Re-envisioning the Third Place

Reconnecting Spatial Networks in the Historic Urban Landscape

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[Project Report]

Dr. Jiayi Jin

Department of Architecture and Built Environment

Northumbria University

http://www.northumbriaarchitecture.com/research

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Executive Summary

'Re-envisioning the Third Place' is a research-based design extended from the 2019 AA Summer School in Chengdu, China named as 'Marking the City'. Collaborated with all summer school students, the author investigated spatial networks of Kuanzhai Alley, which located at the heart of Shaocheng, Chengdu. As one of the most famous historical sites in the city, it has reached great success as a popular commercial district full of tourists and commercial activities. However, the abandoned historical buildings, crowed courtyard space occupied by the informal constructions & car parks also led to the diminishing of 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1999) in its neighbourhood as well as decreasing its liveability and identity. Meanwhile, the social condition in the neighbourhood is degrading. The social class is lowering in the old neighbourhood while the upgrading of the social class in gated communities caused the social segregation.

From the heritage perspective, we believe it is crucial to reconnect the social-spatial network with rich third place in Shaocheng to strengthen the identity of the existing heritage and renewed identity for the old neighbourhood area. From the residents' perspective, the complete social-spatial network with good third place is important for improving the liveability of the local area and building a new urban identity. The summer school design research was developed from these two perspectives and adopted multiple research methods like historical and policy review, case studies and mapping, interview and co-design sessions.

Through the elaboration of a vision and an urban plan with the third place design, we conceived a spatial strategy that effectively integrates the local urban fabric and urban development, which looks for durable and resilient spatial solutions that can be incorporated into the local planning and design but also provide a framework for other historical regenerations in many other Chinese cities.

Keywords: Third Place, Historic Cities, Urban Regeneration, Urban Design, Chengdu, China

Acknowledgement

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Contents

Chapter 1.

Introduction

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1   General Context

XL - Chengdu

The city of Chengdu is located in southwest China with the history over 3000 years.

L - Old Town Area

The old town area of Chengdu has contained many remain historical buildings with great cultural and social values.

M - Shao City

Shao City was the military area for Qing Dynasty, and nowdays it still remains part of the unique street structure and buildings from that time.

S - Neighbourhood around Kuanzhai Alley

Kuanzhai Alley whic locates inside Shao City, is the most famous historical site in Chengdu with many traditional housing. The neighbourhoods around also have great historical & cultural values.

Fig. 1.1: Location of the Study Area

Shaocheng / Shao City in Chengdu (figure 1.1) was built around the year 1776 when Qing Dynasty sent the army to defend against the rebellion and decided to leave some staying in Chengdu for garrison (Ying, 2014). Since then, Shaocheng is famous for its herringbone street structure as it was

designed as the housing for the Qing military moving from Beijing and this kind of structure would be more effective when conveying the order or message. The building type is the combination of both traditional Chuanxi residential house and Beijing Courtyard which make Shaocheng different from other historic districts in Chengdu (Shuangshuang, 2014). In addition, there was also a wall around the City to segregate itself from the Han residence. At that time, Shaocheng is an isolated island from the rest of Chengdu (figure 1.2).
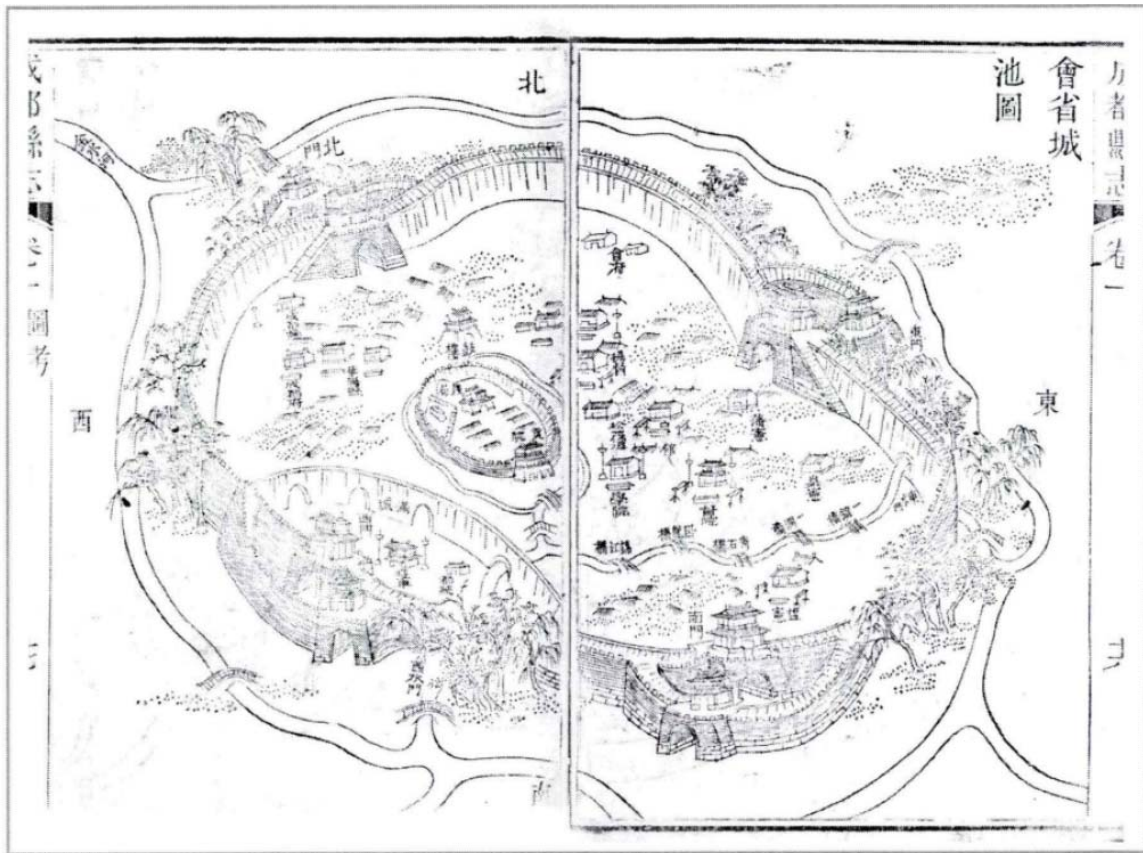

Fig. 1.2: Shaocheng / Shao City – An isolated island (image from Zhang, 2014)

After the Qing government had collapsed, the wall of Shaocheng was demolished and the area was gradually integrated into Chengdu city since then (Zhang, 2014). During the Republic of China era, due to the continuous wars, Shaocheng had changed little by some self-organisation of the residence, figure 1.3 is showing the street view and how the house looked like. At this time, ground floors were usually used as the retail space and the family was living on the first and second floor. After the great reform and opening in 1979, the local government began to realise the importance of protecting the heritage in the city, and Kuanzhai Alley had been considered as one of the key historical blocks in

Chengdu. In addition, because of the rapid urbanisation process, the roads had been widened, many historic houses had been replaced by 6-9th floor apartments with the 1st floor open as small shops.

Fig. 1.3: Old historic houses during the Republic of China (ROC) between 1912 and 1949 (image from Zhang, 2014)

During 2003 and 2008, the regeneration project of Kuanzhai Alley was processing gradually. And right after that, the district has been transformed into a cultural-commercial block aimed to present the history and culture of Chengdu as well as acting as the new 'living room' of the city (figure 1.4). After the 1st regeneration of Shaocheng, most of the housings in the area has been replaced by 6-9th floor apartments, but Kuanzhai Alley was considered as a protected historical block by the government, and it was planned as a commercial district with the original historic fabric.

While the regeneration project of Kuan Alley was under construction, many local residents moved out and relocated to the suburban of the city. High-rise apartments have built up along the river as the developers believed this site has a huge potential to attract high-income earners. When the Alley was regenerated and got ready for the public in 2008, it indeed had reached great success as lots of visitors came to the area to experience its unique cultural and historical atmosphere. Nowadays, Kuanzhai Alley has become a commercial street predominantly occupied by tourists, and many original residents in Shaocheng chose to relocate due to the loss of sense of belonging and identity of their local district.

Looking at the neighbourhood area during our on-site visits, new gated communities along the river are filled with upper, middle-class families and high-income renters. For residents living in the old houses built before 1949, the whole regeneration did not improve their living conditions, the public service remains minimal, and most of the people living in these areas are aged and low-income renters.

Fig. 1.4: Birds eye view of Kuanzhai Alley (image from Zhang, 2014)

Loss of Identities in the Process of Change

Heritage in urban areas is often seen as the physical representation of the identity of a certain community (Nijkamp & Riganti, 2008). In recent years, there are many historical sites having been transformed into commercial streets to attract more tourists for economic development in Chinese cities. Under this framework, heritage buildings would normally be well protected, however, the intangible cultural heritage, the traditional lifestyle of the place, as well as most of the public space for the local residents are diminishing.

There are many more disadvantages following this trend, the historical district in a city usually only presents a certain period's lifestyle and cultural identity out of a long timeline. And due to the rapid

development of real estate and tourism, there is a trend of delivering revenue-based integrated commercial complexes without a clear strategy toward the local urban heritage.

In addition, these regeneration projects are usually aimed at the elitist (Ke, 2012). Some researchers think the new commercial activities replace the original function of the housing which has led to urban gentrification and resulted in significant losses in urban, social, and cultural identities (Ya, 2011). Besides, due to the growing commercial activities and tourists in these places, the public space was mostly occupied for commercial uses, like street vendors or pop-up art stores. The privatisation of public spaces is escalating, and when space is controlled, and especially when the public is unclear about what the legal or acceptable boundaries of activity are, the people living there tend to police themselves, to monitor the behaviour and to limit interactions, especially after embarrassing confrontations with security.

In many Chinese cities, tourism has gradually become one of the most important roles for economic growth, which encouraged the government to invest in historical site transformation to attract tourists (Yingluo, 2009). However, like Kuanzhai Alley, most of the local government has excessively focused on developing a "historical commercial street", but ignoring the protection of many other (tangible & intangible) heritage in local neighbourhoods. As the consequence, lots of heritage has been discarded like the building shown on figure 1.5.

Fig. 1.5: The abandoned mansion built in 1929. Source: http://sc.news.cn/topic/lsjz2.htm

Local Liveability and New Measurements

As mentioned, due to the growing tourism and gentrification of many historical sites in the old town area, the public space is usually filled with commercial activities and occupied by tourists (figure 1.6). Thus, many local residents have considered the tourists' activities influencing their liveability as they have taken the quality public space and increased the living cost massively e.g. the soaring price in local restaurants, cafes and retail shops.

Fig. 1.6: Tourists occupied historical street. Source: http://www.kzxz.com.cn/

The government in Chengdu had a lot of attention on developing the GDP of the city while ignoring the liveability of the citizen: we see 'busy traffic, shortage of the affordable housing, very poor quality of the local infrastructure and public space in the old town district' (Chunling, 2014). Moreover, the population in Chengdu has grown very quickly because of the new born every year and the immigrant workers from small towns. As the consequence, the living environment of the old neighbourhood in the central city district is getting even crowded with increasing information construction and car parking in the neighbourhood's courtyard (figure 1.7). Many neighbourhoods in the old town district have been occupied by the aged and low-income renter instead. Besides, in the old town area, the traffic system is generally in poor condition, the space for car parking is needed. The side parking is

common in the old town area which has interrupted the public space system of the residents in the neighbourhood area (Xiaoming, 2015) which also has influenced the liveability of the neighbourhood area.

Fig. 1.7: Narrow courtyard space and little public space.

During the last decades, the urbanisation rate and economic growth of Chengdu are keeping increasing rapidly. They both have raised living standards among people, however, modern economies have lost sight of the fact that the standard metric of economic growth, gross domestic product (GDP), merely measures the size of a nation's economy and doesn't reflect a nation's welfare. Yet policymakers and economists often treat GDP, or GDP per capita in some cases, as an all-encompassing unit to signify a nation's development, combining its economic prosperity and societal well-being. As a result, policies that result in economic growth are seen to be beneficial for society. During the last decades, the urbanisation rate and economic growth of Chengdu are keeping increasing rapidly. They both have raised living standards among people, however, modern economies have lost sight of the fact that the standard metric of economic growth, gross domestic product (GDP),

merely measures the size of a nation's economy and doesn't reflect a nation's welfare. Yet policymakers and economists often treat GDP, or GDP per capita in some cases, as an all-encompassing unit to signify a nation's development, combining its economic prosperity and societal well-being. As a result, policies that result in economic growth are seen to be beneficial for society. We need alternative metrics to complement GDP in order to get a more comprehensive view of development and ensure informed policy making that doesn't exclusively prioritise economic growth. We're seeing some efforts already, such as new attempts to measure Gross National Happiness, which considers factors like equitable socio-economic development and good governance, and UNDP's Human Development Index (HDI), which encapsulates health and knowledge apart from economic prosperity.

The government of Chengdu is also beginning to focus on the ease of living of its citizens, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs has developed the Ease of Living Index to measuring the quality of life of its citizens, as well as economic ability and sustainability. It is as well expected to evolve into a measurement tool to be adopted across districts. We believe that this more holistic measure will provide more accurate insights into future urban development and planning.

We aimed to create a more liveable space, to move towards a more just and equitable society that is economically thriving and offering citizens a meaningful quality of life. With a change in what has been measured and perceive as a barometer of development, how to frame better policies will also catch up. In an economy with well-being at its heart, economic growth will simply be another tool to guide it in the direction that the society chooses. In such an economy, the percentage points of GDP, which are rarely connected with the lives of average citizens, will cease to take the centre stage. The focus would instead shift towards more desirable and actual determinants of welfare.

1.2 Third Place Theory

Urban planners seeking to stabilise neighbourhoods are focusing on the critical role that "third places" can play in strengthening our sense of community. Third place is a term coined by sociologist Ray Oldenburg (Oldenburg, 1999) and refers to places where people spend time between home ('first' place) and work ('second' place). They are locations where we exchange ideas, have a good time, and build relationships. (figure 1.8). According to Ray Oldenburg's idea, third place is a "public space that hosts the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1999). In the meantime, it focuses on the places for social interaction and encourages the communication among all social groups which could contribute to a strategy to solve the problem of social spaces.

Third places have a number of important community-building attributes. In this project, the definition of third place is focusing on the public space like green space, street side and semi-public space like courtyard space (gated community excluded) which could contribute to the diverse social interaction in order to reconnect the social-spatial gap.
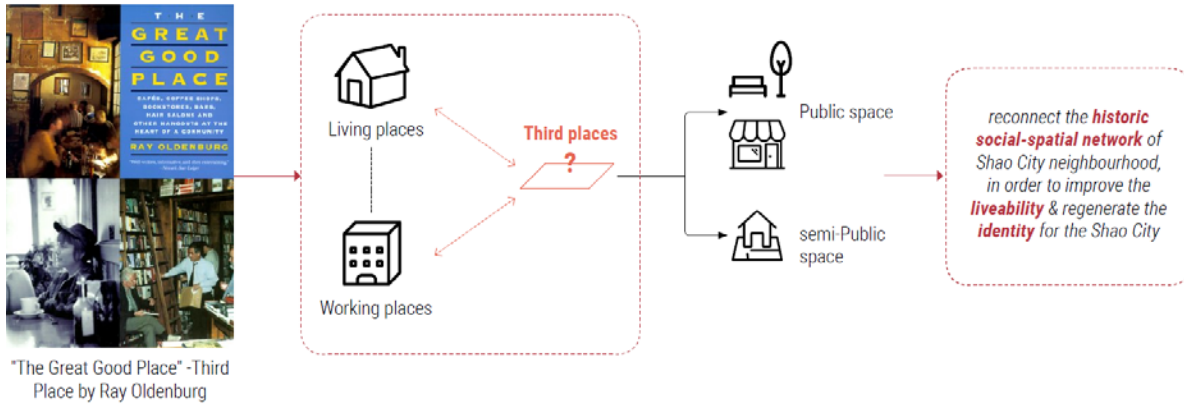

Fig. 1.8: Third place by Ray Oldenburg and its connection for this project.
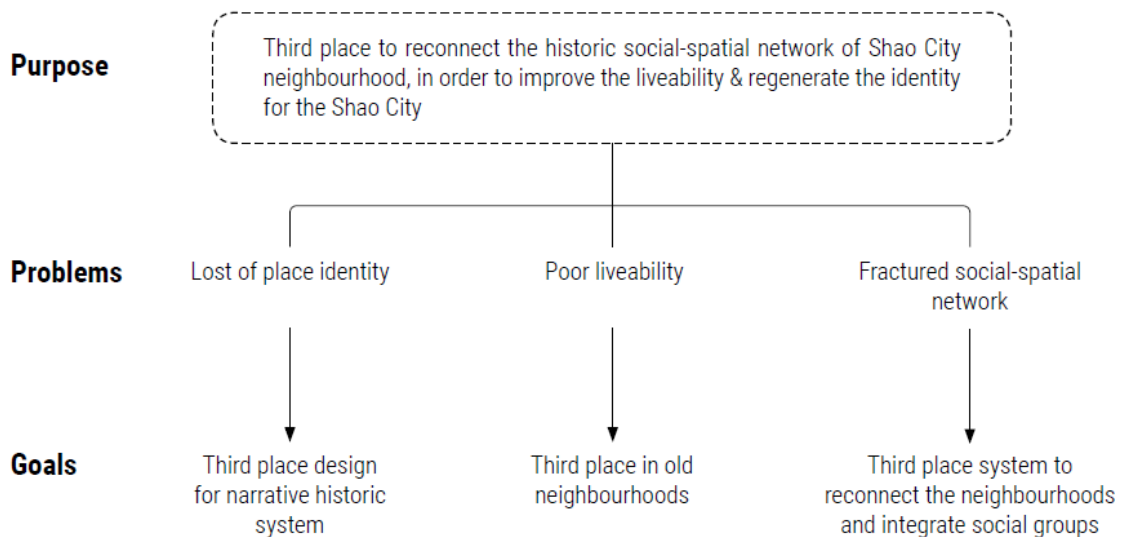
1.3 Problem Statement

Fig. 1.9: Purpose / Problems / Goal scheme

As shown on figure 1.9, the project focused on issues of declining liveability of the old neighbourhood area and the lost place identity of Shaocheng. To be more specific, the problem focus is the fractured historic social-spatial network between the old housing neighbourhood and Kuanzhai Alley & newly

emerged gated communities with declining the public space (third place) for local residents. The abandoned historical buildings, overcrowded courtyard space occupied by the informal constructions & car park and Kuanzhai Alley full of tourists and commercial activities have led to reducing third place of the neighbourhood as well as decreasing its liveability and identity. Meanwhile, the social condition in the neighbourhood is degrading, and the social segregation was created.

From the heritage perspective, it is crucial to reconnect the social-spatial network with rich third place in Shaocheng to strengthen the identity of the existing heritage and renewed identity for the old neighbourhood area. From the residents' perspective, the complete social-spatial network with a good third place is important for improving the local liveability and reforming new identities in the process of change.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the problems and the third place theory, the main research question in this project is how to use third place to reconnect the historic social-spatial network of Shaocheng neighbourhood in Chengdu in order to improve the liveability and regenerate the identity. To answer this question, there are six sub research questions to first understand the current challenges (value and limitations) and how / what kind of third place could help solve the problems and design the project. Figure 1.10 shows more about the research questions.

*How to use **third place** to reconnect the **historic social-spatial network** of Shao City neighbourhood, in order to improve the **liveability** & regenerate the **identity** for Shao City*

*What is the **definition** of the third place in Shao City neighbourhood?*

*How to **use** it to improve the liveability and regenerate the identity for Shao City?*

Fig. 1.10a: Main research question

Sub-questions

Products

SBQ-1

What and how the main challenges have been formed in improving the liveability and regenerating the new identity for Shao City?

current challenge

+

SBQ-2

What third place can improve the liveability and regenerate the new identity for Shao City?

Third place

SBQ-3

What are the zones of interventions that have the potential to maximize effects of "third place" interventions?

zones of intervention

SBQ-4

What are possible solutions for reconnecting historic social-spatial network in order to improve the liveability and regenerate the new identity for Shao City?

catalogue of solution

SBQ-5

How can these solutions be implemented in the elected zones of intervention?

urban design

SBQ-6

How did the third place contributed to the development of Shao City urban design strategy?

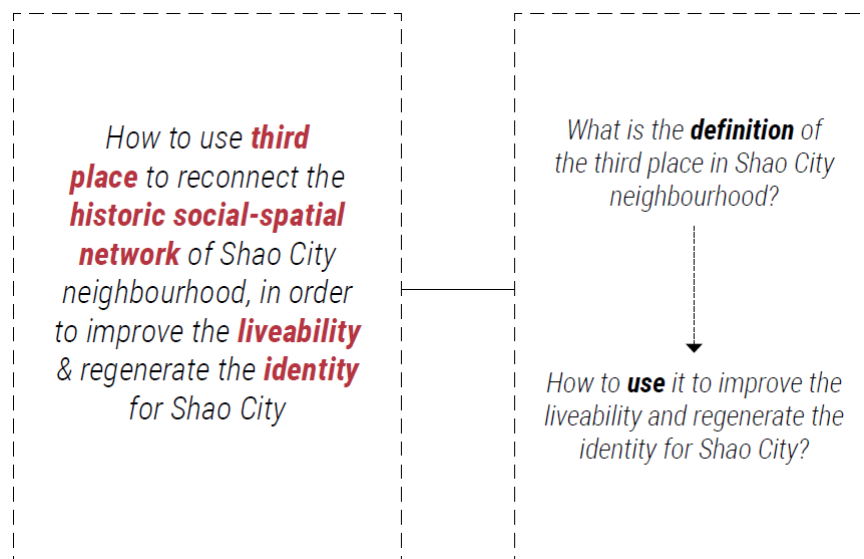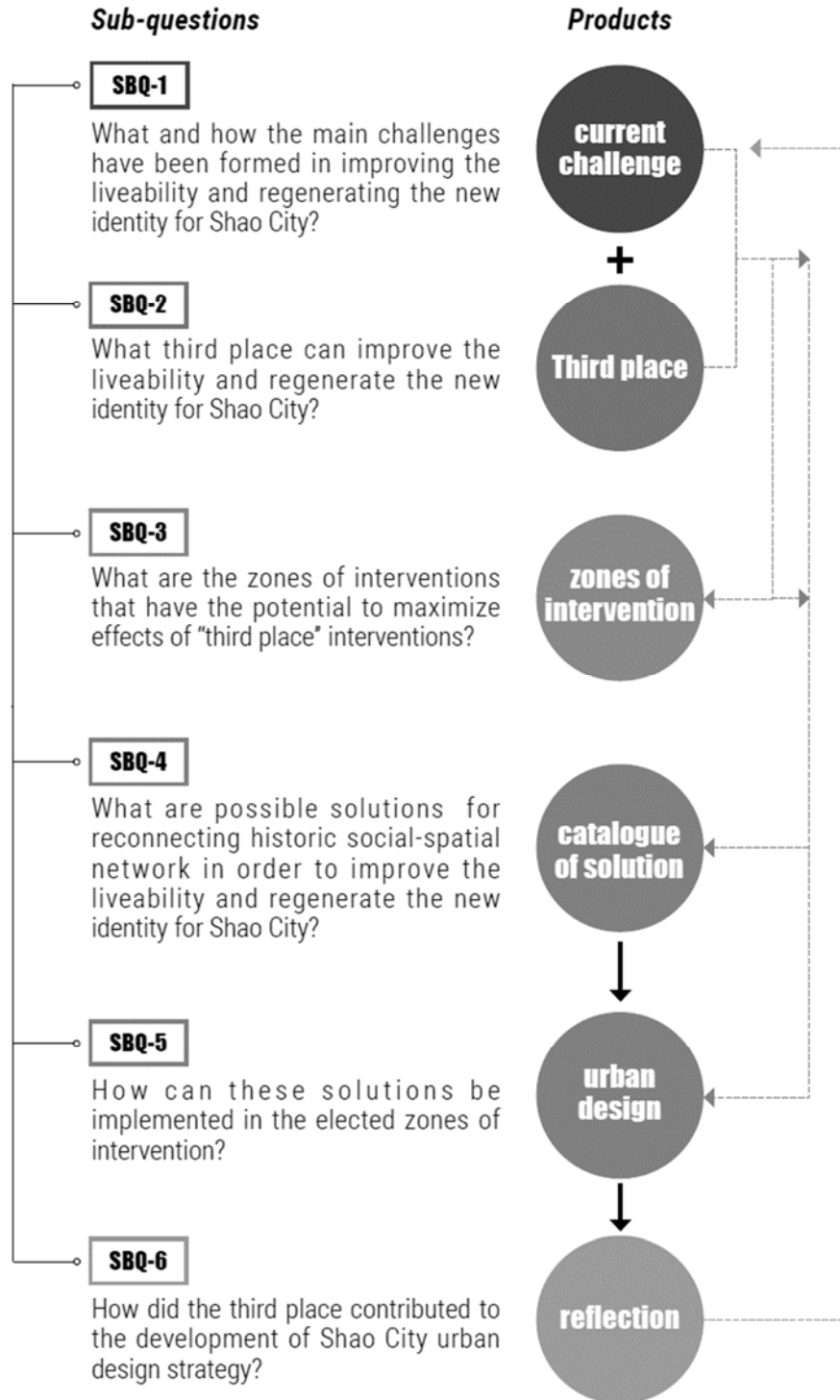**reflection**

Fig. 1.10b: Sub research questions

1.5 Methodology

The structure of the methodology is based on Lucienne T.M. Blessing and Amaresh Chakrabarti's book DRM - a design research methodology (Blessing & Chakrabarty, 2009). This methodology consists of four main stages 1) Research Clarification (RC); 2) Descriptive Study I (DS-I); 3) Prescriptive Study (PS) and 4) Descriptive Study II (DS-II)
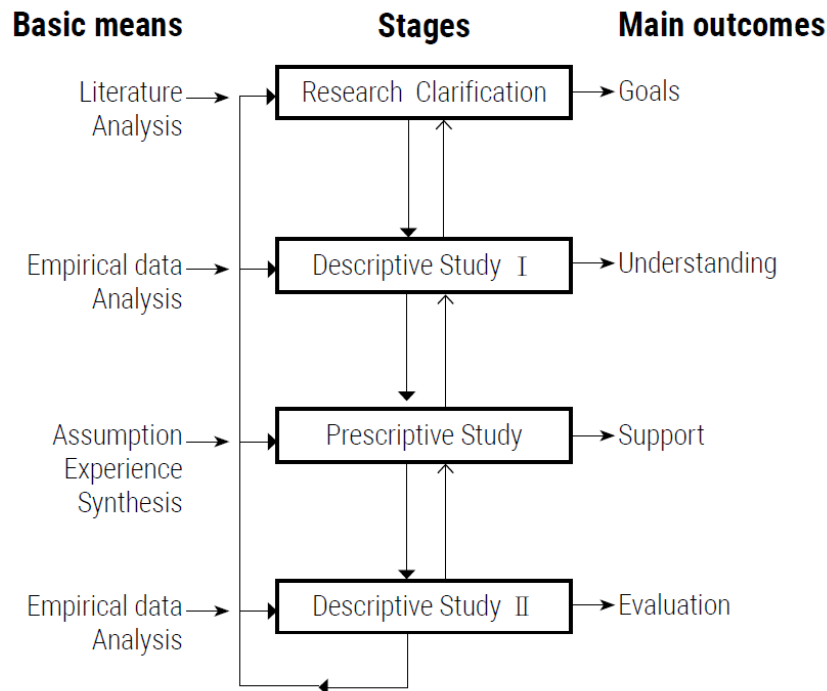

Fig. 1.11: DRM framework (source: Blessing & Chakrabarty, 2009)

1）Research Clarification (RC)

Current urban problems were tackled and research gaps were identified at the first stage, which requires evidence collection and review of the literature to develop an overall understanding of the issue and to support the research goal (Blessing & Chakrabarty, 2009). Thus, Stage 1 includes: A description of the existing situation (problem statement); clarification of criteria that can be applied to judge the outcome of the research (social, physical and mental spaces); and a description of the research questions and hypotheses.

2）Descriptive Study I (DS-I)

The Descriptive Study I is aimed to obtain a more detailed understanding of the existing situation which has been narrowed down from the RC phase, thus to obtain greater clarity of the desired aims

(Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009). At this stage, the methods consist of the literature review on heritage, liveability and place identity; an exploration on how to use the concept of third place (Oldenburg) to design for the public space system in the old town area, and how these spaces have been realised through a set of examples of third place design and their approaches to integrate social, physical and mental spaces (Lefebvre & Soja) have been analysed.

In addition, as the aim of this stage is to develop a detailed understanding of the existing situation, the site analysis is considered as an additional layer in the DS-I. This analysis consists of three steps. The first one is defining the current condition of the liveability and the place identity in Shaocheng which is the continuation of Sub-question 1: "**What and how the main challenges have been formed in improving the liveability and regenerating the new identity for Shaocheng?**". This question is answered by investigating the historic background and local heritage, open spaces, building forms/functions, and the social structure using the means of literature review, policies review, data collection & analysis, mapping and space syntax. The second step addresses Sub-question 2: "**What kind of third place can improve the liveability and regenerate the new identity for Shaocheng?**". This analysis reveals relationships within third place/public space, social segregation (social space), spatial quality (physical space) and place identity (mental space), also, it supports the research development of Sub-question 1 by adopting literature review, case study and mapping. The third step is set to locate the zones of intervention in order to improve the image of the neighbourhood and the quality of life for local residents. As the conclusion part, it adopts methods like policy review, data analysis, space syntax and mapping to answers Sub-question 3: "**What are the zones of interventions that have the potential to maximize effects of "third place" interventions?**".

3）*Prescriptive Study (PS)*

The aim of this stage is to refine the desired situation by putting forward a "vision on how addressing one or more factors in the realisation of the desired, improved situation"(Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009). Therefore, this phase elaborates on design studies, that is the urban design project of third space (public space) system for Shaocheng, divided into three steps. The first one is to develop the criteria of good third space (public space) based on literature review, case study, interview, co-design sessions using CAD and SketchUp, and creating visual impressions (diagrams, images, collages). The conclusion of the PS stage will answer Sub-question 4: "**What are possible solutions for reconnecting social-spatial and historical network in order to improve the liveability and regenerate the new identity for Shaocheng?**" The second step of the phase focuses on studying the design of the third place system to reconnect the social-spatial network and historical network of the study area by using the methods of mapping, modelling and visual studies. The final step of the PS stage is to propose design strategies on third place design to recall memories, rebuild characters,

and regenerate the place identity. These two steps answer Sub-question 5: "**How can these solutions be implemented in the selected zones of intervention?**".

4）Descriptive Study II (DS-II)

The Descriptive Study II stage aims at investigating the impact of the proposal and its ability to realise the desired situation (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009). Moreover, in this stage, there is an indication of conclusions and the need for further studies (Blessing & Chakrabarti, 2009). For this project, DS-II is realised in evaluation and reflection. A critical review of the design is made, confronting its findings and achievements with the hypothesis which was put forward by adopting the space syntax method, thus answering Sub-question 6: "**How third place is contributed to the development of urban strategy?**". While the reflection focuses on the economic and societal impacts of this study, as well as its limitations. Besides, the reflection also encompasses ethical dimensions. This stage uses narrative and reasoning as main methods.
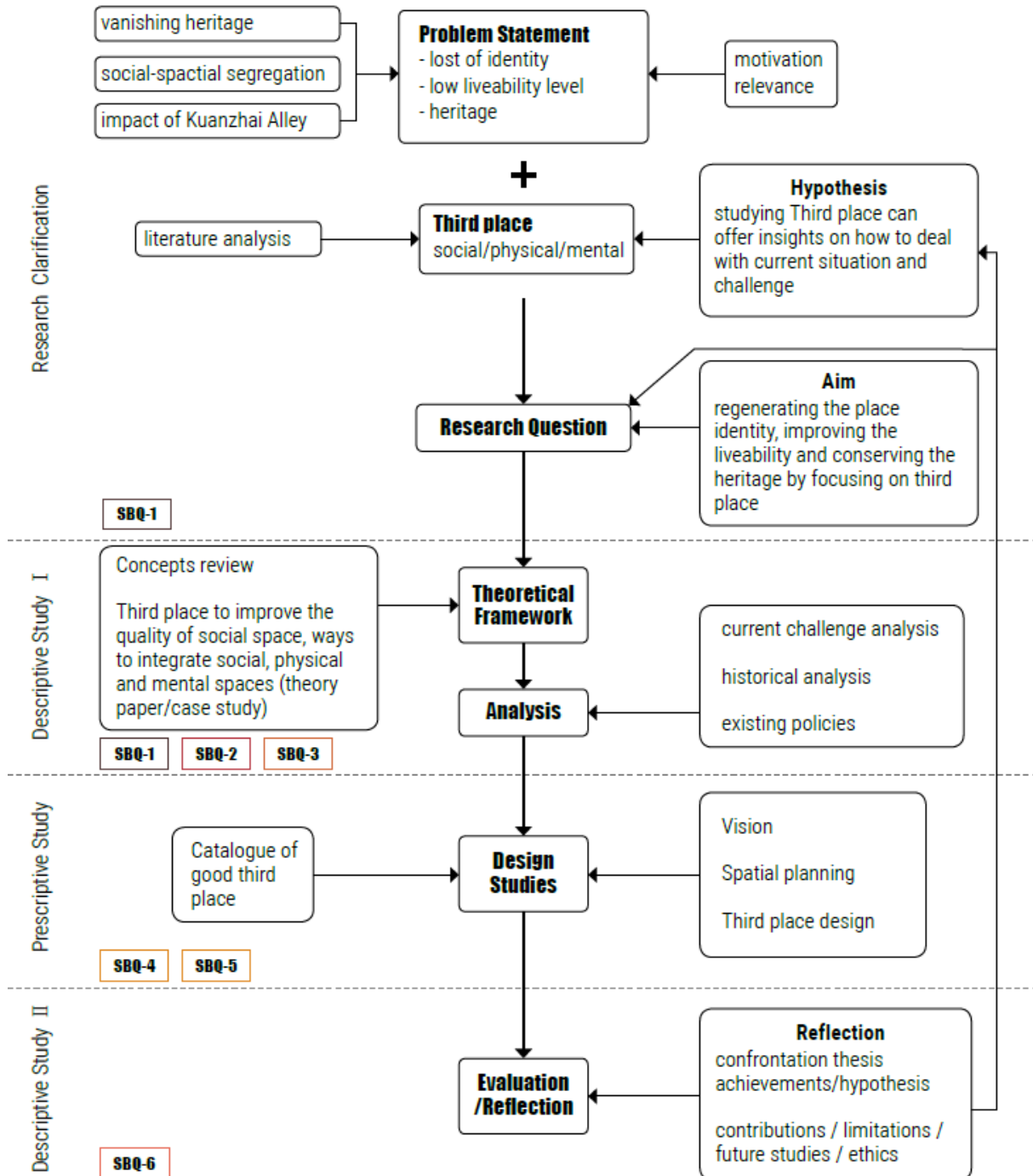
1.6 Research Framework and Outputs

Fig. 1.12: Research Framework

Chapter 2.

Problem Analysis

Photography: Local residents in Kuanzhai Alley, Chengdu.

Chapter 2. Problem Analysis

2.1 Historical Analysis

Shaocheng was built around the year 1776 when Qing Dynasty sent the army to defend against the rebellion and decided to leave some soldiers staying in Chengdu for garrison (Ying, 2014). Since then, the area is famous for its paralleled street structure as it was designed as the housing for Qing military moving from Beijing and this kind of structure would be more effective when conveying the order or passing message around (figure 2.1). The building type is the combination of both traditional Chengdu residential house and Beijing Courtyard which makes Shaocheng different from other historic districts in Chengdu (Shuangshuang, 2014). During Qing Dynasty, Shaocheng, also known as Manchu at that time, was filled with housing, the general building, training ground and park and surrounded by walls to separate it from the rest part of Chengdu. At that time, the characteristic of Shaocheng is introversion. While inside each housing, there is enough open space for each family.
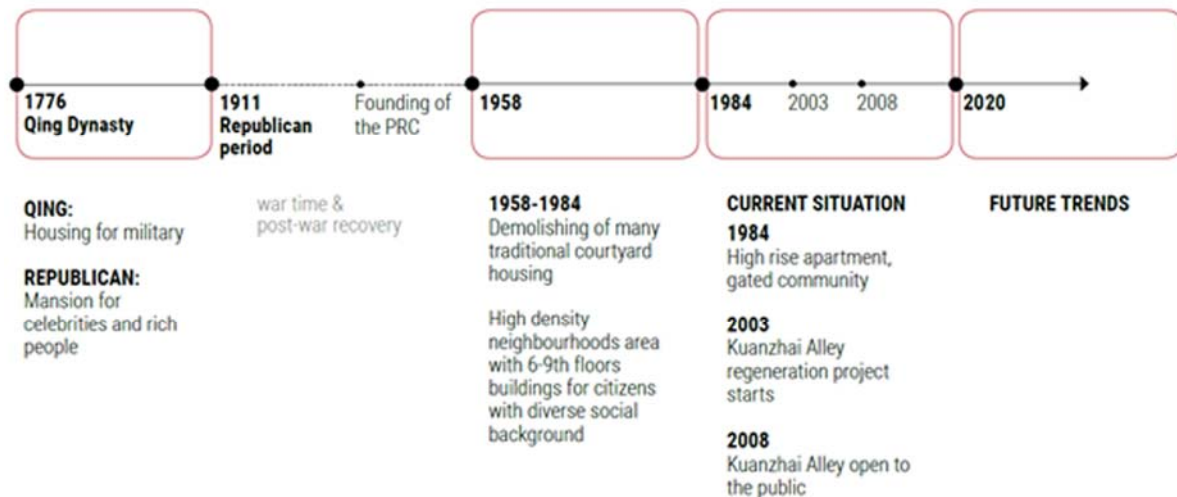

1776
Qing Dynasty

1911
Republican period

Founding of the PRC

1958

1984   2003   2008

2020

QING:
Housing for military

REPUBLICAN:
Mansion for celebrities and rich people

war time & post-war recovery

1958-1984
Demolishing of many traditional courtyard housing

High density neighbourhoods area with 6-9th floors buildings for citizens with diverse social background

CURRENT SITUATION
1984
High rise apartment, gated community

2003
Kuanzhai Alley regeneration project starts

2008
Kuanzhai Alley open to the public

FUTURE TRENDS

Fig. 2.1: Research Phrases and Outputs

The social structure in Shaocheng at this time is very single: for Qing military families. The citizen outside the city is not allowed to enter the area as it is protected as a military site. The main function is the large scale residential district within and there is no commercial activity inside the boundary of the City. Thus, Shaocheng during this period is quite isolated from the rest of Chengdu.

After the Revolution of 1911, Shaocheng with the old city wall has become an island which made the whole city of Chengdu develop eastward (Zhang, 2014). Then the government decided to allow the

military families to sell their houses to the citizens outside Shaocheng. The walls around it were also gradually being torn down. The boundary between Shaocheng and the rest part of Chengdu is disappearing. At this time, part of the area has become the housing for the rich citizens or warlords. The structure and building form did not change too much: more buildings and small roads inside the street like it shown on figure 2.2.
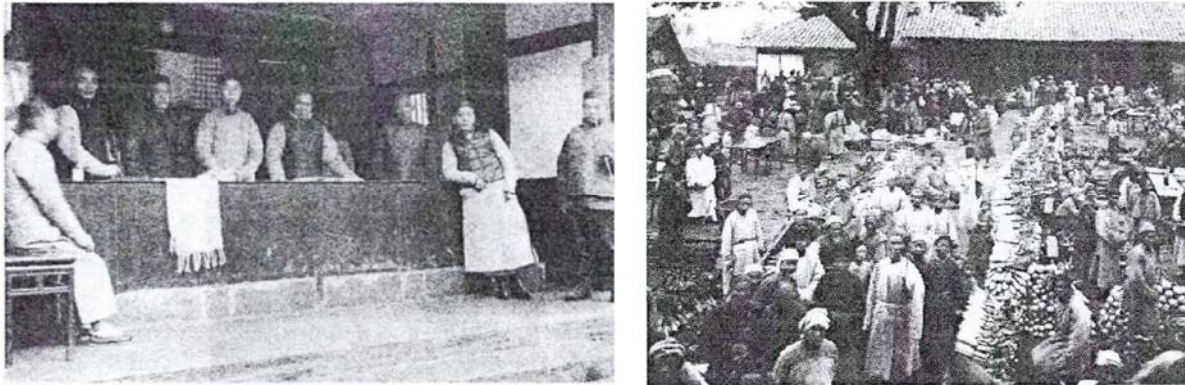

Fig. 2.2: Shaocheng in the Republican period, source: http://www.sohu.com/a/232628328_100177186

After the Chinese Communist leader Mao Zedong declared the creation of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the new government began to focus on old town regeneration and new city centre development. In 1958, Shaocheng, located in the central area of Chengdu, started its 1st urban regeneration: while some traditional houses owned by celebrities were kept in their original conditions, many other housings were transformed to provide space for several different families to live in together. After China's reform and opening-up policies in 1978, due to the effect of growing population and urbanisation, the city government carried out more holistic planning for Chengdu which included the need of increasing commercial activities and protection of Kuanzhai Alley. After that, the regeneration of Shaocheng began: all roads were broadening for cars and public transport, the old courtyard houses were demolished for 6-9th residential buildings with the shops on the ground floor. At this time, the street life was extremely diverse and lively.

During 1958 and 1984, the regeneration process was delivered, many historic buildings were demolished due to the government planning and policy at that time, the new 6-9th floor brick residential buildings influenced by the Soviet Union, as well as traditional neighbourhood housing typologies (figure 2.3) enable Shaocheng to have more third places for local residents for their daily activities and social interactions. The inclusiveness and openness of Shaocheng at this time had attracted a diverse group of people to live in (traders, migrants, workers, celebrities and educated young people).
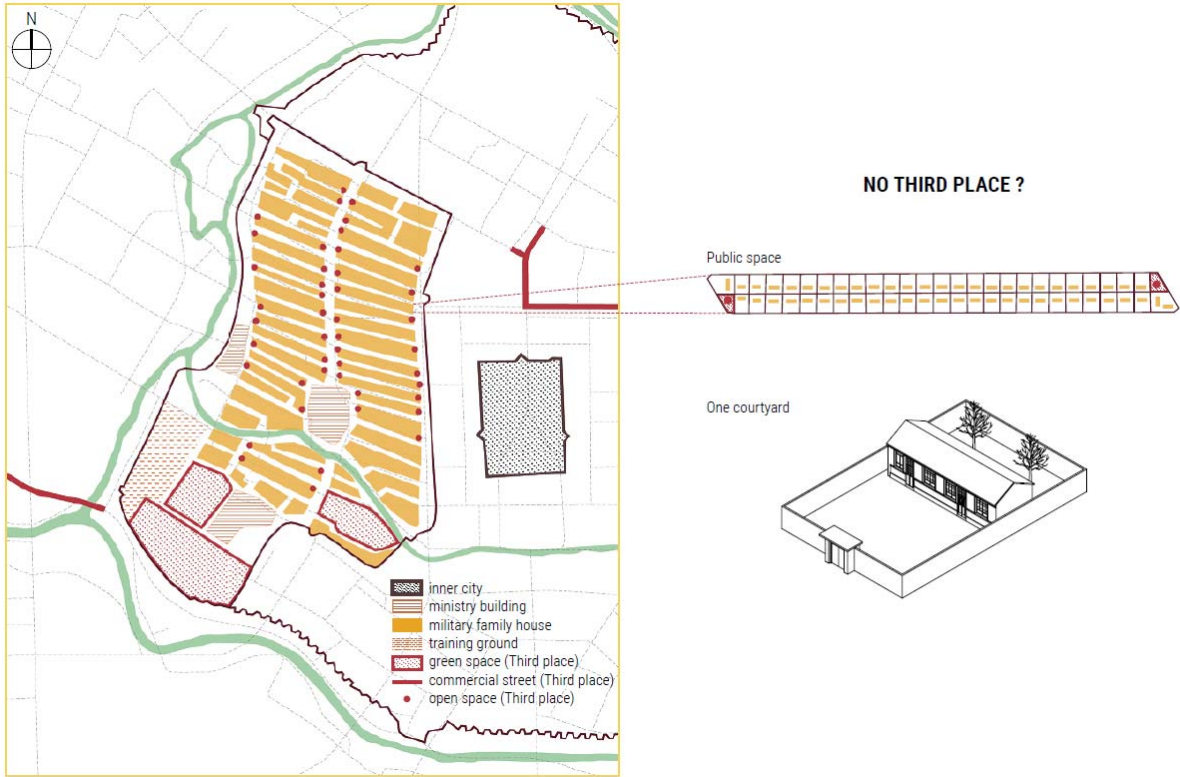
NO THIRD PLACE ?

Public space

One courtyard

Fig. 2.2: Third Place and building typology during the Qing Dynasty

inner city
ministry building
military family house
training ground
green space (Third place)
commercial street (Third place)
open space (Third place)

DIVERSE THIRD PLACE

The third place in Shao City is green space (Renmin Park), commercial streets and the courtyard space (semi-public space). Thus, the diverse third place encourage healthy social interaction among all social groups.

Fig. 2.3: Third Place and building typology between 1958-1984

residential
administrative/military
education
green space (Third place)
commercial (Third place)
commercial street (Third place)
open space (Third place)

2.2 The Latest Development

The surge in urbanization began in the 1980s when the Chinese government began opening the country to foreign trade and investment. As markets developed in "special economic zones," villages morphed into booming cities and cities grew into sprawling megalopolises (Schneider, 2015). Following this trend in 1984, the second and a much larger scaled urban regeneration in Shaocheng, Chengdu began, high rise gated communities started to build up (figure 2.4). And in 2002, the transformation project of Kuanzhai Alley launched by the government, it has been positioned as "the reflection of old Chengdu, living room of a new Chengdu", to become the heart of the tourism, cultural and commercial zone. During the project, some local residents were moved out from the alley and relocated to urban new towns. After 2008, Kuanzhai Alley started to open to the public and has attracted a large number of tourists every year afterward, which boosts the local economy but also has a side effect on the local living conditions, as more and more quality public spaces have been occupied by the tourists and commercial activities. Space like courtyards now have filled with informal constructions due to the surged land price and occupied by private vehicles by the local neighbourhoods. Many historical buildings were protected from a full demolition but still remain abandoned due to low building performance.
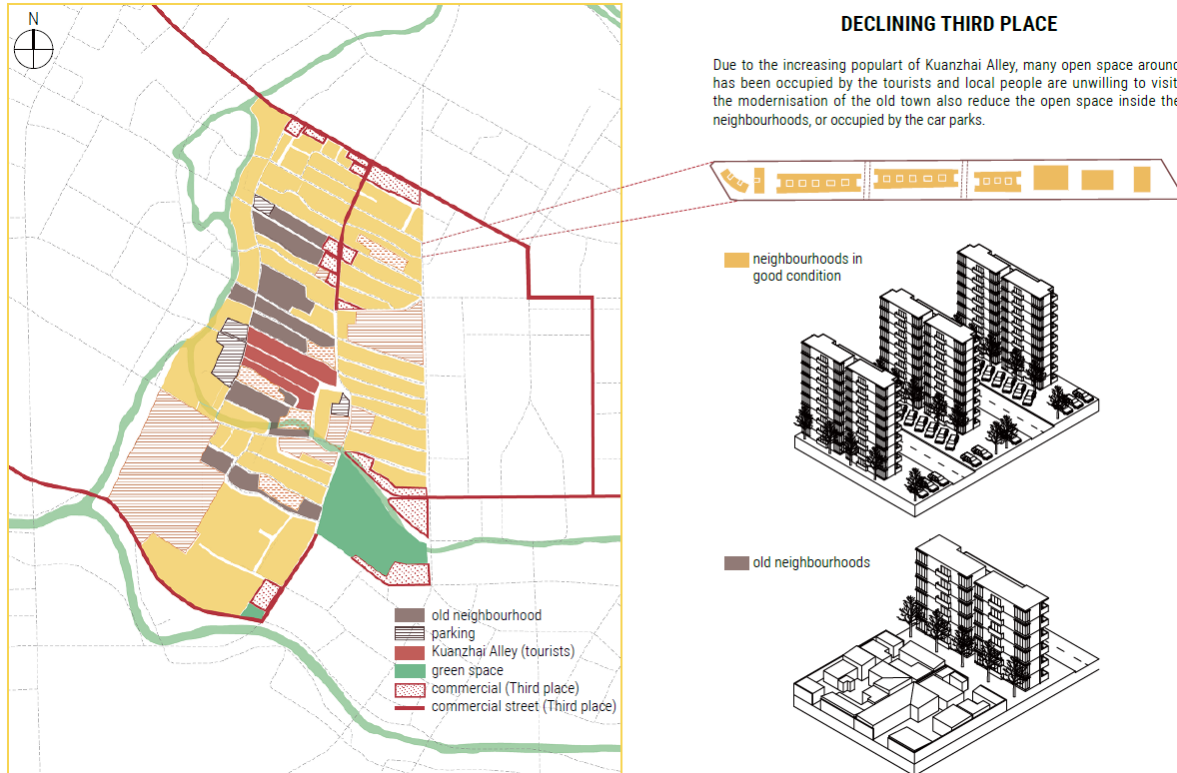

Fig. 2.4: Third Place and building typology at the present, 2019

In 2000, the redevelopment of Kuanzhai Alley in Shaocheng has attracted lots of visitors and commercial opportunities, achieved great success on city branding, but instead of improving the surroundings' liveability and inheriting the culture and history of Shaocheng, it more appears like a modern high-class shopping / tourist street. Besides, traditional buildings outside Kuanzhai Alley are not being well protected, and the newly-built residential area in Shaocheng totally abandon the traditional typology with awful conditions of living quality: disordered inner yards, informal construction and the shortage of car-parking in the area. Thus, the local area nowadays is occupied by half of gated communities and half of old historical neighbourhoods. While the identity of Shaocheng is highly influenced by Kuanzhai Alley, the diverse social life is gone and 'tourism district' is the brand when people talk about this area. Besides, the social structure is also degrading with aged people, low-income renters.
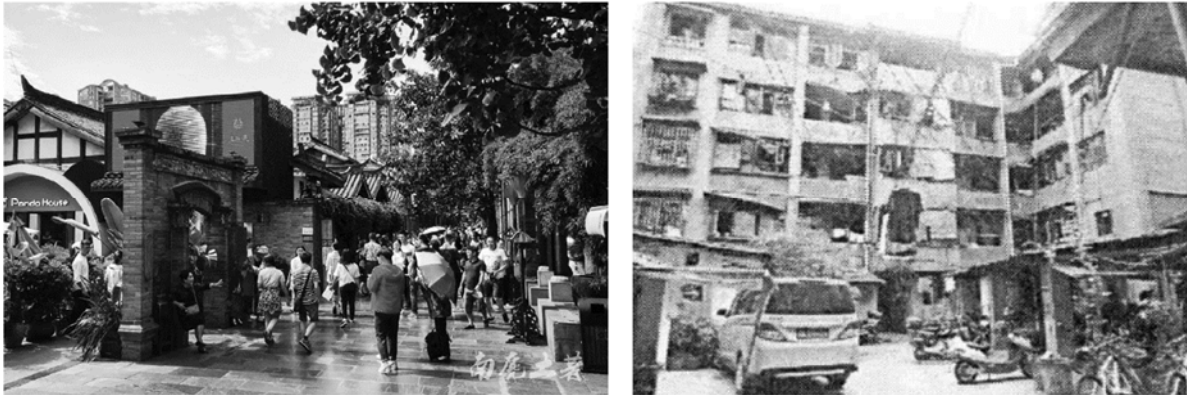

Fig. 2.5: Tourists and commercial activities occupied historical streets, and side by side is an overcrowded courtyard in the same neighbourhood source: http://www.sohu.com/a/232628328_100177186

2.3 Future Trends

According to the urban transformation programme and the latest Chengdu City Master Plan (2011-2020) published by the Chengdu Institute of Planning & Design, there are 60 streets which include almost all the streets of Shaocheng have been considered as key areas to present the characters and show the historical and cultural identities of the city centre. And based on the city development strategy published in 2016, the protection of these historical and traditional houses in Shaocheng was the foundation of later development. The future visions of the area will focus on bringing 'creativity, culture, and intelligence' to the local neighbourhood. And to be transformed as 'a new dynamic area' in order to show the identity of the city.

This has provided a comprehensive and strategic dynamic long-term plan that guides urban construction, development, and planning management within central city areas in the period from

2011 to 2020 and extends beyond. To carry out the plan, the informal settlement would be demolished for new apartments to welcome the new social groups. In addition, new developments like city museums, galleries, theatres and a new arena will be built in the district. All of these movements were aimed to make the neighbourhoods to accommodate the cultural and creative business in the near future.
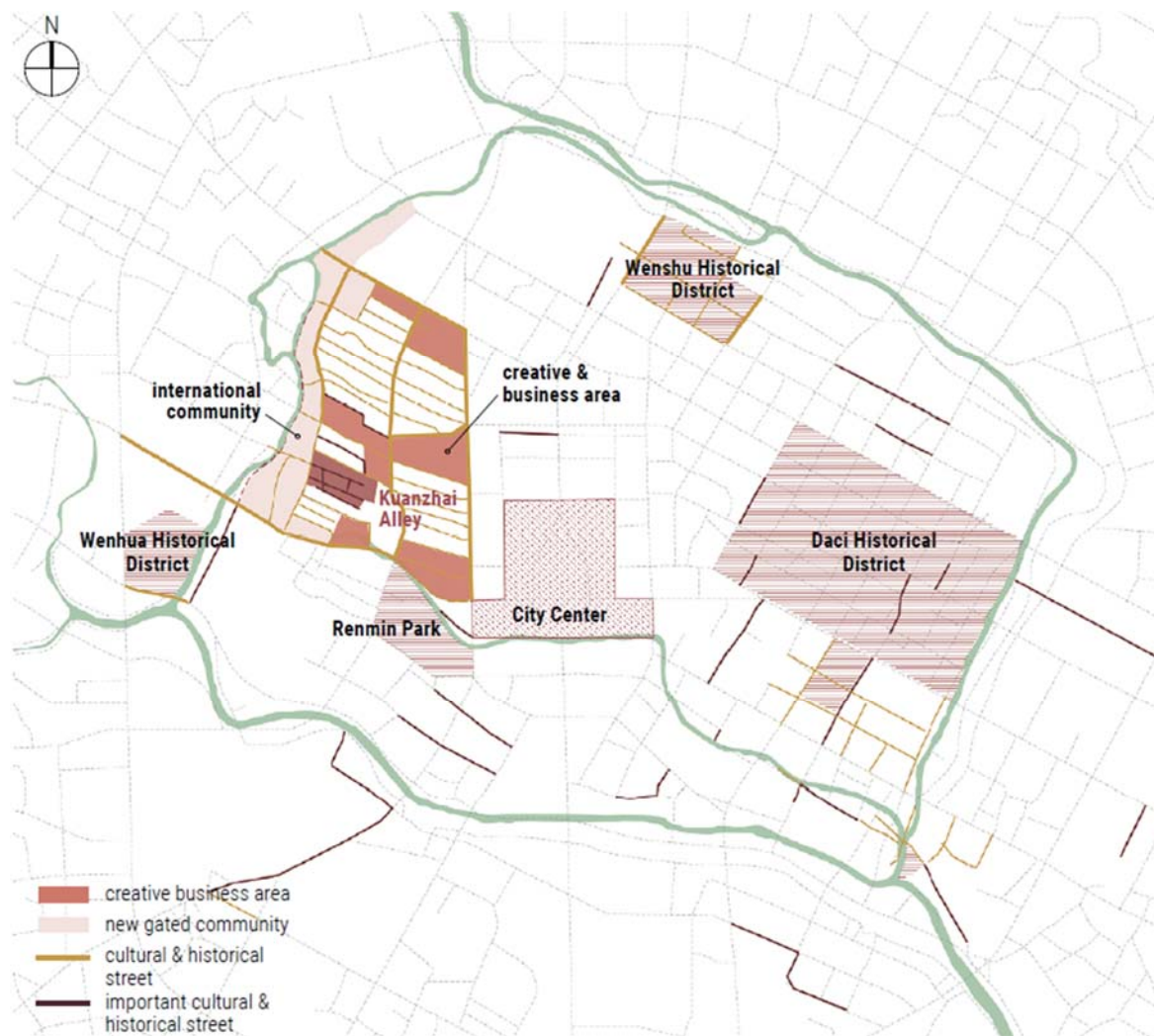

Fig. 2.6: Kuanzhai Alley surrounded by key developments in the district

The local government also took notice of the dilapidated environment, security risks, public revenue loss and a lack of social space and cohesion in the neighbourhood. As urbanisation continues, these 'shanty towns' in the historical area become eyesores in the modernised urban mosaic and obstruct development in what has become a downtown location with prime land value. The long-term policy visions and key principles asked for in-situ urbanisation and urban containment, and the promotion of

new development models of 'smart growth' in 'compact city' (Jabareen, 2006). For example, the latest regeneration plan planned for an extensive city-wide action of the swift demolition of informal structures, and give back spaces for public activities, as well as to improve local security and to increase the neighbourhood association. In parallel to that, several international high-end communities (figure 2.7) were planned to attract young talents and to improve creative business.
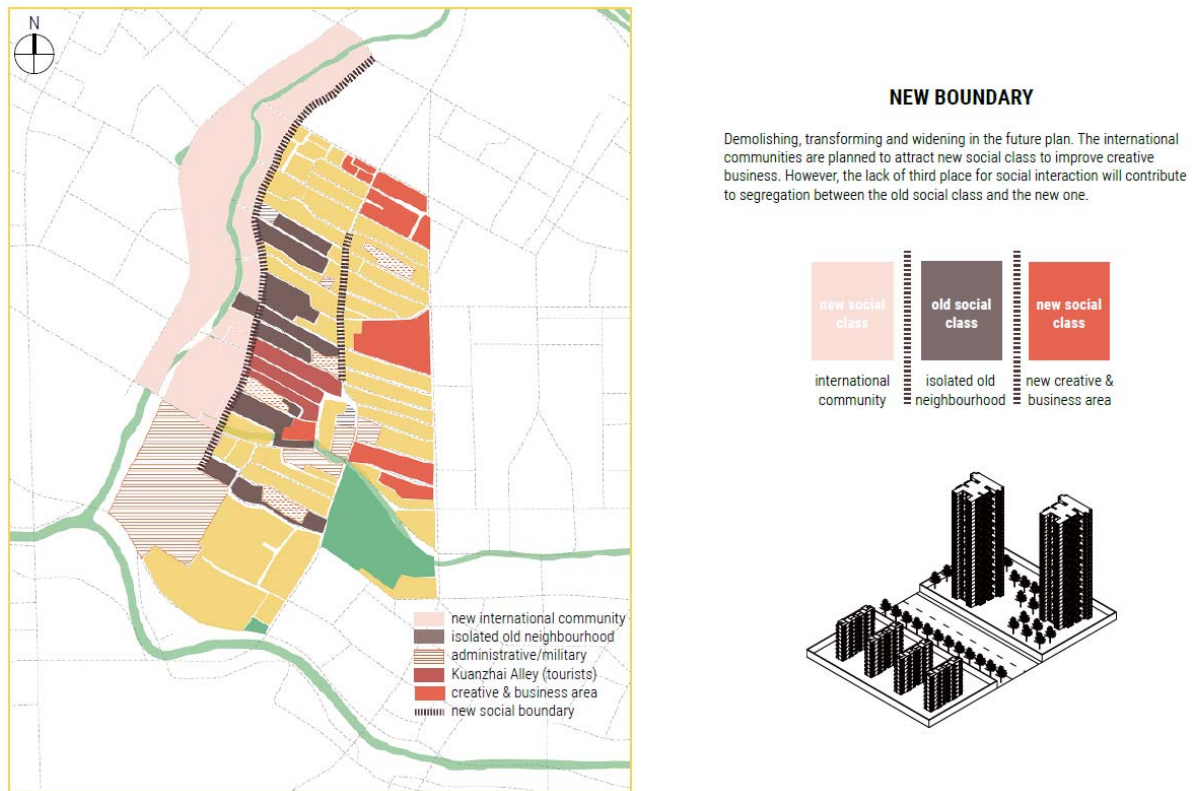

NEW BOUNDARY

Demolishing, transforming and widening in the future plan. The international communities are planned to attract new social class to improve creative business. However, the lack of third place for social interaction will contribute to segregation between the old social class and the new one.

Fig. 2.7: Kuanzhai Alley surrounded by key developments in the district

2.4 Conclusion

Almost every Chinese city is striving to be competitive and attractive, for economic and political reasons, and one common strategy is to revitalise the local areas and economy through historical and cultural-led urban redevelopment. Notably, there was a shift in the scale of conservation projects, from single buildings to larger urban areas, during the 1980s (Ruan, 2005: 31-37; Whitehand & Gu, 2007: 643-650), due to the rapid urbanisation process and a reawakening awareness of place-based heritage value.

Significantly, particularly in the context of urbanisation in China, UNESCO (undated) suggests that: "Heritage constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities disrupted by bewildering

change…". Unfortunately, however, the result has been that many decayed historical urban environments have been transformed into 'chic places' with questionable authenticity often under the official banner of historical and/or cultural conservation. All over China, there are many such examples of famous regenerated historic streets/districts, predominantly catering for tourists, which was very obvious in our study. However, the formulation and implementation of urban conservation plans, exhibited a 'top-down' government approach, in which the independence of the heritage profession and the applicability of those planning principles were doubtful (Qian, 2007). This has led to a dramatic social structure change in the local neighbourhood (figure 2.8) and the heritage conservation projects fail to assume a genuine sense of revitalisation due to a lack of community involvement or local community-oriented regeneration.

	👤	👤	👤	👤	👤	💡	👤	👤	👪
Qing Dynasty	Military family								
1958-1984		Celebrities	Educated young people	Migrant worker	Traders				
Current situation		Celebrities move out due to the degrading condition	Relocate their home to the new town	Migrant worker in old neighbrouhood	Traders working in tourism industry		Aged	Low-income renters	Tourists
Future trend			working in creative industry ?			Creative industry ?	Aged	Low-income renters	Tourists

targeting group: **Citizens**   targeting group: **Local residents**   targeting group: **Tourists**

Fig. 2.8: Evolution of social structures over time

In Shaocheng, the main commercial streets filled with complete rebuilt and the simple copying of historic forms and decoration together with the total removal of local inhabitants has transformed a decayed urban fabric into a chic tourist-oriented place. Significantly, these examples of urban gentrification typically led to the displacement of the actual living patterns of local residents and therefore much of the essence of the place (Smith, 2002). Thus, many original residents have moved out, the degrading of neighbourhood conditions have also forced many wealthy families to move to new towns. The majority of users of Shaocheng nowadays are tourists, the elderly and many low-income renters, which results in the growing social segregation of the old neighbourhood.

For regenerating the local area, a critical question is to how to respond to the socio-cultural authenticity of the living patterns and their associated physical forms (i.e. the courtyard houses and the streets) between the three fundamentally different historic periods in Shaocheng, Chengdu. Indeed, the continuity of the urban fabric during the Imperial period is typified by the prevalence of Confucianism and formed a richly textured community life that has left traces that can assist with the creation of a social and culturally sustainable future for the district. And courtyard houses, as an urban

settlement pattern, dominated Imperial China for almost three thousand years with their longevity demonstrating a perfect unity of social life and physical form. The socialist reform of the courtyard houses and new development of residential blocks, however, was a political violation of the private ownership of these properties with a short and relatively recent history (from the 1950s to the present), which was a violent and rapid reaction to housing shortages with the merits of the re-appropriation and still awaiting history's judgment in terms of its success.

Despite commercial gains and although marked as an important historical and cultural site, the current physical fabric of the Shaocheng fails to reflect such exalted social values that is exercised and sustained by the daily practice. Nor is there any social ideology embodied by physical form after more than one hundred years of trauma, which could be upheld by the whole of society concordantly, devotionally and inspirationally, as Confucianism was in the past. As such, it delivers lessons and indeed raises many further questions that can contribute greatly to the development of urban conservation research and practice particularly in relation to urban heritage. Therefore, we demand a socially and culturally-rooted response towards urban heritage conservation and new regeneration rules of the area, then the identification or evocation of strong socio-cultural foundations is a precondition.

Through this research-based design, we hope to implement third place co-designing with local residents to reconnect the historical social-spatial networks between Shaocheng neighbourhood and its surrounding urban environment, for building strong communities, improving the liveability of the neighbourhood and regenerating new identities. And this surge of new, genuine third places, is more likely to come from placemaking driven by local communities, rather than a change of policy (Storring, 2018), which provides a process of barefoot 'doing local development differently' from the bottom up, providing an important counterweight to more top down approaches.
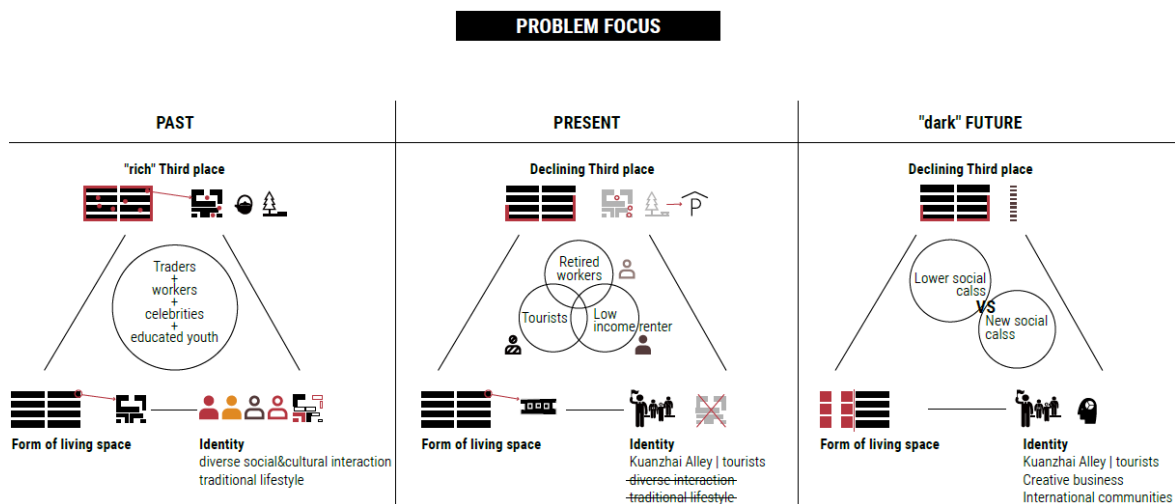

Fig. 2.9: Problem focuses during the past, present and future.

Chapter **3.∎**

Theoretical Framework

Photography: Small street vendor in Kuanzhai Alley, Chengdu.

Chapter 3. Theoretical Framework

The term "liveability" has become popular mainly thanks to liveability rankings and indices aiming to quantify urban quality. However, in this work, we argue that "liveability"—if interpreted appropriately—is more than just a statistical index or marketing tool. To provide a general overview on the variety of available definitions, this chapter focused on available literature review studies evaluating a large amount of urban environmental quality-related research.

3.1 Lefebvre, Soja & Oldenburg

The city space is fundamental to our lived experience, and that everyday experience is comprised of three interrelated aspects of space: social space, physical space and mental space (Watkins, 2005). In Lefebvre's book, he proposed a spatial triad suggesting an approach to organisational analysis that facilitates the contemplation of social, physical and mental spaces to provide an integrated view of organisation space. Based on Lefebvre's idea of dialectical interaction between society and space, Soja proposed a three-dimensional dialectic of physical - social - historical interdependent relationship (Shi, 2012) and reinterpreted Lefebvre in light of third space (Pratt,1998). From Soja's perspective, first space focuses on the physical (practical) space, second space focuses on mental space (space of concept or imagination) and the third space, the combination of practicality and imagination, acts as the role to 'reinvigorate their approaches to spatial knowledge with new possibilities' (Soja, 1996).

For Lefebvre, he tried to avoid the rigidity of categorical equivalence, for this reeked of what he saw as the deadening of dialectical reasoning in conceptual dualisms, in the construction of compelling binary oppositions that are categorically closed to new, unanticipated possibilities (Soja, 1996). Two terms are never enough: there is always the Other, a third term that disrupts, disorders, and begins to reconstitute the conventional binary opposition into an-Other that comprehends but is more than just the sum of two part (Soja, 1996). Thus, in Lefebvre's projects of the production of space, he injected a third dimension to the elements of historicality and sociality: an encompassing and problematic spatiality developing a rebalanced trialectic of spatiality - historicality - sociality. This is the keystone to introduce the idea of Third space that evolves within it. What Lefebvre concerned about are the triangle of physical, the mental and the social. He proceeds to fuse/integrate physical and mental space into social space through a critique of what he called a "double illusion" (Soja, 1996).

Soja thinks this idea powerfully attack on reductionism in spatial thinking which is an important part of 'thirding' process, according to her idea, in this first round of thirding, social space takes on two different qualities. It serves both as a separable field distinguishable from physical and mental space, and/also as an approximation for an all-encompassing mode of spatial thinking (Soja, 1996). Based on Lefebvre's idea, Soja developed the trialectics of spatiality and outlined what he called the third

space "retains the multiple meanings Lefebvre persistently ascribed to social space" which is "distinguishable from other spaces (physical and mental, or First and Second) and a transcending composite of all spaces". In Soja's understanding, third space is a product of a thirding of spatial imagination, the creation of another mode of thinking about space that draws upon the physical and mental spaces of the traditional dualism but extends well beyond them in scope, substance, and meaning (Li, 2018). Third space is considered as a "possible machine", a remembrance-rethinking-recovery of spaces lost (Soja, 1996).

Here it becomes clear that social, physical and mental elements cannot be considered individually when understanding the problems of space and city, and there is a need to integrate them in a complete system as they are interrelated to each other, in order to deal with the problems in the city. Based on the ideas of Lefebvre and Soja, the third space might contribute to a strategy of integrating social, physical and mental in a complete system, especially when focusing on social-spatial segregation (or social, physical) and the loss of identity (mental) problems. For Shaocheng, the focused problems are the liveability and identity issues which caused by social-spatial segregation, damaged historical buildings and overcrowded commercialised Kuanzhai Alley.

Thus, the theories of Lefebvre and Soja contribute to showing the necessity to consider social, physical and mental problems together, the third space (third as othering, or social) could be considered as a critical strategy to reconnect and recover first space and second space (or physical and mental space).

Extend to Oldenburg's definition of third place, it is a "public space that hosts the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1999). The problem it focuses on is that people become overly dependent on the first and second place - home and work. Thus, third place serves as a place where people can get away from it all and has specific characteristics that distinguish it from other places that people visit (Crick, 2011). It is on neutral ground with no host or hostess, a level place where people are equal, an inclusive place, there are regulars who bring it to life, the mood is playful, it is easy to get to and the hours are convenient, it has a low profile and can even be called plain, and it is a home away from home for patrons (Crick, 2011). For Chinese urban research and design field, it proposes a new concept of spatial form which helps to revitalise the monotonous public space, emphasizing the inclusiveness of public space for social interaction, and offers a possible solution for the fractured public space system and social-spatial segregation in the old town area (Feng, 2015). Thus, based on the ideas above, the concept of third place based on Oldenburg could contribute to a strategy to solve the problem on social space (third space), as it focuses on the places for social interaction and encourages the communication among different social groups. In this sense, combining with the ideas from Lefebvre and Soja on the relationship among third space (social space) and second space (mental

space), first space (physical space), it could begin with improving or redesigning a better third place (or public space system) to solve the problems in physical, mental and social space (figure 3.1).
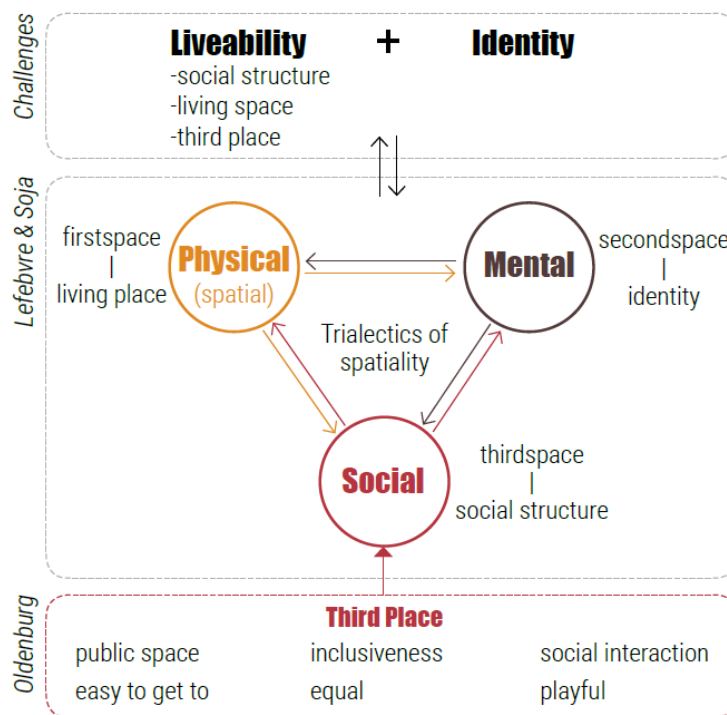

Fig. 3.1: Problem focuses during the past, present and future.

3.2 Concepts Overview

Liveability

The concept of liveability is introduced to explain the relationship between people and their living environment. According to Van Dorst, liveability is the appropriate relationship between people and their environment. There is the combination of perceived liveability and individual's perception of a place, the apparent liveability - the match between people and their environment and presumed liveability - about presumed conditions of liveability (Van Dorst, 2012). Based on the indicators Van Dorst has looked into which are:

1) Health and security (or safety): construction demands, road safety, indoor air quality, social safety, water pollution, crime, etc.

2) Material prosperity, income inequality, inequality in happiness: people prefer to live in a neighbourhood with a homogeneous group, for example in lifestyle, income or culture.

3) Social relationships

4) Control: social interaction/physical environment

5) Contact with the natural environment: green space quality

For this project, the elements used to examine the liveability level of Shaocheng are: road safety (road sections), income, culture, control over the physical environment (participation), open space, quality of infrastructures.

Heritage Value

The historical environment is a sharing treasure. People value this historic environment as part of their cultural and natural heritage. It reflects the knowledge, beliefs and traditions of diverse communities. It gives distinctiveness, meaning and quality to the places in which we live, providing a sense of continuity and a source of identity. It is a social and economic asset and a resource for learning and enjoyment (Drury & McPherson, 2008). In this sense, protecting heritage value means to reconcile its protection with the economic and social needs and aspirations of the people who live in it. In addition, the historical environment is essential to the cultural heritage and sense of identity of the old town area in many Chinese cities. Conserving the heritage of a place begins with an understanding and defining how, why, and to what extent it has cultural and natural heritage values: in sum, its significance. Only through understanding the significance of a place is it possible to assess how the qualities that people value.

Identity

Due to global trade, media, space flows and economic connections, the city planning has contributed to create great similarities between cities (Boussaa, 2017). Among many Chinese cities, there are strong similarities due to the city planning after 1949. As many cities aim to attract national and global markets through trade and tourism, they struggle to keep their cities distinctive and unique. Today, there is a growing recognition of the need for an individual city's identity in an emerging global world. Urban identity is a blend of the physical heritage, local culture and geographical context, overlaid with perceived remembrances. Furthermore, City identity is a combination of the aspirations and experiences of the citizens and those who visit. The sense of place and identity is reflected in an understanding of both the wider city region and specific physical places. For each city to find its authentic and distinctive identity in a 'placeless world' where the same brands occur on every high street, is the challenge". In short, urban identity refers to the local character of a place that makes it different and distinctive from other areas (Boussaa, 2017).

Chapter 4.

Site Analysis

Chapter 4. Site Analysis

4.1 Analysis Methods

This chapter focuses on the value and the limitation base on the real site study and user analysis in social, mental and physical aspects. Thus, the combined methods include mapping, site visits and interviews as shown in Figure 4.1.
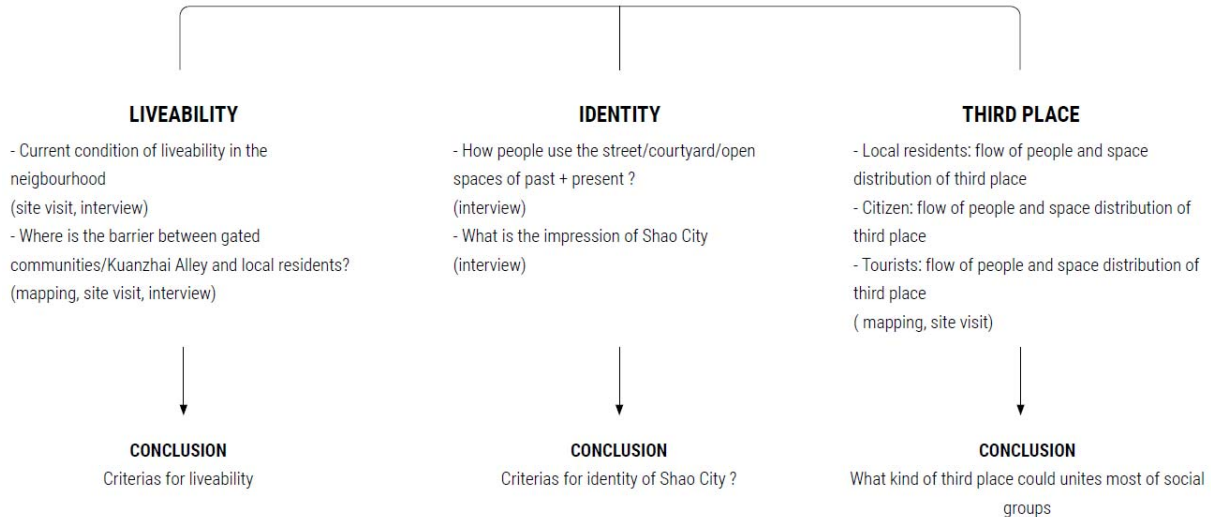
LIVEABILITY

- Current condition of liveability in the neigbourhood
(site visit, interview)
- Where is the barrier between gated communities/Kuanzhai Alley and local residents?
(mapping, site visit, interview)

IDENTITY

- How people use the street/courtyard/open spaces of past + present ?
(interview)
- What is the impression of Shao City
(interview)

THIRD PLACE

- Local residents: flow of people and space distribution of third place
- Citizen: flow of people and space distribution of third place
- Tourists: flow of people and space distribution of third place
(mapping, site visit)

CONCLUSION
Criterias for liveability

CONCLUSION
Criterias for identity of Shao City ?

CONCLUSION
What kind of third place could unites most of social groups

Fig. 4.1: Research methods for the site study.

Interview

Target Groups: 1) Tourists; 2) Citizen 3) Local vulnerable groups mostly the low-income renters and the elderly

Target Area (figure 4.2):

The reason the author chooses this area is that it contained most of the conflicts among different social groups: tourists (Kuanzhai Alley), low-income residents and middle-class families in gated communities.

Methods:

Worked with students, we conducted a survey on the satisfaction of Kuanzhai Alley on whether it has managed to show the cultural and historical identity of Shaocheng, and in the questionnaire, we asked what they really like and would keep/add to this area.

Fig. 4.2: Study Area

4.2 Liveability Analysis

Residents Satisfaction Surveys

The satisfaction of the neighbourhood environment from most of the local residents is relatively positive as shown in figure 4.3. Based on the interview, they are in general happy with public transport, as well as the education and health care systems in the local area. Some residents have some opinions on the retail price but they are satisfied with the commercial distribution in the area. On the negative side, many local residents complain about the overcrowded car parking which has influenced the biking and pedestrian. In addition, for the retired workers, they generally think the aging service

should be increased/improved, and in the old neighbourhood area, and reckon there is a lack of cultural and sports facilities.
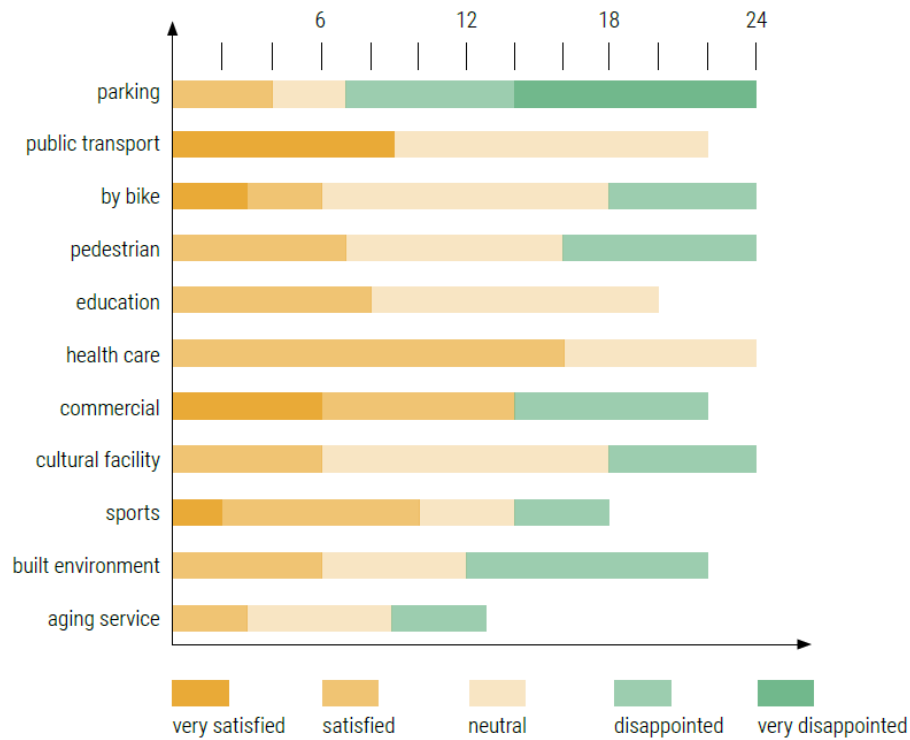

Fig. 4.3: Residents Satisfaction Surveys

Barriers

Based on the site visit and local interviews, there are some clear barriers between the old neighbourhoods and gated communities which contribute to the social-spatial segregation (figure 4.4), includes: 1) the waterfront area which has been largely occupied for vehicles, very minimal space left for the residents' daily activities nearby; 2) the same area which has also been separated by different gated communities with tall walls; 3) the barrier between the old neighbourhood and gated community 4) the barrier between the informal settlements, new high-rise apartment and the historical building.

It is worth to notice the gated community residents feel least integrated (social networking and interaction) compared to the other fragments aligning with the study by Sabatini and Salcedo (2007) where community integration performed poorly among the gated community residents. Also, the correlation analysis revealed a negative correlation between safety and community integration in the gated community fragment. This shows that gating tends to limit social networks with different social groups and residents of the other fragments (community integration). It agrees with the literature on gated communities (Blakely and Snyder 1997; Caldeira 2000; Landman 2000, 2002, 2004; Morgan

2013) that creating territorial spaces, gating, building fences and walls and personalising the environment could reduce the fear of crime and increase the feeling of safety but undermines the development of social networks and interactions. However, it is worth noting that these interactions are between residents in the gated community with residents in other fragments (planned non-gated and historical areas) in Shaocheng (figure 4.5).
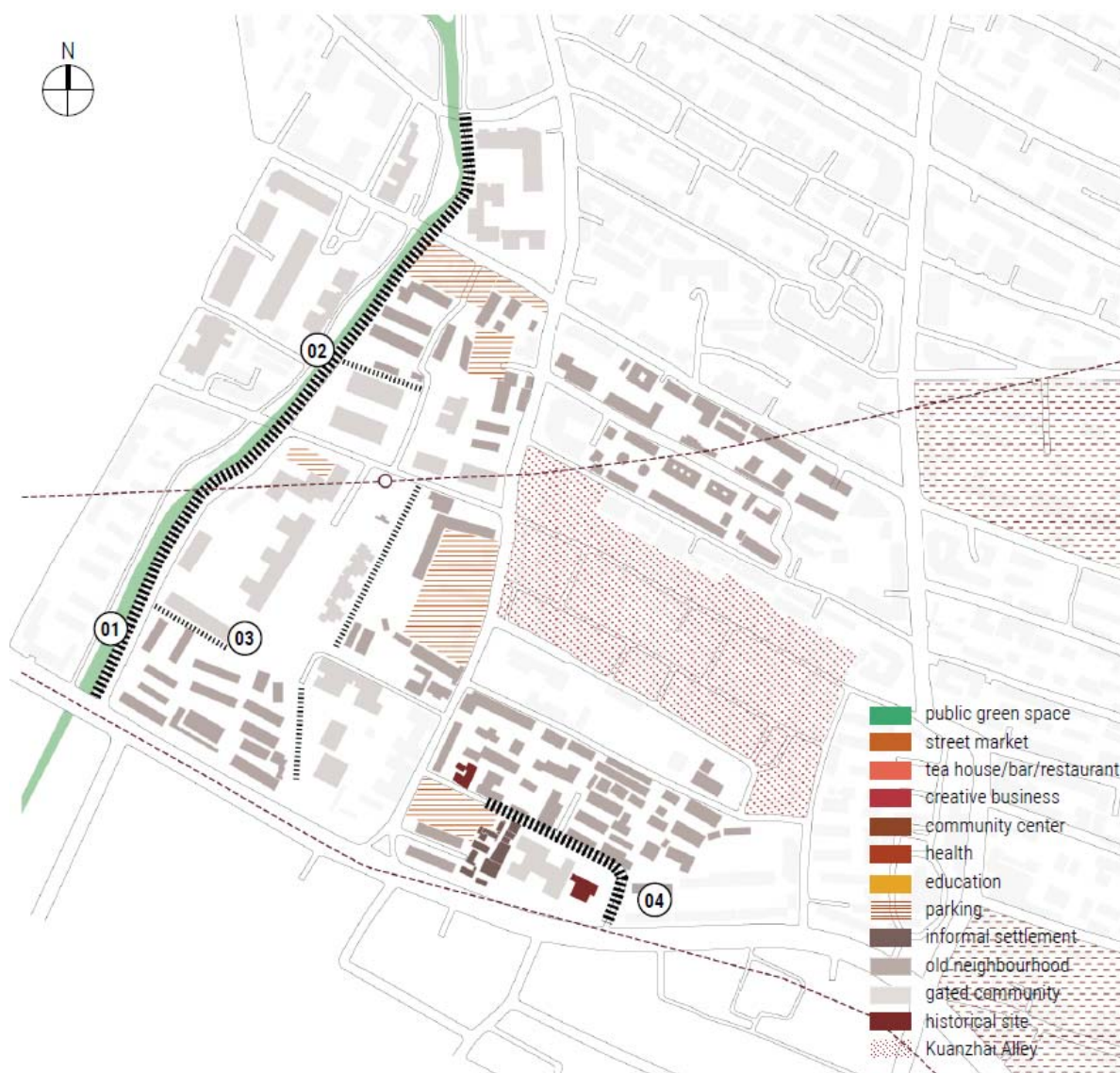

Fig. 4.4: Barriers on the map: 1) waterfront, 2) waterfront, 3) neighbourhoods: gated community vs informal settlement 4) neighbourhoods: informal settlements vs height rises vs historical area

01.waterfront

occupied by car parking
no waterfrom entertainment

02.waterfront

narrow walking path

03.neighbourhoods

gated community vs.
old neighbourhood with informal
constructions

04.neighbourhoods

informal settlements vs.
high rise appartment vs.
historical building

informal settlement

historical building & high rise appartme

Fig. 4.5: On-site photos on local barriers

4.3 Identity Analysis

What shapes the identity?

In this part, all the key elements that shape the identity of Shaocheng, as shown in the diagram: 1) courtyards; 2) featured built environment, which includes the street structure, historical houses, construction materials and the special trees which help generate the identity for Shaocheng; 3) the local social structure, includes the residents' daily activities and interaction. As well as for 4) cultural heritage aspects, like how these activities are being organised, what are their impacts on shaping the unique local identity, which will helpful for framing third place interventions and place-making strategies.

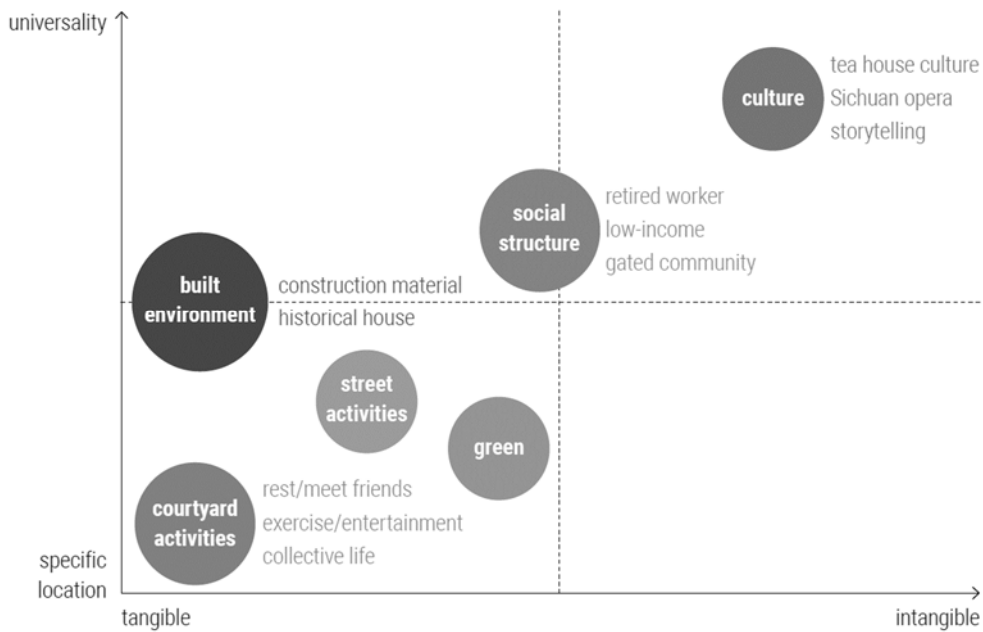**Fig. 4.6:** Key elements

1)   Courtyard and courtyard activities

Fig. 4.7: Courtyard space

Fig. 4.8: Courtyard activities

The Kuanzhai Alleys before its redevelopment in 2003 lost much of its Qing dynasty look due to residents' alternations (Ji, 2011&16). Moreover, some traditional courtyard houses were turned into collective dormitories and shops. In 2003 the area had acquired layers of alterations. Such alternations undoubtedly changed some of the alleys' Qing-dynasty architectural style, but they also enriched the alleys' function as a vernacular residential district that was home to a diversity of social classes: teachers, professionals, migrant workers, and even some prominent cultural elites of Chengdu lived in the Kuan and Zhai Alleys' courtyards (Ji, 2011). The richness of the alleys' urban history is manifested in the different social classes and the layers they had created for this historic site. In terms of the tangible and material aspects of the development plan, with the introduction of such overtly modern materials as glass and the rebuilding of many residential courtyards, the material integrity of the district is compromised. In the new Kuan and Zhai Alleys, new bricks, steels and glass fill many courtyards-turned-bars, tea houses and restaurants

2) Built environment – Street structures

Fig. 4.9: Main streets

necessary activities
- restaurants
- shops

Fig. 4.10: Main streets activities

Fig. 4.11: Neighbourhood streets

social activities
- meet friends/chats

commercial activities
- retail
- traders

Fig. 4.12: Neighbourhood streets activities

In the Qing dynasty, streets were renowned for their peaceful ambience and garden-like beauty, as the Chinese author Fu Chongju describes: "Within the [area], the scenery was very tranquil, the flowers and trees lush … and this place lifts up one's spirit" (in Ji 2011, 10). Urban residents "used the street as their shared space for everyday commercial, recreational, and ceremonial events" in the area

(Wang 2003, 2). The street was an important public space to bring about modern change and political reform in Chengdu. With a full range of activities and cultural events taking place on the streets, from outdoor teahouses to local opera performances to peddlers, urban commoners shape their own city.

The idea that street culture was central to public life and community solidarity in the area was also stated by interviewed residents of the Kuanzhai Alleys, as they all identified the communal spirit embedded in the area as a defining cultural character of the alleys before the 2003 transformation. For example, several households lived in one courtyard, neighbours would take care of each other, and everyone was in a harmonious relationship with each other. One interviewee also pointed out that the street was "a central part of our life, as peddlers would travel through the alleys at dusk to sell things to us, and basic life amenities were all located in or near the alleys – it was very convenient to live here."

Yet contemporary planners seem to hold contempt for this historic identity and have dismissed the urban commoners' version for the local neighbourhood as a place of flourishing street culture. Urban planners favour an elite version of Shaocheng as a city with a "spirit of progress" by introducing high-end modern commercial sectors into this heritage site. This future-oriented transformation of the Kuanzhai Alleys has radically reinvented the spiritual value of this site: it has changed the alleys from a place of community solidarity to a cultural hub for the middle class and upper-middle class consumption. The current restaurants and teahouses on the alleys (main streets) offer expensive options that cater to the middle and upper-middle classes (figure 4.10). In addition, many of the current commercial occupants of the alleys have installed cultural elements that depart radically from the cultural past of the streets, such as a beer shop with a giant bust of what seems to be Karl Marx and another bar with Christmas trees, which would be recognised and favoured by the middle class, to attract targeted consumers

The neighbourhood streets, on the contrary, do preserve the traditional value of communal life and street culture enjoyed by the alleys' residents (figure 4.12). Contrary to the consumer-focused approach, we believe a community-focused approach is needed that centres on historic memory and pays more attention to how the transformation project may affect not only the future consumers of main streets, but more importantly, the residents and "owners" of a historic quarter.

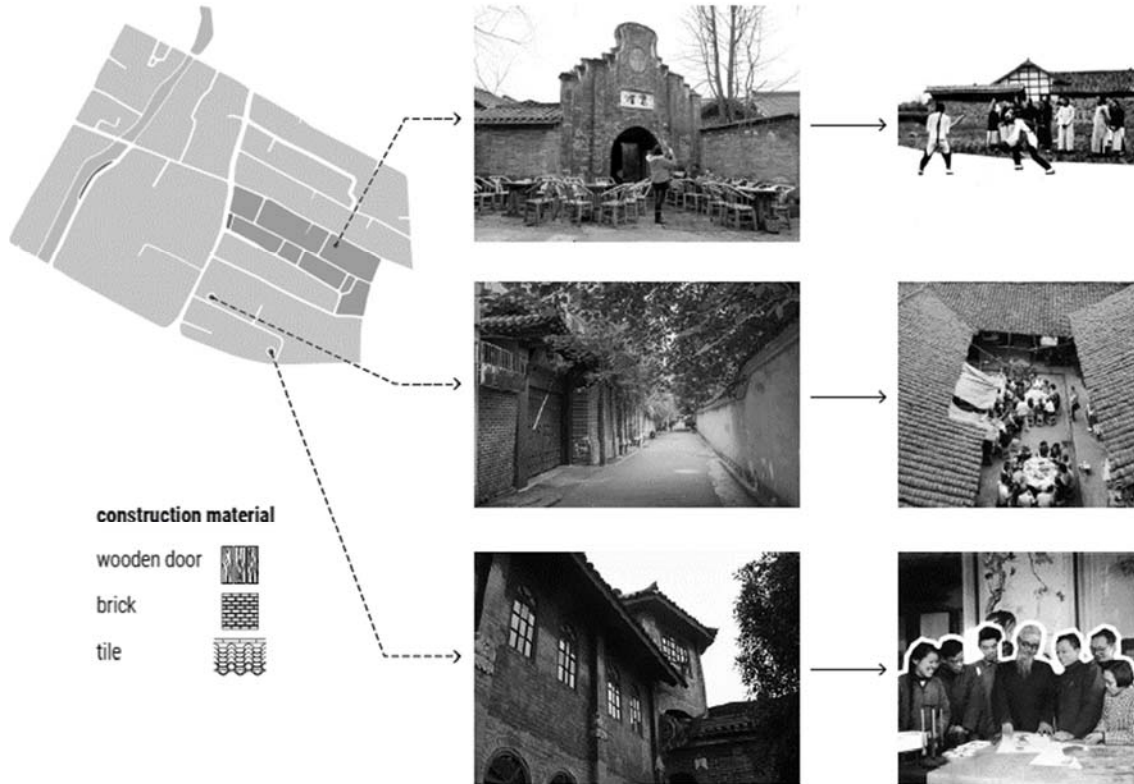*3) Built environment + Social & Cultural structures*

construction material

wooden door

brick

tile

Fig. 4.13: Built environment

tea house culture
people enjoy spend their
time with friends having
tea and rest.

storytelling
the traditional
entertainment activity in
Chengdu, usually in tea
house.

chess/brid
people especially aged
people love chess playing
and have a walk with their
pet

street trader
for most of reisdents,
the street traders are the
childhood memory for
the diverse products and
the moment sharing with
friends.

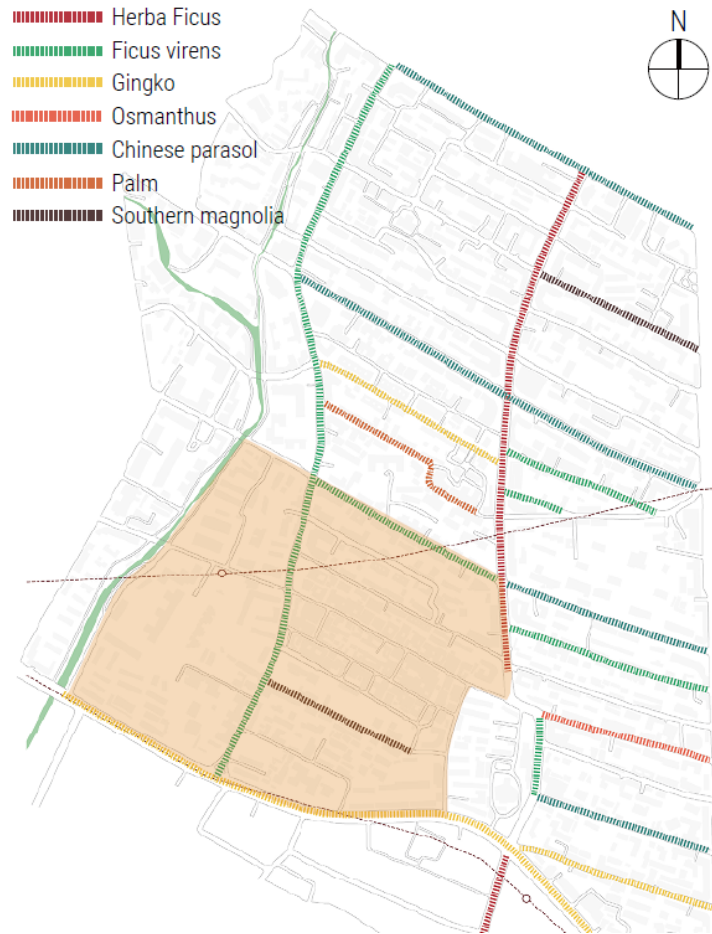**Fig. 4.14:** Culture as the identity

Fig. 4.15: Tree map

4.4 Third Place Analysis

The purpose of the third place in Shaocheng is to reconnect the people in the local area as well as improve the liveability of the neighbourhood and bring back the identity. According to this idea, places which could encourage social communication would be considered important and, at the same time, shops and streets would also be regarded as necessary criteria when analysing the current third place in Shaocheng.

For this project, the purpose of third place is to reconnect the social gap between different groups, improve the liveability and regenerate the new identity/strength the old identity. Therefore, the third places in the project are the places which could encourage the social communication, make the life more convenient for the residents and reflect the local character of the area which include the indoor space like shops, restaurant, tea house, community centre and also the outdoor space like courtyards, streets and public parks.

Characters

sociability

uses & activities

access & linkages

comfort & image

neutral ground

inclusive place

conversation

accessibility

regulars

a low profile

playful

a home away from home

adaptability

diversity

Types

Commercial
- restaurant/pub/cafe
- book store
- hair salon
- durg store

non-Commercial
- post office
- park
- street
- church
- library
- community center

→ **Third place**

Indoor
- restaurant
- retail shops
- tea house/pub/cafe
- community center
- library/museum

Outdoor
- courtyard
- street
- open green space
- square

Fig. 4.16: Third place structure in Shaocheng
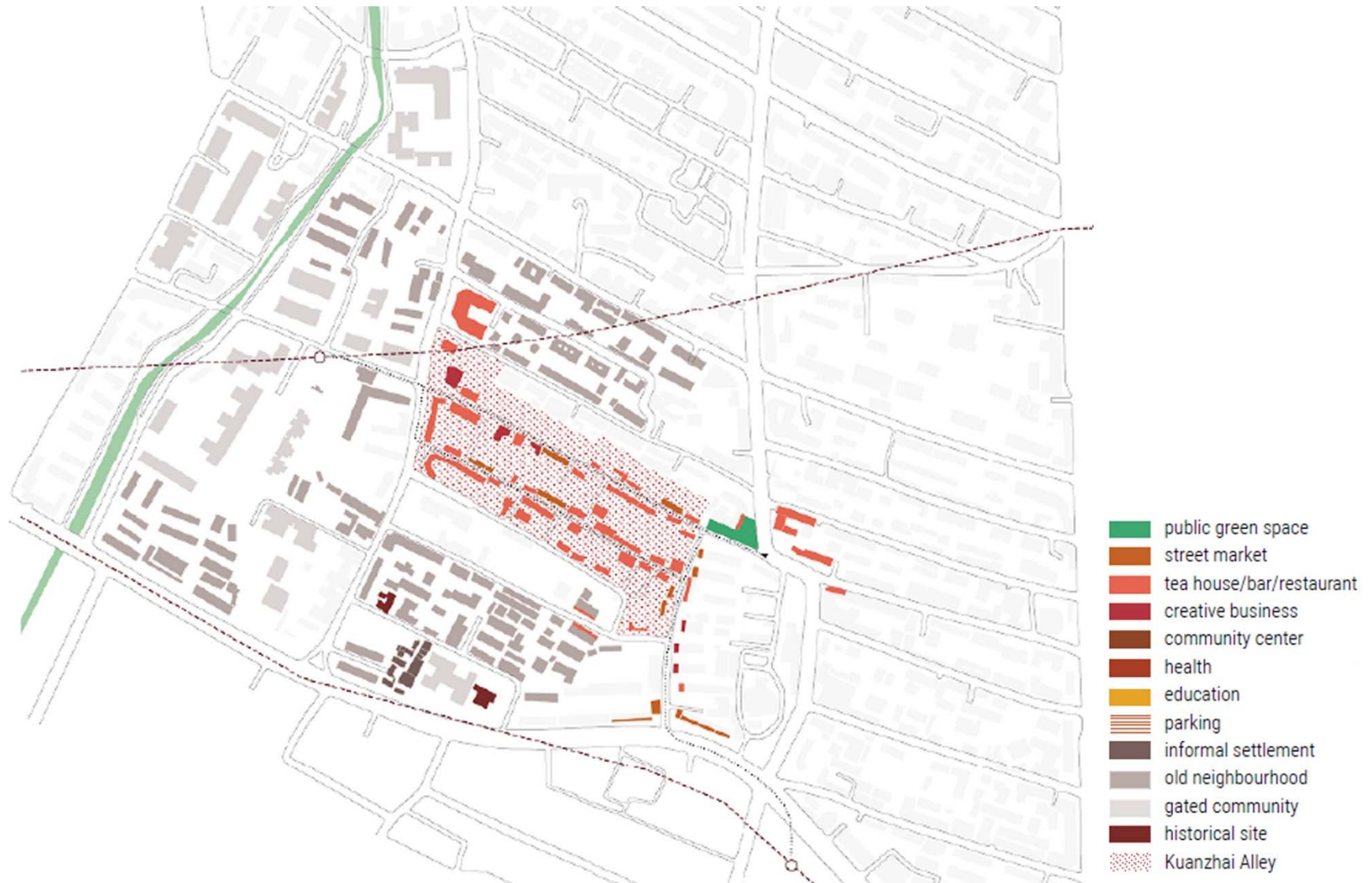
Fig. 4.17: Third place mapping for tourists

public green space
street market
tea house/bar/restaurant
creative business
community center
health
education
parking
informal settlement
old neighbourhood
gated community
historical site
Kuanzhai Alley
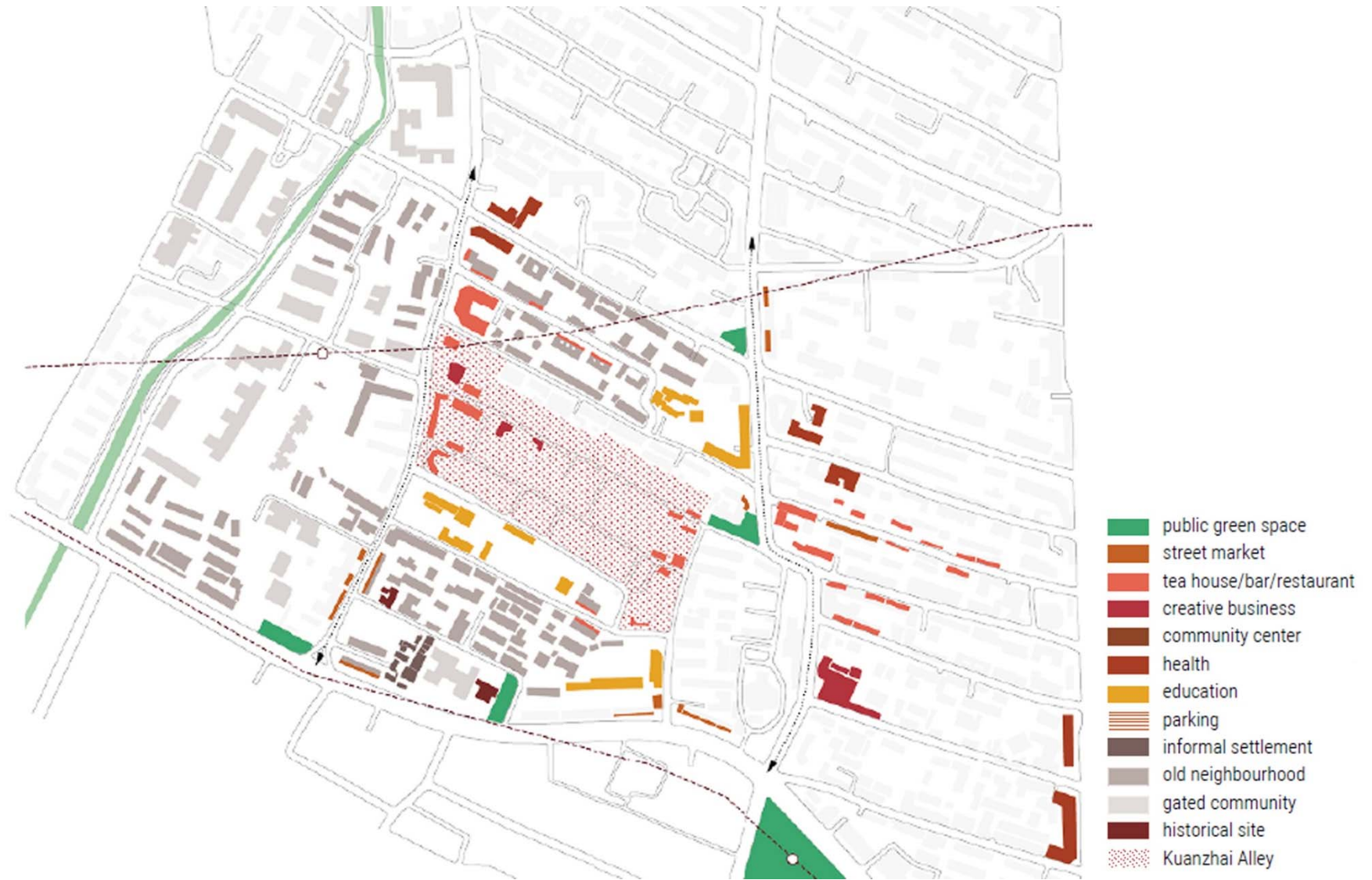
Fig. 4.18: Third place mapping for citizens

Legend:
- public green space
- street market
- tea house/bar/restaurant
- creative business
- community center
- health
- education
- parking
- informal settlement
- old neighbourhood
- gated community
- historical site
- Kuanzhai Alley

Fig. 4.19: Third place mapping for local vulnerable groups

Legend:
- public green space
- street market
- tea house/bar/restaurant
- creative business
- community center
- health
- education
- parking
- informal settlement
- old neighbourhood
- gated community
- historical site
- Kuanzhai Alley

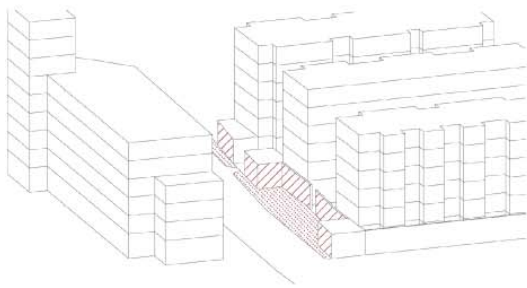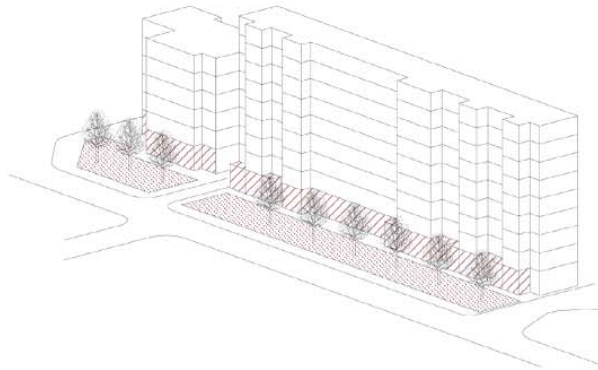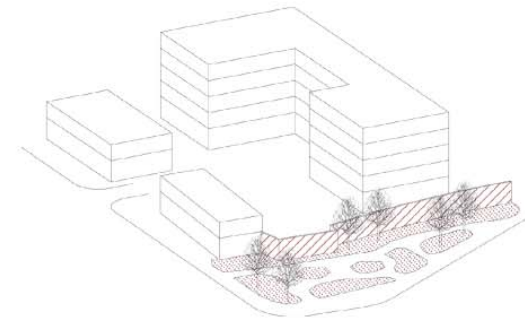**eating** **shopping** **short break** **chat** **exercise**

Fig. 4.20: Third place activities includes necessary activities like eating, shopping, commuting and optional activities like having a chat with friends, short breaks, playing chess or exercise

wall + ground floor **green + ground floor** **green + wall**
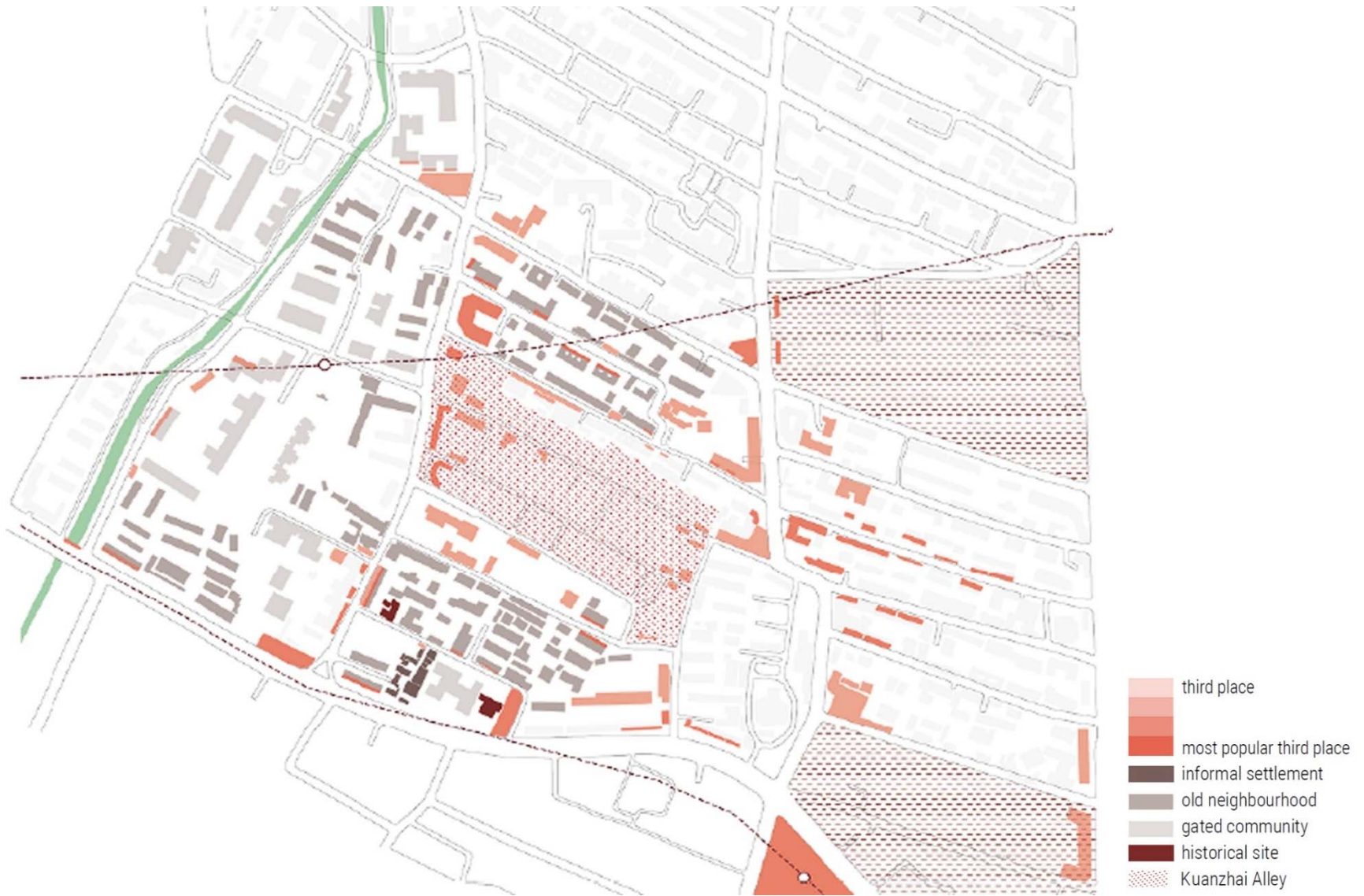
Fig. 4.21: Locations of above activities

Fig. 4.22: Third place mapping with integrated social groups

third place

most popular third place
informal settlement
old neighbourhood
gated community
historical site
Kuanzhai Alley

Legend:

- tourists
- citizen
- retired workers
- renters
- gated community
- third place
- most popular third place
- informal settlement
- old neighbourhood
- gated community
- historical site
- Kuanzhai Alley

Fig. 4.23: Pedestrian movement based on different social groups

Legend:
- third place
- most popular third place
- informal settlement
- old neighbourhood
- gated community
- historical site
- Kuanzhai Alley

Fig. 4.24: Walkability analysis

eduacation

public green space
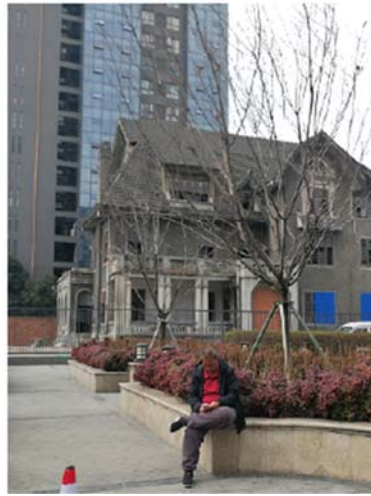
street market

bar & tea house

street retails + green space

restaurant

Fig. 4.25: On-site photos capturing third places in the area

4.5 Conclusion: The Spatial Development Framework

Through the site analysis with interviews, three main planning approaches were identified in order to create a spatial framework to improve the development of third places with the local urban area in Shaocheng. Table 4.1 depicts the applicable design elements and considerations of each selected planning approach as below.

Approach	Design Element	Consideration
Placemaking and Identity	Access and Linkage	Movement patterns, inclusiveness, network linkages, connectedness to surroundings, visibility, entrance and exits
	Comfort and Image	Safety, maintenance and cleanliness, public furniture and facilities, convenience, pedestrian (eye-level) scale
	Uses and Activity	Characteristics incorporated, activity, function, regularity
	Sociability	Sense of place, social activity, diversity, interactivity
Liveability Design	Vibrant and Diverse	Sociable stage, centralized amenities, mixed-uses, attraction elements, variety
	Temporary	Temporary elements, activities and enhancements. Easy to change in order to provide for variety and ensure regularity
	Compatibility	Linkage with surroundings and need within specific locations
	Creativity	Creative design, surface variety, texture, material, colour, shapes, city art
	Pedestrian Friendly	Car-free zone, walkability, bicycle friendly
	Design	Consistency, durability, sustainability
Site-specific Urban Design	Multi-scale	Integration between land-use patterns, benefitting city, neighbourhood and human scale
	Multi-functional	Combined services, benefit people and the environment and improve human-nature interaction
	Aesthetics and Authenticity	Visually beneficial, with the notion of authenticity covers physical, social, economic and environmental perspectives

Table. 4.1: Spatial Development Framework with design elements and considerations

third place
most popular third place
informal settlement
old neighbourhood
gated community
historical site
Kuanzhai Alley

Fig. 4.26: Pedestrian movement based on different social groups
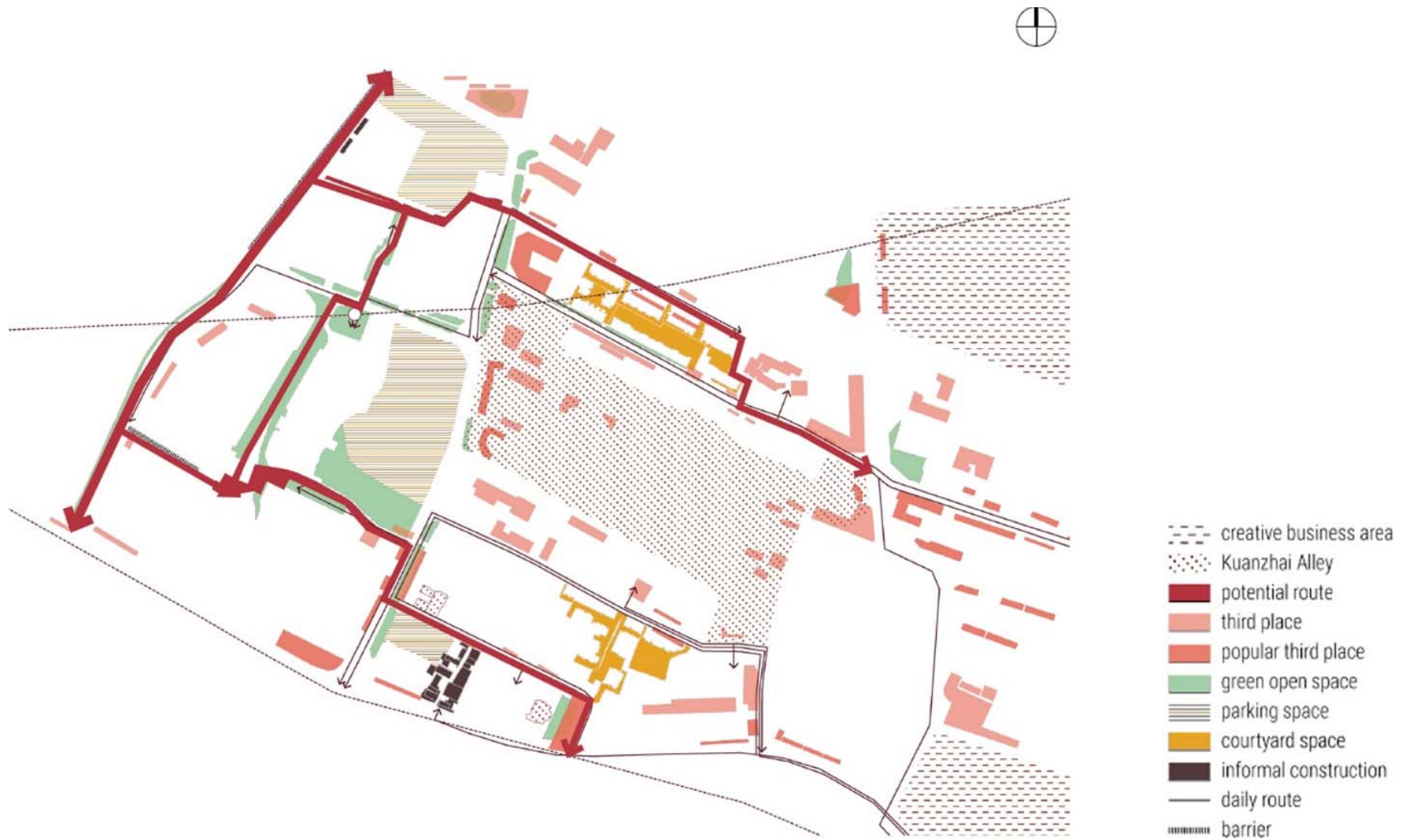
Fig. 4.27: Pedestrian movement based on different social groups

Legend:
- creative business area
- Kuanzhai Alley
- potential route
- third place
- popular third place
- green open space
- parking space
- courtyard space
- informal construction
- daily route
- barrier

Chapter **5.**

Third Place Design

Photography: Early morning street breakfast market.

Chapter 5. Third Place Design

The analysis of the site and the spatial design framework provide design principles for us to work with. We believe the strategy of future development and the third space design for each phase should incorporate some of these design principles.

The third place system (figure 5.1) for the local residents primarily aims at providing inclusive public space for gated communities, the elderly and low-income renters. Due to the high consumption level in Kuanzhai Alley, the housing density and local rental price, most of the new third places as shown on figure 5.1 locates in the neighbourhood area for providing user-friendly spaces for the local communities. For example, we redesigned the courtyards in order to improve the liveability in the neighbourhood area as well as to bring back an authentic local identity for the Shaocheng neighbourhood. Then we added the new functions like day-care centres & tea houses (figure 5.2) and increased ground floor space (figure 5.3) for urban green or communal space, which could act as new connections between the gated communities and old heritage neighbourhoods. In the meanwhile, new green space & the waterfront with new accesses and connections will help to establish a better network for more social interactions among the local residents.
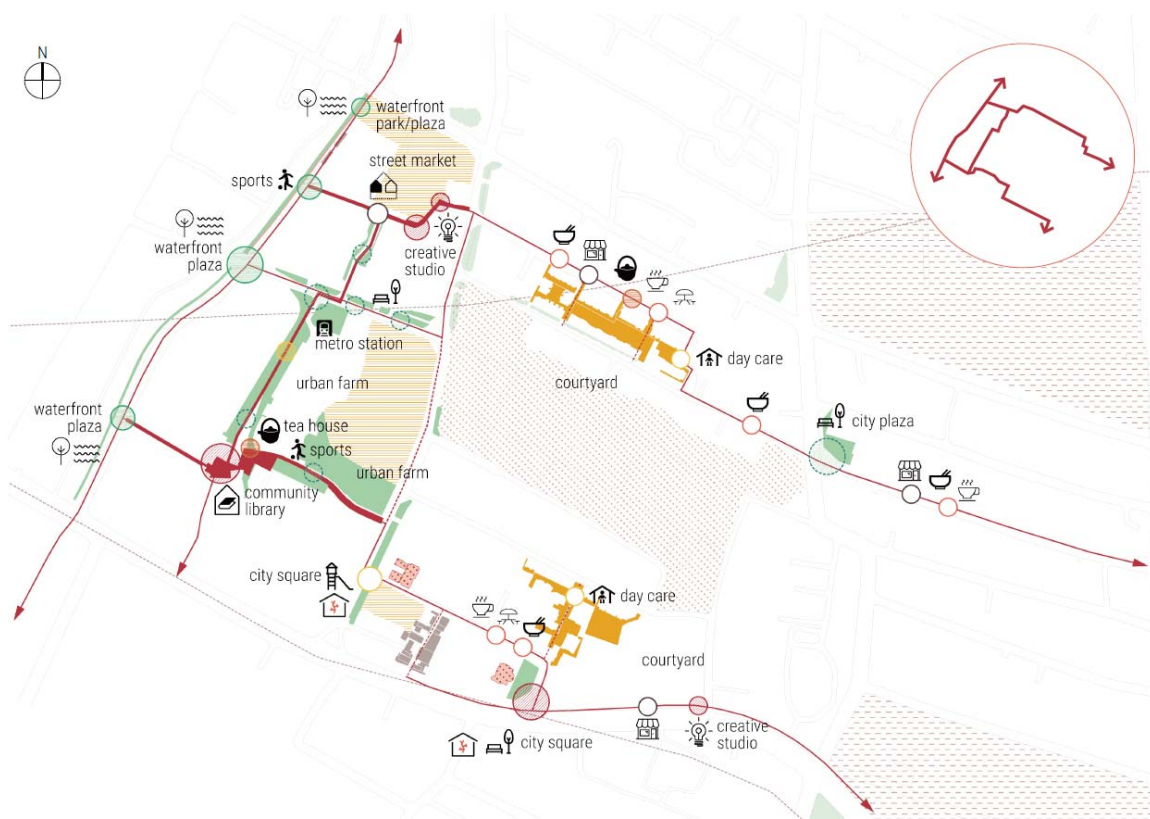

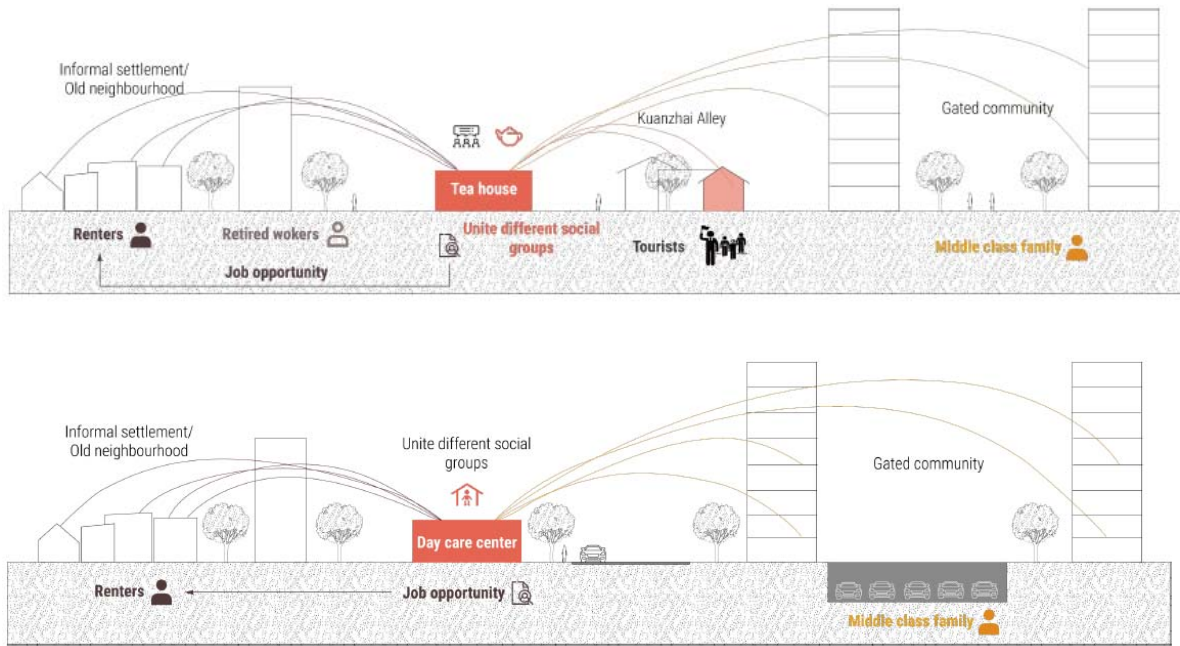**Fig. 5.1:** Embedding new accesses and connections within the local area

Fig. 5.2: Communal spaces (day-care centre and tea house) as connections between different social groups.
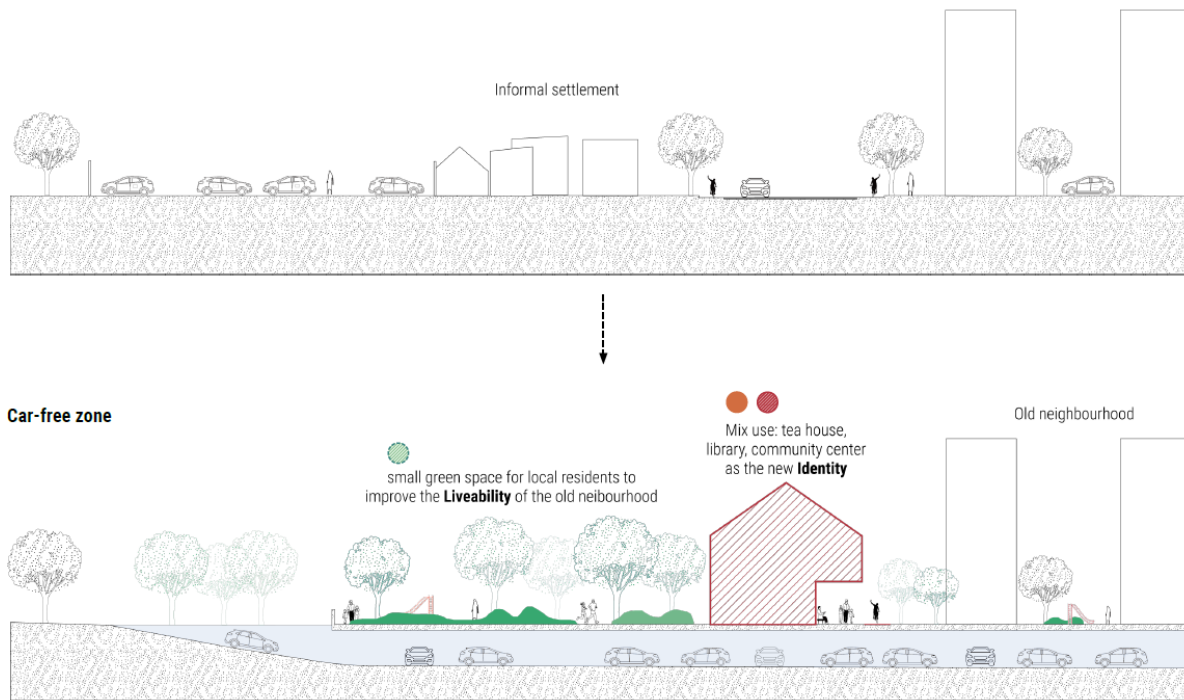

Fig. 5.3: The Planning of the underground parking to improve the environmental situation and to free the ground space for local communities

In order to solve the problems like the lack of car parking and open space especially in the old neighbourhood area, we embedded the idea of co-living with shared spaces and facilities such as (roof) gardens, playgrounds, co-working spaces and urban living rooms, as shown on figure 5.4, these accessible third space will be attractive to educated young talent to move into the area. We also reckon that instead of build massive underground parking space, creating new public roofs and new courtyard spaces could be more feasible, and the planned strategy could be extending to urban farm ideas or developing a circular economy based around local resources.
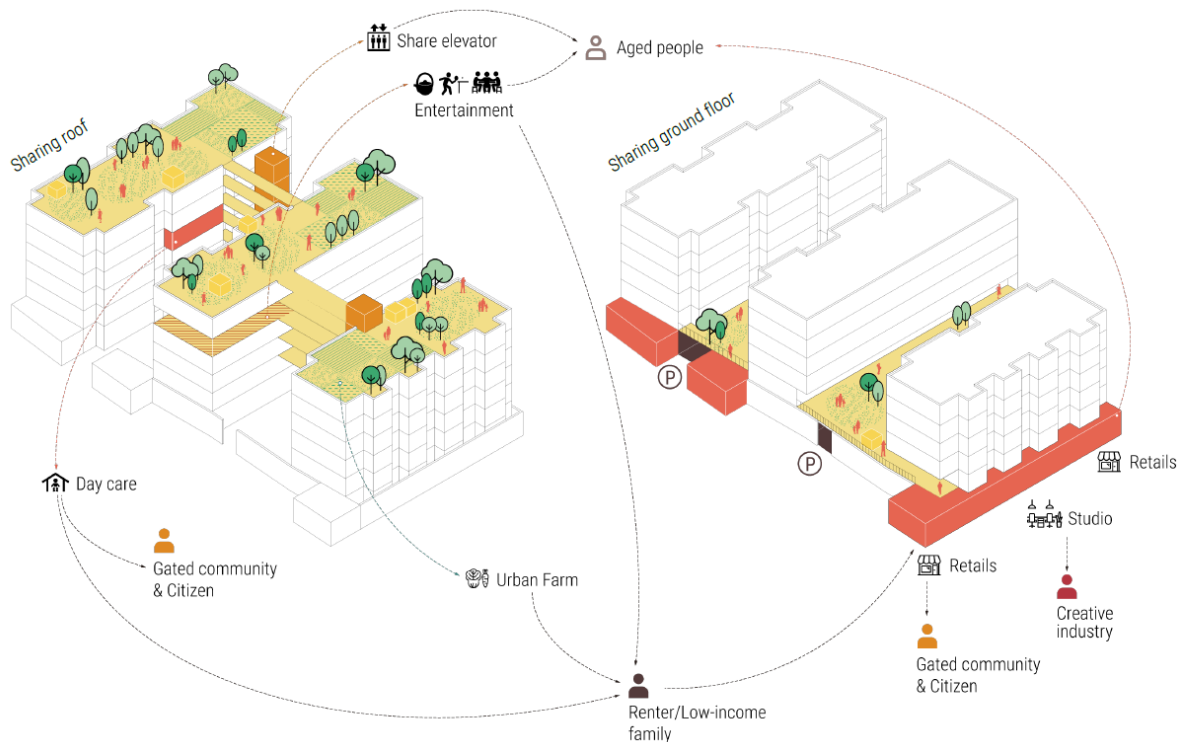

Fig. 5.4: Co-living spaces added to gated communities which will be free to access locally in supporting vulnerable people.

From the old neighbourhood area, we see tall walls as harsh boundaries of each gated community that separate these residential neighbourhoods from the street network. The new vision (figure 5.5) tries to design with existing walls in order to achieve new public realm vitality for vibrant and diverse streets network and more permeable clusters. The area is filled with several large clusters and a dense street network connecting them. However, from the site analysis, we noticed that most of the local streets are composed of several high capacities which are usually occupied by heavy traffic, boundary walls and are hostile to pedestrian movement and cyclers. The newly proposed tries to open harsh walls, integrating with seating and bicycle sheds, as well as planting vegetation for a more attractive urban landscape. The defined network of new public spaces along streets could potentially encourage

the pedestrian and cyclers and present the inhabitants with opportunities to have alternative mobility possibilities. Also, the network combining the streets, courtyards and neighbourhood entrances (figure 5.6) provides a common vision of the public spaces for the historic centre, connects new developments and clusters and encourages investment along these spatial channels.
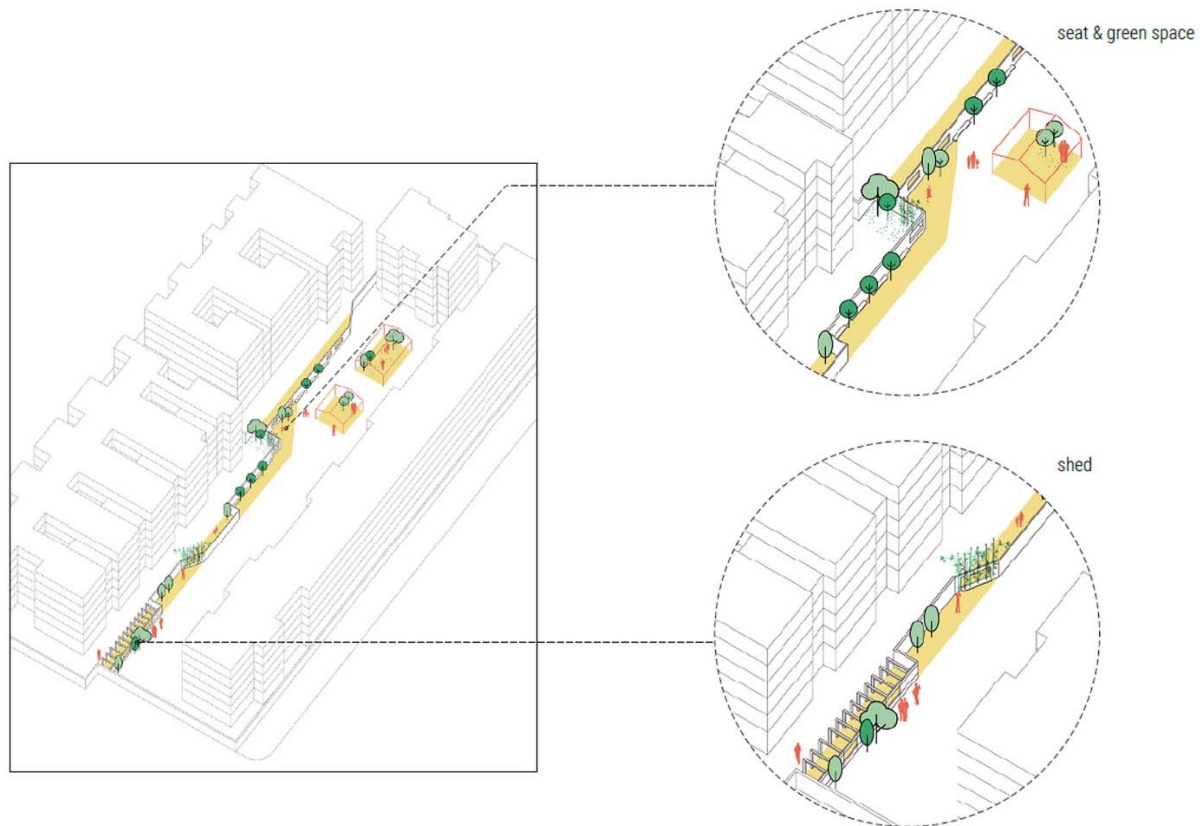

Fig. 5.5: Pedestrian friendly green space with seats and bicycle sheds along the boundary of gated communities.

In a future scenario, we hope Shaocheng will be consolidated as the heart of the cultural, economic and historical activities at the urban level. The strategic urban regeneration on third place will become the foundation of a larger plan promoted by the potentialities of better integration between mobility systems, urban networks and identity assets from the local to the metropolitan even to the national level. The strategic plan and third place design will serve as a scaffold to extend the range of socio-economic opportunities for the diverse set of actors by recognising their necessities and aspirations in order to promote higher levels of socio-spatial cohesiveness. As a final outcome the new compact, mixed and diverse urban network will contribute in the short term, with the meaningful and functional strength of Kuanzhai Village as the most valuable place in the city, and in the long term, with the maturity and consolidation of a more inclusive and competitive emerging model for historic centres.
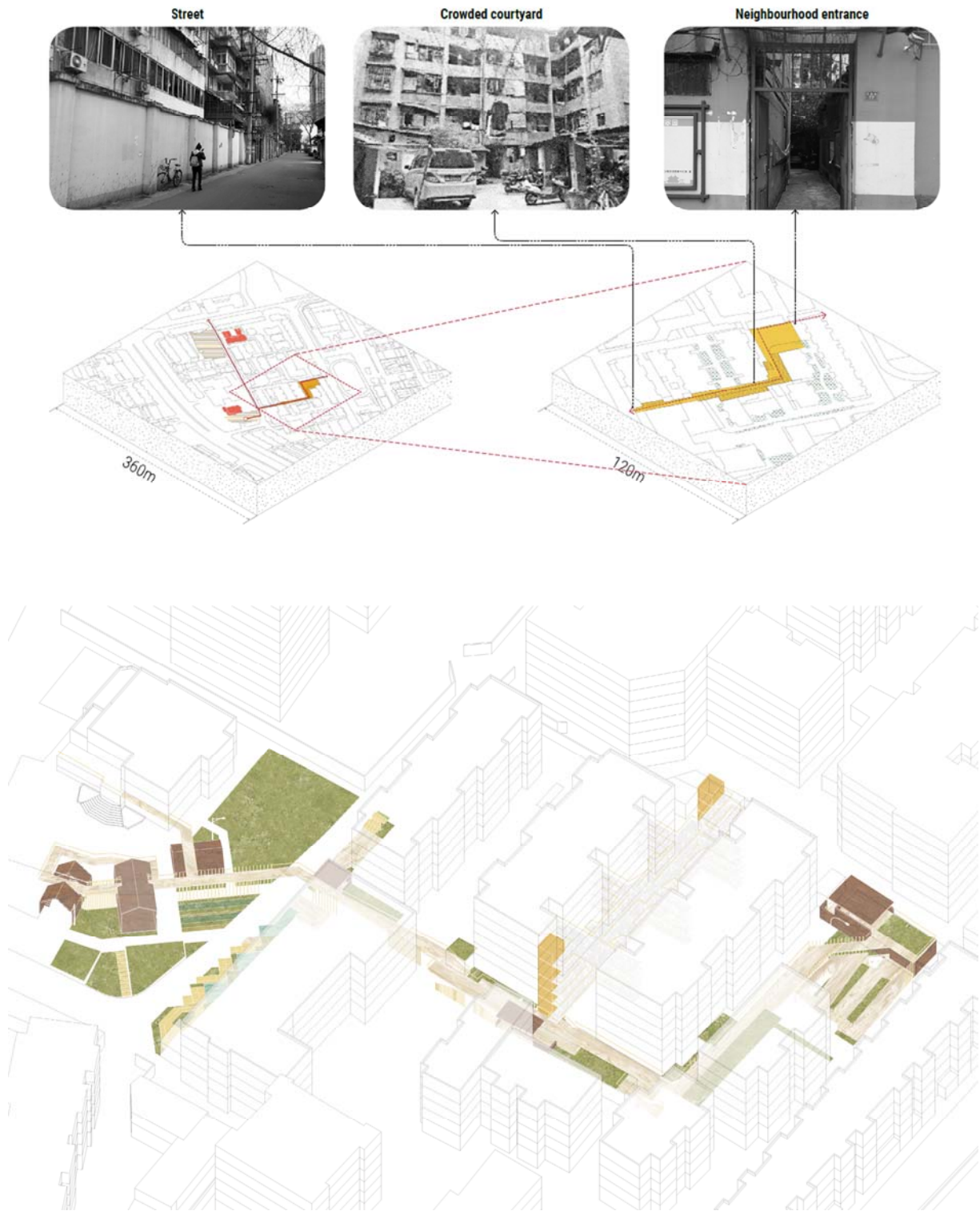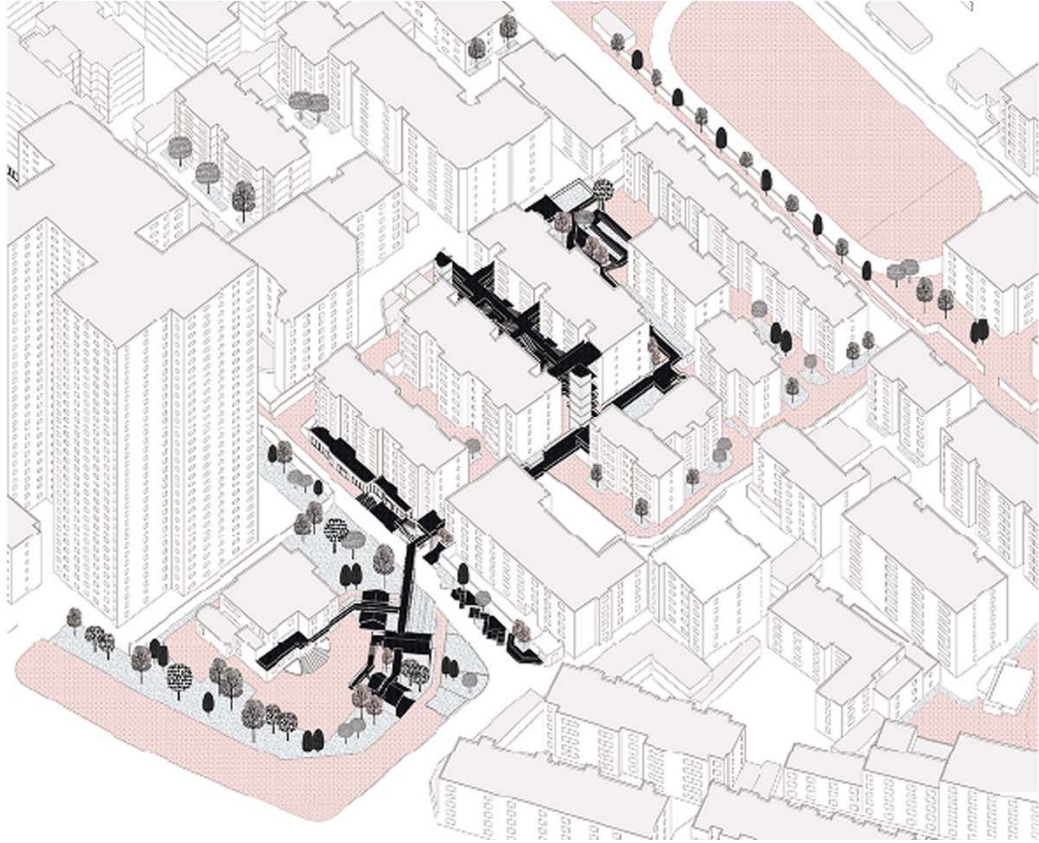
Fig. 5.6: Third space design for local streets, courtyards and neighbourhood entrances.

Chapter 6.

Conclusion & Reflection

Axonometric drawing: embedding third spaces in the community

Chapter 6. Reflection & **Recommendation**

In the city of Chengdu, there are, at the least, three other historical districts in the old town area which are facing similar challenges. All design decisions for these areas were initiated by local governments, usually in partnership with the private developers to transform an otherwise decaying urban fabric into commercial places with a historical flavour. For example, in Daci historical district, some traditional buildings have been transformed into boutique shops, the area now serves as the new high street in the city centre which boosts local fiscal revenue. However, it is worth mentioning these streets and surrounding neighbourhoods are filled with massive production of 'fake' historical structures and sites mainly serving commercial and tourism purposes. Besides that, the local residents nearby are highly affected by overcrowded visitors, growing demands for parking (spatial) and the loss of the original neighbourhood identity (mental) due to the increasing commercial-driven activities. The public space (social) is declining, and the social gap is growing in the area.

Whitehand and Gu (2007) suggested that there has been very limited research on Chinese urban conservation and regeneration, particularly from historical, methodological and theoretical perspectives. Indeed, although topics related to urban heritage conservation have received increasing attention, and relevant scholarship is prolific in Chinese (e.g. Collection of International Symposium on Conservation of Historical Cities and Buildings, 2006; Urban Heritage Conservation, 2010), most of the studies tend to be dictated by Western theories, and often lack a systematic approach. Through the description and analysis of the history, the site and people's living patterns in the local historical landscape, this research attempts to find culturally and socially-rooted responses in a more sensitive manner. In support of engaged students and local experts, this project took the example of one specific area in Shaocheng and implemented the design hypothesis and third place strategies for creating more vibrant and inclusive public spaces and connecting the waterfront, local neighbourhoods and commercial streets.

Several research methods have been adopted for the project. Firstly, the historical analysis combining the literature review help to identify the value and limitation of the study area. Secondly, popular theories raised by Soja, Lefebvre and Oldenburg on third place and its relation with physical and mental spaces provide a design hypothesis that third place plays a critical role in mitigating conflicts in physical (living environment) and mental (place identity) aspects. Thirdly, the overall historical analysis combining literature review, site visit and interview provide the criteria for achieving sensitive approaches towards placemaking, liveability design, and site-specific urban design. This serves as a strategic framework for spatial planning and local interventions. Finally, a systematic approach with

third place design for the local neighbourhood were conducted, the design part was presented from the last chapter.

Dorst and Cross (2001) mention that a precise problem statement of the design tasks cannot be defined completely beforehand. They argue that defining the field of research and finding the solution are a simultaneous process, they co-evolve. The research part and the design part of this project were also not a linear process but they were executed simultaneously. The two parts represent a cyclic process where research and design alternate each other. At the beginning of the project the main component process is researching on Shaocheng, and adding knowledge into the local regeneration project. In the meantime, gradually an idea regarding the design practice is maturing. These first ideas are tested to the found knowledge. New questions arise. While finding knowledge, new inspiration for the design evolves. This cycle was repeated numerous times for this project. While the research is adding to the body of knowledge of the project, the design is using the body of knowledge, this way they benefit from each other. This process indicates that both the research and the design part can provide new insights. This enhances the quality of both the research and the design.

In Chapter 5, we documented our proposed planning strategies with third space design, but in reality, it will require a long term with massive effort from all departments. A further suggestion for policy makers is to keep the historic preservation long time and breakdown the goals for each time segment. For short term, the environment cleaning up is initiative, then to repair the cultural elements. For midterm, the environment for each historic district should be recovered and the basic desires of users need to be reached. For long term, the cultural district should be able to attract more people to visit and impact on a larger range area to stimulate the regional living quality.

Further recommendation on operational instruments

1) To specify the guidance of short-mid-long terms to improve the working effect and guide the process.

In Chapter 5, we documented our proposed planning strategies with third space design, but in reality, it will require a long term with a massive effort from all departments for historic heritages. A further suggestion for policymakers is to keep the historic preservation and old town regeneration long time and breakdown the goals for each time segment. For the short term, the environment cleaning up is an initiative task, and to repair the cultural elements. For the midterm, the environment for each historic district should be recovered and the basic desires of users need to be reached. In a long term, the cultural district should be adapted to stimulate the regional living quality.

2) To stimulate the public participation mechanism to involve the users in decision making process.

In the regular ways of working system in China, a top-down process still plays a central pattern in as the result of the governing system (Long, Shi, & Dong, 2008). In this way, the governors and the experts determine the planning process. Based on an obvious strong top-down management process, public participation seems too idealistic so far. However, the lack of involvement of the public organisations arose many protests because the implementations of a project damaged their interests or the objective of a project cannot meet their needs. This kind of interference pushes the society going against the government and leaves many difficulties in historic preservation projects. Therefore, the problem can bring long time impacts to be solved.

Society needs to be open and democratic. As a balance, an Interactive Public Participation mechanism is recommended. It still admits the dominant position of the government. Meanwhile, it requires the government to provide a platform for all the participators to express their voice. As we can see from the European experiences, if from an early stage, the effort is put to satisfy the public, later on the public will return the efforts to improve and maintain the historic preservation environment.

3) To form a multi-organisational coordination mechanism to integrate social recourses.

Historic preservation project is done not only by a single organisation but multiple from both the public and the private. The participants are responsible for forming and constructing the historic site and show it to the public. (Ashworth, 1994). Actually in Shaocheng, there are already multiple organisations related to each other. But the current investigation and the planning work are assigned by urban planners while the final decision is made by governors, and the implementation work is done by real estate or construction companies. The latter is profit-driven which brings much trouble to public and social interest such as violent expropriation or evictions. Another risk of fewer-actor is that it creates a symmetric informative situation where the benefits lean to the powerful side, like the commercial companies or the government.

What is needed is to set a comprehensive mechanism to involve more related stakeholders and to coordinate with each other. The stakeholders should be analysed deep to find out who has what kind of power or resources which benefits the social welfare. Additionally, embed the interests of investors into the development of historic districts to increase the caring and contribution from them.

Chapter 7. Appendix

QUESTIONNAIRE / 调查问卷

ABOUT SHAOCHENG (TOURISTS/CITIZEN) 关于少城

1. Do you know that Shao City as a historic reserve?
   Yes/No/Not sure

2. If there were a conflict between demolition and preservation in a historic reserve, in your opinion, should it be preserved or not?
   Yes/No/Not sure

3. If there were a conflict between cultural and economic aspects of the local neighbourhood, which one will you prefer?
   Cultural value/Economic gain/Not sure

4. Impression of Shao City

   a.   a commercial area

   b.   a tourism site

   c.   a residential area

   d.   other_____

TO HELP ME DESIGN NEW THIRD PLACE (OPTIONAL)

1. Is the existing public and semi-public space good enough for your daily activities?

2. In your opinion, the lack of public place is mainly caused by...

   a.   courtyards being occupied

   b.   Kuanzhai Alley & too many tourists

   c.   local gated communities

   d.   other_____

3. Your ideal locations for public activities

   a.   courtyards

   b.   community green space

   c.   waterfront

   d.   other_____

4. In your opinion, what needs to be added or improved for the neighbourhood?

INTERVIEW / 采访问卷

ABOUT SHAOCHENG (CITIZEN) 关于少城

AGE_____   JOB_____

ABOUT SHAOCHENG:

1. Please mark the neighbourhood you live in on the map.

2. How long have you been lived in the neighbourhood?

3. Where are you from?

4. You chose to live here because...

5. What do you like the most in Shaocheng? / What makes this place special from other places?

6. What/Where do you usually do/go after work?

7. What/Where do you usually do/go on your weekends?

8. In your opinion, what needs to be added or improved for the neighbourhood?

ABOUT THE LIVING CONDITION:

1. How many square metres of the house/apartment you live in?

2. How many people/family members you live with?

3. Do you own/rent for the current living space? How much is the rent/mortgage & overall house

    price?

4. Does the current living environment fit as your ideal resettlement? if not ... why

5. In order to improve your living condition, what needs to be improved?

6. What would you like to add to semi-public courtyards?

7. Do you use vehicles on a daily basis? / How does car parking influence your daily life?

8. Will you consider riding a bike or walking to work in future?

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