

INTRODUCTION

Shenzhen's transformation within a generation from a rural fishing village to a thriving metropolis, home to 10 million people, and almost as many enterprises, illustrates how the pressure of rapid urbanization can be accommodated to create a livable, efficient and productive city. At the epicentre of China's reform policies launched in 1979, Shenzhen's planners,

authorities' and institutions, have largely kept pace with the unprecedented waves of urban migration which have averaged over 300,000 people per year for the past 30 years. Shenzhen has also largely met the challenges of transforming its housing from the dormitory worker style of the early years to the desirable residential districts now keenly sought after by its increasingly affluent population.

For centuries, Shenzhen was an unremarkable fishing village clinging to the coast of China, on the edge of the Pearl River. Its fortunes changed with the advent of the Reform and Opening program initiated by Deng Xiaoping. 1979 saw the establishment in Shenzhen of China's first Free Trade Zone (FTZ), a restricted area where businesses could trade unfettered by the close supervision of the government.

With the strong entrepreneurial spirit of its population, and backed by a welter of domestic and foreign capital, the FTZ flourished. As China's economy began to respond to the new market oriented initiatives, hundreds of manufacturing businesses flocked to Shenzhen to take advantage of the liberal economic policies, the increasing supply of low cost labor and cheaper land than in Hong Kong. The distance from Shenzhen to the seat of power in Beijing, over 2000km to the north was certainly no disadvantage, enabling Shenzhen to be a test-bed for reforms, ring-fenced from the rest of the country.

1979

the year when China's first Free Trade Zone (FTZ) was established in Shenzhen

However it was Deng Xiaoping's visit in Spring 1992 that provided Shenzhen the impetus to become the economic powerhouse of Southern China, unleashing a wave of migration on a scale never before witnessed in human history. In the 1990s Shenzhen's population increased fivefold, growing by an average of over half a million people each year for 10 years between 1990 and 2000. The story of how the city coped with the unprecedented influx of workers is a testament to the coordinated efforts of the municipality and provincial governments as well as the spirit of the immigrants.

In the early years, Shenzhen displayed all the characteristics of a boom town with its substandard housing blocks and lack of social and transportation infrastructure. However, by restricting migration to the city to people who had employment, and by making employers responsible for providing accommodation for their workers, Shenzhen mostly avoided the urban squalor and informal housing that plagues many fast growing cities in emerging markets.

500,000

Between 1990 and 2000 Shenzhen's population grew by an average of over half a million people each year

In fact, the rapid growth encouraged land sales and the proceeds from these, and from taxes on new businesses, provided the revenues which gradually allowed urban planning to gain the upper hand. Broad streets were developed, new areas were cleared and services and landscaping were introduced. Schools and hospitals were built, building regulations were enforced, and health and safety concerns addressed to avoid the building collapses and disastrous fires that had plagued the city's initial growth spurt.

At the same time the economy in Shenzhen began to diversify with the growth of the financial and business services sector to complement the dominant manufacturing sector. An airport was developed as well as the world's third busiest deep water container port. The first metro line opened in 2004 and in 10 years the system has extended to 177km, including linkages to Hong Kong, with 5 additional lines under construction.

1. October 1949, PLA led by Communist Party of China arrived in Shenzhen

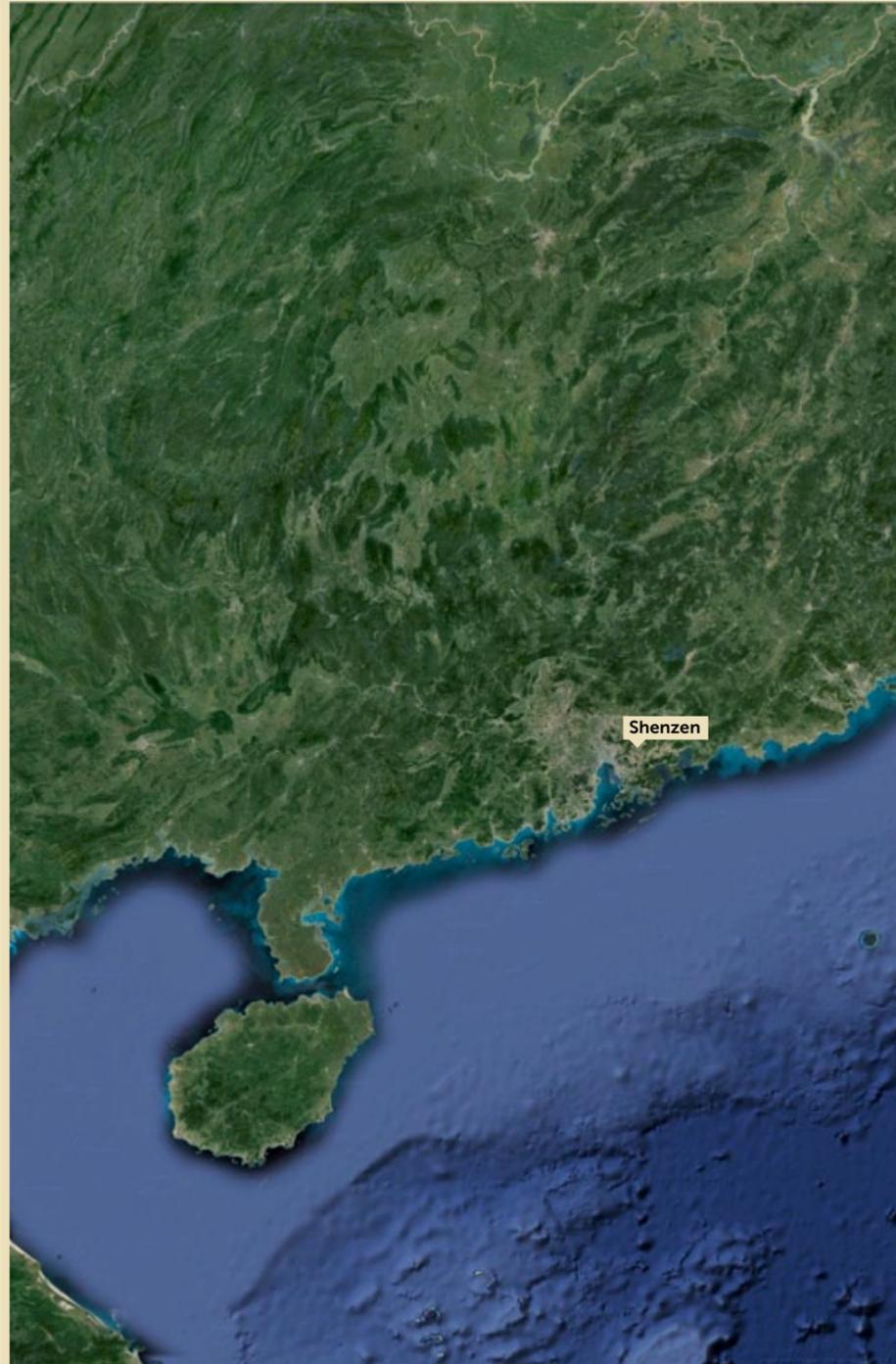


CONCLUSION

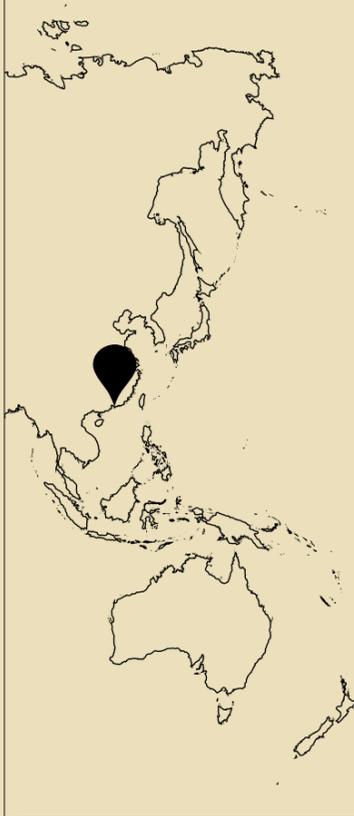
The economic reforms tested in Shenzhen quickly spread throughout the country. Issues remain, but those such as the hukou or registration system, which denies the migrant population the right of permanent residence and access to services within the city, and the serious air pollution which affects many of China's cities are starting to get serious attention, although it will be many years before the problems are eradicated.

CREDITS AND LINKS

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SHENZHEN



COORDINATES
22°33'N 114°06'E
 AREA
159 sq mi
 POPULATION
3,538,275
 DENSITY
22,000 sq mi
 GDP total
\$178 billion
 GDP per capita
\$17,096

2004

The first metro line opened in Shenzhen, now there are 5 additional lines under construction



Shenzhen managed to avoid the urban squalor and informal housing that plagues many fast growing cities in emerging markets

2. Shenzhen by night

3. Picture of the western side of the CBD of Shenzhen, China, looking southwest. The Shenzhen river and rice fields can be seen in the background.

With the strong entrepreneurial spirit of its population, and backed by a welter of domestic and foreign capital, the FTZ flourished

SOURCES

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14

SHENZHEN,
 People's Republic of China

RESPONDING TO THE CHALLENGES OF RAPID URBANIZATION

In collaboration with MIT

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