The Belt and Road for all
Rethinking globalization-driven urban development in Khorgos.

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P2 REPORT
The Belt and Road for all
Rethinking globalization-driven urban development in Khorgos.

January 2017

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“For those who pass it without entering, the city is one thing; it is another for those who are trapped by it and never leave. There is the city where you arrive for the first time; and there is another city which you leave never to return.”

– Italo Calvino, translated by W. Weaver (1997), Invisible Cities
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Introduction and motivation

The Belt and Road Initiative, reviving the ancient Silk Route in the age of globalisation.

At times of political unrest and dynamic changes in the world, China puts forward a proposal for global collaboration towards peace and prosperity – the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Faced with critique, distrust and questions from the global community the plan to revive the ancient Silk Road can as easily fail as succeed, depending on the way it is executed on the local scale.

As of now, in its early stage, the Initiative is a geopolitical tool; China lobbies for cooperation of other national governments, makes economic agreements and signs deals for infrastructure developments abroad. With this China expands the focus of its economy from production of goods to providing the expertise (in building infrastructure for example) to other countries and as such spreads its influence in Middle-Asia.

The conceptual predecessor of BRI, the Ancient Silk Route, is set as an historic example of cooperation, trade and culture exchange. The cities along the Silk Route were the first metropolises, famed for the diversity of cultures they housed and the rich cultural identity they got as result. As such the Silk route was a carrier of globalisation in its era, and today China hopes the BRI to be the medium for a new era of globalisation. But the times have changed, and the question is, whether the success factors behind the Silk Route back in the old days, can still be useful today, when the world turns at accelerating speeds, mixing cultures faster than our societies can adapt to, in cities that grow by minute.
The Belt and Road Initiative

The Silk and Spice Routes
Multiculturalism and globalisation-driven urban environments.

In the light of globalisation and cultural exchange this thesis takes a critical stance towards the BRI. If we truly would want to bring a difference in the way globalisation happens, then the interaction with the local context is what we should be thinking about. Currently the BRI is executed on the level of governance. The starting point for my thesis is the intuitive statement that the key to a new era of globalisation lies in rethinking the urban environments that are created as a consequence. In doing so, I believe we need to take into account the multiculturalism of our societies and our lack of experience with them. In a rather short amount of time people of completely different cultural backgrounds and ethnicities started living together in big cities. Just 200 years ago the world was much more segregated both socially and spatially. Industrial and revolutions, economic globalisation brought us together much closer than our societies and cities were ready to adapt to.

To rethink how to deal with these developments we need to understand what our multicultural societies need, how can different cultures coexist together and how can we bridge the cultural barriers without losing identity. A lot of social questions, but they are crucial in shaping our built environments. Therefore with this thesis about the Belt and Road Initiative I want to make a start in addressing these issues through the field of urbanism. This master thesis is the first step on a much longer journey.

Motivation for the studio

As can be found in the Complex Cities statement “researchers share an interest in the changing role of Urbanism that results from increasingly complex spatial and societal circumstances and internationalization”. As such my thesis research is aimed at rethinking globalization-driven urbanization; with a focus on the interplay between global geopolitical developments (such as largescale infrastructure development) and the way these meet the local context. My research focuses at locating the vital elements in the interplay of the built environment and the globalizing multicultural societies it houses. With this study I want to explore how urban planners and designers can contribute to cultural mixing to create more inclusive and ambient cities in the future, regardless the accelerating speed of globalization.
Context

1. The Belt and Road Initiative explained

During his first state visit to Kazakhstan, in September 2013 Chinese president Xi Jinping held a speech at the Nazarbayev University with the title ‘Promote People-to-People Friendship and Create a Better Future’.

"To forge closer economic ties, deepen cooperation and expand development in the Euro-Asia region, we should take an innovative approach and jointly build an ‘economic belt’ along the Silk Road. This will be a great undertaking benefitting the people of all countries along the route." (THE DAILY COIN, 2017)


With this China puts forward a plan to revive the Ancient Silk Routes in a contemporary form of cross-continental economic collaboration network, in order to strengthen trade and investment partnerships across Asian, European and African markets. In May 2017, during the Belt and Road Economic Forum Beijing introduced their initiative and invited the global community to join powers and contribute to the ‘win-win’ project of the century (Phillips, 2017).

The ‘Belt and Road Initiative’ (BRI), formerly known as OBOR and the ‘New Silk Road’, consists of two parts: a network of logistic and economic corridors over land, and a series of sea-routes supported by existing and new Chinese ports, essentially providing China better access to Europe, Middle-East and Africa.

Road aims for a series of Chinese coastal ports to (4) link China with Europe through the South China Sea and Indian Ocean; and (5) connect China with the South Pacific Ocean through the South China Sea (HKTDS Research, 2017).

With this the initiative covers 65 countries across six regions and potentially involves 62.3% of the world population and 30.0% of world’s GDP (Fung Business Intelligence Centre, 2017).

To support the grand scheme the Chinese government founded the Silk Road Fund, the International Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the New Development Bank (NBD). However, so far the most funding came from the state-owned China Development Bank (CBD) and four commercial banks (Wildau & Ma, 2017). China lends other countries the money to realise infrastructural projects such as ports, oil pipelines, power plants, highways and railways as part of the BRI; strengthening this way its economic and political position. Another important motive behind the BRI is China’s wish to export its expertise in construction of infrastructure and generate business for Chinese engineering and construction companies.

In the past five years since the announcement of BRI first steps towards its realisation have been undertaken. China focused on its southern and territories and launched several infrastructural projects with the neighbouring countries.

As such Pakistan became one the first BRI allies as it provides an opening to the Middle East through the Arabian Sea and Oman. Chinese investments made it possible to construct a hydroelectric dam, power plants and oil pipelines with most important feature of the China-Pakistan Corridor being the Gwadar Port that links the Maritime Road and the Land Belt together (Hernandez, 2018).

But the first flagship project of the BRI was the realisation of the New Eurasia Land Bridge Economic Corridor through construction of a railway from Yiwu in China to London in UK. This connection made it possible to transport freight directly over land in 16 days, half of the amount of time it previously took using the sea route (Postmedia Inc., 2018). As China’s western border is geographically protected by the Tian Shan mountain range, the only opening to the West lies at the border with Kazakhstan. It is no coincidence that this border region grew in strategic importance as a transport hub. The presidents of China and Kazakhstan agreed upon joint development of ‘Khorgos Gateway’ Special Economic Zone that would consist of a dry-port and a cross-border free trade area, to become the ‘New Dubai’ of Central Asia in the next 20 years (Shepard, 2016).
2. Khorgos Gateway

The Khorgos Gateway, is an infrastructure hub, strategically crucial in connecting China and Europe, situated along the railway of the Eurasian Land Bridge Economic Corridor. This development was proposed in 2013 and is currently under construction. Khorgos Gateway consists of a dry-port, to become the biggest one in Eurasia; a Special Economic Zone situated across the Sino-Kazakhstan border and a cross-border cooperation centre ‘ICBC Khorgos’. All are situated not too far from the railway line and a station that was constructed in 2011. To support the infrastructural hub, new towns are being developed on both sides of the border. In Kazakhstan, Nurkent is being designed to house 100,000 that will work at Khorgos Gateway, and on the Chinese side the town Horgos is built to become a 200,000 people robotics manufacturing hub (Shepard, 2016). Currently the cross-border cooperation zone is already functioning, for trading although it is not yet a very popular destination, due to its poor accessibility and not yet fully developed surroundings. The development is executed by several companies that own the different objects of the plan. As of now the dry port, the railway station, the cross-border cooperation centre and the supporting new-towns have very little to do with each other. Nevertheless the strategic position at the centre of the Eurasian continent provides the hub with bright hopes for the future.

*Note: after the fieldtrip more detailed information will follow on how Khorgos Gateway is being developed*

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**Figure 3**: The Eurasian Land Bridge Railway Corridor from Yiwu through Khorgos to London. Source: http://home.bt.com/news/uk-news/silk-road-revived-as-first-freight-train-from-china-arrives-in-london-11364137816988
Figure 4: Plan for the proposed SEZ Khorgos, with the cross-border cooperation centre, dry-port and the railway station. Source: www.mcps-khorgos.kz/en

Figure 5: A more detailed look at the proposed cross-border cooperation center. Source: www.mcps-khorgos.kz/en
3. Local conditions

Both sides of the Sino-Kazakh border are developed in tandem to support the dry-port and eventually develop into a new international hotspot for trading, commerce and cultural exchange situated at the heart of Eurasia. Currently on the Kazakhstan side of the border there is the town Khorgas, and a new-town Nurkent, with residential area’s being developed to support the logistic and commercial functions of the Khorgos Gateway. On the Chinese side the town Horgos is being built to become a new robot manufacturing hub. The residential areas on both sides together are developed to house at least 300,000 people. But all of this development started on an empty canvas, a landscape of desert and some farmlands with the national border cutting through.
Figure 5: Aerial view of the Sino-Kazakh border zone and the Khorgos Gateway developments. Source: Google Maps.
The national border where the special economic zone of Khorgos will be situated at, is where two different political and economic systems, at least two different languages and ethnicities will meet. On one side the Kazakh people, formerly a USSR republic, speaking predominantly Kazakh and Russian languages; and on the other side the Uyghur people of the autonomous region Xinjiang, speaking Uigur and Mandarin languages, share the Islam as religion.

Note: After the field study (15 Feb - 28 Feb) this section will be extended with historic, political and cultural backgrounds of the border region.

Khorgos is illustrative case for studying BRI developments as it is a location that will be facing drastic changes, all of them initiated for the sake of development of BRI. On top of that it is a location where two and later more different cultures meet and mingle in interaction, for now purely infrastructural and economic, but potentially cultural at later stages of development. Development plans for Khorgos Gateway mention cultural exchange being an important future selling point of this international hub, however the plans so far show no innovative approaches to reaching this.

Note: This statement will be further tested and confirmed or reformulated based on obtaining more detailed plans for the area during the site visit.

Figure 6: One of the proposed developments on the Kazakh side of the cross-border cooperation zone. Source: www.mcps-khorgos.kz/en
Figure 7: Schematic summary of the context definition. Image by author.
Problem definition

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by China, implies a large scale network of economic agreements and infrastructural routes aimed at connecting China to Europe; and strengthening connectivity and trade across Eurasia. The initiative is stimulated by decision-making on national levels and is actively financed through Chinese economy. As such the BRI is a carrier of globalisation that will pressure the so far mostly untouched region and the local context of Khorgos to adapt to this change in short timeframes.

If people to people friendship and collaboration are the changes BRI is supposed to bring into globalisation it is about to trigger, then it doesn’t reach the full potential of this goal yet. Construction of large-scale infrastructure and economic agreements between nations certainly do provide a fundament for people to gather for mutual benefit, but it is the urban environment that plays a key role in people returning, settling and building upon initiatives on the long run.

The case of Khorgos illustrates this issue as follows: current development plans propose dry-port infrastructure as well commercial functions to facilitate efficient transportation and trading of goods from and to China. The proposed urban environments are functionally subservient to the strategic functions and as such seem to be poorly embedded within the local context. Stereotypic for fast-paced urban developments they have a uniform, tabula rasa appearance.

Considering the highly dynamic and multicultural global community that this place aims to attract the proposed plan might be challenged to suffice their diverse needs.

The research will revolve around two themes: (1) the tension between the multicultural communities’ needs and uniform urban environments, (2) the (dis)connection between the special economic zone and the surrounding local context. With this the focus will be on the SEZ boundary and interaction of cultures around it, rather than the national boundary.
**Aim**

The aim of this master thesis is twofold.

First, to define the Belt and Road Initiative as a (set of) problem(s) that can be addressed through urban planning and design. Khorgos Gateway development will serve as context to explore the problems, SEZ will serve as a case for the second aim of the project that is supportive to the first.

The second aim is to propose a set of design interventions for the Special Economic Zone (SEZ) of Khorgos that will (1) help embed the SEZ in the local context, (2) stimulate social interactions of the international community on the territory of SEZ across the national border and (3) make the borders of SEZ permeable to guide the (cultural) exchange between the international community within SEZ and the local community.

**Research questions**

**Main question:** How to use urban design and planning tools to facilitate cultural exchange in SEZ Khorgos?

**Sub questions:**

1. Can the current plan for Khorgos answer the needs of future multicultural communities? What does the local Chinese, Kazakh and the visiting international communities need? What are the overlaps between the different needs and uses?

2. How to embed SEZ Khorgos with the surrounding context? How can SEZ and the surrounding context interact with each other spatially, functionally, socially? What are the mutual benefits? Where is place for interaction?

3. What is the future vision for the development of SEZ Khorgos as an international hub for cultural exchange (among trading and commerce)?

*Figure 9: Conceptual diagram showing the focus of the research. Image by author.*
Research Approach and Methodology

1. Overview of considered research methods and techniques

The following research techniques are considered to answer the posed research questions. Currently provided with a general description and the envisioned contribution to the research, an exact definition of research parameters will be designed and defined later through the course of research before executing each of the techniques. The reason for this is the explorative character of the research and the complexity of the topic. As seen up until P2 each research technique (like a literature study) and the insights gathered with it, time after time significantly reshaped my problem statement, as this research is not simply one for a solution, but one to define a problem within the BRI context that urban planning and design can solve.

*Note: in later versions of this report the defined parameters, and the steps taken for each of the techniques will be described below in full detail, provided with a reflection on proposed and executed plans and the effect they had on reshaping my problem statement.*

**Field study:**
Documenting the conditions at site. What conditions are generated by local context and what are imposed onto the location by infrastructural development of BRI?
Observing characteristic urban morphology and patterns of space use in China (Urumqi) and Kazakhstan (Almaty). Defining how the different cities embrace or reject globalization-driven developments.
Understanding how ready and/or open a city is for international influx.

**Interviews:**
Where possible interviews will be conducted in order to understand the specifics of governance/development processes in both countries and at the site as well as to get insights in the lives of locals.

**Literature:**
The aim of this step is to gain knowledge about how space can be used to shape social interactions in cities. Design theory for place making and new town development in relation to cultural exchange are currently in consideration. If available, literature or documentation on Special Economic Zone development in Kazakhstan and China.

**Case study:**
Case study of Special Economic Zone development aimed at learning from the successes and mistakes made in practice. Special attention to development strategies, involvement of locals (citizens and companies), embedment in the surrounding context and interaction with it.

**Design methods/techniques:**
To develop a future vision of Khorgos, different scenarios of future development of Khorgos will be developed. The scenarios will be used to construct a future vision for Khorgos (2050) by applying the developed patterns and urban forms on site. With this several types of places (for social interactions) will be designed to support the vision.
Based on field results and literature a strategy (approach) for development of the vision will be generated.
2. Research approach log: steps towards problem definition

It took a lot of explorations to arrive to the current problem statement and research questions. The starting point of my research exploration was the fascination for cultural exchange in the context of urbanism. Given this mindset, the Belt and Road Initiative seemed to be the perfect case to study the points of interaction between culture and the built environment. However, soon enough the full complexity of the BRI revealed itself, leading to an iterative process of defining and redefining my research focus.

Embedding BRI in Urbanism research field

The BRI is closely linked to the Silk Route in media and literature, especially when it comes down to the matters of cultural exchange. Therefore, in the first phase the emphasis was on defining the relation between the two in terms of space, historical development, cultural exchange and organization. Literature by Frankopan (2017), Simfendorfer (2011), provided insights in the history of the Silk Route and the formation of the Belt and Road initiative. These very useful for my understanding of the BRI, and its historical and political background, but although the link to urbanism seemed evident, a clear theoretical support of this hunch was lacking. Parallely to this I explored different strands of urbanism literature in search for concepts and theories that could be relevant for the BRI and the urbanization it would bring along. Richard Sennet’s Open Cities (2017) opened the perspective of creating permeable environments and developed later in the idea of stimulating interactions through urban environments. Sennet’s (2017) and Fulong Wu’s (2015) work supported my insight that hybrid solutions were needed to facilitate the BRI through urbanism; solutions based on rethinking and reevaluating concept pairs like Western and Eastern (global South) practices, formal and informal planning, local and global developments.
Locating research site
To choose the research site I took a series of steps, along which selection criteria for the site were generated. As the BRI revealed itself to be a complex network of interventions, the first step was to narrow down to one strand of it. As the initiative is quite new, only a few developments were actually executed, among them the Eurasian Land Bridge Railway corridor was the earliest and currently the most developed one. I considered this to be an important benefit as, studying this strand I could rely not just on future plan and speculations, but rather I would be able to observe the first impact and results of the BRI.

Focusing on the development of the railway line from China to UK, I investigated the key cities along this route. These were Duisburg – the biggest dry-port in Europe, Xi’an that has a big legacy of the Ancient Silk Route, Alataw-Pass – historically the only pass from China to the West and Kazan – that would become a high-speed railway hub in the future. From exploring these cities and their role in the BRI through newspapers, I understood that for me it was most interesting to investigate further a place that has not been developed as much yet and where the effect of the BRI would be most impactful and visible in the future development. Exactly for these reasons I considered working on Alataw Pass a railway hub near the border with Kazakhstan and Russia, until I found out that 300 km to the south along the border, China focused all its attention on developing Khorgos Gateway.

Another aspect that I was searching to give place to is the role of the border in the BRI developments as it seemed interesting for the cultural exchange aspect. Therefore in early explorations I even considered Cyprus’ divided capital Nicosia as a location. Khorgos Gateway development answered all of the formed

Figure 11: proposed research methodology at P1. Source: Scheme by author.
criteria: its development was launched by the creation of the railway to Europe, and a BRI related agreement between China and Kazakhstan; before the development the border zone was an empty desert with some little villages and farmlands, and moreover this was a cross-border joint development between China and Kazakhstan.

**Defining the problem field**

Zooming in on the border region itself, I found out about the infrastructural developments of the railway, highway and dry-port, plans for new-towns and a cross-border trade zone. Working on the SEZ and particularly the cross-border cooperation zone is motivated as following: the SEZ already has the potential to attract people with its favourable economic conditions. Research wise this economic fundament gives me more freedom to focus on the spatial and cultural aspects and see the exercise as upgrading of the SEZ typology towards one that stimulates more cultural interactions.

Images below: different schematic formulations of the research questions, context and problem that I considered before arriving at the current problem statement.
Figure 12: Schematic research outline showing at the top the executed research, the theoretical concepts I took into consideration at that time and the envisioned outcomes. This scheme is not final but was very helpful in defining the areas of my research framework that I didn’t know yet how to address or define.
Defining culture

Defining the role of culture in my research is an ongoing process. Starting with culture in the broadest sense of the word, referring to different scales varying from ethnic culture to professional culture, I have been working on narrowing it down to the aspects and definitions that are workable for urbanism.

Doing so I have explored culture from different perspectives. The biggest difference in defining and working with culture is defined by who is using the word.

In the field of urban planning, culture refers more to organisational matters, the approach to planning one can have, for example top-down planning versus bottom up planning. Both cultures have their specific ways of addressing problems and produce different urban environments as result. A more design oriented direction considers culture in concepts like place making and identity of a place. In common language culture refers to ideas, values and customs of a specific group.

In my research so far I settled down to a twofold way of addressing culture in my later project. On one hand I am looking at the spatial culture of a place in terms of types of urban forms and public spaces. On the other hand I am seeking to understand and define what kind of patterns of space use are characteristic and important for a place. These together contribute to shaping and reshaping the identity of a place.

Furthermore I consider the division between ‘global/international culture’ and ‘local culture’, which so far concerns mostly the spatial aspects. As such ‘global culture’ could be the technology driven developments like railways, highways and the stations along them, but also economy driven developments like shopping malls, skyscraper hotels and business centres. ‘Local culture’ then, concerns the historic, vernacular architecture, but also functions specific to the region, like religious buildings and spaces. Another important aspect that belongs with local culture and needs further definition is the degree of privacy and relation between public and private that strongly defines the character of a place and will play an important role in the design phase of my thesis.

Note: this section will be extended after the field trip where I will try to experience and understand the local culture and after completion of the theory paper which provides more theoretical background to construct a framework of my understanding of culture

Planned after P2 and field trip

1. Set the exact boundaries of the design site. It will be the cross-border cooperation centre and a limited amount of context around it, to be defined after site investigation.
2. Define research and design parameters for ‘global/international culture’ and ‘local culture’.
3. Set up and define future user profiles, to generate patterns of space use, define and evaluate the program for the site. These profiles will function similar to scenarios in design phase.
4. Consider whether or not to use scenarios of far future development of the Khorgos Gateway for generating design.
Theoretical framework

1. Theory Paper abstract

Note: due to adjusted graduation schedule the full report will be delivered in week 3.5 and added to the content from P3 report on.

From Silk Road to the Belt and Road Initiative Through Time, Culture, and Space

At times of political unrest and dynamic changes in the world, China puts forward a proposal for global collaboration towards peace and prosperity - the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). Faced with critique, distrust and questions from the global community the plan to revive the ancient Silk Road can fail just as easily as it can succeed, depending on the way it is executed spatially and the local scale.

Although a lot has been written on geopolitical and economic origins of the initiative and the possible consequences it will bring along, little has been said about the spatial consequences and how the new wave of urbanization that follows will be shaped. Taking BRI as a carrier of globalization, the debate presented in this paper revolves around the tension between the uniform urban environments and the culturally diversifying societies that will house it. In terms of culture, the BRI relies a lot on the success of its conceptual predecessor, the Silk Route, however there is no comprehensive overview to support this claim.

This paper seeks to present a historical overview of the development of the Silk Route and the Belt and Road, investigating it from the perspective of cultural exchange between nations and defining the substantial links between the two developments.

An overview of literature from the fields of history, diplomacy and anthropology forms a chronological narrative starting with the origins of the Silk Route and ending with the full scope of the planned OBOR development programs. The paper presents cultural exchange as one of the fundamental pillars shared between the Silk Route and OBOR next to economics and politics. Making this knowledge explicit the aim is to embed the BRI into the context of Urbanism and redefine it as a (set of) problems that can be addressed by urban planners and designers.

Using the Silk Route history as a case tested by time, this paper claims that the success of the contemporary OBOR initiative depends highly on the way it touches the ground spatially through the way new developments are organized and executed with culture being of crucial importance in rethinking these issues.

2. Globalisation-driven urbanisation: focus Special Economic Zones

As described in the context, BRI functions as a carrier of globalisation that brings along large scale urban developments, such as new-towns, new high-rise city districts, trading centres and shopping areas and specifically for the BRI; Special Economic Zones. Keeping the former ones in the background this section will provides some background on the Special Economic Zones.

Note: after redefining the final outcome of the research based on the fieldtrip input, I am considering to extend this section with more background on new-town development.
Special Economic Zone and Boundary Cooperation Centre

Special Economic Zone as defined by the World Bank (2008) is a ‘geographically limited area, usually physically secured (fenced-in); single management/administration; eligibility for benefits based upon physical location within the zone; separate customs area (duty-free benefits) and streamlined procedures’. In practice these kind of zones are explained the easiest with the airport analogy. Each airport situated in a country has an area that is neutral, it is there that the duty free-shops are situated and people from all over the world can buy goods and bring them back to their countries after getting through the security. The special economic zones are similar in workings but, most of the times they are much larger in size and include bigger functions like trading and distribution centres. Just like the duty free areas they are supported by a prominent infrastructural connection like an important railway or highway route to make the transport and trading of goods efficient. Most of the times the SEZ are located close to the border of a country aiming to strengthen economic relations with the neighbouring countries. In quite some cases the SEZ boosted the development of the local context they were places in, like happened with Shenzhen and Dubai, as companies and investors attracted by favourable conditions would move closer to it.

In case of Khorgos, the Special Economic Zone is supported by the biggest dry-port in Central Asia and is unique for worlds first cross-border cooperation centre, a small area across the Sino-Kazakh border where visitors from all over the world can shop and trade goods.

Figure 13: Planned Special Economic Zones in Kazakhstan, most of them initiated after the announcement of the BRI. Source: www.eurasianbusinessbriefing.com/tag/special-economic-zones/
China’s economic zones

In 1980, China established its first four special economic zones as a part of the economic reforms with the aim of increasing trade and investment. Since the 1990s, numerous "New Areas" that are given special economic and development support by the government have been established. Recently, China’s government launched Xiongan New Area, a new economic zone near Beijing, which is deemed as the most important project since the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone and Shanghai’s Pudong New Area.

**Development Timeline**

There are seven special economic zones, most of them established under Deng Xiaoping’s leadership, and nineteen "New Areas", thirteen of which have been launched since 2014 under Xi Jinping’s leadership. Xiongan New Area being the latest one.

*Even though Deng Xiaoping has never held position as the head of state, he was considered the paramount leader of the Communist Party of China from 1978 to 1989, and was responsible for the economic reforms in China.

Note: Year established is the year when the area is approved as a special economic zone or a national-level new area.

Sources: The State Council, The People’s Republic of China; Reuters

W. Cai, 07/04/2017

Figure 14 Existing and planned SEZ in China, China’s focus on the West is visible in recent planning of SEZ Khorgos and Kashgar on the Western border because of the BRI. Source: Reuters
It becomes clear that the SEZ typology is an important instrument for the realisation of the BRI’s ambitions, as in its nature it is aimed at facilitating easier trading conditions and strengthening cooperation between nations. However, with the international benefits in mind, it is important to consider and further research the relation SEZ’s have with their local context as this can impact its future developments to the best or to the worst. If the SEZ is well embedded and benefits not just the national but also the local scale it can develop as Shenzhen and Dubai did, but if the local context doesn’t ‘feed’ the SEZ it may dry-out into an industrial ghost town.

As such I define two kinds of exchange happening in relation to the special economic zones: international exchange that the SEZ facilitates between countries and that happens within its boundaries, and local (cultural) exchange that happens between the SEZ and the context surrounding it. As such the hypothesis for the design phase is development of hybrid solutions consisting of a symbiosis of ‘transferable’ elements (like infrastructure and technologies) and ‘adaptable’ (to the local context) elements (like typologies of space use).

Note: these statements will be further developed for the P3 and supported with case studies of SEZ’s: Astana New City in Kazakhstan, Shenzhen in China, and the Jebel Ali Free Zone in Dubai after which SEZ Khorgos is modelled.
3. Urban forms for social interactions of multicultural communities: patterns or typologies?

Note: This section will be developed after P2 and the field trip, because it was shaped before I focused on Special Economic Zone of Khorgos and I need to define the exactly how this topic links with the SEZ.

4. Globalisation-driven socio-spatial polarization (part of the theory paper)

‘Social and spatial relations are intercontingent and combined. [...] Geographically uneven development is an essential feature of capitalist spatiality [...] Produced and reproduced at multiple scales, from the local to the global, [it] is inherent in the concretization of capitalist social relations both as medium and as outcome, as presupposition and as embodiment’ (Soja, 1985).

In other words, the relationship between space and culture, which includes social relations and practices, is mutually constitutive. For example the urban structure and urbanism under capitalism differ between the Fordist and post-Fordist city between the modernist and the postmodernist city, between the managerial and entrepreneurial city, and between the metropolis and the postmetropolis (Lever, 2001; Harvey, 1994; Harvey, 1989; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Soja, 2000; Wu, 2005).

This is a predictable development in the context of globalisation but as discussed earlier, sustainable coexistence of cultures which is among the aims of the initiative, happens and can most naturally be addressed at the urban and local scale. Urban design has an influence in how business activities and culture mixing is adapted. A bottom-up approach like Silk Road befits the local culture, the cities along the Silk Road fed from the trade traffic, enriching their own. However that development took centuries, the luxury of time that we do not have today generating urban environments in months.
Design challenge
To develop an alternative approach for planning and designing in the context of globalisation-driven urbanisation. To construct a series of interventions that will stimulate cultural mixing within the SEZ as well as across its boundaries with the local context. The outcome will consist of a vision for Khorgos, accompanied by a set of guidelines or steps that are crucial in reaching this vision or readapting it somewhere else.

Intended End Products
1. Academic paper: setting the Belt and Road Initiative in the context of urban planning and design.
2. Journal article Atlantis: field trip log – world’s biggest initiative touching the ground...
4. A vision for Khorgos as a hub for cultural exchange.
5. A set of design implementations (typologies or patterns) to enhance cultural exchange.
6. Planning guidelines for developing the proposed vision.
7. Recommendations for transferring the developed approach elsewhere.

Time Planning
Based on 15 weeks starting from week 3.1 in the academic calendar:
Approximately 5 weeks for research and 10 weeks for design before the P4.

Note: The design products and the time-scheme will be critically revised in week 3.4 after the field trip. The aimed result of the revision is that the planning will be much more detailed with exactly defined deliveries (format, amount) structured per week, and as such a clear justification for each step in the methodology.
Research in broader context

Social Relevance
Under the trend of globalization the world is becoming smaller. Companies collaborate across opposite sides of the world, missiles can reach over continents in minutes and people migrate further than ever before, creating a new kind of dynamic multicultural society.

This globalization we speak, a rapid development of the last century aided by industrial and digital revolutions, develops faster than our societies are willing to adapt. More than ever before we need to coordinate our efforts and collaborate through all scales. However, more than ever before this is becoming an extremely difficult task to execute in this world of growing complexity.

We cannot solely rely on diplomacy as the main institution for global collaboration, when our cities are melting pots of cultures from all over the globe. Diplomacy between the heads of state doesn’t solve the daily challenges of coexistence in multicultural communities, nor can it fully influence the way companies execute global visions locally.

Our different cultures provide a rich set of solutions and approaches to problem solving. Culture (beyond its ethnical aspect) plays a role through all scales and is especially influential on the fundamental level of human-to-human communication. Our built environment provides the common ground for this interaction.

I believe that working with this fundamental issue through space will contribute to social cohesion, collaboration and understanding on all scales and as such create openings for many other economic, environmental and societal solutions.

Scientific relevance
In practice, due to rapid globalization and urbanization, urban planners and designers are pressured, to design fast, cheap and efficient solutions, resulting in trends like uniform large-scale urban developments. These large scale developments are needed to keep up with the demand that globalization puts on our cities. On the other hand it results in cities that do not add a lot of value to the day to day life of it’s people. If we assume this globalization-pressure will not stop anytime soon, we would have to rethink how we can design efficiently but with more diverse and vibrant urban environments as a result. This research aims to contribute to rethinking globalization, by focusing on the interplay between global and local and searching for symbiotic solutions that can be reapplied elsewhere.

Ethical issues
Ethical issues of the Belt and Road Initiative revolve a lot around the issues of globalization.

When we design solutions for large scale developments to encourage globalization, we make decisions that affect the lives of significantly large amounts of people. Designers of such developments carry a very large responsibility. Therefore, we must question if it is ethical for one select group of people to design and execute developments that have such widespread impact on the daily lives of large, diverse masses of people. Even assuming that the motives behind such developments are pure, we need to really ask ourselves if it is possible to design solutions that cater to the needs of all individual parties involved in such a large scale development and not only the ones with significant power.
Can we make sure local cultures don’t get wiped when we make strategically important large-scale developments?

**Top-down, bottom up: who has the right to decide?**

The presented OBOR Initiative and the possible solutions towards its further development revolve around the dilemma of the right to decide. When striving to make inclusive environments on local scale, how far should we go in involving the inhabitants in design and decision-making process?

To be democratic, everyone’s voice needs to be heard, but in order to make rapid progress someone has to make the decisions and bear the responsibility it brings along. How do we decide who is entitled to make certain choices and who is not? Can we rely purely on status, experience and professionalism? If not, how else can we measure whether or not someone is suitable to decide for others or not. Should it be one person, or several people? How much is enough and how much is inefficient? How do we make sure that personal judgement doesn’t mix with personal interest and is it bad to be subjective?

Throughout the research these questions will be explored a little deeper in order to provide an insight in how different cultures deal with ethical issues differently.

Core literature for this purpose is the book by Camillo Boano ‘The Ethics of a Potential Urbanism’. The book investigates the ways in which design practices in different parts of the world have ‘to reconcile the current separation of urban design from radical thought - one that has happened either by ditching theory altogether, or by simply hiding in a formalist, autonomy-narrowing urban design, with a design mission that adheres to uncritical acceptance of the status quo’ (Boano, 2016).

**Homogeneity, mixture**

Celebrating differences or melting into one culture, losing or enriching our culture?

How to deal with globalisation from a cultural perspective? For the sake of peace and prosperity we need to find common ground for mutual understanding and collaboration. How far can we go in compromising without losing our identity? One of the debates in the European Union is whether or not the union threatens the cultural identities of each state. Some agree, some disagree saying they are losing their local culture to globalism. This happening in a union with relatively open and tightly related cultures shows how close this matter is to people and how difficult this question can be on even a bigger scale. The two models of integration; homogeneity and mixture (Häußerman et al., 2004) will be investigated deeper from ethical and cultural points of view.
Reflection

The past half a year has been often a disorienting process of framing the Belt and Road Initiative into a master thesis project. An initiative unprecedented in scale in real-life, proved to be unprecedented in the history of master theses too. Entering the graduation process with the idea that the BRI is the ‘problem’ to which I will be trying to find a solution over the course of the coming year, I look back at a semester of research to define BRI as a problem that urbanism field can address and through which urban planners and designers can add the most value in the context of the BRI.

As such one of the biggest lessons for handling issues as complex as the BRI would be for me, that defining and redefining the problem as clear as possible is the most crucial condition to designing solutions. The complexity of such a multi-level project, invites to dwell in explorations, making new links over and over again. In this I realized that it is extremely important to process and document every bit of information you collect evaluating what about it makes it so interesting. Too preoccupied to find that one problem that I would be working on and design a methodology for it, I discarded a lot of information that I went through as not relevant. I wish I have documented it better along the way, as it would have been much easier to write a report like this and illustrate in much more convincing way how all of this information contributed to my current understanding of the problem, and I am determined to do so with more consistency in the next half a year.
Literature

Note: this reference list contains items from the theory paper contents of which will be included in the report after it’s completion in week 3.5. As they were shaping for the thoughts in this report I kept them here ahead of the paper.


Appendix

Site selection documentation

Field trip abstract (to reach out for interviews)

Required attachments:
Graduation Orientation Form
Graduation Plan Form
Figure 19: The potential research locations were considered along the Eurasian Land Bridge Railway Corridor.

Figure 20: Comparison between Alataw Pass (considered as research location) and Duisburg both with prominent function of Railway hub.
**Duisburg**

World's largest inland port located in North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany. It is the central city in the Rine-Ruhr metropolitan area. Duisburg is a result of numerous incorporations of surrounding towns and smaller cities. It is the fifteenth-largest city in Germany known for its steel industry.

The city has a rich history dating back to the Roman period, being an important trade centre from its early days around fifth century AD. During the industrial revolution the city developed its industrial identity that it is famous for till today, strengthening its importance for Germany and later Europe. Industry aside Duisburg is rich for culture due to its past as port, trade and industrial centre and is a popular touristic destination, being well connected through Dusseldorf Airport.

Duisburg houses various nations, with about 20% of the population of 489,600 inhabitants being non-German. Most prominent is the group of people of Turkish origin, about 8% of the population, recently building one of the biggest mosques in Europe.

**Alataw**

The busiest land port in Asia, Alataw Pass is historically and geographically known better as the Dzungarian Gate. Located in the Bortala Prefecture in Xinjiang Region, China, for ages it was the one and only gateway from China to Europe. The prefecture borders Kazakhstan to the north and west, and has an international border of 385 km.

Situated in the Alatau mountain range, Bortala is rich in nature and has two lakes, but at the same time it is hard to reach with Alataw Pass being the main transport hub, focused mainly on goods. Therefore there is no developed tourism and although the demographics contain a high variety of 35 different ethnicities the population is about 447,000 inhabitants.

Both the Dzungarian Gate as well as the Bortala prefecture are extremely rich in history, developing along the ancient Steppe Route the first strand of the Silk Route network. Nevertheless, little of this history is actively contributing to the prefecture and its cities seen mainly as a logistic hub.

**Potential Design Location (at the time of P1) Kazan**

Implementing and testing developed theories through design in the later stages of research will happen in other cities along the (future) railway corridors of OBOR. So far the city of Kazan in Russia is considered for the planned development of the high-speed railway between China and Russia. The development is financed by China and the first stage, the construction of the track between Moscow and Kazan is planned for 2019.

Kazan is a prosperous regional centre situated at the Volga River. Since 2000 the city has been renovating fundamentally, and is actively being used for international events like FIFA World Cup. The city is a touristic hotspot and has a Unesco Heritage site.
Figure 23: Duisburg - Europe’s largest dry-port and part of the New Eurasian Railway Corridor Landbridge. Source: Yandex Maps

Figure 22: Kazan a future high-speed railway hub in the BRI network. Source: Yandex Maps

Figure 21: Xi’an the historical crib of the Ancient Silk Route, currently a distribution hub between East and West of China. Source Google Maps
One Belt, One Road for all
An alternative, culture-sensitive approach to globalization-driven infrastructural development in Khorgos.

Location
Khorgos – Special Economic Zone on the border of China and Kazakhstan, along Eurasian Land Bridge Railway.

Research goal
Devise an (1) alternative planning and design approach to tackle the infrastructure-driven urban development in Khorgos; and propose a (2) plan with a locally embedded urban structure, as well as public places that stimulate social interactions between users of different cultural backgrounds.

Background
Khorgos (Kazakhstan) and Oqiq (China) are towns at the Sino-Kazakh border, assigned for development into Eurasia’s biggest dry-port and world’s first cross-border free trade zone ‘Khorgos’. Being of strategic importance for China’s Belt and Road Initiative the two towns and the border region between them, are facing fast-paced infrastructural developments in the coming years.

The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by China, implies a large scale network of economic agreements and infrastructural routes aimed at connecting China to Europe and strengthening connectivity and trade across Eurasia. The initiative is stimulated through decision-making on national levels, and is actively financed by Chinese economy. As such the BRI is a carrier of globalization,
which will pressure the so far mostly untouched region and its local culture to adapt to this change in short timeframes.

**Problem**

Current proposals for the development of SEZ 'Khorgos', generated and executed top-down, impose strategic functions on the region without responding to the local (socio)spatial conditions, and without reflecting the local characteristics (identity) of the surrounding region.

**Role of Almaty and Urumqi in this research**

During the field study, Almaty and Urumqi will serve as conceptual representatives of the regions on both sides of the Sino-Kazakh border. **Main goal is to get a taste of the local cultural as much as possible.** I want to study the governance and development strategies behind new urban developments as well as characteristic urban forms of both cities (how is the city shaped, what are typical characteristics) and typical patterns of the use of space (how is the city used, e.g. use of public space, what are local habits people have in using the city).

**Goals of the field study and interviews**

**Khorgos (interviews, documentation)**

1. Confirm the problem statement or define a new one.
2. Understand the way SEZ is organized and what the currently proposed future developments are.
3. Define the challenges/problems the current development faces.
4. Gather as much as possible documentation on SEZ development plans.
5. Identify how local inhabitants view the initiative. What does it mean for them? How do they see the future of this development and the region?
6. Video/photo of the area (landscape, people, infrastructure, buildings).

**Almaty (interviews, observations)**

1. Find out how the city deals with new urban developments (policies, strategies, organization, actors, top-down vs bottom-up).
2. In what extend does the local government know about BRI and is it somehow involved in it? What does development of Khorgos mean for the local government, the city, and the inhabitants?
3. Video/photo of the area (landscape, people, infrastructure, buildings).
4. Study of characteristic urban forms and typologies (e.g. gated communities or others) in the city.
5. Study the use of public space by locals (and visitors)

**Urumqi**

1. Find out how the city deals with new urban developments (policies, strategies, organization, actors, top-down vs bottom-up).
2. In what extend does the local government know about BRI and is it somehow involved in it? What does development of Khorgos mean for the local government, the city, and the inhabitants?
3. Video/photo of the area (landscape, people, infrastructure, buildings).
4. Study of characteristic urban forms and typologies (e.g. gated communities or others) in the city.
5. Study the use of public space by locals (and visitors)
Graduation Orientation Form (AR3U040 requirement)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research group Selection</th>
<th>Graduation Orientation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Name</td>
<td>Kseniya Otmakhova</td>
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<tr>
<td>Student Number</td>
<td>4149297</td>
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<tr>
<td>Selected research group</td>
<td>Complex Cities - Transforming Chinese Cities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Possible mentors         | First mentor: Gregory Bracken  
|                         | Second (possible) mentor: Rients Dijkstra, Luisa Calabrese |
| Your aim                 | 1. To propose a collaborative and/or participatory framework for future planning and design of China’s OBOR initiative.  
|                         | 2. To redefine the role of the designer as the mediator in this framework with a focus on bridging cultures.  
<p>|                         | 3. To illustrate/test the framework by providing spatial design solutions. |
| Main motivation          | The impact of China’s OBOR initiative goes beyond the planned economic and infrastructural developments; bringing with itself a new wave of urbanization, exposing regions that have been out of global focus and as such changing the daily lives of millions people across different regions and cultures. The scale of this issue and its geopolitical nature are an invitation to combine the best practices from urbanism in both developing and prospering countries into a new approach. My personal interest in China and the Orient with its cultures as an alternative lens to perceive the world, links well to the OBOR issue which is said to be able to shift the global focus from West to East. Lastly, I consider this research to be the first step in my long term aspiration to take the urban design (and planning) expertise out of its conventional box for the benefit of other professional scopes. |
| Link to research group focus | Several core values of this research project fall within the scope of ‘Transforming Chinese Cities’ research group. The context of urbanization and migration in which the research group positions itself, is extremely relevant in the research of the OBOR-case. My personal interest to establish a strong interexchange between the macro and micro scales for the sake of sustainable daily-live narratives connects to the group’s aim of providing new models of city and regional development and translation of planning concepts into physical solutions. Finally, my fascination for bridging cultures can provide another approach/tools towards creating inclusive environments. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Your possible location</th>
<th>1. The New Eurasia Land Bridge Economic Corridor (Lanzhou-Yekaterinburg)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2. The China-Mongolia-Russia Economic Corridor</td>
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<td></td>
<td>3. The China-Central Asia-West Asia Economic Corridor</td>
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</table>
| Research question (Key words/concepts) | How to translate China’s geo-political OBOR-initiative into a coherent culture-sensitive spatial design? Case-study: one of the above 3 corridors.  
- How to use design as a communication tool in inter-cultural collaboration?  
- How to translate a global planning concept into a chain of local, culture sensitive solutions? (crossing borders, globalization vs. autarky)  
- How do the trends of emerging technologies confront with local cultures?  
- How does the above shape the role of urban designer? (responsibilities, skills, tools) |
| Possible methodology: (I will choose one main issue after a deeper research on OBOR) | Bridging cultures  
Research cross-cultural communication and ambicultural strategic management and translate the key concepts into tools for urban planning and design.  
Participatory + Collaborative Framework:  
A: Study paradigms involving stakeholder discussions (NL as example) with designers involved.  
B: Study the paradigms that are more common to the rest of the world with designers being involved at later stages of spatial development.  
Compare A and B for their suitability for the OBOR-issue.  
Research how the culture-factor can play a role in bog scale spatial developments.  
C: Combine the most suitable approach (hypothetically B) and upgrade it with the culture-factor.  
Global technologies and local culture  
Select the potentially relevant technological developments and through scenario building explore the possible future confrontations with the newly exposed local cultures. Provide suggestions for a more harmonious coexistence of the two.  
From planning to spatial solutions  
Illustrate the workings of one of the above concepts through scenarios, vision plans, (local) design solutions. |
| Main Variables (key words) | Cross-cultural collaboration  
Role of emerging technology (local effect, global consequences)  
Geo-political relations  
Design as communication tool |
| Classified your Thesis/interests | Research 30%  
Design 30%  
Planning 40% |
Graduation plan as submitted at P2 (requirement for P2 report)

Graduation Plan: Kseniya Otmakhova

The graduation plan consists of at least the following data/segments:

<table>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Personal information</strong></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
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<td>Phone number</td>
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<td>Name / Theme</td>
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<td>Teachers / tutors</td>
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**Argumentation of choice of the studio**

As can be found in the Complex Cities statement “researchers share an interest in the changing role of Urbanism that results from increasingly complex spatial and societal circumstances and internationalization”. As such my thesis research is aimed at rethinking globalization-driven urbanization; with a focus on the interplay between global geopolitical developments (such as largescale infrastructure development) and the way these meet the local context. My research is aimed at locating the vital elements in the interplay of the built environment and the globalizing multicultural societies it houses. With this study I want to explore how urban planners and designers can contribute to cultural mixing to create more inclusive and ambient cities in the future, regardless the accelerating speed of globalization.

<table>
<thead>
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<th><strong>Graduation project</strong></th>
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<td>Title of the graduation project</td>
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<th>Goal</th>
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<td>Location:</td>
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The posed problem:

Khorgos (Kazakhstan) and Qorgas (China) are towns at the Sino-Kazakh border planned for development into Eurasia’s biggest dry-port and world’s first cross-border free trade zone ‘Khorgos’. Being of strategic importance for China’s Belt and Road Initiative the two towns and the border region, between them are facing fast-paced infrastructural developments. The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) proposed by China, implies a large scale network of economic agreements and infrastructural routes aimed at connecting China
to Europe; and strengthening connectivity and trade across Eurasia. The initiative is stimulated by decision-making on national levels and is actively financed through Chinese economy. As such the BRI is a carrier of globalisation that will pressure the so far mostly untouched region and the local context of Khorgos to adapt to this change in short timeframes.

If people to people friendship and collaboration are the changes BRI is supposed to bring into globalisation it is about to trigger, then it doesn’t reach the full potential of this goal yet. Construction of large-scale infrastructure and economic agreements between nations certainly do provide a fundament for people to gather for mutual benefit, but it is the urban environment that plays a key role in people returning, settling and building upon initiatives on the long run.

The case of Khorgos illustrates this issue as follows: current development plans propose dry-port infrastructure as well commercial functions to facilitate efficient transportation and trading of goods from and to China. The proposed urban environments are functionally subservient to the strategic functions and as such seem to be poorly embedded within the local context. Stereotypic for fast-paced urban developments they have a uniform, tabula rasa appearance.

Considering the highly dynamic and multicultural global community that this place aims to attract the proposed plan might be challenged to suffice their diverse needs.

The research will revolve around two themes: (1) the tension between the multicultural communities’ needs and uniform urban environments, (2) the (dis)connection between the special economic zone and the surrounding local context. With this the focus will be on the SEZ boundary and interaction of cultures around it, rather than the national boundary.
Main question:
What kind of urban environment can facilitate the needs of diversifying user community of SEZ Khorgos and embed it into symbiosis with its local context?

Sub questions:
1. *Can the current plan for Khorgos answer the needs of future multi-cultural communities? What does the local Chinese, Kazakh and the visiting international communities need? What are the overlaps between the different needs and uses?*
2. *How to embed SEZ Khorgos with the surrounding context? How can the two interact with each other spatially, functionally, socially? What are the mutual benefits? Where is place for interaction?*
3. *What is the future vision for the development of Khorgos land-port?*

Design assignment in
To develop an alternative approach for planning and designing in the context of globalisation-driven urbanisation. To construct a
which these result series of interventions that will stimulate cultural mixing within the SEZ as well as across its boundaries with the local context. The outcome will consist of a vision for Khorgos, accompanied by a set of guidelines or steps that are crucial in reaching this vision or readapting it somewhere else.

### Process

**Method description**

**Research methods/techniques:**

- **Field study:**
  Documenting the conditions at site. What conditions are generated by local context and what are imposed onto the location by infrastructural development of BRI? Observing characteristic urban morphology and patterns of space use on site (Khorgos), in China (Urumqi) and Kazakhstan (Almaty).

- **Interviews:**
  As much as possible interviews will be conducted in order to understand the specifics of governance/development processes in both countries and at the site as well as to get insights in the daily lives of locals and their attitudes towards the Belt and Road Initiative.

- **Literature:**
  The aim of this step is to gain knowledge about how space can be used to shape social interactions in cities. Currently concepts such as place-making and typology development are considered for further research.

- **Case study:**
  Case study of other Special Economic Zones in China and Kazakhstan will serve to examine how they function and interact with their local context, and how much is done to facilitate international exchange and local cultural exchange.

**Design methods/techniques:**

To develop a vision for Khorgos, different user scenarios, and scenarios of future development of Khorgos will be used. With this several types of interventions and guidelines supporting the vision will be proposed.

### Literature and general practical reference

**Literature**


Reflection

Relevance

Reflection:
The past half a year has been often a disorienting process of framing the Belt and Road Initiative into a master thesis project. An initiative unprecedented in scale in real-life, proved to be unprecedented in the history of master theses too. Looking back at the past half year I wonder whether or not it was all a waste of time, nevertheless I am very happy to have finally arrived at the point where the puzzles pieces start to fall together. And they all do so at the selected research site, finding which happened soon, but where justifying to myself it wasn’t an accident took several months. I am looking forward to working out how the big issues I explored in the first semester will translate onto the local scale and how reworking them can feedback onto the global scale again.

Societal relevance:
Growing societal complexity, fast paced political and technological developments require us to collaborate efficiently and more often. Mutual understanding is a key, but cultural misconceptions are a strong barrier. The accelerating pace of globalisation makes the world smaller than before, mixing up communities that never had to deal with each other before into a global society. Industrial and digital revolutions brought about social changes so much faster than our societies, than we people, seem to be ready to deal with. Social changes take generations to happen, while technology these days gives us the opportunity and leaves us no choice than making decisions in days, hours and milliseconds. A challenge that needs to be addressed from the level of local communities to national policies. Our built environment reflects these problems, but also holds potential for solutions. The Belt and Road Initiative illustrates the clash between multicultural society and the top-down decision-making with the environments it produces and can provide answers and opportunities to rethink the relation between global and local.

Scientific relevance:
In practice urban planners and designers are pressured, to design fast, cheap and efficient, which after a while results in trends like uniform large-scale urban developments. If we assume this globalization-pressure will not stop anytime soon, how can we design, efficiently but with more diverse and vibrant urban environments
as result? This research aims to contribute to rethinking globalization, by focusing on the interplay between global and local and searching for symbiotic solutions that can be reapplied elsewhere?

Ethical issues:
Ethical issues of the Belt and Road Initiative revolve a lot around the issues of globalization. China’s win-win proposal hasn’t convinced everyone yet. How to make sure local culture doesn’t get wiped out to make place for strategically more important large-scale developments? How to weigh local vs global, history vs. future, vision vs. reality of life? Who gets to decide and why?

**Time planning**
Based on 20 weeks starting from week 3.1 in the academic calendar:
Approximately 7 weeks for research and 7 weeks for design before the P4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Revise research plan</td>
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<td>3.2 – 3.3</td>
<td>Field trip</td>
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<td>3.4 – 3.5</td>
<td>Field trip data analysis, Case studies selection.</td>
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<td>3.6</td>
<td>Case study</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>Case study, Literature review.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.8 – 3.9</td>
<td>Design concepts, scenario’s.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.10 – 4.2</td>
<td>Design implementation proposals, define elements and tools from literature and cases.</td>
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<td>4.3 – 4.5</td>
<td>Work out selected implementations.</td>
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<td>4.6</td>
<td>P4</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.7 – 4.10</td>
<td>Finalize design, Evaluate design, build-up story line presentation.</td>
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