

Who Has a Right to Asia's World City?

Hong Kong Urban Thinkers Campus / A UN Habitat Event

**URBAN
THINKERS
CAMPUS**
THE CITY WE NEED



**WORLD
URBAN
CAMPAIGN**
Better City, Better Life



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The Urban Thinkers Campus is an initiative of UN-Habitat's World Urban Campaign, conceived as an open space for critical exchange between urban actors. It is intended as a platform to build consensus on urbanization challenges and solutions to urban futures. The Urban Thinkers Campus creates a platform to reflect on current urban challenges and trends as well as to propose a new urban paradigm. The outcomes will contribute to the New Urban Agenda, the main outcome document of the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III) in 2016.

PROGRAMME

09:30 am - 10:00 am	Registration	
10:00 am - 10:20 am	Urban Labs: Introduction	Paul Zimmerman
10:20 am - 10:40 am	Urban Labs: The Right to the City & Information Booklet	Mee Kam Ng
10:40 am - 11:00 am	Urban Labs: The Good Lab: Experience Sharing	Ada Wong
11:00 am - 11:30 am	Coffee	
11:30 am - 01:00 pm	Urban Thinkers Sessions 1 - Brainstorming (Where are we now and where do we want to be?)	Moderators & everyone
01:00 pm - 02:00 pm	Lunch	
02:00 pm - 03:15 pm	Urban Thinkers Sessions 2 (How to get there? And actionable and concrete recommendations to <i>The City We Need</i> document.)	Moderators & everyone
03:15 pm - 04:00 pm	Report back	Moderators & everyone

SPEAKERS & MODERATORS



ADA WONG, Make a Difference

Ms Ada Wong has led a varied and boundary-crossing career as lawyer, local politician, cultural advocate and commentator, educator and social innovator. She has been involved in major cultural development, creative education and sustainable community issues and policies via her ventures and public service. She founded the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture (HKICC) and Hong Kong's only art high school, HKICC Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity. She then founded Make A Difference (MaD) Institute (www.mad.asia), a regional platform to Advocate Creativity for Good and inspire the next generation of innovators. Her latest social venture is The Good Lab (www.goodlab.hk), a co-working space and hub for tri-sector social innovation and entrepreneurship.



CECILIA CHU, The University of Hong Kong

Cecilia Chu is a faculty member in the Department of Urban Planning and Design at The University of Hong Kong, where she teaches urban theory, urban design, and urban history. She has previously worked as a professional designer in Canada and Hong Kong and has been a research consultant for several NGOs focusing on urban design and conservation. Her areas of expertise include history and theory of architecture and planning, heritage conservation, urban design, cultural landscapes, and ethics of design. Her articles have been published in a number of anthologies and leading academic journals. Recent works include a special themed issue, titled "Spectacle Cities," for Geoforum.



EDWARD YIU, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Dr Yiu is one of the Associate Directors of the Institute of Future Cities, and Associate Professor of the Urban Studies Programme, the Chinese University of Hong Kong. By profession, he is a surveyor, and is an active researcher in urban sustainability, housing and land economics. He has recently published a book titled "A Reader on Local Agriculture: The Pursuit of Ecological, Adaptive, Low Input and Community" with Sung Ming Chow.



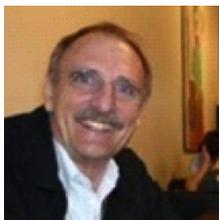
EUNICE MAK, Hong Kong Institute of Planners

Dr. Eunice Mak is an experienced urban planner who has practiced in America, Canada and Hong Kong for over thirty years. She is also the current President of the Hong Kong Institute of Planners (HKIP). As a former staff of the Hong Kong Housing Authority, Dr. Mak was directly involved in the planning, design and development of many public housing projects with a focus on addressing the social, community and housing needs of the low income families in Hong Kong. Through her long-term relationship with the planning community in the Mainland, Dr. Mak has gained in-depth knowledge and insights into the common urban issues that confront both Hong Kong and other comparable cities in Mainland China.



HENDRIK TIEBEN, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Hendrik TIEBEN is an architect and Associate Professor at the School of Architecture of The Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK). At CUHK, he serves as the Director of the M.Sc. in Urban Design program and Assistant Director of the B.S.Sc. in Urban Studies program. Prof. Tieben's research and teaching is devoted to the increase of community benefit in contemporary urban planning processes in Hong Kong, Macau and the Pearl River Delta. Prof. Tieben is partner in various urban design and research networks such as the Erasmus Mundus project Urban Lab+, the International Forum on Urbanism, the ACNB Metropolitan Lab project Mobilizing the Periphery, and the City Space Architecture project Mastering Public Space (MsPS). In addition, Hendrik Tieben is a Founding Member of the Hong Kong Institute of Urban Design. He has published in a range of international academic and professional journals.



IAN BROWNLEE, Master Plan Consultancy

Founded Masterplan Limited as a planning and development consultancy in 1992, after working for the Hong Kong Government for 16 years. The main focus is on assisting private developments to obtain approval and to be implemented. He has experience in railway development projects, urban renewal projects, ecological conservation and heritage conservation projects, many involving community groups and NGO's. He has a special interest in sustainable development and on housing issues and has written commentaries on these subjects.



KENNETH CHAN, Hong Kong Public Space Initiative

Kenneth received his Master of Architecture with concentration in Urban Design in Hong Kong. With his professional background and working experiences from Hong Kong and US, he is currently the Director of Hong Kong Public Space Initiative (HKPSI), which is the first charitable non-profit non-governmental organisation focusing on public space issues in Hong Kong. HKPSI strives to bring the knowledge of public space to all walks of life, in order for people of Hong Kong to understand the value of public space through research, education and community engagement programmes. Meanwhile, Kenneth is also serving at advisory positions in Hong Kong Federation of Youth Groups and HKSAR Outstanding Students' Union to share his experiences in leadership, social innovation and youth development.



KIM CHING CHAN, Liber Research Community

Chan Kim Ching, graduated in Geography in the Hong Kong Baptist University, now being the researcher member of the Liber Research Community and the lecturer in Polytechnic University, SPEED. Specialized in contemporary urban issues and planning problems in Hong Kong, he actively engaged in many of the urban development debates in town, and having series of publications on land and housing problems in Hong Kong, offering interesting alternative accounts for the city futures.



MEE KAM NG, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

Mee Kam Ng is Vice-Chairman of the Department of Geography and Resource Management, the Director of the Urban Studies Programme, Associate Director of the Institute of Future Cities and the Hong Kong Institute of Asian Pacific Studies at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She is a member of the RTPI, a fellow of the HKIP and an academic advisor of the HKIUD. She has published widely on planning, governance and sustainability issues in Pacific Asia. Her publications have earned her six HKIP Awards. She has been consultant to the United Nations and the European Union.



PAUL ZIMMERMAN, Designing Hong Kong

Paul Zimmerman made Hong Kong his home in 1984. He is an elected District Councillor representing the Pokfulam constituency, and CEO of Designing Hong Kong, a non-profit organization devoted to promoting livable density and member of the World Urban Campaign by UN-Habitat. Paul is also a board member of Civic Exchange, Professional Commons, Path of Democracy, Hong Kong Democratic Foundation, and the Patient Care Foundation. His Hong Kong Government advisory functions include the Harbourfront Commission, and the Steering Committee on Biodiversity Actions and Strategy Plan. Paul has a Masters in Social Science (Economics) from the Erasmus University in Rotterdam, and a Masters of Arts (Transport Policy and Planning) from The University of Hong Kong.



High Density Buildings, Causeway Bay. Photo: Simon Smith | CC BY-SA

STATISTICS

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ABOUT HONG KONG

FACT SHEET ^[1]

Population: 7.2 m
 Population density: 6,650 ppl/sq. km
 Population /land developed: 26,090 ppl/sq. km

GDP: HK\$2,144.6 bn (2014)
 GDP/capita: HK\$310,113 (2014)
 Real GDP growth: +3.7% (2014)
 Labour force: 3.9 m (2014)

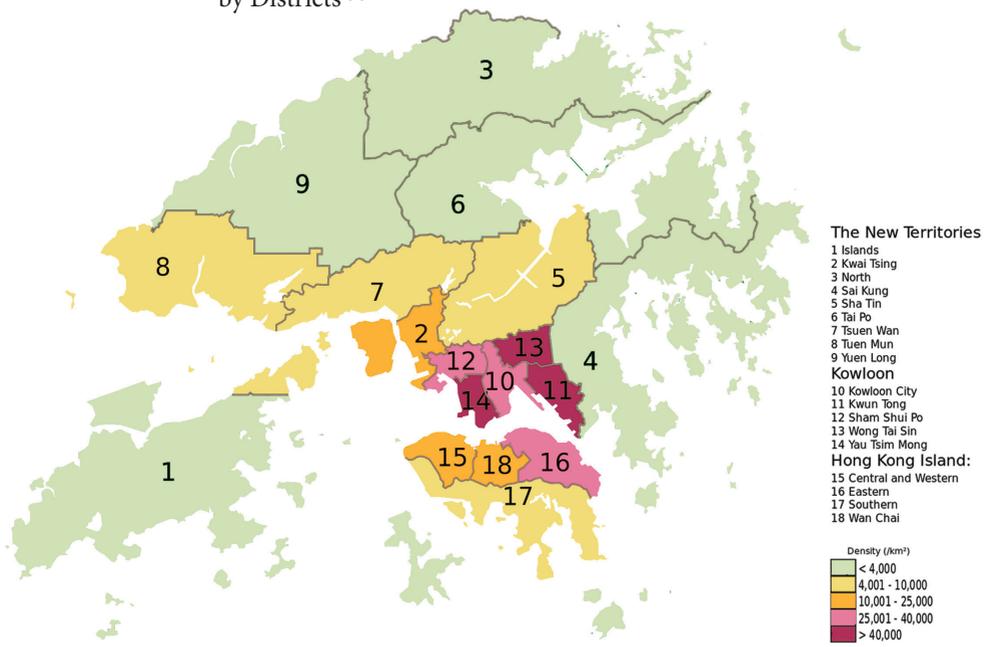
Total area: 1104 sq. km
 Land developed: <25%
 Country parks & nature reserves: 40%



GOVERNMENT

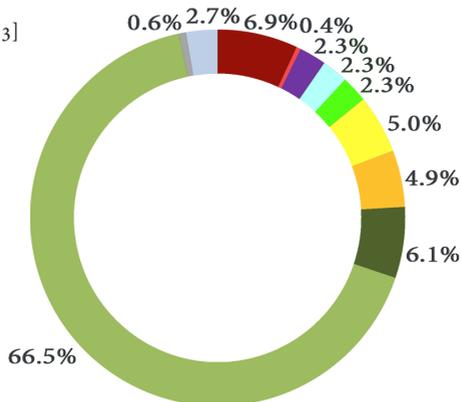
Head of Government: Chief Executive
 Cabinet: Executive Council
 Legislature: Legislative Council, 70 seats
 Highest Court: Court of Final Appeal

POPULATION DENSITY by Districts ^[2]



^[1] Gvo HK | <http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/facts.htm>
^[2] Planning Department | http://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/info_serv/statistic/landu.html

LAND USE DISTRIBUTION ^[3]



Residential
Private residential 26 sq. km
Public residential 16 sq. km
Rural settlement 35 sq. km

Commercial
Commercial/
Business and office 4 sq. km

Industrial
Industrial land 7 sq. km
Industrial estates 3 sq. km
Warehouse and open storage 16 sq. km

Institutional
Government, institutional and community facility 25 sq. km

Open Space
Open space 25 sq. km

Transportation
Roads 40 sq. km
Railways 3 sq. km
Airport 13 sq. km

Other Urban or Built-up Land
Cemeteries and crematoriums 8 sq. km
Utilities 7 sq. km
Vacant land/Construction in progress 17 sq. km
Others 22 sq. km

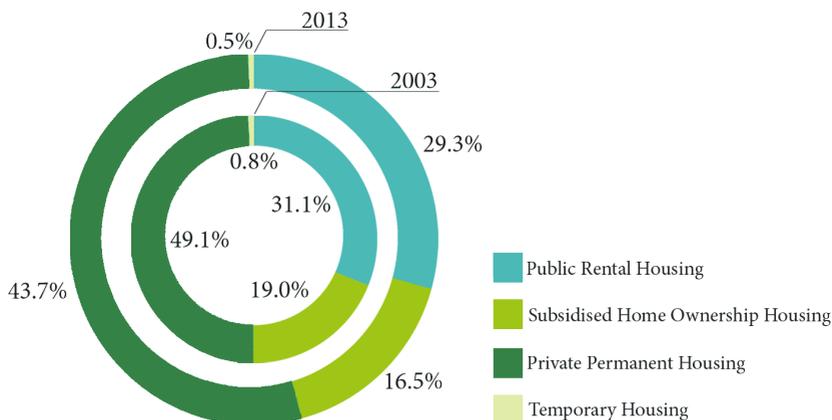
Agriculture
Agricultural land 51 sq. km
Fish ponds/Gei wais 17 sq. km

Woodland, Shrubland, Grassland, Wetland
Woodland 274 sq. km
Shrubland 269 sq. km
Grassland 190 sq. km
Wetland 5 sq. km

Barren Land
Badland 2 sq. km
Quarries 1 sq. km
Rocky shore 4 sq. km

Water Bodies
Reservoirs 25 sq. km
Streams and nullahs 5 sq. km

POPULATION DISTRIBUTION BY HOUSING TYPES ^[4]



Public Rental Housing
Subsidised Home Ownership Housing
Private Permanent Housing
Temporary Housing

^[3] Planning Department | http://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/info_serv/statistic/landu.html

^[4] Hong Kong Housing Authority | Housing in Figures 2014

HONG KONG & CHINA

TOURISM

TIMELINE ^[5]

2004



The first phase of the Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA) came into effect on 1 January.

2009



Shenzhen permanent residents could apply for one-year multiple-entry IVS to Hong Kong from 1 April onwards.

2003 ^[6]



The Individual Visit Scheme (IVS) was introduced on 28 July as a liberalisation measure under CEPA. It allows residents of 49 Mainland cities to visit Hong Kong in their individual capacity.

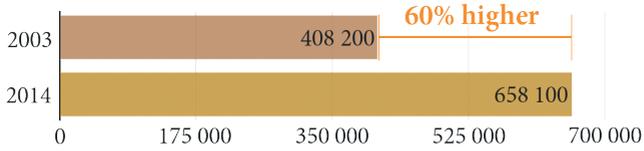
2007



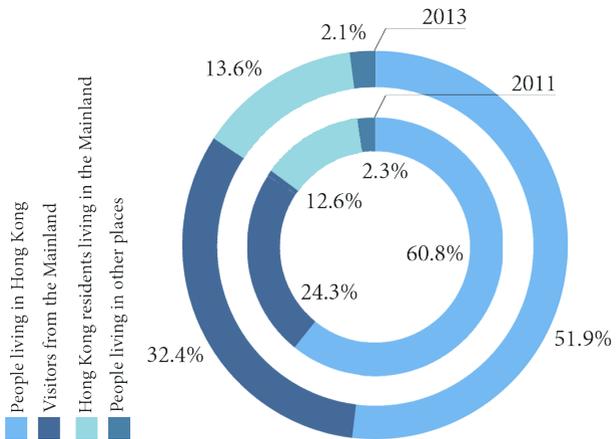
The Lok Ma Chau Spur Line Control Point opened for public use on 15 August.



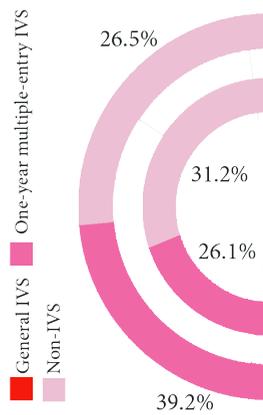
AVERAGE DAILY CROSS-BOUNDARY PASSENGER TRIP ^[5]



TYPES OF VISITORS



MAINLAND



2012



Anti-parallel trading protests took place continuously in Hong Kong from 2012 onwards. It is believed that the very first one happened in Sheung Shui on 15 September 2012.



2015^[5]

Shenzhen authorities have announced that multiple-entry individual visit endorsements for Shenzhen residents will be limited to one visit per week from 13 April.



Parallel trading activities became more active in Hong Kong gradually.



24.5% of the 60.8 million visitors were multiple-entry permit holders from Shenzhen in 2014.

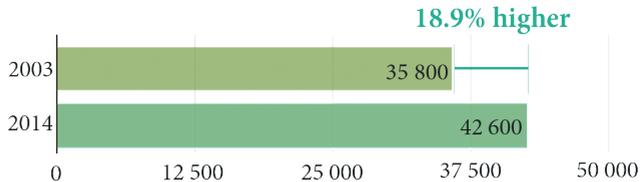


The number will decrease by 30% after implementation.

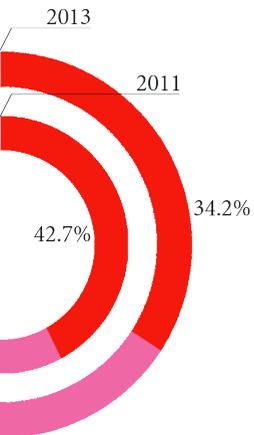


AVERAGE DAILY CROSS-BOUNDARY VEHICLE TRIP ^[5]

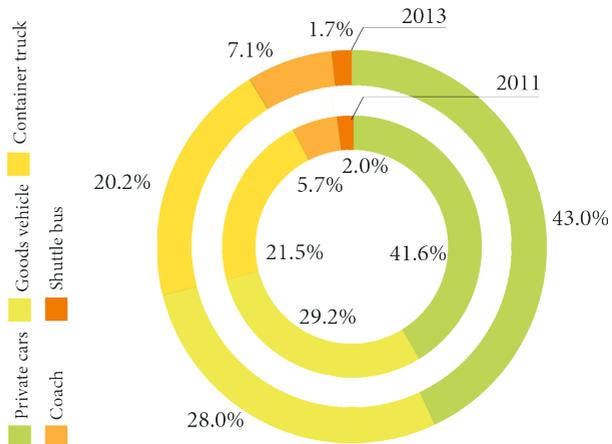
Of all the cross-boundary passenger trips in 2014, **91.9% were passenger trips between Hong Kong and the Mainland** and the remaining 8.1% were between Hong Kong and Macao.



VISITORS



TYPES OF VEHICLES



^[5] Planning Department | Cross-boundary Travel Survey 2013/14

^[6] Tourism Commission | http://www.tourism.gov.hk/english/visitors/visitors_ind.html

^[7] News.Gov.HK | http://www.news.gov.hk/en/categories/admin/html/2015/04/20150413_103803.shtml

^[8] South China Morning Post | Shenzhen imposes once-a-week limit on cross-border visits to Hong Kong by permanent residents 11 APR 2015

HONG KONG VS. THE WORLD

COMPARISON TABLE ^[9]

INDICATORS



Population
(Millions)



Population
living in
urban areas



Average annual
population
growth rate



GDP per capita
(International dollars
using purchasing
power parity rates)



Income Gini
coefficient
(100=absolute
inequality)^[11]



Life expectancy



Expenditure
on education
(% of GDP)

**HONG
KONG**

7.2

100%

0.4%

50,291

53.7
(2011)

83.4

3.4

SINGAPORE

5.4

100%

2.4%

71,475

46.4
(2014)

82.3

3.3

TAIWAN^[10]

23.4

-

0.23%

45,900

33.8
(2012)

80.0

-

JAPAN

127.1

92.5%

0.1%

35,006

37.9
(2011)

83.6

3.8

CHINA

1,385.6

53.2%

0.6%

10,771

46.9
(2014)

75.3

-

**THE
UNITED
STATES**

320.1

82.9%

0.9%

50,859

45.0
(2007)

78.9

5.6

**THE
UNITED
KINGDOM**

63.1

79.9%

0.6%

34,694

32.4
(2012)

80.5

5.6

RANKINGS



Carbon dioxide emissions per capita (Tonnes)



Year-on-year change in housing price^[12]



Human Development Index, 2014



Happy Planet Index, 2012^[13]



IMD World Competitiveness, 2015^[14]



Global House Price Index, 2015 Q1^[12]

5.2	18.7%	15	102	2	1
2.7	-3.3%	9	90	3	49
-	0.4%	-	-	11	41
9.2	-0.7%	17	45	27	44
6.2	-6.4%	91	60	22	54
17.6	4.1%	5	105	1	25
7.9	5.9%	14	41	19	19



Kingston Street at night, Causeway Bay.
Photo: Tsui Sing Yan Eric | CC-BY-SA-2.5

^[9] United Nations Development Programme | 2014 Human Development Report

^[10] Central Intelligence Agency | <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/tw.html>

^[11] Central Intelligence Agency | <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2172.html>

^[12] Knight Frank Global Price House Index 2015 Q1 | <http://content.knightfrank.com/research/84/documents/en/q1-2015-2951.pdf>

^[13] Happy Planet Index 2012

^[14] The 2015 IMD World Competitiveness Ranking



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WORLD CITY VS. GREAT CITY



A mix of old and new buildings makes cities more vibrant.

HOW HONG KONG COULD BE A BETTER CITY? ^[15]

Richard Wong: *Great cities are about diversity and occasional anarchy, which is why we should scrap the dated system of zoning and income determined housing*

Jane Jacobs was a writer, thinker and activist. She railed against the received wisdom of 20th century urban planners who promoted rigid masterzoning plans and called for bulldozing slums, opening up city spaces and resettling the displaced in either “skyscrapers in a park” or “garden cities” that were self-contained communities surrounded by a greenbelt.

Hong Kong’s public housing estates are a direct descendant of this mindset.

Jacobs thought that cities worked best when they had mixed primary uses. Putting residential, commercial, office, small industrial and public uses within close proximity creates symbiotic relationships and increases the life of a city, so the streets are busy throughout the day.

She also argued for the retention of ageing buildings and mixing them with the new. Older buildings not only connect with history and provide character, but they are also cheaper. This allows a broader range of businesses and housing to coexist.

Jacobs’ work led to a new appreciation of why a diverse mix of uses does not lead to chaos, but to a more developed form of order. What she advocated was organised complexity, rather than either simplicity or disorganised complexity. Wan Chai provides a good example of this, where the imposed simplicity north of Connaught

Road stands in stark contrast to the spontaneous diversity to the south.

Wellfunctioning urban areas spring from “human action”, not “human design”. Perhaps Jacobs’ greatest contribution is her view that it is precisely the diversity and occasional anarchy of great cities that makes them great; diversity should be encouraged rather than tidied away by zoning regulations that pay little regard to the consequences. Jacobs was a grassroots social activist, but also a profound believer in “spontaneous order”.

In contrast to those ideas, the public housing projects that have been very much in style everywhere since the 1950s and 1960s are largely income sorted. They are built specifically for lowerincome people. Income sorting tends to encourage insular neighbourhoods; the labelling effect creates a polarising perception of “us versus them” that reduces crosstraffic and sources of diversity, and ultimately leads to fewer retail businesses as they thrive in diverse environments that cross income divides.

The only saving virtue of public rental housing estates in Hong Kong is that in the first 20 years of the programme, they were built in urban areas and most tenants were resettled squatters who were not means-tested. The stigma of lowincome housing increasingly stuck over time when the predominant reason why people were admitted into the estates was the lack of means. This coincided with the location of estates in far off satellite towns that are socially and culturally isolated and, in the past 20 years, with an increasing number of single-parent households.

Jacobs’ simple and cogent point is that successful neighbourhoods are ones that win

the loyalty of their residents by making them want to stay and improve their environment rather than move on at the first opportunity. For this and other reasons (chiefly to address the wide gulf in property assets between the “haves” and “have-nots”), I have advocated the privatisation of public housing estates so that those who stay can feel they belong to the community and feel proud to contribute to its improvement. I always thought it conceited to regard public housing estates as a sort of purgatory from which those who redeem themselves can move on to the homeownership schemes provided by the Housing Authority.

Urban development in big vibrant cities undergoes continual change and must evolve with the ebb and flow of city life. It must not be welded to rigid master plans. Jacobs believed that some of our popular conceptions of ideal urban planning, like zoning and sorting housing by income, are not only wrong but actively destructive to large cities.

In this century, Hong Kong will experience massive and rapid changes in its demographic structure that are unprecedented in modern history (Japan excepted). It is imperative our city embrace flexible market solutions to avoid isolating our low-income elderly population and our young children (especially those in singleparent households) in public housing estates in remote areas.

If half the people in our society live as serfs, our politics and economics will increasingly become hopelessly divided.

MAINLAND INTEGRATION



TOO LITTLE, TOO LATE: CURBS ON CHINA VISI- TORS SLAMMED AS HONG KONG PARALLEL TRADING BOOMS ^[16]

Timmy Sung and Amy Nip: *While visitors seem relaxed about new travel curbs, local residents fear it is too little, too late and shopkeepers worry about their livelihoods*

Last week's decision to restrict Shenzhen residents to one trip to Hong Kong per week did little to dampen brisk sales in border towns yesterday.

Suitcases and shopping trolleys stuffed with baby milk formula and instant noodles, as well as medication, packed the pavements outside a cluster of pharmacies in Sau Fu Street, Yuen Long, for example.

Since Monday, Shenzhen's municipal government has not renewed expiring multiplicity permits, which allow unlimited visits to Hong Kong. Instead, permanent residents can apply to visit no more than once a week.

The move expected to slash the number of visitors from Shenzhen by 30 per cent, or 4.5 million a year is designed to deflate tension over parallel traders, who snap up goods in Hong Kong to resell over the border.

But the full effect of the move is unlikely to be felt for six to nine months, and visitors in town yesterday seemed unperturbed while locals were concerned the move could be too little, too late.

Busy traders in Yuen Long yesterday. Photo: Jonathan Wong

Shenzhen resident Shirley Tung had no problem with the decision as she was not a regular visitor. “In fact I am happy. Hong Kong used to be quite clean, it’s dirtier now,” she said. Fellow shopper Daisy Song saw no reason to apply for the new permit. “Since I am not a parallel trader, what’s the purpose of visiting so often?” she asked.

But some Yuen Long residents who claim parallel traders cause overcrowding and force out stalls catering to local tastes said the move would not solve the problem.

“Limiting their trips to once a week will not work ... If more people are attracted, then we are back to the original situation,” said Y.K. Chan, who has lived in the town for a decade.

Pharmacists in the area said they had noticed little impact yet, but one worried fewer mainlanders would come in the long run.

“I am not disappointed but angry. Fewer people coming means less business, and less business means less money,” said the employee of Yee Kin Medicine.

But an employee at Well Done Pharmacy said he was not too worried as Shenzhen residents might simply buy more goods.

Retail sales in the city have slumped in recent months as fewer mainland visitors have made the journey.

The Occupy protests and Beijing’s crack-down on graft and conspicuous consumption have been cited.

Economists predict that the latest change will knock down retail sales by 2 or 3 per cent. They expect shop rents in border

towns to take a hit, but see little impact on the wider economy.

ANZ Bank estimated that the measure would reduce retail sales by about HK\$10 billion a year or 2 per cent of the total. That would represent 0.09 per cent of gross domestic product, and mean 7,000 job losses.

Mariana Kou, senior investment analyst at brokerage CLSA, expected retail sales to drop by 2 to 3 per cent, with cosmetics businesses badly hit.

Joe Lin, executive director of rental services for CBRE, said rents for pharmacies and shops selling daily necessities could fall 20 to 30 per cent.

PUBLIC SPACE IN A DENSE CITY

HOW MUCH PUBLIC SPACE DOES A CITY NEED? ^[17]

Greg Scruggs

How much of Manhattan is dedicated to public space? For starters, there's Central Park, but the island's oasis is only 1.3 square miles, 5.6 percent of the borough's land area. You might remember those swaths of green way uptown, like Highbridge Park and Inwood Hill Park (the only natural forest left in Manhattan), but together they're just another one-half square mile, accounting for a mere 2.1 percent. Add in all the well-worn parks from Marcus Garvey to Bryant, the slivers of open space along the rivers, privately-owned public spaces like Occupy's Zuccotti Park, newfangled innovations like the High Line, and Janette Sadik-Khan's pedestrian plazas. Maybe 15 percent at best?

Guess again. When we think about public space, we picture parks and greenways, but overlook the largest single public space asset in any city's rolls: streets. Include the pavement New Yorkers traverse every day in your public space calculation and the city's most prosperous borough hits the magic proportion: 49 percent.

Magic, at least, according to the researchers at UN-Habitat's Global Urban Observatories Unit, who last year released the report *Streets as Public Spaces and Drivers of Urban Prosperity*. They argue that asphalt, hardscaped streets should be counted as public space right alongside our leafy parks and landscaped plazas. Together, they

should make up 45 to 50 percent of a city's land area, with 30 to 35 percent of the area occupied by streets and 15 to 20 percent open space. "If less than 30 percent of the land of the city is dedicated to the street pattern, it's a huge error," UN-Habitat Executive Director Dr. Joan Clos says. "If you have less, you will have big congestion problems."

The problems go beyond traffic snarls, according to the UN researchers, who found a correlation between expansive street grids and prosperity. Manhattan, with 36 percent of its area is dedicated to streets and a booming economy, has the largest street grid in the world thanks to a 1811 plan that prioritized a reliable street pattern. Toronto, Barcelona — where Clos served as Mayor — and London, all economically vibrant cities, aren't far behind, while younger and poorer U.S. cities like Phoenix and Los Angeles hit the sub-30 percent danger zone. It's not incidental that Phoenix and L.A. — both car-oriented places that developed with a more suburban form than older cities — have a smaller percentage of their area dedicated to public streets. In these cities and in their suburban peers, large lots and open spaces collude to create a very small overall percentage allocated to streets.

"In general, the American city has a good pattern of street allocation," says Clos. "This is not so in suburbia."

Among cities in Africa, Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean, the cities with the most area dedicated to streets leaders are Hong Kong, with 34 percent and Tokyo, with 29 percent. Both are economic powerhouses. At the bottom of the street-area rankings, all with under 10 percent: Bangui, Central African Republic; Yerevan, Armenia; and Dhaka, Bangladesh. Clos argues that these cities look more like the Phoenixes of the world than the Manhattans and Barcelonas.

“The pattern of sprawl and suburbanization which is very frequent in the expansion cities of Latin America, Asia, and Africa. The street pattern tends to be less than 10 to 15 percent. This kind of pattern cannot support the future evolution of urbanization,” says Clos. “These parts of the city tend to resist very badly when you want to increase the compactness or density because there is not enough street.”

In the fast-urbanizing global south where new cities are rising out of the ether, a functional street grid can easily fall casualty to a hot real estate market that offers a tidy profit on the centrally located parcels. Take street crossings, for instance, which can be threatened by the sale of land adjacent to busy roads. UN researchers advocate keeping enough land public to ensure construction of at least 80 crossings per square kilometer in fast-growing cities. “Any less and you are certainly going to be in a collapsed city,” Clos says. “Those are not prescriptions, but the consequence of studying the street pattern of the world and correlating it with the congestion in many different matters.”

The report cites Nairobi, where four people were killed on Sunday when a six-story building on a densely populated block

collapsed, as a specific example of a city without an adequate street grid. There, the number of intersections per square kilometer barely reaches 40 and many streets lack sidewalks.

But numbers don't tell the whole story. Cities still must be conscious of how they use the precious square feet, after all there is a big difference between St. Petersburg, Russia and Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, even though they have the same scant 15 percent of area dedicated to streets.

Clos pointed to perennial pedestrian charmers like his native Barcelona, Vienna, Amsterdam, San Francisco, and Budapest as cities that have their streets enough breathing room and also made sure to design them to support a thriving economy. Even if the Greek economy has fallen on hard times, when Athens was made the capital in 1832, a street plan laid out over the 7,000-year-old city helped transform it from a sleepy city of ancient ruins to a metropolis befitting modern Greece.

Laying out the streets, however, is only half the battle. Especially in the automobile era, it's vital to make sure they serve more than just car traffic and provide a dynamic streetscape for all users. “It is not just the amount of public space, but its quality of potential use, the process through which it is created and owned, and its governance,” says Ethan Kent, Vice-President of Project for Public Spaces.

Ultimately, it's not only about how much a city has by way of streets, but also what a city – and its residents – do with them.

URBAN PLANNING MUST REFLECT HONG KONG'S GREAT NEED FOR COMMUNITY AND OPEN SPACE ^[18]

Ian Brownlee: *A singleminded focus on residential housing will affect Hong Kong's liveability*

There is no doubt that the previous administration did not put enough land up for sale. Housing supply dropped to a level that affected the affordability of homes in Hong Kong. But affordability of housing is a worldwide problem, not just here.

The present administration is totally focused on the provision of residential flats. One unintended outcome is likely to be the longterm shortage of open space, and community and institutional facilities for the people who will live in these new flats and for the existing residents.

At the same time, there is wide recognition that social support needs for the community are changing and increasing as the population ages, and as economic changes drive more lowerincome manual jobs out of Hong Kong. Some of these issues are covered in the chief executive's policy address, but they are not getting sufficient focus in the provision of land and facilities.

The government is pressuring the Town Planning Board to rezone sites for housing that are reserved for open space and government, institutional and community uses.

There is growing resistance to this from local residents and district councils across Hong Kong recently in Shau Kei Wan and Kwai Chung, for example as people

become aware of the consequences.

Irrespective of informed and cogent arguments from local people, these community sites have been rezoned and this is likely to continue as the housing machine moves relentlessly onward.

The topdown system that overrides community concerns does not know or respect the problems that people face daily. It is almost heartless in the way it removes or prevents the provision of services that needy people depend on.

The problem is threefold.

First, many of the social and community services are not provided by government, but by nongovernmental organisations of many types. Some NGOs have government financial support but many don't.

These are not recognised as permanent providers of social services, as they don't strictly fit the government mould. Such organisations do not have permanent sites or premises, even though many have been in existence for 20 to 30 years. Typically they're on shortterm leases of around five years.

Thus, although they provide essential services to groups in the community, a lack of permanent sites limits longterm investment in facilities and there is always the threat of having to move on or close down.

Second, Hong Kong's planning standards are outdated and do not specifically require the provision of sites or premises for housing for the elderly, support facilities for the handicapped, early education, or for religious facilities. Even though such facilities are urgently needed in many cases, because they are not on the list they are not considered.

When facilities are not included in the government's development plan, land previously proposed for a park or social/community facilities is considered surplus.

This overlooks the longterm need, and does not take account of NGO requirements and their significant contributions.

Third, the Lands Department does not have a list of vacant sites for use by community groups or sports groups. Therefore, nobody knows what is available or what the real needs are. Many community service providers are experts in providing services, but have no time, money or expertise to run the gauntlet of unclear government procedures to obtain a piece of land or premises.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department is unable to develop parks and sports grounds as it doesn't have the finances for it and it doesn't want to increase its recurrent expenditure. Any vacant open space is usually put out for a shortterm use such as car parking. When rezoning comes around, it becomes an obvious target for a housing site.

Recreation and the greening of the city is being adversely affected. The density of population and buildings in our urban areas will increase. Without open and green space, the city will become hotter and livability will be affected.

Why not give these open spaces to sports bodies or schools to manage? Why not turn some into community urban farms? The demand is there and it should not be dependent only on the Leisure and Cultural Services Department's capacity to provide facilities.

Sustainability of the city depends on much more than housing. Before becoming too focused on housing, government officials need to do more than just talk to each other. They should also talk to the community and listen to the concerns of those who provide services, and listen to those who need the social services now under threat. The outcome is not just a paper exercise to be carried out in government offices; it will directly affect people's lives.



There is a demand for community urban farms.
Photo: Bloomberg

SPECULATIVE VS. AFFORDABLE HOUSING



WHAT HOUSING CRISIS IN HONG KONG? ^[19]

Ian Brownlee: *A look at the facts reveals that only a small percentage of Hongkongers live in very poor conditions. For the vast majority, quality of life issues take priority*

There is no doubt that a lack of land sales by the administration under former chief executive Donald Tsang Yam-kuen resulted in a housing shortage. The current administration has made housing its overriding priority, calling it a crisis. Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying says it “is the major concern of everyone in Hong Kong” and has called on the public, district councillors and green groups to support his proposals.

But is there really a crisis? The facts tend to show otherwise. Perhaps only a few see housing as a priority; for many, other things are more important. More housing is really important to a small group of people living in very poor conditions, but not to others.

There are usually two criteria applied to housing - affordability and quality. Affordability, to rent or buy, is an international problem facing cities such as London, Vancouver and Sydney. In many cities, the lack of subsidised housing is part of the problem, as those on lower incomes have no alternative. In “third world” cities, the problems are compounded by widespread poverty, a lack of public resources, large squatter or slum areas, and many homeless. Compared with these, Hong Kong is not in crisis.

The government’s Long Term Housing Strategy, released in December, considers all those living in subsidised housing to be

Tower Blocks, North Point. Photo: Kevin Utting

adequately housed at affordable rates, and they account for 45 per cent of all people in Hong Kong. A very large proportion, therefore, have no problems.

For private housing, which meets the remaining 55 per cent of need, the strategy defines those that are inadequately housed. Yet, the definition confuses the problem, as it also says that not all people in inadequate housing are necessarily inadequately housed. The strategy takes a conservative approach, and includes all defined households.

The first group comprises the 15,700 households living in temporary structures, huts or rooftop structures. Temporary structures in Hong Kong are buildings made of wood and with metal roofs, or those not approved by regulators. Buildings made of such materials would be considered adequate housing in places such as Canada and New Zealand, where they make up a large part of the housing stock. I know of one household who left their Happy Valley penthouse to move to a temporary structure with a full sea view at Shek O, full amenities and all modern conveniences. They are not “inadequately housed”, but others are.

The second group is the 3,000 households who live in commercial or industrial buildings. These buildings are usually permanent and provide solid, safe accommodation, but the system does not allow them to be approved for residential use. If fire safety requirements could be met, there is no real reason why they could not be converted to “loft-style” apartments here, as in many other cities. There are many “unauthorised” high-end loft apartments in our industrial and commercial buildings which provide good accommodation. People

there are not inadequately housed.

The third group is the 11,300 households who share with other households, in rooms, cubicles, and the like. In many other places, such sharing is an accepted form of housing for people at a certain stage of their lives - particularly for young people. Sharing is one way of overcoming problems of affordability. Yet, the strategy lists these as inadequately housed.

Fourth are the 75,600 households who live in subdivided units. There are obviously situations in which the physical conditions in these units are not acceptable but, again, they meet a social need that is not met by subsidised housing. There are also good standard subdivided flats that accommodate people who prefer this form of affordable housing to other options. But under the strategy, all are listed as inadequately housed.

This makes a total of only 105,600 “inadequately housed” households but, in reality, many are living in acceptable conditions. The strategy is overstating the problem. It also states that all the other households in private accommodation are adequately housed.

Last year, there were 2,437,000 households in Hong Kong. If fewer than 105,600 (4.3 per cent) are inadequately housed, then 95.7 per cent are adequately housed. Hong Kong does not have a housing crisis.

Affordability is very loosely defined in the strategy because “different societies have different views”. Affordability is “to enable people to meet their housing needs in accordance with their means”. That is not really very helpful, as there is no indicator as to when “affordable” housing will be

achieved, if it ever can be.

What about the huge demand for public housing and the long waiting times? These are a creation of the poor definition of eligibility. Too many people are eligible, and it is creating false hope that large numbers in private housing will eventually get public housing when they won't. There will never be enough public housing to meet those currently eligible to apply.

How can a Home Ownership Scheme application be 60 times oversubscribed and considered reasonable when 59 out of 60 people will not get a flat? Public housing eligibility criteria should be redefined to identify only those with a real need - such as the 105,600 inadequately housed households for a start. Why not set a different target - to provide subsidised housing for half of all households in Hong Kong and redefine the criteria to cater for the neediest?

There is a need to provide a continuous supply of new housing, both public and private, but there is no "crisis" and therefore no reason to recklessly reduce the sustainability of our city by rezoning sports fields, community and social support sites, and our green belts for housing. This will only create much more significant problems in the future regarding the quality of life Hongkongers strive for. Academics are warning of an increased urban heat island effect, and they should not be ignored.

The government is asking people to get behind its drive to provide housing, as this is the basis for many problems in the community. Fortunately, 95 per cent don't have a housing problem and are more concerned about quality of life issues than housing for others. They, therefore, have

legitimate reasons for objecting to their parks and green areas being removed, as the quality of their lives and of future generations is more important to them than a poorly substantiated housing crisis. Proper systematic planning of new towns is the way this continuous supply of new housing should be addressed.



LAND HEGEMONY



Farmers will lose out too. *Photo: Dickson Lee*

NON-INDIGENOUS VILLAGERS LOSE OUT IN COMPENSATION FOR LOSS OF THEIR HOMES ^[20]

Olga Wong

Villagers in the northeastern New Territories say their ancestors settled the flat, arable land as early as 1900, according to local records.

But that doesn't meet the legal definition of indigenous village established when the government launched its small-house policy: one that existed before 1898 - when Britain leased the New Territories from China. And only native people are given new land when their homes lie in development zones.

Houses built by non-indigenous villagers are often labelled as squats by the government. Only houses registered with the government before the 1980s are considered legal. Even so, their legal status is precarious: their status is temporary because the government never formally approved them.

Close to 90 per cent of the 727 villages in the New Territories have been recognised as indigenous, while 74 are classed as non-indigenous.

If the government takes back land from an indigenous homeowner, it offers a site of the same size elsewhere for the homeowner to build another residence. They're also offered money on a case-by-case basis.

Occupants who aren't native are not given land, but are generally offered about HK\$600,000 in cash, although the amount

can vary. Some residents opt to take a public flat if they pass the government's means test.

Chow Kwong-chuen, 74, whose father settled in Kwu Tung in 1949 after fleeing the communists, raised his three children in a 3,000-sq-ft stone house that is legal. Now eight people live there, including grandchildren, and he raises livestock. He says the government offered him about HK\$1,000 per square foot. "For the small sum we can't really afford a flat in this area," he said.

Private developers hold at least 70 hectares of the 168 hectares of residential land that would be subsumed in the proposed Kwu Tung new town development, according to developers' annual reports and town planning and villagers' records.

Developers involved include Henderson Land, Sun Hung Kai Properties, New World Development, Cheung Kong and relatives of the late businessman Henry Fok.

Villagers are especially incensed that the nearby 170-hectare Fanling golf course - owned by the private Hong Kong Golf Club - has not been included in the redevelopment plans.

Ng Mee-kam, an urban planning professor at Chinese University, said the government owed the public a clear explanation as to why the golf course land would not be redeveloped.

"This is an injustice in the eyes of the public," she said.

A spokeswoman for the Development Bureau said the land use of the golf course would be included in a future planning

study covering the northern New Territories.

Activists also claim the government may have favoured developers which own land in the new-town areas. They say their research shows most of the land held by developers is zoned for residential use, which allows them to maximise profits by building flats.

A Planning Department spokeswoman said zoning was determined by planning considerations and not land ownership.

"It's not surprising for the government to do that [zoning private land for flats] in order to minimise difficulties in the land resumption process. Why can't they just explain it clearly if there's no collusion involved?" asked Ng.

The credibility of the bureau leading the project took a further hit in July last year, when it was reported that development minister Paul Chan Mo-po had acquired a 20,000 sq ft agricultural plot in Kwu Tung North 20 years ago. He remained a director of the company which bought the site until April 2011.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE NEW TERRITORIES? ^[21]

Grace Tsoi: *The government's little-publicized plans for developing the north-eastern New Territories are much bigger than it would have you believe—under the current plans, huge tracts of green land will be turned to concrete.*

On September 2, while secondary school students were hunger striking at Tamar, a smaller-scale but equally vociferous protest was being staged. Several hundred villagers from Kwu Tung North, Fanling North, Ping Che and Ta Kwu Ling also staked out the government offices. They chanted slogans protesting against demolition and removal—their homes are slated to be destroyed, according to the government's plan to develop the northeastern New Territories.

The development plan is not a new one. As early as 1998, former Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa floated the idea to develop Kwu Tung North, Fanling North, Ping Che and Ta Kwu Leng into three new development areas (NDAs). However, the plan was halted due to a slower-than-expected population expansion in 2003. Then in 2007, Donald Tsang restarted the Hong Kong 2030 Planning Vision and Strategy scheme, and the Northeastern New Territories were again slated to be developed. The three NDAs will total 787 hectares, of which 533 hectares will be built upon. The consultation was done in the dark, and the majority of the public only learnt of the development plan at the last stage of the consultation. Originally the consultation was set to conclude at the end of August, but due to staunch opposition, the government has extended the deadline until the end of September. Here, we line out the many

problems and shortcomings of the government's plans.

Can It Satisfy Housing Demand?

The government backs up the development plan by stating that more homes will be built in the northeast New Territories—an appealing idea in the wake of rocketing house prices. Around 54,000 homes will be built, with 40 percent of the flats set aside for public housing. During her tenure as Secretary for Development, Carrie Lam said the ratio of public housing should be kept at less than 50 percent in order to avoid a repeat of the disastrous Tin Shui Wai new town in Yuen Long. “The problem with Tin Shui Wai is not that there is too much public housing. It is because of the monopolies [for example, the community is served only by The Link and Li Kashing's shopping malls and there are very few independent vendors] and insufficient jobs for the working class. Even hawking is prohibited,” says Chan Kim-ching, a researcher from Local Research Community, a think-tank focusing on urban planning. On the other hand, the project's 21,600 public housing flats, which will be made available by the year 2022, don't even come close to satisfying the government's target of building 15,000 public housing homes per year. We have to ask—is getting rid of all this precious green space worth it? On the private housing side, low-density homes will be built. However, it is questionable whether these flats will be affordable for the majority of the Hong Kong public—Chan worries that they will be snapped up by mainland buyers instead of satisfying local housing needs.

Overestimating Population Growth

In order to justify the project, the government has, once again, cited population growth in its push to build more housing. A government press release states: “According to the latest population projections, there will be an increase of about 1.4 million people in the coming 30 years. There is still a strong demand for land for housing and economic development.” However, the Census and Statistics Department has a track record of overestimating Hong Kong’s population growth. In 2002, the department predicted that Hong Kong’s population would hit 7.53 million by 2011. But today, Hong Kong’s population is 7.14 million—way off government estimates. The department itself has also lowered its population estimates. In 2004, it predicted that Hong Kong’s population would surge to 8.72 million by mid-2031. But latest predictions stand at 8.47 million by mid-2041. So if the government’s predictions are not accurate and consistent, how can it justify such a large-scale development?

Non-indigenous Villagers Lose Out

It is estimated that more than 10,000 villagers will be affected by the plan, and that more than 10 villages will be demolished. Almost all of the villages that are under threat are largely inhabited by non-indigenous villagers. Non-indigenous villagers migrated to Hong Kong after World War II. They farmed in the New Territories and built their homes near their fields. However, they are not landowners because land in the New Territories belongs to indigenous villagers. So even though the non-indigenous villagers have lived in the area for decades, according to authorities, they have no rights to the land. “The most ridiculous thing is, even though non-indige-

nous villagers have been living there for 50 or 60 years, their houses are still classified as squatter huts, a temporary form of housing. The authorities don’t recognize their housing rights... Non-indigenous villagers are easy targets of bullying because their rights are not protected by law,” says Chan.

Although it is the non-indigenous villagers who will be most affected by the development plans, no one sought to gain their input. In fact, the first and second phases of the consultation, which were conducted in 2009 and 2010, did not actively engage them at all. “The villagers of Ping Che did not know about the plan before—they only learned of the plan when they were invited to a *poon choi* banquet hosted by gleeful indigenous villagers. Some of the elderly villagers attended, and they were only told at the feast that the celebration was because the government would claim the land for development. They only learned that they would have to move at the banquet,” Chan says.

Unlike urban renewal projects, the government has not conducted any studies to investigate how many villagers are going to be affected; neither has it come up with any compensation or resettlement plans for the affected villagers. The only thing the government has done is to carve out a 3.2 hectare parcel of land in Kwu Tung North, where a public housing project will accommodate the non-indigenous villagers.

Meanwhile, indigenous villagers are set to reap huge profits. All the land in the new Territories land is either owned by indigenous villagers or property developers. As the government has allocated \$40 billion to buy land, it is certain that indigenous villagers will pocket part of the money. To add insult to injury, while their non-indige-

enous counterparts face the demolition of homes, the indigenous villages will be kept largely intact. Also, the government has saved land for the future expansion of indigenous villages. Within the three NDAs, around six hectares of land has been set aside for this purpose.

Loss of Farmland

Another inevitable consequence of developing the New Territories is the loss of farmland. A spokesperson of the Planning Department tells HK Magazine that 22 hectares of land under active cultivation will be affected by the development. That figure is significantly lower than estimates by environmental groups, which have come up with the figure of 98 hectares. “The government data refers to the land being farmed currently, but we focus on arable land. When we talk about arable land, it also includes abandoned land which has the potential to be rehabilitated. It is for sure that the government has not included such land in its figure of 22 hectares. From the perspective of agricultural development, abandoned land can be rehabilitated. So why don’t we protect and rehabilitate this land?” says Roy Ng, the Conservancy Association’s senior campaign officer.

Displaced Farmers

The government has pledged to maintain a total of 54 hectares as agricultural zones. However, 37 of these so-called “protected” hectares are found in Long Valley, a well-established and very active farming area. The government plans to relocate many of the farmers who have been displaced by the project to Long Valley, a move that’s bound to cause friction between agriculturalists. “If we move all the affected farmers to Long Valley, it means that some of the farmers

[who are already] in Long Valley have to move away,” Ng says. “The agricultural practices of the farmers are very different. In Long Valley, most of the farmers are growing wetland crops. But most farmland in Ping Che and Ta Kwu Ling is not wetland... If we move all these farmers to wetland areas, it may have an adverse impact on the conservation of Long Valley.”

The government also claims that affected farmers can buy or rent land with the help of the Agriculture, Fisheries & Conservation Department (AFCD)—referring to the department’s Agricultural Land Rehabilitation Scheme, which “provides assistance for land owner, tenant farmers, or members of the public to reach agreement on tenancy.” In short, it functions as a matchmaker between landlords and tenants. “The government only acts as a middleman. The dominating power still lies in the hands of landlords and property developers. In these past years, it is clearly seen that developers would rather leave the land uncultivated than let others rehabilitate it,” says Ng. From 2007 to 2011, the AFCD only managed to assist 73 people leasing and rehabilitating 11.2 hectares of farmland. Some 200 people are still on the waiting list.

The loss of arable land is an irreversible change. If we sacrifice farmland in exchange for more development, the basic question we should ask is what kind of agricultural policy we need in the city. “Hong Kong needs to produce a certain amount of food,” says Professor Jonathan Wong Woon-chung, who teaches biology at the Hong Kong Baptist University. Currently, Hong Kong only produces two to three percent of locally-sold vegetables, but Wong reckons that there is room for increasing the production. “I think doubling

the current production is doable.” However, the pre-condition of healthy farming industry is land security and stability. If the government doesn’t do more to protect farmland from development, all this talk on envisioning a stable farming or food policy will be for nothing.

Lack of Overall Planning

Kwu Tung North, Fanling North, Ping Che and Ta Kwu Ling are not the only areas set to be developed in the New Territories. In fact, several development plans are being discussed simultaneously [read more on p.13]. It is hard to get an overall sense of how the area might look if these developments all go ahead, as the government has been doing the consultations separately, area by area. In fact, these consultations quite often contradict themselves. For example, in the three NDAs consultation, the government clearly stated the plot ratio of housing to be built. But in another consultation regarding the Northern Link [the rail may pass through the three NDAs], the Transport Department seeks opinions from the public as to whether more homes need to be built. Not only does this make it difficult for the public to grasp the full scale of development in the New Territories, it once again highlights the fact that the government does not have an overall development plan.

New Directions for Development

“If you look at the basics, do we need new development? And new development in the simplest form means: do we need gross floor area for different uses—do we need new GFA [gross floor area]? The answer is yes,” says Paul Zimmerman of Designing Hong Kong. “If we all agree

that we ultimately need space, we can still discuss how much space we need.”

Apart from the amount of land to be developed, the public should also discuss the means of development. If there is a genuine need to develop the New Territories, the government should prioritize developing “brownfield sites,” which refer to land that has already been contaminated. A certain amount of land in the New Territories has already turned into container sites, car parks and recycling sites; developing these brownfield sites first means that the loss of arable land will be reduced. According to a study conducted by the Professional Commons in March, there are about 800 hectares of brownfield sites in the New Territories, which is already more than the total area of the three NDAs. However, the government has not really looked into the possibility of redeveloping these sites; nor has it collected any data regarding brownfield sites in the New Territories.

The government could also make use of the already vacant land in the urban areas for its plans. In early July, former Secretary for Development Mak Chai-kwong stated that the vacant land in urban areas which has been zoned for residential use amounts to 2153.7 hectares. This vacant land is distributed throughout every district. If the government makes use of this land, it will also help quench the thirst for housing, and our rich farmland need not be destroyed just yet.

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