

# Reflections

*Another shenzhen: Towards an urban regeneration model for intercultural integration*

*Zhujun He, Complex cities*

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## 1. The relationship between research and design

In this project, the research is derived from the attempt to rethink the interaction between built environment and social integration. Literature and comparative study help to thoroughly understand the implication and impact of Shenzhen's complicated social context, such as the historical evolution of urban village, the socio-spatial transformation, and the culture of migration. Based on research, essential value of the project site has become concrete and clear, as the problem statement formulated.

Moreover, the previous research on issues of urban regeneration gives great insight into design process of small scaled, collective and networked interventions. However it is easy to get stuck when the design takes priority over research at the very beginning. I went back to the review of hierarchy of needs, which helped me to figure out what values the target groups pursue. Otherwise the design implementation will be not that convincing. In this way, research becomes an essential base and guide of design.

To end up with, the project can be classified as 'research-based design' rather than 'design-based research'. Taking steps of discovering patterns, releasing public space, the goal of cultural interaction will be achieved, which is set by the research.

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

Graduation lab 'complex cities' focuses on formulating methods and guidelines for the building of economically and socially advantageous and sustainable cities and metropolitan regions in order to bring the results of this research to planners, designers and policy-makers in usable forms.

Under the frame of 'complex cities', together with massive input from Urban fabrics, the case study in the project points two implications of the theme:

- a) understanding the 'complex' context of metropolitan cities,
- b) finding out potential lie in the context as well as in the built environment.

As cities are physical spaces where people interact with the built environment. The target group is therefore a main key in such interaction, in this project, I try to understand different target groups in the perspective of cultural integration, which lead the project to a user-oriented approach. The project explores the possibility of urban reform to balance effectiveness and equity in the time of knowledge economy.

Urban fabrics also contributes a lot in the process, as the methods of designing address the evolution of urban form, specifically in Shenzhen.

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

One theme of complex cities studio is concerned with the governance in the context of the increasing complexity and fragmentation of spatial relationships. It motivates students to investigate the role of spatial design and planning in metropolitan city. It also requires students to concern with understanding the evolution of metropolitan spatial structure, in terms of economic competitiveness, environmental sustainability and social well-being.

My thesis focuses on develop a model of urban regeneration by better understanding how culture and history contribute to the construction of a social identity and the producing of a multiplicity of distinct groups. The methodical line of approach of this graduation lab offers an alternative way to research the relationships between the social, economic and environmental performance of the city. By interpreting and developing patterns of urbanization and urban structure in Dalang, the principles and guidelines will be formulated. In this way, the methodical line of approach provides a frame for thinking about transformation under conditions of urban mobility, cultural transmission and regional regeneration. It is increasingly the frame for discussion about changing urban localities and identities, social, functional and migration patterns.

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

The project not only produces effects on the context of Dalang, but also the wider context. In addition to urban environment, the research is primarily relevant to socio-economical issues, and providing an intercultural perspective.

First of all, cultural sustainability is fostered by respecting the tradition, allowing for contextual interventions and programs. In the past experience and even during the trip field in Dalang, we got to know that the relatively disorder of urban regeneration attributes to the cognition of 'profit first'. For example, land owners of urban village long for the huge compensation for demolition of the collective owned property, rather than regeneration implementation. It is reported that ten pilot urban regeneration projects in Luohu District have been stand still since the year of 2010. Same situation can be seen in Dalang, that the construction of the Grand Hotel stopped years ago, the owner of the building would rather make it stay vacant, than rent it to start-up companies separately. All these remind us of the importance of awareness of social responsibility and cultural solidarity.

Secondly, according to the industry planning of Shenzhen government, we are now in an era of knowledge-based and innovation-driven development. Modern service industry and smart industry have the priority, in this sense, multicultural society creates possibilities for people to achieve their dreams. This project is in this way quite relevant to the research of the current context.