

Name: _____ Class: _____ ()

Tuesday English News Report

Full potential of Hong Kong's harbourfront not achieved, experts say

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Designers and urban planners **lament** cookie-cutter plans and 'regimented' designs, saying officials need to think outside the box

Victoria Harbour has long been one of Hong Kong's crown jewels – a rare, natural, deep-water harbour that provides shelter for vessels.

The government recently **touted** its efforts to develop the nearly 73km-long waterfront into a "world-class harbourfront", highlighting the completion of the 1km-long Kwun Tong **promenade** as an example of creating "an attractive and **vibrant** waterfront for citizens".

While urban planners and designers welcome the open space created, they do not believe what has been given to the public is the best use of the harbourfront. And they feel that in this case, the government is not the solution, but the problem.

"Basically what we've achieved is passive open space, such as parks and landscape areas. This is under the management of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department [LCSD].

"Because of this, it limits the variety and different uses of the harbourfront.

The Kwun Tong promenade, **adjacent** to Kwun Tong bypass, provides 4.2 hectares of leisure and recreational public space. It includes a 1km-long seaside boardwalk, two pavilions, a children's play area, viewing platforms and a light refreshment kiosk.

Kwun Tong Promenade establishes Hong Kong as one of the world's best waterfront cities

Paul Zimmerman, CEO of urban design NGO Designing Hong Kong said it was **a boon** to have the former Kwun Tong public cargo working area site available to the public, but the promenade was another standard government department design.

"Under the highway it would be great to have a cooked food market. It would become a destination instead of a passive public space for people who live there," he said.

Zimmerman believes the government needs to move aside and let the public decide the best use for the open space naturally, instead of applying "**regimented** designs".

Zimmerman cited the Western District public cargo working area as the best example of natural use of the waterfront. The popular area is used by Kennedy Town residents despite there being no railings along the waterfront or other **amenities**. The site is **abuzz** with various activities including cycling, jogging, reading, fishing, drone flying and yoga, all without government rules or regulations.

If the LCSD became involved in developing the cargo working area in the future, it would “kill the space”, Zimmerman said.

“On many occasions, we asked whether we could have some coffee shops or restaurants along our waterfront; [the LCSD] said they cannot do that because of the mandate they have.

Establishing a more powerful harbourfront authority would allow a single entity to run Hong Kong’s waterfront and eliminate interdepartmental barriers. However, setting up this statutory body has been slow.

In August, development minister Paul Chan Mo-po revealed that the government had yet to come to a decision about establishing a governing authority, citing the large financial commitments involved and land investment as obstacles.

HK\$12b transformation of Hong Kong’s Central waterfront: what’s about to happen

Pleasure craft activity along the harbourfront is consistently absent from waterfront development plans.

“A second problem with [the Kwun Tong promenade] is that it’s on the water’s edge, but [there’s] a glass wall. It’s on the edge of a typhoon shelter where vessels are going to be, but you don’t allow anyone to connect between the land and the vessels because you put [up] a glass wall,” Zimmerman said.

He blamed the strict mandates of the LCSD and the Marine Department for harbour planning not including ways for pleasure craft to use the waterfront.

With declining use of public cargo handling basins, such as in Wan Chai, Causeway Bay and Chai Wan, new ideas are being put forward on the best use for those areas.

Development minister Chan unveiled plans for the Wan Chai basin to be used for sunbathing and water sports, including a floating pool.

Hong Kong harbourfront advisor vows watchdog would learn from ‘past mistakes’

David Robinson, founder of maritime news magazine *Fragrant Harbour*, dismissed the development minister's plans, believing that the best way to utilise the basins and underused typhoon shelter spaces was by creating public marinas.

Much like waterfronts in the US and Europe, Hong Kong could have restaurants and cafes along the boardwalks that would service those with pleasure craft and those without them, allowing for maximum use of not only the harbourfront, but also the waters along it, according to Robinson.

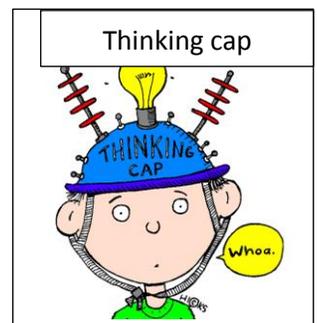
Despite waterfront development not being **optimised**, the government has been active in reserving land along the harbourfront for public use.

The Central Harbourfront is a multi-use area that has been the site of several events, as well as an open space for spontaneous use by the public.

Both Zimmerman and Ho believe these are signs that make them **optimistic** about the harbourfront's future.

1. Questions to think about:

- What do you think of closing off roads to traffic?
 - What are the pros and cons of this type of action?
- What else could be done in Hong Kong to make the environment we live in more people friendly?



2. I: Extending your vocabulary: Synonyms

Choose the word or phrase in the box below which matches the meaning of the words from the text in the table. Fill in the table. One has been done for you.

wander	temporary	forbid to enter	one and only	find out	roadway
sit around	measure	special	extraordinary	inquisitive	
owner	ban	disallow	highway	unrivalled	relax
walk about	broad strip or area	assess	make-do		

A: Word from text	Synonyms		
1. thoroughfare (n)			
2. banish (v)			
3. unique (adj)			
4. unprecedented (adj)	unrivalled		
5. swathe (n)			
6. lounge (v)			
7. roam (v)			
8. makeshift (adj)			
9. gauge (v)			
10. proprietor (n)			
11. curious (adj)			

II: Usage of vocabulary

Fill in the missing words of the short paragraphs or sentences below using the vocabulary (1-11) from column A. Not all of the words will be needed.

The earthquake which was (a) _____ in the history of the country, a first-time natural disaster of this kind, damaged a huge (b) _____ of land. Main roads and (c) _____ were also impassable. Many people left homeless (d) _____ the streets aimlessly, not knowing what to do. Charity organisations set up (e) _____ tents as shelter for the victims who had no homes to go to. Hopefully, this would only be a temporary solution. Some areas were too dangerous so people were (f) _____ from entering.

Governments sometimes do surveys to (g) _____ the opinion of the public.

(h) _____ to find out more, the kid asked a lot of questions.

Challenge of the week: (1) The headline of the article is a play on words of a famous saying (or I should say commandment) from a book. In the book, it is **'Four legs good, two legs bad'**. *What is the name of the book? Who is the author?

First three students to answer the questions, win a prize & there is a bonus prize for the student who can tell me what it means.

(2) Usually before a word with a vowel (*a, e, i, o, u*) we use 'an', not 'a', but not with the word, *unique*. *Why? (Again, prizes can be won!)