



**DECENTRALISATION IN HONG KONG:
HOUSING, EMPLOYMENT AND LAND USE
IMPLICATIONS**

By
KULATILAKE, K. K. R. P.

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Urban Design

The University of Hong Kong

2000

80525



Abstract

Growth polarities of the city into centralised and decentralised forms have been synonymous as the birth of the city itself. Concurrently, two basic schools of thought have sprung based on these and the patterns of city growth have constantly been subject to argument. In the debate no conclusive ends have been arrived at, although both seem necessary for the city growth. Contrary to some arguments, decentralisation is not mere diluting of urban density. It could rather be used as an effective way of mitigating over-dense urban setting or creating, still dense poly-nucleated, autonomous centres around a main urban core. The primary attribute of such centres should be the availability of employment opportunities to sustain its resident population within themselves.

Hong Kong rests itself in the extreme end of this debate as a compact city, which however does not prove itself on most of the arguments put forward by the 'centrists'. Its extreme environmental pollution, sky-rocketing urban metabolic rates, traffic congestion, grossly inadequate open space provisions, severe lack of land in the urban core and the limitations of harbour reclamations alone to add land for development have necessitated its march towards decentralisation, which has manifested in the form of new towns. In terms of population and housing, decentralisation efforts have become much successful, however in terms of employment it lags behind. Also Hong Kong's economic transition from manufacturing to services sector, its increasing links with the Pearl River Delta region, re-union with the mainland China, whose free economic policies are making significant impacts upon the future role in Hong Kong, have subtle impacts on Hong Kong's urban form and its decentralisation ventures.

Thus, finding strategic planning options to make decentralisation has to take these factors into consideration. The most appropriate option may be to create alternative autonomous and sufficiently large urban centres at strategic locations, the primary concern of which is to provide employment opportunities for the already established



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These centres, although being the result of a decentralisation effort should essentially have higher densities, with careful land use zoning, open spaces, transport and infrastructure facilities. Once the locations are carefully chosen they would help reduce the longer daily trip lengths into shorter and more sustainable ones. Adverse environmental efforts should also be minimised by way of introducing energy efficient buildings, innovative technologies and environmental friendly modes of transport.

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Declaration

I declare that this dissertation represents my own work, except where due acknowledgement is made, and that it has not been previously included in a thesis, dissertation or report submitted to this University or to any other institution for a degree, diploma or other qualification.

Signed:..........

Kulatilake, K. K. R. P.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBD	-	Central Business District
GDP	-	Gross Domestic Product
HKPSG	-	Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines
IFA	-	Internal Floor Area
MTR	-	Mass Transit Railway
OZP	-	Outline Zoning Plan
PRD	-	Pearl River Delta
TDS	-	Territorial Development Strategy
TDSR	-	Territorial Development Strategy Review



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