

Tracing the Origins and Standardizing Contemporary Usage: The Chinese Translation and Conceptual Connotation of the Urban Planning Term "Block"

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Keywords: history of urban planning; planning terminology; street-block; urban spatial unit; urban planning knowledge system.

Abstract

"Block" is a core concept for describing the basic spatial unit of the city. Through systematic excavation of historical literature, and using literature databases together with content analysis, this study examines the evolution of Chinese translations and conceptual connotations of "block" since its introduction into China in the early-modern period. The study finds 28 translations in early-modern literature, which can be classified as transliterations, indigenous semantic translations, and borrowed Japanese translations. Despite terminological diversity, scholarly understandings of its core definition - a spatial unit enclosed by four streets - and of its three attributes - planning control, land development, and social life - are highly consistent. In modern and contemporary usage, translations of "block" have gradually converged around *jiefang*, *jiequ*, *jiekuai*, and *jiekuo*. Among them, *jiekuai* is recommended as the standard term because it is more scientific, univocal, and systematic, and can facilitate disciplinary communication. This historical process reflects the transformation of Chinese urban planning from knowledge transfer to independent construction. It provides a typical example of localizing foreign concepts and offers important implications for improving China's urban planning knowledge system.

Introduction

From the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century, block, as a core concept in Western urban planning, was introduced into China and quickly became a key term for describing the basic spatial unit of the city. During more than a century of reception and use, however, its Chinese translation has remained pluralistic: from early-modern terms such as *duanluo* and *jieduan* to modern and contemporary terms such as *jiefang* (Note 1), *jiequ* (Note 2), *jiekuo* (Note 3), and *jiekuai* (Note 4). Multiple expressions are often mixed even within the same document (Notes 5-6). This phenomenon of one word with multiple translations and one meaning with multiple names not only easily causes conceptual ambiguity and inconsistent standards in academic research and professional practice, but also reveals a deeper issue in the modernization of China's urban planning knowledge system: how to reproduce localized knowledge from imported concepts.

The term "block" originates from American English and originally refers to a modular spatial unit enclosed by a road system and to the social organizational forms it carries. This concept differs fundamentally from the more enclosed spatial forms of traditional China based on social units such as *fang* and *li* [1]. The introduction of block was therefore not merely a linguistic translation. Its localization reflects the knowledge transformation of Chinese urban planning from traditional to modern forms and has clear significance for disciplinary history.

Although scholars have discussed the definition and translation of block, the existing discussion is scattered, divided, and lacking in systematic historical analysis. For example, some studies take *jiekuo* as the benchmark term to distinguish it from *jiequ* and *jiefang*, arguing that *jiekuo* is the basic unit constituting *jiequ*, while *jiefang* can be used interchangeably with *jiekuo* in broader contexts [2]. Such distinctions are informative, but whether their assumed benchmark term is appropriate remains debatable. Today, block is widely used in urban planning, architecture, landscape design, sociology, and related fields. Yet disciplinary perspectives differ: architecture emphasizes material spatial form, while sociology focuses on community function. The term therefore remains

seriously confused in practical use. This inconsistency has produced major divergences in the understanding and naming of block and has diluted or even reconstructed its core connotation across contexts. It is therefore urgent to trace and standardize the term from the perspective of planning history.

From a broader perspective, terminological unification is also an important indicator of the maturity of urban and rural planning as a discipline in China. As an applied discipline with both engineering-technical attributes and social-governance functions, urban planning depends on precise and unified concepts to support theory building and practice. In the current context of constructing a Chinese-style knowledge system, the accurate translation and creative transformation of imported terms are both practically urgent and academically necessary.

Based on this problem consciousness, and grounded in existing research on urban planning history, this study systematically excavates documentary materials and applies literature analysis to examine the appearance, evolution, classification, conceptual content, and localization characteristics of block in the Chinese context. It then proposes an appropriate contemporary standardized term. Although the study concerns a single term, its significance extends beyond that term. It offers reference and insight for constructing a Chinese urban planning terminology system and for promoting the formation of a Chinese-style planning knowledge system.

1 Research Methods and Literature Base

1.1 Progressive Literature Search Strategy

In the early-modern period, when the terminology system was not yet unified, scholars often added the foreign original term in parentheses when introducing foreign concepts, as in Chen Shutang's "rectangular street-road subdivision (block)". This feature makes it possible to search database sources systematically for Chinese usages of block. On this basis, this study constructs a progressive literature search strategy (Figure 1), consisting of the following steps.

- (1) Initial search. Based on previous research and broad preliminary reading, initial combined keywords of "translation + block" were identified (Table 1), and extensive searches were conducted in databases such as the Complete Database of Early-Modern Chinese Newspapers, Periodicals, and Books. The search emphasized diversity and aimed to cover all terminological variants in order to avoid omissions. The results were then strictly screened to remove non-professional and duplicate documents and ensure validity.
- (2) In-depth reading and repeated search. The initially obtained documents were analyzed in detail. New noun forms such as "fangwu duanluo" (house-building segment) and related concepts were extracted to generate second- and third-round keywords, expanding the search range in sequence. This snowball method effectively avoided omissions caused by a limited initial keyword set.
- (3) Supplementing non-digital documents. To construct a more complete and diverse literature base, paper archives, planning drawings, and other non-digital historical materials were collected to complement database sources.

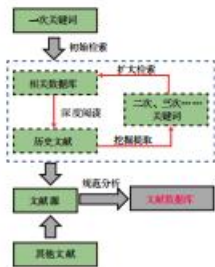


Figure 1. Research process.

Table 1. Examples of Chinese translations of "block" in early-modern times.

No.	Term	Original text and source marked as "translation + block"
1	布洛克 (buluoke)	布洛克 block [3]
2	区划 (quhua)	街路区划 (block) [4]; 区划 (block) [5]; block system 区划法 [6]
3	井区 (jingqu)	井区 (block and lot) / 井区 (lot) [7]
4	地段 (diduan)	block plan 地段图 [8]
5	区域 (quyu)	block 区域 [9]; 区域 (block) [10]; (American) block, (British) turning/row, (Chinese) 区 [11]
6	段落 (duanluo)	block - 房屋段落 [12]; 建屋段落 (block) [13]; 建筑段落 (block) [14]; 段落 (block) [15]
7	街廓 (jiekuo)	街廓 (block) [16]; block is a district of city streets; the Japanese translation is 街廓, so it is followed [17]
8	街坊 (jiefang)	街坊 (block) [18]
9	路格 / 路隔 (luge)	路格 (block) / block, city 路隔 [19]
10	建筑面积 (jianzhumianji)	建筑面积 (block) [20]
11	分段、段界 (fenduan / duanjie)	段 (block) [21]; lot and block maps, 分区及分段图 [22]; 段界 (block) [15]
12	街段 (jieduan)	街段 (blocks) [23]; 街段 block [24]
13	方段 (fangduan)	方段 (block) [25]
14	建筑分块 (jianzhu fenkui)	建筑分块 (blocks) [26]

Source: National Newspaper and Periodical Index; Collection of Republican-Era Literature (to 1949); National Library Republican-Era Literature; General Database of Chinese Historical Documents - Republican-Era Books.

1.2 Literature Classification and Analytical Framework

Through multiple rounds of search and screening, a corpus was established containing 124 early-modern documents that use block-related terms. These documents include eight types: monographs, planning documents, journal papers, regulations, translations, textbooks, dictionaries, and translated articles. The corpus has long temporal coverage, diverse types, and substantial scale, providing a solid historical basis for the study. The study develops a dual analytical framework combining conceptual history and word history to reveal the full picture of terminological evolution (Figure 2). The conceptual-history dimension examines how the urban-spatial idea referred to by block was understood in different periods, what interpretive emphases it carried, and how its meaning continued or changed. The word-history dimension focuses on the evolution and use characteristics of the terms themselves, including statistical analysis of the frequency, contextual distribution, and usage rules of each translation.

Operationally, content analysis is used to interpret terminological examples. For each occurrence of a translation, the study records not only the form of the term but also the sentence, paragraph, and full-document context in which it appears, so as to analyze its usage scenario and conceptual connotation. It also compares trajectories of usage across ancient, early-modern, and modern-contemporary documents and evaluates terms according to the seven criteria in the Principles for the Approval of Scientific and Technical Terms.

Figure 2. Annual frequency of different Chinese names of "block" (1913-1951). Source: based on 124 documents from databases including the National Newspaper and Periodical Index, Collection of Republican-Era Literature (to 1949), National Library Republican-Era Literature, General Database of Chinese Historical Documents - Republican-Era Books, and Duxiu Academic Search.

The introduction and localization of block in early-modern China involved the encounter and integration of Western planning concepts with Chinese local practice. Existing documents show that, since the early twentieth century, its translations evolved from transliteration to semantic translation and from single borrowing to diversified exploration, producing the coexistence and competition of multiple translations. Because standardization was absent for a long time, different translations interpreted this imported concept from different angles, forming a rich and diverse terminological genealogy.

The expression "block plan" appeared as early as 1906 in the Regulations of the Northern Settlement of Yangjingbang, Shanghai, but no fixed Chinese translation existed at that time; it was generally referred to as tuyang (drawing) (Note 8). By 1925, the New Building Regulations of the Hankou Special District Administration translated "block plan" as diduan tu (site/block plan) and linked it to "building lot" [8], reflecting the nature of block as a basic unit of land subdivision.

As early as 1913, Yao Jicang [27] proposed *jieduan* in a translation from German, opening the path of semantic translation for block. The term emphasized the function of block as a spatial unit divided within a street system and conformed to Chinese word-formation rules, laying the foundation for subsequent diversification.

the rise of planning education, Western urban planning theories were introduced in large quantities. As a basic concept, block experienced a rapid expansion of translations. Statistics from 124 documents between 1913 and 1951 show as many as 28 related translations, including representative terms such as *duanluo*, *jieduan*, *jingqu*, *fangduan*, and *jiekuo*. They reflect the multiple understandings and localization attempts of the time (Figure 3).

Figure 3. Genealogy and use frequency of different Chinese translations of "block" (1913-1951). Source: based on 124 documents from the databases listed in Figure 2.

The word *duanluo* appeared as early as the Song dynasty and referred to structural divisions in writing and music, or to segmented units in fields, engineering, or administration. In *Juyitangji*, the Qing scholar Xu Fang wrote: "Joints are *duanluo*. In writing they are *duanluo*; in people they are the skeleton. The *duanluo* is the skeleton" [28]. Early-modern scholars borrowed this traditional word and extended it to mean the "skeleton" of urban space. They used it to translate block and developed two derivative categories: "urban *duanluo*" at the macro level [29], and "building *duanluo*" at the micro level [30-34]. "Urban *duanluo*" further includes variants such as "city-street *duanluo*" [35] and "street *duanluo*" [36], while expressions close to "building *duanluo*" include "house *duanluo*" [37-39], "house-foundation *duanluo*" [40], and "building-house *duanluo*" [41]. These variants reflect subtle differences in planning contexts and together constitute a relatively complete terminology cluster.

Other close terms such as *fenduan* and *duanjie* also often appear in cadastral management and neighborhood-unit theory literature, showing the broad penetration of this term across multiple fields.

The word *jieduan* can be traced to the late Qing period, for example in the Qing Veritable Records, which records "measuring street segments outside the city" [42]. Translating block as *jieduan* draws on the meaning of "street segment" and indicates the division of urban spatial scale. Yao Jicang's 1913 translation already paid attention to scale and suggested that the length of a *jieduan* should be 150-250 m to avoid excessive corners and land waste.

arguing that "jieduan and lot plans" were important contents of urban planning [44]. Like duanluo, jieduan was used not only as a planning term but also in municipal management, such as street-light placement and water-supply and drainage layout.

2.2.3 Jingqu: Cultural Metaphor of the Well-Field System

The term jingqu was already used in the Song dynasty to refer to cities or streets, as in "shops lined up in jingqu" [45]. In 1924, Xu Xingcheng [7], a civil-engineering student at Tangshan University, first used jingqu to translate block in Street Design and noted at the beginning that his intention was "to be accessible, and therefore to avoid technical terms as much as possible." The inspiration came from the ancient Chinese well-field system. He explained that "jingqu (block lot) is the plot enclosed by streets on all four sides. The existence of jingqu in the city is like the existence of well fields in the countryside. Inside a jingqu, houses are built and divided by small lanes into several segments. The form of jingqu (lot) is usually determined by street-surface subdivision. The jingqu enclosed by rectangular streets is rectangular."

This translation cleverly connected the Western urban grid model with traditional Chinese land-division concepts, showing an intention of cultural adaptation. Yet because it deviated from the conceptual essence of block, it was followed by only a few scholars such as Yang Zheming [46]. This phenomenon reflects a selective mechanism in the dissemination of professional terms: translations that rely too heavily on cultural metaphor while neglecting conceptual precision often fail to become mainstream.

2.2.4 Fangduan: Direct Description of Geometric Form

The term fangduan appeared in the Qing period and originally referred to a subdivision or interval. As a translation of block, it highlighted rectangular geometric form. This usage appeared in the 1935 Outline of the Municipal Construction Plan for the Hubei Provincial Capital. Although the term was visually intuitive and semantically concise, it did not extend into cultural or functional meanings and therefore failed to spread. This shows that a successful term needs to balance conceptual precision, professional utility, and cultural adaptability.

2.3 Introduction and Influence of the Japanese-Derived Translation Jiekuo

Japanese loan translations were an important source of early-modern Chinese urban planning terminology; jiekuo is one example. Jiekuo was originally an ancient Chinese word referring to street areas, as in "the street area was solemn and the wards and markets were clear" [47]. In 1923, when the Tokyo Institute for Municipal Research translated Thomas Adams' *Modern City Planning: Its Meaning and Method*, it used jiekuo [48] to translate block. This term was then reintroduced into China. For example, Luo Chaoyan [16] in 1929 and Lin Ben in 1933 both used the term when translating the same work and explicitly noted that it came from the Japanese translation [17]. Although jiekuo was used in Northeast China during the puppet Manchukuo period [49] and in urban planning in Taiwan during Japanese colonial rule [50], it remained marginal in the overall early-modern Chinese context, reflecting selective acceptance of external influence during terminological localization.

In summary, the diverse early-modern translations of block embody the encounter and integration of Chinese and Western planning concepts and reveal translators' different conceptual emphases. From cultural metaphor and morphological features to functional indication, these terms jointly constructed the terminological foundation of early Chinese urban planning and provided an important historical reference for later concept standardization.

3 Characteristic Cognition of the Early-Modern Conceptual Connotation of Block

3.1 Core Definition: A Spatial Unit of Cross-Temporal Consensus

Although Chinese names for block have remained inconsistent since the early-modern period, their core definition is highly consistent: the basic urban spatial unit enclosed by streets. From Sun Ke's "a square plot of

land bounded by streets on all four sides" [4], Dong Xiujia's "the segment between street and street, or between street and lane" [16], and Xu Xingcheng's "the plot enclosed by streets on all four sides" [25], to Chen Xunxuan's textbook *Urban Planning*, which defined it as "a building segment that is a kind of interval on the ground, surrounded on all four sides by roads" [11], the same conceptual lineage is evident. These early-modern definitions are continuous with the 1956 Interim Measures for the Preparation of Urban Planning [51], which defined *jiefang* as "a plot surrounded by urban streets (arterial, secondary, or branch roads) for residential or public buildings," and with the 2021 Terms of Urban and Rural Planning [52], which defined it as "a basic urban unit plot defined by streets or natural features such as rivers."

Together they show a cross-temporal consensus regarding block as the basic spatial unit of the city. Early-modern definitions, however, emphasized two core features more strongly: explicit boundaries enclosed by four streets, and functional attributes as the basic unit for organizing buildings.

3.2 Morphological Norms: Form and Scale under Pragmatism

Early-modern scholars discussed the form of block with a strong pragmatic orientation, especially its shape and scale in urban planning.

Regarding shape, regular geometric forms, especially rectangles and squares, were widely advocated. Their advantages included: long sides facing main streets, facilitating traffic; simple form and regular boundaries, facilitating land subdivision; and land saving with clear economic efficiency. At the same time, some scholars such as Dong Xiujia and Zhang Hongye advocated "new-style urban planning" and argued for breaking through grid constraints by using triangular, trapezoidal, and other irregular blocks under radial road networks, so as to balance aesthetics and land use [53].

Regarding scale, there was broad agreement that block area should be moderate and should consider multiple factors. Blocks that are too large or deep can save road area and accommodate large buildings, but may cause traffic congestion, harm ventilation, sunlight, and sanitation, and hinder fire response. Blocks that are too short or shallow can facilitate traffic organization and ventilation, but increase the proportion of roads. Factors affecting block scale can be grouped into two categories: major factors, including road planning, functional needs, building layout, fire protection, ventilation, and sunlight; and secondary factors, including land price, construction cost, topography, and local habits [54]. Shen Yi, formerly Director of the Shanghai Municipal Works Bureau and Mayor of Nanjing, proposed specific scale recommendations according to urban functional zoning (Table 2), reflecting scale rationality under a functionalist orientation.

Table 2. Appropriate block scale based on urban functional zoning.

Functional zone	Length / m	Width / m	Area / m ²	Characteristics
Commercial area	120	60	7,200	Shopfronts face the street; width requirement is the smallest.
Residential area	200	80	16,000	Residences often require gardens; depth should not be too shallow.
Industrial area	300-500	100-200	30,000-100,000	Road intersections should be provided about every 600 m to meet transport and evacuation needs.

Source: Reference [30].

3.3 Triple Attributes: Multidimensional Interpretation of the Urban Spatial Unit

As a physical spatial unit enclosed by urban streets, block plays a pivotal role in the urban structure. It connects upward with the urban road network and functional zoning, and downward with street interfaces, building

control, and the allocation of building sites. It therefore has three spatial-unit attributes: planning control, land development, and social life (Figure 4).

As a unit of urban planning control, block is used in two situations: new-town development and old-city renewal. (1) New-town development contains two logical paths: a road-network-first model, in which the road network form is determined first and blocks are then rationally divided; and a block-led model, in which block scale is determined according to functional needs and the road network is adjusted in reverse. Together, these paths construct a progressive control system of road network -> block division -> building layout. (2) Old-city renewal involves layered restructuring. Based on existing street-and-lane spaces, strategies of road improvement and land readjustment reshape spatial units and form a larger-scale urban fabric combining new and old elements: external main roads with internal lanes.

As a unit of urban land development, block usually appears in three forms. (1) Most commonly, one block is subdivided into several property parcels or building lots for public and private buildings, with land boundaries generally perpendicular to roads. Large blocks can solve internal traffic and subdivision problems by introducing inner streets, lanes, or central gardens. (2) When an entire block is a single property parcel, it is used for large buildings or open spaces such as parks [55]; in this case, block is equivalent to lot. (3) The block-lots plan can serve as the basis for land-price assessment; urban land is graded and valued by block-lots units to establish a modern land valuation system [56].

As a unit of urban social life, block has two aspects. First, through public open urban streets and semi-public, semi-open internal block spaces, it forms a spatial sequence of street (public) -> block (semi-public) -> building (private), shaping hierarchical domains of life. Second, in combination with the baojia system, one block could serve as the basic unit of one jia (about 6-15 households), with several blocks forming one bao (about 6-15 jia), thereby creating a grassroots governance structure of bao -> jia -> household [57].

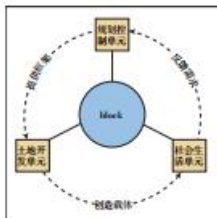


Figure 4. Schematic model of the block unit with triple attributes.

4 Analysis for Standardizing the Contemporary Term Block

4.1 Modern and Contemporary Development and Current Use of the Term Block

Similar to the early-modern situation, contemporary scholars still commonly use the form "translation (block)" when referring to block. Following the method used for early-modern block research, this study searched databases such as Duxiu Academic Search and CNKI with "translation + block" as keywords. A total of 203 relevant documents from 1953 to 2025 were obtained. Content analysis makes it possible to trace the development and current features of block terminology from the 1950s to the present.

Taking reform and opening-up as the dividing line, the development can be divided roughly into two stages. In the 1950s, the transformation toward a socialist planned economy and the large-scale construction of urban residential areas promoted the reconstruction of planning terminology. Early-modern translations of block gradually faded, and jiefang (Note 9) and jiequ, which had stronger social-spatial attributes, became mainstream. In 1954, Liu Guanghua [58] formally adopted jiefang in the textbook Town Planning (Figure 5). This reflected the transformation of the term from material space, such as "building duanluo," toward a social-function concept adapted to the Soviet model of the "residential jiefang" [59].

After reform and opening-up, especially since 1985, large amounts of foreign urban planning knowledge were introduced, the discipline of urban and rural planning developed rapidly, and the terminology system became more professional and systematic. Urban design, regulatory detailed planning, real-estate development, historic conservation, and urban renewal all promoted block-related research, and understandings of block became increasingly deep. In this stage, in addition to the continued use of jiefang and jiequ, some early-modern translations such as fangwu duanluo, jieduan [60], and jiekuo [61] reappeared, and the new term jiekuai [62] emerged. The Shenzhen Urban Design Standards and Guidelines explicitly distinguished jiequ, jiekuai, and dikuai (parcel), establishing the scale hierarchy of jiequ -> jiekuai -> dikuai [63]. This marked an important step in terminological standardization (Figure 6).

Based on analysis of 190 documents from 1985 to 2025, current block terminology shows three main features. First, mainstream usage has changed: early-modern high-frequency terms such as duanluo and jieduan have decreased sharply, while jiekuo became popular for a period around 2006 and, together with jiequ, jiekuai, and jiefang, constitutes the core set of terms. Second, the new term jiekuai, which appeared in 1987, gradually became a high-frequency term in architecture and planning because of its univocal meaning and fit with technical contexts (Figure 7). Third, internal differentiation has occurred: jiefang tends toward social meaning; jiequ has exceeded the original meaning of block [64]; and jiekuo has developed the additional meaning of "street silhouette" (Note 10).

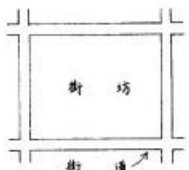


Figure 5. Relationship between block and street. Source: Reference [58].

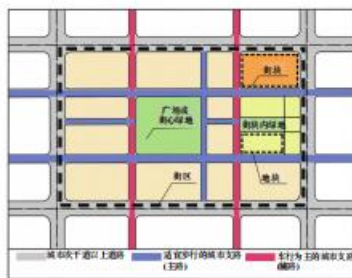


Figure 6. The composition of jiequ-jiekuai-dikuai in the Shenzhen Urban Design Standards and Guidelines. Source: redrawn from Reference [63].

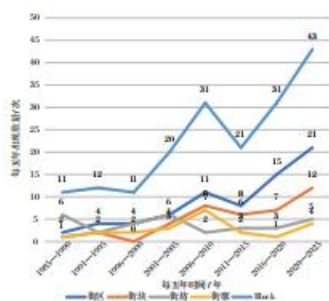


Figure 7. Overall and core use frequencies of Chinese names for block in modern and contemporary documents (1985-2025). Source: based on 190 documents from Duxiu Academic Search, CNKI, and Wanfang Data.

4.2 Multidimensional Comparison and Preferred Term

The four high-frequency translations currently used for block - jiequ, jiekuai, jiefang, and jiekuo - each have different emphases and are suitable for different contexts. From the linguistic relation between signifier and signified, the Chinese signifying form of block has not yet completed a transition from plurality to unity. Its signified, however, is clear: the basic urban spatial unit enclosed by four streets. This meaning embodies the dual features of block: jie (street, road boundary) and kuai (geometric module). Based on historical evolution and current evaluation, this paper recommends jiekuai as the preferred term, for the following reasons.

In terms of terminological suitability, jiekuai best conforms to the core principles for approving scientific and technical terms. It is strongly univocal and clearly distinguished from everyday language, avoiding the overgeneralization of jiequ. It is scientifically accurate, expressing the spatial essence of enclosure by four streets. It is systematic, as it can form a conceptual sequence with dikuai (parcel) and jiequ (district/area) [65]. It is concise, with a two-character structure consistent with Chinese word formation. Its signifier (jie + kuai) matches the signified (the original meaning of block) most closely: jie expresses the road boundary, while kuai highlights geometric modularity; together they cover the core connotation of block.

From the perspective of semiotic precision, the qu in jiequ has a vague boundary and is easily confused with jiekui in lishi wenhua jiekui (historic-cultural district). The kuo in jiekuo emphasizes outline (Note 11) and is closer to the concept of street wall [66]. The fang in jiefang emphasizes the social neighborhood unit and has weaker spatial-boundary attributes.

In terms of international comparison and local adaptability, Japan uses jiequ or the transliteration burokkui [67]. As a direct translation of block, jiekuai can preserve the characteristics of Chinese expression while facilitating international communication, helping to avoid terminological homogenization and supporting the subjectivity of Chinese urban planning theory.

In terms of practical basis and disciplinary development, jiekuai has already been incorporated into Shenzhen's technical standards for urban planning and has a standard basis. Its wide use in academic research reflects professional consensus. Clarifying this term helps promote research on urban form, land development, transport organization, and related areas, and deepens the construction of basic theory in urban planning.

In short, establishing jiekuai as the preferred term aims to reduce conceptual confusion, clarify its relationship with supplementary terms such as jiequ, jiefang, and jiekuo, and improve the accuracy and systematic character of planning language (Table 3).

Table 3. Comparison of block and related Chinese terms.

Term	Core emphasis	Applicable field	English equivalent
街 块 (jiekuai)	Spatial form + street enclosure	Urban planning / urban renewal	Block
街区 (jiequ)	Social life + functional mix	Commercial development / historic preservation	Superblock / Blocks
街 坊 (jiefang)	Neighborhood cultural identity	Community planning	Neighborhood
街 廓 (jiekuo)	Street-interface design	Urban design	Street silhouette / wall
地 块 (dikuai)	Land ownership	Real-estate development / land management	Parcel / Lot

5 Conclusion

The evolution of Chinese translations of block is a microcosm of the movement of Chinese urban planning from knowledge transfer toward independent innovation. In facing this imported concept, early-modern scholars constructed a terminological ecology of multiple translations through creative translation, such as *duanluo*, and cross-cultural borrowing, such as *jiekuo*. Although these explorations did not achieve unity, they revealed the three attributes of block: morphological regularity as a unit of planning control, property logic as a unit of land development, and hierarchical spatial sequence as a unit of social life. These understandings laid an important cognitive foundation for contemporary terminological standardization.

After the 1950s, the focus of the term shifted from physical form to social function, reflecting the promotion of the residential *jiefang* model under the planned economy. Since reform and opening-up, with land marketization and the need for refined governance, *jiekuai* has gradually established a technical position in local urban planning systems because it emphasizes the spatial essence of road enclosure plus geometric module. The conceptual hierarchy *jiequ* → *jiekuai* → *dikuai* indicates that block terminology has begun to move from pluralistic competition toward professional consensus.

Establishing *jiekuai* as the preferred term has three broader implications. First, it improves theoretical precision by avoiding the problems of *jiequ* being too broad, *jiekuo* being ambiguous, and *jiefang* overemphasizing the social dimension. Second, it responds to current practical needs by resolving conceptual confusion caused by one meaning with multiple terms in interdisciplinary communication, providing clear grounds for regulatory planning and land development. Third, it supports the construction of disciplinary subjectivity. *Jiekuai* connects with the international concept of block while using Chinese semantic expression to embody local characteristics. It moves beyond the passive logic of "translation as reception" and promotes the transformation of planning knowledge from absorption through Sinicization to construction in a Chinese discourse, supporting Chinese-style urban modernization governance.

Future revisions of the Standard for Basic Terms of Urban and Rural Planning should specify *jiekuai* as the statutory term, define related concepts, and recommend street-block as its English equivalent. Textbook writing and professional training should promote its use. Although this terminological clarification concerns only one word, it is deeply related to the scientific and subjective construction of China's urban planning knowledge system. Only by clarifying basic concepts can China better tell its story of urban modernization in a globalized context.

Notes

1. *Da jiefang* is translated as "super-block" and *jiequ zhi* as "block system". See Encyclopedia of China (Third Online Edition).
2. *Jiequ*, block, also known as *jiekuo*. See Reference [52]: 47.
3. *Jiekuo* (block). See: Sun Hui, Liang Jiang. The meaning of *jiekuo*[C]//Urban Planning Society of China. Face-to-Face Urban Planning: Proceedings of the 2005 Annual National Planning Conference (Part II). Department of Architecture, Dalian University of Technology, 2005.
4. Block translated as *jiekuai*. See Reference [65]: 119.
5. "This provision actually belongs to the design of urban *duanluo*. The so-called urban house *duanluo* is the segment between street and street, or between street and lane." See Reference [29]: 201.
6. Block is translated simultaneously as *jiequ* and *jiefang*. See: Tolstoy Becklin, Michael Peterek. Urban Block[M]. Zhang Lufeng, trans. Beijing: China Architecture & Building Press, 2011.
7. To reflect the continued use of early-modern Chinese translations of block in the early years of the People's Republic of China, the study extends the lower limit to 1951. From 1952 onward, usage gradually shifted to *jiefang*.

8. "Fourteen clear days before it is intended to commence the erection of any new building or the rebuilding of any old building a block plan of the land showing the buildings to be erected thereon shall be submitted to the Municipal Council for their approval." The Chinese regulation states that before beginning house construction, the owner must submit drawings to the council for examination, with the required items specified therein. See: Regulations of the Northern Settlement of Yangjingbang, Shanghai[M]. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1906: 61-62.
9. Definition of jiefang: "Many detached residential buildings, whether bungalows or multi-story buildings, arranged within one area and surrounded by roads on all four sides form one jiefang. A jiefang may also contain nurseries, kindergartens, or other buildings. Multiple jiefang can form one welfare district." See: Zeng Yongnian et al., eds. Explanations of Scientific and Technical Terms: Architectural Engineering[M]. Beijing: Popular Science Press, 1958: 20.
10. Jiekuo is translated as "street silhouette". See: Chang Qing. The Metropolis Begins Here: A Study of the Bund Section of Nanjing Road, Shanghai[M]. Shanghai: Tongji University Press, 2005: 62.
11. Jiekuo is both the boundary of the street, the edge of the block, and the "inner wall" of urban space. Control of jiekuo includes control of the boundary of the passage and the space between boundaries. See: Wang Lumin, Liu Chenyu, Fan Wenli. Preliminary exploration of street-silhouette landscape control in urban landscape planning: the case of Zhengzhou National Economic and Technological Development Zone[J]. South Architecture, 2001(1): 47-49.

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