

EMBRACING THE COMMUNAL
The Perseverance of the Dynamic

II

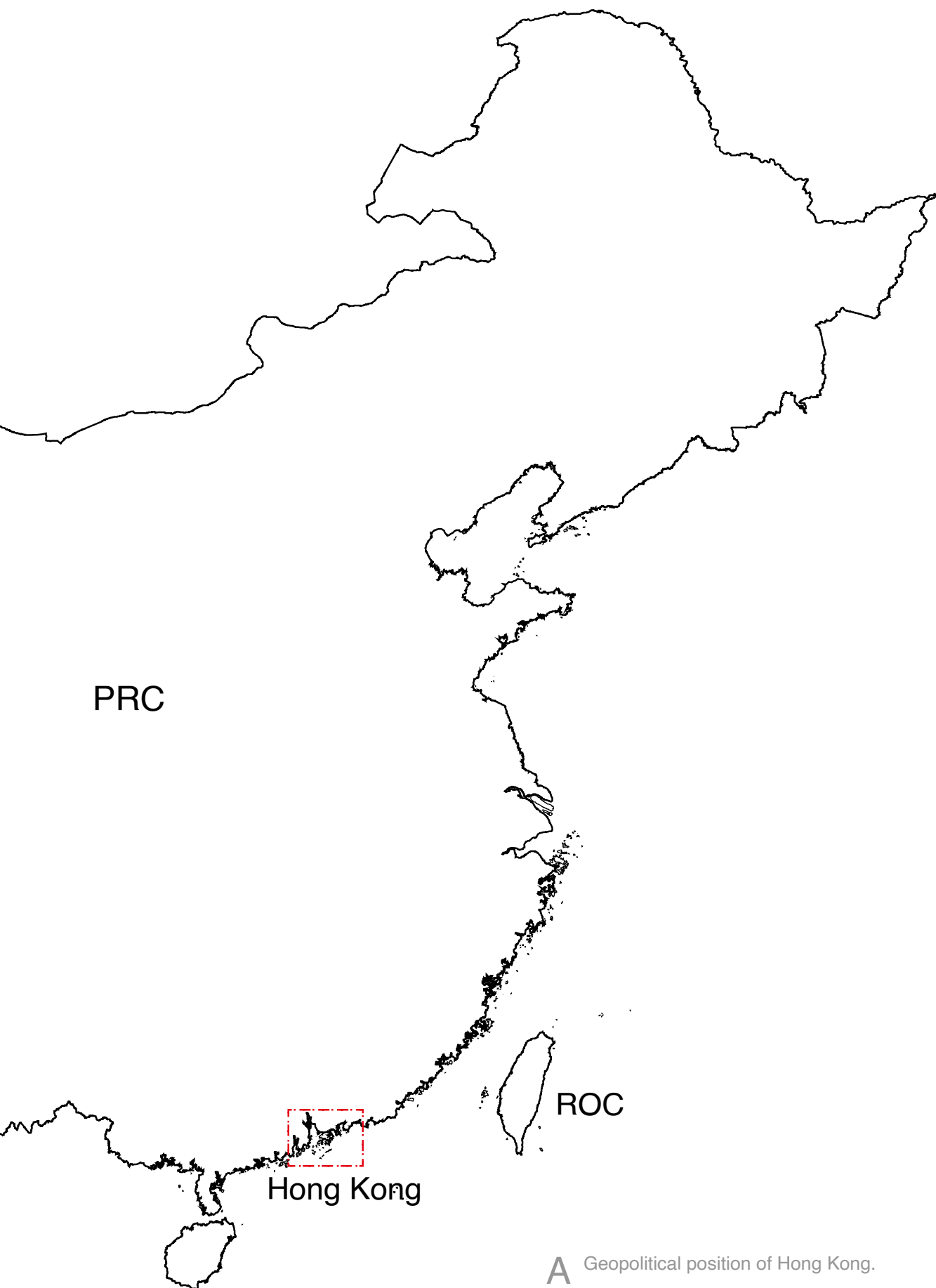
DEFINING THE FRAMEWORK
A Contextual Analysis of Sha Tau Kok Village

THE HAKKA

Introducing the Indigenous



A personal connection to a township on the border of Hong Kong and China, is the subject in the face of potential radical change. The township in question is 沙頭角 Sha Tau Kok (Mandarin; Sha Tou Jiao) on the most Eastern side of the Hong Kong - China border, one that is, at first hand, neither particularly unique or specifically valuable for architecture. However, the underlying narrative and its becoming poses an interesting and potential case to develop the area after the aforementioned 'inevitability' of the disappearance of the border.



A Geopolitical position of Hong Kong.

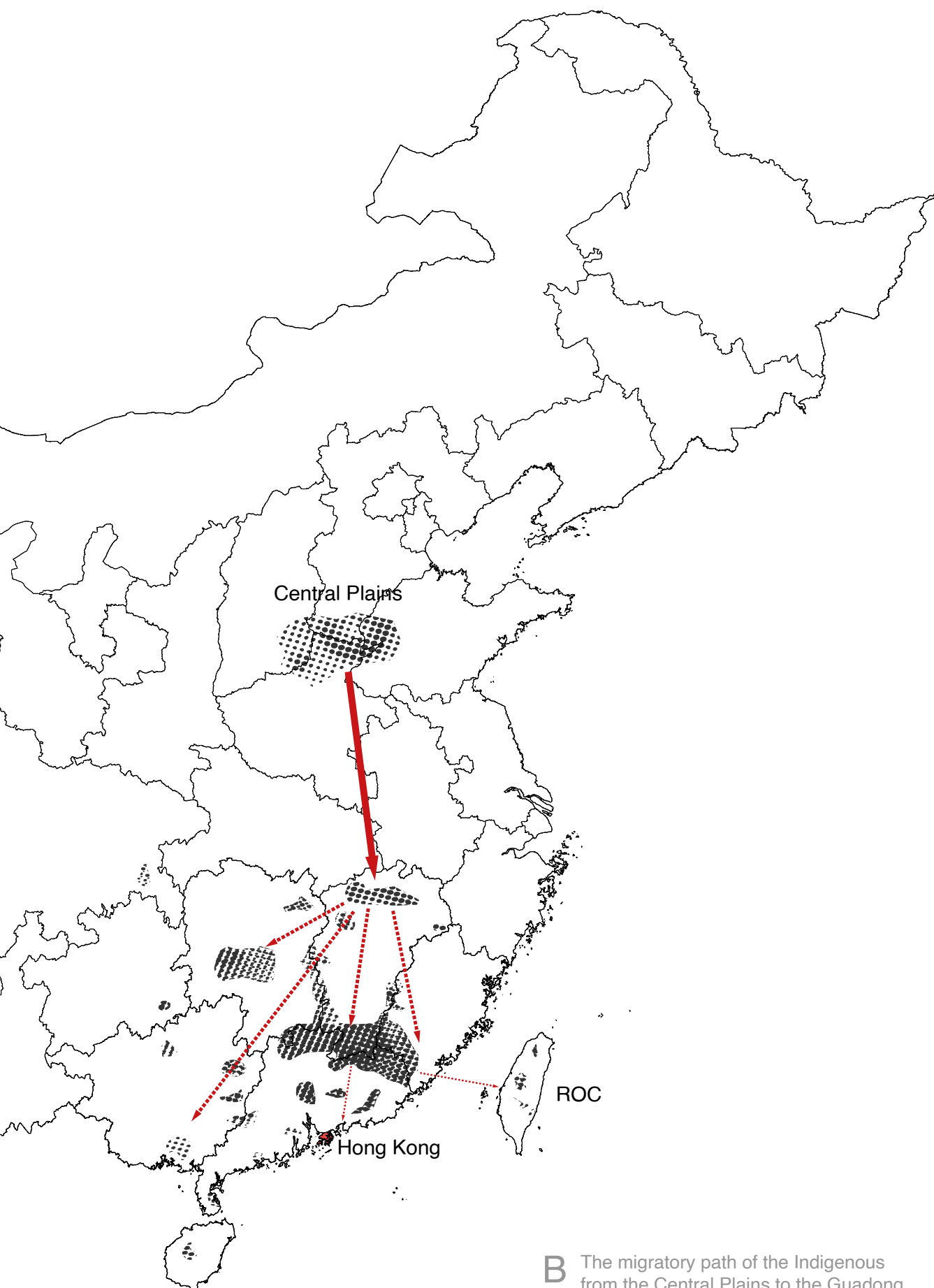
The narrative originates from people of the Hakka culture, a subgroup of the Han ethnicity. Hakka, meaning *guest house* or *guest people*, did not have their identity shaped until three major migrations and scattered them throughout South-East China. The migration during the early Qing dynasty in the 17th century, led them to the coast of the Guangdong area.¹

According to research of historian Luo Xianglin (1906-1978), proving the Hakka are Han Chinese as well as their migratory path from the Central Plains to Southern China. Traces show the path of the Hakka, even though the migratory path is not exclusive to the Hakka.



1

One cultural aspect of the Hakka, due to their nomadic nature, is a necessity to be low on possessions. Due to this, most of their culture manifests in the forms of language, traditions and relationship. One of the few tangible heritages are vernacular structures; 土楼, the *Tulou*, known as Hakka earthen buildings, mostly found in South East China, next to the Guangdong province.



B The migratory path of the Indigenous from the Central Plains to the Guangdong region after three major waves.

These rural dwellings, contained whole clans or families and were to establish a community. They were an important place of gathering and exchange, but most of all, a defensive structure. The structure consists of local materials found on the lands. They used a technique known as *rammed earth* by using local materials found from the lands such as clay, earth and lime. By creating a rather thick base for the outer walls, it acted as both protection and insulation.²

By using materials within their vicinity and the integration into the mountainous landscape, it also shows their position of man and nature, wherein harmony between the two are key.

Chinese scholar Hanmin Huang (1958-) described the time period, function and process of the constructions in *Fujian's Tulou: A Treasure of Chinese Traditional Civilian Residence*, 197-212. Singapore: Springer Singapore.

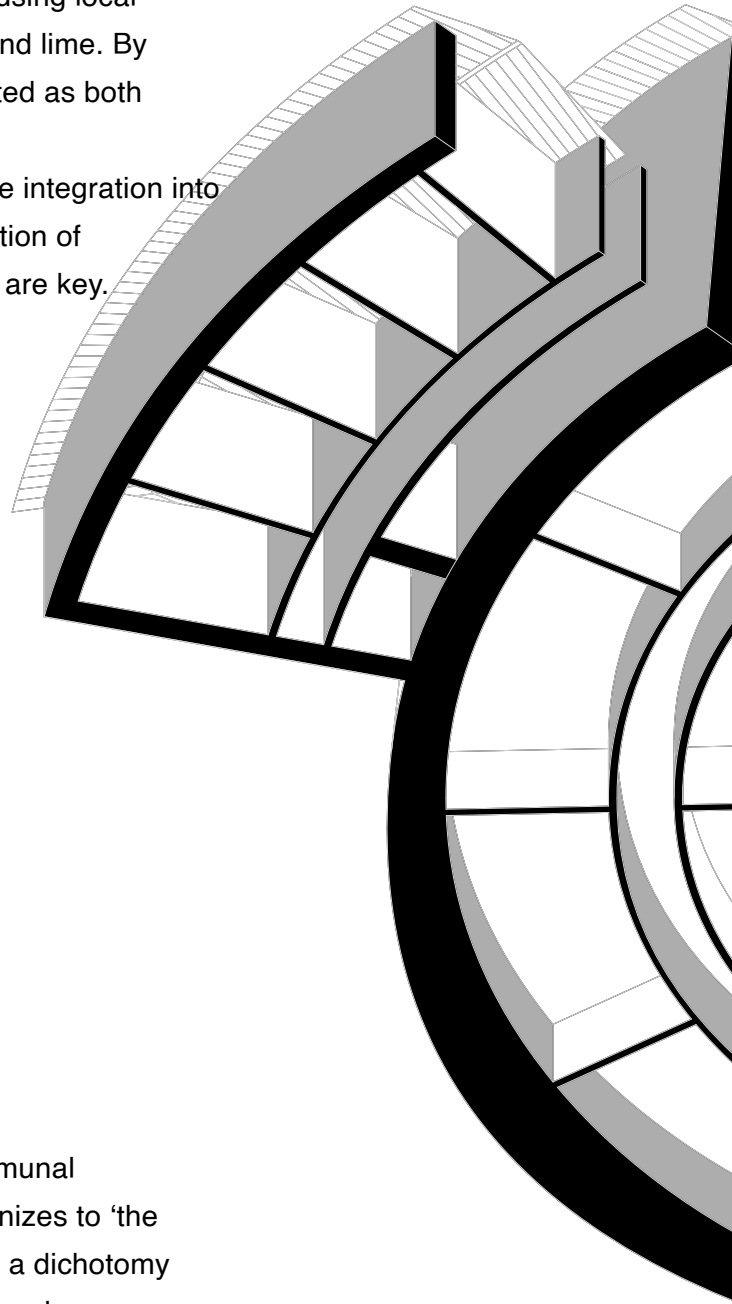
Hereby referring 'the Others' as people excluded from the Indigenous community, regardless of the time period.

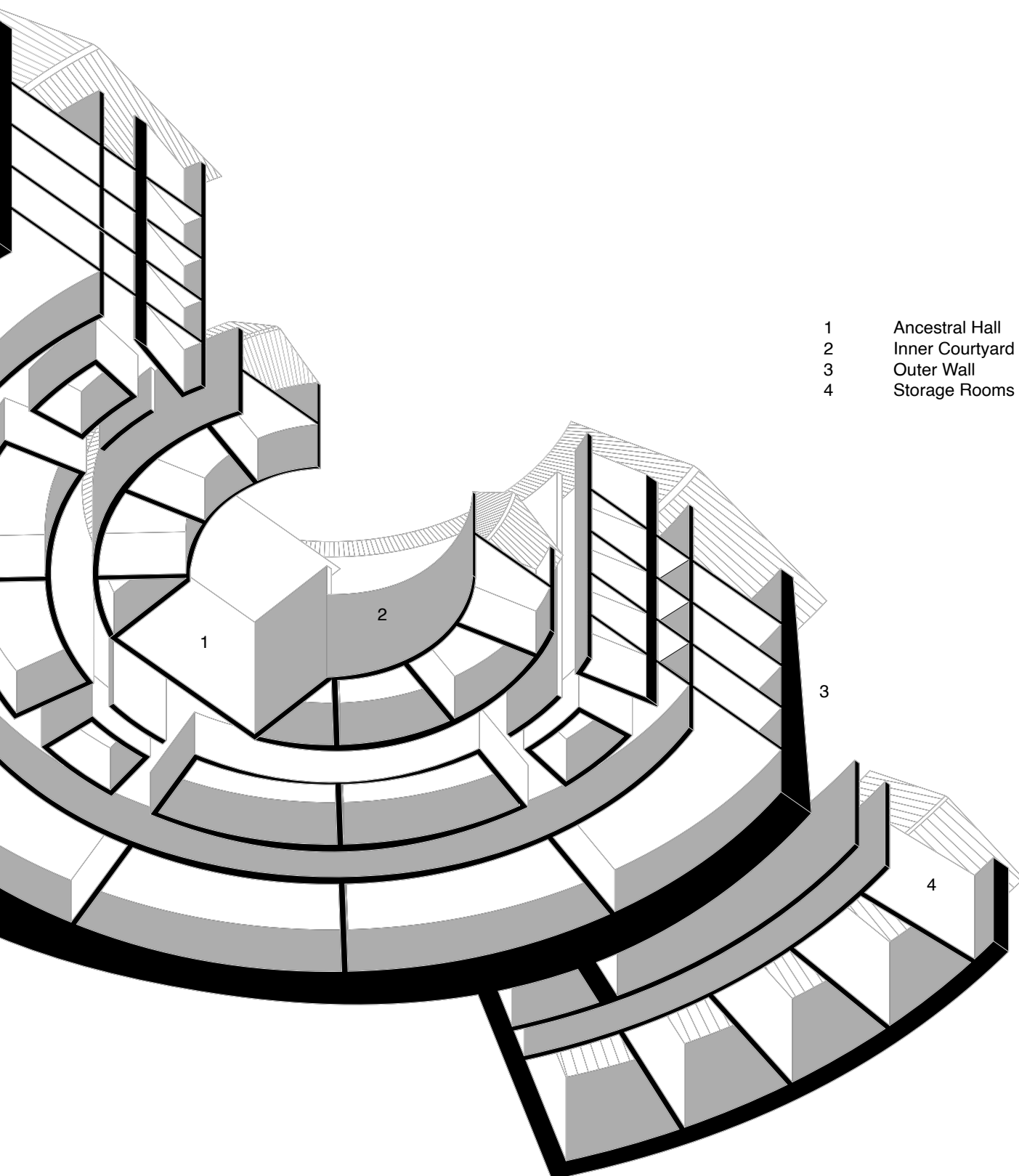
2

3

Intriguing is the building itself, as a unified and communal building for the clan, which at the same time antagonizes to 'the Others'.³ The sheer size of the outside walls causes a dichotomy of interior-exterior. It also proves to be a point in time where the identity of being *guests* slowly faded and became a social community living of what nature provided.

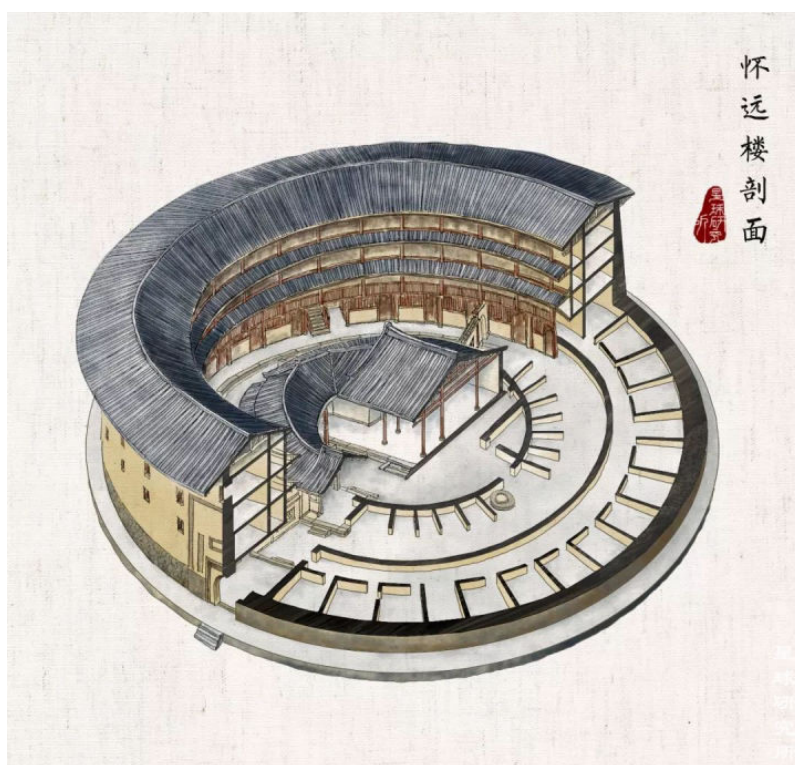
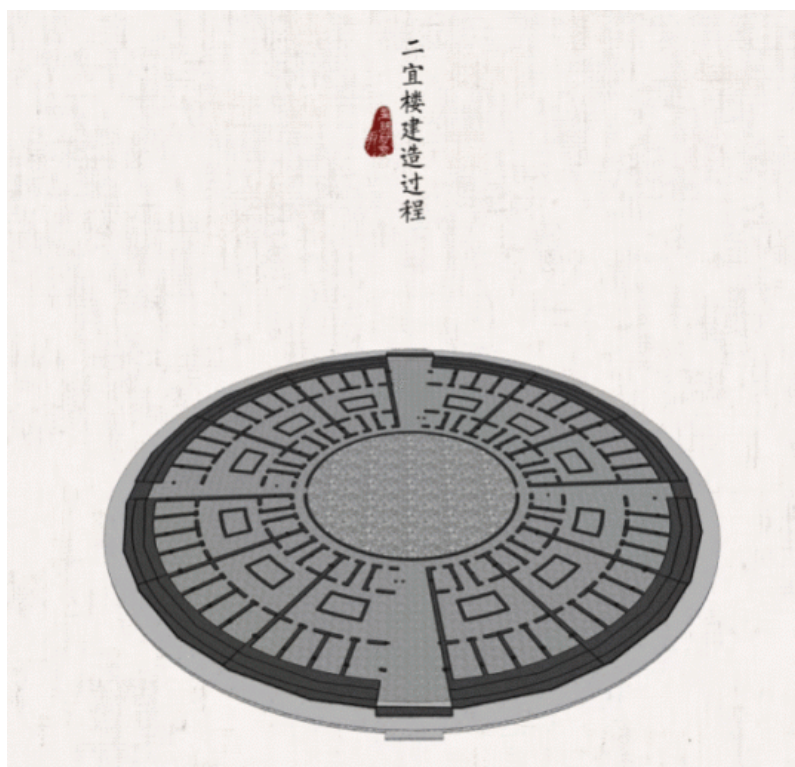
Within this structure, the social status of everyone is equal by creating same size rooms. By doing so, an emphasize is made on social and equal exchange within the families. The early Tulou were rectangular in shape, however later changed to more circular, due to being less performative (less luminous and more exposure of the corners, thus more vulnerable).





C Zhencheng Tulou, Fujian (1912):
Redrawn axonometric (upside down).

The societal conditions forced the erection of walls, the dichotomy of interior-external.



D 张靖/Planet Research Institute:
Base layout of the Eryi Building in
Zhangzhou, Fujian (2018).

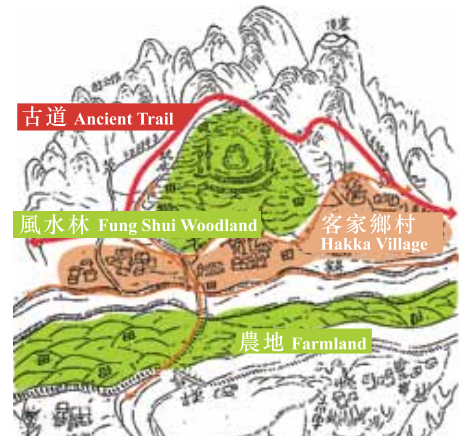
Referring to the change of authority of Hong Kong in 1997 by the British empire. This independency treaty between the British Empire and China is set to expire in 2047.

The circular shape tends to be more symbolic as well; it reinforced the communal ideology, wherein the center is for the most important. It is used as a flexible central square, mostly as an inner courtyard for family unity or serves for commerce. It also shows the importance put on an open, public space.

Most Tulou have their ancestral hall attached to these inner courtyards, to remember the importance of commemoration. Even though the Tulou are not found in Sha Tau Kok, due to not being an immediate necessity, it does give insight in the nature, tradition and philosophy of the Indigenous. It allows us to understand the path taken and what the priority are of the Hakka within their narrative of the founding and potential change of the village. The Tulou followed their ideology of harmony with nature. In that same train of thought was the settlement in Sha Tau Kok. It is based on the Mountain-River-Village-Farmland relationship, the Hakka being farmers and fishers, being self-sustaining.

Sha Tau Kok is a village on a controversial borderland. In relation to the 50 years of independency of Hong Kong (SAR; special administrative region)⁴, the next change of authority will undeniably have consequences on the borderlands. The aspect of change lies in the dichotomy of the village itself, just as the symbolic dichotomy of the Tulou. As Sha Tau Kok is split by the border, there exists a phenomenon of the separation of the village, making it a 1 village – 2 inhabitant morphology, a 1 village with 2 political systems. In essence, it is 1 village with 2 identities where one side is part of the larger metropolis of Shen Zhen and the other remained as a rural township, consisting of several smaller communities.

It once was founded as a permanent settlement for the nomadic Hakka people, but has slowly lost most of its indigenous character. This is partially due to urbanisation aspect of the younger generation, but the extreme rapid development of the Chinese side of the border also plays a role. This contrast of development is directly related to the Frontier Closed Area, a buffer zone which acts as a separation between the two authorities. It is an area only accessible for permit holders, such as the residents of Sha Tau Kok.



E Jia Shu Lin and Hao Lin:
Kejia Tu Lou and Kejia Wen Hua (1992).

7

See 'Chung Ying Street', page 66.

6

See 'Appendix 1 - Interview', page 80.

5

See 'Frontier Closed Area', page 46.

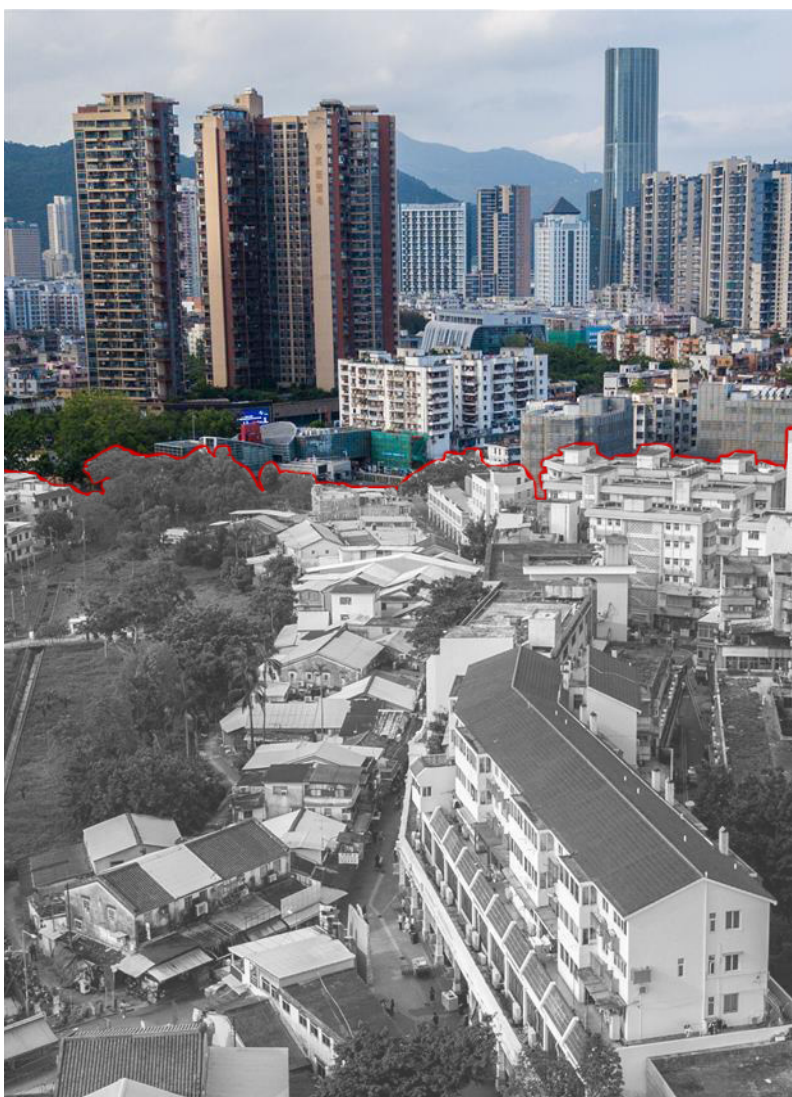
Due to the way the developments take place in China, it is possible that the village will need to make place for continuation of the metropolis.

The change of borderlands also comes with the increase of interest, by both 'the Others' and the indigenous themselves, in the identity of the village. After the change of authority in 1997, the borderlands slowly began to change, wherein the restricted area gradually decreased.⁵ This caused the accesibility of Hong Kong residents to be able to go further into the village than they were allowed to previously. The phenomenon of this two village - one system was not seen by many people, thus caused a large influx of visitors to see the ambiguous situation. For the Indigenous, the recent change and possible dissapearance of the border in its whole, triggered a sense of belonging. As Mr. Chung, member of the local clan committee, says:

*'We (The community) have been fairly passive until recently. Sha Tau Kok has always been quite closed off ... this change or displacement of the border brought attention to us, but it also gave us the urgency to showcase ourselves as well. ... It showed that this is our home and that we belong here. By having people outside of the community become interested, we hope to make our mark.'*⁶

For a village like Sha Tau Kok, the history is quite rich. Especially 中英街, Chung Ying Street (litt. China England Street) has its fair share of story. It is there where the village started to bloom through the market street. However, history does not only exists of the positives. This street, as the name suggests, is the physical seperation of the area.⁷

Through the eyes of the Indigenous, the geopolitical situation does not necessarily define their village and identity. It remains their sense of belonging regardless of the situation. For them, it can only be enhanced. Thus, it seems more beneficial to look at the situation not focussing on the geopolitical, but rather the communal. An approach that focusses on the social-economic.



F Chung Ying Street, Sha Tau Kok:
*Representation of the differences in development
through the dichotomy.*



G ‘十約’有‘你’ (2020):
Festival on Chung Ying Street.

The historical narrative portrayed through dance performances, story telling and decorations.

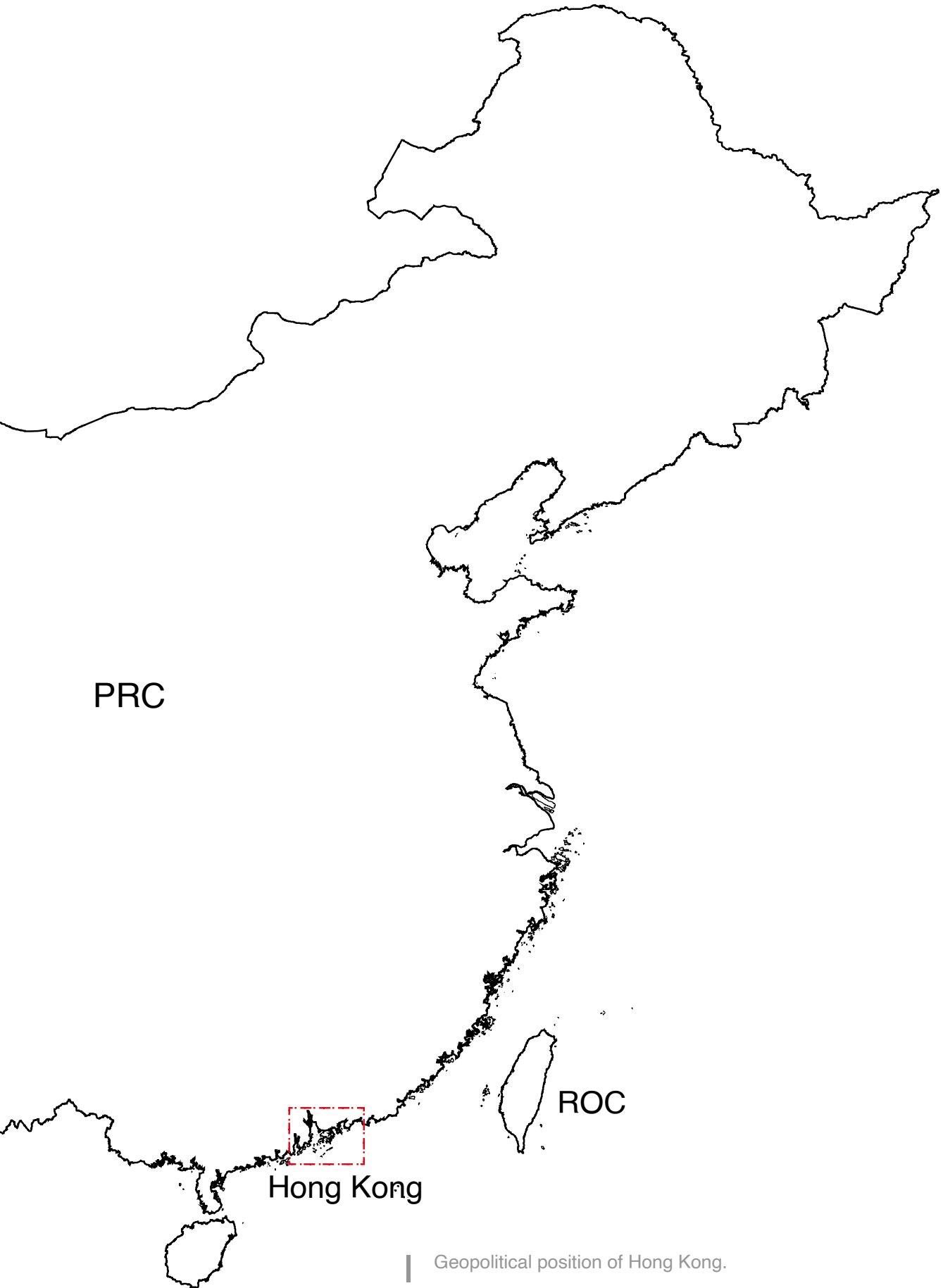


H Harold Ingrams:
Main Street, Chung Ying Street, Sha Tau Kok
(1952).

'MAPPING'

A Contextual Analysis of Sha Tau Kok Village

The border between Hong Kong and China is ground for interesting positions, yet is considered controversial. In order to translate the narrative of the Indigenous alongside the history of the context, an attempt to visualize the dichotomised state is done through the exercise of framing the site that relates more to the author's personal background.



Hong Kong, even though being highly accessible, has a complex and controversial relation with national and international relations. This is due to being a SAR of the PRC. Together with Macau, these are the only two special administrative regions and form the 'one country, two systems'.

Acronyms

STK	<i>Sha Tau Kok</i>
PRC	<i>People's Republic of China</i>
ROC	<i>Republic of China (Taiwan)</i>
FCA	<i>Frontier Closed Area</i>
SAR	<i>Special Administrative Region</i>

Through the FCA as the northern border, there are areas in Hong Kong that are not freely accessible. Villages that are located within the FCA, are only accessible through an entry or resident's permit. The FCA is an extreme border condition mainly consisting of wild growth and barricades and is comparable to the Demilitarized Zone between North-Korean and South Korea, albeit less armed in recent years.

The only remaining village located in the FCA is Sha Tau Kok. Mainly acting as a logistics checkpoint nowadays, its identity as a dichotomised village is still wide known. Roots from the author stem from this very village. Stories and frequent visits has intrigued the author so much, that this graduation project is dedicated to it.



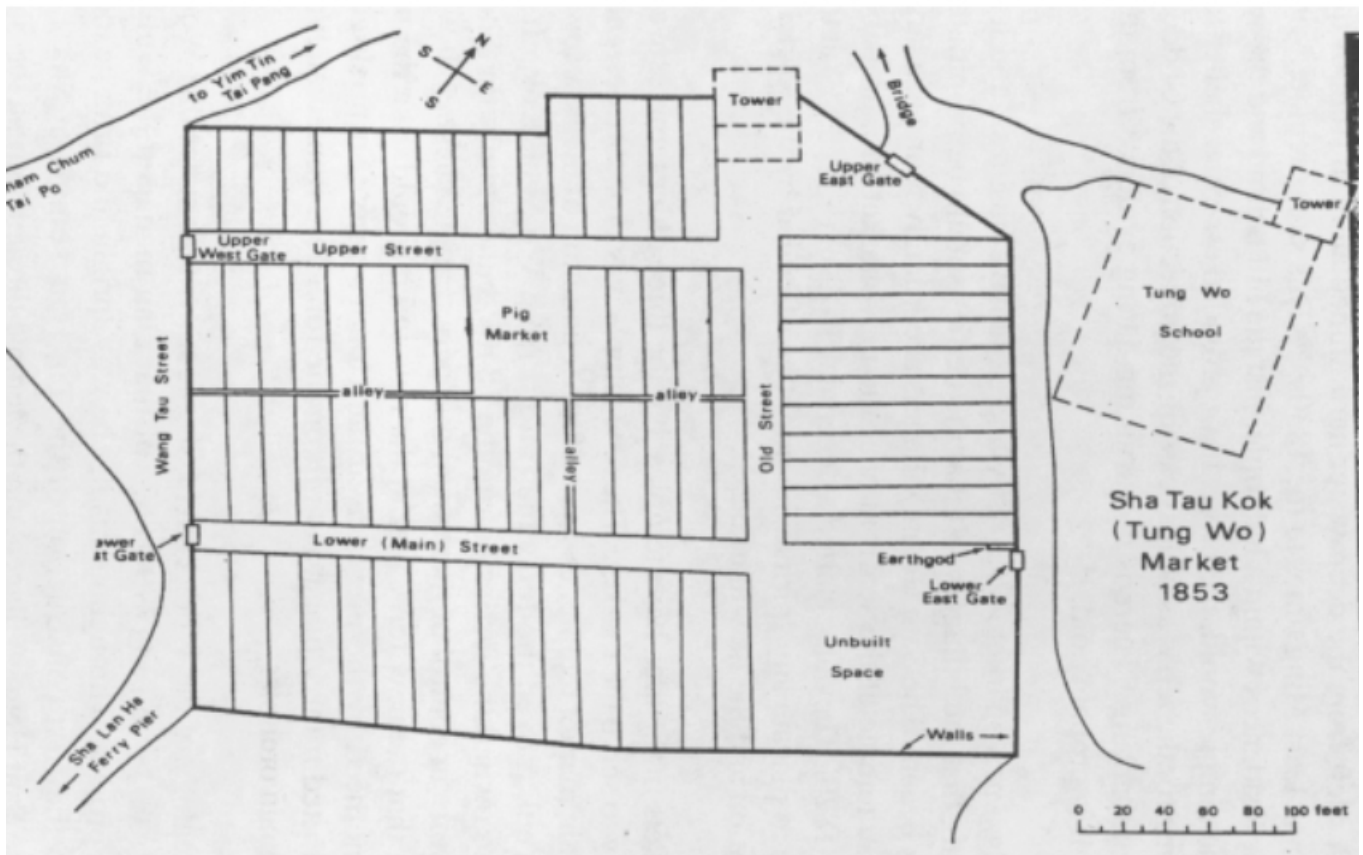
J The SAR boundary of Hong Kong and Macau.

Sha Tau Kok is located in the most north-eastern edge of Hong Kong and, like many cities, started as a village near the Sha Tau Kok river. Through the years the original mouth of the river has dried up and the village has expanded far beyond it.

Founded by the Hakka, Sha Tau Kok quickly gained prosperity through the 東和 Tung Wo Market (Cantonese; literally translating to the Eastern Peace Market).⁸ The commerce hub could only establishment through agreements of forming an alliance with surrounding clans, with Sha Tau Kok becoming the center of it.

Thus, the village became a socio-economic network for the alliance. Eventually, the economical prosperity came to an end, however, the relations of clans still remain.

8



K Patrick Hase (1993):
東和市場 *Eastern Peace Market of 1853*.

The notion of market has and, even to this date, is still an important aspect of the village.

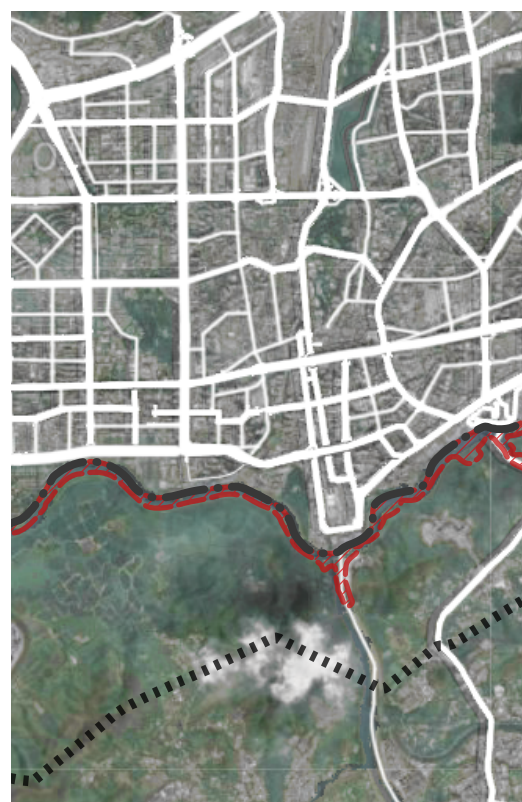


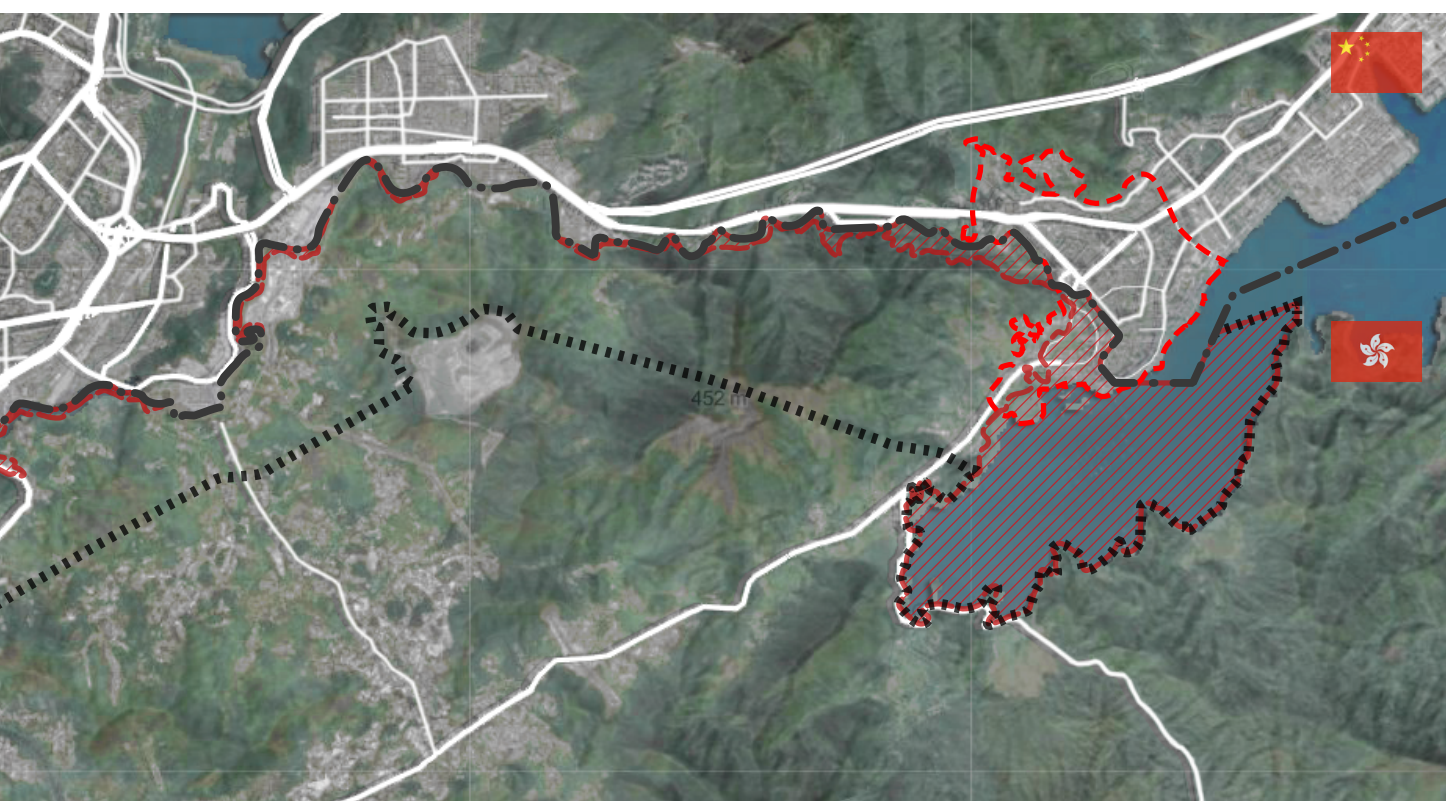
Hong Kong/Shau Tau Kok
Site location.

The Frontier Closed Area was established in 1951 as a restricted area that acts as a buffer zone, once used to keep out illegal immigrants. Through the years it has been expanded and reinforced until the the change of authority in 1997. Since then, the FCA has been revisited and reduced a couple of times, the last one being in 2015.

Legend

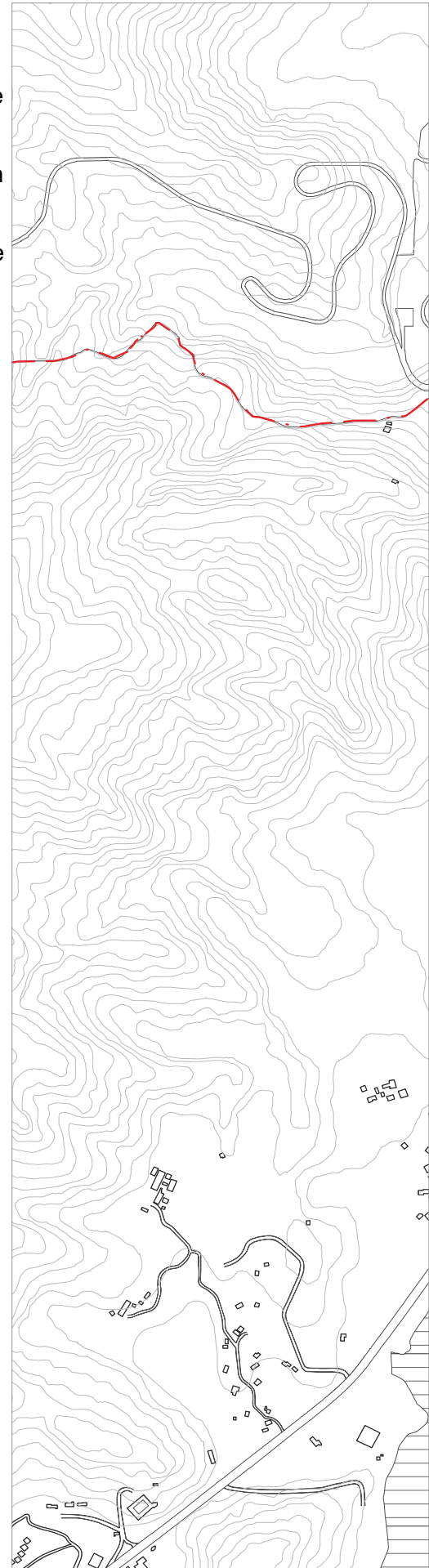
- • — SAR Boundary
- - - - - Sha Tau Kok Village
- Previous Frontier Closed Area
- ▨ Current Frontier Closed Area



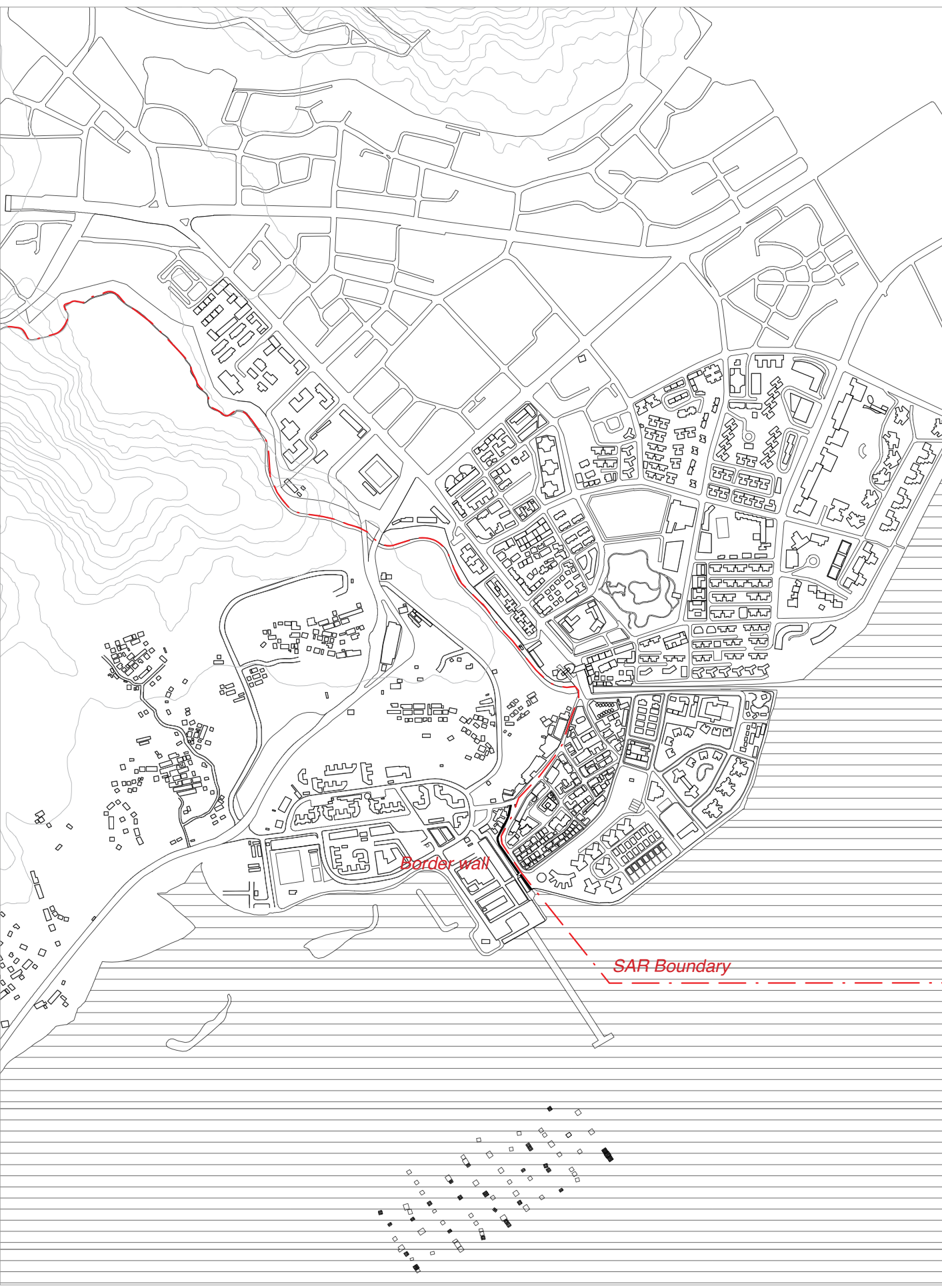


M The Frontier Closed Area and its area reduction since 2015.

Where once was the mouth of the river, now a wall is erected to create the physical dichotomy. It was this place where the establishment of the village was. Nowadays, the village is in decline both culturally and economically. However, in earlier times, through commerce and alliances like the Tung Wo Market, the village began to prosper and through British Hong Kong, the village once more became the center of attention. Thus, this area has significant value both historically and present.



N Sha Tau Kok Site.
1:30000



Much of the wealth was poured into large reclamation projects, as it was aimed at increasing the arable land available in the area. Traces of the Hakka still remain, albeit somewhat hidden most of the times.

As the indigenous are known for being farmers and fishers, these traces would still remain, mainly on the Hong Kong side of the river, as this in a sense, is true to its rural expression. The farmlands still remain mostly in use and the fishing, once prevalent, is still present.

Legend

Historical:



Indigenous Structures

Sha Tau Kok River

Land Reclamation

Relational Networks:



Economical Relations



Worship Relations of Tin Hau

Present:



Indigenous Structures

Public Square

Irrigated Land

Relational Networks:



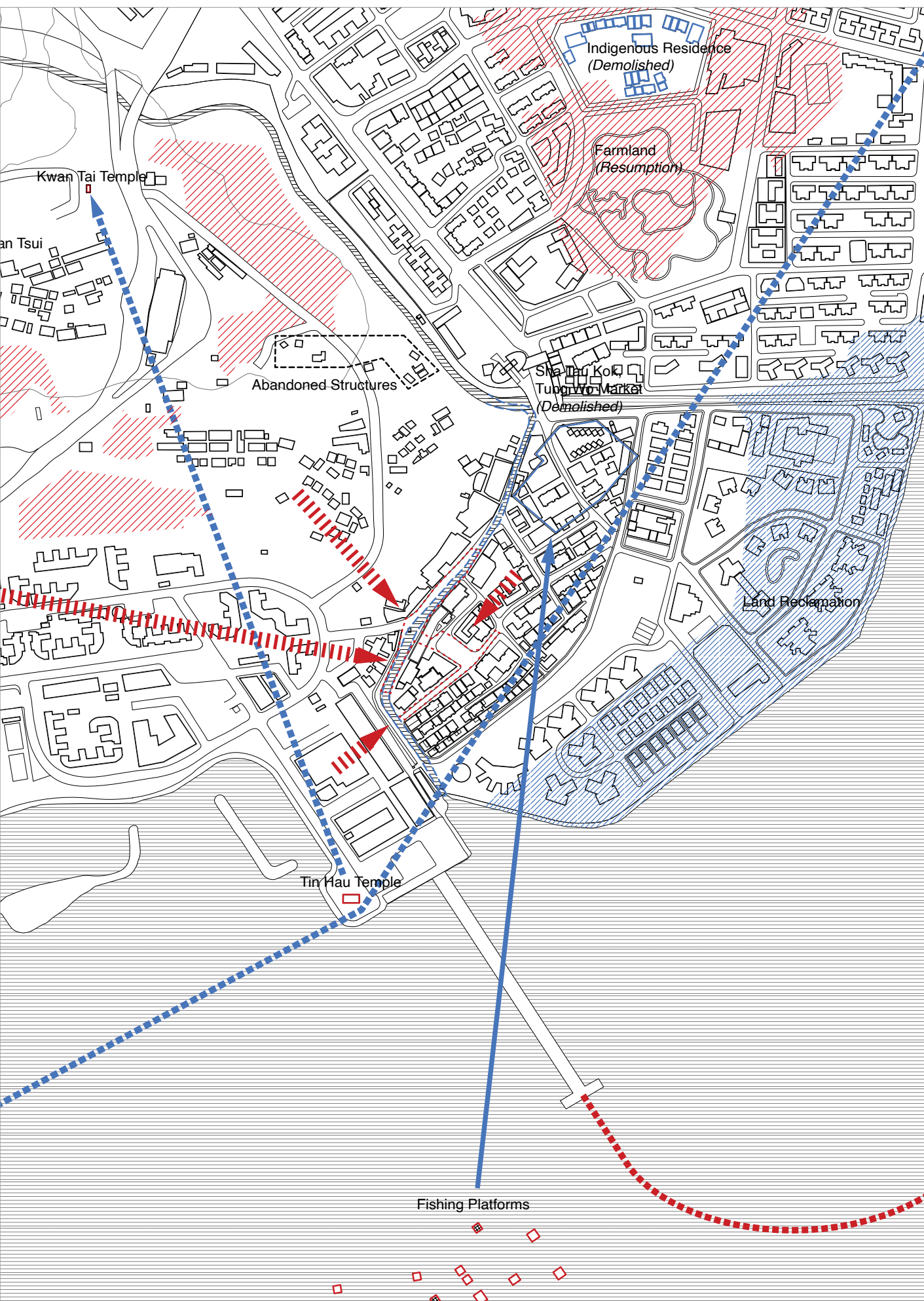
Social Network



Economical Network (Shap Yeuk)

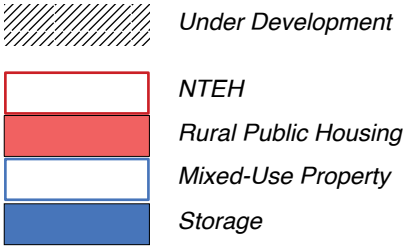


N Sha Tau Kok; Indigenous Footprint
1:10000



Looking at current situation, Sha Tau kok is, in a sense, true to its rural expression with low rise, open spaces, low density formations. The main typology exists of New Territory Exempted Houses, a typology with strict regulations regarding building height, floor area and residents. These types of housing are present all around villages in the New Territories.

Legend



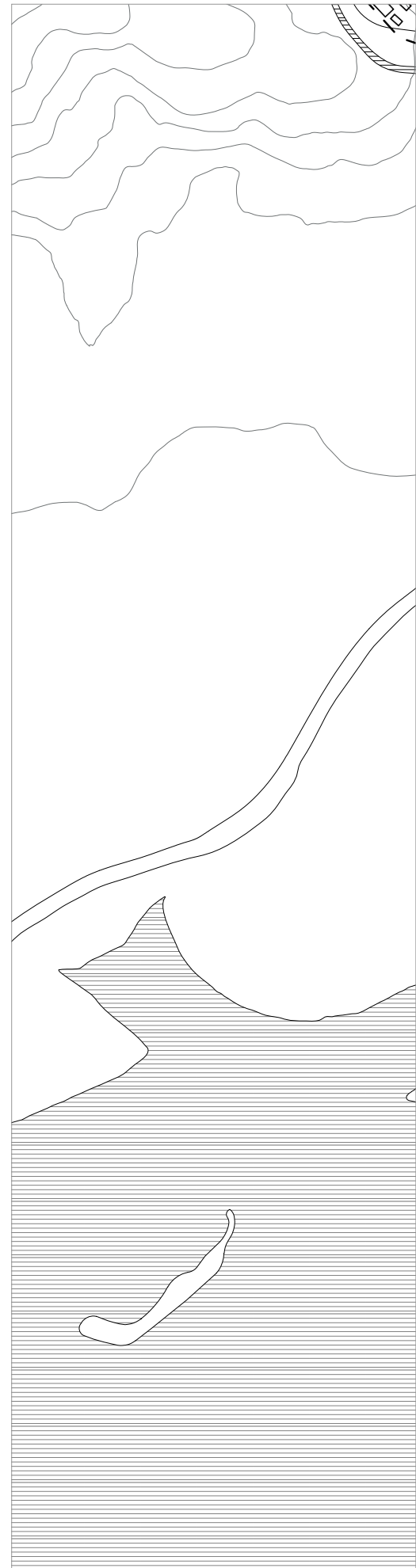
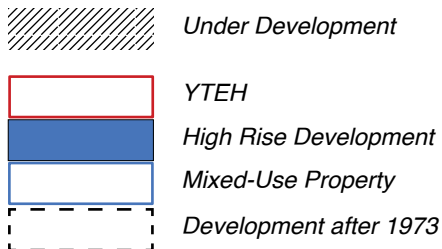
N Sha Tau Kok; Developments Hong Kong
1:10000



The development in Sha Tou Jiao started to arise as a direct result of the growth of Shen Zhen, as a district connected through a port as part of the Special Economy Zone. Previous indigenous settlements have long been consumed by the larger developments.

However, similar building typologies as the New Territory Exempt Houses still exist. Mainly in the neighbourhood directly beside the borderwall. The district is 盐田 Yan Tian, therefore these typologies are hereby referred to as Yan Tian Exempt Houses. In itself, neither part of the border are especially singular.

Legend



N Sha Tau Jiao; Developments China
1:10000



However, the singularity comes from juxtaposing these borderlands. A village consisting of two political systems, a two inhabitant morphology. The authorities have earlier come to agreements of ownership complexities, as exemplified by the relocation of several rural residences to Rural Public Housing. The relocation leaves the possibilities of maintaining the socio-economic network intact, giving a glimpse of the consensus both authorities might agree to.

Legend

	<i>Control Points</i>
	<i>Rural Public Housing</i>
	<i>Residential Relocation</i>
	<i>Demarcation Line</i>
<i>Relational Networks:</i>	
	<i>Boundary Crossing Points</i>
	<i>Economical Relation</i>
	<i>Social Network</i>
	<i>Urbanisation</i>



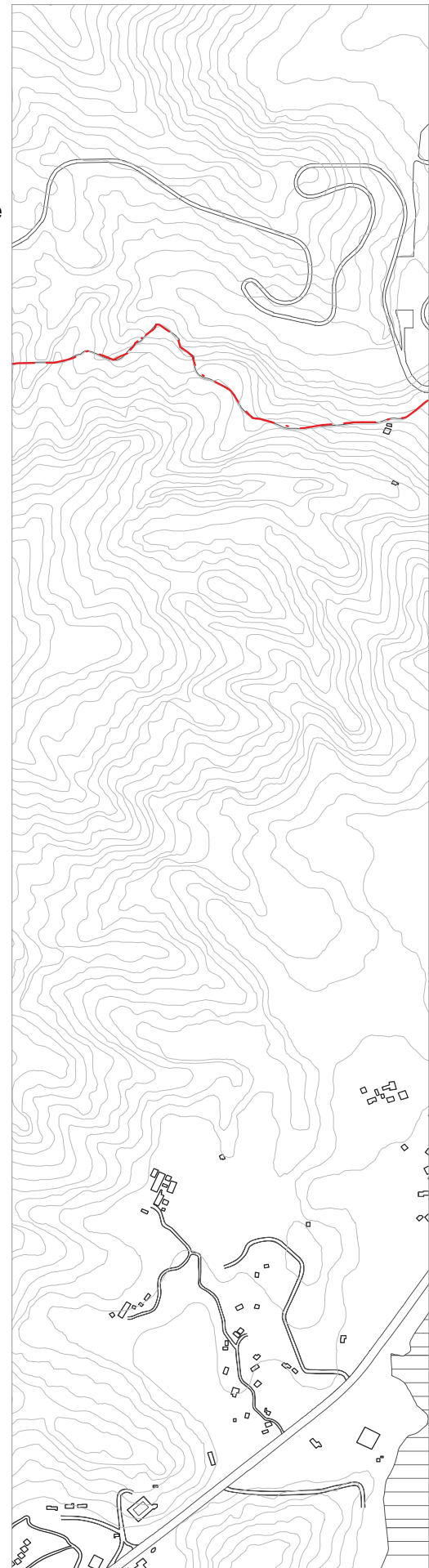
N Sha Tau Kok; Juxtaposition
1:10000



Instead of seeing the site as a place of controversies and the necessity of an 'ideal' masterplan, the research proposes to 'mark-up' certain areas to make these public spaces enhancing the socio-economic, the factor that made the village prosper. This is done with the Indigenous community as the main beneficiary.

These *mark-up* areas are locations that prove to be valuable in the past, present and perhaps future. They are locations that are to be designed, because their function in its current form might not be able to withstand the inevitable disappearance of the border.

These *mark-ups* are not exclusively 3 locations. It is merely that the chosen locations at this instance are proving to be most singular, valuable, bearing potential or *just* interesting. In that sentiment, in time, possible new *mark-ups* will appear, formed and transformed as the urban fabric develops with it, according to the needs of the people. As previously mentioned, the *mark-ups* are intended to be enhancements in public spaces to become catalysts for future developments. Therefore, each of these *mark-ups* are considered to be part of a larger, collective, spatial network, but at the same time should be looked at separately to be designed, because each location poses a different narrative.



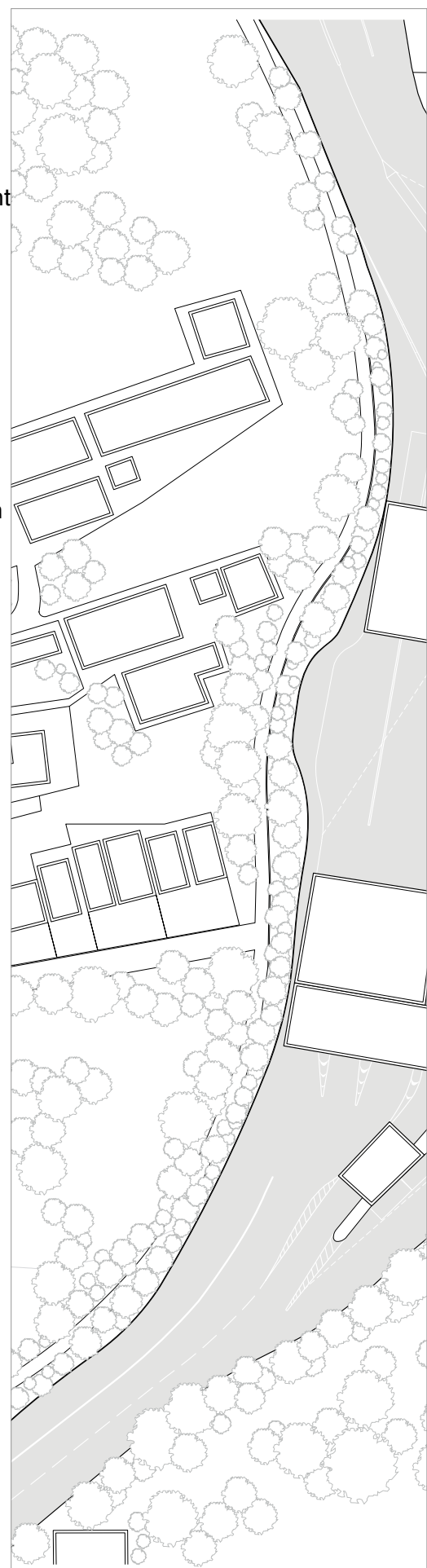
N Value of Locations
1:30000



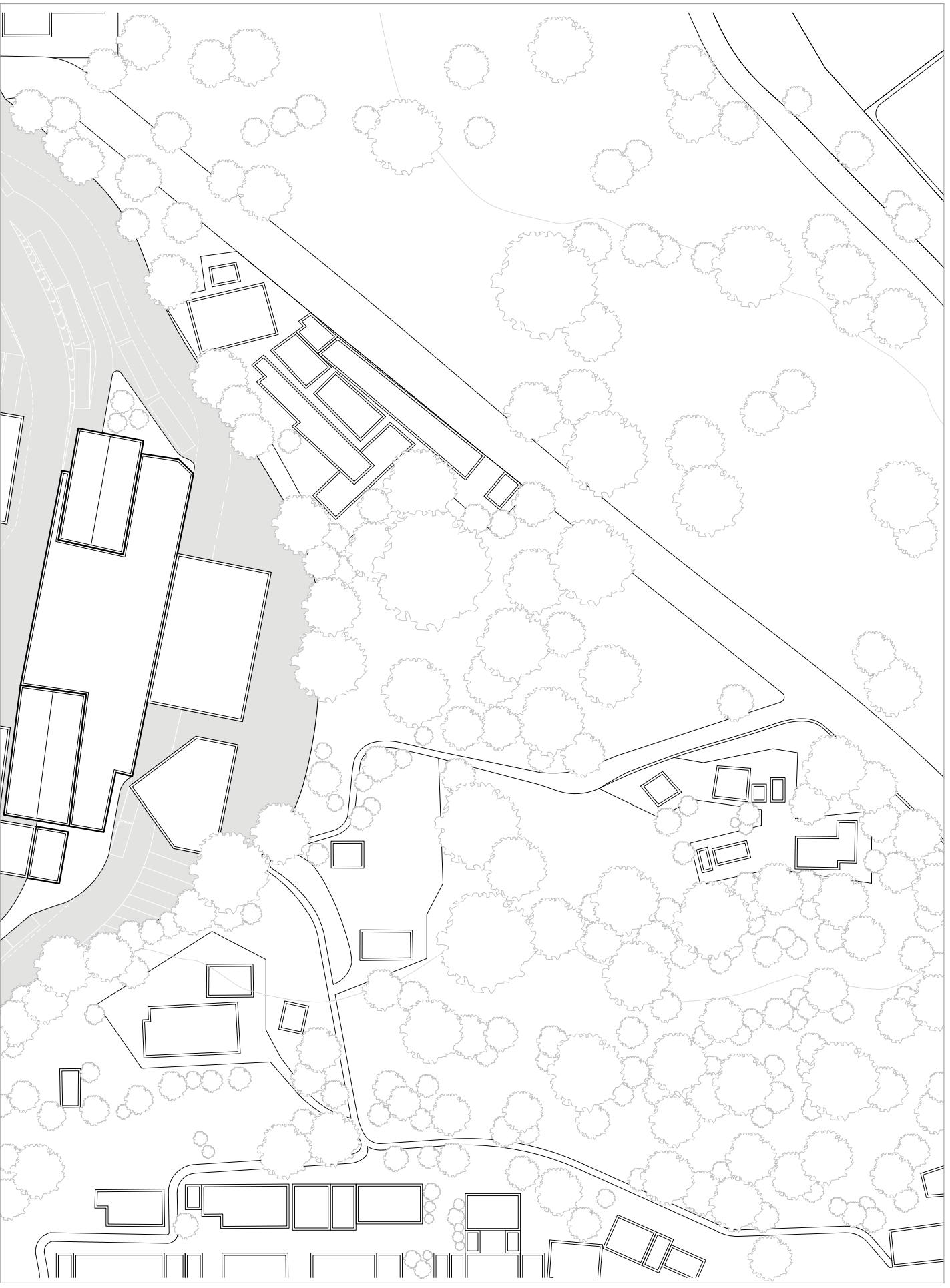
The first *mark-up* is the Border Control Point. It is mainly meant for transportation of goods and the passage way for visitors to mainland China, without crossing the inner village. This area, together with its function, is perhaps the corporeal form of the dichotomy. The moment the border disappears, this area in its current form, is highly likely to disappear with it.

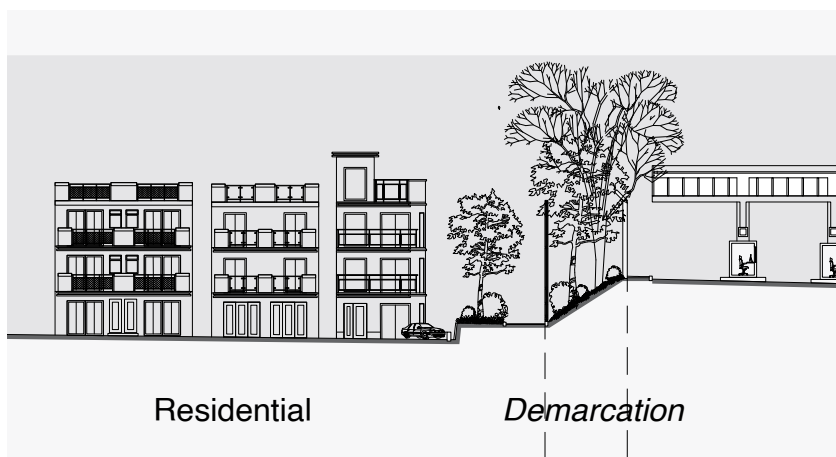
The infrastructure is a highly restricted and monitored area, however, in the more recent years, unplanned development have been slowly rising all around this restricted area. This causes the infrastructure itself to become another means of division of the developments.

It is exactly this reason this area is interesting and might pose potential for future developments in context of history, function and value to build upon this narrative, not to forget or provoke, but to co-exist.

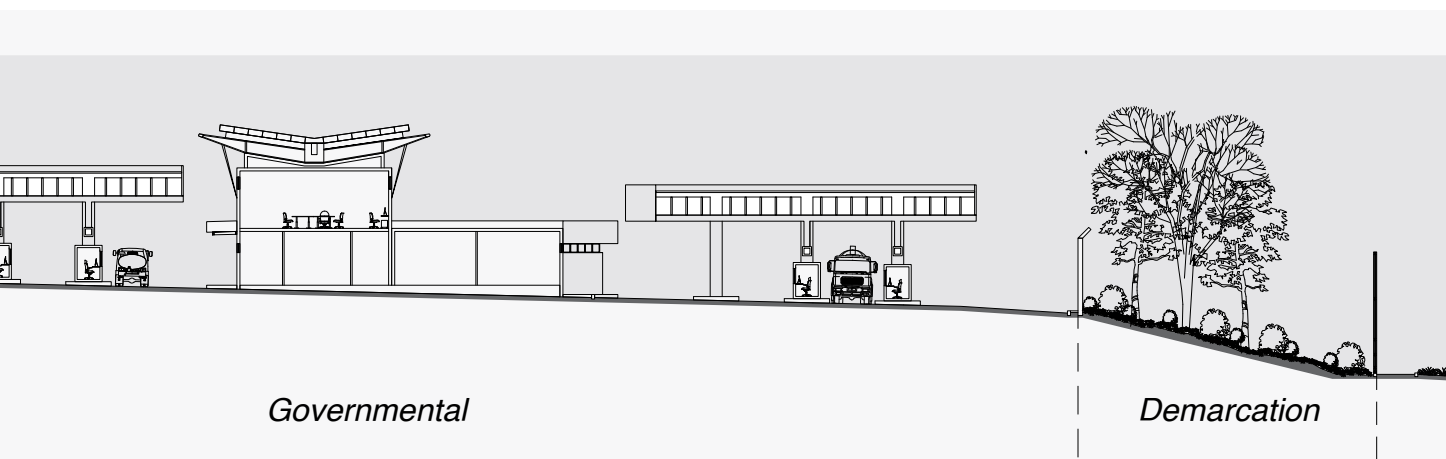


○ Sha Tau Kok; Border Control Point
1:1000





P Border Control Point; Section
1:250



Q Border Control Point; Demarcation
1:100





The lease of Hong Kong to the British Empire led to an impactful division of the prosperous village. This in turn, caused the market to decline and ultimately fall. As most borders, it was dictated by the geography of the landscape. The River, however, dried up and later became known as Chung Ying Street (literally, China-England street), a very important demarcation line.⁹

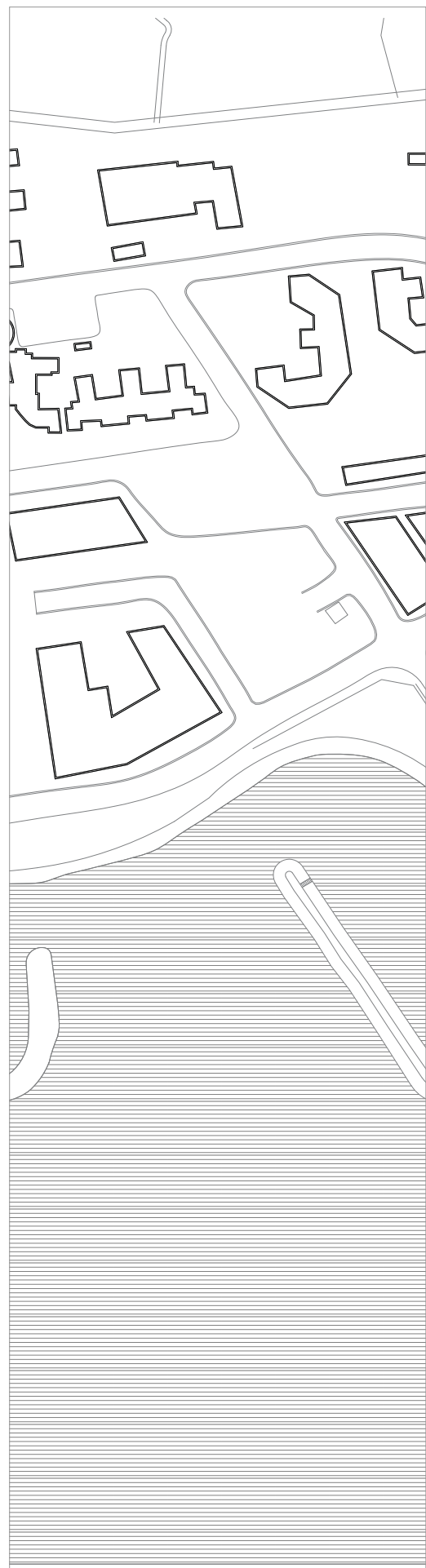
During the early years of Communist China, daily, a large influx of people came into the village, wondering how Hong Kong would look like. Little did they know it was too far from the core, however, the street still peaked interest and became a social hub, a place of exchange promoting or inhibiting cross-boundary ties. The village as the British garrison, once again prospered through consumerism at the border.

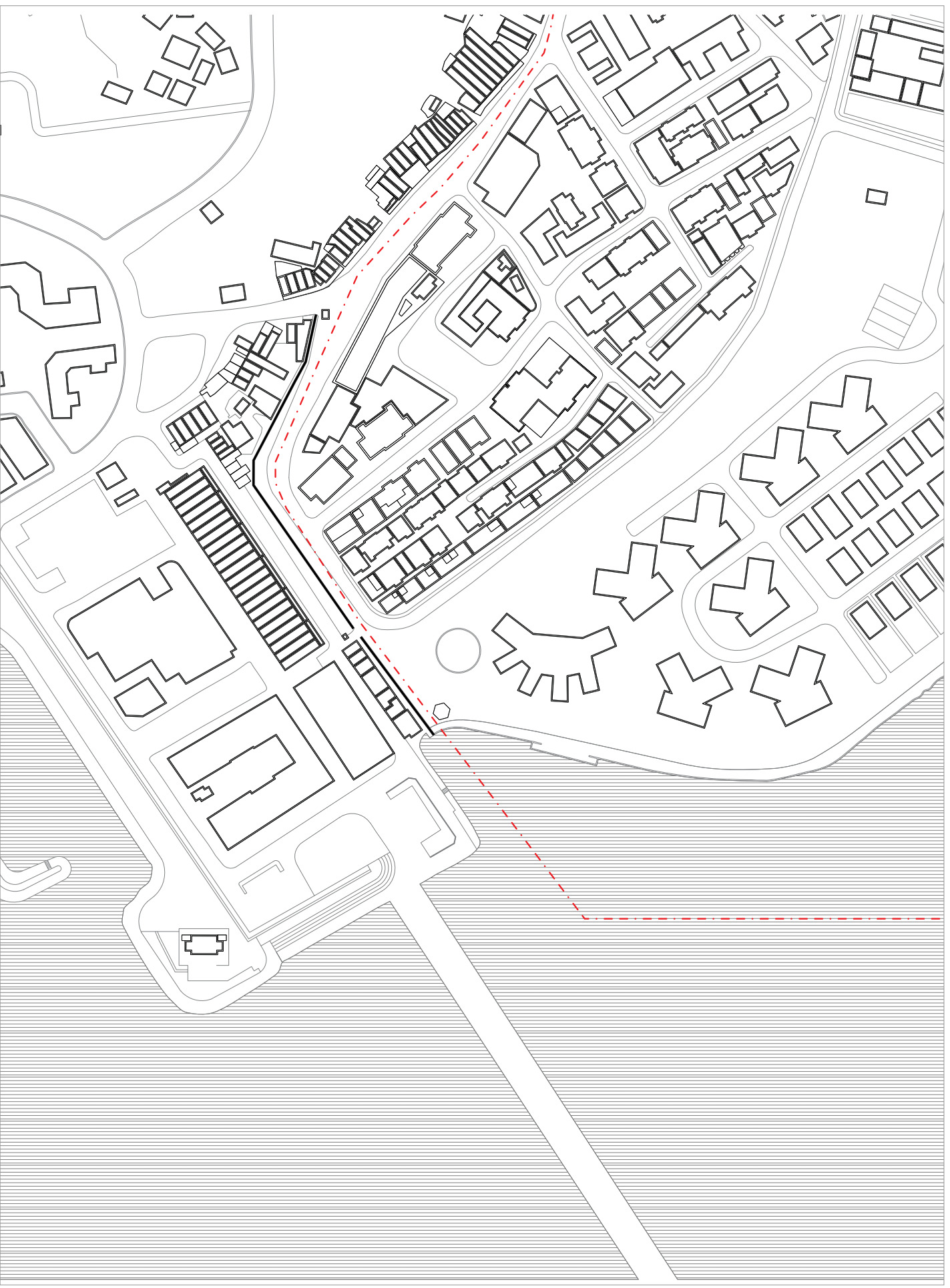
The change of authority in 1997 caused ease of travel restrictions, the village lost its image as a peephole and the mainland's only touch to Western products. The village started its decline and became the least crossed control point as of today.

Sun Xiao, founder and former curator of
Chung Ying Street History Museum:
*'Chung Ying Street bears witness to a
very dark chapter of the Chinese history.'*

9

R The Border on Chung Ying Street
1:2000







S *Top*
Carmen Chen:
Chung Ying Street in 1983.

Bottom
Streetview:
Chung Ying Street in its current state.



T Ernest Kao:
The Porous border,

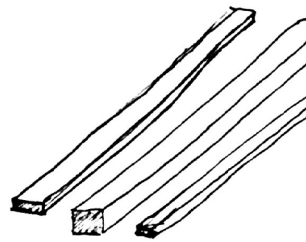
Demarcation and co-existence.

The fishing platforms are floating objects currently in use. The earliest form of these platforms were results of beach foraging, collecting anything of use to be self sufficient. Even though they can be considered mere objects, they are an important part of the cultural heritage. Especially when the border disappears.

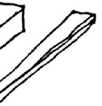
The locals have small boats on the docking areas, and use these to commute inbetween the platforms and land. The platforms, now, provide a small amount of fresh fish to local markets.

However, after the opening of the border, with the acceleration and automatization, these platforms perhaps would become more and more obsolete. Partially remaining and revisiting its repurposing, would then allow it to be part of the urban fabric and become valuable again.

Fishing Platform inventory

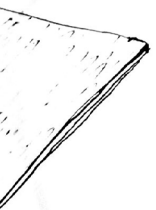


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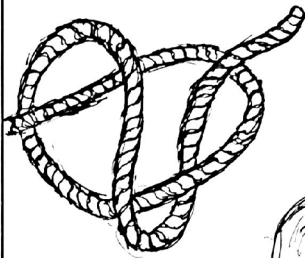


wood of varying sizes

plastic barrels



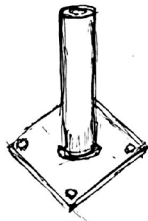
(stainless) steel plates

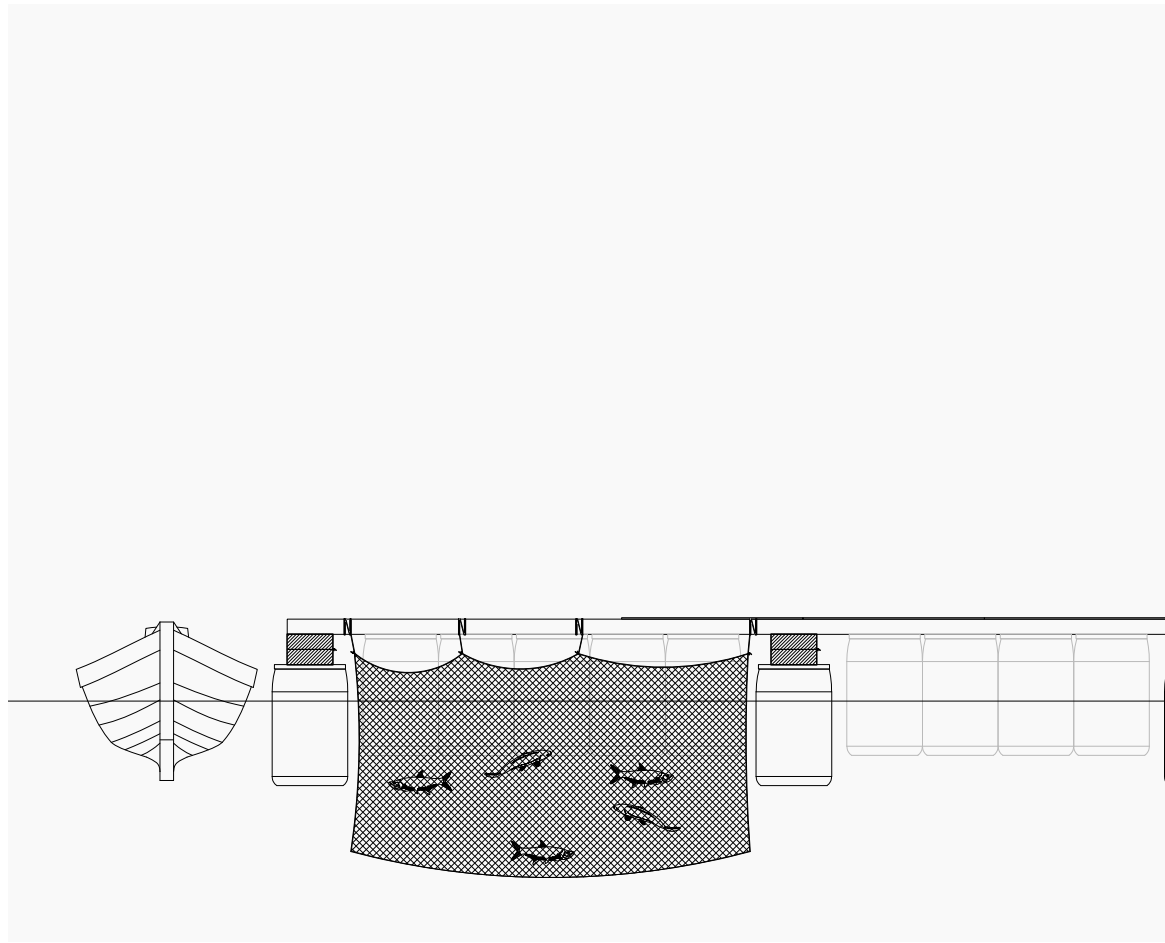


Ropes & fishing nets

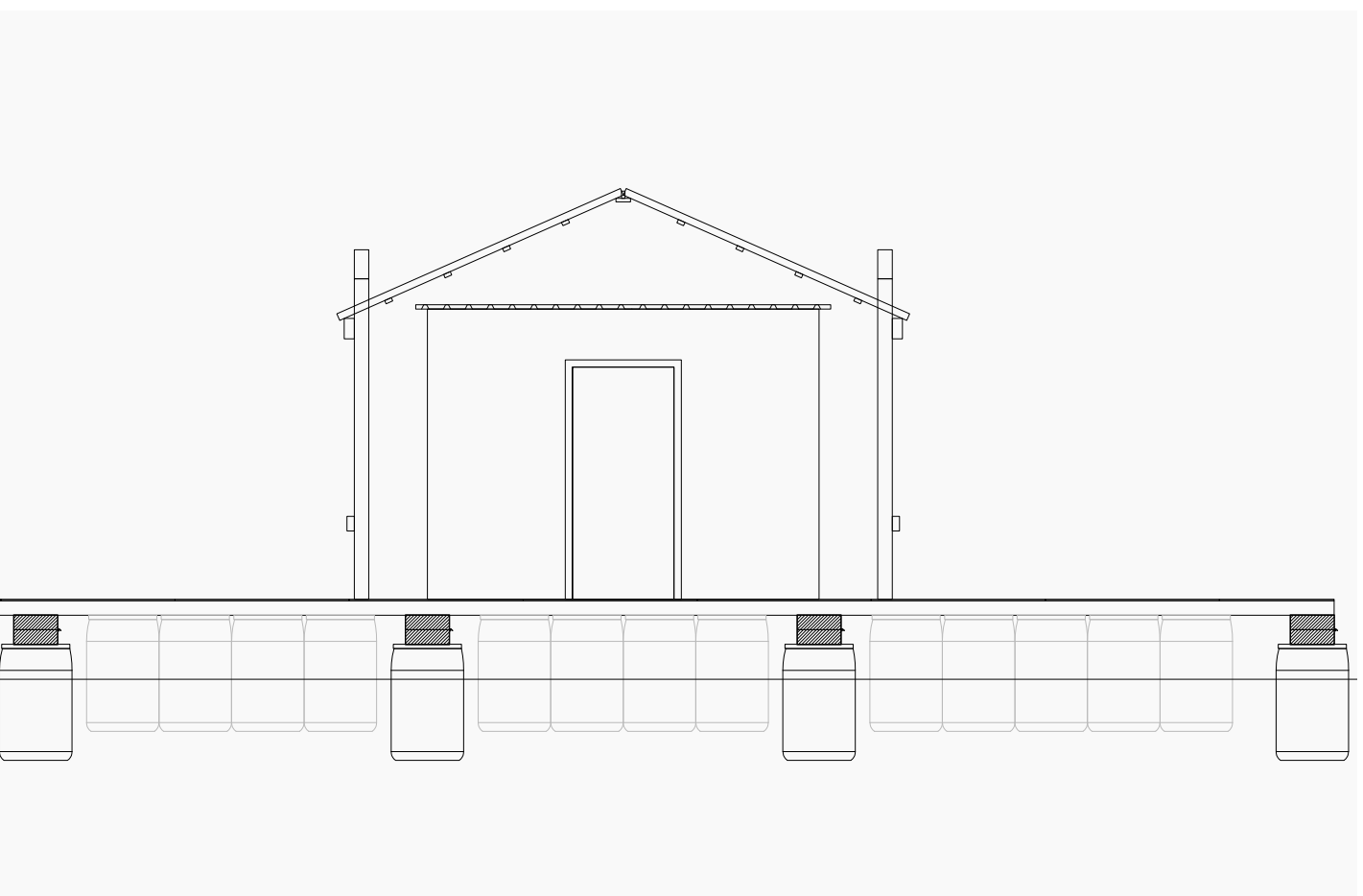


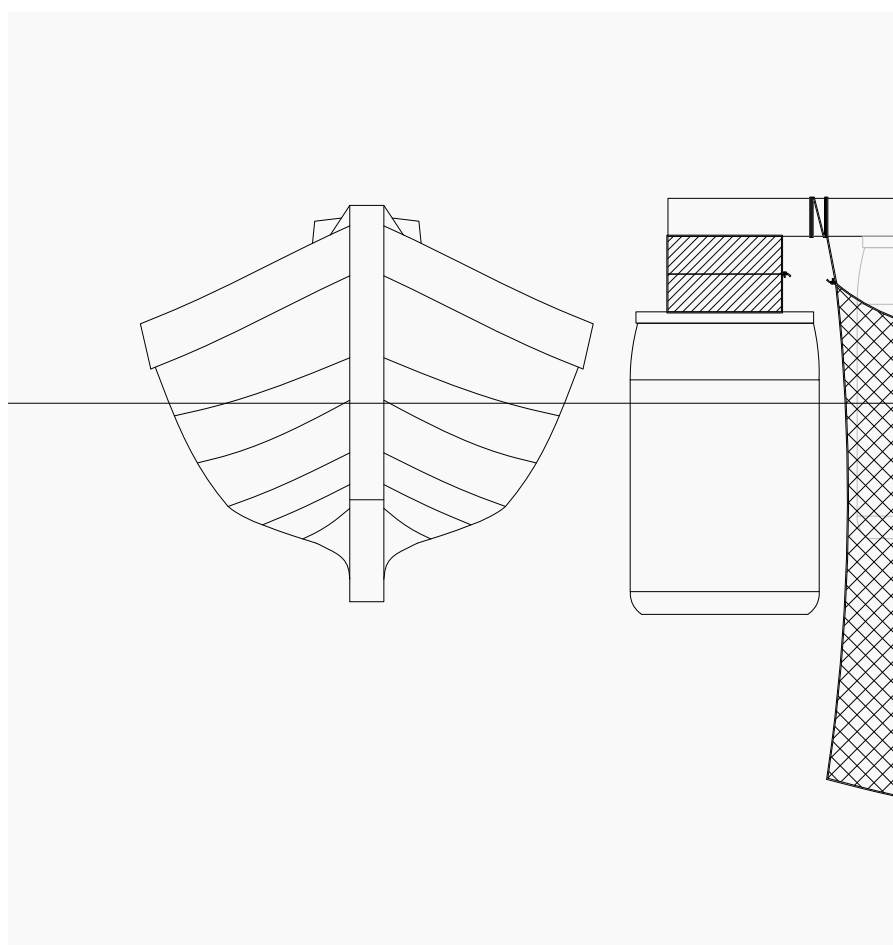
Steel anchor points



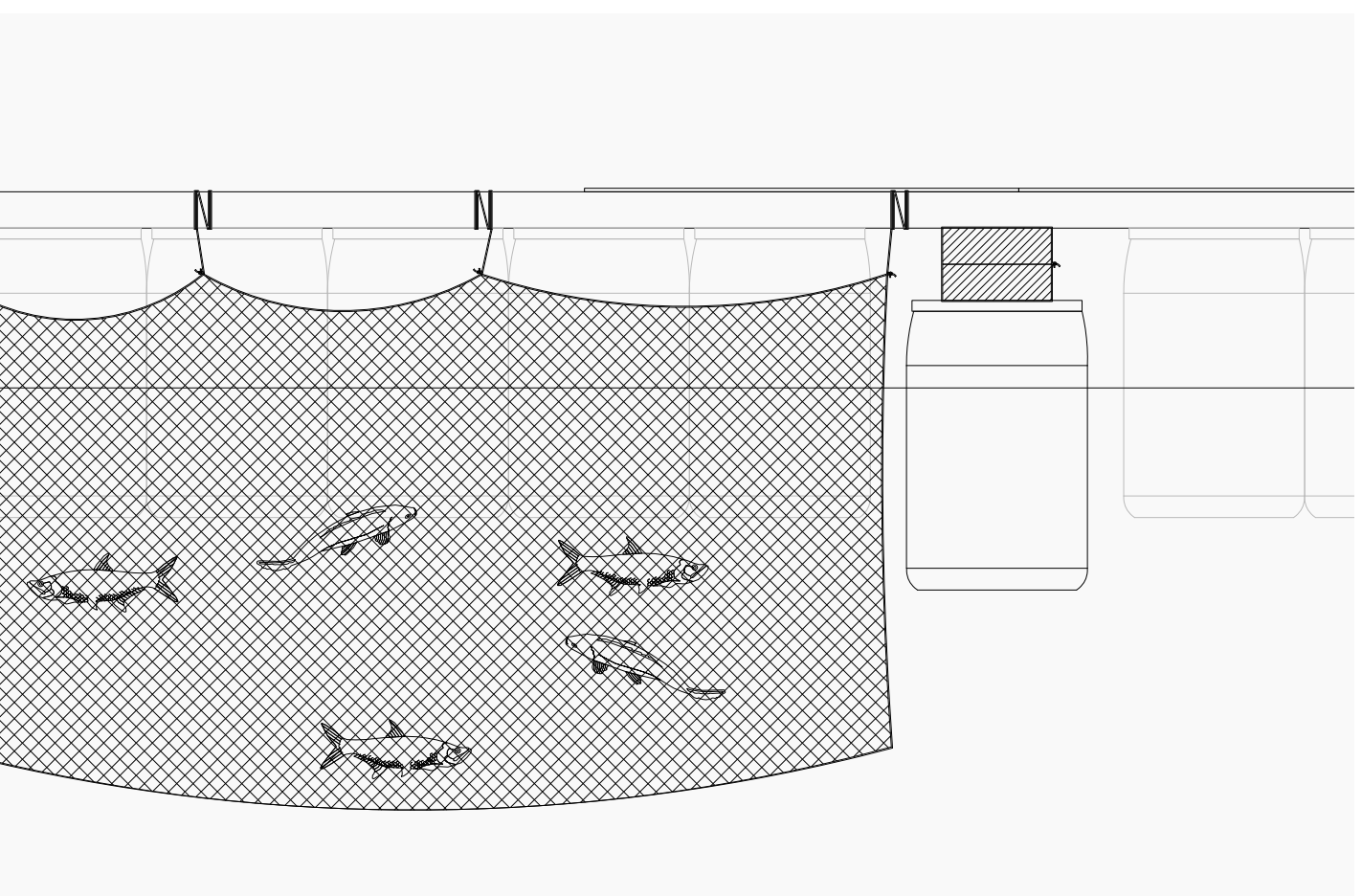


V Fisher's Platform; Section:
1:50





V Fisher's Platform; Section:
1:20







EXPERIMENTATION

Design

Leading to the experimentation and design, a scenario is set. It is an extrapolation of the past experiences, theories and expectations.

For the rural villages within the urban periphery, there are 3 possibilities of urban expansion;

First, the original residents were either financially stimulated to develop their lands into urban villages or displaced into newly, (formally) planned residences nearby.

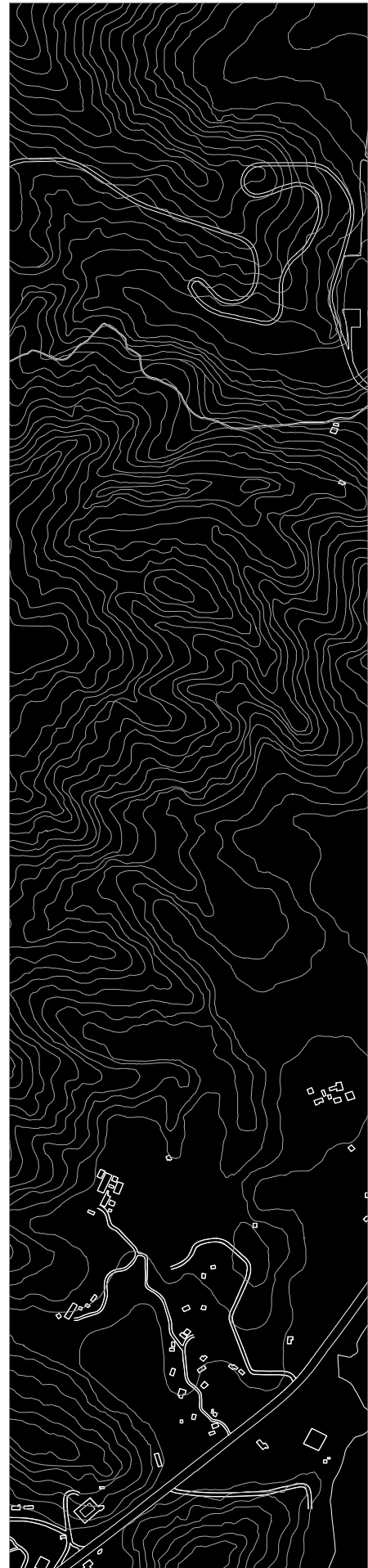
In Sha Tau Kok, the local residents seize the opportunity for developments, as they see the benefits for once the land is to be revisited.

Then, the land owners are directly approached by contractors or investors, who see benefits in developing these lands into semi-planned neighbourhoods. For the current situation in Sha Tau Kok, this is not yet ongoing, as the village is still within the FCA and therefore does not allow non-residents to live here.

Lastly, Sha Tau Kok is not in the center or scope of this economical metropolis, but it follows similar patterns in development. The Chinese side of the border can hardly be called a village anymore. It is a commercial hub with all the necessary facilities for a city to function.

Due to the financial benefits of optimizing GFA, it became a common, uncharacteristic set of developments. So for both private owners as well as governmental planned development, it is more likely to follow the trend of this 'generic' development. Then, due to the lack of land for urban expansion, these built-up areas are revisited, because of the gradual change in density the city.

X Scenario:
Preliminary Site Plan.
1:30000







1.



2.

Y Scenario:
*Phases of Urban Expansion in The New Territories,
 HK*

Diagrammatic depiction.



3.



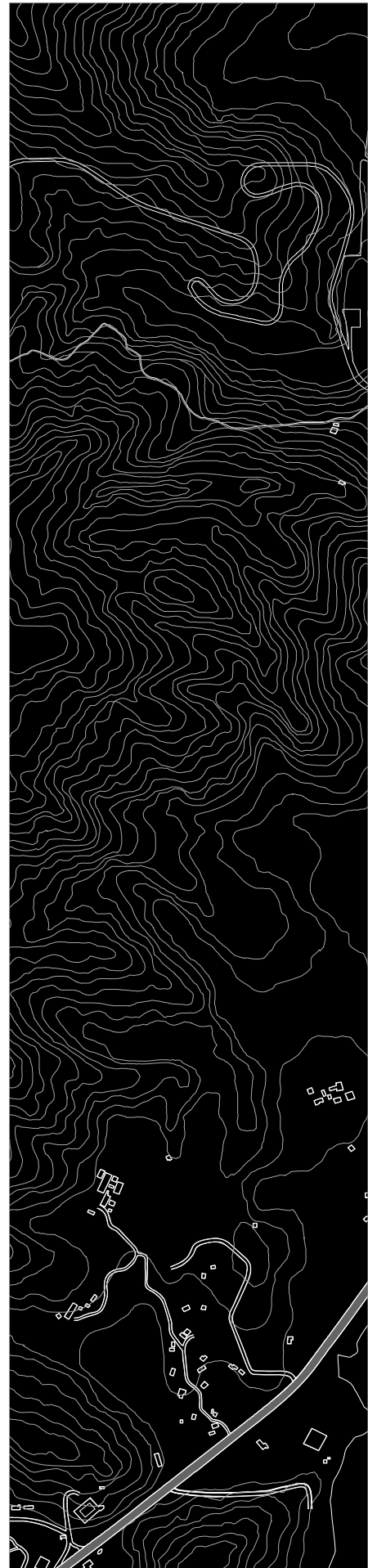
4.

Ultimately, the scenario mostly affects the rural side of Sha Tau Kok, as the Chinese side mostly consists of newly, planned developments. The plots of the scenario are based on existing infrastructure, such as the main roads, landscape of the mountainous area and river and patterns of the existing infrastructure of Sha Tou Jiao (CH). It preserves the spaces of the *marked-up* areas as a valuable asset, that endures the developments of the disappearance of the border due to their value in past, present and future.

This sets the stage to reconnect the village spatially in social and economic terms. Even though the context has partially gone through the Chinese development patterns, there is still a communal context present. With eye on the continuity of history and ultimately the Indigenous as the beneficiary, the design aims to transcend the demarcation of the border.

The design focusses on the public space as a catalyst for both future developments and socio-economic interactions, as it did in the flourishing of the village and the inherent importance for the Indigenous. It is to create a platform for exchange.

Z Scenario:
Infrastructure Superimposed.
1:30000





The proposition to urge the enhancing of the public space and allow them to create a network, in all forms, is in direct relation to the *search for* or *maintainance* of the identity of the village. It creates the physcality of the city for each individual and introduces the quality of the spatial network.

In its current state of being *fragmentized* and *dichotomised*, *socio-spatial* qualities are a necessity for the *perseverence* of the socio-economic dynamic of the village. This is in relation to the village being developed into its own identifyable edges. In the dialogue of fragmentisation of public spaces, they tend to be unfavorable, albeit in a vacuum. Therefore, we are in search to *defragmentize* the public space and by doing so, the city. At the same time, as a contradiction on defragmentization, creating *individual* or *personal* space in the *isolated* public space, becomes a necessity to *encourage* an individual to use or stay in the space.

This allows for an open-ended exploration of spatial objects on all scales. The *impact* of intervention should then lead to defragmentize public space in order to allow the possibility to create a collective spatial network. By allowing such a network, the interventions are to guide logistics, people, visual through the urban fabric. The interventions are to *provide* the possibility, *enabling* and *instigating* action, together with the careful consideration of the *narrative, story, history, culture* and *life* of the Indigenous as the beneficiary within the context of the urban fabric.

Ultimately, the intervention together with its direct context, as *mark-ups*, are to become *catalysts* for future developments being in close relation to the intention of the identity of the city.

The Perseverance of the Dynamic *Reflective Note*

Within the paper, the theoretical aspect is based on an exploration of architectural, socio-cultural and philosophical frameworks, while *superimposing* these with the narrative of the Indigenous and China in attempt to construct an interconnected *context* of value and possibility of a different approach. This, in time, lead to the understanding of the contingencies surrounding the topic and the impact of a statement. Through this perspective, in this exploration, architectural interventions start to become catalysts for future developments within the urban fabric of networks.

Through the constant dynamic of readings on one hand and implementation on the other, both the research and design are slowly *enhancing* one another. An example is the notion of fragmentation and defragmentation of the city through architecture. This has become an important aspect within the design proposal and relates back to the theoretical aspect of the graduation.

Frankly, at the same time, the goal of the paper is not to create a 'formula', 'tool-box' or other, inherently, prescriptive means for both architectural and urban design. The paper and its design complement each other and are specifically looking to understand and transcend geopolitical aspects.

Instead, the fascination started as a way to uncover the unknown and the ambiguous, yet extraordinary narrative of the Indigenous and their 'hidden' village. By going back to the roots. By being open to any form of dialogue. By looking beyond what is given. This exploration in itself becomes a catalysts in discovering personal positions within the discipline of architecture. In this era of increasing polarisation in our society, we, perhaps, have to rethink the role of architecture. To not merely look for solutions, but set the objective beyond what we see and allow for dialogues to emerge.

APPENDIX

Interview

This interview is conducted with the uncle of the author, a local of Sha Tau Kok and involved with the Hakka community in the village. The questions are related to the future aspect of the village and community and the potential disappearance of the border.

Could you please introduce yourself?

My name is 鍾洪浩, Hong Hao Chung. You could say I am a real local. My father was born here and stayed here his whole life. I also have been living here since birth, but I work in Fanling (New Territories, Hong Kong).

I have seen photos and videos of a festival which was held recently in Sha Tau Kok. Could you explain what the purpose is?

The festival is to showcase certain traditions of the Hakka and to shed some light unto our community. The Hakka were looked down upon in the early days, because we were very poor. It was a hard time to be a Hakka, because we never belonged anywhere. However, nowadays people are proud when they say they are Hakka. We also see this in the amount of volunteers willing to help with the festival and other activities to portray the Hakka. It is held in Sha Tau Kok, because it was the central trading hub of the Ten Alliances. Therefore, it is called ‘十約’有‘你’, literally translating to ‘Ten Alliances have you’ and is all about inclusiveness.

Why is it so important for the Hakka and the village?

We (The community) have been fairly passive until recently. Sha Tau Kok has always been quite closed off and no one really took the effort to organize such events, because of the time and money it would cost. It most likely has to do with the developments in the last decades that the effort has increased so much. This is also one of the main reasons we thought it was important to organize an event now, because we needed to create awareness.

Could you elaborate on this matter?

Before this (the change of the borderlands), there was little to no attention for both the village and the community. However, since the opening up of the village, there have been many visitors that are interested in the history and story of the village and people. I guess Sha Tau Kok always had this mystery around it, because the majority of the people could not visit it at all and only heard stories from other people. So this change or displacement of the border brought attention to us, but it also gave us the urgency to showcase ourselves as well.

Are you referring to the potential threat to the village when Hong Kong and China becomes a unity instead of this one country - two systems?

Yes, this has been a topic for a while in our committee. Of course, when the government decides anything, it will be almost impossible for us to do anything about that. This is the urgency of putting ourselves on the map I was referring to earlier, because a lot of areas have already been renewed. In the end, the festival was for our community to get involved with their roots and have something memorable. At the same time, it showed that this is our home and that we belong here. By having people outside of the community become interested, we hope to make our mark.

