A home away from home

The emergence and meaning of third places in Shenzhen

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Acknowledgments

"You can even write a whole thesis on what is happening on the athletics court in OCT loft!"

This was the first thing I said to my fellow students, after we returned from jogging through the park of OCT loft on one of the first days in Shenzhen. It perfectly circumscribes my feelings about doing research in China, and in particular Shenzhen: getting surprised every moment by what happens on every corner of the street, 24 hours a day. I hope this thesis properly describes and elaborates on an interesting part of the vibrant city of Shenzhen.

Being able to do research in such a highly evolving city was definitely one of the best experiences I had in my life. Together with the other students, we jumped in a hitherto unknown context. I learned a lot about the Chinese culture, cities and society by being part of it for seven weeks. Therefore, I would like to give my expression of gratitude to some people and organizations.

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▼ Figure 1.1 - Skyline of Shenzhen (OC)

Abstract

Places where people regurlarly come besides their work have proven to play an important functional, social and emotional meaning in Western people's lives. Oldenburg introduced the concept of "third places" in 1989 and many scholars have elaborated on the concept since then. However, not much is known about the Chinese situation. The highly evolving Chinese cities, such as Shenzhen, theoretically provide good soil for these places to flourish due to their developing lower working class. This research will try to make clear how these so-called third places look like and how they emerge in a highly transitioning neighborhood in Shenzhen: Dalang. In this area, about 90% of the people consist of low-educated migrant workers, although eager to develop themselves personally. What role can third places play in the social & cultural development of these people? And how might we foster the emergence of these places through planning?

The research follows an etnographic approach in which various places have been visited and observed, while interviews have been held with several initiators and visitors. It seems that in Dalang, a real factory town with a developing lower class and emerging middle class, four different types of places can be distinguished: large scale commercial places, small business entrepreneurs, public organizations and factories. A high variety of activities within these places leads to a different meaning for its visitors. Moreover, it seems that especially the small business entrepreneurs manage places that show a great emotional meaning towards their visitors.

Moreover, third places in Dalang play an important role in the cultural development of society. People visit these places to express and identify themselves, while gaining social support through joint activities. This leads to a loyal place attachment, since they simply know the gain of visiting the place. Apperently, third places are needed in the highly evolving context of Dalang. Future development will, however, have to take into account the consequences of privatization, while accomodating the growing demand for places to perform any kind of (joint) activity. Public and private parties have to join forces and search for a win-win situation in which the quality of life in Dalang will improve. This can be done by empowering new entrepreneurs and volunteerorganizations.

Content

§1 Introduction

China to Spend More Than $162 Billion on Shantytowns

By Bloomberg News | Mar 17, 2014 4:38 AM GMT+0100 | 35 Comments ✉ Email 🖶 Print

China said it will invest more than 1 trillion **yuan** ($162 billion) redeveloping shantytowns this year as the government detailed how it will boost its urban population to support **growth**.

More than 4.75 million households will be involved, state broadcaster **China Central Television** reported yesterday, citing the housing ministry. China will build more transportation links, ease some residence-registration rules and let local governments directly issue bonds, according to the urbanization plan for 2014 to 2020, issued by the ruling Communist Party and State Council.

Source: China Photos/Getty Images

A March 2009 file photo shows a shantytown in Shenyang, China. The nation will **Read More**

▲ Figure 1.2 - China invests billions in urbanization (Bloomberg, 2014)

In March 2014 this headline (figure 1.2) dominates most international economic newspapers. China is about to invest billions in the urbanization of the country, since it sees the urban growth as one of the major boosts for economic development. Lots of money will be invested in the regeneration of shantytowns, urban villages and other to be considered deprived neighborhoods. Hence, domestic consumption has to increase in order to sustain economic growth. Here, the Chinese approach of "raise and build" will probably dominate the contemporary development. However, it seems that within the light of the current urban situation in China, and especially Shenzhen, many urban migrants – mostly performing unskilled labor work in the factories – live in these peripheral, sometimes deprived neighborhoods, while at the same time forming a vivid part of the Chinese urban society.

In Shenzhen, it is this group of people that should earn the attention of the national government. Far out the most people are migrants and are not only focused on earning money. Instead, these people concern about their self-development within the city they live in and are eager to climb up the social and economic ladder (Hendrikse, 2013). The young white-collar workers do not only care about decent housing and transportation. It is the social networks that play an immense role in the way these people develop themselves. The construction of a social life can be considered as a crucial factor in the establishment of a new life within a new city. Social contacts can be found everywhere, but mostly in public facilities and activities where likeminded people join together (Jim & Chen, 2009, p. 668).

In the western world, the construction of communities and places where these communities can find space to act within, already deserves lots of attention in urban planning and urban regeneration. Social spaces, such as libraries, parks, cafes and other communal spaces have already prov-

en their success when it comes to the success of community construction and place-making by social support, which on their turn are considered to be crucial in the self-development of people (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 96-70). These places are also called "third places": places besides the home and the work, where people come together to interact and meet each other while performing other recreational and educational activities (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 16). This research will replace the concept of third places in a whole new context; that one of the emerging Chinese city.

Shenzhen will, like most cities in China, face some real urban issues over the next couple of decades. The city seems to run out of new spaces, while new migrants still arrive in the city. Inner-city spaces become more and more expensive, causing them to become places for only the upper class of society. Lower and middle-class people, often shaping the contemporary service-economy and eager to climb up the social and economic ladder, will ask for more social spaces where they can meet and interact with people. Are we able to distinguish the role of third places in this process?

As one of the youngest cities in China, Shenzhen is still rapidly growing. Every day, migrants arrive in the city to find work. Since most of the lower and middle-class people live in peripheral districts, where the factories that offer unskilled labor places are located and housing is relatively cheap, it is interesting to take a closer look at third places in one of these neighborhoods. Are there any of these places to be observed? How do they look like? What is their meaning for the visitors? Theoretically, these areas provide good soil for the development of places, that foster the cultural development of society by reciprocal social support and educational meaning. However, since the Chinese way of societal development differs from the Western situation (Lia, 2012, p. 30), placing the concept of third places in this new context opens up its scope and provides new answers.

1.1 Problem definition

China, including Shenzhen, has gone through some massive changes over the last decades. The rapid increase of the working class in Shenzhen, together with the economic growth, has resulted in a more consumer-oriented society. These blue- and a growing share of white-collar workers differ from earlier working migrants when it comes to their way of living and working (Lia, 2012; Hu, 2012). It seems that within the light of this emerging – what we call on paper – middle class, there is a bigger demand for new public facilities and activities to construct their social life and develop themselves (Wang, 2012). In the Western world, third places have proven to play a crucial role in the construction and formation of this social life for the middle class (Oldenburg, 1989; Rosenbaum 2006). In China, however, the consistency of this emerging middle-class still raises some questions, while it is clear that lower-class people are changing consumer and recreational behavior (Hu, 2012). Besides, it is still unclear to what extent third places play a same role, and it can therefore be seen as an unused potential in such a fast-developing city as Shenzhen. Therefore, this research focuses on this concept of "third places" in Shenzhen and how they can help trying to accommodate the demand for places to interact or for other activities in upcoming neighborhoods with an emerging and developing lower- and middle class. It tries to find out how these places emerge in Shenzhen (Da Lang) in both institutional and organizational ways, what they look like and what their meaning is for their visitors. Hence, the following research question has been formulated:

"How do third places emerge in the Da Lang district in Shenzhen and what is the meaning for their visitors?"

The aim is to clarify what meaning third places fulfill for their visitors in a developing Chinese urban society and elaborate on the future emergence of new third places. This explorative and descriptive research tries to elaborate on these issues and open up new perspectives and ideas concerning the emergence and meaning of third places in contemporary China.

1.2 Scientific relevance

There is not much written on the emergence of third places, especially not in upcoming societies such as the Chinese. Some articles provide information on the economic transition, emerging consumerism and identity construction of the upcoming working class in Chinese cities, such as Shenzhen (Elfick, 2011; Lia, 2012; Hu, 2012). There are also scholars who spoke about the altering role of social spaces in transforming China (Miao, 2011; Jian, 2012; Liu, 2009; Zizhou et al, 2013). Others provide explicit information on the role of third places in western cities. Some tell us something about the definition of third places (Oldenburg, 1989), others about the social empowerment (Meshram & O'Cass, 2013; Hickman, 2013) or physical aspects (Mehta & Bosson, 2009) and the meaning of these places (Rosenbaum et al, 2007; Rosenbaum, 2006; Tiemann, 2008). However, there is not much written about both under which the conditions these places emerge and their meaning in a new context, such as the Chinese let alone in a very fast growing city like Shenzhen. Therefore, this research builds upon existing literature from above, to explore new perspectives for third places in the Chinese context.

1.3 Social relevance

Accordingly, when more knowledge on the above subject is gained, it provides a new perspective on the role of these places in a changing and upcoming society, such as the Chinese. Once this role becomes clearer, policy makers might open up their scope in which they either try to enhance the emergence or interfere in the existence of these places. Besides, on a higher level, policy makers in other countries get a better view on the meaning of third places in emerging societies or societal classes. This will provide a closer look on some parts of social spaces, which are currently invisible, but ultimately define the flavor and networks of an urban community in order to foster a certain sense of place as well as collective empowerment.

▼ Figure 1.3 - Urban village within Shenzhen (OC)

§2 Theoretical framework

2.1 Economic transition in China and public space

2.1.1 Economic transition
China, and in particular Shenzhen, has gone through a massive economic transition over the last decades. This enormous shift lies at the core of many political and societal changes that are currently present throughout the whole country in both cities and rural areas. Especially, due to the massive economic growth the GDP per capita increased rapidly. This resulted consequently in a growing middle class and a growing income per household. The GDP per capita of Shenzhen is expected to double the size until 2025, which means that this middle class will grow even further in not only size, but also financial power (McKinsey, 2006).

2.1.2 A thriving "middle class"
However, there is much debate about the consistency of this thriving middle class (Elfick, 2011, p. 189; Lia, 2012, p. 30-31). Many scholars do agree on the heterogeneous composition of this group, but are still discussing about how to define and view it in general terms. However, they commonly use four criteria to define the Chinese middle class; income, occupation, education, and consumption. Some scholars then also add subjective cognition to these criteria. This means that, in their opinion, a member of the middle class is officially expected to have a high and stable income, a professional or managerial job, have received higher education and enjoy a relatively high standard of living with good access to quality healthcare (Lia, 2012, p. 32). Still, this does not clarify the exact formation and consistency of the middle class in, for instance, Shenzhen. What in general has become clear, however, is that the massive economic transformation and de-industrialization has enabled many to transform their lifestyles from ones of socialist frugality to consumption-oriented ones (Elfick, 2011, p. 190; Zacharias, 2010, p. 210).

2.1.3 New migrants
In large urbanized cities, such as Shenzhen, this tendency is reflected by the way of life of the many working migrants in the city. Throughout history, people – originally living in rural areas – moved to the cities due to great inequalities in work and income between urban and rural areas (Hu, 2012). Originally, these migrants' aims were to get work and earn money, sometimes in order to financially sustain their families who still lived in the more rural areas. Wang (2012) describes this with the three key words: "*leaving, remitting & returning*". This reflects the characteristics of this floating population quite accurately.

However, the so-called "new generation migrants", which is now primarily active in cities, due to massive economic and social changes, shows some fundamentally altered characteristics (Hu, 2012). This group of often younger people, seem to migrate more out of individual preferences than family needs. Instead of only performing blue-collar factory work, these people are eager to develop themselves and therefore consider these jobs only as a first stop towards establishing themselves in society. Wang (2012) rather gives these people another label of "*leaving, searching & becoming*".

These new migrants are eager to develop themselves and this is highly stimulated by the local government in various ways. It has been an important goals of the economic reforms in recent years to create a highly consumer-oriented middle class. This has been done, accordingly, by investments in education and the attempt to guarantee higher loans for these middle class workers (Elfick, 2011, p. 195). Besides, the new migrants are intensively using networks, rather new than existing ones, in their road towards a highly developed personal life. This clearly contributes to

the emergence of new social spaces in which these migrants meet and interact with other similar minded people (Hu, 2012). The next paragraph will pay attention to the importance of these social places in general and in the Chinese context.

2.2 The importance of place

2.2.1 Place and place-making
The meaning of place and space has been discussed by many scholars. For the purpose of this research, however, it is important to shed a light on the way a place is used by people and what this means for both these people and the place, especially when it comes to new emerging places in a fast developing society. Qiu (2009) emphasizes the importance of place-making in urban regions: "*Urban places are sociospatial structures that sustain the city's daily activities and collective memories. They are based on tangible infrastructures such as an architecture, roads, signs, and the telephone grid. Yet places are also intangible because they exist in people's minds, maintained through social organization, enacted by an image of the street, a smell of the invisible array of power relations, economic ties, and interpersonal networks. And it is often these invisible parts that ultimately define the flavor of an urban community*" (Qiu, 2009, p. 157). Of course, people attach meaning to a place. Mostly, they will or won't use a certain place because they love or hate it for several reasons. The construction of such a meaning towards a place takes time and will not always evolve without any state involvement (Friedman, 2007, p. 260).

2.2.2 Place and place-making in China
When it comes to place and place-making in China, it is immediately clear that China is an exceptional case. In cities, where thousands of people arrive every day to start a new life in overcrowded accommodations, small rooms, dormitories, high-rise apartments or owner-occupied dwellings, life has become quite unsettled and disorienting. It seems that, quite often, there is no time to attach meaning to a place or even other people. Not only do many people arrive in the city every day, they also climb up the social ladder so fast, that the residential mobility takes enormous heights. Together with the central city getting hollowed out, the development of new infrastructural corridors and huge commercial facilities, it seems that the comforting place has evolved more of into an incurable construction fever (Friedman, 2007, p. 271).

As Friedman describes (2007, p. 271): "*Under conditions of contemporary life, the importance of neighborhood-based places in people's lives tends to diminish as social networks extend beyond the limits of the small spaces of the city and contact with neighbors becomes progressively more impersonal. Efforts by the state to re-impose a territorial order based on an imaginary of the self-regulated small spaces of the city are therefore likely to fail*". Here, he refers for instance to community construction, with which the Chinese government tried to enhance sense of place – especially in new neighborhoods – by opening up service centers that formalized the delivery of social services to the people. Results of this strategy remains to be seen, but it is clear that place-making in such fast developing cities is a difficult task, although something the central government wants to enhance (Friedman, 2007).

2.2.3 New social spaces
Together with the decline of the work-unit system and the socialist redistributive system, the economic transformation has resulted in the state playing not such a central role in people's live any longer (Elfick, 2012, p. 199). At the same time, a new group of (migrant) workers trying to climb up the social ladder – while heavily using their social network – has emerged (Hu, 2012). This has

provoked new social spaces and freedoms to emerge in various ways. Elfick (2011, p. 199) describes this as the result of the erosion of the work-unit system, which has resulted in a more strict separation between the home and work space, and the expansion of the personal and individual spheres. At the same time, the new consumption oriented people have thus become consumers of urban living space, subjected to new omnipresent political, administrative and commercial powers (Jian, 2008, p. 49). All that was under Mao still public and politicized, often by including "People" in a public space's name, has now become privatized (Elfick, 2011, p. 199; Jian, 2008, p. 49).

In Post-Mao China, many new diverse types of social spaces, both public and private, have emerged, such as privately owned homes, many new businesses, educations, leisure facilities and activities and so on. Consumerism has contributed to economic growth, and accordingly a rise in personal income and has precipitated the redrawing of boundaries between social groups and the creation of social space outside state control (Elfick, 2011, p. 199). These arenas are increasingly being used as arenas through which individuals may find, identify and express themselves (Lia, 2012, p 92). Social interaction now takes place in a for China whole new dimension by a new working class. It seems that, here, privatization of public space has a huge influence on the way places are being used.

This privatization of public spaces has been stressed and criticized by Miao (2011). He believes that the global trend of privatization is also shaping contemporary Chinese cities' public spaces. According to him, this is mostly the result of a small representation of interests by private parties and the failure of the government to serve its duty to protect and service the public domain adjacent to commercial establishments. Hence, the amount of "real" public space is declining rapidly, while at the same time commercial spaces arise very quickly. It becomes nearly impossible to find places without buying something. It seems, therefore, that malls, teahouses, karaoke clubs and other commercial establishments have become the main environments for recreational activities in Chinese cities. Accordingly, "real" public facilities, such as parks, museums, libraries and senior and youth centers seem to have disappeared from the list (Miao, 2011, p. 190-192).

2.2.4 Different realms
The question whether this privatization is good or bad with regard to the use of public spaces by the emerging middle class, can and should not be answered here. However, it is important to provide some perspectives on the consequences of this privatization for the way places are being used. One of the major consequences, that certainly have to be named here, is the chance of parochialising effects. This has been introduced by Lofland (1998) and relates to the realm between the public and the private. Here, the public realm refers – in contrast to public space, what refers to a geography – "*to spaces that approach a particular ideal of inclusiveness and then interrogates the circumstances that allow this happen, and the threats to this ideal*" (Walters & McCrea, 2013, p. 357-358). This concerns ideally inclusive and open realms, such as city parks and public transport. On the other hand does the private refer more to realms such as the household, "*where kin and the closest of social relationships, our private selves, are nurtured and maintained*" (Walters & McCrea, 2013, p. 358).

However, it is the parochial realm that exists in between and is characterized by a "*sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbors who are involved in interpersonal networks that are located within communities*" (Lofland, 1998, p. 10). Here, the self is always a member of the community and the identity is ministered to membership. The creation of a communal feeling towards

"the other" distinguishes this realm from the public. In public life, this might result in gathering of little groups obtaining or claiming certain parts of public or private space, greatening the barriers for other groups to use that same space (Walters & McCrea, 2013, p. 358).
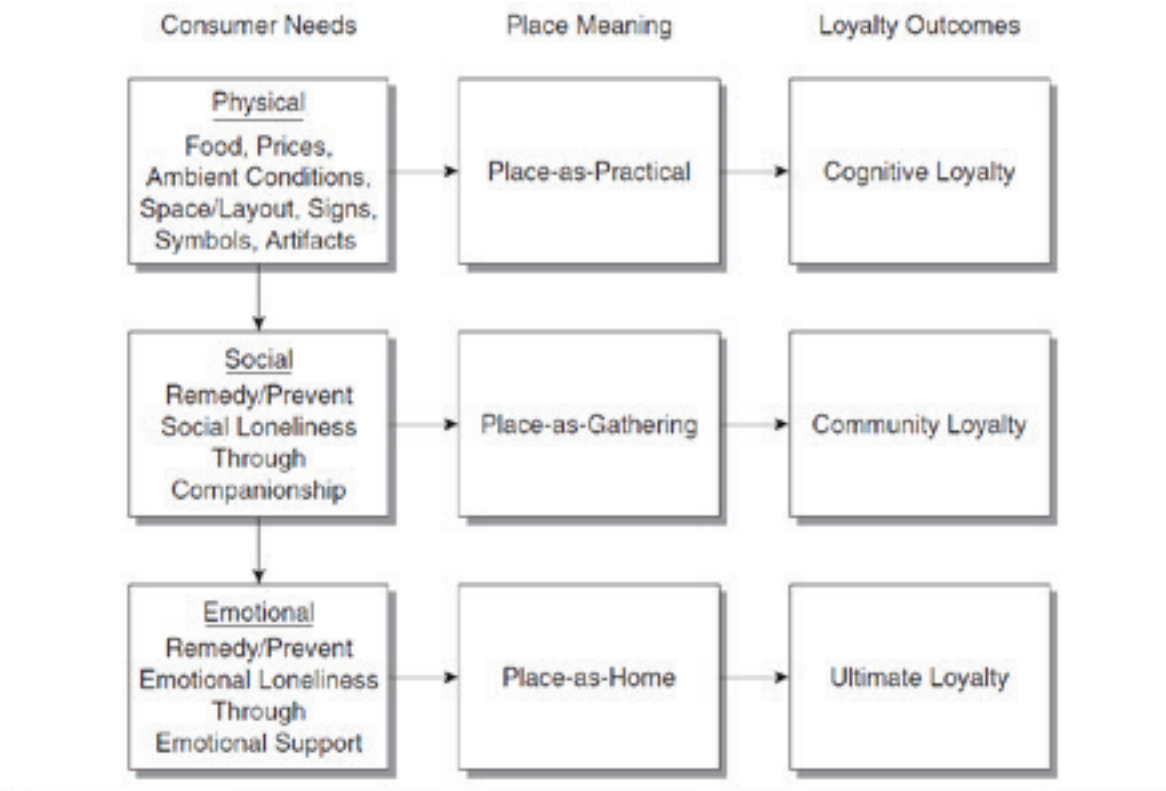
2.3 Third places

2.3.1 Definition

"The third place is a generic designation for a great variety of public places that host the regular, voluntary, informal, and happily anticipated gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work" (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 16). With this sentence, Oldenburg introduces the new concept of third places in his book "The Great Good Place" in 1989. It refers and connects to the first and the second place in social life. These are the home (first place) and the work setting (second place). The third place is, according to Oldenburg, a place to escape from serious daily routine and therefore often reflects a more playful mood. In these places, conversation is the primary activity. In order to facilitate this, it is very important that everything takes place on a neutral ground, while at the same an inclusive sphere is created. The place cannot have any formal criteria of membership, excluding people. On the contrary, third places take away any possible ranks in society by being open to anyone and function as a so-called "leveler" (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 20-64). This means that, in principle, third places should always consist of a public realm (Walters & McCrea, 2013). Third places therefore thus somehow counter the inbreeding of sociability along social class and occupational lines, which are encouraged by the family and workplace. Overall, Oldenburg rather calls a third place "a home away from home" with examples such as cafés, coffee shops and libraries (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 20-64).

Although it might sometimes be hard to distinguish both in real life, a third place theoretically differs strongly from so-called *nonplaces*. The latter refers to places where individuality disappears and one becomes part of a unifunctional role, such as shoppers and customers. Here, individuality becomes irrelevant (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 205). It is not the networks of interaction that funds the wave of construction here, but a focus on production which lies at the core of these places (Keane, 2009, p. 228). In other words, these are places of anonymity where the individual gets lost in the crowd (Aubert-Gamet & Cova, 1999, p. 40).

Oldenburg discusses a few physical aspects of third places. One of the major factors, that also lies behind many others, is proximity. Once a place is relatively close to the homes of its regular customers, people will be better encouraged to come "as they are". As such, the place need not to offer more than the company it easily attracts (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 181). Besides, Oldenburg sees the consumption of food and beverages as a huge factor in the potential to become a third place. He calls this the synergism that comes into play wherever (alcoholic) beverages are part of a culture (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 167).

However, Mehta & Bosson (2009) tried to find more distinctive physical aspects of a third place in their research. They found out that especially the amount of seating and shelter, provided by third places, distinguished them from comparable business that were not considered as third places. This indicates that *"features of business that increase people's physical comfort – by providing a place to sit and shelter from the sun – are especially important criteria for distinguishing third places from other businesses"* (Mehta & Bosson, 2009, p. 802).

Consumer Needs	Place Meaning	Loyalty Outcomes
Physical Food, Prices, Ambient Conditions, Space/Layout, Signs, Symbols, Artifacts	Place-as-Practical	Cognitive Loyalty
Social Remedy/Prevent Social Loneliness Through Companionship	Place-as-Gathering	Community Loyalty
Emotional Remedy/Prevent Emotional Loneliness Through Emotional Support	Place-as-Home	Ultimate Loyalty

▲ Figure 2.1 - Meaning of third places (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 62)

2.3.2 Meaning of third spaces

It is not the physical appearance of third places or any other hard characteristics, such as the leveling, the primacy of conversation, the certainty of meeting friends and so on, what makes them so special and distinctive in essence. Oldenburg stresses the importance of what third places contribute to both the whole person and the greater good for society (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 43). The question then remains why these places might become meaningful to someone. As Lofland (1998, p. 63) stated: it remains unclear to many academics as to why customers might grief about a closed barbershop. It was Rosenbaum (2006, p. 61-62), however, who tried to con-ceptualize this meaning of third places (figure 2.1). "*The framework indicates that older consumers attribute meanings to a third place based on their ability to satisfy consumption, companionship, and emotional support needs in a particular establishment. On the basis of their place meanings, consumers may identify a third place as place-as-practical, place-as-gathering, or place-as-home*" (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 62).

The framework assumes third place meaning to be derived from physical, social and emotional needs. Both Rosenbaum (2006, p. 62) and Hickman (2013, p. 232) claim the consuming role as providers of key services, amenities, leisure opportunities and "goods" for people, which might be needed due to inexistency at either home or work. According to Rosenbaum, companionship and emotional needs then arise, just because of the fact that these consumers want to remedy or prevent enduring negative symptoms that are associated with social and emotional loneliness (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 62). This is something Hickman would rather name as the social role of third places. By this, he primarily beliefs in the driving role of these places behind the construction of better social structures and networks within neighborhoods. This is merely the result of the high level of interaction within and attachment to third places that exists (Hickman, 2013, p. 232).

After the attribution of a meaning towards a certain third place, this meaning influences the loyalty towards this place. Hence, Rosenbaum (2006, p. 62), presents a relational theory in which

he suggests that there is a positive relationship between the social supportive resources that a consumer receives from other people in a third place and his or her loyalty towards the place. This is simply the result of the healing effect of third places, in which all attendees are gaining in social support due to social interaction (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 55; Hickman, 2013, p. 228).

Oldenburg also stresses the importance of third places for the greater good, for instance towards politics, the freedom of assembly and the expression of social cohesion (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 65-85). This is something that Hickman (2013, p. 232) rather calls the symbolic value of third places due to their function as a marker for "health" and "vibrancy" in the neighborhood. They seem to form a reflection of the just things in society.

2.3.3 Emergence of third places in a western context

Many scholars have written about the existence, meaning and appearance of third places in the western world. However, not much is known about how they emerge. It seems that, in the western world, third places are almost always privatized places in terms of bookshops, coffee shops and other businesses, where people can sit, consume, meet and interact (Rosenbaum, 2006). However, sometimes, these places are publicly owned facilities, such as libraries, that function in a similar way (Lawson, 2002). It can therefore be questioned to what extent third places are primarily developed as third places. Some definitely will, such as commercial businesses as Starbucks & Coffee Company, who aim at their function as a third place. At the same time, however, these shops do not completely fit into the definition of a third place due to their high prices which might exclude certain people from visiting these places (Rosenbaum, 2007, p. 56). Others will evolve over time and eventually position itself as third places, since people obtain emotional support and companionship over time, creating some sense of attachment to a place (Rosenbaum 2007, p. 46).

According to Rosenbaum (2007, p. 56), "*third places are usually locally owned, independent, small-scale establishments that are operated by people who seem to know everyone in the neighborhood. In addition, third places are usually patronized by a group of regular customers who often transform them into their second homes*". This means often that people visit these places in order to belong to a community. However, in the Western context this also has to do with an imagined community of people that visit the same place or consume the same goods. "*The believed shared consciousness of kind means that participants assumed others share their values and resultant behaviors. This allowed individuals to easily feel part of a large unmet but easily imagined community*" (Shaw, 2007, p. 141).

Who then is responsible for these third places? It seems legit that it is in both public and private interest that these places exist, since their supposed meaning for both the individual and the greater good. Municipal and regional authorities will therefore try to facilitate and stimulate the development of these places by creating the institutional and physical environment. At the same time, almost always, private businesses will actually provide grass roots efforts for developing third places. Consequently, this leaves a relatively small scope for policy makers to interfere in or shape these places. However, policy makers might try to maintain and replenish these places through various strategies, such as the appointment of a retail liaison officer; the creation of a safe environment so that residents can visit key third places after dark and providing institutional and organizational support for local groups to encourage them to occupy vacant retail units. Nevertheless, policy makers should bear in mind that third places should be tailored to the characteristics and needs of local residents and recognize that the appeal (and importance) of third place 'types' will vary by population group (Hickman, 2013, p. 133).

2.4 Third places in China and Shenzhen

Since it was Ray Oldenburg, an American scholar, who came up with the concept of third places, thereby pointing at several Western examples, the role of third places in China has not been discussed that much in the scientific world (Tai, 2013, p. 168). A look into the debates about social spaces and – although to a lesser extend – third places in China provides several examples which have to be pointed out here in order to get a grip on the emergence of Chinese third places.

Traditionally, China has a long history when it comes to social spaces, mostly as a result of the communistic narrative, which caused people to move out and perform many activities in public shared, but often walled spaces near schools, sport courts, hospitals and factories (Friedman, 2007, p. 267-268). Hence, the Chinese teahouse seems a pretty good example of a traditional Chinese third place (Tai, 2013, p. 168), since many people come together here to meet each other and interact, while drinking a cup of tea. However, over the years, alongside the *gaige kaifang* (reform and opening up policy) and the emerging consuming culture, a growing demand for teahouses and other social spaces, where people could have a drink, play some pool and mahjong or perform other joint activities, appeared (Smith Maguire & Hu, 2013, p. 670). In Chinese cities, such as Shenzhen, this has resulted in not only the growth of small businesses, functioning as third places (on which we will come back later) but merely the rise of a huge amount of international commercial third places in central districts of Chinese cities – also Shenzhen, such as big bookstores and international coffee shops (Smith Maguire & Hu, 2013, p. 671).

Here, the case of Starbucks in China is exceptional. In a relatively short time, the coffee shop has gained enormous popularity under Chinese middle and higher class people, especially youngsters that derive their lifestyle from the coffee store (Lin, 2012). Not only does Starbuck profile itself as a third place, it seems to function as one in China, where people regularly come and grab a coffee, meeting other people. It even seems that both individual and collective identity are shaped by Starbucks in China, showing the huge social role of these places in Chinese cities (Smith Maguire & Hu, 2013).

However, not everyone agrees on this: "*although Starbucks promotes itself as a third place, its uniform servicescapes and high prices often suppress the primary characteristics of third places, namely, the ability to meet regularly with an array of people and to have varied experiences. The coffee shops that represent quintessential third places are those that have a rich social servicescape but a rather plain physical servicescape (Thompson and Arsel 2004). Third places are created not with architectural wonderments but by encouraging intercustomer and employee socialization, employing comfortable seating arrangements, allowing customers to linger, and allowing them to participate in the servicescape décor (e.g., highlighting customers' artwork, hanging customer event and lifestyle signage)*" (Rosenbaum, 2007, p. 55).

Another important type of social spaces, that is also proclaimed to be a third place by some scholars, is the so-called cyberspace or virtual space in China (Tai, 2013, p. 168). These social spaces on internet take a very important position in the Chinese society among all classes. Although the way of communication between the third places, defined by Oldenburg, and the cyberspaces show striking similarities, Tai (2013, p. 169-170) tends to not call them third places, but proposes to call them the fourth place. According to the author, the internet has created possibilities in the totalitarian regime of China that would otherwise not be possible in physical third places by giving people the chance to express themselves in various ways. And the opportunities for this

medium are not yet to be defined. In general: virtual spaces play such a role in the Chinese society (Qiu, 2009), that they have to be taken into account in this research.

2.5 Third places in places in transition: Dalang district

Especially in those areas where migrants arrive every day to find their luck in the city, the importance of these third places seems legit. Not only do the migrants often live in small dormitories and rooms; the life at home and work is changing so fast that some stabile places to meet other people and develop themselves are quite urgent (Friedman, 2007; Miao, 2011). Dalang is such a neighborhood in Shenzhen, consisting for around 90% of migrant workers, of which many belong to the new generation: willing to climb up the social and economic ladder within Shenzhen (Hendrikse, 2013).

Earlier research in Dalang district in Shenzhen on leisure activities of migrant workers in public space has shown the great urge for particular places for these young migrants to attend, visit or just watch various leisure activities. These activities are sometimes just focused on having fun or recreation, however an increasing group is likely to visit some place for self-cultivation or because they feel some sense of belonging to these specific places. These are not only (semi-)public spaces, like the Labor Square in Dalang, but also more and more private or commercial places, like shops and internet cafes. Taking into account the fact that these migrant workers often live in small dormitories without much more space for other uses than sleeping, these places take an important position in people's life (Hendrikse, 2013).

However, in such a highly evolving district as Dalang, some challenges might occur when it comes to the creation of social spaces. The increasing role of private parties in the urban development of China automatically leads to privatization of spaces. Miao (2011, p. 188) names two possible negative effects that might follow from this process. First: "... capital creates environmental forms against most residents' interests to satisfy a minority's (commercial tenants/real-estate buyers') irrational demands, in order to maximize its short-term profits at the expense of the larger environment. Even though the local government often partners with the private developer, the aim of these projects is chiefly profit" (Miao, 2011, p. 188). Besides, he fears a laissez-faire government when it comes to its duty to service and protect the public domain adjacent to private commercial developments (Miao, 2011, p. 195-196).

2.6 Conclusion

Generally speaking, there is a lack of theory on third places in China. However, speaking from the theories that have been written on the meaning of these places in the Western context and the current development of Chinese cities when it comes to places and place-making, research on the issue seems legit. Is the concept of third places a fruitful one to use in China?

▲ Figure 2.2 - Mixed functions in urban village Baishizhou (OC)

▼ Figure 2.3 - Reading a newspaper on the square in the Central Business District (OC)

§3 Research design

3.1 Research question

The following research question has been formulated in §1.2: "How do third places in the Da Lang district in Shenzhen emerge and what is the meaning for their visitors?"

3.2 Subquestions

In order to answer the research question, the following subquestions are formulated and will be answered:

1. What kind of third places exist in Da Lang?
2. What activities take place in these places?
3. How and why have these third places emerged?
4. Who are the visitors of third places in Da Lang?
5. What meaning do third places fulfill for their visitors?

3.3 Conceptual scheme

The conceptual scheme (figure 3.1) has been derived from the content of the theoretical framework. It suggests a relational framework of various units of analysis that provide an accurate structure of the research. It starts with the initiators with which it focuses on the emergence of third places. Then, these third places as a concept will be further analyzed, concentrating mainly on the physical design and appearance of these places. Within these places, various activities take place. This is considered to be the third unit of analysis. It is assumed that, by these activities, a specific group of visitors is attracted, which attribute a certain meaning to these places. The analysis of this "meaning" will provide better insights on why visitors come to these third places. Therefore, a feedback loop has been created, since it is assumed that this meaning will contribute to the shape of a third place. The dotted line between visitors and initiators suggests the possible role of visitors as initiators of a third place.

3.4 Operationalization

The units of analysis need some further operationalization in order to be investigated.
Initiators: The initiators of a third place are the ones that one or manage a third place and will rather be private than public. The characteristics and motives of these people will provide better insights on the organizational aspects of third places. See appendix 1 for list of questions.
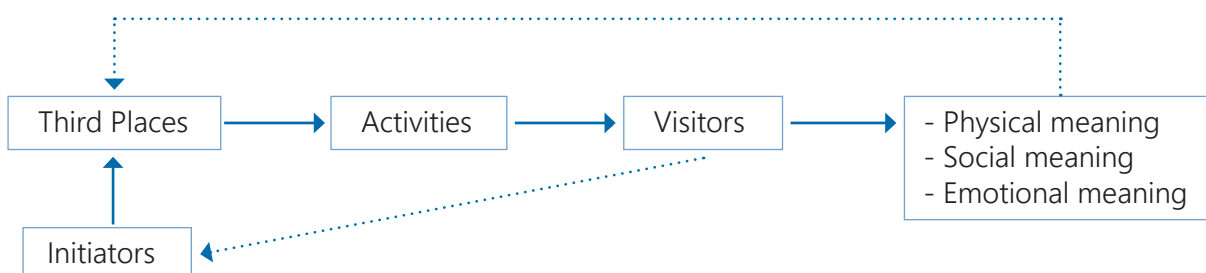
▲ Figure 3.1 - Conceptual scheme

Third places: They have a certain physical appearance or design (providing shelter and seating, open structure) and a certain aimed function (for instance a restaurant, café or shop). There should be no formal criteria for the exclusion of certain people.

Activities: Various activities take place within third places, of which the most important one is interaction. This can happen either on purpose or not. Therefore, many other activities can take place that serve as the basis for interaction within the third place. These activities have to be made clear within the line of this research.

Visitors: The visitors of third places are the ones that come here. It is important to know who these people are (their characteristics) and why they come here (motives). This provides more knowledge about the meaning of third places for these visitors. See appendix 2 for list of questions.

Physical, social & emotional meaning: The different meanings follow from the framework of Rosenbaum (2006). The role can either be physical (about consuming), social (companionship) or emotional (support and loneliness). Often, the meaning of this place is not something that can be asked directly to the visitors, but can be derived from various observations and questions about the activities and the experience of visitors.

3.5 Research strategy & methodology

3.5.1 Research design
This research holds a descriptive and explorative research design, since it tries to answer question such as "who, what and where" around third places, while at the same time it tries to explore some new findings about "why" people visit third places in a scientifically new context. It follows a single-case study design, using the case of the Dalang district. Dalang can be seen as a typical or representative case, because of the consistency of a developing lower class and emerging middle class and their activities in this neighborhood. This situation is well known throughout many other neighborhoods in various cities in China (Friedman, 2007). However, within the case there will be multiple units of analysis embedded, since many third places in this area are researched. This design can therefore be labeled as an embedded case study design (Yin, 2003, p. 47-49).

3.5.2 Ethnographic research
Various qualitative methods are used in order to perceive data on the subject. In general, this research applies an ethnographic approach for this case study. "Ethnography is a systematic approach to learn about the social and cultural life of communities, institutions, and other settings. It takes the position that human behavior and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their worlds and lives are highly variable and locally specific" (Taylor, 2002, p.1). This provides the chance to dig very deep into the existence and consistency of third places, their visitors, and meaning. As such, this research design fits best to the research question. (Bryman, 2008, p. 403).

3.5.3 Induction & grounded theory
The research holds a bottom-up approach, which is inductive. It moves from specific observations to broader generalizations and theories about the subject (Bryman, 2003, p. 11). Various ways of sampling are applied during the process, depending on the unit of analysis. For the initiators of third places a purposive sample strategy will be used. This means that they were strategically

chosen since they are supposed to be of importance to the research (Bryman, 2008, p. 415). Sometimes, this can be the result of the snowball effect, in order to get to the right people or places through others (Bryman, 2008, p. 184-185). On the other hand, in order to investigate the visitors of these places, a random sample will be applied. This means that every visitor has the same chance to get selected for an interview (Bryman, 2008, p. 171-172).

Grounded theory will be employed in order to create new thoughts about the meaning of third places in contemporary China. "Grounded theory is a prime methodology when an investigation's focus entails theory generation" (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 64). Right now, some of the concepts – such as third places and their visitors – are quite unknown or vague in the Chinese context. Grounded theory provides the opportunity to place these concepts in a new context and give meaning to them. Hence, this research is able to create a new meaning around third places, their visitors and initiators, especially in the Chinese context. Grounded theory thus provides the possibility to generate theory along an ongoing process of induction from systematically obtained and analyzed data (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 64).

3.5.4 Research methods
In the following table (table 3.1), the research methods have been listed regarding the units of analysis and the operationalization.

Various qualitative methods will therefore be used to collect data. By observations it is possible to retrieve information about someone's daily use and routines. Because of the presence of the researcher at the research location, all kinds of activities can be discovered. This might also provide new input for any interviews to be done (Van Duppen, 2010). These interviews will be done by means of semi-structured interviews. These are interviews that have a structure with a fixed content in terms of subjects. However, additional questions can be asked in a different order as a response to the answers of the respondent. Hence, it's a flexible way of interviewing (Bryman, 2008, p. 438-439). Also, some in-depth interviews are held with key persons to collect more data on the subject. While these also held a semi-structured line, these interviews provided even more space for flexibility (Bryman, 2008, p. 196).

Unit of analysis	Operationalization	Research method
Third places	Appearance/design Function	Observations Semi-structured interviews Mapping/drawing Photography
Activities	Activities	Observations Semi-structured interviews Photography
Initiators	Public/private Characteristics Intention and meaning	Observations Semi-structured interviews
Visitors	Characteristics Motives and meaning	Observations Semi-structured interviews Mapping

▲ Table 3.1 - Operationalization of units of analysis and research methods

Besides, by mapping the location of third places and visitors, there will be better insights in the geographical spread of these places and their visitors. Accordingly, this provides better info with regards to the networks of people and places. Indeed, behind each urban place is an invisible array of relations, ties and interpersonal networks. Mapping helps clarifying this black box (Qiu, 2009, p. 157).

At last, photography will be used throughout this research. In the end, many of the readers of this research have never or will never visit the Da Lang district. By adding pictures of places and people, one might get a better view on the way third places give meaning to people and the city (Van Duppen, 2010). It is therefore not primarily a method for collecting data, but merely a way of reflecting and presenting the context of this research for all readers.

3.6 Data collection

The data collection takes place in and around third places, with both visitors and holders of third places. The questions are being asked in Chinese by a Chinese student. She immediately translates the answers. Recording these short conversations has not been done, since many respondents were frightened by this and wouldn't want to answer some questions. Besides, some experts and policy makers are interviewed in order to retrieve more relevant contextual information around Dalang, the people of Dalang and third places. Together with Chinese students, questions are being asked and answers are immediately translated, in order to reduce the loss of information. After every interview the recording has been checked with the direct translation by the Chinese student, in order to prevent it from any incompleteness or misconceptions.

3.7 Data analysis

The data that has been derived from all interviews with initiators and users has been written down in a table, in order to make comparisons between various answers on questions more easily. The in-depth interviews have not been coded, since the amount is limited. In the end, these interviews provide one-sided information from experts on different topics, which has to be taken into account. Whenever comparison between different opinions was possible and necessary, this has been done without any coding.

3.8 Limitations

Doing research in Dalang comprises some limitations. These are almost all caused by limited time. Field research has been performed over a period of seven weeks, in which the first three weeks mainly considered field orientation, acquaintances with experts and Chinese students and excursions. The last four weeks have as much as possible been used to visit the research area. Here, it was necessary to visit the area at different times in the week (during days, evenings and weekends), while taking into account the presence of Chinese students that were able to help conducting the interviews. Besides, following from the essence of this research, finding new places takes some time and visiting some of them was not always possible directly. Overall, it has been tried to cope as much as possible with these limitations. However, a longer stay in Shenzhen might provide better insights on more third places in Dalang and other districts.

▲ Figure 4.2 - Conducting an interview in the bookstore (OC)

▼ Figure 4.3 - Conducting an interview in the skate shop (OC)

§4 Research area

This chapter will provide better understanding of the specific research context. It will give more knowledge about China, the city of Shenzhen and the neighborhood of Dalang in specific, in order to create a contextual framework. Information has been generated from earlier writings about China, Shenzhen & Dalang by scholars and students as well as some interviews that have been conducted during the field research with experts on the case of Dalang.

4.1 Shenzhen

Shenzhen is a relatively young city, starting to grow as a direct effect of Chinese opening up policy. As such, Shenzhen – located just over the Chinese border near Hongkong – has grown from a farming and fishing village of 20.000 to 30.000 inhabitants in 1980 to a city with an estimated population over 10 million people in 2011 (Bruton et. al., 2005, p. 228; Shenzhen Government, 2014). This has been the direct result of the inception of Shenzhen as the first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in China, introduced by Deng Xiaoping opening up Shenzhen for direct foreign investments. From that moment on, Shenzhen, with its free space and cheap labor, functioned as the playground for China in the process of becoming more market-oriented. Soon enough, large industries settled down in Shenzhen, bringing along many other forms of investments in real-estate and infrastructure over the years (Bruton et. al., 2005, p. 228).

The rapid development of Shenzhen started within the SEZ, which was divided in four administrative districts (see picture 4.2), adjacent to the Hongkong border: Nanshang, Futian, Luohu and Yantian. Later on, in 1992, the two other districts "Bao'an" and "Longgang district" were added to the special economic zone as a result of the continuing growth of the city Since foreign investment within the SEZ almost exclusively was in the construction industry or in low-value-added, and labor intensive industries that where outsourced from Hongkong, the city attracted millions of young migrants from all over China to live and work in Shenzhen (Ng & Tang, 2004, p. 201).

The process of expansion in Shenzhen has always come along with this stream of migrants entering the city. They are young and expect to earn more money in the city than in the countryside. Most of the time, this is the case, since low-educated work in the city's factories or service-sector provide better incomes (Zacharias & Tang, 2010, p. 215). Another important ongoing process has been the displacement of industries from the four central districts to the Bao'an & Longgang district over the years. When the local economy of Shenzhen got boosted by all the (foreign) investments, new companies, industries and inhabitants, the land rents in the center raise consequently. Development then mainly started to concern residential areas and offices, displacing the large – less profitable – factory compounds to the more peripheral areas (Zacharias & Tang, 2010, p. 216; Interview 8 & 36).

Finding a job in Shenzhen as a migrant after arrival isn't hard. The many factories, mainly providing un- or low-skilled work, are struggling to find enough workers (Interview 36). Nowadays, the most factories are located in the Bao'an & Longgang district, making these areas "starting places" for working migrants in Shenzhen (Interview 8).

Living, on the other side, is a far more complex story. The workers partly live in dormitories at the compound or in the traditional urban villages (Interview 36). The dynamic urbanization of Shenzhen has led to the emergence and proliferation of these so-called "urban villages". Agricultural land, often owned by farmers, has been used for urban expansion, while "the built-up component of the rural village remains untouched to avoid costly compensation and relocation

Figure 4.1 - Shenzhen old districts (Ng & Tang, 2004)

programs (Hao et al, 2012, p. 2742)". They form small "villages" within the formally planned and developed areas of Shenzhen, consisting of relatively low-quality housing. However, since many of the migrants are excluded from the formal housing market due to the high costs and low wages, these characteristic urban villages became popular and affordable places to live (Hao et al, 2012, p. 2742).

4.2 Dalang

Dalang has always been a subdistrict located in the Bao'an district. Since 2011 however, Dalang is part of the Longhua New District (see figure 4.1). Dalang has an estimated population of 500.000 people, of which only 8640 people have the urban hukou (Zwart, 2013). There are some hills in Dalang (which are used for recreational purposes), two natural protection zones and six water reservoirs. Since the average population density is relatively low, compared to other parts of Shenzhen, walking through Dalang gives the feeling of walking through another city (Interview 32).

Dalang is a real factory town: since 1993 Dalang started to develop between the land that was owned by private farmers or landowners. Until then, Dalang consisted of small villages with a large group of Hakka people (that originally came from the middle of China). Over time, the area attracted many factories, especially in electronics and clothes, of which some were formerly located within the SEZ. Since land prices were rising there and factories were looking for more modern and bigger factory buildings, they got often displaced to more peripheral areas, such as Dalang (Interview 8).

98% of the people in Dalang is migrant (Interview 8). Almost all migrants are non or low-educated. They dropped out after high school and moved to Dalang to work in one of the factories in the neighborhood. Working in one of the factories means working 6 days a week, often 8 hours a day. However, the average basic salary is around 1500 RMB and since one can earn 10 or 20 RMB per extra hour work, many migrants work longer than 8 hours (Interview 35).

4.3 Focus area

Dalang is now changing from a low-end manufacturing neighborhood to a more diverse economy. This means that labor intensive factories that require un- or very low-skilled workers are disappearing, while more high-end manufacturing and designing factories are locating in, for ex-
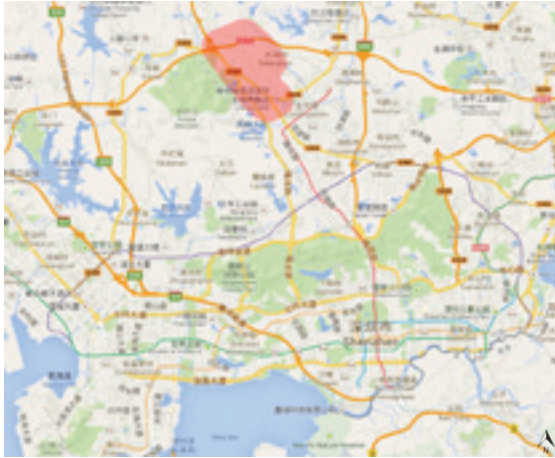

Figure 4.2 - Location Dalang in Shenzhen

Figure 4.3 - Focus area in Dalang

Figure 4.4 - Satellite map of focus area in Dalang

ample, one of the new factories in the north. Besides, many old factories are tumbled down and replaced with commercial facilities and residential buildings. Indeed, the still floating population of Dalang – with many people arriving and leaving in high speed due to the high labor mobility – is developing and asks for more, new and better commercial, cultural and public facilities (Interview 8 & 32). The factory workers obviously now have more places to go after work besides their home. This is what makes Dalang a very interesting case to perform research on the emergence and role of third places.

In particular, attention will be paid to a specific area in Dalang (figure 4.4). This area is located in the west of Dalang and can be seen as an emergent center of different functions (figure 4.5), such as a large public square, small commercial places, a commercial center, residential buildings, (abandoned) factories and a small urban village. During work breaks, after work and in the weekends, this area fills up with people that live in the direct area. Obviously, here, many migrants visit places on a regular base after their work to spend some time, relax, meet new people or work on personal development. Therefore, several places within this area have been researched.

▲ Figure 4.5 - Functions in focus area

§5 Results

This chapter will discuss the results that have been conducted from the field research in Dalang. At several places within the research area, short semi-structured interviews have been conducted with visitors, initiators, employees and volunteers. The chapter will follow the structure of the questions that have been asked in the introduction of this thesis. Hence, it starts with a description of the third places that have been discovered in Dalang (figure 5.1) and the way these places have emerged. Also some experts have been questioned in order to obtain more information about the places.

5.1 Research action

In determining what kind of places were worth a visit, attention has been paid to several factors during the process, based on information that was derived from observations and interviews. During these observations and conversations, all gained theoretical knowledge about the concept of third places in the Western context has been used to decide whether or not to take into account a certain place (and its visitors) in the results. This might of course mean that not all third places in Dalang have been discovered or defined, since this was not the goal. However, it should provide a better view on the kind of places in Dalang that might be characterized as – what we

• • • • • • • •• Factories

• • • • • • • •• Mixed residential & commercial in plinth

• • • • • • • •• Abandoned factories, waiting to be
regenerated into commercial center

• • • • • • • •• Commercial center

• • • • • • • •• Factories

• • • • • • • •• Mixed residential & commercial in plinth

• • • • • • • •• Urban village

opt to name – third places. It therefore puts the theory in Chinese perspective, which may also lead to the inclusion of places that would in theoretical perspective not automatically be named as third place.

What is worth to mention, is that the concept of "third places" is not known in China. However, by simply explaining some characteristics of what we opt to name "third places" to migrants during the research, they were able to relate these to some places they opt to visit regularly. Apparently, as a first result, although they were not familiar with it, the concept of third places does make sense to the people of Dalang.

Attention will be paid to the activities that take place in these places. As such, it should be possible to get a clear view on how third places look like in Dalang. Accordingly, attention will be paid to the visitors of these places and the meaning they attach to the different kind of places they visit. The chapter will end with a paragraph focusing on the way how different actors and stakeholders are currently interrelated within the power field of the future emergence and planning process of any more "third places" in Dalang. The next chapter will then combine empirical results with theory in order to find out what can be said about the concept of third places in China – and Shenzhen in specific – and the future development of those places.

▲ Figure 5.1 - Researched places

5.2 The Music Store

During their research in 2013, Bas Hendrikse and Fabian de Koning (Hendrikse, 2013), got to know the music store and recognized something interesting here. The store seemed to have a transcending function than "just a music store", with many returning visitors that seemed to be friends performing lots of activities. Therefore, the place functioned as a good starting point for doing research on third places in Shenzhen.

The music store in Dalang has multiple locations. However, the main store is located next to the Labor Square and is open 7 days a week. It is a small shop that has a piano in the center and lots of guitars and other music instruments hanging on the wall for sale, while decorating the store at the same time. The store is very open: everyone can just walk in, have some water or tea, play some music or have a chat. During research, the music store has been visited quite some times. Then, a returning group of visitors can be observed, giving it the feeling of a small community, although very open to "new" people at the same time.

Initiators

The music store is owned by Li Fang Xi. During two interviews (Interview 7 & 35), he was able to tell a lot about why and how he started a music store in Dalang. As a young man, living in the east of China, he always wanted to make music and show the importance of music for the cultural development of society. After high school, he went to a music school in the center of China. After one year, he was not able to pay his college fees, forcing him to open a small music shop to earn some money. Once he saved around 20.000 RMB, he could pay his college fee and finished his school. Then, he moved to Shenzhen working as a music teacher in 2007 and in 2010 he opened his music store in Dalang, near the Labor Square.

But why was Li Fang Xi so eager to open this music store? According to him, he wanted to do something for the young migrants in Dalang, ideally with his own passion: music. "*I used to be a music teacher, but wanted to do something more. This was my dream. Most people in Dalang, especially the lower class, have a lack of knowledge about music and art. There is also a lack in the education of these things that are very important to my opinion. So helping people is the main idea*" (Interview 7). Clearly, he wants to lower the threshold for young people to make music, by selling music instruments and offering music lessons, for which he also has instructors. Within four years, he now has three different locations and will soon be opening a brand new fourth store in Dalang.

The owner of the music store tells he was supported by the local government to open this music store, since it fits within the goal to strengthen the cultural development of Dalang. However, procedures are complicated and ask for a lot of paperwork, discouraging lots of starting entrepreneurs from making use of them. Also Li Fang Xi decided not to make use of them, mainly because of this reason and the fact that communication with all kinds of agencies and organizations takes a lot of time that he rather wanted to invest in running his shop. Hence, he is a busy man, working seven days a week on giving music lessons and administration work.

The music store near the labor square – the main store – has a very simple and open design. Due to a small budget, the music instruments that are being sold function at the same time as wall decoration. Also pictures of choirs, that take an important position in Dalang music scene, are decorating the walls of the shop. People should easily walk in, according to Li: "*The music store*

is the site of music. You don't have to buy something. If you want to play guitar or another instrument, you can just walk all day and play as long as you want. We will offer you a glass of water, we will have a little chat and make friends here. Everyone is in principle a friend of the store" (Interview 7). He even gives an example of him being so busy that he has to leave the store for a minute. He will sometimes ask "new" people to keep an eye on the store for a minute.

Activities

As Li suggests, he sells music instruments and offers music lessons. However, when observing the music store during various times in the week, many activities can be seen in and around the store. Although the music store should primarily sell actual instruments, this nearly happens (both during the observations and according to Li himself). The instruments are quite expensive and most young migrants therefore cannot afford an instrument. Other activities therefore characterize the music store better.

First of all, almost all day instructors are giving **music lessons** to people. Most of the students are children, living in Dalang. The music lessons are not only provided in the store near the Labor Square, but also in the other two locations, that are situated in a big department store in Dalang. All kinds of instruments are being used, varying from guitar to typical and traditional Chinese music instruments. Some get lessons individually, while others are playing in little groups. During these lessons, sometimes people walk in the store and will grab an instrument to play or have a look around. When the instructor or owner recognizes him/her, he will always interact with these people and have a small chat, before continuing the lesson.

After working times and in the weekends, small groups of friends will go to the store and **play music together**. They will drink some tea, play some instruments and have a chat. When joining one of these groups in the evening during the research, they obviously talk a lot about music and new songs. Sometimes they will also talk about personal or work life. Obviously, every day the group will differ, since some do not show up while others do, making it a vibrant community.

An important weekly activity is the **band show**. Every Sunday (sometimes on Saturday), the same group of friends that hang out during the week in the music store, will set up a band show. They will sing songs for around two or three hours in different compositions. The name "band show" might give the feeling of a rehearsed performance by some artists. However, it seems more like a practice for the members in different band compositions. Sometimes, songs are just stopped in the middle (for example if the singer is not satisfied), while other times the song has been played so well, the people will applaud loudly.

It is an open, free concert for all the young people of Dalang that are free on Sunday. Therefore, a lot of people (during research approximately around fifty) will stop by and enjoy the music that the band is playing. There is very little interaction between the people listening to the band show. Obviously, they want to enjoy the music individually or sometimes in couples or small groups. The atmosphere, that is created, is a very open one: everyone can join the band or sing a song if he or she wants to. Accordingly, this happened sometimes during the observations.

According to Li Fang Xi, these band shows also function as some kind of advertisement for his store. People can freely enjoy the music and discover what might be in it for them, attracting new students or customers. This makes the band show a perfect combination between a free marketing tool and a joyful Sunday for both the band members and the public.

▲ Figure 5.2 - Sun gives piano lessons (OC)

▲ Figure 5.3 - Preparing for the band show (OC)

▲ Figure 5.4 - A couple watching the band show (OC)
▼ Figure 5.5 - A student is getting guitar lessons (OC)

▲ Figure 5.6 - Guys playing music together at night in the store (OC)

▲ Figure 5.7 - Spectators at the band show (OC)
▼ Figure 5.8 - Preparing for the band show (OC)

Visitors

Some attention has already implicitly been paid to the characteristics of the visitors at the music store. It is clear, that different groups of visitors are being attracted and served by the music store. There is a recurrent group of people coming to the music store often more than three times a week. This group, of mainly young men, arrives at the music store around 5 or 6 pm and will stay till approximately 9 or 10 pm. One of the instructors, who works in the music store every day, is part of this group and tells: "*This is a group of around 20 people and sometimes they bring in new people, who come here only once or also start coming on regular base*" (Interview 25). Each night, there will be around five members of this group. At the same time they form part of the band that gives a show on Sundays.

During the band show that has been visited twice, a totally different group of visitors can be observed. It is a highly diverse group of young men and women. Some of them will just pass by and watch the show for five or ten minutes, while others sit down on the ground, a plastic chair or somewhere else to watch the show from beginning to the end. There is very little interaction between the spectators. Only when they are present in small groups, these will interact reciprocally. At least, there are the students that follow music classes in one of the stores from Li. These are all children that live in Dalang. The parents of these children will probably earn more than the average Dalang migrant worker, since these classes are relatively expensive (around 50 RMB per class). Although Li stresses the fact that his classes aren't that expensive, it can still be seen as a luxury good for many of the Dalang children with parents earning up till 1500 RMB per month.

Meaning

Now having a better view on the activities in and around the music store and its visitors, it should be able to tell something about the role the music store plays in the life of its visitors. At first, the music store has a huge functional meaning for its visitors (at least the ones making music). There are mainly two reasons for this. First, there are people who are not able to buy an instrument. Like Li said, they can easily walk in and grab a guitar or another instrument. This way, he makes it more accessible for these people to start playing music. On the other hand, there is a group of people – who are also playing in the band – that do have instruments, but don't want to or cannot play at home. Sometimes, it is because they live in a dorm with others, while others want to learn from others and therefore rather play at the store.

The recurrent group of musicians that come to the store on a regular base have another important reason to come here. It is because they meet there friends and other similar minded people here. Like one of them said: "*It is really a place where I meet my friends. I know everyone here and the especially the guy on the drums and the guy who works here are good friends*" Interview 25). And it is not only a way to meet existing friends; they also invite new people to join them in making music: "*I recommend the place to people at work. Some of them live in Dalang. But most of them don't, since I work in Luohu. One guy is now a real good friend because I asked him to join me to the band show. Now he also started playing guitar*" (Interview 25). Thus, especially for this group, the social meaning of the place is quite important. However, people also visit the band show on a regular base and show some social attachment to this event: "*... in the weekends on Sunday I almost always visit the band show. I meet the same people there and we have a chat. It is our day off, so everyone is there*" (Interview 30).

Besides, the music store seems like a good example of a place with a strong emotional meaning to their recurrent visitors. Although this is maybe a small "club", the people show a strong emotional attachment to the place, stressing its importance to them and the fact that it feels like a second home (Interview 7, 25, 30). Students, spectators and the "club of friends" come here on a regular base, making it an important part of their life. Here, they develop themselves through contact with real friends and other similar minded people. Joining the nights together and band shows as an observer, really stresses this finding.

5.3 The Yoyi Bookstore

Sun, one of the workers of the music store was asked if he knew anymore places he would love to go, once he has some spare time to do something useful and fun at the same time. Immediately, he mentioned the importance of reading and therefore named the bookstore in the shopping center as an important place for him.

The Yoyi Bookstore is the biggest bookstore in Dalang and is situated in the center of the shopping center of Dalang, on the third floor. The building is an old industrial building. A block of several buildings have been regenerated over the last years into a commercial center, while some are still empty and waiting to be redeveloped. The bookstore consists of one floor, giving it 2800 m2 where visitors can obviously find books, but also many other products, such as gifts, music instruments, sports products, office and school tools, etcetera. Besides, the bookstore has a small café in the middle, a TV screen, a children playground and some practice rooms. Between the shelves, people can find some chairs to sit on. The routing causes people to walk amongst all shelves in a circle, before leaving the store.

Initiators

The Bookstore is owned by HuanCheng, a private developer that has developed the whole shopping center of Dalang. The company started the development of the bookstore in 2009, after they were asked by the local government to redevelop the old industrial building in which the bookstore now is located. The local government aimed at creating more and better facilities for the inhabitants of Dalang, of which many then complained about having to little shops and other facilities. The block of industrial buildings were empty at that time and situated at a central location in Dalang. The buildings are owned by private villagers that rent the land through a construction for 25 years to the developer. One of the requirements, however, was to regenerate the buildings, instead of demolishing them and building new ones instead; a quite unusual habit for Shenzhen (Interview 32, 33 & 36).

Since Yoyi Bookstore already had a location in Shuiwan for 22 years, the developer now had the money to start a new store, here in Dalang. However, since 90% of the inhabitants of Dalang are young working migrants, the owner expected the bookstore not to make that much revenue on its own to be profitable. In the end, many of them are not able to afford books, provided by the bookstore. Therefore, the owner started something that was new for him up till then: the development of a commercial center, to be financially able to locate the bookstore in Dalang. Hence, the bookstore is surrounded by many small shops in the building that lie within the interest of the young migrants, such as electronics, fashion and cafés (Interview 4, 5, 8, 33 & 36).

Why would a commercial developer do something like this, if he could also develop a commercial center without a bookstore, probably making more money? The answer is two-folded. When ask-

ing the owner of the bookstore (and Development Company) the exact same question, he speaks about his culture: the "Hakka" culture. Education lies at the heart of this culture, making its people promoting and stressing the importance of education amongst others in many ways. According to the owner, *"I wanted to provide young people to read in this area. From the beginning I know it was not affordable. But sometimes it is not about making money. I was in the position to do this now after 22 years"* (Interview 33).

However, on the other hand, the regeneration of the whole industrial building into a shopping center, has made this development financially a lot easier. This is also affirmed by the owner. Indeed, the existence of all shops and cafés attract a lot of people that will possibly buy a book or something else at the bookstore, which simultaneously is the only store in the shopping center owned by the developer itself. The mutual gain will in the end benefit both the developer and the shop owners. However, the intention of the owner to foster the cultural development of the people in Dalang with this bookstore clearly makes sense and is visible in all the activities taking place in the bookstore.

Reading is not only considered to be of importance within the Hakka culture, but the importance is also being stressed by the national and local government of Shenzhen. The national government tries to imply this importance through education at schools and national media campaigns. Besides, also via media campaigns, the local government tries to transform the people of Shenzhen into "real Shenzheners", by opting 13 rules that will contribute to being a real "Shenzhener". Reading belongs to one of these rules and therefore forms an important part of Shenzhen cultural activities (Interview 4). Therefore, the bookstore not only offers a place to buy books, but mainly to read books. The bookstore even has an organized book club, discussing books on a regular base (Interview 4).

Activities

A variety of activities take place in the bookstore. Those are often interrelated and lead to different actions of people within the same place. Therefore, different places and activities within the bookstore will be discussed, trying to provide a view on occurring scenes at several places within the bookstore. Most activities are bounded to the location within the bookstore. An overview of the bookstore in schematic persective is provided in figure 5.9.

The biggest share of surface in the bookstore consists of shelves with books, leaving some pathways in between them. The main activity here is **reading**, both by people alone and together. On crowded days, during weekends (especially on Sundays) and in the evening, people will sit everywhere in the store to read books. Mostly they place down near the books of their interest, causing many women for example to sit near the books about "the inner heart" or "women's psychology", while many men can be found near the shelves with books about "logistics" and "business economics". Obviously, there is very little interaction while reading. Many people will perform this activity individually and if they are together, they will not interact for some time. This causes the bookstore to be a quiet place (at least in the area of the book shelves), even on crowded days.

The **café** in the middle of the bookstore takes an important position. It is located in the center of the store and provides seats to customers that want to have coffee or tea. The prices are relatively high (20 – 30 RMB for a drink), making it less accessible for young migrants with their low incomes. The activities in this café are a bit more varying than in the rest of the bookstore. Many people join a table together with friends and are having conversations while occasionally reading
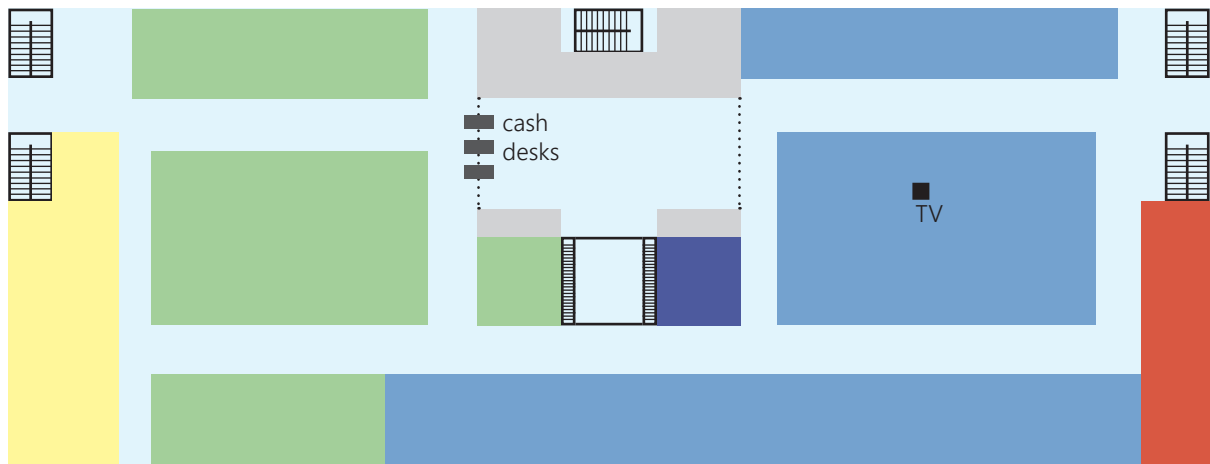
Playground

Other products (toys, office tools, sport products, etc)

Bookshelves, divided by category, including some seats and benches

Coffeeshop with seats

Workshop rooms

Electronic products and service counter

▲ Figure 5.9 - Schematic overview of the bookstore

▼ Figure 5.10 - Watching TV in the bookstore (OC)

their books in pieces. Some of them discuss their books or just have friendly chats. The café is surrounded by an outward-facing bar at which people can take a seat as well. Here, also some people take a nap by placing their heads on the table.

In the center of the "eastern" part of the store (the area with the most book shelves) there is a **TV** hanging on a pillar facing the center of the store. It broadcasts non-stop news, but also series and documentaries. During the day people will watch TV in silence, sometimes standing, for quite a long time. The group of people watching television is quite a good reflection of the total group of visitors in the bookstore: they are clearly young migrant workers.

Another important part of the bookstore forms the **playground** at one end of the store. It is the only sheltered playground in Dalang (Interview 4) and provides some toy aircrafts for very young children. It is located near the book shelves for children, making it a more chaotic part of the store, with children running from the playground, to the book shelves (where they read) or to the toys department. The playground is supervised by two employees of the bookstore. After the parents pay a ticket, they can go their own way: reading books somewhere else in the store or taking a seat at the edge of the playground. Here is where a lot of interaction between parents – both waiting for their children – takes place, such as networking about jobs and friendly chats.

The last important part of the bookstore concerns the **workshop rooms** at the other short side of the store (at the opposite of the playground). Here are two rooms situated, meant for dancing classes and workshops. Especially very young girls take action in these classes, organized in the evenings and weekends, while their parents wait outside the classroom, again interacting with each other. Here, again young parents talk about jobs and social life.

The **rest of the store** consists of shelves with a variety of products. There are no distinctive activities to be observed here, besides some people searching for specific products. Herewith, they form a rather quiet and easy part of the store, even on crowded days. While some of the pathways between the book shelves are then full of people reading, these parts of the store contain nearly no one.

Visitors

The bookstore attracts a variety of people, however mainly young working migrants between 20 and 25 years old, living in Dalang. Of the twelve visitors that have been interviewed, almost every respondent in the bookstore dropped out after high school and can therefore be considered as a low-educated worker. They live in either dorms at a factory compound or in one of the urban villages. Distinctive is their eager to learn something and develop themselves, for example by reading books or joining workshops and other courses during their free time (Interview 1, 2 & 3).

Very little books are bought by the young migrants. Some say they can't afford it, causing them to read within the store (Interview 3, 14 & 15). Different parts of the store attract different people. Most of the respondents come on a regular base, around two or three times a week, after work or on Sundays. They will grab some books of their interests and will start reading, often near the place they took the book. Most of them don't want to talk, (they come to read) except for some small groups of people. In between reading, these groups will have small chats and talks about the books or social life (Interview 1, 2, 3 & 6). A few say they will talk with new people, reading books of the same interest in order to get in touch with similar minded people (Interview 6 & 16).

A clear distinction in visitors can be found between the store and the café. Probably, because of the prices, the café will attract more affluent people, that are able to afford the coffee or tea. This is also visible in the characteristics of the respondents. The ones in the café had overall better jobs than the ones reading in the store (Interview 26 & 27). Some visitors in the store are therefore looking with envy at the people reading in the café, complaining about the fact that there are not enough seats in the store and the drinks are too expensive in the café (Interview 16). The employee of the café affirms this: *"There are a lot of white collar office workers that come to the café. The young unskilled workers will sit in the store and don't buy coffee or tea. Some unskilled workers do come here in the café. White collar workers seem to prefer coffee, while factory workers will order some milk tea or juices instead of coffee. And if they are here, they will speak louder with each other"* (Interview 28).

Another important group of visitors concerns the young parents with children. They will either go to the store to read, to the playground or to one of the classroom to bring their kids to dance class. While the kids are dancing or playing, these parents have a lot of interaction. According to both the bookstore manager and some of the respondents, this is valuable when it comes to networking for jobs and personal life (Interview 4 & 16). With the babyboom in Dalang (Interview 33 & 36), this group will slightly grow and so will the need for children's facilities.

Meaning

So why do these groups come the bookstore? Why do they want to read? What does the place mean to them? These are the most important questions when we want to say something about the bookstore as a third place. When asking visitors these questions, we get different answers. However, one key aspect here is the fact that people want to become "smarter" or "better persons" and that they consider reading to be a crucial factor in reaching this goal. Most of the respondents say they can't read at home due to various practical reasons (small room, noisy, inconvenient), making the place one where they can read books of their interest in silence and develop their knowledge and skills from both a business and social perspective. This is for instance also something acknowledged by some companies that offer a free shuttle to the bookstore for their employees in order to read and relax a bit (Interview 27).

On the other hand, however, the social function of this bookstore is far littler for most visitors. As has been described, most respondents say they come here primarily to read and enrich themselves individually. Meeting (new) people is not a goal on its own for them. Although some say they like to speak with similar-minded people reading the same books or are together with friends reading in the store or at the café, this group is smaller than the group of respondents that does not want to be disturbed. Only the young parents, waiting for their children at the playground or class rooms, clearly admit they love to speak with other parents, giving the place a more social meaning for them.

Does the bookstore than fulfill an emotional meaning and attachment for their visitors? At least, many respondents come here with such regularity that they call it themselves a "second home". They will visit the bookstore almost always after work or in the weekends. Although they might not feel attached to the bookstore in a social way (unless the young parents and some groups of friends), they feel strongly attached because they can do that what they love to do in a – what they call – nice, save, quiet and open environment: reading.

▲ Figure 5.11 - Reading happens everywhere in the bookstore (OC)

▼ Figure 5.12 - The slogan from the Yoyi bookstore is clear: "happy reading, happy growing!" (OC)

▲ Figure 5.13 - The coffeeshop is almost always fully occupied with reading migrants, especially on Sundays (OC)

▼ Figure 5.14 - Children are reading and playing in the playground, while their parents wait and interact (OC)

5.4 The public library

Another place that was named by a few respondents and the manager in the bookstore as an alternative, is the public library in Dalang. However, although it was named by quite a few respondents, the place was hard to find. Dalang has four public libraries that are located throughout the whole neighborhood. The biggest and oldest one is located near the shopping center. It is located on the second floor of a building in a small alley that is part of the urban village that lies in the research area. The library has some book shelves in one part of the floor, while the other part consists of tables with chairs for approximately 50 people and computers for another 15. There are two employees working at the entrance. Furthermore, there is an office for the overall manager and a room for activities. These activities are held by the volunteer organization that is allied to the library. In the hallway walls are decorated with pictures from these activities and posters with information. One wall is totally filled with papers on which visitors can write their dream.

Initiators
The public library was, as its name suggests, founded by the local government of Dalang. It was founded in 2008 and is fully financed and managed by the government. The library has been set up for two reasons. At first: provide a public service to the people to learn by reading books. These books are all informative books about for example computer skills, geography, business, logistics, etcetera. On the other hand, around that time, Dalang already had a lot of community libraries that were run by volunteer organizations, residential complexes and factories. However, the quality of these facilities was rather poor and discouraged people to leave the compound after work.

The manager of the public library, however, shares a concern about the current threats for the public library. Over time, the amount of visitors has declined to 300 or 400 visitors a day, while this was more right after the opening. She blames the invisibility of the amount of community libraries and the establishment of the new bookstore. Although the importance of libraries and reading is clear and also advocated by Shenzhen local government in her campaign to *"become a real Shenzhener"*, right now there is not a clear view on the supply and spread of libraries in Dalang (Interview 21).

Activities
The activities that can be observed in the library are quite limited, compared to for example the bookstore. Most of all, people are reading on one of the tables, using a computer for various purposes (not for gaming) or searching for a book in one of the shelves. During all these activities, there is no interaction that can be observed. People are reading in total silence without having any contact with other visitors.

The volunteer organization organizes various reading-related and non-reading related activities for the people of Dalang. Most of them take place in public space, for example at the Labor Square: "Reading activities to discuss books, but also just for fun, like games on the square or promotional activities for reading itself" (Interview 21). Sometimes around 100 people join these activities (Interview 34).

Meaning
Given the silence and solitude in which people read, it makes sense that one of the visitors of the library said he would come here to: *"to learn some things, about the work I do, for example. I work*

in a clothing factory and want to know more about production and logistics. Here, they have books about these subjects" (Interview 34). He then continues: "*I like being here. It's quiet and easy and I can read books and stress off a bit. Also the activities are very nice. I don't like that they do not have as many books as in, for example, the bookstore. But for me that is alright. But I also know some people that therefore do not come and will rather visit the bookstore or other libraries. It is small, you know"* (Interview 34).

For this visitor – and it can be assumed using the observations that this counts for many more visitors – the library clearly has a functional role in this person's ambition to become a smarter person. Therefore, he regularly visits the place to read the books of his interest, making the place a very familiar one. Since the design of the place doesn't make him feel at home, he rather feels like having a public office to study (Interview 34). He emphasizes the fact that reading is an individual activity and he will therefore not come here to meet other people. The organized activities from the volunteer organization focus on this social aspect, so that he will visit these with a group of friends to meet some other people and have a lot of fun (Interview 34).

▼ Figure 5.15 - Seats, tables and computers in the public library (OC)

▲ Figure 5.16 - Book shelves in the library (OC)

▼ Figure 5.17 - Pin-up boards show pictures of activities that were organized by the volunteer organization (OC)x

5.5 The Skate Shop

The skate shop is located right next to the music store. During the visits there, the skate shop immediately drew attention by the amount of skaters that walked in and out. The shop is almost designed in exactly the same way as the music store. However, instead of music instruments decorating the walls, these are full of skates and skate accessories, as well as pictures of various skate events. The owner of the shop is Jié, who runs the shop and a big associated skate club together with its fiancée. There is almost always one of them present in the shop and if not: Jié, his fiancée or anyone from the skate club can be found at the Labor Square where they usually skate.

Initiators

The skate shop is owned by Jié. In an interview he explains a lot about how and why he started this shop in Dalang. 6 years ago, when he was 17 years old, he arrived in Shenzhen as one of the many young migrant workers. He situated in Dalang, since he got a job in one of the factories there. Almost immediately, he started a small skate club with some friends. Jié then already loved skating, since he did it a lot at his parental home. They practiced on the Labor Square and some other spots in Dalang. He then continues: *"Within three years my dream came true. I saved enough money, around 30.000 RMB, to start this shop"* (Interview 22).

From that moment on, the skate club had a physical place and became bigger and bigger. The owner explains that he had two main reasons for starting his shop. At first, he wanted to become an entrepreneur, because this is an important ambition in his regional culture. Hence, he wanted to earn money with his own business. However, he explains that on the other hand he saw the need of a place to stay for all the skaters in the club. He then decided to combine the shop with a sort of social place: a real meeting place for all the skaters, where they can also buy all the skate-related stuff they need.

The shop has thus been designed as some kind of social meeting place for all the skaters from the club. According to Jié: *"I want to show that this place is the place for the skaters"* (Interview 22). In order to reach this goal, he decorated the store with pictures from the club, tournaments and trips. The community, he is talking about, consists of around a 1000 active members (Interview 31). Communication with this community about upcoming events, such as trips and tournaments, happens through QQ & WeChat, two large social network platforms. The community has been built up from skaters (currently a few hundred) that have been members of the club over the past couple of years. Some of them left Dalang for other neighborhoods, but are still part of this "virtual community" (Interview 22).

Activities

Almost all of the places in Dalang that have been visited have activities that mostly occur between the walls of a certain physical place. The skate shop is a little odd, since it uses the public square as some kind of lengthening piece of the store. Indeed, skating is an outdoor activity and cannot be performed within a 20 m^s shop. For the purpose of finding third places in Dalang, it is inevitable not to take into account activities that are being performed by members of the skate shop on the square.

On a very specific part of the Labor Square, many **skating activities** take place, such as free skating and skate classes. Every day from 5 till 9 pm and on Sunday the whole day, various trainers give classes to young children and youth. Besides, a ramp and some other attributes are being

▲ Figure 5.18 - The interior of the skateshop (OC)

▼ Figure 5.19 - The skaters claim a big part of public space at the Labor Square (OC)

used by skate club members to perform tricks and practice for tournaments. In the meantime, some of them sit on the ground, have a chat with each other, and watch others performing tricks. These activities always take place on the same spot at the square. During the moments that people are skating, music will play through a speaker and lots of people will watch the skaters performing tricks.

The skate club has a lot of **other activities** that are not bonded to the location of the store. Since they participate in many tournaments and games, a part of the club travels through the whole city and some other parts of the province (or even China). Besides, Jié organizes some non-skate-related trips that attract a lot of members. Although these activities don't take place in or near the shop, many club members join them.

One last primary activity that is clearly observable in the skate shop is a constant group of young people – mostly skaters – that **hang out and relax, while interacting**. Sometimes, these are trainers that wait in between the lessons or some members that keep an eye on the shop for a short time (Interview 34). During heavy rains, however, a big group of skaters tried to fit into the shop to cover for the rain. Besides, during lunch and dinner, some of the members will eat together in the shop.

Visitors

As already might have been recognized, there seems to be no such thing as real visitors that make use of the skate shop. Using the word "member" seems to be more legitimate. Indeed, all the skaters that come to the skate shop, including people that just buy some skate related stuff there, are members of a larger community, one that is more present and obvious than for example the visitors of a bookstore. The community is open for everyone and held together by a virtual place (QQ & WeChat) and a physical place, owned by Jié: *"... the boss of the community"* (Interview 34). All respondents therefore not talk about other skaters, but about members and friends (Interview 22, 23, 24 & 34).

Two of the respondents at the skate shop were also part of an important group within the community: the trainers. They give lessons to young children on the square or to some elder youth, that are training for tournaments. In return, they can join the competition and some other tournaments. There are also some trainers that get paid for the job. The trainers form an important part of the group. According to the two respondents, they come to the shop and the square around 4 or 5 times a week (Interview 23 & 24).

Meaning

It becomes clear that the skate shop with its club plays an important role in the life of their members. All of the three skaters that have been interviewed stressed the importance of the place in order for them to do what they love to do: skating. They underline the importance of a "home base", since according to one of them skating is: *"... a joint activity"* (Interview 24). The square – and some other spots in Dalang, such as parks – has the ultimate surface for the skaters to practice their tricks. All the preconditions thus seem to be there: the square, the club and a physical place as home base. This underlines the functional meaning of the skate shop for its members.

As has been mentioned, the skate club seems like one big group of friends. According to one of the skaters, that is what makes Dalang and the skate shop a great place: *"I think the most important thing about a place is that you have friends. Once you have friends, you will like the place. For*

me, skating is about friends, so I do like the place here" (Interview 24). All respondents say they meet their friends when they come to the shop or the square. It is a place for skaters to meet other skaters that are often already their friends.

Like with the music store, these skaters belong to a certain club and show real attachment to the place ánd the people. The skate shop and the community really feel like a second home to the three skaters that have been interviewed (Interview 23, 24 & 31). The skaters are not only having chit chats about social life; they really help each other in personal life (Interview 23) or the skate shop owner, when, for instance, he needs someone to watch the store for a minute.

5.6 Dalang Dream Center

Professor Li told that Dalang has various volunteer organizations, such as the small grass volunteer organization, Jumpjang and the Dalang Dream Center (Interview 8). The last organization was founded in 2012 and has a physical location a few minutes from the center of Dalang, offering services and a relaxing place for young working migrants. This is also the reason why the Dream Center has been taken into account in this research, altough it is not situated within the focus area. The center is situated in the ground floor of a residential building in the middle of an industrial area. It contains one big office that also has some sort of living room in which people can relax. Outside is a small terrace, next to the community library, where people can also read inside. Furthermore, there are a few more offices and class rooms for various activities. They all surround the open courtyard that has a big grandstand for outdoor activities.

Initiators
The Dalang Dream Center has been totally founded and subsidized by the local government in order to create a platform for all kinds of volunteer organizations to improve the young migrant workers in personal and social skills and help them become better people (Interview 11). Although there are some other organizations and schools that organize activities at the Dream Center, it is mainly the Dream Center itself that organizes various workshops and classes but also recreational activities.
The goal is to offer various services, varying from a place to relax or read to offering classes about social abilities and the inner people. As one of the employees, Li Si Qin, says: *"We want to be a second home for the migrants at least. We really hope that they can find and get here what they don't have at home or work, some public services and the opportunity to learn from each other. This is also what they want, so we try to accommodate to that demand"* (Interview 11). Since many migrants in Dalang are very young and therefore very vulnerable, the local government and the Dream Center considered it necessary to offer some places with action and a safe environment.

Activities
The activities in the Dalang Dream Center can be divided in two categories. First, there are daily activities that happen during the opening time of the center. The most important one is reading in the community library. Becoming a member of the library is free, so that everyone can read books. People are asked to deliver the books they have bought and read in order for others to be able to read them as well. This way, the library's supply is defined by the community that it serves. People read both in the library and outside on the little terrace. In the weekends it can be very busy in the library.

The Dream Center was initiated in order to organize activities, such as workshops and classes for

▲ Figure 5.20 - The inner square at the Dalang Dream Center (OC)

▲ Figure 5.21 - The community library at the Dalang Dream Center (OC)

▼ Figure 5.22 - Attending a workshop on "how to make friends" (OC)

the young migrants. Hence, this is the second – and more important group – of activities. On a daily base, in the evenings and on Sundays the whole day, there are various workshops in one of the classrooms in the center. During the research, a workshop on "how to make friends" has been visited in order to get a better view on these activities. Through various exercises and little games, the attendees learned how to present and introduce themselves to strangers. Apparently, some were better able to do this than others, causing the shyest migrants to sit in the back of the class and wait behind others. However, through the skills of the volunteer that lead the class, everyone got actively involved in all exercises.

Visitors

The visitors of the Dalang Dream Center are obviously very mixed. Both in the library and at the organized class a very mixed group of young men and women can be observed. The people that visit the library mostly live in the direct surrounding of the building. The activities, such as the workshops, also attract people that live further away from the center. According to the employee and also following from the observations during the workshop, most visitors are very young and often just arrived in Dalang. This made it quite hard to interview people at the Dream Center. During the first regular visit (when there was no activity) three migrants – of the four that were present – didn't want to answer any questions and looked quite afraid, or at least suspicious.

Meaning

An interview has been conducted with one of the visitors, Zeng Zhong Cai, that was reading at the terrace during his work break. He is a returning visitor at the Dream Center who joins various activities or just comes to read in the library or to meet some other people. For him, it is all about developing himself into a better and smarter person. Instead of doing computer games or playing basketball the whole day, he beliefs it is important to spend some of your spare time on self-development (Interview 12).

He emphasizes the fact that the Dream Center is not so much a place for social activity with friends like playing basketball or other games, but a place to meet similar minded people that share the same problems in a highly dynamic and unstable society as the one in Dalang. Therefore, it frustrates him that not all people – at for instance his factory – use the possibilities offered by organizations like the Dream Center. According to him, these people have a higher chance to leave Dalang in a short period of time, because they can't integrate in local society. Some of them go on in Shenzhen, while others return (Interview 12).

5.7 Factories

Immediately, during the research, it became clear that factories take an important position in the supply of facilities for the people of Dalang. Often, migrants that were interviewed in one of the visited places told about small libraries, cinemas and basketball fields within the factory compound. During field research, it was not possible to visit a factory compound that offers some of these facilities. Therefore, information about these factories and its facilities has been conducted from several interviews with professors at the China Development Institute (CDI) and informal conversations with migrants on the streets or respondents from the semi-structured interviews.

So, why will factories offer these services to their workers? A little research on the internet shows that factories are trying to attract labor force by offering these kind of amenities in online job offers (Kongrong, 2014). But the reason is more thorough, at least according to the CDI. Due to

the overall deficit of public services, infrastructure and facilities in Dalang – both stressed by the CDI and the migrants themselves, factories (and other private companies) tend to jump in this hole. Encouraged by their culture to invest in communities and knowing that the local government doesn't have sufficient budgets, they start to develop (semi-)public facilities in for example factories, but also shopping centers, etcetera (Interview 8, 9 & 10).

According to some of the respondents (Interview 12), the facilities have a highly functional character in order to bring the workers some relaxation and let them stress off a bit. To a lesser extent, they provide places to learn or really become a better and smarter person, such as an informative library or specific workshops. The focus clearly lies on offering a place to relax after a long day of work, potentially with some fellow colleagues or friends.

Mixing
Due to these emerging facilities inside the compound, many migrants do not longer have to leave for a basketball game or to read a book. They can now just stay in the compound and have some functional or social activity. The way migrants look towards this phenomenon is hard to get a grip on: one of the migrants that has been spoken to, stress that it is not good to just stay in the compound for any activity, because you don't meet new people and it won't help your personal development (Interview 12). Another respondent that these facilities are only for during breaks (Interview 31). However, these respondents were spotted in a place outside the factory compound, giving them a prejudged position when it comes to this topic. They apparently choose not to stay within the compound, because they prefer spending their free time outside the compound.

The experts from the CDI emphasize the importance of people coming off the factory compound for any form of recreation. They say it is important to mix with the local society and meet other migrants that share the same interests or problems. Everyone needs a social network in order to have a stable and sustainable personal life. Within the compound, there are little chances for migrants to meet people that can help bringing them further in work and personal life. Besides, the young migrants should create their own cultural identity by performing the activities they love to, such as singing, dancing or skating (Interview 8, 9 & 10).

5.8 Future development

This research not only wants to provide a view on the consistency, characteristics, visitors and initiators of third places, but also on the (future) emergence of these places. Asking questions about how current places have been established is not the only perspective that has been taken to get answers. An interview with the Planning Bureau of Shenzhen, the experts from CDI, a local project developer and the migrants should broaden the scope on the demand and supply of future places for migrants to come, interact, learn and develop themselves.

Migrants
Asking migrants if Dalang needs more places for them to spend their free time in the way they want to, puts up different answers. Although almost all respondents agreed on the fact that Dalang needs more places in general, they are not consistent in what these places should look like. From the 22 visitors of several places that have been interviewed 16 said they want more of these places in Dalang. However, the answers are not really precise about how these places should look like. Only a few (Interview 7, 16, 17, 19 & 25) gave concrete examples of places for ac-

tivities such as music, games, workshops and basketball. There is also a bigger group that doesn't have a clear idea on what kind of places Dalang exactly needs (Interview 1, 2, 3, 12, 14, 15, 18, 20, 23, 26, 27).

The China Development Institute (CDI)
As an important research institution, the CDI is closely involved in the issues concerning Dalang. According to Li Junkui, Tang Huijian and Guo Wanda, there is a task for the local government to include different stakeholders in the creation of new social meeting places and public facilities in Dalang. Since, the local government is not able to provide all services on its own due to financial reasons, private companies will ánd should jump in to fill the gap. Li Jinkui: *"We should ask ourselves how to ask public space from the private"* (Interview 36). In the development of the neighborhood, private companies thus will play a more important role in the provision of what is needed by the public. This is also encouraged by the large amount of migrants without Shenzhen Hukou and the current baby boom, which increases the pressure on the local government.

According to Guo Wanda, however, the involvement of private parties in the provision of public services has some negative effects: *"... some people are excluded. I mean, not everyone is able to enter certain amenities, because they focus either directly or indirectly on a certain group of people. For example when a factory offers services within the factory, they are only accessible for the people who are working there. On the long-term it may become the cost of the company"* (Interview 10).

The CDI concludes that not only commercial centers or factories can solve the problem: *"We need interaction between the service that takes place inside and outside the company. Because right now, many migrants are living inside the factory and don't know much about the outside world, that is a big issue. So they have to make more connection with the society, also outside their current community, because this will improve the society as a whole"* (Interview 10). This means that private owners – "Real Dalangers" – will have to be convinced that if they invest in more facilities in and around the residential areas, the people of Dalang will like the village better and will accordingly pay more for their rooms: a positive economic impact for everyone (Interview 8).

The local government should, according to the CDI, play a facilitating role by empowering social entrepreneurs, volunteer organizations and NGO's that function as a direct platform for all activities that take place in Dalang. The factories and private owners should join in this collaboration: *"We need to show them that they can win something and that it's their social duty to join in"* (Interview 10). Especially in the highly evolving neighborhood of Dalang, where higher-quality factories are coming in and people are developing themselves, services and recreational facilities should as much as possible be mixed to improve the quality of the physical places and the inclusive cultural development of the people (Interview 8, 9 & 10).

Shenzhen Planning Bureau
The Shenzhen Planning Bureau performs all planning activities for different districts in Shenzhen. During the interview with planner Cai Zhi Min (Interview 32), he gave some insights in the new spatial plan for the northern part of Dalang, which will be developed in the near future. Although the plan doesn't contain any visited place, it provides some perspectives on how the government approaches the public needs in the way they plan new areas in Dalang.

The northern part of Dalang is already partly built up. One can find a small urban village, some unbuilt plots and greenery. There is room for new development and this is why the local au-

thorities started to zone in 2009. However, in 2011, the plan has been revised into a more overall spatial plan, that was more flexible that the "American Zoning". Now, in 2014, the newest version of the plan has been presented (although it cannot be found online yet). The comprehensive plan focuses on two main principles: the attraction of highly qualitative cloth design factories and accordingly on the attraction of higher qualitative commercial and public facilities for the "*better-skilled people that work in these fabrics*" (Interview 32).

Therefore, a new commercial area will be developed in the center of all the clothing factories, because: *"More skilled people want different places, where they can drink coffee, tea, a bookstore, technology shops, fashion stores. Places where they can communicate with each other, like in the city center"* (Interview 32). So this means that the government also wants some more public facilities: *"There will be a school, cultural facilities and sport facilities, like a small stadium, reading centers, a library and activity rooms. Also we want a small theater, and something like a small museum and theater. Most of them will be located in the commercial center"* (Interview 32). No matter who invests, private parties or the local government, since these are listed in the plan, they will be developed. The plan thus clearly creates a framework for development. If private parties want to develop the new commercial center, they have to follow the requests from the planning bureau. However, this will be a tough negotiation: almost all the land is owned by private owners and they rather want to develop residential buildings, since this will bring in more money that commercial or industrial development (Interview 32).

Project Developer

The local project Developer HuanCheng that owns the commercial center in Dalang is planning to expand with 60.000 m2. Currently, the project developer is busy attracting shop owners to start a store in the new mall that has been requested by the major factories. These factories want to have a better offer for new workers when it comes to commercial facilities. The new mall will also contain a big children's playground of 1000 m2 and many children's clothes shops, because of the baby boom in Dalang. Unlike in the first part however, there will not be a facility such as a big bookstore or stage for singing events. The second step will contain a training shop for English, arts and computer skills, but mainly it will provide more expensive shops for high-level customers, that are becoming more and more apparent in Dalang (Interview 33).

▼ Figure 5.23 - Flyer from HuanCheng for the new commercial center in Dalang (OC)

§6 Discussion & conclusion

This chapter will discuss the results that can be drawn from the research and confront them with the theoretical knowledge on third places. What can we say about third places in the highly evolving context of a factory town as Dalang? First, it will draw some conclusions on the appearance of third places in Dalang and the way this fits within what we already know about third places in the western context. Besides, attention will be paid to the meaning of these places in the Chinese context. Accordingly, the future development of third places in Dalang will be treated to end with an overall conclusion on the (future) emergence and meaning of third places in Dalang.

6.2 Third places in Dalang

As has already been mentioned in the results chapter, the concept of third places apparently does make sense to people in Dalang. At least, respondents were able to point at various places when the concept was described to them, leading the research to several places that show clear characteristics of a third place as Oldenburg describes them (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 20-64). And although there is not a list or clear typification of what can be called third places in the West, the observed activities and perceived meaning gave us enough direction to find them in the Chinese context as well. Apparently, third places, such as coffee shops and libraries, do not only evolve in the civilized and developed first world countries with many middle-class people, but also in countries with a developing lower-class.

Sometimes, there seems to be a blur area between activities that take place in public space, such as playing cards, basketball or football and activities that take place within third places. Public spaces might be parochialized or claimed as well and therefore focus on one group of people or one specific activity that might have similar effects as third places. However, in the case of third places, there is always an organization or someone that rules the place and the development of the place. This is a distinction to keep in mind, while discussing the emergence and meaning of third places in Shenzhen as a replenishment on activities in public space.

So, what can we say about third places in Dalang then? Immediately, following from the results, a clear distinction is visible in the parties that own or have initiated a third place:

*   Commercial entrepreneurs (bookstore);
*   Small business entrepreneurs (music store, skate shop);
*   Public organizations (public library, dream Center);
*   Factories;

The different initiators cause places to have different purposes and, accordingly, different activities and meanings. Generally speaking, some overarching conclusions can be drawn upon the concept of third places – as Oldenburg (1989) puts it – in China before moving on to the more in-depth differences between the visited places. In essence, namely, they do all have in common that people visit these places regularly besides the home and work for some playful, though useful, purposes. All places, that have been visited, are in principle public places that are very accessible to everyone. Except for facilities within factories, all places have an inclusive sphere, although sometimes on private ground, with no formal rules of membership or entrance. Besides, they are all situated in the center of Dalang, located within the direct proximity of their visitors. Hence, in all cases to at least some extent, visitors are able to visit the place "as they are", whenever they want to, knowing they will find company if they want to. The synergism as a consequence from the activities that serve as a basis for interaction is highly tangible.

Overall, one characteristic clearly steps out from the findings, since it differs slightly from what happens in third places in for example Western Europe. That is, in Dalang, all visits are somehow related to self-development of the visitor, while this is not always connected to visiting a third place in the Netherlands. Visiting a third place in China therefore always initially has a very functional goal, such as reading, learning how to play guitar or to skate. Although these activities are often interrelated with an entertaining or relaxing aspect, they clearly show the role of self-development – for instance in social terms – in Chinese third places. At the same time, however, this is not (always) the case in Western Europe, where the act of conversation and other social activities, such as drinking coffee or working in a coffee bar, tend to play a larger role than personal development by performing an activity (Rosenbaum, 2007 & Lawson, 2002).

Though, it is not hard to find an explanation for the previous notion of self-development. The visitors of third places in Dalang are almost completely consisting of migrant workers. These people can be contemplated as a developing class of the Chinese urban society. The young, low-educated people that work often six days a week, are trying to spend their free time on a combination of useful and playful activities, fitting their *"leaving, searching & becoming"* lifestyle (Wang, 2012). Almost all respondents, especially in the cases of the library, the bookstore and the dream center, mentioned their eager to become better and smarter in whatever they want. Since many of the migrants don't continue studying after high-school, those places offer the possibility to cultivate the knowledge and skills that they have missed.

Thus, whereas third places in the Western world can sometimes resemble elite clubs for middle or high class people, in Dalang they mostly attract low class workers. For example Starbucks, something we genuinely call a third place in Western Europe, looks more like an elite club in China, attracting middle or high class workers and students (Lin, 2012). In Dalang however, more local and down-to-earth shops and facilities seem to function the same for the low-class migrant: they offer familiarity, shelter and an inclusive sphere to cultivate knowledge and personal skills. All visited places are very open to migrants, providing – at least to some extent – connections between them in a highly evolving district. Indeed: a network of people to hold on to, when the home or work cannot furnish this.

6.2 Meaning of third places in Dalang

As Elfick (2012, p. 199) and Lia (2012, p. 92) put it, new diverse types of social spaces, both public and private have emerged that are increasingly being used as arenas through which individuals may find, identify and express themselves. This is something that is clearly visible in Dalang, following from the interviews and observations. New leisure, commercial and public service facilities have emerged – mostly privately owned – that now take an important position in people's daily life. This, however, also means that different places provide different activities and therefore have a different meaning for their visitors. This paragraph will take a more thorough look at these variety of meanings.

Commercial entrepreneurs
The bookstore is a good example of a store, initiated by a commercial entrepreneur. They are different from the small business entrepreneurs in terms of scale and this is also reflected in the meaning the place fulfills for its visitors. Due to the higher amount of activities within the bookstore (or similar large scale commercial facilities that function as a third place), there is a larger difference in the meaning the store has for its visitors. Primarily, these places prove to be – what

Rosenbaum calls – places-as-practical. People come to the bookstore, for instance, to read and accordingly to relax or learn something, due to inexistency of books or reading facilities at the home or work (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 62). However, when looking at the social and emotional meaning the store has, various groups appear to attach a different meaning to the place.

First of all, there is a group of readers that visits the place individually and therefore maybe enjoy some companionship, but are not actively searching or opting for interaction or any other form of social contact. For this group, the emotional loyalty can be great, though it is not caused by social support within the store. The profit of visiting the bookstore for them lies within the cultivation of their knowledge and skills by reading.

However, there is also a group of migrants that join each other in reading books and obviously consider it as a social activity. For them, visiting the bookstore serves as a basis for interaction. This also counts for parents in the store that are waiting for their children and people in the café. The social and even emotional meaning here is far bigger, because they genuinely gain something in personal perspective due to the social support. They get their daily amount of social interaction, are offered new jobs or housing by others or even make new friends. This all causes them to become loyal to the place, because they simply experience the social gain of visiting the bookstore.

Small business entrepreneurs
Within the category of small business entrepreneurs, the skate shop and the music store are perfect examples. Both places are run by a young entrepreneur that initiated the place because he missed something in Dalang for the migrants. They therefore moved from visitor to initiator. Apparently, they belong – together with larger scale businesses – to this group of private entrepreneurs that jumped in a whole new gap, as has been described in literature. They create social spaces outside state control, encouraged by growing consumerism due to larger freedom and higher incomes in the post-Mao era (Elfick, 2011, p. 199). Both businesses provide a place for their visitors to come on a regular base, hereby offering shelter, a place to perform a desired activity and a strong familiarity with people that share the same interests. In both cases, the visitors are very loyal to the place because they gain something: it's a home away from home.

Something that is quite worth mentioning, is the importance for both groups to belong to a real community. The fact that one might claim he belongs to a certain community, provides stability in a highly evolving district like Dalang, with highly unstable places as the home and work. In Western society, however, this is not always the case. A returning visitor of a coffee shop can attach social and even emotional meaning to a place, but will do this most often because this is part of his lifestyle, that is in turn part of an imagined community (Shaw, 2007, p. 141). Although this is also partly at stake in for example Chinese' Starbucks's (Lin, 2012), the importance of belonging to a real community when it comes to these kind of third places in Dalang seems more tangible than in the West.

In a more active and visible way, this is also shown by the entrepreneurs themselves using pictures from their own community activities to decorate the stores. The "servicescape décor" is therefore designed by its own customers: *"encouraging intercustomer and employee socialization"* (Rosenbaum, 2006, p. 55). This clearly shows how the identity of the community and the individual within that community is being shaped by the place and vice versa. Although there are no formal criteria of membership or entrance, it leads to parochializing effects, in which the commu-

nal feeling is so strong that the barrier for new people to access the community can become too high. These parochializing effects are already visible in public space, where the skaters claim a big part of the labor square for their activities.

At last, the skate shop provides another perfect example of what has been mentioned in the literature. The proliferation of virtual networks in the Chinese society is also visible in Dalang. Besides the fact that almost every migrant owns a smartphone and therefore easily has access to all kinds of virtual social networks, such as WeChat and QQ, these are also being used by some places in the interaction between "place & people". As such, the skate shop has an online community of around 1000 members that can be reached through these networks and informed about upcoming activities and events. On the other hand, the accessibility for members to contact other visitors, or even the owner, is very high. Generally speaking, these networks thus do not replace, but form an addition to physical third places in Dalang.

Public organizations

The Dalang Dream Center and public library are public organizations that are fully financed by the local government. Quite obviously, the activities in these places contain a high level of knowledge building and skills improvement. To a lesser extent they also offer a place to go and relax besides the home and work. This also follows from the results, in which it is visible that the activities in both places focus merely on (informative) reading and the development of social skills, giving the place primarily a very practical meaning. However, this educational role goes along with social interaction and support in the vibrant life of migrants in Dalang, causing them to attach social and emotional meaning towards these places. This is mainly because of the special activities that are organized by various volunteer organizations.

Factories

This last category is an exception when it comes to the accessibility of places. Although facilities within the factory compound are open for everyone that works in the factory, people from outside the factory are blocked. It is a perfect example of private parties offering public spaces, with exclusion of certain groups. Besides, the high variety of facilities, ranging from libraries, health services and supermarkets to cinemas and game centers, causes the use to be highly diverse. From what has been heard by several respondents, including experts from the CDI, these facilities are often small and accommodate a very practical demand, often because of their location away from the center: a place to watch TV, to do some shopping or to read a book.

Besides, some respondents point at the negative image that surrounds *"staying within the compound"*. This does not fit the overall image that has been perceived during the research of the *"migrant that is eager to develop himself"*. Hence, this might indicate that workers indeed visit these facilities for very functional aims. On the other hand, it remains conjecturing how big the group behind the fences of the compounds is and how these people feel about these activities. One might therefore still question to what extent these facilities really have a social or emotional meaning for its visitors. Overall, this is an interesting question for future research.

6.3 A great good for society

This thesis asked the question: *"How do third places emerge in the Da Lang district in Shenzhen and what is the meaning for their visitors?"* The aim was thus also to clarify the meaning third places in Dalang fulfill for their visitors and elaborate on the emergence of these places in

contemporary China. The highly evolving society in Dalang, with a new generation of *"leaving, searching and becoming"* migrants theoretically provides a good soil for third places to flourish. It has been made clear in the previous paragraph how the specific activities within and meaning of third places might vary due to differences in initiator, size and intention of the place. This affirms the conceptions that have been made after the theoretical consideration. However, leaving behind the specific differences, the overall emergence of third places plays an important role in the broader Chinese society and future development of Chinese cities.

Many young migrants in Dalang seem eager to spend their free time on the cultivation of knowledge and personal skills. They use third places, such as shops and libraries, to find and identify themselves with others in an inclusive environment. These places are often founded by commercial entrepreneurs and small business entrepreneurs. They started the place, because they missed places for their desired activities in the neighborhood and felt some social responsibility and personal duty to accommodate this demand. Some are also founded and funded by the local government as a social service and therefore concern public (volunteer) organizations. The last group of places is developed by factories and mostly situated within the compound as an extra facility for the workers.

In all cases, visitors perform a primary individual recreational or educational activity in a communal environment, that serve as a basis for interaction. Especially reading and workshops for social and personal skills are very well present in the wide arena of activities, giving almost all researched places a very educational role and practical meaning. However, these activities always go along with the act of conversation, endorsing social activity between visitors within these places. Therefore, in some cases migrants do also visit the place because they have friends there and belong to a real community. Generally speaking, in all researched cases a wide variety of often educational or other useful activities was observed, almost always accompanied with social interaction.

However, as Oldenburg puts it: *"It is not the physical appearance of third places or any other hard characteristics, such as the leveling, the primacy of conversation, the certainty of meeting friends and so on, what makes them so special and distinctive in essence. It is the importance of what third places contribute to both the whole person and the greater good for society"* (Oldenburg, 1989, p. 43). Indeed, this is what makes third places distinctive from the home, work or other amenities, let alone in Dalang. This is not only because of the useful activities that are present in these places, but mainly because of the higher societal meaning these places play in people's life.

Places as the bookstore, the skate shop and the music store have indeed shown to function as an arena in which migrants may find, identify and express themselves through the activities they undertake. In the evolving district of Dalang, migrants are therefore shaped and developed by these places. They show loyalty to the place where they can go after work or besides home, because they experience personal gain through the social support they receive and the numerous learning possibilities, both intentional and unintentional, they are confronted with.

Indeed, the meaning these places fulfill for their visitors transcends the individual in Dalang. One should bear in mind that third places should be tailored to the characteristics and needs of the local people and therefore there will always be large differences between places. However, although there are differences in the meaning and activities between places, because of characteristics of the store, such as scale, intention, initiating party or visitors, they do form an important

part of the broader cultural development of the district. If there are more places, either commercial or public, that offer better services and a wider variety of activities, this will foster the cultural development of the whole neighborhood. Overall, there is still a lack of places and facilities for the young developing migrants to go. Can the emergence of new places catch up on this development? And will this go flawless?

6.4 Future development of third places

As some scholars have described, new types of social spaces have emerged in Chinese cities, both public and private (Elfick, 2011, p. 199). Also in Dalang, this is clearly visible. The emergence of small business entrepreneurs and highly commercial facilities, as well as more public facilities, show a variety of stakeholders trying to accommodate a growing demand on places for activities, through ongoing consumerism. The previous paragraph has shown the importance of these places in the personal development of young migrants and the cultural development of Dalang in general. However, the development of future third places faces some challenges, following from various interviews. That is mainly caused by the fact that in Dalang, the point has arrived that "we have to ask public space from the private" (Interview 8 & 36), because the local government is no longer able to succeed in the provision of social spaces and other facilities on its own.

When it comes to larger scale development of commercial facilities, such as the new commercial center in the north of Dalang, an innovative way of planning is already visible. The local government clearly forces private parties through a list of demands to provide some public spaces and facilities for the people of Dalang (Interview 32 & 33). The intentional development of large scale real third places deployed by the government or project developer, is not realistic here. It seems more that the emergence of small businesses or public facilities within these developments might show up as third places, since these are better able to tailor to the demands and wishes of local people than large scale commercial facilities.

Small and large commercial parties jump in more and more when it comes to the development of both intentional and unintentional new third places. Examples are the local project developer that started the bookstore, but also the small business entrepreneur. Something that has been feared here in literature, is the fact that this would lead to forced consumption of anything before being able to use these spaces or places (Miao, 2011, p. 190-192). The bookstore in Dalang, however, is a perfect example of *"not having to buy any book, but still being able to read"*. While, indeed, this threat may become more serious when it comes to larger scale commercial facilities and should of course be guarded, the local shops still show an open and inclusive sphere, in which buying or consuming is not the primary purpose.

A bigger threat for the above shift in provision of public places or facilities by private parties can be the parochializing effects, as for example Guo Wanda from CDI described them (Walters & McCrea, 2013, p. 358). The results have shown that the migrants live in a highly evolving society. There is no *"real Shenzhen culture"*, due to the high amount of various cultures living along and often, the migrants are not civilized and low-skilled when it comes to social skills (Interview 8, 11, 35 & 36). This not only makes them a very vulnerable group, but also suggestible and formable.

The proliferation of more and more physical places by private parties, that offer certain services or possibilities, such as music shops, game centers and sport clubs, will of course lead to more different communities. On the one hand, migrants will then face more and more opportunities to

express and develop themselves in various places, which is good. However, at the same time, all these different groups will greaten the pressure on public and private space which might lead to conflicts between different "communities", for instance because they claim the same space. The local government will have to play a facilitating and guiding role in this emerging process.

The previous notion also has a diminishing effect on *"real public facilities"*, as has been mentioned by Miao (2011, p. 190-192). Already, in Dalang, the public library faces a lower amount of visitors due to emergence of the Yoyi bookstore and other private community libraries, for example within factories and residential facilities. This clearly shows the consequences of privatization of facilities like these. Although more and more facilities emerge, the interests and purposes of private parties might lead to lower quality amenities and blur the public domain within these places, making them less accessible for certain groups.

Besides some threats, however, within the emergence of future third places in Dalang, there are some great chances, for instance because of the culture. Of course making money is a primary objective for all private parties. The Chinese – and especially Hakka – culture, however, and the social responsibility of various entrepreneurs, such as the one from the bookstore, skate shop and music store, show that these local people are very willing to invest in the cultural development of local society. The stories of these people have proven their local cultural and financial interest to develop the society in which they are situated. This leaves some great chances behind for the local government, that has to provide institutional and organizational support for local groups to encourage them to occupy vacant retail units, hereby *"protecting and serving the public domain, adjacent to these commercial establishments"* (Miao, 2011, p. 190-192). If Dalang is able to maintain and develop these mixed arenas, a win-win situation occurs for factories and villagers, since the quality of life in Dalang will rise accordingly. They will then be able to attract more and better workers, or ask more rent for housing in Dalang.

Something that also has to be recognized here, is the future role of volunteer organizations. Private parties in Dalang are very willing to provide platforms for volunteer organizations and their activities (Interview 33). This has been proven in the past, with the development of the current commercial center that also contains a stage and some workshop rooms. Besides, the local project developer admits he also wants to provide future room for activities in the new parts of the shopping center. Also in public spaces or vacant buildings, some facilities can be developed, like stages or sheltered rooms, in order to provide room for these activities.

The growing urge for more commercial and social facilities that offer room for a variety of educational and recreational activities in Dalang will be served without any doubt. The question is whether this development will implicitly mean that emerging third places will become exclusive places for the upper few, losing the function as an inclusive leveler in society. Third places in Dalang do indeed "*reflect the just things in society*", as Hickman (2013, p. 232) said. In order to stimulate the cultural development of Dalang, the local government should therefore reinforce and strongly guide both small and large scale developments so that more accessible and inclusive places occur: a home away from home where migrants can perform all kinds of recreational and educational activities in a mixed setting.

Reflection

This research has shown some limitations and challenges on which I will elaborate in this section. The biggest challenge by far has been the cultural differences and language barriers when it comes to interviewing both young migrants and experts. The Chinese students helped me in a great way with conducting the interviews. However, information might have still gone lost in translation, as it is something inevitable. The English level of the students was sufficient, yet not subleme, which lead us to some untranslated answers.

Together with the language barrier, the great differences in culture have shown to be hick-ups in performing field research. The young urban migrants in Dalang needed a very soft approach. No conversation was the same, since some were open from the beginning, while others didn't want to answer any personal question. This caused me and the Chinese students to alter our way of conversating with the migrants. Sometimes this meant that we had to skip questions, that I had to leave (since some got scared by strangers) or that we had to shuffle the questions on and on in order to get to the point we wanted to go. Luckily, the Chinese students were pretty good at approaching the migrants, for example by using the right body language and starting the conversation with a little chit-chat. However, some migrants didn't want to answer any questions at all.

Something that was also a challenge, was finding the right places and people. Although I was often able to clarify the purpose and aim of my research and people lead me to various places that could be functioning as a third place, it was sometimes hard to find public organizations that act within the arena I was doing research in. For example, volunteer organizations were hard to find and get in touch with. Also, the effort that has been put into visiting a factory compound with some facilties, has unfortunately not worked out well. Moreover, factories don't want any uninvited guests at their compound. This even resulted in me and a Chinese student being haunted by dogs. It perfectly circumscribes the sometimes sensitive subjects, such as societal development, in China I was trying to put a finger on. Maybe, if I had more time, I would be better able to visit a bigger variety of places, organizations and people, to get an even more complete view on third places in China.

However, something I have been experiencing as a very positive aspect, was the novelty of this research. The fact that there was little theoretical knowledge about third places in China caused me to work open-minded, without having a narrow focus on certain places or organizations. Instead, I only had a starting point and some knowledge on migrants and their leisure activities in Dalang. During the research, I really started to feel that I found something new. I was able to actually add something to the current knowledge on third places by placing this concept in a new context.

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Appendices

1. Questions Initiator/Manager

Short introduction in Chinese about the research.
"Hi, I'm Sjoerd and I am doing research in Da Lang. I'm from a Dutch university and I want to know more about social places in Da Lang where people come and meet each other. I want to understand the meaning of these places, so that we can show the importance of these places in Shenzhen. I would like to ask you some questions that will really help me to finish my research. Thanks in advance!"

Characteristics
- What's your name?
- How old are you?
- Where do you live?
- Education? (What, how many years?)
- Where do you originally come from?
- If he/she is a migrant: where are you from? Why did you migrate? How long do you live here?

Activities
- Why do you come here?
- What kind of activities do you do in this place?
- Can you describe these activities? (frequency, hours)
- Why do you do these activities?
- What do you think about the people that work here?

Functional use
- What do you think about the activities?
- Think about: are they useful, practical or just for fun.
- What do you think about the design of the place?
- Think about: seating, shelter, temperature
- How is your home situation?
- How big is it?
- Can you do the same activities at home, if you want to? This means: are you forced to come here for practical reasons?

Social gathering
- Do you meet other people here?
- If yes: is this on purpose? How many? What do you do together? Frequency?
- Can you describe your relationship with these other people?
- Do you come here primarily to meet people?

Emotional meaning
- Do you feel at home at this place?
- If yes: why? Think about the people, the design of the place?
- Do you recommend this place to new people you meet?
- How important is this place for you?
- Do you want more places like this?
- What should they look like (function, activities and design?)

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- What kind of activities can we find in this place?
- Which of those are aimed and which are just happening?
- Why did you start this place?
- What is the aim of the place?
- What is your personal aim with the place? Think about: making money, helping people, etc.
- How did you start this place?
- Organizational aspects: who helped you? What was the role of the municipality?
- Financial aspects: Did it cost you a lot of money and effort?
- Why did you choose this design?
- Did you use to visit places like this before you started one?
- What do you think about the meaning of your place for visitors?
- Think about: is it just functional, is it to meet other people or is it to function as a second home?
- Do you think your place is important in this neighborhood?
- If so, why?
- Do you think Da Lang needs more places like this?
- If so, why?
- Do you have anything to say or any questions?

3. List of respondents

#	Sex	Age	Location	Function	Education	Origin	Interview
1	Female	20	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
2	Male	20	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
3	Female	20	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
4	Male	35	Bookstore	Manager	Technical School	Guangdong	Short
5	Female	25	Hengguan (developer)	Secretary	University	Guangdong	Short
6	Male	23	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guizhou	Short
7	Male	32	Music Store	Owner	Music School	Sichuan	Short
8	Male	> 40	China Development Institute	Professor	University	Beijing	In depth
9	Male	> 40	China Development Institute	Professor	University	-	In depth
10	Male	> 40	China Development Institute	Professor	University	-	In depth
11	Female	23	Dalang Dream Center	Employee	University	Hunan	Short
12	Male	26	Dalang Dream Center	Visitor	High School	Sichuan	Short
13	Female	20	Bookstore	Employee	High School	Guangdong	Short
14	Male	26	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
15	Female	36	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
16	Male	35	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Anhui	Short
17	Male	25	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangxi	Short
18	Male	25	Bookstore	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
19	Male	20	Basketball Court	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
20	Male	19	Basketball Court	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
21	Female	29	Public Library	Manager	University	Guangdong	Short
22	Male	23	Skateshop	Owner	High School	Guangdong	Short
23	Male	24	Skateshop	Skater	High School	Hunan	Short
24	Male	22	Skateshop	Skater	High School	Hunan	Short
25	Male	23	Music Store	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
26	Female	26	Bookstore Café	Visitor	University	Guangdong	Short
27	Female	23	Bookstore Café	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
28	Female	21	Bookstore Café	Employee	High School	Guangxi	Short
29	Male	9	Bookstore	Visitor	Elementary School	Guangdong	Short
30	Males	25 & 23	Music Store	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
31	Male	23	Skateshop	Visitor	High School	Hunan	Short
32	Male	-	Planning Bureau	Planning officer	University	-	In depth
33	Male	-	Hengguan (developer)	Director	-	Guangdong	In depth
34	Female	19	Public Library	Visitor	High School	Guangdong	Short
35	Male	32	Music Store	Owner	Music School	Sichuan	Single story
36	Male	> 40	China Development Institute	Professor	University	Beijing	In depth