

01

Public Space Along the Central Escalator

Academic Work
Teamwork

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Hong Kong is known as a city of density. Limited land use make the built environment of Hong Kong a product of simple economic rules: to maximize the value and efficiency. However, what is more impressing for every person who have ever visited Hong Kong is the vitality of urban life. People adapt to the built environment and transform it to a more flexible and even more efficient one.

The Central-Mid-Level Escalator, the longest outdoor escalator in the world, is a product of efficiency, carrying workers from upper level of the mountain to the central business district. Along the escalator is a collector of urban patterns of Hong Kong, from dense Tong Houses to large scale skyscrapers. The spontaneous transformation of urban patterns make the trip through the escalator a kaleidoscope of urban spectacles, filled with street wisdom vitality.

Density is only part of "Hong Kongness", the bottom-up evolution is the essence. We try to find out the mechanism of this evolution. Following it trend, a new version of urban pattern is proposed to solve current problems, combine the interests of different stakeholders and integrate top-down and bottom-up methodologies

The urban pattern is not a statistic system, but a dynamic one with bottom-up modifications.



Hong Kong: A City of Transformation

Starting as a colonial city, the history of Hong Kong is turbulent. Hong Kong Island witnessed the tremendous change of urban environment in the past 150 years. It went through population explosion of immigrants from mainland China, who built up thousands of shanties on this small island. It witnessed the destruction of these shanties by a horrible fire and also the construction of skyscrapers in the world financial centre.

Along the contour of Hong Kong Island, an escalator was built, cutting through the areas which present the transformation of the city.

Mid-Level Escalator: A Representative of Vertical Efficiency

The escalator was built for transportation purpose. Hugely shortened the time for residence who live on the mountains to commute down to Central financial centre along the coast. With shops, bars and historical spots along the escalator, it has become a famous tourists' destination to see the hustle and bustles in HK. Finished construction in 1993, the escalator carried 80,000 people every day, presenting the extremely busy and lively image of an Asian metropolis.

Along the escalator: The evolution of urban patterns

1 Efficiency: to maximize the utility of land

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financial centre along the coast. With shops, bars and historical spots along the escalator, it has become a famous tourists' destination to see the hustle and bustles in HK. Finished construction in 1993, the escalator carried 80,000 people every day, presenting the extremely busy and lively image of an Asian metropolis.

2 Asianess: to fix the rigidness in everyday life

To fix the rigidness of the original built environment, bottom-up and informal solutions were brought out by citizens in Hong Kong. They **combine, subdivide, rearrange** the original patterns and make use of the grids of built environment, vertically and horizontally.

"Hong Kong cannot exist without the informal, because it is the identity of Asian metropolis. They are the ghost of Asianness."²

3 Integration bottom-up + top-down evolution

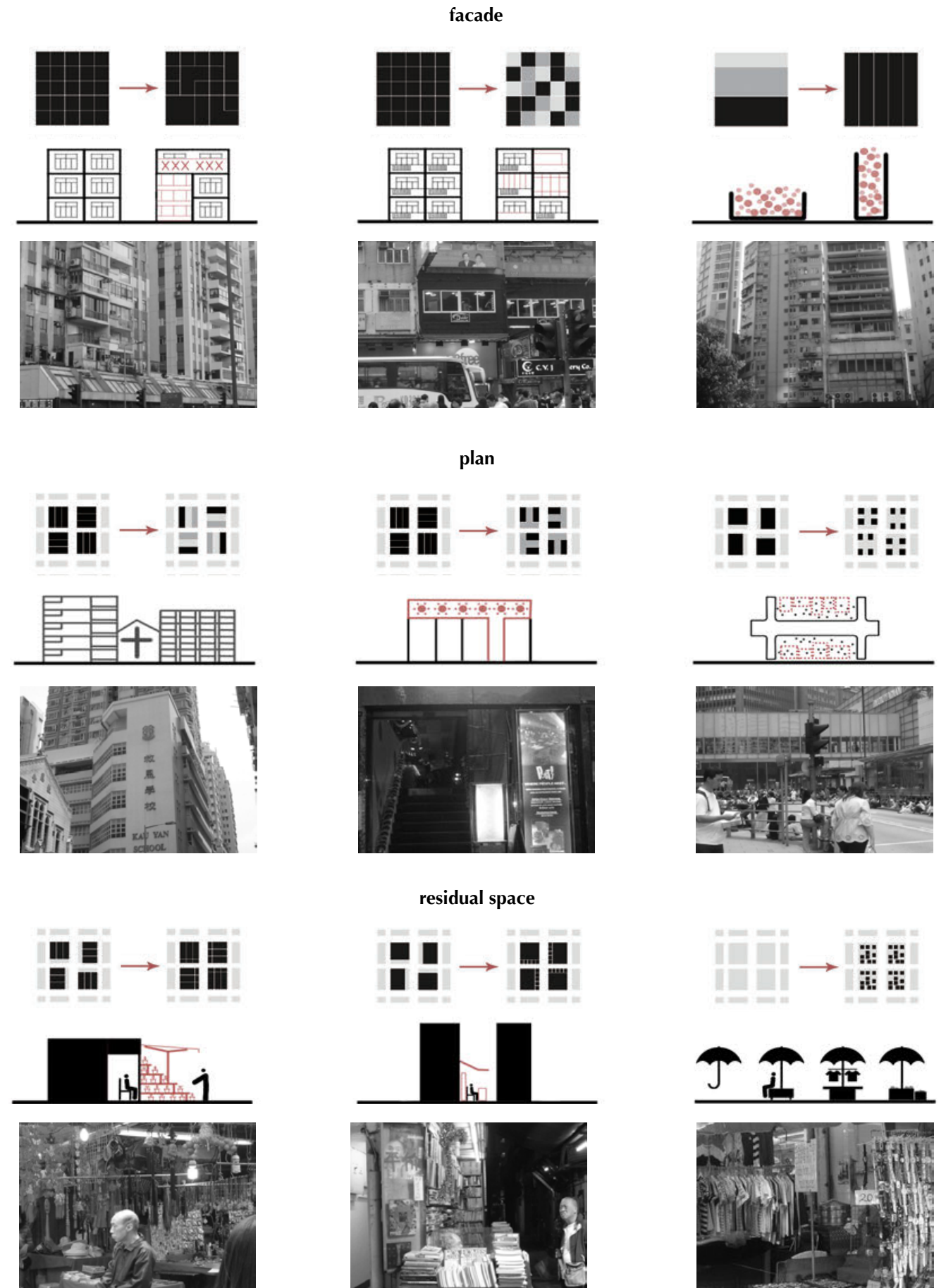
The urban environment is still in development. The conflicts between the built environment and informal solutions have come to a balance and also a dilemma.

Therefore, we try to propose a new version of urban pattern which can combine the efforts made by each side to achieve their stakes. **By integrating their needs in the form of urban pattern, the urban form is transformed toward a more friendly, equitable win-win situation.**

- 1 cover image edited from the aerial photo from airpano.com
- 2 Zhang Weiping, *Invisible Logic: Hong Kong, as Asian Culture of Congestion*, Nanjing, Southeast University Press, 2009
- 3 Barrie Shelton, Justyna Karakiewicz and Thomas Kvan, *The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric*, Routledge, 2010
- 4 Adam Frampton, Jonathan D Solomon, Clara Wong, *Cities without Ground: A Hong Kong Guidebook*, ORO editions, 2012



Photos credit to Georgios Teknais

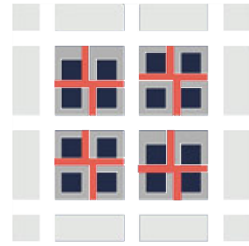
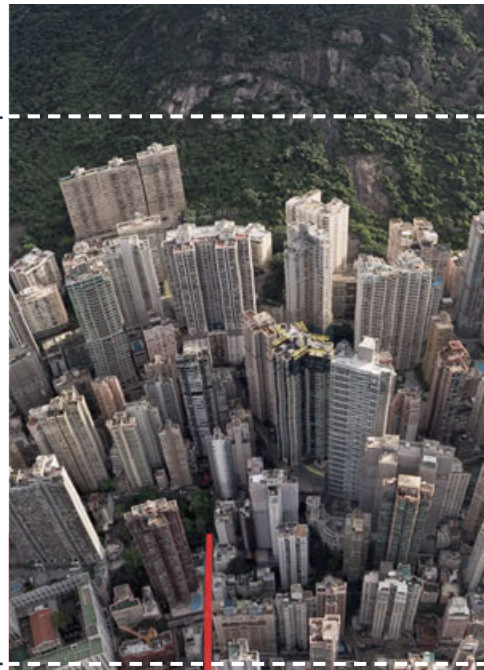


Photos credit to Zhang Weipin

The Evolution of Urban Patterns, horizontally and vertically

Along the Escalator:
Urban Patterns to be **Updated**

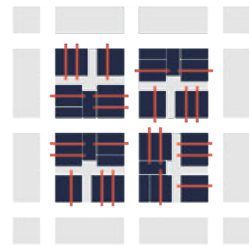
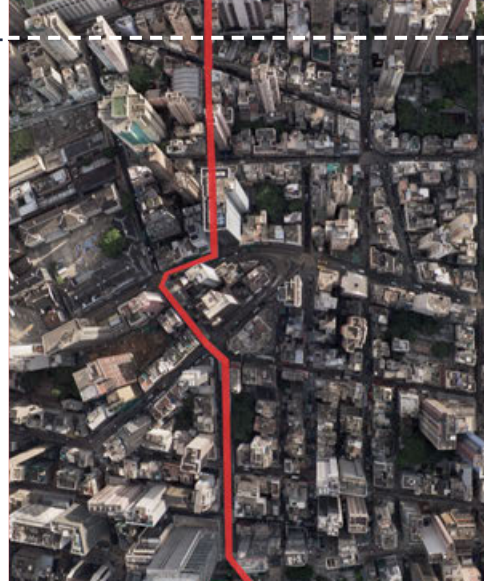
Mid-level



Privatization

Residential buildings were built as separated towers and podiums, with **zero connection to their neighbors.**

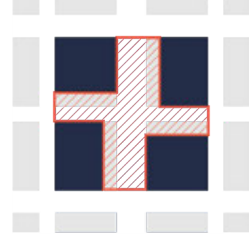
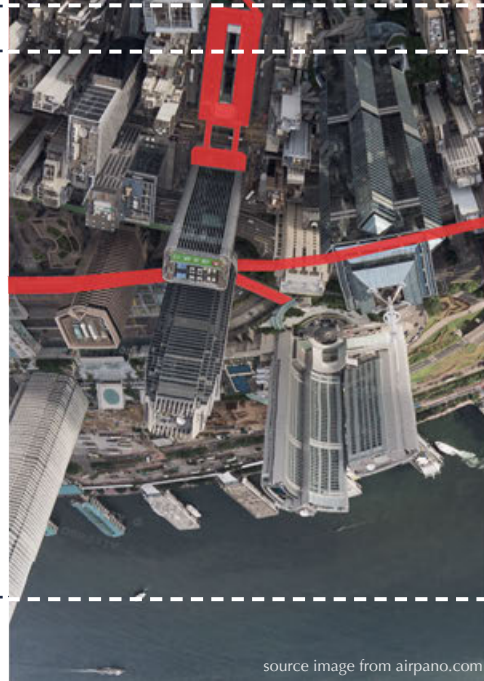
Soho



Change of Use

The buildings were originally built as **residential buildings**, but now the apartment were turned in to **shops and bars.**

Central



Inhuman Scale

Large scale skyscrapers and streets make it **terrifying and inconvenient to walk on ground level.**

source image from airpano.com

Mid-level
residential buildings

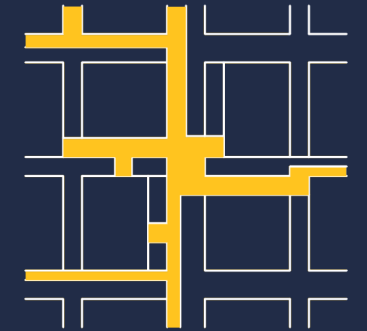
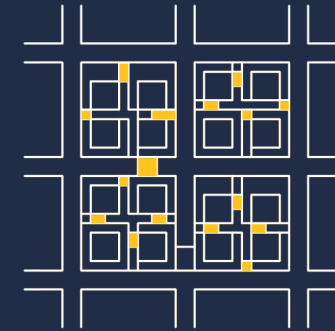
Soho
shops and bars

Central
financial center

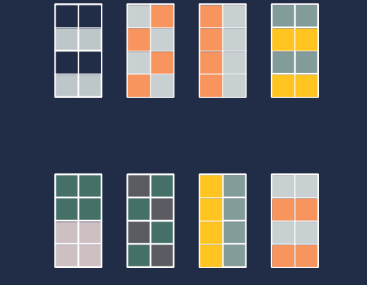
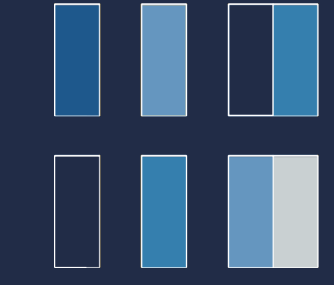
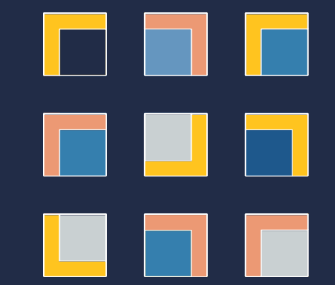
Step 1



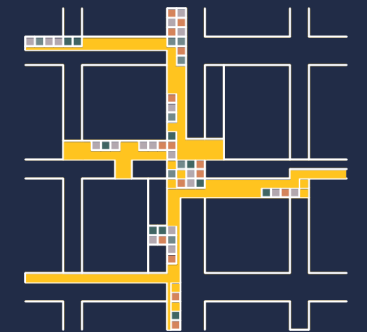
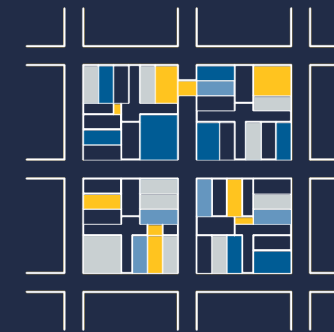
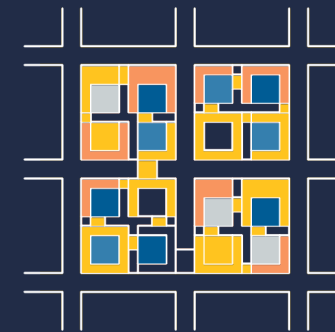
Step 2



Step 3



Step 4



INTEGRATION

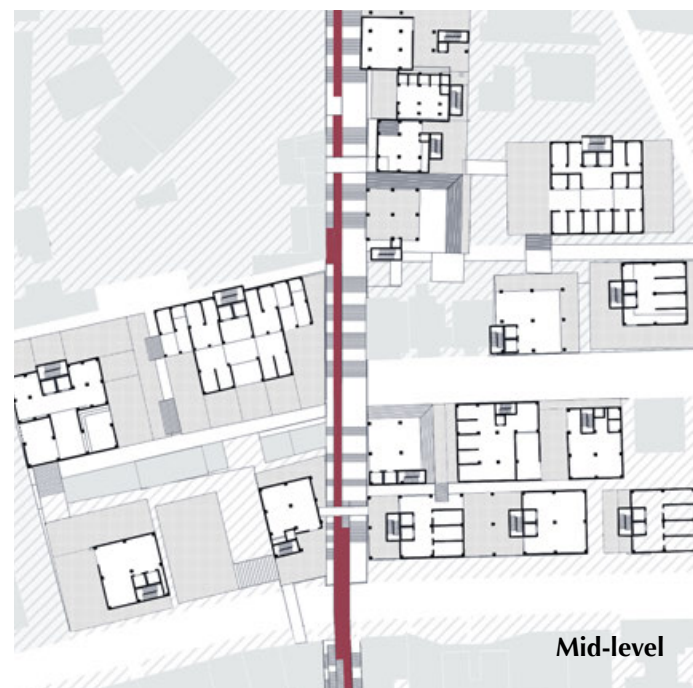
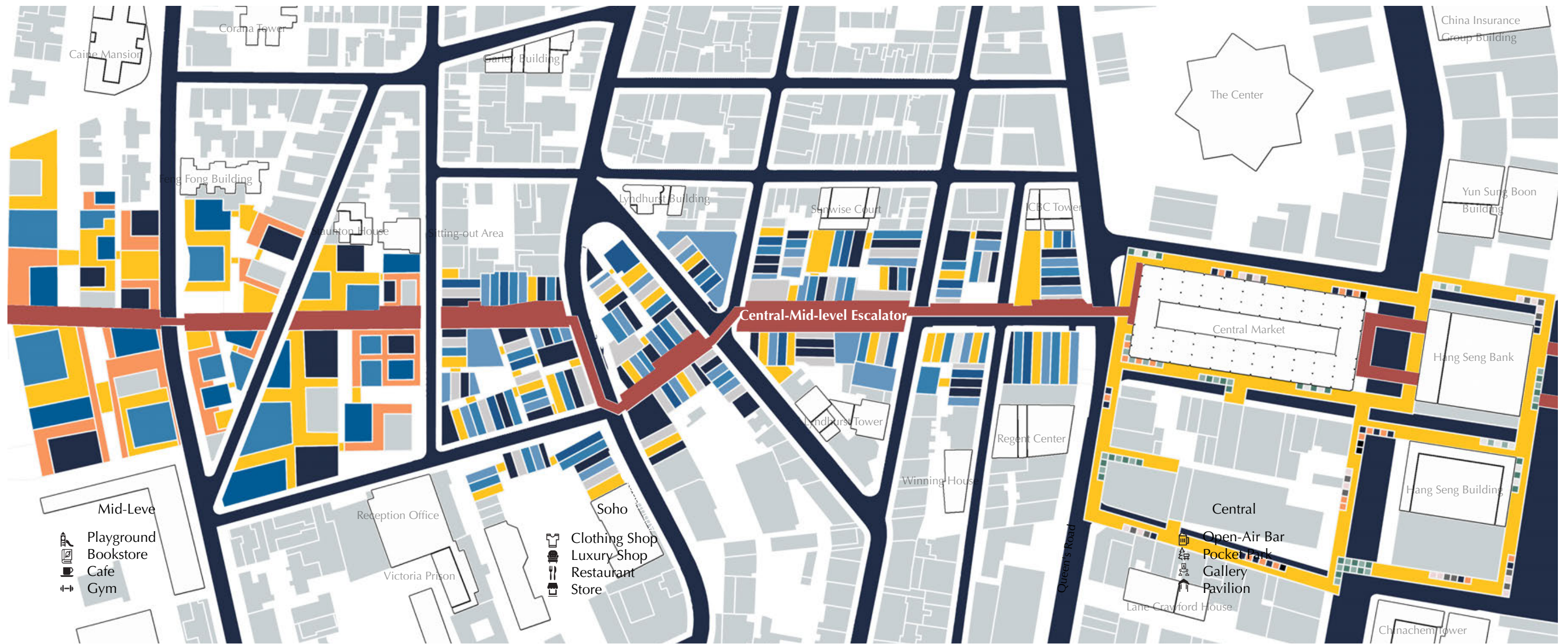
- 1 Analyse current condition
- 2 Connect separated residential buildings
- 3 Urban room typology
- 4 Integrate into interrelated system

RECOMPOSITION

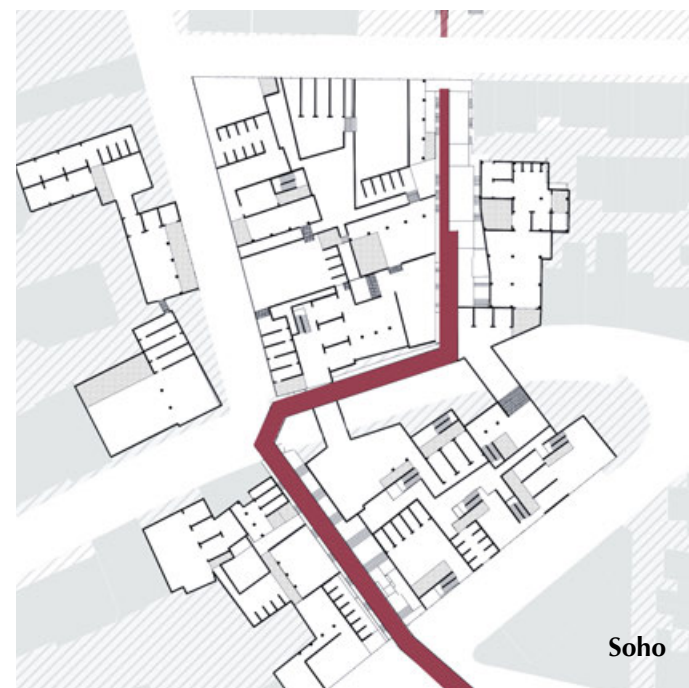
- 1 Analyse current condition
- 2 Break the walls and bridge the gap between buildings
- 3 Urban room typology
- 4 Rearrange the former residential rooms to shops

STUFFING

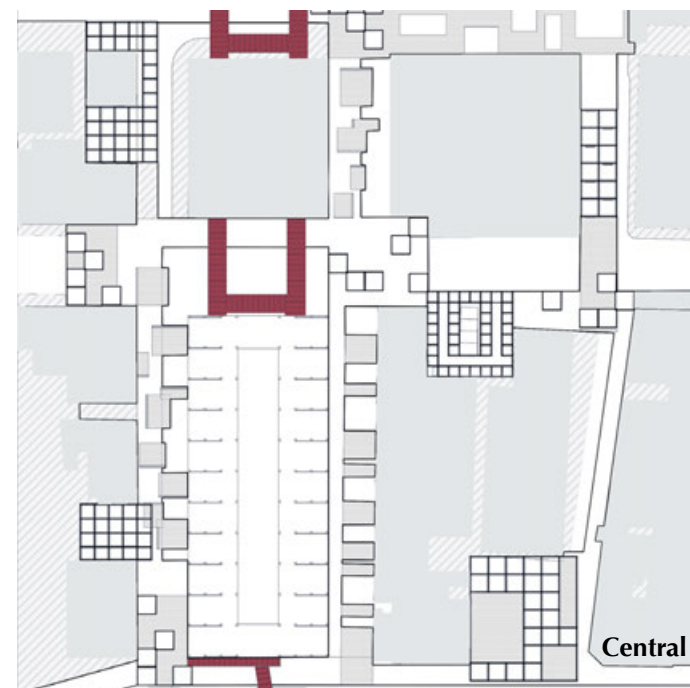
- 1 Analyse current condition
- 2 Lifted platform as an elevated ground floor
- 3 Urban room typology
- 4 Infill the gaps between skyscrapers with public space



Mid-level



Soho



Central

Urban Patterns Along the Escalator

The form of present urban pattern can not meet up with the needs of current activities. Public spaces could be re-created from high-density spaces.

At **Mid-level**, the area is filled with high-rise residential buildings. The tops of the podiums were meant to be the compensatory space for activities on the ground. But the area of a single building is limited and facilities for each building were monotonous and repetitive.

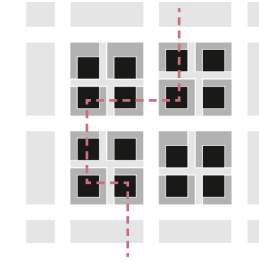
At **Soho**, former residential buildings were turned into various kinds of merchandizing activities. The form of residential buildings can no longer satisfy the needs of different shops.

At **Central**, skyscrapers and wide roads make the walking experience on ground level uncomfortable. It also has great shortage on green land and leisure spaces for office workers to relax.



INTEGRATION

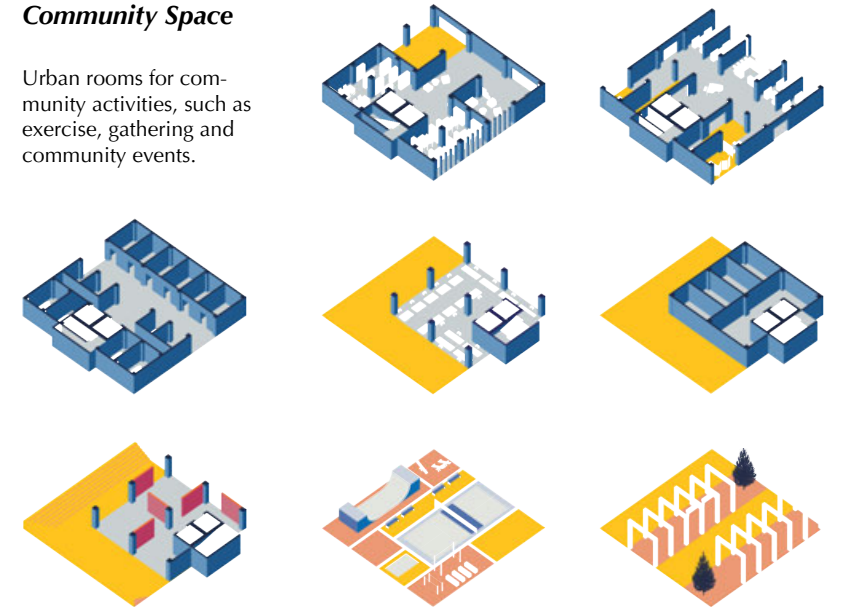
Mid-Level: Residential Buildings



Connect the top of the podiums and made them cultural and exercise spaces for the neighbourhood. From monotonous and repetitive activities to an integrated system of outdoor activities. An experience of passing through indoor and outdoor urban rooms.

Community Space

Urban rooms for community activities, such as exercise, gathering and community events.

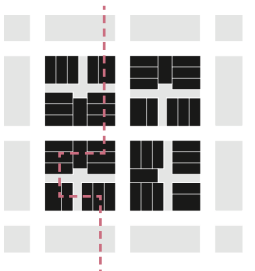


walking in and out



RECOMPOSITION

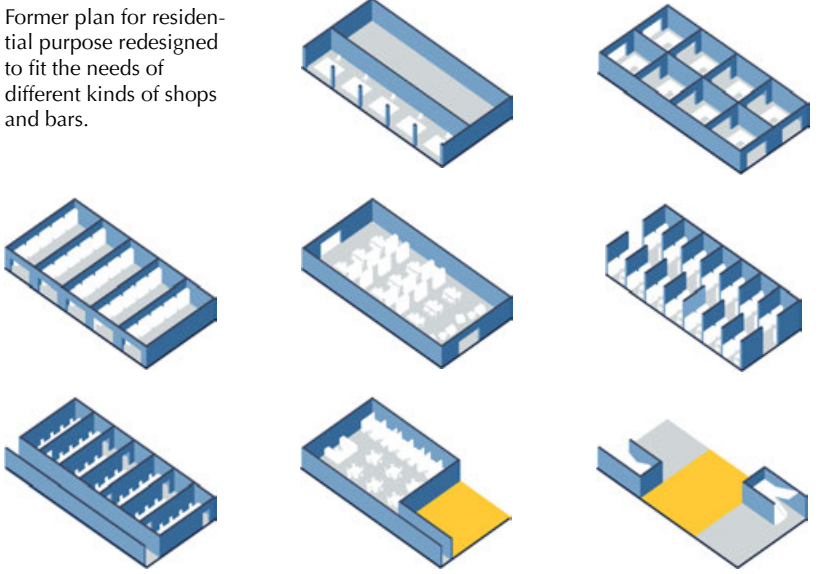
Soho: Shops and Bars



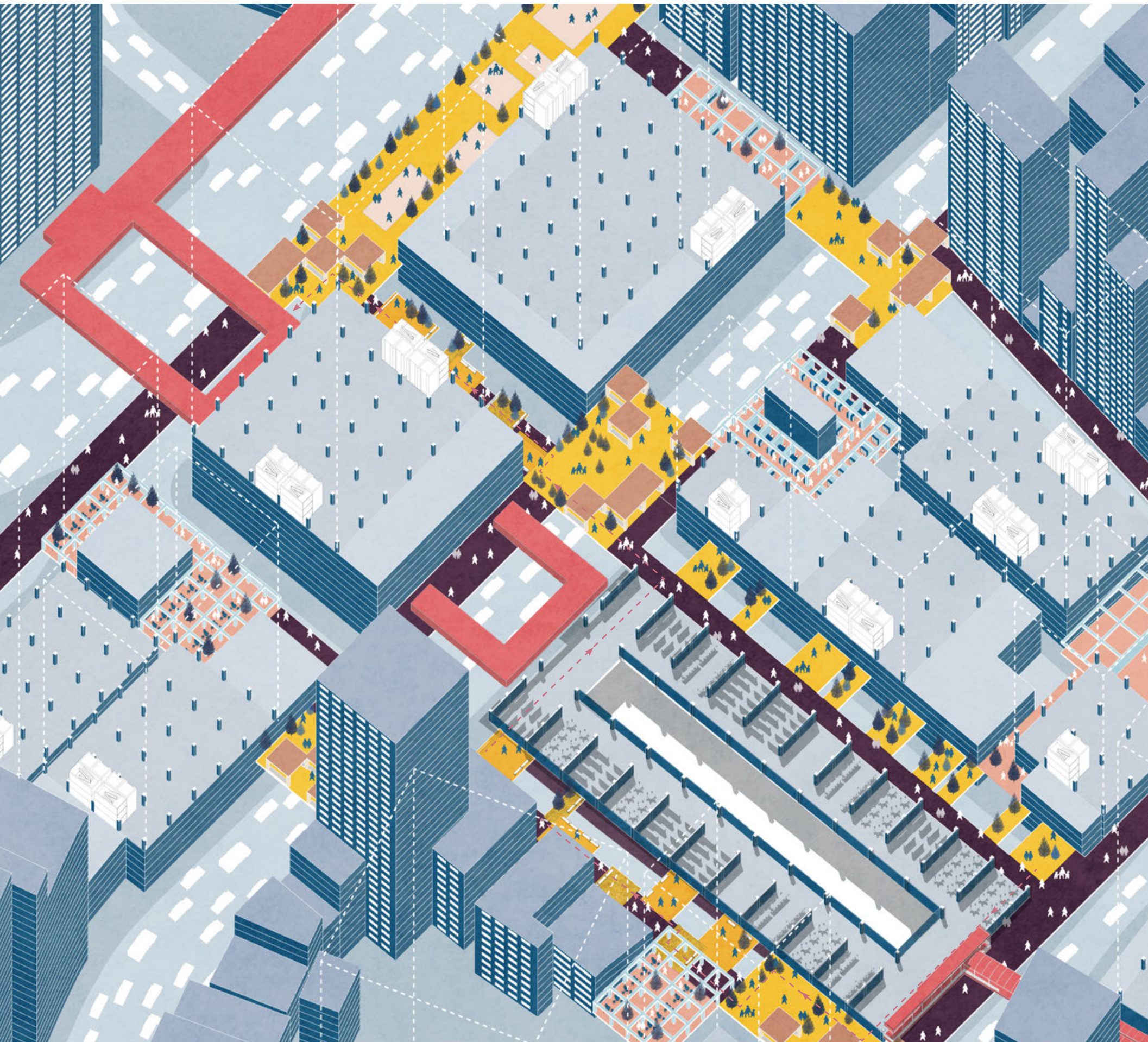
Combine and subdivide rooms to fit different needs of shop. Breaking down the walls and bridge certain gaps between buildings to create an unblocked circulation, this will give meanders an endless experience of passing through.

Commercial Space

Former plan for residential purpose redesigned to fit the needs of different kinds of shops and bars.

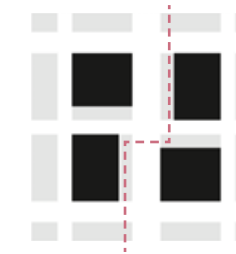


passing through endless rooms



STUFFING

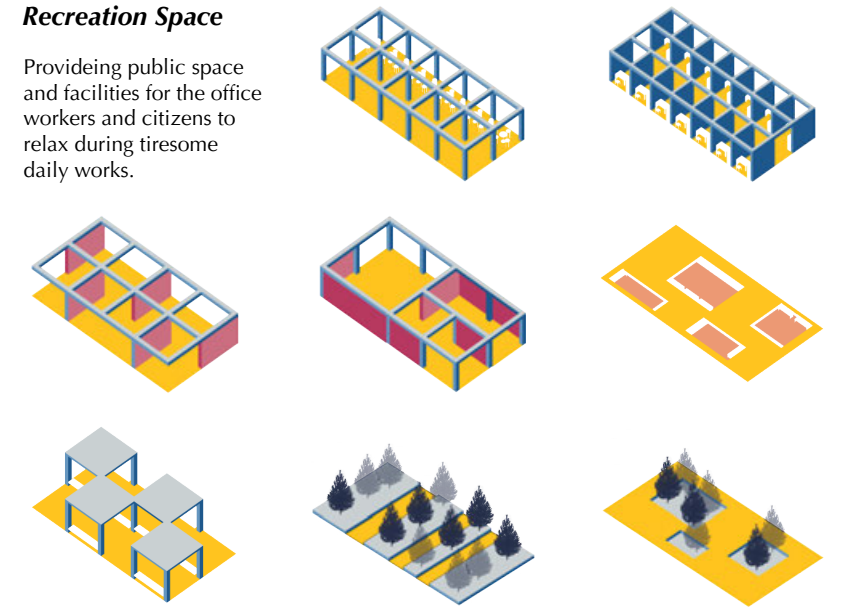
Central: Financial Center



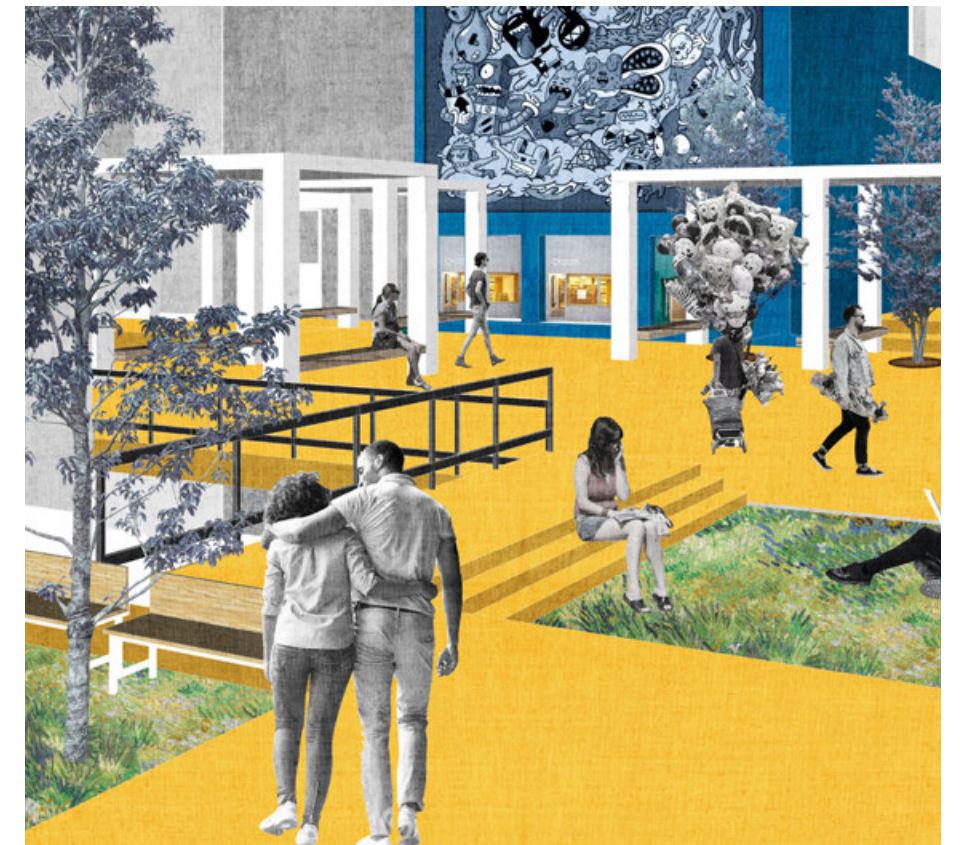
Input an elevated platform between skyscrapers as new ground floor. This platform being planted upon it will create an elevated urban pattern with street atmosphere.

Recreation Space

Providing public space and facilities for the office workers and citizens to relax during tiresome daily works.



walking through concrete forest



Mid-level

An integrated system of community activities on the top of the podiums

Indoor: providing public facilities, such as community gallery
Outdoor: public space and playgrounds, for gathering and exercise

Soho

An endless experience of meandering

Indoor: clothing shops, cafe and bar, bookshops etc.
Outdoor: residual spaces which can be used for street vendors

Central

Street activities taking place on the elevated ground

Indoor: facilities providing free space to relax
Outdoor: spaces for street arts and other activities to happen