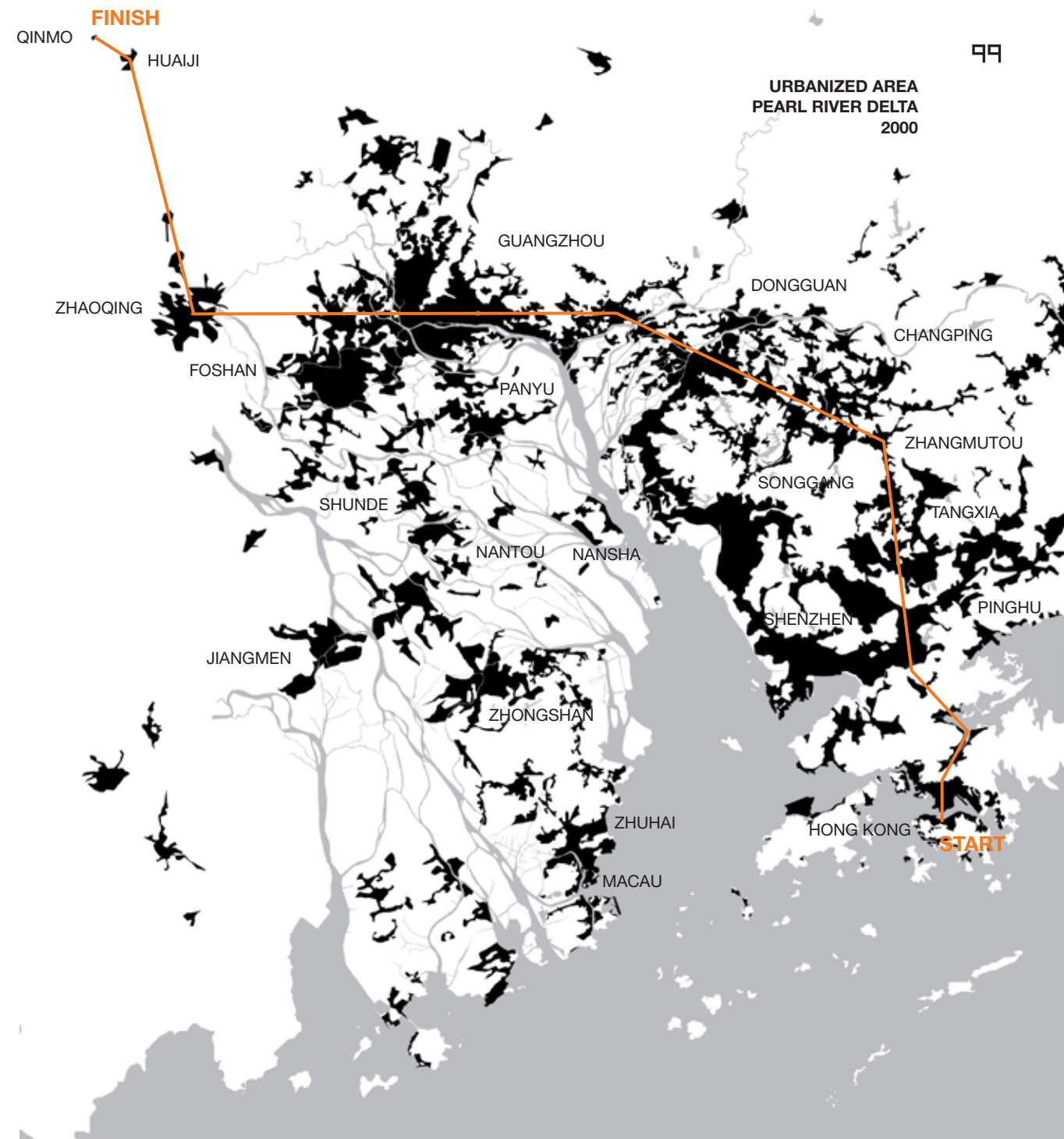


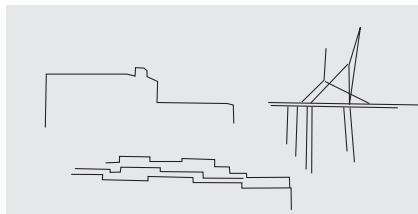
The Rural-Urban Ecology concept originated in a journey that we took to a project site for a rural school construction in a village near the border of Guangdong and Guangxi province. In an eight-hour drive originating in Hong Kong, the journey passed through seven official urban zones and countless in-betweens and otherwise indeterminate territories before arriving at the rural site in Qinmo village. The journey exhibited various conditions of development, many of which exploited grey areas in current government policies and were indicative of the degree of market savvy and entrepreneurship among people who were all simply farmers 30 years ago. There were also clusters of abandoned buildings and projects—bi-products of the extreme influence of the market economy—which were simply halted the moment the market shifted. In the first stage of Shenzhen's transfor-

mation from rice fields into a 12 million-inhabitant city, the edge between rural and urban was brutally distinct. Now, as the PRD develops from a region which in 1990 had only four urban areas with over 1/2 million inhabitants into an area today with more than 20 such cities, the entire regional dynamic has become much more complex. What becomes evident is that urban processes are intertwined with rural processes to the extent that the rural is a key agent in the creation of urban fabric. These mechanisms produce specific forms of differentiated urban fabric, creating incoherent adjacencies between banana trees and high-rise developments, remnants of fishponds and factories. The following is a selection of images along this Rural-Urban scan with key issues that factor into the continuing transformation of the PRD.





0'15": Hong Kong Real Estate

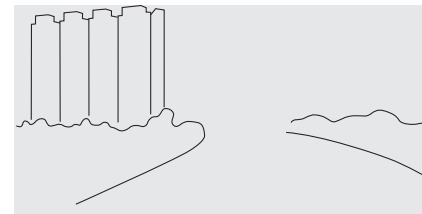


0'25": Logistics Port

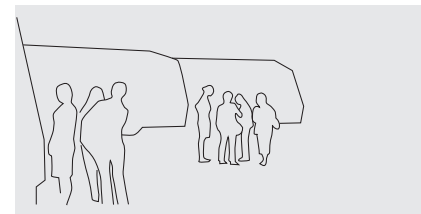


**0'45": Lok Ma Chau (HK)**  
 Lok Ma Chau-Huanggang is one of five land border crossings. It has become the busiest border crossing in Asia, with 150,000 cross-border passengers a day on average.

The Frontier Closed Area in HK is a 2,800 hectare buffer zone created in 1951 to prevent illegal migration from mainland China to HK. In 2010 it will be reduced in size, freeing over 2,000 hectares for future development.



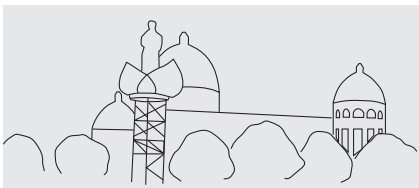
0'50": HK-SZ Border: No Man's Land



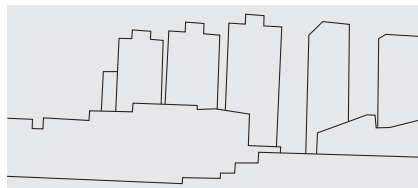
0'55": Huanggang (SZ)



1'00": Logistics Port



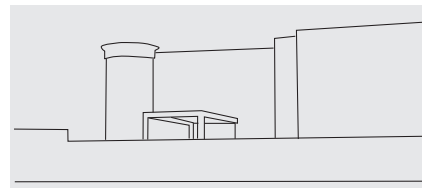
**1'35": Massage**  
 Huge spa and massage complexes form new leisure attractions for tourists, foreign and local businessmen, and overseas Chinese from Taiwan and Hong Kong. Dongguan is made up of a strange mix of factories, 5-star hotels, and entertainment with 450 licensed karaoke outlets and more than 1,000 bars, clubs and discos.



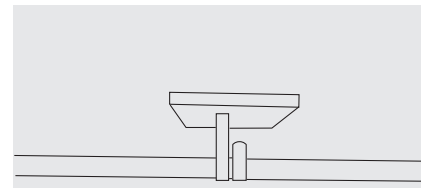
**1'55": Urban Periphery**  
 The urban periphery is a contested zone where the different desires of factory owners, farmers and real-estate developers are played out. This is the zone in which rural territory is transformed into urban substance through the forces of global capital.



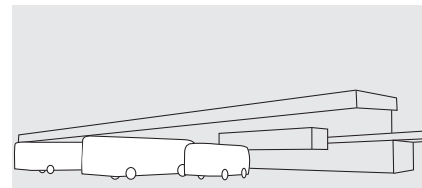
**2'05": Suburban China**  
 The numbers of the middle class are rising in China concurrent with the country's continued economic renaissance. As their wealth rises more are seeking out high-end Western-style villa developments in the suburbs, often in the form of gated communities.



2'15": Highway Urbanism



2'20": Mass-Migration



2'20": Mass-Migration

The years preceding October 2008, when it was generally acknowledged that the world was entering a global recession, could be considered the apotheosis of the extremes of market capitalism. In many developing countries the rapid transformation of rural territory directly into industrialized urban substance was

accompanied by mass migrations of workers to these new urban centers. Now those millions of workers are going home. It is estimated that in China alone over a six-month period, 20 million workers have left cities and returned to their rural homes. This represents a crisis not only for cities but for the established relation-

ship and co-dependency between rural and urban territory.

The traditional relationship between the countryside and the city, the farm and the factory has become exploited and increasingly complex within the processes of globalization. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Pearl River Delta in China. Here globalization's

incessant search for cheaper land and labor, combined with the specific local conditions of Chinese socialism, with its inherent inequality between Urban and Rural citizens has produced a phenomena of urban migration and urban production that is unparalleled.

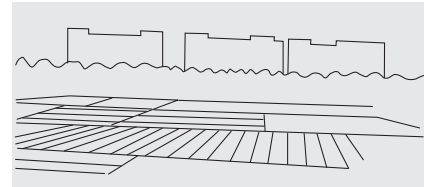
Under the original set up of Mao Zedong's collective farming system, the relationship between the countryside and the city was clear and distinct. In exchange for their land rights, farmers contributed a portion of their food production as tax. Food and raw materials were then distributed by the government

to the non-agricultural population. As a result, the notion of balance between the roles of rural dwellers and urban dwellers was established in the system of Hukou or household registration, and it has continued to this day. This system defines every citizen as either an urban dweller or a rural dweller with distinct rights and responsibilities. This strict legal separation of its entire population exemplifies China's deep-rooted belief in not only the division but the co-dependency of its urban and rural parts. However the nature of this relationship continues to evolve.

One of the chief architects of China's economic rise, Deng Xiaoping, recognized not only the failure of the commune system but the potential for China to act as fertile territory for the expression of late capitalism in built form. The continued commodification of goods, worldwide consumption and expanded field of production centers made possible through globalization, prioritized affordable and available land, co-operative governmental controls and an abundance of cheap labor. By simultaneously opening up key areas to foreign investment and loosening the tie between farmers and their land,



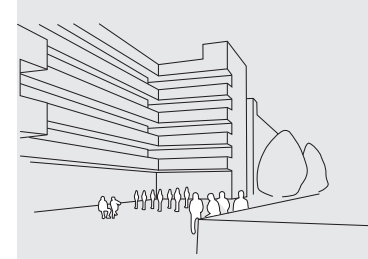
**2'35": Residential Abandonment**



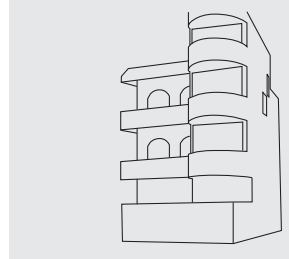
**2'45": Blurred Territories**



**2'50": Dongguang Vacant Factories**



**3'00": Live-In Factory Complex**

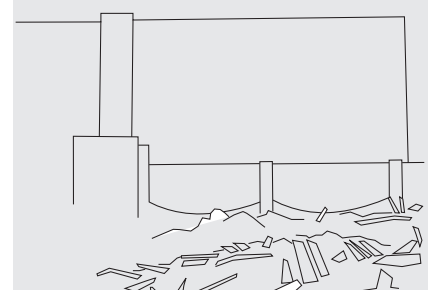


**3'20": Rural Capitalism**



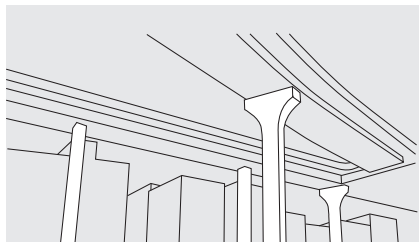
**3'05": Gated Factory Town**

One of the largest factory towns in Dongguan, Yuyuan Industrial District was founded in 1993, by Taiwan Baocheng Group, the largest shoe manufacture enterprise in the world. It has an area of 3,300 mu (about 543.63 acres), and a total investment of US\$1 billion. Now 18 Taiwan factories, mainly shoe and electronic manufacture enterprises, have moved into its complete town facilities, with residential complexes, recreational grounds, local shops, restaurants and on-site medical care.

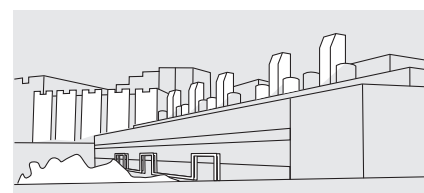


**6'05": Rural Production**

In 1978 policy changes allowed for individual businesses and non-agricultural production in rural areas. The 1990s and continued economic development encouraged further investment in rural commerce and industry. Up to 2006, rural and township enterprises account for 40 percent of total GDP in the PRD. In more rural areas some of these industries include the production of construction materials: bricks, concrete, sewage pipes and wood veneer.



**3'30": Guangzhou Super-Highway**



**3'40": Guangzhou**

Guangzhou (formerly Canton) is the capital city of Guangdong Province and has a permanent population of 10 million, out of total population of 14 million. In 1978, the floating population of migrant workers was approximately 235,000, but rapidly grew to 1.7 million in 10 years and stands at 4 million today.



**4'45": Bourgeois Villas**

Massive migration had created a temporary population of 147 million rural workers in the PRD before the recent downturn and current counter-migration. Ironically this temporary population inhabited the cities of Guangzhou and Shenzhen in clusters of densely packed and loosely regulated enclaves called 'Urban Villages.' These areas, imbedded into the urban fabric are the resultant tradeoffs between the government and villagers when claiming large tracts of farming plots for urban development. The rights of rural dwellers to build a dwelling and the demand for cheap migrant worker housing trans-



**5'15": Zhaoqing**

formed local farmers into property developers. The city of Shenzhen has grown so vast in 30 years that many of these areas have become entrenched into the very center of the urban fabric. However due to the legal separation between rural and urban territory, these Urban Villages have become an intractable problem for city planning, or seen another way as islands of resistance containing a form of informal urbanism that is simply not possible in the formal-grid urbanism that predominates Shenzhen's city fabric.

The fact that rural land is owned collectively— something not possible



**5'45": Truck Town**

The blue transporter trucks congregate in a single town implying that this is the town of truck drivers. It seems strange that such specificity, or differentiation of labour would be so explicit.

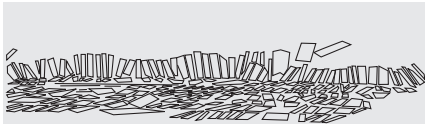
for urban dwellers— gives the farmers of China an inherent capitalistic edge. Originally the collective ownership of property led to the rural welfare distribution system. Since the 1990s the PRD cities of Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai and Foshan have begun reforming this system as a method to speed the conversion of farmland into urban land. These actions transformed the existing 'collective ownership system' into

Deng produced the basic conditions for unprecedented urbanization directly linked to the globalization of markets. In 1978, Shenzhen was named one of five Special Economic Zones, strategically located directly across the border from Hong Kong, which was already established as a global financial center. A year later, Deng began the emancipation of the farmers by transforming the collective farm system to shift productivity from the collective to the individual. The farmers could choose what to grow and had the right to sell any excess for individual profit. Then in 1983, the huge temporary

migration from rural areas to sites of production was legalized by a policy that allowed rural citizens to work in designated urban areas without changing their citizen status.

Currently the rural continues to play an unequivocal role in the growth of cities and economies of the Pearl River Delta.

what was strategically termed the 'rural shareholding co-operative system.' In the administrative region of Dongguan, as a result of implementing these reforms from 2004-2006, nearly 3,000 shareholding



**6'20": Rural Industry**

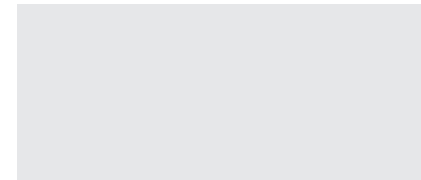


**6'25": Recycling**



**6'50": Rural Infrastructure**

The Central Government proposed to increase its spending on agriculture and rural development to 716.1 billion yuan this year, an increase of 120.6 billion yuan from 2008, in order to reduce the gap between rural and urban residents. Rural inland



areas are particularly impoverished: in 2006, only 48 percent of rural households had tap water, and 87 percent did not have flush water.



**6'55": Investment Farmers**



**7'05": One-Child Propaganda**

The government banner reads: "Sex selection is a natural process. Artificial selection will jeopardize social safety."

co-operatives have been established. The co-operatives are essentially business entities with shareholders, thus allowing the farmers to conduct business freely with outside investors and developers. One might say that nearly overnight 3,000 new corporations were formed with substantial assets in the form of prime land. Though essentially urban, the official rural status of most of Dongguan has allowed it to develop in a uniquely capitalistic manner far in advance of the other cities in the PRD.



**7'15": Rural Development**

The continuing conversion of rural territory into urban substance through various means is blurring the lines, which define not only their physical boundaries but their economies. The areas which are outside the cities, the large expansive peripheries once occupied solely by rice paddies, are rapidly and simultaneously transforming into a generic territory, neither strictly urban nor rural, dotted with factories, isolated residential towers amidst the farmland. This land is still under the legal designation of 'rural' territory and continues to develop in a haphazard manner through coalitions of rural com-



**7'25": Village Density**

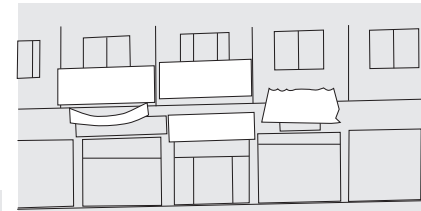
As migrant workers send money back to their hometown villages, some families build new homes or renovate their existing houses often with tiles indicating a new social standing amid the typical brick homes.

mittees, developers, individual farmers and village governments. The growth of this peripheral zone is much faster, more ruthless and seemingly devoid of planning control even compared to the infamous growth of Chinese urban areas. This proto-rural territory is a contested space, organized along territorial lines of traditional farming plots, being speculated simultaneously as new residential com-



There are approximately 30 million migrant workers in Guangdong Province. The recent recession has left approximately 4.8 million unemployed of which 3.5 million have returned to their hometowns.

munities and high-end industrial parks. As opposed to the past development of cities, which were government organized and led, this wave of development is propagated by individual farmers and village co-operatives eager to catch up.



**7'50": Qinmo Village**



**8'00": Project Site**

Qinmo is a small rural village, which is mainly populated by the very young and very old as most young people, men and women, have left to work in the factories or service industries of the PRD's emerging cities. The set of intertwined relations between the city and the village describes an ecology, always in flux, and liable to change. The current economic recession will no doubt impact several layers within this ecology, its exact ramifications as yet unknown.

**Joshua Bolchover** is an urban researcher, academic and architect. He is currently a Professional Consultant at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He recently exhibited *Utopia Now: Opening the Closed Area*, a research project on the Hong Kong and Shenzhen border at the Venice Biennale 2008. He has curated, designed and contributed to several international exhibitions including *Get it Louder*, a touring exhibition in China; *Airspace: What Skyline does London want?*; *Hydan*; *Can Buildings Curate* and has exhibited at the HK-SZ Biennale. Joshua was a local curator for the Manchester-Liverpool section of *Shrinking Cities* between 2003 and 2005. He has collaborated with Raoul Bunschoten, Chora researching strategic urban projects and has worked with Diller + Scofidio in New York. Joshua has previously taught architecture at London Metropolitan University, Cambridge University and the Architectural Association. He was educated at Cambridge University and at the Bartlett School of Architecture.

**John Lin** is an architect based in Hong Kong and is a graduate of The Cooper Union in New York City. His experimental constructions have been published in *FRAME* magazine (2003) and exhibited in the *Kolonihaven (Architecture Park)* at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in Copenhagen (2004) and at the Venice Biennale (2008). His current projects include the design of several school buildings in China. Located in rural areas of Guizhou and Guangdong, the designs integrate local and traditional practices with contemporary technologies. The projects co-ordinate between Mainland and HK universities, the Ministry of Construction, the Education Bureau, and local village governments along with N.G.O.'s and charity organizations from Hong Kong. He has taught at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts, School of Architecture, and the Chinese University of Hong Kong, and is currently an Assistant Professor at the University of Hong Kong.