

THE EVOLUTION OF SPATIAL PLANNING IN THE BORDER AREA BETWEEN SHENZHEN AND HONG KONG, CHINA

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Abstract

Spatial planning in border areas is a complex undertaking, particularly due to diverse governmental systems. This complexity is further highlighted by the unique "One Nation Two Systems" principle in China, which governs the distinct governance structures of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Development Outline has triggered significant changes in spatial planning within the border area between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. This study aims to examine the evolution of spatial planning in this border region, identifying various stages of planning development, key outcomes, influential factors, and coordination mechanisms. Ultimately, the study seeks to propose a more democratic and efficient coordination mechanism for border area planning, drawing on insights from the case study.

keywords: spatial planning, cross-border cooperation, policy transfer

1. Introduction

Spatial planning in border areas presents a unique set of challenges that require careful coordination and collaboration across various jurisdictions and stakeholders. The presence of different governmental systems, divergent objectives, cultural disparities, and uneven socio-economic development further complicate the planning process in these border regions. This is particularly evident in the case of the border area between Hong Kong, a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, and Shenzhen, a mainland Chinese city adjacent to Hong Kong.

Under the "One Country, Two Systems" principle, Hong Kong maintains a high degree of autonomy and operates under its own independent governmental system, distinct from the mainland Chinese system. This has historically led to a prolonged development segregation between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, despite their geographical proximity. However, the promulgation of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (GBA) Development Outline in 2019 and the enactment of the Hong Kong national security law in 2020 have positioned Hong Kong and Shenzhen as the core twin cities of the GBA, with Hong Kong being urged to integrate further into mainland China's national development strategy. Instead of being organised by transregional planning, Shenzhen and Hong Kong have their own urban planning system while continuously influencing and developing border areas under mutual government coordination and democratic feedback. This has led to a series of changes in the urban planning and social development in the Shenzhen-Hong Kong border area, driven by political dynamics and policy transfer.

This study explores the evolution of spatial planning in the border area between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, examining how both sides have worked towards unified development goals and consensus on win-win situations in spatial planning through multiple driving forces. Through the case study, the study aims to identify more democratic and effective coordination mechanisms and promotion methods for spatial planning in the border area, ensuring that planning can be effectively implemented and utilized in practical operations beyond the realm of technical feasibility.

2. Research Overview

Scholars have engaged in extensive debates on regional planning as a form of policy transfer and a complex system that necessitates looking beyond borders. Despite this theoretical discourse, practical planning activities, politics, and governance often confine regions within territorial political units. This juxtaposition has been labelled the "planning paradox" by Paasi, A. and Zimmerbauer, K. (2015), emphasizing the importance of acknowledging open and porous borders in strategic planning, even in the presence of delineated territorial political units.

Existing empirical studies on urban planning in border areas primarily focus on conducting factual surveys and offering planning guidance. However, these studies frequently overlook the long-term and dynamic nature of border area planning, shaped by technical considerations, socio-cultural elements, and the political landscape. Scholars like Sykes, O., Shaw, D., and Webb, B. (2023) have explored cross-border planning initiatives in various global regions such as the EU, ASEAN, and China's Belt and Road Initiatives, providing a comprehensive perspective on this form of planning. Researchers have also delved into specific cases in diverse regions with unique characteristics. For example, Song, Z. and Zhu, Q. (2020) analysed the spatio-temporal patterns of urbanization in 134 border counties in China, investigating the driving forces behind urbanization in these areas. Additionally, S P Mulya et al (2021) examined land use changes in the border area of Bogor Regency and City from 2010 to 2020, viewing border planning as a direct outcome or framework for decision-making while overlooking its long-term dynamic and adaptable nature. Wen, X., Lyu, Z. & Liu, T. (2023) studied port areas at China's borders, outlining the features of the cross-border flow network, including infrastructure, ecological networks, industrial networks, and cross-border communities, while proposing optimization measures for spatial considerations. Innovative approaches for developing cross-border functional areas have been explored, as evidenced in the work of Jakubowski, A. et al. (2022) who introduced the concept of the Cross-border Functional Area (CBFA) in the Lithuanian-Polish borderland. Their case study illustrates that establishing a flexible destination management structure can enhance cooperation among key stakeholders across borders, facilitate cross-border projects, and promote tourist products effectively.

Planning is not just a blueprint and a result, but a constantly coordinated dynamic process. Planning in border areas takes place amidst complex political and socio-economic environments. This paper aims to comprehend the evolution of border area planning through long-term policy changes and planning advancements, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the influences of factors such as policies, socio-cultural environments, and various stakeholders on the development of border planning.

3. Methodology

To comprehensively investigate the evolution and dynamics of spatial planning in the border area between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, this study delves into the policies and initiatives of border area planning in Shenzhen and Hong Kong in the past decades. This period is characterised by significant political transformations and notable progress in the border area, making it a crucial focus for analysing the impact of social change and policy transfer on spatial planning and development in the border area.

The methodology involves analysing various policies and planning maps to select pertinent content and create diagrams illustrating the changes in the scope of the Shenzhen-Hong Kong

development area over different periods. These diagrams aim to identify the key outcomes and changes of various development stages, both physical and non-physical.

Furthermore, the study considers public opinions, social affairs, and key economic issues to identify the driving factors influencing planning and decision-making processes. Coordination among government-specific departments is deemed essential for facilitating discussions at both high-level and technical levels. Once strategic consensus is reached, multiple stakeholders, including the Shenzhen district bureau, Hong Kong NGOs, Members of the Hong Kong Legislative Council, urban planning consultants, headquarters, and companies, are involved in the spatial planning formation and decision-making process. Analysing the roles and involvement of these diverse parties is crucial for understanding the coordination and development mechanisms in the planning process.

4. Planning and Policy Development in the Border Area

4.1 Identification of the Planning Stages in the Border Areas

Spatial planning has been developed rapidly in Hong Kong and Shenzhen in the past decades, especially in their border area which hold significant potential for collaborative development. Despite Shenzhen and Hong Kong having distinct development phases and planning systems, they have reached a consensus under the regional strategic policies. Four main planning stages in the border of Shenzhen and Hong Kong are identified: the independent and self-interested stage, the Shenzhen one-side promoting stage, the regional strategic coordinating stage, and the Hong Kong-Shenzhen two-side cooperating stage.

(1) Stage 1: Self-interested Stage

Initially, both Shenzhen and Hong Kong focused on their development and interests regardless of coordination with the other. For example, Hong Kong initiated plans to develop two new towns near the border, primarily aimed at meeting the needs of residents and creating job opportunities, without taking into account coordination or cooperation with Shenzhen. Additionally, Hong Kong used to plan its NIMBY facilities, such as tombs at the border area, directing facing the city centre of Hong Kong in the border area. The presence of NIMBY facilities in the border area of Hong Kong faced consistent opposition from the citizens in Shenzhen. During this stage, spatial conflicts arose, and the border areas were not fully utilized as valuable space.

(2) Stage 2: Shenzhen One-side Promoting Stage

Due to the topographical constraints, Shenzhen had extensively developed much of its border area, with development activities suspended. During the past decades, Shenzhen expressed a keen interest in establishing collaborative relationships with Hong Kong to attract Hong Kong high-level enterprises, advanced academic institutions, and international experience. Two Shenzhen-Hong Kong cooperation zones, including the Qianhai Development Zone and the Houhai Development Zone, were planned in the border area of Shenzhen to develop the financial industry and headquarters with Hong Kong by 2018 at the initiative of Shenzhen.

(3) Stage 3: the Regional Strategic Coordinating Stage

The release of the regional policy GBA Development Outline in 2019 marked the initiation of a strategic vision and development objectives for GBA cities where the development of Qianhai and Houhai Development Zone was emphasised and proposed to get more political support. After the GBA Development Outline was released in 2019, integrating Hong Kong into the national development framework was a key issue, leading to enhanced planning and

mutual interaction in the border area. The companies and institutions from both cities were joined together and formed a new industrial cooperation.

Following the release of the GBA Development Outline, Shenzhen unveiled Shenzhen Territorial Planning and each administrative district formulated its respective five-year plan for 2020-2025. Each district in Shenzhen urged to plan its Shenzhen-Hong Kong development zone to achieve more resources and benefit from regional cooperation. Three main development zones were proposed, including the Futian Free Trade Zone, Luohu Economy Belt, and Sha Tou Kok development area. Hong Kong enterprises and academic institutions have been involved in these development areas, while Hong Kong did not have a plan to establish its own cooperation zone within its territory.

(4) Stage 4: Hong kong-Shenzhen Two-side Cooperating Stage

To increase land supply and foster greater cooperation with Shenzhen, the Hong Kong government unveiled ambitious plans to develop the Northern Metropolis in the border area in 2021. This strategic initiative aims to increase land supply and foster greater cooperation with the neighbouring city of Shenzhen. Subsequently, both cities started cooperating on the border area planning.

In 2022, the Luohu District of Shenzhen, which has the closest relationship and the most bordering areas with Hong Kong, was positioned by the Shenzhen government as the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Commerce and Trade Upgrade Development Zone, aligning its development with Hong Kong. Luohu District not only issued the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Industrial Development White Paper and a spatial integration framework but also established a Shenzhen-Hong Kong Development Department under its original Luohu Development Bureau, to comprehensively integrate with Hong Kong for planning and development and manage affairs related to Hong Kong. As a result, Shenzhen has transitioned from a strategy of individual development zone integration to a regional Shenzhen-Hong Kong coordinated development strategy, achieving breakthroughs in terms of development scale and strategic vision.

Further on, Hong Kong developed an Action Guideline for the Northern Metropolitan in 2023, focusing on expanding the areas and refining the infrastructure within the region. This Action Guideline further specified the scale and building design plans of the development area, while also establishing a detailed timetable to expedite the planning and construction of the Northern Metropolitan.

Released time	Properties	Policies/Plannings	Main content
2019.2	Regional policy (GBA)	Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Great Bay Area Development Outline	The goal is to build the GBA into a world-class Bay Area and a world-class city cluster.
2019.8	Territorial Policy (Shenzhen)	Opinions on Supporting Shenzhen to Build a Pioneering Demonstration Zone of Socialism	Shenzhen plans to take the lead in establishing a modern economic system and play a key role in the construction of an international technology and innovation centre in the GBA.

Released time	Properties	Policies/Plannings	Main content
		with Chinese Characteristics	
2019.12	Territorial Policy (Shenzhen)	Luohu Port Economic Belt Development Plan	Launch five major initiatives to create a sustainable development pilot demonstration zone.
2021.6	Territorial Planning (Shenzhen)	Territorial Spatial Master Planning of Shenzhen (2020-2035), and Shenzhen 14th Five Year Plan and the Long-Range Objectives through 2035	In 2030, Shenzhen plans to be an important global city as an innovation centre, financial centre, business centre and cultural centre. The plan clarifies urban vision, urban development pattern, ecological pattern, people's livelihood, innovation development, etc.
2021.9	Territorial Policy (Shenzhen)	Comprehensively Deepen the Reform and Opening up Plan of the Qianhai Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone	The total area of the Qianhai Cooperation Zone has expanded from 14.92 km ² to 120.56 km ² .
2021.10	Territorial Policy (Hong Kong)	The Chief Executive of Hong Kong's 2021 Policy Address, and Development Strategies for Northern Metropolitan Areas	The construction of a 300 km ² metropolitan area in the north of Hong Kong, in conjunction with the ports and transportation infrastructure of Shenzhen and Hong Kong, to form a strategic layout of "twin cities, three circles" between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.
2022.9	Territorial Policy (Shenzhen)	Luohu Shenzhen-Hong Kong Deeply Integrated Development White Paper	Luohu whole district is positioned as Luohu Shenzhen-Hong Kong Deeply Integrated Development Area with a total area of 95km ² .
2023.10	Territorial Policy (Hong Kong)	Action Guideline for Northern Metropolitan Areas	The construction of a 300 km ² metropolitan area in the north of Hong Kong, in conjunction with the ports and transportation infrastructure of Shenzhen and Hong Kong, to form a strategic layout of "twin cities, three circles" between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

Diagram 1: Key Policies of Shenzhen and Hong Kong in Chronology
Source: Provided by the author

4.2 Identification of the Influenced Outcomes and Changes

These stages have been shaped not only by multi-level economic and social policies but also by input from citizens and non-governmental organisations. This influence has resulted in the expansion of developing areas, relocation of NIMBY(Not In My Backyard) facilities, alignment of industries and functions, enhancement of cross-border infrastructure connections, and transformation of boundary control points in the border area.

(1) Extension of Developing Areas

Expansion of Development Areas Within the overarching trend of promoting border region development, a significant shift has occurred in the expansion of development areas. Both Shenzhen and Hong Kong have progressively increased the number of development zones and the scale of land occupation to capitalise on the regional value in the border area and foster collaborative opportunities.

After undergoing shifts in planning and policies, Shenzhen and Hong Kong have significantly expanded their development areas in the border region, albeit at varying paces. With the release of the Greater Bay Area (GBA) Development Outline, Shenzhen delineated specific industrial objectives for the Shenzhen-Hong Kong cooperation zones and meticulously planned infrastructure, such as metro lines, to improve connectivity in the border area. Embracing the concept of establishing a Port Economic Belt in the border region, multiple development zones have been proposed. Subsequently, Hong Kong proposed the Northern Metropolis in the border area, envisioning extensive land development for local housing, industrial purposes and collaboration with Shenzhen in technology and innovation. This strategic shift signifies a move towards a more integrated and interconnected approach to development, emphasizing cross-border cooperation and synergy in technology and innovation.

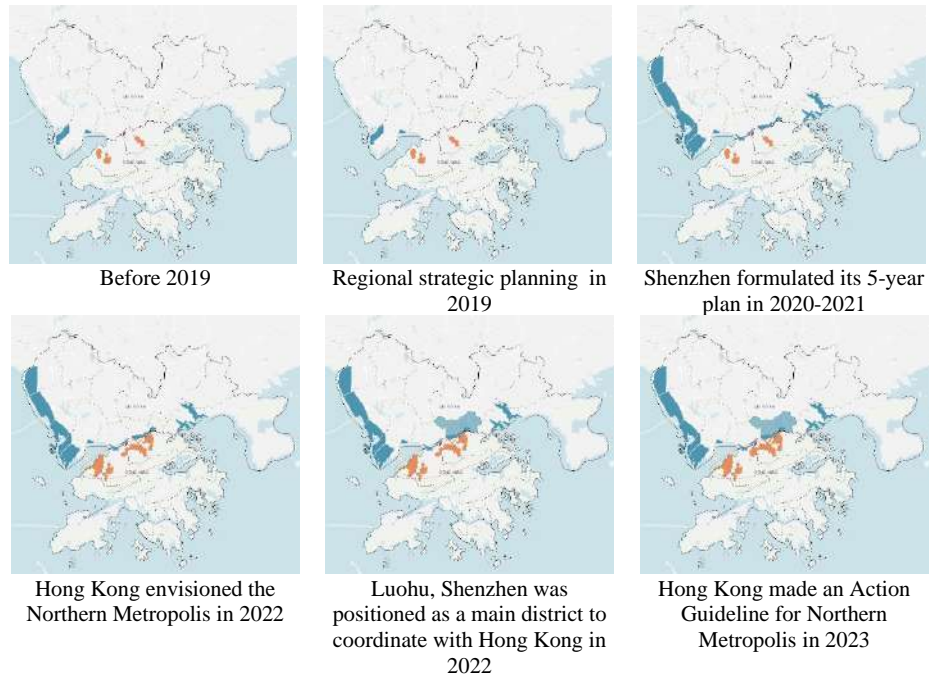


Diagram 2: Expanding development areas of Shenzhen and Hong Kong in the border area
Source: Provided by the author

(2) NIMBY Facilities and Space Conflict

In the context of border planning considerations between the two regions, NIMBY facilities that previously posed challenges to each other have garnered attention. These facilities have been highlighted in government policies and neighbouring public opinions as requiring relocation to address spatial conflicts in the border area.

Prior to 2019, Hong Kong had planned to construct a tomb at the border between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, directly facing the residential area of Shenzhen. This decision sparked extensive protests among the citizens of Shenzhen due to certain Chinese cultural beliefs. However, following the announcement in 2019 by the Hong Kong government to halt the construction of the tomb, taking into account the well-being of the Shenzhen citizens, plans were made to relocate the tomb as part of the Hong Kong Northern Metropolis Development Strategy in 2021 to accommodate new industrial development.

(3) Alignment of Cooperative Industries and Functions

With the expansion of the development areas, the scope of industries for cooperation broadened from finance, technology and innovation, and modern services to include logistics, the food industry, modern consumption, modern commerce, and more. To leverage Hong Kong's advanced international status and receive special policy preferences, several special development areas are planned within the Shenzhen border area, subject to some Hong Kong standards or laws, referred to as "Within the domestic boundary, but outside the national border" or "Domestic but extraterritorial."

In addition to industrial cooperation, Shenzhen and Hong Kong have collaborated to establish several Sino-foreign cooperative universities in the border area, leveraging Hong Kong's internationalized education resources. These cooperative programs in the border area include The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen) and the City University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), among others.

(4) Cross-border Infrastructure Connectivity

Shenzhen has put forth plans to enhance the public transportation infrastructure in the border area, focusing on improving connectivity through the introduction of several metro lines linking to the cross-border ports. In alignment with this initiative, Hong Kong included the development of the Wenjindu Station near the Wenjindu Port in its Northern Metropolis Development Strategy 2021. Subsequently, Shenzhen unveiled its updated metro expansion plans in 2021, which included extending Metro Line 25 to the Wenjindu Port to enhance accessibility.

In response to these developments, Hong Kong made slight adjustments in its Northern Metropolis Action Guideline 2023, modifying the railway line type and relocating the Metro Station closer to the boundary control points. This strategic shift aims to streamline cross-border travel and improve connectivity between the two regions. Ongoing discussions between Shenzhen and Hong Kong focus on establishing a transfer station at the port to facilitate seamless cross-border transportation for residents on both sides. Efforts are also underway to explore the feasibility of a metro line directly connecting to the basement of the Wenjindu Entry Inspection Building, further enhancing transportation convenience and efficiency in the border area.

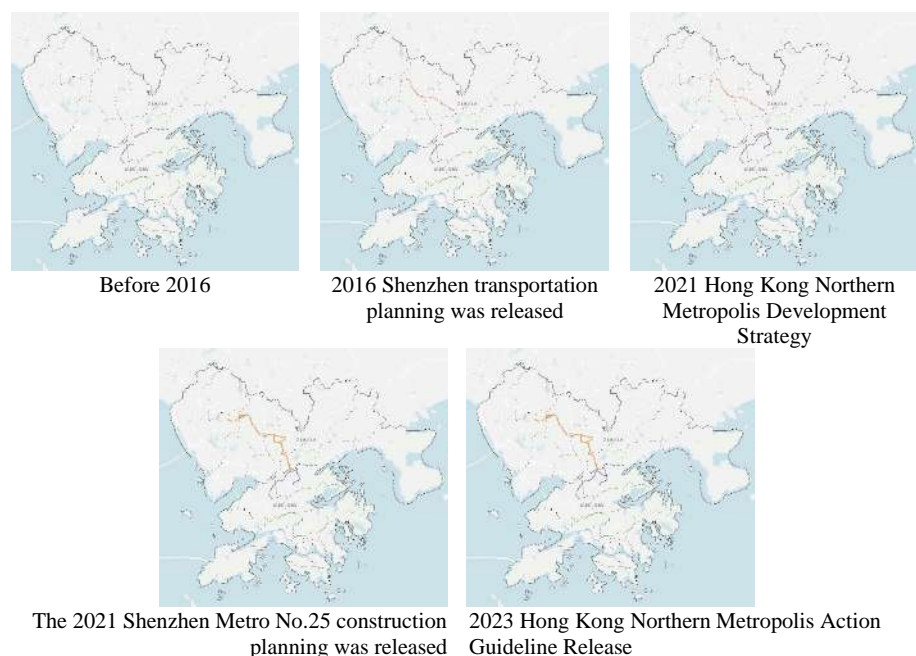


Diagram 3: Transportation planning in the border area between Shenzhen and Hong Kong
Source: Provided by the author

(5) Transformation of Boundary Control Points

The functional positioning of the seven Shenzhen-Hong Kong land ports is experiencing notable transformations in response to policy adjustments. Notably, since 2019, both the Shenzhen Bay Port and Huanggang Port have undergone significant upgrades, with Huanggang Port pioneering an innovative one-stop customs clearance model aimed at improving efficiency and service quality. Looking ahead, the strategic planning for the seven ports will involve repositioning them based on functionality, with freight ports situated on the periphery and passenger ports centralized within the city. These strategic changes are expected to introduce fresh opportunities and challenges to the development of the Shenzhen-Hong Kong ports, impacting trade flows, passenger traffic, and overall port operations in the border area.

(6) Planning and Construction Process

Historically, Hong Kong's intricate public consultation and approval procedures have often led to delays in urban planning and construction projects. Nevertheless, through ongoing communication and collaboration with Shenzhen, Hong Kong has expedited the planning and implementation of the Northern Metropolis. The 2023 Hong Kong Northern Metropolis Action Guideline outlines a defined construction schedule to complete the project within a two-decade timeframe.

5. Influencing Factors and Coordinating Mechanism

5.1 Factors Influencing Planning and Decision-making

The analysis of factors influencing planning in the border area involves multiple levels of consideration. The strategic coordination between Hong Kong and Shenzhen is shaped by a combination of political, market, technical, and public opinion factors.

(1) Political Context

Reflecting on history, the year 2019 marked a critical political transformation point, where national policies directed the cities in the GBA towards a new development trajectory. The coordinated development of Shenzhen and Hong Kong has become a national strategy. Since then, Hong Kong and Shenzhen have been dedicated to deepening cross-border cooperation continuously, promoting the coordinated development of the two places in areas such as innovation, industry, talent, and urban planning, and jointly constructing a more competitive city cluster in the Greater Bay Area.

(2) Market Demand

In the past, Hong Kong held a more advanced and developed position compared to Shenzhen, particularly in terms of the economy. However, in recent years, Shenzhen has significantly bolstered its capabilities in business, trade activities, manufacturing, and modern services. This has resulted in increased tourism and family visits from Hong Kong to Shenzhen and more business trips between the two cities than before. Statistics from the Hong Kong Customs and Excise Department show that from 2010 to 2019, the average annual growth rate of land-based cross-border passenger flow between Shenzhen and Hong Kong was approximately 2.80%. This indicates that the economic and social ties between the two places have grown closer, and cross-border exchanges have been continuously strengthened. The heightened market activity and cooperation across the border have led to a steady rise in land prices in these border regions. Therefore, utilizing the border area to facilitate twin-cities development is a logical response to this market demand.

(3) Technically Comprehensive Feasibility

The evaluation and approval of spatial planning proposals rely on various technical considerations, including factors such as land carrying capacity, transportation feasibility, environmental impact, etc. These aspects require in-depth analysis and expert judgment from planning consultants or institutions, as well as thorough review and assessment by relevant government departments. Before the Hong Kong government formally proposed the development of the Northern Metropolis, a comprehensive land survey and analysis were conducted to gather basic data on developable land to support the border development initiative. Similarly, Shenzhen also conducted a comprehensive analysis of areas available for development and urban renewal in the built border regions, based on which development zones that can be coordinated with Hong Kong were proposed.

(4) Public Opinion

The active engagement of residents, businesses, and various stakeholders in the planning processes of Hong Kong and Shenzhen has become increasingly significant. Their concerns and perspectives play a pivotal role in shaping the planning decisions and strategies, influencing the direction of development in the region. Stakeholders such as local residents, cross-border enterprises, and academic institutions specializing in regional development provide valuable insights that directly impact the planning process. In Hong Kong, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and members of the Legislative Council play a crucial role in representing the interests of the public and specific stakeholder groups. These entities advocate for community interests and provide input on spatial planning initiatives to the Hong

Kong government, significantly influencing the planning and decision-making processes. For example, Dr. Zhang, representing an academic institution in Hong Kong, has presented research findings on border development, proposing development areas, targeted industries, and strategic orientations to inform planning efforts. Additionally, Legislative Council members from Daguling village in Hong Kong have persistently advocated for the preservation of the village's environment and opposed the establishment of 'Not In My Backyard' (NIMBY) facilities during border area development. Their steadfast advocacy has been integral in shaping the planning discussions and decision-making processes in both Hong Kong and Shenzhen, contributing to the formulation of more balanced and practical development plans.

5.2 Cross-border Coordinating Mechanisms and Role Casting in the Planning Process

Given the different planning and regulatory systems between Hong Kong and Shenzhen, it is challenging to easily align their spatial planning efforts. Therefore, coordination mechanisms are particularly important in cross-border planning. Key components of the coordination mechanism in the case of Shenzhen and Hong Kong include the involvement of government coordination departments, related government bureaus/departments, planning advisory institutions, the Legislative Council and public participation. These stakeholders play integral roles in addressing the complexities arising from the differing planning and regulatory systems of Hong Kong and Shenzhen. By fostering collaboration among these entities, the coordination mechanisms serve to bridge the gap between Shenzhen and Hong Kong and facilitate the harmonization of their cross-border planning endeavours.

(1) Government Coordination Departments

Hong Kong has established the Northern Metropolis Office as a key coordinating body for the region, while Shenzhen's former Development and Reform Bureau functions as the central hub for the Shenzhen-Hong Kong Modern Service Industry Cooperation Zone, facilitating cross-border communication and collaboration between the two cities. These governmental coordination departments act as vital bridges for fostering dialogue and cooperation between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, particularly in border areas. These entities are tasked with overseeing all aspects of coordination between the two regions, organizing technical discussions, facilitating official visits between both sides and more. By facilitating regular communication and engagement through various initiatives, these coordination departments play a crucial role in enhancing mutual understanding and promoting collaboration between Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

(2) Related Government Bureaus/Departments

The key government bureaus/departments involved in the planning and policymaking process mainly include the Hong Kong Development Bureau, Hong Kong Security Bureau, Shenzhen Development and Reform Commission, Shenzhen Planning Bureau, and Shenzhen Port Office. Each of these departments focuses on their respective areas of expertise to contribute to the planning and policy formulation process. Their expertise and insights are essential in providing valuable input and guidance in shaping policies and strategies that align with the goals and priorities of both Shenzhen and Hong Kong. By leveraging the collective knowledge and experience of these government officials, the planning process can be more comprehensive and effective in addressing the needs and challenges of the region.

(3) Specialized Groups

Shenzhen and Hong Kong have collaboratively established 19 Shenzhen-Hong Kong Specialized Groups, each focusing on different technical domains to facilitate cross-border cooperation and development. These specialized groups cover a wide range of areas, including the Connecting Northern Metropolis Development Strategy, Qianhai Construction, Hetao Construction, Technology and Innovation, Port Construction, Financial Services, Cross-border Transportation, Cross-border Railway Infrastructure, Special Services, Commercial and Trade, Hong Kong Teenager Entrepreneurship and Employment, Social Welfare, Medicine, Education, Public Service, Culture and Sports Tourism, Law, Environment Protection, and Talent. The members of Specialized Groups consist of both experts and officers of these government bureaus or departments from Shenzhen and Hong Kong.

To promote border area development and enhance coordination, regular meetings are convened in either Shenzhen or Hong Kong, where specific topics are discussed in a roundtable format, enabling each Specialized Group from both sides to delve into their respective fields in detail, exchange insights, and collaboratively devise solutions that benefit both regions. By fostering open dialogue and strategic planning through these specialized groups, Shenzhen and Hong Kong can effectively address shared challenges, leverage each other's strengths, and drive sustainable development and growth in the border region.

(4) Planning Advisory Institutions

Given the varying levels of information accessibility in Shenzhen and Hong Kong, advisory bodies serve as vital intermediaries in bridging the information gap and fostering effective communication between Shenzhen and Hong Kong. These advisory bodies play a critical role in ensuring that both sides are well informed about each other's policies, plans, and initiatives, thereby facilitating a more seamless and coordinated planning process. Urban planning consultants are instrumental in this endeavour, leveraging their expertise in urban development to facilitate communication and collaboration among stakeholders from both sides of the border. These consultants possess a deep understanding of the complexities of urban planning and can effectively convey insights and recommendations to relevant parties. In addition to their role in coordinating the spatial planning for both sides, urban planning consultants also play a crucial role in engaging with potential enterprises and companies that may be impacted by or involved in the planning process. By involving these stakeholders early on and soliciting their input, consultants can ensure that urban development plans are more sustainable, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of all parties involved. This collaborative approach not only enhances the quality of planning outcomes but also fosters a sense of shared ownership and commitment to the development of the region.

(5) Legislative Council and Public Opinions

The Legislative Council of Hong Kong plays a pivotal role in approving planning and development projects in the region. Both Hong Kong and Shenzhen prioritise public consultation stages in their planning processes, allowing the public to review proposals and offer input for optimization. The Legislative Council and public opinion influence decision-making, ensuring projects are legally sound and aligned with community needs. Active involvement of these entities guarantees that planning outcomes reflect the preferences of the communities they serve.

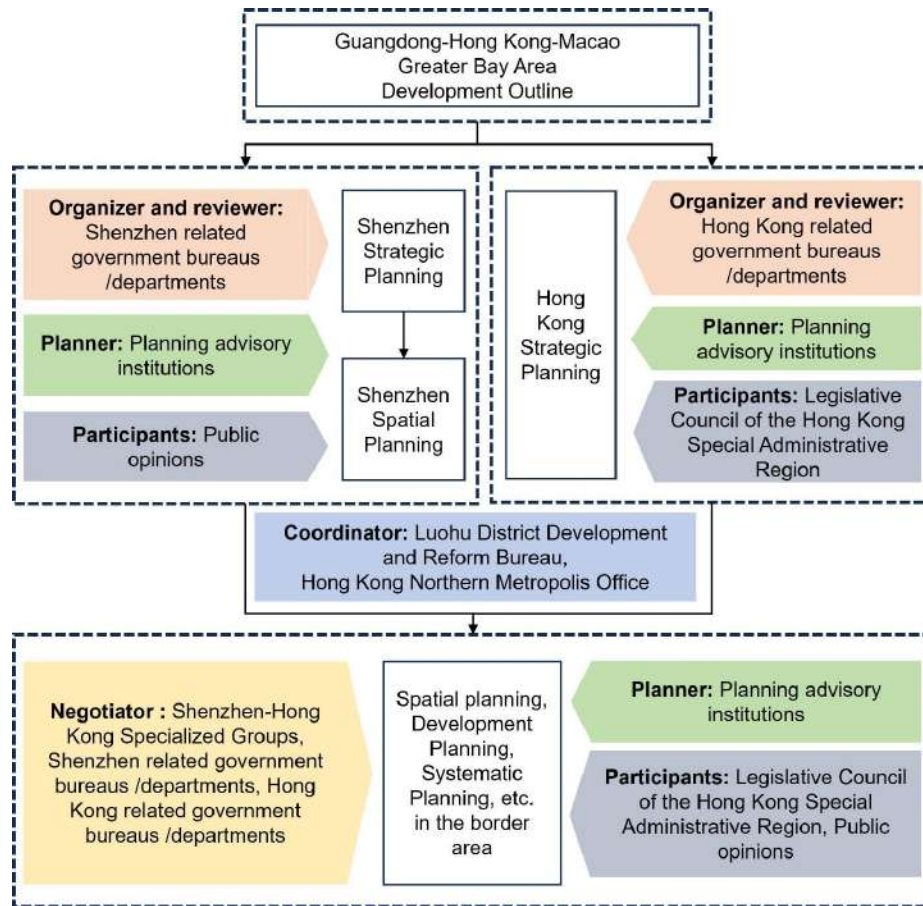


Diagram 4: Coordination mechanism between Hong Kong and Shenzhen border planning
Source: Provided by the author

6. Conclusion

By employing a multi-faceted approach that integrates policy analysis, mapping techniques, stakeholder engagement, and decision-making processes, this study provides a comprehensive understanding of the complexities and dynamics of border area planning in the Shenzhen-Hong Kong border region. The cross-border regional strategy plays a pivotal role in shaping development ideas of border areas, determining the establishment of common goals and development ideas between the two sides. Consistent macro development strategies, driven by market demand and technological conditions, can accelerate the planning and development of border areas. In the context of different political systems and socio-cultural conditions, building a communication bridge for border area planning becomes a shared responsibility for both sides.

In the case of border area planning between Shenzhen and Hong Kong, a cross-border coordination mechanism has been successfully established through collaborative efforts, enabling continuous optimization and adjustment of planning on both sides to achieve

mutually beneficial outcomes. Drawing insights from this case study, several suggestions are proposed to enhance the democratic and effective coordination mechanism for border area planning implementation.

Firstly, it is advisable to organize specialized workshops for the relevant specialized groups for more frequent and informal discussion. In the coordination mechanism, intentions and proposals are often expressed in a relatively indirect manner, making it difficult to receive immediate and precise responses during official coordination meetings. For instance, when Hong Kong presents its plans for Wanjindu port construction in such meetings, they may clash with the planning on the Shenzhen side. As a result, refining and reaching consensus on optimized proposals often require a significant amount of time for feedback. The specialized workshops would provide a platform for each side to fully articulate their technical details and primary concerns. By involving consulting firms experienced in both regions to manage spatial resource allocation and plan regional industrial development, the workshop can significantly expedite the scheme-making process on behalf of both parties. This approach aims to facilitate cross-border construction by implementing innovative mechanisms and unified standards. Secondly, an information-sharing mechanism shall be established to timely disseminate information on border area planning, policies, and development dynamics, promoting interaction and cooperation between both parties. During the planning formulation process, planning adversaries could be the key bridges to understanding the planning and intentions of the other party. In most border planning cases, planning adversaries are often cross-national companies with a better understanding and information about foreign planning. Finally, establishing a bilateral supervision and evaluation mechanism could enhance democracy and public engagement in border areas, incorporating public opinions and input from legislators from both sides. Regularly evaluate the progress and effectiveness of border area planning, and make timely adjustments and optimizations to planning schemes, ensuring the achievement of win-win goals for both parties.

Border areas planning serve not only to resolve spatial conflicts but also to promote mutual benefits. Therefore, the planning of border areas necessitates the establishment of tailored, effective, and rational coordination mechanisms, information-sharing mechanisms, as well as evaluation and supervision mechanisms. Although the focus of this case study is on the border area between the Special Administrative Region and mainland China, the coordination mechanism utilized during the planning process holds significant relevance and applicability to cross-border planning endeavours that involve different systems.

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