

11. APPENDIX

11.1 REFLECTION

This research-design project mainly addresses the ageing problem in residential-dominated historic areas in the context of China. The aim of the thesis is to integrate the current Chinese neighborhood services systems for the elderlies with urban design and planning in the historic area of first-tier city, transforming the interaction between historic area and the elderly from mutual influences to mutual promotion and benefit, towards the livable city in China. Based on the theory of Environmental psychology, Aged-friendly environments, Age-interacting environments, The Silver Economy, Participatory management and Participatory design to build up the conceptual framework from social, spatial and governance aspects. Changsha, a typical ageing city in China, would be the example taken in this thesis for exploring the principles that can be used in other practices in a bottom-up way. There would be four stages—problem definition, problem description, solution proposals and reflection. In reflection, several main aspects would be addressed to.: methodology&limitations, research and design, ageing and transforming Chinese cities, relevance, ethical considerations and conclusion.

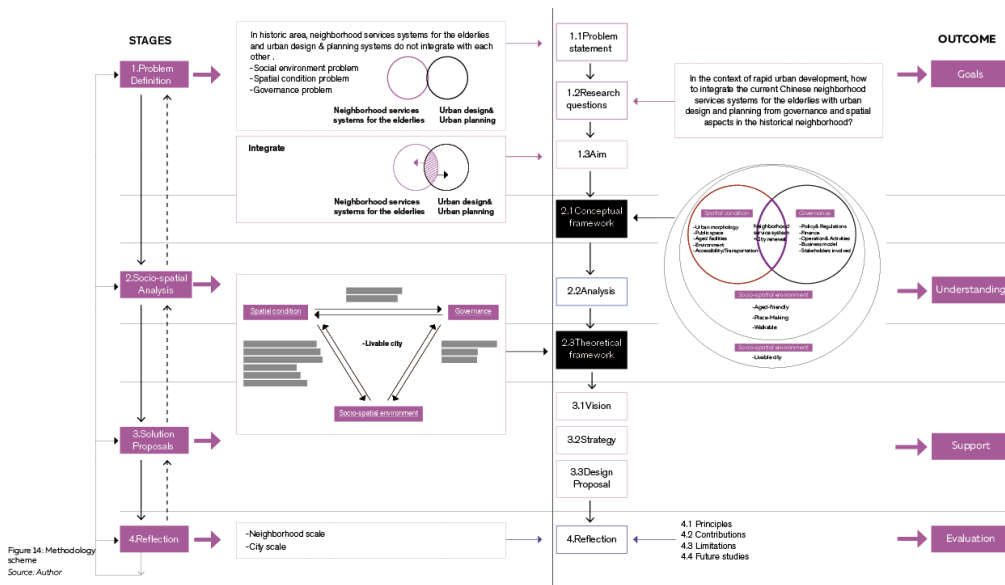
1. Methodology & limitations

1.1 Methodology

The methodology of this thesis is influenced by DRM- Design Research Methodology (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009), and consists of four stages: Problem Definition, Problem Description, Solution Proposal, and Reflection. The outcomes are divided accordingly into four sessions—goals, understanding, support, and evaluation. These would form the main structure of the thesis. Based on these and the main sub-research questions, the methods I used in the process includes: policy and regulation analysis, literature review, field trip, data analysis, mapping, spatial analysis, case study and scenarios of strategies. Among these methods, field trip, mapping and spatial analysis helped the most to practically look into the ageing problem. Since China has such large area with dense population, it is very important to make clear of the special identity and common scenes in Changsha and the elderlies who live there so as to understand their actual need in a more direct way. These methods I opted for can also aid at fully understanding the context and locality of the project. Through the interview, walk-by observation, and direct observation, daily routes, gathering spots, recreational spaces, typology of spaces, activities involved, and preference of elderlies can be observed and mapped. Such a spatial analysis can help visualising the outcome of field trip, deepen the problem, understanding of the context and propose design in a more practical way.

1.2 Limitation

The main limitation of the thesis is lacking of sample size. During the field trip period, it was rainy most of the time. So, there was less people, especially elderlies having activities on the street that I could observe and interview. And for the observation, I only had one day and only went to one neighborhood, it has large particularity. To some extent it influences the judgment of the preferences of the elderly. Besides, the time I began the design proposal is quite late, cannot have time to provide several scenarios of strategies to compare and improve. In the last period of graduation time, I will try to fulfill it by improving the design part. Last but not least, the real renewal process must be more complicated especially in the negotiation part with residents. How to balance the interest of difference sides must be a big question.



2. Research and design.

Before I started my thesis, I learnt from my past design experience that research and design develop linearly, one after another. So, I spent much more time on research than on design since I wanted to find out the absolute direction for the proposal. But after I entered the design part, I found that the uncertainties of my design always pushed me to go back to the research stage. I had to think about the existing site typologies and how they influence people's daily lives, and thus how I should replace them step by step so as to determine the demolishing process, etc., while my initial research package did not include these. After several rounds of back-and-forth reasoning, the research and design stages combined to form a more sense-making and all rounded thesis package.

3. Ageing and transforming Chinese cities

Global urbanization has been accelerating in today's era, with more than half of the world's population living in cities. China is a large developing country with large population and vast territory with obvious regional differences. It is at the stage of rapid advancement that the rate of urbanization is at its fastest in human history. Urbanization in China is an on-going process that leads to formation and transformation of city regions. Alongside the rapid urbanization process, cities are ageing, as are their populations.

In the current stage of urbanization, there are some contradictions among different objectives, such as the conflicts between ageing society and high-speed economic; old neighborhoods and rapid developing commercial area; vulnerable groups like the elderlies and low accessibility old neighborhoods, etc.

It is urgently needed for us to identify the ways of planning so as to more effectively integrate the physical character of cities with social issues. So that healthier, more livable, and more inclusive places could be created. It is aimed to provide new models of city development that promotes 'people-centered urbanization'. (Planning complex cities, 2018)

4 .Relevance

4.1 Societal relevance

China has the biggest group of elderlies among the world. Ageing not only brings pressure to society, but also to every families. The thesis mainly aims to enrich the retire life of the elderlies based on their requirements. It would largely release the pressure for both families and elderly themselves, Through the neighborhood transformation process, it can also improve the overall living qualities for all residents in the neighborhood towards forming a livable city. Besides, the renewal process would help to dig out new economy improving points to turn the ageing pressure into new 'silver economy'. So, integrating the neighborhood services systems for elderlies with urban planning and design can provide win-win solution to solve ageing problem.

4.2 Scientific relevance

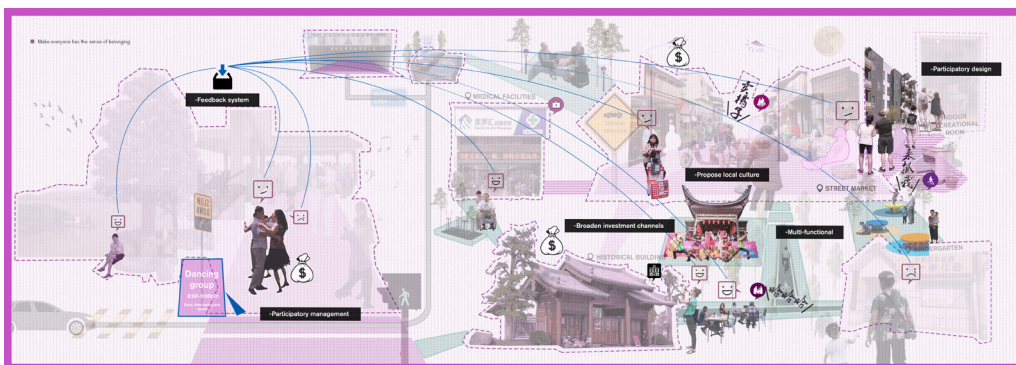
There is a big tendency of disciplinary differentiation in the study of services systems for the elderlies in China. However, these fields are more concentrated on aspects of sociology, economics, etc. And ageing problem is always seen as an individual problem to analyze. For the ageing problem, especially for the neighborhood services systems, its actions rely on environment and space. In other words, a systematic approach in research on how to integrate the neighborhood services systems for elderlies with urban planning and design is still lacking, especially for the historical neighborhood that was formed naturally through continuous development by residents. The thesis integrating these two systems together provides a new possibility to solve both the ageing problem and city renewal.



5 Ethical considerations

In Chinese traditional Confucius mindset, offsprings should always respect and take care of parents and grandparents. However, the reality is that the elderlies are seen as a vulnerable and unrelated group to society. It makes them feel even more lonely. In my thesis, although I made observations in the elderlies' daily lives and habits, I also would focus on other groups of residents, so that everyone can gain a sense of belonging in the neighborhood. To do this I would propose to provide multi-functional public space, shared housing typology, and participatory design and management, etc. On one hand, city renewal is a process that deals with all the residents in the neighborhood, yet there are lots of activities that should have no age limitation. My thesis would propose to break the such age stereotype through effective integration, so that there would be strong communications among different groups and thus to help the elderlies finding their new selves.

Secondly, demolishing and relocation is a sensitive topic in Chinese context. On one hand, people do want to improve their living quality. On the other hand, they tend to fail to come to agreements with government, in which it forced and violent demolition incidents would occur. My thesis proposes to merge the interest and attention of both residents and government, to reach a participatory design and management scheme, so that residents are encouraged to join the process and express their requirements properly. Besides, in the vision plan, I also showed the stages and flexibility of demolishing. The demolition would not be all at once and would have buffer space up for discussion. Lastly, the vision would also include increasing the residential occupancy after renewal. Not only would it welcome new residents, the original residents can stay behind as they wish once renewal is finished.



6 Conclusion

I have to say the whole year I spent on my thesis is the best learning time ever since the year 2012 when I began to get in touch with design. Ageing is one of my favorite urban topics, since it connects with everyone's life, it is urgent and it still have big potential to improve in Chinese cities. I had done the ageing design in bachelor time as well in teamwork in a short period time. But this time, trying to understand the ageing in another angle fully, individually made me have a lot of new inspirations. Through the process of dealing with this problem, combing ageing with urban renewal, recalling all the knowledge I learned and constantly adding a lot of new knowledges motivates me to go further with excitement. Although in the end, I still feels some uncertainty about my last vision design part, I can say I already tried my best through the whole process.

I would like to give my sincere appreciation to Lei and Birgit, my two amazing tutors. Becuase of their excellent academic knowledge, extraordinary patience and constant encouragement, gave me a lot of instructive advice, useful suggestions and inspiration of new ideas. And the most important one, to endure my broken English. :)