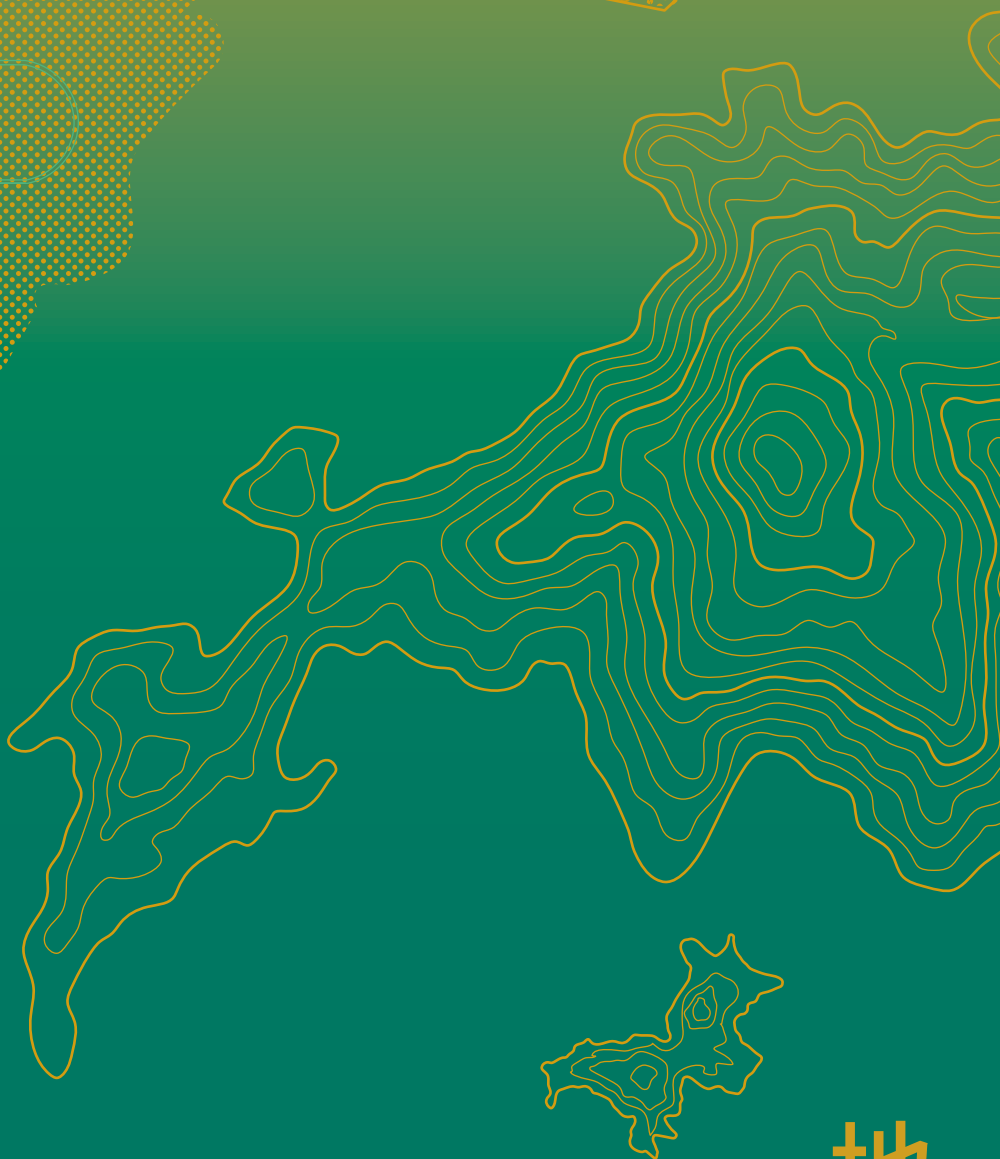
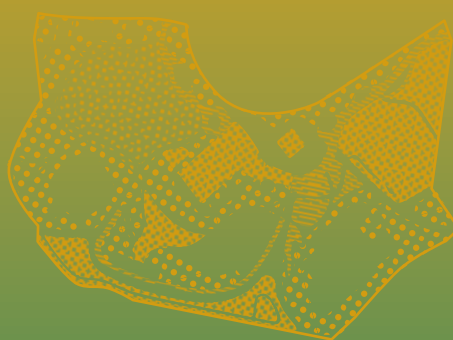




香港
建築師
學報



Occupy Landscape

地
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New Heart — New Territory

新界—港深新中心

- 1 The Hong Kong Shenzhen Border area, showing Lok Ma Chau Loop in the centre (Credit: BWPI)
- 2 View showing Shenzhen development and river from Nga Yiu Fort. Image credit: BWPI
- 3 Frontier Closed Area before 2016. Image credit: Jerome Favre / epa-efe



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As Hong Kong hurtles towards closer ties with mainland China and the adjacent city of Shenzhen becomes a new global development superstar, the New Territories area finds itself in a new and unique position, sandwiched between twin urban mega-centres at the heart of a population of 20 million people. What used to be development considered far from the urban centre will in future be at its very core. Developers are grappling to exploit the simple opportunities that abound, yet the protected habitats, heritage communities, and vast, accessible green space offer tremendous potential health benefits and urban density solutions. The landscape of the New Territories could form the centre of truly smart urban growth as we move into the latter half of the 21st Century. But enlightened vision and careful land management are essential. Are the processes in place to think beyond short term boundaries and create a united and liveable city?

Centre of the world

A quick internet search of 'Hong Kong Map' reveals just what you expect to see - Hong Kong. But in so many cases just Hong Kong alone. There are no islands in the South China Sea, no Dapeng Peninsula across Mirs Bay to the north west, no mouth to the Pearl River at the north east. Seeing maps of the Territory floating in a sea of nothing in the pre-internet age was so normal that it felt almost a reality, after all there was only farmland and emptiness outside the border, wasn't there?

The economic rise of Guangdong means of course that there is now much more than emptiness outside Hong Kong's borders, yet somehow the population can still often give the impression that little Hong Kong is an island at 'the centre of the world', in much the same way as Britain came to fashion itself. However, there is now a 'Greater Bay Area' (GBA), the new 'mega-city' that forms the vision for what was previously considered the '9+2' or 'Pearl River Delta Area'. Is the GBA, as a strategic union,



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threatening Hong Kong's 'Spirit of Lion Rock' and are the new GBA maps, rapidly being drawn up, still going to show Hong Kong at the centre of this new world?

Hong Kong is definitely and physically part of GBA, regardless of any provisions of one country two systems or uncertainty over 2047. In the continued absence of any clear alternative visions for the Territory, Hong Kong may well become heavily reliant upon this initiative for finding its place in the new China. With Shenzhen, the favourite child of Beijing, set at the heart of the GBA and with the development revolution seeming set to intensify there, the connections cross border now appear more important than ever. The roles appear to have reversed however, and could it be that the maps of this new city might start to show the 'void', the 'emptiness', the 'blur', to the south of the Shenzhen River rather than to the north. Borders are regarded as the edge zones of cities and thus often become associated with the concepts of exclusion and marginalization¹. Will Hong Kong become marginalised as the suburbs of the world's largest ever city?

Borders of flux

Borders can be seen to be complex and dynamic phenomena, that continually change related to multifaceted cultural, economic, social and environmental issues². The Hong Kong - China border has indeed been in continual evolution ever since establishment.

Initially, just Hong Kong Island and its harbour were formally ceded to the United Kingdom in 1842, however it was only 18 years later that the Territory expanded when the part of Kowloon south of Boundary Street, together with Stonecutters Island, were then ceded in 1860. The area remained largely undeveloped with the boundary depicted by a long line of high bamboo fences, intended to restrict smuggling between Chinese and British Kowloon at that time.

Move forward just another 38 years and the 1898 lease to the United Kingdom of the land from Boundary Street to the Sham Chun (Shenzhen) River, including the surrounding islands changes everything again. Even then it was more complex as the lease excluded the Kowloon Walled City, which had held a small military outpost

since the Song dynasty (960–1279), and China was allowed to continue to keep officials in the enclave.

It wasn't until 1950 that the Sham Chun River frontier on the China border began to actually be fenced off to prevent border migration and other illegal activities, and 'The Frontier Closed Area' 邊境禁區 (FCA) was established in 1951 to serve as a buffer between the closed border and the rest of the Territory, with special permits being required for entry (Fig. 2). Even then, the boundaries of the Closed Area were adjusted in 1959, and again in 1982 with expansion by four square kilometres and further adjusted in 1984. Subsequently, in a 3 phased adjustment between 2012 and 2016, the extent of the FCA was then reduced from about 2,800 hectares to just the 400 hectares as present³. A continually shifting border of special access and exclusion has continued unremittingly for all of Hong Kong's recent history (Fig. 3-4).



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Meanwhile, Hong Kong started to make further incursions across the China border when the joint immigration and customs facilities of the Shenzhen Bay Port, were established on China territory north of the Shenzhen Bay Bridge under land lease, and administered as a part of Hong Kong. Similarly, areas at the soon to open West Kowloon Railway Station are designated as 'Mainland Port Area' and a train compartment in operation on the Hong Kong Section of the Express Rail Link is to be regarded as part of the Mainland Port Area.

Another important border, north of the Shenzhen River, was the city border of the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone (SEZ) usually called "Erxianguan" 二線關, established in 1980 to kickstart market economics within the ideals of 'socialism with Chinese characteristics' (Fig. 5). The SEZ border had strong similarities with the FCA, reflecting the fences, guards, checkpoints and ports of entry, along with requirements for Entry Permits. Officially abolished in 2010 the boundary land is currently under a period of repurposing with the roadblocks and most checkpoints having been removed. Whilst parts of the border located on mountainside have already been transformed, renewal for much of the larger sites is ongoing and aims to adapt them to a linear 'urban greenway' for connected recreation.

The potential opportunities for green/blue infrastructure, to proactively shape other infrastructure development and housing provision through regional and cross border landscape planning are manifest, where the approach of biodiversity conservation in particular, must go beyond administrative borders and be holistic in accommodating conservation along with sustainable development.

Redraw the border

Goals for both Hong Kong and Shenzhen seem aligned in the mid-term. Shenzhen has already achieved its intent of developing a modern, international, innovative city by 2020, and strives to become a 'global innovation-leading city with greater international influence' by the middle of the century⁸. Whereas Hong Kong's 2030+ statement holds the vision of "A Smart, Green and Resilient City"⁹.

As we move into the fourth industrial revolution and think about development with a focus on wellness, sustainability and the protection of valuable resources it would appear that such smart development has its place most likely in the New Territories. The old centres of Tuen Mun, Yuen Long, and Fanling together with new developments at Hung Shui Kiu, Tin Shui Wai, and perhaps Lau Fau Shan, currently considered far from the urban centre, are in future positioned to be the most desirable real estate locations, immersed in the central green lung of the twin-city, and with easy connection to existing urban centres as well as having land more easily adaptable to liveable city development programmes than the traditional cores.

There are of course huge issues of resistance in stitching border areas, but as was learnt from the case of reunification of Berlin it takes a generation of change to balance cultural, social and economic disparities. Therefore, long-term preparation for border integration is important and existing models and approaches such as cross-border regional innovation systems (CBRIS) and innovation-driven integration processes, whilst serving as a useful starting point in guiding more systematic and comparative work need much further development. A three-stage process of border integration might be anticipated, from that of weak integration, through



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semi-integration and finally to strong integration¹⁰. For Hong Kong to futureproof itself for potential border integration by 2047, there remain just 30 years to adapt through such processes, starting with 'integrated cross-border planning', which is just now being initiated, moving thorough 'border area joint regulation and development' and finally a fusion of both sides. In order to achieve this, it may be time to once again establish a new set of temporary borders or an "integrated border zone" that includes both Shenzhen and Hong Kong Territory, has unique and special characteristics and facilitates joint and co-ordinated regulations and development on both sides of the existing. A 'two cities one system' area shaped through landscape.

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