ARCHITECTURE DEPARTMENT

MASTER OF ARCHITECTURE PROGRAMME



CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

2005-2006

DESIGN REPORT

REDEFINING HONG KONG – SHENZHEN BOUNDARY

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May 2006





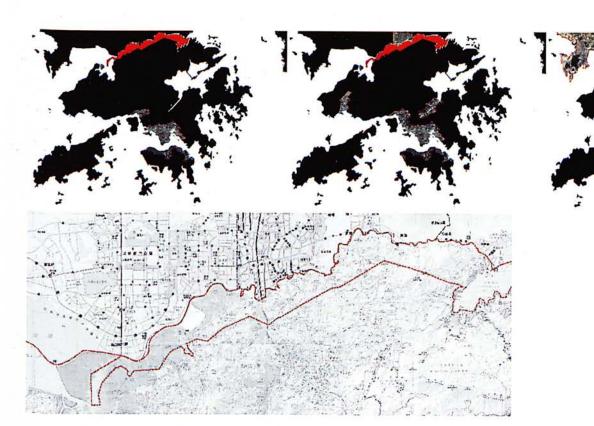
Background

Hong Kong was leased to the British government in 1898 under the Second Convention of Peking. According to that treaty, Shenzhen River was used as the boundary and all the land south of the river was leased.

The boundary has been kept unaltered. During 1949, however, there was a civil war in China. When it ended in 1950, a lot of refugees flew into Hong Kong from the north. In order to secure Hong Kong better, the colonial government at that time set up a Frontier Closed Area (FCA) along the border to provide a buffer zone between Hong Kong & Mainland China. The FCA was altered a few times from 1951 to 1962 and was kept until today.

In the 1980s, there was an economical reform in China and the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone was set up. Within 20 years of time, Shenzhen was developed to a metropolis with a population of 10 million. In contrast, the FCA has been remained as a no-man zone and there has been no response to the rapid urbanization happened in the northern bank. As a result of this, an urban polarity was built up along the Hong Kong - Shenzhen Border.

Before the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the urban polarity was also strengthened by the political polarity between Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The urban polarity may be further viewed as an physical expression of the political polarity – while the Mainland China tried to developed a closer relationship with Hong Kong, Hong Kong was somehow a bit passive in terms of responding to that bridging attempt. After the 1997 handover, however, such kind of political polarity was dissolving. After the implementation of the Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA), Hong Kong has an even closer relationship with the Mainland China, particularly cities in the Pearl River Delta. With this issue in mind, we may find that the political border between Hong Kong and Shenzhen is slowly dissolving with time and there is an urgency in dealing with this issue.

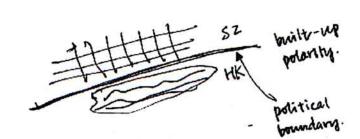


General Issue

The urban polarity built up along the Hong Kong – Shenzhen border and the instable condition of the border caused by the dissolution of political polarity provide an opportunity for the development of the FCA. Such development is in fact a kind of urban planning and architectural response towards the complex and ever changing boundary situation.

Thesis Statement

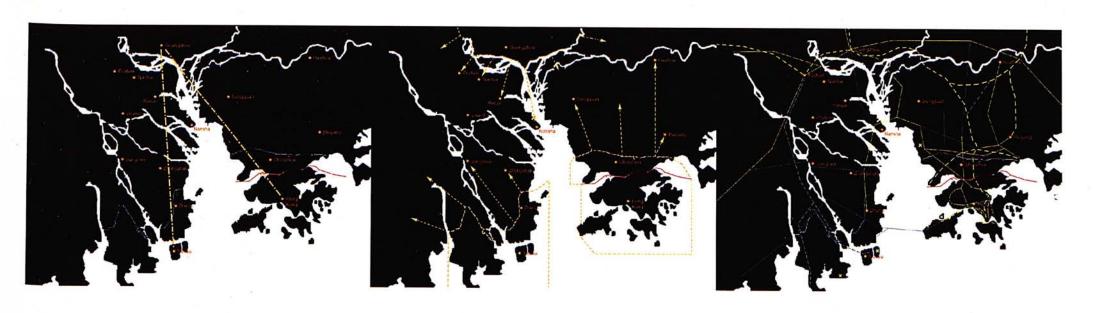
This thesis aims at redefining the prototypes of Hong Kong & Shenzhen political, social & programmatic boundaries in order to respond to the built up polarities as well as the urbanism & cross border activities of the 2 cities, and express through a piece of architecture to create a new social generator.



Top (left to right): Urban Development of Hong Kong & Shenzhen from 1970-2000

Bottom left: Frontier Closed Area (FCA) map

Bottom right: sketches of the built up polarity



Top (left to right): Study on Pearl River Delta future development axis, development models & infrastructure connection

THE AUTONOMOUS BORDER (LIMITS IN ARCHITECTURE)

The phenomenon of the border and architecture are inseparably connected. The act of limitation is the primary aspect of building. Without boundaries there is no territory, and without territories there is no architecture. In order to better define built boundaries, I would like to differentiate between two categories: natural and artificial borders.

Natural borders are traces which are the result of an event-structure. Children playing in the snow require a certain area which is determined by the form and rules of their games, their energies, etc. The traces in the snow describe a territowwhich is a reflection of their activities as well as the boundary between their play area and the area which is out of bounds. A natural border is the the edge of a magnetic field, where the power of the epicenter fades away and the description of the territory ends

Artificial borders, on the other hand, are interventions which divide territories independently of their internal structures. Artificial borders are crected in order to define an extended space, such as a garden wall or the exterior wall of a

While the quality of natural borders is defined by the internal structure of bounded territories. the artificial border defines a territory from the boundary to the inside. Our intuition as architects to provide the user with a home is nothing but the attempt to carve a place out of unlimited. neutral space. And with the physical quality of its borders, we attempt to impose an order and a meaning on this enclosure.

Ultimately design is about the decision as to how to confine a space, be it in an urban envi-staircase. f a territory is to be defined by the quality of its limits, then the built border is the medium of expression of the conventions of its use, with a natural border as the representation, and the artificial border marks out a template of the functional relationships enclosed.

In gractice, however, the spatial design oscillates constantly between the formation of cultural. social and functional relationships. Even when the difference between creating and being formed is not always clear, isn't the art of designing about assimilation of the artificial to the natural porder?

However, this assimilation requires a knowledge of the nature of the space which is to be defined, and this knowledge, dospite careful analysis, has become increasingly difficult to grasp. The social patterns which determine the use of houses, such as family life or the world of work, are in a state of continual disintegration. In the era of tolevision, the border between the private and the public becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish. The once clearly defined geographical and functional territory of the city has become a zone of hybrid nature, in which the social realms of work, recreation and education become increasingly vanue. Natural borders of social patterns are hardly noticeable anymore and require the support of artificial interventions in order to be perceptible at all.

Thus the architect is once again thrown back on his own judgement. His task becomes the conscious ordering and commitment of a scace In this respect, he is comparable to an author of evolve with idiosyncratic lifestyles, habits, fears. loves and hates. Similarly, the architect creates spaces which are like characters; they originate, on the one hand, in the fantasy of the author and, on the other, must be credible as personalties. They live their own lives and develop as the story unfolds. The creation of architecture is the prolection of one's own imagination onto a principally unfamiliar space. It is the transformation of a neutral mass into a clearly recognizable system with the qualities of a personality.

The premise of design as a feeling for autonomous borders of scace crashes into the limits of our own imagination. What is important is the consciousness of this limitation, which results in the discovery of the autonomous porder. What which becomes space itself and which illustrates (Source:Quaderns we describe as an autonomous border is one d'arquitectura the powers formed by the border.

The autonomous border is an argument for the urbanisme, Border transparency of architecture. It is an argument for an understandable, intelligent and intelligible & architecture, one which makes the conformation Barcelona of space, as well as the relative arbitrariness of its limits, sensorially perceptible. It attempts to Col·legi clude the superficiality of a practice without con- d'Arquitectes de clude the superincent, so the survival of definitive Catalunya: 2002) convention. The autonomous border, through its spatial experience, invites the user to compre-Taschen c2004) hension and identification. / Marieus succession

Boundaries,

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He further introduced the concept of 'an autonomous border', which 'is one which becomes space itself and which illustrates the powers formed by the border.' Besides, 'it is an argument for the transparency of architecture. It is an argument for an understandable, intelligent and intelligible architecture, one which makes the conformation of space, as well as the relative arbitrariness of its limits, sensorially perceptible. It attempts to elude the superficiality of a practice without contradictions, and suggests the survival of definitive convention. The autonomous border, through its spatial experience, invites the user to comprehension and identification.'(Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbanisme, Border & Boundaries, Barcelona: Col·legi Oficial d'Arquitectes de Catalunya: 2002)

From the above writings, we can actually extract some important concepts about boundary/border. Boundary/border is actually something more conceptual than physical. The exact location of a boundary is often unclear or controversial. You can never see a line of national border unless when there is a wall/fence constructed to highlight it. Besides, a boundary/border may not be only considered as a one dimensional (as a line) or two dimensional (as a plane), but also as a three dimensional space. It may also due to the matter of resolution. When you draw a black line on a piece of white paper, all you can see may be a very clear distinction between the black and the white. But if you really zoom in the line, the line may no longer be seen as a line, but more a line with an obvious thickness (which may also be considered as a long plane). In that case, the edge of this line may no longer be black or white, but a grey zone instead.

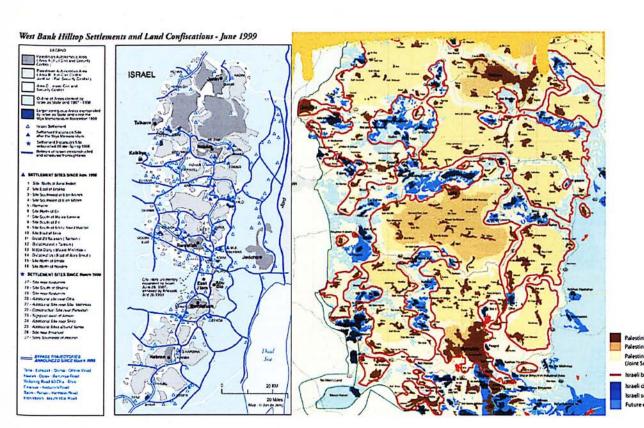
Boundary/border in architecture has such kind of quality too. A boundary/border is not always the straight division between two spaces, but actually a transition space between the two. When we apply this concept to the situation of Hong Kong - Shenzhen border, one may already find that the political border, which is just a conceptual border, follow along the physical border of Shenzhen River, which acts more like a zone than line. If we further apply Matthias Sauerbruch's concept of autonomous border on to the case, then we may say that the Hong Kong - Shenzhen Border should be a border or zone which argues for the transparency, or in the other words, the relationship between the two sides which the border separates. Besides, it should also be an understandable, intelligent and intelligible border/zone which really tells the story of the two cities and expresses the relationship between the two sides.

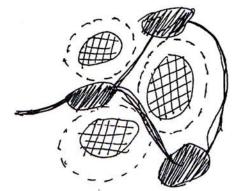
If one says that the existing Hong Kong - Shenzhen Border situation does not reflect the relationship it is now or the relationship it is going to be, then how should we change it? One may also ask whether there are any real cases of boundary/border or not which reflects such kind of quality and influences urban planning and architectural design. Or are there precedents which are dealing with similar issues?

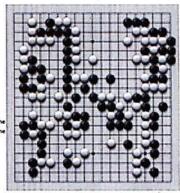
Theory on Boundary/Border

Boundary/border has always been a very important issue which is inseparably connected to urban planning and architecture. One may then ask the question of what a boundary is. 'Euclid defined a boundary as "that which is an extremity of anything", and Aristotle made this more precise by defining the extremity of a thing x as "the first thing outside of which no part [of x] is to be found, and the first thing inside of which every part [of x] is to be found." But these are not really architectural views on boundary.

Matthias Sauerbruch has a very different view on the issue of boundary/border in architecture. In his writing 'the Autonomous Border (Limits in Architecture)', Matthias Sauerbruch from Sauerbruch Hutton Architects tried to categorized borders into natural borders and artificial borders. In his point of view, 'natural borders are traces which are the result of an event-structure' while 'artificial borders are interventions which divide territories independently of their internal structures.' He further elaborates the relationship between the two by saying that 'if a territory is to be defined by the quality of its limits, then the built border is the medium of expression of the conventions of its use, with a natural border as the representation, and the artificial border marks out a template of the functional relationships enclosed.' (Quaderns d'arquitectura i urbanisme, Border & Boundaries, Barcelona: Col·legi Oficial d'Arquitectes de Catalunya: 2002)







Left: Maps of West Bank Settlements (Source: www.lib. utexas.edu/maps/gazastrip.html)

Middle: West Bank partial maps (Source: AMOMA; Koolhaas, Rem, Content, Koln:Taschen c2004)

Top right: sketches of the West Banks situation

Bottom right: the game of 'go' (Wei Oi)

Precedents & Issues

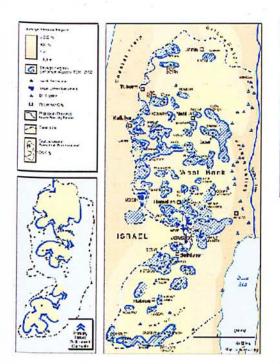
It is in fact very easy to find precedent cases as the world is full of different kinds of boundary or border. Four precedents – Israeli West Bank Settlements, US – Mexican Border, Huang Po River in Shanghai and Potsdamer Platz in Berlin – were chosen to study as they all looked at different kinds of boundary issues and try to find out what issues are related to Hong Kong – Shenzhen Border and what kind of implications or questions do they bring up.

1. Israeli West Bank Settlements

Eyal Weizman is an architect based in Tel Aviv and London. He works with Rafi Segal, and together they have explored the politics of settlement buildings in West Bank. Working with Btselem, an Israeli human rights organization, Weizman has produced a fearsomely detailed map of the West Bank, showing the tortured links of every settlement and settler road, every Palestinian town, village and field. He says such complexity is intentional. In his writing 'the Evil Architects Do' (AMOMA; Koolhaas, Rem, Content, Taschen Koln: 2004), Eyal Weizman actually argued that urban planning and architecture have been used as warfare in terms of redefining territory and occupying space in the West Bank. The organization of space increasing violated human rights and should be considered as war crime.

If we look in detail into the West Banks, we can find that settlements, as well as infrastructure that used to connect them, were placed strategically to isolate or cut through Palestinian existing communities or towns. Besides, unlike Palestinian agricultural settlements which were usually located at flatlands, Israeli settlements were usually built on hilltops in order to dominate their surroundings by the power of vision. In the other words, 'the abstract layout of the cooperative agricultural settlements of the relatively flat Jordan Valley is replaced, with the change of power in Israeli politics, by the elastic and amorphous mountain settlements – rural suburbs, whose form attempts to adapt an ideal, concentric social and strategic model to diverse topographical conditions' (Segal, Rafi; Weizman, Eyal, A Civilian Occupation, the Politics of Israeli Architecture, Babal and Verso, Tel Aviv: 2003)

The major issue related to boundary & territory in the Israeli West Bank Settlements may be more about the dynamic spatial relationship and exchanges of territory. In this area, boundaries are all unstable and temporal. It changes together with the territory of the two different communities over time. If we use another abstract mean to represent the relationship between the two, we may use the game of 'go' (Wei Qi) to represent it – a game of territorial occupation with an ever changing territory on a board (in this case the land of West Bank) with fixed size.





Leftmost: Maps of West Bank Settlements 1966-2005 (Source: www.lib.utexas.edu/maps/gazastrip.html)

Top (left to right): photos of Israeli Hilltop settlements

One may argue that the effect or the intention of the Israeli West Bank Settlements was in fact very negative and against the fundamental requirement of what architecture should do – to do the good of the people. However, if we try to capture the positive aspects of it, we may find that it actually results in a very different kind of urban development. The boundary is no longer a fixed or obvious line. It has a kind of potential and dynamic of changing. The interweaving of two communities may also be considered positively (since the relationship between Hong Kong and Shenzhen is quite different from that between Israel and Palestine). To summarize this part, the precedent actually introduces a very different kind of border treatment – develop a zone (just like a chess board) and let the two compete and interweave to form a dynamic urbanization of the border.



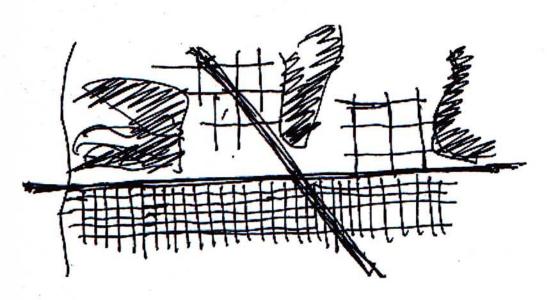
Top: aerial photo of US - Mexican Border (Sources: Google Earth)

2. US-Mexican Border

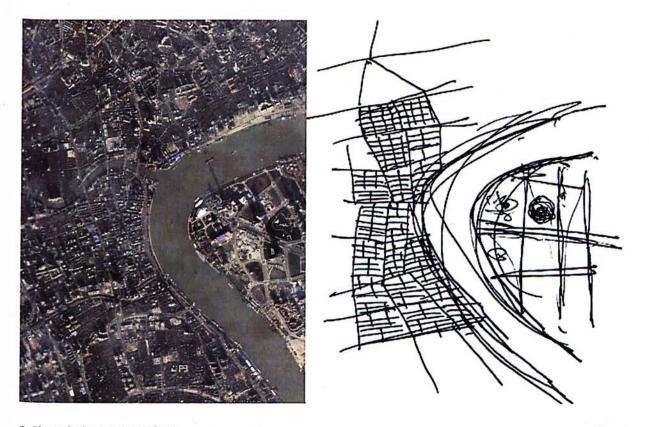
The US / Mexican border is almost 2000 miles long with paired cities all along its length, ranging from small towns of about 50,000 (Douglas / Agua Prieta) to metropolitan regions of over 2 million (San Diego / Tijuana). One view is that these couplings are part of a special border region, different and separate from each nation, and these cities should consequently also be treated as special. Despite their national allegiances, in these cities people speak two languages, share money and telephone services, have industries of one country located in the other, and people sleep in one but work in the other country. The Mexican cities are generally larger than the American and among the fastest growing in the world. Border cities share the same natural resources, yet deal with them in different ways, the lack of cooperation often affecting the other negatively. While the American cities are often poorer than other cities in the US, Mexicans migrate to the border where the cities are often Wealthier than elsewhere in Mexico. There is a flourishing enterprise of cross-border activity. Interaction across the border is multiple and varied: if Americans travel south as tourists or in search of items illegal in their own country, Mexicans move northward to buy commercial commodities not available or more expensive in their own country. The border zone is known in the US largely as the unresolved site of illegal entry, often accompanied by conservative political resentment to the Hispanization of the American south-west. The form of the American city rests largely on automobile travel and lowdensity market distribution, while the denser, bus-oriented, Mexican city is subject to much higher state control. One might speculate about what kind of city a quasi-independent border region might produce, but that remains, at present, an interesting but far-fetched vision. In the meantime, these

cities try to squeeze out benefits from their polarized status.' (MIT Openware Course, Architecture, Theory and City Form, Lecture 18 - Bi-polarity: San Diego / Tijuana, http://ocw.mit.edu/OcwWeb/Architecture/4-241JSpring2004/LectureNotes/detail/lecture18.htm)

The situation happened in the US – Mexican Border is in fact a quite similar to Hong Kong - Shenzhen Border in the sense that in both cases the two cities are interdependent economically and there are many cross border activities. Besides, there is a kind of polarity which attracts people from one side to immigrant illegally to another side. As a result of this, security and surveillance become another important issue. In the US - Mexican Border case, we can see a very interesting situation - the two cities are separated by a fence which was constructed all the way to Pacific Ocean. However, the two cities actually work very much like one city, with most of the industrial area at the northern part and its workers living in the southern part. The kind of tendency of combining and yet separating relationship are very contradicting and interesting. Such kind of contradicting conflict can be observed in Hong Kong - Shenzhen case too. Shenzhen side is more honest in this sense as they develop intensively along the border and express the will of having an intimate relationship with Hong Kong both economically and physically. Hong Kong, despite the fact that the city has become more dependent in Shenzhen, did not truly express such kind of relationship. The way Hong Kong treats the border as well as the existence of the FCA may in fact reveal the hesitation that Hong Kong has when developing intimate relationship with Shenzhen. Such kind of contradicting relationship both physically and conceptually actually worth to be reviewed and challenged.



To summarize this part, one may say that the border is actually a symbol which expresses the relationship between the two cities (similar to the Matthias Sauerbruch's idea in 'the Autonomous Border (Limits in Architecture)'). The study of the US – Mexican Border actually brought above the issue of having contradicting relationship between two cities which need to be re-thought about. How is the border going to be in order to truly meet the needs and the development of the both sides? Or should such kind of contradicting relationship be kept and intensify?



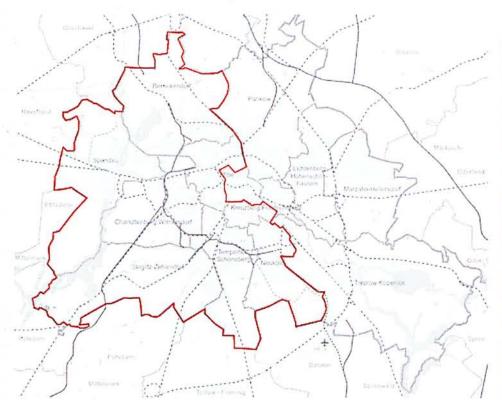
Left: aerial photo of Huang Po River in Shanghai (Sources: Google Earth)

Right: sketches of the site in relation

3. Shanghai Huang Po River

Huang Po River is a river running into the city of Shanghai, cutting it into two halves. On the west bank was called Nanshi which was the old city center of Shanghai. It is mainly composed of very old and fine fabric and reflects a certain degree of opposition to new development. On the east bank, in contrast, is the Pudong area which was transformed from an old industrial area to a modern residential and commercial district. Huang Po River in this case acts like an edge or separator between the two banks. It somehow prevents the fabric and development on each bank from crossing it and spread to the opposite side. In the same time, Huang Po River is also a major tourist spot and acts as an activity generator of the city. In other words, it is an edge or separator when we look at the city fabric and development. But it is also a center or connector when we focus on the city programmes and activities.

Shenzhen River, in contrast, does not have such kind of qualities. When we consider the city fabric and development, it is obviously an edge which separates the two sides. If we consider the programmes and activities, it is also apparent that the river does not contribute to or even suggest any cross border programmes and activities. One may then ask if the relationship between the two cities should be reviewed in terms of city planning and architecture, should there be any reconsideration on the role of the Shenzhen River? Should it play a similar role like the Huang Po River in Shanghai?





Left: Maps of Berlin

Right (top to bottom): Potsdamer 1930, 1961 & 2005

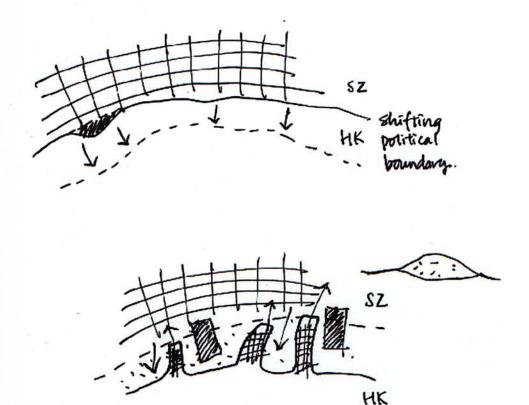
4. Berlin Potsdamer Platz

Potsdamer platz was used to be a square and a major transportation hub lying on the border of the East and West Berlin. When the Berlin wall was constructed in the 1961, it was destroyed and became a restricted zone. After the reunification of Germany, as well as the East and West Berlin, it was obvious that a site with such kind of importance needed to be rebuilt. However, there were different issues and concerns on the reconstruction of Potsdamer Platz.

First of all, it was a piece of land which joined the east and the west. Different views were then expressed on what kind of symbolic meaning it should have. Should it follow those old fabrics and classical buildings in the east to enhance Berlin local identity? Or should it follow the mode of development in the west and develop it as cosmopolitan city center and world class architecture? Besides, whether to develop it into a city center or not also bring about another issue. If it was developed into a city center, then it may mean that Berlin should be developed in a mode of centralization, which may mean something very different to the developed suburbs around the city.

tBeing the physical center of the two cities, Hong Kong – Shenzhen Border also faces the question of what kind of symbolic meaning should it have and what kind of role it should play in the development mode of the two cities. The development of this area will definitely have an influence on the two cities and careful considerations should be made.

The above four precedents are all very different border / boundary situations and they all have different issues and questions. From the issue of static vs. dynamic territorial occupation, to the issue of contradicting relationship of cooperate and connect vs. conflict and separate, to the issue of river as a connector and also an edge, to the last one which is more about the symbolic meaning of the boundary when bringing two different cities together. All of these questions are very crucial to the problem and actually give a clearer direction when proceeding to the formation of political and architectural vision of this project.

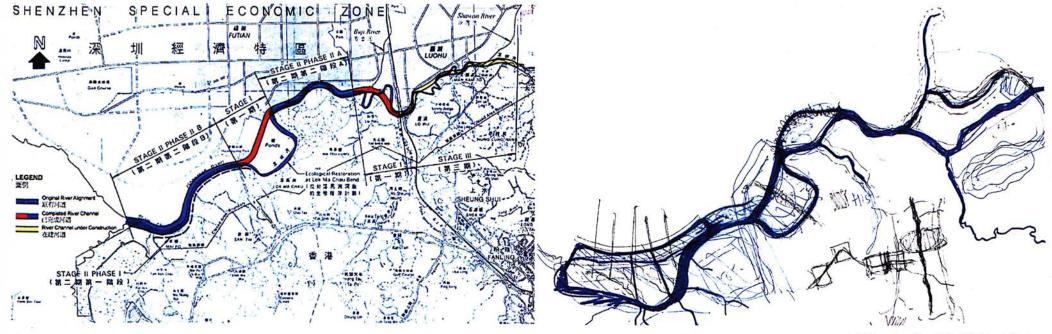


Political & Architectural Vision

Besides studying theories as well as precedents, it is also essential to have my own political vision as well as architectural vision in order to generate a design brief. In my point of view, it is impossible to have a clear architectural vision without a clear political vision. But it is also impossible to have a clear political vision without making any fundamental assumptions.

Therefore, the first assumption that I would like to make is that the political border between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, as well as the political polarity between the 2 cities, will slowly dissolve with time. To me, it is natural and inevitable if the border between Hong Kong and Shenzhen dissolve gradually. However, I think instead of retaining the kind of urban polarity that is having now, there must be some kind of development in respond to this gradual dissolve. Meantime, I also think that it is also inappropriate if the two cities just merge together and bury the existing border with urban development. My vision will therefore be having a kind of memorial landscape between the two cities and this landscape will act as the center, the activities generator as well as the connector of the two cities. The previous study on border, city fabric & infrastructure & programmes somehow proves that such proposal is viable and realistic. Since it is impossible for this transition to happen overnight, I plan to make it happen by developing clusters or in-between zones along the border and finally merge these zones into one. This zone will be shared by the two cities at

the beginning and later on the boundaries of this zone will slowly dissolve. The advantage of this idea is to have this transition happens slowly without making any unrealistic and radical changes and in the same time deal with the urgent problem of dissolving border (at the clusters of in-between zones). This vision also syntheses some of the interesting issues generated in the theories study as well as the precedents study to allow a totally different kind of urbanization to happen in this area.

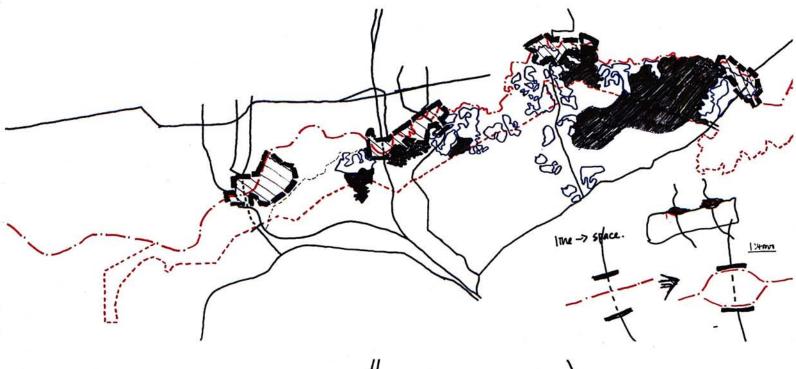


Border Study

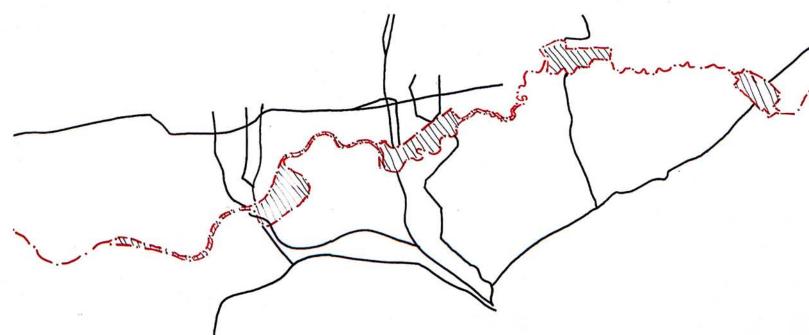
Shenzhen River Rehabilitation Project was a project conducted by the government in the last few years to deal with the flooding problem of the river. The project changed some of the flow of the river and as well as the border line. It led to a series of land exchange between the 2 cities. It reflects that the political concept itself is in fact a very flexible and changable concept.

Left: Shenzhen River Rehabilitation Project Right: sketches of more radical changes of river to create different in-between zones

Ideas on the Transformation of Border



Identifying the possible place for developing in between zones



Setting up of in-between zones

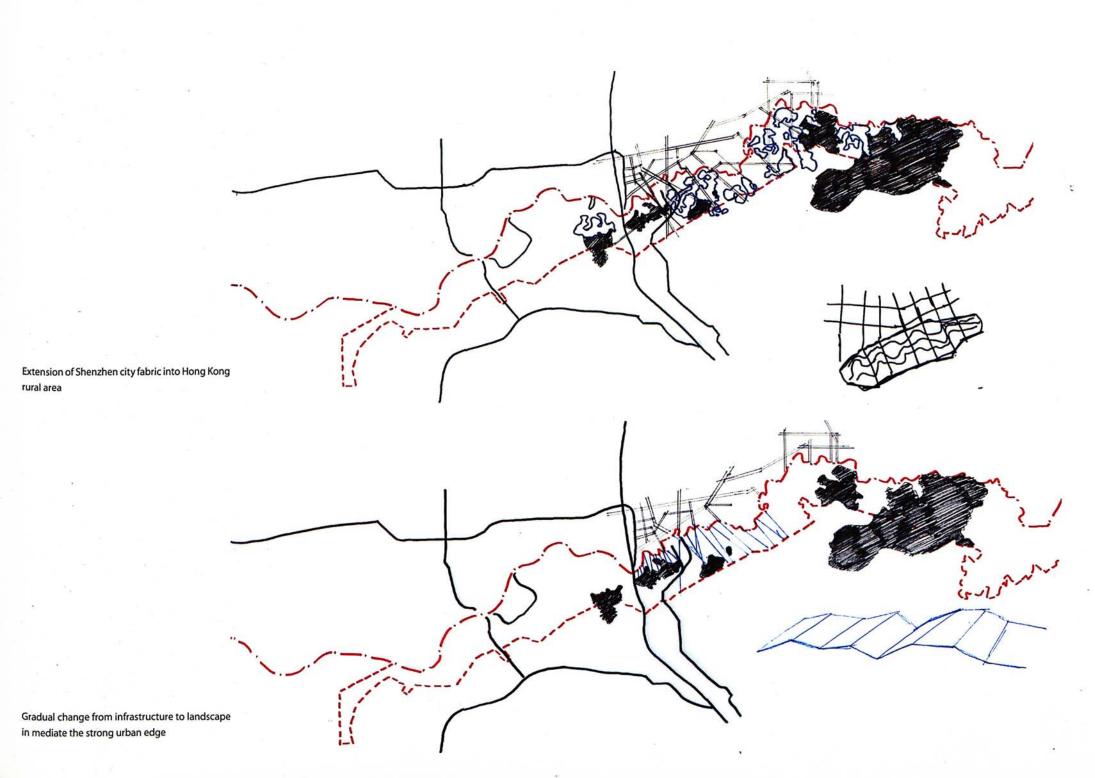
City Fabric & Infrasturcture Study

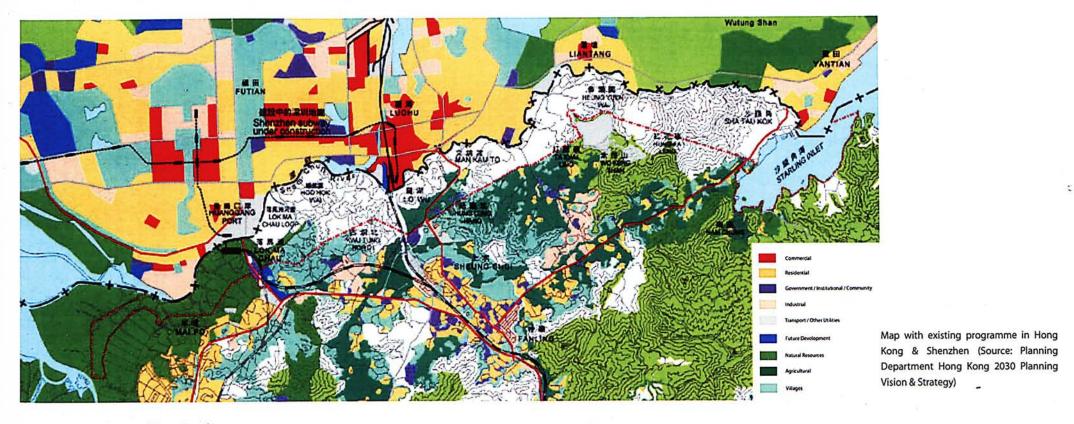


City Fabric & Cross Border Checkpoint along the border.



Figure ground drawing of area along the border





Programmes & Land Use Study

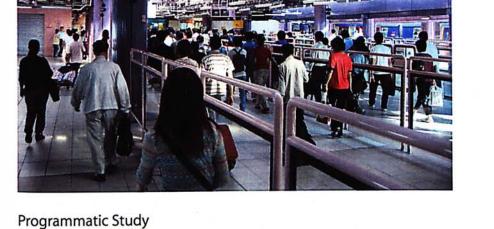
Study on the existing programmes and land use along the border



ldea of extending Shenzhen programmes to Hong Kong rural edge

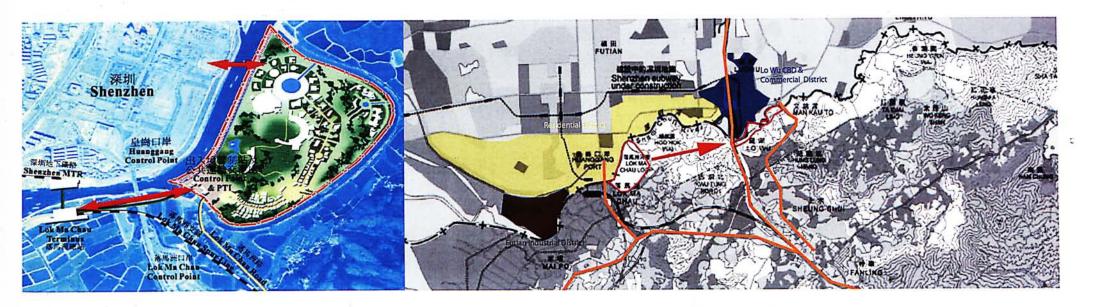
ldea of developing cross border activities along the border





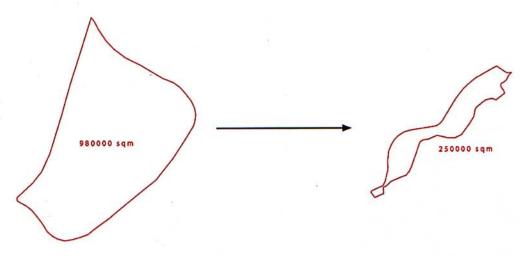
Study on cross border programmes & activties were further conducted. It tried to investigate what cuases the large human flow across the border every day. The top right diagrams show some of the major cross border activies happened in Hong Kong & Shenzhen.



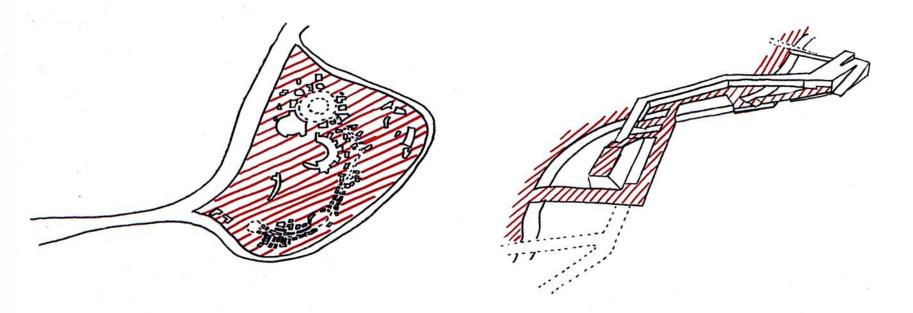


Trade Expo at the Border

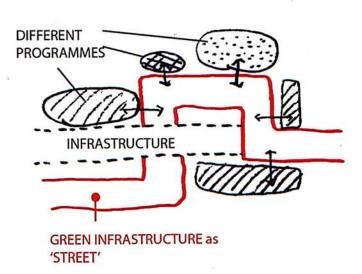
The government has proposed to build a trade expo at the Lok Ma Chau Loop. However, the site itself is an isolated island and does not have a very good relationship with the Shenzhen programmes. It is also lack of potential for further development. Therefore, it may be agood idea to take this programme and compressed it into another site - a site between Lo Wu & Man Kam To Pass. This site is next to Shenzhen centraol business district & night time entertainment center - Lo Wu and potentially could be a much more interesting site in terms of having cross border activities and programmatic exchange.



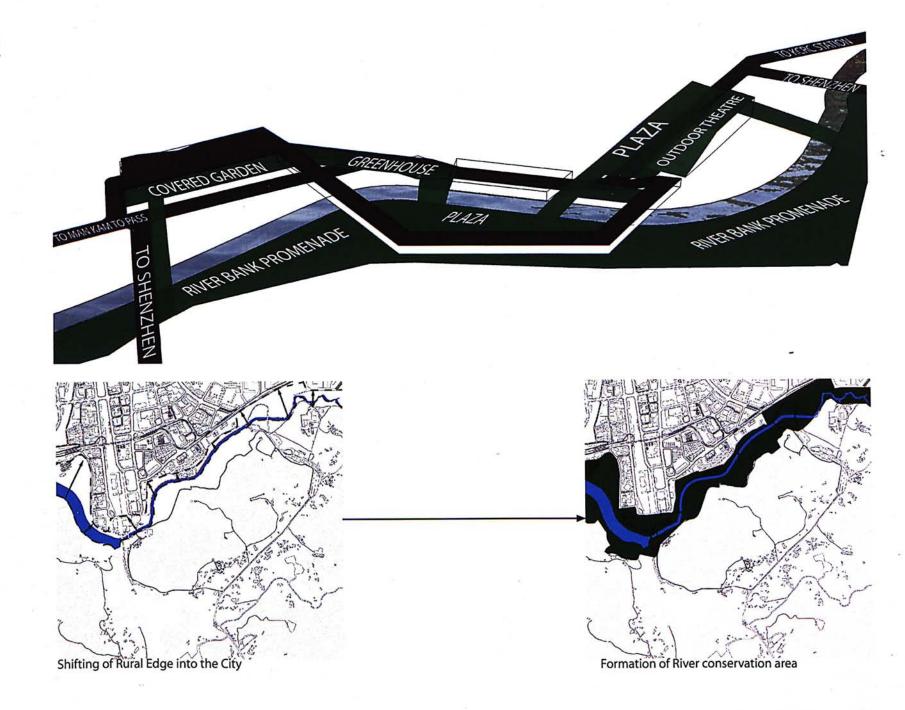
Landscape Strategy Study

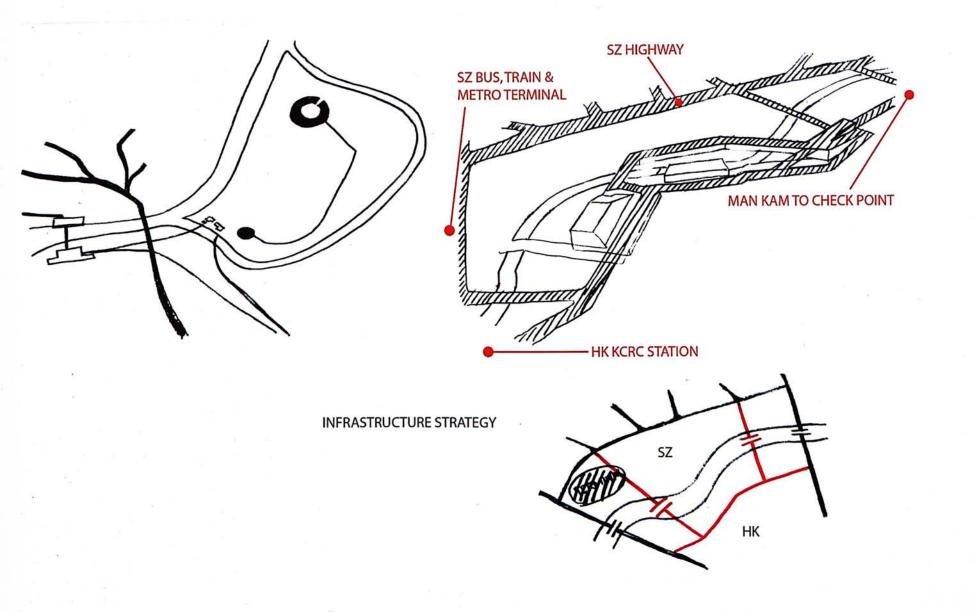


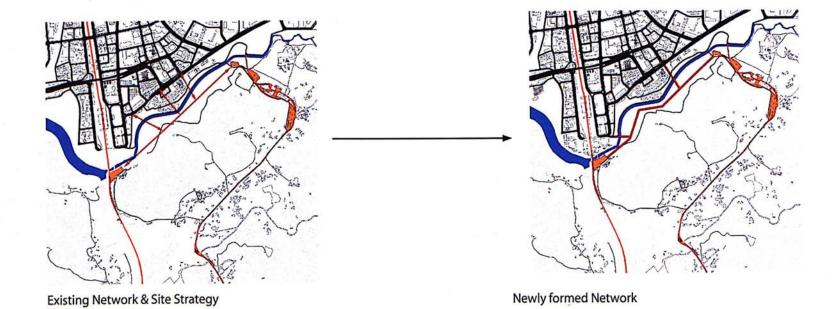
LANDSCAPE as LINKAGE of PROGRAMMES



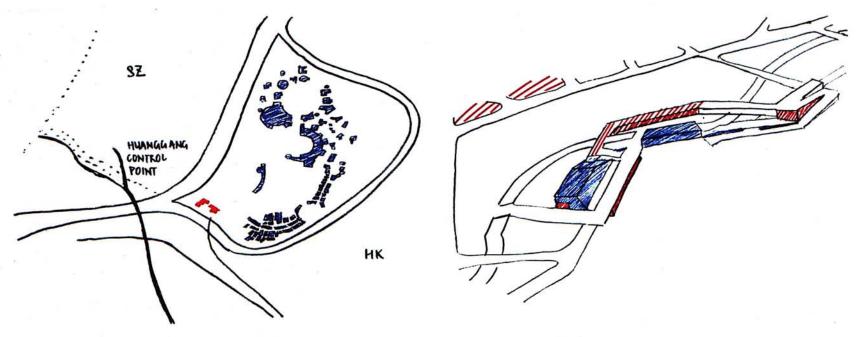
Landscape - Infrastructure Diagram







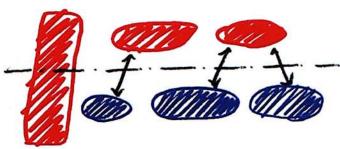
Programmatic Arrangement Study



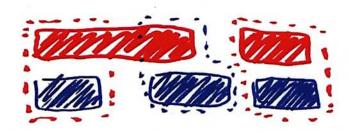
SZ / NIGHT / ENTERTAINMENT

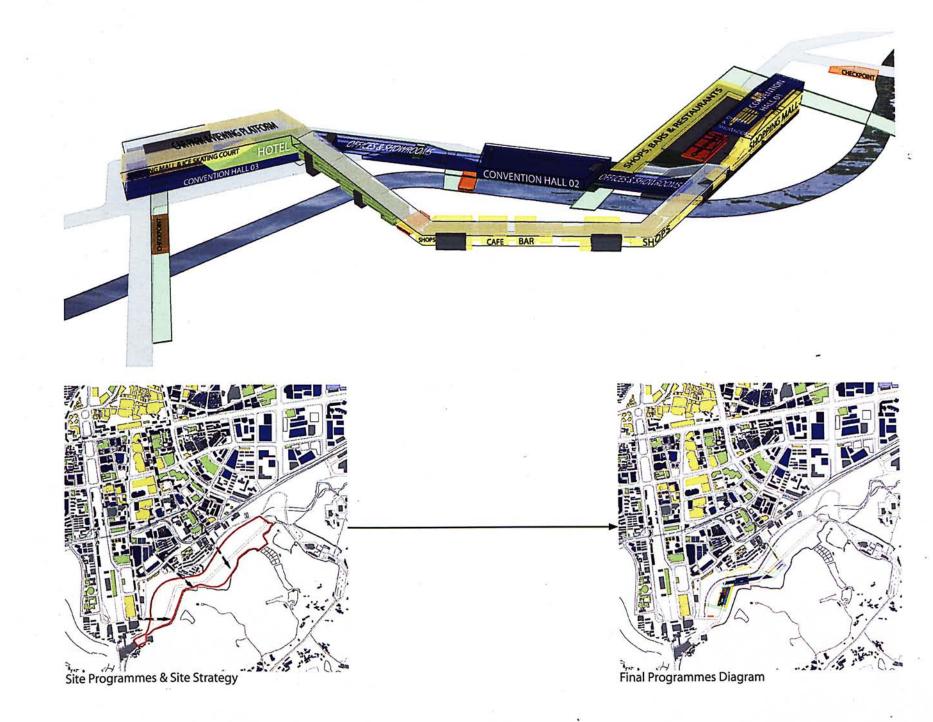
VS.

HK / DAY / BUSINESS

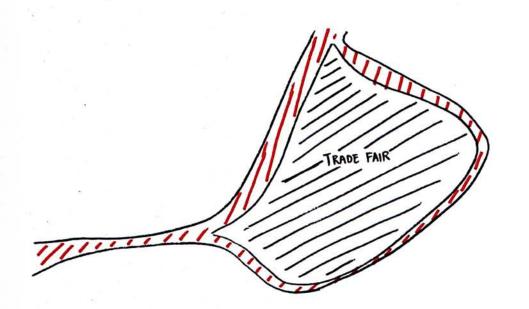


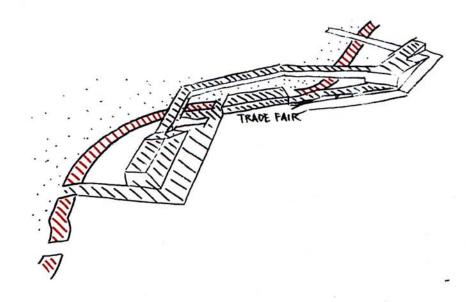
EXPANSION / CONTRACTION



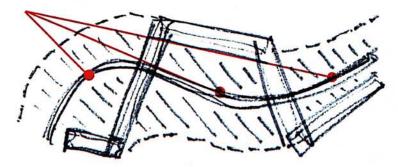


River as Landscape Element

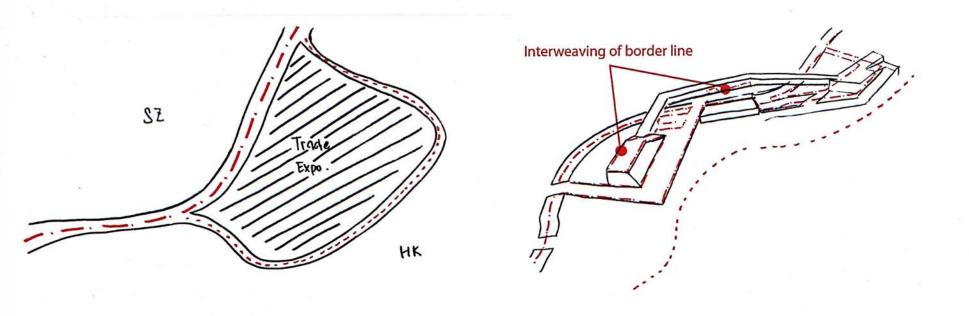




River as center of landscape & activity space

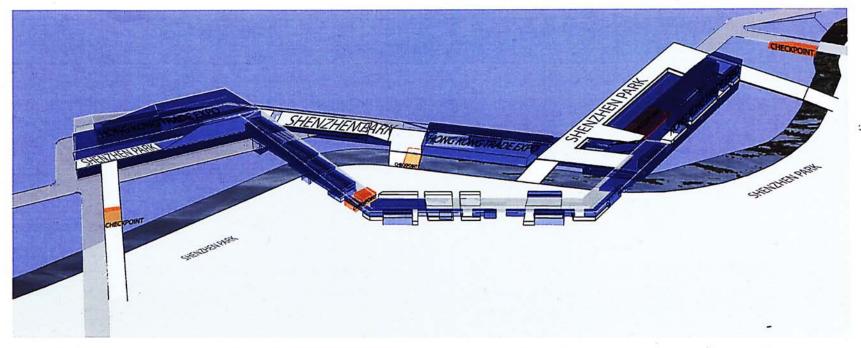


Three Dimentional Border Line



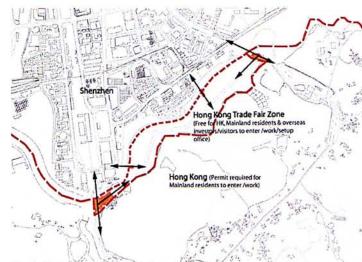


Border Diagram



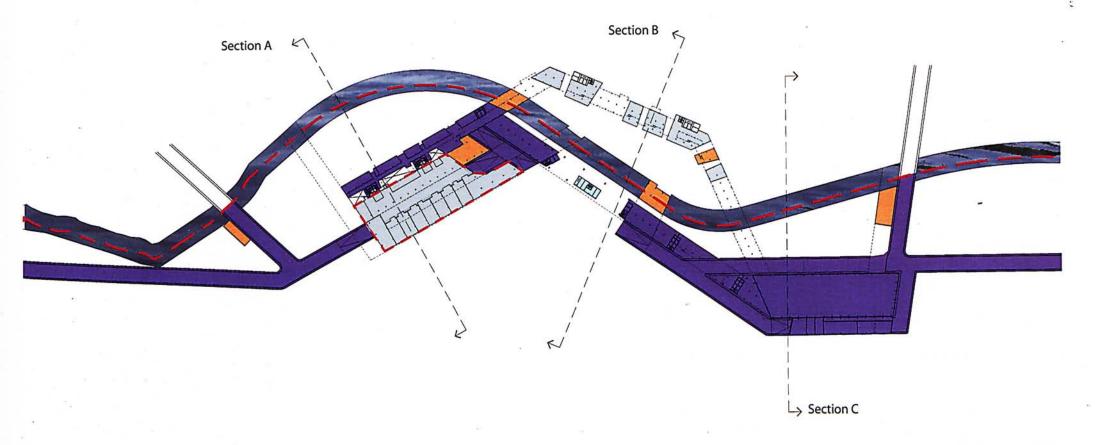


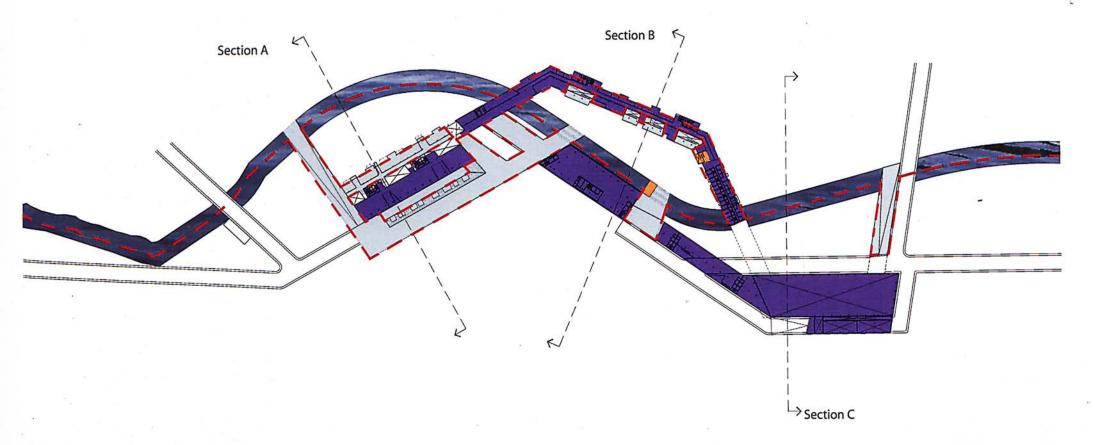
Government Trade Fair Proposal

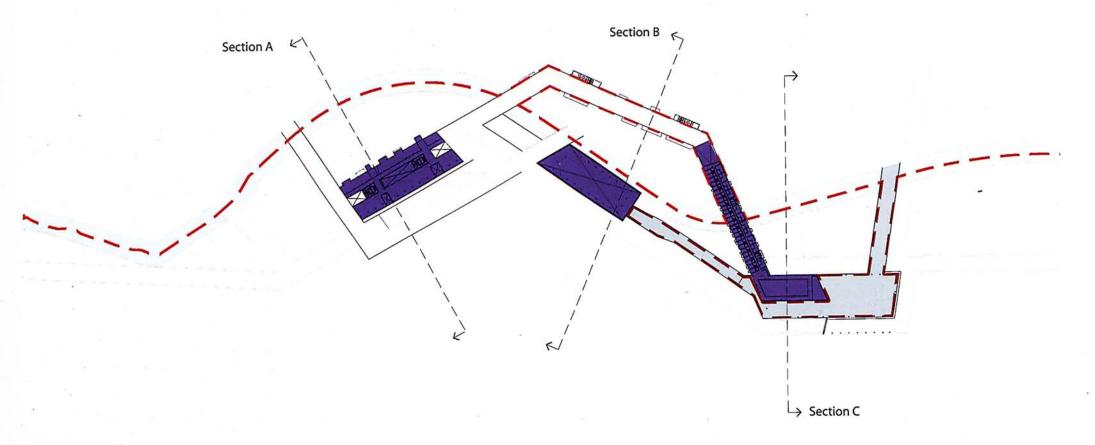


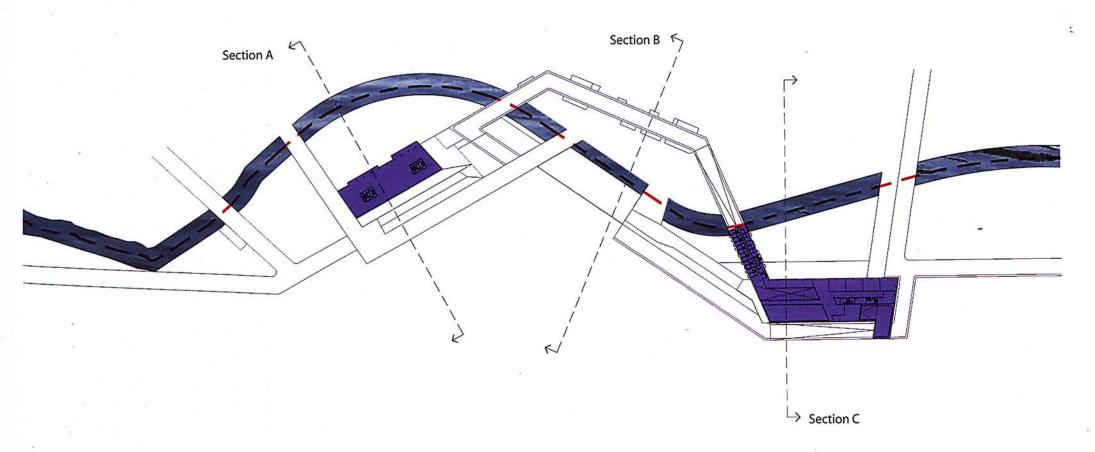
Trade Fair Boundary & Linkage Diagram

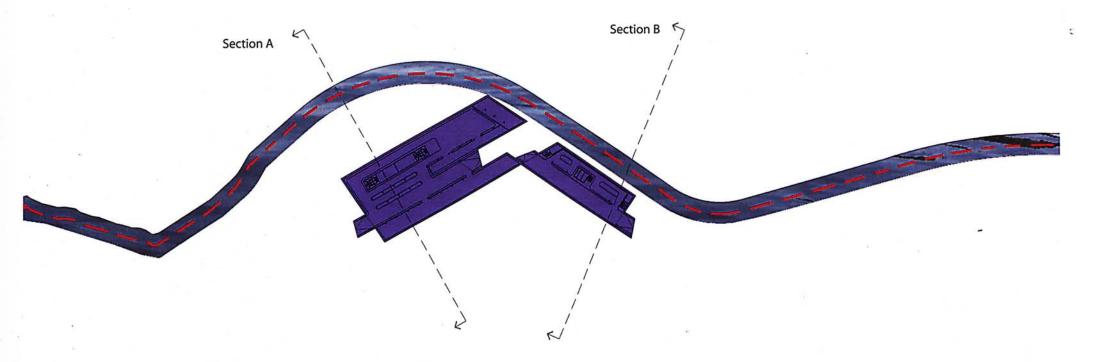


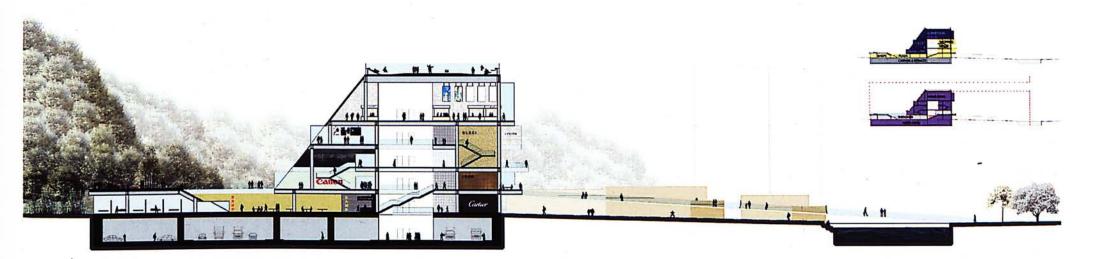


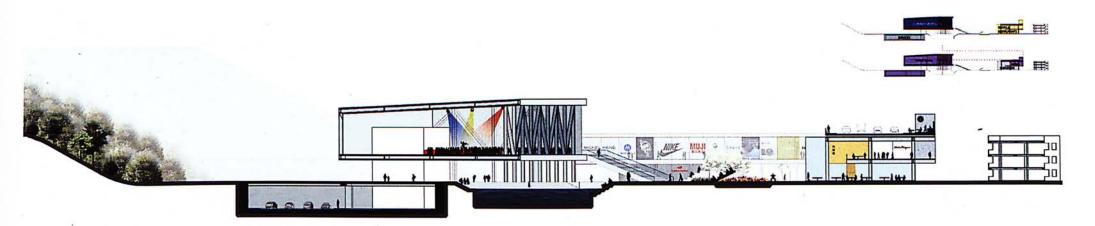


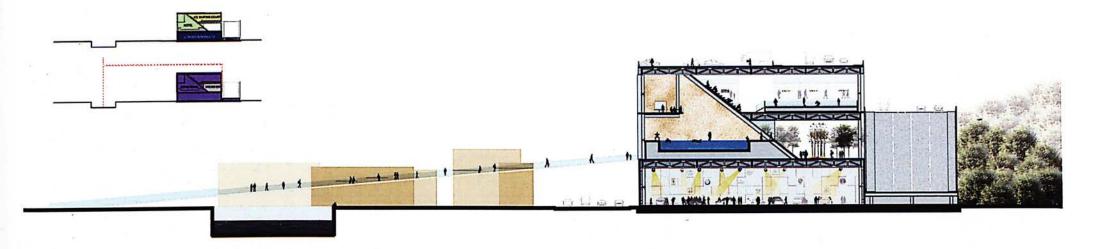


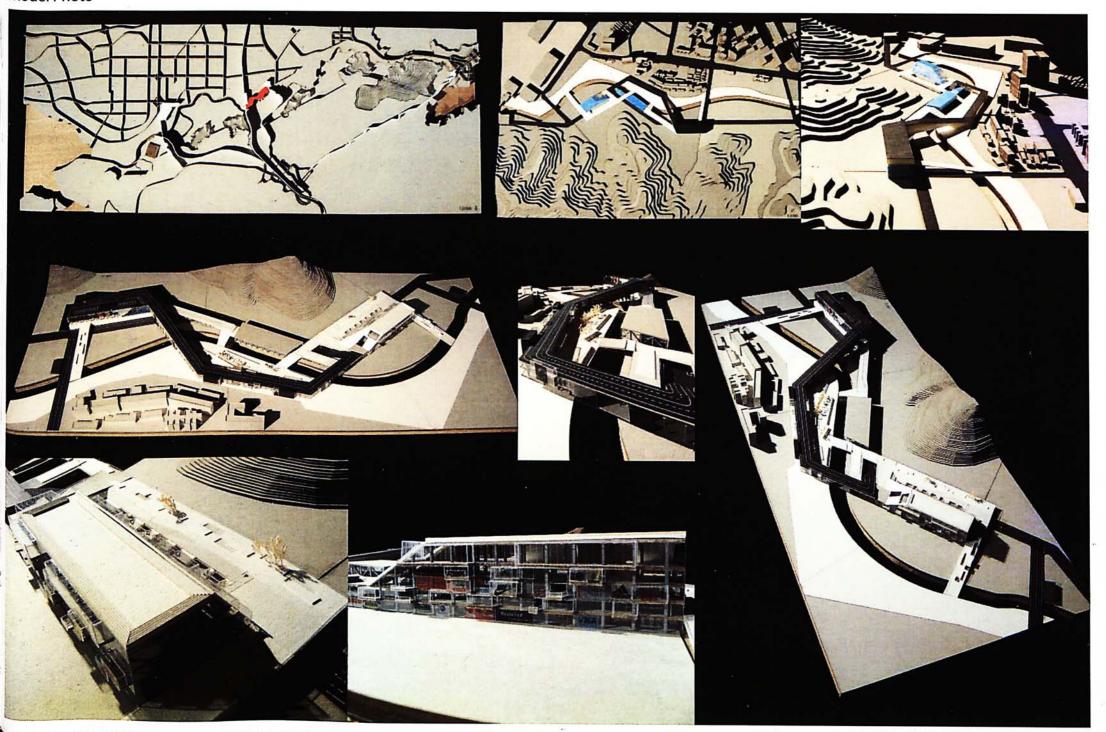












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