

SUBMISSION

to

**Panel on Development
The Legislative Council of the
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region**

by

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The newly established Institute of Future Cities at the Chinese University of Hong Kong would like to offer the following views on "Enhancing land supply strategy: reclamation outside Victoria Harbour and rock cavern development - Stage 2 public engagement":

What is the vision behind the strategy to enhance land supply?

Land bank or land supply, whether through reclamation, cavern development or other means, needs to be justified within a thoroughly considered and evidence based socio-economic development strategy that aims to achieve a certain long-term vision. The Government has a responsibility to let our society understand:

- What is this long-term vision?
- Is this long-term vision best achieved by reclamation or rock cavern development?
- What other strategies (besides reclamation and cavern development) are in place to achieve our societal social and economic development goals.
- What is the merit in enhancing land supply through reclamation or rock cavern development? Academic research and literature review so far do not indicate causal relationships between the provision of land bank and the lowering of land price or property price.

What are the sustainability impacts of reclamation and rock cavern development?

The sustainability impacts that may incur with reference to various types or sizes of reclamation in the marine and terrestrial ecology and local communities need to be identified and published for public consumption. This is the precautionary principle of sustainable development. And this will require technical inputs by experts and general inputs by the affected local communities. A broad and community-based consultation is required to identify potential impacts and deliberate on the rationale of reclamation or rock cavern development.

If reclamation were proved to be necessary by evidence-based studies

Past experiences of reclamation-led urban development in Hong Kong and latest technological advancement in other cities leave us a number of valuable lessons when the need for reclamation or rock cavern development is proved by scientific evidence:

- The Government should learn from the most advanced technologies in sustainable urban development so the 'low impact development'¹ can be pursued to enhance environmental sustainability.
- The newly reclaimed land should be integrated seamlessly with existing urban areas and plans, policies and other measures should be in place to promote the building of sustainable communities².
- Indeed, existing communities should be enhanced in terms of job opportunities, transport facilities, recreational provision and visual impact. These can be achieved through engaging relevant stakeholders in the design, planning, development, implementation, monitoring and management process.

The need for more scientific research and evidence-based studies

The above arguments all point to the need for more thorough scientific planning studies to explore the need for reclamation and rock cavern development. The Metroplan Review was done before 2000. And no sub-regional development statement for Northeast, Northwest, Southeast and Southwest New Territories has been done in the last decade. Without a thorough understanding of local needs, strengths, weaknesses, threats and opportunities, it is difficult to convince Hong Kongers the need to enhance land supply. The Government should revisit its planning approach and strengthen local planning (from community to territorial) within the wider regional, national and international context.

¹ 'Low impact development' refers to urban development that will have minimal impacts on the environment. These include green building designs, permeable urban surfaces to increase anti-flooding capacities, recycling of water resources for greening, bringing biodiversity back to the city such as revitalizing urban streams etc.

² Sustainable communities are communities that are thriving, well-designed and built, active, inclusive and safe, well run, well connected, well served and environmentally friendly (Source: ASC (2006) *Making Places: creating sustainable communities. A teachers' guide to sustainable communities*, Leeds: Academy for Sustainable Communities.)