

URBANIE & URBANUS

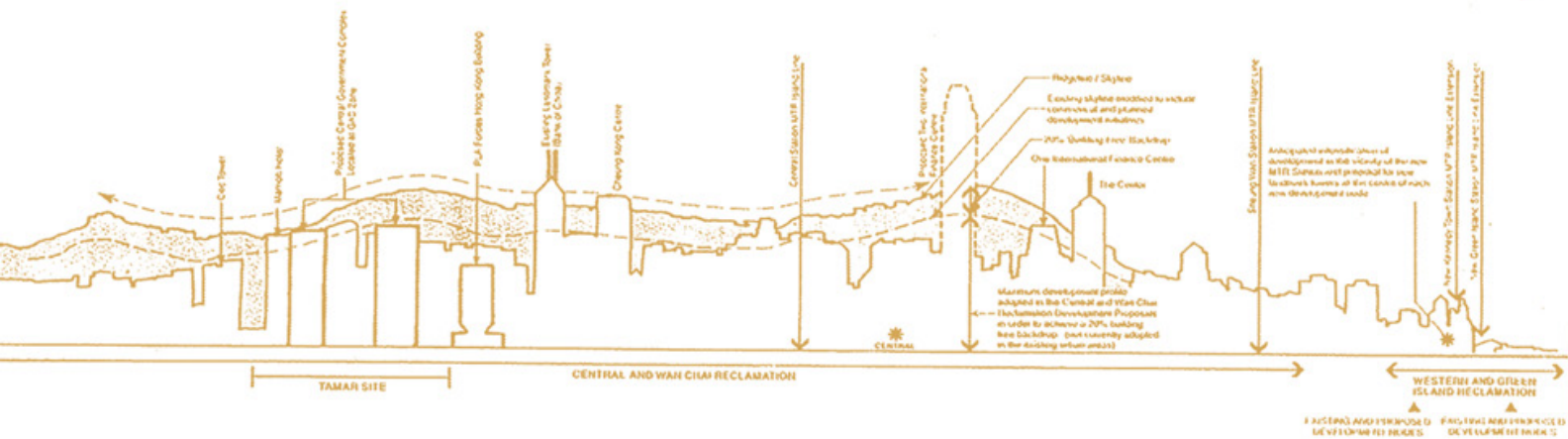


TABLE OF CONTENTS

About U+U	1
'A New Direction For Hong Kong?' Editor's Note	2
HKIUD Vice President's View Barry Wilson	3
A New Direction in Research	
Hong Kong-Zhuhai- Macao Bridge: Crossing The Line? Austin Williams	13
Reconnecting Hong Kong In Time And Space Jing Lu And Gang Wang	24
How Does The Spatial And Built Form Characteristics Of Hong Kong Inform Its Walkability Hee Sun (Sunny) Choi	32
A New Direction in Practice	
Taikoo Place Swire Properties	41
Landscape work at Pacific Place;Ten Years On Fergus Comer	44
Re-interpreting Landscape and Architecture Kwok Yan (Sarah) Lee & Yutaka Yano	46
New Urban Design Books	49

A New Direction for Hong Kong

EDITOR'S NOTE

Currently, we can see lots of big project titles from the websites of the Hong Kong government and prominent local developers, such as 'Lantau Tomorrow Vision', 'Place Making' in Central, Walkability, Smart city, Hong Kong – Zhuhai-Macau Bridge, the Kai Tak development and the West Kowloon Cultural District Development.

With all this taking place I believe it is an essential time to consider and reflect on where Hong Kong is heading, and what the new direction for Hong Kong could be. The origins of urban renewal in urban environments are becoming increasingly complex, and a focus on these should not be crowded out. Issues such as changes to household makeup, land scarcity, air quality and noise require innovative solutions. So it would be worthwhile to de-structure all layers of the built environment to allow us to redefine urban living and working practices.

With this backdrop, U+U Issue No.1 concerns creativity within the urban design process and as a way of solving problems through academic debate, innovative strategies and future-focused management. The first article is from HKIUD vice president Barry Wilson, who offers a view on the 2030+ policy vision for Hong Kong. This is followed by a series of research papers, including the Macau- Zhuhai- Hong Kong Bridge by Professor Austin Williams, Jing Lu & Gang Wang's 'Reconnecting Hong Kong in Time and Space', and an article from myself concerning walkability within specific districts in Hong Kong. These are followed by three practice papers; A developer's perspective on Taikoo Place is offered by Swire Properties, Sarah (Kwok Yan) Lee (HKIA, RIBA, ARB HK/UK) and Yutaka Yano (HKIA, RIBA, ARB)' from SKY YUTAKA Ltd. contribute a paper entitled 'Re-interpreting Landscape and Architecture' and Fergus Comer has written a short piece reflecting after ten years on the redeveloped public space in Pacific Place, Hong Kong. The issue closes with a review of new urban design books.

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IS THE 2030+ VISION VISIONARY?

By Barry Wilson
 HKIUD Vice President

Hong Kong has a land crisis, but it goes beyond mere availability. Not only does there seem to be a fundamental lack of consensus in the actual quantity of new land creation required, if in fact new land is required at all, but more than that, there appears to be a fundamental flaw in the development decision making process. Despite the concerns continually voiced by professionals and public alike about the lack of quality objectives, solid data and visionary thinking in a changing world that should inspire the population and justify key decision making, Hong Kong just cannot break away from building by numbers.

THE DEVELOPMENT PRECEDENT

Hong Kong develops. That's what it does. It builds and expands and has done so for its entire history. But to what end? After all this growth experience, wealth creation, employment generation and skills development you would have thought the city would, by now, have been able to develop the best living experience money can buy? But no, the mass of the population

is seriously unhappy. In fact, they are the least happy people in the developed world and even less happy than most of the populous of the developing world.

Ranking of Happiness		Quality of Living Ranking	
Ranks	Countries/Regions	Ranks	Cities
1	Finland	1	Vienna
2	Norway	2	Zürich
3	Denmark	3	Auckland
...	...	3	Munich
7	Canada	7	Vancouver
...
34	Singapore	25	Singapore
...
70	Libya	68	Belfast
71	Philippines	69	Prague
72	Honduras	70	St. Louis, MO
73	Belarus	71	Detroit, MI
74	Turkey	71	Hong Kong SAR
75	Pakistan	73	Pointe-à-Pitre
76	Hong Kong SAR	74	Dubai
77	Portugal	75	Ljubljana
78	Serbia	76	Budapest
79	Greece	77	Abu Dhabi
80	Tajikistan	78	Montevideo
...
86	China	119	Beijing

Figure 1: World Happiness Report (source:UNSDSU; table: BWPI) & Quality of Living Ranking (source: Mercer; table:BWPI)



Figure 2: Salt Pans at Tai O, Lantau Island circa 1960. (source: industrialhistoryhk.org)

Hong Kong ranks 76th in the 'World Happiness Report' of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) ¹ and 71st on the Mercer 'Quality of Living' index. How will things ever change?

There seems to have always been a need for new land in Hong Kong, started by the reclamation of coastal fields for salt production going back thousands of years. Major reclamation projects started in the mid-19th century with the ambitious 'Praya reclamation' of 1890's by Hong Kong Land, establishing some 24ha of waterfront area in Central.

The development of the New Towns since the 1970's has been mostly built on reclamation including Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Sha Tin, Ma On Shan, West Kowloon, Kwun Tong and Tseung Kwan O. The first phase new towns were primarily aimed at providing housing for the more than a million people living in temporary shacks on hillsides and on boats in typhoon shelters, as well as addressing the continuous migration of refugees from China. The simple, fast techniques for establishing such extensive housing areas at that time were a necessary and bold response to a serious and continued crisis on a huge scale.



Figure 3: Praya Reclamation set the early precedents for continued Hong Kong land development in the 19C. (source: HK Museum of History)



Figure 4: West Kowloon Reclamation as viewed from the Peak in 1994. (source: gakei.com)

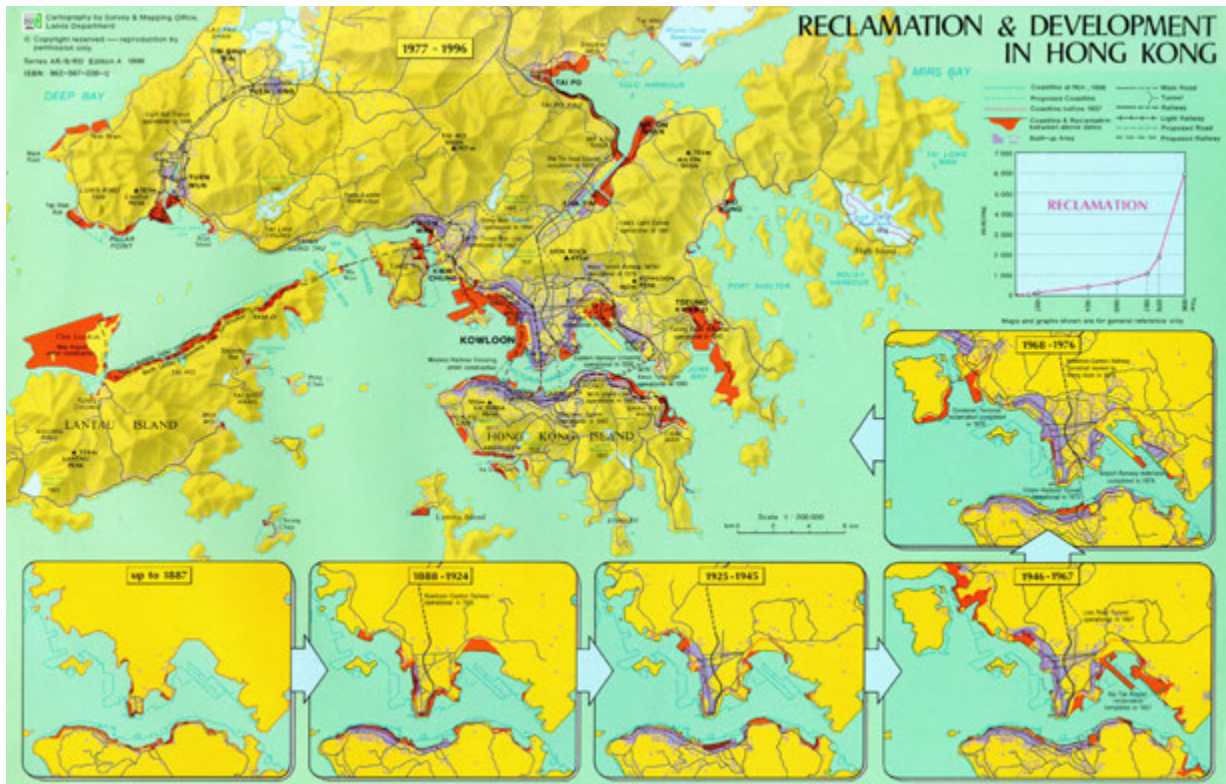


Figure 5: Land reclamation map of Hong Kong from 1851 to 1996. (source: Lands Department, HK)

The achievements of those periods are well acknowledged in rapidly alleviating overpopulation and improving basic quality of life. However, the further planning intent to provide local jobs near to these new developments was unsuccessful as the planners failed to foresee the movement of manufacturing industry to China just several years later in the 1980's. The industrial estates of the first-generation new towns remain largely underutilised and the populations commute extensively to central urban locations. A clear lesson that time doesn't stand still and planning for the future is an inaccurate science, one where anticipating future trends rather repeating those of the past is paramount.

Later new towns, like Tin Shui Wai and Tung Chung, as a result of the industrial shift, did not include for significant local job creation as a major objective and were merely provided as distant commuter settlements, albeit that Tung Chung could service the new airport. However, the planning principles and tenets of new town development have changed relatively little since the 1970's.

Modular construction facilitated super rapid development of Tin Shui Wai for example, officially opened in 1993 with 30,000 residents, it took a further 10 years to connect the town by metro, during which time a series of suicides and family tragedies saw it become known as the "city of sadness". Many of the inhabitants in the cramped public housing were new immigrants from mainland China, often unemployed and unaccustomed to urban life. Situated far away from central areas, disconnected, without

jobs, activities or services. Could this not have been foreseen?

IS THE 2030+ VISION VISIONARY?

Today's land crisis is unlike that of the 1970's. However, we still address it in the same, economic and quantitative terms. Reading the pages of the government's 'long term' policy vision document, "Hong Kong 2030+: Towards a Planning Vision and Strategy Transcending 2030," amongst the plethora of statistics, benchmarks and generalities, one word is conspicuous in its



Figure 6: HK2030+ "towards a planning vision". With climate catastrophe imminent, the vague notions of Hong Kong's future, without any sustainable targets, are totally deficient. (source: hk2030plus.hk)

almost total absence, "quality".

The document states its 'Aspirations and Vision' as "To become a liveable, competitive and sustainable Asia's World City" but gives little clue

as to what liveable should mean, provides no measurable liveability targets or addresses what is a suitable term of vision in the lead up to a critical 2047 and beyond? Edinburgh by contrast has a '2050 City Vision' campaign, initiated 2 years ago.



Figure 7: Vancouver has clear targets to become the world's 'greenest city' by 2020. (source: morethangreen.es)

Vancouver, now widely recognized as one of the most liveable cities in the world, set clear quality goals in 2011 with measurable and attainable targets addressing three overarching areas of focus: Zero Carbon, Zero Waste, and Healthy Ecosystems in its clear vision to become the 'greenest city in the world by 2020.' More than 35,000 people participated in the development of the Greenest City Action Plan which has now been rolled out to a commitment for the city to become 100% renewable by 2050².

Singapore can of course point to its "garden city" quality vision back in 1967 as a strong policy driver to transform itself into a clean environment in order to make life more pleasant for the people³. Nowadays however, the city-state's "Smart Nation" initiatives directly lead to "support better living, create more opportunities, and to support stronger communities⁴". Singapore is already the 'most liveable city' in Asia according to Mercer.

Hong Kong 2030+ is now shaping development decision making, including the decision to create a new East Lantau Metropolis and puts forward three aspirations: - planning for a liveable high-density city; embracing new economic challenges and opportunities; and creating capacity for sustainable growth. That's all well and good but where are the clear living quality targets to meet these aspirations, there's no intent to directly make citizens happier. Does this document really reflect the peoples' aspirations or does it more reflect development inertia? Is this really what the public asked for during consultation on how their future lives will look?

Were the right questions even being asked? Our future thus being planned for us, fails to go much beyond catering to the most basic linear projections based on population change, guesswork and holding the fanciful notion that Hong Kong will continue to grow in much the same way as it has always done. Census and Statistics Department project a peak population of 8.22m in 2043 from 7.4m today. Funny enough that’s an annual growth of 32,000 a year, the current figure, extrapolated for the next 25 years.

Hong Kong Population Growth Will Slow

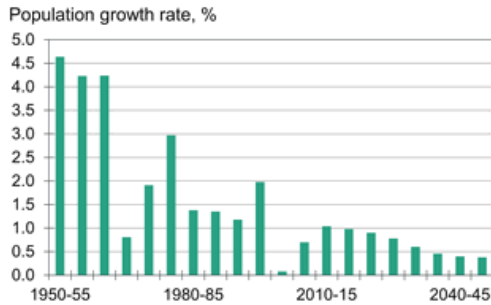


Figure 8: Could the trend be for Hong Kong to move to negative population growth in the near future? (source:United Nations Medium Variant estimate, Moody’s Analytics)

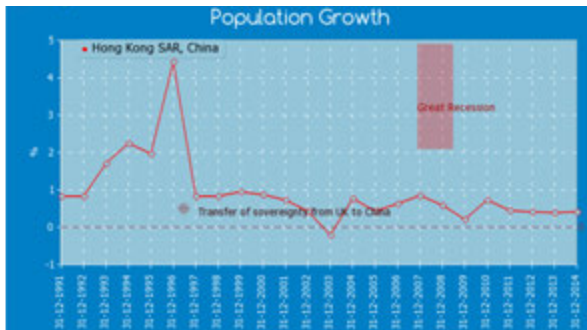


Figure 9: Population Growth (source: Mecometer.com)

But why that figure should stay constant is not clear.

Eminent Hong Kong Architect, Planner, and Urban Designer, Peter Cookson Smith, highlights that the increased economic collaboration of Hong Kong in the Greater Bay Area (GBA) currently being promoted, including potential tax and identity card integration, should lead to more living opportunities in the GBA for Hong Kong residents, where housing costs are significantly lower than in Hong Kong. Around 530,000 Hong Kong residents stayed in Guangdong province for more than 6 out of 12 months in 2017 and in the two months since a new initiative in September, more than 70,000 Hong Kong residents have already submitted an application for a residence permit in the mainland. So whilst Government appears to be encouraging its population to live and work in the GBA, he points out that it paradoxically expects a continued increase in the population of Hong Kong itself. Whatever does happen towards 2047, one thing we can expect is that stable and linear population growth is unlikely to be one of the scenarios.

It’s also worth considering that we have now entered a new epoch; the Anthropocene, and have hurtled into the fourth industrial revolution which will inevitably lead to a shift of the economy’s pillar industries. The speed of current breakthroughs has no historical precedent with evolution at an exponential rather than a linear pace and disrupting almost every industry in every country around the world. 2030+ fails to identify and respond to the paradigm shift arriving with automated transportation and inad-

quately references the implications of increased integration with Mainland towards 2047. The plans and maps exist in virtual isolation from the burgeoning development of Shenzhen.

Back in 2007, when the original 'Hong Kong 2030 Planning Vision and Strategy' was released, population change, integration and technology shift were all highlighted as key issues. What got lost in the intervening ten years?

DEVELOPMENT IN THE RIGHT PLACE

Which brings me to land supply. The current discussion has become overly politicised and focused on rapidly objectifying a dubious target of 1200-hectares of land most easily available for housing rather than taking an approach that identifies specific land units that are clearly the best and most appropriate to create quality mass housing. Is the tail wagging the dog? A numbers game again rather than being about the optimum use of limited resources. In all cases the tenet of "right development in the right place" should be adhered to in order to ensure finite land resources are utilised appropriately and optimally.

Rapid development to a high-density city in the past decades has already witnessed the significant loss of valuable cultural and landscape resources; the cost of which is only recently being appreciated and citizens continue to remain short of provision and access to connected, quality open space that can make them happier. Cultural heritage and natural landscape, once lost, can never be replaced and needs to be considered as a primary asset in any land use debate. Furthermore, the

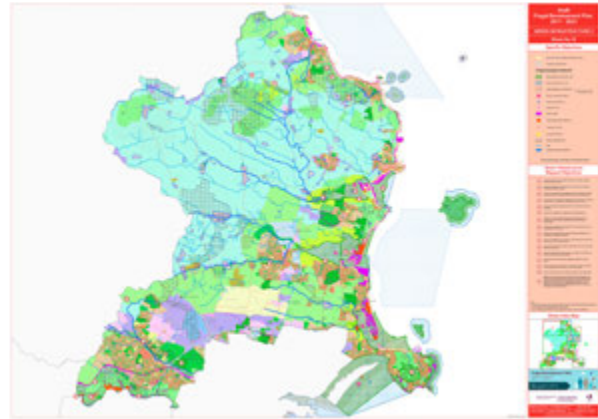


Figure 10: Development Plan demonstrating Green Infrastructure planning for Fingal County, Dublin, Ireland. (source: fingal.ie)

health, wellness and economic benefits to the population in providing easy access to greenspace, quality cultural resources and unique and special places is well researched. Contemporary planning overseas is increasingly driven by green infrastructure (GI) approaches, where 'green' and 'blue' landscape elements set clear parameters providing 'go/no go' areas for future development. The components of GI can be cultural, ecological, agricultural or recreational and include both managed and unmanaged green and blue space. Resources might include cultural heritage attractions, watercourses and drainage reserves, agriculture, sports facilities, urban forests, open space, roadside margins and wetlands that can be linked and used to frame where future development should easily take place around them in a low impact, sustainable model that protects essential ecological processes and systems, performs environmental services such as managing stormwater, recharging groundwater, reducing

the urban heat island effect and cleaning air and water.

Such planning puts into place regulatory and planning policy mechanisms that primarily safeguard valuable land resources, integrate sustainable practices and mitigate against disaster risk whilst importantly identifying the land most appropriate for development. The multi-functionality of this approach is key to the efficient and sustainable use of land, especially in compact and dense situations like Hong Kong where pressures on land are particularly acute. Currently no such green infrastructure system mapping has been undertaken for Hong Kong.

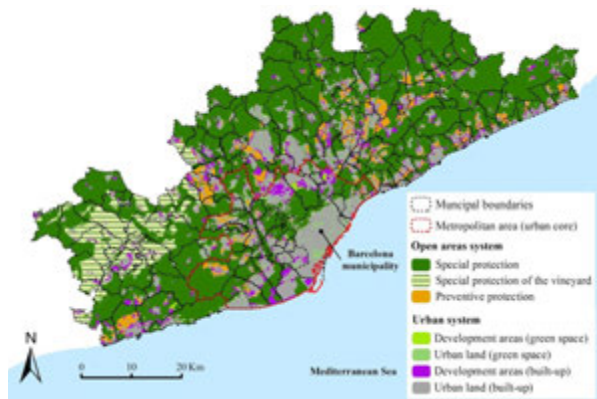


Figure 11: Green Infrastructure planning systems of the Territorial Metropolitan Plan of Barcelona. (source: PTMB)

Our development of land must place a higher intrinsic value on its social, ecological and amenity value, where accessibility, rarity and uniqueness are essential in contributing to the vitality of life. For instance, Fanling Golf Course is a unique cultural, heritage and landscape asset and would form a definitive part of any green infrastructure plan. The suggestion of its

use for housing is derived from a social equity issue above a land resource issue. Its promotion for housing further demonstrates poor appreciation in optimisation of land, whilst it may be appropriate for more public access, its necessity for protection as a cultural and working landscape is paramount.

The undertaking of comprehensive strategic landscape and environmental infrastructure planning should be the first method to objectively highlight the best opportunities for all future land development and thus avoid scattergun land utilisation based on metrics and legalities.

HOUSING OR QUALITY HOUSING

Public housing models developed over the last 50 years have typically been based on household sizes of over 5 persons. This has been falling rapidly in the last 20 years, and households now average 2.8 persons meaning more space per person but more demand for units. The move towards single person living is a clear trend meaning Hong Kong public housing size models are no longer fit for the future, regardless of other systematic failings regarding availability and occupancy. With more new towns already in the pipeline will we get the housing mix right? Kwu Tung North, Fanling North and Hung Shui Kiu are targeted for about 400,000 people; further expansions at Yuen Long South; Kam Tin South; Tung Chung Extension; and Kai Tak – Kowloon East should provide another 400,000 population. These new developments should include a majority percentage of single and double occupancy units which would mean upwards of 400,000 units that could and



Figure 12: Recently Developed Public Housing at Kai-Tak. (source: wikicommons, user Mk2010)

should already be on track. But what are the living quality aspirations beyond the norm for these new communities?

The Hong Kong track record doesn't inspire. The happiness and quality indexes don't lie. If people could live on bridges and roads then Hong Kong would be a world beater. Our development and management model engineers miserable places to live, planned not around people but the vehicle. The ten years between 2003 and 2013 saw the number of road vehicles in Hong Kong rise by 30% despite the known impacts to social equity and population health. Cities such as Paris are currently preparing plans to make public transit entirely free and banish petrol cars by 2030. Meanwhile a recent study suggests that private car ownership across the US will decrease 80 percent by 2030, with stranded assets in traditional motor vehicles by 2025, as manufacturers are fully switched to electric production and municipalities fully automate public transport systems⁵. Hong Kong

seems to be behind the curve in transitioning and the vast amount of land currently allocated to roads, on / off street parking, fuel stations and transport depots needs urgent reassessment. All new housing provision needs to be based on innovative, car-free development models and prototypes urgently need to be put in place that can form a modern generation of housing stock types.

Land development options can only therefore be based on a much more sophisticated and integrated planning vision, that goes well beyond that set out in 2030+. Priority must be given to already disturbed sites, in particular brown-fields, village type development area, development on Infrastructure and public utilities sites, and military sites. Any land options involving irreversible impact to the natural environment and construction of extensive infrastructure, such as large-scale reclamation, or development of East Lantau should in no way prevail over primary development of alternative and disturbed sites.

Preliminary concepts provided for a new Metropolis at East Lantau, drop all the right 'buzzwords' about a "smart" "green" and "resilient" city, that provides commerce and tech jobs with images of green idyllic islands of development. But this is greenwashing, there are no measurable quality targets and this is Hong Kong; can we really deliver that through our existing, siloed and engineering led development processes? The Preliminary Concept Report perhaps more reliably outlines the reality when it describes "provision of infrastructure and delivery of services, cost-effectiveness of infrastructure

investment, etc". along with the need for "a new central business district (CBD3) connected by rail and strategic highway." In other words economic not quality growth. For me this conjures familiar images of long bridges, highway interchanges, barriers, ramps slopes and lots of wasted space left over; real 'Hong Kong' stuff and what we do best. Our development process is not quality led, it's not even very functional, it's purely infrastructure for growth and it aims first and foremost at creating work, jobs and profits whilst obtaining the cheapest development product for the taxpayer. You get what you pay for as they say.

WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

With the large-scale changes to the logistics industry resulting from the development of port facilities both in Shenzhen and within the Greater Bay Area, strategic re-evaluation of the extensive land supply dedicated to this industry, particularly the container terminals in existing integrated urban areas, would appear more expedient, whilst providing opportunities for extensive, mixed development on sustainable principles. In the face of such opportunities, high risk approaches on greenfield or isolated sites like islands off East Lantau would appear misplaced.

The Housing shortage can act to provide the government with an opportunity to radically rethink how they want the city to evolve, positively planning where quality public housing really needs to be, rather than simply utilising that land most easily available. The anticipation of new and future transport and communica-

tions technology, coupled with development of the 'Greater Bay Area' should inspire clear quality of life targets that are at the forefront of such thinking in creating a radically different, inclusive and liveable Hong Kong.

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Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge: Crossing the Line?

By Austin Williams
Bsc, Dip Arch, RIBA

Abstract The Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area (the “Outline”) was published on 18 February 2019. It includes technical details of the longest sea-bridge in the world running from Macau Special Administrative Region to Zhuhai on the southern coast of Guangdong province (on China’s mainland) to Hong Kong’s Lantau island that was inaugurated in October 2018 after almost ten years of construction. But more than that, the Outline reveals a series of political and policy objectives tied to the implementation of the bridge project.

The Chinese government’s development plans for its south-coast include the islands of Macau and Hong Kong. It has been clear for some time that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge had the intention of bringing these dynamic island regions into the embrace of the Chinese mainland and more efficiently consolidating their economic promise with that of the Pearl River Delta.

The Outline also covers the implementation period from 2022 to 2035 and states that China intends to “fully leverage the composite advantages of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau (and) deepen cooperation among the Mainland, Hong Kong and Macau”. As well as making a physical connection and a means of further economic integration, China has constructed a socio-political bridge that, for some, is not built on the most solid foundations. This paper examines whether infrastructural links and political progress are synonymous, and whether both sides of the divide will automatically benefit from physical connectivity.

Keywords: Greater Bay Area, city clusters, Hong Kong, urban development, China

Introduction

Even though China's rate of urbanisation has slowed somewhat, the number of people entering the metropolitan and urban and administrative regions of China is still relentlessly high. The massive spike between 1976 and 1980 saw the rate of urban population growth shoot up from 1.76% to 5.26% per annum as Deng Xiaoping's "Opening Up" policy took hold. This was reflected in the accelerated development of new and revived urban centres. In 1978, for example, China had 198¹ (or 193²) cities but, two years later in 1980, that figure had grown to 229. By 2003, it laid claim to 660 cities³ and this figure has remained reasonably consistent for ten years or so even though the ambition is still to be home to a total of 926 cities by 2025⁴. Admittedly, much of the official urban data should be looked at with healthy scepticism but there has undoubtedly been a major rebalancing from rural to urban in recent years.

It is well documented that the last quarter of the 20th century saw the biggest urban transformation in history predominantly as a result of China's development. In 1970, its urban population was 167 million and five years later was 195 million but still only 23% of the national population. Since then, China's urban population rose to 49% of the overall population in 2000, is now just over 60% (813 million)⁵ and the government is preparing the way for its urban population to hit 1 billion by 2030.⁶

The World Bank observes that "not all of the population increase in Chinese cities has come

from an influx of rural inhabitants; 9% of the urban population growth from 2000 to 2010 was due to the natural birth-led population increase, 35% from the reclassification of non-urban land to urban land (and hence the change of status from rural to urban hukou), while the remaining 56% came from migration from rural to urban areas".⁷ The question of 'where should these people go?' is addressed in a dialogue between urban versus rural development, and fundamentally in the debate between the agricultural and non-agricultural hukou. The question of how China pays for this construction boom is equally fraught given that even though GDP from construction is increasing year on year, quarter on quarter since 2016⁸ the financial sector seems to be displaying slower annual growth trends.

Hong Kong is similarly immersed in a population/land resource debate. It is an overcrowded island with a population (at the time of writing) of around 7.5 million equivalent to Greater London. It is predicted to grow slowly and steadily to 8 million by 2030.⁹ With little buildable land remaining it is crowded; and with the most expensive real estate in the world it seems that the world's least affordable housing market is preparing for another boom in prices.¹⁰ The something-must-be-done approach has revived government plans to build artificial islands in North Lantau creating an additional development potential of 1,700 hectares. The cost will be approximately HK\$624 billion (more than half Hong Kong's financial reserves).

Having developed rapidly, mainland China is

clearly now revising its urban policies and practices to remove inherent inefficiencies: sometimes by benevolent means, sometimes less so. One of the more benign globally-established mechanisms is to develop co-regional urbanisation to provide socio-economic benefits due to the potential for shared densities and networks. Urban geographer, Jean Gottmann's early work on the Megalopolis exposed and reified the real interlinkages that have evolved between neighbouring administrations. He saw "Greater Boston to Greater Washington not as conventionally urban, but as a 'one great system'... 'an incubator of important socio-economic trends'." ¹¹ Such interlinkages have been shown to reap socio-economic rewards in clusters such as San Francisco, Sacramento and San Jose, or UK's pharmaceutical golden triangle of London, Oxford and Cambridge, for example.

Conversely, Mexico City has been described as a predominantly monocentric urban form ¹² whereas many other super-large cities, like Dubai, or a range of Chinese urban agglomerations often demonstrate a polycentric tendency to contain many urban centres within one city container. It is a way of creating cities within cities: of bringing down the scale within mega-city regions to manageable proportions. Academics Arribas-Bel and Sanz-Gracia have shown that "larger and more dense (cities) have higher per capita incomes with lower poverty rates compared with monocentric equivalents."¹³ As Chinese cities develop and metamorphose into mega-cities and even super-regions, so the government is learning from the Western experience with a more expansive form of polycen-

trism. An unmanageable urban form is, after all, something that the control-centric Chinese state cannot countenance.

The Pearl River Delta (PRD) is one such polycentric opportunity that comes with its own particular set of difficulties. It is a potential growth area that crosses three notionally independent jurisdictions. As far as the Chinese state is concerned, keen on the maintenance of its authority, it is a region in need of Chinese integrative stabilisation. As China becomes ever more global, so it views stable economic dynamism arising from a rebalancing away from exports to domestic consumption-led growth. It is a contradictory desire to look outwards while being pulled ever inwards.¹⁴ There is a unquestionable desire on behalf of Chinese businesses and local regional leadership to buy into the liberal markets while at the same time constrained by the impact on political hegemony that liberal freedoms may bring.

In this instance, the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge is intended to encourage economic integration between Hong Kong and the western Pearl River Delta to enliven the competitiveness of the more sluggish (in relative terms) western area of the PRD region. In 2008, the government announced a regulatory framework designed to minimise "idle land" and to introduce economic incentives to make more efficient use of that land. By the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20), the Chinese state had formulated demands that master-planners should identify 19 city clusters – or super-regions – in order to intensify urban growth, counteract sprawl and to



rationalise regional development. One such is the Greater Bay Area (GBA) along the southern coastline with Hong Kong.

Hong Kong is a major player in world trade. It is a Special Administrative Region of China since being handed back from British colonial rule on 1 July 1997 (since the Treaty of Nanking ended the First Opium War ceding Hong Kong to the British in 1841). It is a series of small islands

that form an Anglophone entrepôt to mainland China¹⁵ enabling it to maintain its continued high economic performance (which has depended, to some extent, on it being a genuine free market economy in distinction to China's more managed economy). According to the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, it is the world's most services-oriented economy, with services sectors accounting for more than 90% of its GDP. It is a major trade and cargo

port and one of the largest banking and financial centres in the Asia Pacific.

On the other side of the bridge sits Zhuhai on the western bank of the Pearl River estuary adjacent to South China Sea. For several years it has been voted the most liveable city in China by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. By contrast, former Portuguese colony Macau – the other western landing point for the bridge – is the most densely populated region in the world. It is maintained as a capitalist gambling enclave operating a free trade arrangement with mainland China. Dispensations mean that, for instance, prostitution is legal in Macau, unlike in mainland China where it is officially illegal but tolerated... and flourishing.

Clearly, this project is genuinely crossing boundaries and hoping to “unite” significantly contradictory social and political traditions. Reaching out over 55,000 km², the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao cluster comprises a land area twice the size of Belgium. It includes the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macao Special Administrative Region, and the nine Pearl River Delta municipalities of Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen, Zhaoqing, Guangzhou, and Shenzhen. A snapshot of a few more of these regions will give an indication of what is at stake:

In 2014, Foshan was described by Hong Kong think-tank, the Fung Global Institute (FGI) as China’s “emerging economic frontier”.¹⁶ In 2015, Guangzhou established China’s first urban renewal authority. Dongguan is known to many as “the world’s factory” and not nec-

essarily in a flattering way. Indeed China Labor Watch regularly reports on employment abuses, such as low pay, poor conditions and breaches in safety standards. South of Donguan is Shenzhen, a city that has amassed a population of around 15-20 million¹⁷ and is officially classified as one of the fastest growing megacities in the world¹⁸ and the largest migrant city in China.¹⁹ Shenzhen was one of the primary Special Economic Development areas in 1980 (as recounted in Deng Xiaoping folklore). Since then, the Shenzhen government has shown itself keen on meaningful urban renewal; “more so than any other city in China”²⁰ but is but a fraction of the ambitious Greater Bay Area regional development zone that will incorporate around 70 million people. As Shenzhen flourishes, Guangzhou on the other hand fell short of its economic growth targets for 2018.

Regardless of occasional seasonal fluctuations in local or regional economies the general trend is up. In 2017, the gross domestic product of the Greater Bay Area stood at around RMB 10 trillion. Research by PWC reveals that the eastern cities of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Dongguan and Huizhou are responsible for 56% of the economic activity in the GBA, whereas Macau, Zhuhai, Zhongshan and Jiangmen on the west with just 15% of the population are responsible for just 12% of the regional economy.²¹ With this in mind, it is a little clearer that the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge is intended to spread the dynamism a little. It is expected to raise productivity rather than simply spread the existing pot of wealth a little more thinly and evenly.

There is clearly an interest, as far as the Chinese state is concerned in tapping into the foreign currency potential of Hong Kong's trade wealth. With China internationalising its currency, the recent relaxation in the use of the Renminbi in Hong Kong will certainly advance the island's prime location as a financial link to the rest of the world. Hong Kong will also benefit by tapping into China's Silk Road Initiative and the Greater Bay Area development to give new impetus to the economy.²²

The HK\$7billion capital costs of the bridge are shared in a unique tripartite arrangement - also sharing the HK\$2 million maintenance charges - but as Caixin financial magazine notes, mutual access to enlarged capital flows have made it a no-brainer proposition for both sides.²³ Indeed, Huizhou is already budgeting for inter-city highways and up to 11 high-speed railway stations to facilitate new 30-minute commutes - reduced from over two hours - to Shenzhen and Guangzhou.

Of course, the bridge cannot be the answer to all of the PRD's problems. Indeed, there are simple technical conflicts that have stymied progress, let alone the broader political issues. The Chinese engineering team, for instance, had to bow to the superior internationally-accepted technical standards employed by Hong Kong engineering practices over the more anodyne and risky Chinese regulations. The design also had to contend with resolving the confusion of "three customs zones, three legal systems and two hard borders (Guangdong's with Hong Kong and Macau)."²⁴ Each of the three distinct

regions connected together have border control issues to contend with, with travellers required to obtain a permit to travel to the former colonies from the mainland and vice versa, not to mention specific highway regulations (China drives on the right, Hong Kong on the left, for example).

But more significantly maybe, the bridge is also intended to bring Hong Kong and Macau into even greater allegiance with the mainland. The Outline report states that inter alia, the project will "enable compatriots in Hong Kong and Macao to share with the people in the motherland both the historic responsibility of national rejuvenation and the pride of a strong and prosperous motherland". As The Economist pointed out, this is not without difficulty - moreso for Hong Kong than Macau - in terms of Hong Kong's western allegiances and the former colony's much-vaunted democratic autonomy.

Conclusion

On 1 July 2017, President Xi Jinping oversaw the signing of the Framework Agreement on Deepening Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Cooperation in the Development of the Greater Bay Area, an agreement whereby the three regions will "pool innovation resources". In several forums, Hong Kong residents have expressed nervousness about potentially being the provider rather than beneficiary in this relationship.²⁵

However, the nervousness works both ways, with Party officials monitoring society's Gini coefficient (a measurement of income disparity in which 0 represents social equality and 1 rep-

resents total inequality). It is said that 0.4 is the point at which the tensions arising from economic inequality give rise to instability and unrest (although there is no theoretical framework for this assertion). For the Chinese state, social stability remains the central Party's foremost concern and worryingly for them, by the end of 2018 according to the International Monetary Fund, the national Gini coefficient was 0.5²⁶ with China predicted to run its first annual current-account deficit for 25 years. Hong Kong itself has a Gini coefficient of 0.54. When this is measured across the PRD cluster (although no accurate figure yet exists) this can only be even higher. However, the Chinese report acknowledges that there exists a "relatively wide development gap"²⁷ – comparing Hong Kong's record as the world's most expensive city to the peasant economies of north-Guangzhou.

While there is some cause for concern, rapid economic improvements in living standards from a low base are eminently feasible in these poorer regions (as Shenzhen's miraculous rise has demonstrated). In other words, it is relatively easy to see how China's poorer PRD regions might benefit from material improvements mandated by the central party. But Hong Kong under a notionally autonomous Legislative Council (LegCo) might have higher stakes in the game.

China needs to attract net capital inflow²⁸ and is making it easier for foreign investors by liberalising funding regimes and opening up the market due, in part, to the downturn in its economic performance. Allying itself with Hong

Kong is a straightforward means for China to allay the problems associated with its status as a "non-market economy" as defined in World Trade Organisation terms.²⁹

There are clear and immediate benefits to lives and living standards. The report points out that bridge connectivity will "bring more convenience to the lives of people in the Greater Bay Area, raise the quality of living of residents, provide more convenience for Hong Kong and Macao residents studying, working, starting businesses and living on the Mainland, strengthen exchange and integration across different cultures, and build a beautiful bay area that is ecologically safe, environmentally attractive, socially stable and culturally vibrant." China states that this arrangement is based on "open cooperation, mutual benefit and win-win situation".³⁰ What's not to like? Lu Kang, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesman reassures Hong Kong residents that, given its allegiance with China "everyone can see that Hong Kong's society and economy has achieved progress."³¹ But economic growth is not the be all and end all in this highly charged debate.

For example, the U.S. Hong Kong Policy Act of 1992 provides Hong Kong with special trading relationship status with the United States whereby the US treats it as it would an independent economic entity. But this is a condition dependent on Hong Kong maintaining its economic and political identity sufficiently distinct from that of the mainland.

China's continued endorsement of Hong Kong's

Basic Law – the mechanism by which China facilitates “one country, two systems” while at the same time maintaining the overall governance of the Central Committee – is as jarring to Hong Kong democracy activists today as it ever has been. In this tense atmosphere, the idea that, as some observers put it, “future urban development in China should be focusing more on efficient growth and effective governance”³² may not, for some, be as simple or benign as it sounds. Indeed, in 2017, China’s President Xi is reported to have “warned Hong Kongers not to cross a ‘red line’ by ‘endangering China’s sovereignty and security’ or ‘challenging the power of the central government’.”³³

The report on the new bridge, covers a lot of the development, economic, environmental and planning considerations that were contained in the broad plan for official urban redevelopment guideline document: “Outline of Development Planning for the Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macau Dawan District” and published on the official party news agency Xinhua. This report details both the short-term objectives (up to 2022, by which time China should have reached its first of President Xi’s Chinese Dream milestones of becoming a “moderately well-off society”).

The report then examines plans for the region’s long-term prospects to 2035. It speaks of the “Pan Pearl River Delta” referencing the integrated connectedness of all places in the region.³⁴ There will certainly be prizes for all provided that everyone plays their cards right. After all, China promises to financially support the de-

velopment of airports, expressways, shipping, high-speed rail connections, as well as five R&D centres in Hong Kong, including logistics and supply chain management application technology, textiles and garments, information and communication technology, automotive parts, nano and advanced materials, as well as the construction of a Science Park and Cyberport.³⁵ On the mainland, the proposed revitalisation intends to “radiate” improvements in urban and rural infrastructure across the region: to “promote urban renewal according to local conditions, transform urban villages, merge small villages, strengthen the construction of supporting facilities, and improve urban and rural human settlements environment.”³⁶ There will also be even more bridges. For many, this is not contentious: China is merely bringing Hong Kong home.

Pragmatically, Hong Kong becomes China’s credible and legitimate window on the world and its simplest means of tapping into international standards of business behaviour and performance. This can only be a good thing. For example, Cina already has been morally obliged to pledge that it will denounce fake products, to engage with international trade regulations and to outlaw intellectual property theft. Hong Kong will be the place through which China can earn the respect of the world.

Even though Shenzhen has notionally outperformed Hong Kong in terms of GDP (but not GDP per capita), Hong Kong retains its democratic superiority in terms of having “a clean and accountable government, an independent

judicial system, academic and press freedom, and protection of individual liberties and human rights, which are more important criteria in the measurement of a society's modernity."³⁷ China, on the other hand wants to "encourage" young people from Hong Kong and Macao to study in mainland schools, to integrate the economy of the former colony further and to maintain tighter control. Recent evidence of the Hong Kong LegCo relaxing rules on extradition have worried those who prize the differences rather than the similarities between Hong Kong and China. And this, clearly is of historic international concern rather than it simply being a minor domestic policy shift.

The "fact" that Hong Kong is Chinese is indisputable in terms of international law. The fact that it is another system will be tested increasingly as the borders become looser. In a global period where borders, autonomy, democracy and sovereignty are being called into question, it is worth asking whether the new bridge represents an attempt to erase, or respect, the frontier? Only time will tell.

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Reconnecting Hong Kong in Time and Space

By Jing Lu¹ & Gang Wang²
Urban Planner & AIA, LEED ap

Abstract As a high-density compact city, Hong Kong carries the baggage of this, with a chronic shortage of easily accessible urban public open spaces. On the one hand, it leaves the stressful urban localities with no place for instant contact with nature; on the other hand, with a lasting impression of a 'shopping paradise' to the tourists, the micro-regeneration of urban public open spaces inevitably becomes tailored to the needs of shopping 'pilgrims'. Such changes jeopardize the uniqueness and cultural identity of Hong Kong, and there is a crying need to preserve cultural heritage in the already very crowded urban public spaces. Along with the industrial restructuring and spatial regeneration strategies proposed in the newly released Greater Bay Area Development Plan, more public space is potentially relieved in the urban core of Hong Kong. The authors argue that this is a great opportunity for Hong Kong to create a truly integrated urban trail system, which not only connects the underprivileged high-density dwellers to the green and blue spaces, but also offers an interconnected experience of routes that celebrate the cultural authenticity of Hong Kong.

Keywords: Contact with Nature, Cultural Heritage Preservation, Open Space Network

Without doubt, the newly released Greater Bay Area Development Plan (2019) by the China State Council signifies new opportunities and challenges for Hong Kong as an important leading player in the 'Greater Bay Area' (GBA). While reconsidering the industrial and spatial development in the overall GBA, it presumably provides regeneration potentials in the urban core of Hong Kong, especially ways of mitigating the over-crowdedness in urban public spaces brought by the high-density genes of Hong Kong.

No place for instant contact with nature

Hong Kong has long been known as a high-density compact city (Figure 1). A legacy of the compact city is a chronic shortage of easily accessible urban public open spaces (Jim and Chan, 2016). Within Hong Kong's country park system a statutory designation of 40% of the city's countryside as protected areas are expected to bear more recreational functions to mitigate the shortage of urban open



space (Jim and Chan, 2016; Cheung and Tang, 2016). However, with the high conservation and ecological value of country parks, encouraging recreational use leads to a higher risk of environmental deteriorations, e.g. hill fires, vegetation damage and etc. (Cheung 2013; Jim 1986, 1989; Cheung and Tang, 2016)

There is no doubt that the urban population spend most of their time living, working, playing and relaxing in urban areas. Given such already low-level per-capita urban green space provision in urban Hong Kong (Jim and Chan, 2016), the quality and distribution of these urban green spaces also calls for caution. The current zoning system of Hong Kong allows a wide range of other uses within open space zones as long as such applied uses are considered essential to the community. Cheung and Tang (2016) argues that urban open space tends to act as public land reserved for all sorts of community uses rather than serving the original planning intention of recreation. Tang (2017) found that the distribution of public open space in Hong Kong is not equitable: a large proportion of Hong Kong's open spaces, especially those with waterfront access, were located close to upmarket, low-density housing areas and mixed commercial-business zones, rather than high-density mass housing zones.

There is a growing concern in high-density cities that the large population and limited green open space might affect human health and well-being (Wong et.al, 2016; Xue et.al., 2017) According to biophilic hypothesis, human be-

ings have the innate tendency to contact with nature and other forms of life (Wilson, 1984). Sarkar, Webster and Gallacher (2018) have investigated highly dense urban areas and the associated reduced contact with natural environments has led to a rise in mental disorders, including depression. In a study carried out by Garrett and her colleagues (2019), they have found out that those Hong Kongers with a view of blue space from home and those visiting blue space regularly were more likely to report good general health, while intentional exposure was linked to greater odds of high wellbeing. In this sense, urban green and blue spaces are essential for urban dwellers' mental and physical health as they provide instant opportunities to contact with nature.

Room for celebrating Hong Kong's unique cultural authenticity

In this small, land-hungry city, land has always been an extremely valuable source (Tang, 2017). Coupled with being a tourism destination, public spaces in urban Hong Kong not only serves their localities, but are also expected to accommodate seasonal visitors, which pushes the scarcity of land to a further extreme. According to the latest Hong Kong tourism report (2018), Mainland Chinese tourists continued to be the largest visitor source, followed by tourists from Taiwan, South Korea and Japan. A study has shown that Hong Kong best attracts tourists from countries and districts with smaller culture distances in East Asia (Qian et.al, 2018). Being a tax-free city and offering a wide variety of goods, these



primary markets have considered Hong Kong to be a shopping paradise since the 1980s (Chan, 2016). Given the purchasing power of these tourists, the micro-regeneration of urban public spaces, especially the streetscape, is inevitably tailored to the needs of shopping 'pilgrims' (Figure 2). Such quick changes jeopardize the uniqueness of Hong Kong – its social fabric and cultural identity – its soul. As a result, it has triggered a strong sense of loss. There is also a nostalgia among local Hong Kongers who cry out for preserving Hong Kong's culture heritage and a return to the more authentic 'good old days'.

Due to historical causes, the culture of Hong Kong has long been unique, with a foundation rooted in China and strongly influenced by British colonialism (Qian et.al, 2018). It gave birth to a complicated but charming culture of Hong Kong as both traditional and modern:

Hong Kong mixes with both marketplace life and metropolitan norm, inheriting Chinese cultural heritage whilst actively incorporating an international urban culture. In her book of *Cities and Cinema*, Mennel (2016) pointed out the urban characteristic is the most significant part of Hong Kong culture, which sets Hong Kong apart from the culture of Mainland China. Despite the genres; Kungfu, Gangster or the art films of the New Wave (Mennel, 2016), the Hong Kong films produced during the peak age in the 1980s and 1990s were mostly shot in the urban settings (Qi, 2002). This unique culture of Hong Kong has widely influenced other places in Greater China and East Asia via its entertainment industry: Movies, Cantonese pop songs, TVB dramas and the like. Visitors to Hong Kong from these parts were largely exposed to or even grew up with these Hong Kong films, songs and TV shows during this peak production period.

Referring to the cultural heritage of a city, Ashworth (1998) describes it as a 'text' that can be interpreted. Tourists and local residents form their views on such cultural identity in different ways. The tourists' view of the city is influenced by pre-conceptions from literature, guidebooks, media and art, and tourists may overemphasise accounts of the 'Golden Age' (Breitung and Lu, 2016) of a particular place. These pre-conceptions may not be accurate, but they have a great impact on the place image. Tourists interpret the actual touristic experience through the lens of this artistic imaginary, and when their experience contradicts the pre-existing image, a 'lack of local identity' is conceived (Breitung and Lu, 2016). In contrast, the significant changes experienced within one generation lead to a feeling of loss, affecting the sense of history and sense of place within a locality. It may be small features such as colours, smells or building materials that evoke memories and symbolise place identities, community or certain periods of a person's life (Breitung and Lu, 2016).

Fortunately, such differences in interpretation between locals and tourists to Hong Kong may be small; and they may even reach an agreement on the 'Golden Age' to return to. Having shaped the imagination of an authentic urban Hong Kong amongst tourists, this perspective on the 'Golden Age' of the 1980s and 1990s might not align completely with that which has been memorized by the locals, but tourists and locals will probably agree on this important source of contemporary cultural authenticity.

Studies conducted in South Korea have confirmed the potency of a film-inspired nostalgia as an important motivation in tourism (Kim et.al, 2019). They also identified five domains of film nostalgia, including memories of backdrops, stories and movie stars, mimicking, envy, culture and history. From these domains, memories of backdrops and mimicking were found to be the best predictors of perceived familiarity with the films' original territory and of future travel intentions. In this regard, as it is blessed with such unique culture, Hong Kong could consider repositioning itself as a destination for cultural tourism, in addition to being a 'shopper's paradise', through an integrated urban design approach that celebrates its cultural heritage and provides space for an authentic experience of Hong Kong for both locals and tourists.

New opportunities from GBA integration

In the newly released Greater Bay Area Development Plan (2019) by the China State Council, Hong Kong is identified together with Shenzhen as one of the leading poles in the GBA. In the latest Conceptual Spatial Framework for Hong Kong 2030+ (2017), the planning authority has already proposed a northern economic belt along the border with Shenzhen. The plan identifies a new strategic growth area of New Territories North (NTN), with new town developments proposed at Heung Yuen Wai/Ping Che/Ta Kwu Ling/Hung Lung Hang/Queen's Hall. In providing these alternative living and working spaces to the urban cores of Central and Tsim

Sha Tsui, this GBA Plan also offers an opportunity to ease the tension and shortages of under-served public open spaces there.

The strategic positioning for Hong Kong in this GBA Plan is focused on financing, commerce, logistics and specialized-service industries (China State Council, 2019). What is missing is the strength that Hong Kong has as a cultural influencer and tourist destination. Given Hong Kong's unique status as a sub-cultural entity in the greater Chinese society, the challenge lies in how to grasp this new opportunity in industrial restructuring and spatial regeneration, while still holding on to the authentic taste of Hong Kong to strengthen its tourist industry and standing within contemporary culture. If done well, Hong Kong will not only be identified as the financial and service centre, but also still remembered as a beautiful cultural curator and tourism destination.

Interwoven touch of the authentic urban Hong Kong

In the Conceptual Spatial Framework for Hong Kong 2030+ (2017), in addition to the existing trails in the country parks, it proposed to expand a network of new open spaces at strategic waterfront locations and near commercial/business zones. However, such a concentration of green and blue networks may exacerbate the inequitable distribution of open spaces, and have little effect in providing open space access to those underprivileged communities. What is essential in open space planning and design is to create a green and blue network that is interconnected with

high-density zones; in this way, it offers urban pedestrian trails for all. As the new development takes place in the New Territories North (NTN), job opportunities will naturally attract more people to live and work there. Consequently, it will potentially leave more room for regeneration in the urban core of Hong Kong. By fully utilizing the existing green and blue spaces in the urban centre, together with future vacant lands it may be possible to create such an interconnected green and blue network with access to all. In this case, local communities will have a more equal opportunity for close contact with nature in a way mental and physical health.

Special attention is also required in adding ingredients of Hong Kong's authentic culture to these urban trails. Here again we can refer to Kim and his colleagues (2019) highlighting the role of nostalgia as a positive, social, and past-oriented emotion that evokes memories of previous happiness. These memories of backdrops and mimicking could inform the routing of urban trails, using a filmic sense of narrative mixed together with more natural ingredients. Similar to viewpoints along an elevated trail, there could be opportunities to mimic film clips at certain spots along the trails. In addition, potential vacant buildings and plazas after industrial restructuring can serve as new linkages points in the network and injected with cultural functions, such as remodelled as celebrity museums and retail areas designed to evoke nostalgia. With the help of the new technology such as Augmented Reality, both physical and vertical experience with the

imagined and memorized Hong Kong can be offered. Simple and creative ideas to capitalize on the significance of nostalgia will help enhance the destination appeal of Hong Kong.

The urban trails will help connect local communities to the beloved blue space, help restore local Hong Kongers to their memories of previous happiness and help mingle local communities and visitors through their shared taste of cultural authenticity. A more healing and appealing Hong Kong could be created for all to share.

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How does the spatial and built form characteristics of Hong Kong inform its walkability?

By Hee Sun (Sunny) Choi
Ph.D, MA, BA, Lecturer at HKDI

Abstract This paper focuses on how adjustments to pedestrian accessibility and walkability can enhance the economic and spatial value of a particular built environment. Using the case of the redevelopment of Taikoo Place in Quarry Bay, Hong Kong, this research explores user behaviour patterns and pedestrian flows at different times and locations based on the existing arrangement and future layouts.

Through these findings, this research aims to provide an assessment of the functionality, pros and cons of the the split-levelled, layers spatial structure of the public and quasi-public realms in Hong Kong – both indoor and outdoor, on the ground and above the ground, in order to generate alternative perspectives on pathways, open areas and how they are linked.

Key words: walkability, spatial structure, users' behaviour pattern

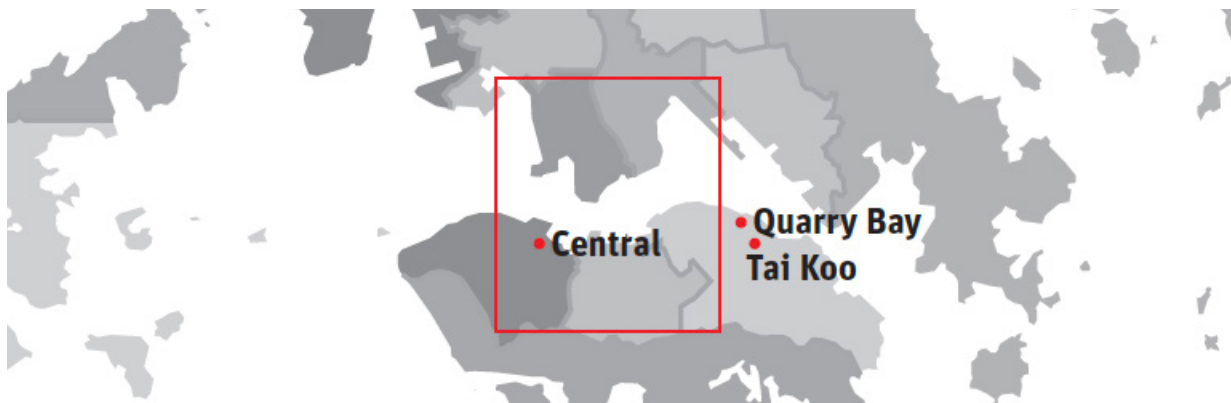


Figure 1: Hong Kong Central and Quarry Bay (source: Author, 2018)

Introduction

With the public transport system of bus and rail (MTR) in Hong Kong responsible for 90% of all journeys taken, walking is a necessity in Hong Kong, at least for the 'first mile' and 'last mile' of those journeys. Given the city's density, compact and layered urban structure the walkability of these routes becomes a critical part of the city's planning.

Walking can be a special experience in Hong Kong, with the streetscape varied and prone to blockage by flying highways, mammoth shopping malls and other obstructions. This results in a requirement by the pedestrian to be less reliant on the footpath than they might be in other cities, to walk through buildings from one footpath to another, up and down escalators and along elevated walkways. The outcome is an unusual hybrid pathway, part indoor, part outdoor, part elevated, part sunken, and hence only partly on ground. A number of scholars (Zheng, 2016; Gold, 2006; Kwok, 1999; Lin, 2002; Lui, 2001; Pu, 2001; Smith, 2006) highlight the connection between foot traffic on footbridges linking commercial buildings and the tendency towards consumerism within the people of Hong Kong. Another key factor is the climate of Hong Kong, with a hot and / or wet climate for around half of the year leading people to indoor walking routes to stay cool and dry. Rotmeyer, J. (2006), Robinson, J. (2014), Ferreira, N., Lesage, S., Vishniac, J., & Wang, Z. (2013)) argue that walking via covered and enclosed walkways is mainly inspired by the tropical weather in Hong Kong.

However, in addition to the climate, the elevated and in some cases below ground walkways of Hong Kong are also clearly used in three

other ways that make them a noteworthy element of the urban condition of Hong Kong.

Firstly, in districts such as Wanchai, where expressways bisect the city, walkways are used to separate foot traffic from vehicular traffic. Secondly, in densely over-developed districts such as Causeway Bay that are subject to intense pedestrian overcrowding at street level, pedestrian walkways offer an alternative release valve to relieve the pressure and danger of this. Finally, walkways are used in combination with elevators, escalators and travelators to provide step-free, walkable routes across the underlying steep terrain upon which a proportion of Hong Kong's built form is constructed.

Whilst the causes can be a topic of debate, there is a growing consensus that good walkability will bring substantial benefits to the city and its people (GovHK: https://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/p_study/comp_s/hk2030/eng/finalreport/). These benefits include better public health, higher real estate values, travel time savings and greater accessibility, increased economic opportunities, as well as other environmental and social gains. With so many overlapping factors and interests in the value of walkability, what are the key elements to consider in terms of creating a more walkable environment in Hong Kong?

Numerous assessment tools have been developed in recent years that can measure the usability of pedestrian environments, including Geographic Information Systems (GIS), Space Syntax and empirical studies of pedestrian behavior patterns. This research adds to this data set with findings of existing and expected walk-

ability patterns within the multi-layered public and quasi-public realm of Taikoo Place in Hong Kong.

Spatio- functional walkway and street level usage

The research into public space and accessibility by Rapoport (1975), Lynch (1984), and Tshu (1996) argue how the city is formulated by people, and continually evolving with the people who live in it. They further state how this human foundation constitutes the social 'institutions' that drive the generation, synthesis and implant of the multilayered decision-making process within the city. There is a cyclical process whereby the physical and social-economical relationships among these entities create the framework within which these 'institutions' develop.

In Hong Kong, like many other cities, the urban form and spatial structure may be viewed as the resultant form and framework for many of these social institutions, overlaid on the density of urban form which in turn is informed by the original topographical condition and the morphological development of the city as it has built upon this. An additional factor more peculiar to Hong Kong, particularly Hong Kong Island, is the practice of land reclamation. The northern shoreline along which the urban heart of Hong Kong lies has been realigned and shifted outwards a number of times over the last 100 years.

In simple terms then, Hong Kong's spatial structure can be interpreted from three perspectives – density of urban form, topography, and the social institutions of the people that occupy this.

Firstly, density has many different definitions or interpretations, what the important is the understanding of the physical as well as the

social-spatial relationships among objects, people or the built-up area of a certain place. The housing and workspace required for the sheer number of people living and drawn through economic migration to the city is a key factor. The individual islands of Hong Kong, including Ap Lei Chau and Tsing Yi, are amongst the most densely populated land masses in the world. This has led to the 'left-over' space for common public areas and circulation being very limited. The tendency is towards vertical expansion to the maximum height and maximum allowable footprint on each site.

Secondly, the topography of Hong Kong, and the typology of the built form set upon it, are also a factor in how elevated walkways come into being. From a topographic perspective, there is often a disconnect in the section of the street, with retaining structures raising the footpath on one side of the road two storeys or more higher than the other side. In the building typology there is a planning regulation that makes it permissible to build 'podiums' that occupy the full 100% of a building plot up to 16 metres in height, above which a tower extending further upwards should reduce to a smaller percentage. Elevated walkways connecting podium to elevated ground, or from podium to podium, are often the most direct connection that can be made.

This has led to narrow pavements in Hong Kong being overwhelmed with people, and a manipulation and redefinition of the ground surface in response to this (Frampton, 2012).

Elevated walkways and pedestrian bridges have hence become one of the defining characteristics urban form in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong MTR station is one such example of a multi-level pedestrian network with a

very busy flow, given its position at the junction of city routes in all directions, and as the main departure and arrival point into the city from the popular Airport Express train service to Chek Lap Kok international airport. Such transport interchanges provide tremendous opportunities for the development of underground pedestrian tunnels. Similarly, these subterranean walkways reduce the foot traffic at street level.

In an area of such high traffic the pedestrian bridges and tunnels do not solely perform as an alternative mean of access. These routes also support a wide variety of commercial activities and hence stimulate economic vitality. Upon the creation of multiple grounds, it gives rise to permeability and multiple access points.

Case study: Taikoo Place

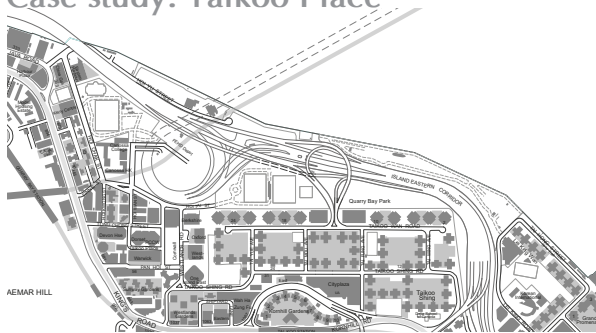


Figure 2: Taikoo Place in Quarry Bay with landmark buildings (source: Author, 2018)

Taikoo Place is an office complex located in Quarry Bay, in the eastern part of Hong Kong Island, Hong Kong. The complex includes the office buildings, and some open external areas in internal atrium spaces with some amenities and restaurants. The complex is set within a residential neighbourhood, with some commercial and banking facilities within the surrounding streets, and adjacent to the larger resi-

dential district of Taikoo Shing. Surrounding the site to the East are the elevated parklands of Mount Parker, and across the East Coast Expressway is a harbor-side promenade.

Taikoo Place is owned and managed by Swire Properties, one of the largest developers in Hong Kong. The adjacent City Plaza office and shopping complex is also part of their portfolio, which is surrounded by the 12,000 apartment complex of Taikoo Shing, also constructed by Swire.

These three complexes are all constructed on the site of the former Taikoo Sugar Refinery and Taikoo Dockyard. As a business district, the ambition for the area is for it to become a new CBD area in Hong Kong. Commencing from 2014, three warehouse style office buildings were demolished to make way for two new grade 'A' office towers and a large quasi-public square. Connecting the square to the surrounding buildings will be an elevated and enclosed first floor walkway.

Quarry Bay is one of the sub-districts of the Eastern District of Hong Kong Island, with an overall area of approximately 209 hectares and a total population estimated to be in the region of 143,000 (Hong Kong Government, 2017). The different zones of the Quarry Bay outline zoning plan and their respective areas, in hectares and percentages are listed in Figure 3 below.

As stated in the explanatory statement of the Quarry bay outline zoning plan, the redevelopment of the former Taikoo Dockyard into a major self-contained residential estate (Taikoo Shing) has marked the gradual transformation of Quarry Bay from an industrial/dockyard area into a major residential/commercial commu-

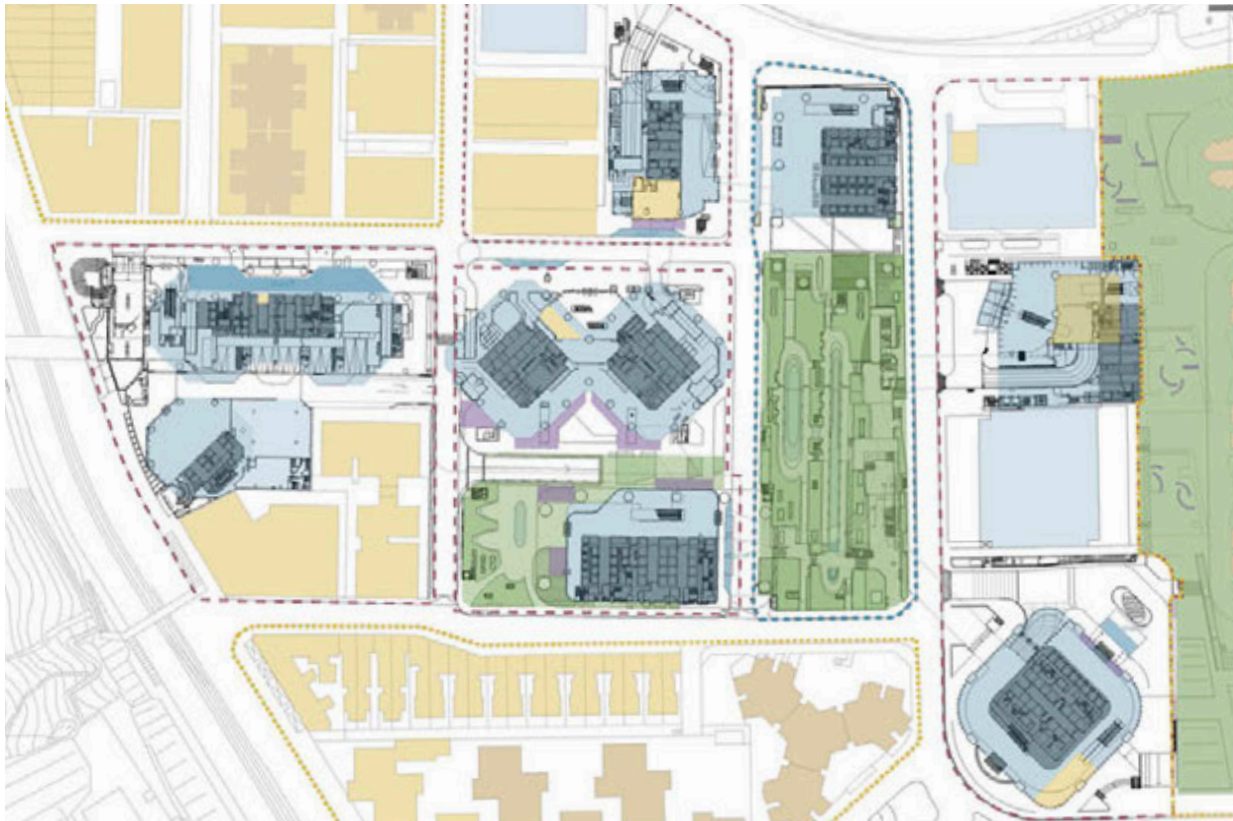


Figure 3: Zoning plan for Quarry Bay, Hong Kong (according to Quarry Bay outline zoning plan)(source: Hong Kong Government)



Figure 4: Taikoo Place and Quarry Bay; Landuse and Zoning(source: Hong Kong Government)

nity. This, together with other similar developments, most of which are concentrated at Westland Road, Shipyard Lane and Taikoo Trading Estate, become out of place with the surrounding land uses. As a result, the interface between these industrial and residential buildings is subject to environmental problems which are a major source of complaint from the public. In order to encourage more residential development in the area these existing industrial areas are specifically zoned to encourage redevelopment into compatible or residential uses.

The sequential development of Quarry Bay began in 1990 with the commercial buildings along Tong Chong Street, linked by an elevated pedestrian bridge to Quarry Bay MTR station. Building work continued until the completion of One Taikoo Place in 2009.

Construction work began again in 2014 and the office towers of One Taikoo Place opened in 2019 and Two Taikoo Place is due to open in 2021.

Understanding this development in relation to the existing built form in Quarry Bay, this area shows an interesting spatial structure in terms of street layout, building typology, and its accessibility and walkability through the ground level and above the ground level. This redevelopment will extend the usage of street level for both residential and commercial users at both ground and first floor levels.

The new quasi-public landscape of Taikoo Square, built by Swire on private land but open to the public, is currently under construction, with the new elevated walkway due to link the square to the surrounding office towers in 2021.

While the benefits of high urban walkability might apply across geographies, the magnitude of these benefits and ways to realize them could be quite different from one place to another in terms of accessibility, consumer cost savings, public cost savings, efficient land use, liveability, public fitness and health, economic development, and equity. Site observation and measurement from Quarry Bay MTR station and the neighbouring Taikoo Shing MTR station showed that 8000 people arrive per hour at both stations and use the street level to walk through to their final destination. Before the constru-

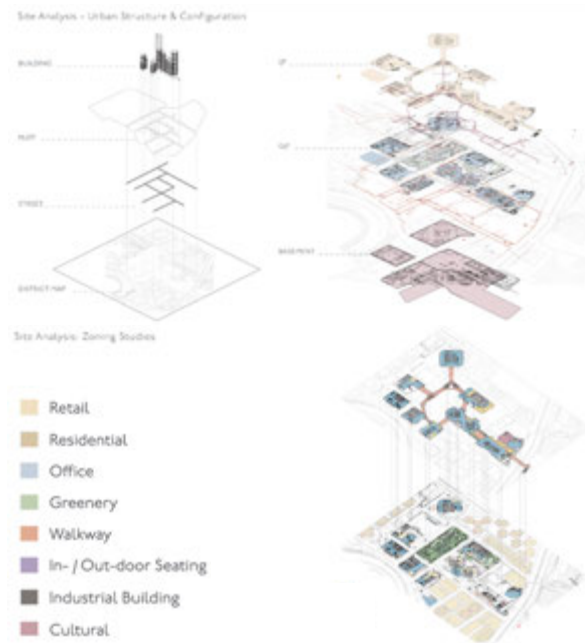


Figure 5: Three-Dimensional map of Taikoo Place and its elements(Source: Authro)

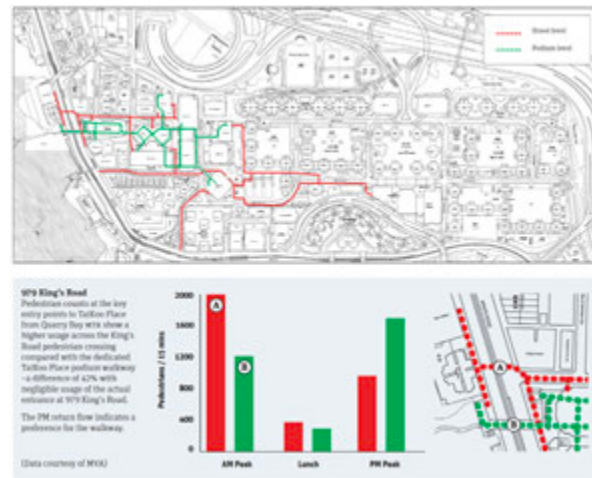


Figure 6: Existing footbridge performance (source: MVA 2016)

ction and demolition of the previous first floor walkway, the footbridge pedestrian users are mix 1800 in every 15 mins along the 8 buildings, totalling 35 % of the footbridge walking population. This data shows the division of different users between ground level and above-ground level, as well as the different pattern of human flows on the ground level when compared with the public realms and the footbridge. Most of the footbridge users are office workers, and the ground level street users are mostly local residents or local business people.

The purpose of the walkway bridge is to enhance the connectivity across the development and increase footfall to the restaurant and other commercial outlets that exist within the internal realm of the development at ground and first floor.

However, considering Quarry Bay's diverse population density and spatial complexity, the vertical integration of Building typology with horizontal layering of pedestrians and walkway have not developed a comprehensive urban design strategy directly related to such a cityscape both for external and internal public realm.

To analyse the walkability on both street level and footbridge at Taikoo Place, it become clear that it cannot be described by master plans or elevations. It signifies a series of socio-spatial relations which will contest many assumptions and conjectures in existing architectural and urban studies, particularly regarding the notion of public space, topography, density, mobility, and spatial equity which is the outcome of a series of geographic, economic, and regulatory determinants (Lai and Baker, 2014). It reveals the potential socio-spatial relations of the new walkway at Taikoo Place, especially the new linkage point between

new Taikoo Garden and One Taikoo Place, which will bring additional economic value and opportunities yet to be investigated.

The data also highlights how the specific benefits associated with accessibility and permeability in Quarry Bay are numerous and inter-related. It is crucial to recognize them, and in light of that to rethink the physical and social connection in terms of connectivity, permeability, diversity, variety and integration with public transportation.

Conclusion

Can Hong Kong be considered a modern-day pioneer of the skywalk? If so, why? Is it because of the tropical weather, high density, hilly topography and pollution? Do these factors impact on the walkability of the city?

There has been considerable interest globally in recent years in developing the walkable streets, neighbourhoods and cities. Much of this research, is geared towards cities that are less hot and humid, less mountaineous, less densely built up and populated. This research has therefore highlighted some design principles specifically for the case of Hong Kong, and relevant for other cities of comparable scale and climate.

Considering Quarry Bay and the redevelopment of Taikoo Place as a specific example, the new walkable footbridge at first floor level will play an important role in the Quarry Bay re-development project in terms of enhancing the environmental, economic, and social success of the scheme.

In conclusion, although there are long term design strategies required and plans needed to

transform Hong Kong into a truly walkable city, this paper has highlighted the particular factors to consider in making a truly social streetscape. It has identified the importance of different dimensions of design, management, equity, business ownership, behaviour and interaction in working places (Penn, Desyllas, and Vaughan 1999), linking accessibility, density and diversity to explain the 'spatial capitals' (Marcus 2010).

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TAIKOO PLACE

“Where are you based?” is often the first credential

By Swire Properties



Taikoo Place, already recognised as one of Hong Kong's a business hubs, currently offers around 6.5 million sq ft of prime, state-of-the-art commercial space for local and multinational corporations. The exciting Taikoo Place redevelopment project currently underway involves the redevelopment of three techno-centres – Somerset House, Cornwall House and Warwick House – into two new Grade-A office buildings offering 2 million sq ft of office space. Another highlight is the introduction of “Taikoo Square” and “Taikoo Garden”, designed by London-based landscape architectural practice Gustafson Porter. The two gardens, comprising a collection of lush greenery, will provide 69,000 sq ft of open space - equivalent in size to Statue Square in Central - for the enjoyment of the community.

The HK\$15 billion Taikoo Place redevelopment project has already been progressing in full swing. Collaborating with international designers to create inclusive and relaxing urban spaces, the redevelopment is a milestone project to realise Swire Properties' long term vision for creative planning and community building. The office community at Taikoo Place will be motivated to excel in vibrant office space surrounded by landscaped gardens, cascading water features, as well as new restaurants and cafes.

Recently, One Taikoo Place confirms Swire's commitment to the future with a triple Grade A rated property that is set to be one of the most sought after addresses in the city. The development will take pride of place alongside eight ex-

isting properties which have attracted over 300 leading international companies from banking and finance, to legal services, insurance, accounting, luxury brands, consulting, media and advertising services, digital communications and technology.

The extensive green open space is a rare feature in high density Hong Kong commercial areas and will form part of the larger fabric of Taikoo Place with water features, quiet pathways and trees and foliage native to the region.

To link overall 8 office buildings, there will be an elevated walkway system, offering easy connectivity for the office community and the public to the nearby MTR station and the various facilities, shops and dining spots. As part of the redevelopment, the other triple Grade A office tower Two Taikoo Place is expected to be completed in 2021.

Don Taylor, director offices, at Swire Properties said about this development, “We saw a demand from Central-based tenants who wanted high spec accommodation, but at a lower price,”

“The value proposition we are presenting is twice the spec, at half the cost. As the rent differentiation between Central and Taikoo Place widens, it becomes a compelling financial argument to relocate out of Central.”

Rents range from HK\$50 to HK\$70 per square foot, depending on size of occupation and floor level.

“But corporate occupiers aren't going to move just based on cost,” he said.

“A big issue that concerns them is the attraction and retention of talent. They want to be in a place with amenities that are commensurate with Central.”

Three old industrial buildings, also owned by Swire Properties, were demolished to make way for two new towers with a smaller footprint, creating 70,000 square foot of open space.

Other amenities within the entire Taikoo site redevelopment include retailers and restaurants, a co-working space, a private members’ club and a theatre.

The redevelopment of Taikoo Place, which has been part of the Swire empire for 140 years, marks the property developer’s intention to redefine the city’s office landscape, said Guy Bradley, Swire Properties’ chief executive.

“The lines between work and private life are becoming increasingly blurred. Corporates want a vibrant place, not just during office hours,” said Taylor. “It is about providing those amenities and venues, that create a stickiness where people want to stay after work.”

The world’s second largest law firm by headcount, Baker McKenzie, will relocate its entire offices from Central to occupy five floors, taking a total of 100,000 square foot space, in the 48-storey tower.

Having always been based in Central, chief operating officer Brian Henderson described the move as a new chapter that was drawn by lower rents and the provision of extra amenities.

Other occupying companies include Facebook, communications conglomerate Interpublic

Group, and international law firm Simmons & Simmons

“An increasing number of companies are placing greater importance on their employees and the user experience,” said Darren Nugent, executive director, advisory & transaction services at CBRE Hong Kong.

“Firms are investing more time and resources in selecting and creating work environments that focus on productivity and wellness. A good office space in a vibrant commercial district serves as a strong talent attraction and retention strategy.

“Quarry Bay continues to be a popular location on Hong Kong Island for companies looking to decentralise too,” said Nugent.

Swire Properties chief executive Guy Bradley said the project is designed to redefine the city’s office landscape. Photo: Handout

Nowadays, most offices are investing more time and resources in selecting and creating work environments that focus on productivity and wellness. Not only focusing on the office space location within a commercial district. Through this innovation and renovation of Quarry Bay, let’s see how this district can develop as a CBD with a local vision and a global aspiration.

(source: Taikoo Place’s website and the link <https://www.taikooplac.com/en/whatson/themag.aspx>)

Landscape work at Pacific Place; Ten years on.

By Fergus Comer
ARB,AA Dipl



Pacific Place is a mixed use scheme first developed in the 1990's by Swire Properties, including a shopping mall and four towers containing offices, luxury hotels and serviced apartments. In 2006 Heatherwick studio were asked to carry out a major renovation to give the mall a contemporary look. The renovation works began opening in phases in 2009, including newly landscaped public space on the top of the podium. This paper is a reflection on this public space in particular and whether it has become an integral part of Hong Kong's open space network.

A characteristic of the site is that this podium is semi-submerged into the hillside, with entry at street level to the north and a drop off four floors above for cars, accessed via a ramped road that curves up around the rear of the site. From this elevated podium the air feels fresher than at street level, with a clear view east towards the harbour and west towards Central District.

From a user's perspective, before the 2006 renovation works commenced this podium level was largely inaccessible to pedestrian foot traffic. The skylights lighting the mall below were raised up as pyramids of glass within planters, and mechanical and electrical buildings sat in service areas between the office tower entry lobbies. So a key part of Heatherwick studio's work was in looking at how to open up all this space for pedestrian use and to add commercial value. The skylights are now a walkable surface, around which are arranged a series of planters of different heights. These square

planters are set at different heights from 300mm up to 1200mm in order to allow for different types of planting and soil depths. All the trees are placed in the deeper planters. The existing escape stairs from the parking areas below are also integrated into these planter groupings.

Soft landscaping generally and planting patterns in commercial areas in Hong Kong tends to follow the strict patterns of the architecture, with the plants lined up like soldiers. Rows of red flowers of identical height, carefully controlled sections of different species. In these planters the attempt was to create a more naturalistic style, inspired by the more wild planting styles of landscape designers Dan Pearson and Piet Oudolf.

Ten years on the soft landscaping has grown up and is well used, offering shade to the external seating areas to the cafes and restaurants that open up to it. On days and evening when the weather is pleasant these outdoor seats are full of people. As a piece of landscaped space it is well connected to Hong Kong Park and so in some ways has become an extension to this, allowing for a continuously green, landscaped walk from Admiralty to Central. As a relative newcomer to Hong Kong I find that this access to nature to be one of the surprising and pleasant aspects of urban life here. The fact that this green space has extended this network is a positive outcome for this redevelopment project.

Fergus Comer was project designer for Heatherwick studio for Pacific Place, 2008-2011.

Re-interpreting Landscape and Architecture

By Kwok Yan (Sarah) Lee & Yutaka Yano
HKIA,RIBA,ARB HK/UK & HKIA,RIBA,ARB



Figure 1 - UABB is a three month event that is co-organised by Hong Kong and Shenzhen under an innovative “Two Cities, One Biennale” approach which aims to promote education and public discussion around a dynamic programme of architecture, urbanism, design and culture. As co-curators of the Hong Kong edition (2015/2016), the exhibition titled ‘Visions 2050 – Lifestyle and the City’ was conceived as a narrative of the past, present and future centred around the question on our lifestyle and the city.



Figure 2 - Borrowed Nature is a kinetic installation commissioned part of the Design Society’s inaugural ‘Minding the Digital’ exhibition (2017). The kinetic installation with multiple sensors and networked sculptures explores the viewing experience that is division between the material and the virtual that intends to promote a dialogue about the technology and landscape.

With the advance of communication technology in recent decades, specifically the ubiquitous tool of our mobile devices, these have dramatically altered our reading of the city and the way we navigate urban space. Today's architects are faced with requirement for increasingly complex skillsets to make contribution in spatial creation for contemporary society. For our design practice, it seems essential to be openminded and eager to take chances and experiment, as well as being respectful to our cultural heritage and tradition, in order to be able to create a strong connection to its surrounding context and landscape but also critical of the fact our surrounding environments are rapidly transforming.

One of the ongoing projects in the studio, 'Invisible Landscapes: Unfolding Histories of Shing Mun River' tells narrative of Sha Tin town history in the form of 4km long heritage trail along the Shing Mun River. The project forms a part of the wider Shing Mun River revitalisation project managed by the Sha Tin District council. Twelve site specific landscape installations were introduced along the trail including the historic Che Kung Temple, the Tsang Tai Uk Village, Lion Rock tunnel, and Sha Tin New Town development. The design approach makes reference to the cultural understanding of the landscape with use of traditional landscape technique such as "borrowed scenery" and "visual axis" to enhance the experience by overlaying the narrative with the spatial and geographical condition which have dramatically been transformed, mainly with reclamation of the substantial land area in preparation for the new town development. Shing Mun River has long been a popular venue for the local residents to pursue leisure and recreation activities. Being important public space for the town,

the project was subject to stringent procedures including local council meetings, a number of workshops with the steering committee group to refine the narrative. The historical research undertaken by the studio also included the field trips and photographic mapping to ascertain location of the flight path for the first powered flight which took place above the Shing Mun River in 1911, the information was instrumental to the location and design development of the installation.

Some of the studio's past projects such as the 2015 Bi-City Biennale of Urbanism\Architecture Hong Kong (UABB) and Borrowed Nature interactive installation actively aims to further develop our understanding of design culture in Hong Kong and experimentation with architectural representation. Through our training at the Bartlett School of Architecture, with its strong tradition for experimentation, this has been instrumental in our approach and we continue to explore and engage with issues through the medium of art installations which become a means to devise and explore ideas in addressing the social and economic change of the digital era.

Increasingly we are part of an industry shift to a more multi-disciplinary and collaborative mode of working and a multi-faceted approach becomes an effective tool in contemporary design. Relying on intuition, critical thinking, representation and craft to push the boundary in spatial design for future city conditions and trying take on the challenge of devising and developing ideas to address the social and economic change of the digital era.



Figure 3



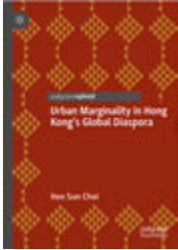
Figure 4



Figure 5

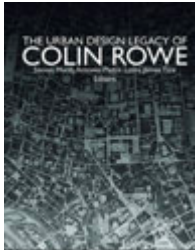
Figure 3,4,5 Invisible Landscapes (2019) describes the evolution of Sha Tin's unique urban landscape through a riverside walk of twelve permanent site-specific architectural interventions. Responding to the surrounding context, the trail celebrates the cultural fabric of time and connects past and present relationship between the urban and natural landscape, geography, infrastructure, cultural and sporting legacy along the Shing Mun River.

New Urban Design Book introduction



Urban Marginality in Hong Kong's Global Diaspora 2019. 2 **Author: Dr Hee Sun (Sunny) Choi**

: This book aims to examine the characteristics, roles and social values of public spaces in the globalized territory of Hong Kong. Choi focuses on the usage of public space by marginalised communities, particularly the foreign domestic helpers of Hong Kong.



The Urban Design Legacy of Colin Rowe 2019.4 **Author: Steven Hurtt, Antonio Pietro Latini, James Tice**

: This book is for anyone seriously interested in the forces that shape the everyday environment of our cities, towns and suburbs, be they everyday citizen, student, aspiring community leader, academician or professional in real estate, architecture, landscape architecture or city planner. An extensive collection of essays that trace the profound influence and legacy of one of the greatest thinkers in the twentieth century on the everyday world we inhabit and on the people who do, or do not, design it.



Urban Health 2019.5 **Author: Sandro Galea, Catherine K. Ettman, David Vlahov**

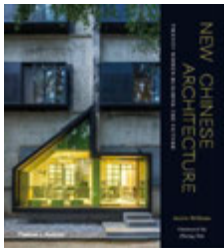
: By using the ubiquitous aspects of the urban experience as a lens to study these exposures across borders and demographics, this book offers a new, scalable framework for understanding health and disease. Its applications to public health, epidemiology, and social science are virtually unlimited. Enriched with case studies that consider the state of health in cities all over the world, this book does more than capture the state of a nascent field; it holds a critical mirror to itself, considering the next decade and arming a new generation with the tools for research and practice.

New Urban Design Book introduction



Inventing Future Cities, 2018 **Author: Professor Mike Batty**

: In this book, Michael Batty explores what we need to understand about cities in order to invent their future. Batty discusses the approaching great transition from a world with few cities to a world of all cities, and argues that future cities will be defined as clusters in a hierarchy. He describes the future “high-frequency”, real-time streaming city, considers urban sprawl and urban renewal, and maps the waves of technological change, which grow ever more intense and can lead to continuous innovation — an unending process of creative destruction out of which future cities will emerge.



New Chinese Architecture: Twenty Women Building the Future, 2019 **Author: Austin Williams**

: This celebration of 20 of China’s latest generation features detailed profiles of each architect, exploring their routes to success, their inspirations and the challenges posed for those working and designing in this richly diverse and rapidly evolving region. Each profile is followed by a selection of recent works, including everything from small-scale conceptual plans to country houses, schools, offices and large-scale city development projects. From exploring new ways to build with radical, sustainable materials to sensitively honouring the vernacular traditions of the country’s complex history, each architect brings their unique vision to the question of what architecture means in China today.

Urbanie and Urbanus

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If you would like to know more details, please email to inq@hkiud.org

Kind regards,

Dr Hee Sun (Sunny) Choi
Editor of Journal of Urbanie and Urbanus

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