A Brief Overview of
Recent Guangzhou City Development

Presentation by Raymond Wong,
Division of Building Science and Technology,
City University of Hong Kong

Introduction
The study of Guangzhou as part of his city researches, Raymond Wong has visited Guangzhou at least 3 to 4 times a year for the past 10 years.

Being a qualified engineer and builder, Raymond Wong started the study of the city in 1998 with a main focus on her infrastructure development. Following this path, he witnessed the development process and the completion of a series of major infrastructure projects in Guangzhou including the 35 km Inner Loop Expressway (内环路), the major metro-lines, the new airport at Huado (花都), the development of the Central Business District (CBD) and the new city axis at Tianhe (天河) and Zhujiang Xincheng (珠江新城).

At the same time, Guangzhou, being an economically fast-blooming city, has also undergone an obvious process of urban evolution. Most of these changes show a definite escalating improvement in the urban quality within the city, at least when compare to the undesirable historical background, like many places in China, that accompanied Guangzhou for the past century.

Stepping into this overwhelming process, Raymond Wong seems to walk together with an energetic child, seeing that she has grown from her adolescence to adult-hood and yields signs of encouraging achievements. The process is more than an usual academic research but filled with love and passion to the object under Raymond’s study.

With the use of the presentation in the following slides, Raymond Wong tries to share his vision with people of Hong Kong so that some of the astonishing developments of our sister city, Guangzhou, can be comprehended in a more realistic manner, such that Hong Kong may be able to jump out from a nut-shell and position ourselves better in facing of the challenging future.
The city of Guangzhou is developing very fast since the late 1990s. By that time Guangzhou had a few specific targets to achieve. These targets in general included:

1. The upgrading of the living environment and urban quality of the entire city to receive the opening of the 9th National Athletic Meet which was hosted by Guangzhou in 2000. The scheme again covered:
   - general landscaping and greening provision
   - improve the external look of the old city (building facade)
   - regenerate or renovate the poorly maintained buildings and streets within the old city zones
   - remove some of the old and shabby buildings which do not have significant value for preservation
   - regenerate the 18 km land strip along both sides of the Pearl River bank and develop it into a pedestrian-friendly promenade

2. The onward upgrading of the above areas for the receiving of the forthcoming Asian Athletic meet in 2010.

3. Development of the metro system starting from 1998. (Metro Line 1 & 2 under operation in 2002, Line 3 & 4 in 2006/07). Finally the system will cover the major sub-urban area of Guangzhou including Panyu and Nansha, as well as other neighboring cities including Foshan and Zhuhai. The network will finally form an one-hour railway transportation web centered at Guangzhou.

4. Enhance the highway system including the expressway and interchanging facilities inside the city district (the Inner Loop), and an highway circuit within an ½ and 1 hour-ring radiating from Guangzhou.

5. The onward development of the new city axis including a CBD zone in Zhujiang Xin Cheng (珠江新城).

6. Construction of the new airport in Fado (花都).
7. Development of a series of convention, exhibition and trading facilities in Pazhou (琶州) and Bai Yun (白云).

8. The development of a number of landmark buildings including the Guangzhou TV Tower, Guangzhou Museum, Central Library and the New Opera House.


10. Development of a series of new town/new city zones on the sides of the main city proper such as in Bai Yun, Liede (猎德) or Chigang (赤岗).

11. Other private investment being attracted due to the economical multiplying effect resulted to the development of large amount of high-quality office and commercial projects.

12. Environmental upgrading within and outside Guangzhou city including the removal or relocation of some highly polluted transportation, industrial and out-dated state-owned facilities.

The following slides are prepared with the use of more photos in order to provide an overview of the existing city condition of Guangzhou, as well as some of the major developments that Guangzhou has been completed recently, or projects that are still in progress up to mid 2008.

Most of the photos used in this presentation were taken by the speaker within the recent 2 to 3 years. Detail description is not provided here in order to ensure the presentation can be delivered within a 2-hour speech.
The old Guangzhou transits into the 20th Century

Streets inside Liwan (荔湾), Yuexiu (越秀) and Dongshan (東山) Districts can date back to the late Ching Dynasty.
Streets and large community zone inside Liwan basically in an intact condition easily reflect the old way of lifestyle almost a hundred year ago.

Overview of Shamian, a leased area solely controlled by foreign governments from the turn of 19th Century up till the formation of the People Republic of China.
Buildings constructed in early 2000s still reasonably preserved inside Shamian

Present status of the old zones inside Dong Shan District with some of the minimally preserved traditional houses
Traditional houses in Tung Shan District

Present status of the old zones inside Yue Xiu District
Present status of the old zones inside Yue Xiu District

Condition of buildings inside the old city districts
Condition of buildings inside the old city districts

Condition of buildings inside the old city districts
Condition of buildings inside the old city districts – to preserve or to remove?
Condition of buildings inside the old city districts – trace of western architectural style can be observed.
Remaining buildings with high heritage value scattered everywhere inside the old city zones.
Condition of buildings inside the old city districts – before and after a casually renovated process.

Condition of buildings inside the old city districts – casually renovated row of town houses.
Scene within small streets – the alley
A question not easy to answer:
Prize or price for advancement and modernization?
Elevated motorway cutting across the main districts inside the city proper
Elevated motorway cutting across the main districts inside the city proper
Upgrading of the cityscape since 2000 - Promenade along the bank of Pearl River
Forming the deck of promenade as seen in 2000
Greening and Landscaping in Guangzhou

Landscaping strip at least 5m wide are standard provision along side of roadway and expressway after 1990.
Landscaping strip at least 5m wide are standard provision along side of roadway and expressway after 1990.
Green area in Shamian
The uneasy balance between preservation and development, between staying in the easy old way or to step into the modern world .....
Typical process to renew the old district, the heart-breaking way up to the 2000s’
City redeveloping process - Junction of Peking Road and Zhongshan Road in 2002
City redeveloping process –
The removal of Liede Village to give way to a new expressway heading Guangzhou from Panyu

Demolish and re-build an old ancestor hall in the Liede Village inside Tianhe (天河) District
Common view inside the city showing the contrast between the old and the new
Bugs exist inside a modern city – reminding the walled city of Kowloon City in Hong Kong (九龙城寨), a difficult situation to solve for they involved hundred thousands of inhabitants and house owners.
Further advancement to receive the 2010
The new city axis of Guangzhou in Zhujiang Xin Cheng (珠江新城) in Tinhe (天河) (photos from this slide onward were taken between 2006 to 2008)

This kind of mega-size construction site can be found everywhere within the 3km x 1km land strip along the new Guangzhou city axis.
The West Tower on the side of the new city axis under construction as seen in 2008
The new Guangzhou Central Library under construction as seen in 2008

Guangzhou TV Tower in 2007 and 2008
Guangzhou Youth Centre

The Guangzhou Opera House under construction in 2008
The Science Exhibition Centre
in Guangzhou in Guangzhou University Mega City

One of the 12 university campuses in Education Mega City – the Guangzhou University
Can Hong Kong organize international exhibition of this type and scale?
Other recent office towers inside the CBD area along the new Guangzhou city axis near Zhujiang Xin Cheng (珠江新城)

The famous CITC Plaza opened in the mid 1990s and the East Station Square (Garden at the foreground) situated on the north end of the new city axis.
Guangzhou is economically very active, like any top-most modern cities, but in the Chinese style.
Colours in the night time show the active life-style of the common people
Shopping mall
This is Guangzhou.

How does she compare with Hong Kong?

In fact, we have quite a number of similarities and differences due to common origin. The question is, have we both found the right way to advance ourselves? Any changes occur these years that strengthened or hindered our development? Are we lagging behind by some inappropriate policies or political systems? Can we able to withstand our strong holds against all odds? Or, are we too stubborn to grasp ourselves blindly on something that is out of date and being tied at ground?

There is reason for us to think it over careful and make adjustment where necessary.