

YYZ HKG

A Tale of Two Cities



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A Tale of Two Cities

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AFFIDAVIT

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Approach

Hong Kong means “fragrant harbour” in Cantonese,

Toronto means “where trees stand in water” in Iroquois¹,

Hong Kong is situated in the Pearl River Delta,

Toronto lies at the shore of Lake Ontario,

Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region,

Toronto is the provincial capital of Ontario,

Hong Kong was founded during the First Opium War,
as a British trade post to trade opium.

Toronto was founded after the American War of Independence,
as a British trade post to trade fur.

This is a tale of two cities – Toronto and Hong Kong. It tells about the life of two cities on the opposite sides of our planet. It deals with differences and commonalities, global and local phenomena, and the bond that connects the two cities: migration. After Deng Xiaoping and Margaret Thatcher had agreed on the handover of Hong Kong to China for 1997, “a flood of emigration was observed in the years leading up to this historic event”². Canada was by far the most popular destination – about 62% of all emigrants landed there. During the 1980s and 1990s, the majority arrived as “economic-class” immigrants.³ Many of them emigrated back to Hong Kong after having obtained Canadian citizenship. The stories of five people, who have lived in both cities, lead to their daily life places and give an insight into transnational lifestyles. All these stories relate to architecture, which is the stage for our daily lives and the built expression of society. This book is an experiment on how to conduct artistic urban studies as an architect.

¹ Cf. Relph 2014, 12.

² Chan 2014, 439.

³ Chan 2014, 440.

I. Collection of Material

In January 2015, I started to collect the material for this book, which took me until July 2016. In 2015, I spent four months in Hong Kong and two months in Toronto, in 2016 one month in each city. I separated my research into two phases referring to the two years. During the two phases, I had a different research focus.

2015

field research /

“The way to get at what is going on in the seemingly mysterious and perverse behaviour of cities is (...) to look closely, and with as little previous expectation as possible, at the most ordinary scenes and events, and attempt to see what they mean.”⁵

The first time I visited both cities, I arrived “with as little previous expectation as possible” and was able to collect impressions with an open mind. I studied in Hong Kong for one semester and spent as much time as possible experiencing the city. After the semester, I stayed on for three more weeks to go deeper into urban exploration. During this time, I mainly focused on the topic of under- and above-ground walkways and their appropriation by the inhabitants.

After my semester in Hong Kong, I went to Toronto. I read *Death and Life of Great American Cities* by Jane Jacobs, who lived in Toronto for 36 years, two blocks from where I stayed, and has considerably influenced my way of observing cities and public life. I started doing a lot of field research by writing a field diary and through photography, exploring Toronto by bike, walks and public transport. In Toronto I focused mainly on the *PATH*, an underground walkway network, connected to the subway system, in which I regularly got lost.

Accompanying the city walks, I studied literature about cities, from Aldo Rossi’s *Architecture of the City* to Rem Koolhaas’ *Generic City*. Also I focused on elevated and lowered walkway networks in both cities in theory and practice and examined how these underground and above-ground streets were appropriated during different times of the day.

I should point out, that I was always led by my interests in observing, and not so much by a specific question looking for a definite answer. This approach comes close to what the thinkers of the great Chicago School called “nosing around”. “Go into the district”, “Get the feeling”, “Become acquainted with the people” is what they encouraged their students to do.⁶ One morning, I watched a whole *Wimbledon* match of the Canadian tennis star Milos Raonic in the middle of the *Dragon City Mall* in Toronto’s Chinatown, together with twenty Chinese people. I had rush hour lunch in the *PATH* among hundreds of stressed office workers, swam in the flow of commuters in the *MTR* during rush hour, went to baseball games of the *Blue Jays*, and betted pennies on horse races in Sha Tin. I went to Jane’s walks and guided neighbourhood walks, where I always made the acquaintance of very responsive and cooperative people who shared stories with me. They helped me on my search for interesting places.

places /

“If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place”⁷.

There is a lot of written material about the interpretation of “place”; I was inspired by Marc Augé’s definition. To me a place is a space people can relate to, a space, where something happens. There is a reason why the expression is “to take place”. Place is the physical manifestation of the common good. A place is a living organism.

A sense of place – the ability to create places that are meaningful, places of quality and character – depends on the ability to define space with buildings. Is this not exactly an architect’s job – creating the meaningful context for people’s everyday landscape? Architecture is “in this sense not only the place of the human condition, but itself a part of that condition”.⁸

“The world had been discovered. This adventure is finished. But the world is still young, still eager for adventure; what next? There are other worlds to be discovered; even more interesting. The world of great cities.”⁴

⁵ Jacobs 1961, 31.

⁶ Lindner 1990, 10.

⁷ Augé 1995, 77-78.

⁸ Rossi 1984, 34.

⁴ Robert E. Park, quoted in Lindner 1990, 98.

Very much of the public realm in both cities is constituted by the street, since both cities do neither have hundreds of years old cathedrals nor market plazas like older cultures. Louis Kahn once wrote that a city can be measured by the character of its institutions, and the "street is one of its first institutions."⁹

photography /

"Streets provide the principal visual scenes in cities."¹⁰

During my walks and exploration tours, photography came to be the primary medium of this work. I love to observe street scenes and capture them with my camera. Speaking of which, all photos in this book were taken with a relatively small system camera. I think, my camera's small size was crucial to the authenticity of the images, since I was able to photograph the scenes relatively unnoticed. I took most of them from a pedestrian perspective, from which cities are mostly perceived.

This form of street photography is in opposition to perfected architectural photography, aiming to "approach an ideal depiction of formal perfection"¹¹, that influences our perception of buildings. My interest was not to show star architecture, but investigating the built environment that sets the living conditions of a great part of our world's population. As photographs always record a past moment, urban photography can – in these times of rapid change – soon portray the city's recent history.

vs. tourism /

"For that purpose let us betake ourselves to what has always been one of the greatest factors of education, both of the individual and of the world, and see what is being done in other cities and countries."¹²

I clearly want to distance my field research from tourism. First of all, I did not explore the cities by ticking off places of a list in a guidebook that someone else had decided were worth visiting. Second of all, I developed a daily life to settle in both cities for a short time. It was long enough to develop a certain routine, but short enough to still consider myself as a neutral outside observer in both cities. I avoid showing a branded and manufactured mass image of the two cities in my work, which often creates a quite trivial and superficial identity. "The nature of the tourist is one of contradictory vacillation: The tourist has come to expect both more strangeness and more familiarity than the world naturally offers."¹³

2016

migration /

"Home in its most profound form is an attachment to a particular setting, a particular environment, in comparison with which all other associations with places have only a limited significance. It is the point of departure from which we orient ourselves and take possession of the world."¹⁴

By and by, I discovered the intricate relationship the two cities have through migration stories. I considered this topic of transnational lifestyles and the adaptation to life in another culture highly interesting. I wanted to get to know views on the two cities from people who have made the experience of living in both of them. For this reason, I was looking to connect to people with this background. Through friends in Hong Kong, Toronto and Graz, and by posting into the Facebook group *Canadians in Hong Kong*, I got in touch with five families, who lived in both Toronto and Hong Kong during the last 30 years.

agents /

"... every day, they traverse and organize places; they select and link them together; they make sentences and itineraries out of them. They are spatial trajectories."¹⁵

For my second visit in the two cities, I wanted to meet the five families in person. My goal was to visit the places of their daily lives and to get to know their stories within the city. I especially established contact to the family members of my generation, and these five young women and men became protagonists in this book, as the *agents of juxtaposition*. They are Eric, Josh, Kerwin, Quincy and Yvonne. I conducted narrative interviews with the families, and with some of them I even lived during my stay and was able to take part in their daily routines.

In each case, we visited the places of their daily lives together in the city where they are currently living – we walked their way to work, went grocery shopping, to their favourite coffeehouse, favourite restaurant, place of worship etc. I visited the equivalent places they told me about in the cities where they did not live at the moment.

"Every story is a travel story – a spatial practice."¹⁶

It was very interesting to observe the appropriation of spaces, and the mechanisms of settling down in a new environment. "Lefebvre long ago pointed out the curious condition that space is both a means of production and a product of it."¹⁷

In both cities, I illustrated the protagonists' daily life background, which they take for granted (or rather had taken for granted) and showed it to them. Their reactions reflected the importance and impact of their former everyday landscape. They asked me to give them the photographs, wanting to show them to their friends, some of them even put them as their cover photos on Facebook, commenting «*I used to live there*».

9 Louis Kahn, quoted in Friedman et.al. 2015, 472.

10 Jacobs 1961, 378.

11 Strobl 2015, 17.

12 Geddes 1915, 161.

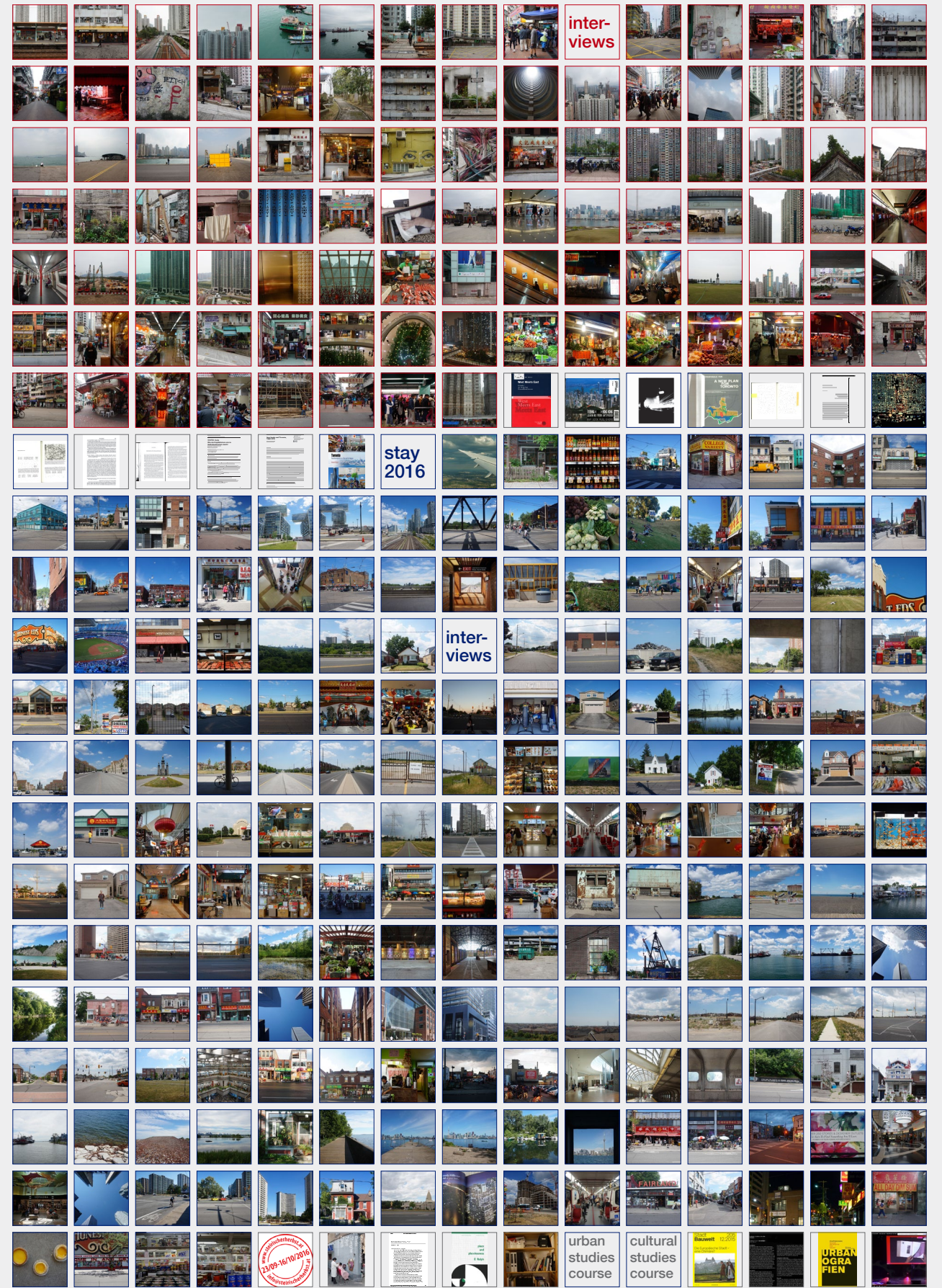
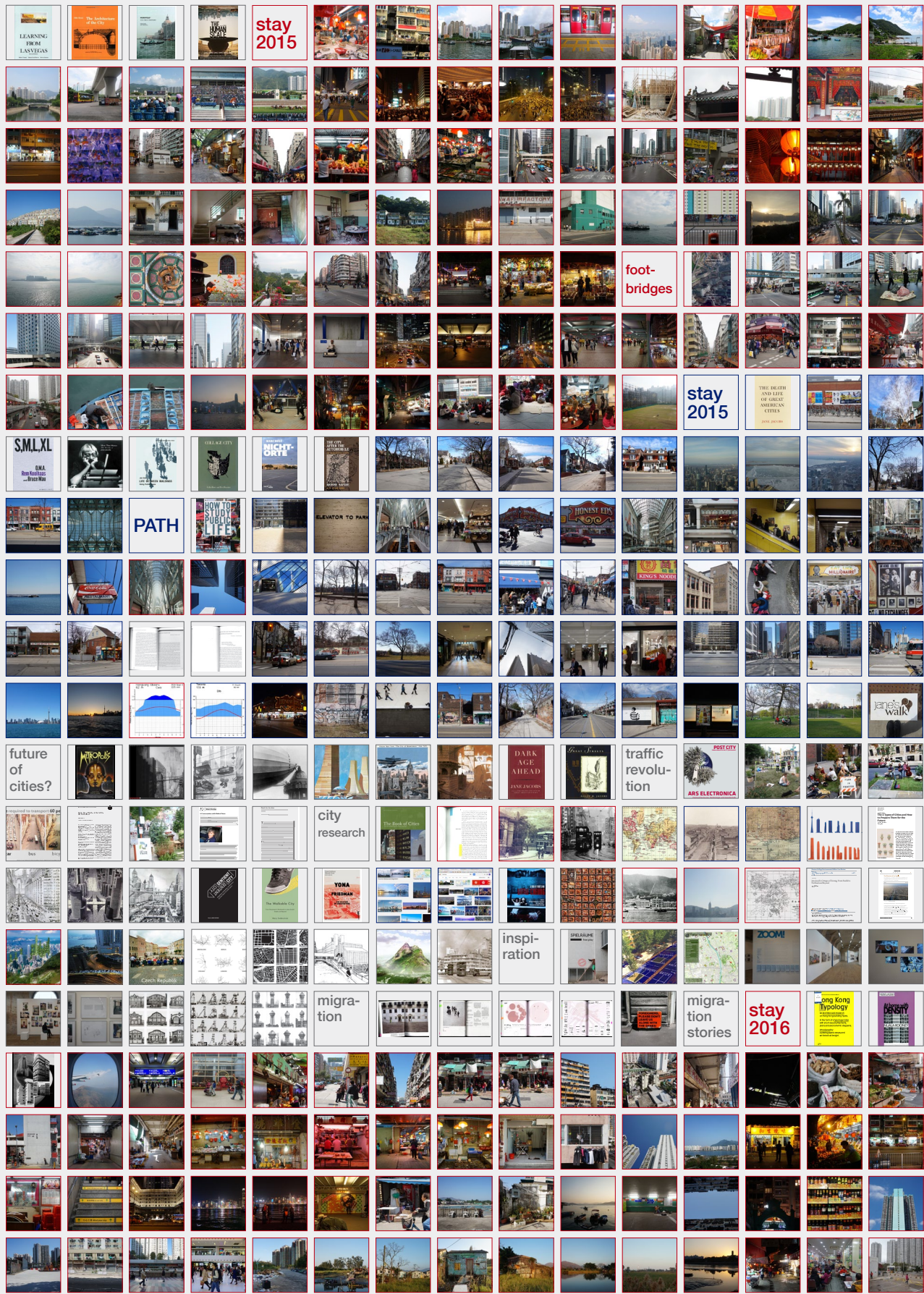
13 Scheppe 2009, 349.

14 Relph 1976, 40.

15 Certeau 1984, 115.

16 Ibid., 115.

17 Dovey 2009, 6.



Collection
Chronological Order

II. Curatorial Design

“Collecting is the piecing together of different elements; indeed, the more unfamiliar the elements are to one another, the more artistic.”¹

After a long research phase and the collection of a lot of material – written, read, recorded and photographed – I started working on designing a unifying and coherent structure, resulting in the production of the book on hand. The process of book design shows many similarities to an architectural design process – the decision-making involves scale, orientation, size, relation, proportion, expression, aesthetics, function, meaning and material. The main difference would be the function of the designed object. Architecture’s main intent is to create built space, contexts for people’s daily lives. The intent of architectural practice is manifested in the content of this book. Every photo of the 112 places presented is an examination of built space.

In the following, I will reflect on my design decisions for my artistic conception of telling a story about space and place.

orientation / One of the very early design decisions was the orientation: The two sides of the book represent the two sides of the planet. Seen from my perspective in Austria, the book is oriented North. The reader is put in a position from where they can look at both sides of the globe – to the West to Toronto and to the East to Hong Kong.

With this juxtaposing parallelism I was able to create relationships between spatial realities. It could be considered as elevations of an architectural drawing, showing something from two sides.

Each two photographs on a double page form an image pair. Hanging *pendants* – artworks that are equivalent or complement one another – next to each other, is a common method in galleries. Another reference is the *split screen*, familiar from movies of the 1960s, where two people talk on the phone, to tell a story simultaneously in two places.

photographic material / A continuing task was the selection of the photographic material and the fine-tuning of the pendants. I chose 52 places out of the lives of my five protagonists, and 60 places I came across during my own field research. I decided on photography as the main medium to create a kind of a photo novel.

Since looking simultaneously at the two sides of the planet is challenging enough, I decided to do this mostly from the same angle. In my search for equivalent places, I had already started to photograph them more and more in a central perspective – which made it easier to work with the material, since I could place the horizon on the same level.

Every night during the field research process, I spent time selecting and sorting the photos into categories. The pairing of the images was by serendipity, except for three pairs. I documented a lot, everything I found interesting, and paired them afterwards. I excluded almost all of the juxtapositions that I had originally planned during the curatorial process because I considered them too banal.

colour coding / Next was the colour coding for the two cities. I chose **red** and **blue** inspired by the Union Flag, since both cities were founded as British colonies. On the one side, red represents Hong Kong following the colour of the Chinese flag, blue on the other represents Toronto.

alphabet / Looking for a way to structure the multitude of widely differing impressions in two such interesting and complex cities, Gilles Deleuze’s *Abécédaire* was a big influence for me. By breaking it down into 26 relatively simple terms, he provided insight into the complexity of his philosophical thinking. I decided to choose 26 aspects to explain the city in fragments; in an associative, photo-essayistic, collage-like way, never aiming to be complete, but as a whole still drawing a colourful picture of the two cities. The Alphabet touches upon many topics concerning the city – housing, traffic, politics,

economy, recreation, culture, development, food, water, nature, collective memory, education, density, tourism, migration, diversity... I also included the stories of my protagonists in the alphabet, since they are part of both cities.

An important tool for the construction of the alphabet was the thesaurus helping me with my search for adequate synonyms and terms. This process went hand in hand with the selection of the photographic material.

subjective – objective / The Alphabet, the main part of the book, presents the two cities seen in a very subjective way, through my own experiences and impressions, and based on the five families’ stories. It is subjective on different levels; in the framing of the images for my part, but also in their interpretation through the reader. The image pairs are meant to provoke and to inspire thinking about differences and commonalities in a globalized world.

“All places and landscapes are individually experienced, for we alone see them through the lens of our attitudes, experiences, and from our own unique circumstances”²

For a more objective overview in facts and figures, maps and rankings, in which cities are usually compared, I created a reference guide of graphics that are shown in the Appendix. The juxtaposition in numbers is meant to provide underlying knowledge and proof that the two cities actually are comparable.

description / In reference to Erich Mendelsohn’s *Bilderbuch eines Architekten*, I wrote a short text about each of the 112 places. Some of them are about my own impressions, some tell stories of the collective memory gained from conversations and interviews, some quote excerpts from my literature research. «*Such quotations*» belong to the interviews of the protagonists, “such quotations” to my literature research. The descriptions are meant to provide the reader with more insight for the interpretation of the places. In addition to the concrete representation of places in images and words, I added an abstract code of each place, in form of its coordinates.

title / I chose to title the book on two levels. First, I juxtaposed the cities in the title with their generic IATA airport codes, since the airport represents the ultimate (non-)place of globalization to me. Second, I chose the reference of Charles Dickens’ novel *A Tale of Two Cities* as a hint of the narrative that spans between the two cities, talking about places of everyday life.

¹ Kuehn 2016, 191.

² David Lowenthal, quoted in Relph 1976, 36.

Alphabet



/ in the sky over Toronto

The approach into Toronto offers a bird's-eye glance onto the sprawling carpet of urban developments interwoven with strands of greenery. Low-rise suburbs stretch between distinctive high-rise centres, the tallest of which is Toronto's financial district. The city sits at the shore of Lake Ontario, one of North America's five Great Lakes.



/ in the sky over Hong Kong

Flying over Hong Kong, one sees green, mountainous islands – 262, to be exact – many of which feature areas packed with super-dense, repetitive high-rise towers. From afar, one can also see Victoria Harbour, the narrow strait between Kowloon Peninsula and the skyrocketing towers on Hong Kong Island.



W79°18'51.3" N43°53'55.1"

Where does the city end? Toronto is built on vast, very flat land. Except for the shore of Lake Ontario, there are neither natural nor political boundaries hindering its expansion. The City of Toronto is clearly demarcated on maps, but only a part of the developed Greater Toronto Area that has been expanding further and further into the hinterlands.



E114°1'47.1" N22°27'53"

Where does the city end? Hong Kong has natural and political boundaries all around. The neighbouring Shenzhen has experienced an unbelievably rapid growth during the last thirty years. In 1978, Shenzhen was declared a "Special Economic Zone", an experimental zone for capitalism in a communist country. Shenzhen's buildings push up against the border with Hong Kong.



W79°18'10.8" N43°54'4.2"

Toronto grows outward and further outward. Green spaces and farmland make room for new neighbourhoods of cookie-cutter houses. The car-centric developments still coarsely follow the road grids of urban planning, but the blocks are subdivided by curvy crescent drives that aim to create a calmer, more charming setting.



E114°14'3.5" N22°31'46.5"

On the Hong Kong side, the border region to China is characterized by farm- and wetlands speckled with ghost villages. One could describe it as a vacuum, as a respectful distance to the imposing Mainland. Hong Kong grows inward, by further densifying, and outward, by way of enormous land reclamation projects in the South China Sea.



W79°49'9.9" N43°40'2.3"

In order to fight this sprawling development, the provincial government has put in place the "Greenbelt Plan". This green space protection designation promises to be "an urban growth boundary zone that is intended to permanently enclose the conurbation of Toronto. It creates the sort of urban containment that for example surrounding mountains have always imposed on Vancouver"(Relph 2014, 152-153).



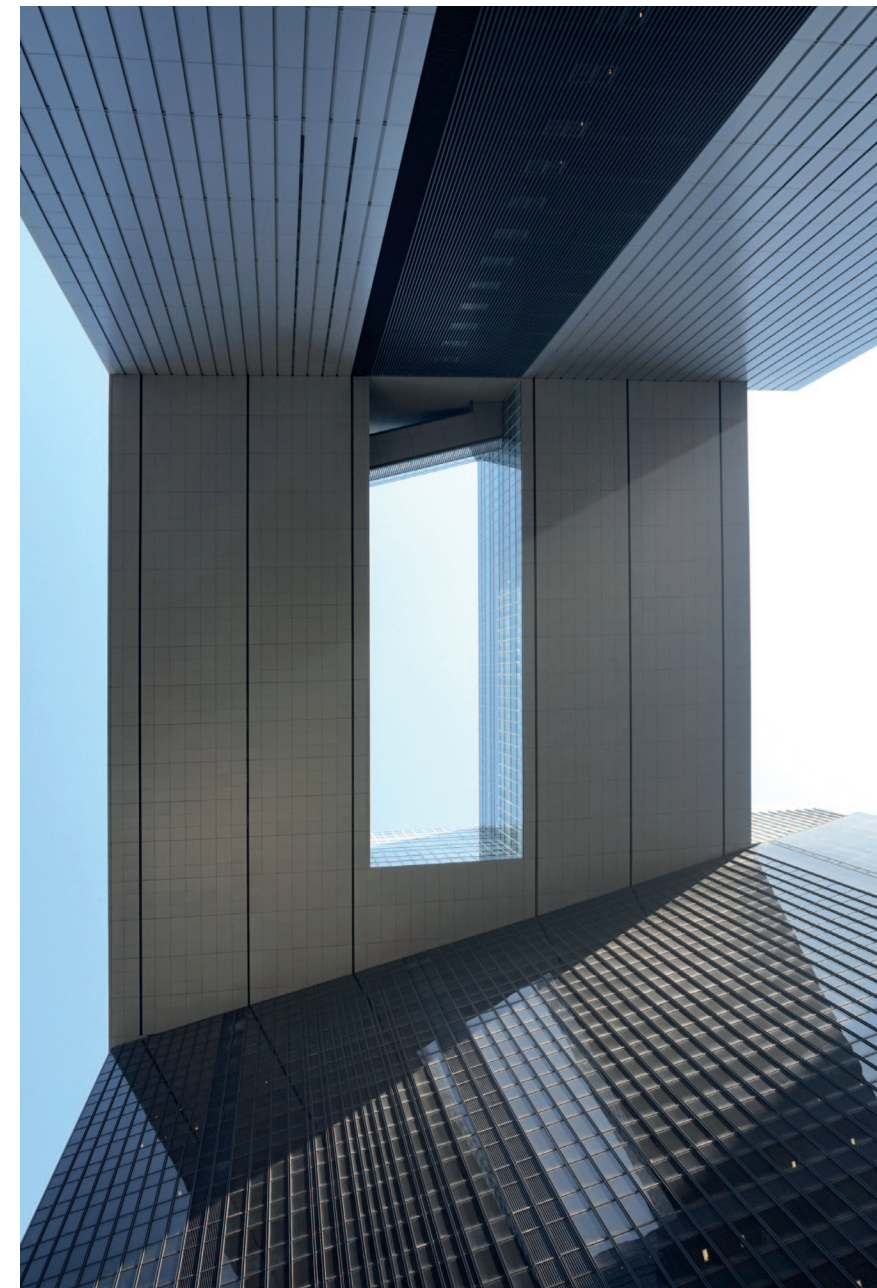
E114°14'3.2" N22°31'49.1"

The sheer scarceness of surface area, compounded by the region's spectacular topography, accounts for the fact that land is by far the most valuable resource here. There is no such thing as sprawl in Hong Kong. Even the new towns in the New Territories, i.e. the land North of Kowloon, are built very compactly and always centre around existing traffic hubs. Because infrastructure dictates development, the neglected areas along the border to China have become deserted.



W79°22'59.9" N43°39'7.6"

Toronto outgrew its old City Hall, a stately red sandstone building, in the 1960s. The iconic, modern design of the new City Hall, which stands next door, features two curved wings standing behind a round council chamber. The construction between 1961 and 1965 required a part of Chinatown to be torn down. Nathan Phillips Square, the plaza in front of the building, hosts many civic events and festivities.



E114°9'55.8" N22°16'50.1"

The Central Government Complex was completed in 2011. As a "grand gesture of opening up the site from the city to the Victoria Harbour, the project is a visual icon projecting the spirit of Hong Kong: a city always open and receptive to new ideas and diverse cultures. The Open Door also symbolizes a city which is justifiably proud of its openness and transparency of governance" (ArchDaily 2014). After the building was occupied during protests, the city has implemented measures to fortify the civic square (cf. Li 2014).



W79°22'46.9" N43°38'50.5"

"Most big-city downtowns fulfill – or in the past did fulfill – all four of the necessary conditions for generating diversity. That is why they were able to become downtowns. Today, typically, they still do fulfill three of the conditions. But they have become too predominantly devoted to work and contain too few people after working hours. This condition has been more or less formalized in planning jargon, which no longer speaks of 'downtowns' but instead of 'CBD's' – standing for Central Business Districts." (Jacobs 1961, 165.)



E114°9'31.5" N22°16'57.6"

Even if Hong Kongers might not use the term "CBD", their city centre is unquestionably a Central Business District, with one bank skyscraper next to another. In this district stand the famous *HSBC* building by Foster, the *Bank of China* and the currently tallest building in Hong Kong – the *International Finance Centre*.



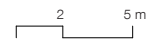
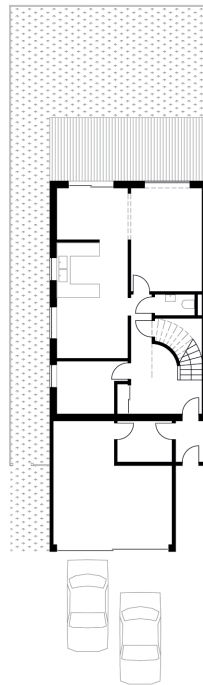
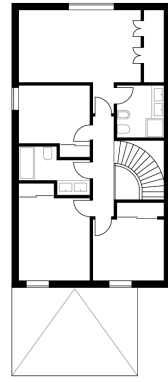
100 m

Dairis Crescent
Markham
1:5000



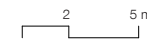
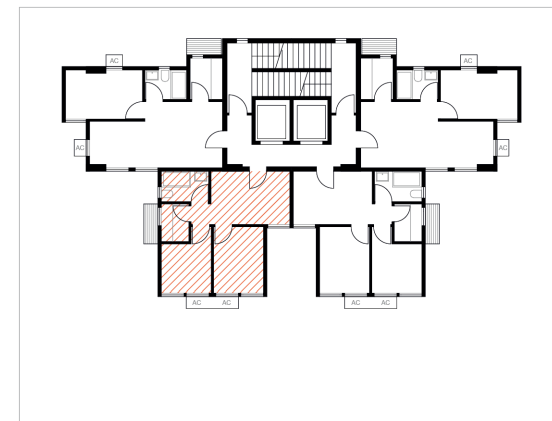
100 m

Newish Mansion
Mong Kok
1:5000



GF + 1/F • 2 floors total
1:333

Eric, Nelson, Mr & Mrs Cheung
1990 – 2000
Eric & Vanessa, Nelson & Teresa, Mrs Cheung
2010 –



5/F • 14 floors total
1:333

Eric & Vanessa
2000 – 2010

1990

The Cheung family arrived in Toronto when Eric was 12 years old. They moved to Dairis Crescent in Markham and fulfilled their dream of having their own house. The house had just been finished and was ready to be inhabited. At the time, Markham was already growing into an ethnoburb (=ethnic suburb), where many families from Hong Kong settled. The area was very sparse – *«you have to have a car»* – much unlike what they were used to.

Eric soon felt at home at the public school he was attending just down the street, where he improved his English and made friends from many different cultures. Eric's father started working as an air-conditioning serviceman, but never really adapted to life in Canada and therefore returned to Hong Kong in 1994, after having become a Canadian citizen. After high school, Eric went on to study Economics in Ottawa. After graduating, he realized that there were more job opportunities in Hong Kong than in Ontario and decided to return there to work.

Both Eric's parents, Mr and Mrs Cheung, were born and raised on Hong Kong Island. Mr Cheung has a college diploma in electrical engineering and Mrs Cheung has been a housewife ever since graduating from high school. In 1978, their first son Eric was born and two years later, Nelson followed. The brothers were raised in an apartment in Tai Ku Shing on Hong Kong Island and attended an English kindergarten and an English school in the neighbourhood. Eric recalls large changes to the area during his childhood: land reclamation and construction projects quickly replaced their view of the sea with more apartment buildings.

In the 1980s, Eric's family started to worry about Hong Kong's uncertain future under the rule of the Chinese government. The Tianamen incident in 1989 finally triggered their decision to leave Hong Kong and Eric's parents, together with his two paternal uncles, started to organize their emigration to Canada.

2010

Soon after their return, Eric and Vanessa had a big wedding celebration. The big part of their families live in Toronto, and some of the others flew in to celebrate with them. They moved in with Eric's mother and brother again, who still live in the same house on Dairis Crescent. Many of their former neighbours moved up North to bigger houses. *«We are the longest residents on this street.»*

The newly-married couple opened up a Japanese restaurant called *Sushi O* on Yonge and Eglington. Unfortunately, they divorced after three years and decided to sell the restaurant. Other than in Hong Kong, Eric has never been an employee in Canada. Right after he sold his restaurant, he started his new business as a mortgage broker. He is now working a ten-minute-drive away from his home, which he finds very convenient compared to the long commute before.

Last year, his grandmother finally immigrated to Toronto, where she lives in an elderly home very close to the family. Almost all relatives are reunited now, except for Eric's father, who still lives in Hong Kong. Eric's mother goes back and forth every six months to visit him.

Eric and his Teresa re-married recently in a *«silent wedding»* and will soon move out of the family home on Dairis Crescent into a house they bought together.

Eric moved into a little apartment in Mong Kok, just opposite of the *MTR* station. He enjoyed the convenience of living in the busy and colourful Mong Kok district, as well as the food that he had missed so much in Canada. He took an investment banking job in the financial district of Hong Kong Island and, over the years, worked for four different banks. *«There was so much pressure! You work 24/7, they call you during the night, when the other stock markets are open, you never rest...»*

In his rare free time he explored Hong Kong. Hiking on Hong Kong's biggest and mostly untouched island, Lantau, is one of his favourite memories. Eric also spent a lot of time with his father and grandmother. They had family meals and spent the holidays together.

In Eric's new circle of friends were quite a few Canadian Hong Kongers, many of them *«home away from home»* for the first time. Through this group of friends Eric met his now-girlfriend, Vanessa. After dating for three years, the couple decided to return to Toronto together and get married there.

2000



W79°17'31" N43°49'37.7"

Steeles Avenue, the border between Markham and Scarborough. This major road runs behind Eric's backyard, which sits behind the wooden fence on the left side of the picture. In recent years, more and more families from Mainland China have settled in Scarborough, surpassing Hong Kongers as the largest group of immigrants. «*You have to know Mandarin if you want to eat at a Chinese restaurant in Scarborough!*» Eric has noticed tensions between Hong Kong Chinese and Mainlanders due to cultural differences.



E114°10'9.7" N22°19'31.3"

During Chinese New Year, many shops in Mong Kok are closed and the nearby flower market expands onto this street, just around the corner from where Eric used to live. The neighbourhood is known for its many market streets specializing in sneakers, goldfish, birds and other.



W79°17'52.2" N43°49'31.7"

On his drive to work down Steeles Avenue, Eric often stops at this *Tim Hortons* to grab a medium coffee and a muffin. He uses the drive-thru most of the time. *Tim Hortons* are a Canadian staple and can be found at almost every big intersection in Toronto's suburbs.



E114°9'41.8" N22°19'55.5"

"Concern about the demise of local gastronomic traditions, which see themselves threatened by a homogenous, brand-driven culture of uniformity, has found sustenance in the concept of McDonaldization." (Scheppé 2009, 356.) When he lived in Hong Kong, Eric often went to McDonald's, especially after long working days, because it is open around the clock.



W79°18'21.3" N43°49'33.9"

A five-minute drive from Eric's house lies *Pacific Mall*, an ethnic Chinese mall, where the halls carry Hong Kong street names. On the upper floor of the mall, one can find *Pacific Heritage Town*, a themed food court with typical Chinese lanterns in auspicious red. Ethnic malls serve "as both a social space for recent immigrants and a distribution point for transnational business networks" (Allen-Kim 2013, 1).



E114°10'14.8" N22°19'20.4"

A little street shop footsteps away from Eric's apartment in Hong Kong, shortly before Chinese New Year. For sale are: red lanterns, incense, calendars, dragon decorations, and red pockets, which adults fill with money and gift to children.



W79°18'19.1" N43°49'34.7"

Goldfish symbolize money flowing in, so Eric and his family like to keep an aquarium. The fish shop in *Market Village* is where they buy their goldfish for the aquarium. In the same mall, Kerwin's relatives (>K Kerwin) own a watch repair shop.



E114°10'11.3" N22°19'23.5"

Due to the association of goldfish with gold and therefore luck, the goldfish trade is very popular in Hong Kong. Tung Choi Street North is mostly referred to as "Goldfish Market" – the street is lined with shops devoted to the raising of various species of fish. One can also find amphibians, reptiles, algae and corals.



W79°25'45.4" N43°50'17.6"

The statue of Lord Hanuman overlooks the *Vishnu Mandir* on Yonge Street since July 2016. It was established in 1979 and serves as a spiritual Hindu temple. It also runs the *Canadian Museum for Indian Civilization* showcasing Hinduism. During the summer the temple offers yoga classes and summer camps (DH Toronto Staff 2016).



E114°12'55.4" N22°28'22.5"

The Guan Yin statue, which is among the tallest statues in the world, is visible from afar. The Chinese Buddhist Monastery was finished in 2014. The monument's homepage entry states that "most important in *Tsz Shan Monastery's* design is its blending of buildings with nature and creates an ideal space for meditation."



W79°22'53" N43°38'54"

For a long time, the famous *Toronto Dominion Centre* by Mies van der Rohe was the tallest building complex in the city. Beneath the office tower is a pedestrian tunnel network belonging to Toronto's *PATH* network – a labyrinth of tunnels connecting the major buildings in the financial district. The 30 kilometres of tunnels are lined with 1200 shops. In contrast to the rigid above-ground street grid, the *PATH* is a maze.



E114°9'30.1" N22°16'58.6"

The *Jardine House* was built in the 1960s and was the tallest tower in Asia for a long time. The two skybridges that dock onto it are part of an extensive bridge network that separate pedestrian from automobile traffic in the Central district. The network is connected to huge subway stations and heavily used by commuters to shortcut their way to work.



W79°22'54.2" N43°38'56"

During lunch hours, the tunnels are filled with bank employees grabbing a quick bite from one of the food courts. It is very easy to get lost in this labyrinthine space with very few connections to the outside. "A place devoid of children and young families, the elderly, the lower income segments of our society and the underclass" (Ken Jones, quoted in Bélanger 2007, 285). This is the reason why the *PATH* is completely deserted in the evenings and during weekends.



E114°9'27.7" N22°17'2.6"

"Hong Kong enhances three-dimensional connectivity to such a degree that it eliminates reference to the ground altogether. Hong Kong is a city without ground..." (Frampton/Solomon/Wong 2012, 6.) The underground subway and the above-ground footbridges are frequented throughout the day by a wide range of people, from office workers to Southeast Asian housemaids on their free Sundays.



W79°22'51.8" N43°39'22.9"

Billy James has been busking in *TTC* subway stations for 37 years, longer than any of his fellow performers. Dundas West Station, pictured here, is his usual stage (Deschamps 2015). Only 75 musicians are licensed to play on *TTC* premises, making the auditions held every three years a fiercely competitive process. Recently, the *TTC* has installed new “stage areas” for the musicians to perform on (Spurr 2016). Toronto’s street musicians must apply for performance licenses as well.



E114°9'33.8" N22°17'2.1"

In Hong Kong, busking is not regulated by the city, so musicians are at the mercy of land owners. This two-string erhu player sits on the footbridge to the Star Ferry Pier. The *Star Ferry Ltd* is one of the few landowners that permit busking. In the subway, however, busking is forbidden.



W79°26'39" N43°42'58.5"

This footbridge to a subway station spans over a short expressway connecting to Toronto's busy Highway 401. The expressway was originally designed as the *Spadina Expressway* stretching into downtown Toronto, but strong public opposition thwarted this plan in 1971. Also Jane Jacobs, who had just arrived in Toronto, engaged with the *Stop Spadina* movement (cf. White 2011, 120).



E114°8'42.6" N22°17'20"

On this walkway, sandwiched between Highway 4 and Connaught Road West, one gets a feeling for the complexity of a city without ground. The big roads cut the city off from the shore. Access to the water is only possible via the few pedestrian bridges crossing over and under the shadows of the heavy mass of concrete.



W79°25'56.4" N43°51'6.3"

"The allure of Hollywood has arrived in Richmond Hill", proclaim website and sales office brochures of this new condominium-to-be, *The Beverly Hills*, under construction 45 minutes away from the city. The sales pitch: ten bullet points, each ending with the same catch phrase: "Life of glamour, life of style. Why go downtown?"



E114°12'32.7" N22°27'24.3"

Also this gated community carries the name *The Beverly Hills*. "Thus, 'Beverly Hills' does not exist only in the 90210 zip code; it is also, with Utopia and Dreamland, a suburb of Cairo, an affluent private city 'whose inhabitants can keep their distance from the sight and severity of poverty and the violence and political Islam which is seemingly permeating the localities'" (Davis 2006, 115).



W79°21'58.8" N43°38'3.7"

From the ferry that shuttles picnickers from downtown to the islands, one gets a fantastic view of Toronto's prominent skyline, characterized by the *CN Tower* and the *Rogers Centre*. The islands, originally natural sand spits, were fortified in the 1960s to limit erosion.



E114°6'4.2" N22°17'47"

The ride from the Central Ferry Pier to one of the many islands – in this case, Peng Chau – offers a view on Victoria Harbour, on the Kowloon peninsula (on the left; the *ICC*, at 484 metres the city's tallest building) and on Hong Kong Island (on the right; with the *IFC*, the second-tallest building).



W79°21'27.4" N43°37'39.5"

The islands are crowded with weekend visitors who come to swim, ride their bikes, kayak, or visit the small children's *Centreville Amusement Park*. The small settlement on the island with its charming wooden houses is the most coveted residential area in Toronto. There is a 40-year-long waiting list, and applicants pay every year just to keep their name on it.



E114°1'43.1" N22°12'30.3"

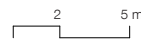
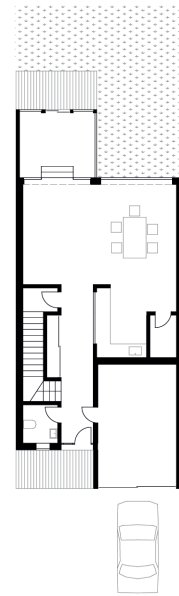
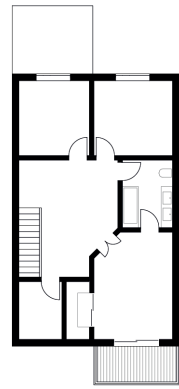
The atmosphere on the islands could not be more different from that of Hong Kong's downtown area. There are no cars, only cyclists; no rushing workers, only relaxed, mostly elderly residents. There are small market streets as well as hiking paths and beaches.



Bellefontaine Street
Scarborough
1:5000

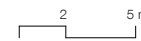
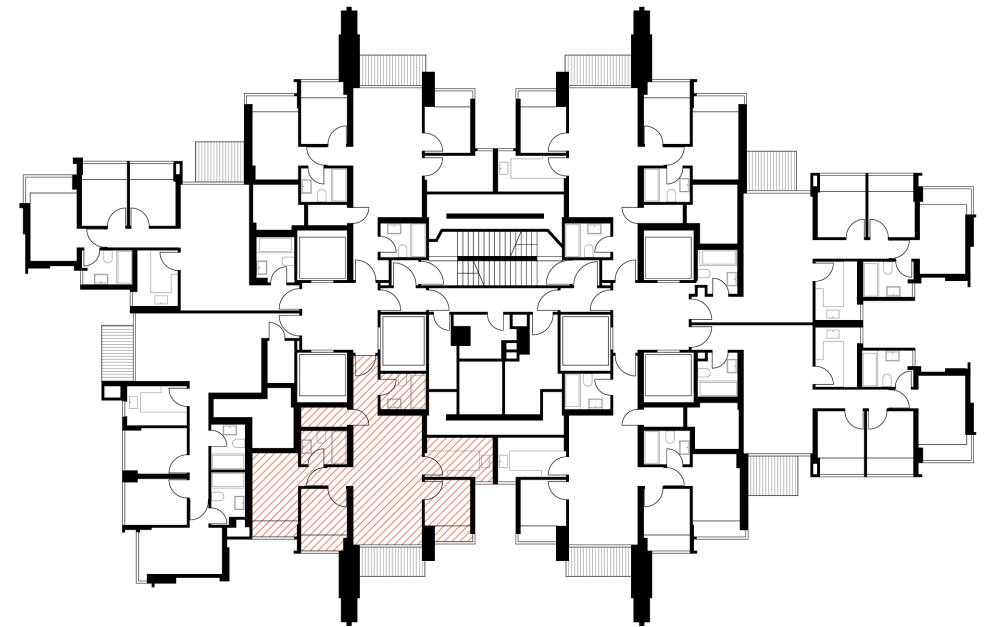


Banff
LOHAS Park (under construction)
1:5000



GF + 1/F • 2 floors total
1:333

Josh, David & Lydia
1992 – 1997



25/F • 62 floors total
1:333

Josh, David & Lydia
2012 –

1989

In Toronto, David started working in an architecture firm as a senior draftsman. They moved into an apartment in Scarborough. Soon afterwards in 1990, their only child Josh was born. The young married couple moved into a semi-detached house, where they had a lot of space and their own backyard. Every morning they dropped Josh off at his grandparents', who took him to the catholic kindergarten he attended. On weekends and in the afternoons, Josh spent a lot of time with his cousins. Uncles and Aunties One, Two, Four, Five, and Six lived close by, in the adjacent municipalities of Scarborough and Markham. After a few years, two of his uncles moved to the States and have been living in San Francisco and Los Angeles ever since. Unlike his uncles, Josh's father never really adapted to the work life in North America. Therefore Josh and his parents returned to Hong Kong in 1997.

Josh's father David was born as the third in a family of six sons. Josh calls his father's brothers "Uncle One" to "Uncle Six", as it is common in Hong Kong – *«I even do not know their real names»*. When their six children were born, Josh's grandparents were living in Vietnam, where they had met and built a business. They had owned a lot of land there, which was all seized by the government at the beginning of the Vietnam War. Because of the war, the family decided to return their father's place of origin – Hong Kong.

Josh's mother Lydia was born and raised in Hong Kong, where her family roots had always been. Lydia met David while she was a student in English education and he in engineering. David's parents and his five brothers, some of them with their partners, decided to move to Toronto in 1984 because of the impending handover to China. David had just met Lydia at the time and decided to stay in Hong Kong. After their marriage in 1989, David and Lydia followed the family's path to Toronto, where they could start a family close to David's relatives.

2019

His bigger dream is to migrate back to Toronto with his girlfriend Veera after first working for two in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong license is just a back-up plan, in case he cannot make it as an architect in Canada. Until his marriage or his future migration to Canada, Josh will continue living together with his parents, which is common in Hong Kong due to high housing prices and a strong family bond. I met Josh and Veera when they were visiting relatives in Toronto. They loved the beaches and islands and were excited about the idea of getting around by bike in the city – *«we are really excited to move here soon!»*

They arrived in Hong Kong right before the handover to China. Josh still remembers the ceremonies on July 1, 1997. They moved into an apartment in Ap Lei Chau on Hong Kong Island and Josh started going to primary school there. As a kid, he loved to visit the fish market in the Aberdeen district and admire the boats there. He also went to secondary school in Hong Kong. After graduating from secondary school in Hong Kong, he left to study architecture in London, where he picked up his strong British accent. He truly enjoyed studying abroad, and once in a while, when he felt a little homesick or missed his favourite stir-fry noodle dishes, he went to the local Chinatown.

Josh came back to Hong Kong in 2012 for his masters, where he moved in with his parents again. While Josh was in London, his parents had moved into a new housing development, called *LOHAS Park*, in the East of the New Territories. Josh remembers that the smell around the site used to be quite bad, due to the nearby landfill (which is meanwhile being used as a building waste deposit). *LOHAS* stands for "lifestyle of health and sustainability". *LOHAS Park* is the epitome of a satellite city. The trains are completely packed when people rush to work and back home, but during the day the trains run only every 12 minutes, a very long interval by Hong Kong standards. People who live here mainly work on Hong Kong Island or in Kowloon, as the area around LOHAS is mainly residential. *«They are planning to build a big shopping mall plaza, but that will be finished in four to five years. Now, we have absolutely nothing here!»* There is a shuttle bus directly to the next mall and if you show your resident ID and a receipt of your purchases, the ride is for free.

In 2013, after his "year out" working in an architectural firm, Josh started studying at the School of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. In his free time Josh likes to play basketball, go to coffee shops with friends or hang out with his girlfriend Veera. They often go out for dinner, mainly Sushi or Thai food.

Josh has just graduated with a Master from the School of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is now looking to work for two years in order to obtain his license as an architect in Hong Kong.

1997



W79°22'33.3" N43°53'21.6"

Josh's "Uncle One" with his family, whom he stays with when he is visiting Toronto, just moved into a semi-detached house here in the rapidly expanding Markham. Their neo-Victorian style neighbourhood is situated around the *Cathedral of the Transfiguration* at the outer edge of the city. Much of the neighbourhood is still under construction.



E114°16'15.3" N22°17'45.9"

From their balcony you get a good view on Junk Bay and *LOHAS Park*. The bay's name derives from the junk boats which used to anchor here as well as from the nearby landfill. Around the towers are huge pipes and building pits, evidence for the ongoing construction. 17 towers are completed so far – they carry prestigious names like *Mona Lisa*, *The Blue Danube* or *Amber*. Josh lives in *Banff* – so, in a way, in Canada.



W79°24'58.6" N43°46'52.3"

«I love Timmy's! I go there every day when I am in Canada.» The fast food chain, serving inexpensive coffee and sandwiches, was founded by and named after a *Toronto Maple Leaf* hockey player. The chain is ubiquitous in Toronto with around 500 branches and constitutes a part of the "taken-for-granted yet distinctive background to daily life in the Toronto region" (Relph 2014, 120).



E114°15'35.2" N22°18'28"

Sometimes Josh grabs a cup of coffee at Starbucks at this location in *Popcorn Mall* on his way to school or downtown. Sometimes Veera meets him for a date here to eat at their favourite Thai place. This time he orders a Frappuccino Green Tea, an interesting fusion drink.



W79°32'3.6" N43°49'31"

The outlet centre *Vaughan Mills* lies far outside Toronto's city centre. There is a free shuttle bus that leaves from the financial district. The outlet is structured into six different "districts", each decorated to keep with its theme ranging from rural to fashion. Here in the "sports neighbourhood" are big sports brands, live sports TV and statues of famous Toronto sportsmen.



E114°11'17.7" N22°22'55.7"

Josh and his girlfriend Veera often meet at the mall in Sha Tin, since it is close to the School of Architecture and Veera's place. Sha Tin is a new town, which was built in the 1970s on reclaimed land and is home to hundred thousands of inhabitants today. Occasionally, Josh and Veera get annoyed at the crowds of shopping tourists from the Chinese Mainland, among whom Sha Tin is popular for its proximity to the border.



W79°16'37.7" N43°49'31.4"

This Asian supermarket in Scarborough is located in a typical strip mall which has many small businesses surrounding a large parking lot. There is a doctor's office, a pastry shop, a small library, a Hong Kong style barbecue place, a hair salon, a Canada Post and a bank. Josh's mother Lydia used to go grocery shopping here.



E114°15'18.1" N22°19'30.9"

Every district in Hong Kong has its wet market, selling fresh meat and produce. Josh remembers that the wet markets were once filled with cackling noises, but since the SARS breakout in 2003, poultry has almost entirely disappeared from the wet markets. This wet market in Po Lam is where Josh's mother regularly buys fresh food for home cooking. On the weekends, Josh often accompanies her.



W79°23'57.4" N43°48'31.2"

During their time in Toronto, Josh and his family regularly visited the Buddhist *Chan Shan Temple* in Markham. The site on Bayview is easily accessible by car. Two guardian lions flank the big gate. Interestingly, the temple is situated very close to a synagogue and an Islamic centre – a testament to the cultural diversity of the city.



E114°10'58" N22°22'24.9"

Josh sometime visits *Che Kung Temple* with his mother, who is from a «very traditional Hong Kong family. We always go here to pay our respects to our ancestors. We light incense sticks and put out fresh fruit for them, and wish for wealth and safety for the family.» Josh's father, however, comes from a Catholic family.



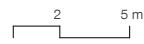
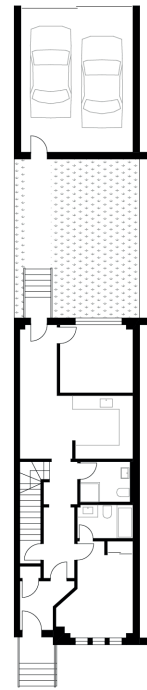
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Elia Lane
Village at York University
1:5000



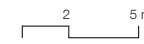
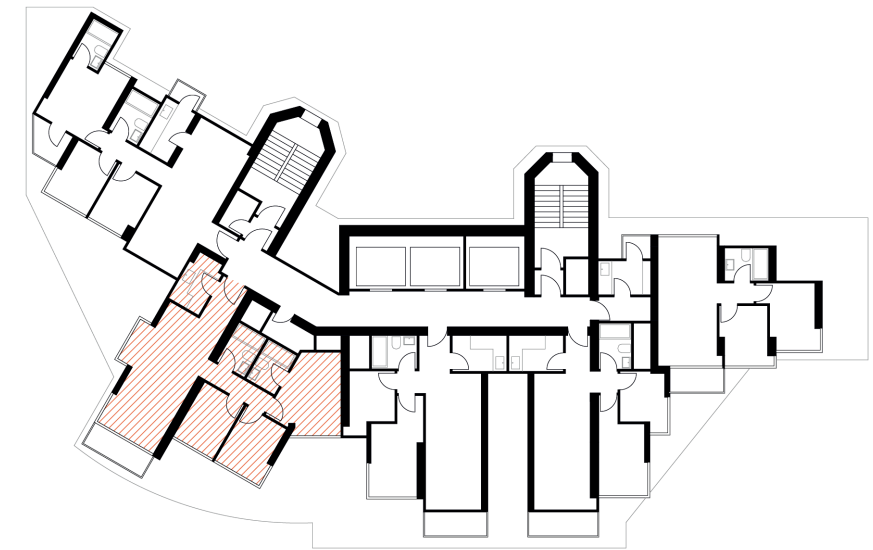
100 m

Jadewater
Aberdeen
1:5000



GF • 3 floors total
1:333

Kerwin & 1 other student
4 others on 1/F and 2/F
2010 – 2014



37/F • 44 floors total
1:333

Kerwin, Rebecca & Thomas
2014 –

2007

Kerwin started attending high school in Fort Erie, right at the Buffalo border with the United States. Many of his weekends and holidays were spent with his relatives in Markham. After graduating from high school, Kerwin went to Toronto to study anthropology at York University. He lived very close to Campus, in a New Urbanist settlement called the “Village at York University” – neo-Victorian style row houses with a little porch in the front and laneways with garages at the back. During that time, Kerwin bought a car and loved the experience of driving in Toronto. He drove to go grocery shopping at *Walmart*, to malls with his girlfriend and to visit his relatives in Markham. After finishing university, he decided to go back to Hong Kong due to better job opportunities and higher pay.

Kerwin’s parents Andy and Rebecca were both born and raised in Hong Kong. They both have six siblings. Rebecca’s father was a police officer, so her family used to live in a police residency in Wan Chai. When he retired, the family moved to a public housing estate near Aberdeen, a municipality that has a long tradition as a fishing village. Its Cantonese name literally translates to “Little Hong Kong”. Andy grew up near Aberdeen in Tin Wan, where he attended primary school. Back then, many primary schools were located on the rooftops of public housing estates. After graduation from high school, Andy became a police officer. He met Rebecca in 1981, when he was patrolling through her neighbourhood. The two married soon after and moved into a police residence in Sai Ying Pun. A few years later they moved to the Southern district, where they both used to live.

Rebecca became a manager in a ceramic metal parts manufacturing company, where she is still working at today. Andy, however, changed his career path and became an insurance broker in 1990. That same year, Rebecca’s older sister and her husband emigrated to Toronto with their three young children and settled in Markham. They opened a watch repair shop in *Market Village*, a mall right next to *Pacific Mall*.

Andy and Rebecca’s first son Kerwin was born in 1992, two years later Thomas was born. The two boys spent their childhood on the south side of Hong Kong Island, where the family moved several times. Kerwin played a lot of basketball and did five years of Taekwondo and holds the red belt. «*Digivice from digimon was something very big for me. I played several generations of digivice. I also collected lots of digimon cards.*» When he was in secondary school, his parents got divorced. Kerwin and his brother lived with their mother and their father lived with his own parents, also in Aberdeen. The district has changed a lot over the years. From its outset as a fishermen’s village, where ten thousands of people lived on boats in the harbour, it has become a new town and home to thousands of people living in high-rise housing estates. The *MTR* line will soon be extended to Aberdeen, which will probably bring along even more changes. Kerwin and I looked at old photographs of Aberdeen that were shared on a Facebook page. When Kerwin and I talked about authenticity and rapid change, his comments were: «*What is authenticity really? I think trying to keep the former situation would not be authentic. The rapid change is the most authentic feature of Hong Kong.*»

The family has close ties to Rebecca’s sister in Toronto. This was one of the reasons that after secondary school, Kerwin’s parents decided that he should continue his education in Canada.

2014

Back in Hong Kong, he moved in with his mother and brother in Aberdeen. Having lived in a spacious house in Toronto, his perception of space had been sensitized. «*In Hong Kong, personal space is a luxury. If you look up to the sky, in Hong Kong you only see a tiny portion of it, because the tall apartment buildings block the view. In Toronto you see the ‘real sky’.*»

He attended a master program in anthropology at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, from where he graduated with a Master of Arts. He is currently preparing for the admission test to become a fireman, which involves both a demanding physical exam and a mental test. On the side, he works as a salesman at the *Nespresso* store in the *IFC* mall in Central. He enjoys being back in Hong Kong and hanging out with his friends, but he is worried about Hong Kong’s polarizing political future. Recently he shared an article about politics, commenting: «*Now I know how good Canada is!*»



W79°29'46.4" N43°46'4.2"

From the doorstep and his window, Kerwin used to look out onto the small park on Elia Lane with typical York University village row houses behind. All of them feature a main entrance with a little porch and a back entrance in the laneways, where you leave your car and directly enter the house. The houses were originally built for families but are now mostly rented out to students.



E114°9'8.2" N22°14'54.7"

From his window in Aberdeen, Kerwin can see the harbour, the *Aberdeen Wholesale Fish Market* and the dense housing developments on Ap Lei Chau. The former fishermen's village image is now polished to attract tourists – the benches at the Aberdeen promenade, for example, are designed in the form of traditional junk boats, on which ten thousands of people used to live in this bay.



W79°30'6.9" N43°46'27.4"

At the food court of *York Lanes*, a two-storey mall on campus, is where Kerwin spent most of his lunch-times. There is a wide range of choices from *Hero Burger*, *The Campus Bubble Tea* to *Falafel Hut*. You grab your food at one of the surrounding stalls, and then sit together with your mates in the oval atrium.



E114°9'16.5" N22°14'56.8"

On the third floor of the Aberdeen wet market is a small food court. Kerwin, wearing a blue hat in the photo, orders some toast with condensed milk, and the classic Hong Kong milk tea for us. He regularly comes here with his brother or mother when they buy food at the market.



W79°30'19.3" N43°46'20.6"

The top floor of *Scott Library* was Kerwin's favourite place on campus to study. He enjoyed the special atmosphere created by the skylights and the coziness of the carpet floors. The library building is a stunning example for Brutalist architecture from the 1960s and 70s. Its structure is in the form of an inverted pyramid, with stacked-up platforms open to the atrium that widens upward. Plants grow over the edges of the concrete balconies.



E114°12'42.2" N22°24'58.3"

The new building of the School of Architecture at the CUHK was completed in 2012. Kerwin liked to study here in the library during his masters. From the study tables, you get a great view into the atrium, an open space flooded with light, where there are many surfaces for the architecture students to present their work.



W79°29'28.6" N43°45'48.3"

Kerwin often drove down Keele Street on his way to grocery stores and his favourite restaurants. However, trying to visit his favourite Vietnamese restaurant, I discovered that it had been closed. He used to go to a *Walmart* that opened shortly before he left. Before that he used to drive further to another *Walmart* in Thornhill.



E114°9'17.6" N22°14'58.4"

Kerwin's family does a lot of grocery shopping at the wet market in Aberdeen, which is located at this crossing, a five minute walk away from their home. Fruits, meat, and dry goods are sold on different floors. The small food court, where Kerwin likes to snack when shopping, is located on the third floor.



W79°27'7.5" N43°43'31.6"

Yorkdale Shopping Centre was Kerwin's favourite mall. The cinema inside the mall was also where Kerwin and his girlfriend went on dates. He liked it for its proximity to his place and he considered it to be the least crowded, other than that, he finds that «all malls in Toronto look identical!»



E114°9'31.3" N22°17'7.8"

The IFC at the Central waterfront is a huge complex combining offices, hotels, and a mall featuring more than 200 stores. Kerwin currently works here at the Nespresso outlet as a salesman. He likes to meet his friends on the rooftop of the mall where they get a great view on the harbour and can bring their own drinks.



W79°22'9.8" N43°53'38.7"

The *Cathedral of the Transfiguration* is a replica of a Slovak cathedral, built on behalf of a mining magnate who immigrated from Czechoslovakia in the 1930s. The construction started in 1984 and has not been finished to this day. The majestic building with three onion domes, plated in gold, is a landmark visible from the nearby highway 401 (cf. Contenta 2011). Originally built on a vast field, a New Urbanist housing development now surrounds it – *Cathedraltown*, where Kerwin's relatives live.



E114°9'22.5" N22°14'50.3"

Close to the waterfront is a steep alleyway lined by colourful Buddhist shrines. The alleyway lies next to Old Main Street Aberdeen and is part of the old village. Today the guardians still have an important meaning to the inhabitants. People bring flowers and fruits and light candles for their ancestors when they pass by on their way to work.



W79°23'13.5" N43°38'34.6"

One can get the best view of the city's flat landscape from the *CN (Canadian National) Tower*, transmitting television and radio signals. When it was built in 1976, it was the tallest tower in the world, and soon became the signature icon of Toronto. Originally the tower was not supposed to be open to the public – today it is a major tourist attraction with its observation deck and rotating restaurant at over 300 metres.



E114°8'43.9" N22°16'33.1"

This well-known panoramic view of Hong Kong is from Victoria Peak, the highest point on Hong Kong Island at 552 metres, and the first one you get when typing "Hong Kong" into Google. The crowds of tourist usually line up to take the old funicular to the top. In the 19th century, The Peak became the most sought after residential area in Hong Kong, predominantly among Europeans. Today, the prices *peak* up to 150,000 USD per square metre (Chiang 2014).



W79°19'12.8" N43°38'44.4"

In the 1950s, authorities initiated an expansion of the port area for "port related facilities". They started reclaiming land on Lake Ontario by dumping building waste here, which is how *Leslie Street Spit* formed. In the 1970s the site was not required for the port anymore, but natural processes had shaped it into an "accidental wilderness", as described on the homepage. In five decades, the man-made headland grew to over five kilometres in length, forming several lagoons. It has become a paradise for bikers and bird watchers – the reinforcing steel forms sculptures on the shores.



E114°11'24.9" N22°19'56.5"

This wall stands in the memorial garden on the site of the former *Kowloon Walled City*. Originally a Chinese military fort, it became a "donut hole of Chinese sovereignty" and a magnet for Chinese immigrants. It developed informally into the most densely populated place on Earth there has ever been. "Imagine a vertical urban village, a lawless labyrinth, where crime, commerce and community coexisted for generations." (Jou 2014.)



W79°23'11.7" N43°39'2.8"

The most popular ways to get around in downtown Toronto are by bike, streetcar and subway. The city is fostering a strong bike community – the network of bike paths is growing and bike shops are sprouting everywhere. The streetcars, originally drawn by horses, serve 82 kilometres, and here under University Avenue runs the yellow line of the subway. The further away from downtown, the greater the reliance on car is for transportation.



E114°13'16.5" N22°16'58.8"

The old double-decker streetcars – in Cantonese called “ding ding” – are not only a must-see tourist attraction but also very popular among locals for short trips on Hong Kong Island. Under the road, the *MTR Island Line* runs along. The archetypal red taxis are spotted everywhere, since car ownership is unusual. The red taxis are meant to serve the downtown area, whereas the green ones are appointed to go to the New Territories.



W79°26'49.8" N43°43'25.5"

To enter the *TTC (Toronto Transit Commission)* subway, you have to drop an old-fashioned token into the turnstile or swipe your monthly pass. There are only two major lines in the system, one going North/South and one going East/West. There are plenty of seats on the train, facing various directions.



E114°6'24.3" N22°22'23.7"

The *MTR (Mass Transit Railway)* stations are huge, noisy underground mazes. Once you tap your *Octopus Card* on the reader, triggering a very distinctive sound, you can enter the station through the turnstile. You fight your way through the masses of people staring at their smartphones. The concept of constantly being on the phone has been described as a "mechanism for coping with density" (Rooney 2003, 142), as a way to maintain privacy – a modern form of Simmel's *blasé* attitude.



W79°24'35.3" N43°39'39.4"

This is the view from the window of my temporary home in Toronto – the point of departure from where I got to know the city. The neighbourhood of Victorian-era row houses is called “The Annex”, Jane Jacobs used to live two blocks from here. The view may not be the best, since houses are tightly packed against each other. The neighbourhood itself is very lively, with Koreatown and Little Italy in walking distance.



E114°12'42.5" N22°25'12.4"

From my student dorm room on the campus of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, I had a great view of Tolo Harbour, apartment buildings and the landscape of Ma On Shan. Located in the middle of the hilly, green campus, the dorm is within walking distance to lecture halls and 34 canteens. It takes a while, though, to leave the campus behind and dive into the “real” city atmosphere.



W79°24'52.8" N43°39'2"

Toronto features a very lively street art landscape. Especially in Kensington Market, Chinatown, in alleyways and on larger walls, one comes across colourful mural paintings. These bearded gentlemen looking down from a brick wall on Dundas right on Trinity Bellwoods Park were created by artist *Elicser* to support the *Movember* movement.



E114°8'58.6" N22°17'4.3"

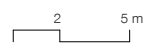
In the little side streets of Hollywood Road, where there are many antique stores, one faces a large amount of mural paintings. Two years ago, *HKwalls* – a street art festival – was initiated, and artists from all over the world were invited to beautify the area around Sheung Wan.



Brunswick Avenue
The Annex
1:5000

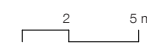
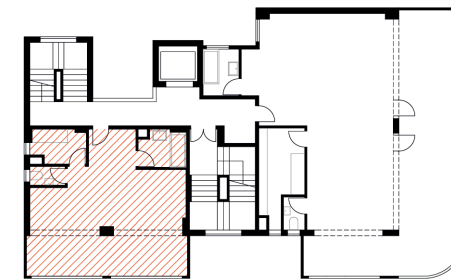


Wen Pang Building
Sham Shui Po
1:5000



3/F • 3 floors total
1:333

Quincy & Sebastian
2016 –



5/F • 13 floors total
1:333

Quincy, Michael & Jenny
1988 – 1994

2000

In 2000, the whole family moved to Vancouver. As they had spent the last six summers in their house, the change of environment was not very drastic. However, the transition from being CEOs of their own company to being retirees and immigrants in a new environment was not easy on Quincy's parents. Quincy started going to elementary school and it was a completely different world. *«Sometimes when I think back on my life in China, it is like I lived a different life. School in Canada was so relaxed. In China I had school from 7am to 6pm and I did homework until 11pm. In Canada I had school from 9am to 3pm and had no homework. We were encouraged to read books! People brought toys to class! We had PJ day and hot dog days and sports day... I could go on forever!»* She insists, however, that the first phase was not all rainbows and unicorns. *«I was bullied by my classmates because I was fob – fresh off the boat – and there was a lot of fighting at home.»*

Quincy graduated from high school and left home to study in Toronto. Her first impressions of the city were *«old, dirty, ugly. Vancouver is a thousand times more beautiful»*. However, she enjoyed the multicultural spirit, the diverse neighbourhoods and the student life at the University of Toronto. She did her undergraduate in engineering, where she met her boyfriend Sebastian, who is from Germany, and who she has been dating ever since. The two love going hiking and bouldering and exploring Ontario's nature. Maybe this is one of the reasons why Quincy decided to do a masters in earth science, where students went on a lot of field trips in the course of their studies.

In the meantime, Quincy and Sebastian are doing something completely different – they are working as self-employed software developers. They now live on a tree-lined street in The Annex – *«It is a mostly residential neighbourhood, but that has a thriving cultural scene with theatres, coffee shops, bars, and restaurants just steps from my house.»* Their apartment is situated on the top floor of a typical Toronto row house, with a huge deck where they grow tomatoes. Next to the deck, they set up a home office with two desks from where they work on their software projects.

Neither Quincy nor Sebastian have any relatives in Toronto, so visiting family requires covering many miles. They go back to Hong Kong, Vancouver and Cologne as often as possible. But both of them cannot imagine living anywhere other than Toronto. *«Toronto is so diverse. People from all different backgrounds live here and are so well integrated.»*

Quincy's father Michael was born into a very poor family in the agricultural hinterlands of Hong Kong. His parents were so poor, that they had to sell their first two daughters. Later they had ten more children. The whole family lived in a one-room shed next to the barn where they held pigs, chicken and ducks. The way to school was long. When Michael was 13, he dropped out of school and started working as a factory boy in a garment factory, where he spent the nights sleeping on the floor. He worked his way up in the company and was given more and more responsibility. *«It is unbelievable to me how far people in my father's family have come! They all worked so hard!»*

Quincy's mother Jenny was born in Mainland China as the youngest of four. When she met Michael, they founded their own company for design and pattern making on Canton Road, close to where they lived. Soon afterwards, their first child Quincy was born. She grew up in Sham Shui Po, a very busy and colourful area with many street markets.

Back then, the production sector was huge in Hong Kong – for decades, tons of products, especially toys and garments, labeled “Made in Hong Kong” were exported to the global market. The “Open Door Policy” under Deng Xiaoping in 1978 and the nomination of Shenzhen as “Special Economic Zone” affected Hong Kong enormously (cf. Tieben 2012, 16). It rapidly changed from a production to a service economy, with factories relocating across the border to Shenzhen, which grew incredibly fast from 100,000 inhabitants in 1980 to more than 10 million today. Quincy's parents considered the new policy an economic opportunity and decided to move to Jenny's hometown Tianjin and opened a company for synthetic cotton. Quincy started attending primary school in Tianjin. They regularly went back to Hong Kong to visit relatives. The production was going really well, they soon had three factories with a total of 80-100 employees.

In 1994, Jenny became pregnant with their second child, Quincy's younger brother, David. To bypass China's one-child policy, they bought a house in Vancouver in a predominantly Chinese neighbourhood as their second home, so their son could be born there. Another reason that they decided to lay the foundation for a life in Canada in the near future was the wish for better education opportunities for their two children. From then on, they spent every summer in Canada. Michael and Jenny were able to sell the company and emigrate to Vancouver as very young retirees in their early fifties.



W79°24'24.1" N43°39'49.9"

The eye-catching red door on the corner of Brunswick and Robert Street in this typical Toronto bay and gable neighbourhood is the entrance to Quincy's and Sebastian's home. The window under the roof belongs to their bedroom. They lock their bikes to the fence in the front yard, where they often play with their neighbour's cat.



E114°9'43.7" N22°19'39.3"

The green building in the corner is *Wen Pang Building* in the middle of Sham Shui Po, where Quincy spent the first years of her life. Her relatives still live in this area of Hong Kong. Whenever she comes to visit, she strolls around this area and likes to shop for little things, like magnets, herbs and chopsticks to bring back to Toronto.



W79°24'2.5" N43°39'17.2"

Kensington Market, where Quincy does almost all of her grocery shopping, is only a five-minute bike ride away from their home. The multicultural neighbourhood adjacent to Chinatown was even designated as a "National Historic Site of Canada" in 2006. With its little shops and food stores from all over the world, it has become a tourist attraction as well as a place of local culture.



E114°9'40.6" N22°19'43.4"

This picture was taken just in front of the wet market of Sham Shui Po, where Quincy's parents used to buy their groceries. The street is lined with *tong lau*, which means "shophouse" in Cantonese, and market stalls. Sham Shui Po, which is still one of the cheapest and poorest districts in Hong Kong, is known for its buzzing street markets.



W79°24'2.8" N43°39'17.3"

In the middle of Kensington Market, there is this butcher shop. When Quincy and Sebastian have a barbecue on their deck in the summer, this is where they buy fresh, organic meat from. In the market is also the lady where Quincy buys fresh fruit and vegetables, a bakery, the man from whom she buys nuts and oats for her muesli, and a cheese store. Sometimes she likes to grab a Fajita on the way as a little shopping snack.



E114°9'41.8" N22°19'45.2"

This butcher in the middle of the Sham Shui Po market is situated two blocks away from Quincy's former home. The red lighting of the hanging meat, from chicken feet to snouts, is a very common feature to butchers in Hong Kong.



W79°24'1.4" N43°39'14.7"

This is the fruit and vegetable store that Quincy visits twice a week. She loves cooking and uses the high-quality products to try out new recipes from all over the world and – once in a while – to prepare the one traditional Chinese dish her mother taught her.



E114°10'14.7" N22°19'16.8"

This is in a market street in Mong Kok, where Quincy's family used to buy fruits from. The red lamps are a distinct feature to markets all over Hong Kong, perhaps to make the food look more appealing. They have become so iconic that now they are also being sold as design items and used in art installations.



W79°24'56.4" N43°39'50.4"

If you take a five minute walk from Quincy's home down Bloor Street, you find yourself in the middle of Koreatown. «A good way to judge the cultural diversity of a city, is by the food. And Toronto has a wide range of food choices. We often go out to have Korean food, also because it's relatively cheap. But there are also Nicaraguan, Italian and Persian places nearby that I love!»



E114°9'52.2" N22°19'47.8"

This traditional Hong Kong restaurant is famous for its beef noodle. Whenever Quincy goes back to Hong Kong, she eats here. The queue outside is long and when you get a seat, you share the table with strangers, eat your delicious food, and then leave again to make your seat available for the next client. Hong Kong restaurants work quickly!



W79°25'15.7" N43°39'53.4"

Christie Pitt's is a more than six blocks large park in Koreatown, seven subway stops from downtown. Most of the park is under street level, since it used to be a sand pit. There are several baseball courts and the terrain is perfect for audiences sitting on the slopes during Wednesday and Saturday night baseball matches. In the summer, the park turns into an outdoor cinema and shows international as well as local films.



E114°11'12.3" N22°16'33.6"

This sports field belongs to the *South China Athletic Association* near Causeway Bay, in the heart of Hong Kong. The field is being maintained and watered very early in the morning sun. It is not even 7am and next to the court, in the sports centre's cafeteria, a large group of mainly expats, is watching the *Superbowl XLIX* – the *New England Patriots* won.



W79°22'42.9" N43°38'37.1"

The stadium organ plays its distinctive jingle and the fans chant: "Let's go Raptors!" – The *Toronto Raptors* are the only Canadian basketball team playing in the *NBA*. The game is hosted in the *Air Canada Centre* next to Union Station in the heart of the downtown. It is also the home of the *Toronto Maple Leafs* (Hockey) and the *Toronto Rock* (Lacrosse).



E114°12'18.6" N22°24'3.5"

Horse racing, brought over by the British, is perhaps the most popular sport in Hong Kong. The racecourse in Sha Tin is one of two racecourses managed by *The Hong Kong Jockey Club* and its races draw large crowds. Most of the gamblers betting sit inside the Public Betting Hall, in front of the screens, and study the Daily Racing Form. The racecourse has capacity for 85,000 viewers and even has its own *MTR* station serving on race days.



W79°24'40.3" N43°39'55.4"

Honest Ed's was founded by Ed Mirvish in 1948, and has been a iconic bargain shop for almost 70 years. While I am writing this, *Honest Ed's* is being torn down to make space for a ten-storey high condominium building. *Honest Ed's* with its blinking neon signs is clearly what Venturi and Scott-Brown call a "decorated shed" (Venturi/Scott-Brown/Izenour 1977, 87).



E114°12'11" N22°23'24.6"

This seafood restaurant with its Chinese style sweeping roofs and the bright illumination is conveying its meaning through its form. The restaurant appears to be floating on water but in reality, it sits on piles in the river bed. Its granite base takes the form of a ship. It is a clear case of what Venturi and Scott-Brown call a "duck": "Where the architectural systems of space, structure, and program are submerged and distorted by an overall symbolic form." (Venturi/Scott-Brown/Izenour 1977, 87.)



W79°23'59.4" N43°39'9.1"

The barber pole you can see in the shop window of this hairdresser in Chinatown has become an international sign for barber shops. According to the shop owner, it dates back to the Middle Ages, when the specialization of professions was not as advanced and barbers also acted as surgeons and dentists. The red colour of the pole is said to represent the blood of the "patients".



E114°9'19" N22°14'55"

Many hairdressers in Hong Kong have adopted the barber pole as their sign. On this fully loaded facade, two turning examples flank the entrance stairs leading to this barber shop upstairs – air-conditioning obviously guaranteed.



W79°23'58.7" N43°39'24.2"

"The old city of Toronto is mostly built around this extensive grid of retail streets, an urban form that has proved to be very adaptable to changing economic and social conditions and is an important factor in the present-day vitality of the old city's streets." (Relph n.d.) The shop houses were built along the street-car lines, and are still the predominant building typology around the downtown core. The area used to be predominantly low-rise, but is becoming more and more punctuated by high-rise condominium buildings.



E114°9'38.1" N22°19'46.5"

This typology, unique to Hong Kong and Southern China, is called *tong lau*. The traditional tenements were designed for commercial as well as for residential uses (cf. Christ/Gantenbein 2012, 29). Those narrow buildings are still the prevalent building typology in Mong Kok and Sham Shui Po. The corner buildings often feature rounded edges.



W79°24'19.6" N43°39'51.3"

”我要真普選 – I want true general election” is written on this paper sign. It is part of a big solidarity movement throughout Toronto. There were pro-democracy marches, Hong Kong radio channels reporting round the clock. Joshua Wong, one of the revolution leaders, even gave speeches at universities in Toronto during his *North America Tour*.



E114°9'57.3" N22°16'47.5"

When the government announced that they would pre-select the Hong Kong candidates for the elections in 2017, the *Umbrella Revolution* started, particularly by university students and teachers. The yellow umbrella became the symbol of this movement, since the protesters used them to protect themselves from tear gas. Another symbol, the yellow ribbon, stands for universal suffrage. *Occupy Central* went on for three months – an entire village surrounded the government building.



W79°20'52.5" N43°38'50.5"

This building on Commissioners Street in Toronto's Portlands, probably had many uses in its life. With deindustrialization in the 1980s, most of the Portlands were abandoned. Some of the empty factory spaces have now been transformed into musician jam spaces and recording studios. The site is part of the redevelopment plan on Villiers Island.



E114°13'29.3" N22°31'42.6"

The old schoolhouse lies in the outskirts of Hong Kong near some abandoned villages and close to the Chinese border (>B boundaries). The area is very isolated and only reachable on foot or by boat. Most of the inhabitants were farmers, but with the growth and industrialization of the city, villagers sought better jobs and opportunities and left the villages behind.



W79°21'14.8" N43°38'45.8"

The Portlands of Toronto – a place where you meet a lot of weekend tourists, cyclists, huge parking lots, a big Chinese supermarket, some abandoned buildings (>V vacancy) and wastelands. The site is to be redeveloped and is currently in the planning stage. Near downtown waterfront, many condominium towers haven been constructed over the last decades.



E113°58'6.3" N22°22'44.8"

This is one of the many harbour areas in Hong Kong. The landing piers are managed by the government. Because the harbour is near the new town Tuen Mun, originally named Castle Peak, the bay is called Castle Peak Bay. Tuen Mun's big ferry terminal will handle more border crossings to Macau and Mainland cities in the future.



W79°13'52.7" N43°42'24.8"

These high-priced 24 floating houses lie in the *Bluffer's Park Marina*, forming a kind of gated community. The community's homepage states: "Being in this small community feels as if you are in cottage country or on the east or west coast of Canada. The neighbours are friendly, relaxed and share the love of being on the water."



E114°12'31.7" N22°27'16.3"

This floating village lies in a protected cove of Tolo Harbour, right next to *The Beverly Hills* (>H Hollywood). The boathouses float on barrels and are tied underneath. The inhabitants used to make a living out of fishing, which has become more and more difficult due to the worsening water quality. They now work in the tourism sector, offering activities like hiking tours, boating and waterskiing.



W79°15'25.8" N43°51'48.8"

What is XL about the Greater Toronto Area? – Certainly the area itself. One gets the impression that the land is never-ending. The City of Toronto is surrounded by widespread development connected by broad highways. Of course, the long distances that result from this wideness, cause even more dependence on cars.



E114°0'10.6" N22°26'56.6"

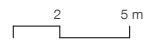
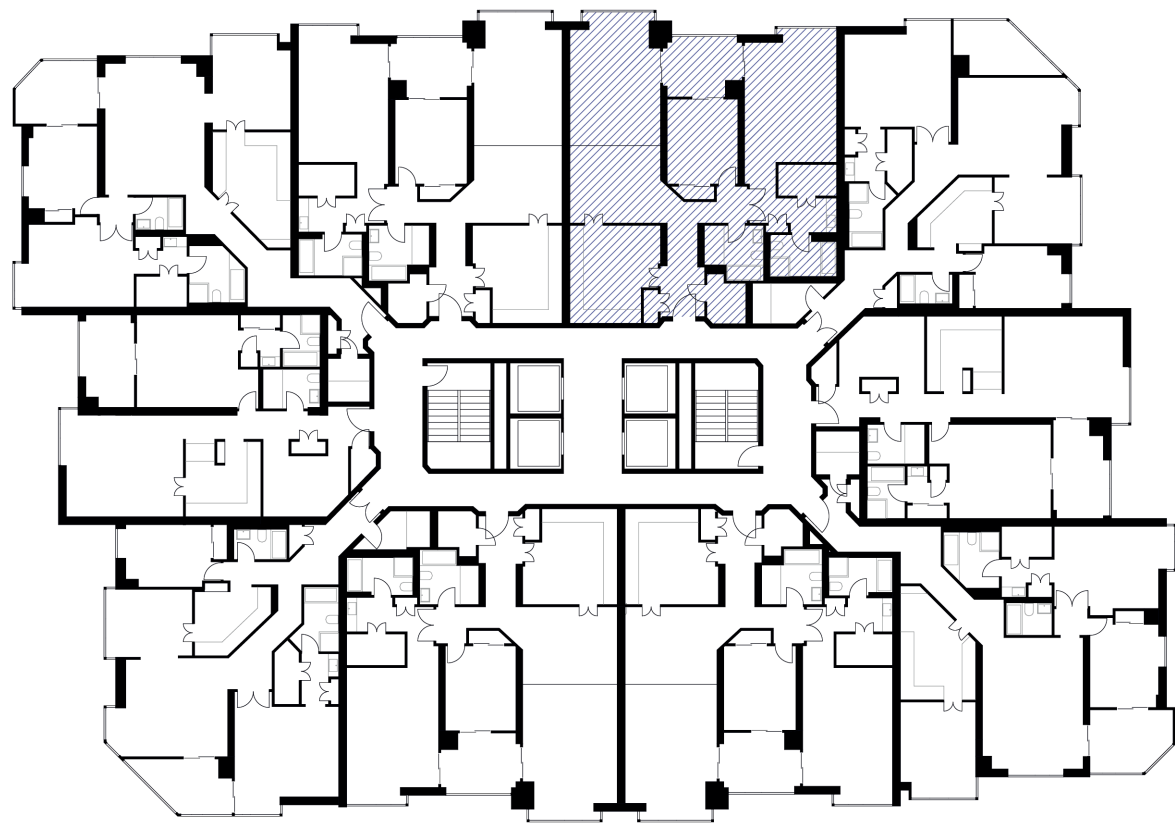
Tin Shui Wai, literally signifying a place enclosed by heaven and water, was built in the 1990s on vast lands in the Northwest of the New Territories. Because of a high unemployment rate and numerous family tragedies, the new town got its nickname, "city of sadness" (Savelle 2013). This housing estate is built on the Housing Authorities' standard floor plans called *Trident 3* and *4*, as well as *Harmony 2*.



Manhattan Place
North York
1:5000

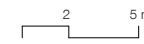
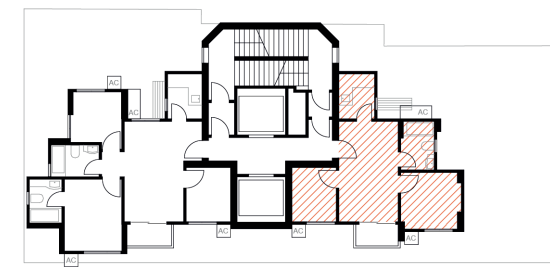


Elite Court
Sai Ying Pun
1:5000



20/F • 23 floors total
1:333

Yvonne, Kai Yuen & Joan
2015 –



3/F • 24 floors total
1:333

Yvonne & 3 friends
2012 – 2015

1982

Joan's family immigrated to Toronto in 1982, when she was 20 years old. Originally coming from a region with harsh winters, it was easy for them to adapt to the Canadian climate – *«I am not afraid of that coldness, I have it in my blood.»* Joan received an education in journalism and linguistics. In 1984 she met Kai Yuen who had come to Toronto on his own for his education because at that time it was very hard to get into a university in Hong Kong. The two got married in the same year. After Kai Yuen had finished his PhD he taught at the university, but he only got short-term contracts. He was looking for more job stability, which is why the young married couple went back to Hong Kong.

Yvonne's mother Joan was born in Tianjin – a day's ride from Beijing – and immigrated to Hong Kong when she was six years old. She lived with her family in the Mid-levels on Hong Kong Island, and attended an Anglican school where both her parents taught. Yvonne's father Kai Yuen was born in 1955 in Hong Kong as the youngest of five children. His father was a police officer and his mother stayed home with the children.

2014

They looked to buy a place near their relatives in North York and found one in a condominium building called *Manhattan Place*. Many of the residents are Jewish and middle-aged, since they had moved in as young families and couples when the building was completed over thirty years ago and had never left. This probably explains the strong social cohesion in this condominium. There is, for example, the *Condo Care Group*, a group of residents that help with minor house-repairs, such as changing the light bulbs. One of the biggest changes for the family here in Toronto is that they now own a car and have to drive everywhere (*«Toronto is so enormous!»*). They also do not have a housekeeper anymore, which is normal for many middle class families in Hong Kong but uncommon in Toronto. Yvonne took a job at a small architecture firm, where she is designing a music school in Morocco along with colleagues from five different continents. *«This is what I love most about Toronto, it is the most multicultural place I've ever been to!»*

Kai Yuen became a professor of economics at the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK), Joan taught Cantonese to foreigners. In 1993, their only child Yvonne was born. The family lived in staff housing on the campus of the CUHK in the New Territories. From the huge 137,3 hectare campus one can get a nice view on Tolo Harbour. The greenery on campus is a much calmer scene than that in the city centre. For her primary as well as secondary education Yvonne went to international schools in the New Territories, where English was the main language and lots of her friends were expat children. A lot of Joan's and Kai Yuen's acquaintances were expats. Joan frequently played bridge with friends from Britain and South Korea. Yvonne started to study architecture at the Hong Kong University (HKU), which is more than an hour away from her parents' place. Most Hong Kong students live either in student residences or privately rented rooms for the time of their studies and move back home after graduation. Yvonne rented a tiny apartment with three friends in the middle of the buzzing city centre. Their new home was in Sai Ying Pun on Centre Street, a steep, shop-lined pedestrian street from where you can get a glimpse of the sea and feel the dense urban pulse. I think Jane Jacobs would have loved this lively area! Yvonne used to greet all the people with familiar faces and put out cat food out on the street. She could walk to university, and the wet market where she went for groceries was only a minute away. Their apartment was on the third floor, so they could hear everything, from the mini buses passing in the early morning to the butcher sweeping the street late at night. In her free time she liked to busk near the Star Ferry Piers. As Joan's whole family had remained in Toronto from 1982 onward, they always had a very strong bond to their old home and visited their relatives every summer. Kai Yuen had never liked the political system and the humid weather in Hong Kong. For these reasons Yvonne's parents always knew that they wanted to return to Toronto one day to grow old there. In the summer of 2014, Yvonne graduated from Architecture School and Kai Yuen retired – Yvonne spontaneously decided to do an internship in Canada in order to join her parents there. *«Personally I would have preferred to stay in Hong Kong and I will probably go back one day. But I can see why people immigrate to Canada. Here you don't have to fight all the time, in Hong Kong you are fighting for everything – for a seat in the restaurant, a seat on the MTR, for housing, for everything, because there are simply not enough resources.»*

1989



W79°24'39.7" N43°45'43"

Yonge Street is Toronto's "spine", the axis of its urban intensification and the dividing line that determines East and West. It is one of the oldest streets in the city and also the longest one. Beneath the street runs the yellow *TTC* subway line. Yvonne gets off the *TTC* here and walks two minutes to one of the surrounding condominium buildings, where she lives.



E114°8'32.1" N22°17'10.2"

This is Centre Street. Yvonne calls it her *«favourite street in the world»*. There are a lot of activities going on from early morning to late at night. The nearby wet market is always crowded. You never have to leave Centre Street to satisfy any of your daily requirements – from clothes to electronics to food – you can find everything here, in one of the many tiny shops.



W79°24'40.9" N43°45'42"

This *7-Eleven* is just outside the Sheppard-Yonge subway station, where Yvonne gets off and walks by every day. It is located next to the McDonald's, surrounded by newly built skyscrapers, and opposite of a huge mall. Yvonne never goes to this *7-Eleven*, as *«there just isn't anything I would need from there»*.



E114°8'31.7" N22°17'8.2"

Every night there are people sitting in front of this *7-Eleven* on Centre Street, drinking a beer and chatting amicably. They are people who live in the area, like the man who owns the congee place up the street, another man who does deliveries, and the lady who lives around the corner. Occasionally, Yvonne would stop to sit and chat with them.



W79°25'23.9" N43°39'45"

Since her way to work is far, Yvonne has her bike parked in front of the police station on Bloor – *«no one would steal it in front of the Police Station!»* – she takes the TTC subway to Bloor-Yonge and rides it 5 kilometres down Bloor Street to her office, which is situated in the basement of a Victorian row house.



E114°8'31.7" N22°17'4.4"

On Yvonne's way to university, there used to be four enormous Banyan trees providing very nice shade for the pedestrians. Two years ago one of the trees toppled over in a typhoon, and the next day the government had all the others felled. The disappointment among the residents was acute, they tied yellow ribbons to the dead roots in mourning and newspapers deplored the disappearance of those beautiful trees. Now to everybody's delight, they are sprouting again.



W79°24'9.3" N43°39'22.5"

This pie shop is situated in Kensington Market, an area that Yvonne describes as *«the most Toronto of Toronto»*. She adores wandering around here and observing the busy street life, as there is so much to see in this colourful, multicultural area. From the sliding windows, which are opened up completely in summer, you get a great view of what is going on outside while enjoying your pie.



E114°7'41.2" N22°16'58.5"

Near HKU there is quite a special dim sum place. Dim sum are little bites accompanying tea, traditionally in the early morning. It literally translates to "touching the heart". This place is very famous for its dim sum called "fried milk" and is open from 2am till noon. Many famous Hong Kong people have been here, with newspaper articles on the walls as proof.



W79°25'47.6" N43°45'46.5"

The cemetery in North York is Yvonne's favourite place in Toronto. It is huge and makes Yvonne feel like she is the only person on Earth. But she is probably just the only one walking on foot, since the cemetery is so spacious that people actually drive to their relatives' graves. Yvonne has very early memories of coming here as a child to her great grandmother's grave during summer visits. She often walks on what seems to be the only hill in North York, from where she enjoys the view lying in the grass under the trees.



E114°7'54.7" N22°17'21.8"

Next to the *Wholesale Fruit Market* is a long, broad, concrete pier. Fishermen fish, Instagrammers take fashion photographs, and people roller-skate. «*One of the favourite things that I enjoyed doing is buying a beer at 7-Eleven with some friends, and coming here. It is secluded, you can sit right at the edge of the pier, the surface of the sea just below your feet, and you look at the Tsing Ma Bridge and the beautiful lights across the Harbour.*»

Take-off

III. Encounters

We are back at the airport – the (non-)place, where you depart and arrive but never stay, where you say goodbye or meet again. Where so many people's stories of different backgrounds cross for an instant and then divert again. Noises of trollies being drawn by, mumbling in foreign languages, steps on the reflective floor making that shut-in place look bigger. You hear announcements in the different languages of the planes' flight destinations. It is time for take-off. Time to go back, but take-off is the end as well as the beginning of a journey – an impulse in an ongoing thought process.

What does a becoming architect take home of this journey?

Architecture sets the stage for people's daily life. For this reason, I consider it crucial for a planner to observe how they use spaces, move between them, live in them, and which places they choose to appropriate as a stage for their daily life.

As already stated in the Approach, I was never looking for answers. My main focus was on observing city life in different cultures, talking to people and listening to their personal stories, visiting places, and in so doing curating and creating an artistic documentation of cities during globalization.

“The curatorial view on reality does not see in the cultural memory a Wunderkammer full of treasures that are to be preserved.”¹

Now, 5988 photographs, many acquaintances, interviews, and hundreds of kilometres walked and cycled later, I will now conclude with realizations and thoughts gained during this documentation, by writing about the most essential encounters during this journey.



... with egg tarts

Let us look – as an analogy – at a very iconic food item that carries a lot of colonization and globalization history, and that you come across a lot in Hong Kong as well as in Toronto. The story is told in slightly different ways, but basically it must have been more or less like that: In the 1830s *pastel de nata* was created in a monastery in Lisbon, a puff pastry with an egg yoke cream filling and a *crème brûlée* like crust.² Through overseas traders, the delicious treats were soon brought to the Portuguese colonies, among them Macao, where they were sold in teahouses. From Macao they spread to the Western influenced port cities of Guangzhou and Hong Kong.

Under British influence, the recipe of the treat, now called “egg tart”, changed slightly. In Hong Kong, it is nowadays being prepared either with the original puff pastry or a shortcrust pastry, and is part of the menu at every dim sum restaurant. Today, also Western chains like Kentucky Fried Chicken and McDonald's sell their version of the egg tart at many of their branches in Asia.

From Hong Kong and Southern China, emigrants took the delicacy with them to every emerging Chinatown abroad. Therefore, in every Chinese bakery and dim sum place in Toronto one can find the Hong Kong version of the Portuguese egg tart. In the meantime, also a significant number of Portuguese immigrants settled down in Toronto and brought along *pastéis*, which can be found and enjoyed in Little Portugal.

... with anatomies

The two cities have very different underlying structures, generating particular outcomes:

For Toronto, I refer to the **mosaic**, which is reflected in the population as well as the city landscape. In a grid, the different neighbourhoods deliberately form “little worlds that touch but do not penetrate each other”.³ Together, the colourful tiles form a patchwork stimulating city life and diversity (even though, I have to admit that the tiles become larger and less colourful towards the edges).

After having become a Canadian citizen, Jane Jacobs wrote to her mother: “I told her [note: the immigration officer] one of the things I liked best is Canada’s ‘mosaic’ theory, the idea that immigrants and their descendants should remain proud of their origins instead of feeling shame about being foreigners or ‘different’, and that I thought this was much more healthy than a ‘melting pot’ theory which tends to make children ashamed of their parents. [...] Incidentally, in a paper we had been given, upon applying, about the duties of Canadian citizens, I was very pleased to see that one of our duties is ‘to get along well with our neighbours.’ This really is a remarkably nice, sane country.”⁴

In Hong Kong, everything is based on **infrastructure**. The very efficient *MTR* lines are like strings on which the dense new towns are lined up. About 12.6 million passenger journeys are taken on public transport every single day.⁵ It is all about function and efficiency, if it is the frequency of the subway, or the pace in a restaurant. “Its efficiency and pace are legendary.”⁶ This omnipresent efficiency has an influence on the daily life of the inhabitants, who due to their Confucian work ethics, often consider it weird to just do nothing.⁷

I would not describe either of the two cities as particularly beautiful, but their underlying structures give them their fascinating character. In Hong Kong, you always get the feeling to be a tiny part of a well-oiled machine. In Toronto, you feel like one colour in a vibrant, multiculturalist environment. I got a sense of the effect that a city has on its inhabitants who are simultaneously part of its evolution, constantly creating those effects. Simply put after my impressions, Hong Kong encourages considerate behaviour, whereas Toronto encourages individualism.

... with sameness

In Hong Kong, as well as in Toronto, one faces a big spread of **repetition** in standardized housing. Obviously, the spatial prerequisites of the two cities could not be more different. Having experienced Hong Kong, one realizes the luxury of space. It is interesting to observe practices to cope with this lack of space on the one side, and then observe how people deal with oversupply of space on the other side. In reply to the respective spatial prerequisites, two very different forms of development were established that could both be described as the contrary of **site-specific**. Although, on a large scale, one might call them prerequisite-specific: in Hong Kong, where there is insufficient supply of land, vertical development arises, whereas in Toronto, with its vast landscape, horizontal development spreads. On a small scale though, the built structures are not site-specific at all. They do not respond to their surroundings, like to a particular view, or to existing buildings (because often there are none). They are basically characterized by sameness and could be placed anywhere. “This is fatal, because great diversity in age and types of buildings has a direct, explicit connection with diversity of population, diversity of enterprises and diversity of scenes.”⁸

In Toronto, the highest percentage of Hong Kong immigrants lives in so-called ethnoburbs like Markham, a municipality that has “enthusiastically embraced new urbanism, apparent, for instance in the neo-Georgian streets of Cathedraltown”.⁹ A big part of the built-up landscape is characterized by crescent drives filling the rigid grid and lining up same-looking detached houses. The crescent drives are supposed to create a more charming setting, but in the first place, their turning radii are very convenient for cars. The huge dependence on the car is accompanied by boring streets that offer nothing interesting for pedestrians. This boredom and the fact that the suburban development is too sparse for an efficient public transportation network, lead to even more car use.

“Almost half a million dwellings were constructed in Toronto’s outer suburbs between 1991 and 2011, and because the same developers and construction firms operate throughout the region it is not surprising that in spite of attempts to give subdivisions distinct identities many of them do look similar. It is probably fair to say that they are more diversified by the people who live in them than by their architecture.”¹⁰

The cookie-cutter houses do not have any of the qualities that we, as architecture students, are taught make “good architecture”. They are not dense, not sustainable, not multi-use, not site-specific, not diverse, poorly built and imitate styles. They are not built by architects, but by investors. An apartment company in Toronto used to advertise with the slogan – “If you want a place to call home, call us!” – exploiting the “home-sweet-home” theme.¹¹ And still, people (think that they) desire to live like that. The whole house with a garage plus two cars in front becomes a status symbol. The sparse sameness could be described as the contrary of density, thus as the contrary of Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, where “history is systematically eradicated”¹², density might be the only thing historic. In 1953, the fire of Shek Kip Mei left 50,000 people homeless over night. They had been living in dense squatter housing and were mainly Chinese immigrants who had left Mainland during the Civil War and after the establishment of the People’s Republic of China. The *Hong Kong Housing Authority* was set up to build fast low-cost flats to re-house thousands of people. Since then, the authority has been a major actor in shaping the urban landscape. The first housing developments were based on the plan *Mark I*. *Mark II*, *III* and *IV* followed.¹³ Over the decades the development series were called from *Concord*, over *Trident*, to *Harmony I-III*, in slab and star-shaped compositions. Many of the public housing estates are based on one to two of these standardized plans. The lack of space and Hong Kong’s land policies force this enormous efficiency in planning and land use. To achieve higher densities, older buildings are often eradicated and replaced with higher ones, stacking up the current version of the “typical plan”:

“Typical Plan $x n$ = a building (hardly a reason to study architecture!): floors strung together by elevators of incomprehensible smoothness, each discreet “ting” of arrival part of a never-ending addition.”¹⁴

3 Robert E. Park, quoted in Lindner 1990, 102.

4 Jane Jacobs, quoted in Allen 2011, 143.

5 Transport Department: Hong Kong: The Facts. Transport, May 2016, <http://www.gov.hk/en/about/about/hk/factsheets/docs/transport.pdf>, 28th November 2016

6 Biswas 2000, 86.

7 Cf. *ibid.*, 89.

8 Jacobs 1961, 212.

9 Edward Relph: Outer Suburbs – Matrix and Patches, <http://www.torontotransforms.com/home-about-torontos-transformations/6-the-outer-suburbs-part-1-matrix-and-patches/>, 15th November 2016

10 Relph 2014, 86.

11 Cf. Relph 1976, 83.

12 Biswas 2000, 83.

13 Cf. Tieben 2012, 16.

14 Koolhaas 1995, 342.

... with urban biographies

“One can say that the city itself is the collective memory of its people, and like memory is associated with objects and places.”¹⁵

In the beginning, I had the chance to get to know the cities as a neutral observer. In the second step, I got to know the cities from the view of my protagonists who walked me through their daily lives. In my opinion, all elements of their biographies together – their memories, their education and jobs, their movement within the cities, the typologies that they live(d) in – draw a very characteristic picture of each of the cities, matching with my initial impressions.

There were so many details in the stories that were typical for the particular city. For example the floor plans and building typologies of their private homes: There were the detached houses in the car-based suburbs, where Eric and Josh live(d). There was the podium-tower in the dense area of Mong Kok, where Eric used to live. There was the podium-tower in the emerging new town of *LOHAS Park* on reclaimed land near the former landfill, where Josh lives now. There was the massive condominium building, where Yvonne lives, and the tiny toothpick tower (due to small building lots, on which investors want to achieve maximum profit) in a pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood on Hong Kong Island, where she used to live. There was the *tong lau* (tenement house) in the vibrant Sham Shui Po, where Quincy used to live, and the typical brick row house near downtown, where she lives now. There was the fancy privately owned apartment building, where Kerwin lives, and the cookie-cutter house at York University, where he used to live. There were bankers, AC servicemen, policemen, farmers, and factory owners, among the family members. Issues in their lives touched upon religion, education, politics, transportation and economic conditions.

Those personal stories and the places, where they are set in, uncover not only the biography of the protagonists, but also that of the city. Stories have the power to create a relation to a bigger issue. One approaches the micro-level, **personal stories**, to get an understanding for the macro-level, **a complex city**. One approaches the next micro-level, a city on the local stage, to get an understanding for the macro-level, our globalized world.

“Local analysis is the key to understanding the global context.”¹⁶

15 Rossi 1984, 130.

16 Burgio 2009, 1312.

... with off-worlds

“These ‘off worlds’ – to use the terminology of *Blade Runner* – are often imagineered as replica Southern Californias. Thus, ‘Beverly Hills’ does not exist only in the 90210 zip code; it is also, with Utopia and Dreamland, a suburb of Cairo, an affluent private city ‘whose inhabitants can keep their distance from the sight and severity of poverty and the violence and political Islam which is seemingly permeating the localities’¹⁷.”

There were such *Beverly Hills* in both Toronto and Hong Kong.

54 | 55

Besides, I encountered a lot of off-worlds – placeless places that have more relation to other fakes than to the original:

There was *Pacific Mall*, the mall inspired by *Pacific Place* in Hong Kong, placed it in a suburban setting in Toronto surrounded by parking lots. In press releases the mall’s manager claimed, “a trip to Pacific Mall would be equivalent to a trip to Hong Kong”¹⁸. The Chinese heritage town on the upper floor is a hyper-simulation and over-the-top exotic. The mall serves as a magnet for recent immigrants, tourists and inhabitants. According to an *OECD* review from 2010, there are 60 Chinese plazas in the Toronto region that feature often also Korean, Vietnamese and other ethnic stores and restaurants.¹⁹

40

There was the *Cathedral of the Transfiguration*, a replica of a church in the building owner’s hometown in Slovakia, imported to Toronto and placed next to the highway in the outskirts of Toronto.

92

There was the bamboo forest in the middle of *IFC* mall in Hong Kong.

91

There was “lake neighbourhood” in the giant outlet mall *Vaughan Mills*, where the only things lake-like were the blue tiles on the floor and the printed wall screens.

There were Starbucks all over. The branches are super generic but some of them disguised to be specific. In Unionville, a historic village that is nowadays part of the municipality of Markham, one is very proud to have a history dating back to 1794.²⁰ To enhance this historical identity, the Starbucks on Unionville’s Main Street features a carved wooden sign with fake patina, “it celebrates the past as only the recently conceived can.”²¹

There were McDonald’s everywhere. McDonald’s is so popular in Hong Kong that there exist McDonald’s joss paper menus to burn at the funerals of relatives to ensure that they have a lot of good things in their after life.

There were off-worlds in the naming of many of the apartment buildings – such as *Banff* in the developing *LOHAS Park*, *Manhattan Place* in North York, or *Jadewater* at the harbour of Aberdeen.

What all of these off-worlds have in common, is that they create generic places, referencing to a place of longing, mostly for branding purposes. These off-worlds or longing places create a global connection of placeless places on a metaphysical level. Since the memory of the far-away home also turns into a longing place, the transnational lifestyles probably intensify this phenomenon.

In the end, this book was printed across the street from *Konfuzius* – a Chinese restaurant, with a bamboo garden and two lions flanking the red entrance door.

17 Davis 2006, 115

18 Allen-Kim 2013, 6.

19 Cf. Relph 2014, 132-135.

20 Welcome to Our Vibrant Village, <http://www.unionvilleinfo.com>, 28th July 2016

21 Koolhaas 1995, 1256.

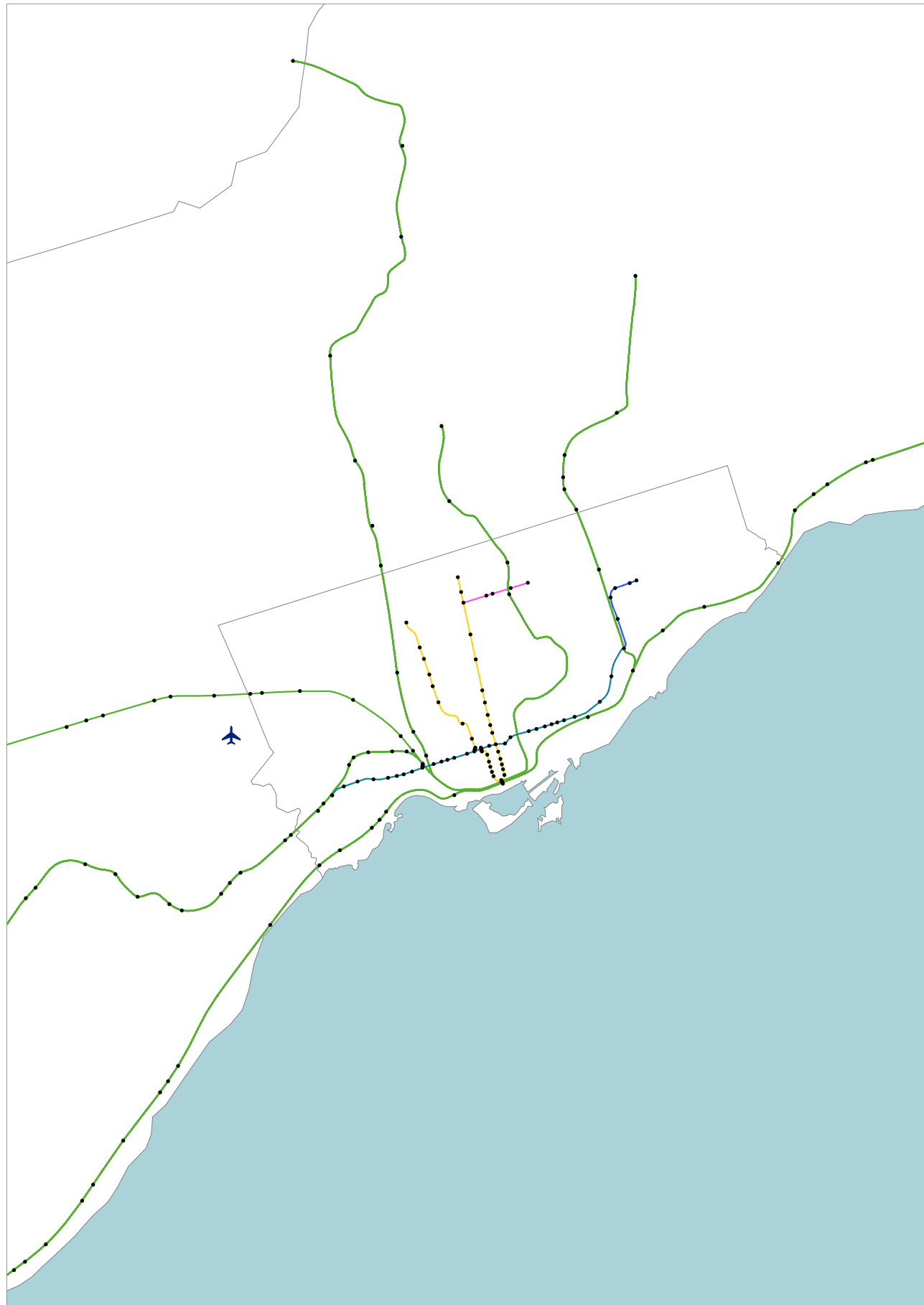
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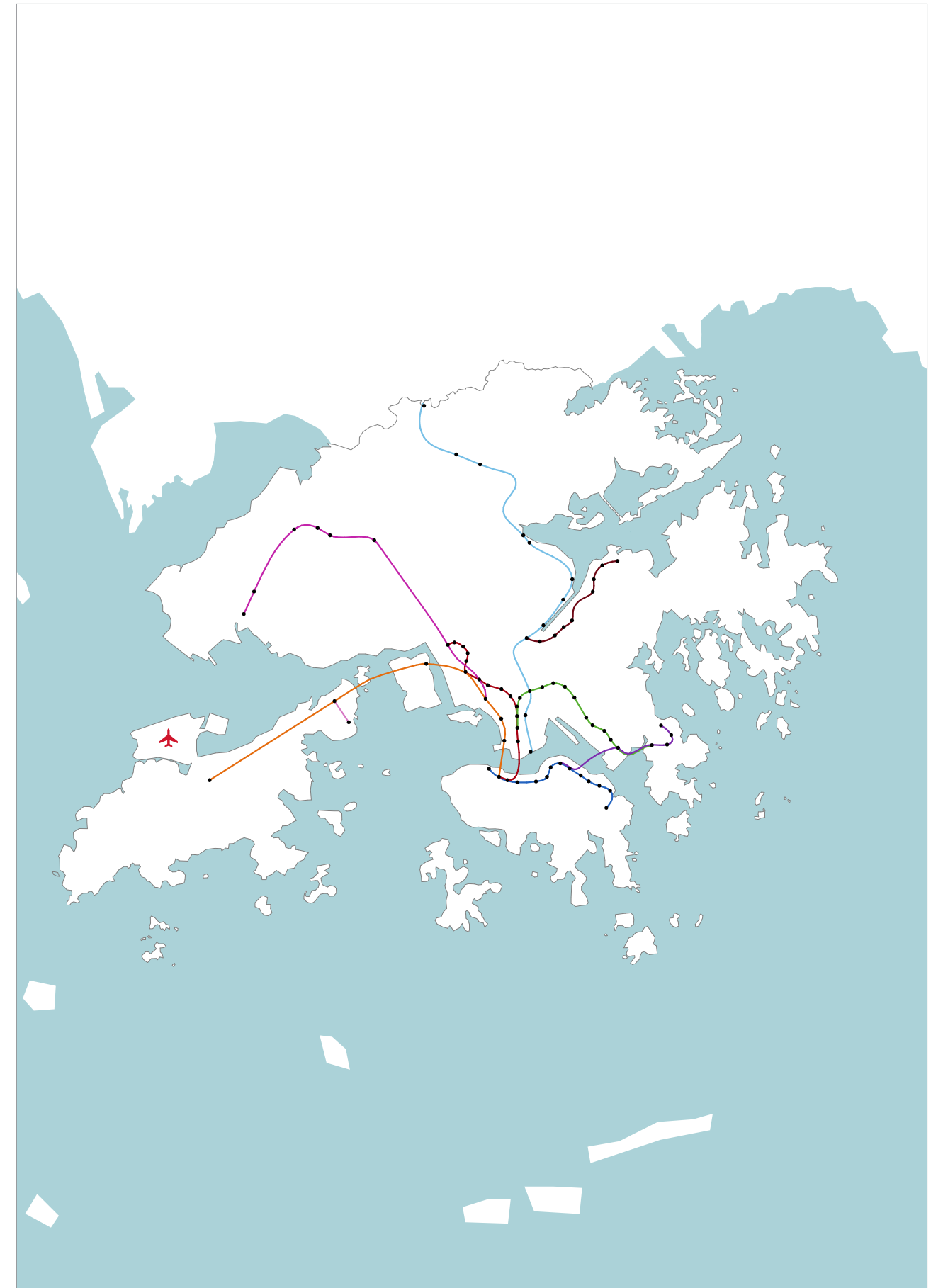
Great Lakes
Situation
1:4.000.000



Pearl River Delta
Situation
1:4.000.000



Greater Toronto Area
TTC and GO Train
 1:400.000



Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
MTR Lines
 1:400.000



Greater Toronto Area
Municipalities and Built-up Area
1:400,000



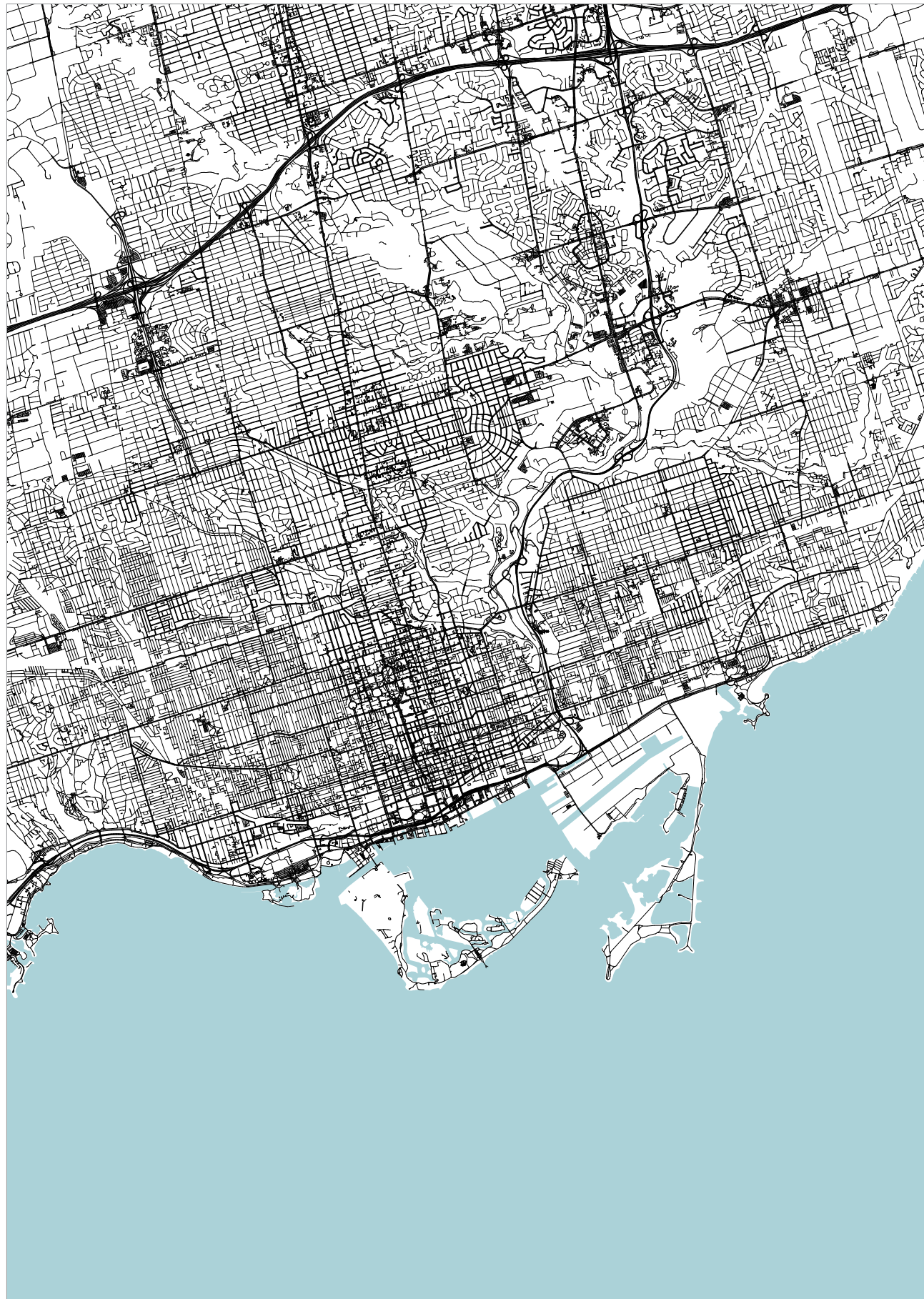
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
Municipalities and Built-up Area
1:400,000



Aerial View
Toronto with surrounding municipalities



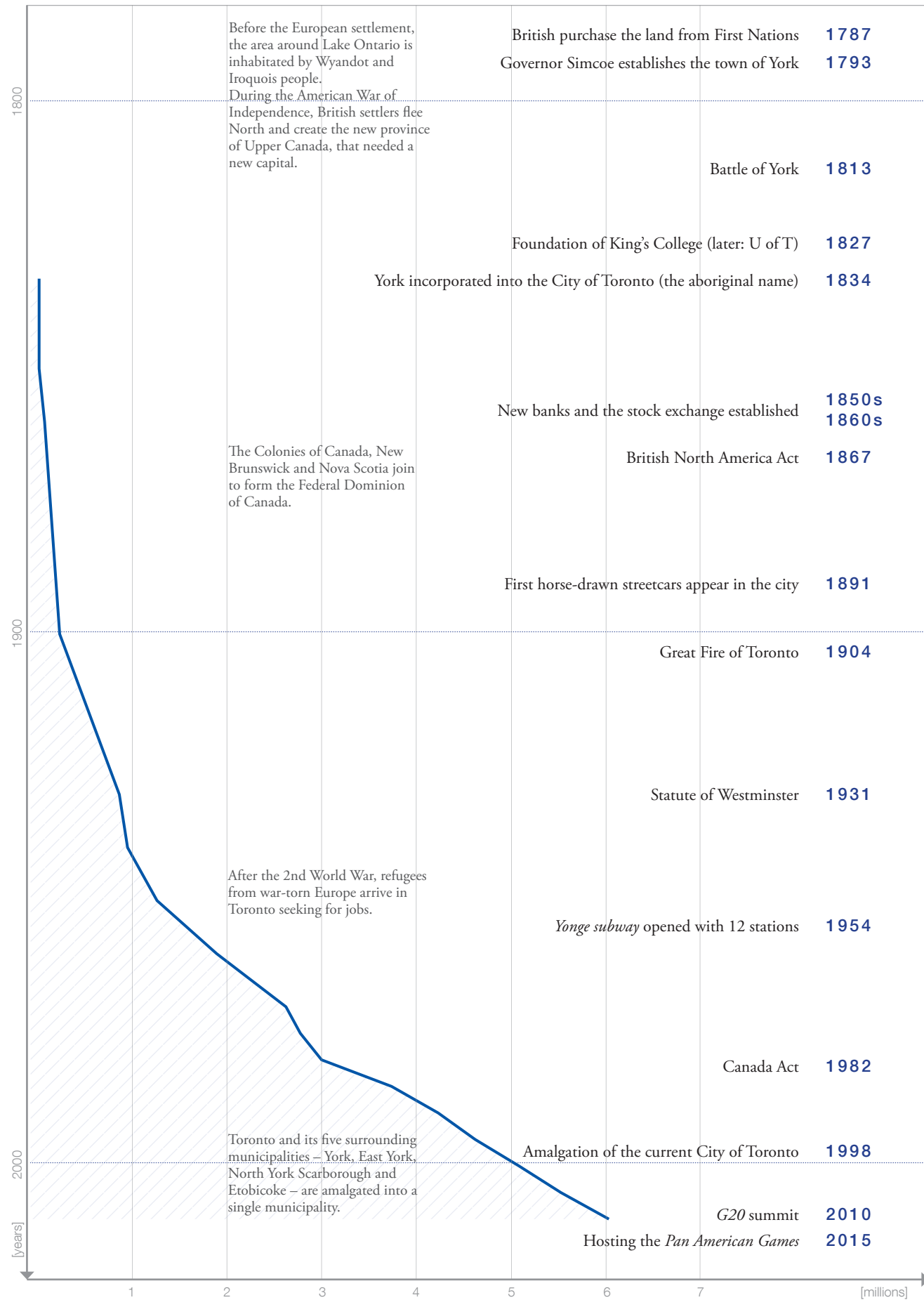
Aerial View
Hong Kong Island, Kowloon & New Territories



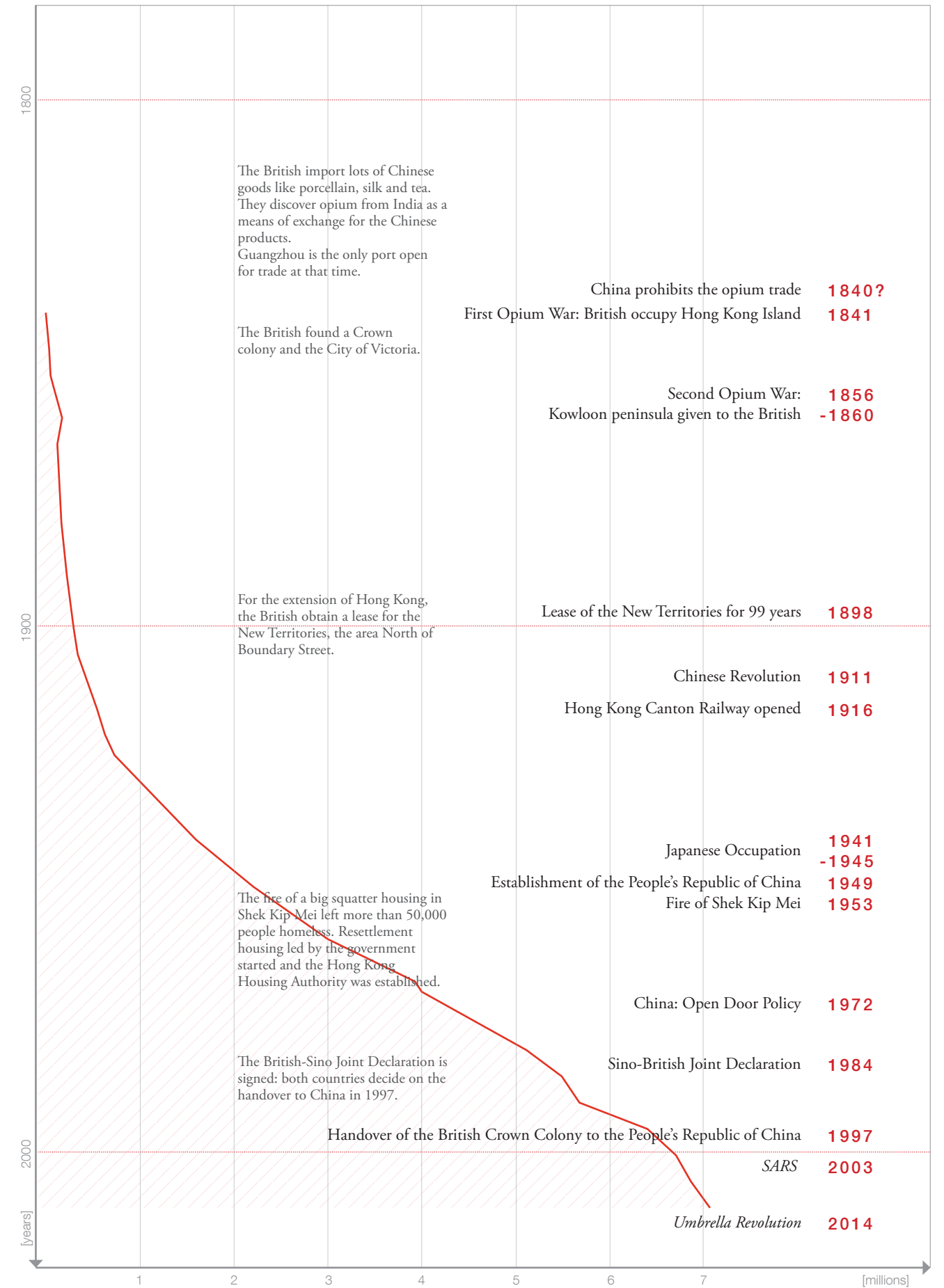
Toronto
Road Network
1:100,000



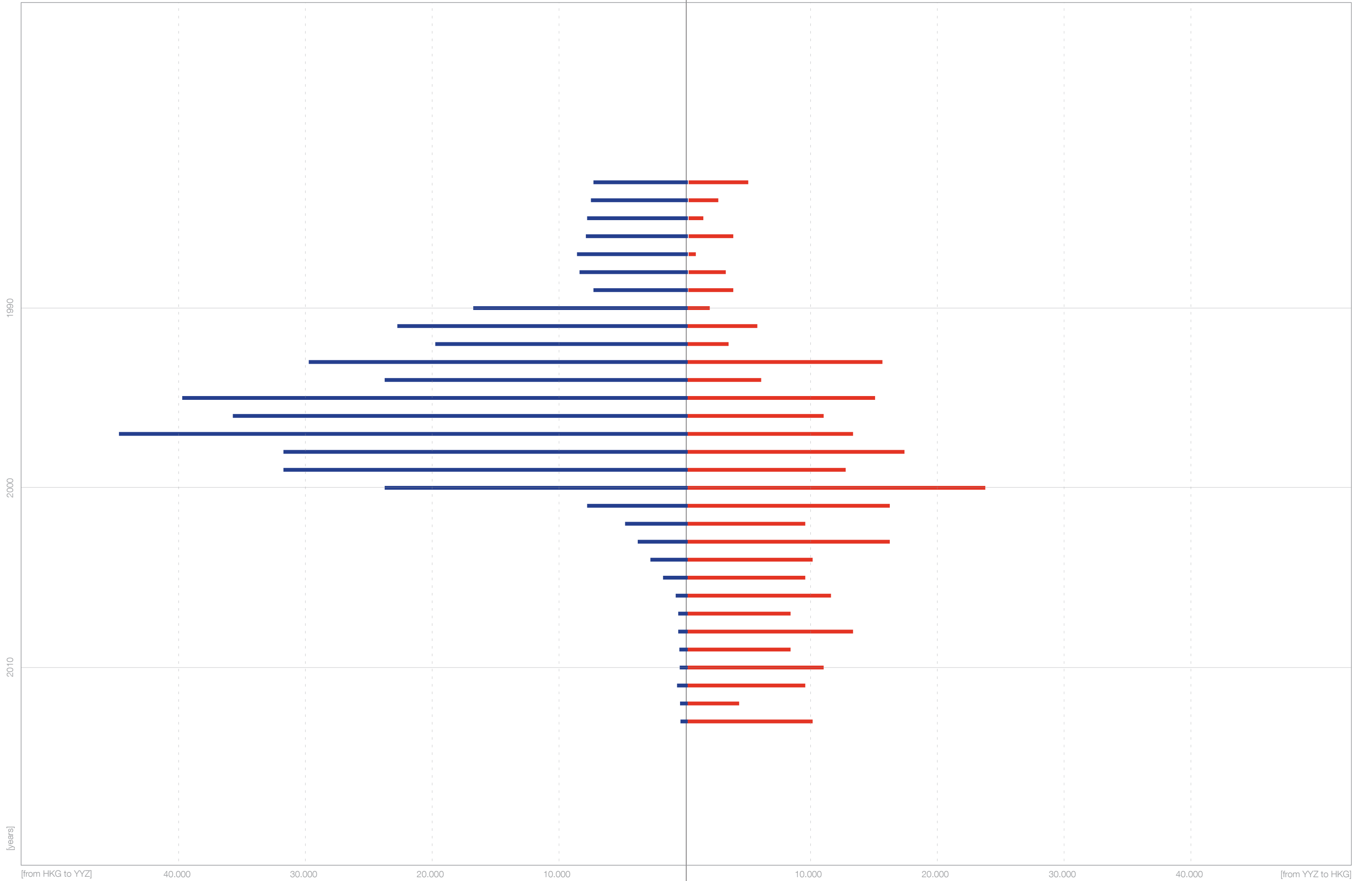
Hong Kong
Road Network
1:100,000



Toronto
Historical Events and Population Growth



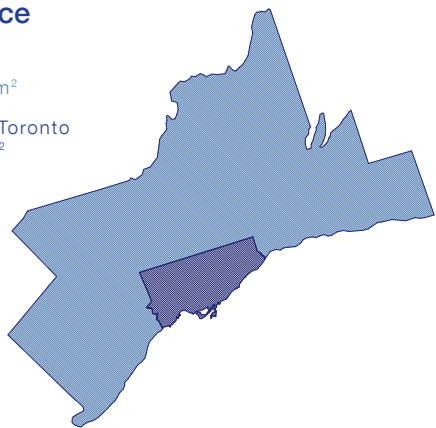
Hong Kong
Historical Events and Population Growth



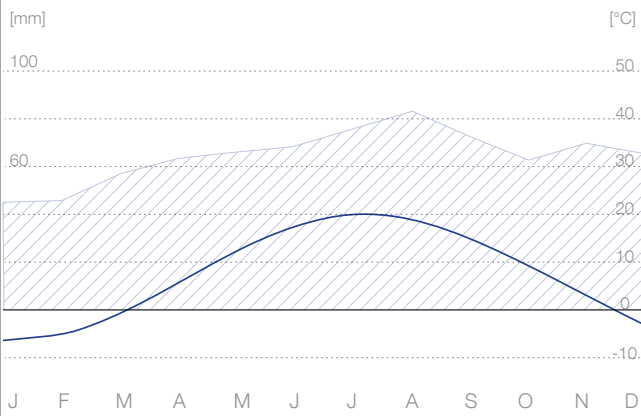
Migration and return-migration
between Hong Kong and Canada

Surface

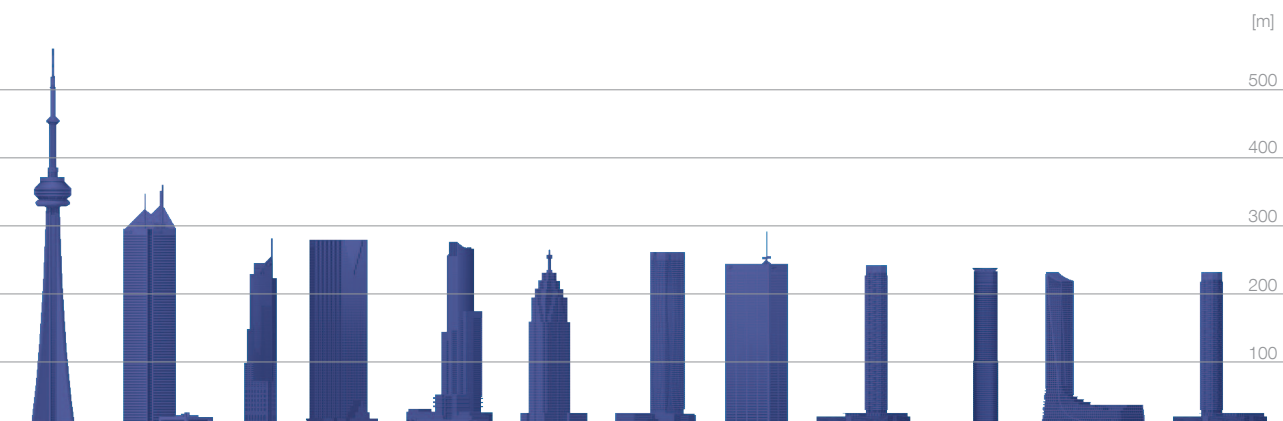
GTA
7125 km²
City of Toronto
630 km²



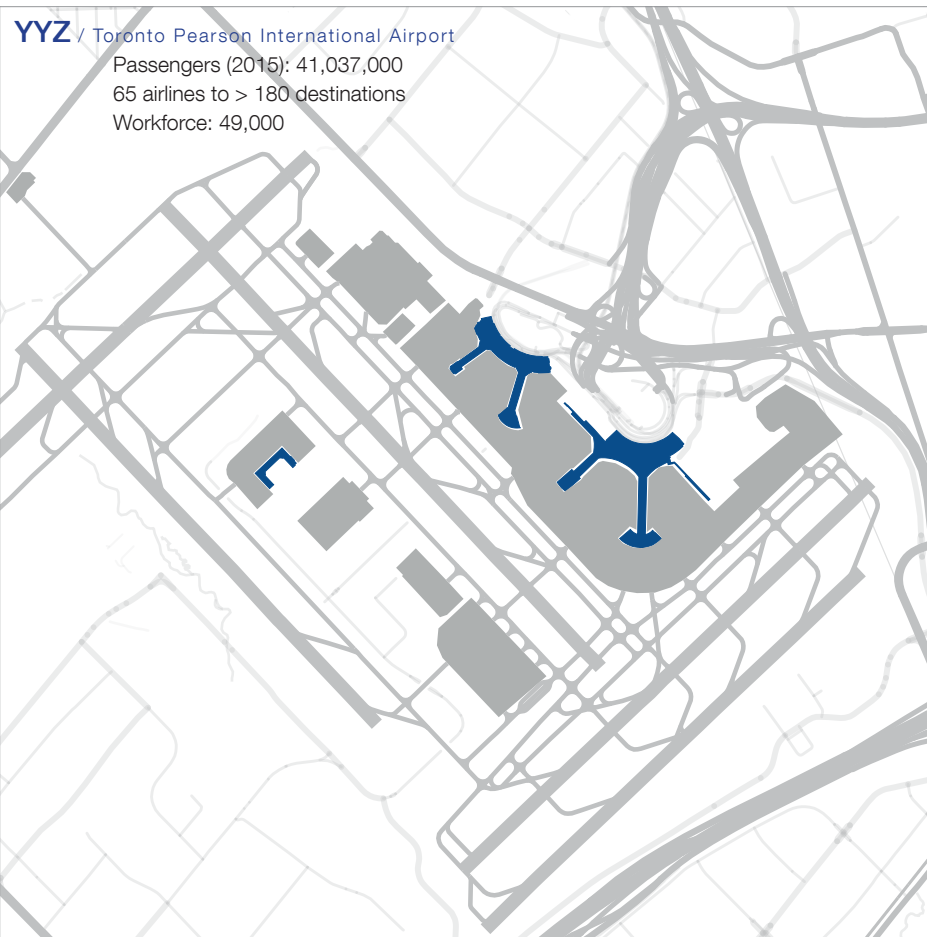
Climate



Skyscraper



YYZ / Toronto Pearson International Airport
Passengers (2015): 41,037,000
65 airlines to > 180 destinations
Workforce: 49,000



Safest Cities Index

- 1 Tokyo
- 2 Singapore
- 3 Osaka
- 4 Stockholm
- 5 Amsterdam
- 6 Sydney
- 7 Zurich
- 8 **TORONTO**
- 9 Melbourne
- 10 New York
- 11 **HONG KONG**
- 12 San Francisco
- 13 Taipei
- 14 Montreal
- 15 Barcelona

Global Liveability Ranking

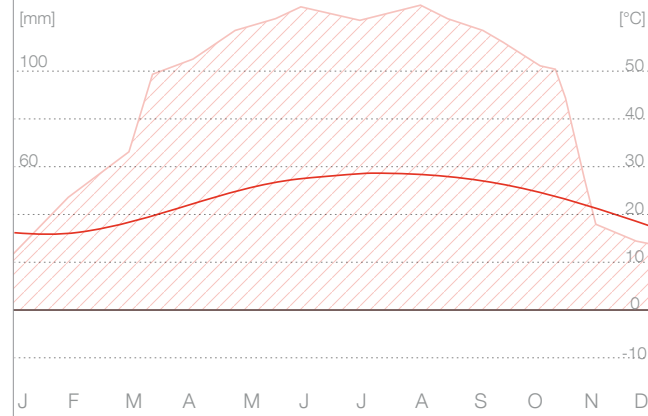
- 1 Melbourne
- 2 Vienna
- 3 Vancouver
- 4 **TORONTO**
- 5 Calgary
- 5 Adelaide
- 7 Perth
- 8 Auckland
- 9 Helsinki
- 10 Hamburg
- 35 **HONG KONG** (2008)

Surface

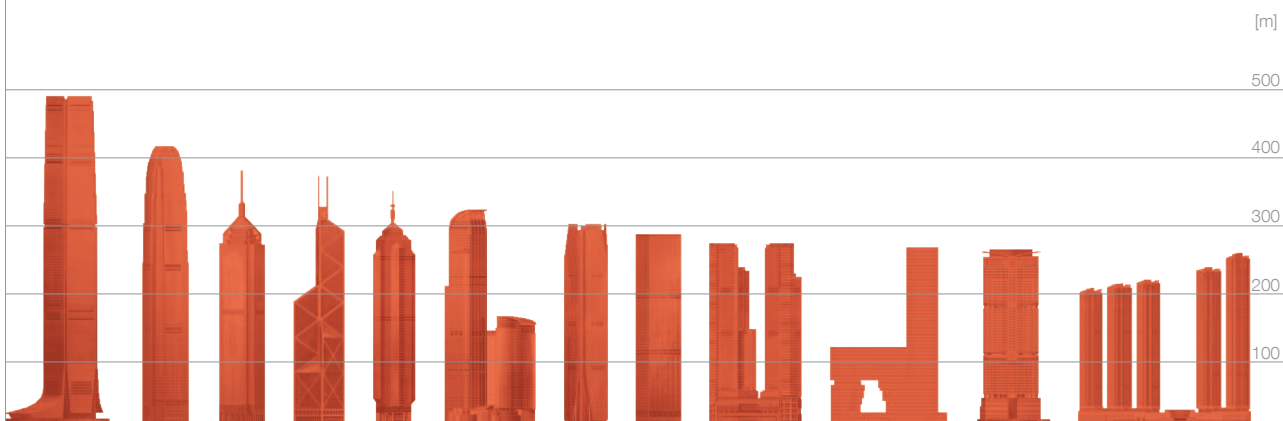
Hong Kong SAR
1104 km²



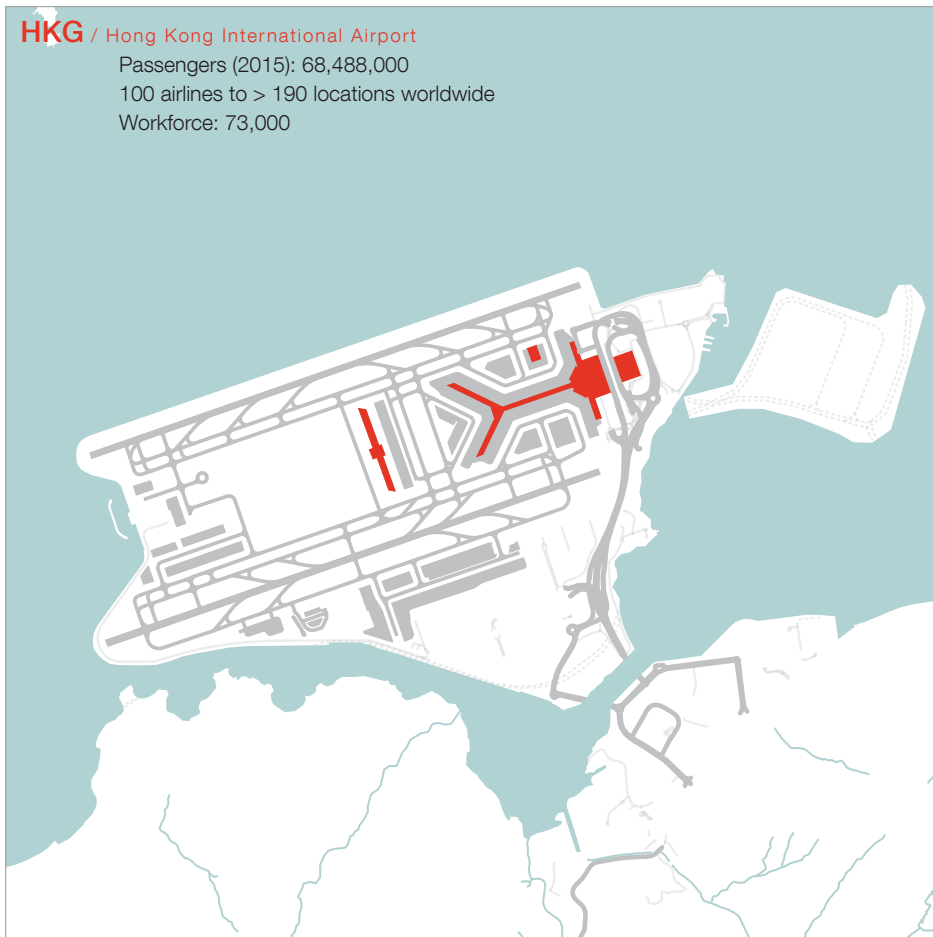
Climate



Skyscraper



HKG / Hong Kong International Airport
Passengers (2015): 68,488,000
100 airlines to > 190 locations worldwide
Workforce: 73,000



Most Skyscrapers

- 1 **HONG KONG** 1303
- 2 New York 717
- 3 Tokyo 475
- 4 Chicago 309
- 5 Shanghai 289
- 6 Dubai 283
- 7 Shenzhen 257
- 8 **TORONTO** 251
- 9 Guangzhou 245
- 10 Singapore 224

Economically Most Powerful Cities

- 1 New York
- 2 London
- 3 Tokyo
- 4 **HONG KONG**
- 5 Paris
- 6 Singapore
- 7 Los Angeles
- 8 Seoul
- 9 Vienna
- 10 **TORONTO**
- Stockholm
- 12 Chicago
- 13 Zurich
- 14 Sydney
- Helsinki

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