

# Graduation Plan: Urbanism

## Personal information

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## Studio

Theme: Complex cities  
Teachers: S.A. Read; D.A. Sepulveda Carmona; F.F. Colombo; L. Qu; V.E. Balz; R.C. Rocco

### Argumentation of choice of the studio:

This studio covers multiple scales and complexities. Shenzhen can be seen as the prototype of a modern city, since it has grown from fishing village to vibrant metropolis in roughly 30 years. Therefore the studio of Complex Cities fits well to this thesis.

Theme: Shenzhen, system of places, sense of place, migrant integration  
Teachers: 1<sup>st</sup> mentor: dr. ir. Stephen A. Read  
2<sup>nd</sup> mentor: Ir. Maurice G. A. D. Hartevelde

## Title

Title of the graduation project: A network to network  
*Creating a system of places, integrated into the urban network, that supports inhabitants in their everyday lives and stimulates the integration of the migrant population, the case of Shenzhen, China*

## Product

### Problem Statement

The problem field of the thesis concerns modern cities in China, with Shenzhen as a particular case. At this moment, public space is not actively helping the integration of migrant groups in the city of Shenzhen, due to two main problems. The first problem has a spatial dimension, while the second problem is related to the social dimension of space. First, it is argued, supported by literature review, that the existing public spaces in modern cities in China are operating individually, and therefore lack a clear system. Second, because of the fact that most public spaces are designed for a specific higher class target group, excluding the majority of the residents, the social interaction between different inhabitant groups is minimal. These two problems together form a strong socio-spatial segregation in certain parts of the city. Moreover, according to literature, the public spaces lack 'sense of place' and are therefore not contributing to needs and activities in the everyday lives of people.

## Research Questions

The main research question:

*How to create a system of places, integrated into the urban network, that supports inhabitants in their everyday lives and reinforces the integration of the migrant population in Shenzhen?*

- Sub research question 1

*Which strategies and approaches can be used to create a public space with 'sense of place' which stimulates interaction between different social groups in the context of contemporary Chinese cities?*

- Sub research question 2

*How to form a 'system of places' on different scales in Shenzhen that strengthens the structure of the in-between areas and provides the inhabitants with their everyday needs?*

- Sub research question 3

*How to implement local public spaces in a high dense area in a creative way, with consideration of the high land prices and a profit-aimed development environment, aimed at helping the migrant integration?*

## Goal

The main goal of this thesis can be described as the following:

*Creating a strategy to improve the system of places on the larger scale, in which the integration of the migrant groups can be stimulated on the local scale. The implementation of specific high detailed interventions in public space, should lead to improved social interaction at the local level, within the larger system of places.*

## Process

### Method description

Different techniques and methods are going to be used per sub research question.

Sub research question 1:

- Literature review on public space making and 'sense of place'-theory
- Literature review on integration through social interaction in public space

Sub research question 2:

- Site visit, documenting the site in photo's, collecting on-site information
- Mapping the places, systems, flows and barriers in the target area
- Interviews, gathering information on a.o. people's behaviour in space
- Analysis of photo series, analysing flows of people during different times a day
- (optional) Space syntax analysis, to analyse the connectivity of the target area

Sub research question 3:

- Consultation to institutions, consulting several sources in Shenzhen about the state of affairs concerning current developments and the governmental system
- Design a small intervention on the local scale, using the findings from all previous analysis
- Stakeholder analysis on the specific intervention space(s)

## Literature and general practical preference

Literature, main authors per topic:

- space systems: Amin and Graham; Castells; Heidegger; Friedmann; Knox
- public space: Jacobs; Lynch; Cullen; Montgomery; Massey; Miao
- social interaction: Hall; Kohn; Kostof; Liu, Li and Breitung; Mandanipour
- Shenzhen: Cartier; Craciun; Laursen; Ng; Yu and Padua; Zacherias and Tang

## Reflection

### Relevance

Shenzhen is a city of migrants. Up to 74% of the population comes from outside the city. A part of these migrants found their way up in the cities hierarchy and is now enjoying their new life as a middle class citizen. However, a large group of migrants is stuck in the bottom layers of society and have sadly little chances on improving their city lives.

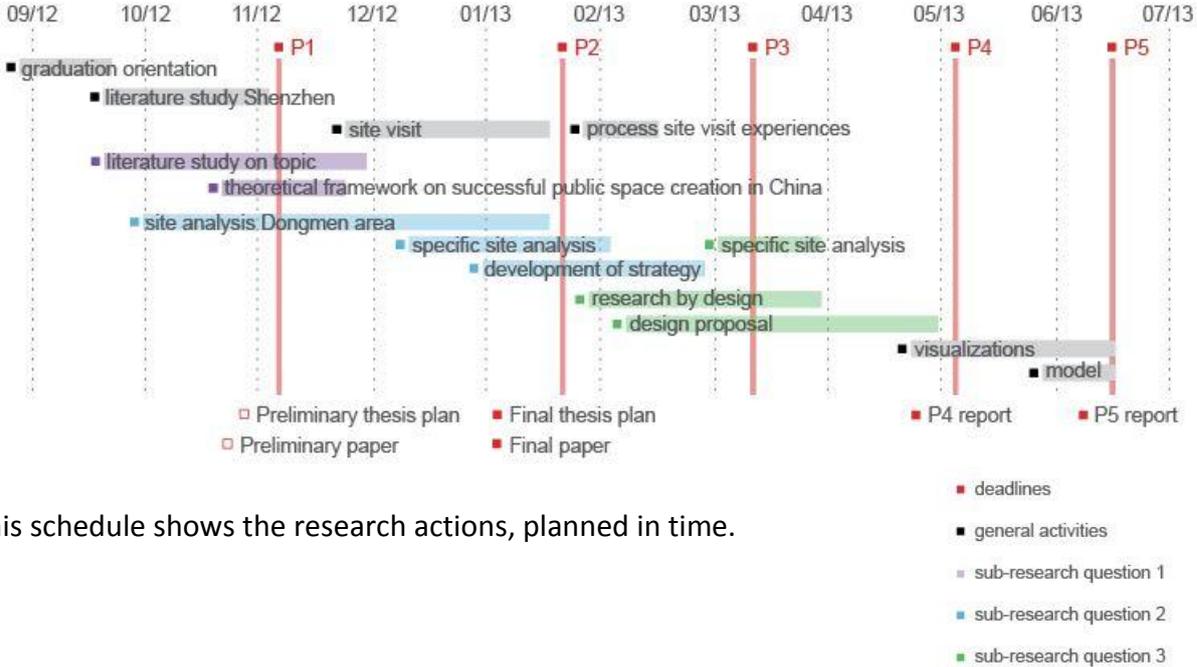
Lately, a newspaper article was published in the *Trouw* (a Dutch newspaper) about Shenzhen. The title states '*Exploding Chinese city forgot its citizens*'. The article starts by saying that Shenzhen can be seen as the prototype of a modern day car-based city. Moreover, it is one of the fastest growing cities in the world. However, this vast growth did not only bring prosperity for its inhabitants. The first impression might seem nice, when traveling through the city by car. This impression changes as soon as one tries to walk through the city. The huge city scale causes a number of problems for pedestrians. Moreover, the developments that are being realized over the last years all have a very high-end status. These developments are contradictive to the overall demand for housing and facilities in the city. The majority of the population consists of middle and low income people, who are not able to afford the housing in these new developments. The necessities of the middle and low class are basically not addressed in most of the designs.

The group of migrants which are active in the lower layers of society currently live in urban villages. These villages give home to a considerable part of the total population. Since the governmental development policies do not address to the necessities of these people, current developments do not add to the living quality in these villages. Most redevelopment plans are based on replacing the villages by new high-end development. This thesis attempts to develop alternative ways to integrate the migrants into the urban system. And in addition, the possibilities for a strategic plan to improve the overall system of places on the pedestrian scale, in a part of the city is explored.

Over the last years, a lot of research has been conducted to try and shift the approach on urban villages in the city towards a more sustainable one. However, the majority of the researched strategies on migrant integration is aimed at redevelopment of the physical setting of these urban villages themselves. This research project tries to provide a different angle on the integration of migrants in the city. Focusing on social interaction rather than residential situation opens possibilities for a new strategic integration approach. By using a network of public space as a supportive city layer for migrants as well as the more fortunate classes, it can function as the main basis of activity for all citizens. This will improve the social interaction and hopefully grows mutual understanding of the different living conditions existing in the city. Moreover, the expansion of the social networks of villagers and migrants to a more broader area will create opportunities to climb in the social hierarchy of the city.

Furthermore, this research project will result in a strategy together with a detailed design for respectively a specific area and a local site. This strategy and design are founded on more general principles and therefore are suitable to apply in other situations within Shenzhen, or even within other modern Chinese cities as well. Because of this, these principles add to the body of knowledge on the public space network and successful public spaces in an Asian context, as well as on migrant integration in Chinese modern cities in general.

Time planning



This schedule shows the research actions, planned in time.