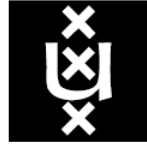***Growing up in Shenzhen:***

A qualitative study of place attachment in a rapidly changing environment

Julius Blaisse

UNIVERSITY OF AMSTERDAM

Julius Blaisse (6129129)

Master Thesis Sociology

First reader: Arnold Reijndorp

Co-tutor: Cing-Wen Yang

Second reader: Veronique Schutjens

Abstract

This paper examines the relationship between place attachment and changing environments, by making use of a qualitative research design. Place attachment is the emotional bond between a person and a place, which is influenced by an individual's personal experiences. It has been studied in different ways from a myriad of perspectives, so there are many varying definitions of what precisely place attachment means. The emotional bond that an individual develops with a place is influenced through interactional processes of the characteristics and the use of the environment and the constructed meaning that people give to a place. This thesis explores the first- and second-generation migrants' children's feelings of place attachment in Shenzhen. This group is either born, or raised in Shenzhen. The city Shenzhen was established in 1979 to serve as way to link rural China with the external global economies, through work opportunities. Currently, Shenzhen is one of the fastest growing cities in the world.

This paper argues that attachment to Shenzhen is felt most strongly through the notion of being part of the city's transformation, and to a lesser extent through the physical nature of its places. Shenzhen is being experienced as a city where people consume and develop their professional lives, rather than a place to grow old. The open attitude of the city makes it easy to create social networks, however, people's focus on work makes it difficult to deepen these ties. Strong attachment has been found at the level of the city. The level of the house as well as the level of the neighborhood resulted in weaker attachment, with the exception of the Shekou neighborhood. The combination of the economic prosperity at the level of the city and perceived homogeneous neighborhoods allows its inhabitants to become attached in a functional way.

Acknowledgments

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1. Introduction

Interest in the bonds between people and places is growing. In many different scientific disciplines, the subject's popularity is increasing. We can ask ourselves if this growth in research led to a true increase in knowledge. Do we have a theory of place attachment, or do these publications mostly generate many unrelated empirical findings and observations? What do we really know about the emotional bonds between people and places?

In early research, place is defined through its unique character and historical continuity (Relph, 1976 and Tuan, 1975: 151); however, the modern world can be characterized by globalization, increased mobility and McDonaldization, a process in which a growing homogeneity of places occurs and where places loose their unique character (Augé, 1996: 77).

We live in a changing world, which can influence the importance of places to people. Does modernization undermine people's meaningful relations with places or does their importance grow in the contemporary world? People tend to feel more attachment to historical places, and attachment can be described through shared historical experiences, values and symbols (Gifford, 2009: 2). Attachment to place described as an emotional bond between an individual and his city can cause grief, for example, for someone who was forced to leave his city (Fullilove, 1996). Attachment to place can be damaged when circumstances change quickly (Rowles & Ravdal, 2002: 88), however, literature about place attachment in rapidly changing societies is missing.

This research will be conducted in Shenzhen, China. Shenzhen is a perfect place to investigate the meaning of place attachment since it is one of the most rapidly growing cities in the world. Though it was no more than a small fishing village before 1979, the city is now home to up to fifteen million people. The city is located alongside the Pearl River Delta and experienced enormous economic growth due to China's open-door policy. Subject to this research will be people who are either born or raised in Shenzhen, the so-called first- and second-generation migrants' children. This generation grew up in a small town and now lives in an international metropolis—the only thing that didn't change is the name of the city.

Place is often understood as a stable and traditional entity which contradicts the features of the globalized world spaces of today. Reconciliation of these two perspectives isn't an easy process and hasn't been accomplished in the literature so far. The first- and second-generation migrants' children in Shenzhen witnessed the city's transformation from a little village into a modern, globalized and also unstable city, which makes it possible to investigate what kind of places people actually prefer and create emotional bonds with.

The enormous transformation that Shenzhen is facing ensures its social and scientific

relevance in terms of place attachment. In this research, I want to explore if and to what extent a changing society influences people's feelings of attachment. This is interesting from a social perspective because it concerns people's feelings of well-being in rapidly changing societies and it is scientifically relevant because it combines motivations of prolonged residence with a changing environment. It is this thesis' aim to understand in which ways the first- and second-generation migrants' children experience emotional bonds with the fast-changing environment of Shenzhen and to expose important factors that explain the strength of place attachment among this group. I will do so by answering the questions: *in what manner has place attachment among the first- and second-generation migrants' children changed throughout their lives, which factors can be used to explain these changes and what role does this changing environment plays according to them?* With this research, I hope to generate new theoretical insights concerning mechanisms underlying people's emotional bonds with places.

2. Theory

2.1. Attachment to place

Place attachment, the bond between persons and their meaningful environments, has become an important topic in recent years. Due to globalization, increased mobility and environmental problems, bonds between persons and places have become fragile. This study will focus on the feelings that people develop towards the place where they were born or raised as well as the function these places fulfil in their lives.

In both psychological as well as sociological terms, the bonding of people and their places is called *place attachment* (Hildago & Hernandez, 2001: 274). Despite the increasing interest in the subject during the last few years, place attachment still is a contested term. Agreement regarding its name, definition and the best-suited research methods are missing. Similar terms such as 'sense of place', 'place identity' and 'sense of community' are often used (Hildago & Hernandez, 2001: 274). In general, place attachment is explained as an affective bond between people and places. Its definitional diversity shows the growing interest in place attachment.

In order to define the concept of place attachment, I will emphasize the main characteristic of place attachment, namely: to remain close to the object of attachment. The object of attachment in this case will be the city Shenzhen or neighborhoods within Shenzhen. Therefore, I will define place attachment as a positive bond between a person and a place, whereby the main tendency is to remain close to the place of attachment (Hildago & Hernandez, 2001: 274). This definition is broad and there exist several operationalizations of this construct. Qualitative research of place attachment intends to offer insight into the meaning of places. A place's physical aspects and strength of emotional bonds are related. To understand attachment to a specific place, it is important to first identify its meaning.

As mentioned previously, the concept of place attachment can't be grasped in one clear theory. I will begin this thesis' theoretical section with an organizing framework, which will help facilitate measurement of the emotional bonds between people and their meaningful places. This organizing framework consists of three elements: place, person and process. The preexisting literature about place attachment has put too much emphasis on the place element. The literature largely ignored the process, the mechanisms through which place attachment develops.

Leila Scannell and Robert Gifford suggest a three-dimensional framework in which place attachment can be measured. According to Scannell and Gifford, place attachment is a multidimensional concept with person, process and place dimensions. The first dimension is

the actor–who is attached? It refers to what extent the attachment is expressed individually or collectively. The second dimension is the process; it touches upon the way affect and behavior are manifested in the attachment. The third dimension is place; which is the object of the attachment (Gifford & Scannell, 2010: 2).

Place attachment at the individual level refers to the personal connection someone has with a place. Attachment to place is stronger when someone has personal memories of a place, or has reached certain milestones there. At the level of a group, place attachment can be exposed via symbolic meaning that is shared among members. For example, group attachment to place can be explored in different cultures and religions. The process of attachment refers to the way people relate to a place and the interactions that take place in the environment that is important to them. It encompasses their emotional bond with an environment, the memories, beliefs and meanings that people have that cause certain environments to become important to them and the way that attachment to this environment is expressed through actions. This element of the framework is often overlooked as the place element. Attachment to place itself is often divided in two levels: social and physical. Social characteristics concern the social relationships and group identity that facilitate place attachment. Physical characteristics concern the way an environment is built, for example the type of architecture and the amount of nature within an area (Scannell & Gifford, 2009: 2-4). People tend to feel attached to places that match their values and to places that include personal memories.

2.2. Predictors of attachment

In many publications about place attachment the terms *predictors* and *dimensions* are often used. While both concepts sometimes overlap, they are not the same. A dimension of place attachment means a certain type of attachment or reason for attachment. Quantitative research that studies dimensions of place attachment often uses direct questions such as 'how important for your attachment to the place is _____?'. Predictors of place attachment are factors that are studied independent of someone's sentiment and even if a positive relation between a predictor and someone's strength of attachment exists, that person does not have to be aware of this association. Many researchers divide their predictors in social (community ties, sense of security, strength of neighborhood ties and involvement in informal activities in the neighborhood), social-demographic (length of residence, age, mobility, home ownership, social status and having children) and physical (building aesthetics, volume and density; these are problematic because they are subjective estimates of physical features made by people themselves). Good physical predictors are also close (walking) proximity to activities, access

to shared gardens; or in the case of Shenzhen, parks (Kim & Kaplan, 2004). Other physical predictors are the size and type of housing (Lewicka, 2011: 217).

2.3. Dimensions of attachment

Places are always contested; physical use and social behaviors will never be fixed. However, to a certain extent, residents must have a common conduct of how to behave. Current behaviors are influenced by previous behaviors, which are constantly being challenged and questioned by newer generations who learn these behaviors as well as newcomers who bring with them their own norms and values. Daily encounters between neighbors create norms, values and symbols between people and places. These encounters can create and strengthen emotional bonding between people and places by creating a feeling of community (Collins, 2004).

Home can have different meanings for different people, but the one quality that all feelings of 'home' usually share is that it refers to a specific physical place. We can't understand social processes if we don't take into account the concrete places where these social processes take place. These places include the streets, houses and open spaces, as well as the actors who all carry their own representations and identifications. Places can function as a platform for social bonding, but people also become attached to places for personal, private reasons, for example, a familiar park or square might inspire a particularly positive or important memory. As previously mentioned, people identify with neighborhoods in different ways, which means that neighborhoods can have several and different identities. People create emotional bonds with places, often referred to as place attachment (Hernandez & Hildalgo, 2001) or sense of attachment (Cuba & Hummon, 1993). Jan Willem Duyvendak and Peter van der Graaf state that these emotional bonds can be divided in two dimensions or types of attachment: social-emotional attachment and physical-emotional attachment (Duyvendak & van der Graaf, 2009: 18).

Social-emotional attachment refers to people's social life in their environment and is often called *bonding* (Hernandez & Hildalgo, 2001: 275). Places gain a certain identity due to processes of signification in which people tell each other stories and create symbols. Neighborhoods will never have one identity; different people will use the public space in different ways. A city or neighborhood can also get a certain identity from people outside the area that can differ from the people that live inside the area.

Physical-emotional attachment refers to people's attachment to certain places in their neighborhood or city and is also called *rootedness* (Hernandez & Hildalgo, 2001: 275). Just like social-emotional attachment, physical-emotional attachment increases through processes

of signification, in which people create symbols about certain places, use places in a collective way, create routines or tell stories about places.

The social and physical dimensions of place attachment play different roles in attachment processes and therefore can be distinguished. Some people feel attached to a place because of the social factors. They have, for example, close ties within a neighborhood or feel attached to its religious symbolism. Other people feel attached to a place because of its physical aspects. They love the peaceful nature or the possibilities for recreation. Albeit this distinction is theoretically justified, it is simultaneously a difficult one to make. Place, defined as a meaningful location, is an entity with social dimensions, but its basis is physical. Some constructivist research states that both the social as well as the physical aspects of place are in a symbiotic relationship in which the physical has meaning because it has been socially constructed (Lewicka, 2011: 213). In recent years, attachment to place has been viewed as a social construct, as the result of a shared behavioral and cultural processes rather than processes rooted in the physical aspects of a place (Lewicka, 2011: 214). In many studies, the physical nature of place has been treated as part of the social process instead of as an independent object of studies.

Places can serve as a platform for creating and stimulating social relations. The capability of a place to strengthen social relations can cause people to feel at home. People can also become attached to physical places themselves. The existence of an architecturally interesting park where people can go to walk their dogs or a hill where inhabitants can look out at a beautiful view of the city can make people become attached to the physical place, rather than only recognizing the place's social function. Places gain meaning when people use them in certain ways. Places can become symbols because of the way they are being talked about and the norms and values that are being created by repeated use of the space. People identify with the norms and values of their environment. Neighborhoods will never have one identity. Different people will use the public space in different ways and therefore will give different meanings to a place. People will identify with neighborhoods in different ways, which means that neighborhoods have different identities. A neighborhood's image can also differ from the image that local residents have of their own neighborhood. While places have multiple identities, people also differ in behavior. Collective behavior is never fixed and is always changing. Newcomers can bring new norms and values with them, which can threaten the pre-established patterns of behavior (Reijndorp & Reinders, 2010: 24).

2.4. Non-places

If a place can be defined as historical and given an identity, then places that can't be defined

as historical and can't be given an identity should be non-places (Auge, 1996: 78). Auge claims that modernity produces non-places, meaning spaces that are not limited to a specific culture or identity, like highways, airport, shopping malls or homogenized entertainment sites. Instead of defining a non-place as a clear category that is applicable to an object or a space, non-places should be seen as a trend associated with globalization and modernization. This happens when the system, which mostly combines free market economy and representative democracy, overpowers the historical. When the architectural and geographic conditions are taken over by patterns of global consumption. Places and non-places are always moving and will never be fully reached. A place for one person can be a non-place for the other or the other way around. Therefore, the concept of non-places is more useful as a category of thinking rather than a category of direct analysis.

2.5. Scales of attachment

An important issue that often does not receive attention is the specific places to which one becomes attached. Many studies about people-place relations focus on one scale of place and don't make any comparisons with other scales of place. Most often, research about place attachment has been done on the subject of neighborhood attachment, but of course, there are also other spatial levels of attachment such as the house, the city, the region or even national regions and continents. Hildago and Hernandez reported a curvilinear, U-shaped relationship between the scale of a place and the strength of attachment people feel. They measured at the level of an apartment, the neighborhood and the city (Hildago & Hernandez, 2001: 279). Maria Lewicka supported these findings, studying place attachment at five different levels (apartment, apartment building, neighborhood, city district and city). In three out of the four cities she examined, she found a curvilinear, U-shaped relationship between the scale of a place and the amount of attachment people feel (Lewicka, 2009: 45). In order to measure place attachment, three different groups of predictors have been used: social predictors (neighborhood ties, sense of security), physical predictors (type and size of housing) and socio-demographic predictors (age, education, gender, length of residence). According to this study, the best predictors of measuring place attachment are neighborhood ties followed by the effects of the length of someone's stay, the size of the building they live in and the type of housing they live in (Lewicka, 2009: 45).

The scales of attachment that are measured most often are home, neighborhood and city. Home is the symbol of self-identity, privacy, comfort and security. Home often means ownership and refers to family life. Neighborhoods are more diffuse and often have arbitrary borders, however, neighborhoods are being explored to a much higher extent than other

places of scale. Cities have clearer borders than neighborhoods; they have proper names and can be found in atlases. They can be located on a map and easy virtualized, but simultaneously, they are 'centers of meaning' (Tuan, 1975: 156).

2.6. Place making

For her dissertation, Tineke Lupi conducted an interesting research project about place making in IJburg, a new suburb in Amsterdam. She studied in which ways place making occurred during the first few years of the planning process. In this qualitative study, she refers to place making as people bonding with their environment. According to Lupi, people bond in functional, emotional, social and political ways with their environment. Lupi shows that people feel at ease in their neighborhood and get attached to it at the moment they start bonding with their neighborhood.

Bonding with a neighborhood is a layered process; one can feel at home in the neighborhood, the city or even the country. People feel at home when they feel familiar with their environment. Residents can bond in different ways with their neighborhoods and cities. They can feel connected to their environment in a functional way, which means that the facilities are sufficient enough to satisfy their needs. For example, how long does it take for people to get to work, how convenient is it to do groceries and are the prices of housing affordable? People can also connect in an emotional way with their city or their neighborhood. Emotional bonding with someone's city or neighborhood makes them feel at home and is therefore an important aspect of place attachment. Emotional bonding can include the feeling of being proud of the surrounding environment and being able to personally identify with it. When people bond with other people in the neighborhood, they can become socially connected. Having friends and family who live in the same city or neighborhood can make people feel at home. Aside from the functional use of space and its social contacts, people can also feel connected to their environment by taking responsibility for what they think will be good for all inhabitants. Participation and involvement of citizens in their environment can bond them in a political way (Lupi, 2008).

2.7. Implications of urban renewal

Urban renewal programs encourage improvement and development of both the physical and social environment. These programs bring up the question: *what do these developments and improvements mean for the feeling of attachment among the residents of the area in question?*

Urban renewal can make places more comfortable, cleaner and more convenient. An improved metro system, more greenery in the city, cleaner streets or more shopping malls can

increase the feeling of comfort among inhabitants.

Improved neighborhoods or cities will be more likely to attract wealthier classes of people which can lead to an enhancement of social and emotional bonding among a neighborhood's local residents, especially when there are more parks and other public meeting places that can facilitate local encounters (Dautzenberg, 2009: 27).

While feelings of attachment can increase due to urban renewal programs in which cities and neighborhoods are being upgraded, the same programs can also decrease feelings of attachment to place. The introduction of new malls, parks and other buildings can also result in the loss of older buildings. Due to the renewal, people can lose their familiar places, and being familiar with the environment is an important factor of place attachment. Physical changes in an environment can mean that local inhabitants feel less able to appropriate and influence their neighborhood anymore. This can lead to feelings of loneliness and a lack of safety (Frijhoff, 2010: 45). Alongside the loss of physical and familiar places, these places also facilitated social encounters, and so great changes in a neighborhood can result in a loss of social bonding among inhabitants.

The arrival of wealthier classes can sometimes lead to a feeling of discomfort among a neighborhood's original inhabitants. It might be possible that the original inhabitants lose the feeling of agency in 'their' neighborhood, or get the feeling of relative deprivation, because the quality of their housing didn't improve as much as the quality of the newcomer's housing (Kleinhans, 2005: 157).

Place attachment often refers to a positive relation between an individual and place, but disrupted attachment can be harmful and a threat for an individual's cognitive ties with his or her socio-physical environment. Disappearances or renovations of familiar buildings and the arrival of wealthier classes can lead to disrupted feelings of attachment. Disruptions can threaten someone's social identity and stability and it can take different shapes (Smith, 2009: 18). Because of Shenzhen's young age, it often is unclear who the established and who the outsiders are. Rapid or structural change of a city or neighborhood can harm an individual's stability. People who have been living in the same place all of their lives can experience negative feelings when their environment changes so quickly and intensely (Rowles & Ravdal, 2002: 88). There is no clear research that examines these experiences among younger generations. Place attachment refers to personal sentiment that can be felt very strongly. These feelings can influence one's stability and self-identity, but these feelings can also be dysfunctional. Intense feelings of place attachment can lead to a desire for continuity and an inability to see opportunities that can help improve one's situation (Smith, 2009: 18).

2.8 City renewal of Shenzhen

This research will be conducted in Shenzhen, a city that at thirty-six years old is remarkably young. Before Shenzhen was appointed as a city in 1979, the village Shenzhen already existed, so there are people who have lived in Shenzhen for more than thirty-six years. However, the vast majority of inhabitants arrived in Shenzhen during the last thirty-six years. The first- and second-generation migrants' children are those who were born in Shenzhen or moved to the city before the age of six, because that's the age when they begin to go to school. These people have memories and knowledge of Shenzhen and they have experienced firsthand the rapid changes in the society of Shenzhen.

After the *Shenzhen comprehensive plan* suggested that Shenzhen should be a 'modern border city and a special economic zone majoring industrial activities and complementing rural development' (Mee, 2010: 15), the city promptly and quickly expanded. The government's aim was to develop Shenzhen into 'an industrial based, export-oriented, multi-functional, technologically advanced, highly civilized economic zone with a rational economic structure' (Lg, 2010: 15). Shenzhen became an economic center and started to develop an emerging middle class. Its population grew from 20,000 people in 1978 to nearly fifteen million in 2012 (Shenzhen daily). People from all over China moved to Shenzhen, mainly looking for work, and often chose to leave after a few years with new skills and experiences. Shenzhen is a city that faces strong and rapid social transformation. Individuals from poor families move to Shenzhen in order to leave the city as members of the middle-class. Careers start in Shenzhen and upward mobility is the standard (Elfick, 2011: 188). This raises the question in what way people that have experienced their childhood create emotional bonding with the young and changing society of Shenzhen and what factors explain this level of attachment.

The changing atmosphere in Shenzhen reflects the changing composition of the society. Immigrants in Shenzhen can be divided into three generations. The first generation arrived during the early 1980s. Most of them were construction workers who were assigned to build the Special Economic Zone. The second generation arrived during the late 1980s. Shenzhen was growing, but the future of the Special Economic Zone was still unclear. Many of the second-generation immigrants were people who were dissatisfied with their lives at home and who dared to cope with the uncertain city that Shenzhen was. The third generation immigrants arrived during the early 1990s. This group was in their late twenties, had a higher education level and brought new tastes to the city (Davis, 2000: 255).

2.9. Locals vs. newcomers

Shenzhen is an attractive city for migrants for the same reason people have always moved to cities: to get ahead. The fact that the city largely consists of migrants leads to some interesting theoretical insights. When urbanites settle in a new place, they are at first considered foreign by the community who has lived there for generations. This phenomenon is universal and evidenced by a variety of studies. This raises the question whether or not this is the case if the majority of the city is migrant?

The literature states two opposing views regarding one's identification with place and its explaining factors. The traditional point of view assumes that there are different gradations of 'insidedness'. People can be completely alienated from place (which is called 'objective outsidedness'), while at the opposite end of the spectrum there is 'existential insidedness', reserved for people who have been living in a place for generations or a very long time. A true sense of place can only be developed by those who are either raised in a certain place or by those who have been living there for many generations. According to this point of view, newcomers will not share values with the local community since they haven't been part of the creating of them. Newcomers are consumers instead of creators of places and journeys away from home will reinforce the emotional bonds with their homes rather than create new ones (Lewicka, 2011: 215).

This view has been contested by researchers who investigate attachment to place among recreational sites, like seasonal residents or tourists. According to this view, place attachment doesn't develop depending on someone's length of residence; however, the quality of attachment may differ from those who have been living there for generations. The empirical material evidencing this viewpoint is mixed. It might be possible that attachment develops faster for the physical aspects than the social aspects, since it takes time to create a social network. It might also be the case that locals and newcomers differ in their reasons for attachment. Local community members and newcomers use places in different ways for different purposes (Stedman, 2006).

Places differ in their character, and can be understood as bounded entities that distinguish themselves from the outside. However, places can also be understood as open spaces encouraging multiculturalism (Lewicka, 2011: 210). Of course, most stances fall in between these two ends of the spectrum. The type of place closely relates to the types of social capital: bridging and bonding or strong and weak ties. Open societies encourage bridging social capital whereas closed local communities typically support bonding social capital. Both types of social capital often occur simultaneously (Lewicka, 2011: 211).

3. Research Design & Methodology

3.1. Research Question
In what manner has place attachment of the first- and second-generation migrants' children changed throughout their lives, which factors explain these changes and what role does the changing environment play, according to them?

3.2. Sub-questions
In order to answer the research question, I have formulated four sub-questions that all explore a different aspect of the main question.

- In what manner do the migrants' children experience emotional bonds with (places in) Shenzhen?
- To which scale of place do the migrants' children feel most attached?
- Which factors explain the relationship between scale of attachment and strength of attachment?
- In what manner has place attachment to (places in) Shenzhen changed throughout the lives of the migrants' children and what factors explain these changes?
- How do the first- and second-generation migrants' children perceive the changing environment of Shenzhen?

3.3 Operationalization of key concepts
As previously mentioned, it is this thesis' aim to understand to what extent place attachment among the first- and second generation migrants' children has changed throughout their lives, which factors explain this change and what role the changing environment plays. The main concepts in this thesis are place attachment, social changes and the children of migrants.

Place attachment: 'A emotional bond between a person and a place, whereby the main tendency is to remain close to the place of attachment' (Hildago & Hernandez, 2001: 274). Central in this research will be how and in what manner a rapidly changing society influences place attachment.

Place: Physical appearances which are meaningful because of the emotional and behavioral preferences of its users.

First and second-generation migrants' children: First- and second-generation migrants' children are the children of the first and second-generation migrants who established themselves in Shenzhen during early and late 1980s. Their children are either born or raised in Shenzhen. In my definition, it is important that this group is raised in Shenzhen.

The reason I only include the first- and second-generation migrants' children is because many of their children are born or raised in Shenzhen and because most of them have finished their schooling. Except for one student, I did not interview other students during this research because they find themselves in an institutionalized educational path that prevents many of them from developing their emotional bonds with their urban environment.

The term 'Shenzhener' is subject to an ongoing social construction and is therefore not an official term being used by the government. Due to the fact that the term isn't an official term, the local government of Shenzhen doesn't have specific data for the first- and second-generation migrants' children. According to government statistics, there were 755,191 people born in Shenzhen between 1979 and 2013. In 2013, the total population in Shenzhen was 10,628,900, however, unofficial numbers are much higher.

In my research, I will define this group as either being born in Shenzhen, or having moved to Shenzhen before turning six years old. In Shenzhen, children begin primary school at the age of siz, so for my study, interviewees must have moved to Shenzhen before their institutionalized educational path began.

Economic and social change in Shenzhen: As China's first economic zone, Shenzhen transformed from a fishing village during the 1970s into a coastal southern hub in China leading high-tech development, financial services, foreign trade, shipping and creative and cultural industries with a current population of around fifteen million people (Hulshoff & Roggeveen, 2011). At this moment, Shenzhen has one of the most rapidly changing societies in the world. Alongside this economic development, new classes arise embracing what are perceived to be modern values and behaviors (Elfick, 2011: 192). The market economy encourages an egalitarian social structure; it increases social mobility and it causes a struggle among members of the population to gain positions within the social order (Elfick, 2011: 198). Different people have different perceptions of what a rapidly growing society is.

Social and physical dimensions of place attachment: Shenzhen is an entity that has a social dimension, but its base is physical. The respondents feel related to Shenzhen mostly though their social relations in the city, its social change, its physical environment or a combination of all three.

Emotional, social and physical predictors: A categorization of factors that can influence the strength of place attachment. An individual does not always have to be aware of the association.

3.4 Research Design

For this study I will use a qualitative, explorative and descriptive research design since I will try to explore 'why' and 'how' place attachment is being influenced among people born and raised in Shenzhen. I will make use of a case-study design, using Shenzhen as my case. Shenzhen can be seen as a representative case, since its inhabitants experienced rapid transformations. I tried to examine people's experiences in detail by making use of both observations as well as in-depth interviews, and I attempted to identify issues from the perspective of my participants.

3.5. Ethnographic research

During this research, I'm exploring the feelings and experiences that people have in relation to their physical and social environment. Various qualitative methods are being used in order to collect data, however, I mostly made use of an ethnographic approach. I will define the social reality as a construct, which is subject to different experiences and approaches of sense-making, rather than as a fixed and objective fact. Residents create identities and give meaning to places via everyday encounters and shared routines in which norms and values are being agreed upon.

Ethnography is an approach to learn about people's social lives. By making use of this approach, I was able to examine the meaning of place for first- and second-generation migrants' children and the way they deal with a changing social environment. This approach can conceptualize space with a focus on social relations, the power dynamics of those relations, how space is produced and reproduced, and how space can influence identity formation (Yen at al, 2011: 2). This provides the chance to dig deep into the existence of place attachment and the emotional bonds people have with their environments. This research design fits best to the research question (Bryman, 2008: 43). For this research, I made use of an inductive, bottom-up approach. Starting from specific observations, I made broader generalizations about the subject (Bryman, 2003: 11).

3.6. Data collecting methods

For this study, I made use of observations, in-depth interviews and I followed some of my respondents while they performed everyday activities. I observed the first- and second-

generation migrants' children at places where they hung out. During this research, I conducted just as many interviews until I reached a saturation point. This happened when the added value of my last two interviews decreased and no new knowledge was added. The observations gave me insight into people's daily uses and routines. These insights could function as new input for the interviews to be done.

I had the fear that the Chinese people that I interviewed would not be open and honest in the beginning. They might have provided me with answers that show more positive results than reality. Therefore, I didn't make use of surveys in order to examine place attachment. Many studies did make use of survey designs in order to measure place attachment (Hildalgo & Hernandez, 2001, Lewicka, 2009, etc.), but in order to avoid a falsely positive version of reality, I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with my respondents.

3.7. Data collecting strategy

I made use of the snowball strategy in order to find respondents, using five different sources, and through them I was able to find respondents. This means that some people had overlapping social networks, but the majority of my respondents were part of different social networks and didn't know each other. I made use of snowball sampling due to the limited amount of time I had to conduct my research (only seven weeks) and the small number of contacts I have in Shenzhen. Snowball sampling does, however, carry a few disadvantages. My sampling might be community biased since it is not random and I found my participants via other participants. I also found one group of five respondents by exploring the streets and talking to people.

3.8. In-depth interviews

The conducted interviews were semi-structured, using my prepared questions as a guiding tool. Before conducting the interviews, I formulated a theoretical framework, which guided the concepts of my interviews. A constant comparison of the conducted data made it possible to discover new themes and concepts that seemed relevant for my participants, which would become a new topic during the following interviews. In this way, these concepts became sensitizing (Bryman, 2008) concepts that guided my research. These concepts were the starting point of my analysis. I always let my respondent decide where they wanted the interview to take place, in order for them to feel familiar with their environment. The places where the interviews took place varied from coffee houses, restaurants, parks, studios, homes and the street.

3.9. Limitations

This research has been limited in a few different ways. The first limitation arose from the language barrier. Though I found someone willing to translate my interviews, it's inevitable that information has become lost in translation during the interviews. The second limitation was the restricted amount of time I had to spend in Shenzhen. The field research took place during a period of seven weeks. The first week consisted of orientation programs, and I spent this initial period adjusting to the new environment, and reevaluating my subject. Ultimately, I decided to change my research topic after this first week. This left me with six weeks for the actual research. At the end of the research, I came to new insights; however, some of them I am unable to use due to a lack of evidence. A longer stay in Shenzhen would have allowed me to gather more information, which would have increased the level of data.

4. Data Analysis

4.1. Characteristics

In total, I conducted 22 interviews in which I interviewed 28 people. Of these people, 14 are men and 14 are women. The interviews and observations were conducted in Shenzhen between the 29th of April and the 1st of May. The average age of the people I interviewed is 27.54 years old. The youngest participant is 21 years and the oldest participant is 40 years old. One of my participants is still studying while the other 27 are working. All of my participants either currently or have previously studied. Among the 28 participants, 18 people were born in Shenzhen and 10 people moved to Shenzhen before the age of six years old. Among my 28 participants, 17 people were able to speak English during the interview and 11 interviews were translated These research subjects constitute a minority in Shenzhen. It is hard to state the exact number of the first- and second-generation migrants' children in Shenzhen due to a lack of statistics, and even if there are up-to-date statistics, they are mostly written in Chinese.

The respondents I interviewed are all first- and second-generation migrants' children. The first-generation migrants arrived in Shenzhen during the early 1980s. This generation mainly consisted of construction workers who had to build up the Special Economic Zone. The second-generation migrants arrived in Shenzhen during the late 1980s. The city was still growing, but its future was unclear. Many of my respondents mentioned having great job opportunities, but also claimed that it can be difficult for migrants to establish themselves in Shenzhen. This raises the question of whether their parents were all able to climb up the social ladder more quickly than others. A large amount of the first- and second-generation migrants have gone back home to their original hometowns. Mostly, those who were successful in their careers remained in Shenzhen (website China.org). My respondents' parents' professions varied from bank employee and journalist to fabric owner and human resource manager. In all cases, my respondents' families are comparatively well off. Since I haven't spoken with all first- and second-generation migrants' children, these results might be biased, however, many migrants that didn't succeed have gone home, which resulted in good career opportunities for those whose parents were able to stay.

4.2. Analyses

All interviews took between thirty minutes and 1.5 hours. Before conducting the interviews, I formulated a topic list (see appendix) that I used as a guide during the interviews. The topic list is formulated based on pre-existing literature, however, the nature of the interviews was very flexible. A constant comparison of the conducted data with the existing literature made it

possible to discover new themes and concepts that seem relevant for my participants, which became a new topic during the following interviews. In this way, these concepts became sensitizing concepts that could guide my research. These concepts were the starting point of my analysis.

In order to analyze the data, all interviews have been transcribed and I made use of Atlas ti in order to code whether the participants frame their homes, neighborhoods or their city in a positive or negative way. Atlas ti will allow me to locate particular words or phrases that can be attached to certain codes, which allows me to study people's behavior. At first, every code was developed close to its original sentences. When all interviews were coded and when no new relevant codes could be created, I compared all different codes in order to combine closely related codes and I removed all redundant codes. The last phase of the coding was creating supercodes; comprehensive theoretical concepts have been made out of the previously made codes in order to create clear insights and relationships. These insights and relationships are discussed in my results.

5. The Research Area

Shenzhen is a young city that started to grow enormously due to China's open-door policy. At this moment, Shenzhen is one of the fastest growing cities in the world. Before the economic reform in 1978, Shenzhen was a small fishing village lying north of the former British colony Hong Kong in the south of China. Shenzhen was appointed to be China's first Special Economic Zone (SEZ). The term *Special Economic Zone* is generally used as a term that refers to a modern economic zone, in which business and trade laws differ from the rest of the country. Today's Shenzhen is located within the once rural Bao'an County. This rural area was set up in the fourth century and consisted of what we today call Shenzhen, Dongguan, Zhongshan and Hong Kong (Ng, 2003: 429). During the 1970s, the Chinese planned economy was close to collapsing. A certain degree of liberalization was necessary to manage the national economy and improve the investment environment. In order to realize this liberalization, various reforms were initiated including an Open-Door Policy to attract foreign investment. Due to its proximity to Hong Kong, Bao'an County was appointed as a site for developing an export-oriented economy (Ng, 2003: 430). In 1979, the city of Shenzhen was created and in 1980, Shenzhen, together with Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen, was designed as a Special Economic Zone. Shenzhen had to serve as a platform for economic, scientific, technological and market developments; the city had became a 'training ground' for talents from the mainland and an 'experimenting ground' for reforms such as flexible economic cooperation between China and foreign countries (Ng, 2003: 2003: 431). For the first time in Chinese history, a city was entrusted with the task of running a local economy instead of following decisions from the central government. Shenzhen's sixth Five Year Plan between 1981 and 1986, right after the Special Economic Zone was set up, specified that Shenzhen should 'learn to compete for foreign investment; to operate according to market principles and to practice modern management skill' (Ng, 2003: 436).

Demolishing already existing villages, the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was built from scratch. These villages were given the title 'urban villages' as well as an urban status and land plots where the native farmers could build their houses. These urban villages lie outside the governance of the Municipal Government. They are governed by rural committees, which have the formal status of 'shareholding companies' (Ng, 2003: 432). There exist 241 urban villages in Shenzhen (Bach, 2010: 423), however, as a result of Shenzhen's rural urbanization, which included the transformation of the local environment, most villages, including the famous ones, face plans for demolishment.

During the first five years of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, the development

mainly relied on domestic capital instead of foreign investment. In 1993, the rapidly industrializing counties outside of Shenzhen were incorporated as districts of the Shenzhen municipality. Shenzhen's strategy was to develop the city into a 'modern world city with a prosperous economy, a stable society and an amiable environment'. The city had to become a city with the 'environment of Singapore and the efficiency of Hong Kong' (Ng, 2003: 434). In order to transform from a manufacturing zone into a world city, an important strategy was to further strengthen the city's domestic and international economic linkages. Shenzhen invested in all kinds of facilities such as the Yantian Port or the Guanshen Highway and in 1997, Shenzhen built a new business center in the Futian district, a symbol that should establish the image of the 'world city' Shenzhen (Ng, 2003: 435). The city successfully transformed from an industry-led Special Economic Zone which depended on domestic capital into a modern city attracting international capital and people from all over the world. According to its 2003 Master Plan, the city aimed to become a 'regional center of finance, information, trade, commerce, logistics, transportation and tourism as well as a high-tech and research development center in southern China' (Ng, 2003: 440). It's difficult to say to what extent the city succeeded in the realization of its Master Plan, but the ambitions are impressive for a city that just established a socialist market economy.

The rapid transformation of the former fishing village resulted in a unique atmosphere. The experience of being in Shenzhen differs from visiting other places in China; places that already have been defined and renovated and where nostalgic tours are ready to be consumed (Shenzhennoted.com). Tourists can go to the imperial Forbidden City in Beijing, visit Xi'an's ancient city center, have a cocktail in one of Shanghai's trendy clubs or buy gifts at one of Gongzhou's small shops. All these places represent China's 5,000-year old civilization, which make them successful tourist attractions. The absence of an agreed upon narrative makes Shenzhen a different experience. It leaves more space for the tourist to judge what's historical and what isn't. Wherever one goes in Shenzhen, he or she will be surrounded by skyscrapers, representing the city's development and its economic achievements. Before Shenzhen became the first Special Economic Zone, city planners had to plan for investments from central ministries, which means that local urban growth wasn't on their agenda. Foreign investment didn't exist and population growth was strictly controlled by the central government. City planners didn't have much experience of how to build a city based on market development. In Shenzhen, city planners were facing the reforming of the planned economy, the introduction of foreign investment and a strong influx of its population. The city dared to attract some brave city planners, such as Yuan Geng, who I will discuss later in this thesis. Facing new challenges and introducing a can-do attitude based on market principles,

Shenzhen made a difference and distinguished itself from any other city in China (Ng, 2003: 435).

These two photos are sent to me by one of my respondents. The second photo was taken five years after the first photo. This is her perception of change.

6. Results

In this chapter I will discuss the results that have been conducted from the fieldwork. Existing literature on place attachment has emphasized the significance of places rather than their meanings. The meaning of place is an intermediate link between the physical property of places and people's emotional bonds with them. A place defined as a meaning location has a very strong social dimension, but its base is physical (Lewicka, 2011: 213). In this thesis I will take into account both the physical as well as the social dimension of place attachment. In order to discuss the results, I will analyze the physical and social dimension by making use of the main characteristics that influence place attachment; the social, socio-demographic and physical predictors of place attachment. By analyzing both these predictors as well as the topics the respondents mention, it's this thesis' aim to unveil possible mechanisms of attachment. The three spatial levels of place–house, neighborhood and city–will be analyzed and discussed. Quantitative research measurements have grasped differentiation among people regarding their importance and strength of emotional bonds with places but they fail in measuring what these places mean. By making use of their measurements via questioning them in in-depth interviews, I want to contribute to the identification of the meaning of places. In doing so, it becomes clear that people's emotional bonds are connected with the physical aspect of places. Physical features help people to become attached since the physical has meaning because it has been socially construed. Therefore, concerning the different meanings these predictors can have for different people, these predictors often overlap. Features that influence attachment are endless and studies that try to relate all of these features to each other don't contribute to the existing knowledge (Lewicka, 2011: 217), which is why I selected the used variables based on the main literature as well as the responses of my respondents.

6.1. Social predictors

According to many urban sociologists, place attachment is mainly social. The most common social predictors of place attachment that have been studied are community ties. Albeit they have been operationalized in various ways, they all measure local social capital, one example of which is neighborhood ties, a system of friendship and kinship networks rooted in family life and local involvement ties in the neighborhood. I will now discuss my respondents' socialization processes and their relation to their attachment to place.

6.1.1. Community ties

In exploring my respondents' attachment to their neighborhood, we discussed their local social activities. These activities differed from meeting friends from the same neighborhood to engaging in local community activities. Among my respondents, the majority mentioned to have weak social ties at the level of the neighborhood. While discussing the neighborhood, most of them regularly referred to the past, stating that their social relations were, to a larger degree, spatially concentrated and friends and family often lived in the same neighborhood, making use of the same facilities. In the current Shenzhen, due to its rapid growth and extended migration, social networks are increasingly spread out. Feng told me that when he was young, the majority of his activities took place in his neighborhood, while there are currently divided throughout the whole city. 'When I was young, I knew the neighborhood, I played with the children, but now, I don't even know the guy who lives next door to me'. Jian, a 40-year old man who was born in Shenzhen when it was still a village, told me something similar. While brining up memories, he said 'we shared the things in the neighborhood. We helped each other. If people had food, they would share it. But now, you don't know your neighbor, who lives there. We don't talk. I think it's complicated. My son can't have the same childhood as I had.'

The first- and second-generation migrants' children have relatively different social networks. Their parents came from all over China, trying to achieve a better life for themselves and their children. In the memories of my respondents, local communities play an important role since most of their relatives lived in different parts of China. These local communities, which mainly consisted of the nuclear family and friends, don't seem to exist anymore in the same way that they remember. This might be the case because they themselves grew older and developed new social networks, or this might be a result of the changes in the structure of the society, from a fishing village into a competitive and free economic and market environment. In a post-traditional society, lifestyle becomes the core of self-identity. People consume goods for utilitarian purposes, but also to express who they are, and develop a sense of individuality (Elfick, 2011: 198). To a larger extent, the society is beginning to place increasing value on the individual rather than the collective, a change that inspires different emotions.

Another point that, according to my respondents, influences people's local engagement is the normality of moving several times. Most of my respondents moved a few times within Shenzhen during their childhood. In many of these cases, their parents received a promotion at work, which often ensured them new, and more spacious housing. Liu told me she felt happy every time they moved. 'Our old house was built before 1995, so that wasn't very

comfortable to live [in]. My mother had to fight for a parking place. If we would come home late, we wouldn't be able to find a place to park our car. We also lived on the second floor, so when there were people playing games downstairs, it was very noisy.' Strikingly, many of my respondents barely talked about places where they often spent their leisure time as a child. During their childhood, they faced busy school schedules until late in the afternoon, while the evenings were filled with homework and extracurricular activities. If they were free, their schedule was mostly filled with family activities. Now that they are adults, my respondents state that they have more leisure time, however, for many of my respondents, this didn't result in stronger local engagement to their neighborhood.

While almost all of my participants are positive about the current society of Shenzhen, they seem to grow more pessimistic when they start comparing the current society with the local community they remember. The majority of my respondents say they are not involved in local neighborhood activities. Apart from the fact that some of my respondents questioned the existence of community based neighborhood activities in their neighborhood, the majority is too occupied with their jobs, families and other social obligations. Geographically, their professional and social obligations encompass the whole city and they value their living place based on its proximity to other functional and recreational places, rather than the extensiveness of informal social activities in the neighborhood. Most of my respondents don't have a strong preference to live in a certain neighborhood, as long as the location is easily accessible. Most neighborhoods are described as homogeneous, due to their interchangeable architecture and their low level of community ties. An exception is the Shekou area. All of the respondents from Shekou (six) felt more strongly attached to Shekou compared to Shenzhen. I will discuss the case of Shekou later in this thesis.

6.1.2. Family and friends
Family, friends and family life was a significant topic during my interviews. Relationships between people and place were important for most of my respondents' sense of place identity. Significant people such as family and friends were important factors in their level of attachment to Shenzhen. For some of my respondents, a family in China represents something else than in Western Europe. To clarify: in Western Europe, we normally focus mainly on the nuclear family. The nuclear family in Holland is comprised of two generations: parents and their children. Any other generation would be an exception, the 'extended family'. In Shenzhen, the nuclear family sometimes includes three generations: grandparents, parents and children. In Holland, the father would traditionally work full-time and the mother would often work a part-time job (relatively spoken, Holland is world leader in terms of women having

part-time jobs). In China, both parents can more easily work full-time because the grandparents provide both childcare as well as housekeeping services. Some of my respondents' parents formed a functional and important part of their social networks. From this perspective, the role of the grandparents doesn't differ that strongly from their role in the Netherlands, however, the difference is that in Shenzhen they often live in the same house. Chinese families emphasize the bond between parents and children. Fang, a mother of one child, said that Shenzhen is home for her because of her friends, relatives and family. Both Fang as well as her husband have a full-time job while her husband's parents take care of their son and live in the same house.

Most of my respondents felt a moral responsibility to stay close to their parents. Feng told me that, after a few years of living in Canada, he felt obliged to come back to Shenzhen in order to stay close to his parents. 'My parents are getting old. I like to be around them and when I was away for ten years, when I think about it, it must be hard for them.' While Feng wants to take care of his parents now that they are getting older, his girlfriend, Hua, has a very different opinion regarding her parents. When we were talking about places she could imagine living, she told me her parents aren't a factor that will keep her in Shenzhen. 'I can live without my parents, yeah. I could also live without my friends, I'll just make new ones, right?'

Some of my respondents lived or studied elsewhere for a while and they all came back to Shenzhen. Most of them told me that the job opportunities in Shenzhen are better than in most other cities, but they also feel a sense of familiarity in Shenzhen because of their family and close friends. Knowing that they are their parents' only child makes them want to stay close to their parents and take care of them while they get older.

Family life has always been very important to Chinese culture. However, while some respondents feel at home in the place where they got married, other respondents consider their nuclear family as nothing more than a household. An important ideal used to be the so-called 'four generations under one roof', referring to the cohabitation of the mother and father, their son and daughter-in-law or daughter and son-in-law, their grandchildren and great-grandchildren. In the current Shenzhen, the meaning of a family differs from person to person. Nevertheless, while modern Chinese families increasingly consist of two generations, the tradition still remains.

Beginning in the 1990s, people in Shenzhen started to buy their own apartments, moving from pre-reform housing, with a shared toilet and kitchen, to a self-contained apartment (Elfick, 2011: 201). As the amount of people who identify as middle class is rising in Shenzhen, people have begun to express individual taste, which has resulted in a developing sense of a collective consumer identity. There has been an increase in the number of people

who pursue a higher education, and the number of professional jobs is growing significantly (Elfick, 2011: 197). These developments changed the way some people valued marriage. Some people I interviewed were clear in terms of getting married or finding a partner: they first want to discover their own identity and satisfy their own needs and maybe one day they will marry. However, many people's parents put pressure on them to follow a traditional lifestyle, so there is still a large number of young people for whom marriage is an important milestone that they are eager to achieve. During our interview, Fang told me she wanted to get married, but also that she felt pressured by her parents. 'When I finished my study in France, all I could think about was getting married as soon as possible. Getting married is a vital step for a human being. My parents urged me to get married, so I was also pressured. Also, the relationship between my boyfriend and me was very tight, so it was definitely the time to get married.' Fang and I met in a coffee bar in Yen Tian, the district where she lives. Yen Tian is a district in the eastern part of Shenzhen. There are no metros going to Yen Tian and it takes a long time to get there. It's because of the district's geographically remote position that most people I've been interviewing from the area feel it's a city of its own. If you don't have a car, it's quite an effort to go to other areas in the city, so they often hang out in the district itself. Fang told me she was lucky that her husband also grew up in Yen Tian, so that she didn't have to move to another district. This wasn't the case for her friend Daiyu. 'Growing up in Yen Tian gave me great experiences, I have many friends here. After I got married I moved to a new house in Longhua. I have fewer opportunities now to get together with my friends. I will adapt to the new atmosphere and new circumstances. This whole thing is new, but living with my husband and his parents is an encouragement, I'm not afraid of this kind of change.'

Many people I've been talking to experienced difficulties and pressure from their parents. They want their children to marry, regardless of whether their children feel ready for it. 'I'm old in my parents' thinking. They keep calling me, they say that they are worried about me. They want me to come over for dinner, or something like that, and then they will talk about marriage with me!' said Fan. Marriage can change people's social status; the social and familial pressure to marry can be stressful and unpleasant for many people. Despite the family pressure, all my respondents stressed the importance of marriage when a woman is pregnant. For them, a family means a father, mother, a child and a comfortable home. This view reflects the traditional aspects of home and attachment, namely to wed and have a family.

6.1.3. Feeling (un)safe

Sense of security is a social variable which is often being used in order to measure the strength of place attachment. People in Shenzhen vary in their feelings regarding the safety of

the city. Nobody mentioned particularly bad neighborhoods in which one doesn't want to be, however, the growing feeling of anonymity does encourage the feeling of Shenzhen turning into a more dangerous city.

The variety of different people and the open attitude of the society of Shenzhen are conceived as something positive which makes its inhabitants proud, however, the crowdedness of the city remains a concern for many people. Jian thinks there are more people in this city that it can handle. 'People from all over the world come to our city and bring their values with them. Maybe we will learn from you and you might learn from us. Sometimes it might change the way we think about things. I experience this as something positive. But there are things I don't like. It's too crowded, there are too many people in the city.' My respondents are positive about the diversity in the city, however, I noticed that their circle of friends contained mostly local Shenzheners. Most of the friends of my interviewees are from Shenzhen as well, and they share a common social background. During the week I followed Hung, I noticed that most of his friends are born and raised in Shenzhen. I met some friends with whom he played football when they were young, or with whom he spent time at spots close to Sea World. People tend to become friends with people they look like, however, the anonymous feeling one has when living in a diverse society can have its downsides. According some of the respondents, Shenzhen is turning into a more dangerous city.

'In general, I don't like the people in Shenzhen. I don't talk to strangers. When someone approaches me? I will have no expressions, first see who he is,' admitted Bojing, one of my respondents. I found that people appeared to especially fear the safety of children. 'When I was a child, I used to play with my neighbors, but the children that live there now can't do that because the parents are worried that the children will be kidnapped.' Bingwen, who is a father himself, even told me that it is illegal to let your child go to school alone before attending grade six (which is at the age of 11). 'Every day I will drive my son to school. Even though it's only one kilometer, I still drive him. I went to school alone in grade two, but he's in grade four now and I still bring him to school. If parents don't bring their children to school they break the law, so they would charge us. After grade six, we could let him go alone to school.' The anonymity of living in Shenzhen and all the different backgrounds the city brings forth cause people to sometimes disrespect common rules, norms and values, which results in an unsafe feeling growing among my respondents. In contrast, some of my respondents state that they always feel safe in the city. 'I never feel danger in the city,' said Shan. 'I mean the whole city, even in Baishizhou. I would never get lost here.' Shan connects her feeling of being safe with her familiarity with the city. She will not get lost in Shenzhen, so she feels safe. I noticed that most people have this feeling. Chen also said he feels safe in Shenzhen because

he knows the way. 'Shenzhen is nice, I don't get cheated by other people. These things don't really happen to me because I'm so familiar with this city. I don't go to places that are dangerous. If I go to another city, I never know whether the place is safe or not'. Both Chen as well as Shan feels safe in Shenzhen because of their physical familiarity. They 'know' all the streets and feel at ease in the city's physical setting. People can create strong emotional bonds of place attachment as a result from the sense of safety and security that they feel (Scannell & Gifford, 2009: 5). In the case of Shenzhen, the society is often described as cold and anonymous, but most of my respondents feel safe on the streets. However, my respondents do fear for the safety of children, and when they express their feelings regarding a lack of safety, they mainly refer to the security of the children.

6.1.4. The sociability of technology – WeChat
An important element that can result in attachment to place is people's social experiences. This includes their social ties, sense of social belonging and the familiarity with fellow residents. In Shenzhen, these experiences are to a large extent influenced by the use of technology. People arrange dates, find jobs, maintain friendships, make appointments and find new friends, all with one application: WeChat. People use this application to structure their daily activities and agenda and therefore it influences the way they experience Shenzhen.

For being the 'city of iPhones', it wouldn't be right if everyone didn't have one, and so they do. It's not uncommon to see a pedestrian meandering crookedly from left to right while simultaneously typing a message and walking down the street. Due to governmental restrictions, Chinese people aren't allowed to use Google, YouTube, Facebook or Gmail but, as previously mentioned, they use WeChat. WeChat is the WhatsApp of the east, though it also combines social networking functions such as mass-media sharing. WeChat is more than just a chatting app. Using WeChat, people can share news, images and information about themselves. While conducting my research in Shenzhen, it soon became clear that I would be absolutely lost without making use of WeChat. Since WeChat can also translate messages, it really is a functional app for everyone to use to communicate. It's easy to 'look someone up' on WeChat and to get connected; users can scan each other's phones to instantaneously connect.

Most of my respondents had mixed and contradictory feelings about the use of WeChat. Just to be clear: all my respondents used it, both personally as well as for professional purposes. Tencent, the company that introduced WeChat is founded and based in Shenzhen, a simple fact that almost every Shenzhener proudly told me. During my interviews, my respondents always mentioned the possibilities for connection that WeChat

offers users, and the fact that Tenscent is a company founded in Shenzhen made them proud of the city's entrepreneurial attitude.

WeChat appears to strengthen not only weak ties but also strong ties, since people often have to work such long hours than they don't have time to meet their friends. A respondent named Fang told me that she uses WeChat to keep in contact with friends. 'My friends from school, we don't visit each other anymore. Maybe two or three times a year. We maintain our relationship via WeChat. I don't think we see each other enough, but we are all married, we have our own families. We have lots of things to do for our jobs, our families and us spend all our time with our families instead of meeting each other'. While WeChat helps good friends to 'keep in touch', it does the same with acquaintances. People use WeChat in a very casual manner, which makes it easy for someone to get in touch with a person who might be able to help find them job or something else they need. WeChat is also being used as a location-based app that facilitates communication between mutually interested users, in other words: people can flirt via WeChat. Using Bluetooth, people can make connections with other people close to them. If the other person accepts, there is a match, if not: better luck next time. During my stay in Shenzhen, I received a few invitations via my Bluetooth. I decided to give it a shot, and accepted. I waited a while for a message, but nothing happened. Maybe I didn't understand the rules of WeChat flirting, but it did help familiarize me with the costs of collectively using WeChat: it makes the social world curter and further removed from physical reality.

As I mentioned, people can flirt via WeChat. Many people I spoke to are enthusiastic about this possibility, but at the same time they fear that people communicate less in real life. Bingwen told me the society of Shenzhen is getting less real. 'My real friends are my friends from back then, not from right now. Right now, everyone is just focused on their mobiles. They share the best things with their friends, but people don't share their real minds, their real thinking. Nobody knows if people are happy or unhappy. You can see people's face, but you can't see their heart.' Chao, one of my respondents, referred to the use of WeChat as a lifestyle. 'We all have our phones; it's a change of lifestyle. Nowadays I seem to be more solitary. Everyone is using their phones. It seems that when people are face to face, when there are just two people, they would play with their cellphones individually. They don't even look at each other, that's a little bit sad, right? This is one of the things I don't like about today's lifestyle. I like the social things.' It seems that the 'WeChat lifestyle' can help people with busy schedules to maintain friendships and can connect individuals and groups that aren't (strongly) related yet. However, the casual and obsessive way people use WeChat can also lead to a phony social reality in which people are glued to their screens.

The use of WeChat isn't limited to Shenzhen. It is a socially shared activity that takes over parts of the 'real world'. Most of my respondents met people via WeChat and all my respondents maintain social relationships via WeChat. Despite the fact that WeChat isn't geographically framed, it helps people to construct and structure their social life and experiences in Shenzhen and therefore it gives meaning to the city. For some of my respondents, Tenscent is a symbol of Shenzhen's entrepreneurial spirit and the can-do attitude. They are proud of Tenscent and the company reminds them of the city's opportunities.

WeChat influences the formation and strength of people's social ties. The nature of WeChat relationships might be a prototype for social relations in general. Social relations on WeChat can operate as a form of intermediary social capital, different from the strong ties of bonding social capital, but also different from the weak ties of bridging social capital. It fulfils both functions, while simultaneously alienating both forms. Close friends have the impression of maintaining their 'close friendship' on WeChat. Some of my respondents mentioned that they are too busy to see their close friends due to work and their nuclear family, and WeChat helps them to stay in contact with their close friends, even though they only see each other once a year. One the other hand, people use WeChat in a very casual way, which helps them to form a social network, however, due to the overload of information, it's difficult to distinguish functional information from the masses of information people are receiving.

6.2. Socio-demographic predictors

Various variables have been studied under this name such as length of residence, age, social status, mobility and having children. Among these variables, length of residence is the most consistent predictor of place attachment. Length of residence influence attachment both directly as well as indirectly, through affecting the strength of local ties.

6.2.1. Age and time of living in Shenzhen
My respondents are all born or raised in Shenzhen. This implies that most of my respondents' length of residence is about the same, however, they do differ in age. Seven of my respondents are over the age of thirty and twenty-one of my respondents are still in their twenties. As previously mentioned, the positive relationship between time of living in a place and attachment to that place are found to predict both directly, but also through affecting the strength of local ties. Apart from Shekou, time of living doesn't influence the strength of local ties, due to people's professional and social obligations, however, the older (30+) respondents' strength of attachment has changed throughout the years in a different manner than the

younger (30-) respondents' strength of attachment. They all referred to their childhood's community life in which local ties where of great importance, whereas the majority of the younger respondents did so to a lesser extent. For the majority of the respondents, length of residence does not influence the strength of their local ties, which is an interesting finding since it contradicts the existing literature.

However, time spent in a place is found to be a stable predictor of place attachment for several different reasons. First, some of the respondents feel a strong sense of security because they feel familiar with the places they know well. This is not the case for all of my respondents. As earlier discussed, the growing society can also inspire concerns regarding lack of safety. Second, my respondents associate the city with several memories and life stages such as their childhood, dating, and sometimes getting married and having children. Third, people that are born and raised in Shenzhen have witnessed the city's rapid process of transformation. They state that this process makes them proud, which makes them want to be active participants in the changes going on around them, so therefore, time spent in Shenzhen is found to be a stable predictor of place attachment.

6.2.2. Mobility

Mobility is a variable that has been studied as a social-demographic predictor. It can take different forms and influence place bonding in different ways. Mobility can be operationalized various ways, for example by the number of times one moves, or in terms of commuting within the city. It can have a both positive as well as negative impact on place attachment. When mobility increases, attachment to a certain place can shift from concrete places to a new form of more abstract identity. During the interviews, my respondents often referred to various means of local transportation when discussing their sense of mobility.

Throughout the years, Shenzhen experienced some changes in terms of its mobility. The city changed from a cluster of small fishermen's villages into a megacity and went from a non-motorized city to a traffic-saturated city (Erath, 2014: 1). In the early phase of the city's development, the traffic consisted of mainly bicycles, however, today's Shenzhen has become a hostile environment for cycling.

During the late 1990s, Shenzhen experienced a rapid motorization. In 1998, thirty-two out of 1,000 people owned a car while in 2012, 210 out of 1,000 people owned a car. This expansion happened due to higher incomes, and because the government's policy which was actively supporting car ownership (Erath, 2014: 6). The road network in Shenzhen adapted to the requirements of cars, however, the demand of cars overtook its capacity. As a more sustainable solution, Shenzhen constructed a Metro system. The planning started in 1998, but

the first two lines opened in 2014, with the Metro running at a frequency of fifteen minutes. In June 2011, three extra lines were added and three more lines are to be opened in 2016 (Erath, 2014: 8).

One of the more important environmental variables of attachment is traffic. Regarding someone's individual attachment to place, aspects of perceived livability (absence of noise and pollution), safety issues, environmental awareness and increased mobility are correlated. Traffic can influence the sense of belonging that people feel toward their home environment (Fuhrer & Kaiser, 1993: 311). These feelings of belonging can differ from person to person, but they all agreed upon the city's major improvements during the last decade in terms of mobility.

Some of my respondents mentioned that the opening of the Metro system made a great difference to them. Chao told me that even though Shenzhen is growing, the traffic is improving. 'Ten years ago we didn't have a subway. We only had busses, but those weren't safe. When people didn't have a seat, they had to stand and for that bus, it really isn't safe.' However, despite the improved metro system, some respondents admitted that they prefer taking the car. Because of the large number of cars, it's getting more difficult to register new cars. Heng, a 26-year old architect, wants to buy a car, but according to him, it's very difficult to register one. 'Applying for a number plate became a lottery. The government registers 7,000 number plates per month, 3,000 of them go to the highest bidders and the other 4,000 are appointed via a lottery. I think this is a good policy for the city, but a bad one for me [laughs].' One of the lucky few who just received one of these number plates is Jie. She registered her car one month ago and told me that her mobility improved substantially. Like many of my respondents, Jie has friends throughout the whole city. She told me that the distance between her and her friends made it difficult to see each other, but since she has a car, she can see her friends on a more regular basis. 'Since I have a car, the area is getting bigger and bigger [more and more accessible]. I can go wherever I want to go. Now I have a car, friends call me more often and ask me to see them.'

Most of my respondents didn't have a car due to the difficulties of registering their number plate. Nevertheless, it seems that the majority of my subjects think that their mobility increased during the last ten years because of the Metro system. Since the Metro system is expanding and the government discourages car ownership, public transport seems to gain importance. Not a bad idea for a city with twenty million inhabitants.

6.3. Physical predictors

Socio-demographic variables are relatively easy to operationalize and social variables usually cover well-defines measurements but the potential number of physical variables that can stimulate one's attachment is almost endless which complicates the measurement of physical predictors (Lewicka, 2011: 217). The way physical features affect the formation of place attachment is ambiguous. People often don't become attached directly to the physical features of a place, but rather to the meaning that these features represent. Physically based place attachment is expressed in the symbolic meanings of place (Scannell & Gifford, 2009: 5). Physical features can facilitate social contact and therefore can influence place attachment indirectly. The best physical predictors of place attachment are features such as close (walking) distance to work, recreational centers, shopping malls or parks. People value their residential place in terms of close proximity and short travel distance to these places. Many of the respondents mentioned not feeling attached to specific physical places. When asked about which physical places they like, most of them replied in terms of recreational spaces. They want to be close to shopping malls and karaoke bars and to a lesser extent, parks.

6.3.1. Leisure activities

Physical features often facilitate social contact and can therefore influence place attachment indirectly. Consistent predictors of place attachment are physical features such as closeness to recreational centers, shopping malls or access to parks. For my respondents, shopping malls and karaoke bars are of great importance and their neighborhood and houses are valued based on proximity to these places (Lewicka, 2011: 217).

Activity involvement is partly an antecedent of place attachment (Kyle e.a., 2003: 265). Increasing leisure activity involvement leads to increased attachment to recreational settings. When people are better able to express themselves, their sense of place identity rises. Their emotional bonds become stronger when they derive pleasure from leisure activities. This form of self-expression has a significant and positive effect on their place dependence as well as their place identity (Kyle e.a., 2003: 266).

Leisure activities and places were one of the first topics discussed during my interviews. During my fieldwork I often accompanied my respondents during their leisure activities in order to understand their association with both the activity as well as the setting.

6.3.2. Shopping malls

As income rises in Shenzhen, so does the desire to buy more and better products, and income expansion is accompanied by growing numbers of non-places such as shopping malls. The amount of shopping malls increases, and whether people appreciate their aesthetic beauty or not, they appear to be very convenient. One of my respondents, Ju, expressed her enthusiasm for the increased presence of malls in the city: 'There are more new buildings, new shopping malls like Coco park, Coastal City and the OCT. I think it's handy, because we used to travel a long way to see a movie or to go shopping, but now you can just walk to mall close to you.' Though few would argue against the convenience of these shopping malls, they also have their detractors. 'Shopping malls have what you want; but change has a good side and a bad side,' Shan admitted to me. 'The good side is that it's more convenient, but the bad side is that this city has no culture. It's like a stone forest with too many shopping malls. Everywhere you go are shopping malls.''

It seems that most districts were dealing with an inadequate level of facilities for a while. Ju isn't the only person who referred to the long trips she used to have to make merely to buy some clothes or see a film; Chen is also positive about the proximity of shopping malls. 'Ten years ago, the traffic was terrible and we didn't have so many shopping malls as we have now. I like to go to the shopping mall; we buy clothes, go to the cinema to see a movie or we hang out by the shops to see whatever is coming by'. This wasn't the first time someone told me they like to 'hang out' in their local shopping mall, so I had to pay a few visits myself as well. I was invited to spend a few hours at the shopping mall with some people I interviewed, and after several visits, I came to understand that shopping malls are often not only being used for shopping. The shopping mall serves as a space for recreation and a place where one can go to meet up with friends or meet other mothers at the mall, where they can have dinner and watch their children, who enjoy running and dancing around. There are performances given by local singers or artists surrounded by a crowd of enthusiastic teenagers. As people earn more money in Shenzhen, it is common to see people siting and chatting in one of the many Starbucks coffee shops, or socializing in one of the numerous bars that can be found at the shopping mall. The mall also offers opportunities for socializing and leisure activities for those of lesser means; it is relatively cheap to go to the theater or to see a movie. A shopping mall isn't just a place to shop; it's a place to be. When Jilan asked me what my favorite shopping mall is in the Netherlands and I told her that I wasn't sure if we actually have any, her reaction was illustrative. 'Then how do you relax? What do you do in your leisure time? Do you even have leisure time?'

Crowd in front of the KK Mall.

Though all shopping malls look the same, they trigger excitement and comfort. In an era where people can buy everything they want online, it seems that shopping malls must offer more than just a place to purchase goods. In Shenzhen, shopping malls serve as an arena for social interaction and relaxation, as well as consumption. People in Shenzhen value close proximity to non-places such as shopping malls.

6.3.3. KTV

Another place people like to go in their leisure time are karaoke bars. Karaoke originated as a Japanese product, but became a global phenomenon in recent times. Almost all of my respondents suggested I visit a KTV bar, where people gather to sing karaoke. KTV gives customers the opportunity to sing in public whenever they want and allows them to pretend they are pops stars. It's mass culture without the feeling of being mainstream. Shenzhen is full of KTV venues which all boast different atmospheres. People usually go as a group and rent a karaoke box together, in which they can be loud, release pressure, relax, sing off-key or feel like a pop star. In short, people do what they want without bothering anyone.

I was invited by Hung to join him and his friends on a Saturday night. He didn't plan to sing karaoke, but he knew we would probably end up singing anyway. After a nice but

expensive dinner at Sea World, we continued our night at his friend's birthday dinner. The dinner was over when we arrived, but we were in time for their next stop: karaoke. Like Hung himself, the whole group consisted of artists, not an easy profession in Shenzhen. Karaoke allows them to think of things besides their next sale, and gives them the chance to act silly without being judged. The karaoke box was being used in different ways. Two girls performed a passionate performance of a song by their favorite musical artist and soon became the local karaoke celebrities, while most people were drinking and dancing, letting off steam after a long work day.

As a popular media, karaoke has become an important tool for self-expression. The music industry is declining in many parts of the world due to file sharing, but in China it's rising, mainly because of the consumers of karaoke (Zhou, 2008: 182). Some people argue karaoke turns people into social animals, while others assert that karaoke creates alienation. People who go to a KTV venue rent a private room where they can drink, sing and dance without being watched by strangers. It's a group activity, but one where all participants are in the same social group, physically separated from those outside the group. Unlike the western style of consuming karaoke, where people sing in turns in front of a whole bar, in China, groups of friends rent a private room in a public place. Whether it encourages people to socialize or whether it creates alienation, karaoke has become an important form of entertainment, for some people even a way of life (Zhou, 2008: 177).

Unlike in many parts of the world, pop concerts were scarce in China, and due to government censorship, pop music was extremely restricted. Karaoke allowed people to bond with their favorite artists. People see their friends at the karaoke venue drinking, dancing and singing together. It became a symbol of modernity as well as an aspect of modern consumer life and therefore it creates a sense of meaning in people's lives.

6.4. House, neighborhood and city

Throughout this research, attachment to place at the level of the house, neighborhood and city have been investigated. The respondents showed strong attachment at the level of the city and weak attachment at the level of both the house as well as the neighborhood, with the Shekou neighborhood as an exception.

At the range of the house, the weak attachment that has been found contradicts with most of the literature on place attachment. Home is considered a symbol of security, self-identity, comfort and privacy. In the case of Shenzhen, the house has been found a weak scale of attachment for several reasons. First, all of my respondents live in high-rise buildings

and the interchangeable architecture of these residential buildings inspires weak attachment. Second, for many of the respondents, housing is related to their work, which increases their willingness to move in case they get a promotion. Third, Many of my respondents grew up sharing their rooms with several family members, which makes their perception of privacy different from many western views. Accessibility to parks, functional and recreational sites (like shopping malls) are often valued more strongly than the house itself. Feng, a young architect, told me he never felt attached to any of his apartments. 'I guess I'm not attached to the house. At this moment, we have four big shopping malls near to us. We watch movies, have some deserts. I like this one, Coco Park, the most.'

Modern high-rise apartment complex in Shenzhen.

Neighborhoods were described as homogeneous and safe, whereby people feel safe because they feel familiar with the environment. Chao, an English teacher who is born and raised in Luohu, had mixed feelings when he moved to Longgang district. 'I felt a little sad because I felt familiar with all the things in Luohu, but as Shenzhen is getting bigger, it just swallows up all the neighborhoods. Shenzhen has always been changing and so do our lifestyles. I used to play in the neighborhood, but now we go to a shopping mall. We don't have to buy something; we just walk around and enjoy the feeling.' Chao is one of the many respondents that mentioned enjoying the shopping mall. Proximity to shopping malls triggers attachment, which influences feelings both at the level of the house as well as at the level of the neighborhood.

At the level of the city, strong attachment has been shown. Shenzhen is described as

an open and transforming city, containing great job opportunities and the city is rewarded for its can-do attitude. During the interview with Bohai, he mentioned that he lived in Shenzhen, Beijing and Hong Kong and felt he related most to Shenzhen. 'I want to be different and creative and Shenzhen has that.' The excitement at the level of the city and the familiarity one feels at the level of the neighborhood might combine to stimulate one's feelings of attachment. Their place attachment combines feelings of security and familiarity at the level of the neighborhood and the experience of stimulation, opportunities and excitement at the level of the city.

6.5. Job opportunities

As previously mentioned, a clear theory of place attachment is missing. There's a lack of theory that connects people's emotional bonds with the physical side of places. In order to create a better understanding of people's bonds with places, one should consider more than economic factors and social relations, for example, the degree to which people can support their personal goals and plans (Lewicka, 2011: 218). People become attached to places that support the pursuit of their goals. If places provide resources that an individual requires to pursue his or her goal, and if the use of these resources is frequent, attachment can be formed (Scannell & Gifford, 2009: 11). In the case of Shenzhen, these resources are jobs. Shenzhen has gone through an enormous economic transition during the last few decades. Its GDP per capita is expected to double in size by 2025, which will lead to an increase in job opportunities and a growing middle-class, both in size as well as in power (McKinsey, 2006).

        Many Shenzheners are very positive about the economic future of the city. 'I work in finance and comparing Canada and China, in Canada everything is established. I feel like there are a lot more opportunities here than in Canada, or even the United States. That's probably the main reason why I came back' a respondent named Feng told me. Shenzhen has the status of a job paradise. Every week again, thousands of migrants arrive dreaming of a well-paying job and a comfortable life. Later during the interview, Feng further explained his statements about the unestablished structure of the job market in Shenzhen: 'most people in Shenzhen are considered the elite class of China. If you can stay here I consider you a Shenzhener, but it's not easy to establish yourself in Shenzhen.' The highly educated professionals are in a good position to benefit from the state's effort to create a consumer society. Shenzhen benefits from the influx of foreign investment, and a competitive meritocracy is emerging (Elfick, 2011: 194). 'For me, change means hope,' said Huan. 'Everything is growing. The city is full of sparks. I think that the sparks are the hope of

Shenzhen.' Most of my respondents have the feeling that everyone, born in the city or not, will have equal chances, and the key seems to be creativity and discipline. Bohai told me that Shenzhen gives him the opportunity to be creative. 'I lived in Beijing, Hong Kong and Shenzhen and these cities have their own personalities. Beijing is the capital and people have traditional minds, they live a stable life. Hong Kong is the international and commercial city. People are always busy and they work fast. I don't want to be stable nor safe, I want to be different and creative and Shenzhen is a more creative space, it's a young city.' The young age of the city does help make people believe their chances to get a job are higher compared to other Chinese cities. 'I had many choices, Beijing, Shanghai and Hong Kong,' said Feng. 'I considered many things but Beijing and Shanghai are more established than Shenzhen. Shenzhen is an innovative city, I feel that in terms of the finance industry.' Despite his earlier comment about the difficulties of establishing oneself in Shenzhen as an outsider, Feng still thinks that if there's a Chinese city full of opportunities, it's Shenzhen. 'This city even goes faster than New York. People come from all over the country, even all over the world. People come here to choose their own path and chase their own dreams. They have everything they dream of to chase, maybe that's why the city goes so fast.' This feeling can lead to place dependence, a type of attachment whereby people value a place for the specific activities, in this case opportunities, that it supports or facilitates (Scannell & Gifford, 2009: 6). There were only a few respondents who expounded upon this 'Chinese dream'. A respondent named Lihua shared her perspective with me: 'I really welcome the people that come from mainland parts of China. I suppose it's really hard for them to work in this city. The process is really difficult and tough. Not too many people would like to go to Shenzhen to start their lives here. There are lots of fears, the competition is enormous and the prices of the flats are sky-high. They take a risk to live in Shenzhen. Those people that live in Shenzhen, or their parents who came to Shenzhen, they really have the courage to start from zero.' During an unrecorded lunch conversation, I was told that many migrants who come from the countryside go to Shenzhen because otherwise, they have to wait for their parents to retire so that they can take over their jobs. 'They live at their parents' houses in the countryside waiting for a job, so for them, going to Shenzhen doesn't only equal a job, but also means being able to get their own place, make their own decisions, and maybe even experiencing their first romance.'

Shenzhen is only thirty-six years old, and though it might not be established in the same way that Beijing and Hong Kong are, and the chances of being offered an interesting job might be substantially higher compared to those cities, there still exists a fair chance that these promises might be misleading. Since my subject group consists of first- and second-generation migrants' children, their parents came to Shenzhen in order to improve their

family's quality of life. All of my respondents had the chance to study, some of them went abroad, and growing up in Shenzhen, they were able to create social networks. Most of the parents of my respondents came to Shenzhen to find work. The jobs differed from banking and owning factories, to being an artist, taxi driver or a waitress. Albeit their salaries varied strongly, they all provided their children with education. It seems that their social status differs from newer generations of migrants. A possible explanation of these differences in social status might be the increased costs of living in Shenzhen. My respondent's parents came to Shenzhen during the 1980s, when the price of housing was still affordable. However, the newer generations of migrants are better able to succeed in their goals and become part of the consumer-orientated middle-class in Shenzhen (Segijn, 2014: 11).

The absolute majority of the population in Shenzhen is made up of migrant, some of whom come from poor, rural areas in China. Originally, these migrants came to Shenzhen to find a job and earn money, sometimes while still providing for their families who remained in the countryside. The isolated life of the Chinese countryside and technological developments that make farming easier are pushing the younger generations from the farm to the city. Because of their poor education and lack of a social network, many of these migrants are exploited by their employers, working long days with a lot of overtime and bad working conditions. The exploitation of cheap workers is at the same time the foundation of the growing wealth of the city of iPods and shopping malls, a consequence my respondents did not mention. The newer generations of migrants move to the city more out of individual preference, rather than being forced to do so. Their goal is to establish themselves in the society. The new migrants are keen on developing themselves. By investing in education and guaranteeing higher loans for middle class workers, the government tries to stimulate the development of the middle class (Segijn, 2014: 11). Despite several attempts to get in touch with first- and second-generation migrants' children who have a lower level of education, I didn't manage to speak to them. My respondents are positive about the job opportunities in Shenzhen, especially compared to other cities. Their statements have to be taken seriously; however, due to my respondents' educational background, the results of these interviews present a limited perspective.

6.6. Changing identities

In this thesis, I'm exploring how the rapid changing society of Shenzhen influences its inhabitants' place attachment. Earlier, I discussed the main and most consistent predictors of place attachment, according to the literature and the conducted interviews. I will now discuss

the way the rapidly changing society influences my respondents' identities and feelings of attachment.

Most of the people I've been talking to were people born in the 1980s. They were either born in Shenzhen or moved with their parents to Shenzhen at a very young age. In their memories they enjoyed the city as it used to be. Most people's first thought of childhood is school, but despite the enormous pressure people feel in high school, people remember cycling on Shennan Road, walking to school alone, playing at the beach and enjoying Shenzhen's clean environment and small population. These are experiences and memories of which all the respondents speak. Most of the respondents experience the growth of the society of Shenzhen as both positive as well as negative. While they cherish their memories of the way life used to be in Shenzhen, they praise the society's economic growth, opportunities and attitudes toward newcomers, especially compared with other Chinese cities. The majority of the respondents don't experience Shenzhen as a city where they want to grow old, but as a city where they consume and develop their professional life. They emphasize the opportunities that Shenzhen can offer and tell me that the 'open attitude' is one of Shenzhen's characteristics. 'People in Beijing are negative about the newcomers, they don't welcome them, but it's a different phenomenon in Shenzhen. People here are nice and friendly. We welcome the newcomers. Unless they are rude, unfriendly or do bad things,' said Ju.

Despite the opportunities that Shenzhen can currently offer, people remember Shenzhen in a different way than they experience the contemporary city. They value growing up in small urban communities where they know their neighbors, play with the other children and where some people don't even have to lock their doors at night. In their eyes, today's Shenzhen has become a uniform mass in which different areas are being absorbed into one homogeneous city. Today, the skies are getting grayer, the streets more dangerous and the same imported trees can be seen everywhere throughout the city. Some of my respondents start to feel alienated from the city. They recognize their opportunities, but they miss the joy they felt as children. As contradictory as it sounds, this is the first generation that is being defined as real 'Shenzheners'–people who are born and/or raised in Shenzhen and who identify with the city. 'When people ask me where I'm from, I say I'm from Shenzhen, but I'm not, I'm born somewhere else,' says Ju, a woman who moved to Shenzhen when she was three years old.

Shenzhen represents itself as having a can-do, proactive attitude. Everywhere in the city tall office buildings rise up from the ground. Throughout the years, the city has modernized and became a more comfortable place to live. My respondents praise its economic accomplishments but also criticize the process of modernization. They identify with these tall

skyscrapers and the opportunities the contemporary city offers, but mostly with the memory of Shenzhen as the progressive city that redefined the Chinese identity in a liberal and capitalistic way. My respondents contradict themselves, by using exactly this image to describe the reason behind their partially alienated feeling in the current Shenzhen. They are positive about Shenzhen's development but criticize its result. Illustrative was my interview with Cheng. He told me several times how proud he was of Shenzhen's accomplishments and its increasing status in China. He describes the city's ability to develop so quickly as 'fantastic'. Nevertheless, he doesn't want to grow old in Shenzhen. 'The moment I have enough money I will move away from Shenzhen. Shenzhen is a quickly and fast developed city, which gives me a lot of pressure and makes me feel depressed.' Being confronted with his own contradictions, he corrected: 'that's the opinion of a young man, not the older version of it. When I have enough money, I don't want to feel this pressure. I want to move away from this developing city and create a peaceful life. I will let the change remain for those young people.'

When my respondents compare Shenzhen to other Chinese cities, they share a common *us-feeling.* Shenzhen has an open society that welcomes people from outside. The lack of an established class and dialect provides everyone who is willing to work hard with opportunities to realize their dreams. It's a common statement I heard many times, however, throughout my interviews people tend to express this idea in their own words. Shenzhen might provide opportunities, but it's hard to establish oneself in the 'city that always works'.

It's the city's open and can-do attitude that bonds people, yet it's exactly the same attitude that makes people feel negatively about the city. 'It's not easy to establish yourself in Shenzhen,' said Feng, who returned to Shenzhen after living abroad because he saw opportunities in the finance sector. 'I consider someone a Shenzhener if he or she can stay in Shenzhen.' Accoring to Feng, even New York City is slower than Shenzhen, and he's not the only one who suffers from the fast pace of the Shenzhen labor market. Ju, a 25-year-old woman who lived in Australia for a while described coming back to Shenzhen as 'time traveling'. 'This city grows very fast and people live very fast. The living speed is so quick, people work faster. They drive faster, they do everything faster. When you get used to this pace and when you think it's the normal speed, you think everyone is lazy when you go to another city. You think: why are these people still in bed? Get up and do something. It makes you nervous and you try to do things but there is nothing for you to do. On the other side, when you get used to these lifestyles and you come back to Shenzhen you think slow down, slow down, it's not that serious, please calm down. I had this fight with my family every time I came back.'

Chen, a 23-year old consultant, born and raised in the Luohu district, is proud of the

city's image. He thinks Shenzhen's reputation is growing because of the open, positive and can-do attitude that everyone who lives in the city has. 'I'm proud of the change in Shenzhen. I never miss Shenzhen how it used to be when I see the daily developments in Shenzhen and its status in China. The city is improving and escalating which makes me proud.' When I asked him to explain his feeling of pride he answered in terms of materials. 'It's good to grow up in Shenzhen now, the money and the living conditions are good.' Bingwen criticizes this attitude; he says it causes too much stress. It's exactly this can-do attitude that makes the city so empty. According to Bingwen, people come here to work, not to grow old and enjoy life. It's because of this attitude that the city is growing and moving forward, but as a result there is no thriving cultural or social life, something he finds hard to accept. 'People don't take breaks. People work all the time, also when they go to a coffee shop, they continue working. We communicate quick and fast, but the real has been reduced. I went to England and when I came back, I lost my hometown. My feeling of Shenzhen? Everything is quick, quick, quick. Focused on the jobs and the businesses. The memory of my hometown is different. It's more simple and real. Things were true for me.'

The enormous growth and diversity of Shenzhen's society inspires different opinions regarding its safety, sociability and its opportunities. While praising the characteristic equality of the labor market in Shenzhen and all the opportunities it brings forth, the society is described as cold. People are proud of the society in terms of welcoming newcomers, but negative when they compare the society with the memories of their youth. 'Live and let live' seems to be the motto, however, people often don't seem to enjoy the feeling of anonymity. According to Feng, the society of Shenzhen lost its heart. 'Deep down inside we are still the same people as we were thirty years ago, it's just that the city is moving too fast and the economy is booming. We are a bunch of people without any beliefs. Wealth, money and power; those are the things we believe in right now. It's a shame, but every country has to go through stages. Maybe in ten or twenty years we can go back to some of the basic things of humanity.'

The distinction the respondents make between the open and closed character of Shenzhen also influences their two types of social capital: bridging and bonding social capital. They mention that the open attitude of the city makes it easy to create social networks, however, people's focus on work makes it difficult to deepen these ties. Most of the respondents have many acquaintances, but only a few friends. Their social networks keep expanding, however, the growing character of the city mainly deepens the ties they already had; the ones established during their childhood. Both bridging ties as well as bonding ties do occur simultaneously. Illustrative might be the way WeChat is being used. It serves both

bridging as well as bonding ties. People easily share their WeChat in order to expand their network, but they also use the app to maintain close friendships due to a lack of time in their 'real life'.

6.7. If you come to Shenzhen, you are Shenzhener

In the light of the society's changing identity, the phrase *if you come to Shenzhen, you are Shenzhener* became a famous claim used by the government. My respondents have mixed feelings about this claim. Some people couldn't agree more and think that this claim reflects the identity of Shenzhen, while others believe that this phrase became too politicized, and still others feel slightly offended by it and say that it's because of such claims that Shenzhen is losing its local identities.

Using this claim, the government tries to welcome people from outside and build up a future in Shenzhen. Despite its positive intentions, the claim offends the people whose traditional hometown is Shenzhen and implies that these people aren't the real Shenzheners. The society of Shenzhen can be divided in three different categories of people: Shenzheners, locals and outsiders (Shenzhennoted.com). The categories 'locals' and 'outsiders' refer to the hometown of the people that live in Shenzhen. While local people trace their roots in Shenzhen to one of the many urban villages, outsiders come from elsewhere to live and work in Shenzhen. Regarding this definition, everyone who lives in Shenzhen should be either a 'local' or an 'outsider'. Nevertheless, as a result of a never ending social construction, the category 'Shenzhener' generates the third identity, mainly focused on the differences between the (rich) second generation and the rest of the society of Shenzhen (Shenzhennoted.com). The generation I focused on in my research identifies as 'Shenzheners', even when their parents identify with their traditional hometowns. While discussing this claim, Feng told me that the government didn't intend to use this claim in such a political way. Nevertheless, he thinks it's good that the phrase became this famous. 'As I said before, Shenzhen isn't a place where people feel at home and feel safe. We need that sense of feeling at home.' Liu, a 23-year old bank employee, thinks the claim describes Shenzhen exactly as it is: 'I love this slogan. It describes Shenzhen's specialty very well. I recommend other people to work and live here. Although Shenzhen is not very relaxed, it's modern and you will feel that the city can be your home. Shenzhen people are from everywhere in China. From everywhere in the world. Everyone will accept you, no matter where you are from.' This feeling as well as the claim contradicts the fact that less than three million people of the total population of Shenhen actually has Shenzhen hukou (website government), which means that the majority of people

living in Shenzhen are legally not Shenzheners.

Let me illustrate this contradiction by using Huan as an example. After I interviewed Huan, I had lunch with him a few times and noticed that he identified with Shenzhen and other parts of China in several ways. During the interview, he praised the inspiring way Shenzhen is growing: 'Twenty years ago, Shenzhen was just a group of people. People didn't care where you come from. But we are here now, this is the culture. We are here to create a brighter tomorrow. To me, this means hope. This is a city full of sparks and the sparks are the hope of Shenzhen.' Then during one of our lunches, he told me he didn't like the phrase *if you come to Shenzhen, you are Shenzhener.* Despite his earlier statements about the sparks of Shenzhen, he told me that he is from Gongzhou and the life can be a lot better over there. 'The food we have right now is from my region. But it's not only too expensive here, it's also not good. My parents' hometown is famous because of its good food and beautiful women. I love to be there. Besides, it's getting too crowded in Shenzhen, there are too many people.' While Huan calls himself a Shenzhener, he identifies with the food and image of his parents' hometown. The contradiction in his statements not only reflects his emotional attachment to his parents' hometown, but it also reflects the social construction of being a 'Shenzhener' and the different identities that many 'Shenzheners' feel.

7. Shekou: a city on its own

Shekou is an area in Shenzhen that belongs to the Nan Shan district. In 1979, it became Shekou Industrial Zone, which means that starting from 1979, foreign investments were being held. Shekou became an industrial zone before the formation of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone, which makes it the forerunner of the reform of Shenzhen. Before Shekou was appointed as an industrial zone, the area was a customs station of Bao'an County. The rights to develop Shekou were given to the China Merchants Company. Guided by the outspoken former sky chief Yuan Geng, Shekou operated new ways of running the economy and experimented in democracy and political openness (scdaily, 2008). Shekou developed shipping and industry, advocating industrialization, foreign investment and foreign trade. Yuan brought some capitalistic practices to Shekou. For example, he introduced bonuses that people received after the required work was done. Performance-based salaries were introduced, dismissing the Chinese practice of paying salaries according to a person's ranking instead of his or her performance. This approach led to the famous catchphrase 'time is money, efficiency is life' (csdaily, 2008). Yuan Geng was an inspiration and hope for social reform in Shekou. One day before I arrived, the Shekou Community Welfare Fund organized the exhibition 'Me and Yuan Geng', celebrating his 98th birthday. The Fund was initiated by community members who gave donations, rather than it being started by a government bureau (shenzhennoted.com). The title of the exhibition reflects his philosophy; in most exhibitions, the name of the leader would come first. This exhibition was about how people experience 'their' Shekou instead of following the leader Yuan Geng. According to the exhibition's preface, Yuan Geng had a dream. His dream was for Shekou to be the best place to live, a place where 'humanity' and 'comfortable life' were keywords in the realization of this dream. Not just for the minorities or the people with money and power, but a comfortable life for everyone. Yuan Geng inspired many people I've been talking with and according to my respondents, he played the main part in the development of Shekou from 1979 up until today.

Starting from the 1980's, different oil companies started to explore in the South China Sea. Shekou served as a base for a contingent of foreign oil platform workers due to the fact that qualified personnel weren't available locally. Due to the growing numbers of foreign workers, many staples of western culture were made more readily available. Thus, the area became home to the majority of the expatriate population working in and around Shenzhen. During my stay in Shenzhen, I interviewed six people who were born and raised in Shekou. While most of my respondents felt more strongly attached to Shenzhen at the level of the city, my respondents from Shekou felt more strongly attached to Shekou instead of Shenzhen as a

whole. While they cited different reasons for this preference, they all showed more attachment to Shekou than Shenzhen. As mentioned earlier, many staples of western culture were available in Shekou while the economic zone was in an early stage of its development. For Hua, this is an important reason why Shekou remains distinct from other parts of Shenzhen. 'I live an easy life in Shekou. In Shekou, you can find almost everything. Even though it's a small city, you can buy everything. You can find imported things, things you can't find in Luohu or Futian. In Shekou you can find them. It's because there are so many foreigners here. It's about the history. Twenty years ago, most foreign companies chose to locate in Shekou. Since then, it's easier for foreign people to live in Shekou.'

During my first week in Shenzhen, I talked to some artists who performed in different areas in the city. They spoke about their experiences with grassroots community building in Shekou. They told me that unlike other areas in Shenzhen, building relationships among participants has become a strategic pillar of community organizing initiatives in Shekou. Soon after this chat I met Hung, a 26-year-old artist born and raised in Shekou. I interviewed him and found his experiences very interesting. He offered to show me around and soon I was attending his social activities for a while. 'Yeah I'm a Shekou guy,' he told me. I asked him what a Shekou guy is. 'I don't know,' he replied. 'It's a feeling. This city is old, man.

A former factory in Shekou.

Most buildings already existed when I was young!" For a city without history, that is old, but in terms of the 5,000 years of civilization at the Pearl Delta River, it's nothing. Hung brought me to some old factory buildings that are now being used for different art projects. Most parts of the factories were closed, so we had to climb over some rusty fences in order to see the art projects. 'Nobody knows about these factories, nor do people know about the harbor. You see, the metro doesn't even get here, so you can only reach it by car. That's why we saw all these

factory signs on our way here. The government wants to show people these factories. It's actually right next to the harbor, I will show it to you.'

Just a few minutes later we were siting on the side of the road, looking down at the impressive harbor in Shekou, when Hung told me about his everyday life. He's practicing sports twice a week with his friends from Shekou. He works as long as he can motivate himself, but he also likes to hang out with some friends every now and then. 'I'm a lazy guy [laughs]. I wish I could produce art everyday, but it's a lot of effort sometimes. You know, sometimes I feel like a construction guy. There is this huge wall, you get dirty, you get sweaty, it smells bad, the environment is horrible, you know. I can't do that everyday anymore. I now get paid for my art; it's a job, which also made it different. I lost a kind of passion. Art is no longer your own hobby, but also that of the customer.' Feeling trapped by his constant need for new customers, Shekou offers Hung the inspiration he desires so much. 'These factories are so beautiful. You see these containers over there? Soon we can use them as well. We can decorate them or maybe turn them into restaurants. I love this place, man. There are no other places in Shenzhen with so many old and empty buildings.' When I asked Hung about the grassroots activities in Shekou, he told me that his mother is involved in all kind of artistic and cultural projects in which participation is an important aim. 'I told her about you visiting Shekou and she got so excited, you know! She wishes to be here right now, but unfortunately she can't. She's in North Korea right now, can you believe that? She's a super woman, I tell you!'

I noticed that, while most of my respondents have friends everywhere in the city, people from Shekou mostly meet other people from Shekou. When Hung and I went playing football and basketball, we were playing in Shekou with other people from Shekou. 'We don't need Shenzhen in the way Shenzhen needs us' said Lee, a guy from Shekou with whom I went out. 'It all started here! We have the harbor, foreign investment, the weather is good, people are nice. We don't really have to be in Shenzhen.' Jia, one of my respondents, literally brought this into practice. 'I only know the place I grew up; I don't know any other places. Shekou has a good environment to live in. It has a lot of cats, and I like cats! In my leisure time I like to go to the shopping mall. I always go to the Coastal City shopping mall, do you know that one?' When I asked her how she feels when she's in a different district, she replied firmly: 'I don't want to! The growth of the city doesn't affect me that much. I stay in Shekou. I have everything I need in Shekou.'

What makes Shekou so special? My respondents tell me that there are many old places in Shekou and the atmosphere is more relaxed than other parts of Shenzhen. The area is convenient since it serves so many different tastes and lifestyles and due the sea, the weather is calmer than in the city. Hai, a professional golf player Hung introduced me to,

thinks that Shekou has a more authentic look than other areas. 'When I was young, I liked to walk around and take photos. The area is so beautiful. I went to a lot of places when I was young, but Shekou is such a relaxed city. I like it that the city is changing. There are more foreigners right now. Where I live, probably 40% of the people are foreign. There is a lot of good food in Shekou like Indian food and Mexican food, I like good food [laughs]. The cultures are mixing, people bring good habits with them. The traffic is safer, the city is clean, that's a good thing.' Like the rest of Shenzhen, Shekou is also expanding and despite the convenience, different lifestyles and the cultural variety, people are sad to lose 'their' places. 'Have you ever seen the big ship over there, in Sea World?' Hai asked me. 'That ship was in the sea twenty years ago. I have photos at home. Now, twenty years later, there are apartment buildings over there. I was in Australia for three years and when I came back, buildings would just come up. Like that one! And that one! I think that's really sad.' While sitting next to the road on the top of the hill

The entertainment ship at Seaworld Plaza in Shekou.

looking out over the Shekou harbor, Hung told me about his concerns. 'Change is both good and bad, you know. Sometimes, they can destroy my memories and the environment. This tree on the mountain needs to be cut because we need another building. You know what, my mother is doing some non-profit productions in Shekou, she's trying to save this little park, right? The government wants to build a bigger road, so they will remove this little park. Local people, and especially the older people, are trying to defend that park.' We went to that park and took a walk. Hung showed me some playgrounds he played at when he was a child and then he showed me a photo of Yuan Geng that was hanging on the wall of a community office. Hung was proud, a bit emotional even. 'This is the man that created Shekou, we owe him everything'. He explained to me one of his ideas, which he told me. 'You know that big finance building at Sea World? I want to draw [Yuan Geng's] face on the whole building, visible from different angles. I'm already talking with them about it. This man is amazing and I want to

show him my respect.'

According to my respondents, Yuan Geng created a unique place. A place where residential, working and leisure spaces are close to each other. A place where both young as well as elderly people use the public space for mixed activities. Different sized buildings, a mix between modern and industrial and plenty of green spaces ensure both leisure as well as business activities. The variety of little bars and restaurants make the area charming and lively, but be careful: the bulldozer is just around the corner.

8. Conclusion

The final part of this study contains the conclusion. In this thesis, I tried to understand if, in what manner and how a rapid changing society influences people's attachment to place. The main question of this thesis is: *In what manner has place attachment of the first- and second-generation migrants' children changed throughout their lives, which factors explain this change and what role does the changing environment play, according to them?* Strong attachment has been found at the level of the city. Shenzhen's expansion and economic growth has influenced its inhabitants' emotional bonds in both positive as well as negative ways. Attachment to Shenzhen is felt the strongest through the notion of being part of the city's transformation, and to a lesser extent through the physical nature of its places. The combination of the economic prosperity at the level of the city and perceived homogeneous neighborhoods is a good combination for its inhabitants to become attached in a functional way.

8.1. Place attachment throughout the years

In this thesis, I described place attachment as the emotional bonds people develop with Shenzhen. Shenzhen is one of the fast growing cities in the world. This makes Shenzhen a young, modern and vibrant city but its historical and cultural features are limited. Despite mobility and globalization processes, person-place bonding undoubtedly involves emotional connections to Shenzhen. The emotional bonds that local inhabitants have created and developed with Shenzhen have changed throughout the years due to the city's rapidly changed society and economic growth. People born and raised in Shenzhen experience strong emotional bonds with the city, however, their forms of attachment are mainly expressed through the notion of the city's fast transformation rather that its physical places.

      The society's rapid transformation has been experienced in both a negative as well as positive way. People remember having strong local community ties in which they had close contact with other people in their neighborhood. Due to the city's rapid growth their strength of local social capital decreased but got replaced by new forms of attachment. For many people, Shenzhen is a place in which they believe they can support their personal goals due to its economic resources. The city's focus on work can cause stressed and alienated feelings, however, it provides people with perceived opportunities, it makes them part of an enormous transformation and it allows people to become attached to what they want to be.

      Perceptions of the physical environment like its architecture or historical monuments are incorporated in people's attachment. However, in contrast, people expressed their attachment much more strongly in behavioral terms. Individuals connect to Shenzhen in the

sense that the city represents who they are or what they want it to be, in this case, a global metropolis in which one has the opportunities to accomplish one's own goals.

8.2. Factors that influence attachment

In this thesis, several factors have been found that influence Shenzhen's inhabitants' attachment to place. These factors including one's length of residence, the city's career opportunities, the lack of an established class, the city's perceived can-do attitude, the existence of both open as well as closed societal elements and the existing of many non-places.

A stable factor that influences attachment to place is time spent in Shenzhen. Among the respondents, the time they spent in Shenzhen influenced their feelings of attachment in several ways. First, half of the respondents feel a strong sense of security because they feel familiar with their places. Second, people associate the city with several life stages such as their childhood, dating partners and sometimes getting married and having children. Third, time spent in Shenzhen is found to be a stable predictor because people witness Shenzhen's transformation, which they feel they want to be part of it.

My respondents' wish to be part of Shenzhen's process of transformation is rooted in their perceived career opportunities. People become attached to places that support the pursuit of their goals. Places that provide resources with which people can pursuit their goals positively influence their attachment. In Shenzhen these resources are jobs. The city's economic growth encourages Shenzhen's inhabitants to have a positive attitude about the city's career prospects.

Another factor that influences people's attachment to Shenzhen is the lack of an established class. Among the first generation born and raised in Shenzhen, a common *us-feeling* has been developed. Shenzhen is an open society in terms of welcoming people from outside. The lack of an established class and dialect makes people perceive Shenzhen as a city that provides everyone who is willing to work hard with opportunities to realize their dreams. During the interviews, the city's welcoming character was continually praised. These perceived positive qualities caused feelings of pride and attachment among respondents.

Alongside Shenzhen's welcoming character, the city's can-do attitude influences its inhabitants' feelings of attachment. Shenzhen is being experienced as having a can-do, proactive attitude. Everywhere in the city tall office buildings rise up from the ground. Throughout the years, the city has modernized and became a more comfortable place to live, accomplishing significant economic growth. This open and can-do attitude bonds people, yet it's exactly the same attitude that makes people feel negatively towards the city. Shenzhen's

process of modernization and economic growth simultaneously causes feelings of alienation, because it causes feelings of stress and emptiness. The majority of the respondents described Shenzhen as a city to work and develop one's professional life, rather than a city to grow old and enjoy life.

Another factor that influences people's attachment to Shenzhen is its diversity. A city can be understood as a bounded entity with a unique identity defending or distinguishing itself from the outside world and, on the other hand, as a meeting place inviting diversity and multiculturalism. In the case of Shenzhen, my respondents are proud of the society's welcoming character towards newcomers, an attitude that they think will not change due to the city's economic progress. Shenzhen is being described as a multicultural city in which people can learn from each other. However, despite the often-repeated description of the society as multicultural, it is also described as homogeneous in the sense that people go to Shenzhen in order to work. This has resulted in closed attitudes within the society towards each other. For many of the respondents, the city's transformation is accompanied by the feeling that the city is becoming less safe. The city's transformation and growth leads to distrustful attitudes toward other people in the city. The distinction between the open and closed character of Shenzhen is related to the respondents' two types of social capital: bridging and bonding social capital. The open attitude of the city makes it easy to create social networks, however, people's focus on work makes it difficult to deepen these ties. Both bridging ties as well as bonding ties occur simultaneously. Illustrative might be the way WeChat is being used. It serves both bridging as well as bonding ties. People easily share their WeChat in order to expand their network, but they also use the app to maintain close friendships due to a lack of time in their 'real life'.

An important factor that influences people's attachment to place is people's proximity to non-places and parks. The amount of non-places is growing (in Shenzhen these are mostly shopping malls), however, this doesn't imply that places are losing their meaning. Shopping malls trigger excitement and comfort, offering a lot more than just a place to purchase goods. Throughout this research, strong attachment towards recreational places has been found.

8.3. Scales of attachment

In this thesis, people-place bonds were focused on different scales of places. Place attachment can take place at different spatial scales and throughout this research, the scale of the house, neighborhood and city have been investigated. A finding that has been replicated in several countries is that attachment to neighborhoods is weaker than attachment at the level of the house or the city. My respondents reported the strongest attachment to the city and the

weakest to their house. They also reported weak attachment in terms of their neighborhood, mentioning that they wouldn't feel sad about moving to a different neighborhood. Neighborhoods were described as homogeneous and safe, whereby the feeling of security is being described as being familiar with the environment. An exception is the Shekou area, which reported strong attachment among its inhabitants. At the scale of the city, my respondents reported strong attachment. Shenzhen is described as an open and transforming city, containing great job opportunities and the city is admired for its can-do attitude. This combination of elements might stimulate one's feelings of attachment. Their place attachment combines feelings of security and familiarity at the level of the neighborhood and the experience of stimulation, opportunities and excitement at the level of the city.

An interesting finding is the weak reported attachment to the spatial range of the house. Most of the literature on place attachment finds strong attachment to people's houses. Home is a symbol of security, self-identity, comfort and privacy. In the case of Shenzhen, the house has been found to be a weak scale of attachment due to several reasons. First, all of my respondents live in high-rise buildings and the interchangeable architecture of these residential buildings inspires weak attachment. Second, for most of the respondents, housing is related to their work, which increases their willingness to move in case they get a promotion. Third, many of my respondents grew up sharing their rooms with several family members, which makes their perception of privacy different from many western views. Accessibility to parks, functional and recreational sites (like shopping malls) are often valued more strongly than the house itself.

8.4. Perceived changing environment

The way people experience Shenzhen has changed throughout the years. People born and raised in Shenzhen grew up in what they call a 'little village' having strong community ties and now live in a metropolis in which they barely know their neighbors. References to the past were often being made. Social relations were, to a larger degree, spatially concentrated and friends and family often lived in the same neighborhood, making use of the same facilities. Current social networks are increasingly spread out. The transforming society they grew up in changed the way they view, use and judge their environment. Economic progress made them part of a transformation of which they are proud and which they believe contains plenty of opportunities. Place attachment also consists of the way a place meets someone's individual needs and the way it allows people to achieve their goals. If the current is judged better than all alternative places, the chance is high that people feel attached and want to stay in that place.

Attachment to Shenzhen is felt the strongest through the notion of being part of the city's transformation, and to a lesser extent through the physical nature of places. Non-places trigger forms of attachment since people value their houses in terms of their proximity to, for example, shopping malls. The combination of the economic prosperity at the level of the city and perceived homogeneous neighborhoods might allow its inhabitants to become attached in a very functional way. The majority of my respondents don't experience Shenzhen as a city where they want to grow old, but as a city where they consume and develop their professional life.

9. Discussion

The previously presented results contradict with some consistently found relationships in the existing literature about place attachment at different spatial levels, the notion of home and regarding the influence of residence length on community ties.

Attachment to place develops to different degrees with different spatial scales of places. In this thesis, three of such ranges have been analyzed: house, neighborhood and city. In the exiting literature, a curvilinear U-shaped relationship has been found (and replicated) between the spatial scales home, neighborhood and city, and the strength of attachment. These studies claim neighborhoods are poorer examples of place and evoke less attachment compared to the home or city. In this thesis, a low strength of attachment has been found at the level of the neighborhood whereas people do feel attached to the city, however, a contradicting finding is the weak attachment at the scale of the house.

Regarding people's notion of home, several factors might explain the contradicting outcomes and the different perspectives on home between inhabitants in Shenzhen outcomes in previous research, which is mostly based on western paradigms. According to western standards, home is a symbol of security, self-identity, comfort and privacy. In the case of Shenzhen, there are several factors that change the general views on home. First, all the respondents live in high-rise buildings, and so does almost every inhabitant in Shenzhen. The interchangeable, homogenous architecture of these high-rise buildings inspires weak attachment. Second, housing in Shenzhen is often related to work. This means that when people get promotions they often move, which affects one's self-identity in terms of housing. Third, the majority of the respondents' perception of privacy differs from many western views. Many people have good memories sharing their room with other family members and don't value their house in terms of the existence of private rooms.

As mentioned earlier, time of residence is found to be a consistent predictor of place attachment. Length of residence affects attachment both directly as well as indirectly, through affecting the strength of community ties. The results show that length of residence positively affects place attachment, however, due to different reasons. Though time spent in Shenzhen didn't affect one's community ties, it did positively affect place attachment in several different ways. First, half of the respondents feel a strong sense of security due to their increased feeling of familiarity with their environment. Second, people associate the city with several life stages such as childhood, dating and sometimes getting married and having children. Third, time spent in Shenzhen is found to be a stable predictor because people witness Shenzhen's

process of economic growth, which they are proud of and want to be part of.

10. Reflection

In the final section, I will reflect on my limitations, what I have learned throughout this study and I will make a suggestion regarding future studies about place attachment in Shenzhen. During my research, I was challenged with cultural differences and language barriers that complicated my interviews. My translator helped me greatly while I conducted my interviews, however, it's inevitable that information has become lost in translation during the interviews. He majored in English at his university, which resulted in an excellent level of English, yet some nuances and details inevitably remained untranslated.

My respondents differed regarding their openness in answering my questions. Most of my respondents didn't mind answering personal questions, however, some of my respondents found it difficult to do. Six interviews were filmed by a documentary crew that was shooting a documentary about Shenzhen. I made use of their social networks in Shenzhen, but I'm aware of the consequences it could have had have in terms of people's willingness to talk freely. When I had the impression that my respondents didn't talk freely, I invited them for a social activity (without the cameras), which often resulted in a follow-up interview.

I have learned that doing qualitative research, especially in a country where one doesn't speak the language, is a complex process, in which I had to make constant decisions based on changing criteria and circumstances. Which questions am I going to ask, which theories will I use, how many respondents do I have to interview and how do I analyze the data? Using the theoretical framework as my starting point, I eventually found ways to connect the dots. I derived interesting and also contradicting insights from my data, which made the analyzing complex, time consuming but also very enjoyable and from it, I have learned a lot. There is a growing scientific interest in place attachment, however, the knowledge about attachment to rapidly changing environments such as Shenzhen is limited. This made me work with an open-minded attitude, without the need of having a narrow focus on certain places.

10.1 Future research

In the absence of a comprehensive theory about place attachment, an interesting field of future study would be to study place attachment with a specific focus on the role that various forms of social capital can play in creating people's emotional bonds with Shenzhen. My respondents regret their decreased contacts with their neighbors throughout the years. Many of my respondents experienced their neighborhood as homogeneous and the city as diverse. Previous research suggests that neighborhood diversity doesn't foster attachment, but that

people do value diversity at the level of the city. A consistently positive relationship has been found between strength of neighborhood attachment and strength of neighborhood ties. This might explain my respondents' regret of losing their community ties due to Shenzhen's expansion. Future research about place attachment in Shenzhen can pay closer attention to the nature of people's neighborhood ties and their underlying processes. Future research can explore if these relationships can be treated as a prototype of social relations in general and whether or not neighborhood ties in Shenzhen can function as an intermediary form of social capital, between both bonding as well as bridging social capital.

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Appendix

Topic list

Name:

Age:

Gender:

Profession:

City of birth:

The neighborhood

1. In which district in Shenzhen did you grow up?

2. What do you do in your neighborhood?

3. Do you like this place? Why do(n't) you?

4. Do you have a lot of contact with your neighbors?

5. Do you feel safe in your neighborhood? Why?

6. Can you tell me about your memories in your neighborhood?

7. What are the things you did in your old neighborhood? What did you do at school? And after school? Where did you go shopping? Where did you go out? Where did you play sport? Where did your friends live? Where did you meet?

8. Is your neighborhood part of yourself?

9. Are you involved in things that are going on in your neighborhood?

10. Do you want to be involved in things that are going on in your neighborhood?

11. How did you feel when you had to move to a different neighborhood? Why did you have to move? What did you think of it?

12. How would you feel if you have to move to a different neighborhood? Why?

The apartment

13. What do you think of your apartment?

14. What do you think is important about an apartment?

15. What do you think of the apartment's architecture?

16. Did you ever move in your life? Why? How did changing apartments make you feel?

17. Do you feel at home in your apartment?

The city

18. Do you like the city Shenzhen? Why?

19. How would you describe Shenzhen?

20. Do you feel safe in Shenzhen? Why?

21. Can you tell me about some of your memories of Shenzhen?

22. What are the things you did in the city? Where did you go shopping? Where did you go out? Where did you play sport? Where did your friends live? Where did you meet?

23. Is Shenzhen part of you? Why?

24. How would you feel if you have to leave Shenzhen without the people close to you? Why?

25. How would you feel if you have to leave Shenzhen with the people close to you? Why?

26. What do you think of the people in Shenzhen? Why do you think that?

27. Do you still see your old friends? Where do you meet?

The society

28. What do you think of the society in Shenzhen? Why do you think this?

29. Can you tell me how Shenzhen looked like during your childhood?

30. Does this change your feelings of Shenzhen? Which factors determine these feelings?

31. Can you explain what the society of Shenzhen means to you?

32. Which area in Shenzhen do you like the most? Why do you like this area the most?

33. Did you ever doubted leaving Shenzhen? What made you stay or why did you come back?

34. Does the changing aspect of Shenzhen influence the way you experience the city and your neighborhood?

35. How do you see Shenzhen in twenty years? Why?

36. Do you want to grow old in Shenzhen? Why?

List of respondents

Name	Sex	Age	Education	Profession
Huan	Male	24	University	Soundsman
Hung	Male	26	University	Artist
Yu	Male	32	University	Logistics
Cunwei	Male	30	University	Secretary
Wang	Female	30	University	Secretary
Jia	Female	35	University	Logistics
Zhou	Male	29	University	Logistics
Ai	Female	22	University	Student
Chao	Male	21	University	Teacher
Hai	Male	26	University	Entrepreneur
Liu	Female	23	University	Bank employee
Fan	Female	28	University	Bank employee
Jie	Female	28	University	Real estate agent
Bohai	Male	25	University	Finance
Heng	Male	25	University	Architect
Fang	Female	28	University	Bank employee
Daiyu	Female	28	University	Artist
Lihua	Female	28	University	Tourism industrie
Ju	Female	25	University	Bank amployee
Jian	Male	40	University	Finance
Shan	Female	26	University	Finance
Jia	Female	22	University	Finance
Bojing	Male	23	University	Artist
Fung	Male	25	University	Finance
Hua	Female	27	University	Teacher
Feng	Male	34	University	Finance
Bingwen	Male	36	University	Finance
Jiahui	Female	26	University	Bank employee