Landscape as caricature?

Can landscape be created like caricature?
Can potential design possibilities be generated through this approach?
How can the key contexts of a site be celebrated through design in different ways?

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**Declaration**

I certify that except where due acknowledgement has been made, the work is that of the author alone; the work has not been submitted previously, in whole or in part, to qualify for any other academic award; the content of the thesis is the result of work which has been carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program; and, any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

Lingling Qiu
20 August 2007

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Why a Masters?

As a master student, I am interested in exploring potential design possibilities. I believe that the more I learn and the more I think or question, the more possibilities I will get.

Personally, neither pragmatic thinking nor systematic thinking is enough for a masters, although systematic thinking used to be my goal before I came to RMIT. When I learned more and thought more, I realized that it isn’t the only way of thinking for me. SueAnne Ware, my supervisor, always pushes me, ‘you can do it in this way very well in office, but why are you doing a masters?’ I do love this question as well as her. Since working at firms for 7 years, the way I thought was only practical. I did not get a greater idea and take it further. Hence, I need to keep pushing myself to open my mind and think further - ‘Celebrate my thinking!’

I use design as a method to carry on a systematic inquiry in order to acquire new knowledge and innovative thinking. I might not have done this before I did the masters. In this research process, design and research inspire each other (I will discuss this further in other sections).
The following is the journey of the reasons I chose Central Plaza as my research project:

Firstly, People's Park is adjacent to Central Plaza, with a 90-years-history, beautiful shade and a traditional Italianate garden plan. However, the existing Central Plaza copies the physical form of the adjacent park in a simplistic way without considering its own unique key contexts. I have been thinking that it is a problem, as every location and context is different. I suggest that each site has its own unique characteristics. Similar to each single person, one is different from others. Copying physical form isn't the best way to design. My hypotheses were that, new forms could be inspired by the existing context, new forms and design possibilities could generate through intensive understanding and further analysis of the existing complicated context.

My research journey started from the above point. Also, I believed that, through studying the rich contexts of the site could drive me to think systematically. Something unexpected and interesting happened to me during the research process. In the existing Central Plaza, however, most of the existing key contexts were ignored, including the nature of local Lingnan Culture, circulation systems, and how people occupy space for different activities, which are all key characteristics of the site.

I went back to Guangzhou, China to do the site analysis. I looked around the existing new Central Plaza again and again, but I wasn’t impressed by it. Compared to the colorful activities in People’s Park, it is almost empty. It is located in an area of high demand, however, it isn’t often used as there are many of the problems I mentioned (I will discuss this further in the section of ‘critique of the existing Central Plaza’). Central Plaza deserves me to analyse it and redesign it. I believed that diverse design possibilities would generate through doing this project.
Ronaldinho’s key characteristics are celebrated in different ways, including his physical characteristic and his personality. Here focuses on his distinctive buck-toothed smile, the languid athletic frame and his joyful personality. But you can still recognize him from each of the caricatures. This interesting point relates to diverse design approaches which I will present in the section of my own design works.

In contrast to Ronaldinho’s caricatures, his portrait is drawn merely based on his characteristics without any celebration. It looks like a photo at most. If concepts were considered like a portrait, something interesting might not be generated.

‘Watching him is a sheer delight. He wants to touch people through his play, inspire them. He is hands down the best player in the world.’
- Maradona.
The Inspiration - **CARICATURE**

Since I intended to fix the ‘copying issue’ of the existing Central Plaza (P7), my research started with the idea of ‘Identity’ and unique characteristics of a site. But the stimulating idea of ‘Caricature’ came to me in a flash of inspiration when I was taking a shower. It was a great breakthrough and made my research go further. WIKIPEDIA encyclopedia(2007) defines ‘caricature’ as a portrait that exaggerates or distorts the essence of a person or thing to create an easily identifiable visual likeness, and caricature can be insulting or complimentary. However, I emphasize that, what caricature inspires me is not its negative aspects, but its positive aspects of IDENTITY and CELEBRATION:

**‘IDENTITY’**

Similar to every different single person, every site has its own identity and heaps of characteristics that lead to distinguish it from others. And each single one is different in different stage. My research statement started from this point.

In my opinion, context composes a site’s characteristics, including:

- **Physical Contexts:**
  - geography
    - (eg. location, topography, climate)
  - ecology
    - (eg. sunlight, shadows, water, species)
  - infrastructure
    - (eg. circulation systems)

- **Cultural Contexts:**
  - who will use it?
  - how to use it?
  - how it will feel to move through the site?
  - how it relates to the city and/or cultural world that surrounds it?

Personally, however, considering contexts is what a landscape architect should do essentially. How do I think further to create a stronger idea for a specific site? How can I make it creatively?

**‘CELEBRATION’**

What caricature has fascinated me is that the key physical and emotional characteristics of each unique single identity are captured and celebrated interestingly in different ways, but you can still recognize the person and have fun as well. That is why caricature is so interesting and successful.

What I mean by ‘celebration’ is positive exaggeration, intensification, and emphasis of key contexts which reveal how good, how important or how unique the site is.

Similar to caricature, each single site has its own unique characteristics. Caricature is more than the way an identity relates to its key characteristics (please see opposite page to compare different results between Ronaldinho’s portrait and caricatures). In terms of landscape design, if context is the key characteristic of a site, if the key context is celebrated, it is more than the way a site relates to context. Why cannot a conceptual idea be created like a caricature? Something interesting might be generated. If different key characteristics are celebrated in different ways like Ronaldinho’s caricatures, new forms could be created, while the conceptual idea still strongly connects with the key context of the site. A number of possibilities could be generated in this way.

For me, caricature is a new way to discover wide diverse design approaches. My statement is, before celebrating, I need to make sure that I have had complete and fully investigated results in terms of key contexts of site. After that, let’s celebrate the certain qualities through the design.

**Opposite above left:**

**Opposite above right:**
Portrait ‘Ronaldinho’ taken from www.alibaba.com, 08/06/07.

**Opposite below:**
Before starting the alternative design of Central Plaza and before my ‘celebration’, I am going to carry on the analysis of different contexts for the site, from the greater context, the city to the site, including location, topography, infrastructure, some key environmental contexts and cultural relationships. To further understand the key cultural context, I am carry on analysis of the adjacent People’s Park and the particular qualities of the living local ‘Lingnan Culture’. Both of these can inspire my design research very well. The final analysis is to critique the existing Central Plaza.
Guangzhou, China

Guangzhou is the capital city of Guangdong Province and near Hong Kong. Locals speak Cantonese. Mandarin is spoken as an official language.

The SITE

From the City to the Site

1 Since Central Plaza lies in the heart of ancient Guangzhou city in Southern China, how it relates to the city is one of the key contexts for Central Plaza. So I begin with the site analysis for understanding the site, moving from the largest to the smallest in scale (city - the site).

Geographic Context

Guangzhou has a subtropical climate without very distinctive seasons. The highest temperature is 38°C. The city with long summer and no winter, with plenty of rainfall, sufficient sunlight and heat, is always green with flowers in bloom all the year round, hence reputed as “Flower City”. Also known as ‘Canton’, Guangzhou is the capital of Guangdong Province, near Hong Kong and borders on the South China Sea. With a long history of 2,210 years, it is one of the most prosperous coastal cities in China. Guangzhou lies in the Pearl River Delta which is an alluvial plain and flows through the city.1 Guangzhou is a hilly city. The topography is higher in the northeast and lower in the southwest.2 The site has the similar topography.

Historic Context

Around Central Plaza Guangzhou’s colorful historical views and cultural relics remain, such as Site of Nanyue Kingdom Palace. This area is where initial Guangzhou city was built up.3 Central Plaza is also located at the middle of Central Axis of ancient Guangzhou city which is a unique natural & cultural city central axis in China. This is because ancient Guangzhou city has a natural topography and geography (hill & river) in the downtown. There are a number of historic architecturals feature along with the Central Axis. Therefore, Central Axis is the first place where tourists go.

Cultural Context

Guangzhou is the centre of Lingnan Culture. This famous historical cultural city with special features of Lingnan, has a brilliant history.4 (I will discuss this further in the section of ‘Analysis of Lingnan Culture’.)

Key Infrastructural Context

Central Plaza is located at the interchange of Metro line 1 and 2, which is the biggest and busiest metro interchange station in China.
3. **Historic Central Axis Context**

Central Plaza is located at the middle of Central Axis of Ancient Guangzhou city which is with beautiful natural conditions (hill in the north and river in the south of the city - good FengShui). According to historical materials and expert research, there are over 10 existing, established or excavated historical or cultural sites around this area. They are all of high historical and cultural value. Before the existing Central Plaza was built up, the site was separated by Qi Yi Road which ended to the north gate of People’s Park.

3. **Section of Historic Central Axis**

- **Haizhu Bridge** the first bridge linking the north & south of city (built in 1932)
- **Liberation Monument** (built in 1946)
- **People’s Park** (built in 1917)
- **Government House of Guangzhou Municipality**
- **Zhongshan Memorial Hall** (built in 1930)
- **Five Coats Statuary Symbolization of Guangzhou** (built in 1955 & the story is more than 2000 years-old)
- **Zhenhai Tower** Guangzhou Museum (500 years old)
Satellite Photograph of the Site

This satellite photograph shows the middle scale context of the site and the existing Central Plaza.

( Legend please see the opposite page. )
The Site

KEY

1. **Central Plaza** (18,600 sqm)
   It is the expansion of People’s Park.

2. **People’s Park** (48,400 sqm)
   - In 1917 proposed by Mr. Sun Zhong Shan, the site was built into a park, named ‘The First Park’ & altered to ‘Central Park’ in 1926. In 1966, it was renamed ‘People’s Park’ till now.
   - The original site was the old government office of the dynasties from the Sui dynasty to the late Qing dynasty.
   - Traditional italianate garden plan style with towering age-old native trees.

3. **Government Office of Guangzhou municipality**

4. **Beijing Road Pedestrian Mall**
   - The most prosperous commercial distributing centre historically and currently.
   - Reputed ‘Famous Street of Lingnan’, including shops, restaurants, drinks, retail departments, entertainment places and banks.
   - It is also in a strong cultural atmosphere - various bookstores, stores for photographic equipment, cultural goods, artwork shops, glasses, jewelry, and various kinds of food cultures gather here.

5. **Commercial streets**

6. **Accesses of metro interchange station**

7. **Bus terminals**

8. **Site of Nanyue Kingdom Palace**
   The former Children’s Park has gone in this site because Site of Nanyue Kingdom Palace is excavated for now.
The Green Power of People’s Park

As previously stated, Guangzhou has a subtropical climate, and is hot and humid, without very distinctive seasons. So people always need adequate shade for outside spaces.

People’s Park offers beautiful shade, a natural and cultural environment for locals. People enjoy the park because they can occupy spaces with shade, get together, rest, linger and do many activities they want to do.

The Italian plan form of People’s Park seems to be not important any more for its current use.

Underground Context
It includes:

- Carpark (>4,901 sqm)
- Comic City (3 levels, >18,484 sqm)

The biggest metro interchange station of China.
1. Government Office of Guangzhou Municipality
   Image 1,6 from myphotolife.com, 22/05/06.
   Image 7,8,12 from pclady.com.cn, 22/05/06.
   Image 11 from fotoe.com, 22/05/06.

2. Northern Gate of People’s Park

3. Comic City and cosplay events in Comic City
   Images 3,14 from www.gzmtr.com, picture.game.21cn.com, 17/02/07.

4. Kicking shuttlecock on the main interior road in the park.

5. Music Pavillion

6. Playing Chinese Chess

7. Beautiful Shade

8. Chinese Pavillion

9. Dancing on the main interior road of People’s Park

10. Ballroom dancing

11. Cantonese Opera & music

12. Park edge

13. Southern gate of People’s Park

14. Metro platform

15. Guangwei Road - Bus terminals

16. Jixiang Road

17. Access to Comic City and metro

18. Access to Comic City and metro station

19. Temporary shops - A highrise is under construction behind it.

20. Zhongshanwu Road - a famous commercial street

21. Metro Control Centre

22. Qiyi Road
   It ends to the south-middle of Central Plaza.

23. 24. Highrise shopping complex

25. Metro ventilation shaft

26. Air conditioner generator of Comic City
Site Plan

People’s Park

land boundary

engineering design boundary of Central Plaza

LEGEND

1. metro ventilation shaft
2. access to Comic City and metro station
3. air generators of Comic City

section lines
The analysis of the site from p12-19 shows some key contexts of Central Plaza:

**People’s Park**
People’s Park is adjacent to Central Plaza. With adequate shade, the beautiful park has become an oasis located in the heart of the city and also a good place for people to relax, get together, take different exercises and refresh themselves after work. This links to the cultural context of the site - Who will use it? How will they use it? How it relates to the cultural world that surrounds it?... I will do more analysis for these questions at next sections.

**Topography**
It is higher from People’s Park (north) and lower to Central Plaza (south). This natural physical topography about 2 meters drop will inspire my alternative designs, combining some key cultural contexts.

**Comic City**
Comic City is the first shopping mall of Guangzhou to combine themes of youth fashion, entertainment and leisure underground Central Plaza. It focuses on comics, cartoons and animation. There are a plenty of cartoon cultural events and campaign held in Comic City. Comic City links to both Central Plaza and the main metro interchange station.

**Metro**
Central Plaza is located at the interchange of metro lines 1 & 2, which is the biggest metro interchange station in China. All of these places are extremely busy and popular, including the popular commercial pedestrian Beijing Road in downtown Guangzhou.
As a key part of physical contexts, the shadow context of Central Plaza was focused on. Also, as previously mentioned, adequate shade is very helpful and popular for locals to rest, linger, play or exercise in outdoor space. It would be made comfortable if there was buildings’ shadow onto the site. I figured that it would also be a key context for the site.

Unfortunately, the surrounding buildings do not cast a very deep shadow onto the site during the hot seasons. Only approximately 1/5 of the site can benefit from the adjacent buildings shadows. However, a highrise that is still in planning, will create more shade if it is built.

Therefore, I need to focus on tree shadows rather than rely only on the buildings’ shadows.
The previous sections are of introduction of the contexts of the site in general. The following analyses are more specific. Central Plaza is the expansion of People’s Park, analysing People’s Park is thus really significant to Central Plaza. It is one of the key cultural context of the site because it links to ‘who will use it?’ & ‘how to use it?’...as I previously stated (P9).

Firstly, I focused on the edge analysis of both People’s Park and Central Plaza since I figure that people’s relaxation and behaviours mostly link to different types of edges, such as sitting edge, traffic edge and space edge for different activities. It is one of the key physical and cultural contexts that I need to consider specifically. Moreover, I believe that I can learn from both of the weaknesses and strengths of the key edges through the edge analysis.

The activities occupation of both People’s Park and Central Plaza is also a key cultural context. There is no other free park in downtown Guangzhou except People’s Park while the city population density is extremely high. Also, people enjoy doing exercises especially outdoor group sports for keeping healthy, gaining energy and remaining happy. The development of People’s spatial occupation and activities reflects a living local culture partially as well as some design issues.
Edge Analysis
- People's Park & Central Plaza
Summary of Edge Analysis

From these two pages, the key issue of edge is of seating. Due to the high density of people in People’s Park, most of the primary seating (e.g. bench) are usually occupied, so that the rest of people sit on some edges such as planting kerbs, wall kerbs or steps (see the top photos 2-6 and sections 3, 7, 24, B). Even though the short kerbs or steps are not easy to sit on comfortably, people still sit on them as long as there is adequate shade (sections 13, 16, 18, 19, 22, D). In the existing Central Plaza, there isn’t any bench and isn’t enough secondary seating with shade, so that people have to sit on the short kerbs uncomfortably (see the top photo 1 and section D).

Accordingly, like stepped seating, planting kerbs or seating-height walls, those kind of seating edges are quite useful for sitting, watching and rest. What I need to do is to make sure if the seating is easy and comfortable for people sitting and if there is adequate shade on to the seats.
Analysis - Activities Occupation Analysis
(People's Park & Central Plaza)

**LEGEND**

**Active Activities**
- Kicking Shuttlecock
- Physical Exercises
- Thai Chi
- Ballroom Dancing
- Group Dancing
- Jogging
- Badminton
- Group Singing
- Cantonese Opera
- Playing Erhu
- Guitar Busker

**Passive Activities**
- Roller-Skating Class
- Kids Wushu Class
- Kids Scooter
- Kids Playing Ball
- Kids Cycling
- Kids Soccer
- Chinese Chess
- Playing Poker
- Reading newspaper
- Chinese Handwriting
- Tofu Jelly vendor
- Herbal Tea vendor
- Playing Erhu
- Guitar Busker
- Jogging

**Business in Park**
- Shuttlecocks vendor
- Fans vendor
- Shoeshine

Weekdays
- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening
- Whole Weekday

Weekends
- Morning
- Afternoon
- Evening
- Whole Weekend
Dissection
- Analysis of the Activities & Occupation

Based on the activities occupation analysis and direct observation in People’s Park and Central Plaza, the following is the synthesis:

1. People love choosing the space with nice shade to relax and take exercises, but they usually play games on pavings, not on lawn, except for football sports by youths in evenings occasionally. Because of the big population density in China, government has to make a rule for protecting lawn. Over years, people have got used to it - ‘It’s everybody’s duty to take care of trees and grass.’ Therefore, I will need to consider this context when I design.

2. People enjoy watching each other and never mind disturbing each other. For example, one group is playing Chinese Chess quietly while a plenty of other people are dancing with loud music. This interesting point links to the particular quality of the living local Lingnan Culture (I will discuss this further in the section of ‘Lingnan Culture’, see next page).

3. People’s Park offers various spatial volume with nice shade for people to do different group activities, including:
   - Group singing (>3*3m²)
   - Kicking shuttlecock (>5*5m²)
   - Group exercises (>5*5m²)
   - Taichi Fan (>10*10m²)
   - Children WuShu class (>10*10m²)
   - Ballroom dancing (>10*20m²)
   - Group dancing (>15*20m²)

   This key context gives me important information and raw data that informs my alternative design because people’s behavior is a key cultural context to the spatial design.

4. Comparing the activities occupation between People’s Park and Central Plaza, obviously, People’s Park is much busier and more popular than the existing Central Plaza.

   People prefer enjoying People’s Park because of its beautiful shade and easy spaces for doing a lot of different activities. Moreover, there isn’t adequate shade in Central Plaza during day time. Those trees have to take years to grow up.

   Even though trees in Central Plaza grow up one day, there is another key problem that cannot allow people occupy more spaces there - the spatial quality of Central Plaza is limited to be occupied by people. For instance, except playing poker under the original big street-trees at day time, there are only some roller-skating classes occupying the centre of Central Plaza in evenings. The rest of Central Plaza is only some narrow paths and planting areas that are not supposed to go in, so that it is too hard to do any exercises there.

   The above analysis makes me think of the ‘copying issue’ again. The proposed design merely pursued following the plan form of People’s Park while ignoring the key cultural context - people’s activities. As a result, people do not enjoy the new Central Plaza and still keep staying at the old wonderful People’s Park. By this I mean, in this case, plan form is not the key design element, but spatial quality is the key.
Lingnan Culture (岭南文化)

I choose Lingnan Culture as one of the key cultural context of Central Plaza to analyse specifically, because firstly, Central Plaza is located at the heart of historical downtown as well as the ancient Central Axis of Guangzhou city. History usually links to culture and Guangzhou is the centre of Lingnan Culture. Secondly, a plenty of cultural activities happen in People’s Park that is adjacent to Central Plaza. People’s activities and behaviour link to the living local culture as well. Hence, analysing the particular qualities of the living local culture will support what I will be designing, make me think further, explore the design possibilities as well as fix the ‘copying issue’ of the proposed design.

Lingnan (岭南)
The development of Lingnan started from its geography - 'On the ground there are five ridges and peaks from north; stretching to the horizon is the end of the mainland in the south'\(^1\). As a result, cold air from north mostly cannot pass through the five ridges down to the south of the five ridges in winter, so that the climate between north and south is extremely different as well as many other cultural aspects, such as food culture, language, art and custom.

Lingnan Culture (岭南文化)
Lingnan Culture is typically contrasted with Central Chinese Culture, that of China’s northern plains.\(^4\) Since ancient days Lingnan was far from the reach of emperors, receiving less of the influence of the main stream of traditional Chinese culture. Also, as it is on the sea coast, it has a tradition of trading with foreign countries.\(^5\) Hence, believed to result from the mixing-up, benefited from the local original Yue heritage and nurtured by Han Culture from Central China, Lingnan Culture grows to be a culture of splendid richness, and the influence of western culture, and the once colony economy also attribute a lot to its complexity.\(^6\)

Since the modern times, Guangzhou, as a famous trading port and capital city, was one of the areas that were the first to emigrate abroad, with the great number of overseas Chinese that had frequent contact with foreign countries, absorbing the advanced western productive technology and culture, which promoted the development in modern industry, food, medicine, architecture, and art.\(^7\) So, Cantonese people’s cultural exchange with foreign countries has had an important influence over Lingnan region. Guangzhou, as the central city of Lingnan Culture, has always been the political, economic and cultural hub of Guangdong and Southern China.\(^8\)

Lingnan culture is a living culture. I will analyse it further in next pages from different aspects, such as food culture, Cantonese cuisines and one of the typical Lingnan architecture - ‘Qi Lou’. In addition, as a popular park with a 90-years-old history, People’s Park is one of the best examples to reflect the particular qualities of Lingnan Culture in terms of open space. People’s activities in People’s Park show the nature of Lingnan Culture as well.

Lingnan (岭南):
Ling (嶺) - ‘ridge’/ ‘mountain’/ ‘mountain range’.
Nan (南) - ‘south’.

Lingnan Culture refers to the culture at the south of the five ridges,\(^1\) and the culture of Guangdong and the nearby provinces in southeastern China.\(^2\) (As you see in the top image).

Cantonese is the native language of Lingnan, but most people can speak both Cantonese and Mandarin since Mandarin is the official language of China.
The ideas of Yin (cooling) and Yang (wet-heat) are used in the sphere of food and cooking in China. Yang foods are believed to increase the body’s heat (e.g., raise the metabolism), while Yin foods are believed to decrease the body’s heat (e.g., lower the metabolism). The Chinese ideal is to eat both types of food to keep the body in balance. For example, a person eating too much Yang food might suffer from acne and bad breath while a person lacking Yang food might be lethargic or anemic. Yin food includes tofu, bitter gourd, sugar cane, honeydew, watermelon, and green tea... Yang food includes mango, pineapple, chilli pepper, deep fried food, barbecued meat, lychee and cherry...9

The geography of Lingnan makes it have a gentle climate and rich food materials. Cantonese cuisine is the most diverse and richest of all Chinese cuisines, it mixes up the good qualities of other kinds of Chinese cuisine and western cuisine, and keep creating new styles while adapted them into the local food materials and local natural conditions.

With more than 1,000 varieties, Cantonese cuisine is one of the major cuisines in China. Seafood, Barbecued Delicacy, the various Morning Tea and snacks (e.g., Dim sum) are very famous. One Cantonese saying goes that, ‘Anything that walks, swims, crawls or flies is edible for Cantonese.’ This shows one of Cantonese people’s attitude - ‘open-minded’.

The above images show some of the famous Cantonese cuisines.

The philosophy of food is introduced first because it relates to how Cantonese cook and create new cuisines while incorporating good qualities of other kinds of cuisine and adapting to local conditions.
Tofu was first made in Northern China over 2,000 years ago, and then it was introduced into Korea and Japan more than 1,200 years ago. Tofu is extremely popular in the Orient today. Tofu is a type of nutritive and healthy food made by coagulating soy milk. Due to the local wet-heat climate, Tofu is one of the favourite to Cantonese with cooling quality, good taste and good nutrition. Compared to Mapo Tofu and Japanese Tofu, Cantonese Tofu recipes can vary. Cantonese people prefer cooking Tofu with fresh and nutritive materials, such as mushroom, peas, kelp, fish or seafood...

Example 1
Cantonese Cuisine - ‘Tofu’

Tofu was first made in Northern China over 2,000 years ago, and then it was introduced into Korea and Japan more than 1,200 years ago. Tofu is extremely popular in the Orient today. Tofu is a type of nutritive and healthy food made by coagulating soy milk. Due to the local wet-heat climate, Tofu is one of the favourite to Cantonese with cooling quality, good taste and good nutrition. Compared to Mapo Tofu and Japanese Tofu, Cantonese Tofu recipes can vary. Cantonese people prefer cooking Tofu with fresh and nutritive materials, such as mushroom, peas, kelp, fish or seafood...

Example 2
Cantonese Cuisine - ‘Bitter Gourd’

I choose Tofu & Bitter Gourd as two good examples because both of them are cooling food materials to Cantonese and Cantonese have been created many various cuisines for them.

Bitter Gourd originated in Indo-Malayan region (tropical regions of Asia) long time ago. It is a kind of Yin (cooling) vegetable, so it is popular to Cantonese. ‘Fired bitter gourd with beef’ is a common bitter gourd cuisine in China. In contrast, Cantonese people create various dishes of bitter gourd (see above images on the second line).

Accordingly, from these two examples of Cantonese cuisines, Cantonese people keep open-minded, love absorbing good qualities of other cuisines, including nice looking and recipes, while adapting them to the local culture and conditions.
Lingnan Architecture

As previously mentioned, since a great number of overseas Cantonese came back their hometown and imported advanced western technology and culture, the local traditional architecture absorbed the good qualities of western architecture, including the productive technology, skills, styles, decorative elements and spatial quality. \(^ {14} \)

‘Qi Lou’

‘Qi Lou’ is one of the typical representative of Lingnan Architecture. It was the result of importing the advantages of western long corridor of arches architecture by overseas Chinese and adapting in constructions of local commercial functional needs and local climate. ‘Qi Lou’ architecture was nearly built at any main commercial streets in Guangzhou.

In Guangzhou city and some towns of Guangdong province, many visitors are surprised by the historic ‘Qi Lou’ streets. In Guangzhou, in streets like Beijingsu Commercial Pedestrian Street, Zhongshan Wulu Road and Hui Fulu Road, old-fashioned shops of ‘Qi Lou’ architecture are found in heaps. \(^ {15} \)

Opposite above: Images from www.jiangmen.gov.cn, 18/04/06.www.ycwb.com, 18/04/06.chinaabc.showchina.org, 25/07/07.myphotolife.com, 15/04/06.
Some other famous historic ‘Qi Lou’ architecture in Kaiping city of Guangdong province - They are old but still have strong poetic feelings.

As you see from the above images, due to the extra hot and humid climate, most people prefer to walk in Qi Lou architecture with nice shade rather than the middle of street without shade, otherwise they have to use umbrellas.

‘Qi Lou’ Area
It is quite helpful for people enjoying shopping because ‘Qi Lou’ creates shade, keeps away the rain and strong sunlight.

How ‘Qi Lou’ architecture has been adapted for local conditions?

With long corridor and numerous pillars that were built in front of the shops, ‘Qi Lou’ is so popular also because it is really appropriate to the local climate - mainly hot, rainy & humid. By this I mean that, whenever it is rainy or hot with strong sunlight, people can still easily keep walking along the shops in both sides of commercial streets within the ‘Qi Lou’ architecture.

Accordingly, Cantonese people are good at incorporating the advantages of exotic architecture. they consider both local environmental context and cultural context, and then mix up very well, therefore a new style architecture was born and has been last for such a long time till now. This links to the particular qualities of Lingnan Culture that are summarized at the end of the chapter.
Analysis - Lingnan Culture
Open Space

With a long history, People’s Park is a very good example illustrating Lingnan Culture as an open space. It incorporates the advantages of western style into the local cultural and physical context. For instance, as you see from the above plan, People’s Park has a symmetrical Italianate garden plan for showing how powerful the government is, that borrows from the west by an overseas Chinese architect - Yang Xizhong in 1917. He also combined west and Lingnan or Chinese culture in the park.

1. Symmetrical Italianate Garden Plan
2. Combination of western style and Lingnan pavilions
3. Incorporate western style into Chinese gate
4. In People’s Park, people enjoy doing various activities under the nice shade which is created by the native tall trees. This presents that People’s Park considers the environmental context while borrowing a symmetrical Italianate garden plan.
Accordingly, with their courage to explore new horizons always and their broad insight, Cantonese people are always open-minded, ready to accept new things and are good at apprehending both material and spiritual achievements from foreign countries, and then incorporating them with their own traditional culture and local conditions. They love absorbing the good qualities of other culture, adapting them for the local conditions so that they keep creating new things, as you see in the analysis of previous pages.

I am interested in how those good qualities of Lingnan Culture will be celebrated or be reflected in my alternative design (please see sections of ‘Alternative Design’).
The existing Central Plaza

People’s Park

land boundary

site boundary of the existing Central Plaza

50m
Analysis - Critique of the Existing Central Plaza

I critique the existing Central Plaza because I have been thinking that there are a lot of design problems on the proposed design. I intend to prove that, if the designer merely focus on copying the physical form of People’s Park without considering other key context of the site, it can cause a lot of problems. What I am doing is to show those key problems of the existing Central Plaza in this section. And then I will try to fix and avoid those problems when I will do my own design work.

Weaknesses

1. The whole proposed design doesn’t have a view of Central Plaza as an undifferentiated whole. For instance, the existing Central Plaza tends toward an old style to deal with the relationship with the old People’s Park that is adjacent to it, while the entrances to the underground Comic City cover with modern forms (P37).

2. As you see from the opposite plan, the proposed design tends to imitate the physical forms of People’s Park merely in a simplistic way. People’s Park was built 90 years ago, with a traditional Italianate garden plan while adapted into native species such as trees. People enjoy the nice shade in People’s Park without noticing the Italianate garden plan form actually. Ridiculously, in addition, there isn’t any symbolic pavings in People’s Park and only concrete paving, while the existing Central Plaza was added some symbolic pavings. This might be because the old style was assumed to be designed in this way. In my opinion, only symbolic design cannot express the nature of a culture very well. I prefer to explore other approaches.

3. The circulation system is limited. People only can follow the pathways so that cannot get to the underground entries directly from the plaza. Also, the circulation system design causes a few walls of the entrances underground dominating the view from opposite (P37). In addition, the edge design (P22-P23) doesn’t allow people relaxing and walking easily.

4. Space occupation: As I previously mentioned in the section of activities occupation analysis (P24-26), people hardly can occupy appropriate space for their various activities except the centre of the plaza. Other spaces are mainly pathways and plant areas with low curb so that people cannot go in or sit on it easily. However, people are flexible. They still occupy the narrow paths to play poker or roller skating, while others cannot pass through there easily. (please see images and text in the next two pages.)

Brief Introduction of the site

Central Plaza consists of three parts:
1. Top Landscape
2. Underground - Comic City
3. Metro line 1 and 2, and the busiest metro interchange

The underground Comic City integrates the functions of exhibiting, selling and experiencing cartoon & animation products. This area is a cartoon & animation shrine in Southern China. Guangzhou Government plans to invest about 150 million yuan (about 18.8 million US Dollars) each year in the next five years to support the animation and cartoon industry of Guangzhou.

Strengths

Regarding the strengths of the existing Central Plaza, both of two main underground entrances lie in easy accesses, because they are located at the corner of the intersections and close to the main commercial streets.
1. The level difference between People's Park and Central Plaza

2. 3. 4. People occupy the footpath to do different activities, such as roller skating, poker or having a break, while others cannot pass through here easily.

5. The streetlamp in Central Plaza is the same as one in the old park.

6. The level difference between People's Park and Central Plaza

7. The Gate of People's Park

8. Edge of Central Plaza

9. The level difference between People's Park and Central Plaza

10. The level difference between People's Park and Central Plaza

11. There is no shade ose trees in Central Plaza need to take time to grow up.

12. The centre of Central Plaza viewing toward People's Park

13. The Sister Cities artworks literally look like graves. If you get there in evenings, you might be scared by those 'graves'.

14. A flat, flat, flat plaza. The spatial design wasn't considered for events. Why does it still keep a flat plaza all the time?
15. Central Plaza viewing from opposite street. The beautiful green background is of People’s Park.

16. Metro ventilation shaft

17. They try to hide those infrastructures and roof with the poor thin plants but they failed.

20. A flat plaza with terraces and steps

Symbolic Pavings
The existing Central Plaza intends to have an old style with symbolic design. In my opinion, only symbolic design might not be able to express the nature of a culture well because the local Lingnan Culture is a living culture. I want to explore how to express the nature of a culture through my alternative design methods, such as researching the way people how to meet, how to do different activities in different occupied spaces, and how to interact with each other.

21. Passersby of exterior sidewalk do not feel invited into the plaza because it isn’t perceived as being an extension of public rights-of-way. The existing plaza is above street level with few entry points.

22. This little entry point with a big level change considerably reduces the amount of passersby who enter and use the plaza.

23, 24. People have to pass a long and wobbly slope and steps to get to the lift entry, why not the lift entrance just faces to street directly? The walls cannot allow people access Central Plaza directly and easily. This relates to the circulation system design.


25. The water feature doesn’t belong to the great conceptual idea of Central Plaza.

26. One way goes to the underground Comic City and metro by a series of long, high and difficult steps, the other way goes to Central Plaza by a long narrow path which doesn’t provide a pleasing sense of invitation to passersby.

27, 28. The walls of the underground entrance domain the view opposite. This relates to the circulation system design.

29, 30. The existing Central Plaza tends toward an old style to deal with the relationship with the old park, while the entrances to the underground Comic City cover with modern forms. Although the original conceptual idea of the entrances - 'a leaf falling from a tree of People’s Park' (which intended to represent the relation between Central Plaza and People’s Park) sounds so beautiful, it is still isolated and the whole proposed design doesn’t have a view of Central Plaza as an undifferentiated whole. Also, they literally look like a white monster or worm, but not ‘a leaf falling from a tree’.

A leaf?
Summary
- The Critique of the Existing Central Plaza

Through the critique of the existing Central Plaza of previous pages, I learned a couple of key things:

I believe that to focus on plan forms is a simplistic approach especially while ignoring key contexts of a site when starting design work. The existing Central Plaza has a number of problems in terms of circulation systems, spatial occupation by people, and how people use it in the future, etc. On the other hand, personally, starting from analysis of key context of a site will inspire the conceptual idea specifically so as to new forms will generate creatively.

Last but not least, I realised that a project design work need to have an undifferentiated whole conceptual idea. By this I mean that all specific design ideas should follow the great conceptual idea.
Case Studies
- Argyle Square Piazza
- Yokohama International Port Terminal
- Federation Square

I examined the following case studies to further understand how key contexts may influence design. For example, Argyle Square Piazza focus on how to celebrate Italian Culture, and this could give me some good ideas that could inspire my own design work on how to celebrate the local living Lingnan Culture.

Yokohama International Port Terminal started from the possibility of generating organisation from a particular circulation system. Central Plaza has a complicated circulation systems as well, which gives implication on choosing Yokohama Terminal as one of my case studies. Besides this, I am interested in the flowing form and intensive space of Yokohama terminal.

Federation Square focuses on celebrating the multicultural city and the true spirit of federation as well as the relationship between the city and the square. I also learn the way of edge design, the design’s geometry and the top topography celebration of the square from Federation Square.
Case Study 1 - Piazza Italia at Argyle Square

Preface

When I went through Argyle Square Piazza for the first time, I didn’t have a strong impression of it. It is a nice looking park with an adequate size plaza for events. Originally there was a sloping topography that goes down from east to west. However, because the function of Piazza Italia is to provide a big platform for people and events, the sloping topography wasn’t celebrated.

When I got to know more about the background of Argyle Square Piazza, I realised that it is expected to celebrate Italian Culture since it lies in the Melbourne’s Italian precinct, Lygon Street, Carlton. I figured that this would be helpful to the design of my research project because I intend to show the Lingnan Culture in my design. Therefore, I am interested in how the piazza celebrates a culture.

Argyle Square Piazza is located at the Italian precinct of Melbourne and it is a redevelopment of the north part of the existing Argyle Park. One of the main aims of the project is to celebrate the contribution of Italian community to the city’s cultural diversity, like Italian food culture, art & lifestyle. The design started from ‘Piazza’, and then the relationship of Italy and Melbourne. I will discuss this further in next pages.

In this case study of Argyle Square Piazza, I visited Nina Isabella, the senior urban designer of the City of Melbourne, contacted Andrea Tomaselli, the designer of Solaris, and visited the site on numerous occasions, accessed some websites about Argyle Square, and ultimately acquired a lot of useful information and documents. Here I want to thank them for their help, specially Andrea Tomaselli.
How does it celebrate?

**‘Piazza’**

The design idea of Argyle Square Piazza began from defining the piazza since Italian piazzas have a long and broad history. This traditional, central element of Italian life, although through two thousand years old, still continues to retain contemporary relevance. Piazza evolves from Roman forum, marketplace and meeting place. It focused on a well thousand years ago. When piped water was introduced to Italian cities, decorative water features, fountains or monument emerged instead in the centre of piazza and businesses continued to open their doors to piazzas. After centuries, the function of piazzas still is of the heart or meeting place of many communities, in Italy and all over the world. And the central water or other features in the centre of piazzas provides a powerful symbolic reference, drawing people to meet and linger there. Whenever it is, ‘piazzas are spaces of exchange where the culture and market live together in harmony.’

**Defining the site and the design**

Argyle Square achieves a certain hybrid identity. As a new cultural Piazza Italia, it needs to have strong community support and appeal. It is responsible for playing a important role to evoke their migrations or introduce the Italian culture to other locals. As a public open space, the piazza needs to offer a flexible range of clear open space as a platform for diverse community social activities and civic life, on every scale. For example, an evening of entertainment Italian-style or a bicycle race opening celebration could be provided for there. It could also include singing on the platform and some small temporary buildings for retail or craft markets.

The project theme of ‘peace offering’ was chosen for the piazza to express the hopes for peace and prosperity that all immigrants bring to their new home. The theme has been interpreted through the image of Persian rug – weaving together notions of multiculturalism and cooperation between Australia and Italy. In the context of Melbourne’s cultural precincts, Argyle Square Piazza is a place of welcome and respite for everyone in the urban heart of Lygon Street Italian precinct.

The design for the new Argyle Square Piazza is elegant and contemporary in a new way, without being nostalgic or rarefied. Contemporary artworks integrated into the new piazza design.
Approach 1 - Formal layout

The author claims that Argyle Square Piazza is called ‘Borrowed Landscape’. The formal subject includes tree avenues, colonnade, low walls, seating steps, integrated lighting features, formal paths and intricate high quality pavement artwork.

In terms of the spatial quality, as traditional Italian piazza was framed by adjacent buildings, Argyle Square Piazza is framed powerfully by planting golden coloured and deciduous trees at relatively close intervals since there isn’t building surroundings to shape the piazza space.

Approach 2 - Porphyry Cobblestone

The central material proposed is Porphyry cobblestone. It is an ancient material originating from the Trento region of northern Italy and represents a tangible, enduring and appropriate metaphor for migration. According to co-designer Ms Beevers, the use of porphyry served as a symbol of Italian migration to Australia. As transmissible heritage, a porphyry piazza reads as a site of collective memory.

Furthermore, this natural and multi-coloured stone offers a unique surface and vitality, even in the same stone type and block. This connects to the notion of individuality within the group, resisting stereotyping; appropriate as a core statement in any contemporary project reflecting migration.

The central paving looks like a feature of Nautilus shell that is adapted to the solar clock feature as well as the project theme - ‘peace offering’ of Persian rug weaving.
Approach 3 - Solar Clock

According to Andrea Tomaselli’s conceptual idea, the solar clock is an interactive device for drawing people to enjoy the piazza and acts as an enduring reminder of Italian Culture in Melbourne. This centrepiece is key at the origin of the spiral pattern. As Mr Tomaselli’s says, ‘TIME perhaps relates to the consciousness that this is actually a young city in a very ancient land, and where ironically, everyone comes from an old culture. History, culture, relationship, anniversaries, love stories, family stories, migration stories are all about TIME’.14

The solar clock looks like a symbol well. I was literally standing in an ancient Italian piazza. The solar clock combines with the shell-shape paving feature. On my visits to Argyle Square, there were always people occupying the centre of piazza, they enjoyed standing or sitting or running around the solar clock paving feature. I found that it is a really interesting device which I never saw before. I can cast my own shadow on to the pavement and then work out what time it is, just from the ground! What an amazing solar clock! Children, parents, youths as well as elders learned from it.

This solar clock also continues the tradition of public timekeeping in Melbourne. The designer said that the solar clock was selected in recognition of Italian traditions of exterior timekeeping in civic spaces and private domains, and each exterior timepiece actually has developed a strong attachment in community memory and cultural identity.15

To contrast, in Central Plaza, in celebrating the Guangzhou Sister Cities Relationship, each stone monument was erected on the grass for each Sister City. It literally looks like grave. Culture here is celebrated statically (below) in contrast to Argyle Square. I propose to carefully choose and plant trees of different sister cities in Central Plaza, which should be adapted to suit the local environmental conditions (eg. climate and soil). Sister Cities are introduced to locals via trees, growing with time, which presents that the friendship between Guangzhou and its sister cities is growing up too.
Approach 4 - Collaboration

As a part of the design process for the new Argyle Square Piazza, as Milan is one of the Sister Cities of Melbourne, the City of Melbourne collaborated with an experienced Milanese architectural firm, Design Innovation. The collaboration was established with the assistance of the Italian Institute of Culture. The aim of the project is to create an authentic, contemporary piazza that merges the best of Italian culture with Melbourne’s relaxed, outdoor lifestyle.\(^{16}\)

The City of Melbourne chose Andrea Tomaselli, who is an Italian artist, as the leading designer of Solaris project. This was a part of a postgraduate research project of RMIT.\(^{17}\) He is familiar with both of Italian Culture and Melbourne.

\(^{12}\) Melbourne City Council spent almost $300,000 importing Italian stone and bringing two Italian artisans to Melbourne to pave a square in Carlton, sharing the skills with local stonemasons.\(^ {18}\)

This collaborations, in some ways, represent the relationship between Italy and Melbourne. It is an interesting way and process of design for a project. If the project merely put some symbolic elements in Piazza Italia, that would be too superficial for expressing a multi-cultural relationship.
What does it celebrate?

The Yokohama project started around the possibility of generating organisation from a circulation system. The key characteristic is its circulation as well as the relationship between city, civic and the sea (see the following diagrams).

Circulation can literally shape space. FOA – the architects attempted to create a fluid, uninterrupted, and multidirectional space, rather than a gateway to the flow of conventional, fixed orientation. They preferred to create an ‘intensive space’ rather than setting the program as a series of adjacent spaces with more or less determined limits. They articulated them in the continuity of a branched sequence along the circulatory system. Eventually, a particular flexible spatial performance was created successfully and the experience of fluid movement has been celebrated specifically in this case.

What I learned from Yokohama project is how the circulation system is celebrated and how the fluid intensive space allows people to enjoy doing diverse activities.
Case Study 2 - Yokohama International Port Terminal
No-Return Diagram & Bifurcation Sequence
This three-dimensional circulation diagram shows that the Yokohama project started from the possibility of generating organisation of the circulation systems. This good idea inspires one of my final design work - Tocopark, as the Yokohama project celebrates one of the key contexts - the circulation systems of the international port terminal while the circulation systems also are one of the key contexts of Central Plaza. I will represent this later and further in the section of ‘alternative design 3 - Tocopark’.
Case Study 2 - Yokohama International Port Terminal

Fluid section & Transverse sections

What these sections show us is the fluid and transverse spaces of the port terminal and how people use the various spaces. What I learned is how the circulation system is celebrated and how the fluid intensive space allows people enjoy doing diverse activities here. They inspire me significantly in my final alternative design - Tocopark.
In addition to the fluid movement, the surfaces of Yokohama International Port Terminal allow people to do a range of sports that benefit from the geometry of the roof plaza.

A. Skate Boarding
It's a predominantly young and urban sport. The natural slopes and ramps on the surface are perfect for the practice of that sport. But it's more likely to happen as an exhibition sport, where professionals do their tricks on special ramps while young people gather to see their performances.¹

B. Jogging
This sport is practiced by older people than Skate Boarding. The roof is a perfect area to practice this sport as the different slopes act as different training areas. The roof plaza is not an enclosed jogging circuit but an extension of the ground of the city.⁵

C. Aerobics
Aerobics can be practiced at any point of the roof top plaza taking advantage of its differentiated topography to perform different physical exercises.⁷
Another influence on the design was the inclusion of the places for events and a range of movement types allowing people to enjoy the diverse interesting intensive space. This inspires my final alternative design - Tocopark, as Central Plaza is an important open space in downtown Guangzhou where a variety of events would be held and people also can occupy and do a range of activities.

**Various Roof Plaza**

The differentiated topographical conditions will provide a variety of possibilities to host different events, exterior seasonal festivals, and open air concerts. Each type of organization uses different areas of the roof. A careful planning of these activities can activate the roof plaza with large amounts of people over different seasons, as a major attraction for Yokohama’s citizens.

**Open Air Concerts**

The space used for a concert varies depending on the time of the day and the nature of the music. The space requirement for each type of music is different.
Case study 3 - Federation Square

What is the key characteristic of the site?

**Iconic Public Landscapes & Contexts**
Compared to Sydney Opera House, Federation Square is not a single thing in empty surroundings, but it is in the city, and is adjacent to the busiest intersection of Melbourne’s CBD and the railway centre - Flinders Street Station. Federation Square focuses on the relationship with the city, the middle scale context - lanes and arcades, as well as the river.

‘Federation’
‘Federation is about independent identities that come together to form a large whole’. This also means difference and coherence. Differences is about individual entities, coherence is about the whole they form. This becomes the great conceptual idea and the inspiration of the project.

City & People
Melbourne needed to create a true public square, for linking the CBD and the river, for a living and breathing focus, for the multicultural city, and for a new centre of diverse cultural activity. In some sense, the meaning of ‘multicultural’ is similar to the particular quality of ‘Federation’ - difference & coherence. Compact Oxford English Dictionary states that ‘multicultural’ means relating to or constituting several cultural or ethnic groups. They live together in perfect harmony.

What & how does it celebrate?

Celebrate the city
Federation Square draws its inspiration from the unique urban characteristic of Melbourne’s arcades and lanes, and then transforms these elements into a new form of organisation. Here the buildings and the plaza open at all angles into the city fabric, so they allow people to come into Federation Square from a range of directions (see diagrams opposite).

Celebrate ‘Difference & Coherence’
It celebrates the unique multicultures of the city and the true spirit of Federation. First of all, the facades are federated. For example, they bring together three distinct elements including zinc, sandstone and glass. In other words, these three different materials come together to create something different or a new large whole, which is meant to be evolving. Also, the architecture is programmed with distinct cultural and commercial buildings, while they maintain a visual and formal coherence.

Above:
Images from www.east-buc.312.ia.us, 12/11/06.
www.afterdark.com.au, 26/09/06.
5. Here the buildings and the plaza open at all angles into the city fabric.
What & how does it celebrate?

Celebrate the topography of the Square

The square gradually rises from the west street level until about 6 metres higher at the eastern end - the Atrium and the NGV. However, you might not know that, on the top of deck across the railway yards and under the eastern half of the square there is a big labyrinth which mainly generates cool air for the glazed atrium. It is a passive cooling and heating system. Interestingly, such an elegant system of passive temperature control becomes the square’s final surface topography.

The fascinating sloping square runs down to a stage area, which makes Federation Square a natural amphitheatre for large-scale events or campaigns. Other parts of the square mostly keep the fluid quality except for some small edge terraces for restaurants or coffee shops and some seating areas.
8. Design's Geometry

The design's geometry allows for a vast array of configurations and arrangements, from the largest scale public gathering of up to 15,000 people to intimate sites of relaxation and contemplation, with stone pavers for the edge terraces, stepped-seats, planters and wall-seats.

I learned the way of edge design and the design’s geometry from Federation Square, especially the various seat types along the sloped-square.
The Seating Design Work in Federation Square

As you see from images 8 to 16, Federation Square creates a great number of seating planters, stepped seating and seating walls along different edges. For example, in image 8, due to the different functions of restaurant and gathering areas in the square, the stepped seats is created along the slope for people enjoying having a rest on them. This type of edge design is interesting and inspires my own design work.
Yarra River is one of the key surroundings of Federation Square. From the above sections, however, lack of a strong linkage with the riverside is a problem. By this I mean that, the design for the riverside landscape could vary rather than merely the terraces and steps. For example, a hilly gradual lawn from the civic plaza to the waterfront could make people feel peaceful as they enjoy the beautiful natural landscape when standing on the plaza. People cannot see the river directly now unless standing on the steps or sitting in the area of coffee shops. However, it is still a narrow view and not enough for really enjoying the river side.
With regard to my design work, the case studies are helpful. For example, Argyle Square Piazza represents the multi-cultural exchange in an invisible way which leads me to think further in terms of reflecting the nature of the living Lingnan Culture in Central Plaza. What I learned from Yokohama Project is how the circulation system is celebrated and how the fluid intensive space allows people to enjoy doing diverse activities. They inspire me significantly in my final alternative design - Tocopark. Federation Square celebrates the top topography so that there is a beautiful smooth amphitheatre and people enjoy it. I also learn the way of edge design and the design’s geometry from Federation Square.
The following pages are of my design work - Topopark, Occupark and Tocopark. Three different alternative designs of Central Plaza are created based on the conceptual idea of my research - Caricature, to celebrate the key characteristics of the site. They are also designed based on the previous analysis in this AVR.

I attempt to celebrate the key context of the site in three different ways for exploring design possibilities. I extremely enjoy this. Hopefully, they will make you feel interested as if you are looking at my version of caricature.
Introduction

The conceptual idea of Topopark starts from one of the physical context of the site - topography. There is level difference that goes down from People’s Park to Central Plaza, including a key basement context - Comic City.

Moreover, other key cultural contexts inspire me to consider the relationship of people’s activities and Comic City. Specifically, the majority of people occupying People’s Park are elders, but in Comic City, the majority are youths. According to both the previous analysis of the particular qualities of the living local Lingnan Culture and people’s activities and occupation, the locals love watching and learning from each other. They never mind disturbing each other. They are good at absorbing the qualities of others.

Also, there is no a real open space for youth’s extreme sports in the heart of Guangzhou city, that includes skateboarding, roller-skating and BMX.

Therefore, I figure that, if I create a space mainly for youths in Central Plaza that links to both People’s Park and the underground Comic City based on the great topography, it would be an interesting design challenge.
Alternative Design 1 - TOPOPARK

Form Orientation

The form of Topopark draws its inspiration from the unique urban fabric of Guangzhou and transforms the characteristic of the element into a new form of organisation.

Central Plaza lies in the heart of the city, and also, it is assumed that Guangzhou city started from here 2217 years ago. In some ways, I figure that, the larger context of the city’s unique fabric could inspire the form of Central Plaza. So, the design starts from the city fabric. As you see from the above images, different cities have their own unique fabrics. Compared to other cities’ fabrics, Guangzhou’s city fabric is curved and looks much softer. This is because Guangzhou has a long history of city development and it is a hilly city alongside a river.

Guangzhou’s urban fabric is the result of long history development with the natural original geography of the city so it literally seems to be without urban planning.

The above analysis of the Guangzhou city fabric gave me a nice surprise because I found that this soft form is good for occupation and easy movement. As you see from the opposite page, compared to the grid form of People’s Park, the deformed soft form is much easier for people moving through while there is a plenty space for people to occupy for group activities.

Also, I considered the local hot and humid climate context and nice views from opposite street, I created a 3d form of undulating lawn with shade, as you see in the detail sketches on the opposite page.
The Form Development of the 3D Undulating Lawn

Deformable Occupation Study in People’s Park

It is hard to pass while people occupy the road in the park.

People occupy corner space mostly.

The Interplay of Form and Use
The circuit ramps are created mainly for youths' skateboarding in evenings, weekends or holidays, or for events. People can walk down from the ramp to Comic City during other time. Besides this, there are undulating ramps and skateboarding ramps on the top Central Plaza that link to the circuit ramps. This would be interesting as the whole topograph is celebrated in this way and people can enjoy watching the extreme sports while going shopping in Comic City or having a rest in Central Plaza.
As you see from the above comparison, the quality of activities occupation in Topopark is different than the existing Central Plaza’s. In Topopark’s spatial volumes, people can occupy more space and enjoy their activities at a range of scales.
Summary of Topopark

Strengths

In terms of the greater conceptual idea of Topopark, both the physical and cultural context of the site are integrated. The physical context includes the whole topography of that is from People’s Park down to Central Plaza till the basement - Comic City. The cultural contexts include the people’s activities and the particular qualities of the living local Lingnan Culture (P27).

The circuit ramps are created and connect with the top Central Plaza and Comic City by celebrating the whole topography. Both of the youths’ extreme sports and Comic City belong to youths’ favourite while elders in People’s Park are interested in watching it as well, so this could be an interesting situation.

Weaknesses

If youths play sports here sometimes, people could not pass by easily and will have to be cautious.

The skateboarding circuit ramps would reduce the space that can be occupied to do other exercises by elders or youths. It is also inconvenient to walk on because it divides the space into parts and people have to circle around for their destinations. It also occupies some parts of the commercial space of Comic City. The business of Comic City would earn less rent from the shops then.

In terms of the cultural context, Topopark links to the particular qualities of the living local Lingnan Culture – I see it as open-minded and good at absorbing, because it creates a space to connect with elderly and young people. In People’s Park, space is often occupied by elderly people. Meanwhile, in the heart of Guangzhou city, there is few outdoor space for youths to play. Now that Comic City is under Central Plaza and adjacent to People’s Park, Topopark celebrates the topography of the site and allows more youths to enjoy here. Then the elderly people in People’s Park would watch the youths’ sports at Central Plaza, while youths also watch elderly people doing what they like to do at People’s Park. They enjoy watching and learning from each other.

The plan form relates to the greater context – Guangzhou city fabric. Compared to the existing Central Plaza, Topopark adapts to create flexible space for people to occupy while other pedestrians can pass much more conveniently.

Topopark makes the circulation system of the site work more smoothly. This is showed that it opens up the views between Central Plaza and the entries of Comic City. When people stand opposite to Central Plaza, they can look at the broader view of Central Plaza while people could walk through much more easily from the entry of Comic City to Central Plaza.
Topopark is a celebration of topography and it is the first alternative design work of my research project for Central Plaza. My celebration journey started from it and I did benefit from it, although there are weaknesses. Before I did this masters and when I worked in firms, I usually had no idea how to start thinking about the conceptual idea of a project. But now I strongly believe that, like drawing caricatures, it is important to capture the key characteristics of an identity before you start to draw the first draft. And the key contexts do inspired the conceptual idea.

The next pages show the second alternative design - Occupark. It focuses on the celebration of activities occupation. It is different from Topopark. I intended to think and design in different ways and explore a range of design possibilities. So the approach is to celebrate different key contexts of Central Plaza through its occupation.
Alternative Design 2 - OCCUPARK
Occupation Celebration
Introduction

The conceptual idea of Occupark starts from the possibility of generating a new form inspired by the medium scale context - housing and lanes space in the heart of Guangzhou City. The form of Occupark was inspired by the great scale context - city fabric of Guangzhou. But then I found an interesting linkage between the way of housing in lanes and the way of people occupied various spatial volumes in People’s Park. The conceptual idea of occupation celebration allows that various possibilities of occupation can vary if I design in this way. Accordingly, with this inspiration, based on the medium scale context of the site, a new form is created.

Form Orientation

With high density and a long history of housing development in the heart of Guangzhou historic city, the way of housing and lanes work is that, based on different functions, different house occupied different scaled spaces. This led the lanes to be sometimes narrow and sometimes wider, as you see from the above diagrams. Interestingly, it is similar to the way people occupying various spaces in People’s Park based on different activities. The conceptual idea of occupation celebration allows that various possibilities of occupation can vary if I design in this way. Accordingly, with this inspiration, based on the medium scale context of the site, a new form is created.
Activities and Occupation Comparison

To test my design and offer a comparison, I diagramed the spatial occupation. Occupark is better than the existing Central Plaza’s. For example, in Occupark, due to the various sizes of spatial volumes (see perspective 2 in opposite page), people occupy space and enjoy their activities more easily, while the existing Central Plaza cannot afford various spatial volume for people because there are too many narrow paths with planting areas except the centre plaza.
1. This perspective is the centre of Occupark viewing to the north gate of People's Park, which shows that Occupark opens up.

2. This perspective shows a wide range of spatial volumes created by the form of Occupark. People occupy space base on the demand for different activities. It also shows the various short edges which separate different spaces, afford spaces for planting trees, afford adequate seats and a variety of edges for people to rest and play (e.g., Youths play skateboard on ramps or steps, and others rest on seats, which are parts of edge design). On the other hand, this clear definition of borders becomes relatively enclosed but the plaza still opens up spatially. This makes different groups feel more private, while the edge design offers more opportunities for people to sit down and enjoy watching or to be watched. The hierarchical organization of spatial volumes and the short edges design encourage people enjoy playing, watching and learning from each other, and also encourage people innovate through playing, watching and learning. Thus some of the good qualities of Lingnan Culture (open-minded, good at incorporating and innovative) are reflected through design.

6. This perspective shows the open space of Occupark.

Perspectives Guide
Edge design in Occupark

The edge of Occupark is celebrated in the following ways: the plan form of Occupark is comprised of squares with various sizes, which also considers the disabled moving easily, thus Occupark needs to avoid being a terraced plaza. When the first ramp model was created in 3D software, something crazy occurred. Why not allow youths’ sports like skateboarding or roller-skating to happen here? It is one of the key cultural contexts of the site, like Topopark.

So I created various edges that can be played or rest in Occupark, which can be seating island, seating planters, steps or seating walls. As a result, there are heaps of borders in Occupark where the space still opens up. On the other hand, according to Jan Gehl, ‘the most popular places to sit can be found at the edges of open spaces, where the sitter’s back is protected, the view unobstructed...’
Above: the ramp was designed for the wheeled walking traffic, however, it is not easy to get to the lift entrance through the detour ramp from exterior intersections or pedestrian.

Below: The existing water feature is isolated from the great idea of the existing Central Plaza, which can be anywhere.

5. In contrast, the alternative water feature I created for Occupark is a similar form that belongs to the great idea of Occupark. Considering the wheeled walking traffic, a new lift entrance is created which faces the street level directly, while the existing lift entrance is kept facing to the other side - Central Plaza (red arrows).
Alternative Design 2 - OCCUPARK

Detail design

The conceptual idea of the existing Comic City entrance is about a leaf falling from the tree of People’s Park. This sounds so beautiful, but it is still isolated since the existing Central Plaza tended to be like an old style plaza like People’s Park. In addition, the walls dominates the views and makes the circulation inconvenient.

Accordingly, I created a new form that adapts to the great conceptual idea of Occupark, and that opens up the walls for easier circulation and stronger in-park/out-park/Comic City connections, as well as for a greater views.

3. I removed the walls (compare the right photos) for opening up a wider view and for a more easier circulation.
Due to the existing walls, pedestrians have to make a detour to get to the entrance of Comic City and metro stations or to Central Plaza and People’s Park.

4. I removed the walls (compare the left photo) for a more easier circulation as well as opening up a wider view.
Summary of Occupark

Strengths

Along with the higher density of population in Guangzhou and high density of uses at People’s Park, people need more space to play and relax. Occupark creates a range of spatial volumes for people to occupy, play and relax.

The above images show the various edges which are created unexpectedly. For instance, the edge can a ramp, seat, wall or sculpture for playing, skateboarding, roller-skating or resting.

Like Topopark, Occupark opens up the views and the circulation system between Central Plaza and the underground Comic City entrances. When People stand opposite to Central Plaza, they can see the greater view of Central Plaza.

Similar to Topopark, the entries to Comic City are designed to a shape and form that connect to the great conceptual idea of Occupark – diverse edge forms. In addition, Occupark shifts the lift entrance area to street level. This allows people to get to the lift more directly and easily.

Weaknesses

People wouldn’t walk reasonably freely with being disturbed or having to maneuver in some parts of Occupark as there are a number of long edges and planting areas that separate the open space into parts.

Compared with Topopark, Occupark is less of a connection with the underground Comic City, but youths can still enjoy skateboarding on the diverse edges or roller-skating in the top Occupark.
Through the process of designing Occupark, one of the interesting things is that I discovered that the way of housing in Guangzhou city, and the way people occupy various spatial volumes for different activities, have much in common. I also realized that three-dimensional digital technique and model making are quite helpful for generating more possibilities unexpectedly, such as the edge celebration in Occupark.

The previous two alternative designs started from plan form. It is limited to explore design possibilities with this design approach. As the third alternative design, TOCOPARK started from the three-dimensional circulation system because it is one of the main contexts of Central Plaza. I wanted to celebrate it while integrating with other key contexts.
Brief Introduction

I started from the possibility of generating organisation from the circulation system of the site. I learned this approach from one of the case studies - Yokohama International Port Terminal (P46-51). Central Plaza lies in a complicated location (P14-19) and the circulation system is a main context of the site. I figured that it would be more interesting to combine the whole topographic context of the site (top topography, underground Comic City & metro station) and the idea of youths’ extreme sports (P60), with the circulation system. Hence, I started thinking from these certain qualities and hoped I would achieve an unexpected result. I wanted it envolve to a real fluid flowing space, which would be better than Topopark’s. Meanwhile, I also thought about how people’s activities and occupation could be celebrated.

LEGEND

1. People’s Park  
2. Central Plaza  
3. Underground Carpark  
4. Comic City  
5. Metro Lobby  
6. Platform of Metro Line 1  
7. Platform of Metro Line 2  
8. Metro Interchange  

Main flowing from top to metro lobby  
Flowing to metro line 1 platform  
Flowing to metro line 2 platform  
Flowing to Comic City  
Carpark flowing
Based on the greater conceptual idea, I made the study models. They gave me a surprising breakthrough in terms of the form of the design work and allowed me to understand how the whole ‘topography’ (from top landscape down to the bottom level) worked with this particular circulation system.
The Fluid Intensive Space
This diagram shows the bifurcation sequence and the easy fluid circulation systems of TOCOPARK. It illustrates how TOCOPARK celebrates the topography of the site from the top People’s Park, the top Central Plaza, to the underground Comic City, till the metro stations. I learned ‘intensive space’ from Yokohama Project (P46), which offers a space in the continuity of a branched sequence along the circulatory system.²

**People’s Park**
Access to
Comic City / metro

**Focus Stage**

**Wallclimbing area & skylight**
The built environment of the site (the top Central Plaza - the underground Comic City) offers a place with three level differences where people would be able to enjoy wallclimbing and watching wallclimbing, which is one sort of extreme sports.

**The top fluid plaza**

**Metro lobby**

**Metro line 1**

**Metro line 2**

**Bifurcations:**
- exterior footpath
- Tocopark
- metro lobby
- Comic City

**Bifurcations:**
- Comic City / metro lobby - exterior street - Tocopark

**TOCOPARK**

**The top fluid plaza**

**Bifurcations:**
- Comic City / metro lobby - exterior street - Tocopark

**Bifurcations:**
- Comic City / metro lobby - Comic City

**Bifurcations:**
- metro lobby / interchange - Comic City (B1) - Tocopark

**Bifurcations:**
- metro lobby / interchange - Comic City (B1-B2) - metro line 1

**Bifurcations:**
- metro interchange - Comic City (B1-B2) - metro line 1

**Bifurcations:**
- metro interchange - Comic City (B2-B3) - metro line 2

**Bifurcations:**
- metro line 1 - Comic City (B2-B3) - metro line 2
Flowing diagram of the existing Central Plaza

According to the previous section of ‘activities occupation analysis’ (P24-26), most of the existing Central Plaza is narrow paths that are not appropriate for occupation of people for various exercises. From the above plan, only the two green squares can be occupied by youths’ roller-skating classes in evenings. At other time, the existing plaza is almost empty.

The existing Central Plaza copies the Italianate garden plan form of People’s Park in a simplistic way without thinking about how people use it and move through it. It doesn’t create diverse spaces for people’s various activities and people cannot move through it easily. For instance, if people want to go to Comic City or the metro lobby from Central Plaza, they have to go down to the footpaths on the street level first before getting access.

Flowing Diagram of Tocopark

Inspired by Yokohama International Port Terminal and based on the particular circulation system of Central Plaza, I tried to create various spatial qualities for various activities. Also, keeping a smooth flowing quality and freedom of movement were my major goals. I wanted youths to play their sports and people to get to wherever they like, including directly from People’s Park to the metro lobby, or from Central Plaza to Comic City.
Compared with the existing Central Plaza (overleaf), the above plan shows that, the flow to the underground access varies more in Tocopark. People can get there from anywhere more easily and directly.

Also, according to the comparison diagrams with the circulation system of the existing Central Plaza on the right, Tocopark allows people move more easily and directly from wherever they like to go from wherever they are in the site.
The following sections drawings A-F and 1-6 show how the circulation system in Tocopark is celebrated. They also show how people move easily between People’s Park, Central Plaza and Comic City as well as the metro station as well as how people exercise in Tocopark.
Shops on gradual slopes lead to the metro station and laneway & stairs. Shops on gradual slopes provide open space for shops or other functions. Comic City Access is available from the Central Plaza.

**Conceptual Idea of Sloped Shops in Comic City:**

From the above images, shops are created on the gradual slopes due to the topographic celebration. People can enjoy both walking and shopping from one level to another level smoothly and even from the top Central Plaza to Comic City.
Sections C-D show how people move easily between exterior streets and Central Plaza, as well as how people exercise on the top of Tocopark. Section D-D shows ventilation shafts of metro that are the existing built environment of Central Plaza.
In sections F-F, I am showing the ramps between People’s Park and Central Plaza, where both youths and other people can enjoy the funcky undulating ramps.

In sections 1-1 and 2-2 (overleaf), I am showing how people walk down from People’s Park, Central Plaza and exterior footpath. In section 2-2, the undulating ramps show how youths’ sports are played back and forth in the throng, where other people can enjoy the funny walking as well.

In section 3-3 (overleaf), I am showing how the fluid flowing route gives people a smooth and direct movement from People’s Park to the metro lobby and metro station. There is a focus stage during the middle of route, which allows people to enjoy shows from different angles and levels, such as people who stands on the bridge, or people who are sits or lies on the smooth amphitheatre.
Alternative Design 3 - TOCOPARK
Key Sections

Section 1-1
- B1: Comic City
- B2: Comic City
- B3: Comic City

Section 2-2
- B1: Comic City
- B2: Comic City
- B3: Comic City

Section 3-3
- B1: Comic City
- B2: Comic City
- B3: Comic City

Ramps created for youths’ sports, based on the level difference from People’s Park to Central Plaza.
The sloped square starts from the edge of People's Park.
The definition of ‘edge’ here is the specific design between different levels, different objects, different functions, or between different spaces. Different edges were generated based on specific context. For instance, considering one of the key cultural contexts - there is not enough bench for people to rest due to the high density in the park (P2.3). In addition to primary seating (eg. bench), I tried to create many opportunities for secondary seating in the form of stairways, tree pedestals (undulating seating), stepped seats, seating walls, and so on, which are needed for times and activities when the demand for seating is particularly great. This is also inspired by the case study of Federation Square (P54). As a result, they work with the whole gradual sloped plaza.
As a part of secondary seating (e.g. seating walls, stepped seating & seating planters), the undulating seating are generated gently from the sloped ground like little waves, which maintains the big picture of Tocopark in a fluid form. People can walk through without too much manoeuver. In addition, due to the local hot and humid climate context, sitting on it with nice shade is a good idea. As you see from the above, there are four different types of undulating seating that are created based on different situations (see P92 for specific sections).
Alternative Design 3 - TOCOPARK

Occupation Celebration

Activities and occupation are some of the key cultural contexts of Central Plaza. How do I celebrate occupation in Tocopark?

Tocopark is a sort of space that allows people to occupy where they like more flexibly and to move easily through it. As previously mentioned, the locals exercise on the paving but not on lawn, so a big lawn won’t occur in Tocopark. In addition, the majority of people pass through Central Plaza due to its location, if there are too many long borders or edges that separate an open space into small parts, people wouldn’t move easily and its use is limited. For celebrating occupation, I prefer something like dots, such as trees and seating, set in an open space, that allow people to enjoy the freedom of movement and to enjoy occupying space nearly wherever they like, with adequate shade, as well as having seats to rest (see opposite perspective).

I set the position of trees by considering in there is enough soil to plant trees due to basement and the gradual sloping down of the square. Also, according to the previous analysis of activities occupation (P24-26), basically, in People’s Park, the smallest space occupied is around 5x5m² like group kicking shuttlecock (this is such a popular activity in People’s Park). The largest space occupied is about 15x20m² like group dancing or ballroom dancing that are also extremely popular. So, as you see from the above left enlarged plan, the shortest distance on the nearly flat ground between trees is more than 5 metres.

Due to the local climate and the demand of the active group activities, people love occupying the main road of People’s Park (P25) where there is enough volume, concrete paving and especially it is under the shade of towering trees. They hardly exercise on lawn.

The diagrams (right) represent the flexible occupation possibilities based on different volumes of activities between trees, seating and under shade.
Alternative Design 3 - TOCOPARK
Perspective looking to people's activities and occupation
Activities and Occupation Comparison

To test my design and offer a comparison, I diagramed the spatial occupation. Tocopark is better than the existing Central Plaza’s. For example, in Tocopark, due to the various sizes of spatial volumes (see perspective in opposite page), people occupy space and enjoy their activities more easily, while the existing Central Plaza cannot afford various spatial volume for people because there are too many narrow paths with planting areas except the centre plaza.
Alternative Design 3 - TOCOPARK
Perspective looking to Focus Stage along the fluid plaza
Summary of Tocopark

Strengths

Tocopark focuses on the topographic celebration that leads to a fluid plaza from the edge of People’s Park flowing through Tocopark till the underground Comic City and the metro station. In other words, the fluid quality leads to an easy circulation and diverse walking experience, as well as a funny shopping experience in Comic City. For example, it creates more level differences and allows people enjoy various movements and spaces (eg. stepped amphitheatre, smooth amphitheatre, focus stage, smooth flow, undulating ramp and easy movement, as well as the underground sloped shops). On the other hand, the fluid quality also offers opportunities to the youth for playing extreme sports like skateboarding, BMX and roller-skating. For instance, they could skateboard from the top plaza down to Comic City till the metro station. According to the previous analysis of people’s behaviours in People’s Park and Lingnan Culture, the local people love watching and learning from each other, they even never mind being bothered. Tocopark does give people of different ages more opportunities to stimulate one another. In a way the interplay of form and use of Tocopark thus represents the particular qualities of the local living Lingnan Culture (open-minded, good at incorporating and innovative).

Tocopark also focuses on the occupation celebration that leads to more flexibility for people to occupy, because the entire plaza nearly opens up without too much borders except for the shade and secondary sittings (eg. steps & pedestals) created by trees. Different size’s spaces are occupied for times and the demand for different activities. In some ways, the trees and undulating seats become edges offering some protection for rest and activities.

Weaknesses

The fluid plaza with basement leads to less tree planted because some places are not able to offer enough soil for trees. Without shade, activities wouldn’t happen in hot days over there.

Borders can offer relatively enough protection for private or passive activities to happen more easily. But the celebration of occupation in Tocopark leads to few borders, except for trees and seats in the plaza. In contrast, there are a great deal of borders in Occupark where the space still opens up. According to Jan Gehl, ‘the most popular places to sit can be found at the edges of open spaces, where the sitter’s back is protected, the view unobstructed...’ Thus, spaces protected by something like planting area, walls or a row of trees, would be the most popular places to be occupied. The rest of the open space (like those with spot trees and undulating seating) which lack of enough protection, would become the secondary popular places to be occupied.

What I learned from Tocopark is how to celebrate the key contexts of a site more intensively. Although there are weaknesses produced by the intensive celebration design approach, Tocopark brought me a lot of fun and surprise through the design celebration. On the other hand, I realise that there is no perfect design in the world. There is diverse design approaches and a variety of design possibilities if I keep exploring.
CONCLUSION

Research Questions

Can Landscape be created like a caricature? How can the key characteristics of a site be celebrated in different ways through design? Can potential design possibilities be generated through celebrating the key characteristics of a site’s contexts?

My research started with the idea of ‘Identity’, as the existing Central Plaza copies the physical form of an adjacent park (People’s Park) in a simplistic way without considering its own unique key contexts. Personally, it is a kind of design merely on a graphic level, and I think every location and context is different. Careful consideration of both physical and cultural contexts is what a landscape architect undertakes as an essential part of developing a design, however, how can a stronger or more interesting idea be created for a specific site? One day, the idea of CARICATURE suddenly occurred to me when I was having a shower. What I find inspirational about caricature is the aspect of ‘Celebration’ which it encourages. Just as a site has unique characteristics and each of them can be celebrated differently, each caricature celebrates the particular physical and emotional characteristics of a single, unique original identity. Each successful caricature can be related clearly to the key characteristics of its own identity, so you can still recognize the person and you are encouraged to have fun as well in that game of recognition. By ‘Celebration’ I mean the carefully chosen, positive exaggeration, intensification and emphasis of key characteristics which reveal how good, how important, or how unique the site is. ‘Celebration’ is an act of revealing and sharing the positive potential qualities of a site. In terms of landscape design, what I sought to do is to reinforce the key qualities of my site through design or designs which would emphasize.

If landscape is thought about and designed like caricatures are created, some interesting possibilities can be generated for design responses. Before celebrating, it is necessary to make sure that the site contexts have been fully analyzed and understood. After that, we can celebrate particular qualities through design.

What I learned from the Research Process

To discover and understand the key contexts of Central Plaza, I have undertaken analysis, including geographic context, urban context, environmental context, edge context, activity and occupation analysis, as well as examination of the particular qualities of the living local Lingnan Culture. I discovered that the key contexts of Central Plaza are the topography, the relationship of activities between People’s Park, Central Plaza and Comic City, people’s activities and occupation, the circulation systems, and the local climate. They inspired my own design works. When I celebrated some of the key contexts (i.e. topography, activity and occupation), other contexts were considered simultaneously (i.e. the local climate and the particular qualities of Lingnan Culture).

I also did case studies of different contemporary plaza spaces and I learned different things from each of them. For instance, I learned how to celebrate a culture from Argyle Square Piazza. I learned how to celebrate the experience of fluid movement and how to design from starting with circulation systems from Yokohama International Port Terminal. I also learned how to celebrate multiple things in a project as well as edge design and design’s geometry from Federation Square.

I have produced three different alternative designs for Central Plaza based on the conceptual idea of ‘caricature’. They are called Topopark, Occupark and Tocopark. Topopark started from a focus on the physical context of the site – that is, its topography. It celebrates the topographic context as well as the relationship of the activities between and beneath Central Plaza and People’s Park. Occupark focuses on the celebration of the various types of occupation activities which take place. Tocopark started around the possibility of generating the plaza’s organisation from the organization of circulation systems and combines to celebrate both topography and active occupation. Although Tocopark is more intensive than Topopark and Occupark in terms of the idea of celebration, all three have different strengths and weaknesses. Like the example of the caricatures of Ronaldinho, the same identity is celebrated in different ways, but you still can recognize him in each one and enjoy them equally as well, because all of them relate to the key characteristics of his appearance and personality.

After nearly two-years’ research, what I think is different and much clearer. I now realize that, before starting or developing a stronger conceptual or design idea, a thorough analysis and understanding of the contexts of a site is essential. Also, compared to the abstract importance we may try to give to particular symbols and forms, people’s behaviors and activities are more important and useful to consider as design generators. When these things are considered intensively, something potential or interesting can be generated and new forms can be created unexpectedly. This is the biggest surprise and celebration of all!

What I learned from the Masters

Before I undertook this Masters research, I learned from work practice that design was about problem-solving, decoration, how to use materials and how to build pleasant physical conditions. What I thought was quite pragmatic without any of the excitement of ‘celebration’. What I created were always ordinary and unoriginal ideas. I used to believe that there was only one best design outcome for a project. This sort of simple, systematic thinking also used to be the only goal of my Masters project. During these two years, I have learned diverse design approaches. I realize that design approaches can vary and that there is a lot of fun in design and in unexpected challenges. Design is not just about fixing problems. Design is about celebration!

‘Caricaturalism’

The design disciplines have gone through something of a metamorphosis in recent years (e.g. Modernism, Phenomenology, Structuralism, Postmodernism and Poststructuralism), they are now more and more receptive to the whole domain of cultural theory, including landscape architecture. During recent years, a great deal of projects like Federation Square and Yokohama International Port Terminal, celebrate and emphasize the key qualities of the site through design, and finally an intensive space or architecture is created interestingly. Accordingly, I can define these design ideas as ‘Caricaturalism’. I might be just kidding...

‘Caricaturalism’ – it is time to CELEBRATE, it is time to ROCK IT! Are you ready?
Endnotes

Caricature:

The Site:
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3. ‘Beijing Road Pedestrian Mall’, Invest Guangzhou, 59.41.8.115, 14/12/06.
6. ‘Beijing Road Pedestrian Mall’, op. cit., 14/12/06.
7. Brief Introduction of Guangzhou People’s Park, People’s Park, 05/05/07.
8. ‘Beijing Road Pedestrian Mall’, op. cit., 14/12/06.
9. ‘Beijing Road Pedestrian Mall’, op. cit., 14/12/06.

Lingnan Culture:
5. ‘The History of Guangzhou’, op. cit., 05/05/07.
7. ‘The History of Guangzhou’, op. cit., 05/05/07.
10. Id.
15. ‘Lingnan Culture’, op. cit., 29/04/07.

Critique of the existing Central Plaza:

Argyle Square Piazza:
2. Id., p.6.
3. Id.
6. Id., p.7.
7. Id., p.6.
8. Argyle Square Piazza Paving PORPHYRY SUBMISSION, p.15.
10. Id., p.9.
12. Id.
13. Italian Cultural Institute, Melbourne, www.iccme homepage.melbourne.esteri.it, 03/12/06.
15. Id., p.23.
17. ‘RMIT designers pave the way of public art’, RMIT University, www.rmit.edu.au, 02/11/06.

Yokohama International Port Terminal:
2. Id.
5. Id., p.261.
8. Id., p.258.
9. Id., p.259.

Federation Square:
2. Id.
3. Id., p.39.
4. www.askoxford.com, 29/06/07.
7. Id., p.94.
9. Id.

Occupark:

Tocopark:
3. Gehl, Jan, op. cit., p.158.

Conclusion:
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