1 The Relationship between Research and Design

Starting from a social perspective, this thesis attempts to explore the potentials and qualities hidden in urban village, a prevalent social phenomenon in China. It intends to reveal the spatial consequence of society, which is caused by social, political and economic sequences. As the diagram illustrates (Figure 1), the perspective of social resilience provides a base for connecting the practical and theoretical research with spatial analysis. It generally contributes to the diagnose of qualities and challenges of the selected site, leading to the strategy building and design intervention eventually. With more emphasis on research part, combination of information and interpretation research provides a three-scope framework for answering the research question, which is in terms of various common interests from different stakeholders. Here, the position of design has shifted from an aesthetic work to a negotiation tool in the decision making process. By visualising the spatial intervention with attractive images, design has become a strategic tool to encourage communication among planners, designers, the government, developers and local residents to better understand the potential capacities and the adaptivities of strategies could lead to.

Figure 1: the relation between research and design; source:author

2 The Relationship between the theme of the Graduation Lab and the Subject/Case Study chosen by the student within this framework (Location/object)

The graduation lab of this project is Complex Cities Studio, of which the topic is transforming Chinese cities (2016-2017), in terms of migration, industrial upgrading, urban regeneration, heritage and green-blue city, etc. This year’s studio is trying to explore how planning strategies could integrate with design for cities, landscape, architectures, contributing to both spatial planning framework and social well-being building which can withstand the pressures of social transition. Since it combines knowledge from the fields of planning and design for a built environment, the studio encourages students to take a firm point to understand complexity of contemporary cities in the first place.

Corresponding to the theme of the studio, Lijiao village in Guangzhou is selected as the pilot example in this research, representing other historic villages of strategic-location. Guangzhou city is a great choice for discussing social resilience within the trends of urbanisation transformation. It gave a sharp point of entry in the current rapid urbanisation process and revealed both social and spatial impacts on Chinese planning during the history. With numerous research on the same topic before, it posed a huge challenge to catch a new perspective from different aspects at the beginning. Therefore, for me, knowing what kind of questions to be asked is the most essential part to clarify the storyline within the whole project.
3 The Relationship between the Methodical Line of Approach of the graduation lab and the Method Chosen by the student in this framework

From the very beginning of theoretical perspective, a progressive methodology framework has been changed quite a bit until the research questions settled down. Seeking relevance to context helped visualise the desired possibility as an expected outcome, that on return constituted the guidelines and principles of design. By shifting from one single layer method to the multi-level approach, a cohesive methodology framework was formed based upon the guide and recommendations provided by my mentors and personal interpretation. As the figure 2 shows, the contents of different chapters try to answer the research questions by methods included from the literature reference to the practical investigation, exploiting all accesses of resources.

![Figure 2: the methods within methodology framework; source: author](image)

The seminar organised by South China University of Technology has gave me a chance to catch up with latest information and current trends of policy transition, through the communication with planning experts and the related government officers in the planning department. While the meeting with local joint-stock company and real estate developers, and interviews to local villagers has offered me their point of view to understand the priority interests of every stakeholder better. Although the mixture of driven force is hard to reach a balance, this thesis tries to reconcile the different interests and encourage more potential participants at different stages, ideally. It enhanced my personal drive for chasing a convinced argument for socio-resilient strategy building towards academic contribution. Ultimately it aroused a challenging opportunity for re-recognising the the socio-spatial role of urban villages in the changing regeneration model. Hence, the methodical line offered by the Complex Cities studio greatly matched to the one chosen in the project.

4 The Relationship between the Project and the Wider Social Context

This thesis intends to explore how to promote a sustainable renewal of the urban village effectively and feasibly, and to maintain the current affordable living qualities appropriately, considering the interests of a considerable part of the disadvantaged groups. It witnessed a social perspective searching out the relationship among political, socio-economic and spatial aspects. As the social phenomenon of urban village is representative in the developing world, the conclusion of this research not only reflected to the special Chinese context, but also in other similar informal settlement. In local scale, the choice of Guangzhou as target city did help better illustrate the values of history and culture which fostered subtle influence inside local community, and capacities of spatial shaping depending on social networks.

Therefore, by exposing the shortcomings of current regeneration model, this project put forward a new integrated strategy, combining the top-down planning and bottom-up organisation together. It provides another possibility for an immigrant city by encouraging a desirable common interest for different groups of people, which will be adjusted over time and reality as well. From the basic guarantee of survival to the support of acquisition of funds and resources, finally it aims at realising the transition of both place and people, which involves self-achievement, inclusive urban renewal and social integration. The initiative motivation of encouraging public goods has transferred to a core interest in the new regeneration model, stimulated by other effects it brought about. All in all, the project is closely integrated with the actual argument, and finally reaffirming the importance between research and context, both in the academy and professional life.