

Graduation studio- Complex cities
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Reflection paper

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Research group & thesis

This project of livable Shenzhen is carried out in complex cities research group under the graduation topic of "Transforming Chinese cities". The complex cities research group studies "the changing role of Urbanism that results from increasingly complex spatial and social circumstances and internationalization" (complex cities research group, 2018). And the "Transforming Chinese cities" graduation topic tries to "identify ways of planning to

more effectively integrate the physical character of cities with social issues to create healthier, more livable, and more inclusive places - and provide new models of city development that promote 'people-centered urbanization'" (complex cities research group, 2018). This research group, from my perspective, is focusing on the development of cities under globalization, when cities are more complex than ever before. Stakeholders, history, policies, culture, social and economic geography are

all the concerns of this research group. The “Transforming Chinese cities”, meanwhile, pays more attention on urban regeneration in Chinese cities. This fits exactly in what the project of livable Shenzhen addresses in the thesis. The project is based on the new policy of “Tenants enjoy the same rights as home buyers” put forward by the government. This new policy makes it possible to boom the long-time renting in Shenzhen, which could be a solution for the current soaring high price in China. The impact of policy is always one of the study topics of this research group. Besides, the project is located in Shenzhen, which is an important city in the whole global system, and the objective of the project is high-educated young migrants, who are the main backbone of future social and economic development of the city. Although this thesis is not about low-income migrants and urban villages that this research group usually pays attention to, they share the same idea of creating a health, livable and inclusive living environment. Moreover, this project tackles the complexity of transforming current residential areas and creating new job opportunities in the city. To create affordable housing and job opportunities, demand of objectives, different urban forms and stakeholders with different interests and powers are taken into consideration, and these are all the topics of complex cities research group.

Methodology & approach

Basically, this thesis follows the methodical line of complex cities research group, that is

context and spatial analysis, vision, strategy and pilot projects.

Systematical and logical thinking is involved in during the analysis. The thesis follows the approach of combining theoretical approach and the on-site analysis of complex cities research group, trying to localized the theory research on the local scale. The thesis the indicators of livability for high-educated young migrants and the relationship between density and livability. Through literature review, the framework of on-site analysis is defined and the representative case of Sungang is used to connect abstract theories and practice. Based on the analysis, strategies and pilot projects are proposed in the case of Sungang.

Besides, to approach the complexity, the strategies are divided into several layers. The way of categorizing could contribute to narrow down each strategy to the site and analyze different stakeholders and actions in each strategy.

Theory & design

The thesis integrated design and research and each of these two plays an important role in the thesis. The research helps to answer the questions related to “why” and “what”. In this thesis, the research clarifies the indicators of livability and the relationship between density and livability, which not only becomes the framework of on-site analysis, but also shows the direction of design and provide the basis to form the solution in the design. Meanwhile, design process aims at solution, which means the questions related to “how”. The

design is integrated through the whole thesis. How density is connected with livability in the literature review is the combination of theory and design. The definition and measurement method of density is studied through theory, and the connection between density and livability combined both current design in the city and theory. To bridge theory with design, a field trip is carried out to study the current design in the site and how does it impact livability in current situations. After site analysis, the issues in the site for future design are concluded and strategies are put forward based on these conclusions. Besides, in order to improve spatial quality, designs of densification and streets are put forward in the project 1. Different options are designed to show the flexibility of the strategies. In pilot project 2, design is also based on strategies and different options are also provided.

So in a conclusion, design is highly linked with theory. Theory firstly form the structure of analysis and provide the direction of strategy. Design is used to test and verify the theory during literature review and is a further step of strategy.

Transferability

This thesis aims at creating livable living environment for high-educated young migrants, which is a big problem not only in Shenzhen, but also in whole China. The thesis plan analyzes the demand of high-educated young migrants and the possibility and strategies of transforming current urban forms, more affordable

housing and job opportunities could be provided, making it possible to retain these driven forces of future development. The ways of urban regeneration in the thesis could be transferred not only to the other similar places in Shenzhen, especially in “guannei”, but also other metropolitan cities which are also experiencing an ongoing industrial upgrading, like Beijing and Shanghai. Besides, a long-time renting model is put forward in the thesis. As a testing land in China, the experiment of long-time renting in Shenzhen provide an alternative way to be transferred to other cities in China to solve the problems of high housing price.

Deficiency

The site of the thesis is located in “guannei”, which is more developed and the housing quality and morphology of urban fabrics is a little bit different from “guanwai”. Besides, even though the strategies could be transferred to other similar places, the limitation should still be noticed that each area has its own challenges and opportunities and the strategies in the thesis just give the basic instruction and does not meet demands of all areas in the city.

Progress

During this one year graduation thesis, a lot of progress is made from my perspective. The first thing that I would like to point out is the way of critical and logical thinking. After P1, the analysis should be carried out. At first I carried out the analysis just as all analyses people would carry out. However,

during tutorial, I found out all analyses should have a backbone and should not be carried out casually. This was the first time that I realized the need of critical and logical thinking. Based on this, a lot of literature review was made and finally a list of indicators of livability was created, which became the basis of my analysis. After this, I always pay attention to the logic of the thesis and always tries to keep the story line complete. The second thing I would like to mention is about social inclusiveness. When dealing with social housing and other dwelling types, I made a distinction between them at the beginning since I thought the segregation would happen naturally and it would be very difficult for richer people to social interact with people in low-income. Likewise, this problem was also pointed out during tutorial. I started to realize that there should not be this physical distinction made by people intentionally. Besides, I firstly thought these social housing would be built by private developers as other dwelling types. While tutors reminded that these social housing could be built by state-owned developers for a better quality and suggested me to look up references of social housing in Netherlands. This process of discovering gives me a new idea of social inclusiveness.

In a word, during this one-year graduation project, the progress is not only in academic aspect, but also makes me understand more about insistence and time management.