

HONG KONG



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**CCCH9033 SUSTAINABLE
URBAN DEVELOPMENT AND
HONG KONG**



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HONG KONG



September - December 2012





Message from Course Coordinator

Urban sustainability is more than an environmental concept. Ethical utilization of resources, geographical equity and living within the carrying capacity of Mother Nature are important components underlying the principle. Sustainable urban living is concerned with both inter- and intra-generational equity, and touches upon such social, economic and environmental issues as satisfying basic needs, accommodating multi-cultural and diversified aspirations, ensuring public engagement as well as nurturing public participation and partnership in the development process.

Hong Kong's phenomenal growth in the last three decades has led to serious environmental, economic and social problems. While these sustainability issues are also present in other large, vibrant cities, future development of the city is at risk unless they are addressed.



This booklet encompasses bilateral inputs from the process of teaching and learning, showcasing selected teaching materials and outputs of student projects. The students had been encouraged to come up with creative solutions to the problems they had identified. This booklet is available online and will be sent to relevant government bureaus and departments for their consideration.

The course, *Sustainable Urban Development and Hong Kong*, was first offered in September 2012. I am grateful for the funding support from the Common Core Teaching Development Grant of the University of Hong Kong.

Dr. Roger C. K. Chan
Department of Urban Planning and Design



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Course Introduction

Course Description

Ever since the mid-19th century, Hong Kong has played an important role in China's modernization. During her days as a British colony, the fishing village was a safety haven from wars and disturbances in the Mainland. The fishing village expanded and developed into a 'mart of trade'. When the People's Republic of China was set up and a closed door economy was adopted, Hong Kong became a source of economic support for the Chinese state as well as many of the poor countrymen. One of the four Asian dragons, Hong Kong has served as a model of capitalist market economy and a society ruled by law since the country's reintegration with the global economy in the late 1970s. The Hong Kong miracle has offered many valuable lessons for opening Chinese cities. Now as China's Special Administrative Region (SAR), we have called ourselves 'Asia's World City'—do we live up to this title? What does Asia's World City mean to us Hong Kongers and to our motherland? In the context of her century old historical mission of running at the forefront of China's modernization, what is the performance of Hong Kong with reference to her responses to global challenges?

Course Objectives

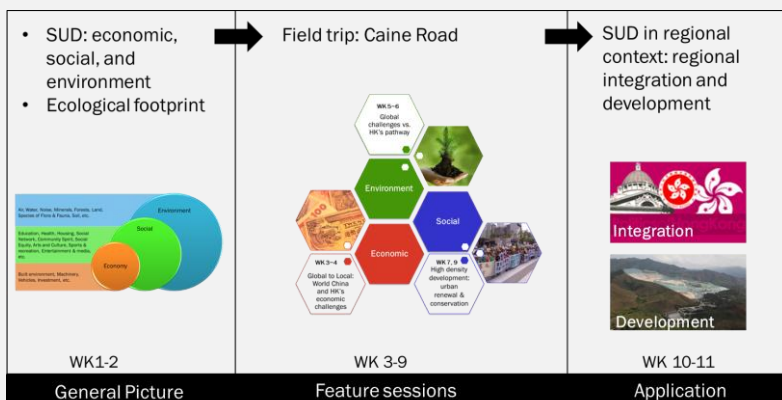
This course focuses on the understanding of sustainable urban development (SUD) in the context of high-density, market-oriented Asian world cities. Urban sustainability is not just an environmental concept though ethical utilization of resources, geographical equity and living within the carrying capacity of mother nature are important principles. Sustainable urban living concerns also about inter- and intra-generational equity that will inevitably touch upon social, economic and political issues like satisfying basic needs, accommodating multi-cultural and diversified aspirations, assuring access to modes of governance and enhancing partnerships in the development process. In the dense and compact environment of Hong Kong, these, very often, become tough and complicated issues if we want to become a sustainable world city.

Organization

The course consists of three components, lectures (including one guest lecture), field trip and Moodle learning. Lectures are organized by the three aspects of sustainable urban development, namely economic aspect, environmental aspect and social aspect. This is followed by a shift of perspective to regional dimension, and issues like immigration and regional development are examined. To welcome broader insights, Mr. K. K. Ling (director of the Planning Department) was invited to give a lecture on “holistic view of sustainable urban development in Hong Kong and the regional context”.

Inspired by the Place-based Education (PBE), a half-day field trip was organized to one part of Tai Ping Shan area. Students could apply knowledge to the real community and reflect deeper on the concept of SUD by interacting with the built environment.

Some self-administrated activities were organized through Moodle. Students are encouraged to participate and, in the meantime, give feedbacks to better inform the teaching and learning process.



Course Introduction



Learning Outcomes

After taking this course, students are expected to:

- Describe and explain urban sustainability challenges at the global level and examine responses in Hong Kong.
- Explore and use various sources of information and assess Hong Kong's performance in terms of tackling various global issues.
- Apply knowledge generated in the cases of Hong Kong to understand and examine sustainable urban development issues in Chinese cities.
- Demonstrate a reflective response to global sustainability challenges in the context of Hong Kong and an awareness of the implications of such responses on the challenges China is facing in her ongoing quest for modernization.

Different Views on Education for SUD*

Aspect / Ideology	Conservative	Liberal	Socially Critical
Habermas's knowledge and constitutive interests	Technical	Practical	Critical
Human nature	Humans are inherently unproductive and individualistic	Humans are inherently unproductive but have goodwill	Humans are inherently productive and co-operative
Human goals	Maximum personal liberty and material well-being	Individual equality and equal opportunity	Social equality based on individual needs
Environmental paradigm (Milbrath, 1984)	Dominant social paradigm (DSP)		
	New environmental paradigm (NEP)		
Environmental position (based on O' Riordan, 1981)	Techno-centric accommodator, deep self-reliance; Technologists and managers		Eco-centric cornucopian; Soft interventionist, environmental ecologists, and communalists
Socio-cultural paradigm (Sauve, 1996, p.17)	Industrial	Existential	Symbiosis-synergic
Associated educational paradigm and main characteristics (Sauve, 1996, p.17)	Rational: transmission of predetermined knowledge	Humanistic: optimal development of the many dimensions of the learner ("freedom to learn")	Inventive: critical construction of knowledge for social transformation
Curriculum perspective (Stevenson, 1993)	Empirical-analytical	Interpretive	Critical
Approaches to SUD education	Education ABOUT environment & society	Education IN environment & society	Education FOR environment & society
Example of SUD pedagogical approaches (Sauve, 1996: p.17)	Formal presentation; modules approaches for training	Nature education	Socially critical environmental education

Source: adapted from LEE Chi Kin John and CHUNG Yue Ping Stephen. "Knowledge Foundation: Education for Sustainable Development". Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems (EOLSS) Encyclopedia (Electronic) Entry <http://greenplanet.eolss.net>. 23 pgs. Eolss Publishers Co. Ltd., 2003. 12.



3 Students' Reflections

Students' Reflections

- Overall
- Economic
- Environmental
- Social



Overall

New York vs. Hong Kong

Jessica Luscher

One quality that is inherently different between the New York and Hong Kong urban environments is the density of interconnection. In New York, there are two levels of transportation: one occurs at the street level, via car or via foot. The second is the subway system, maybe 5 meters below the street level. In New York, people travel along the street and enter buildings through a single “front” entrance, move upwards in elevators, then move down again and exit via the same route, on the same level. If the subway is used, the subway exits onto the street level, from which people enter buildings through the same “main” entrance that they would use if they were coming by car.

This system is completely different in Hong Kong. If Hong Kong is compared to the New York System, all of Hong Kong is one building. Each built environment in Hong Kong has sundry entrances, and as soon as the system is entered, options and directions of travel are unlimited. Central and Wan Chai, for example, can be metaphorically compared to an urban rubix cube. There is a street level, but car traffic is very separate from that of the pedestrian (there are even guard rails at most intersections, to keep people from crossing the street). Each MTR stop in the area has between 6 and 20 entrances and exits, and it is possible to enter maybe 6 different blocks from each stop. Above ground, all buildings are interconnected by an intricate, above-street network of pedestrian pathways. It is possible to enter a labyrinth of paths and exit at a completely different place without retracing your footsteps at all.

As a result of this “volumetric” city, it is arguable that buildings in Hong Kong are designed with a different hierarchy from those in New York. First of all, a building doesn’t have a designated entrance, meaning that it doesn’t have a designated front, or the design

Hong Kong as a Volumetric City.....



hierarchy that comes with having a “front door.” Instead, the entire building becomes an extension of an urban network that is about intercepting traffic as it moves “through” instead of “into”—which is a fundamentally different organization.

Furthermore, the constant interconnectivity, and pedestrian movement through buildings instead of along streets brings shop-fronts and commerce inside buildings, instead of along the outside street level, which is smoggy, uncomfortable, and not air conditioned. Hong Kong has turned the street inside out, and has turned its city podiums into pedestrian play-park for consumerism, intercepting “through traffic” for shopping and other amenities—a continuous shopping mall and bombarding of information. This multi-level urbanity can interaction does not occur nearly as often in New York, where people only go places in a direct route.

How this idea of the “volumetric urbanism” corresponds to sustainability, I’m not completely sure. However, from what I’ve observed in class, there is rarely anything bad about interconnectivity. Everything about circulation in New York is much more privatized, and therefore arguably less efficient than in Hong Kong. Hong Kong, arguably, also benefits from the idea that the interconnectivity of its system is economically stimulating and allows people to become less sectionalized.





Overall

New understanding about sustainability

Mak Ka Hei, Marco

In this course, I gained new understanding about sustainability. In the past, I always thought that being sustainable is to be eco-friendly and a tree-hugger. After this course, I realized environmental sustainability is complexly linked to economic and social sustainability.

I found that although economic development is more powerful than the demand for environmental protection, we can actually use the economic factors to drive and improve environmental sustainability. For instance, during the field trip, I saw many examples of urban renewal. I realized that gentrification may be an inevitable process in economic development but with better urban planning and design, like adding more greenings, environmental sustainability can be improved. Urban planning is important in Hong Kong, this highly urbanized city, for sustainability.

In this late lecture, Professor Chan quoted "Politics without principles is a root to violence" from Gandhi. It was a meaningful quote and I realized that the principle of sustainability is becoming more important but still not many people understand it and use it in decision-making. Thus, it encouraged me to participate more in some green groups and practice it in daily life to spread the word to more people.

"CCCH9033, sustainable urban development and Hong Kong has provided me a new view about Hong Kong and its urban development. Among all the aspects which I enhanced my understanding, the most significant learning experience is the holistic view of Hong Kong and comparison with mainland China."

Yu Kaicheng

Reflection on the course

I have learnt a lot from this course.

Firstly, I have a much deeper understanding of the sustainable urban development. Before, I thought sustainability was equal to environmental protection. Now, I know that sustainable urban development consist of three equally important components: environment, economy and social. These three components make up a society and they are closely related. Many countries, especially the developing industrialized countries, pay too much emphasize on economy, ignoring the pollution and social problem. Striking a balance amongst the three aspects are absolutely important.

Secondly, I learn more about Hong Kong. The development of Hong Kong is the highlight of this course. This includes the economic transformations of Hong Kong and the social problems of Hong Kong. The Hong Kong used to be an industrial center. Due to the Open Door Policy in mainland, Hong Kong has transformed into an international financial center. Now, another economic transformation is coming – the six industries include Medical Services, Environmental Industries, Testing and Certification, Education Services, Innovation and Technology and Cultural and Creative Industries. One of the major social problems in Hong Kong now is the issue of heritage conservations. Conserving, abolishing or redeveloping the heritage? There is no an easy solution. It is certainly difficult to strike a balance between conservation of the culture and fitting the modern society.

Thirdly, I know more about the global environmental challenges, particularly global warming. The secondary school teachers mainly talk about the basic knowledge such as the principle of greenhouse effect and the causes of air pollution. On the contrary, this course talks more about the solution. Mitigation and adaptation are the possible solutions to the pollution problem. Both global and local effort is needed to solve the problem. Globally, there is number of cross-nation treaties and conventions such as Kyoto Protocol and Copenhagen Accord. Locally, regional projects such as Guangdong Greenway have been carried out to reduce pollution and raise the public awareness of having a green life.





Economic

“Front-shop, back-factory” Model

Jung Bin Lee

Hong Kong, with the regional ties that were represented by the economic development model called ‘front-shop, back-factory model’, has become one of the leading centers in terms of business and finance. This was due to the fact that in the model, nearby mainland region, or Pearl River Delta (PRD), has been sources of cheap labor and resource. The light-industry based city, because of its development and rise in the cost of labor, thereby turned itself into a giant “shop” that would sell the products coming from the ‘factory’ PRD.

This was particularly successful as it was accompanied by the upsurge of world economy and the opening of Chinese economy in the 1980s, which have secured the city with both cheap resource and large, enthusiastic market.

This model, however, does not seem legitimate anymore in terms of proposing vision and development. Thirty years ago, Asia (with the exception of Japan and the rising Four Tigers) was a continent of developing countries and states, with endless possibilities but no definite results. Twenty first century Asia, however, is totally a different story. Competitive nations or states such as China, South Korea, Taiwan, India, Indonesia and Singapore all have the capital, resource and accessibility to meet the criteria for establishing themselves as economic centers. To add, PRD region is not a home ground for factories anymore, since the labor cost of the region is constantly increasing, lowering benefit and ultimately competitiveness of the region in terms of industries.

New type of development strategy, therefore, seems inevitable for Hong Kong; the most legitimate way is to participate in the production of high technology regarding IT and biotechnology. Since Hong Kong does not have adequate labor resource or natural resource, it is all the more important that it utilizes what it has to the maximum extent, which is capital and know-how from many international corporations and firms situated in the city. It needs to change the foundation of its economy, just as it did from light industry based economy to tertiary industry based economy thirty years ago.

In the tutorial, I see a better connectedness between government policy and sustainable urban development in Hong Kong. Previously, I would have considered that government policy to transform old industrial buildings as money generators to simply be a disadvantage to artists who reside and work there at a very low cost. However, the discussion gave me an insight that relocation of artists or simply providing residence for them is not particularly a good solution because of their reliance on their friends who work with them. Relocation would then cause a breakage of relationship which is difficult to mend.

I also learnt that related government policies could help the artists by inviting them to participate in the West Kowloon Cultural District, or even in future government buildings. This is a sustainable way to achieve sustainable development, because in the process the artists' talents are explored (i.e. it is a revitalization of human capital), and in the long run focusing on the cultural industry adds to Hong Kong's individuality.

Creative

explore
Economy
technologies
speakers
infrastructure
design
people
convergence
discussions
sustainability
global
future
space
impact
development
workshops
opportunities
collaboration
entrepreneurship
economic
emerging
innovation
complex
organizations
sector
most
entrepreneurs
industry
designers
including
policies
track
thinking
industries
technology





Economic

Economic situation in Hong Kong

Wong Ka Wai

The economy of Hong Kong is facing three grim problems, including the series of global financial crisis, the non-sustainable development pathway and also the phenomenon of being marginalized by mainland China. These three problems are adversely affecting Hong Kong's economic growth. If the local government hasn't got a better strategic policy towards such a situation, we will be stuck in a deteriorating economic environment with loss of specialty and competitiveness.

Financial and tourism aspects have occupied a large part of our economic sector. However, both of them are very vulnerable towards economic fluctuation. Once reaching the recession period, financial trading and tourists visiting would be greatly reduced. Series of global financial crisis have kept assaulting Hong Kong in recent years. Tourism has been affected in these two years while stock market has been greatly influenced. As mentioned above, Hong Kong relies mostly on the financial and tourism sectors in order to keep its economic prosperity. I think it's not sustainable developed in the economy of Hong Kong. A diversified economy can help share risk when economic recession comes ahead. Also, it can increase the attractiveness of a city or country with economic benefits. In old history, Hong Kong acted as an important entre-port and financial centre in China. However, due to the Door-Open Policy in 1978, Chinese government has acted actively in improving and reforming its economic development. Many metropolitans have been developed with great financial and economic base, for example Beijing, Shanghai and Guangzhou. Some harbour-front cities have also been developed into a large port, including Ningbo, Tianjin and Dalian. Some regions have been developed into an industrialized area like Jing-Jin-Tang industrial belt (Beijing, Tianjin and Tangshan). In recent years, economy in China has been developed rapidly. Hong Kong starts to lose its unique status when compared with different developed cities in China.

It's important for Hong Kong government to react quickly towards these three problems. A diversified economy is important to avoid and resolve the above three problems

...marginalized or rationalized?

while improving the specialty of an economy. Local government has implemented a policy to improve the six-pillar industries, including the medical service, environmental industries, testing and certification, education service, innovation and technology and cultural and creative industries.

In my point of view, this is a good policy as it makes a bigger diversification and competitiveness of our economy. I especially support the pillar of the environmental industry. In Hong Kong, environmental problem is very serious. However, both the facilities and also mindset of local people are not enough to adjust this problem. After the implementation of this policy, I hope that the facilities can be improved first in order to solve the problem and it can create a snowball effect to raise the awareness of the local people towards environmental problem.



Six-pillar development is a quite well-thought policy as it combines the economic development together with the balance of environmental and social consideration. I hope the government can really make it real but not only a policy. Although it takes a long time for us to taste the result, I think this policy is leading us to a right way to retain sustainable development.





Environmental

Urban Development and Environmental Changes

Zhang Ankai

To start with, I want to share a real-life story, and also my personal experience. During my four years of study in Singapore, a peninsula country, I was amazed by her great air quality. Thanks to its huge coverage of natural resources, Singapore is known by many as a 'Garden City'. One can easily spot an office building far away. However, one day when I was up, I found that the sun was shrouded in a smoky haze, which prompted doctors to warn people with respiratory problems to wear masks. Government also reminded the public to stay indoors and reduce outdoor activities to the minimum.

The haze, attributed mostly to fires burning on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, has become recurring summer blight, engulfing parts of Malaysia, Thailand, Brunei and Singapore, and leaving a litany of health and economic costs in its wake. A major source of smoke, according to a research, are fires set on palm oil and rubber plantations, primarily in Sumatra, to get rid of old trees and to clear land for new plantations.

From my limited but useful physics knowledge from high school, this kind of combustion without off gas treatment may release a large percentage of the greenhouse gas such as carbon dioxide. However, many of the initiators (mostly farmers) do not know the results of their activities. This also reminds me of some rural areas in China, where farmers burn farming waste such as wheat husk as a source of energy or heat. Each of these activities may not have some serious effects on environment in terms of quantity. However, considering there are 600 million farmers in China, the combined effect may be appalling.

My point is, with the above short recount, that people tend to think climate change is mainly contributed by industrial activities, while some of the temperature changes are coming from different sources. And in turn, for policy makers, those group of people and their corresponding activities should not be ignored when it comes to restricting Greenhouse gas release, and different approach should be used (eg. education) instead of financial motivation.

Since Green House Effect is a very famous environmental problem all over the world, I also have been taught about this when I was in middle school and high school in Korea. However, the notion of 'Natural Green House Effect' was new to me. It basically means the greenhouse effect caused by human being. Things such as combustion of fossil fuels, large-scale industrial pollution, deforestation and land usage, and population growth are those.

Among those four factors, the thing I want to handle mainly is population growth. First, I thought that it is quite weird since there is a problem of low birthrate among modern issues. After the lecture, I realized that the 'population' here means the total amount of it and so related to an aging society problem. But, here I found a dilemma. The life of human is a very valuable. And we 'should' appreciate to highly developed technology that save people from death and eventually extend the life of them. At the same time, however, that thankful technology causes a serious problem that there are not enough sources to support those old people's life. Seriously, I don't think creating work to them to make them support their life by themselves is not effective. Most of those people already have done working for a very long time and they have right to enjoy and relax. Thus, I think the society should remind people when they are still young and working that they need to save some sources for their future and suggest actual policies to help people. And the policies should be something more systemic and approachable than insurances.

...Compared to Malaysia, Hong Kong is more sustainable in several ways. The public transport system is undeniably impeccable, people are willing to walk (maybe that's why the locals here have a walking speed that matches our sprinting), plastic bags come with a fee to encourage people to bring their own grocery bags, there is extra charge for takeaways in certain places, all this shows that though Hong Kong has much room for improvement in terms of sustainability, she is on the right track, and Malaysia has much to learn.

Kim Heey Jin





Social

Minimum wage: a solution or not?

So Yuk Wa

I think the real solution of improving the living quality of grassroots in Hong Kong and narrowing the wealth gap is not simply the minimum wage. There are many substantial issues in different aspects affecting the lower class in Hong Kong. What we need to do is to find the right antidote to each of those issues specifically one by one. For instance, the working condition of Hong Kong people is really bad. Many of us are having more than 12 working hours per day which is actually worsen the living quality of citizens. Government should legislate to monitor the working conditions of the employees.

Also, the inflation rate in Hong Kong is considerable. It is what the government should cope with. For example, the taxation system can be altered to improve this situation. Besides, government can lower the daily expenses by reducing the cost of public transports, electricity, and water etc. Moreover, the welfare system in Hong Kong is not comprehensive enough. For instance, the poor often cannot afford the heavy medical expenses. There are actually so many factors affecting the living standards of Hong Kong people substantially and directly other than the "wage".

If government wants to combat with the issues of the poor, a more comprehensive, holistic perspective should be held instead of focusing on 'wage'. I think the major issue is the welfare system. In fact, the welfare system of the northern European countries such as Norway, which has been rated a highest human sustainable development index in the world. I think the welfare system of Norway is a good reference for Hong Kong if we want to achieve sustainable development.

After all, it is a long way towards sustainability. Besides minimum wage, more investigations and studies of different aspects should be carried out to improve the present condition.

Cho Chung Yan

Heritage preservation in Hong Kong

I think that the endeavor of heritage preservation Hong Kong government seems to be inadequate, it tends to focus on the development of large scale shopping malls and infrastructure. It is likely that most of the revitalization of heritage is mainly for business use, becoming shops and restaurants is the process of “revitalization” such as Lei Seng Chun and 1881 heritage. Although they have been kept their original structure of the building, the cultural value has been minimized to a large extent. The historic and artistic value has been changed and lead to negative effect to cultural uniqueness. Everywhere become more and more similar by the wide disperse of modern and large shopping centers comprising the well-known luxury shops and boutiques, fast-food chain restaurants and so on, let alone some of the historic building in Hong Kong.

Compare to Macau, I think Hong Kong should put more efforts on heritage preservation since they have outstanding merits and valuable to all of the Hong Kong citizens, representing the sprits and collective memories. Heritage should be considered and protected in most of the circumstance when there is land development. Moreover, heritage trips and trails should be promoted to educate the importance of heritage to the public. Then, sustainable development may be lead to the progression of Hong Kong with the persistence of our precious heritage.

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THANK YOU

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