Bridging the Fast and the Slow

the urban multifunction interface as place for experience of social interaction and inward reflection

Chang Liu
Landscape Architecture
TU Delft

Mentours:
Saskia de Wit
Maurice

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1.1 Fancination

Ten acres built with scattered houses square,
Beside the thatched huts eight or nine in all;
There elms and willows shade the hindmost eaves,
With peach and pear trees spread before the hall.
A distant village gleams beneath the sun,
While smoke from nearby huts hangs in the breeze;
A dog is barking in the allay deep,
A cock crows from the clump of mulberry trees.
Within my courtyard all is clear of dust
Where tranquil in my leisure I remain;
Long have I been imprisoned in a cage,

Extracted from ‘return to my farm’, Tao Yuanming, 405AD
The pre-industrialization life described in poems and drawings has always fascinated me. Apart from the ordinary life where one is in pursuit of fortune and fame, there is always a place where one attaches one’s dream and emotion to. Nature is everywhere in the cities and the countryside, comforting stressed minds and providing a retreat from work, for both the common and the elite. This love of nature and contemplation is most apparent in Villas for the elite. As their powers enable, their villa is a demonstration of the life that they, the Chinese scholars, have yarn for. It is a combination of work and life, of social and being alone, of fast and slow.

1. Pace of Life
There seems to be a perfect balance between public and private, life and work, social and individual. The front door is where public life ends, and private ones begin. Starting from the front door, grand buildings along the central axis are used for working and formal meeting. It is where ambitions lie. Then, closer to gardens, smaller buildings used for living are arranged less orderly and more depending on topography and view. In the garden, cozy pavilions(ting), galleries(lan), and a more casual building called Xuan(xuan) and a similar one called Xie(xie) are usually arranged around small lakes and mountains, which are most likely ponds and hills. This is where the ambition rest and the scholarly poetics come in.

2. Informal Interaction
Even though there is a sequence, in traditional villas, from the public to private, from negotium to otium, and from fast to slow, there are also interactions between them. The front door is where one sees friends off, where public and private meets. Inside the villa, even in the fastest place, in working areas, there are always yards between buildings where green thrives and the mind rest. Apart from that, the windows and doors are so engraved that the scene from outside could reach the one working inside. And the sense is often, “natural” vegetation, mountains and lakes.

3. Interaction within one place – change of mind
This interaction between fast and slow, chatting and contemplation could also happen within one place. The Chinese values vegetation as much for their symbolic meaning as any good they could do, especially for the educated. As a result, curiously shaped vegetation and rocks are collected in the garden. They serve as natural background when one is meeting others, but also triggers contemplation when one is appreciating.
1.2 Problematic

With a large population, expanding cities can merely provide enough for efficiency and economy. Emphasizing efficiency and efficiency alone, space for slow living, for space-driven and visual-driven activities, are occupied and ignored. As a result, mental stress rises and indifference among people thrives.

Till now, with the developments of technologies and explosion of population, cities are expanding and cutting themselves from nature. City life is more related to efficiency, to work and formal parties. Life-work balance is widely being talked about because there is not much of the balance existing now. Recreation is there, but most of them are also quite shallow, watching movies and go shopping. In fact, entertainment is not all that a slow life was about. It is also about informal social contact and being alone from time to time, in other words, about encounters with both acquaintance and strangers, and restoration and contemplation. These deeper levels of a slow life, the value of slowing down are missed. The anonymous is taking over the community, talking over silent, and activities over stillness. These slow side of life, are getting more and more overwhelmed by the fast pace and the efficiency demanded in urban city life. However, the longing for slow life has never gone far away. Nowadays, it can only be attached to the life in the countryside, the Arcadian life. Nevertheless, people in cities are still dreaming about that slow, poetic, Arcadian life. They long for restoration in nature, for a warm community, both of which are missing in urban cities life in expanding cities.
1.3 Research Objective

Explore the interfaces between functionally different spaces, to allow for informal activities that enable multifunction and bridge the slow and fast life. This project aims at bringing back slow life in developing urban cities.

Sub-questions
1. How can the urban spatial structure be rearranged, using both horizontal and vertical level, in such a way that it encourages social interaction, and unexpected encounter?
2. How can contemplation and restoration play a role in that system?
3. How can interfaces bridge these different activities, encouraging one to try out the other life?
4. What is the role of material and vegetation in the role of encouraging informal claim of space and activities?
1.4 Methodology
1.4.1 Theory Framework

Cities have been developing. In ancient times, cities were developed spontaneously from traffic node and market. Planning was rarely there, and cities grew organically with almost all concerns going to life in the city. But as technology developed and power centralized, palace and its garden were designed, and cities were gradually being planned. These plans considered more about the beauty of bird-eye view and the show of power. And now, the focus has been more on the efficiency of cities in the sense of traffic and economic. Ecology is also a rising concern in the world of planning and designing, and the process of nature has been wilder acknowledged. But those should not be all that cities offer. Cities are not only build to make people work more efficiently but should also provide a better living condition. Cities should not only be planned in the sense of function, either economically or ecologically but also for the good that places in the city could offer. Cities focusing on efficiency have resulted in the worldly rise of anxiety and depression. It is doubtful if cities going on the road of function and efficiency could please its citizens. In fact, critiques for the fast pace in cities have been arising from the 20th century.

1.4.1.1 Slow Movement

The slow movement is the one that critiques fast urban life and advocates a shift towards a slower pace of life. In the beginning, it was only an idea about food. Carlo Petrini was shocked by fast foods in Rome and started the slow food movement in 1986. At its heart, the slow food movement was so acknowledged by troubled citizens that it developed spontaneously from traffic node and market. Planning was rarely there, and cities grew organically with almost all concerns going to life in the city. But as technology developed and power centralized, palace and its garden were designed, and cities were gradually being planned. These plans considered more about the beauty of bird-eye view and the show of power. And now, the focus has been more on the efficiency of cities in the sense of traffic and economic. Ecology is also a rising concern in the world of planning and designing, and the process of nature has been wilder acknowledged. But those should not be all that cities offer. Cities are not only build to make people work more efficiently but should also provide a better living condition. Cities should not only be planned in the sense of function, either economically or ecologically but also for the good that places in the city could offer. Cities focusing on efficiency have resulted in the worldly rise of anxiety and depression. It is doubtful if cities going on the road of function and efficiency could please its citizens. In fact, critiques for the fast pace in cities have been arising from the 20th century.
1. It is restricted to small towns and not suitable for great cities. In its regulation, it is stated that the city cannot have a population above 50,000. And cars have to be restricted so that their speed could not exceed 20k/h in the city. However, in most metropolitan cities where the pace is breakneck, and a break of the slow life is needed, the population is often counted in million and above standard. Thus these ideas could only be applied in small towns where the life is slower than in metropolitan cities and where the need is less. It denies great metropolitan cities the opportunity to enjoy slow life.

2. It is not, at its heart, aiming for slow life. Cittaslow is using slow as its slogan. It does demand the slow pace of living. It requires more space for walking, more green for recreation, more squares for communication, all of which are essential for the slow pace of life. However, it also requires the service of local food, traditional cuisine, and local farming. It might be more of an advocate for traditional, local life. It is against globalization, but not really the fast pace of living. Semmens stated in 2004 that Cittaslow is an Italian-inspired global network of towns that collectively resist globalization and mainstream corporate-centered development through planning and urban design that prioritize each town’s local, unique and historic resources. Internationally, Cittaslow’s regulations-for-action approach has assisted towns to more effectively implement sustainable development principles. What they add to the function of a city, is the history of the city. History is at the core, and slow life is only a by-product.

But if we return to the idea of the slow movement, it is much more concerned with lifestyle than towards local history. In other words, what the slow movement add to city life is the enjoyment of slowing down. Emphasising local history might be a way to achieve slowing down, but history is never the core. Speed is at the core, and we see that in various statements relating to slow movement. Honoré describes the Slow Movement thus: It is a cultural revolution against the notion that faster is always better. The Slow philosophy is not about doing everything at a snail’s pace. It’s about seeking to do everything at the right speed. Savoring the hours and minutes rather than just counting them. Doing everything as well as possible, instead of as fast as possible. It’s about quality over quantity in everything from work to food to parenting. [8]

Here we see that slow movement is actually about doing things at the right speed. It is not only about slowing down, but also about being fast when it is appropriate. It is not at all against the efficiency of urban life but tries to add enjoyment to it. Efficiency is demanded in city life, in working and commuting. But apart from that fast life, there should also be times when it is about sensation and emotion, about physical and mental enjoyment.

This project is developed on this philosophy of slow life, that city life is a combination of both the fast and the slow. It is not advocating that the speed of life should be slowed down completely. It is only about adding the pace of slow to that fast urban life. In doing so, it is stretching the boundary of the slow city movement. It acknowledges the existence of fast life in cities. As a result, it is not necessary that the population of the city has to be below 50,000, or the speed of the car in the city has to be restricted to 20km/h. Thus, this spirit of slow can also be applied in great metropolitan cities.

But what can landscape architects do to add this dimension of slow? To see that, we might first figure out what is it that we are longing for when we claim that we long for the slow Arcadian life? Do we value more the aesthetic enjoyment that we have time to appreciate in slow life, or is there anything more profound than that? Is it the local history? Is it the love and warmth of people? Or is it the closeness to nature and wilderness?

Norwegian philosopher Guttorm Fløistad believes that is our basic needs as a human that is driving us in the longingness of slow life, as quoted by Botta (2016): The only thing for certain is that everything changes. The rate of change increases. If you want to hang on you better speed up. That is the message of today. It could, however, be useful to remind everyone that our basic needs never change. The need to be seen and appreciated! It is the need to belong. The need for nearness and care, and for a little love! This is given only through slowness in human relations. In order to master changes, we have to recover slowness, reflection, and togetherness. There we will find real renewal. [9]

He believes that what we want from the slow life is on the one hand care and togetherness, and on the other hand, reflection.

1.4.1.2 Care and togetherness

Planning and designing were about fascinated functions in the 1950s. Jane Jacobs(1961) helped to understand the city better, to understand its complexity. And she claimed that lively neighborhood should be what cities are aiming for. [7] She is the most influential figure who critique urban cities and introduces the idea of care and togetherness into planning. Albert J. Rutledge(1981) also advocates designing for people and claimed that by close observation, designers should try to understand and predict how people use specific space. [8] Jan Gehl(2010, 1971) brings this idea to practice, to design and into a smaller scale, to intimate spatial characters. [9]

In the book The Death and Life of Great American Cities, Jan Jacobs calls for a lively city and exhibits the complexity and diversity in urban cities. In her eyes, the city functions as a complex whole. Eyes on the street are introduced, and the importance of diverse elements, such as alleys, old buildings, and density are discussed in both functional and economic sense, of how they improve diversity in the city. She believes
that diversity is what promotes lively neighborhood, giving city vitality and security. These notions were entirely novel at that time and are influencing city planning today. It raises new demands for planning – planning should not be based on the assumption that green space is always good or a city should look good in bird’s eye view, but it should be based on how city function. She is advocating for a lively city, in other words, a city where care and togetherness can be found. However, her work studies only the functional aspect of the city, but not the spatial aspect. It is too much focused on the functional level, of what promotes an active or safe place, but too little about the quality of the space itself. It underestimated the good that a space could do in itself. For example, she is a bit too critical of green space. It is true that the green space doesn’t in itself guarantee a lively safe community, but there are still good in having them, as they provide restoration.

In A visual approach to park design (Albert J. Rutledge, 1981), the idea of designing for people is introduced. He believes that even though people could choose to do whatever they want to do in a certain space, there are, for those common activities, a pattern that can be predicted. And this pattern could be utilized in designing. He focuses on how “seeing people” determines the activities of people. Cases for activities in parks and their behavioral reason were studied, and methodologies for conducting this observing-and-learning-behavioral-patterns activity is introduced. His studies deepen those from Jacobs. He acknowledges the functional reason for human activities and for lively cities, but also adds to that a psychological layer, the behavioral reasons. Still, it is not about the space itself, but about the arrangement between different activities and how one influence another.

Jan Gehl links public life to the fulfilling of the need for togetherness and works more for the spatial demands. He sees public city life as crucial elements for deeper social contact (life between buildings, 1971). And he finds out that public city life is also beneficial for creating a lively, safe, sustainable and healthy city (cities for people, 2013). In both his two books, he enthusiastically argued for the needs of public city life in cities. Senses and dimension were introduced. Principles for planning, such as assemble or disperse, integrate or segregate, invite or repel, open up or close in were also elaborated. He also explores spatial demands for encouraging walking, standing, sitting, seeing, hearing, and talking. When doing so,
Note

Unless otherwise noted, drawings are made with the knowledge from theories.

Drawing 1 is about diverse function, it is the main topic for Jacobs. The drawing is based on ideas in cities for people.

Drawing 2 is the idea about behavioral patterns, as discussed by Rutledge.

Drawing 3 is about spatial design. It covers 3 part: social interaction, walkability, and quality for staying. They are what I learned from Gehl. And those drawings for social interaction are traced from Life Between Buildings.
a few visual principles are also studied. Gehl’s work is more complete in the sense of designing.

In conclusion, Jacobs, Rutledge, and Gehl all advocate, in a way, designing for people. Jacobs, and Gehl study more about what promotes lively life while Rutledge studies more, in general, the methodology to learn what influence activities of people. Besides that, their starting points for studying are also different. Jacobs starts with the functional level and introduces the complexity of cities. She sees lively life as the result of diversity in function. And as a result, her study works best in planning. Rutledge goes one step further and also explains in the psychological level of how lively life come about. He studies how different activities influence each other and how they can be arranged to enhance each other. That is to say when the diversity of function is there, how these different function cooperate do the best. This means his work is not about city functional planning, but planning on a smaller scale, such as a park. Gehl works on an even smaller scale, and offers principles for planning and for designing on a small level. These three studies went step by step, from planning to designing.

However, designing for people is not only about lively life. Rutledge acknowledged that there are people who prefer being alone or seeing others from a distance. He found out during his observation that avoiding people rather than engaging with people is also the aim of some people. But this longing for being alone is not studied in other two works. That means that from these theories, we have only the methodology for studying how people want to be alone, but not the principle for how can the arrange of function or space support that.

Yet, being alone is related at most times to reflection and contemplation. These are the activities that demand time and attention. They are also missing in fast life but yearned for.

1.4.1.3 Restoration and Reflection

The longing for slow life is also because of the need for being alone. Being alone means time for looking inward. Jon Kabat-Zinn finds a revolution driven by “strong inward longing in our society for well-being, meaning, and connectedness,”[10] This inward longing has a long history. Scholars in all times

Note

Image 4: https://alchetron.com/Mus%C8%A5D-Soseki


Drawing 5: Ideas are from both the Kaplans and Treib
are triggered by senses. Reflecting inwards, they attach their philosophical thought, their emotion, and ambition to the view and create poems. Detached from society and everyday life, looking inwards provide relaxation, restoration, and reflection.

But what kind of space promote looking inward? How could a place be designed to engage people in taking time in? It is believed that nature is helpful for restoration and contemplation. The Kaplans (2005) introduced nearby nature as the perfect place for restoration and achieving the sense of effectiveness. He believes that nearby nature helps to bring the best of people out. And Treib (2005) finds out that any visually poor environment could help. Kaplans’ studies the cases of various experiment of connecting people to nature such as AIDS patient (Canin, 1992), cancer patient (Crimprich, 1993), young children (Grahn et al, 1997) and different two projects leading people into nature: the Piedmont Project of tree planting and the Lewis project of garden competition. He concludes that nearby nature helps in both restorative manners and also in achieving the sense of empowerment and competence.

Treib extends the study beyond nature. His study explores from writing and drawing: German 19th century artists; to nature and garden: English garden makers, woodlland cemetery, Muso Soseki, tea ceremony; and architecture and interior: art museum, the shakers; and even landscape art: the lighting field, the Roden Crater. He concludes that contemplation is essentially interior, but visually and aurally poor condition could help. “If there are but a few elements available to attend – the process is considerably simplified.”

In conclusion, nature, silence, peace, and simplicity are what promotes looking inward and promote restoration and contemplation. They are highly needed. Stephen Hatch writes in 2000, “Stress in the workplace and home, the breakneck pace and complexity of the ‘information age’ and a growing lack of connection to the natural world drive many to seek a life of greater silence, peace, and simplicity.”

### 1.4.1.4 Conclusion

It could be concluded that slow life is also needed in urban cities. Fast life provides us with efficiency so that we could do more. Slow life offers the opportunity to enjoy, to belong, to care and love people. It also offers the opportunity to look inside, to relax, and to reflect. Functional diversity is essential for lively social interaction. Behavioral patterns could help in the composition of different functions and enhance the attraction for each other. And the spatial design on eye level, could either encourage or discourage that social interaction. With a suitable design for walking, standing, sitting, seeing, hearing, and talking, social interaction is encouraged. With nature, silence, peace, and simplicity, solitude and inward looking is encouraged.

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Reference:
1.4.2 Methodology

This project follows the general research methods: from problematic to research objective, theory, and case study. Principles are drawn from them, which leads to conclusion and reflection. But it also follows the structure of research through design. All theoretical understanding helps in analyzing and designing. And most importantly, when doing this research with an actual site, the analysis helps to reflect about problematic and shaping the research objective. The design tests principles drawn from theory and add new ones to it. With this design, the principles are more applicable and complete.

In this project, the research objective was first slow life. Starting from here, theories relating to slow, such as slow movement and slow city are explored. Compromising with the fact that efficiency is demanded in urban cities, especially in developing cities where there is a lot of work, the position here is to add slow life in fast life in urban cities, while some would try to slow down completely. Then, with analysis of the site of Chengdu, another question that didn’t occur with the first thought came. The problem is: there are too many people but too little space usable for slow activities. And this leads to the thought of encouraging informal use and multifunction. Interfaces are where multifunction is most likely to happen. And if designed well, it could bridge fast and slow life and attract people from the fast life to the slow. So eventually the research objective becomes: Explore the interfaces between functionally different spaces, to allow for informal activities that enable multifunction and bridge the slow and fast life.

From theories of the two aspects of slow life: social interaction and looking inward, it is concluded that functional diversity, behavioral patterns, and spatial design are the most influential factors. Functional diversity has been explained quite well in theory. So behavioral patterns and spatial design are the focus of case studies. Projects that focus on social interaction in residential areas are chosen. They are Kingohusene, Albertslund Syd, and De Runde Haver.
De Runde Haver. By analyzing the activities and private-public structure, behavioral patterns in the residential area are learned. And by comparing their efficiency in encouraging social activities with relation to spatial form, spatial design principles are drawn.

Apart from some basic information, the site is also analyzed with these 3 lenses. For functional diversity, designed functions, shop density, and actual activities are mapped. Since a building could have different functions on different floors and rooms, the functional analysis is 3 dimensional. But because ground floor is where most activities in the city occur, and it is most likely that ground floor is used for shopping while upper levels are used for business or dwelling, this 3-dimensional analysis is actually composed of ground level and everything above. There is no distinction among all the upper levels. With concerns about the design, questionnaires are sent out to ask for the rating of current activities and the longing for additional ones. Behavioral patterns come mostly from analyses, but not only making an inventory. It is what could be seen behind the activities. It is the link between activities and public-private structure. And finally, it comes to spatial design. Spatial design is about form and material. “Natural” condition of the site is mapped, because “nature” is one of the most important material. And here, “natural” and “nature” do not refer to the wild nature or the untouched nature. They refer to the cultivated nature and the artificial nature, that is, vegetation, water and topography arranged by human hands. For the sake of designing, usable vegetation is also listed with concerns of their symbolic meaning and image form. Artificial materials are also analyzed for the feeling they give. The site is also analyzed with regard to fast and slow activities and their interfaces. The composition of fast and slow is mapped, and the activities on their interface are listed.

Information is gained from literature, observations, cognitive maps, and questionnaires. Literature tells about local vegetation and traditional street life. For observation, videos were recorded while cycling along all street in the site. In order to obtain enough information, especially about informal activities and the flow of people, observations are conducted systematically at different time of a day and in different weather conditions. The time for observation is weekday: morning rush hour, morning, lunch, afternoon, evening rush hour and dinner time, evening, early night; weekend: morning, afternoon, evening. During my stay of 10 days, in November and December, there was no rain, but cloudy, misty weekdays and sunny, warm weekend. There is also one sunny day that is much warmer in the afternoon than all the other days. And it is a weekday. So I took samples of one weekday, one weekend, and one afternoon of that extra warm and sunny weekday.

In total, there are 11 video records. With those, activities are mapped, and behavioral patterns are analyzed. Cognitive maps are used to learn about the impression and evaluation of people on site. However, as most of them are too shy to draw, less information is learned than expected. Questionnaires are sent out to both residents and visitors, asking for their visiting frequency, their aim for being there, the activities they do, and they would like to do, and their impression and comments. This information is used for both diverse function and behavioral pattern.
1.5 Scope and Relevance

This project emphasizes social factors. It is a project aimed at changing the lifestyle. It tries to integrate slow life into the fast life of urban cities. It explores a methodology of planning with concerns for functional diversity, design with concerns for behavioral patterns and detailing with spatial/sensory demands. The focus of detailing is on interfaces between functionally different space. They are so designed that various informal activities could take place. In doing so, it is blurring the boundary between them and bridging the fast and the slow. In this case, where fast life is the mainstream, and slow life is the longing within people, this bridging could be seen as advertising for the slow. This exploration provides not only the designing methodology for adding slow life in urban cities, but also gives design principles. Principles of theories are tested and enriched by principles learned from the case study, site analysis, and designing. Thus, the final principles are more thorough and applicable. Even though the design is site-specific and most design strategies are also specific. These principles and the design methodology are mostly generic. Therefore, this project could hopefully contribute to the discussion of the slow life in urban cities.
Chapter 2 Case Study

Kingo Housing
De Runde Haver
Private claim on public space.
Front Door.
Garden at back
Car road in the front
Asbjørn Jessen, 2017

Behavioral Pattern
To See People
To See Scenery
To be seen
To See the ordinary

Spatial Form
Inviting staying space
Non-Centripetal space for users
Centripetal space keeping people in

Conclusion
Chapter 3 Site Choice and the city Chengdu
Brief Introduction

Good climate leads to abundant food and prosperous economy. The idea of enjoying life starts to grow because of this. And with its late urbanization, there are remains of the slow spirit till now.
Development of the City

- 311 BC: Qin
- 202 BC: Han
- 618: Tang
- 907: Shu
- 960: Song
- 1368: Ming
- 1636: Qing
- 2017: Now

Household
City Range
Green/Blue
Buildings

Image source: Tongzhi. (1992), Revised Chengdu County Volume XVI.
Qing

Street

Now

Image of the city

Image and photo source:
google image, street culture of chengdu, Baidu Streetview
City Life -- from Slow to Fast, from Informal to Formal
Traditional Slow life

poems and literature
Fast life and remain of the slow
Fame of being slow
Chapter 4 First Impression and Design Assignment

Site - Wenshuyuan Neighborhood

Water System

Zen temple and its garden

Redesigned Commercial Zone

Old buildings

High-rise buildings
There are only limited public space.

**Public-Private Space**
Rivers/Pounds not closely Accessible

Green Area
Where one cannot set foot in

Community Yard devoted to parking

Car lane where no one stays
Many public space are wasted, and only a few is used for street life.
A lot of activities; Over-crowded

Activities on Site
Activities on Site
## Missing Needs - Questionair

### More activities are wanted

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<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>Residents/Worker</th>
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<th>Visitors Far Away</th>
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Missing Needs - Questionair

More activities are wanted
From the perspective of slow life, there are missing activities that people do not even realize — inward looking.
Regular Users

- A lot of small shops
- Fewer larger shops
- A Few shops
Huge Potential User Group
Design Assignment

Limited Space

Not used wisely - occupied by parking, or over scale

Overcrowded at the places where city life do happen

Conflict

More People

People living in high rise buildings

More activities wanted per person

What they want -- traffic efficiency, rest, and social interaction

What is proved to be good and is essential in a slow life -- looking inward

Wish more space?

Solution Multifunction

Fast life Traffic Efficiency and Connectivity

Slow life Walk → Stay Social interaction

Inward restoration and reflection

Design Structure Design

Functional diversity

Zoom in to Interfaces and Multifunction

Behavioral pattern

Spatial design

Visual/Tactic design
Chapter 5 Analysis & Design

space & view & behavior

Contemplation → Social → Behavior

View → Space

out of daily life

people

human scale

staying place
More Space ——
High Rise Building
More Space ———
Less Car Path and Parking
Current Connectivity & Walkability
Behavior ——
Connectivity & Walkability
Activities

Regular Market
Work Place
Stage for Performances
Alter
Ceremony
Everyday: Meet & Chat, Game, Doctor

General

Shops

Activities
shopping
gossip
market
office
settlements
everyday
Activities

Regular Market
Stage for Performances
Alter
Ceremony
Everyday: Meet & Chat, Game, Doctor

Activities

shopping
Sports
Movie
gossip
office
everyday
Shop Owner

Meet/Look after shops

Extension of shops
Make a Living on the Street:
Peddler, Berger, E-bike drive, Fountain teller

Food/Groceries - On the Go

Beggar - Monastery

E-bike Driver - Subway

Clothing - Mall

Religious - Monastery

Clothing - Mall
Functional Diversity
Functional Diversity - Fast and Slow
Behavior Sequence
Street

No Overlay

Overlay

Indicated Function

Edge

Core Area

Shop Walk Stay Facilities Car Space
Visual Analysis
Green as Spatial Component
Green Filling Void/Ornamental
Garden Representing Nature
Garden Representing Nature

Bule as Infrastructure
Views of Nature on Different Levels

25th Floor

6th Floor

Ground Floor
View Plan

To See People

To See Scenery
Chapter 6 Zooming in
Zooming-in Masterplan

1. Entrance Square
2. Gallery Square
3. Reflecting Square
4. Traditional Wall
5. Temple Entrance Square
6. Temple Entrance
7. Hill
8. Pond
9. Resident Square
10. Parking Tower
11. New Building
Space Analysis

Street & Square not used
Street & Square in use
Entrance Square
Grid Form

Basic Program

Seats

6m x 6m

6m x 6m

Furniture

Vegetation

Material
Behavior & Space
Behavior & Space
Temple Square + Reflection Square
Street
Space & Behavior

Shop  Walk  Stay  Facilities  Car
Street with Cars

- shop
- pedestrian
- parking
- bike
- car
Street without Cars
Chapter 7 Conclusion

space & view & behavior

Contemplation
Social

Behavior

View
Space

out of daily life
people

human scale
staying place
Chapter 8 Reflection

1. Societal relevance, methodology and ethical issues

For most landscape projects, the most common relevance is environmental relevance. However, this project has more social relevance than an environmental one. And this is because of my personal interest when choosing the topic for a thesis project. I have noticed over and over again that building design projects are not used as they are intended to be. Seats are empty, and lawns are trampled out of the path so as to provide shortcuts. It seems that some designs are irrational in the field of human activities. But shouldn’t design serve people, I wonder. So, in this project, my aim is to design for people. I would like to design a place where almost all that one wants to do could be done in an appropriate space. For this reason, I choose my hometown as the site, where I know the common behavioral pattern. But when thinking about my hometown Chengdu, the first things that occurred to me is slow life. So initially, the research objective was slow life.

Looking up the principles for the slow city, I found out that this notion is actually emphasizing more on local culture and history. And it is slowing down the life completely. Cities with a population over 50,000 or cars over 20km/h cannot apply for the slow city. But here came an ethical issue – should cities be slow down completely? Is contemporary fast life doing so badly that we should better return to, to a degree, the life before? I would argue that it is necessary for urban cities to keep their fast pace. Actually, most of us enjoy fast speed when it comes to traffic and commuting, even though these traffic takes a lot of space and makes the street over scale. And when it comes to another fast activity, work, it is apparent that this can hardly be slowed down in such fierce competition. What could be done, is probably to add a layer of slow life to this contemporary fast life. By doing so, an efficient but also enjoyable life can hopefully be expected. So, the research question became adding slow life to urban cities. Then, taking into consideration how precious land is in such these developing urban cities. Only adding a layer might take too much space and is therefore not the best solution. Thinking in this direction, I see that utilizing interfaces between fast and slow as much as possible might be the solution. 1. Interfaces are where they meet, so there could be interaction and exchange between the fast and the slow. People living a fast life could be attracted by the slow activities that others are doing and give it a try. In this sense, it is advertising slow life. 2. Because of this interaction, the activities on the interfaces might not be fixed. There could be a lot of informal activities. This means that the interfaces could be multifunctional. Space is saved as a result, and the place could be more resilient to change of program. So, the research objective eventually became Explore the interfaces between functionally different spaces, to allow for informal activities that enable multifunction and bridge the life of fast and slow. In a way, the change of research objective is already an answer to this ethical issue of should cities be slow down completely? There are certainly also other ethical issues in this project, such as 1. Should the walls enclosing residential communities be demolished so that connectivity is better and green within those walls can also serve those outside the wall? Is it sacrificing safety and privacy in doing so? 2. Should the site be car-free so that the street could be used for city life and the chance to meet others while walking could be increased? Will it be too inconvenient for those who need a car for commuting or shopping? But these questions did not take me as much time as the research question. For the first one, in my design, walls are demolished where there is enough space to create a semi-enclosure with rode, water, and vegetation. In other area, walls are kept. For the second question, cars are still allowed in residential areas, but not in temple and shopping areas. They serve mainly either tourist who come for only a few times, or for residents that live nearby. The need for commuting is relatively small when compared to residential areas. And Parking towers are added not far from the car-free zone so that tourists and those who work there would not have to walk a long way.

In fact, what troubled me a lot was not these two questions, but the design methodology, or the storyline. The research methodology is easy, as almost everyone follows the steps from fascination to conclusion. There is confusion in between, such as my research objective, but the direction or the research strategy is clear. However, that is not the story for design methodology. There is not one theory that I can directly apply to my design. And I wasn’t sure where to start my analysis. I mean, for some project, the theories are there. For example, if it were a project about protecting ecology but not integrating slow life into fast life, the environmental ecology of light, wind, water, and migration; and the force of time in the sense of growing and succession of vegetation would definitely be the theory. But here, I struggled from planning to designing, and between encouraging social interaction and encouraging spending time alone to reflect. It was not until I went through all theories I read again and tried to summarise their position that I grasped my design methodology. My design starts from planning with concerns for functional diversity for the neighborhood. Then, zooming in a little bit, adding behavioral patterns to it, master plan of one site can be designed. Zooming in again, spatial visual design helps the space to be attractive in itself. Social life and individual contemplation are both concerned in every step, as they are the two qualities of slow life – caring and love, and restoration and reflection.

I think my design methodology is much clearer by now. And with this line, the design can finally be clearly linked analysis. In previous times, I felt that there is a way the analyses are useful for design, but I didn’t know how. This exploration of design methodology is good in the sense that it made me crystal clear about what I want to do and how can I do it. It takes time, but I think it is worth it.

2. Data collection

There are quite some questions in data collection. First, CAD maps are classified and not available to individuals. The solution to this is stupid. I collected GPS maps piece by piece with print screen, put them together and traced from it my CAD map. All the other mapping and modeling information are acquired by onsite observation and review of photos and street views. Information such as the height of the buildings, the location of parking lots and entrance for the enclosed residential community, and function of both indoor and outdoor space is gained in this way. It took a lot of time, and I had to go over the photos and street views over and over again. And sadly, the information is not as reliable as those
measured by authorities. It is impossible to gain information for soil, groundwater, and geomorphology in this way. So these underlying layers remain a mystery for me. The same goes for topography. But the missing of topography is acceptable. Chengdu is in a plain, so the natural topography difference is mineral. These mineral differences are not of much importance since I am not doing projects sensitive to it, such as rainwater collection and water sensitive city. Artificial centriole of topography are often limited in certain space, so the height difference can be estimated. Another difficulty in data collection came from people. Since I am doing a project with much social relevance, I handed out questionnaires and tried to ask for cognitive maps. People are not always willing to fill questionnaires. This is not news, and I tried to get more participation in giving mostly multiple choice questions but not open questions. But still, most people answered in a rush and perfunctorily. This resulted in them not thinking the questions over and tell me what they want. I could imagine them participating more if this were a practical project. Chatting with people could work if the person is in chatting mood. People share more information when chatting, compared to writing the answers down. This is probably because chatting takes much fewer efforts and gets more response. But chatting takes a lot of time since the conversation often starts with small talk, and gradually to the real topic. Also, senior citizens were more suspicious and defendant and preferred to share no personal preference or information. In other words, they are much more likely to reject filling a questionnaire. This could lead to every conclusion reading to age invalid. It is even more difficult when it comes to asking for cognition maps. Not even one person drew with willingness and excitement. When being asked, they often reply with “I can’t draw well. Find someone else.” In compensation, I tried another way. I tried to let them talk about what they want to draw while I draw them down. But later, when I was analyzing these drawings, I found out that the drawing technic also reveals information. It tells if your impression of something is 3S and spatial or 2D and conceptual. However, this is as much as I can get. The situation is much better when the map is asked from architecture student, as I did later for a social psychology course.

3. possibilities to generalize the results of the research and the function of design in this research

There are great possibilities to generalize the result of this research. In fact, part of the conclusion are generalized principles for functional diversity, behavioral pattern, spatial design, and visual and tactical design, considering both social interaction and inward looking. Naturally, these are not all that could be concluded from this project. With a site-specific design, there are localized design strategies. But the designing methodology and the design principles mentioned above are both generic. In this project, design, in fact, a research method. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, design helps to test the principles learned from theory. After testing with design, the principles are more applicable and complete. Besides, the idea of design means that there is a site for the research, and there has to be analyses about this site. These analysis helps to deepen the understanding of reality. And this could also deepen the problematic and research question because they are the result of the comparison between reality and fascination. In this way, having design assignment also helps in the thinking process in research.