

mindset of previous ruling class, to a mentality of assessing land values in totality by taking the social cost and long term benefit of the community into consideration. According to Karl Marx:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas: i.e., the class, which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it.<sup>13</sup>

As elaborated by A. Gramsci:

The realization of a hegemonic apparatus, in so far as it creates a new ideological terrain, determines a reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge: it is a fact of knowledge, a philosophical fact. In Crocean terms: when one succeeds in introducing a new morality in conformity with a new conception of the world, one finishes by introducing the conception as well; in other words, one determines a reform of the whole philosophy.<sup>14</sup>

The emphasis on personal and community identities ahead of financial consideration would affirm the built heritage social, spatial, and temporal value and its historical significance to serve public and societal interests. By adopting a new perspective in looking at the present built heritage conservation practice, in this case the socio-political dimensions of such practice, would locate the conservation effort firmly on a moral high ground and engage the public in such effort. Once this noble and moral position is established then the government would be compelled to regard the built heritage as irreplaceable legacy of the achievements of Hong Kong society.

The notion that "the particular heritage and collective memory of each locality or community is irreplaceable and an important foundation for development, both now and into the future,"<sup>15</sup> would ensure considered and prudent evaluation would be done before any decision is made on demolition. Furthermore, according to International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) "heritage is a broad concept and includes the natural as well as the cultural environment. It encompasses landscapes, historic places, sites and built environments, as well as bio-diversity, collections, past and continuing cultural practices, knowledge and living experiences."<sup>16</sup> The significance of the built heritage could also be in terms of Hong Kong's cultural history, uncommon or endangered elements, contribution to the understanding of a way of life in Hong Kong, special creative or technical innovation at a particular time, aesthetic or architectural merits, demonstration of the diversity of Hong Kong social and religious groups, cultural tourism attraction, special knowledge created by its conservation, etc.

As Pierre Bourdieu points out "individuals are engaged with values and therefore want, even unconsciously, to show themselves in a good light by giving the answer they judge to be the most noble one."<sup>17</sup> Emphasizing the appropriate socio-political dimensions in the practice of built heritage conservation would advance such practice by making use of the community's desire and government's necessity to be seen as socially responsible. It would be a matter of how the question was being presented. If the question was if one would prefer economic stability or preserving the old building down in the street, the answer would be obvious with the choice being economic stability. On the other hand, if the question was a choice on allowing a developer to make money or preserving one's own identity and pride, most people would choose the later. Linking conservation to a moral high ground would give cultural capital to built

heritage and give Hong Kong an opportunity to obtain a beneficial long-term conservation policy. If the SAR Government has the political will than there are ways to better the built heritage conservation practice in Hong Kong.

#### **Part 4 – Rectification of the inadequacy of existing statutory laws in connection with built heritage conservation**

To make use of the community's desire to be seen as socially and morally responsible for the built heritage, it is necessary to engage the public and make them partner in the conservation process. One reason for the present low priority given by the community on built heritage conservation is that many of the declared monuments, historical buildings and archaeological sites fail to engage the community and become relevance. This is not to say that the declared buildings should not be preserved or could not be appreciated by the public after conservation. The point is that formal avenue for the community to initiate project for declaration should be established so public also could claim ownership to such project. For example, in 1997 Australia, The Ethnic Communities Program was established by the NSW Heritage Office with the aim to:

Develop an awareness within ethnic (mainly migrant) communities of the heritage system in NSW and how it works. ..Encourage those communities to identify and celebrate places important to history of their settlement in the state... and assist with the listing of places of particular important to those communities... One element of the 2000-2005 strategic plan of the Heritage Council and Heritage Office is an aim to 'encourage listing nominations from ethnic and Aboriginal communities and specialist heritage groups'.<sup>18</sup>

In Hong Kong there are opportunities for the government to engage the public and neighborhood groups to do the same, such as the recent case with the involvement of St.



James Settlement on the 'Blue House' project in Wanchai.<sup>19</sup> The government could well make use of such occasion to consider the technical feasibility to elevate the Grade 1 listed 'Blue House' to the declared list.

Another problem with the present inflexible Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance is that it only looks at building and monument in isolation and does not conserve the declared building's surrounding context. For example, the foot massage path and children play equipment installed outside the main terrace of the declared Flag Staff House have reduced the House's significance. Preserving historic buildings or monuments should mean more than just preserving individual building. The government should be well aware of such principle as Article 1 of The Venice Charter states:

The concept of a historic monument embraces not only the single architectural work but also the urban or rural setting in which is found the evidence of a particular civilization, a significant development or a historic event. This applies not only to great works of art but also to more modest works of the past which have acquired cultural significance with the passing of time.<sup>20</sup>

The Home Affairs Bureau's February 2004 consultation on conservation policy review also points out such inflexible inadequacy and prompted the former Hong Kong Representative of the Nature Conservancy, Annie Y.S. Fung, to criticize that "in its present form, the AMO is ineffective in achieving its goal."<sup>21</sup>

But even Annie Y.S. Fung assented to the idea that "land is such a rare commodity, especially in urban area, that it carries a premium value... Those who own land are often compelled to develop it to the greatest extent in order to earn the maximum possible return."<sup>22</sup> David Lung also added that "both the government and public believe the developer has the

right to attain a maximum rate of return for the land."<sup>23</sup> One point that is not apparent to most people is that the development potential of a piece of land is controlled by various government imposed restrictions. Some of the government's control mechanisms include Outline Zoning Plan, Land Lease, Buildings Ordinance, Environmental Impact Assessment Ordinance, Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance, etc. The government has many tools that it could use to restrict the site usage, development plot ratio, height of building, timing of development, maximum gross floor area or impose conditions on provision of amenity facilities, preservation of trees, maintenance of slopes, construction of access roads, diversion of utilities, etc. For example, for many private sites granted under King George V with residential use restriction under the Land Lease, there are usually terms in the Lease stipulating the land user:

13. Karl Marx, *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, translated by T.B. Bottomore in Fromm, *Marx's Concept of Man* (London: Continuum: 2003), p. 163.

14. A. Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, edited and translated by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1971), pp. 365-366.

15. ICOMOS, *International Cultural Tourism Charter* adapted at the 12th General Assembly in Mexico, October 1999

16. ICOMOS, *International Cultural Tourism Charter* adapted at the 12th General Assembly in Mexico, October 1999

17. Pierre Bourdieu & Alain Darbel with Dominique Schnakper, *The Love of Art: European Art Museum and their Public*, translated by Caroline Beatie and Nick Merriman (Cambridge: Polity Press, paperback 1997), p.5. (First published in French in 1969).

18. From the Heritage Office of NSW web site: [http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/about/abus\\_2\\_2.htm](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/about/abus_2_2.htm) and [http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/about/abus\\_5\\_7.htm](http://www.heritage.nsw.gov.au/about/abus_5_7.htm), accessed 1 December 2000 as cited in Graeme Aplin, *Heritage Identification, Conservation, and Management* (South Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2002), p. 17.

19. This is a \$100 million project between URA and Housing Society with the aim to preserve the 80-year old Blue House in Wanchai. See South China Morning Post, April 1, 2006.

20. ICOMOS, *International Charter for the Conservation and Restoration of Monuments and Sites (The Venice Charter - 1964, 11nd International Congress of Architects and Technicians of Historic Monuments, Venice, 1964, adopted by ICOMOS 1965)*, Article 1.

21. Annie Y.S. Fung, "Sustainable Development and the Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage" in *Sustainable Development in Hong Kong*, edited by Terri Mottershead (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p. 405.

22. Annie Y.S. Fung, "Sustainable Development and the Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage" in *Sustainable Development in Hong Kong*, edited by Terri Mottershead (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p. 399.

23. David Lung and A. Friedman, "Heritage conservation and conflicting community interests: Heritage held hostage in the New Territories and beyond", in *Community Mobilization and the Environment in Hong Kong*, edited by Peter Hills and Cecilia Chan (Hong Kong: Centre of Urban Planning and Environment Management, The University of Hong Kong, 1997), pp. 215-232.



Not [to] erect or allow to be erected on the said piece or parcel of ground any building other than one residence of European type and in no case will the height of any such building be more than two storeys and will obtain the special approval of the said Director to the design disposition and height of any building erected or to be erected.

For most historic buildings which have restricted Land Lease, it often would not be possible for the owner to build to the maximum development potential as allowed in the Outline Zoning Plan as the Lease is usually more restrictive. The government has no obligation to modify the Lease to allow the owner to redevelop the site above the initial provision. However, when dealing with built heritage conservation, the picture presented is that the government would 'loss' the potential opportunity to collect additional money for Lease modification, therefore, creating an economic sacrifice by limiting the development potential of the declared building. The governments' argument is that the land has development potential which is allowed under the present outline zoning plan and has not been used; government would expect to modify the lease to allow such development potential to be realized and collect addition premium, i.e. making money in the Lease modification process. The assumptions of the government's reasoning are a) "the development potential of the land is part of its 'intrinsic' or 'real' value and must always be taken into account in the assessment of compensation on resumption and b) favourable zoning or other planning benefits of the land are not prospective but existing features of the land which affect its value."

Both of the above assumptions have been tested by exchanging the role between the owner and Government, i.e. the owner assumed the above as intrinsic right and sought compensation from Government upon Government resumption of his land. From the Court of Final Appeal record, two recent cases

with the above situation were found which might affect the assessment of future potential development value of resumed land. The two cases, *Dragon House Investment Ltd. v. The Secretary of Transport*, Final Appeal No. 13 of 2004 (Civil) (on appeal from CACV No. 1284 of 2001) and *Nan Chun Investment Company Limited v. the Director of Lands*, Final Appeal No. 11 of 2005 (Civil) (on appeal from CACV No. 335 of 2003), involved developers who owned certain lands which were resumed by Government. The developers unsatisfied with the compensation based on the existing allowed land use sued the government seeking additional compensation based on the 'development potential' and 'zoning benefit'. The ruling of the Court of Final Appeal stated that "in determining the amount of compensation payable on resumption the value of the land must be taken to be its value subject to the restriction in the lease" and "zoning does not have an independent value of its own" and furthermore, "planning permission in itself has no value, it is the right to develop the land that is valuable. Therefore, no value may be attributed to zoning which can only be realized by obtaining a lease modification." As 'everyone should be equal before the law' such interpretation should also be applicable to Government. However, more research would need to be done or an actual legal test case be instigated to ascertain the above is indeed the case and Government is also limited to such ruling.

However, even if compensation is to be made, there are still other methods within the existing statutory framework to satisfy such need with policy initiative instead of tax players' money. Some actual cases are discussed below:

- 1) Allowing the transfer of unused development rights from the declared buildings to other developments.

Allowing the transfer of unused development rights from the declared buildings to other developments means there is no gain or

lost in declaring building under AMO. Such methodology had been applied in the conservation of London Mission Building (LMB) at Robinson Road. The LMB was a listed building built in 1893 and was under threat of demolition. After prolonged negotiation between the Town Planning Department and the developer, the issue was resolved by the transfer of the unused development potential of LMB to the adjoining former Nethersole Hospital site. The former Nethersole Hospital site was then developed into a residential development with two domestic towers known as 80 Robinson Road. London Mission Building has been saved from demolition and by setting the two residential towers back from the street, another historic building, Hop Yat Church has also gained more visual significant commensurate with its status.

Another case of the transfer of development rights involved Ohel Leah Synagogue (built 1901-1902, the only synagogue in HK) in mid-level. The developer was allowed to transfer the allowable floor space of the Synagogue site to an adjacent site which was then utilized in the residential development known as Robinson Place.

- 2) Granting higher plot ratio in exchange for commitment to pay part of the maintenance fee for declared building

During the redevelopment of Cheung Kong Center (former Hilton Hotel) a deal was struck between the developer and Government that with the granting of a higher plot ratio than normally allowed, the developer would contribute to the maintenance costs of the St. John's Cathedral and the Court of Final Appeal (former French Mission Building).

- 3) Declaring privately owned buildings within the vested power of AMO

Under the vested power of AMO it is possible to declare a privately owned building as



monument without the consent of the owner. In 2003 when developers were invited to tender for the redevelopment of a Tuen Mun site which included the Morrison Building with the threat of demolishing the building when the redevelopment goes ahead, the Government declared Morrison Building a monument without the consent of the owner. Although I suspect such act was more political motivated as the building had served as the Dade Institute during the formation of the People's Republic of China from 1946 to 1949 under the direction of Zhou Enlai; however, it does further confirm the feasibility to protect historic buildings if Government has the will to apply the law.

**4) Exchanging the development right of declared building by 'Letter B'**

'Letter B' which had land exchange value of 5: 2 (for every 5 square foot of agricultural land resumed by the government, a certificate granting 2 square foot of building land was issued by the Government to the land owner) was used in 1960 onwards for Government to buy land held in the private sector without actually paying a significant amount of real money. Such "letter B" was then sold to developers which allowed the developers to use them to increase plot ratio in special site endorsed by the government. This system has proven successful in the past and could be used to exchange the development right of declared building when such building is being declared under AMO.

Other methods would also be feasible and could be developed to facilitate the conservation of built heritage including 'surrender and regrant' of heritage site with special imposed lease condition or plot ratio incentive for conservation effort, establishment of special historical zone under the Outline Zoning Plan to protect historic sensitive area or the setting surrounding declared monument in Hong Kong in accordance with Article 1 of The Venice Charter.

The above examples illustrated that if the paradigm shift has been made and the will of Government is to facilitate the conservation of built heritage then there are policy initiatives and existing statutory laws that can be utilized for such purpose.

As noted by Annie Y.S. Fung "our architecture heritage can be particular important in helping us understand the history and culture of our society. Historical buildings are like books with stories to tell... Historic or heritage places also contribute to the diversity and character of our environment, distinguishing our city from yet another anonymous urban place. They provide townscape variety and a sense of civic pride."<sup>24</sup>

**Draft for HKIA Journal – June 2006  
by Donald CHOI**

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24. Annie Y.S. Fung, "Sustainable Development and the Conservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage" in *Sustainable Development in Hong Kong*, edited by Terri Mottershead (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004), p. 390.





fig. 1 Reference from a historical postcard - The Time Ball Tower as seen from Canton Road in 1906

fig. 2 Photographic documentation - The two storey high Time Ball Tower in 2003



# THE CONSERVATION PLAN OF FORMER MARINE POLICE HEADQUARTERS

Dr. WONG Wah Sang and Curry C.K. TSE

## THE INTERVIEW

### Consultants of the Conservation Plan

The Former Marine Police Headquarters at Tsim Sha Tsui was constructed in 1884 and it comprises of several items of heritage significance including Former Marine Police Headquarters Main Building, the Stable Block and The Time Ball Tower. Being one of the four oldest surviving government buildings in Hong Kong, it was declared as Monument Site under the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance in 1994. The HKSAR Government prepared to revitalize this long-vacant site by adaptive reuse of the historic buildings and site.

### Why do we need a Conservation Plan in the adaptive reuse proposal?

In 2002, the HKSAR Government invited proposals to preserve and develop the site. As there was a foreseen change to the historic site, a Conservation Plan was therefore needed to guide future uses and maintenance while preserving the cultural significance of its buildings and site features. The Conservation Plan will become an important document in the course of development from inception, schematics, and detail design to future operation.





fig. 3 Identification of character-defining elements - A decorated Indian Balcony on the East Facade of Former Marine Police Headquarters Main Building



fig. 4 The Pigeon Houses, though moveable, are identified as significant features of the compound. They should be preserved



fig. 5 Condition Survey - Inspection of the pitched roof, timber truss and chimney flue

### What are the main contents in the Conservation Plan?

The Conservation Plan for Former Marine Police Headquarters compound follows the formats and guidelines set out in The Conservation Plan, Sydney, National Trust of Australia(NSW) by Dr J.S. Kerr(2000).

The Conservation Plan includes the following:

- Analysis of historical development and architecture of the site and buildings;
- Investigation of the existing physical fabric and nature of previous alterations;
- Establishment of a list of Character-defining Elements;
- Establishment of Statement of Cultural Significance for the whole compound and to examine levels of significance for individual elements;
- Understanding of the opportunities and constraints;
- Formulation of Conservation Policies to ensure the retention of cultural significance in future reuse proposal and to outline course of implementation;
- Establishment of Conservation Guidelines to preserve identified significant features.

### How do you obtain the necessary information?

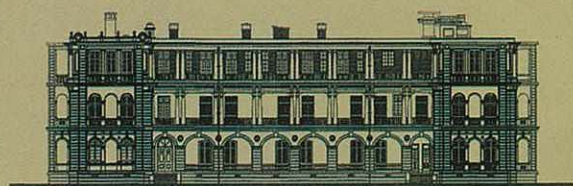
The preparation of the Conservation Plan involves gathering of information from various sources. These sources include the following:

- Historical aerial photographs and survey sheets from Survey and Mapping Office of Lands Department;
- Archival files from Public Record Office;
- Interviews with Marine Police Officers;
- A series of investigative testings on structures, termite, building condition and materials;
- Primary information is obtained through site inspections, photographic recording and preparation of measured drawings.

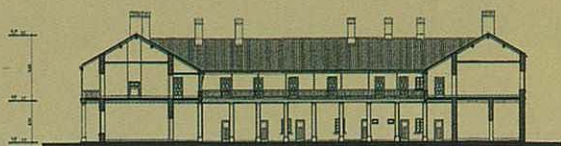
### Would the Conservation Plan be vetted and approved?

Yes, the Conservation Plan would be vetted and approved by Antiquities and Monuments Office. It should also be endorsed by the owner of the Site. However, the Conservation Plan should be reviewed in a regular period of time or when new information about the buildings is discovered. So, it should be evolving.





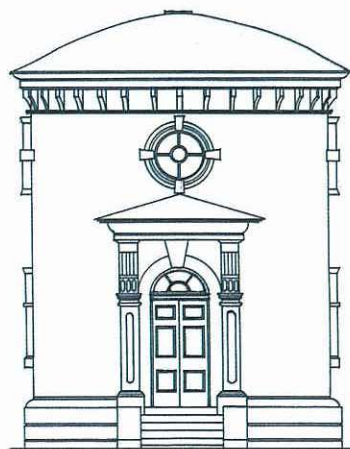
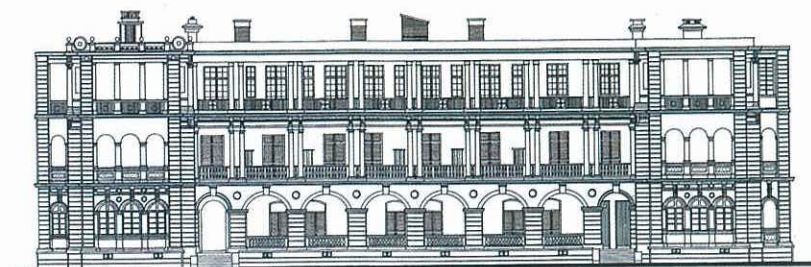
South Elevation



Section CC 6

fig. 6 Measured Drawing - The South Elevation and Section of the Main Building

fig. 7 Colonial ambience of the verandah at ground floor of Former Marine Police Headquarters Main Building. Conservation Policy is prepared to preserve this significant character of the space



### Who are going to use the Conservation Plan?

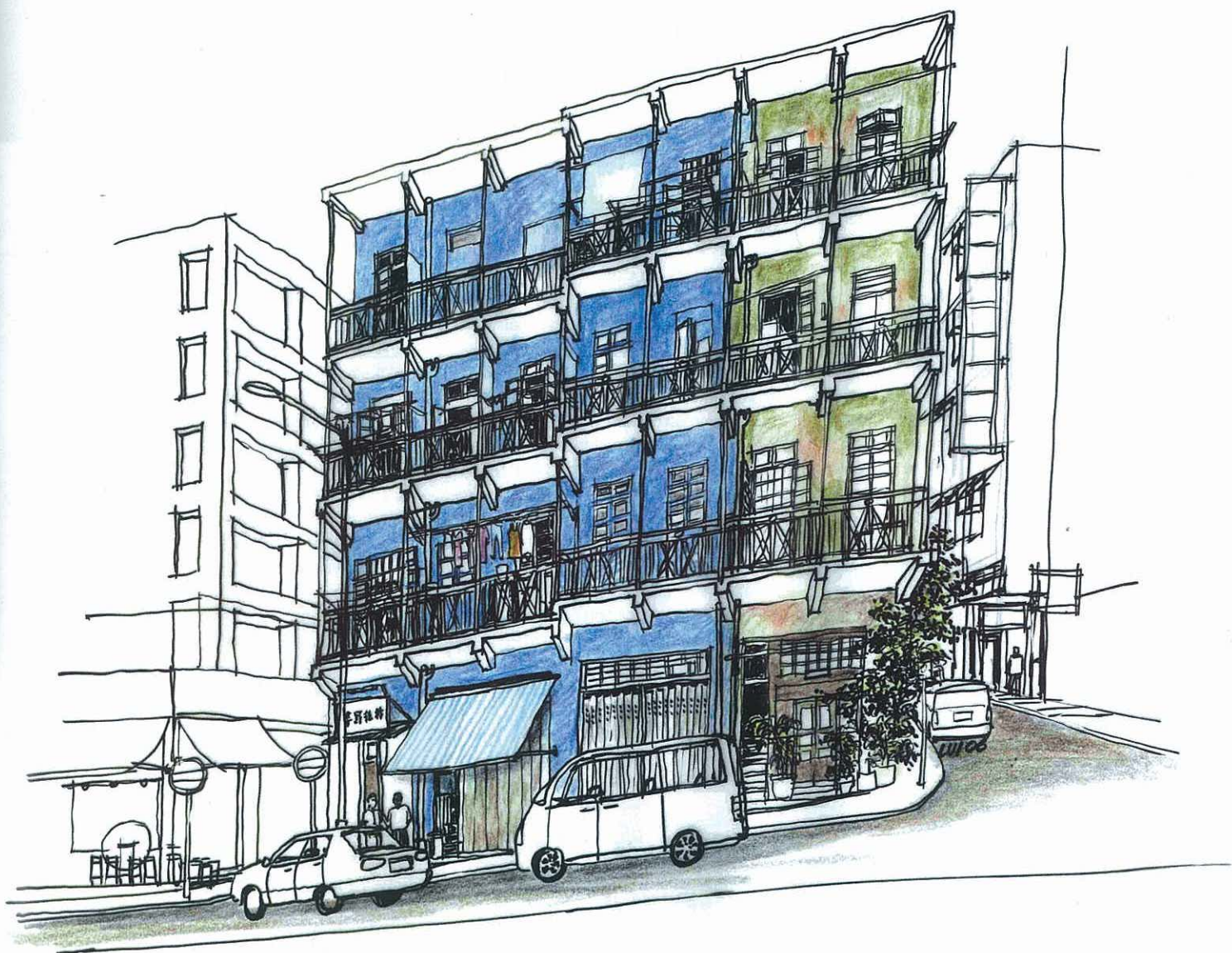
All the parties that are working on the adaptive reuse project of Former Marine Police Headquarters should read and use the document. It is very important that the Conservation Plan is a functioning document and should be referred to from time to time by project managers, consultants, and contractors to future operators. For example, the landscape consultant may refer to the historical setting of the garden lawn while the interior designer may refer to the levels of significance for individual rooms and character-defining features that have been identified.

### What is the major difficulty in the preparation of the Conservation Plan?

The preparation of the Conservation Plan is not only an information-gathering exercise but it involves evaluation and assessment of huge amount of information from history to building materials used. The difficulty would be to set the hierarchy of assessment criteria regarding various elements of different nature. But the difficulty is also the most challenging and rewarding part of the process and it can be overcome by experience.

Dr. WONG Wah Sang and Curry C.K. TSE  
Wong Wah Sang, PhD, and Curry Tse Ching Kan leads the research study on the conservation plan of the Former Marine Police Headquarters, a declared monument in Hong Kong taken up by the private sector for formal conservation and adapted re-use.





## WANCHAI BLUE HOUSE

Alex LUI

The Blue House is an icon of Wanchai. Its value transcends the old structure and modest design of a typical residential building of a past era. It embodies the spirit of local community and the heritage of this place and its people. It is a small part of historic Hong Kong that is still standing, and continues to enrich today's city life.



# TRANSFORMATION OF TWO WALLED VILLAGES IN KAM TIN

Chan Chi Sing Rex

## Introduction

In the past few decades, due to the rapid social and economical changes in Hong Kong, many village houses inside the wall villages have been modified, demolished and replaced by typical New Territories Exempted Houses (NTEH). In the process, it is not difficult to find some existing old village houses inside the wall were partially demolished and coexisted with newly built houses. The coexistence suggests some meanings behind the resulted form and the transformation follows certain order and methodology. Besides, the original settlement form has gradually merged with the surrounding, and the process was further accelerated when the perimeter defensive wall was demolished. From carrying out comparison and analysis on two adjacent walled villages, Kat Hing Wai and Tai Hong Wai in Kam Tin, southern Yuen Long, this article is intended to investigate the reason of the said progressive change. The transformation basically is a degradation process of walled villages and gradually disappearing process of the essence of old village houses. In short, it is a process of abandoning of the form, spaces, ordering principles, entrance gate location, and ancestral temple location in traditional walled villages. In this process, the technical and the utilitarian characteristics of forms and space appeared unstable and the traditional geometry, religion and ethics were also being transformed.

To sum up, this article attempts to:

identify the transformation process of walled villages and trace the destruction of walled villages by comparing the two walled villages, Kat Hing Wai and Tai Hong Wai.

explain the transformation pattern of village houses in walled villages to new NTNH.

study how the social changes and urban settings in the vicinity influence to the destruction of walled villages.

## Background

Both Kat Hing Wai and Tai Hong Wai are located in Kam Tin of the New Territories. Their precedents migrated to the southern China region and settled in this region in Sung's Dynasty. The settlements of Kat Hing Wai and Tai Hong Wai were about the same size of a square about 100m long and 90m wide. The two walled villages under investigation accommodated a large settlement of mainly one big family clan. Subsequently in Qing's Dynasty, there was limited necessity for coastal defense and the threat of piracy, the inhabitants built the defensive wall and four high defensive towers at the four corners, and surrounded by dug moat outside the wall to enhance the security for their inhabitants. The only entrance to the village was through a heavy iron gate. The above measures resulted in a kind of very high defensive nature architecture at that time.

## Spatial structure of walled villages

The basic spatial structure adopted for both Kat Hing Wai and Tai Hong Wai which had gradually evolved during the Qing dynasty, have similar elements and characters although they vary slightly depending on site conditions, the size of the settlement, and the prevailing social climate.

### *Perimeter walls with artillery towers*

Square shaped wall surrounded by a moat formed the dense barrier of the settlement. The four corners of perimeter walls were fortified by defensive towers. The spaces beneath the perimeter wall and artillery towers mostly served as "services areas" such as public kitchens, storage, animal barns, and so on.

### *Axial/centripetal living units*

The main residential units were oriented towards the front of the settlement and were divided by small alleys in a checkerboard grid pattern. Secondary residential units, or service-oriented spaces surrounded the main

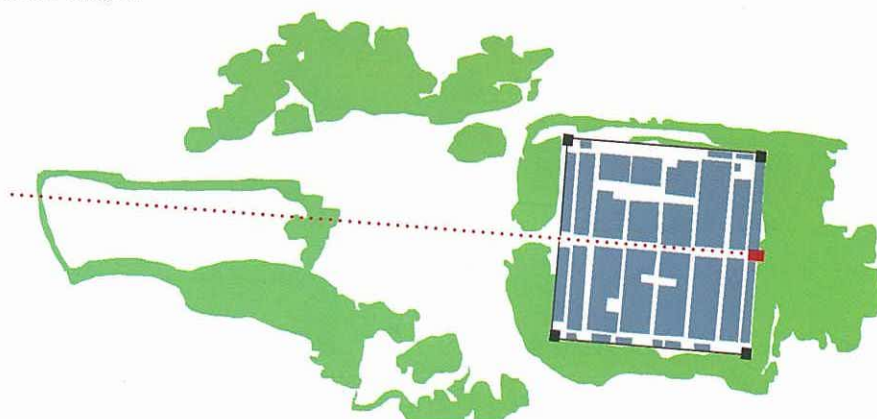


Fig. 1 - Original setting of Kai Hing Wai in 1949

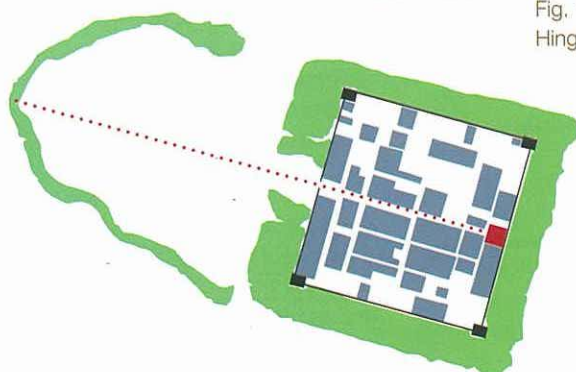


Fig. 2 - Original setting of Tai Hong Wai in 1949



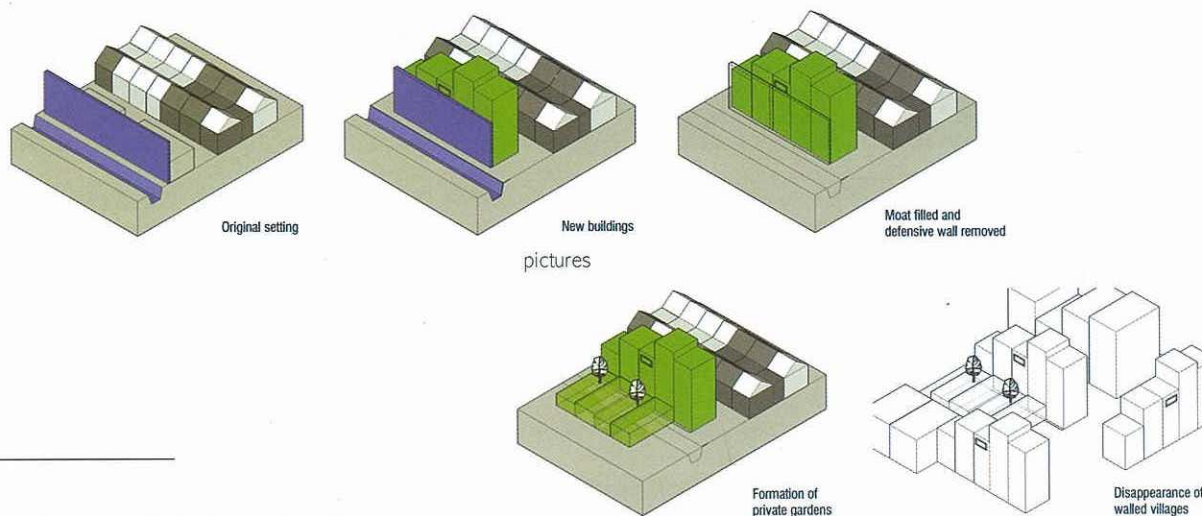


Fig. 3 - Disappearance of walled villages

residential units to form a square and were further joined with the perimeter walls to form a one-building complex.

*An ancestral temple located at the end of the central axis*

The central axis of walled villages was defined by the negative space: the main alleyway connecting the front entrance to the ancestral temple. The ancestral temple, with the width of one module-bay was the same width as the main alleyway which was flanked on both sides by residential units. (Fig. 1 shows the setting of Kat Hing Wai in 1949 while Fig. 2 shows the setting of Tai Hong Wai in 1949.)

### Transformation of the walled villages

The two walled villages provide valuable evidence on the transformation process of a walled village. By tracing the modification of the existing elements, it puts forward the idea on how a walled village disappears in the surrounding physical setting.

Being the most well-preserved walled villages in Hong Kong, Kat Hing Wai has relatively not been heavily influenced by the surrounding change of physical environment although many village houses inside have been demolished and rebuilt with typical NTEH.

On the contrary, with the removal of defensive wall and dug moat in Tai Hong Wai, the walled villages were forced to communicate with the outside environment. It has undergone different stages of transformation and ultimately attained the disappearance situation. Based

on the changes derived from the comparison, it is not difficult to find out the pattern of the transformation. (Fig 3 shows the gradual process of disappearance of walled villages.)

#### *Removal of defensive wall and moat*

As the society became more stable and the threat of piracy was no longer an issue at all, the inhabitants of Tai Hong Wai chose to remove the defensive wall and towers, and filled the moat. By doing so, the inhabitants at the perimeter wall did not necessarily have to rely on the alleys inside the walled village. Instead, village houses could open the entrance facing outside, adopting more outward looking windows. With the provisions of storage and kitchen in the new NTEH, the inhabitants tended to rely less on the original public kitchen and store rooms at the perimeter wall. In view of the convenience, increasing numbers of NTEH were built to take such advantage.

#### *Formation of private gardens at the perimeter houses*

The newly built village houses at the perimeter have the opportunity to utilize the space in front. Some started to fence off the area to demarcate their own premises. The newly occupied area became one's private garden. More and more village houses owners built the private gardens and made use of them as the house entrance, the necessity of using the internal alleys was gradually reduced. The daily activities which used to take place inside the walled village gradually happened in the entrance plaza and at the proximity of the gardens. The decrease in the residents using the internal alleys reduced the boisterous atmosphere inside the walled village. (Fig. 4 shows the private gardens in front of village houses.)



Fig. 4 - Private gardens in front of village houses



#### *Commercial activities emerge at ground floor shop houses of Tai Hong Wai*

The spaces surrounding the perimeter of village houses were not only used as private gardens but the residential units facing outside also became shops on the ground floor, where the market place was built on the south of Tai Hong Wai. (Fig. 5 – Commercial undertaking facing outside)

#### *An improvement in living conditions and facilities*

The removal of defensive wall and the evolution of private gardens at the periphery suggest that the "quality of life" has become more important for the inhabitants than the defensive purpose. The widening of alleyways and the expansion of public space give the account of the improvement of living conditions in the walled village. The original living unit in a walled village was a simple rectangular form of one module-bay width, it is not difficult to find that some living units had been divided and new residential block was erected, occupying half of the module-bay. In some cases, the whole typical unit was demolished and replaced with a new residential unit and NTEH. It indicates the improvement in both the size and quality of the living unit.

#### *The emergence of outside tenants*

As the development of economy continued to grow in the past few decades, increasing number of inhabitants left their villages and worked in other urban districts in Kowloon peninsula and Hong Kong Island. Some families eventually migrated to the districts, leaving their houses in the walled villages unoccupied. Although some residential units were re-developed and replaced by NTEH, they seldom sold to outsiders on account of the complicated land matters for transferring the land ownership and, more importantly, maintaining the tradition of being one big family clan. Instead, the newly built residential units were usually rented to others not in the clan so as to make a rental in return. Outside tenants would not find it easy to engage in the traditional culture and well-established neighbourhood. Therefore, the extent of communication between them and the existing residents were decreased inevitably. As such, the integral atmosphere of the wall village was reduced.

#### **Disappearance of walled villages tradition**

After the previous discussions on the transformation of the two walled villages, it puts forward some ideas for the process of the latest development of a walled village. From the removal of the defensive wall, it began the reduction of inhabitants' utilization of internal alleyways and it accelerated the extension of activities inside the walled villages to the immediate surrounding. The daily lives of the walled villagers have extended to the outside and blended with the surrounding social pattern. Besides, the change of land use and urban development further brought impact on the unprotected walled villages. The influence simply follows the similar pattern with other scattered settlement. The internal tradition qualities had been unfolded, confronting with the common social culture. The traditional culture has no longer been protected. Many particular qualities of traditional walled villages have been abandoned. In the transformation process, there are no special guidelines or bylaws to control the disappearance of traditional walled villages. On the contrary, the criteria of the construction of NTEH have no relationship with the tradition of them at all. Therefore, not only the physical setting has changed largely but also the valuable tradition culture and ritual have gradually fled away from our heritage. By looking at the transformation of Tai Hong Wai and Kat Hing Wai in Kam Tin, it is hoped that this article could increase the understanding of the current situation of walled villages in Hong Kong and arouse the awareness of the public and the government that this kind of heritage will continue to disappear if no long term strategy is to be considered and no proper measure is to be taken.

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Fig. 5 - Commercial undertaking facing outside



# URBAN DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG

## A BRIEF HISTORICAL REVIEW

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### Early Settlement of the British Colonial Government

On 26 January 1841, the first British settlement set foot on Hong Kong Island. In order to connect the landing spot with the barracks, the first street in Hong Kong, Hollywood Road, was constructed soon afterward in 1841 (Cheng, 2000).

Captain Elliot, the Chief Superintendent of Trade, was the first British official putting land as one of the main concerns in organizing the new Colony (Collins, 1952). In order to fulfil the circulation purpose of temporary dwellings and public works, a main road running along the coast line of the central area, Queen's Road, was planned and built soon after the settlement of the British army in this colony (Bristow, 1984), which was completed in March 1842. However, before the completion of Queen's Road, on 14 June 1841, 50 lots of land had already been taken place for the first land sale. This evidences the economic orientated objective of the Colonial Government on the development of the early Victoria City (old name of the Central District), where the so called philosophy of land-use planning was adopted only as a mask for achieving the goal.

Due to the rapid increase of houses built by the local Chinese, in November 1841, a new regulation for the erection of houses was introduced that streets of 20 feet wide in a regular grid and a set back of 5 feet from the edge for the street were required for all the newly built houses. This is probably the first building regulation for street configuration in Hong Kong in order to facilitate circulation in the primitive urban area (Bristow, 1984).

Just within more than two years after the British occupation, the basic principle of land-use control in Hong Kong had been established which had roughly shaped the future development of the urban area, the basic organization of the administration and even the means of detailed control by the system of Crown lease. All these has formed the essential and concrete principles of the development control of the city of Hong Kong until now (Bristow, 1984). By examining the works done by the early Colonial Government, it is not hard to recognize that the goal for the construction of streets was mainly to facilitate land sale for economic purpose. And the establishment of regulation was a tool for remedial action without long term planning.

### Urban Development in the Nineteenth Century

The demand of flat land for urban development in the following years after the settlement of the Colonial Government had led to the consideration in three courses: (1) to expand upward and inland; (2) to extend along the narrow strip of the north coast of the island; and (3) to move outward and seaward by means of land reclamation (Tregear & Berry, 1959). At the same time, infrastructure of streets became the main driver for extending the newly developed lands.

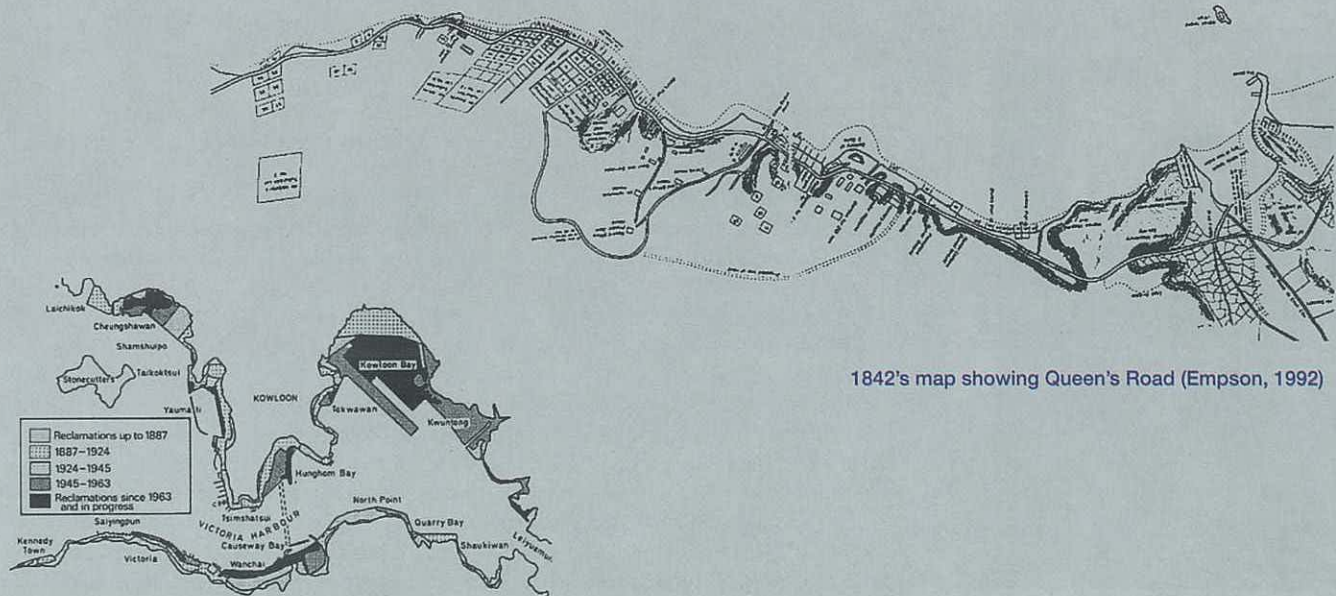
Besides the actual demand of lands for the urban dwellers, disasters of fires and storms had created chances as well as urged the Colonial Government to alter the face of the city by reconstructions and reclamations in the nineteenth century (Bristow, 1984). The great fire in December 1851 and those non-stop typhoon damages became the stimulators for all those redevelopment works in the early period of the Victoria City. However, almost all of them were planned in piecemeal manner. Further than the reaction for storm attack, rapid growth of population in Hong Kong by the end of the nineteenth century had also made the further expansion of the reclamation works along the north shore of the island in the 1880s.



In addition to Hong Kong Island, by the Convention of Peking on 26 March 1860, the urban development process by the Colonial Government shifted to Kowloon after the taking over of Kowloon peninsula. In the 1860s, major reclamation works had been taken place in this new piece of territory at Yau Ma Tei, Tai Kok Tsui and Hung Hom where most of the road construction networks were contracted to private developers under the control of a Public Works Commission by the government.

The early history of the city of Hong Kong reveals that the natural forces as well as the overcrowded living condition had led the outcome of reclamation of additional land as the prime solution for the urban development in Hong Kong. Although it might not be the prime intention of the Colonial Government, it brought to the colony new facilities for better living standard in the future (Bristow, 1984). However, it has been argued that this approach is short sighted, and its adverse effects have been lasting even now. The campaign for protecting the Victoria Harbour in the early 2000s reflects the general understanding of this issue.

In the early period of urban development in Hong Kong, form of street and its configuration had reflected its primary function. Since the general movement of people by that period did not require the street layout for serving vehicular standard, 'ladder' streets across most of the hilly areas were common. It was because of the high demand of land for the construction of buildings, land-leasing system thus encouraged the rectangular gridiron street pattern to maximum the built area with minimum street layout. This had also led to those corresponding regulations for the building requirements of the Chinese tenement houses, as well as the European dwellings (Bristow, 1984). Land-use planning at that period aimed only to maximise the use of available land for buildings and minimise the use for public spaces, i.e. streets or open spaces.



1842's map showing Queen's Road (Empson, 1992)

Reclamation in urban Hong Kong until the 1960s (Leeming, 1977)





Typical 'ladder' streets in Central District of Hong Kong (Cheng, 2000)

### Early Twentieth Century Development

The most significant change of the urban form in the turn of the century was introduced by the 99-year lease of the New Territories under the Convention of Peking in 1898. It created the possibility of the real expansion of the earlier settlement of the Kowloon peninsula, particular in the area of New Kowloon between Boundary Street and the Kowloon Hills. While in the New Territories, which was mainly treated as a buffer area from the Mainland China, major highways were completed in about 1920 for transportation purpose. Not long after the turn of the century, large-scale speculative developers started emerging. However, the most successful of them still only connected with the developments in Kowloon (Bristow, 1984).

Although reclamation work was focused on the development of the Kowloon peninsula in the early twentieth century, works at the Hong Kong Island kept going which included a large piece of reclamation land in Wan Chai and Causeway Bay. It is not hard to recognize by the street configuration that those areas have not been greatly altered in the past century that become the template of the physical urban structure along the northern side of Hong Kong Island. This part of the urban area is also said to be the typical Hong Kong in terms of the built environment as well as those survived and newly introduced urban activities.

On 19 January 1922, the Executive Council approved the appointment of a Committee to investigate the possibility of a long term planning for the Colony. From that time, the principle of town planning was formally applied with consideration of the future development of the whole urban area in Hong Kong which led to the establishment of the Town Planning scheme of 1922. In 1935, a Town Planning Officer was first appointed in the Crown Lands and Survey Office within the Public Works Department. Together with the establishment of a separated sub-department of the Buildings Ordinance Office to deal with the examination and passing of building plans of the private developments, the status of clear separation between town planning and building control had started emerging.

In the early twentieth century, the rapid growth of population had also raised the issue of public health which gave rise the Public Health and Building Ordinance of 1903 in order to control the building development in a micro scale. The same issue in the 1920s and 1930s had further stimulated a significant step in the building history in Hong Kong, the establishment of a separated Buildings Ordinance in 1935 (Bristow, 1984). It was in 1939 that the Bill regarding appointment of a Town Planning Board was passed in the Legislative Council that the town planning legislation in Hong Kong was initiated.

In connection with the movement of people in the urban area, the period of early twentieth century was significant in terms of the introduction of those new modes of transportation. The Hong Kong Tramways Limited was established in 1904 for providing the first mechanical mean of public transportation along the east and west of Hong Kong Island. Although its slow travelling speed had not created great conflict with the pedestrians, its accessory provisions, e.g. overhead cables, cable posts and terminal kiosks, had introduced a new streetscape along the route of the tramline (Ma & Chu, 2005). It was not until the 1920s and 1930s by the introduction of the automobile that the perception of the street environment for pedestrians has a significant changed. The high speed of the automobiles together with the trend of their rapid growing in numbers in the urban area in that period became the milestone for the change of role of streets in Hong Kong. This also led to those new requirements stated in the Buildings Ordinance of 1935



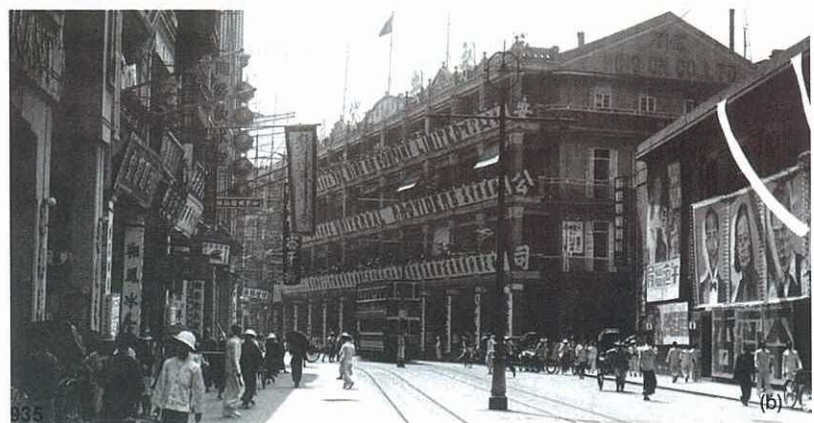
regarding the minimum width of the newly constructed streets. ( See photos on right: (a)1915, (b)1935, (c)1950 )

Besides all the environmental changes, seeking for land resources was still the main task of the Colonial Government during the early twentieth century. However, the issue of providing a physical health environment in terms of quality instead of just quantity has started introducing to the planning philosophy by the relevant officials. The government at that time had probably noticed that the growth of the city could no longer depend on the sole quantitative provision of physical space but also the quality of city life. Establishment of the Town Planning Board was found to be the first step to help obtaining a vision to foresee the possibilities in the future. However, the idea of town planning for the city of Hong Kong at that moment was still primitive in terms of its vision that urban life of the city dwellers was in a much lower level of the hierarchy compared with the physical development of the city structure for facilitating its economic growth.

### After the Second World War

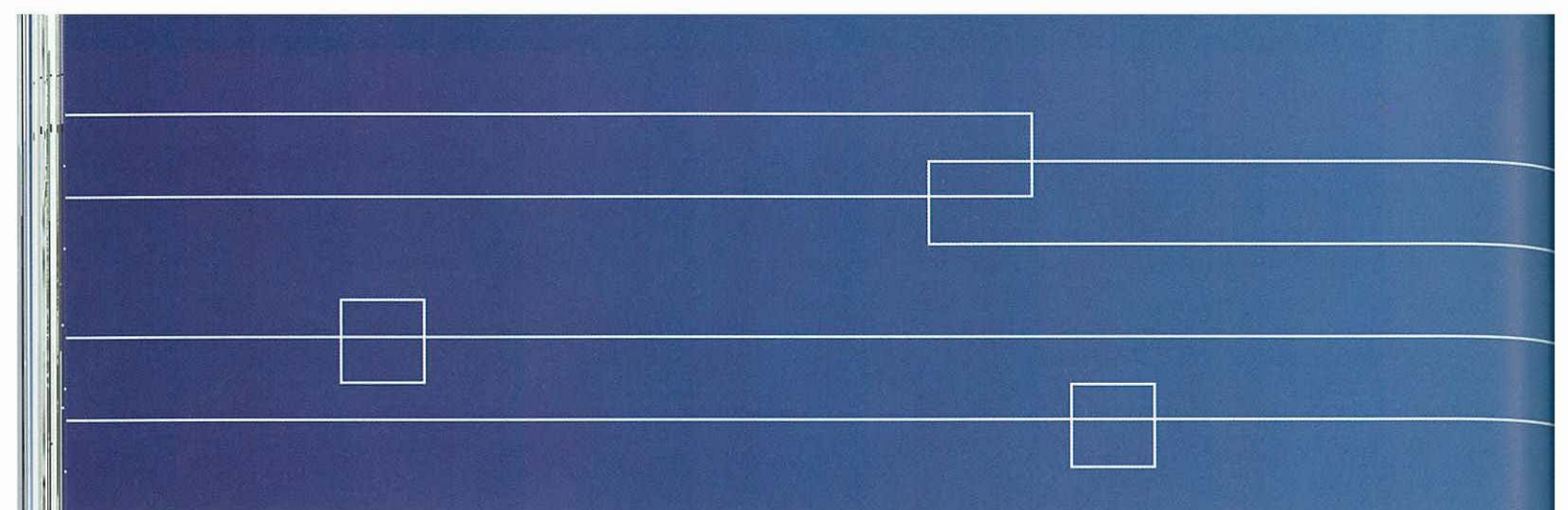
After the war, physical development of the city fabric continued. In order to rebuild the city for the foreseeable population growth, a five-year programme of major public works was authorized and begun in 1951. The Hong Kong Housing Society was first established in 1948 to supply middle-income housing (Hong Kong Housing Society, 2005). Because of a great fire in Shek Kip Mei in December 1953, the scheme for public housing had started for providing living space with reasonable standard for the lower class (Sham Shui Po District Council., 2003). It was followed by the establishment of the Hong Kong Housing Authority in 1954.

Town planning matters, after the war, was considered unimportant by London compared with the rebuilt of the damaged city (Bristow, 1984). However, development of a city is



Change of streetscapes in Hong Kong from 1915 to 1950 (Cheng, 2000)





irreversible which includes its relevant process of its administrative body. In the following years, more and more districts in the urban areas were redeveloped and had to be included as planned districts. In 1955, the Town Planning Board had held its first regular meeting and began its routine consideration of the statutory zoning proposals.

In 1956, by the introduction of the Building (Planning) Regulations, the urban landscape of our city was suggested to be altered and consolidated (Bristow, 1984). Followed by the Charlesworth Report of 1959 on road development, transport planning began to be introduced into the urban development process separated from land-use planning in Hong Kong.

Although the introduction of the vehicles before the Second World War was beneficial in many aspects, and planning for their existence in our urban fabric was a proper step, the establishment of transport planning into the urban development process had signalled the beginning of great conflict between the vehicular and the pedestrian movement in our urban environment. It worth considers that if those strategies in dealing with the same issue were based on the theoretical principles set up by the urban designers rather than on those technical principles generated by the traffic engineers, we would probably have another picture of the urban environment at this moment. It seems that the most questionable administrative decision in connection with the planning of Hong Kong in the 1960s was whether we should separate the issue of transportation from urban design and urban planning.

### **From the 1960s to 1980s**

By the end of the 1960s, town planning in Hong Kong seems to be mature by the imported mechanism of land-use zoning. In connection with the separated strategies established by the other government departments, the planning system for the development of the urban realm was reasonably settled (Bristow, 1984).

In the 1970s, the city of Hong Kong as a whole had shown an acceleration of development. With the administration reform for town planning matching in pace with the government structure, plan-making activities were also expanded considerably (Bristow, 1984). Especially in the New Territories, the government considered the planning of infrastructure for transportation essential. Transport Office was thus set up in 1965 and was later upgraded to Transport Department in 1968. The Transport Department, although not intended to influence town planning matters, many of its studies in transportation, together with those by Transport Survey Division of Public Works Department, had contributed greatly in shaping Hong Kong as it is today. However, it has to be noted that the issue of transportation at that moment was limited to mechanical means where the movement of pedestrians in the city was excluded.

Further than the physical development of the city, the development of the administrative structure had more significant influence on the planning history of Hong Kong from the 1970s. At the beginning of the 1970s, idea of redistributing the powers of town planning from the central government had started (Bristow, 1984). In the late 1973, an independent new Office was subdivided to different branches to deal with the plans of different sections of the whole territory, as well as to prepare and update the new ten-year development programme. From this period on, town planning in the Colony had become a systematic process. However, as the hierarchy of powers within the administrative structure was still vague at that time, decisions made by different