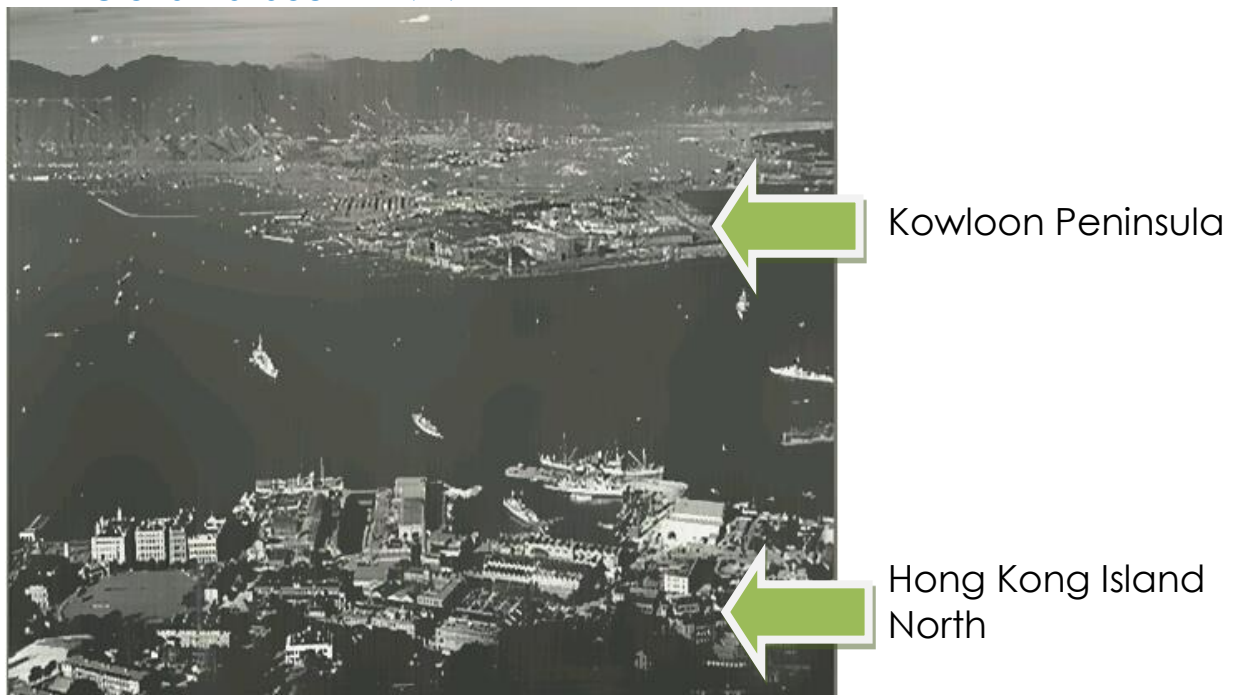


Role of Reclamation in Hong Kong Development

1. Early Development in Hong Kong

Hong Kong was once a fishing village a long time ago. Since the 19th century, with its strategic geographical location, Hong Kong has been gradually developed into a trading port. However, Hong Kong has a hilly natural terrain with little flat land. To meet the needs of a growing population, the Government launched a series of reclamation projects in phases in 1850s-1900s at both sides of Victoria Harbour to expand Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula. These reclaimed lands were rapidly developed into urban area.

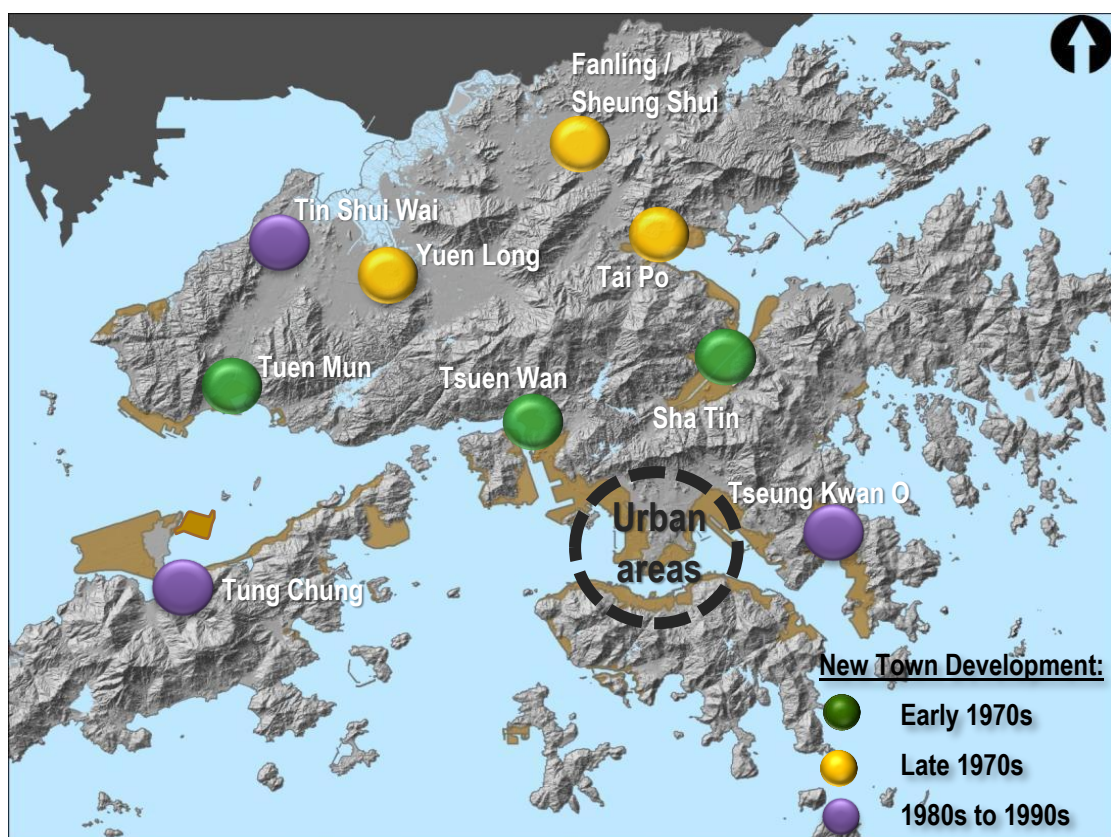
Victoria Harbour in 1947



Just like having a partition in between, the New Territories was at that time isolated from the urban areas by mountains stretching along North Kowloon. With no transport infrastructure and major public facilities, it was relatively difficult to develop at the New Territories.

2. New Town Development

In 1950s and 1960s, there was the influx of migrants from the Mainland to Hong Kong. The urban areas were getting crowded. New spaces were urgently needed to address the housing demand arising from the additional population and to decentralize the population from the overcrowded urban area to improve living environments. The Government launched the New Town Development Programme in 1973. Nine new towns have been developed since then, accommodating nearly half of the local population.



Six new towns, namely Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin, Tuen Mun, Tai Po, Tseung Kwan O and Tung Chung, were built on reclaimed lands (coloured brown on the above figure). With relatively larger areas, it would be easier to build balanced and vibrant communities in the new towns by means of comprehensive planning.

Photos showing new towns before and after reclamation are at Annex 1.

Current Population in New Towns

As at 2016, the population of Hong Kong was about 7.35 million, including 3.47 million living in new towns, accounting for nearly half of the total local population (47%).

Development Period	New Town	Population
Early 1970s	Tsuen Wan	805 000
	Sha Tin	691 000
	Tuen Mun	502 000
Late 1970s	Tai Po	278 000
	Fanling / Sheung Shui	261 000
	Yuen Long	164 000
1980s-1990s	Tin Shui Wai	290 000
	Tsuen Kwan O	396 000
	Tung Chung	80 000*
Total population:		3.47 millions

* *In order to expand the Tung Chung New Town into a larger community to meet the long-term housing, social, economic and environmental needs of Hong Kong, the Tung Chung New Town Extension project is proposed by the Government. The Tung Chung New Town will accommodate a population of about 268,000 upon expansion.*

Source – Civil Engineering and Development Department's Website (www.cedd.gov.hk):

✧ Publications > Fact Sheets > Hong Kong Fact Sheets

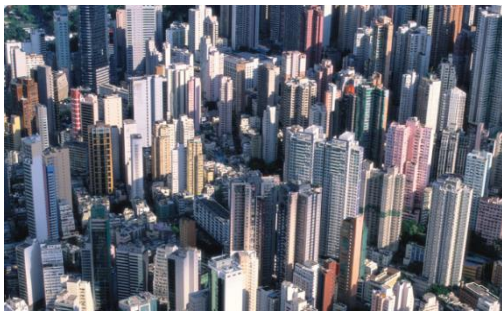
For the latest development of Tung Chung New Town, please refer to the website of Tung Chung New Town Extension Study:

www.tung-chung.hk

3. Metroplan

In addition to the New Town Development, the Government launched the Metroplan Study (the Study) in late 1980s, aiming to explore the overall planning and land utilization of the metro area. The metro area covered the urban areas at that time, and extended to such nearby areas as Tsuen Wan and Kowloon East. The Study mainly proposed to:

(1) Reduce population density in urban areas



(2) Enhance urban landscape and quality of living environment



(3) Increase the capacity of mass transit transport



Reclamation had a role to play in reducing overcrowding in urban areas and improving living environments. The new spaces provided by reclamation not only allowed decentralization of population, but also made up the shortfalls in community facilities.

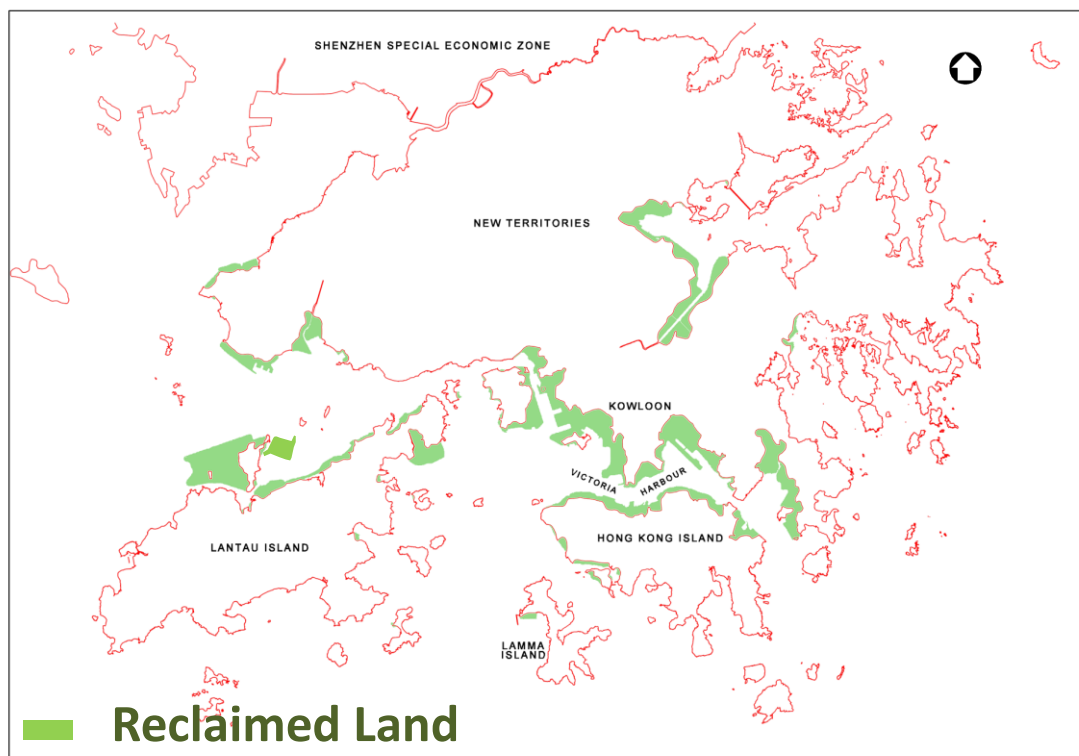
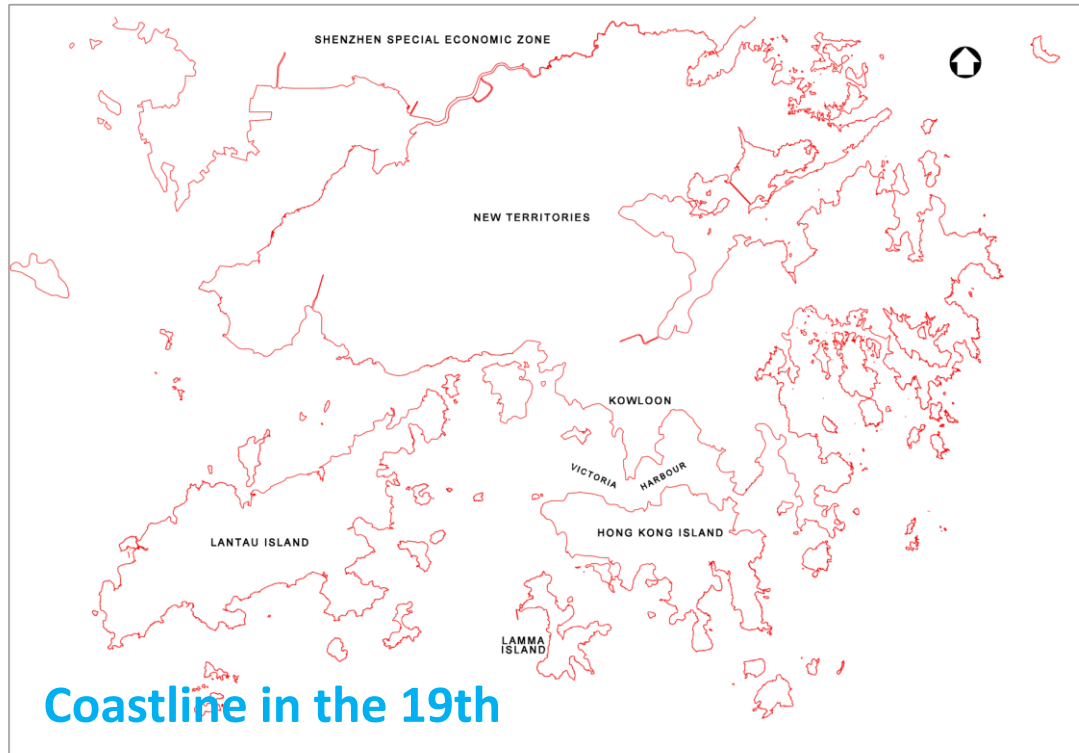
The Government had launched various development projects and studies to plan developments for Hong Kong since then. They have demonstrated the needs for the Government to develop land persistently.

For details on land development projects and studies and urban planning, please visit the websites of the CEDD (www.cedd.gov.hk) and PlanD (www.pland.gov.hk):

- ✧ CEDD website > Media Corner > Video and Song
- ✧ CEDD website > Topic in Focus
- ✧ PlanD website > Video Corner
- ✧ PlanD website > Planning Studies

4. Land Supply by Reclamation

As at 2016, the reclaimed land in Hong Kong is about 6,954 ha, accounting for about 7% of the total land area. Such an area is about half the size of Lantau Island.



Just imagine what would happen if reclamation were not carried out and the same size of land for development were to be found elsewhere. Land of area larger than the total area of Shing Mun Country Park and Tai Lam Country Park would be required.

In addition to housing and commercial uses, reclamation creates land for infrastructure and provision of community facilities, thereby supporting the social developments. Examples include the followings:



Hong Kong International Airport at Chek Lap Kok



Hong Kong Cultural Centre at Tsim Sha Tsui



Sha Tin Sewage Treatment Works



Victoria Park at Causeway Bay

Reclamation is also the effective means of increasing land supply in other countries. The land area in Singapore has increased from 581.5 km² in 1960s to 719.1 km² in 2015, i.e. accounting for 19% of its total area, by means of reclamation.



Marina Bay in Singapore

The reclaimed land are used for developing financial districts, residential areas, hotels, botanical garden, as well as performance, entertainment and exhibition venues, etc.

Source - The Singapore Government's Website (www.data.gov.sg):

✧ Home > Datasets > Total Land Area of Singapore

5. Latest Developments in Reclamation

Reclamation Area in Hong Kong

The statistical figures show that the additional land created by reclamation in Hong Kong was about 500 to 700 ha every 5 years between 1985 and 2004. The reclaimed land under the Airport Core Programme was not included.

Victoria Harbour is an unique public asset and natural heritage in Hong Kong. The Government has been prudent in pursuing further reclamation since the enactment of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance in 1997. Land supply by reclamation dropped to a mere 84 ha in 2005-2009. In 2010-2014, there were only 124 ha of lands reclaimed, which has included those under the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge (HZMB) Project.

Reclamation in Hong Kong Between 1985 and 2014

Year	Reclaimed Land (ha)	Remarks
1985-1989	697	Excluding 1274 ha at Chek Lap Kok and Kowloon West
1990-1994	467	
1995-1999	577	
2000-2004	550	
2005-2009	84	
2010-2014	124	Including 115 ha for artificial island under HZMB Project

Land formed by reclamation has dropped significantly in recent years, thereby reducing the land supply. Thus, the Government proposes reclamation be carried out on an appropriate scale at suitable locations outside Victoria Harbour, aiming to restore the function of reclamation in land supply. Through implementing a mix of land supply options, sufficient land can be provided in a steady manner in the long run, in a bid to meet the needs of the society.

For size of reclamation between 1985 and 2015, please refer to Annex 2.

Source – Lands Department's website (www.landsd.gov.hk) :

✧ Survey and Mapping Office > Practice Notes and Publication > Hong Kong Geographic Data

Protection of the Harbour Ordinance

Under Section 3 of the Protection of the Harbour Ordinance (PHO), “the harbour is to be protected and preserved as a special public asset and a natural heritage of Hong Kong people, and for that purpose there shall be a presumption against reclamation in the harbour.”



In other words, a presumption is made against reclamation within Victoria Harbour under the PHO to serve the dual purposes of protecting and preserving the Victoria Harbour. According to the ruling made by the Court of Final Appeal regarding the PHO in 2004, there must be a compelling and overriding public need to displace the duty of protection and preservation in order to rebut the presumption against reclamation within Victoria Harbour.

Needless to say, “public need” refers to the need of society, including economic, environmental and social needs. A “compelling and overriding” need refers to the current pressing need for reclamation where there are no other reasonable alternatives. In sourcing reasonable alternatives, we should take into account all potential options, including their economic, environmental and social implications, as well as the cost and time to be incurred and possible delays.

