Abstract

This presentation serves as an interim report of my ongoing research on Hong Kong open space funded by the PolyU research grant (Project No. G-U606) and the RGC GRF grant (Project No. 527910). It starts off by asking two simple questions: What is open space? How much open space is there in the whole territory? The enquiry into these two seemingly factual questions turns out to be more perplexing, intriguing and fascinating than they were originally thought. In the views of many land-use planners and perhaps most people, open space is simply a piece of land for relaxation, public enjoyment and recreational purposes. This perception, however, conceals the complex underlying dynamics, struggles and contesting discourses in the provision for and against open space. By reviewing the history of planning and development of open space in the hyper-dense economic city of Hong Kong, this study has found that the justification for and interpretation of open space have not been static, but are constantly being defined and re-defined by the authority in power to meet political and economic needs. It shows how decisions about open space in Hong Kong, like in some western cities, were built on a history about sanitizing environment and controlling potential insurgence. The ideology of planning for open space in Hong Kong, which is officially always justified by the physical scarcity in land space and which supports the privatization of urban space, is subject to challenge.

15 October 2010

Further reading:


Download (via PolyU’s network): http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.landurbplan.2008.06.009