

# Preface

## The Impetus for This Book

Hong Kong, a Chinese territory located at the tip of the South China Sea, was the last British overseas colony. During its 150 years of colonial rule from 1841 to 1997, the colonial leadership combined with a Chinese effort from the administrative to grass-roots levels made Hong Kong unique. In addition to its values and lifestyle, this city-state has its own social, political, and economic systems. Hong Kong laid down the framework for the city proper during its first hundred years of development from 1841 to 1945. The 50 years following World War II saw Hong Kong transition from a defensive outpost into an international financial hub. The urban architecture seen in the city today was formulated mainly during the 1980s and fermented to maturity. Since 1978, when China opened its doors, Hong Kong has served as an example of economic success, and its experiences have directly contributed to the success of mainland China. In the 1990s, the per capita GDP of Hong Kong once surpassed that of UK, its suzerain.<sup>1</sup> After the handover of sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong became one of China's many cities. Since then, it has contributed its wealth of experience to other parts of China.

In the 1950s and 1960s, Hong Kong was busy relocating refugees and developing local industry. From the 1970s to 1990s, the rise of the “four Asian dragons”—Hong Kong, Taiwan, South Korea, and Singapore—was manifested in their remarkable construction boom. Hong Kong architecture during the half century from 1946 to 1997 was shaped by government's policies, local social and technical forces and products created by local and expatriate planners, architects, and builders. The tiny island took its own path apart from UK and China. Hong Kong's architecture is the result of a pragmatic economy and property speculation, and is

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<sup>1</sup>During 1993 to 1998, the per capita GDP of Hong Kong was higher than that of the UK.

The data of per capita GDP is available from (International Bank for Reconstruction and Development 2014).

free from political ideology. The independence and uniqueness of its built environment are worth exploring.

Although the port city was shaped in the nineteenth century, the buildings constructed before the war were mostly demolished when the economy took off in the 1970s. The buildings constructed after the war mostly followed modernist principles and resonated with the modern architectural movement in the Western world during the 1950s. These buildings of the 1950s and 1960s have become endangered as a result of the tide of redevelopment encouraged by high commercial profits. More than half of the post-war buildings have been or are being replaced by new skyscrapers. Some buildings in the central business district stood for less than 30 years before they were replaced by a new generation of skyscrapers. This modern heritage deserves further exploration. My study of Hong Kong architecture is further motivated by the following questions.

- As one of the major economic pillars, how did urban architecture help Hong Kong's transformation and economic miracles in its last 50 years before the sovereignty handover?
- How did the building projects represent and symbolize the various stages during this period of transformation?
- What are the driving forces for building development in different stages?
- What contributions has Hong Kong architecture made to China, Asia, and the world?

Although many books and articles have considered Hong Kong's urban architecture and construction, a comprehensive and resourceful English volume related to post-war architecture has not yet appeared. I have written and published several books, chapters, and papers about contemporary Chinese mainland architecture (including a few about Hong Kong architecture) for decades, and hope to extend my study to this corner of the South China Sea to compare developments in mainland China and Hong Kong. By answering these questions, I hope to establish a framework of Hong Kong architecture from 1945 to now, contribute to the architectural history of this vibrant city and enrich the discourse of city-state development. On the practical side, a study of Hong Kong architecture would reveal its design and development and provide a reference for architects, developers, government, scholars and members of the public. Hong Kong architecture involves the development, design and management of a high-density environment, and its study should be useful and meaningful for other cities facing similar problems.

## **Other Studies of Hong Kong Architecture**

Scholarly works inspire the study of Hong Kong architecture in the following ways. Due to space limitations, only the most representative works are discussed.

### **British Colony and Hong Kong History**

British overseas colonies reached their heyday in the nineteenth century. Home's *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* (1997) covers the entire sweep of British colonial urbanism from Africa to Asia. Building design was partly mentioned. Ngo's *Hong Kong's History: State and Society under Colonial Rule* (1999) offers a colonial history perspective of Hong Kong. Several books have described the history of Hong Kong in different ways. For example, Akers-Jones (2004) focuses more on the human rather than administrative aspects, but provides many insights into the recent history of Hong Kong. Welsh (1997) evokes the history of Hong Kong and the characters of those who shaped it, from its buccaneering origins to its post-war growth. Wang's (1997) book includes two parts, one involving archaeology, society, policy, urban development, and economy and the other involving education, culture, religion, and social customs. Ching and Faure (2003) analyze the social formation of Hong Kong, the interaction between its government and society, the internal and external factors underlying its social evolution, and the emergence of its culture and identity. Li (2012) reveals the government decision process in the last colonial administration period through reading the released archives in London. Blyth and Wotherspoon (1996) examine the oral histories of more than 30 people. Lui (2012) analyzes the social factors experienced during the 1970s. The last two books provide a voice from grass-root citizens, which are rarely heard in formal historic accounts. As a piece of cultural critique, Abbas' book (1997) relentlessly expounds the essence of "disappearance" culture in the last colonial years.

Some books mention Hong Kong's regional history. Girard et al. (2011) explore the notorious Kowloon Walled City before its final clearance in 1992. Lee and DiStefano (2002) examine the threats of recent development to two of the oldest villages in Hong Kong's New Territories. No matter how strict the law was enacted, people have their own innovative ways of resistance, resilience, and survival. They created "architecture without architects." Many similar books, mainly published by non-government organizations, take a nostalgic approach to post-war life in Shek Kip Mei, Shau Kei Wan, Lamma Island, and other areas. The government has also recorded population, housing, and other changing statistics in its annual reports and other documents.

### **Urban Studies of Hong Kong and the Statutory System**

Urban studies of Hong Kong usually refer to items such as the city's geography, estates, reclamation, land use, municipal construction, administration, policies and town planning. Victor F.S. Sit established a framework for Hong Kong's urban development in *Hong Kong: 150 years, Development in Maps* (2001, 2010) which consists of the city's geography, history, economy, city, society, community, and environment statistics. Sit compiled a factual panorama of the city.

Alexander Holmes and Joan Waller's *Hong Kong: Growth of the City* (2008) takes a series of important cities as references and analyses their growth and evolution in tables to show Hong Kong's developmental history. Feng Bangyan's Chinese book entitled *One Hundred Year History of Hong Kong Real Estate*

*Property* (2001) attempts to reveal and dissect the historical progression of the city's real estate against its economic and population development backgrounds in the twentieth century. Living in and speculation of real estate have been the driving force of urban construction and building design in Hong Kong.

Ho's several English and Chinese books (2004, 2008, 2011) focus on Hong Kong's harbor, land, infrastructure and construction development history over a 150-year period. These books consider data from the government and professional bodies and present them in statistic tables and figures. Bristow (1984) records the history and progression of land policy implementation from the viewpoint of land-use planning. In another book, Bristow (1989) covers the historical and conceptual origins of new towns and satellite towns worldwide and the Hong Kong cases, in addition to development procedures and controls, design aspects and problems, and the role of government and the private sector in catering to the public need. As the difficulties of accessing the materials of half a century ago, Bristow's books give a reliable source. More critical review of public housing comes from Castells et al. (1991), who studied the public housing in Hong Kong and Singapore and linked "collective consumption" with the cities' economic growth.

Cheng (2000) has written several books introducing the development clues of Hong Kong's roads and streets with abundant historical pictures. Nissim explains both the historical development and current practice of land administration. The Hong Kong government has also published urban study materials that consider the city and its statutory system. For example, the government manual entitled *Hong Kong Planning Standards and Guidelines* provides criteria for determining the scale, location and site requirements of various land uses and facilities. Lu and Chan's (1998) Chinese book about Hong Kong's urban planning is a systemic monograph that introduces the formation and development of the urban planning framework after World War II in Hong Kong. Other books consider recent case studies to extensively explore Hong Kong's economy, town planning, building control, urban renewal, and housing price problems (Lai 1997; Lai and Fong 2000; Leung and Yiu 2004). Yiu's e-museum of building control and land administration focuses on the changing policy of building control and its consequences for building development and design.

### **Hong Kong architecture**

Most of the books and articles about Hong Kong architecture have been published in the Chinese language. Lung Ping-yee's pioneering *Ancient and Current Hong Kong Architecture* (1991) outlines Hong Kong architecture from the early nineteenth century to the end of the 1980s. Peng's (1990) edited collection of architects' and scholars' articles written about Hong Kong's history, housing, commercial, and new town development covers the period to 1990, with all authors knowing Hong Kong well at the time. Zhang and Lau (1998) analyze the formation of Hong Kong's port in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by comparing Shanghai and Yokohama. The Hong Kong Institute of Architects (HKIA) published a Chinese book entitled *Hundred Years of Hong Kong Architecture* (2005), which consists of chapters on tenement housing, public and private housing, and

vernacular buildings. The book is intended for consumption by the general public at the expense of academic depth. Two by-product books from the HKIA investigation, including *Loving Architecture* (comprising dialogues with 15 veteran architects) and *Jianwen zhuji* (a biography of old architects) were published in 2007, and serve as vital records of famous architects between the 1950s and 1980s. Gu (2011) records the endeavor of Chinese architects and clients to construct the Chung Chi College buildings at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in the 1950s and 1960s. These books delineate a line of development from the post-World War II period to 1970. Other Chinese books have been written by cultural commentators and published by non-government organizations (Woo 2005; Fang 2006), and express personal ideas and observations. Except for Gu's bilingual book, none of the aforementioned books are accessible to the English-speaking world.

Some English books have focused on Hong Kong architecture. Walker and Rowlinson (1990) describe the Hong Kong Construction Association's 70 years of building construction. Their book provides information about milestone building projects from the 1920s to 1980s. Denison and Guang (2014) tell a story of architect Luke Him Sau from Hong Kong, London, Shanghai, and then Hong Kong. In their book about Hong Kong's high density, Shelton et al. (2011) describe the city's land constraints, planning innovations and peculiar situation. Three books including Christ and Gantenbein's *An Architectural Research on Hong Kong Building Types* (2010), Frampton, Solomon and Wong's *Cities Without Ground - A Hong Kong Guidebook* (2012) and Zhang's *Invisible Logic* (2009) demonstrate a lasting research interest in the high density and design strategies of Hong Kong. *Cities Without Ground* focuses on this interest in the academic and professional worlds. It uses digital axonometric drawings of various traffic interexchange areas and attempts to exaggeratedly demonstrate Hong Kong's intricate high-density environment and pragmatic solutions. *Cities Without Ground* most typically represents the fresh psychology when a (foreign) visitor first arrives in the city.

Books by Chung (1990) and Lampugnani et al. (1993) include large-format design case pictorial introductions and cover articles. Both books focus on prominent building cases completed before 1991. The property market has always been a major driving force behind Hong Kong's economy. The books *Professional Practice for Architects* (1998) and *Building Design and Development in Hong Kong* (2003) cover a wide range of topics related to building design and property development practices in Hong Kong. The government departments publish materials about their work, such as books about public housing (Yeung and Wong 2003; Leung 1999), and reports related to subways (Tang et al. 2004) and public buildings (ASD 2006).

Journals in China and abroad occasionally publish design works or articles about Hong Kong. Hong Kong trade magazines such as *China Architecture & Urbanism*, *Building Journal*, *Vision*, *Pace*, *Space*, *Hinge*, *Perspective*, *Hong Kong Institute of Architects Journal* and *Asian Architects and Contractors* frequently print stories about built projects in Hong Kong using little text and analysis. They record ample factual material and timely information.

Conclusively, there is a plethora of publications related to Hong Kong's history, society, geography, urban planning, environment, and construction especially in the Chinese language. However, quality writing about post-war Hong Kong architecture is rarely published. Although professionals know about many buildings and events, they have not yet captured them in writing. In view of this gap, I published a Chinese book entitled *Contextualizing Modernity: Hong Kong Architecture 1946–2011* in the summer of 2014. It was warmly welcomed by readers in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. This English edition lends its findings a broader scope and consolidates the other chapters.

## From Colonial to Global

My observations of Hong Kong architecture in this book are set against the background of Greater China and world architecture. I have read most of the aforementioned materials and immersed myself in the life of Hong Kong over the past 20 years, following the construction of key buildings and participating in design projects and social events. My view of Hong Kong architecture was gradually formed during a process of close examination, experience, and contemplation.

Most books on architecture highlight built works with attractive and tasteful pictures. Initially, I intended to focus on building design and formal evolution in this book. The deeper I looked into historical materials from half a century ago, the more I felt the pulse of Hong Kong's development and found it to be closely associated with the building form. Behind the form and evolution of the building hide governmental policy and control, a societal vision, various forces and architects' creativity. Some buildings deserve description and broadcasting. Some buildings are generic, and only serve the operation of the busy capitalist urban machine and provide usable space to owners, end users and speculators. These buildings lack prominent qualities and glamor. During Hong Kong's transition from last British colony to international Asian metropolis, buildings were produced, consumed, and quickly demolished or replaced. That is the meaning of Hong Kong architecture and also the departure point of this book. The text and illustrations provided in this book explain this process.

A "colony" is a type of territory expansion in which people migrate from a central region to an outlying region. The ancient Romans conquered the vast territories from Minor Asia to North Africa and Northern Europe. Overseas colonization started from ocean navigation and venturing expansion. Vast land of Latin America, India and Far East fell to the hands of European colonists. British colonists built Hong Kong Island into a trade outpost and military base during the first hundred years after its occupation in 1841. In the turbulent years of modern Chinese history, Hong Kong acted as a refuge, a buffer zone, and an enclave between political powers and cruel wars. The cultural seeds of East meets West were planted from its inception as a port city.

Looking at the 50 years of Hong Kong history from 1946 to 1997, an obvious demarcation line can be drawn in 1971. Post-war reconstruction turned a new page for Hong Kong after the dark days of Japanese rule. After the war, the British Colonial Office took close care of its outlying colonies. London directed the governance of Hong Kong, which stepped into the free capitalist world. Meanwhile, the Chinese mainland suffered from endless turmoil as a result of internal war and political movements. The Territories received an influx of migrants from the Chinese mainland in the 1950s and 1960s, providing a direct supply of labor for the newly sprouting industry.

From 1946 to 1970, Hong Kong society was busy coping with various emerging disasters such as an inundation of refugees, squatter area fires, resettlement of the urban poor, economic embargos, and street riots. As observed by Ackbar Abbas, “other cities like Los Angeles or Tokyo were built on seismic fault lines or volcanic soil; Hong Kong seems to have been built on contingency, on geographic and historical accidents, shaped by times and circumstances beyond its control and by pragmatic accommodation to events” (Abbas 1997). Hong Kong experienced gains and losses. The transitioning immigrants improved its culture and technology, and money escaped from Shanghai after the communists came to power in 1949. Therefore, Shanghai had the dominant influence over the culture.<sup>2</sup>

Although boasted as a sample of “laissez faire” economic policy and “active non-intervention,” the urban architecture of the period was characterized by strong government leadership and specific investment, in the types of public housing and buildings constructed. Settling the refugees, providing shelters for low-income people, regulating the developmental potential and dense conditions, building schools and hospitals—all of these active governmental measurements thoroughly modernized an otherwise dilapidated port city full of squatter areas. As Castells et al. concluded, millions of people lived in a “realm of collective consumption” due to the government’s housing and social welfare endeavors.<sup>3</sup> Partly because of the rigorous economic situation, government buildings were designed with authoritative modernist language, mainly designed by expatriate architects in the public sector. The architectural magazine at the time reflected an enthusiastic pursuance of modernist method (Tan and Xue 2013).

Early in 1967, decolonization began silently in Hong Kong “because Britain was set on a course of withdrawal” (Fauer 2003). Hong Kong gradually decided its own developmental path. More Chinese elites began participating in political and administrative affairs. The installation of new governor Sir Crawford Murray MacLehose in 1971 marked a new economic era and social life in the territory. To be considered one of the greatest governors, Sir Crawford introduced more social

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<sup>2</sup>Harvard University Professor Leo Lee called Hong Kong’s culture in the 1950s “Shanghainessed.” See (Lee 1998). The architects from Shanghai were active in this period, a fact that partly supports Lee’s judgement.

<sup>3</sup>“Collective consumption” is used to describe people in the “developmental nations,” where housing and other welfare are mainly supplied by the government. See (Castells et al. 1991).

welfare and public services to thoroughly cure the society.<sup>4</sup> The governor and his cabinet established a new way of governance: “As for Hong Kong, its very lack of resources or means of being independent was always curiously enough a factor for its favor: it meant that more could be gained all around by making the city work as a port city—by developing infrastructure, education, international networks. This was a position that both the colonizer and the colonized could agree on, a position of cute correspondence or collusion” (Abbas 1997).

Under this “collusion” and consensus, private investments started to surge, especially those from full-fledged Chinese (family) consortiums. In many ways, their financial forces surpassed those of the government and the old-brand British companies and merchants. The government was keen to introduce these (Chinese) elites to the Legislative, Executive and Urban Councils. The private sector, private and public cooperation and semi-public sector (e.g., mass-transit railway [MTR]) dominated urban construction. This situation was quite different from that seen in the 1950s and 1960s. A watershed moment occurred in 1971, when the government and private forces led Hong Kong through its colonial years in the last half-century in two stages, respectively. The government channeled economic activities into a more thriving direction.

After 1970, Hong Kong’s economy gradually boomed and its society found stability. From 1971 to 1997, Hong Kong saw its economy take off and witnessed the prosperity and internationalization of the city. A significantly important factor supporting Hong Kong’s economy was the open-door policy adopted on the Chinese mainland in 1978. After 28 years behind the iron curtain, China opened its windows and let its people see the affluent lifestyles, advanced technologies, and management practices of Western countries. However, the West was located far away, with the nearest example being economically successful Hong Kong. China’s patriarch Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997) circled the four special economic zones on a map—Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Shantou and Xiamen—all of which were located in southern China and close to the capitalist world of Hong Kong, Macau and Taiwan.<sup>5</sup> The intention of China to learn about capitalist (economic) success was obvious.

People and companies on the Chinese mainland were eager to learn from the West, and multinational corporations showed an intention to enter the China market. Hong Kong acted as a transition point that collected money from both sides.<sup>6</sup> Meanwhile, the opened Pearl River Delta provided ample land and labor for Hong Kong’s manufacturing industry. Factories in Hong Kong were moved

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<sup>4</sup>In most of the history books about Hong Kong, Sir Crawford Murray MacLehose was warmly lauded as a leader who brought Hong Kong into a new era. The main measurements are social welfare, public services and eliminating bribery. See (Cheng 2007).

<sup>5</sup>For more about modern and contemporary Chinese history and Deng Xiaoping’s achievements, see (Spence 1990) and (Goodman 1994).

<sup>6</sup>Hong Kong gained from both the Western and Chinese sides in the early years of the open-door policy. See (Zweig 2002). Such gains also took place in architectural design. See (Xue 2006)<sup>1</sup> and (Xue 2006)<sup>2</sup>.



northward to Shenzhen, Dongguan, Shunde and other towns in Guangdong Province. These factories made products in China and traded from Hong Kong. The land in Hong Kong was freed for office buildings. In 1997, the tertiary and service industries in Hong Kong contributed 85 % of the city's GDP.<sup>7</sup> The city transformed from a light-industrial base into a service center. Supplied with all of the preceding advantages in a "borrowed place and borrowed time," the people in Hong Kong created an economic miracle, growing its GDP steadily at 7–9 % annually over a sustained period (Hughes 1976) and (Castells et al. 1991).

To support these changes, skyscrapers designed by international architects were erected to soar over the central business district (CBD). Landmark buildings served as headquarters for multinational companies and were glorified as physical landmarks. To disperse the population pressure in the city center, new towns were planned and accommodated the increasingly expanding middle class. Consequently, MTR was developed and transit-oriented development (TOD) was enacted for the convenience of residents and the working class.

The diverse and vital economic development since the 1970s was led by private forces. The society and people tended to earn more money instead of political disputes. The austere modernist design language was gradually replaced by more decorations and somewhat "post-modern" manner. The architectural magazines with academic inquiry folded and gave way to more commercial trade magazine (Xue et al. 2016).

The early 1990s saw the end of the Cold War and the "end of history" around the world.<sup>8</sup> During this period, Hong Kong was proceeding toward the sovereignty transition. After Hong Kong is returned to China, it was no longer a British colony and outpost, instead it would merge to the network of Pearl River Delta and will lead China towards the world with its unique system. After 1997, Hong Kong society became more open, civic-oriented and democratic as the world entered a globalized, informational, and consumerist era. People enjoyed more individual and materialistic lifestyles, convenient communication and freedom of speech and civic life. Furthermore, Hong Kong's town planning, urban design, heritage conservation and sustainable development attracted societal attention and engaged the active participation of the public.<sup>9</sup> The professional cooperation between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong also became more interactive.

Based on the preceding understanding of Hong Kong's contemporary history, this book is divided into three parts, with Part I covering the post-war period to 1971, Part II covering the period of 1972–1997 and Part III covering the post-1997 period. Each chapter discusses a particular topic.

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<sup>7</sup>For more about the growth of the tertiary industry in Hong Kong, see (Zheng 2016).

<sup>8</sup>I borrow the concept of Harvard University Professor Francis Fukuyama. See his influential book (Fukuyama 1992).

<sup>9</sup>In the twenty-first century, all public buildings require design competition or tendering within a "two-envelope system"—one economic, and one design professional. Many public projects have undergone numerous public hearings and consultations. See (Cheng 2007).

Chapter 1 describes the post-war reconstruction in Hong Kong and how the government used resettlement housing to soothe the society and support new industries when thousands of workers required shelter. Chapter 2 analyzes the planning and design of public housing and buildings in tandem with their Western counterparts. The pioneers of the modernist architectural movement drew blueprints for ideal urban living in the 1920s and 1950s. Their dreams were realized in the crowded Far East. Expatriate British architects in the Hong Kong government brought in fresh ideas of modernist design and provided examples for their peers.

Chapter 3 categorizes the different types of architects and examines the strategies they adopted during the post-war reconstruction period. Educated in the US and UK, the first generation of Chinese architects, who had escaped from mainland China in 1949, filled the gap before the local talents were trained and matured. This chapter is devoted to “immigrant architects” and supplements studies of the first generation of Chinese architects and their achievements on the Chinese mainland. Chapter 4 reviews the evolution of government control and building regulations. To scientifically manage the urban architecture on the narrow land available, the government continuously updated the building regulations, which forcefully shaped the appearance of the buildings on the Hong Kong streets. The constraints both challenged and inspired developers and architects.

Chapters 1–4 mainly refer to the timeframe of 1946–1971. Their discussions of certain building types such as public housing and buildings focus on cases seen in later years so that readers may comprehend the fully evolving picture of these types of buildings and their development tracks.

With the enhancement of quality of life and an increase in the middle-class population, private housing started to thrive in the 1970s, driven by the growth of powerful (local Chinese) commercial developers. To begin Part II, Chap. 5 describes several representative private residential estates from the period. Most commercial developments are gated communities decorated with classical architectural clichés. On the contrary, the examples provided in Chap. 5 exhibited a forward-looking spirit and contributed to an active street life. Chapter 5 also depicts the evolution of the shopping mall in Hong Kong in terms of its design characteristics and why such buildings have flourished. Given the increasing popularity of consumerism, which has led the world economy, the shopping mall has arguably become a quasi and alternative “public space” for people living in narrow environments. Chapter 6 considers the “rail town” and mega-structures that attempt to solve the problems encountered in high-density cities. Such crowding problems challenge most East Asian cities. First proposed in the Western world, TOD also made its way to Hong Kong. New towns, TOD and public-private partnerships are mutually indispensable in achieving a compact city.

A colony is formed to connect with the outside world and outside forces. As Robert Home pointed out, “while the concept of the colonial city is still useful for the development theory, all cities are in a way colonial. They are created through the exercise of dominance by some groups over others, to extract agricultural surplus, provide services, and exercise political control” (Home 1997, p. 2). King also argued that the colonial city was the forerunner of the current global metropolis

(King 1990). As Hong Kong began to take its own path, the wave of globalization arrived at its shores. Globalization is a process of interaction and integration between the people, companies and governments of different nations, a process driven by international trade and investment and aided by information technology. Globalization affects and is affected by business and work organization, economics, social-cultural resources and the natural environment (Globalization101 2016). The International Monetary Fund identified four aspects of globalization: trade and transactions, capital and investment movements, the migration and movement of people and the dissemination of knowledge (International Monetary Fund 2016).

Chapter 7 depicts the work of international architects in Hong Kong in the 1980s, when the current CBD waterfront townscape was crystalized. Hong Kong has been a stepping-stone for foreign architects' expeditions in China. The construction of a convention center in Wanchai and a new airport in Chek Lap Kok represented the apex of this trend and injected confidence in the sovereignty hand-over. Meanwhile, both local and expatriate Hong Kong architects alike started to export their designs to China and Asian countries. The 1980s saw the heyday of Hong Kong's economy and architectural design.

Hong Kong's awareness of the importance of finding roots increased when its society accumulated a certain amount of wealth in the global era. The awareness consciously resisted and subtly balanced the capitalist greed and cultural supermarket to some degree.<sup>10</sup> Hong Kong architects discovered the potential and challenges involved in their own land. Chapter 8 considers representative designers and their works to this end. The explorative journey did not cease after 1997; rather, the baton was passed to the new generation.

If the 50 years from 1946 to 1997 represented a rising trajectory of Hong Kong, the 18 years after 1997 made its architecture more comprehensive, and as such deserve a separate piece of the territory's history. Part III highlights two salient trends that have been witnessed in the last 20 years. The first is the conservation of heritage buildings. The second is design competition and public consultation, both of which have reflected Hong Kong's buoying democracy and civic society. During the economic boom in the 1980s, people were unaware of the importance of conservation, and the government was able to decide and implement large-scale infrastructural or building projects with little public engagement. This top-down method was subverted when the political and social situation was transformed. In the twenty-first century, any matter of historic value is highly sensitive and politicized. Design competitions bring some new ideas that affect local conventions, and public consultation engages more stakeholders and citizens. Those who make decisions about public buildings hear different voices and solicit many schemes. However, the process is costly, noisy and time consuming.

From public housing and buildings to private housing and shopping malls, from shantytowns to rail villages, from refugee architects to locally trained designers,

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<sup>10</sup>Gordon Mathews uses the term "cultural supermarket" to describe the abundant choices in life. See (Mathews 2005).

from one-way government decisions to public engagement, the last 70 years have seen a wide range of building types and progress. The aforementioned chapter topics chart the leap forward of Hong Kong from colony to global city from an architectural perspective.

The three periods of Hong Kong modern architecture are listed in the following table based on their driving forces and architectural outcomes. Although the table contains preliminary ideas and contents that can be further adjusted, it shows the rubric of the relationship between the causes and effects of architecture during the 70 years under examination.

**Table 1** Summary of social conditions, driving forces and outcome of urban architecture in Hong Kong

Period	Social and economic conditions	Driving forces	Outcomes in urban architecture
1946–1971	Unstable domestic and international situations, crises typical of the Third World; wave of industrialization.	Settling refugees; clearance of squatter areas; housing for low-income citizens; <b>government-led modernity</b> .	Public housing; public buildings for urgent societal needs.
Demarcation event	Installation of Governor Sir Crawford Murray MacLehose in 1971.		
1972–1997	Economy taking off; shift from manufacturing to tertiary industry; bridging China and the Western world.	Driven by the <b>property market</b> and private investment, especially from <b>Chinese capitalists</b> .	Large-scale private middle-class residential estates; shopping malls; CBD designed by international architects; new towns and TOD; heritage buildings giving way to commercial interests.
Demarcation event	Sovereignty returned to China in 1997.		
1998–Now	Bumps in economy; economy slowing down; economy gradually surpassed by neighboring competitive cities like Shenzhen, Shanghai and Singapore; divided opinions in society.	Civic society; <b>public engagement</b> ; awareness of the importance of <b>sustainability</b> and <b>finding roots</b> .	Public and institutional buildings through international design competitions; green architecture; renovation of heritage buildings.

## In Search of Identities

The change in Hong Kong's imprint from a colony to a global city inevitably influenced several characteristics of the city's architecture. First, after World War II, colonies in Asia and Africa gradually achieved independence, strange flowers grown from the local and Western cultures. When the wave of globalization pushed forward, these former colonies soon became nodes of global cities such as Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, Taipei, Hong Kong and Shanghai (semi-colony) and played roles in the world economy. Although the imprint might not have been obvious in the individual buildings, it was embodied in the continuous development of the period. Chapters 2, 6 and 9 extend this observation.

Second, architectural design strategies were motivated by Hong Kong's high-density environment, hilly topography and compact infrastructure. Land resources were always in short supply. When Sir Abercrombie enacted the Hong Kong Plan in 1948, he was amazed that the city had "the highest density in the world." This density is now almost four to eight times its size during Abercrombie's era. On several university campuses, the height difference reaches hundreds of meters. The mega-structure MTR stations and their vicinities form many "rail villages" that accommodate almost half of the population. The territories' high density, hilly topography and "infrastructure urbanism" led to many special design treatments and construction effects. Chapters 4–6 look at the designs implemented to suit Hong Kong's unique topographical and environmental situations.

Third, the pragmatism of the architecture developed over time. Hong Kong is generally defined as a "city of materialism" when compared with other cities of religion, political power and romance.<sup>11</sup> A building's function must be rational, and the building should deliver its maximum usable or saleable floor space. A building is a machine for living and working that yields commercial value. The traditional relationship of "architect: building work" sometimes disappears in the city. The commercial determination of the developers decides the building plan, while architect only acts as an "Authorized Person" for drawing submission, and occasionally "beautifies" the elevation. Although Hong Kong tourism materials portray a red-sail junk positioned against a background of skyscrapers, ideas such as "integrating the East and West" and "custody of Chinese culture," which have haunted architects in mainland China and Taiwan, never burden Hong Kong architects. This pragmatic attitude is also partly shaped by the city's narrow lands, thrift-conscious conditions and fast pace of life. Pursuing efficiency and mass production, elaborating functions and exploiting technology advancements coincided with the design principles of modern architecture. This modern architecture opposed the classical (eclecticist) architecture that dominated the influential buildings of Hong Kong before the war. Gaining global popularity after World War II, many architects and

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<sup>11</sup>See (Bell and De-Shalit 2011). The authors discussed nine cities, including Jerusalem, Montreal, Singapore, Hong Kong, Beijing, Oxford, Berlin, Paris and New York, using their own "strolling" anecdotes and extensive storytelling. Hong Kong's ethos is defined as "materialism."

architectural educators adopted architectural modernism (Frampton 1992). The expatriate British and some local architects designed a series of (public) works in the 1960s and 1980s that demonstrated the features of modernist architecture, including simplicity and clarity of form, the elimination of unnecessary decoration, visual expression of structures, clear edges, the use of industrially-produced materials and machine aesthetics. Chapters 2, 5, 6 and 8 provide examples of the buildings that fit these categories.

From drawing board to concrete entity, a building is the result of the joint force of a hundred hands, a thousand drawings, many machines and huge amounts of material. However, the architect's design is the soul of a building. After the war, public housing and buildings were mostly designed and supervised by architects from the Public Works Department who had come from Britain or other Commonwealth countries. Through public buildings, the government achieved its social plan and architects realized their ambitions. The second force of architects came from the Chinese mainland (mainly Shanghai) after accumulating practical experience for 20–30 years and serving clients from China. Local (trained) architects debuted in the 1970s. The third force comprised large (British expatriate) firms such as Palmer & Turner, Leigh & Orange and Spence & Robinson, which had been set up in the late nineteenth century and survived over several generations. Since 1980, international architects have participated in the design of corporate headquarters. Chapters 2, 3, 7, 8 and 10 provide details about how these architects make their brainchildren. The conclusion foresees the “made in Hong Kong” design and its future potential.

Architecture is the container of life. Every era has its own architecture. In the years when women wore *qipao*<sup>12</sup> and boat ferries were the only means of crossing the harbor, tenement housing and the first generation of public housing sheltered the Chinese people. The information and digital age requires more sophisticated, comprehensive and flexible architectural spaces. The text and illustrations included in this book demonstrate buildings from decades ago and in part represent the living scenarios and paces of former generations. Regardless of their lengths, the following chapters serve to delineate Hong Kong's transition from colony to global city from an architectural perspective. To avoid exhaustive descriptions, the chronology in the appendix supplements the major events in the construction of modern Hong Kong.

The 1990s saw the emergence of globalization and building products in Hong Kong. The last 70 years of architectural development in Hong Kong present interesting contrasts and rich colors. Most of the following chapters were developed from independent research papers that were either working papers or published in journals.<sup>13</sup> These papers represented the outcomes of the research team over the

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<sup>12</sup>*Qipao*, an old-style Chinese woman's cloth popular in the 1920s–1960s. It is sometimes seen as a symbol of traditional beauty in the Republic of China. See (Lee 1999).

<sup>13</sup>See the chapter notes and reference bibliography.

past five years. Although the chapters are grouped by period in Parts I–III, each chapter can be read as a topical paper.

An author requires a platform to launch his inquiry. My 25 years of observation, experience and contemplation in Hong Kong are reflected throughout this book. Inspired by Bell and de-Shalit's book, which captured the authors "strolling" through nine Eastern and Western cities in addition to providing strict academic accounts (Lee 1999), I add a personal account of a specific Hong Kong environment at the end of every chapter in *italics*. According to Walter Benjamin (1898–1940), this attitude of *flâneur* or "civicism"<sup>14</sup> combines personal experience and emotion with the macro narrative of urban architecture for the benefit of readers. My life experiences in other Chinese cities, the U.K., the U.S. and other countries allow me to consider the "ethos" and building types in Hong Kong with a degree of sensitivity. The selection and prioritizing of chapter topics, buildings, events and people are driven by my understanding of Hong Kong's values. The insertion of personal experiences and stories may be challenged as superficial and impressionistic. The profound masters' works mentioned previously should address these concerns. Urban scholar Anthony King also described his findings in relation to traveling and moving to new places (King 2004).<sup>15</sup> As we are convinced that the ultimate purpose of architecture is to better the lives of people, a description of life within the architectural context better illustrates the subtle quality of the built environment. In past decades, some "academic" architectural journals have served only to boost individual ideas such as Descartes, Husserl, Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Derrida rather than physical buildings themselves. It is time to counterbalance this trend.

Looking at the Far East, Shanghai was once a splendid metropolis in the 1920s and 1930s. When the European cities were limiting their building height to 80 feet, Shanghai was building skyscrapers from 18 to 24 stories high in the 1930s. Its building height was just the second after that of New York City (Denison and Guang 2006, 2008). After 1938, Shanghai was dragged to Sino-Japan war, internal war and behind the iron curtain during Mao's leadership. Shanghai and other Chinese cities picked up from 1978 when the open-door policy was adopted. During Shanghai's absence in the urban and skyscraper construction, Hong Kong timely took Shanghai's talent/fund and relayed to build capitalism and skyscrapers.

Since 1950, various parts of Greater China have taken their own paths. Mainland China implemented a socialist planned economy and in 1978 embraced the open-door policy. Design institutes have designed buildings in mainland China as part of the national plan. "National form and socialist" content has been highlighted in the official buildings of Beijing. In Taiwan, official building design has been influenced

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<sup>14</sup>Walter Benjamin (1898–1940) was a French social scientist. He invoked the image of the *flâneur*—the man who walks aimlessly through the street—as a way of examining the rise of capitalism, consumerism and urbanism in nineteenth century Paris. See (Benjamin and Tiedemann 1999). "Civicism" was a term advanced by Bell and de-Shalit, who argued that loving a city was easier than loving an abstract state. See (Bell and De-Shalit 2011).

<sup>15</sup>In this intimate and comprehensive book, the author introduced his life experiences in Britain and the United States.

more by the Beaux-Arts method, and architectural design has inherited Japanese and American conventions.<sup>16</sup> During the period of marshal law, architecture reflected an official ideology, similar to the situation in mainland China. When marshal law was lifted, modernist flowers blossomed (Shyu and Wang 2008; Fu 2014). In Macau, the main construction took place after large-scale reclamation and the construction of ocean bridges, with talented Portuguese architects playing a major role.<sup>17</sup>

Compared with architects in other areas of Greater China, Hong Kong architects were less affected by ideology. At first, they embraced the modernist principles without hesitation when forced to face the problems of mass construction and limited budgets. This was apparent in a series of public buildings constructed in the 1950s and 1960s. In tandem with the worldwide trend, design standards and tastes were much better than they were in other areas of Greater China. Since the 1970s, backed by the solid design and management abilities they accumulated in past decades, Hong Kong architects have sustained this momentum and taken their designs to mainland China, Taiwan and Macau. This book intends to determine how they built this momentum. I sincerely hope that it provides fresh material for analyzing the architectural streams in Greater China and the rest of Asia.

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<sup>16</sup>For more about the general development of modern Chinese architecture, see (Xue 2006)<sup>1</sup>, (Zhu 2009) and (Xue 2010).

<sup>17</sup>The scholarship related to Macau architecture was based mainly on its colonial history and heritage buildings from the 16th to early 20th centuries. For example (Liu and Chen 2005). Modern architectural development since 1960 is rarely covered in both the Chinese and English literature.



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