

A Paper

submitted to

Meeting of Planning, Lands & Works Panel
LegCo Chamber

on

WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT

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by

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PLEASE, WE NEED A POST-MODERN CITY DEVELOPMENT FOR THE 40 HA USE OF LAND!

HONGKONG NEEDS A POST-MODERN CITY GARDEN OR A HIGH TECH CULTURAL GARDEN?

Can Hong Kong having a West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) be a **'model or generic city' for China and Asia** in its last/latest stage of modernism and globalization? For the next 40 years, which is the **best city model** or solution for this metropolis? What are those attributes, characteristics and superlatives, that can be found in the WKCD, contributing to the make-up of this metropolis?

Can the canopy be another **global competition for skyline or downtown emblem**, or it is just a monolithic character of another modernism defended by Foster? Hong Kong has experienced a long city development of late modernism dressed in a cool aesthetic in form of bank headquarter and regional airport. Can we tolerate this late-modernism again in much a grand scale embedded with cultural facility? Why the **heterogeneous quality of a city development** be scarified?

What kind of **city image** can be produced through this master plan? Can the WKCD be the promise of a new Hong Kong based on creative, knowledge-based infrastructure? What are the **ideal typology** in a 40 ha of land? Can the proposed urban infrastructure (IFP) be completed without a church, a grammar school, or a fishing ground? Can the tourist get the fist-hand knowledge about Hong Kong through the WKCD? How can **the IFP be the right answer** specific to Hong Kong?

Should the 40 ha of land be **the right location of creative industry or industrial production** geared to the inspiration of big business and small and medium enterprises (SMEs), but not the interest of our society as a whole. Where is the Government's White Paper on creative industry and urban policy relating to the public and private use of land resources?

Should the 40 ha of land be **a venue tailored made for art professionals/workers?** In the IFP, there is nothing about the setting up of a visual or media art college, contemporary art museum, art village, traditional performance venue, in order to meet the cultural void as its primary roles. There is no specification in IFP!

Should the 40 ha of land be **a landmark with mega cultural structures** like museum (min GFA 50,000 m² and 40m high) and performance venue like Grand Musical Concert to attract tourist and promote cultural industry?

Should the 40 ha of land be just **a new Ocean / Marine Park / Theme Park / Green Garden** like the Central Park in New York?

According to the 3 master schemes presented by the 3 proponents, they can be categorized as 2 city development models: i) the Foster model of Late-Modernism, which takes high-style and technology, ii) the City Garden Model proposed by the 19th century Ebenezer Howard in England. We are of the argument that there are other city models, which should be tabled for public

discussion at the beginning before 2002, i.e. **the pluralistic approach** epitomized by the Post-modern “Contemporary City Model” of Rem Koolhaas, the current Harvard Professor chairing the Contemporary City Design School.

LACK OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION ON CITY PLANNING BEFORE 2002

Where is the public involvement in such a spatial crystallization point? At the current stage, the once and for all model of city planning eliminates all possibilities of public debate, discourse and participation on the details of site planning and programming. There had been some discussions about the future art plans of the WKCD over the past years, the Government has not yet organize a comprehensive debate on the form of city planning over the 40 ha of land in form of public forum. Both city forums (i.e. weekly televised Victoria Park Public Forum 維園論壇) and forums at district level (i.e. Public Debate at Yau Tsim Mong District Council 油尖旺區議會) before the commencement of the fist phase of international competition in 2002 was found insufficient. The details of planning objectives, standards and logistics had not been fully discussed. The below IFP was not discussed openly in HKADC, DC, CHC & municipal councils. There is no specification in IFP, letting the public to know that what kinds and how many museums or performing venues should be built for Hong Kong.

| IFP for WKCD |
|---|
| Theatre complex comprising three theatres (with at least 2,000, 800 and 400 seats) ??? |
| Museum cluster comprising four museums of differing themes (with total net operating floor area of at least 75,000m2) ??? |
| Art exhibition centre (with net operating floor area of at least 10,000m2) ? |
| Performance venue (with at least 10,000 seats) ??? |
| Water amphitheatre ?????? |
| At least four piazza areas ?? |
| Total GFA: 213,950m2 ???????? |

All in all, there is a lack of sufficient & substantial public debate on the City Planning Model, which is appropriate and specific to Hong Kong in the long-term future. The questions raised should be the concern of all parties in our community, but not only limited to the arts sector in general.

CITY DEVELOPMENT SHOULD BE DEVELOPED IN PHASING STAGES

City planning is a phasing development plan, which should be implemented on a process of public consultation and a ‘trial & error’ evaluation process. The experience of success and failure acuminated in each planning stage should be duly taken into account at later stages. There is no hurry to finalize all planning details at one particular point of time.

LEARNING FROM THE REDEVELOPMENT OF DER POTSDAMER PLATZ- PLANNING, COMPETITION & CONSTRUCTION (1991-2001)

48 ha (world’s largest building site: 5% Cultural Facility, 56% Office, 19% Residential Use, 11% Retail, 9% Hotel)

Development Phases & International Competitions:

| | | | |
|-----|------|--|---------------------------------------|
| Oct | 1991 | Master Layout Plan (Potsdamer & Leipziger Platz) | Heinz Hilmer & Christoph Sattler Team |
| Oct | 1991 | Commissioned Design for P & L Platz | Richard Rogers |
| May | 1992 | Sony Site Competition | Helmut Jahn |
| Sep | 1992 | Daimler-Benz Property, Potsdamer Platz | Renzo Piano & Christoph Kohlbecker |
| Apr | 1993 | <i>Master Plan of Daimler-Benz Property presented to the public for debate</i> | |
| Jun | 1993 | ABB Property & Rail Station Site | Giorgio Grassi |
| Mar | 1994 | Approval by Municipal Administration & City Council | |
| Nov | 1995 | 2 Green Areas | Maike van Stihout & Bruno Doedens |
| Oct | 1998 | <i>Lack of Church Space argument</i> | |

Individual Building Competition:

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|--|--------------------------------------|
| Headquarter of Berliner Volksbank | Arata Isozaki, Steffen Lehmann |
| Façade of Debis Headquarters | Renzo Paino |
| Musical Theatre, IMAX Cinema | R. Paino |
| M Benz Building | Jose Rafael |
| Ensemble (Sony Forum, Tower, Buildings) | Helmut Jahn, Hans Kollhoff, R. Piano |
| Sony Development | Murphy Jahn |
| South Block Ensemble, Residential Building | Richard Rogers |

In this connection, it is recommended that the whole WKCD be developed into phases.

CITY PLANNING IN VIOLATION OF ARCHITECTURAL ORDINANCES

The 3 Master Lay-out Plans and presented models expose the line of thinking about how a 40-ha city can be developed at the expense of our current Architectural Ordinances: the height exemption of a 130m high, 1.4 km long and half a kilometer wide canopy, which is a semi-transparent PTFE plastic material, lasting for not more than 40 years. It is highly likely that the developers would seek massive scale of exemption in terms of GFA, ceiling height of exhibition Gallery (40-50m high) as well as the canopy construction. The argument is that there is so far no public discussion over the issue of how planning standard can be violated or exempted before a city fully develops to its utmost.

From the above, we strongly request the Government safeguard the interest of the public by developing the master plan into phasing stages, with different periods of development, involvement and international competition.

Thank you very much!

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