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

the modern-day city of SHENZHEN

Shenzhen Scenario’s

1970

Small Fishing Village
city area: ca. 10 km²
inhabitants: ca. 30,000

2012

The Shenzhen Master plan tends to focus on this global ‘space of flows,’ thereby neglecting the local ‘space of place.’

City Development

A mainly committed by city government, follows a top-down hierarchical system, uses planning through master plans.

The master plan points out cores of development which are functioning as key centrals in the bigger network of capital flows. This kind of city planning leads to a ‘sphèroidal city:’ the main hubs are very well developed and connected to each other in a bigger network, whereas the left over areas in between lack a basic system.

It is this distinctive feature of being globally connected and locally disconnected, physically and socially, that makes mega cities as new urban form.”

Government Integration Approach

The current approach conducted by the Shenzhen government is aimed a spatial renewal:

- relocate villagers
- remove old housing
- room for new development

This approach improves the spatial quality of the site but does not address to the socio-spatial problems of the local inhabitants.

Alternative Integration Approach – Public Space

Intergroup social interaction is of great importance in stimulating the integration of migrants into the urban environment. But the spatial segregation present these contacts from happening. However, public space helps to reduce tension and promotes an exchange among different social and economic groups. Thus, public space is able to play a key role in the integration of migrant groups into the urban system.

However, current problems in public space prevent the spaces from actively helping the migrant integration in Shenzhen.

- Lack of a public space network
- Lack of sense of place
- Privileged target groups

Strategy

The city structure of Shenzhen is build up out of an extensive main city grid, embodying the global connection Castells talks about. The strategy is to imply a system of places on the intermediate scale, to bring structure to the lower scale levels and connect the city grid to the local level as well.

Design

The design proposal is aimed at creating ‘sense of place’ in order to improve the public social life. An increase in the amount of activities will lead to improvement of social interaction. Moreover, the conducted analysis takes the preferences of all social classes into account, without excluding certain groups.

Weber Anderson: 2010

Modern-day city

1. Disorientation
2. Generalization
3. Exclusion

Challenges

1. Lack of public space network
2. Lack of sense of place
3. Privileged target group

Solutions

1. Creating a system of places
2. Designing sense of place
3. Aim at social interaction