RE-MADE (IN) HONG KONG
People's alternative approach to redevelop Tin Shui Wai New Town

2014-2015 TU Delft
MSc Architecture
Joan Kwong, Chung Heng
student no.: 4248481
tel no.: 0616889203
e-mail: joan.kwongch@gmail.com

Design as Politics
New Utopia on the Ruins of Welfare State
Design Mentor: Prof. Huib Plomp; BT Mentor: Prof. Bas Gremmen; Research Mentor: Prof. Wouter Vanstiphout
Project Description

Introduction:

This project, with people’s redevelopment approach, is an alternative to the tabula-rasa approach used by the government for development and urban renewal in Hong Kong. People’s approach means searching for new methods to form a new society where local residents can have more control of their way of living and habitat in different aspects. The case represented here is a Tin Shui Wai New Town in Hong Kong, also famously known as The City of Sadness. The town was fully developed in the 90s from a village with water bund for fish husbandry. Original residents are resettled. A place where its history is lost and totally forgotten. The existing inhabitants are resettled here originally from places all around Hong Kong. Their original connection to their habitat and community network are lost. Due to the disastrous planning of the government, sense of isolation brought about by urban design, lack of local economy, lack of community connection and facilities, Tin Shui Wai became famous for high percentage of family violence, child abuse, commit suicide cases, etc. since 2004.

Hong Kong government’s approach to land development is always relocating underprivileged people further and further away from the city centre by providing them public housing in the New Territories, the northern edge of Hong Kong. Urban renewal in city centre for gentrification of old district is also happening more and more intensively since 2000. More social conflicts revealed between local residents and government due to redevelopment of the inhabited land. Lots of public protests also happen because of huge social spending on large infrastructure and new developments in the New Territories which required the resettlements of existing farming village communities.

Design Assignment: Utopia as design strategy
Heterotopia, People’s Utopia is the New Utopia

In the future scenario 10 years from now, the Hong Kong government decided to help gentrify the whole Hong Kong cities, so decided to demolish all the public housing in Hong Kong and relocate the underprivileged people to “Hong Kong Land” in Mainland China. Tin Shui Wai New Town will be redeveloped once again due to the deterioration of the place with the gentrification approach of the government to private housing estates. The Right to the City is questioned. Who own the city? Who has the right to the city?

In the process of demolition of Tin Shui Wai, protestors occupy the deconstruction site and start their own version of redevelopment. People should be protected to live in their original living place. People should have the right to make decision on their living environment. This project touches on a lot of important aspects happening in Hong Kong, including urban renewal, resident’s right to the land, resettlement, self-building, etc. What is the people’s approach to redevelopment? How to empower the people? A people’s version of redevelopment will be the centre of the project.

Motivation:

Due to the recent occupy movements in Hong Kong, I am inspired by the self-organizing approach which is totally voluntary and bottom-up. As a person from Hong Kong, more problems revealed after Hong Kong return to China. More unfair and injustice without the consideration on the opinion of the general public can be seen in land development, urban redevelopment, large infrastructure investment, etc. and more severe poverty problem. There are many reasons to the injustice need different parties to cooperate to act against it. As an architect, I would like to help thinking of ways to empower people to have more control on (re)development and help people to re-inhabit places according to their own will instead of being assigned to a place which determine their lives.
Location: Tin Shui Wai New Town in New Territories, Hong Kong
1. Demographical: New immigrants with different background and skills

The population of Hong Kong is formed mainly by new immigrants from Mainland China in different years. But recent new immigrants have different educational and political background causing huge social conflicts. Importing immigrants from mainland China is also one of the social engineering tools used by the Mainland Chinese government.

Tin Shui Wai population is mainly consisted of low-income family with new immigrant members. Discrimination and labels by the society is very commonly seen. New immigrants usually came from the village or smaller cities. They have farming or manufacturing skills which cannot be utilized in Hong Kong. High level of unemployment can be found among new immigrants in Tin Shui Wai.

2. Economical: From manufacturing to Service Industry

Hong Kong has transformed from a manufacturing economy in the 50s to 80s to financial, service and tourism based economy nowadays. The shift in economy leads to mismatch of skilled workers and skills required. Without protection and proper re-training schemes, low-skilled workers became unemployed, getting poor and old. New immigrants with farming and manufacturing skills also doesn't have opportunities in employment.

Tin Shui Wai does not have local economy for the town to be self-sustaining. Low-skilled workers, like many elderly people and new immigrants in Tin Shui Wai does not have choice to work, either travelling for a long time for low-paid jobs in the city centre or became unemployed.

3. Political: From laissez-faire to even more imbalanced reliance on land development

The Hong Kong government always promote “large market, small government” approach. The situation get much worse after Hong Kong has returned to China. Political decisions are made mostly about financial benefits without social concerns. All past chief executives are businessmen except Mr. Donald Tsang. The main source of income come from land selling. Urban Renewal projects and large infrastructure projects are happening intensively which ensured the financial benefits of the four main land developer but the public concerns about the right to the land has be raised.

In Tin Shui Wai, the whole urban development process was top-down, decided by the government and cooperating land developers. Previous and existing residents are different people, both parties did not have the chance to give their opinion or contribute in the decision making and development process.

4. Social Welfare: Not for redistributing income but for the rich helping the poor

The social welfare system is not a complete one. “Our welfare system does not exist to iron out inequalities. It does not exist to redistribute income. Our welfare programmes have a different purpose. They exist because this community believes that we have a duty to provide a safety net to protect the vulnerable and the disadvantaged members of society, the unfortunate minority who, through no fault of their own, are left behind by the growing prosperity enjoyed by the rest of Hong Kong.” stated by Chris Patten in Policy Address 1996. The main system is Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA) for all Hong Kong permanent residence living below poverty line. The incomplete welfare system only differentiate insignificant subsidies for elderly, disabled, unemployed and poor youth, which cannot support their living. The undifferentiating welfare system did not help people according to their real needs and created a collective poverty population.
In Tin Shui Wai, most of the people get CSSA subsidies. They include elderly, disabled, low-income family, new immigrants, poor children, etc. Lack of employment in Tin Shui Wai and being far from city centre promotes the reliance of Tin Shui Wai residents on government subsidies.

5. Social: Poverty and Social conflicts

Hong Kong wealth gap is getting much wider, the most serious among all cities with developed economy. Poverty population is getting larger and larger each year but the Hong Kong government has no concrete strategy to deal with the unequal distribution of income. There are also social stigma concerning laziness and inability from the society which always promote independency and working hard. The poor are usually blamed on taking social resources for granted.

People in Tin Shui Wai are usually being labeled as “low-income family, new immigrant family or unemployed”. Without real understanding and concern about the core problem of the poverty population, discrimination and social labels are put on the burdens of the victims, Tin Shui Wai residents.

6. Spatial: Poverty population are concentrated and isolated

In Hong Kong, poor population was concentrated at the edge of city centre in the past. Through the development of public housing and the New Towns by the Hong Kong colonial government. Most of the people are relocated in much further away from the city centre in the New Territories. New Towns were supposed to be self-sustainable community neighborhood, but usually not the case. Most of the residents still need to go a long way to work in the city centre because of the lack of local economy. Recent New Town Proposals are in-balance with sustainability without relationship with the surrounding natural environment.
Problem Statement

Hong Kong people does not have the right to make political, economic, social, cultural and spatial decisions in favor for their living. The Hong Kong government act against the people.

The government is not allied with the Hong Kong people but the businessmen. The ruins of welfare state is the distorted top-down political system, social welfare system barely survive and became insignificant. People are not protected by law or the government to defend their homeland. Hong Kong people does not have the right of decision making in policies and to choose the chief executive to work for the sake of Hong Kong people.

Hong Kong Chief Executive CY Leung said:
‘Democracy would see poorer people dominate Hong Kong vote’

(Interview with the International New York Times, Oct 21, 2014)

Research Question

Main Research Question:

How can the underprivileged community be empowered to initiate and self-organize the (re)development of their neighborhood to enable their Right to the City?

Sub-Research Questions:

What are the characteristics of Tin Shui Wai community? What are the natural landscape resources in the surroundings? What skills do local residents have? How can local residents utilize their surroundings and their skills to redevelop Tin Shui Wai society and neighborhood?

What are the materials that Tin Shui Wai residents can used to rebuild? Can they reuse and recycle used built materials? Can they use traditional skills and old materials for new construction?

What are the theories can be used to support the underprivileged’s right to control their environment? What are the theoretical framework developed about self-organized redevelopment project can be applied in Tin Shui Wai community?

What are the political, social and economic structure to empower the underprivileged local residents? What kind of framework enable the participatory process can organized from bottom up in Tin Shui Wai neighborhood?

What are the spatial strategies that can be developed with the society framework? What kind of architecture and urban planning can be developed from Tin Shui Wai community?
Relevance

1. Social Relevance:

Tin Shui Wai residents suffer from the poor urban planning of the government affecting their employment, daily life and community development. The Hong Kong government does not have any concrete solutions to improve the neighborhood. At the same time, many urban renewal projects and development of infrastructure are intensively happening in Hong Kong. People in Hong Kong do not have the right to decide against government decisions. Land development should be based on people’s need. Bottom-up self-organizing strategies can empower local residents in Hong Kong to rethink how to develop their neighborhood based on their need but not government’s wants.

2. Political Relevance:

There should be legal protection to local residents to their homeland. Protection as well as Local residents’ Redevelopment Policy should be developed to enable people to change their living environment according to their own will. Self-build regulations should be implemented. Self-initiative projects by local residents should be promoted by the government to develop their neighborhood. “Residents plan and develop, Government helps providing infrastructure” should be the final goal.

3. Scientific Relevance:

There are many theories about participatory approach, but a lot less about actual implementation to specifically empower the underprivileged people to initiate, self-organize and utilize skills and materials to (re)develop their society and neighborhood. This project aims at providing spatial strategies, building materials and techniques used as a manual guide to people for actual realization of a community neighborhood by themselves.
Time Planning

Methodology

1. Situation Research Phase

Firstly the ruins of welfare state are identified, including the failure in policies and realization in spatial reality. Demographical, economic, political, social and spatial contribution and effects on each other will be gathered and analyzed. Conclusions are drawn from the analysis identifying the core failure of the ruins of welfare state.

2. Theoretical Research Phase

Brief utopia idea is developed. Different utopian theories from various scholars are gathered and for relating and comparing to the brief utopian idea. Background of utopian theories are also considered and analyzed. Initial utopia is developed based on analyzing the theories. Position and utopian theory will be developed.

3. Design Research

This phase will be developed hand-in-hand with the utopian theory development. Using future scenarios, involving different actors, developing scenarios of their response and finally the utopian scenarios. Design Concept, urban and architectural design that matches the scenarios will be developed at the same time until the end of the project.
Abstract

Modern Cities have always been created by the state with the help of urbanists and architects in a top-down approach using their Utopian visions. But this way also aroused a lot of criticism. This year, the theme of my design studio, Design as Politics, is New Utopia on the Ruins of Welfare State. In this position paper, I will explain the importance of Utopia as a discourse, in form of Heterotopia, a New Utopia that allow everyone to dream and create their own Utopia. In this way, the lost connection of Utopia with the society will be established

Keywords: Utopia, Heterotopia, Right to the City

Introduction

Nowadays, architects do not talk about utopia anymore. Utopia was once a popular term among architects of Technology Futurism where people have extraordinary imagination about what technology can improve our lives in the future. And then it comes to a stage where architects criticize on utopia and saying that there is no Utopia anymore and even further creating dystopia saying how technology future is de-humanizing us and destroying our future. It was true that technology has made our lives more convenient. But it is also true that technology has become so dominating in parallel with the over-expansion of advanced capitalism. Now is the time for us to reflect and think about the future again.

So what is New Utopia? I believes that the answer lies in Heterotopia. Our space nowadays are so dominated by bureaucracy and institution of large corporate and the state. Housing, schools, hospitals, offices, etc. all exert a kind of control of different parties on us revealed in spatial quality. The totalitarian force to ‘normalize’ and homogenize everything has stimulated the rebellious force among the people. Different heterogeneous groups are formed based on wealth, age, occupation, race, country, etc. The underprivileged groups are forming a great power which call for change. There are recent revolutions around the world especially Occupy Movements which change the use of public space. This is the people who are asking for their right to the use of space. The informal activities and events change the original function of the space. The re-definition of the use of space by the people I believe is the New Utopia in architecture - Heterotopia.
Rem Koolhaas claimed that “Architecture can’t do anything that the culture doesn’t”. We all complain that we are confronted by urban environments that are completely similar. We say we want to create beauty, identity, quality, singularity. And yet, maybe in truth these cities that we have are desired. Maybe their very characterlessness provides the best context for living.” His approach is to accept what it is happening on this world as a fact. He considers it as a way that most people want so things happen in this way. He basically use the reality he observed in the city context to apply in an architectural context without considering social, economic and political aspects. He found the way to explain the logic that The Manhattan in New York is developed and have this vision of Manhattanizing the entire world. He is criticizing on the unrealistic character of Utopia saying that it does not consider the reality situation.

As architects, we have to realize that we are also public servants since we create buildings which affect the space that people live in. We need to see the reality as it is, but find out the things that people are discontented about and wish to change. And we are the one who coordinate these wishes and translate them into spatial reality. Utopia may not very well addressed the problem in reality but heterotopia provide new view of seeing things in reality.

Heterotopia first brought about by Michel Foucault. He first talked about utopia as “sites with no real place … presenting society itself in a perfected form, or else society turned upside down ... fundamentally unreal places.” Heterotopia is the other spaces which is more ‘real’, “something like counter-sites, a kind of effective-ly enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found in the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, inverted. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality.” He further uses mirror as a metaphor to illustrate utopia and Heterotopia. Utopia is the mirror where a placeless place is shown. “… Heterotopia in so far as the mirror does exist in reality, where it exerts a sort of counteraction to the position that I occupy.” Heterotopia is being both real and unreal, real in virtuality and unreal in reality.

Heterotopia being a more ‘real’ space than Utopia can exert its effects in reality. That is the important function that Foucault talked about. “…their role is to create a space that is other, another real space, as perfect, as meticulous as well arranged as ours is messy, ill constructed, and jumbled. This later type would be the Heterotopia, not of illustration, but of compensation.” Therefore, Heterotopia can tackle the weakness of Utopia by creating a ‘virtual-reality’ to let us act on the reality towards our dream if things are not going the right way.

There are anti-Utopians saying that Utopia doesn’t exist anymore. Colin Rowe said the standardization of architecture is the “rapid devaluation of its ideal content. The intensity of its social vision became dissipated. The building became no longer a subversive proposition about a possible Utopian future. It became instead the decoration of a certainly non-Utopian present.” Whereas, Manfredo Tafuri said that “intellectual work which has the courage to recognize itself as capitalist science and to function accordingly is objectively separate from the background, regressive role of purely ideological work. From now on synthesis is impossible. Utopia itself marks out the successive stages of its own extinction’. ‘Ideology is useless to capital development.” Both architects actually criticize on the loss of Utopia in front of capitalism. Utopia became either misused or useless. Both Rowe and Tafuri suggested being abstain by emptying the content of the architecture to protect it from contamination of capitalism. But then that means authentic Utopia in shaping the reality is more important in this case since the meaning of Utopia is distorted without its original function.

It is true that architecture is corrupted by capitalism and there should be redemption of architecture but not by emptying out but by giving it a New Utopia with real human nature. Being abstain is not enough to voice out because you do not have a provocative image or statement or vision that you want to bring about. It is very difficult to convince people why capitalist nature is not good enough. A new meaning of architecture should be given once again by its people and society. And architects are the ones who do the coordination and reveal people’s wishes into architecture.

According to Foucault, “… Heterotopia can change in function and meaning over time, based on the particular “synchrony” of the culture in which they are found.” The example of moving cemetery from next to the church in the city centre to the suburbs, leads to spatial change based on the change of thought in people’s general mindset. Architecture needs to evolve with people and society. When architecture doesn’t mean anything or only as a tool for capitalism or other purposes, it loses it true meaning to the society but should be vice versa. Architects has the responsibility to keep track on the society and help to evoke a right future where everyone desires.
3. Heterotopia allow the right of everyone

Foucault distinguishes space as Utopia, reality and Heterotopia while Lefebvre define spaces as conceived, perceived and lived. Heterotopia can be understood as the lived space or space of representation by Lefebvre. What Foucault sees as Heterotopia is the counter-sites, where the alternative reality that can happen, it is also a juxtaposition point where allow in one real place several different spaces; whereas, what Lefebvre sees as the space of representation is the space in between, the space linking the conceived and the perceived, reality and representation space. According to Lefebvre, space of representation is “space that is directly lived, a space that stretches across the images and symbols that accompany it, the space of “inhabitants” and “users.”” It is a space where imagination want to change the dominated physical space to form systems of non-verbal symbols and signs. It is also the “terrain for the generation of “counter-spaces,” spaces of resistance to the dominate order arising precisely from their subordinate, peripheral or marginalized positioning.” Therefore both Lefebvre and Foucault see other spaces in here Heterotopia as a space for reaction, contrast and alternative to reality.

Lefebvre took one step further by proposing the “Right to the City”, a “demand ... (for) a transformed and renewed access to urban life”. On top of this idea, he argued “for le droit a la difference, “Right to Difference”, against the increasing forces of homogenization, fragmentation, and hierarchically organized power that defined the specific geography of capitalism.” It coincide with what Foucault defined as deviants in the Heterotopia of deviation. Lefebvre thought it is necessary for the deviants to take action for “Urban Revolution”. It is the right of the inhabitants to work together, and engage in managing the urban spaces by ourselves. This is highly related to nowadays situation where Occupy Movements are happening around the globe since the Heterotopia of deviation is threaten and engulfed intensely by the dominating power and space.

David Harvey also brought about the concept of “Dialectical Utopia” which can be understood as Lefebvre’s Heterotopia. As Harvey illustrated, “Lefebvre’s concept of Heterotopia is foundational for the defining of revolutionary trajectories.” This is the meaning that people want in their daily lives creating Heterotopic spaces all over the place. “Lefebvre’s theory of a revolutionary movement is the spontaneous coming together in a moment of “irruption; “when disparate Heterotopic groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different.” Heterotopia is the space where allow everyone to dream and experiment it in reality. Space can be anywhere, the important component is people’s quest. So the New Utopia is no longer an optimistic extensive of the future like the Techo-Utopia, and not one dream for all, but more similar to Morris’ Utopia, criticizing the present and creating new alternatives, further appearing as Heterotopia where everyone can test out and develop their own space in reality.

Jane Jacobs also criticized the “scientific mind” shared among 20th century modernist urban planners. The urban planning at that time failed to recognized the significance of people’s perception of their environment which she considered as the most important thing in creating lively neighbourhoods. Different parties in society have different wishes. It is not anymore individual architect’s own vision to the future regardless of time and people’s interaction with space. Everyone needs to be considered. But there needs to be a coordinator who collect but not manipulate those thoughts. This is the true mission of architects nowadays to change our role not only as designers but also to reach out and listen to the people; designing with people and allow the design to be open for people to inhabit, change and redevelop, etc. People, together with architects, should be the co-creator of any constructed space.

Conclusion

Utopia is the purpose of action. It is actually a vision that you should have whenever you do anything. It is extremely important to have a goal in mind so you know where you are heading. But realization is very important as well. Therefore, one should not stop at the stage of dreaming but relating the vision to the reality. But it is not a time where technology, futurist or modernist Utopia dominates anymore. It is also not anymore the time for individual dictator, architect or urbanist to try to manipulate the future of all people. That’s why we need Heterotopia. Heterotopia allow the imagined world to be implemented in the real world. It is the in-between, the compensation of Utopia, leading to a New Utopia. Heterotopia is also a user-determined space, where the function of a space is not given by institutions or authorities anymore, but users re-define the space when they come together and integrate the spaces, forming their own Heterotopia which varies in different user groups. Architects and urbanists are the ones who try to understand, mediate and help people to build their Heterotopia. New Utopia now means not one to all and not homogeneous but heterogeneous Utopia, giving new meaning to our space, architecture and our world.
Tin Shui Wai Redevelopment Plan has burnt up Hong Kong citizens. Chief executive, Chun-ying Leung, proposed the redevelopment of Tin Shui Wai as another “Common Economic Zone” of Hong Kong and China. Nearly 250,000 existing Tin Shui Wai residents need to resettle in “Hong Kong Land” in Nansa, Guangdong, China.

Over 100,000 protestors occupied Tin Shui Wai Demolition Site

Umbrella movement extends to Tin Shui Wai

Chief Executive Chun-ying Leung claimed that Tin Shui Wai Redevelopment can bring HK$200 million profits.
Design Principles

Principles: Design based on resident’s life with their involvement
Empower residents to have more control on the place
Allow users to define and develop the place continuously
Engage with surrounding environment

Preliminary idea on new society structure:

Political Structure: Bottom-up self-organized neighbourhood and work sector associations jointly form municipal council

Economic control by people: Civic bank and Social Fund & Loan with the help of external social enterprises

Social Interaction: Non-hierarchical overlapping social structure based on work and living place with joint social activities

Cultural Inheritance: Cultural Exchange between residents by joint cultural events and traditional festivals

Land Control: Progressive Development and Expectative Property Right
1. Shophouse

Shophouse is a typical Southeast Asia Vernacular Architecture which is originated from Southern China when people migrate and adapt to new places. The shophouse can be understood directly from the name as a work-live integrated housing typology where usually small business runs on ground level with residential units on upper level. Variations can be all levels of one shophouse turns into one shop and all levels are residential only for later generations. Shophouse is usually built together as a complex along a street with 3 to 6 storey. The intimacy of the low-rise shophouse with the ground and chances to meet neighborhoods on streets turning the front public street into a common space for the neighborhood. This kind of building complex together with their occupied spaces allow the formation of neighborhood community.
2. **Hong Kong Public Housing**

Public Housing Typology starts from an H-shaped with individual living units for family with shared toilets and kitchen. The H-shaped actually formed two open courtyard space at each of the building having common space on ground with upper common corridor where living units extend to where neighbors can see each other and have a view to the courtyard. The later versions becomes two H-shaped and two ring-shaped forming two closed courtyards still having common space on ground and common corridor with courtyard view. The latest versions of public housing becomes Trident, Concord and Harmony. They all has highly efficient vertical core but in different shapes together with common corridor on the inside trying to maximize the view to the outside from individual units.
3. **Harmony Block**

The transformation of public housing started from a building complex which has small living units and sharing facilities but allow social interaction on different levels to become small-footprint efficient high-rise with better living qualities in individual living units but losing common spaces for social interaction on common corridor and on ground. These giant building block isolates people into individual units without the chance to interact with neighbors. Thus neighborhood community cannot be formed without chances and places to meet. The better minimum living standard is only on the physical aspect but downgrading in terms of social and cultural values.
**Housing Typology**

4. **Common House**

Co-housing is a kind of intentional community made up of private living units with all necessary supported by community shared facilities. Common House is the important building of the neighborhood community which houses all the shared facilities including common kitchen and dining hall, laundry and recreation facilities, etc. It is important because in typical housing units the community portions is lacking. We want our privacy at home and all necessary facilities but we normally do not have places to meet neighborhood freely. In this kind of co-housing, the Common House acts as the main intentional community meeting place for the neighborhood where people living there having dinner together every day and have community meeting occasionally and do recreational activities together.
**Deconstruction to Reconstruction**

1. **Toolbox Element List**

From Harmony Block, there is a list of elements that can be reused. All the elements because of the limit in loading weight of the crane, needs to be cut down into maximum with 20tons. All the elements in fact has 13tons maximum. Elements are sorted into structural walls, Partition walls, Floor slabs, Doors and Prefabricated materials. The overview of the elements can be seen from the element list. Each element is listed with its name and quantity per floor, dimension, volume and weight in tons. Thus the number of elements can be conveniently reused as much as possible per floor during the design process.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Floor Slab</th>
<th>Structural Wall</th>
<th>Partition Wall</th>
<th>Doors</th>
<th>Prefab. Elements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Circulation Core</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Diagram]</td>
<td>[Diagram]</td>
<td>[Diagram]</td>
<td>[Diagram]</td>
<td>[Diagram]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Living Units | | | | |
| [Diagram] | [Diagram] | [Diagram] | [Diagram] | [Diagram] |
Deconstruction to Reconstruction

1. Toolbox Indication Plan
Deconstruction to Reconstruction

2. Deconstruction Method & Procedure

Deconstruction procedure per floor using one harmony block unit as example:

1. Take away doors and electrical appliances
2. Cut out and take away partition walls
3. Install temporary support for floor slab
4. Cut out and take away floor slabs
5. Install temporary fixture on structural walls tie with floor slabs
6. Cut out and take away structural wall
7. Repeat step 1-6 for the next level
Deconstruction to Reconstruction

3. Reconstruction Method & Procedure

Reconstruction procedure using one new shop-house unit as example:

1. Construct new floor and foundation with insulation to prevent heat absorption from ground
2. Put reused structural wall in place fixed with new bolts
3. Construction new column and beam extending to form sun shading eave for ground floor and new benches on balcony for next floor
4. Put reused floor slab in place fixed with bolts again and grout to new beam and column
5. Put reused partition wall in place fixed with bolts again with addition of adjustable grille on top for natural cross ventilation within the unit, as well as additional insulation layer on the inside
6. Repeat step 1-5 for the next two level
7. Install green roof on top of the concrete roof for natural cooling to prevent over heating of concrete during the day
1. New Shophouse

The basic housing unit is based on the shop-house typology. It has both work and live area in a living unit. In typical shophouse, only the ground floor is shop which has a covered public corridor connected with the street. But in the new shophouse, it is a 3-storey low-rise with public corridor on all levels so all units can connect directly to the public corridor facilitating the work which needs customers. In typical shophouse, only the street front act as the front facade where the back is closed up. In the new shophouse, the work-live unit has two front facades. The work area has a street view connected with the public corridor and the live area has the courtyard view connected with the common corridor.

New Shophouse is reusing the architectural elements used in the Harmony Block. There are 16 individual units on a floor. 4 units of a wing can form 2 units of new shophouse. 1 unit is for 1-person and 2 units can be for 2-3 persons. Housing units can be combined by the removal of non-structural service wall in the original structure. Living area can be combined for co-living area and Working area can be combined for co-working area.
New Common House is the intentional community meeting space which is important for neighborhood community formation. Typical Common House has community shared facilities which will also be incorporated in the New Common House. Since the neighborhood is a co-living and co-working community, work area with supporting facilities are also introduced into the New Common House. New Common House is also connecting the new shophouses on all 3 levels. It forms a part of the co-housing units located at the central position recessed from the street forming a transition/entrance space to the neighborhood and extruded to the courtyard where the ground level is closely connected with the courtyard space.

New Common House consist of 4 storey with social programs on G/F, supporting programs on 1/F, work-related programs on 2/F, extra programs on 4/F.

New Common House reused the vertical circulation core of the Harmony block but adding new beam-and-column open structure on the two-sided facades. New Common House functions as the main central vertical circulation of the building complex connecting public and common corridors on all levels.
New Shophouse complex forms neighborhood with lots of public and common spaces, both intentional and unintentional community spaces for the neighborhood community to use together. Common and public corridor are unintentional community meeting places. Common corridor connects the living area of the new shophouse to the courtyard space which is common space for community meeting having playground, sitting area and green garden. Public Space includes public corridor connects the working area of the new shophouse to the streets where can be freely occupied.

The neighborhood is located at the area where is a park originally. Some playground facilities, green soft ground and paved hard ground are reused forming part of the neighborhood courtyard space. New green area and playground are added to neighborhood where there are without these facilities.
Urban Strategy

2. On Plot Level

The area of focus is the central plot of the Tin Shui Wai New Town. It is the Central Park of Tin Shui Wai North. The Central Park originally has a large green open space which is separated from the residential buildings is now forming 8 neighborhoods with individual facilities and common spaces like common house and courtyard. Together they having new main streets and side streets connecting the neighborhood together with an open plaza space at the middle with new public building. The plaza is the new large public space at the centre of the North Tin Shui Wai. It is the conjunction of the new main street extending to the edge of the New Town.
Urban Strategy

3. On Site Level

Tin Shui Wai North is the site where most of the public housing are located. The plan for reconstruction starts from the central plot where public housing block are taken down and turn into neighborhoods in the central park plot in Phase I. In phase II, public housing on the side edge can be taken down for building around the central plot and other area. In phase III, the remaining buildings at the corner of the New Town can be deconstructed as well for further development.

The remains of the New Town are also reused on site level. The 7-storey high school buildings and community buildings are kept and reused in different public buildings with original school assembly area turns into public open area, thus more public spaces are formed. The edge of the New Town is turn into agriculture and fish ponds as production center since the site was a fishing village in the past with rich natural resources. Thus the area can have a certain level of economically independency. Smaller plots and closer streets without cars are formed with human activities at the middle of the streets and plots since the human interaction is the central focus of the design project.
Reflection

1. The relationship between research and design

The research in the first phase was started with the social welfare situation in Hong Kong as a post-welfare state city. The political, economic, social and spatial aspects are being analyzed. Coincidently, it was the period when “Umbrella Movement” was happening in Hong Kong. Hong Kong people was demanding democracy. The research was trying to incorporate as well this demand of the people in the research. The social welfare system is supposed to do good for the people whose voice should be listened clearly. So the research actually started from analyzing the past social welfare system by the British government and their ambition. And then Hong Kong is transferred from British to Chinese government in 1997. Everything including the political and welfare system is supposed to be unchanged for the first 50 years. But economic, political and social situations are changing gradually in this 17 years towards policies which deviate much further from people’s need. Because of the mismatch of the government policy and people’s need. There was the outburst of “Umbrella Movement” and on-going protests.

Since my intention is to design for people, seeing this unsynchronized government development policy, my design is to focus on empowering people to build and develop their own neighborhood by themselves when things are not going well. My design is the reconstruction of the Tin Shui Wai New Town in Hong Kong where large poverty population gathered. They have better minimum living standard but losing the community bonding and the chance to run their own small business.

My design is trying to solve these problems by looking at past lifestyle. Learning from vernacular shophouse typology, the New shop-house complex are built as a neighborhood incorporating work and live in a unit, which connect closely with common spaces and public spaces, allowing intentional and unintentional meeting in the community. New common house is also introduced into the neighborhood for more intentional community gathering place. This is a neighborhood typology for co-living and co-working. This is a design for economic, political and social independency of both individual and community in response to the distorted political and welfare system of the government.
The theme of Design as Politics this year is “New Utopia on the Ruins of Welfare State”. The case study I have chosen is the Tin Shui Wai New Town in Hong Kong. It is a New Town designed and built by the British government, the social housing in the area is provided as part of the social welfare system of British welfare state to the poverty population in Hong Kong.

Tin Shui Wai New Town is famous as the City of Misery/Town of Sadness because of its problem family tragedies. People are living poorly in Tin Shui Wai but also isolated. The ruins is Tin Shui Wai New Town itself and also the problems it arises. Because of the design problems, like high concentration of residential buildings because of zoning, without local economy since no economic zone was planned within the New Town, large open space far away and wide car road separating residential areas. It puts more burden on the already poor population.

Poor doesn’t mean sad but in Tin Shui Wai the answer is yes. I imagined a New Town that people can live happily even if they are poor. My New Utopia is a Utopia of the Commons. It is a place where people have the right to make decisions in favor for their living. It is a place where people can have their own little business and do things they like and sell those stuff and earn a living. People can freely vendor on the streets. People can see and meet with neighbors and other people intentional or unintentionally running into each other. People doesn’t have to worry about not having jobs in the labour market because they can already work at home. And they are living together with other people in a neighborhood not isolated in individual units in 40-storey high residential buildings.

Within the studio framework, the case study based on the studio theme becomes the “New Utopia of the Commons on the Ruins of Tin Shui Wai New Town”. Ruins means Tin Shui Wai New Town but also means physical ruins. The rebuilding of the neighborhood requires the reuse of the old elements in the typical social housing typology - harmony block, which is the important part in my design.

The framework of the studio helps to define the project very clearly. The “New Utopia of the Commons” is built on and from the “Ruins of Tin Shui Wai New Town”. It shows that by building similar architectural elements can allow people to having a much better living style in terms of social coherence and economic independency.
3. The relationship between the methodical line of approach of the graduation lab and the method chosen by the student in this framework

From my understanding, the methodical approach of the studio is using future scenario as research and design method. It is the visionary approach to design. Having the imagined better future in mind drives the design towards it. Therefore, the New Utopian scenario from the research results is very important for the design process. It acts as a guideline for the kind of life I imagine the people will have.

In the “New Utopia of the Commons”, the future scenario is having streets with shops and vendors and people freely move through and interact, small courtyards spaces where people can have community garden and playground, large public spaces to be occupied freely and having public discussion and performance. It is a kind of life having a lot of common spaces and public spaces, spaces and room for discussion and expression. This kind of neighborhood encourage social interaction thus allow neighborhood community formation. The Future Scenario acts as a design tool in mind guiding through the design process.

The design results end up with individual work-live units together with community common house with courtyard and common corridor as common spaces and public corridor and street as public spaces in each neighborhood. This kind of co-living and co-working housing complex is first imagined already in the future scenario from the research results.

4. The relationship between the project and the wider social context

The project is the rebuilding of the Tin Shui Wai New Town using similar architectural elements but different design strategy to make a better place for people to live. It act as a critic and alternative solution to the social housing problem in Hong Kong. It helps to rethink what kind of living style we do want and not want. Do we want to continue living on our own or living together with the other people and forming neighborhood community? Do we want to work far away from home or just work at home or nearby?

What the poverty population wants are not only money given by the government and let them think they are losers getting social subsidy. What everyone wants are not the life you live just on your own isolated from the others without community support. This project is showing a kind of life which provides not only better minimum living standard but also spaces to work at home and chances to meet and work together with neighbors.

There are two main focus in the design project. First is the People’s opposition towards government’s control. People’s lives are determined by how the government is treating the people. People does not have the right to make decisions for themselves. In this project, people can make decision on how they want to make a living, how they can want to socialize with others, making decisions for themselves and others, working together, etc. By cooperating with each other, together they are more independent and have more freedom from the government’s control.
Reflection

4. The relationship between the project and the wider social context (Continued)

Second is the reuse of demolition materials. It started with an imagination to reconstruction of problematic neighborhood. We are building a lot throughout the years and many buildings become vacant or turns out to be problems because of poor design or other reasons. We have to think of ways to deal with them. Many think of adaptive reuse of the buildings. In this project, there are reuse of buildings in urban level, reuse of landscape and facilities in plot level, reuse of building elements in architectural level. Besides demolition and building new, this introduce a new way to look at redevelopment. Reconstruction is possible if we try.

Rebuilding may be the future direction of development. Co-working and co-living may be the way we can have democracy together in daily life. I hope this project act as a showcase which maybe cannot solve the demand of democracy in Hong Kong in that big scale, but can start from our everyday life to strength the community bonding and work independently with small businesses, by doing it together to have more autonomy on decision making in economic, political and social aspects in our own neighborhood.

Bibliography


Colin Rowe, Introduction to Five Architects, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975


Henri Lefebvre, Writings on Cities

Harvey, David, Rebel cities: from the right to the city to the urban revolution. New York: Verso., 1996