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Exemplary Public Spaces in Hong Kong

優秀公共空間城中尋

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There has been a lot of debate recently over public space in Hong Kong. In 2011, a charitable organisation called the "Hong Kong Public Space Initiative" was formed to "bring the knowledge of public space to all walks of life". They have published a directory listing all government and privately-managed public spaces and continue to organise symposiums and school programmes regularly to promote public space recognition. In 2013, Designing Hong Kong put out a public nomination of quality public spaces and awarded a number of worthy recipients, some of which were not intended to be used as public spaces per se when first created. Nevertheless, these spaces provide an outlet for many Hongkongers, busy with work, study, or any of the other myriad demands of life in Hong Kong, providing a space that is both close to their homes and workspaces while still within the city fabric, to walk and breathe and experience the vast space and scenery the city has to offer. In 2017, Civic Exchange published an article "Unopened Space" which questions the availability of public spaces to the public; answering this question is such an onerous task that they are continuing to probe and will be releasing more findings later this year. The continuous momentum of organised public forums and publications on issues of public spaces has carried unabated, necessitating some questions to properly focus the debate. What exactly should we talk about when mentioning public space? Why is there so much to talk about? I believe the answer comes from the social mission inherent with this topic.

近年，香港各界對公共空間議論紛紛。在 2011 年，非政府組織拓展公共空間成立，致力把公共空間的知識帶進社會各階層。為增進大眾對公共空間的認識，拓展公共空間編輯了一份索引，列出全港所有政府及私人管理的公共空間，又一直定期舉辦研討會及學校活動。而在 2013 年，創建香港透過公眾提名選出優秀的公共空間，當中不少得獎地方實至名歸，甚至乎有部分在最初建立時並非作公共空間之用。話雖如此，這些空間卻為不少日忙夜忙、生活迫人的香港人提供了舒展身心的地方，使大家即使留在市區，亦可在居住或工作的地點附近散步舒一口氣，同時細味大片空間和城市景色。在 2017 年，思匯政策研究所發表報告《不公空間》，探討香港現時開放予公眾的公共空間是否足夠，而問題之巨更令他們繼續深究，預計今年稍後時間會公布更多研究結果。針對公共空間的公眾論壇及報告有增無減，我們不得不藉着一些問題聚焦討論——到底我們應該如何談論公共空間？為何大眾會不斷關注這議題？我相信答案乃源自它本身的社會使命。

The origin of the Landscape Architecture discipline is centred upon the dialectic Man versus Nature. The definition of Landscape Architecture is extensive – the internet provides 68 million hits on the topic, but invariably it involves using land (which in Hong Kong's example includes concrete), water, and vegetation to create spaces, most often external spaces, for people. I can quote many "fathers" of landscape architecture who are equally pertinent, so a coffee table book mentioning Charles Waldheim is suitably relevant: the landscape architect was first conceived as an urbanist capable of tackling natural health, social welfare, and cultural edification. Invariably the art and science of our work involves social conscience. Yes, our clients hire us to create spaces to serve the clients' objective which often is for their own enjoyment, but to varying degrees these spaces are in the public domain. They are open to the sky so from different elevations they are visible to and perceivable by the public, and there is a call for public ownership regardless of whether entry is permitted.

歸根究底，「園境設計」專業背後的思想正是人類與自然的辯證。「園境設計」的定義廣泛——網上會為你提供達 6,800 萬項搜尋結果，當中離不開利用土地（香港的例子包括混凝土）、水及植物去為人創造空間，而多數指的是戶外空間。我可以引用多位「園境設計之父」的精句，位位都同樣見解獨到，例如其中一本精裝大書中提到查理斯·華德海姆（Charles Waldheim）的一句就相當貼切：園境師最初被認為是可解決自然健康、社會福利和文化熏陶的都市規劃聖手。我們工作背後的藝術性和科學觀都牽涉到社會良知的層面。誠然，客戶起用我們創建空間，無非都是滿足客戶需求，往往都是滿足他們的個人享受。但同時間，在不同程度而言，這些空間亦屬於公眾領域。不管公眾能否內進，公眾亦可以在不同高度看到或感受到這些向外開敞的地方，因而引起有關公眾擁有權的討論。



Herein lies Hong Kong's unique condition. Only 24.3% of Hong Kong is built upon. This means that services, transport, and amenities, are provided only within the 24.3% of Hong Kong. The remaining 76% of our city is really quite wild. For instance, there is only one road to enter Sai Kung West Country Park which occupies 3,000 hectares – an area equivalent to 11% of Hong Kong's built up area and 158 times that of Victoria Park. We travel via train, cars and buses from the airport to the city via Tsing Yi and we see large extents of Lantau North Country Park, yet there is no way that we can enter into this wild beauty along the way, except by trekking. So public space in the sense of public ownership of the nearly 40% of Hong Kong land in the form of Country Parks, is not the real public space that is heatedly debated about. The public space relevant to city dwellers experiencing the everyday need for outdoor amenity amounts to only about 4% of the area of country parks. The dichotomy of 1:0.04 proportion of vast open space which is not readily useful for Hongkongers' everyday need, and the two square metres ascribed for outdoor use in the city¹, is a topic which should be investigated in another article.

在此不得不提香港獨特的環境。香港只有 24.3% 的地方為已建設區，即當中的一切服務、交通及其他設施通通都只在香港 24.3% 面積的地方內提供，而剩餘的 76% 面積仍屬郊野之地。例如只有一條車路連接的西貢西郊野公園，佔地 3,000 公頃，相等於全港已建區的 11%，即 158 個維多利亞公園。大家以乘坐鐵路、汽車或巴士從機場經青衣返回市區時都可遠眺大片北大嶼郊野公園，但實際情況是我們不可乘任何交通駛進此郊外美景，除了步行行山以外。因此，即使香港近四成土地中「屬公眾擁有」的郊野公園，這些地方但並非大家所熱議的真正公共空間。城市居民每日使用戶外設施所需的公共空間，其實只佔郊野公園面積的 4%。不過，如何釐清這 4% 可予港人日常生活使用的公共空間和現時規劃署建議的人均休憩空間為兩平方米的關係¹，這需要另文再加說明。



The historical development of what were called "satellite towns" in the 1950s including Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Yuen Long, Fanling-Sheung Shui, Tsing Yi, Tseung Kwan O, Tin Shui Wai, Ma On Shan, and Tung Chung resulted in the increased development of public spaces. Given the scattered nature of these new towns one would have thought there should have been a conscious effort to connect the new public spaces with the vast resource of the country parks, but that did not seem to be the case. Nevertheless, the parks and public spaces that were created provide much needed recreational spaces to the populace. These public spaces are used for their intended purpose – balls played on ball courts, children playing in play equipment areas, the public sitting in benches wherever they are provided, and even boards being ridden in skateboard parks. Most importantly though, is that they provide a space for much needed trees and understorey planting. The combined vegetation truly forms the lungs of an otherwise concrete jungle. Some examples of public spaces that are key to the city's wellbeing are Tai Po Waterfront Park, Hong Kong Wetland Park, Stanley Waterfront, Victoria Park, Hong Kong Park, and Kowloon Park. Smaller public spaces are no less valuable – they are found in the leftover spaces between tall buildings and provide a reprieve to the closed-in walls of adjacent buildings: Cornwall Street Park, Lok Kwan Street Park, Maple Street Playground, Middle Road Children's playground, and King George V Memorial Park.

自 1950 年代起，「衛星城市」相繼落成，當中包括荃灣、沙田、屯門、大埔、元朗、粉嶺及上水、青衣、將軍澳、天水圍、馬鞍山及東涌等，從而增加了公共空間的發展。既然這些新市鎮位置分散，將新建的公共空間與廣闊的郊野公園連繫起來似乎是一件理所當然的事，但可惜事實並非如此。不過，無可否認的是，新建的公園與公共空間仍大大滿足了市民大眾對休憩空間的需要。這些公共空間多有指定用途——球場作球賽之用、兒童在遊樂設施中嬉戲、市民在設有長椅的地方安坐，連踏滑板亦只可在滑板公園進行。不過最重要的，是這些空間種滿大大小小的花草樹木，既切合大眾所需，更真正成為這「石屎森林」的市肺。大埔海濱公園、香港濕地公園、赤柱海濱、維多利亞公園、香港公園及九龍公園等正是公共空間對都市健康的好例子，但面積較小的公共空間亦同樣珍貴。它們大都設在高樓之間的剩餘空間中，令人在困於樓與樓間的夾縫中可得到一絲喘息，例子包括歌和老街公園、樂群街公園、楓樹街遊樂場、中間道兒童遊樂場和佐治五世紀念公園。





Image Courtesy to Waitography

Tai Po Waterfront Park

A 22-hectare park situated along the Tai Po waterfront, it boasts 20 different facilities for enjoyment including theme gardens (like rose garden) and an insect house. It has all the reasons for visiting a park: great views, lots of trees and beautiful flowers, lots of healthy things to do, and things to learn; best of all, it's 15 minutes' walk from the nearest homes.

大埔海濱公園

這個面積達 22 公頃的公園坐落在大埔海濱旁，並提供超過 20 種不同的享樂設施，包括主題花園（例如玫瑰花園）和一間昆蟲屋。它滿足了所有去公園的要求：優美的景色、眾多樹木和花草、可以進行很多有益身心和富學習趣味的活動，更重要是，大埔海濱公園離最近的家才不過 15 分鐘。



Image Courtesy to Waitography



Image Courtesy to Waitography



Image Courtesy to Waitography



Image Source: Urbis Limited

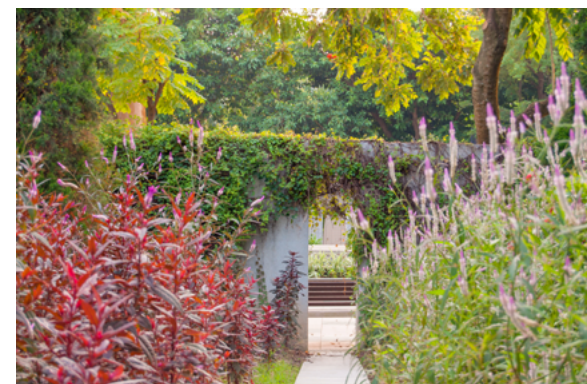


Image Courtesy to Waitography



Image Source: Urbis Limited

Hong Kong Wetland Park

This project is mentioned in a different chapter, but it bears mention again. It has won 12 local and international awards, the most of any parks in Hong Kong. The reason for these many accolades is similar to the mentioning of Tai Po Waterfront Park – Hong Kong Wetland Park has multi-dimensional meanings. It is built for nature conservation, yet it is fun to visit, and practically across the street from nearby residences. What is better than having a meaningful, educational, garden right at your doorstep?

香港濕地公園

儘管在上一章已有提及這公園，仍值得在本章再作介紹。香港濕地公園曾獲得共 12 個本地和國際獎項，為本地公園之冠，箇中原因和大埔海濱公園亦有相似之處：香港濕地公園代表着多重意義，它既是用作保育，又可以為參觀者帶來樂趣，和鄰近屋苑更只是一街之隔。還有甚麼可以和這坐落在家門前而又別具意義和教育性的花園媲美？



Image Source: Urbis Limited



Image Source: Urbis Limited





Stanley Promenade and Piazza

The project has proven itself to be a success in reinvigorating an old district to re-energise a vibrant beach town. The Architectural Services Department was able to remove existing beachside barriers and expand the promenade while connecting it with Murray House, the market village, and the bars and restaurants in between. The result is an animated seaside that best represents active urban waterfront living that serves strong tourism and recreation purposes, but it is most importantly easily within the reach of local residents - it is both special and a neighbourhood playground at the same time.

赤柱海濱及廣場

這項目是將一個舊區轉化成活力海邊小鎮的成功例子。建築署成功將原有在海灘邊的障礙物移走，伸延海濱以連結美利樓、市集及中間的酒吧食肆，令海邊多姿多彩，成為可吸引遊客，同時供人消閒的活力都市海濱。更重要是，對附近居民來說，這是一個既特別又平易近人的遊樂場所。



Image Source: CC BY 3.0 © Wing1990hk
https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/赤柱廣場#/media/File:Stanley_Plaza_Amphitheatre_Playground_2013.jpg



Cornwall Street Park

This project demonstrates that when restrictions are set free and designers can design, excitement comes alive with a fresh approach to sitting, lounging, seeing, and experiencing the best urban park voted by the public. Design innovation is very important, but the true value is its location, being not more than 10 minutes from nearby shopping mall, schools, offices, and residence.

歌和老街公園

這項目展示出如果設計師能突破規限發揮設計創意，使用者能以全新方式在公園安坐、細看及體驗，令人耳目一新。這公園更因此獲公眾選為最佳市區公園。創新的設計意念固然重要，但歌和老街公園的真正價值在於其地點，它距離商場、學校、辦公室和住宅均不超過 10 分鐘的路程，十分便利。



Image Source: CC BY 3.0 © Wing1990hk
https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/歌和老街公園#/media/File:Cornwall_Street_Park_2014.jpg



Image Source: CC BY 3.0 © Wing1990hk
https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/歌和老街公園#/media/File:Cornwall_Street_Park_Pond_View_2014.jpg



Victoria Park

Victoria Park is an iconic symbol of Hong Kong public space. It is truly public. Not only is it a park, it is also a gathering place for public debates and demonstrations. The 19 hectares of park space is well-used to the last square metre, with tennis courts, bowling green, basketball courts, soccer courts, bandstand, swimming pool, you name it! Every one of these facilities is actively and heavily used. The reason - it serves a residential population of more than 100,000 from Canal Road to Fortress Hill and that does not include students in schools, shoppers, office workers, domestic helpers, and visitors in hotels within the area.

維多利亞公園

維多利亞公園是香港公共空間的地標，它完全開放予公眾使用。它不單是一個公園，亦是公眾論壇和遊行的集合點。公園佔地 19 公頃，設計盡用每吋空間，園裏有網球場、草地滾球場、籃球場、足球場、音樂亭、游泳池等，應有盡有，每樣設施都非常受歡迎，使用率相當高。無怪乎公園為超過 10 萬位住在堅拿道至炮台山的居民服務，當中還未包括區內的學生、商場顧客、上班族、傭工和旅客，不可謂不厲害！

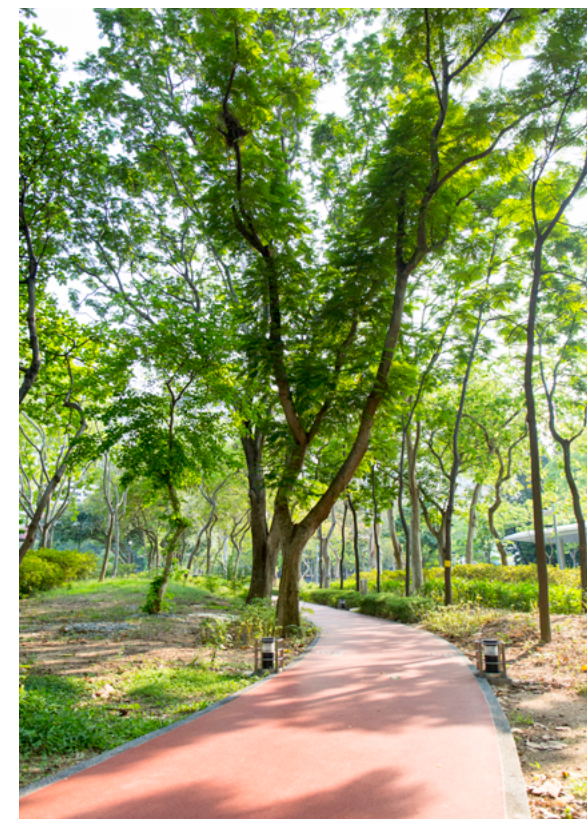




Image Source: Urbis Limited

Harbour Road Garden

A small space of about 5,000 square metres, this space is in the centre of a number of well-connected office buildings that is also adjacent to residential towers, a new swimming pool and a destination sports ground. The primary function for this park though, is to serve the office workers. It does that to a great degree of success.



Image Source: Urbis Limited

港灣道花園

這個只有約 5,000 平方米的細小空間坐落在幾座相連商廈的中央，鄰近住宅大廈、簇新的游泳池和運動場。這花園的首要功能是要顧及上班一族，無疑這個花園在這方面做得非常成功。



Image Source: Urbis Limited



About the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects (HKILA)

The Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects (HKILA) was founded in April 1988. The organisation of the landscape architectural profession was first established with the founding of the Hong Kong Landscape Group operating as a chapter of the Landscape Institute of United Kingdom. In the interests of maintaining and promoting local standards and services, the HKILA was inaugurated in 1988 as the professional body for those engaged in the practice of landscape architecture in Hong Kong, with the main aim of promoting the highest standard in the arts and sciences of landscape architecture and management throughout Hong Kong. A mutual professional recognition with Australia Institute of Landscape Architects and New Zealand Institute of Landscape Architects was established in the next year. The legal status of the HKILA was confirmed and objectives of the HKILA were defined with the enactment of the Hong Kong Institute of Landscape Architects Incorporation Ordinance in 1996.

關於香港園境師學會

香港園境師學會成立於 1988 年 4 月，學會前身為英國園境師學會在香港的一個分會，於 1978 年為一班不同國籍在香港執業的園境設計師，以推廣這個專業在香港的發展而成立。隨著會員的增加，及不同體制的運作模式發展日漸成熟，這個英國園境師學會在香港的分會，於 1988 年經會員通過及香港政府的認可，正式成為香港園林建築師學會，及後改名為香港園境師學會，並於翌年與澳洲及紐西蘭之園境師學會取得專業資格互認。1996 年 7 月，《香港園境師學會法團條例》在立法會通過，確立了學會的法定地位，成為一個延續性的組織，亦界定了學會的目標。

Footnote 註釋

- 1 https://www.pland.gov.hk/pland_en/tech_doc/hkpsg/full/ch4/ch4_text.htm#1.8

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