

A response to land reclamation consultation

The government has chosen land reclamation as one of its means to increase land supply in its effort to regulate the over-heated real estate market and to overcome shortage in land supply. Real estate and land-related issues have seriously affected the lives of many people in Hong Kong. While land issues are often presented to the public in economic terms, the creation, allocation, and use of land has repercussions that goes beyond economic effects, affordability, and shelter. Land allocation and use can alter community fabric and culture. If it is not properly done, it can undermine the livelihood of individuals, communities and cultures, the government's past effort invested to improve the environment and the culture of this city

I am a resident of Peng Chau Island. Peng Chau has a long history which stretches back to the Ming Dynasty and was indeed once the center of trade before the development of Hong Kong because of its geographical location. The island is about one square kilometer in size and has a population of around 7500.

From news sources, I have learnt that as one of the land reclamation options, the government may consider to place an artificial island of about 1000 to 2000 hectares in size between Hong Kong and Lantau. The concept artificial island will be used for residential purposes and in part to relocate polluting industries and city facilities from Hong Kong Island. An artificial island of this size translates into to 10 to 20 times the size of Peng Chau and will literally fill up the sea between Hong Kong and Peng Chau. Effectively, what is made is not an island but an extension of Hong Kong Island's land mass linking up both Peng Chau, and the north of Lamma Island to the main island.

While I am not against land reclamation or artificial island building per se. But land creation of such a massive scale will affect the environment and neighboring communities in serious and irreversible ways. It is not hard to imagine that the islands in the west of Hong Kong as we know them will no longer exist. A large scale land based transport system, likely to be the MTR, will replace the existing ferries. As a result, the main stream shops and supermarkets will replace the island shops and stores.

Land reclamation of this scale does not only supply land, but surgically remove and colonize an island community culture that is central in defining the identity of Hong Kong. One must recognize that in doing so, land reclamation diametrically acts against the cultural development principles of this city which we have taken pains to put in place since the change over. I object to any large scale land reclamation that undermines the cultural and community heritage that defines the identity of Hong Kong.

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