

In narrow alleys, amidst towering blocks, squeezed by brutal infrastructure, in accommodations that range from the practically uninhabitable to the hyper-luxurious, and in spite of ubiquitous repairs, interdictions, and deviations, Hong Kong's irrepressible urban life is above all spontaneous. Although Hong Kong is a driving force in globalisation, it has not succumbed to globalisation's bland seductions. (Is the Cantonese language in itself an insurance policy against the progressive loss of character?) It is the city's authenticity that attracts most visitors, not its similarity to other contemporary capitals. In my time in Hong Kong I have witnessed the emergence of new generations staking a claim in the city, offering the contribution of a highly developed sensibility that combines political awareness, cultural versatility, and an ability to shuttle effortlessly between Hong Kong and global culture. It is this unique Hong Kong sensibility that provided for us both ideas and inspiration.

The West Kowloon Cultural District confronts us with the task of turning an overwhelming governmental ambition – with a bewildering diversity of stakeholders and an incredible richness of program – into a proposal that is fun and serious, planned and spontaneous, large and intimate, Chinese and international, iconic and practical, understandable yet surprising. The site itself is ideally placed to offer Hong Kong both density and release: there is urban pressure to the north and the east, a metropolitan skyline to the south, but also the sense of unlimited possibility granted by the sea in front of it; a mountain range to the north; islands, the sunset, and more sea to the west.

We have tried to make the district a microcosm of the city in its combination of density and nature, discovering, to our own surprise, that we could realize the vast program and still preserve wide swaths of open space. An unsolicited part of our project is a Cultural Masterplan: a collaboration with experts from the cultural and financial worlds, based on a debriefing of Hong Kong's stakeholders. This cultural masterplan works in tandem with the physical plan, each informing and empowering the other. It tries to establish a new zone of creativity, interplay, and production on the basis of an existing infrastructure that, I can already testify, makes a mockery of the notion that Hong Kong has "no culture".

Rem Koolhaas

東 藝
阡 陌

西 演
交 通

中 城
人 才
聚 墟

West Kowloon Cultural District OMA Project for a new dimension

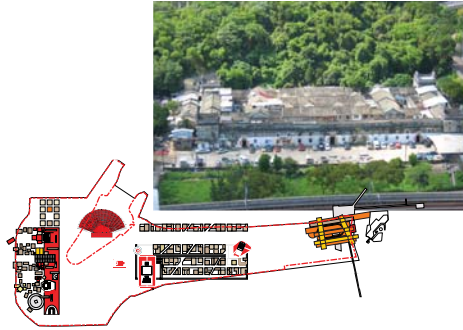
Stage 2 Public Engagement
Exercise for the West Kowloon
Cultural District



Ingredients

The Village

A village is a single organism, consisting of many intimately interlocking parts that work in unison. A village has always been the most sustainable form of human co-existence: it has survived not through new technology or high tech materials, but through the interaction of population and scale, the economy of communication, ease of adjustment, and contact with the nature that surrounds it. The village enables us to absorb the almost overwhelming scale of West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD)'s ambition into manageable portions that resist delusions of grandeur and neutralise the threat of an alienating confrontation between the "old" and "new" Kowloon.



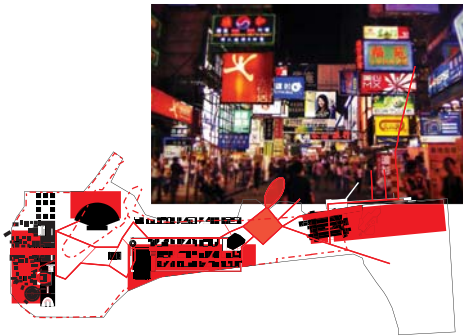
Agricultural patterns

In imagining a landscape for the district, we draw from tropical agriculture, not only as a repertoire of species and cultivation methods, but as a mechanism for organizing communal action. The fish pond – not unlike the Mai Po wetlands – and the rice fields surrounding Hong Kong, like the village, evokes old, essential patterns, seemed to us an apt metaphor on which to found a new territory. Implying both sacrifice and bounty, they provide not just an aesthetic but a philosophy, a system of collective commitment and shared nourishment that goes to the heart of our plan. They offer us a delicate, not-quite rectangular harlequin pattern that weaves the district together.



Streetscapes

A single thematic spine – street life – connects the three villages; it links people, amateurs and professionals, and all forms of highbrow and popular culture. This streetscape can be a free space where people think, paint, rehearse, sew, make sets, try out models, make mistakes, fail, and recover – all elements that are as crucial to creative life as the formal spaces of performance and display. This transparency in the creative process is a strategy to enlist the public and to eventually help to construct a new creative community. In the same vein, the commercial potential of the creative industry will be present too, to connect the district explicitly to Hong Kong's legendary financial acumen.



..... Site boundary of WKCD

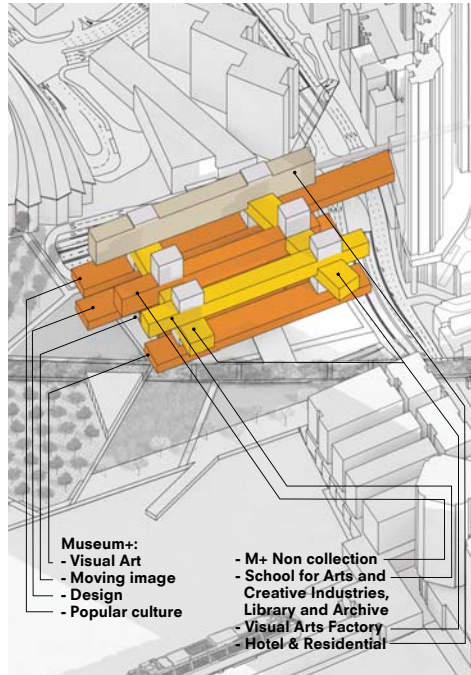
Three Villages



Art in the east: M+

Having had the courage to avoid the Museum Franchise model, M+ has the opportunity to implement the most creative thinking culture of the current moment. The M+ building is interpreted as a barcode with overlapping bands of international and local culture and contemporary art with design, film and visual arts – creating an interface, exposure and connections between them. By embedding M+ in a larger Visual Arts Factory, we suggest moving beyond the traditional division of display, collection, and conservation: research, production, and educational dimensions will be integrated and visible throughout M+.

To emphasize literal imbrications, additional functions of M+ and the Visual Arts Factory—offices, a school, studios, a hotel, housing, and artist galleries – are part of the same structure. The Visual Arts Factory has outposts throughout WKCD and Kowloon itself, assisting in the integration of the neighbourhoods.



4 West Kowloon Cultural District

5 Office for Metropolitan Architecture

1. Connection to Kowloon

M+ directly links to the neighbourhood with pedestrian sky-bridges into Jordan and to Temple Street. The museum's popular culture band also spans across Canton Road and connects to an outpost of the museum in the Victoria Towers.

2. Museum+

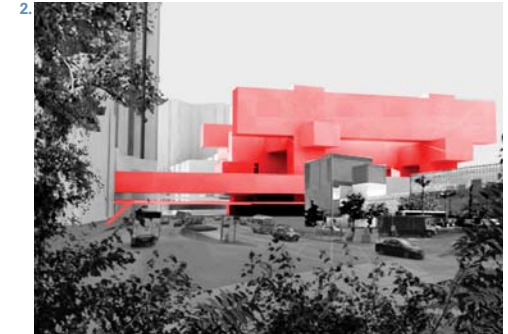
Each band has its own organization and architecture matching the medium on display; the popular culture band will fast-paced, whereas the visual art band will contain a more intimate sequence of pristine spaces.

3. Visual Arts Factory

M+ offers subsidised spaces for artists to work; bringing production into the museum and allowing artists to work in the centre of the city.

4. Street

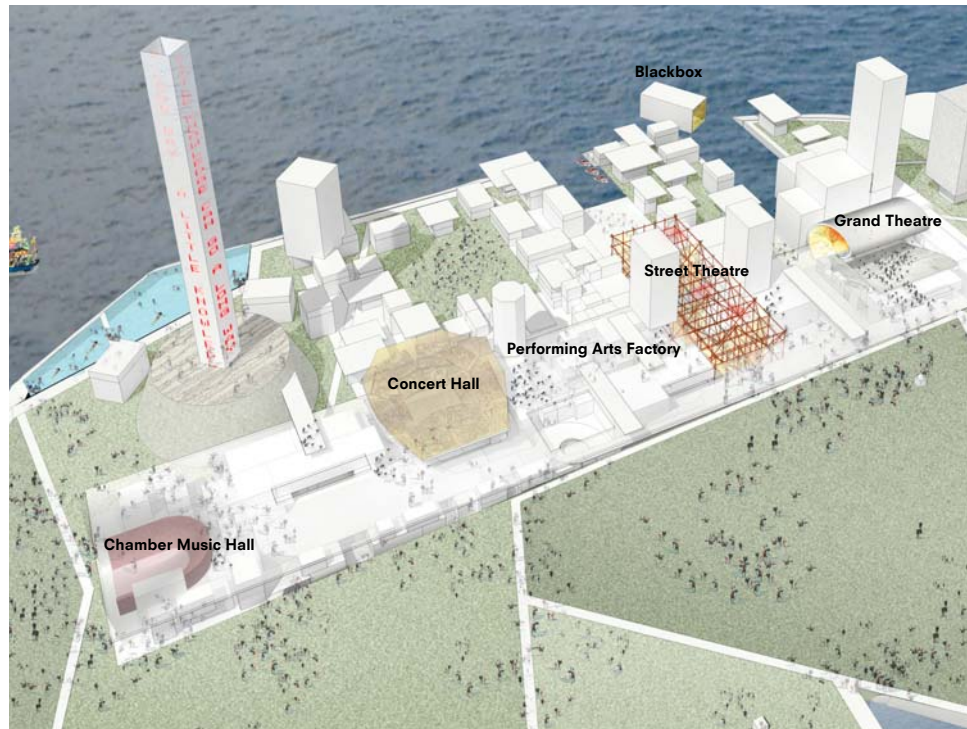
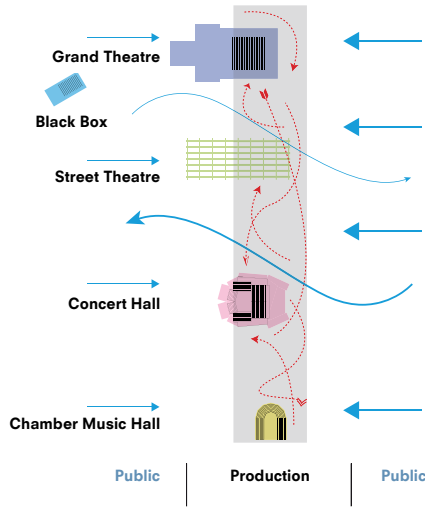
The popular culture band of M+ takes the shape of a street connecting WKCD with the Victoria Tower.



1. 2. 3. 4.

Performance in the west: Theatre Village

The Universal Theatre can accommodate all possible scales and types of performing arts in a single structure including a Grand Theatre, a Concert Hall, a Chamber Music Hall, Street Theatre and an experimental Black Box Theatre. The individual auditoriums emerge from an urban balcony that offers spectacular views over the park, the sea, and Hong Kong Island. Shared lobbies are scattered over the deck, and open to the public with activity day and night. All technical, logistical production and rehearsal spaces are shared and exposed on the ground floor, allowing the public to engage with the behind-the-scenes creative processes of the performing arts. The Theatre Village is a place where production and rehearsal mixes with training in dance, music and acting. There are shops that specialize in music and musical instruments, and there are restaurants and cafés where the public mix with the professionals.



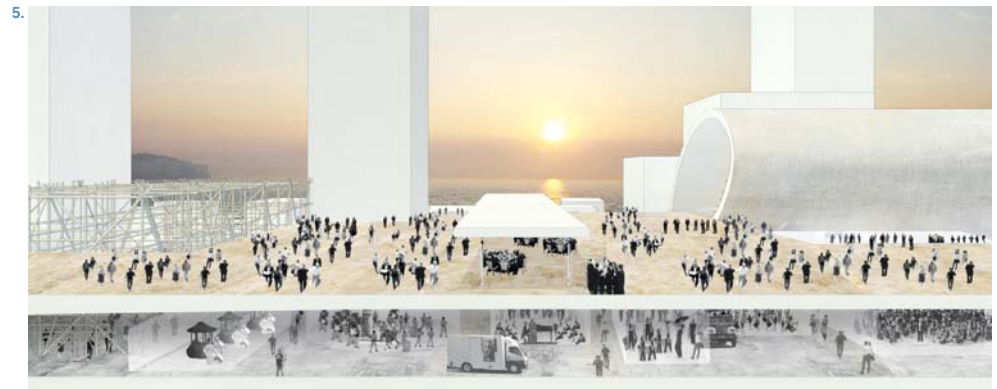
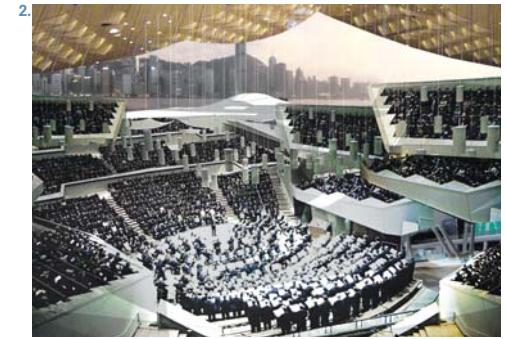
1. Grand Theatre
The public balcony of the Theatre Village curls into the shape of an auditorium for 2,200 people.

2. Concert Hall
2,000 seats at the heart of the Universal Theatre.

3. Swimming Pool
Rock garden seaside swimming.

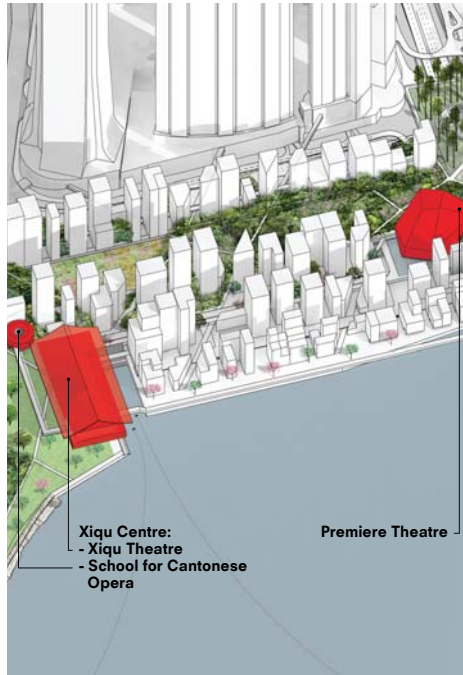
4. Street Theatre
A street equipped to be a theatre for experimental productions that can seat 800 people.

5. Waterfront
The waterfront location for the Theatre Village creates an intimate natural atmosphere with stunning views of the sun setting over Victoria Harbour in the west.



Market in the middle: Middle Village

The Middle Village connects east to west and brings Hong Kong's vibrant city life directly to the waterfront. As a continuation of Kowloon's street markets, the Middle Village contains small-scale entertainment, local shops, restaurants, street markets, and galleries. On either side, the Middle Village is marked by venues that accommodate Cantonese performance in both traditional and modern forms: a Xiqu Centre to the west, and a premiere movie theatre to the east where Hong Kong's movie stars walk the red carpet.



1. Xiqu Theatre
The Xiqu Theatre for Cantonese opera connects its 1,400-seat theatre to an adjacent 400-seat theatre, radically changing the setting of the opera and creating opportunities for innovative performances. The community hall on the roof has a magnificent view over the waterfront and the district.



2. Austin Road
Footbridges connect the Elements to the Middle Village.

3. Street Market
Hong Kong's street culture is spontaneous and free, young and old, traditional and new.

4. Water Taxi
A water taxi connects Xiqu centre directly with Star Ferry Piers.



The life of WKCD

東藝、西演、中墟；
阡陌、交通、人才聚。

6:10pm Behind the scenes @ Edward Lam



10:00am Marathon @ Loop Bridge



3:10pm zzzZZZ @ Middle Village park



8:15am Welcome to Hong Kong! @ XRL



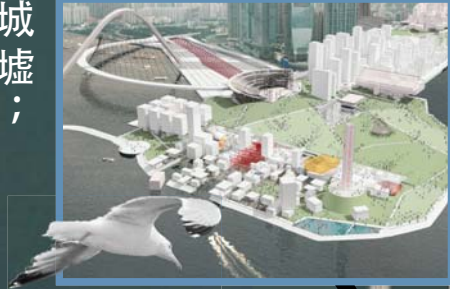
11:00am Visiting Chow Chun Fai @ M+



5:00pm Vernissage @ M+



Theatre Village



00:00 ...4...3...2...Happy new year! @ MPV



1:15pm Great lunch @ art market



M+



6:38pm Wine-tasting @ TV



3:45pm Family tea @ the terrace



8:30am Kowloon cycling tour @ WKCD



8:45pm Recital @ TV



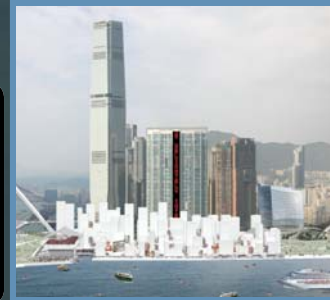
1:30pm Sunny day @ the park



10:00pm Shopping @ MV



Middle Village



11:15pm Jean Tingely @ the boardwalk

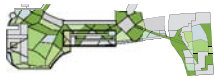


8:30pm Star-spotting @ film premiere! 5:30pm Escaping work @ the garden bridge



Park of the New Horizon

The park offers, above all, a space liberated from the commercial, and also from the wealth of interdictions that inhibit Hong Kong's open space. By connecting to Kowloon Park, WKCD's Park of the New Horizon will be the largest park of the city. Inspired by Hong Kong rice fields and fishponds, the park features native vegetation into fields connected by paths for pedestrians and cyclists. Meadows, forest gardens, orchards, ponds and even communal urban farming – all connected by paths for pedestrians and cyclists. The park's biodiversity reflects the diverse mix of people in Hong Kong and offers activities for everyone.



1. Connection to Kowloon Park
A planted green bridge extends to Kowloon Park, making it an outpost of WKCD and an integral part of the landscape, creating the largest urban park in the city.

2. Waterfront Promenade
Strolling, jogging, roller-skating and cycling along the shore, enjoying the view over Hong Kong Island.

3. Community Farms
Communal public gardens for small scale production of vegetables, herbs and edible flowers.

4. Meadow
Strolling in the open space of the meadow fields.



Allowed in the Park of the New Horizon.



Not allowed in the Hong Kong parks.

Mega Performance Venue

The Mega Performance Venue is an open-air amphitheatre based on the ancient Greek and Roman model. It seats 15,000 people for large scale entertainment ranging from pop concerts to New Year's celebrations with views over Hong Kong Island as its natural backdrop. Using the space on top of the tunnel entrance, the Mega Performance Venue functions as an easily accessible, stand-alone facility with minimal interference to the villages and the surrounding landscape.



Sustainability

With more than two thirds of Hong Kong citizens naming climate change and pollution as their major concern for the future, we want the district to be a new beacon of ecological awareness in Hong Kong. WKCD offers a unique opportunity for an integrated approach to sustainability. Because no matter how energy conscious buildings are on their own, their performance remains meaningless as long as their context continues to be defined by incoherence, remoteness and excess travel distances.

We want to achieve this by: Expanding collaborative research efforts – including those by Hong Kong University, Hong Kong Polytechnic University and the Hong Kong Observatory – with WKCD as a real-time laboratory for new approaches

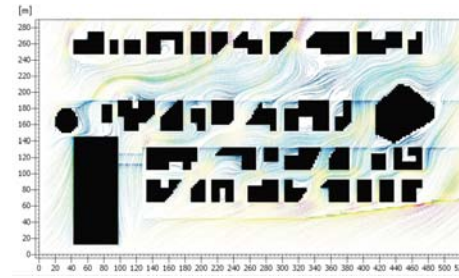
Supporting long-term upfront investment in sustainability, leading to cheaper buildings through their life-time cycle.

Using the park as a vast ecological area featuring urban agriculture fed by a rain and storm water retention area to purify grey water.

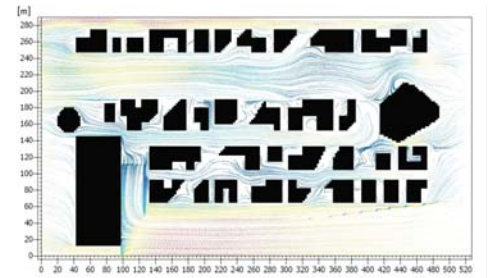
Zero Energy: compact and overlapping use of space ensures minimal traffic, while leaving room for future changes. Optimising the layouts of the villages to make full use of their natural orientation: using shade and sea breeze as part of their climate control, and exploiting the linear nature of the site for one central spine carrying energy, water, information, mobility, waste and electricity.

Zero Emission: generating renewable energy within the district, using the latest photo voltaic technology, and encouraging wind and geothermal energy initiatives. Prioritisation of public transport and bicycles, rickshaws, and rental electric scooters.

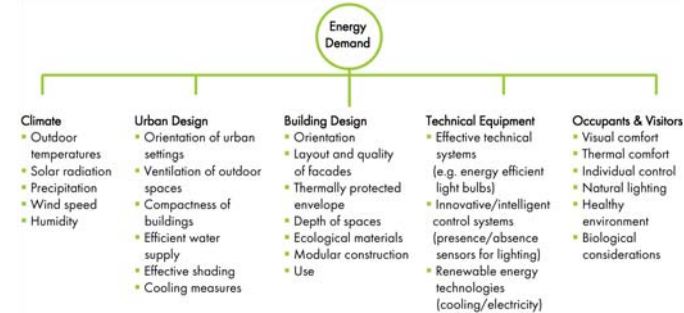
Zero Waste: encourage recycling of buildings: every part of the building should be easy to dismantle and designed for reuse.



Wind trajectory summer months.



Wind trajectory winter months.



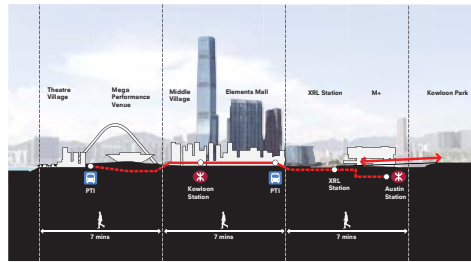
The energy demand of buildings has a wide range of factors.

Connectivity and Accessibility

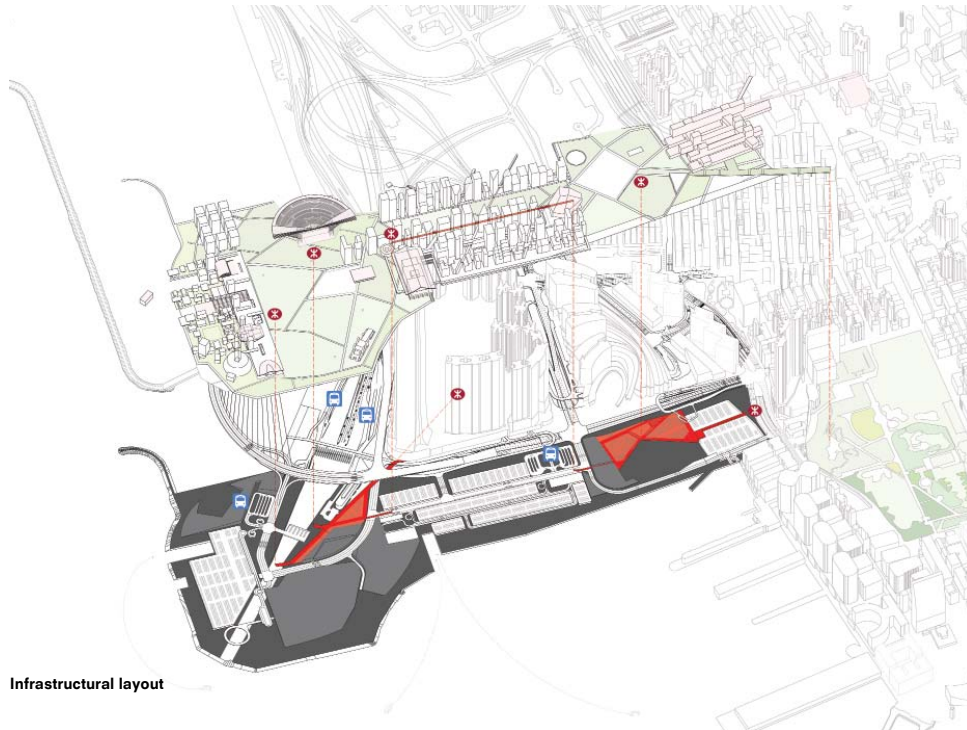
To keep WKCD an open space a seamless web of largely invisible infrastructure supports the urban life on the surface with a minimum of interference: on either side of the Express Rail Link (XRL) station, interconnected underground parking garages support the three villages. This system is connected to Kowloon and Austin Stations and by bridges to Union Square and Elements; and in the east, to the streets and alleys of Kowloon (all shown footbridges in the diagrams are part of the proposal). Although the plan encourages strolling, for visitors in a rush it also delivers efficiency: there is no area within the district that cannot be reached in a seven-minute walk. Depending on the weather, pedestrians can choose either open air, indoor, or underground routes. Hong Kong is a city that presents limited options for cyclists; the West Kowloon promenade is a notable exception which we want to support.



Pedestrian network



Walking distances



Infrastructural layout

Loop

WKCD marks a crucial escalation for Hong Kong: it will not only be the economic hub of Asia, but the cultural hub of the continent too. To mark this occasion we propose a grand approach to WKCD, comparable to Fifth Avenue in New York, the Champs Élysées in Paris and the Ginza in Tokyo. This approach – with easy access by foot, bicycle and car – connects Austin Road, Jordan Road and the Western Harbour Crossing Tunnel and at the same time drastically improves the neighbourhood's traffic situation.

In our proposal this avenue or loop takes the shape of an iconic bridge. This bridge is located outside the site boundary of WKCD and is therefore subject to further assessments not directly related to WKCD. If for any political, financial or legal reason the proposed bridge is not feasible, there is an alternative plan for a double-lane avenue on the waterfront.

