

Reflection

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1. The relationship between research and design

In this project, research and design reframed each other through the process and helped to promote the project together.

The research provided principles and set criteria for the design based on understanding how space functions in the area. It was conducted from three main aspects. The first one is to understand the context of urban planning in the area by tracing the history of development and the political and institutional factors behind it. The second one is interpreting how the social performativity related to urban form. In this sense, the rules and principles learnt from theoretical studies have been verified in this case. And the third part is looking for potential spatial resources in the area with the consideration of involving stakeholders. These helped to find the potential plots and provided guidelines for design.

The design also promoted research the other way around. When more detailed spatial analysis was doing on a local scale, there was a lot of information coming up and the consideration of community space and public space once blurred the topic of providing affordable workplace. Then design helped to redefine the focus of research. What kind of space should be provided, what kind of spatial qualities should be achieved, and how the spatial resources can be transformed, all these questions related to design bring the focus back to provide decent affordable workplace. And the chosen of design proposals also calls for further research. Hence, the design helped narrow down the scope of research.

In a word, research underpinned design by setting criteria and principles while design sharpened the focus of research and promoted the study.

2. The relationship between the theme of the graduation lab and the subject/case study chosen by the student within this framework

(location/object)

The theme of inclusive cities in complex cities lab focuses on the informal urbanization in Global south. It has a branch of study on Shenzhen, China, stressing on the urban villages and migrants driven by the rapid urbanization. The chosen study case of Dalang, Shenzhen is very representative because that it is a town developed for industry and most of its population now is migrants. It stands at the frontline of industrialization, de-industrialization and migration, with a large number of urban villages in the area. Thus, Dalang is a good case to do research in terms of the theme of graduation lab.

3. The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

As the project is cross the two research groups of complex cities and urban fabric, it benefits from both the methodical lines of approach. On the one hand, for complex cities, the methodical line of spatial planning from SWOT analysis to vision setting and strategy proposal with key interventions, at the same time considering the stakeholders involved and the governance mode, built up the framework of the project. On the other hand, in terms of the methods of urban fabric, the analysis of urban patterns through space syntax profiled the spatial structure and spatial qualities on a local scale. And based on these, principles and criteria were set for strategy and design. Both of the methodical lines are followed in this graduation project.

4. The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The project topic is very social contextual based. It focuses on how to provide affordable workplace through urban renewal for the migrants in a transition period in China. On the one hand, there are 240 million migrants in China now and the central government put them in important status, trying to transform them into citizens; on the other hand, China is in an industrial transition period with land shortage and roaring housing price in first-tier cities, expelling migrants. Thus, the unaffordable housing price and the lack of opportunities to improve their career become the main obstacles. Hence, providing affordable

workplace through urban planning can provide more opportunities for the migrants to climb socio-economic ladder. This is quite in line with the social concern in China now.