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small-scale interventions

as an approach to urban villages renewal in Shenzhen

Master Thesis Urban and Regional Planning
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COLOPHON

Master Thesis Urban and Regional Planning

Small-scale Intervention as an Alternative Approach to Urban Villages Renewal: The Case of Baishizhou
Cultural Square

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ABSTRACT

In less than four decades, Shenzhen developed from a small village to a modern cityscape. Its population increased from 310,000 inhabitants to around 15 million, making it one of most important cities in China (Hao et al, 2011). As a result of the urbanisation, the rural villages have been incorporated or grasped by new urban territory, creating the urban villages (Hao, 2012). Due their undesirable image and poor living condition these lands are been largely redeveloped. Therefore, based on the existent social problems of urban villages and the urban renewal goals in Shenzhen, the aim of this study is to explore the incremental upgrade approach. More specifically, this research examines how a small-scale intervention has reshaped the way urban village inhabitants interact and perceive the new environment. In order to answer the research question, Baishizhou Cultural Square is selected for the case study. In order to achieve its goals, this thesis will be divided into eight chapters. To answer the research question and sub questions, this thesis employs different qualitative and quantitative methods. The collection of data for this research is done through observations, questionnaires surveys, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth interviews. The objective of this thesis, therefore, is not to ignore the total demolition and reconstruction model, but to move beyond it, allowing new insights to scholars, planners, and policy makers.

Key words: Urban Villages, Urban Renewal, Public Spaces, Small-scale Intervention, Residents

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Introduction



1 Introduction

During the last decades, cities all over the world, regardless of their location, age, and economic status have been facing numerous problems resulting from rapid urbanization. Many of these problems which range from the provision of basic infrastructure, to the availability of housing, are closely related to high population density. In 2015, China had 15 megacities (Krause-Jackson, 2015), including Shenzhen. In less than four decades, Shenzhen's population increased from 310 thousand to more than 14 million inhabitants (Hao et al, 2011). Because of the rapid development, the city has the highest average population density and the highest average investment in land in China. (Gallagher, 2015). Both of these factors bring attention to the urban villages (UV).

On the one hand, the city relied on urban villages to accommodate the rapid population growth, especially by providing affordable housing to the working class (Hao et al, 2011; Hao, 2012). On the other hand, these settlements have developed unplanned and ignore the construction parameters set by the government, resulting in dilapidated and undesired areas. There is a difference between the urban villages and the planned and modern surrounding neighbourhoods. These factors along with the first class location of urban villages in Shenzhen make the villages the focus of urban renewal policies and the perfect target for real estate investors (Hao et al, 2011).

Consequently, like the rest of the city, UVs are under transformation. The urban planning strategy is therefore to renew urban villages in order to accelerate the city's modernization, and as a way to upgrade the city thereby promoting social, physical, and economic development (Hao et al, 2011). Thus, urban village renewal became a priority in the municipality's agenda and led to the introduction of a master plan aimed at accelerating the process. The Shenzhen Master Plan plans to renew 137 urban villages. 20% of the renewal will be done through total demolition and reconstruction, and 80% through an incremental approach (Shenzhen Municipality, 2010; Gallagher, 2015).

The Shenzhen Master Plan aims to undertake the urban renewal of almost half of the urban villages in Shenzhen and it provides guidelines for the construction and reconstruction of these areas. The first urban villages that have been redeveloped, through total demolition and reconstruction, have shown that the plan has achieved the physical and economic goals. The urban villages were torn down, giving space for the construction of modern neighbourhoods with many skyscrapers, shopping malls, and large infrastructure. These modern neighbourhoods provide housing for middle and high-class residents. However, this approach failed in the social aspects. Rarely were the aspirations, preferences, and values of the majority of urban villages' residents taken into account during this redevelopment process, resulting in conflicts and displacements (Hin & Xin, 2011). Thus, the incremental upgrade

approach emerged as an alternative to provide a suitable way for renovation. This approach aims to improve the quality of the UV through partial demolition and/or small-scale interventions projects. However, the outcomes of these projects are unclear, since there is a lack of English literature on small-scale interventions in urban villages.

Therefore, based on the existent social problems of urban villages and the urban renewal goals in Shenzhen, the aim of this study is to explore the incremental upgrade approach. Moreover, since the local residents are most of the time neglected during the urban renewal process, this thesis focuses on the social effects of a small-scale intervention in a public space in an urban village. More specifically, I will examine how a small-scale intervention has reshaped the way urban village inhabitants interact and perceive the new environment. For this, the research question of this thesis is:

What are the inferences of the small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages on the residents' perceptions about the expected social effects created by the project?

In order to answer the research question, Baishizhou Cultural Square was selected for the case study. The use of public spaces, as squares, has an important role in the city and in its citizens' life. These areas are not only the key element of the urban intervention, but they are also an important space for social and cultural interaction, entertainment, and work. Since Baishizhou Cultural Square is located in one of the most important and densest urban villages of Shenzhen, this case study seems appropriate to investigate the social effects of this small-scale intervention. The objective of this thesis, therefore, is not to ignore the total demolition and reconstruction model, but to move beyond it, allowing new insights to scholars, planners, and policy makers. In doing so, I seek to encourage small-scale interventions in urban villages as an alternative to improve the quality of urban villages, without demolishing them.

1.1 Scientific and social relevance

There are many studies on the effects of the demolition and reconstruction of urban villages in Shenzhen (Hao et al., 2011; Hin & Xin, 2011; Hao, 2012). The results of these studies have raised the need for an alternative method to avoid mass demolition and relocation (Hao et al., 2011; Lin et al, 2014, Zhang, 2005). However, none of the studies has looked at the urban villages and their urban renewal from the residents' perspective. Urban villages provide 50% of the housing needs of the city and its residents cannot simply be ignored in the process of urban renewal. As is the case in other Chinese cities, in Shenzhen urban planning policies and system constantly focus on the development of the city as a whole, ignoring the needs of most of the urban villages' residents. This social group rarely has access to the public

resources, including cultural activities, the social and public infrastructure, provided by the city. Instead of knocking down the urban villages completely and removing the local inhabitants, this mismatch between urban resource provision and urban villages renewal approaches should be remedied through planning tools offered by city planners, to provide social and physical inclusion of this social group.

1.2 Thesis Outline

In order to achieve its goals, this thesis will be divided into eight chapters. Following the introductory chapter, the literature on the research topic will be discussed, which will help explain the concept of urban villages, their urban renewal process and the expected social and physical effects of the interventions. In the third chapter, the research question and sub questions, conceptual framework, and operationalization will be described. Chapter four will show the research design. Chapter five will be dedicated to the history of the Baishizhou and the problems that led to the need for urban renewal. In chapter six, the first three sub questions of this thesis will be answered, Baishizhou Cultural Square will be presented followed by its construction aims and the physical features of the study boundary. In the seventh chapter sub questions five to six, on the social features and perceptions will be looked at, with a strong focus on public space, sense of safety, increase in cost of living, and sense of belonging. The thesis will end with a discussion, answering the last sub question) and conclusions on the research question. Furthermore, the last chapter will include some recommendations for further research and policy makers, and a personal reflection on this thesis.

PART 1



Theoretical Framework



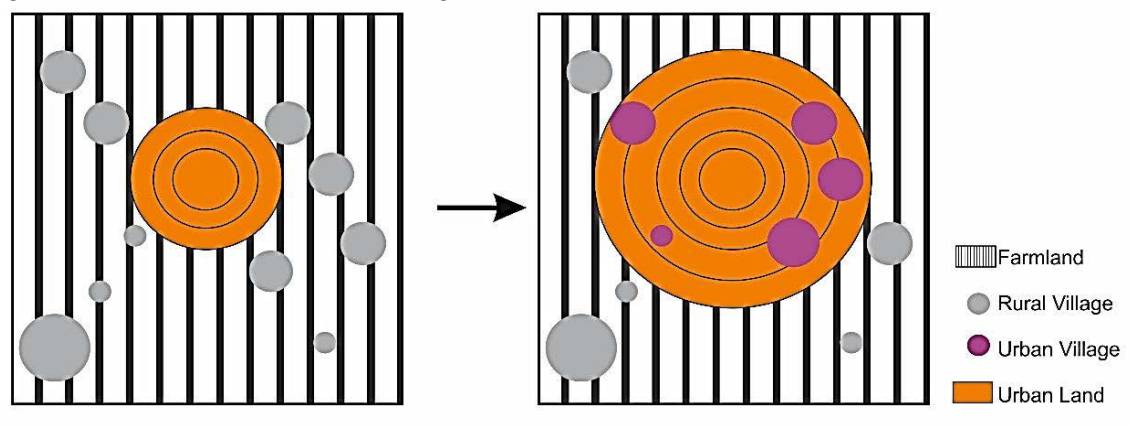
2 Theoretical Framework

This chapter presents the literature connected to the relevant concepts and provides the academic background to this research. In the first section, the meaning of urban villages, including their social aspects, physical features, and the reasons for the urban renewal, will be explained. It is followed by an urban renewal section, where this concept will be clarified, along with the exploration of urban renewal Shenzhen and the small-scale interventions in public spaces as an urban renewal approach. The third section addresses the social effects of urban renewal. The chapter ends with a section designated for exploring the physical features of urban villages and public spaces.

2.1 Urban Villages

Urban villages in China, also known as villages-in-the-city, are a singular outcome of the urbanization process in the country (Liu et al, 2010). Over the years, these communities have received dozens of different definitions, but urban villages are original rural villages which have been incorporated by the new urban territory during the fast urbanization process in recent decades (figure 1) (Hao et al, 2011; Hao, 2012; Hin, & Xin 2011). Moreover, they are settlements spread around the city, which have an important role in the housing market (O'Donnell, 2013; Hao et al, 2011 and Hin & Xin 2011).

Figure 1: From Rural to Urban Villages.



*Source: Adapted from Shuo, 2007.

In Shenzhen, there are around 318 urban villages and 10% of these are located inside the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ)¹ (Lin et al, 2014). It is estimated that Shenzhen's UVs accommodate "...more than half of the city's total population, of whom about 80% are

¹ Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was the first SEZ in China and was established in 1980 by the "...central government to resolve socioeconomic problems encountered by the centrally administered system at that time...Their establishment represents not only an economic but also a political transition...The SEZs were intended as a window of technology, management, knowledge and foreign policy." (Ng & Tang, 2004).

officially recognised as migrants” (Lin et al, 2014). Even though the percentage of urban villages inside the SEZ is low, these communities are largely representative, due to their high density and location. It is common to have a UV bordering a modern and expensive neighbourhood filled with high-tech skyscrapers (Hao, 2012). Moreover, the discrepancy between the neighbours highlights the economic and social inequality and creates the perception of many “cities” inside Shenzhen. On the one hand, urban villages in Shenzhen meet the demand for cheap accommodation and on the other hand, they serve as a new source of income for villagers who can no longer undertake agriculture (Hao, 2012). Seeing their home as a profitable business opportunity, the villagers expand their original houses, increasing the density and decreasing the quality of the built environment. As a result, their incomes sharply rise (Hao, 2012). As the expansions are unplanned and unregulated, the urban villages can be easily identified by their irregular, poorly constructed buildings, which contrast with the new planned neighbourhoods (Hao et al, 2011; Chung, 2009). For the purposes of this thesis, it is important to have knowledge of the physical and social features of urban villages inside the SEZ, which will be addressed below.

2.1.1 The Physical Features of Urban Villages

In the SEZ, UVs can be found in the core centre of the city, near the central business districts, and modern neighbourhoods. To meet the demand for housing, the original two floors high houses in the UVs have been transformed into small buildings of up to six floors high, with the average floor ratio of 2.7 (Hao et al, 2011). Land use in the UVs is mixed. The buildings normally present a commercial use on the ground floor and residential use on the other storeys. Over the years, to address some of the physical problems, the infrastructure of urban villages inside the SEZ has undergone some improvements. As a result, these urban villages do not have open sewage and the streets are paved (Hao, 2012; Hao et al, 2011). Most of the UVs present mixed-use with industries, schools, commercial centres, hotels, and hospitals. (Hao, 2012; Hao et al, 2011). Although these improvements were done as a municipality requirement, there are no formal regulations for the living environment. Thus, the buildings are often precarious and low standard. Most of buildings in UVs are unsafe, and lack ventilation and natural lighting (Liu et al, 2010). The buildings look like a group of identical boxes with steel frames covering the windows (Shuo, 2007; Chung, 2010). The distance between the buildings is only one or two meters. In most of the cases, the passage between the buildings is so narrow that it is not enough for one fire engine to cross, increasing the potential hazards (Shuo, 2007). According to Shuo (2007) the “majority of the land is utilized to build houses, required green lands, public amenities and infrastructure equipment are lacking. So, the building environment is not only terrible but also causes danger e.g. to the health conditions of the dwellers in these urban villages” (p.17).

From the government's point of view, urban villages are unliveable communities, without basic infrastructure, such as electricity, water, and sewage networks. Due to all these negative physical aspects, urban villages are requesting physical interventions to improve their living environment and to offer proper living conditions to their low-income residents.

2.1.2 Urban Villages' Social Characteristics

Inside the SEZ, the composition of residents in urban villages the structure of residents when compared with other urban villages (outside the SEZ and others Chinese cities) is varied. Regarding land use, the urban villages' population, which can be divided into two groups: the villagers and the temporary population, is also mixed (Shuo, 2007). The villagers are the rich and privileged landlords. The majority of the temporary population are in the low income or unskilled workers and young white-collar employees that cannot afford the rent in the luxurious neighbourhoods (Hao, 2012). The temporary population move to urban villages looking for cheap rent and a good location. In most of the UVs, the temporary population equals five to eight times the original number of residents (Shuo, 2007).

As stated before, although the urban villages present a mixed population, the majority of residents are migrants. This social group normally does not have access to the social as well as cultural activities offered by the villages' communities, for instance access to clubs and recreational rooms (Hao et al, 2011). In addition, they cannot enjoy the community facilities and services, because they are only available to the villagers (Hao, 2012). Since most of the urban villages do not offer free activities and public open spaces, this social group have limited entertainment options. The tenants are discriminated against by the original residents. "Intense injustice and the deep gap of richer and poorer created an unstable and insecurity social environment in urban village" (Shuo, 2007).

The physical features of the urban villages bring negative consequences to the society. For instance, the poor infrastructure of urban villages decreases the sense of safety and encourages illegal activities. Since the urban villages remain apart from "formal administration", these settlements are a frequent choice for "illegal organizations and criminal gangs". In 2006, it was reported that the highest indices of crimes, between 70 to 80 percent, occurred in urban villages. The gap between the villagers and the tenants induces the social problems and crimes in urban villages (Shuo, 2007). In addition, the exclusion of the majority of residents decreases the sense of belonging in the community.

2.1.3 Need for Urban Renewal

Since this research relates to the effects created by small-scale interventions in urban villages, it is important to point out the factors that stimulate urban renewal in UVs. The following characteristics, derived from the literature review above, seem to be important:

- Lack of building regulations and planning;

- Environmental degradation;
- Lack of infrastructure;
- Chaotic land use;
- Unsafe living conditions;
- Social exclusion of low-income residents, specially migrants;
- Over-development/high density;
- Unliveable.

2.2 Urban Renewal

Over the years, various definitions of urban renewal have appeared. In the urban literature, urban renewal can appear in different forms: urban redevelopment, urban renovation, urban revitalization, among others (Broudehoux, 1995). Regardless of the approach adopted, urban renewal can be always described as physical transformations that affect the urban environment not only physically, but also socially and economically (Broudehoux, 1995). In Western countries, urban renewal is characterized by slum clearance, and demolition or rehabilitation programs developed in areas that are not fulfilling the functions for which they were created or which simply do not fit the city's image (Broudehoux, 1995). In China, most of the time, urban renewal appears in the form of urban redevelopment.

The turning point of urban transformation in Shenzhen was the National Land Reform, in 1987, when the land in urban areas became a commodity that could be traded on the market. More or less at the same time, the urban renewal concept was introduced in Chinese policies in the 1989 City Planning Act. Shortly after that, the Shenzhen Special Economic Development Zone was established. As a result, many people moved to the city looking for job opportunities and urban villages became more and more densely populated (Hao, 2012), leading to the adoption of large-scale redevelopment programs, especially in centrally located urban villages.

2.2.1 *Urban Renewal of Urban Villages in Shenzhen*

The image of these areas did not follow the city's growth. The physical and social problems associated with the UVs, along with the shortage of land for development led the government to introduce urban renewal measures in UVs (Lin et al 2014; Hao et al, 2011). In this scenario, UVs located inside the SEZ became the target, being viewed as the "last 'goldmine'" (Cheng et al 2014). Therefore, there are two points that have to be considered when addressing the urban renewal of urban villages in Shenzhen: the actors involved and the government approaches and plans for urban renewal in these areas. It is not the focus of this thesis to explore these points in detail, but a general understanding of them is essential to conduct the research.

Urban renewal of UVs always involves three main actors looking for their own gains: “the government, developers and landlords” (Hao et al, 2011). For the government, urban renewal is an opportunity to achieve the municipal development goals, such as new infrastructure, roads, and public facilities. For developers, the urban village is synonymous with economic profit. As stated before, UVs located inside the SEZ present the ideal location to build the new neighbourhoods: near the Central Business district, with easy access to public transport. For landlords (the villagers), urban renewal is an opportunity to become millionaires, because of the high amounts offered as compensation (Hao et al, 2011). It is worth remembering that tenants, the largest share of residents in urban villages, are ignored throughout the process of urban renewal, regardless of the approach adopted (Zhang & Fang, 2004). Not surprisingly, the residents’ unhappiness with the relocation projects (which sometimes do not even happen) results in court action, mass protests, and sometimes even physical resistance (Zhang & Fang, 2004).

In Shenzhen, several approaches to urban renewal of urban villages, especially the ones inside the SEZ, have been made. Like in other Chinese cities, where there was a plan to make the whole urban village to disappear to give space to a new modern neighbourhood, the primary solution was the demolition-redevelopment model (Hao, 2012; Lin et al 2014). The initial goal of this prototype redevelopment approach was to improve the living conditions, through the modernization of the oldest urban villages. However, as described by Zhang and Fang, it fast became a “large-scale speculative form of development involving massive demolition and ruthless displacement” (Zhang & Fang, 2004). In this approach, all existing buildings were demolished and new modern buildings appeared in their place. The residents were displaced, and in some cases, the redevelopment involved the construction of the village on a new site, with re-housing of the original villagers. This method is largely criticized by academia, due to the exclusion of poor residents during the process and lack of relocation plans for them (Chung, 2009; Lin et al, 2014; Lin et al 2014).

Therefore, to organize the urban renewal process in Shenzhen, the government launched the Comprehensive Planning Guidelines for Urban Village Redevelopment 2005–2010 (Hao, 2012; Chung, 2010; Lin et al, 2014). The Master Plan increased the municipality’s leadership in the conduct of urban renewal, but it did not allow community participation (Hao, 2012). The Master Plan mainly focused on infrastructure and major areas, such as central areas, major industrial and logistical parks, and access to Hong Kong (Hao, 2012). The Shenzhen Master Plan (Shenzhen Municipality, 2010) describes two different approaches to urban renewal: the overall demolition and reconstruction model and the partial demolition and village upgrade model (Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau, 2005; Wang, 2013).

The overall demolition and construction model was developed based on the first urban renewal approach, cited before. Although this model is largely criticized by academia, it has

still been the most used in China, and is still been implemented in many cities (Lin et al, 2014). According to the Master Plan (Shenzhen Municipality, 2010), this approach can be implemented in two ways. In some, a new village will be built at a different place and the villagers relocated. In other cases, new houses for the villagers will be built at the original place. In both cases, the original village is totally demolished (Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau, 2005). This model is developed through a partnership between the municipality, developers, and the collective companies (Lin et al, 2014). However, as shown by Hin and Xin (2011), this model is not always implemented in a peaceful manner and many conflicts may emerge during the relocation and compensation process.

The second model aims to improve basic infrastructure (sewage, electricity, fire control, and roads) and to improve the living conditions of residents as well. Moreover, this model aims to improve the physical structure without increasing the total floor area (Shenzhen Urban Planning Bureau, 2005). Normally, this model is applied on a small-scale, and then a full redevelopment of part of a village at a better location is always conducted in pursuit of the economic potential. However, there is a lack of English literature on plans based on the second model that have been implemented in Shenzhen.

To sum up, although there are different models promoting UV renewal, there is still a preference for the overall demolition and construction model. The literature shows many urban villages redeveloped through this model in Shenzhen (Lin et al 2014; Lin and Xin, 2011; Wang et al, 2010). This is the preferred model of governments, investors and villagers, who see UVs as profitable businesses and not as a communities. This is also the neoliberalism influence in China, especially in an international city such as Shenzhen. Wang et al (2010) pointed out that this model of urban renewal should be carefully reviewed, to prevent the problems that Western countries faced during their development processes. Citing Wang et al (2010)

“...on the surface the dramatic redevelopment aims to improve migrant living areas; in reality it results in the destruction of affordable housing in good locations. Poor migrants will be pushed further away into marginal locations, and large-scale urban village redevelopment will lead to more serious social and spatial division. Gradual improvements, upgrading, rent regulation and other softer policies may be more beneficial and sustainable”.

These plans are normally developed without any consultations and the tenants in these UVs are not taken into consideration (Wang et al, 2010). As a result, low-income people cannot afford to live in the new neighbourhood and will have to move out of the city (Lin et al 2014). Many social problems, which will be further discussed in this chapter may emerge from that.

2.2.2 Small-Scale Interventions

During the years, researchers have been concerned about the large-scale urban renewal approach adopted in Europe and the United States. They largely criticized this method

used to deal with physical, social, and economic issues. Looking for a less aggressive approach, the small-scale urban renewal method emerged in Western countries (Shidan and Qian, 2011). Within the concepts that appeared, one in particular has gained significant attention in the field of urban planning and architecture: the concept of Urban Acupuncture. The concept is inspired by Chinese acupuncture, where a punctual action spreads the results to the surroundings. This approach makes small interventions in order to address bigger problems (Unt and Bell, 2014). Urban acupuncture is a bottom-up approach developed as a critical reaction to the large-scale, top down development approach (Casagrande, 2010).

The small-scale interventions have been adopted to solve social problems and improve the public space qualities in Western countries. Normally, the areas chosen to be improved are desired areas of the city like urban brownfields, slums, wastelands, public spaces, and abandoned areas (Unt and Bell, 2014; Lerner, 2014; Shidan and Qian, 2011; and El Haddad, 2012).

One of the best-known strategies of urban acupuncture deployment is in Barcelona. Led by Manuel de Sola Morales, the program started in 1981 aiming to revive urban public spaces. Through the strategy, hundreds of squares have been reconstructed and newly built by the government. These different types of squares have been transformed in the short term and with limited funds, reshaping the old environment and improving the city's image (El Haddad, 2012; Shidan and Qian, 2011).

A second example shows the benefits of the small-scale interventions in an urban brownfield in Tallinn, Estonia (Unt and Bell, 2014). The research showed that the initial attitudes inspired other physical improvements, through small improvements in the area, such as new pavements, benches, and trees thereby enhancing the sense of safety, the comfort in the area, and the flow of people (Unt and Bell, 2014).

Although this method is said to be gaining strength in Western countries, there is little literature available on this subject in China. However, some researches already point to this method as a strategy against the large-scale redevelopments strategy that is predominant in the country (Shidan and Qian, 2011). This method can be used in this research as it uses small-scale interventions in places of high potential that begin to act as catalysts in the processes that go on to affect the entire city. In the urban acupuncture approach, the attention paid towards certain hotspots slowly starts driving overall urban development. Here the main role is performed by local potentialities and no dramatic spatial change is necessary.

Small-scale intervention can be used as an important tool to improve the quality of public spaces in urban villages in Shenzhen thereby promoting the spatial and social transformations of the environment. This increases the sense of safety, social relations, and comfort in the area.

2.3 Social Effects

There are many social effects caused by urban renewal. As shown above, the demolition model adopted in China normally results in the displacement of residents and new neighbourhoods built from scratch. However, as also shown above, it is expected to be other social effects of small-scale interventions, since it is not based on the demolition of urban villages.

If properly planned and executed, urban renewal projects can thoroughly create positive social effects. The capital investment attracted by the improvements in the built environment “could offer social and economic benefits to local communities” (Ho et al, 2012). Additionally, urban renewal could reduce social problems, such as crime and poor environmental hygiene. Lastly, urban renewal measurements may increase the value of properties and may bring direct or indirect economic benefits, such as new jobs and commercial activities (Ho et al, 2012).

Thus, based on the literature review, four aspects were selected to address the social effects of the small-scale interventions: sense of safety, sense of belonging, increasing cost of living, and accessibility.

2.3.1 *Sense of safety*

In the last two decades, the drop in China of safety indices, in both actual and perceived levels of safety, has become a major issue in the country (Nielsen and Smyth, 2009). Fast-paced urbanization and high population density are included in the main reasons for the decline in the sense of safety. At the top of the list of unsafe environments are urban villages, which are frequently described as unsafe places. Urban renewal is often cited as a way to change this status. Safety is an issue that concerns societies around the world. Western studies have pointed out that one of the main features of a high quality environment is the provision of security and a sense of safety (Cozens, 2011).

According to Foster et al (2013), the importance of living in a safe neighbourhood is of concern to different research fields, including perceptions of safety to “social connectedness”; health, and physical activities. Some built environment features are also related to perceptions of safety, ‘such as physical incivilities and neighbourhood upkeep’ (Foster et al, 2013). Western researches showed that gender and age affect the perception of safety. The studies indicated that men are less concerned about public security than women are. Additionally, in the Western context, the sense of safety is higher among younger people (Nielsen et al, 2009). According to Nielsen et al (2009), the sense of belonging in the community also influences the sense of safety.

In terms of physical environment features, first to promote a sense of safety in urban villages the streets have to be permeable. Permeable streets “encourage walking” and “social

interaction” (Cozens, 2011). Secondly, the neighbourhood should have a mixed land use, which through a wide variety of activities and services attracts people to the area, thus increasing the feeling of safety. (Cozens, 2011). As pointed out by Jacobs (1961) in ‘The death and life of great American cities’, those two characteristics are assumed to improve the urban space and provide more “eyes on the street”, which over time enhance “personal and community safety and reducing crime” (Cozens, 2011; Jacobs, 1961). Last, the sense of safety also increases the use of public open spaces, which also contributes towards the liveliness of the physical environment (Cozens, 2011).

2.3.2 *Increasing cost of living*

Since the 1960s, large-scale urban renewal approaches have been criticized by academia (Jacobs, 1961; Hartman, 1964). Most of the criticisms are directed at the exclusion of the residents during the process and the results caused by such exclusion. In many cases, the urban renewal projects increase the cost of living in the neighbourhoods, forcing the residents to move out since they cannot afford the newly built environment. As a result, urban renewal has destroyed the diversity and liveability of neighbourhoods. As small-scale interventions did not have drastic measures, keeping the physical environment almost untouched, it is expected that the small-scale interventions did not change the socioeconomic characteristics of the neighbourhood. It is the opposite outcome of large-scale redevelopment, which inevitably causes displacement and in most of the cases gentrification. It is not the aim of this study to do a socioeconomic impacts survey. Instead, the aims of this thesis are to evaluate the residents’ perceptions about the increasing -cost of living and to find out the effects of the small-scale interventions in this aspect.

A study about the socio-spatial impact of property-led redevelopment in China’s urban neighbourhoods (He & Wu, 2007), indicated that once the area is renovated the land use characteristics changes, resulting in an increase in the cost of living. Not only does the housing environment change, but also the shopping areas, and public and workspaces. Apart from the well-known decrease in the availability of housing, areas that underwent large renewal projects will also face a decrease in employment opportunity and quantity of services. As a result, migrants will move away from these redeveloped areas or even from the city. It will lead to a change in the social and economic profile of the area. There will be a significant impact on the supply of and demand in the area for low income and unskilled workers (Hao, 2012).

The main reason why migrants move to urban villages is that they are located close or inside the SEZ. The redevelopment essentially means eviction and higher transport costs. Hence, local authorities have to balance the further expansion of the redevelopments with the rise in the demand for public transport and affordable housing. The lack of affordable and cheap housing in some areas may cause the total eviction of low-income residents from

certain areas of the city, if not from all of the city. The absence of low cost workers will directly affect the competitiveness of the city and social inclusion (Hao et al, 2011).

2.3.3 Sense of Belonging

The social characteristics of urban villages have shown that the different social groups within the villages limit access to cultural activities, creating social exclusion (Shuo, 2007). The urban renewal projects through large-scale interventions destroy the existing social fabric and networks, leading to social segregation (Ho et al, 2012). However, in sociological literature is rarely found analyses suggesting that the sense of belonging can be strong in poor neighbourhoods (Jørgensen, 2010), such as urban villages. The sense of belonging is often described as inexistent in urban villages, due to their image of being a springboard to those who arrive in Shenzhen (Hao, 2012). Previous studies suggested that, the residents of urban villages do not feel belonging to their neighbourhoods (Hao, 2012). Sense of belonging is listed by Maslow as one of the basic human needs (Carmona, 2010; Mehta, 2008) and it is an important feature to ensure the liveability of a neighbourhood.

According to McMillan & Chavis (1986)

The sense of belonging and identification involves the feeling, belief, and expectation that one fits in the group and has a place there, a feeling of acceptance by the group, and a willingness to sacrifice for the group. The role of identification must be emphasized here. It may be represented in the reciprocal statements "It is my group" and "I am part of the group." (p.10)

The association of people, social events, and gathering places help to create the sense of belonging in a community (Mehta, 2008). The sense of belonging is reliant on these connections, and new redevelopment projects can be designed to promote community integration and foster a sense of belonging (Jørgensen, 2010). Thus, well-designed public spaces can enhance a sense of belonging (Carmona, 2010).

Places that help shape community attitudes, that provide a continuity from past to present, that may often cater to mundane but essential everyday functions, and that help in establishing their community's identity, become significant to the neighbors and achieve a social value and meaning (Mehta, 2008, p. 222).

Although the actual conditions of urban villages may not provide a sense of belonging in their local residents and this feeling cannot be built, this point should be considered by urban planners when addressing the ideal solution for renewing these areas. There are already some programs by the central government, such as "community construction", created to "to strengthen local service provision and social management" (Wu, 2012). Recent policies in China have recognized that migrants should be integrated into the city. However, these programs require a deeper understanding of urban villages' social interactions, since it is not entirely known (Wu, 2012).

2.4 Addressing Physical Features

One of the main goals of urban renewal projects is the improvement of the physical environment. In the case of Shenzhen, the reason for the improvement of the physical environment of urban villages is due to the fact that these settlements do not match the modern image of the city. Even though the small-scale interventions in public spaces do not target the built surroundings, the urban acupuncture projects developed in Western countries, have shown that even the small interference in public spaces can create physical impacts on the surrounding areas (Unt and Bell, 2014; Lerner, 2014; Shidan and Qian, 2011; and El Haddad, 2012). The changes in the physical features may influence the people's perceptions about the social effects. For instance, one specific use that may be good for social interactions might not be good for the life cost or sense of safety (Clifton et al, 2008). Also, changes in land use may create effects on the social network and sense of belonging of local residents. To provide better approaches for urban renewal, the planners have to address both the local residents and the physical environment. Gathering data about how existing designs work is crucial for making the correct choices and for avoiding mistakes in later projects.

The physical features can be measured through urban form characteristics and land use. Land use is the most probable physical factor to change during the urban renewal process. These changes may result in movement of the old uses and insertion of new uses in the area (Carmona, 2010). For instance, residential areas become commercial areas while industrial areas become business areas. The change in land use may have positive or negative effects. On the one hand, "inappropriate land utilization, however, due to the alteration of land-use types and land-use intensity, leads to the damage of land resources and an increase in poverty, inequity and other social problems" (Wang et al, 2013, p.71). On the other hand, when the use of the land is well addressed, it can improve the quality of life thereby reducing the social, physical, and economic problems.

The understanding of how society and space interact is an indispensable part of urban design. The physical environment is an important determinant of human behaviour because changes in the environment influence and changes how people behave. Further, it is a continuous two-way process, where people change the environment and are influenced by its change (Carmona, 2010).

Research Question, Conceptual Framework and Operationalization



3 Research Question, Conceptual Framework and Operationalization

3.1 Research Question

The previous chapter stated the social and physical problems of urban villages. Moreover, it gave the reasons for the urban renewal, the municipality's approach to renewal and goals of the renewal, and the current social effects of the urban renewal. As described, there are many reasons and ways to renew urban villages and thus accommodate the city's economic, physical, and social needs. After years of large-scale redevelopment projects in urban villages, alternative urban renewal models, such as small-scale interventions, are emerging in the city. However, little is known about these alternative methods. Therefore, this study aims to explore the small-scale interventions in public spaces of urban villages. My aim is to investigate the social features of these projects and to determine the social effects of small-scale interventions from the perception of urban village residents. In order to explore the effects of these projects on their surroundings and how these projects have reshaped the way people perceive the new environment, this study will answer the following research question:

What are the inferences of the small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages on the residents' perceptions about the expected social effects created by the project?

In order to answer the main question, seven sub questions were created.

First, three questions were developed to gain more knowledge about the small-scale intervention. These questions are needed because of the limited literature on small-scale interventions in public spaces of urban villages. Moreover, to conduct the case study it is important to know the general features of and motivations for the project. Second, as deduced from the theoretical framework, urban renewal, independent of the approach chosen, causes physical changes. In addition, as shown before, the perceptions on the social effects are directly connected to the physical conditions of the environment. This results in the following sub questions:

1. What were the public space construction goals?
2. For whom was it created?
3. What are the main physical features of the surroundings of the small-scale intervention?

The way residents may perceive the social effects can be influenced by the users of the public space. Therefore, the following sub questions were created:

4. Which activities are been developed in the area?

5. Who are the current users of the public space?

Given my main interest in the residents' perceptions and the social factors pointed out in the theoretical framework the following questions were made:

6. What are the residents' perceptions of safety, sense of belonging, life costs, and physical environment?

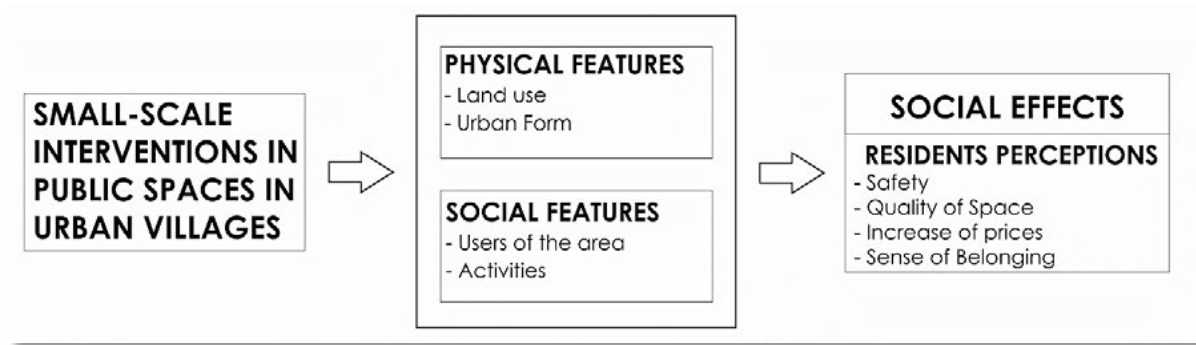
7. In what way do the physical features influence the perceptions of local residents on the social effects of small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages?

3.2 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework (figure 2) displays the concepts and the relations that will be the topic of this research. Moreover, it will guide the structure of this thesis. The conceptual framework did not include all the effects of small-scale interventions because the focus of this research is on the social effects that can be perceived by the residents. Also, I decided to include the physical features in my conceptual framework because it is expected that every kind of urban renewal affects the surrounding environment.

My conceptual framework consists of three parts. It starts from left to right, with arrows guiding the occurrence of the facts. As described in the theoretical framework (chapter 2), urban renewal in urban villages in Shenzhen is conducted in different ways. The urban villages are the main focus of the redevelopment of Shenzhen, its undesirable social and physical conditions drew attention to the need for urban renewal. Consequently, the challenges faced to implement the large-scale redevelopment model are leading to different urban renewal approaches. The first part includes one independent variable: small-scale interventions in public spaces in urban villages. These interventions are noticed in public spaces in urban villages. The central point of the scheme includes two dependent variables: the physical and social features. The social and physical features created by the small-scale intervention influence in the residents' perceptions of the social effects leading therefore, to the last part of the scheme: the social effects through residents' perceptions. The meaning of each concept will be better clarified in the next paragraph and further in the operationalization section.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework



3.2.1 Concepts

Small-scale interventions

Small-scale interventions in this thesis are the small urban renewal projects of public spaces in urban villages. These interventions are done in the core of the UV aiming to achieve maximum effects through the smallest effort and investments. This thesis will consider only projects that did not demolish the existent village.

Public Space in Urban Villages

A place that is publicly accessible and that serves to accommodate social activities in addition to being merely a physical structure. It is where people meet and interact, thus fostering social relations. It can be squares, streets, parks, sports venues, and playgrounds.

Physical Features

The physical features include land use and urban form.

Social Features

The social features include the use of the area and activities.

Social Effects

They are the social and spatial transformations that affect directly or indirectly the users of the urban space, especially the urban village's residents. In this thesis, it will be described through the residents' perceptions.

Residents' perceptions

Residents' perceptions show how residents interpret the qualities of the environment and how they experience the public space. Five dimensions were selected to address the residents' perceptions: use of the space; safety; change in land use; increase in prices; and sense of belonging. These are the factors that are most likely to change during the urban renewal process in Shenzhen.

3.3 Operationalization of Concepts

In order to answer the research question and sub-questions the variables shown in the conceptual framework have to be made operational in a way that will make it possible to

measure them. In the literature review, many aspects were raised about urban renewal of urban villages. The operationalization of the main concepts is shown in this paragraph. The connection between the concepts is presented in the conceptual framework (figure 2) in the previous paragraph.

This research selected the following key concepts to explore further: urban villages; urban renewal; small-scale interventions in public spaces; physical features; and social effects. The operationalization of the variables will provide indicators that can become questions for the questionnaires/interviews and items to be observed during the site visits. The complete questionnaire, topic list of interviews and observation scheme are added in the appendix. The operationalization of concepts is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1: Operationalization of Concepts

Variables	Dimension/Intermediate variables	Indicators		
Small-Scale Intervention	Goals	By who? Why?		
	Situation	Current situation/stage and future perspectives		
Public Space	Squares, parks, sports venues, and playgrounds	Free access to public; What are the activities? Who are the users?		
Physical Features	Land-use	Commercial, residential, mixed, industrial.		
	Urban Form	Street condition, liveability, infrastructure Street-scape use.		
Social Features	Use of the area	Frequency, purpose of the use		
	Activities	Activities that are being developed, residents' interaction with the space, people flow		
	Socio-demographic	Age, gender, relation with the area		
Social Effects	Residents	Perceptions	Sense of safety	Sense of safety before and after the intervention; avoidance of places.
			Sense of Belonging	Use of the area; access to activities; sense of belonging to the community; accessibility.
			Change in land use	Shift in activities; options.
			Increasing cost of living	Increase in rent; increase in daily products prices.

Research Design



4 Research Design

This research focuses on the social effects of small-scale interventions in public spaces in urban villages. As explained in the previous chapter, the research comprises seven sub-questions to answer the main research question. The sub questions were created to form the basis of the structure of the research, and helped to construct the research design. The sub-question divides the research into three parts. The first part is about the characteristics of public space. The second part focuses on the use of the public space. The last part emphasises the perceptions of residents.

In order to conduct this research a case study was developed. The case study permits the in-depth study of small-scale interventions in urban villages public spaces and what the social effects caused by it are (Yin, 2013). Therefore, this research has a single embedded case study (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). I chose the case study design because it seems to be the ideal one that can be used to gather a deep understanding of the complexity of urban renewal in urban villages, especially in Shenzhen. Also, I chose an embedded case study because small-scale interventions are being used in different urban villages in Shenzhen to upgrade public spaces. Moreover, small-scale intervention is a single case because it can be considered a prototypical case for understanding urban villages' renewal through small-scale interventions (Scholz & Tietje, 2002). Lastly, the choice of case study seems to be appropriate since not much is known about small-scale interventions as an urban renewal approach. Embedded case study is ideal when more than one unit of analysis is involved, which will be soon presented.

Additionally, the research design will be mainly descriptive and exploratory. The descriptive research is used to address the physical features of the small-scale interventions. The exploratory research is applied to cover the perceptions of residents of the social effects (Yin, 2013). Although there is no previous research on small-scale interventions in Shenzhen, it is possible to forecast the social effects of small-scale interventions based on the effects of previous urban village renewals. This will permit a reflection on the social effects of the usual approach (demolishment and redevelopment) and the innovative one (small-scale intervention).

4.1 Case study selection and units of analysis

The case study of this research is small-scale intervention in public space in an urban village. Due to my aim to explore the social effects, my research can only focus on completed projects that have been in use for some time. Thus, the chosen case for this thesis is the Cultural Square in Baishizhou. Urban renewal in Shenzhen is described in short as a demolition and redevelopment of urban villages, changing drastically the surrounding

environment. Therefore, Baishizhou Cultural Square as an urban renewal accomplishment can be described as a deviant case.

This case was selected following criteria: it is a small-scale intervention in a public space; it did not involve the demolition of buildings; and it is located in an urban village. The specific case study was chosen in accordance with the viability of primary data, such as previous project and contacts in the area. These factors along with the importance of Baishizhou to Shenzhen led to the choice of the Cultural Square. Moreover, Baishizhou seems to be the appropriate site because the urban renewal process in the urban village is a hot topic at the moment.

In order to undertake this case study, I will use two sub units of analysis: physical features and residents' perceptions. The physical features are divided into two categories: land use and street-scape use. A study boundary was created to survey the physical features. More information on this will be given in Chapter 6.

The residents were selected randomly in order to have as wide a range of respondents as possible. The random sampling of residents should cause a proper external validity. However, due to the limited number of respondents compared with the total number of residents of Baishizhou it will be difficult to generalize the results. Thus, to ensure the validity of this research and make the provision of more reliable data possible, I will use a mix of methods. As a result, I hope to be able to provide a deeper insight into the social effects created by small-scale interventions in public spaces in urban villages in relation to the physical features and residents' perceptions.

4.2 Data Collection and Analysis

In order to answer the research question and sub questions, this thesis employs different qualitative and quantitative methods. As the sub questions are considered individually, they all require a different type of data. Therefore, triangulation seems necessary for this research. Also, as pointed out by Yin (2013) the mixed method of data collection helps to reduce the problems that arise during the construction of validity "because the multiple sources of evidence essentially provide multiple measures for the same phenomenon" (p.116). In addition, the mixed method can combine the information gathered thereby providing more reliable data.

Thus, the collection of data for this research was done through observations, questionnaires surveys, semi-structured interviews, and in-depth interviews. This triangulation of a variety of data types provides the knowledge required to paint a cohesive picture of the perceptions of residents when the case study is analysed (Bryman, 2012). Moreover, to improve the quality of data gathering, this research also used desktop research and information gathered during the introduction week in Shenzhen. Table 2 summarizes the type

of data collection used to answer each sub question. The detailed way in which the type of data collection was developed is explained next.

Table 2: Type of data collection used to answer each sub question

Sub Question	Data Collection
What were the public space construction goals?	Desktop research, in-depth interview
For who was it created?	Desktop research, in-depth interview
What are the main physical features of the surroundings of the small-scale intervention?	Observation
Which activities are being developed in the area?	Observation, desktop research, in-depth interview, semi-structured interviews
Who are the current users of the public space?	Observation, questionnaires, in-depth interview, semi-structured interviews
What are the residents' perceptions of safety, sense of belonging, life costs, and physical environment	Questionnaires, in-depth interview, semi-structured interviews
In what way does the physical features influence the perception of local residents on the social effects of the small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages?	Questionnaires, in-depth interview, semi-structured interviews, observations

4.2.1 Desktop Research

To understand the urban villages' renewal process in Shenzhen, the physical and contextual background of the city was reviewed. As I was not familiar with Chinese development and culture before the fieldwork, the desktop research started before my departure to the field. The initial data was found using web searches, library catalogue, and by going through reference lists in papers. Since some previous researchers from the University of Amsterdam have developed researches on Shenzhen, this database was also explored.

The second stage of the desktop research was done in Shenzhen during the fieldwork. With the help of a translator, it was possible to search for information in Chinese, such as in policy documents, plans, websites, and newspaper articles. Due to the size of Shenzhen and the large number of urban villages, this method was crucial to narrow down the case study.

4.2.2 *Observations*

Observations were carried out in order to understand the existing physical conditions of the area. This enabled me to do some analyses. Moreover, during the site visits, I had the opportunity to observe how people interacted with the area during different times of the day. These observations and visits result in different maps that cover the land and street level uses. These observations, along with the other methods, allow a construction of the complete image of the effects of small-scale public interventions in Baishizhou. The results of this will be presented in the next chapter.

4.2.3 *Semi-structured and in-depth interviews*

The interviews were developed with two different aims. Firstly, an in-depth interview was done with the director of the Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd (interview 1, 2015). This interview was essential to understanding the reason for the construction of Baishizhou Cultural Square and its surroundings. It also provided data on urban villages in general. This interview, together with visiting of the site and desktop research, was used to create the background of the case study. Since the director did not speak English, a Chinese student from Peking University, conducted the interview. Before the interview, a list of topics was provided to the student, and since she was also an urban planning student, she was familiar with the topics. Therefore, it was not difficult for her to conduct the interview. This interview was very important to this research, primarily because I was put in contact with the director of the Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd and she was really engaged in the community. Therefore, even after the interview we still had contact and she provided extra data, such as documents and pictures. She also kept me informed about the completed projects in Baishizhou, especially in the Cultural Square.

Because I would like to investigate the social effects of the small-scale intervention, I decided to conduct interviews with shop owners around the square. I did eight short semi-structured interviews. These interviews were developed with the help of the translator. The questions were provided in English and she asked them in Chinese. My intention was to investigate whether or not the square has created changes in the physical features and use of the area. I was also looking for shops that were in the area before the construction of the square, since they could provide more data to combine with the information gathered from my desktop research, self-completion questionnaires, and the introduction weeks. The list of topics and the respondents' profiles are available in appendix I and II.

4.2.4 *Self-completion Questionnaires*

The questionnaires were the main source of data for this research. It was used to inquire from residents about their perception of the square and its surroundings. It covered

people's level of satisfaction for such aspects as urban form quality, safety, increasing of life costing, and sense of belonging to Baishizhou. The social effects could be investigated through interviews. However, the questionnaires seemed more appropriate in my case for many reasons. First, to gather a better picture of the social effects from the locals' perception, the largest number of respondents is needed. Second, I was already familiar with the challenges encountered in the development of interviews with urban villages' residents. Third, questionnaires could be answered without assistance so I could conduct interviews without a translator's assistance. The questionnaire is available, both in English and Chinese in appendix IV and V.

The questionnaire was developed based on the guidelines provided by Bernard (2006). Bernard (2006) suggests 15 steps for creating the questionnaire and explains how to translate a questionnaire into an unknown language. Thus, I chose to develop a 5-scale questionnaire, with additional open questions and socio-demographic questions.

The questionnaire used the concepts present in my conceptual scheme and the formulation of the statements is based on the theoretical framework. Some questions were included after the interviews, since some different topics flowed from them. For instance, sense of belonging was not in my initial questionnaire, but this point was cited more than once. In addition, there is a sign in the square saying that the square aims to promote the sense of belonging. Therefore, this could not be neglected. In addition, some socio-demographic questions have been excluded from the questionnaire. Questions such as income, education, and marital status were excluded from my questionnaire because on the day of sampling, the respondents were not comfortable with these questions and they expressed their discomfort to my translator. Later on, my interviewed 1 confirmed that most of the time urban village residents did not like to answer these kinds of questions. Thus, as they were not the focus of my thesis, I decided to exclude them.

The first step after finishing the questionnaire in English was to translate it into Chinese. It was done with the help of a Chinese woman with proficiency knowledge in English. As she worked in an Urban Planning office, she was familiar with the topic and helped me to make the questionnaire more understandable. Based on my desktop research and after visiting the area and talking with different people in Shenzhen, one point that was paid attention to during the elaboration of the statements were the educational level of Baishizhou residents. For that reason, the statements were written as clearly and simple as possible.

After finishing the designing of the questionnaire and translating it, I sent it to a Chinese friend to translate it back into English. The "back translation" ensured that the questionnaires had been properly translated and that the questions had the desired meaning (Bernard, 2006). After doing the translation and back translation, I tested how people filled out

the questionnaire. I visited the area with a translator and distributed the questionnaire with her help. After the development of the sample, some changes were made to the length and design.

The final questionnaire is divided into four parts, composed of 25 statements, 4 socio-demographic questions, and 3 open questions. The first part addresses the use of the area. It includes one question about the frequency of use and four statements about the purpose of use. The statements were developed using a 5-point Likert Scale and the respondents were asked to point out the frequency of use from never to always for different activities. The second part addressed the social effects of the small-scale intervention. In this part, the respondents were required to point out to what extent they agreed or disagreed with the statements. The section comprises twenty statements about the features present in the last part of the conceptual framework. The third part was the socio-demographic questions. For the purpose of this research, the relevant socio-demographic data about the respondents are: gender, age, relation to the area, and when it is applicable, the length of residence in Baishizhou. Lastly, the respondents were required to answer three open questions, which gave them the freedom to express their feelings about the area and give their general opinions about the area.

The questionnaire was designed to fit on one double-sided A4 paper. The time for filling it in amounted to about 5 minutes. The target audience consists of users of the square and people around the area. Most of the questionnaires were handed out to people during their leisure time and some were given directly to employees of shops around the square. The questionnaires were handed in two different ways: 25 questionnaires were distributed with the help of a Chinese person and 60 questionnaires were handed out by me and other researchers from the same group at different times of the day. Out of 85 questionnaires, 81 were filled out completely. As my target group are the longer time residents, who have been living in Baishizhou for at least 3 years, I decided to exclude the respondents who were working in or only visiting the area, but did not live in Baishizhou. I also excluded the respondents below 19 years, because they were too young when the square was built.

The questionnaire will be analysed with the use of the statistical program SPSS. The analysis will consist of two parts. First, the frequencies will be run to find out the perceptions results. Second, three variables will be created from the statements (Sense of Community Belonging; Cost of Living; and Sense of Safety in Baishizhou Cultural Square) and will be correlate with each other and with the socio-demographic features to see if there are any pattern in the respondents' answers.

4.3 Validity, Limitations and Possible bias

There were some limitations to this research. Since I am not familiar with Chinese and I have never been in Shenzhen before, I experienced some barriers related to language. The second limitation was related to the number of samples. For sure, in six weeks, I could not

collect enough data to create a behaviour pattern and I could not generalize the outcomes of all urban villages only based on the case selected. Thirdly, I could not be sure if the data I collected were reliable. For instance, not everybody was comfortable sharing information about outcomes, and it is an important point for the success of this research, so alternatives to this had to be found.

There were some problems during the development of the questionnaires. First, some people seemed not to understand the questions, and since we did not speak Chinese, we could not understand the respondents' questions. Additionally, every time we started to hand out the questionnaires, it was difficult to convince people to fill them out. However, once the first person filled out the questionnaire it was easy to convince the others. The last issue was related to making people understand that the questionnaires should be answered by one person. In some cases, they filled it in groups, and they even discussed the questions as a group before answering them. To prevent bias, some notes were made in the questionnaires to know how many people were answering them. Moreover, for the last 25 questionnaires, I focused on people who were alone on the streets.

I also found some limitations to developing the shop owners' interviews. Most of them did not want to be interviewed, and according to them, they were too busy to talk. According to the translator, there were many researches being developed in Baishizhou and shop owners were tired of being questioned or they were afraid that they would provide the wrong information. The interviews were short (between 5 and 10 minutes) and the interviewees did not want to be recorded. Some of them did not want that I made notes during the interview. Thus, during these situations the notes were made shortly after the interviews ended. The person who was interviewed also responded to the questionnaires.

PART 2





Research Area

5 Research Area

In this chapter, the research area will be introduced to get a better understanding of the context of the fieldwork. This research took place in Shenzhen, a city under intense and constant transformation. It is located in the south of Guangdong Province, at the northern border of Hong Kong. The rapid and constant growth over the last 30 years makes it one of the pillars and national benchmarks for China to become a world super power. Currently, the administrative region of Shenzhen comprises six districts - Luohu, Futian, Nanshan, Yantian, Baoan, and Longgang (Li et al, 2005). The case study central to this thesis, Baishizhou Cultural Square, is located in Baishizhou within the Nanshan district.

5.1 Baishizhou

The fieldwork for this research was done in the Baishizhou Cultural Square, in one of the most important urban villages in Shenzhen. Baishizhou urban village is one of the largest UVs in Shenzhen. Baishizhou comprises five urban villages: Xintang, Upper Baishi, Lower Baishi, Tangfou, and Baishizhou Village. The area also includes an Industrial Zone. Due to the historical, administrative, and physical connection, the whole area is identified as Baishizhou.

This urban village enjoys a prime location in Shenzhen, next to the Window of the World and Splendid China (two famous theme parks in Shenzhen). It is near to Shennan Avenue (dividing North and South parts of Baishizhou) and close to two metro stations. Moreover, it is situated between Overseas Chinese Town, one of China's biggest real estate development projects, and complex Portofino, a European style neighbourhood.

The estimated urban village population was 140,000 residents; approximately 31,000 held Shenzhen *hukou*, 2,075 were villagers, and the remaining were migrants (interview 1, 2015). Baishizhou is the most densely populated UV in the city², 18.91 people/km², while the municipal average was 5,323 people/km² (Shenzhen Bureau of Statistics, 2013).

Like most UVs in Shenzhen, the majority of residents are migrants (76.37%), who initially moved to the area because of the availability of affordable housing and because of job opportunities in the area. However, due to its location near the OCT loft³, Baishizhou also attracts students, young professionals, architects, and artists (Bontje, 2013).

² Data based on 7.4 km² of area and 140,000 inhabitants.

³ OCT loft is an original industrial zone renovated into a creative park. It is a gentrified neighbourhood in Shenzhen, occupied by different design and architecture companies and with expensive restaurants and Cafes.

The buildings were usually six to eight storeys high with steel frames covering the windows. As many buildings were illegally built, there is only a small space between them, often only a meter or less, hence the name “handshake buildings”— residents can literally shake hands with their neighbours from their windows (figure 3). The high building density in Baishizhou has led to a mixed land-use pattern. In the residential part of Baishizhou), generally, the first floor is divided into a small shop and service spots. Usually, the store occupies the building's facade and funds provide accommodation for the tenants, and the top floors were mostly designated for residential use. This division is a common feature in most urban villages (Chung, 2010).

All this peculiarities about Baishizhou make it a complex urban village case, which is attracting researches from different fields. For instance, a previous research was interested in the migrants' choice of residence, focusing at the migrants living in Baishizhou village (Veeken, 2013). Other researches were interested in the urban renewal process (Verbeelen, 2013; and Wang, 2013). Moreover, the area also attracts philosophers, anthropologists and others social scientists intrigued by this phenomenon so peculiar in China, the urban villages.

The high value of land in Baishizhou together with the social and physical problems caught the attention of the government and the real estate developers, who are interested in the renovation of the area to improve the image of the city and make profit.

5.2.1 Baishizhou Urban Renewal

The urban renewal of Baishizhou is guided by the Shenzhen Master Plan (Shenzhen Municipality, 2010). Its objective is to transform the image of the entire city and accelerate its urbanization, by promoting the integration of urban villages and surroundings (Futian Government Online, 2005). Since 2005, several attempts have been made to implement the urban renewal plan of Baishizhou (Bontje, 2013).

The current urban renewal plan, “overall demolition and construction” includes the demolition of many buildings and negotiations are underway between stakeholders (villagers, developers, and government). If the plan is executed, it will transform Baishizhou from a low-income community into a modern and rich neighbourhood (O'Donnell, 2013). In March 2014,

Figure 3: Baishizhou Handshake Buildings



the development of this project was approved. The urban renewal of the Northern section of Baishizhou is included in the 'Shenzhen Urban Renewal Unit Plan' (Shenzhen Urban Planning and Land and Resources Committee, 2014). According to the document, the aim is to redevelop 459,542 square meters of built area. The area will be designated for commercial, residential use, and no less than 135,857 square meters for public projects (Shenzhen Urban Planning and Land and Resources Committee, 2014). The document did not mention the relocation of residents. During the fieldwork, it was possible to observe a few signs of the urban renewal. For instance, as a way of alerting the residents about what was happening, several signs with beautiful pictures of the "future" of Baishizhou were spread across the urban village (figure 4). However, at the end of this research only few projects had been started and were still in their foundation stage (figure 4).

The delay in the execution of the projects can be attributed to conflicts between stakeholders, which can be mostly related to two factors (Urban Planner, 2015).⁴ First, the high value of compensation to the landowners (the villagers) is a barrier to the developers, and leads to long negotiations. Developers cannot always acquire all the land necessary to initiate independent projects, such as new buildings, due to the fragmentation of land ownership in the village. Secondly, since many urban villages in the inner city of Shenzhen have been totally demolished, there is a significant fall in the supply of cheap labour in the central area of the city. Low-income workers are moving to the suburbs to look for more affordable housing. Consequently, labour supply falls and transport costs rises, which together increase the cost of labour for employers. The local government is under pressure to keep these residents in the inner city in order to reduce the negative effects on labour supply (Urban Planner, 2015).

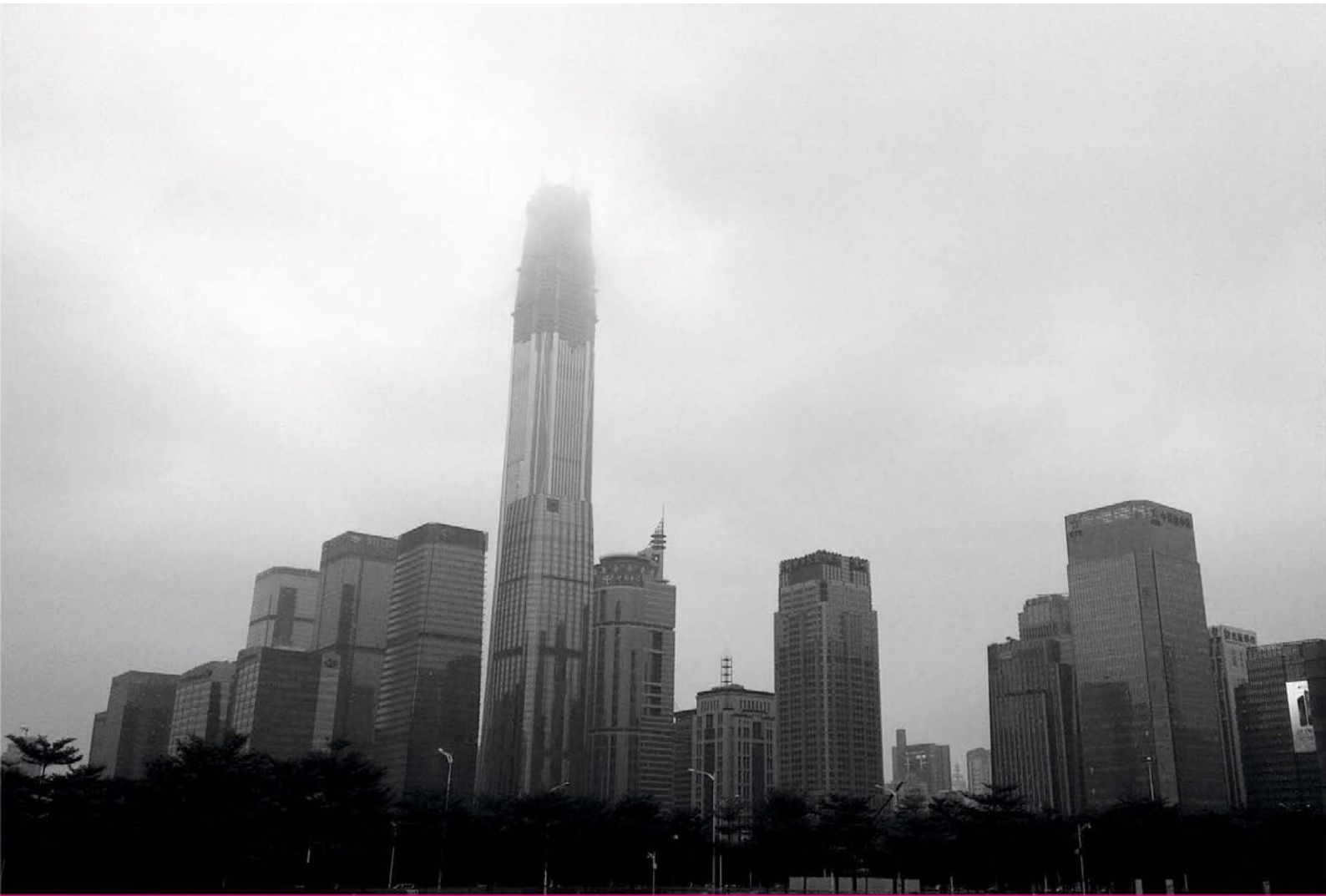
Small-scale interventions emerged in Baishizhou as alternatives to the overall demolition strategy, which has been trying to take off unsuccessfully for the last ten years. This approach is part of a series of government policies that aims to upgrade the neighbourhoods through small changes in the spatial pattern. Most of the time the government compulsorily acquires the facility, pre-determines the area to implement the project, and the collective company executes and finances the project. This approach has been developed progressively and intermittently in Baishizhou. Baishizhou Cultural Square is one of the projects planned and built through this strategy (interview 1, 2015). However, the implementation of projects through this method does not prevent the advancement and implementation of total demolition and reconstruction plans.

⁴ Urban Planner (2015): Lecture with an Urban Planner as part of the introduction week in Shenzhen organized by the International New Town Institute.

In sum, the demolition model is still the favourite among stakeholders who see this as a way to make profit, and get rid of the problems caused by urban villages. However, due to the complexity in the implementation of this model, alternative solutions are emerging in Baishizhou and other urban villages around Shenzhen.

Figure 4: On the top right the plans to urban renew Baishizhou; on the top left the first signs of the large-scale redevelopments; on the bottom Baishizhou from above.





Physical Features

6 Presentation of Baishizhou Cultural Square and Physical Features

This chapter will be the physical features results of six weeks of fieldwork in Shenzhen. As already explained, the aim of this thesis is to explore the social effects of small-scale interventions in urban villages, more specifically in and around Baishizhou Cultural Square. Baishizhou provides the ideal environment to carry out this research. The diversity of this urban village, both in physical and social aspects, along with Baishizhou's complexity have puzzled many scholars in the last few years. In addition, as shown in chapter 5, this urban village is still struggling to be renewed through the best possible way.

The chapter is structured based on the research sub questions. The aim of this chapter is to answer the first three sub questions: (1) What are the public spaces construction goals?; (2) For whom was it created?; and (3) What are the main physical features of the surroundings of the small-scale intervention?. Therefore, this chapter starts with a presentation of Baishizhou Cultural Square, displaying the goals and the target group of its creation. This is followed by the physical features and the delimitation of the study boundary. The chapter ends with a conclusion section about the topic.

6.1 Baishizhou Cultural Square

Baishizhou Cultural Square is located in Baishizhou Industrial Zone. It is situated in the Northern section of Baishizhou, on the border with Upper Baishi Village (South), and Shahe Street (West). Before the construction of the square, the area was an abandoned skating rink. Baishizhou Cultural Square is a result of a compulsory acquisition by the government in 2011, as part of the Comprehensive Improvement Plan and because Shenzhen was hosting the Universiade 2011.⁵ As a result, many small-scale interventions, such as the Baishizhou Cultural Square, were created at central locations of the urban villages. According to the director of the Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd, (Interview 1, 2015) the goal of the project was to improve the image of and the living conditions in the area, and to promote social integration in the community. Another goal for the construction of the square was to tackle the serious shortage of cultural facilities in Baishizhou. In 2012, the area was described as a free space for residents to relax. Baishizhou Cultural Square was completed to open to public use on 17th January 2012.

The construction of the square was financed by the Baishizhou Investment & Development Co., Ltd,⁶ and managed by the Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd. The former

⁵ "The *Universiade* is an international multi-sport event, organized for university athletes by the International University Sports Federation (FISU)". Source: Wikipedia (2015) retrieved from: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Universiade>

⁶ Baishizhou Investment & Development Co., Ltd is the name of the village collective representative company created by the villagers to centralize the decisions related to Baishizhou (interview 1, 2015).

company was also responsible for the location and construction decision, which was influenced by mainly two factors. First, the availability of the land was the primary factor in the choice of location. Secondly, the surroundings of the square were an unsafe place in the urban village, where many illegal activities took place. The director of the Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd (Interview 1, 2015) described the area before the urban renewal as a place to take drugs, gamble, and to hide yourself. She also pointed out that before the square was built, the quality of the buildings were poor, without any security and undesirable. According to her and according to the media, nowadays, the area is the cultural core of Baishizhou. Further, Baishizhou Cultural square is the only open space available in Baishizhou to develop community activities and social integration of residents (interview 1, 2015). Thus, although it is not located in one of the residential areas of Baishizhou, the target audience are the residents of the urban village.

6.2 Physical Features

In order to explore the social effects of small-scale interventions on the community, the starting point is to understand the physical features of the area. The theoretical framework explained that even the small-scale interventions create impacts and changes on the surroundings built environment (Unt and Bell, 2014; Lerner, 2014; Shidan and Qian, 2011). Although urban villages share some similarities, previous researches have showed that Baishizhou has some peculiarities when compared with other urban villages. Lastly, as the research area is located in the Industrial Zone of Baishizhou, the physical features of this area are essential to understanding the local residents' perceptions.

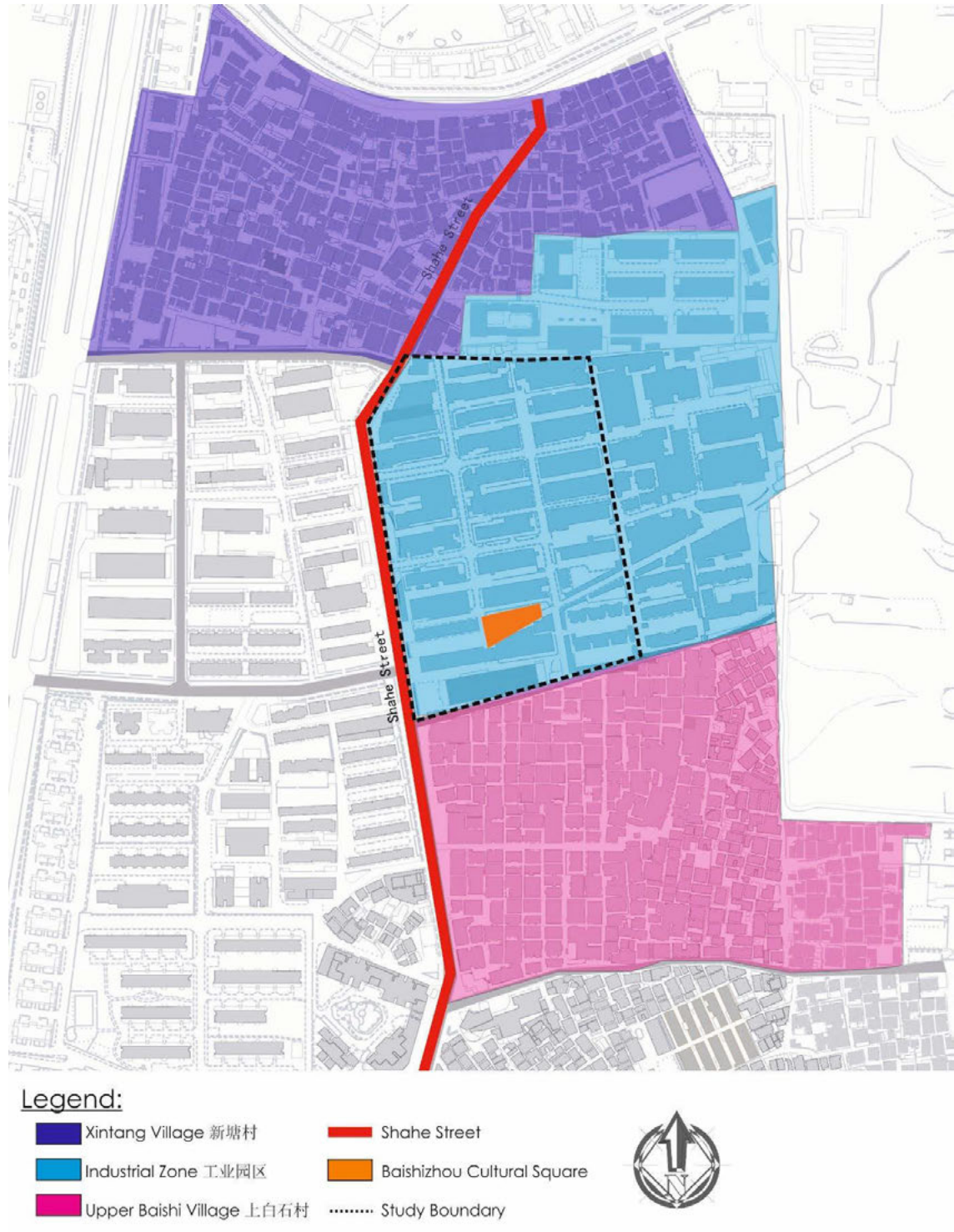
In the previous chapters, the study area was presented, with an overview of the case study and the reasons for the urban renewal in Baishizhou. This section will illustrate the current physical features of the surroundings of Baishizhou Cultural Square. To offer a better understanding of the physical environment in which the fieldwork was carried out, the information will be presented in the form of maps and with the assistance of pictures. The maps were developed by the author based on the survey performed during site visits. The cartographic base was provided by Shenzhen Center of Design and by the director of Baishizhou Community Center.

The first step in conducting the urban space features survey was to determine the study boundaries. The focus area of the research was chosen during the fieldwork and consisted of the square itself and a surrounding perimeter. It was limited to a five minutes' walk towards North, East, and West of the square. As shown before, Baishizhou was already sub-divided into six areas, and the urban renewal plans in the urban village were developed according to those zones. Hence, the first decision was to stay within the Industrial Zone. In addition, the buildings within the Industrial Zone have not been included in the "Shahe Xintang

Street Community Building Census”, and there was no data available about their use. Beside these reasons, other two decisions were made during the fieldwork: the use of Shahe Street as the Western boundary and the exclusion of the residential villages. Shahe Street is the most important street in the Northern part of Baishizhou, connecting Shennan Avenue to Xiang Shan Xi Jie. Shahe Street can be defined as the commercial spine of Baishizhou. In addition it is a natural boundary between the Industrial Zone and the community to the West. The residential areas (Xintang and Upper Baishi villages) were excluded from the study area, because these areas have not been modified in the last few years, and their urban features remain the same (interview 1, 2015). The study boundary is shown in figure 5.

The understanding of the physical features is an important factor of this research, for the reason that the image of the area influences the residents’ perceptions. It also provides data to further answer the main research question. The changes in the urban form after the construction of the square can be an outcome of the small-scale intervention.

Figure 5: Study Boundary



6.2.1 Land Use

The land use gives a general view of the flow of people and the projects, which are under development in Baishizhou Cultural Square's surroundings. The study boundary was primarily designed to accommodate the factory workers and the companies themselves. However, in the last couple of years, many industries have left and as a result the area is

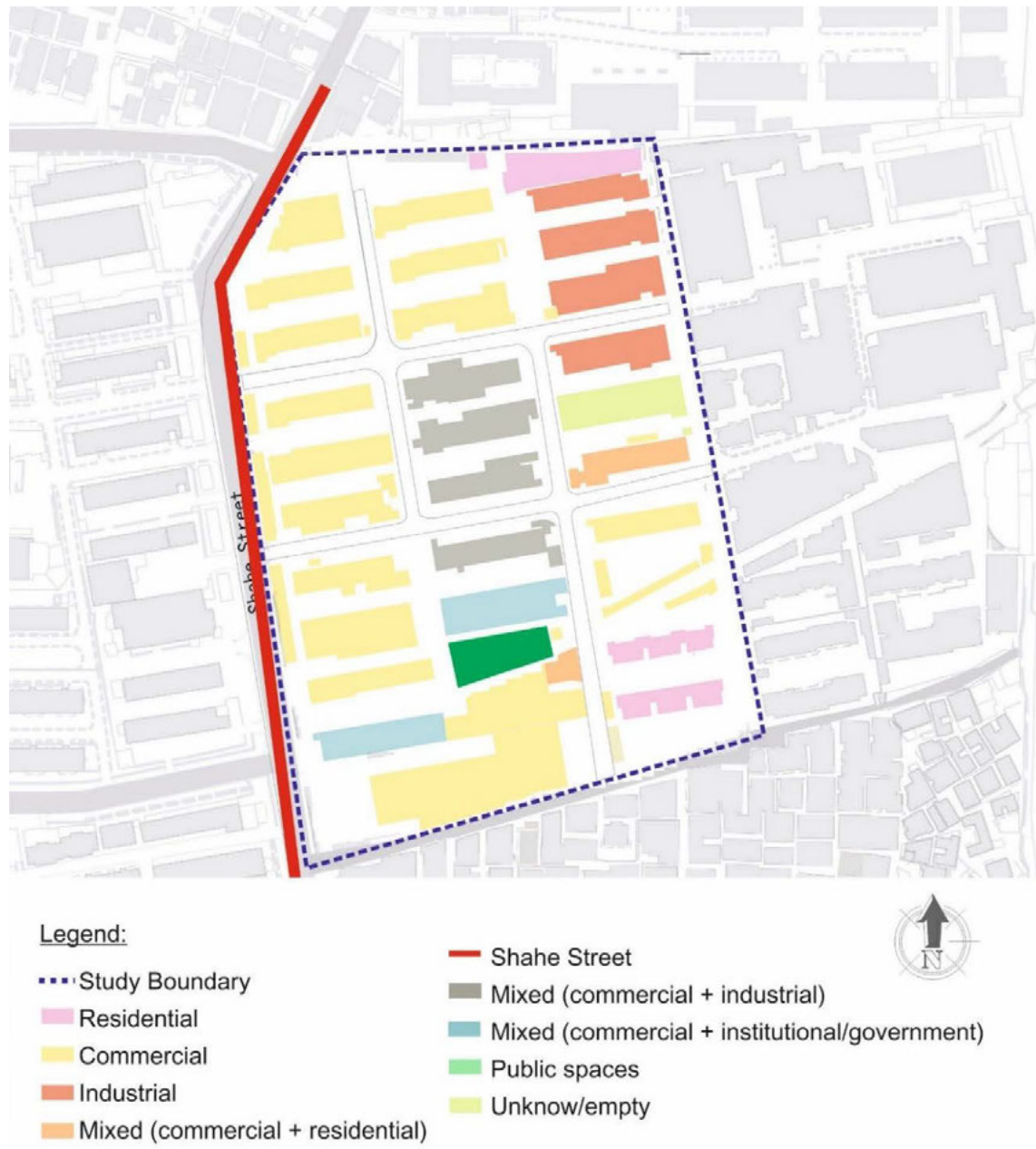
gradually presenting a mixed land use, composed of industrial, commercial, and residential activities, as displayed in figure 6.

The commercial buildings were mainly located at the outskirts of the study boundary, near Shahe Street and Baishizhou Cultural Square. At the core of the area, the ground floors of the buildings were for commercial use while the upper floors were used by manufacturing industries. As can be observed at the top right of the figure 6, some buildings remained completely allocated to industrial activities. In addition, there were only two entirely residential buildings located behind the Cultural Square. During the fieldwork, it was not possible to determine the use of two buildings, marked as unknown on the map. The area also has some buildings used by the Baishizhou Community Center, Shenzhen Baishizhou Investment and Development Co. (深圳市白石洲 投资发展股份有限公司), and LVGEM Real Estate development (绿景集团). They are marked as governmental and institutional buildings on the map.

The majority of buildings on the streets connecting the Cultural Square with Shahe Street have a commercial use, such as shops, restaurants, places for entertainment, and other services, on the ground floor and a secondary commercial use on the top floors, such as hotels and electronics repair shops (figure 7). However, further away from Shahe Street and the Cultural Square, one finds less commercial activities with direct customer service and more industries and empty spaces.

Apart from the Cultural Square and Shahe street, the streets leaving Shahe street in the direction West-East, present significant good liveability. Most of the dining options, stores, and entertainment are concentrated in these streets (figure 6). A peculiarity of those streets is that they are organized by similar or related goods, as only restaurants or only stores. At one side, the street, which connects directly the Cultural Square to Shahe Street, is dominated by apparel stores. Baishizhou commercial walking street displays restaurants, bars, and other entertainment options (figure 7). Another entertainment location is the Pedestrian Street, with billiards table, food kiosks, and children games. The abundance of shops and leisure options on the streets attracts not only residents of the village, but also people from outside the area. The movement of people is intense all day long, as the commercial establishments, from clothing shops to karaoke boxes, focused on different types of customers.

Figure 6: Land use Features



6.2.2 Urban Form and Use of the Area

There is a huge difference between the urban design within and outside the study boundary. When the buildings in the study boundary were compared with the buildings in other villages in Baishizhou, it became clear that the conditions in these areas were better than the average situation in Baishizhou. Also, unlike other areas in Baishizhou, the Industrial Zone was forested, the streets were large, and the majority of the blocks were composed by one large building.

Baishizhou Cultural Square is a rectangular plaza with a stage at one of the sides. The interior of the area is empty in order to permit the development of performances accommodate

chairs for the audience. Around the square are some benches and at the opposite side of the stage are some tables and seats under trees.

The aesthetics of the buildings is also important in the analyses, since it influences people's behaviour. As described by Lynch (1960), the positive perception of the urban form provides to the users a significant "sense of emotional security" (Lynch, 1960). The majority of buildings were multi-storey (between 3 and 5 floors), apart from some extensions that have been made to accommodate small shops. Because of the previous use of the area, there were many buildings identical or very similar to each other, as shown on the bottom left of figure 7. Only two buildings differ completely from that: the supermarket and the Community Center/shops building. Both are located near the Baishizhou Cultural Square. Despite the fact that the buildings were near Shahe Street, they were not well preserved. The unused facades were not painted and had windows with broken glass.

In most of the cases, the renovations were done only on the first floor. Also, since the buildings had front and back facades only the main one was improved. Consequently, the streets with the "new facades" were used by pedestrians and the "back streets" were used for loading and unloading and garbage dumps. Despite the renovation of some buildings, any building in the study boundary have been demolished.

Baishizhou is a mixed-use area integrating industrial, commercial, and residential. As a result, the buildings present a similar design and are distributed uniformly by blocks, between three and six storeys high. The urban form within the boundary is different from the conditions that urban villages generally present. The streets are not narrow as the other streets in Baishizhou, there are trees on the streets, and there are no handshaking buildings within the boundary.

The majority of the buildings in the immediate surroundings of the Cultural Square had an active facade, occupied by different business. It included a supermarket, restaurants, clothing stores, grocery store, employment agencies and others. Businesses located near Shahe Street and Baishizhou Cultural Square were the ones with the largest flow of pedestrians. For instance, a small grocery shop in front of the Cultural Square opened in 2014. According to the owner, an important factor in the choice of the place for her business was the proximity to the plaza (Interview 2, 2015). As she pointed out, the constant flow of people and the liveability of the area ensure customers constantly.

However, while the buildings and streets connected to Shahe Street had many different street-level uses with direct service to the public, the buildings in the core of the study area had a different pattern. Since this area of Baishizhou is transforming from an exclusively industrial zone into a more commercial area, owners of buildings are trying to adapt these structures for its new tenants. This transition process has left several buildings empty, especially at the street level. One point observed during the fieldwork is that the East and West

buildings fronts on the roads moving in the North-South direction are rarely used. These streets have no commercial options and are only used as a connection between the busiest roads in the East-West direction. In general, since most of the streets in the Study Area are interweaving and in a mixed-use neighbourhood with shops at the street level, most of them have the potential, in the medium term, to generate and sustain pedestrian flow.

Figure 7: Urban Form and Use of the Area



6.2.3 Conclusion

In this section the answer to the sub questions three was given. In sum, it could be noticed that the study boundary differs drastically from the normal patterns of urban villages (Chung, 2010). Most of the differences can be attributed to the previous use of the area. But, although it looks like it is different from the rest of Baishizhou village, the area was designed for the residents of the urban village. The area became the place where people from Baishizhou go to look for dining options, entertainment activities, community meetings, and shopping. The study of the urban space became also relevant because these features highly influence the social perceptions, especially the sense of safety (Jacobs, 1961). Also, the area presents the characteristics of a liveable neighbourhood, as it is a mixed area with living, working, and entertainment options (Jacobs, 1961).

During my fieldwork, I observed that despite all the awareness about the urban renewal of Baishizhou, there were many buildings being renewed within the study boundary. According

to the director of the Community Center (interview 1, 2015), the study area is a target for urban renewal. However, in her opinion, it is not going to happen any time soon. Her opinion is the same as most of the entrepreneurs interviewed. One building that used to be an industry is being refurbished to house a restaurant. When the responsible for the working (interview 5, 2015) was asked about the reasons and motivations to reuse the building he pointed out that Baishizhou is an important area economically. He also said that he did not believe in the urban renewal of Baishizhou. In his words:

“I don’t think they will demolish Baishizhou and move all the people. There are many people living here, and we don’t want to move.” (Interview 5, 2015).

The physical location of the study area attracts investments because it is near Shahe Street, which connects Baishizhou and OCT Loft. The street attracts pedestrians as it has many shops, street vendors, and a public transport system. Thus, many investments and improvements are being focused on that street, and consequently in the closest surroundings. Hence, there was plenty of space far away from the heart of the village to develop for commercial use. The expansion of restaurants, bars, supermarkets further into Baishizhou can be used as an engine for cultural and social enrichment of the community as well as economic diversification.



Social Features and Perceptions

7 Results Social Features and Perceptions

After the presentation of the project and the physical features, this chapter will present the findings of my research on the residential perceptions of Baishizhou Cultural Square, their surroundings, and Baishizhou in general. It includes the perceptions of Baishizhou residents and the use of the area. The findings presented in this chapter will be the basis of the discussion in the next chapter. This chapter will be developed to answer the sub questions four, five and six. The chapter will be guided by the answers got in the questionnaires and street interviews. The interview with the director of the Community Center (interview 1, 2015) will be also addressed in the chapter to serve as a comparison between the goals and results of the construction of Baishizhou Cultural Square. The chapter starts with a general view of the respondents, including their socio-demographic characteristics, in order to answer the sub question five. It is followed by a section dedicated to the use of the area (sub question 4). The last part is composed by five sub-sections covering all aspects researched during the fieldwork namely: safety, increase in the cost of living, sense of belonging, use of the area, and image of the area. The last section will end with a conclusion over the residents' perceptions to further answer the research question.

7.1 Respondents characteristics

In total, the questionnaires on perception were filled out by 81 people, four being non-residents, 16 being residents for less than three years, and 61 being residents for a longer period of time (more than 3 years). Since the focus of this thesis is on residents' perceptions, non-residents were excluded from the data analysis. However, I had the opportunity to ask two of them the reasons for which they were there. Two women who spoke English but were residents of other urban villages confirmed that they visit Baishizhou Cultural Square regularly because they have friends in the area. It can be also related to the fact that the Cultural Square attracts people from other communities to engage in cultural activities. According to my interview 1, sometimes people from the surroundings came to Baishizhou because some activities that were taking place in the square were announced in the media and were attended by residents from outside Baishizhou.

Gender and age were included because as I have showed before, these factors influence perceptions of the environment. For instance, Western researches showed that gender and age affect the perception of safety. The studies indicated that men are less concerned about public security than women are. Additionally, in the Western context, the sense of safety is higher among younger people (Nielsen et al, 2009). Moreover, some studies showed that longer residents and elderly people are most likely to feel attached to the neighbourhood, having thus a strong sense of belonging.

Of the 77 residents interviewed, 48 were women and 29 were men. The majority of the respondents were between 31 and 45 years. Only ten respondents were between 46 and 60 years old. Although it was present in the questionnaire, no one stated to have been more than 61 years. This does not mean that people over 60 years did not visit the area. On the contrary, there were activities especially developed for elders, but when I tried to approach them to participate in the research, they refused. According to interviewed 1 (2015), elderly urban villages residents may be afraid to be repressed for giving the 'wrong' opinions or maybe they did not know how to read. Figure 8 displays the residents' profile.

Figure 8: Respondents' Profile



The majority of respondents were living and working in Baishizhou (68.8%). 35 people had been living in Baishizhou for more than five years, 26 people had been living there between three and five years, and 16 people had been residents for less than three years. The length of residence shows that although urban villages are constantly described as places of temporary residence (Hao, 2012), at least in Baishizhou, there were permanent residents. Another important factor is that the majority of people who participated in the survey, even the shop owners who were interviewed, were living and working in Baishizhou. An owner of a grocery shop, a woman, at the front of the square (interview 2, 2015), had her shop at the front and lived in the back, a common characteristic of urban villages (Chung, 2010). The fact that the majority had been living in Baishizhou for a long time is positive for this research, particularly the respondents who had been living in Baishizhou for more than three years, because they have experienced the area before and after the construction of the square (figure 9). In addition, the wide variety of respondents is positive for the data analysis since it is

expected that some correlation will be found between the statements and the socio-demographic characteristics. Thus, this research confirms this previous statement.

This diversity of respondents supports the idea that Baishizhou is a divergent urban village, ranging from families who lived there since they moved to Shenzhen to young people who cannot afford their first independent accommodation in other neighbourhoods (O'Donnell, 2013; Shuo; 2007, Bontje, 2013).

Figure 9: Length of Residence



7.2 Use of the area

Baishizhou Cultural Square is the only Cultural Square in Baishizhou. It is a free open space where the residents have the opportunity to participate in cultural activities. The square is managed by the Community Co., Ltd, but everyone is welcome to use it. When places like Baishizhou Cultural Square are properly designed and built in urban villages, they enhance the social life, providing a place for interaction between neighbours. In addition, Baishizhou Cultural Square is an important venue for social interaction in Baishizhou. As pointed out by Wooley (2004), the hosting of “events can have a very positive effect on the urban environment, drawing the community together and bringing financial, social and environmental benefits.”

During my fieldwork, I visited Baishizhou several times. Sometimes the purpose of the visit was to make observations and distribute questionnaires, and at other times just to try to interact with people. The surroundings of Baishizhou Cultural Square are very liveable areas of Baishizhou. As I showed through the physical features, the area had a mixed use, attracting

people from all different areas of Baishizhou and neighbourhoods. Also, the study boundary was the cultural and entertainment core of Baishizhou. Thus, the evaluation of the residents' perceptions depend on their use of the area. The respondents were, therefore, asked first to point out the frequency and the purpose for which they visited Baishizhou Cultural Square and surroundings. The activities included meeting friends, entertainment activities (for instance play cards, dining and dancing), in case of free time, and community events (figure 10). As can be observed in Appendix IV, I also included two open questions, one addressing the use of the square and a second one about the use of the structure around the Cultural Square.

Almost 30 percent of the respondents indicated that they visit Baishizhou Cultural Square and surroundings almost every day. Some activities were organized daily, which could explain their frequent visits to the square. Other informal activities were also organized daily. For instance, a group of men used the tables around the square almost every weekday to play cards. They are within the group that is assumed to always use the area to meet friends. A group of dancers shared this same opinion. They confirmed that they met each other after work to relax and have dinner at a place near the square. In addition to the playing of cards, other non-organized activities included taking care of children, walking around, sitting to relax, and chatting with friends.

Within the organized activities were the daily dancing (twice a day) and community events. As I pointed out before, Baishizhou Cultural Square was managed by Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd, so all activities that were taking place in the square had to be approved by it (Interview 1, 2015). Those activities included talent shows⁷, voluntary events, and different cultural activities and celebrations⁸. Occasionally, Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd is also the host of the events. According to my interview 1(2015), the square was built to promote cultural life and enhance a sense of community in Baishizhou. For instance, on May 1st (one of the biggest Chinese bank holidays), Baishizhou Community Co., Ltd organizes a series of activities for workers. More than half of respondents confirmed to have visited the Baishizhou Cultural Square to participate in the community events. This was also the most cited answer for the open question in the questionnaire. According to the answer in the questionnaire, they visit the square to attend the voluntary activities, watch shows, and attend events.

Baishizhou Cultural Square is very often the first choice of people to enjoy their leisure time. The choice is also related to the entertainment activities offered in the surroundings of the Cultural Square. According to residents, after the square was built, they had a place to meet friends and do exercise. They also had a place to bring the children, including the Commercial Walking Street. Due to all the different activities that were taking place, the whole

⁷ http://www.fanggenanshan.com/News_1296.aspx

⁸ <http://www.szns.gov.cn/shjd/xxgk23/qt66/gzdt94/2149112/index.html>

study boundary is a liveable area of Baishizhou. In the early mornings, the area was occupied by dancing old ladies, a common practice in public open spaces in China. During the day, children and customers walk around. During the night, the restaurants, the dancing, and the entertainment activities in bars (KTV, billiards, and others) attracted people to the area. The use for Baishizhou Cultural Square is summarized in figure 10.

It has to be observed that the Cultural Square is the only open public space in Baishizhou where the community develop their cultural activities. Another particular point to be observed is that my fieldwork was done in late spring and early summer, when the lower temperature on average was 20 °C and the temperature on average was 26 °C. Combined with the fact that most of the apartments were very hot increased the number of people outside of their homes, and raised the flow of people on the streets during the day.

Figure 10: Use of Baishizhou Cultural Square

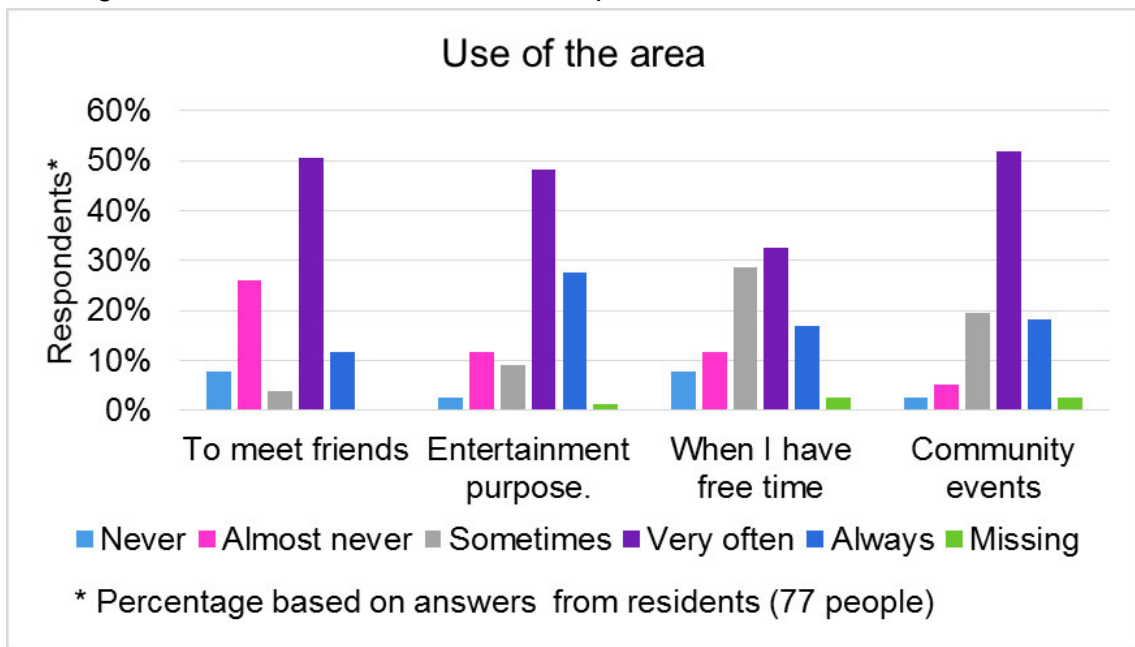


Figure 11: Activities in Baishizhou Cultural Square.



7.3 Users Perceptions

As mentioned in the chapter on theory and methodology, the way local residents perceive that the social impacts, which were brought to the community by urban renewal projects, may influence their overall perception of the environment. This paragraph will address the perceived social effects of a small-scale intervention in Baishizhou. The residents' perceptions will be addressed through a questionnaire and interviews with shop owners. The method used to analyse the questionnaire was explained in Chapter 4. The residents' perceptions were determined by posing them a suggestion. The results presented in the section are based on the answers of the respondents who had lived longer in Baishizhou (over 3 years of residence in Baishizhou), 61 people. The perceptions of residents, combined with a survey of the physical features and the use of the area will provide the data needed to know what the impact of the construction of the square is.

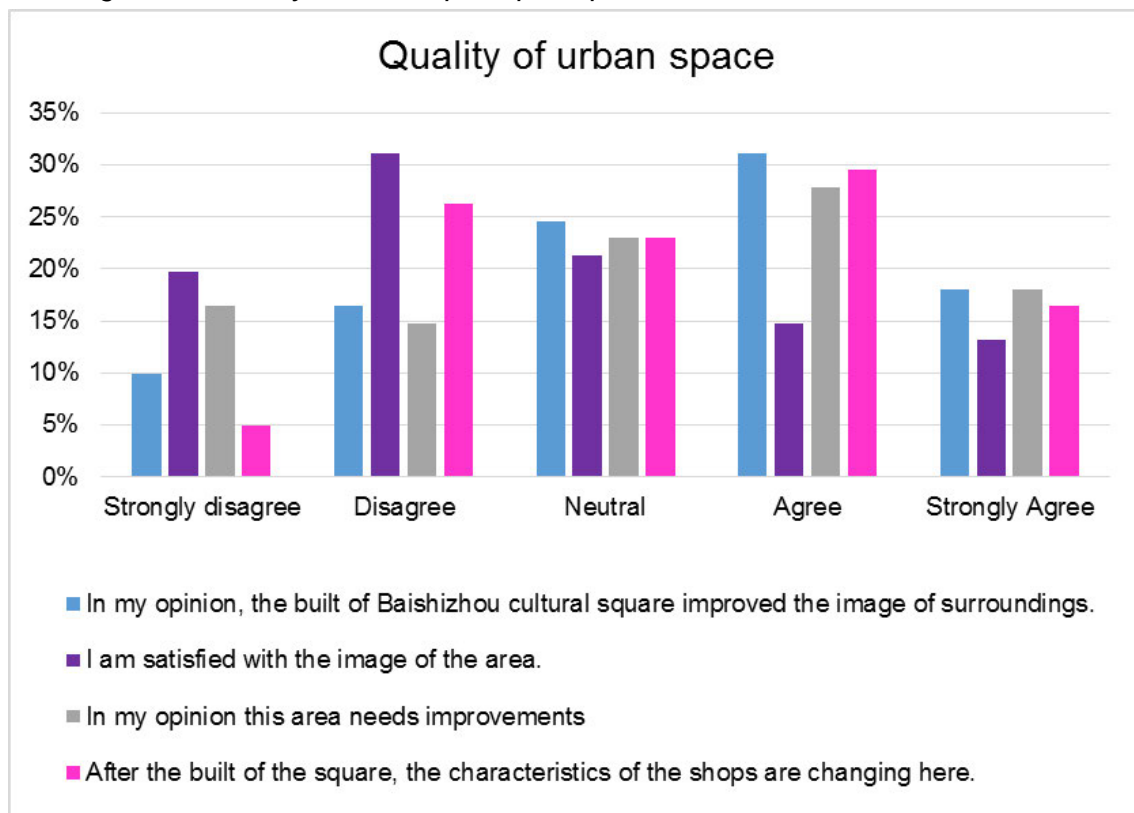
7.3.1 *Quality of Space*

The first topic to address the local residents' perceptions was the quality of space. In order to get a general idea of the quality of urban space perception of the respondents, one of the questions was about the changes noticed in the surroundings after the square was built. Overall, the respondents noticed that the area has improved in the last years. As can be seen in figure 12, thirty people find that the construction of Baishizhou Cultural Square improved the image of surroundings. The respondents also agreed that after the square was built, the characteristics of shops are changing there. The owner of one of the stores around the square also pointed it out. He used to have his shop across the square and after the construction of the square he moved away, establishing his business in a nearby street (interview 9, 2015). According to him, his business, a Car and Bikes Repair Shop, did not "fit more in the place" (interview 9, 2015).

However, the perception of change did not mean that the respondents were satisfied with the actual quality of the area. More than 50 percent of participants were not satisfied with the image of the area and almost the same percentage thinks that the area needs improvements. This can be related to the many empty stores and broken windows near the square. The maintenance of the square and the surroundings also had a negative impact on the perceptions. Some respondents made notes in the questionnaire near the statements. One person wrote that she liked to join the ladies dance, but she did not like the area. She said that many buildings that used to be industries were now empty. Another person wrote:

"I did not any notice any changes and have room for improvements." (Questionnaire 12, 2015).

Figure 12: Quality of urban space perceptions



7.3.2 Sense of safety

Safety is often cited as one of the biggest concerns in urban villages. The improvement of public spaces affects real and perceived safety (Mehta, 2014). Perceived safety is one of the most important elements for promoting social activities (Carmona, 2010; Jacobs, 1961). Public spaces are designed to solve social, physical, and economic problems of the communities including promoting a safe environment for the users and residents (Public spaces: More than 'just space', 2015). When people feel safe, they are more likely to use the area and stay on the streets.

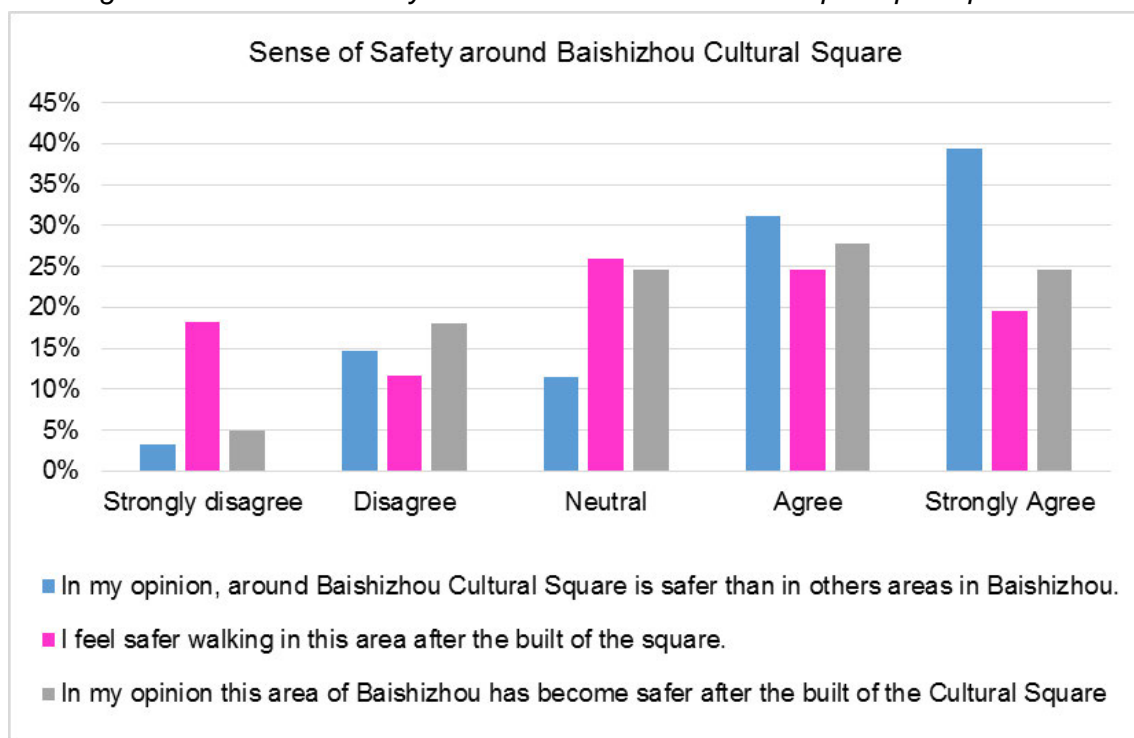
Promoting a sense of safety and enhancing public security in the area were also one of the aims of the construction of the Baishizhou Cultural Square. According to the director of Baishizhou Community Center (interview 1, 2015), the choice of the site for the Cultural Square was partially based on the desire to improve safety in the Industrial Zone of Baishizhou. Many industries were moving out of the area, and as a result, the area became a place housing drug addicts and illegal activities occurred there. Also, without attractors in the area the number of small crimes was increasing daily (interview 1, 2015).

Figure 13 displays the perceptions regarding safety around the square compared with other areas of Baishizhou. As a starting point, respondents should give their opinion about the safety of BCS surroundings compared with other areas in Baishizhou. In general, residents of Baishizhou felt safer around the square than in other areas of Baishizhou. Only five percent

did not share this opinion and strongly disagreed with the statement. According to interview 3 (2015) the flow of people around the square provides a safe environment. This fact is also related to the physical features of the study area. The streets were larger and cleaner within the study boundary. Also, visual safety is higher around the square. According to interview 1 (2015), the poor state of electrical installations causes many short circuits and minor accidents in Baishizhou. People were afraid of the tangled electric wires at the front of their windows.

When I asked the respondents if they felt safer walking in the surroundings of Baishizhou Cultural Square after its construction, the feedback was also positive. The majority of the participants felt safer to walk in the study area with the presence of the square. Interview 5 admitted to be a Baishizhou resident for more than five years, but she said that she had never been in this area before the construction of the square. When I asked why, the answer was that the area did not attract her and it was not a nice place to go. On the other hand, the highest score alone in this statement was in the neutral choice (around 25% of responses). In general, residents were positive about the actual level of safety around Baishizhou. Around 50 percent of respondents have the perception that the area was becoming safe after the construction of the square. As shown in the physical features, this fact can also be noticed in the improvements in the surroundings. Many restaurants and small shops were choosing to be located near Baishizhou Cultural Square. The diversity of activities were including “eyes on the street”, which is a positive influential on the sense of safety (Jacobs, 1961).

Figure 13: Sense of Safety around Baishizhou Cultural Square perceptions



After the questions related to the actual perception of safety around the square, the respondents should give their opinions about how they used to feel in the area where the square was built. The respondents indicated that the area was perceived as an unsafe environment (more than 50% of respondents). This was also their opinion related to the overall perception of safety in Baishizhou. More than 50% of participants admitted that they did not feel safe in Baishizhou and that they were afraid to walk in the urban village at night. The results of all statements are available in appendix VIII.

Based on the theoretical framework, some statistics tests were performed to find correlations between the socio-demographic aspects and the sense of safety. A complete list with the correlations between sense of safety and socio-demographic data is available in appendix VII. Although it was expected to find some correlations, based on previous sense of safety researches in Western countries (Nielsen et al, 2009), this assumption was not confirmed and the results were not significant for this research.

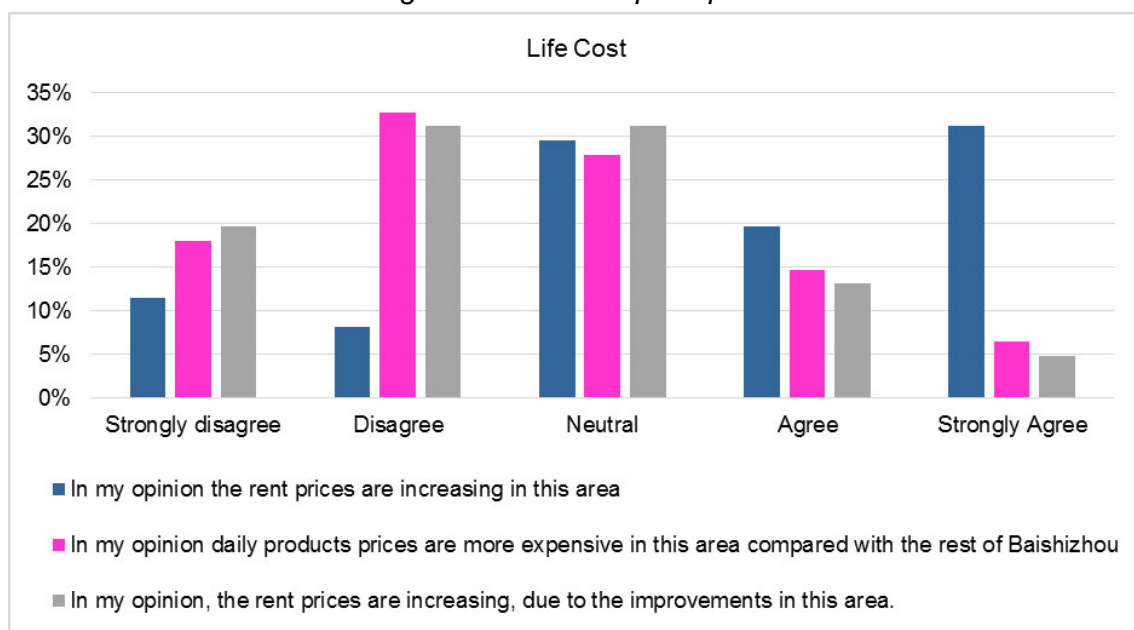
7.3.3 Increasing of Life cost

One of the biggest effects of large-scale redevelopment is the increase in the cost of living, forcing the residents to move out because they cannot afford the costs to live in the new neighbourhood (Hao, 2012). The same phenomenon happens during the redevelopment process of urban villages in Shenzhen. Once the urban village is redeveloped, the whole environment suffers the outcomes (He & Wu, 2007). To address the perception of people towards the increasing cost of living, three statements were made.

Even though Baishizhou has not been redeveloped yet, according to the shop owners, the rent had increased drastically in the last couple of years (interviews 2, 3, and 4, 2015). Consequently, many shops and people were moving out of Baishizhou. One of the store owners (interview 4, 2015), stated that he used to have a bigger store. However, he had to rent half of his store to a second business. According to him, the owner saw the opportunity to double his profit. Thus, with increasing rent the only way to enable him (interview 4, 2015) to stay in Baishizhou was by sharing his space. Another common finding was also that tenants had the store at the front of their homes and lived at the back, same as happened in the rest of Baishizhou. The residents of Baishizhou shared the same opinion as the shop owners. In Figure 14, it is possible to perceive that most residents agree that rent was increasing around Baishizhou Cultural Square. However, they did not connect this fact with the construction of the square. According to interviews 2, 4, 6, (2015), the prices were drastically increasing in the whole of Baishizhou, due to the strategic location of the urban village. According to interview 1, Baishizhou is located in a strategic area of Shenzhen, near OCT and redeveloped neighbourhoods. Thus, this urban village was attracting middle class residents and boosting

the housing market. Lastly, from the residents' perspective, the prices around Baishizhou Cultural Square were quite similar to prices in other Baishizhou areas.

Figure 14: Life-cost perceptions



7.3.4 Sense of Community Belonging

Baishizhou Cultural Square was built to promote social integration in Baishizhou, enhancing the sense of belonging. The slogan of the square was “To promote the sense of belonging in Baishizhou”. The respondents were therefore asked to express their level of agreement in six statements related to their perceptions of the community and with their level of community engagement to provide data enough to build the sense of community. Overall, respondents were optimistic about Baishizhou Cultural Square. More than half of the participants agreed with these statements.

Figure 15 and 16 show the results of the questions related to sense of belonging. Overall, the respondents have a positive perception about Baishizhou and the study area. The level of agreement ranged from 45 to 55 percent in almost all statements, except the statement “it is easy to make friends in Baishizhou Cultural Square” (around 35% agreed with the statement). Also, the majority of answers did not exhibit a negative point of view. However, concerning the importance of Baishizhou in their daily life (30% of people did not consider Baishizhou Cultural Square important). As has been already shown, the frequency of people that visit the study area every day is high. People were generally optimistic about the square. A middle-aged man (questionnaire 3, 2015) wrote in the questionnaire:

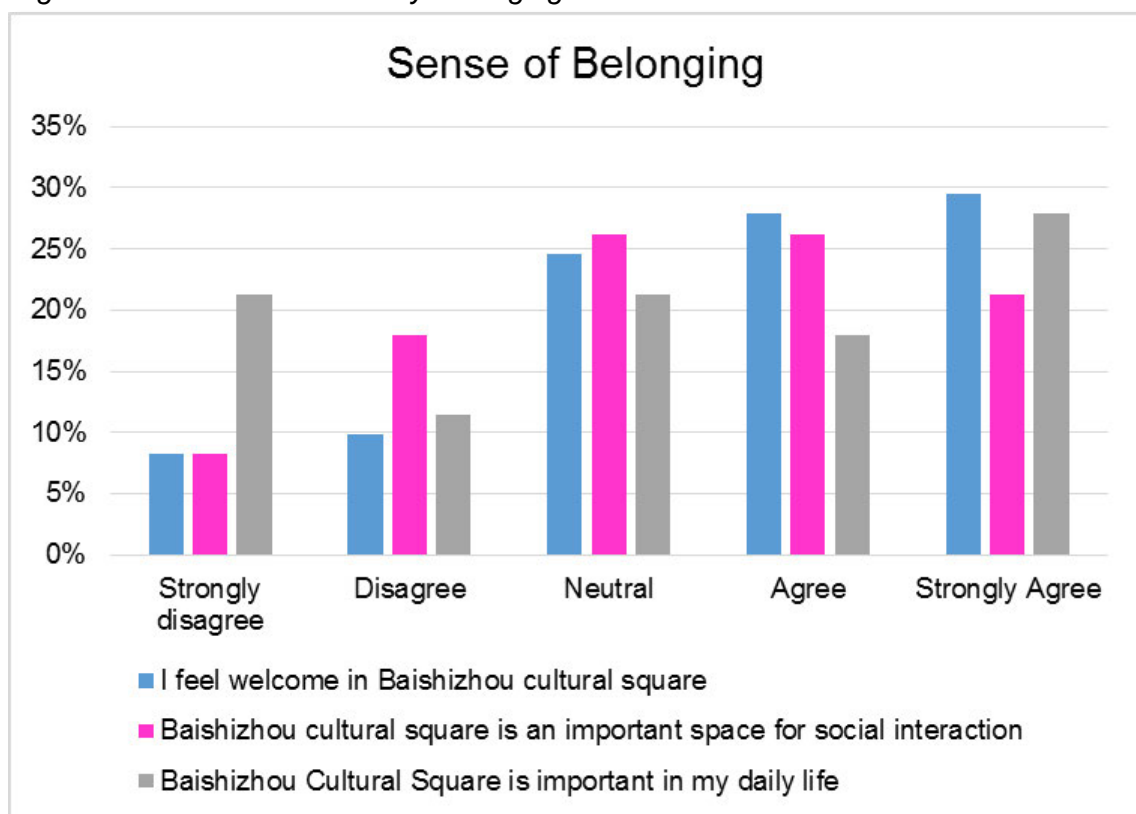
“The square has increased the sense of community belonging. People now have other option of public space, where they can go exercise and meet

friends. It is not easy to build a plaza in the urban village. The plaza has brought energy and liveliness into the community.⁹

Although the majority of residents generally had a positive perception of Baishizhou Cultural Square, some people did not notice any change and used the area only because it was near to a supermarket, and had good transport connections. Another respondent said she only visited the area because she had to work and attend the voluntary activities. However, when she wanted to interact with people she preferred to visit areas such as OCT.

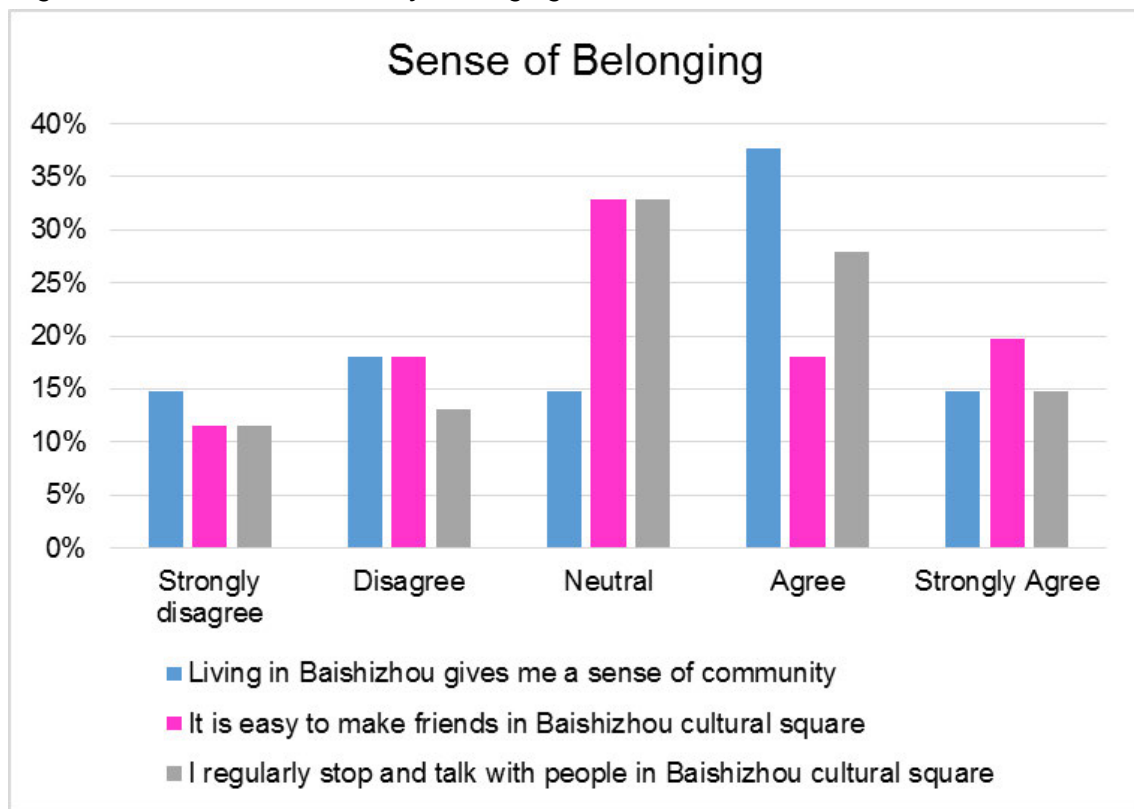
In conclusion, according to dwellers, Baishizhou Cultural Square is fulfilling her goal to promote a sense of belonging in Baishizhou. More than one respondent admitted that he did not have a place to go before the built of the square. In average almost 50% of locals had the sense of belonging perception, while 25% were neutral, and 14% of respondents' did not have a sense of belonging at all.

Figure 15: Sense of Community Belonging



⁹ Translated from Chinese into English by a native Chinese speaker.

Figure 16: Sense of Community Belonging 1



7.3.5 Conclusion

The aim of this section was to answer the sub question six:

What are the resident's perceptions of safety, sense of belonging, life costs, and physical environment?

For this, four variables have been created, namely: Sense of Safety in BCS; Sense of Community Belonging; Physical Quality Satisfaction; and Cost of Living. The questionnaires and shop owners interviews display different opinions about Baishizhou and urban villages, in general. Urban villages are seen by the governments as the biggest problem of Shenzhen's urbanization and that their only value are in providing affordable housing to low income residents (Hao et al, 2011; Hao, 2012; Lin et al, 2014). Overall, local residents see the construction of Baishizhou Cultural Square positively. The results show that Baishizhou is not only a transitory place where migrants start their life in Shenzhen, moving out as soon as possible. Baishizhou has a large group of longer residents that sees the urban village as their community, and that they are part of that.

Baishizhou Cultural Square was built with the goal to integrate different cultures and build a sense of community belonging, where people from all different parts of China are welcome to live (interview 1, 2015). The questionnaires show that this goal was achieved. 44.3

percent of respondents agreed that the square built the sense of community belonging. However, although the residents recognize the value of Baishizhou Cultural Square they are not satisfied with the physical conditions of the area. Only 20 percent of the respondents think that the area does not need to be improved.

Another point highlighted by the questionnaires is that contrary to what usually happens after urban renewal interventions, the construction of Baishizhou Cultural Square did not increase the cost of living in the area. However, as prices are increasing in the whole of Baishizhou it is difficult to reach some conclusion about that. It can also be seen by the answers in the questionnaires that, 45.9 percent of participants have a neutral perception about this issue. The most positive social effect brought by the BCS is the sense of safety in the area. According to 32 people, the area is safer after the construction of the square. The perception of 65.6% of participants is that the construction of the square increased the sense of safety.

In conclusion, addressing the social issues proposed by the conceptual framework based on the answers from the questionnaires, it is possible to say that on the one hand BCS is an important agent in the increase in sense of community belonging and safety. On the other hand, from the residents' perceptions, the construction of the square did not stimulate improvements in the area and as a result, the physical quality satisfaction is low. Table 3, summarizes the results of the social effects.

Table 3: Summary of residents' perceptions

	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Sense of Community Belonging	16.4	39.3	44.3
Life-cost	32.8	45.9	21.3
Sense of Safety BCS	16.4	18.0	65.6
Physical Quality Satisfaction	29.5	50.8	19.7

PART 3





Discussion and Conclusion

8 Discussion and Conclusion

In order to answer the research question several smaller sub questions were formulated namely: (1) What were the public space construction goals?; (2) For whom was it created?; (3) What are the main physical features of the surroundings of the small-scale intervention?; (4) Which activities are being developed in the area?; and (5) Who are the current users of the public space? (6) What are the residents' perceptions of safety, sense of belonging, life costs, and physical environment?. These questions have been answered in the last three chapters. In this chapter, the informations gained during this research will be combined and discussed in order to answer the last sub question (7. In what way do the physical features influence the perceptions of local residents on the social effects of small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages?) and the main research question:

What are the inferences of the small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages on the residents' perceptions about the expected social effects created by the project?

The aim of this study was to explore the social effects of a small-scale intervention in a public space in an urban village. As shown in the methodology chapter, the social effects were addressed through local residents' point of view, considering the social and physical features of the study area. Thus, to achieve the goal of this thesis and answer the questions posed above, this chapter is organized into three subsections. It starts with a discussion about the connection between the theory (chapter 2), the physical and social features (chapter 6 and 7), and the perceptions of local residents and shop owners (chapter 7), thus providing the answer for the last sub question (7). The second section, addresses the urban renewal of urban villages, by comparing the government's goals and the effects of small-scale interventions. This section is followed by a discussion on the role of urban villages and their public spaces. After these three discussions sections, the fourth part will be the conclusion of this thesis. The fifth part provides some recommendations. The chapter ends with a personal reflection on this research.

8.1 Connecting Social Effects and Physical Features

This research shows that some of the physical features influence the residents' perceptions and they reflect on the social effects created by the construction of Baishizhou Cultural Square. As described by UN-Habitat, public spaces should be safe, lively, and well-maintained (Public spaces: More than 'just space', 2015). These factors are ensured by the social and physical qualities of the area. Considering Baishizhou Cultural Square, in regard to these aspects, it can be noted that the project partially achieved these goals. The square

provides a safe and lively environment for the users as their perceptions have shown. However, the area is neither well maintained nor visibly attractive, which was also noted by local residents, for instance there is little or no maintenance of the existing infrastructure. The government demanded the construction of the square, but did not establish any maintenance or monitoring of the area after the project was implemented. Consequently, from the residents' perceptions, the physical quality of the area was the most negative point observed. When comparing their perceptions with the physical features, it is easy to understand why they felt so negative about this aspect. The square and its surroundings have many commercial and entertainment activities, attracting people from all parts of Baishizhou, promoting social cohesion and cultural integration among the residents. However, also many physical problems described in the theoretical chapter as common in urban villages could be found in the study boundary. The physical improvements are isolated and there is a lack of physical infrastructure in the surroundings of the square.

Although the residents had a negative perception about the physical quality of the area, the mixed use of the area did have a positive effect on the residents' perceptions. The wide-range of business operating hours and the variety of activities undertaken in the square ensure the flow of people and increase the sense of safety. As I have shown in the theoretical framework, sense of safety is influenced by the flow of people and commercial activities (Cozens, 2011). Furthermore, sense of safety and the physical environment affect each other. Once the people feel safer, they are most likely to use the area, "which reflects towards the liveliness and sustainability of the built environment" (Cozens, 2011). The busiest walking streets around the square are the ones with commercial attractiveness. However, there are some negative points on the physical environment, which can contribute to a decrease in sense of safety, discouraging people from using certain areas. For instance, some streets are used as parking lots and are not attractive at all. These streets are located at the back of buildings without access to the stores. The same problem occurs in the street (North-South) connecting Baishizhou Cultural Square and the Commercial Street. Moreover, the lack of maintenance in the area results in dark spots, broken windows; and some signs of vandalism. All these physical aspects affect the residents' perceptions and lower the liveability of the area.

The high sense of safety around Baishizhou Cultural Square is also associated with the others aspects. One of the main positive influences in Baishizhou is the strong sense of community belonging (Nielsen, I., & Smyth, R., 2009). The "eyes on the street" (Jacobs, 1961) enhance the sense of safety and at the same time relations with public, places and actions contribute to a sense of belonging to the community (Metha, 2014). The sense of belonging in Baishizhou has also increased with the construction of the square and the land use of its surroundings. The mixed land use attracts not only people to the square's facilities but it also helps to convince them to use the commercial and industrial places. Even if the residents do

not participate in the activities in the square, the area has become a meeting point for Baishizhou residents. Baishizhou Cultural Square is bringing local residents together. It is a place where residents go to interact with friends, enjoy cultural activities or take children to play. The results of the interviews show that people gather in the area after the working day, since they can find diversified dining and entertainment there. The physical environment also shows that the residents are willing to improve the area by themselves, as in the case of the Pedestrian Street and the Commercial Street.

The less significant point connecting the physical features to the resident perception is the cost of living. The physical infrastructure around the square has not been improved by the villagers since its construction. Most of the physical improvements have been done by the shop owners and they are appropriate for the shops. Even though some buildings are being renovated, the fear of urban renewal hinders any significant improvement and maintenance of the area. According to the shop owners, currently, their rent contract is one year long, and in case of urban renewal their contract will not be renewed and they will have to move (interview 7, 2015). For some of them, this is a reason not to invest in their business (interview 8, 2015). However, as shown before, most of the participants do not believe that the large-scale renewal will take place (interview 1, 7, 3, and 4, 2015).

To summarize, combining the physical features and residents perceptions it can be noticed that even though the residents are not satisfied with the quality of the physical environment, it has little effect on the social qualities addressed by this thesis. The research shows that similar to small-scale interventions in Western countries, the small changes in the physical environment has a huge impact on the population (Unt and Bell, 2014; Lerner, 2014; Shidan and Qian, 2011; and El Haddad, 2012). However, it also shows that in Baishizhou, this intervention did not stimulate other physical improvements by the government, and the changes which are happening in the area are due to the central location of Baishizhou.

8.2 Urban Village Renewal – Expectations and Outcomes

“The redevelopment of urban villages is a complex process in which the three main actors—the government, developers, and landlords—compete for their own benefit (Hao, 2012).”

After many studies addressing the demolition-reconstruction model this thesis looked to an alternative approach—the small-scale intervention—and from an alternative perspective from the residents' point of view. So far, I have shown the physical and social outcomes of this approach. In this section, the aim is to compare the theoretical framework about the renewal of urban villages with the fieldwork findings.

In the theoretical chapter, the features the urban villages and their renewal process was explained. The chapter displayed that the economic value of land in urban villages, along with the physical and social problems that lead to the urban renewal of these areas (Hin and Xin, 2011; Hao, 2012; Hao et al, 2011). Which has also been pointed out in the introduction, the Shenzhen municipality launched many plans and policies to regulate and guide the urban renewal of urban villages. Thus, to evaluate the effectiveness of a small-scale intervention in public spaces in urban villages this section compares the research findings with the government's goals regarding urban villages' renewal.

The main guideline for the renewal of urban villages is provided by the Shenzhen Master Plan (Shenzhen Municipality, 2010). This Master Plan has the objective to transform the image of the UV and accelerate urbanization, by promoting the integration of the urban villages with others neighbourhoods (Futian Government Online, 2005). The long-term goal of the municipality is to build an international city through a full range of comprehensive reform, promoting the full integration of the living environment, urban management, economic development; and cultural and psychological aspects of the city (Futian Government Online, 2005).

Baishizhou Cultural Square was built to promote cultural integration within the urban village and as has been shown in chapter 6, based on the Baishizhou residents' perceptions it has achieved that. The "Shenzhen urban village renovation master plan outline (2005--2010)" (Futian Government Online, 2005) states that the urban village should have a certain amount of public spaces to enrich the local cultural characteristics of the community environment and culture to create a unified city image. The cultural city strategy proposed by the government aims to strengthen the construction of spiritual civilization, to promote the "spirit of Shenzhen", advocating home consciousness, strengthen the modern civic attitudes and promote cultural exchanges for people from all groups (Futian Government Online, 2005). The small-scale intervention achieved this goal, with very little effort. The sense of belonging within the respondents is around 45%, and it is directly connected with the construction of the square.

Furthermore, the urban villages are often described as unsafe places, in which many illegal activities take place (Shuo, 2007; Liu et al, 2010; interview 1, 2015). The municipality often uses this as one of the reasons to stimulate the large-scale urban renewal projects, and sees demolitions as the only way to increase safety in urban villages. On the one hand, the demolition and reconstruction model sharply increase physical safety, as it improves the infrastructure and decreases, for instance, fire hazards. On the other hand, this model does not solve the social security problem, when the residents are forced to move to other urban villages, they take the social problems with them. According to interview 1 (2015), the unsafe features described by the municipality were present at the site where Baishizhou Cultural

Square had been built, and the square was an attempt to change this image. As this research has shown, it is possible to change the safety image of the urban village through a small-scale intervention, contrary to the government's claims. However, the construction of the square did not improve the physical qualities of the whole environment significantly. Thus, the infrastructure still presenting some risks for the urban villages residents.

Additionally, the government and developers rely on the renewal of the urban village to ensure the economic growth of Shenzhen (Hao, 2012). The replacement of the village by a modern neighbourhood will attract investors and businesses to the area, but will cause displacements and increase in rent, forcing residents to move out (Hao, 2012). This did not happen during the small-scale intervention because it did not change the physical environment. However, the favourable location of Baishizhou is affecting the area economically and increasing the cost of living in the urban village. It was not the aim of this thesis to develop an economic benefits analysis of urban renewal in Baishizhou, but during my fieldwork, I saw many buildings within the study boundary that could be improved in order to offer economic benefits to the developers and villagers without the demolition of these villages. This could be a potential social, economic, and physical opportunity for Baishizhou. However, these economic opportunities are much smaller than the benefits gained by the large-scale urban renewal projects and they are not seen as advantageous by developers, villagers, and the municipality.

This research shows that there are two movements acting in Baishizhou. On the one hand, there is a tremendous effort to implement the demolition-redevelopment project in Baishizhou. On the other hand, the small-scale intervention emerges as an alternative to improve the residents' quality of life, offering the socio-cultural goals desired by the government. However, this approach did not prove to be efficient in achieving the other government goals, especially regarding the improvement of infrastructure and living conditions. The lack of regulations on the maintenance of spaces such as Baishizhou Cultural Square and the incentive to re-use and improve the existing building would certainly be of help in the accomplishment of the municipality goals pointed out at the beginning of this section.

8.3 The Role of Urban Villages and their Public Spaces

This research provides insights not only about the renewal of urban villages but also knowledge about urban villages in general. This thesis found some important features of Baishizhou, which are contrary to the previous findings by academia. For instance, both during my fieldwork and in the theoretical review, the urban villages were described as a community that "provides the opportunity for the migrants to use the urban village housing as a haven to settle down in the city and later, as a springboard, to seek better employment and accommodation" (Hao, 2012). However, the research findings show that the majority of

respondents have been residing in Baishizhou for a long period and they see the area as their home, a place where they belong. Moreover, the construction of the Cultural Square improved the sense of safety among residents. It is also very important in the residents' daily life. It brings the community together and offers a venue for social events, where everybody is welcome to join the activities. This is also contradictory to the theoretical framework, in which some of the authors argued that only the villagers were welcome to most of the cultural activities in urban villages (Hao et al, 2011). Baishizhou Cultural Square is open to all people, regardless of their origin, income, and personal conditions.

As in other cases of urban acupuncture in public spaces, Baishizhou Cultural Square offers benefits to the whole community through a small-scale intervention. The square has a very positive effect on the urban environment. It has created social benefits. Baishizhou Cultural Square, reintroduced the civil society that has been lost in urban villages after their fast development. Moreover, the square shapes the cultural identity of Baishizhou. It is part of its unique character and provides a sense of place for local residents. Although Baishizhou Cultural Square is a small place, it offers activities for everyone. The area is used in multiple ways and it is a place for people of all ages to socialize, dance, play, shop, and relax. The location of the square, near one of the main streets of Baishizhou, makes it easily accessible and promotes the liveliness of the space.

Baishizhou Cultural Square has been proven to have helped to increase the sense of safety, the sense of belonging and provides cultural activities in Baishizhou. This small-scale intervention has created a space that has become a key part of the community's identity.

8.1 Conclusion

In the theoretical chapter (chapter 2) of this research eight factors were pointed out as reason to urban renewal in urban villages. During my fieldwork I could observe some differences between the areas within and outside the study boundary to survey these factors. The physical features and residents perceptions results showed the benefits brought by the small-scale interventions and by combining the theoretical review and the data acquired during fieldwork it is possible to reach some conclusions about the need for the renewal of urban villages. Based on the factors pointed out in the theoretical framework, the realization of Baishizhou Cultural Square provides an improvement in the socio-cultural aspects of the neighbourhood, decreasing the social exclusion of low-income residents and increasing the liveability in the area. This thesis also showed that the land use within the study area has a positive aspect for urban villages. However, the built of the square did not exceed in solving physical problems in the urban village and there are still many issues in the area, such as poor living conditions and a lack of infrastructure.

Probably the most important conclusion that can be drawn from this research is that there is little attention given by the municipality to the urban villages' residents. The municipality's goal is to complete urban renewal in these areas to create a modern city without villages. Thus urban villages are seen as an undesirable outcome of the urban development and not as a community. However, looking beyond the traditional approach to urban renewal this research showed that these areas are much more than valuable lands and that with appropriate measures is possible to improve their physical and social conditions without having to resort to urban renewal. But, even though the small-scale intervention proved to create positive social effects it is clear that the demolition approach is still the favourite for urban renewal Baishizhou. During my fieldwork I could observe the awareness of urban renewal everywhere. Also, the neglect of urban infrastructure in Baishizhou is visible. Baishizhou Cultural Square was a punctual intervention and even though the residents are optimistic about the positive social effects, the area needs more physical improvements. To provide both physical and social benefits, it is necessary to find an equilibrium between the large-scale and the small-scale interventions, to prevent urban villages from completely disappearing from the city's landscape.

8.2 Recommendations

As a result of this case study and in an attempt to offer a different point of view on urban villages' renewal, I believe that some recommendations can be given for both municipal planners and policy makers in Shenzhen.

Firstly, although the demolition-redevelopment model is still the favourite among the villagers, due to their economic benefits, this model is slowing down in Shenzhen. The barriers to implement these in urban villages such as Baishizhou due to the conflicts related with the compensation and relocation process indicates that this approach should be reconsidered. The upgrade approach cited by the Master plan as described in this thesis provides an alternative to decrease the social problems in urban villages. However, this approach does not offer the economic benefits expected by the major stakeholder groups and new strategies may well be needed to stimulate the implementation of small-scale interventions.

Secondly, if urban villages are replaced by modern neighbourhoods as is planned, it is likely that wealthier residents will substitute the former low-income tenants. This may solve the landscape problem caused by urban villages, however, it may create problems on the labour market and transportation, once the workers will have to move far from the city to find affordable accommodation. This will pose new challenges to the authorities. Although the small-scale intervention prevents the relocation, it did not improve the life conditions of dwellers. As an alternative option would be the provision of professional guidelines for the

urban villages' development in order to improve the physical, social and economic conditions in these areas. A recommendation for both municipal planners and further researches could be the development of an impact assessment to address the effects that urban renewal could create on urban villages.

Thirdly, the public facilities, such as Baishizhou Cultural Square, should be constructed along with maintenance guidelines, to provide more physical improvements in the long run. This would prevent the intervention from becoming an isolated project that does not offer physical improvements to the community.

Fourthly, the government should involve the community more in the planning making decisions. As this research showed, the residents' needs are ignored during the planning and implementation process of urban renewal measures, but, since they are the most affected ones they should be consulted more often. The local government should get a better understanding of the needs of urban villages' residents, especially of those who are often displaced during the urban renewal process.

Lastly, I think that it is very important that urban renewal policy focusses not only on physical and economic interventions but also on the social aspects of the urban villages to provide a city for all. Shenzhen should be a city for all kinds of people, not only a modern city with white-collar inhabitants.

8.3 Reflection

This research has shown some limitations and challenges on which I will elaborate in this section. The biggest barrier was by far the language. This was a challenge in every step of my fieldwork and also during my stay in Shenzhen. For instance, during the interviews the translator received a guideline of questions and translated immediately the answers into English, but as the respondents did not agree to be recorded maybe some of information's have been lost during the translation process. The language was also a barrier to access the police information and translate the documents. This became a challenge when I came back from China, even with the help of a Chinese person, which translated all the documents, policies and websites, the time difference difficult the communication and caused a delayed in my time schedule.

A positive aspect of my research is that thanks to this thesis project I have gained a better understanding of the conflicts, risks, and inconsistencies, but also the opportunities and challenges which emerge during the urban villages' renewal process. In Shenzhen, when first starting my research on urban renewal the demolition-redevelopment approach quickly appeared, in the form of a large plot that has been demolished and replaced by a high scale neighbourhood. On the one hand, urban villages are located in areas with a great development potential, on the other hand they host a series of social and physical problems. Baishizhou is

one of these areas, and its demolition and reconstruction is pointed out by the government as the only solution to solve its problems. However, the case of Baishizhou Cultural square, shows a different picture. The physical structure itself is only a square with a stage and some benches surrounding it. Little change in physical infrastructure Baishizhou can be observed. But, in the social aspects the built of the square was quite significant for Baishizhou residents. If well conducted the small-scale intervention approach could be a partial solution for the problems in urban villages. However, even when successfully implemented the small-scale intervention did not address one of the biggest social challenges of nowadays: social inequality. For instance, there are huge barriers between the formal neighbourhoods and urban villages. In the physical aspect, the barriers includes wall and gates, controlling the access to the gated neighbourhoods. But the biggest barriers are the social aspects. In an informal talk with a person that works in a design company in OCT she told me that she never visited an urban village and in her opinion these areas should be demolished, because only “poor people” are living there. This is the totally the opposite of what I found out during my fieldwork. The urban villages are liveable neighbourhoods, with people who are part of the economy and the city's society.

APPENDIX I – Interviews Profile

For the purpose of the data collection, following people were interviewed to understand the case study, particularly in the context of Baishizhou. Their profile have been mentioned below.

Respondent	Gender	Description	Location	Date of interview	
1	Female	Director	Baishizhou Community co., LTD.	-----	14/04/2015
2	Female	Shop owner	Small Grocery Shop	In front of the BCS	18/04/2015
3	Female	Shop owner	Bar/Amusement games	In front of the BCS	18/04/2015
4	Male	Manager	Liquor Store/tobacco shop	Street between the BCS and SS	18/04/2015
5	Female	Shop owner	Employment Agency	In front of the BCS	18/04/2015
6	Male	Manager	Future Restaurant	Core of the study boundary	18/04/2015
7	Male	Shop owner	Children's clothing store	In front of the BCS	18/04/2015
8	Female	Shop owner	Restaurant	In front of the BCS	18/04/2015
9	Male	Shop owner	Car and Bikes Repair Shop	Behind the BCS	18/04/2015

*BCS: Baishizhou Cultural Square
*SS: Shahe Street

APPENDIX II – Shop Owners Interview Topic Guide

A set of topics was prepared for the interview with experts, however the discussion was not only limited to these questions. The set of topics has been presented below. As point of start the respondents were asked to fill in the questionnaire, thus their general perceptions and their socio demographic characteristics were collected.

- Questions about their business:
 - What is your job function here?
 - How long are you established in this address?
 - Do you know the previous use of this store?
 - How long is your rent agreement?
 - Did your choice for this area is related with the built of BCS?
- Questions about Baishizhou Cultural Square:
 - What were de characteristics of this area before the built of BCS? (ask about safety, belonging, life costing, and physical quality of this area)
 - Did you notice any changes in this area after the built of BCS? (what, when)
 - Could you give your opinion about safety, belonging, life costing, and physical quality of this area?
 - What is your opinion about Baishizhou?
 - Do you think that the area attracts people to your business?
 - Do you think that BCS is an important place in Baishizhou? Why? How?
- Questions about the urban renewal:
 - Do you know what the plans are for the future of Baishizhou?
 - Do you think that the village will be demolished?
 - The ideas of urban renewal of Baishizhou stopped you to renovate your store?
 - Are you in favour of the project?

APPENDIX III – Physical Features Observation Guide

Physical Features Observation Sheet					
Building code:					
Use:	Commercial	Residential	Industrial	Public Space	Unknown/empty
Physical Features:	Vandalism	Maintenance	Infrastructure		
Obs.:					
Number of floors:					
Width:	Front of street	Back of street			
Activities on the surroundings:					
Hour of survey:	Morning	Afternoon	Evening		
Flow of People:	Low	Medium	High		
Pictures Number:					
Additional information:					

APPENDIX IV – English Questionnaire

Questionnaire on the Perception of Public Spaces

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather users' views about **Baishizhou Cultural Square** to analyse how the area are perceived and how the users interact with it. All information collected is for academic research purposes only and it will remain confidential.

Part 2 - Use of the Area

The following statements are related with the use of Baishizhou Cultural Square. Please, check the appropriate box.

1. How often do you visit Baishizhou Cultural Square?

1. I do not know 2. At least once a month 3. At least once a week 4. Almost Everyday

2. How often do you visit Baishizhou Cultural Square for the following purposes?

N°	Statement	Never	Almost Never	Sometimes	Very Often	Always
1	To meet friends					
2	For entertainment (for instance dance, play cards, etc.)					
3	When have free time					
4	To attend the community events					

Part 2 Perception of the Area

The following statements are related with Baishizhou Cultural Square and its surroundings.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

N°	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
5	In my opinion, the built of Baishizhou Cultural Square improved the image of surroundings.					
6	I am satisfied with the image of the area.					
7	In my opinion this area needs improvements					
8	After the built of the square, the characteristics of the shops are changing here.					
9	In my opinion the rent prices are increasing in this area					
10	In my opinion daily products prices are more expensive in this area compared with the rest of Baishizhou					
11	In my opinion, the prices are increasing, due to the improvements in this area.					
12	In my opinion, around Baishizhou Cultural Square is safer than in others areas in Baishizhou.					
13	I feel safer walking in this area after the built of the square.					
14	In my opinion this area of Baishizhou has become safer after the built of the Cultural Square					
14	Before the built of the square this area was unsafe.					
16	I normally feel safe in all areas in Baishizhou					
17	I am not afraid to walk in this area at night					
18	I am afraid to walk in other areas in Baishizhou at night					
19	I feel welcome in Baishizhou Cultural Square					
20	Baishizhou Cultural Square is an important space for social interaction					

21	Baishizhou Cultural Square is an important in my daily life					
22	Living in Baishizhou gives me a sense of community					
23	It is easy to make friends in Baishizhou Cultural Square					
25	I regularly stop and talk with people in Baishizhou Cultural Square					

Part 3 Respondent Profile

26. Gender

1. Female 2. Male

27. Age:

1. Below 19 2. 19 – 30 3. 31 – 45 4. 46 – 60 5. 61 or above

28. Relation with the area (you may choose more than 1 answer)

1. Work 2. Live 3. Neither

29. For how long are you living in Baishizhou?

1. Less than 1 year 2. 1 to 3 year 3. 3 to 5 years 4. More than 5 years

Part 4

31. How do you use Baishizhou Cultural Square?

32. Do you think that this area changed after the construction of the Baishizhou Cultural Square?

33. What is our opinion about this area?

APPENDIX V – Chinese Questionnaire

关于公共空间的认知观念

此份问卷的调查目的是收集使用者对于白石洲文化广场的看法，借此来分析人们对于该空间的理解认知和互动使用方式。以下所有的问卷信息将只作为学术研究用途，并且会保证问卷受访者的个人隐私。

第一部分 - 空间的使用

以下问卷内容是关于白石洲文化广场的使用问题。请选择您认为合适的选项

您平日多久前往一次白石洲文化广场？

我不知道 至少一个月一次

至少一周一次 几乎每天

您多久前往一次白石洲文化广场是基于以下原因或者目的？

编号	原因/目的	从不	基本不	有时	经常	总是
1	会友					
2	娱乐休闲（例如跳舞，唱歌等）					
3	打发时间					
4	参加社区活动					

第二部分 - 空间的认知观念

以下问卷内容是关于白石洲文化广场及其周边的相关问题

编号	内容	非常同意	同意	中立	不同意	非常不同意
5	我认为白石洲文化广场提升了周边的城市形象					
6	我对于该地区的城市形象感到满意					
7	我认为该地区需要进一步升级改造					
8	在广场落成后，这一带的店铺属性特点发生了改变					
9	我认为这一地区的房屋租金正在上升					
10	我认为该地区日用品的价格会比白石洲其它地区的价格高					
11	我认为由于区域的升级改造，物价正在上升					
12	我认为白石洲文化广场相比白石洲其它区域更安全					
13	在广场落成后，我认为在这一地区的街上行走感觉更安全					
14	我认为在文化广场落成后，白石洲地区变的更安全					
14	在有广场之前，这一地区并不安全					
16	我通常觉得在白石洲的所有地方都感到很安全					
17	我晚上在该地区行走不会感到害怕					
18	我晚上在白石洲其它地方行走会感到害怕					

19	我感到在白石洲文化广场有受到欢迎的感觉					
20	白石洲文化广场是一个社交的重要场所					
21	白石洲文化广场是日常生活的重要场所					
22	在白石洲生活给我一种在社区的感觉					
23	在白石洲文化广场很容易交到朋友					
25	我通常都会在白石洲文化 广场驻足与朋友交流					

第三部分 - 受访者信息

性别

女性 男性

年龄

岁以下 岁 岁 岁

岁以上

与该地区的联系（您可以选择多个选项）

工作 居住 都不是

您在白石洲居住多久了？

少于一年 年 年

超过五年

第四部分

您如何使用白石洲文化广场的？

您是否认为自白石洲文化广场落成以后，该地区发生了一定的改变？

对于该地区的想法？

APPENDIX VI – Questionnaires Results

Gender

	Frequency	Percent
Female	48	62.3
Male	29	37.7
Total	77	100.0

Age

	Frequency	Percent
19 – 30	29	37.7
31 – 45	38	49.4
46 – 60	10	13.0
Total	77	100.0

Relation with the area

	Frequency	Percent
Live	24	31.2
work and live	53	68.8
Total	77	100.0

For how long do you lived here?

	Frequency	Percent
Less than 1 year	10	13.0
1 - 3 years	6	7.8
3 - 5 years	26	33.8
More than 5 years	35	45.5
Total	77	100.0

APPENDIX VII – Questionnaires Results

Table 4: Correlation between gender and the social effects

		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Gamma	Sig.
Sense of Safety BCS	Female	8	5	26	.027	.912
	Male	2	6	14		
Area Quality Satisfaction	Female	10	20	9	-.247	.269
	Male	8	11	3		
Life-cost	Female	11	21	7	-.056	.807
	Male	9	7	6		
Sense of Community Belonging	Female	7	12	20	-.215	.313
	Male	3	12	7		

Table 5: Correlation between age and the social effects

		Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Gamma	Sig.
Sense of Safety BCS	19 – 30	4	7	13	.166	.445
	31 – 45	4	3	23		
	46 – 60	2	1	4		
Area Quality Satisfaction	19 – 30	7	13	4	.019	.926
	31 – 45	8	16	6		
	46 – 60	3	2	2		
Life-cost	19 – 30	8	8	8	-.180	.329
	31 – 45	10	15	5		
	46 – 60	2	5	0		
Sense of Community Belonging	19 – 30	2	13	9	-.033	.870
	31 – 45	5	10	15		
	46 – 60	3	1	3		

APPENDIX VIII – Questionnaires Results

Sense of Safety BCS				
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
Before the built of the square this area was unsafe	Disagree	4	1	1
	Neutral	6	6	7
	Agree	0	4	32
* Gamma 0.856 ** Significance 0.000				
Sense of Safety Baishizhou	Disagree	4	7	19
	Neutral	4	3	18
	Agree	2	1	3
* Gamma - 0.035 ** Significance 0.874				
*** Answers in Percentage, based on 61 respondents				
Life Costing				
		In my opinion, the rent prices are increasing, due to the improvements in this area		
		Disagree	Neutral	Agree
In my opinion the rent prices are increasing in this area	Disagree	5	3	4
	Neutral	5	11	2
	Agree	21	5	5
* Gamma – 0.421 ** Significance 0.003				
*** Answers in Percentage, based on 61 respondents				

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