

**Comments on  
REVIEW OF OUTSTANDING ISSUES RAISED AT THE CONSOLIDATION FORUM  
(Paper No. 1/2009)**

Mee Kam Ng  
6 May 2009

1. I missed the TGUDS meeting on 4 May as I had an accidental fall at the entrance to the Government building in North Point and was sent to hospital. I am therefore sending my written comments.

***Issues Not Covered in the Paper (No.1/2009)***

2. It seems that the paper no longer regards Issue One as an outstanding issue. Does it mean that the Government will redistribute GFA in sites 1&2, Central Piers No.1-6 to other parts of the plan?
3. Similarly, Issue 2 on the Statute Square Corridor is not discussed in the Paper. However, according to the summary report, the Technical Panel's responses on p.24 state that '[b]reaking up the sites into smaller land parcels did not represent the majority views. The public opinion collected revealed that more respondents advocated a larger landscape deck connecting the inland Central area to the harbourfront'. I am reading two issues here: development of Site 3 and the landscaped deck. I am not sure if I agree that 'breaking up the sites into smaller land parcels did not represent the majority views'. I think the Government has agreed to break up the site into smaller land plots? For the landscaped deck, it is quite true that people seem to prefer a landscaped deck though from a visual permeability point of view, at grade access will serve a better purpose.
4. For Issue 5: there were discussions on the provision of cycle track, environmentally-friendly transport mode and revamping of the OZP. The responses of the Technical Panel may not be adequate to the issues raised. According to my understanding, the proponents for the cycle tracks are talking about 'sustainable transportation option', not cycling as a leisure activity. It's not just a matter of detailed planning for the site, it's also about planning for better integration of the cycling tracks with existing transportation network. It may be a tough job for the Transport Department but if we are serious in pursuing sustainable development, we better work harder to realise this option. Similarly, the answer of 'other environmentally-friendly transport modes would be further examined at the detailed design stage' is not satisfactory (p.30). We are not talking about such provision in the following year—with increasing global awareness on climate change and global warming, we should ensure all our future development to be environmentally friendly (sooner or later this will become standard practice as well). The planning should start now. Regarding the OZP, the sentiment at the Consolidation Forum was very clear: those who care to attend would like the OZP to be revamped. The question becomes who will make the 'final recommendations of the Study'.

***Outstanding Issues Discussed in the Paper***

5. *Queen's Pier and SFCT*
  - a. As a research planner, I feel rather ashamed for failing to protect the integrity of the Queen's Pier, Star Ferry & its Clock Tower, City Hall and Edinburgh Place complex. It was until very recently when our team at the University of Hong Kong carried out a detailed historical research of reclamation and development in Central District that we confirmed the historic importance of that particular place. The demolished Star Ferry was a third

generation one and the Queen Pier a second generation one—a natural question was why weren't there any hiccup when earlier generations of the piers were demolished. The third generation Star Ferry and the second generation Queen's Pier came into place after the Second World War when the Government of Hong Kong undertook to reclaim land in Central. Before that, the Government tended to adopt public-private partnership approach to do reclamation due to its shortage of funding. This together with Hong Kong then as a colonial dual society, the Central Business District was rather exclusive to the powerful and rich, most of them were expatriates. However, the reclamation in the 1950s changed not only the spatial but also the political ecology of the Central Business District. Not only was the reclamation done by the Government (the British Colonial Office... earmarked 1 million GBP to assist Hong Kong's development in the 1950s, see Ho, 2004, p.136), in the Government's 1961 *Central Area Redevelopment* proposals on the newly reclaimed land, the Director of Public Works explained the necessity of putting the majority of land to improve community facilities, 'rather than to increase the existing preponderance of private buildings... in this congested part of the city' (p.22). Furthermore, unlike its first generation, the Queen's Pier was turned into a public pier in 1954 and the new public space was enlivened by a neighbouring Clocktower in the middle of the 1957 Star Ferry terminal. As stated in the 2007 LegCo paper, 'the relocation [of both piers] in the fifties symbolized that the relationship between the colonial government and the people had changed from that between the 'aristocrats and the commons' to that between the 'modern government and the citizens' and represented important signposts of the colonial history of Hong Kong.

- b. So, for the first time in Hong Kong's colonial history then, common folks could use the space in the heart of the Central Business District, appropriate it and fill it with meanings through their daily living and activities. In other words, that particular pocket of public space represents the first civic space in our CBD, proudly planned and produced by the Government for the people (see what the Director of Public Works had said in the 1961 *Central Area Redevelopment* proposals). Hence, if we were given a second chance to re-plan this part of the city, we SHOULD by all means save that particular set of public space because we do have a beautiful story to tell our future generations.
- c. However, the SFCT was gone and Queen's Pier was removed and we as Asia's World City have failed to live up to international standard practices in terms of heritage conservation. Hence, my consideration is less of a technical orientation as deliberated in Paper 1/2009 but more on how we can redeem ourselves and remedy the situation. I guess my position is very clear: in order to tell a more intact story of the place, it's important for QP and SFCT to be reinstated in their original positions.

#### 6. Inner Harbour:

- a. Personally, I think an inner harbour will introduce more fun to the place. However, this does not need to tie up with QP. Is it possible to accommodate this concept along the waterfront? Yes, we should make the coastline more interesting. We should pay more attention to land-water interface.

#### 7. *Additional Decks over Roads*

- a. While I am not sure I would agree to have a large deck covering all the road 'spaghetti' at Site 6, I would support decking over certain parts to increase connectivity between waterfront and inland. Connectivity between waterfront and major development axes of the city is seen as a pertinent design issue in Vancouver and San Francisco, two cities HEC recently visited.