The thesis gives input for the understanding of the problems in Shao City: the declining liveability (social-spatial segregation) and the missing identity due to the fast urbanisation process and growing tourism industry in the old town area, proposing a potential (third place) strategy for improving the current condition of Shao City. Currently, the (liveability and identity) problem in the old town area is (getting serious). This situation has affected local people. Many original residents area driven out of Shao City because of the degrading liveability and sensing of loss of belongs and identity. Now Shao City has become quite soulless without its original residents, and Kuanzhai Alley is full of tourists.

The reflection will be organised into 5 parts: the relationship between research and design, the choice of research group and how it relates to the thesis, research method and approach, the larger social context and the ethical issues and dilemmas.

Relationship between research and design
This project is focusing on the third place design in order to improve the liveability and regenerate the identity for the Shao City which is a traditional old neighbourhood area with great historical value. In order to make use of the third place to achieve the renewal in the Shao City neighbourhood area, the research contributes to the design in the following aspects: first, based on the historical analysis and literature review, the values and limitation of Shao City have become clear. And this help to decide the zone for design, that is where/what should be improved/preserved. Besides, historical analysis and literature review also help to understand and redefine the historical value as well as the identity of Shao City, which help to come up with the design strategies. Second, the theory about third place provide understanding on how third place(social space) could help to improve the physical and mental space and the criterias of good third place. This provides inspirations for third place design strategy. Finally, the site visit and interview give information based on the real site situation investigate people’s need about improving liveability and identity, that is what is the criteria of good liveability, identity and third place for them. This help third place strategies making, allowing the project to really improve the living environment in Shao City.

Choice of research group
The “History and Heritage Vector” graduation lab deals with the values of heritage and provides a view that the its value for the future urban environment. Shao City, the traditional residential area from Qing Dynasty in Chengdu, China, is considered as a living heritage and suitable for the graduation lab theme. The Shao City is a former military family area with courtyard structure, now it has been transformed in both social and spatial dimensions. The original diverse social space is disappearing as well as the identity, the liveability of the neighbourhood area is also declining. The location would focus on regeneration and redefining the heritage in social, spatial and mental aspects, and make it sustainable urban environment in the future by third place strategies and design. Besides, by understanding the role of heritage, the project will study how historic urban network could respond to the changing urban environment and to reconnect the historic social-spatial network in Shao City neighbourhood. The heritage studio could provide help on how I could define and analysis the value of heritage and make use of it.

Research method and approach
In this research group, there are several methods combining historical analysis being used to approach the graduation project. Firstly, the historical analysis combining the literature review help identify the value and limitation of Shao City as well as the problem field of this project. Secondly, the theories from Soja, Lefebvre and Ray Oldenburg about the third place and its relation with physical and mental space provide idea that third place could help fix the problem in physical(living environment) and mental (place identity) aspects. Thirdly, historical analysis combining
literature review, site visit and interview provide the criterias for good liveability, identity and good third place in Shao City neighbourhood. Meanwhile, site visit, interview and mapping help understand the value & limitation of the site and give information on where is the zone for intervention. Finally, historical analysis combining literature review and case study help analysis the previous experience of urban renewal and place making, and provide ideas for third place design.

**The thesis and the larger social context**

The aim of this project is improving the liveability and regenerating the identity for Shao City, it pays more attentions on the relation among living environment, social life and historical context. For the city of Chengdu, Shao City is reflection of the old time as it has witness the rise and fall of Qing Dynasty, post-war period and the rise of new city of Chengdu. However, due to the modernisation of the old town area of Chengdu, the traditional buildings, street and diverse social life is disappearing. Meanwhile, in the 1980s, Kuanzhai Alley was included in the Chengdu History and Culture City Protection Plan. The transformation of the Kuanzhai Alley from 2003 began. This gives people a chance to see that, once upon a time, Shao City was so beautiful and refined. However, the past is no longer in this “most Chengdu” place, the historical and cultural part it carried has been left behind during the process of urban transformation. Meanwhile, in the current research and planning policy, there is all about how to make Kuanzhai Alley in Shao City be more attractive to the tourists, while little about how could improve the liveability of the local neighbourhoods, how can the aged and low-income family survive in Shao City in the changing urban context. Thus, it is meaningful to study how Shao City could survival better in the changing context of Chengdu. Furthermore, many old town renewal project in China are more focusing on protect the historical building and improving building facade while ignore the identity of the place as well as the local residents. My approach is the integration of physical, social and mental aspects and try to reconnect the people with their living environment.

**Ethical issues and dilemmas**

The graduation project is to design third place system in order to improve the liveability and regenerate the identity for Shao City neighbourhood, that is to provide a better living environment and diverse social activities for the people. However, there are several issues should be taken into consideration for further research and design.

First one is the gentrification. The residences in Shao City old neighbourhood area are mostly the vulnerable group, with the improvement of the living environment, the housing price might grow and contribute to the gentrification in the neighbourhood area. In this case, the housing policy should be applied to protect the local residents from forced moving out of the area.

Second is the growing tourists. After the place has been transformed with better public space, and the location is right next to the Kuanzhai Alley. The number of tourists might keep growing in the area and influence the daily life of the local residents. Thus, the policy or other tourism attractions should be considered in order to share the flow of tourists in the city.

Last one is about the traffic issue, with the growing visitors and growing population in the neighbourhood which is located in the old town area. The number of private car would keep growing and the traffic would get worse. And the policy to control the private car and encourage the public transport have to be looked into in the future research.