Urban Displacement Project
Hong Kong

Final Report

Meg Heisler, Colleen Monahan, Luke Zhang, and Yuquan Zhou

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

Hong Kong, with its history as a colony, of occupation, rapid economic growth, and divergence from traditional statehood, presents a unique challenge in how to interpret the past to make sense of the present and anticipate the future. Two dominant perspectives—the colonial and Marxist—have long shaped the telling of Hong Kong's history but there is a growing body of research, focused on the complex social and political dynamics of Hong Kong. This research complicates mainstream narratives of growth and progress, and centers the perspectives and lived experiences of Hong Kongers, provoking new and surprising insights.

This report aims to contribute to that emerging literature by problematizing overly simplistic narratives and offering new understandings of housing, development, and displacement in Hong Kong.

Research Questions

Our primary research questions are as follows:

- What are the unique processes of neighborhood change which have occurred in Hong Kong since 2001?
- To what extent is redevelopment a driver of neighborhood change in the region?
- How and why do residents and community activists choose to resist redevelopment projects?

Within the above questions, we placed particular focus on the role and actions of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). The URA conducts large-scale redevelopment within Hong Kong, demolishing older buildings and replacing them with newer units. The URA has been well-received by much of the general public for its improvement of physical conditions and quality of life for many people within Hong Kong. However, it has also seen criticism for its significant focus on financial profit and the social and cultural impacts its projects have had on communities.

Outline

This report starts with an in-depth review of literature regarding Hong Kong's history, housing market, transportation planning, and gentrification and displacement. Next, we conducted interviews with relevant stakeholders in Hong Kong, including professors, planners, and members of community groups. To complement our interviews, we also conducted quantitative work by using census data and other data sources to map neighborhood change over time in Hong Kong. This included an adaptation of the Urban Displacement Project's (UDP) displacement and exclusion typologies for the Hong Kong context.

We selected two neighborhoods—Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan—as case studies for an in-depth look at the impact of URA projects. They provide a useful contrast as they are both historically low-income, home to ongoing URA projects and experiencing neighborhood change

but have seen different types of resistance to redevelopment. A new MTR station is also expected to be completed in To Kwa Wan in 2021.

The final two sections include our policy recommendations for the Hong Kong government, the URA, and various quasi-governmental agencies, as well as our key takeaways, and limitations and potential extensions of our research.

Key Findings

Throughout our research, we found a number of catalysts for neighborhood change in Hong Kong. These included foreign speculation in the real estate market, private development, constrained supply and rising housing prices due to the narrative of land scarcity, real and perceived.

However, the URA's developments consistently arose as one of the most distinctive causes of neighborhood change in Hong Kong. Although the organization's projects often help improve physical conditions within the city, significant populations are also directly or indirectly displaced. Crucially, that displacement includes not only physical displacement, but also cultural displacement for even those who are not forced to relocate. The burdens are particularly notable for ethnic minorities, recent immigrants, and those without formal documentation.

We garnered specific insights from our region-wide typologies and case studies that point to two different but related trends. Our quantitative analysis showed that with a growing percentage of sole tenants and private permanent housing in Hong Kong from 2001 to 2016, the displacement pressures are largely concentrated in and around Kowloon City, while exclusionary areas are dispersed throughout the entire region. Our case studies also specifically show how URA development is impacting thousands of residents in both Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan, as well as the steps residents and community organizations are taking to resist individual projects.

We believe that the magnitude of the displacement caused by URA projects could be mitigated through a variety of means. These include:

- Amending the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) to have a stricter definition of the Authority's obligations to residents in a redevelopment area before, during, and after the project.
- Better informing existing residents of their rights, and consistently providing translation services for those who do not speak English or Cantonese.
- Engaging with community groups ahead of selecting development sites.
- Standardizing the relocation process for existing residents.
- Loosening relocation requirements to accommodate those who live in subdivided flats, are nonresidents, or have limited documentation.
- Encouraging the URA to develop more sites in the New Territories, rather than exclusively in Kowloon City and on Hong Kong Island.
- Re-introducing rent control, perhaps in a limited capacity, in those areas slated for redevelopment, to preempt rent hikes and forced evictions.

Final Thoughts

Due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis, our research team was unable to conduct field work in Hong Kong. We hope that future researchers are able to build on our work in the coming months or years through more thorough collection of observational data, extensive field interviews, and analysis of newly available secondary data.

Introduction

Hong Kong, with its history as a colony, of occupation, rapid economic growth, and divergence from traditional statehood, presents a unique challenge in how to interpret the past to make sense of the present and anticipate the future. Two dominant perspectives—the colonial and Marxist—have long shaped the telling of Hong Kong's history but there is a growing body of research, focused on the complex social and political dynamics of Hong Kong. This research complicates mainstream narratives of growth and progress, and centers the perspectives and lived experiences of Hong Kongers, provoking new and surprising insights.

This report aims to contribute to that emerging literature by problematizing overly simplistic narratives and offering new understandings of housing, development, and displacement in Hong Kong.

Research Questions

Our primary research questions are as follows:

- What are the unique processes of neighborhood change which have occurred in Hong Kong since 2001?
- To what extent is redevelopment a driver of neighborhood change in the region?
- How and why do residents and community activists choose to resist redevelopment projects?

Within the above questions, we placed particular focus on the role and actions of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). The URA conducts large-scale redevelopment within Hong Kong, demolishing older buildings and replacing them with newer units. The URA has been well-received by much of the general public for its improvement of physical conditions and quality of life for many people within Hong Kong. However, it has also seen criticism for its significant focus on financial profit and the social and cultural impacts its projects have had on communities.

Outline

This report starts with an in-depth review of literature regarding Hong Kong's history, housing market, transportation planning, and gentrification and displacement. Next, we conducted interviews with relevant stakeholders in Hong Kong, including professors, planners, and members of community groups. To complement our interviews, we also conducted quantitative work by using census data and other data sources to map neighborhood change over time in Hong Kong.

We selected two neighborhoods—Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan—as case studies for an in-depth look at the impact of URA projects. They provide a useful contrast as they are both historically low-income, home to ongoing URA projects and experiencing neighborhood change but have seen different types of resistance to redevelopment. A new MTR station is also expected to be completed in To Kwa Wan in 2021.

The final two sections include our policy recommendations for the Hong Kong government, the URA, and various quasi-governmental agencies, as well as our key takeaways, and limitations and potential extensions of our research.

Background

Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China (HKSAR), is an international metropolitan area by the South China Sea. Geographically, Hong Kong could be seen as consisted of 3 major regions, New Territories, Kowloon and Hong Kong island (Figure 1), The region is extremely ethnically homogenous; approximately 60% of Hong Kong's population was born within the region, about 30% were born in Mainland China, and 10% was born elsewhere in the world (Figure 2).

Figure 2: Birthplaces of Hong Kong residents, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
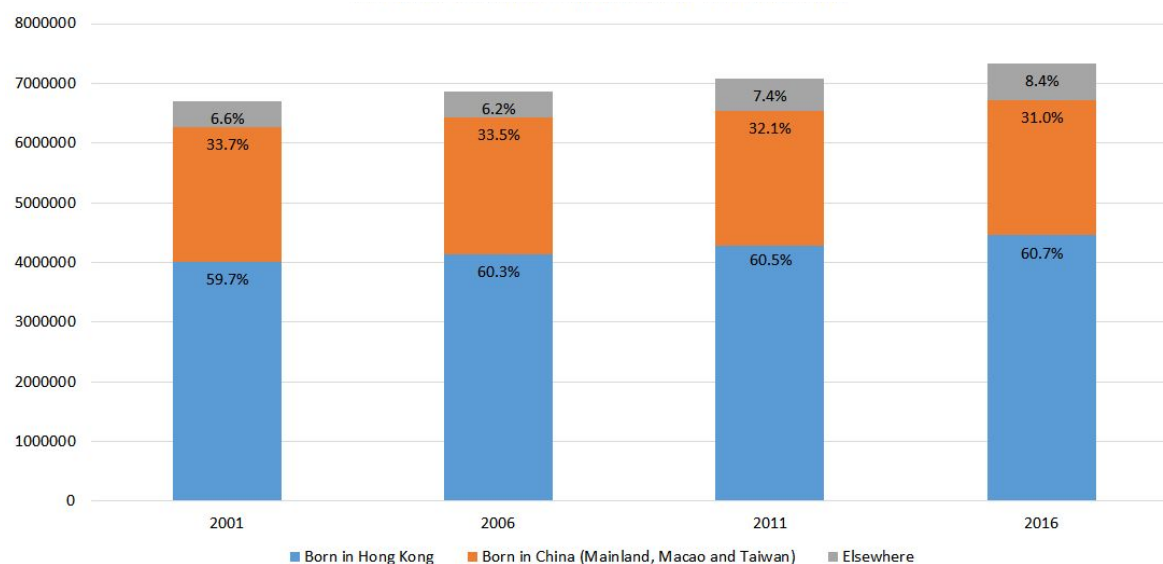
Data source: Hong Kong Census Bureau, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016

Land Governance and Taxation

Hong Kong's systems of governance and taxation are a direct result of its colonial history: the British empire demanded that all its colonies be self-sufficient.[1] Thus, in 1841, Hong Kong began using land leases to generate revenue. Today, nearly all of the land in Hong Kong is owned by the government and rented out on long-term leases.

The spatial distribution of housing sites and the intensity of development are determined by the planning authority and other technical government departments, while land for non-governmental uses is typically leased to the highest bidder at public auctions.[2] Upon maturity, the land reverts back to state ownership and leases are either renewed at a revised land rental or again publicly auctioned. Land leases constitute 15-30% of the government's revenue in any given year.[3] This minimizes the importance of other forms of revenue generation and enables some of the lowest taxes rates in the world. Only 20% of Hong Kongers pay any kind of income tax. The highest corporate tax bracket is only 16.5%, and there are no taxes on capital gains or foreign income. There is a flat property tax of 15%.

---

[1] Bart Wissink, Sin Yee Koh, and Ray Forrest, "Tycoon City: Political Economy, Real Estate and the Super-Rich in Hong Kong," in *Cities and the Super-Rich,* (New York: 2017), 229-252.

[2] Rebecca Chiu, "Planning, Land and Affordable Housing in Hong Kong," in *Housing Studies* 22 no. 1 (2006), 73.

[3] Adrienne La Grange and Frederick Pretorius, "State-led Gentrification in Hong Kong," in *Urban Studies* 53 no. 3 (January 2014), 512.

Economic Conditions and Entrenched Inequality

By many measures, Hong Kong's economy is one of the world's strongest and evidence suggests that it will continue to grow. Both per capita GDP and average income continue to increase steadily and, as a result, it is heralded as a highly successful case of laissez-faire economic policy.

However, despite rapid economic growth, it is also one of the world's most unequal places and the income gap between the rich and poor is widening. Between 2011 and 2016, Hong Kong's gini coefficient increased to .539, well above that of the United States. One in five Hong Kong residents lives below the poverty line per the most recent Census.

Many, including government officials, attribute the rising economic inequality in Hong Kong to its aging population. However, when controlling for age in calculating the gini coefficient, this assumption does not bear out.[4] Instead, others assert it can be explained by Hong Kong's economic restructuring under globalization, and the Hong Kong government's adoption of neoliberalism's central tenets. In the mid-20th century, as manufacturers left Hong Kong, service sector employment—predominantly within financial and business services—took over. As a result, many manufacturing workers became unemployed or under-employed, unable to find low-paid, unskilled positions. The labor market "dichotomised" and the income gap between skilled and unskilled workers widened.[5] These workers have now faced a sustained surge in housing costs: the median house prices is more than 20 times the annual median household income.[6]

Access to homeownership is also a major contributor to wealth inequality in Hong Kong, suggesting that global and regional economic factors have led to a rise of asset prices in Hong Kong and resulted in dramatic wealth inequality and redistributive consequences with asset-holders increasingly benefiting while the asset-less lag further behind.[7]

There is debate around how to address this problem in the 21st century. One camp asserts that people must be made more productive, that the supply of land and housing, by way of decreased regulation, should increase, and that significant investments should be made in healthcare.[8] Others are more critical of the unfettered economic restructuring that has occurred since the 1960s and advocate for more interventionist policies that serve to redistribute wealth amassed through the expansion of neoliberalism and globalization.[9]

---

[4] Richard Wong, *Fixing Inequality in Hong Kong,* (Hong Kong: 2017), 2.
[5] Simon X. B. Zhao and L. Zhang "Economic Growth and Income Inequality in Hong Kong: Trends and Explanations," in *China: An International Journal* 3 no. 1, (2005), 90.
[6] Alexandra Stevenson and Jin Wu, "Tiny Apartments and Punishing Work Hours: The Economic Roots of Hong Kong's Protests" in The New York Times, (July 22 2019).
[7] Ibid., 34-5.
[8] Zhao and Zhang, "Economics Growth and Income Inequality in Hong Kong," 97.
[9] Ibid., 87.

Figure 3: Median monthly domestic household income at LSBG level, 2016
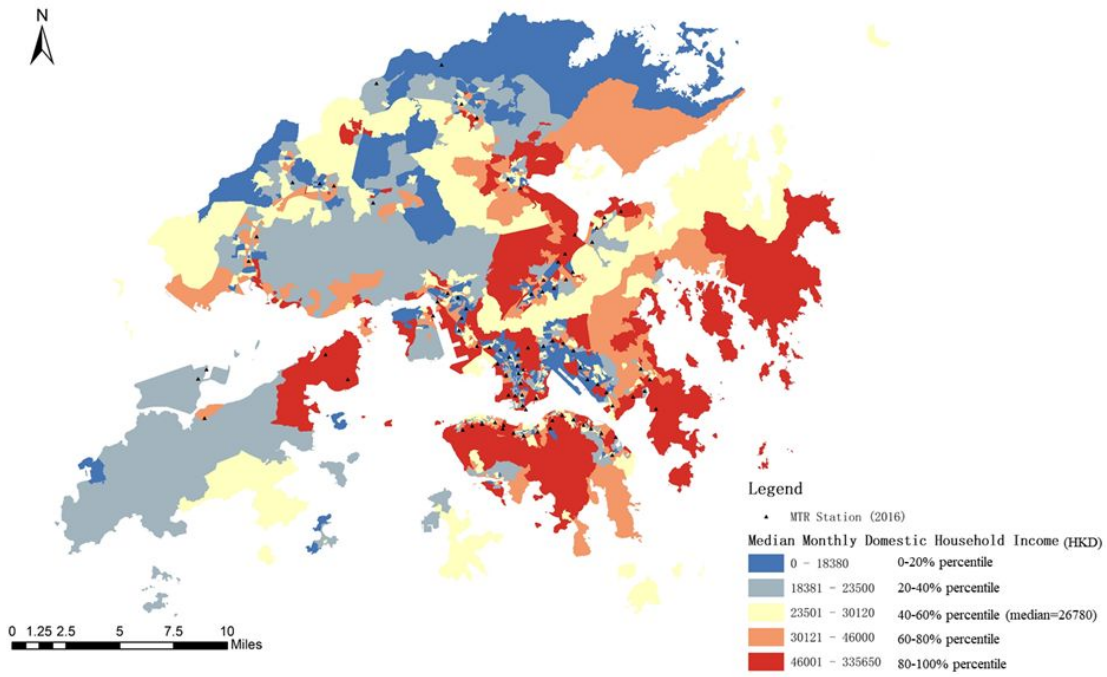
Figure 4: Median rent to income ratio at LSBG level, 2016
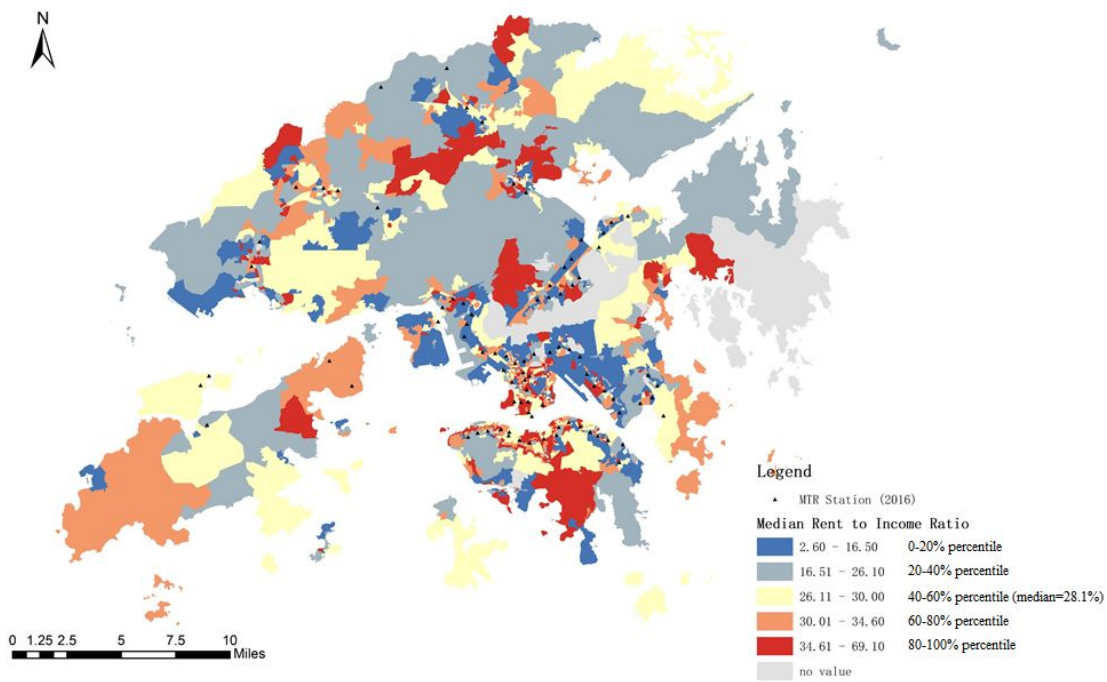
As Figure 3 shows, the median monthly domestic household income varies dramatically within a small geographic area. While Figure 4 shows that in the regions with higher median rent to income ratio such as regions in the Hong Kong island, the housing units are unaffordable.

Planning Agencies

Below are brief descriptions of the government and quasi-governmental agencies of relevance to housing and displacement.

Town Planning Board

The Town Planning Board (TPB) is a statutory body tasked with developing plans to ensure the "health, safety, convenience and general welfare of the community". They do this by guiding the development and use of land by drafting and submitting zoning plans to the Chief Executive in Council, accepting public comments, and deliberating on applications for planning permission. The TPB also hears objections and appeals on certain URA projects. The majority of its members are "non-official", or representatives from various non-governmental sectors, and are unpaid. The Planning Department is the executive arm of the TPB.

Housing Authority

The Hong Kong Housing Authority develops and manages a large public housing program to meet the rental housing needs of low-income families that cannot afford private accommodation and to help low- to middle-income families access homeownership. In total, over two million residents live in public rental housing, and another one million live in subsidized sale flats. They also own commercial properties across the region, including shopping centers, factories, and parking structures.

Urban Renewal Authority

The Urban Renewal Authority (URA) is a profit-making statutory body responsible for addressing urban decay and accelerating urban redevelopment in Hong Kong. Supposed constraints on redevelopable land, coupled with a shoddily constructed, aging housing stock have led the URA to develop larger projects on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula. The government has processes to compensate those residents and businesses displaced by redevelopment. These include offers of public housing and direct payments for properties at above market value.

Mass Transit Railway Corporation

The Mass Transit Railway Corporation's (MTR) "rail-property" development model integrates rail investment and urban development such that public transport turns a profit.[10] The MTR does not receive any cash subsidies from the government to build railway infrastructure but does receive land grants which endow exclusive development rights for 50 years and relieve the MTR of paying market prices. The MTR then sells the development rights at an "after rail" price to generate revenue and negotiates with developers for shares of future development profits, co-ownership position, and protection from future development losses. As a result, the MTR receives a "front-end" payment for land and a "back-end" share of in-kind income and assets. In

---

[10] Robert Cervero and Jim Murakami, "Rail + Property Development: A Model of Sustainable Transit Finance and Urbanism." *UC Berkeley Center for Future Urban Transport* (2008), 3.

Hong Kong, public transportation accounts for as many as 90% of all person trips, and access has a significant impact on housing prices.[11]

Housing Policy, Types, and Conditions

Through the direct control of land supply, use, and development through zoning regulation, the Hong Kong government masterminds where redevelopment occurs and where new housing is built.

Housing prices in Hong Kong have continuously increased since 1975, impacting the average resident's ability to afford a home.[12] The government has responded with three distinct waves of housing policy. After World War II, the influx of refugees drove the population of Hong Kong from 500,000 to 2,000,000 in just a few years, which, together with a devastating fire in Kowloon, resulted in a severe housing shortage. In 1953, the government launched a public housing plan to provide basic temporary housing to resettle low-income people and the homeless. In 1972, the government sought to improve housing conditions and put forward an ambitious 10-year program to relocate 1.8 million residents living in slums and wooden houses into permanent public housing units. Finally, in the late 1970s, the government established homeownership programs to subsidize the purchase of homes for low- and middle-income residents unable to afford housing on the private market.[13]

As Figure 5 shows, the number of occupied quarters in Hong Kong rose continuously from 2001 to 2016. The three main housing types in Hong Kong are private housing, public housing, and subsidized sale flats. Today, 30% of the occupied quarters are public rental housing, 50% are private permanent housing, and 15% are subsidized sale flats. While there are some detached units, the majority of housing in Hong Kong is in towers.

---

[11] Lei Feng et al., "A Hedonic Analysis of the Effects of Transport Accessibility on Flat Prices in Hong Kong," (2011), *SSRN Electronic Journal* 327 no. 3 (January 2011), 30-33.
[12] Si Ming Li, "Hong Kong's Land and Housing Policies Since Handover: A Political Economy Analysis," *Studies on Hong Kong and Macao* 43, no. 2 (2014), 150-162.
[13] Wei et al., "examination and Implementation of Public Housing Policies in Post-Handover Hong KongL A Social Sustainability Perspective," *Urban Planning International* (2017).

Figure 5: Occupied quarters by type, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
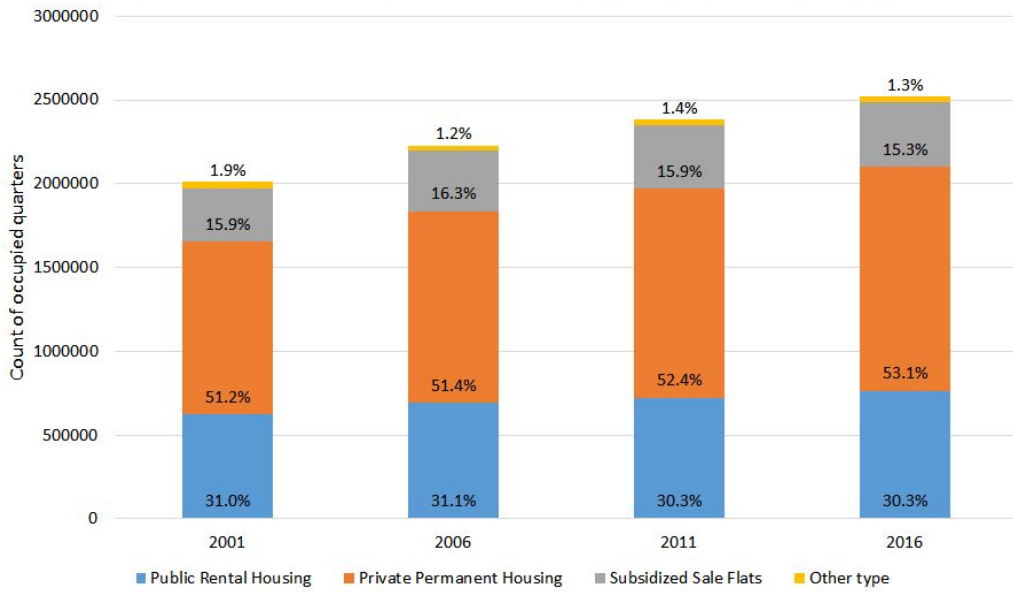
Data source: Hong Kong Census Bureau, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016

Figure 6: Domestic households by housing tenure, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
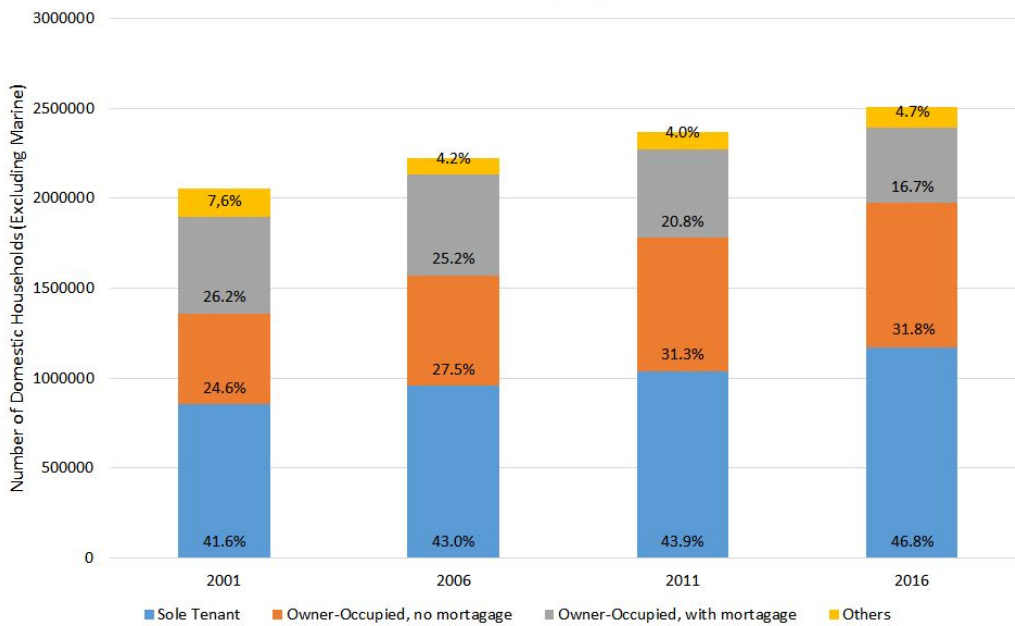
Data source: Hong Kong Census Bureau, 2001, 2006, 2011, 2016

Public Housing

Hong Kong's government has long employed a producer-subsidy approach to housing provision: they build and maintain all subsidized rental and owner-occupied housing, which is unique given the backdrop of a neoliberal political ethos.[14]

Initially, the unelected colonial government, and then the unelected Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR), sought legitimacy via the public provision of housing.[15] In 1953, a devastating fire in the Shek Kip Mei squatter settlement catalyzed Hong Kong's current public housing regime. The population of the colony had quadrupled in five years, as thousands of Chinese migrants fled Mao's regime and landed in Hong Kong's settlements and shanty towns. The fire displaced over 50,000 people and the Hong Kong government affirmed its own legitimacy and the appearance of beneficence of British colonialism by constructing a public housing estate nearby.[16] Large-scale slum clearance programs took place alongside the new construction, clearing high-value land.

Hong Kong's consistent and significant investment in public housing production and the local credibility of the policy made the system effective during an era when many public housing systems elsewhere were "deregulated, privatized, downsized and residualized".[17] But public housing is becoming increasingly residual: the association between public housing and the poorest groups in society is growing.[18] Until the 1980s, Hong Kong's poorest households were concentrated in private and informal housing units, when deindustrialization caused widespread unemployment, particularly for tenants of peripheral public housing estates in the New Territories. [19] That said, there is little stigma attached to living in public housing as it is home to people from a range of occupations and income levels. In fact, it's an increasingly attractive place to live: units are of decent quality, well-maintained, and affordable.[20]

Households in the lowest 20% income bracket often pay more than 50% of their earnings in the private rental market, for substandard and overcrowded living environments. By contrast, public housing rental rates are assessed at 10% of income level. The unaffordable prices in the private market and relatively low wages in Hong Kong led to an applicant waitlist of more than 277,000 people in 2017.

---

[14] Chiu, "Planning, Land and Affordable Housing in Hong Kong," 63.
[15] Valença, "Social Rental Housing in HK and in the UK," 112.
[16] Alan Smart, "Tactful Criticism in Hong Kong: The Colonial Past and Engaging with the Present," *Current Anthropology* 51 no. S2 (October 2010), S321-S330.
[17] Ray Forrest and Ngai-Ming Yip, "The Future for Reluctant Intervention: The Prospects for Hong Kong's Public Rental Sector," *Housing Studies*, 29, no. 4, (2014), 552.
[18] Ibid.
[19] Paavo Monkkonen and Xiaohu Zhang, "Innovative Measurement of Spatial Segregation: Comparative Evidence from Hong Kong and San Francisco," *Regional Science and Urban Economics* 47 (2011), 99.
[20] Valença, "Social Rental Housing in HK and the UK," 108.

Figure 7: Change in public rental housing at TPU level, 2001-2016
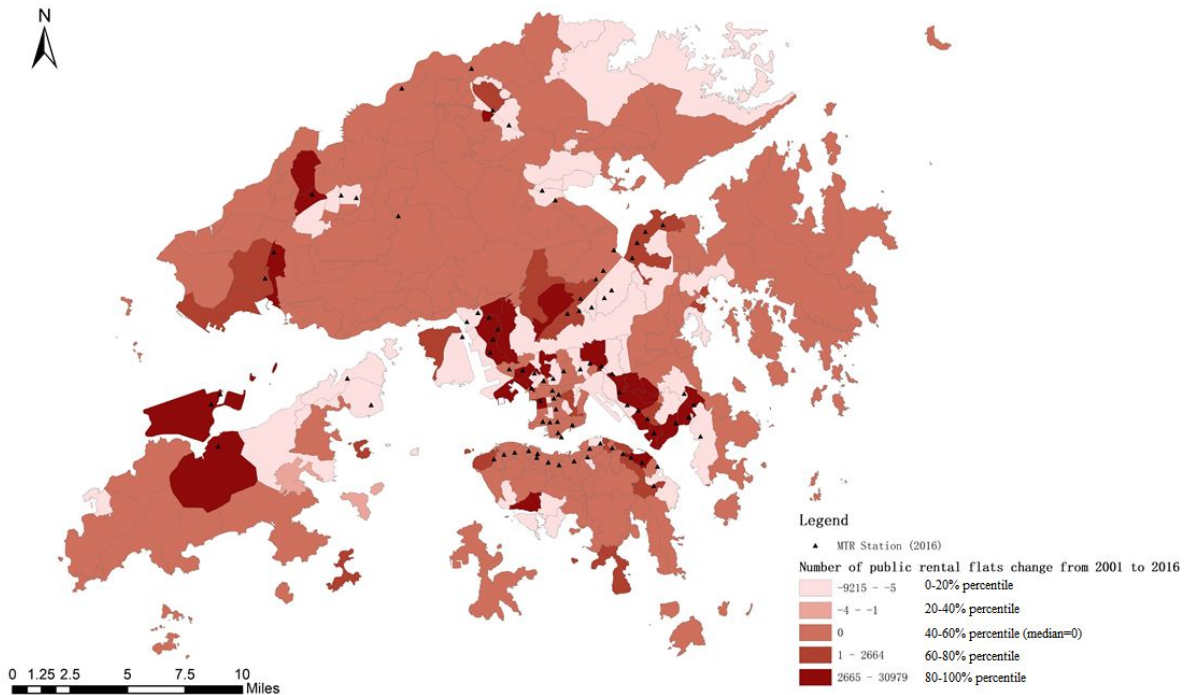
Overall, the public rental stock increased 139,535 units from 2001 to 2016. Most of the newly built public housing in these areas is concentrated in the New Territories and Kowloon Peninsula.

Subsidized Sale Flats

The Hong Kong Housing Authority established two programs to support the transition into homeownership. The Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) is a public housing subsidized sale program intended to encourage wealthier tenants to vacate their subsidized rental units for re-allocation to families in greater need. The Tenants Purchase Scheme (TPS) allows tenants in public housing to purchase their current rental unit at a rate far lower than market due to the average age of the unit and its sales restrictions.

Private Housing

Even with the wide-reaching public housing system, the majority of Hong Kongers live in privately owned or rented units. Overall, there has been an 306,775 unit increase in private housing units from 2001 to 2016. Most of the newly built private housing units in these 15 years is concentrated in Kowloon City, however there are also pockets of development on Hong Kong Island and dispersed throughout the New Territories.

Figure 8: Change in private housing at TPU level, 2001-2016
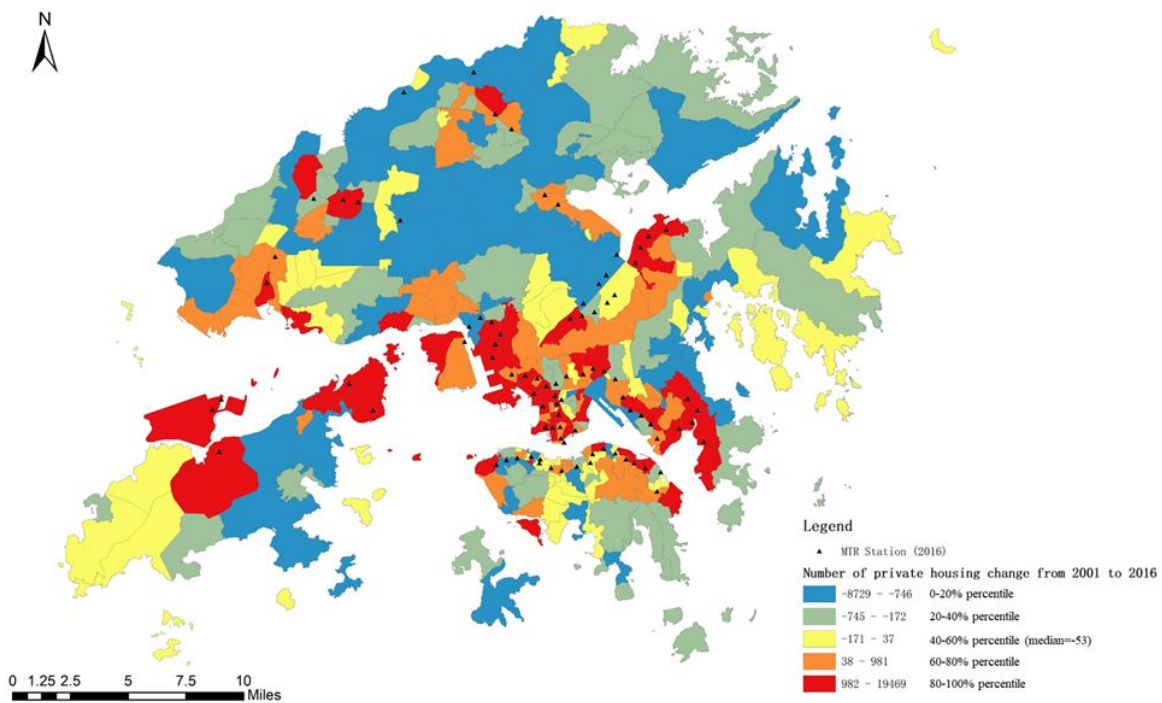
Informal Housing

Due to the high rents in Hong Kong, some low-income people are unable to afford decent apartments and are forced to wait years for affordable public housing. Therefore, some of these individuals choose to live in a rooftop housing, subdivided housing or cage housing to save money. Rooftop housing refers to illegally constructed units on the rooftops of apartment buildings, subdivided housing refers to the flats that are divided into two or more separate units to house more people, and cage housing is an extreme version of subdivided housing, each tenant has only one bedspace to live in .The living conditions in these flats are poor and crowded, and raised concerns of the mental and physical health of these tenants.

Figure 9: Rooftop housing[21], subdivided housing[22] and cage housing[23] in Hong Kong

The Gentrification Debate

Undoubtedly, neighborhoods in Hong Kong are changing, but how should it be described? News networks in Hong Kong rarely use the terms "gentrification" and "displacement" to refer to systematic processes of neighborhood change.[24] Rather, they have focused on processes such as state-led redevelopment. That said, there is some evidence that the term "gentrification" is creeping into common vernacular. The Chinese term for gentrification, "士紳化", was used 75 times in Hong Kong's Chinese news articles between 2004 and 2014. These articles associate the term with urban redevelopment, homogenization, neighborhood transformation, rising costs of living, and social exclusion of original inhabitants.[25]

Regardless, the absence of the term "紳士化" does not suggest an implicit approval of the process of redevelopment.[26] Rather, it signals a lack of identification with a particular kind of neighborhood change caused by the "gentry." It may also be a result of the normalization of displacement as a part of the city's explosive growth.[27] Scholars have also proposed the concept of a 'hegemonic-cum-alienated redevelopment' formulation, claiming an absence of appropriate historical, geographical and socio-political context for the use of 'gentrification'.[28] The concept of gentrification cannot be extracted from its "Anglo-American heartland" and applied to cities such

---

[21] Ernest Chui, Rufina Wu, and Stefan Canham, *Portraits from Above: Hong Kong's Informal Rooftop Communities* (2018).
[22] https://zhuanlan.zhihu.com/p/51201891" The pain of low-income people living in Hong Kong" (in Chinese)
[23] http://www.hkstv.tv/index/detail/id/41580.html "Cage home in Hong Kong"(in Chinese)
[24] David Ley and Sin Yih Teo, "Gentrification in Hong Kong? Epistemology vs. Ontology," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38 no. 4 (September 2013), 167.
[25] La Grange and Pretorius, "State-led Gentrification in Hong Kong."
[26] Lui, "Beneath the Appearance of Gentrification," 478.
[27] Shu-Mei Huang, "Displacement by Neoliberalism: Addressing the Housing Crisis of Hong Kong in the Restructuring of Pearl River Delta Region," in *Neoliberal Urbanism, Contested Cities and Housing in Asia* (2019), 47.
[28] Tang, "Beyond Gentrification: Hegemonic Redevelopment in Hong Kong," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 487.

as Hong Kong.[29] Such a "conceptual overreach" represents an example of Anglo-American hegemony asserting the dominance of its tenants in other cultures and societies.

The literature makes two things clear. First, there is a housing crisis in Hong Kong as evidenced by the cage houses, public housing waitlists, and systematic displacement of households as a result of redevelopment. Second, there is limited quantitative analysis of these processes and a lack of consensus around their import. Regardless, the land-ownership structure and state-led development pressures have led to displacement. The relevant academic question is not whether this process qualifies as gentrification. Rather, it should be understood as a unique outcome of Hong Kong's culture of property and addressed accordingly.[30]

---

[29] Ley and Teo, "Gentrification in Hong Kong?" 166.
[30] Lui, "Beneath the Appearance of Gentrification," 483.

Methodology

Our methodology was broadly broken into two parts. The first was quantitative analysis using a range of data sources. The second was a set of qualitative interviews conducted with academics, community organizers, and practitioners in Hong Kong. These two sets of methods informed our knowledge of broader neighborhood change patterns in Hong Kong, as well as the specific dynamics at plan in Sham Shui Po and to Kwa Wan.

Quantitative Analysis

Data Sources

Our primary data sources were Hong Kong's census and by-census. The census bureau conducts a full census every ten years (2001, 2011). Between each set of census years, a smaller by-census is collected (2006, 2016). We prioritized gathering data at the tertiary planning unit (TPU) and large street block group (LSBG) to accurately assess neighborhood-level change.

To complement our census data, we collected data from a variety of other government sources. Significant data cleaning was required in order to make certain datasets usable for our typologies. For example, the Rating and Valuation Department's dataset of building names and ages contained 19,293 entries. However, missing or poorly recorded addresses meant that only 11,482 (60%) of the addresses were geocodable using the Google Maps API. Thus, that subset was used to estimate the distribution of building ages in each TPU.

Table 1: List of Data Sources

Source	Variables	Geographic Level	Year(s) Available
Hong Kong Census and By-Census	● Population ● Monthly Domestic Household Income (HKD) ● Household Size ● Occupied Quarters	Small TPU Groups	2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
Hong Kong Census and By-Census	● Educational Attainment ● Monthly Rent (HKD) ● Monthly Mortgage Payment (HKD)	Large TPU Groups	2001, 2006, 2011, 2016
Hong Kong Census and By-Census	● Population ● Working Population ● Number of Occupied Quarters ● Median Monthly Domestic Household Income (HKD) ● Median Monthly Domestic Household Rent (HKD) ● Median Mortgage Payment and Loan Repayment (HKD)	LSBG	2016

Twitter	● Georeferenced Tweets	Specific Locations	2012-2016
Google Earth	● Aerial views of neighborhoods	Specific Locations	1999-2020
ArcGIS Online	● Hong Kong MTR Station	Specific Locations	2016
ArcGIS Online	● Public Housing Estates in Hong Kong	Specific Locations	2019
ArcGIS Online	● Hong Kong Topographic Vector Basemap	Hong Kong	2019
Legislative Council Panel on Development	● URA Projects	Street/Neighborhood	2019
Rating and Valuation Department	● Names and ages of buildings	Specific Locations	2020
Centamap	● Aggregated census data	Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan	2016

Typologies

To create our typologies, we primarily relied on census data since it allowed our team to track changes over time. All typologies were designated at the TPU level. Since individual tables in Hong Kong's census and by-census group TPUs into either small TPU groups or large TPU groups, areal interpolation was used to separate variables at the TPU level. In total, there are 291 TPUs Hong Kong, allowing us to accurately assess differences between neighborhoods. Our team decided to focus on displacement and exclusion rather than gentrification based on insights gleaned from our literature review and interviews.

We tested various thresholds for the variables to see how sensitive our typology categories were to our quantitative definitions. We settled on the thresholds listed in Table 2 based on the knowledge we gleaned from interviews regarding particular neighborhoods and their neighborhood change patterns.

The typology categories were initially based on the Urban Displacement Project's categories for San Francisco. However, we adapted our criteria based on both data availability and insights gleaned from our interviews. For example, we were unable to access real estate data over time at a sufficiently granular level, so we were not able to identify "hot" markets within Hong Kong.

Final typology categories and criteria calculations were done in R. The final typologies were mapped using QGIS,

Table 2: Typologies, 2001-2016

Typology Category	Criteria
Not Currently at Risk of Displacement	● Stable or growing low-income population between 2001 and 2016 <u>AND</u> not classified as at risk of displacement, undergoing displacement, or exclusive <u>OR</u> ● Public housing and subsidized sale flats comprise > 75% of the housing stock in 2016

At Risk of Displacement	● % low-income households > 75th percentile
	● <u>Vulnerable to displacement in 2016</u>
	    ○ % college educated < 25th percentile <u>OR</u>
	    ○ % renters > 75th percentile <u>OR</u>
	    ○ % over 65 > 75th percentile <u>OR</u>
	    ○ % of households larger than 5 > 75th percentile
	● <u>Risk Factor</u>
	    ○ MTR station in TPU in 2016 <u>OR</u>
	    ○ At least one URA project in TPU since 2011 OR
	    ○ % of buildings built before 1980 > 75th percentile
	● Not currently undergoing displacement

Undergoing Displacement	● % low-income households > 75th percentile
	● Vulnerable to displacement in 2001
	    ○ % college educated < 25th percentile
	    ○ % renters > 75th percentile
	    ○ % over 65 > 75th percentile
	● population stable or growing from 2001-2016
	● Absolute loss of low-income households (2001-2016)

Exclusive	● % low-income < 50th percentile ● % low-income in 2016 < % low-income in 2001 ● Absolute loss of low-income households (2001-2016)
Very Exclusive	● % low-income < 25th percentile ● % low-income in 2016 < % low-income in 2001 ● % high educated > 75th percentile ● Absolute loss of low-income households (2001-2016)
No Category	● Does not fall under one of the above categories

Sensitivity Analysis

When conducting our sensitivity analysis, we adjusted the thresholds of individual variables to test the impact on our overall typology categories. Generally, small changes in single thresholds

had very small impacts on overall results. A 5-10% change in any one threshold tended to only change the categories of 0-5 TPUs.

We also found that changing multiple thresholds at once also had marginal impacts on typology categories. For example, the maps shown in Figures 10 and 11 show the difference in typology categories when all 75% thresholds were changed to 70%, and all 25% thresholds were changed to 30%. The p-value for a chi-squared test between the two resulting sets of typologies was 0.2243, demonstrating that the distributions across categories were not significantly different from one another. Based on this basic sensitivity analysis, we were reasonably confident in the defensibility of our thresholds.

Figures 10 and 11: 75% and 25% Criteria Thresholds vs. 70% and 30% Thresholds
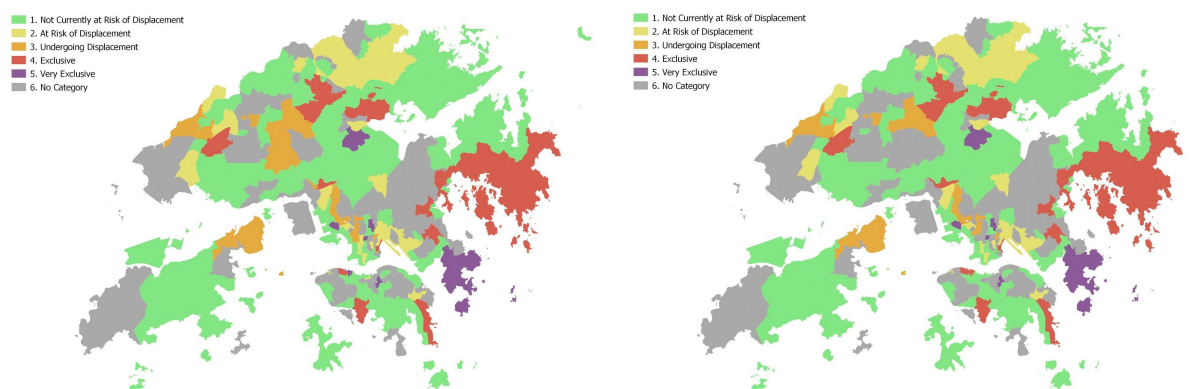
Interviews

Our team conducted eight interviews with a wide range of stakeholders. These interviews helped us gain insight into the processes of neighborhood change within the region, as well as the specific nuances of how residents perceive and are reacting to ongoing processes within our case study areas. The majority of our interviews were with academics who provided insights on the real estate market, land scarcity, and urban renewal. We also interviewed two MPhil students and a local artist who do/did community organizing work within our case study neighborhoods. The majority of our interviewees were selected based on our review of academic and grey literature, however, some were suggested by other interviewees. A full list of our interviewees can be found in Appendix A.

Each interview subject was informed of the purpose of our research via email, and was also sent a consent form assuring the confidentiality of their responses. Our interview protocols can be found in Appendix B. For this report, names have been omitted and interviewees will be strictly referred to by their titles or affiliations. All interviews were recorded and later transcribed.[31]

Interviews varied in length from 1 to 1.5 hours. Each interview was tailored to our interviewee's areas of expertise. Examples of questions we asked are listed below:

---

[31] The one exception was our interview with the artist, which was conducted via email.

- How would you personally define gentrification? How does gentrification apply to the context of Hong Kong?
- What do you believe are the drivers of displacement in Hong Kong?
- How have residents in Sham Shui Po and/or To Kwa Wan seen their neighborhoods change over the past few decades?
- What are communities' views on URA Projects?
- How frequently do community groups mount substantial organized efforts against URA development, and to what extent are they usually successful?

Quantitative Findings

The following section includes maps based on Hong Kong census data from 2001 to 2016. These maps helped inform our eventual typology criteria and map. Our group first analyzed overall population change across TPUs in Hong Kong.

Figure 12 shows population change for each TPU between 2001 and 2016. Based on the map, we can see that most regions in Hong Kong Island are losing population while most regions in New Territories and Kowloon City are gaining population.

Figure 12: Population change at TPU level, 2001-2016
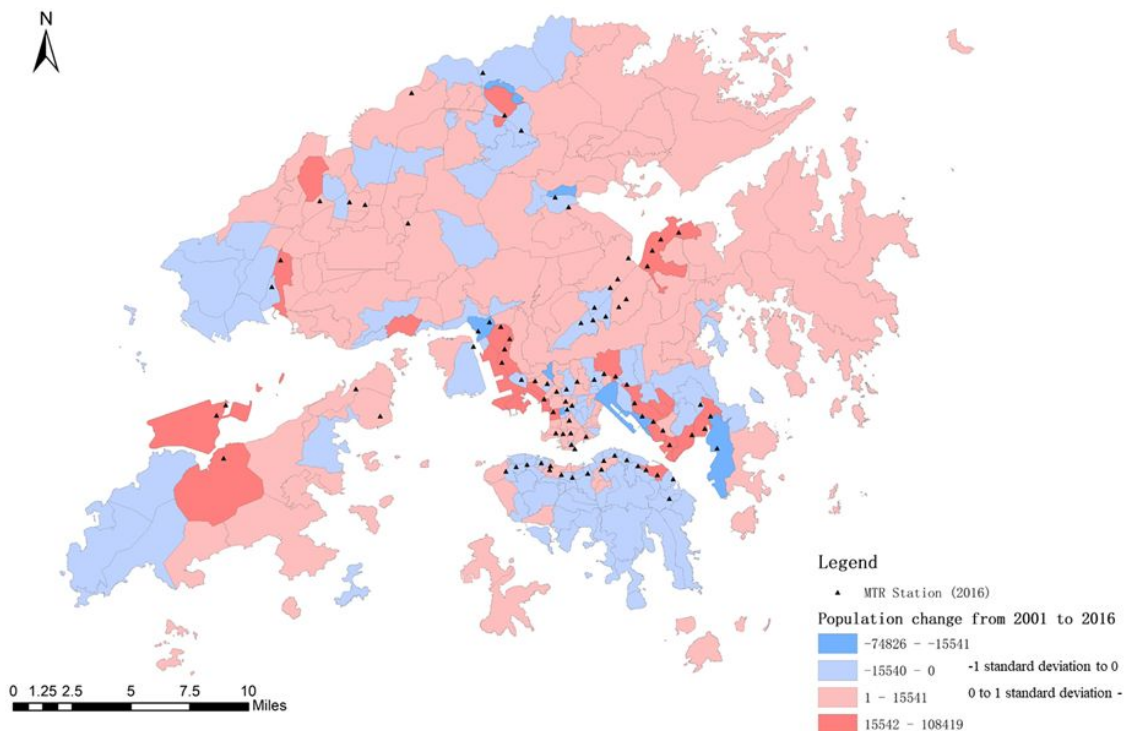
Most TPUs had a slight gain in low-income households. However, some regions such as Wan Chai, Sai Ying Pun, Tsuen Wan, Kowloon Bay and some regions in the New Territories lost low-income households.

Figure 13: Change in low-income households at TPU Level, 2001-2016
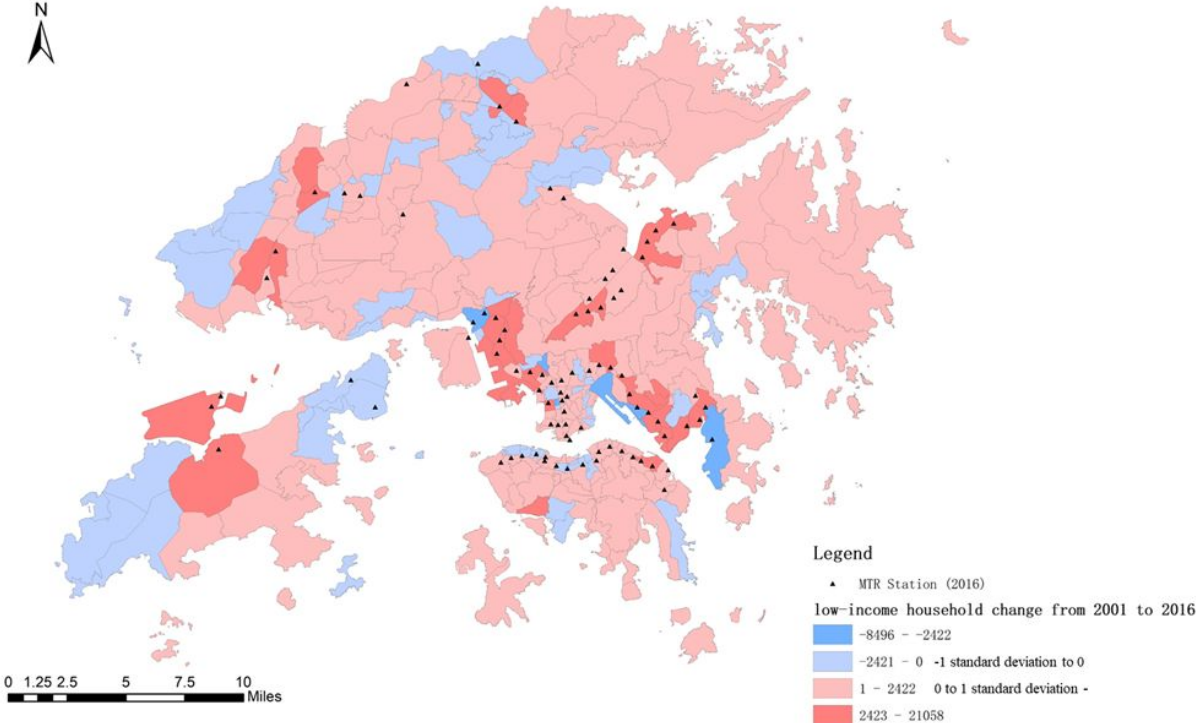
Typologies

Our typologies for displacement and exclusion in Hong Kong can be seen in the following map. The categories are based on criteria listed in Table 2 and were heavily informed by our literature review and interviews.

Figure 14: Map of Typologies, 2001-2016
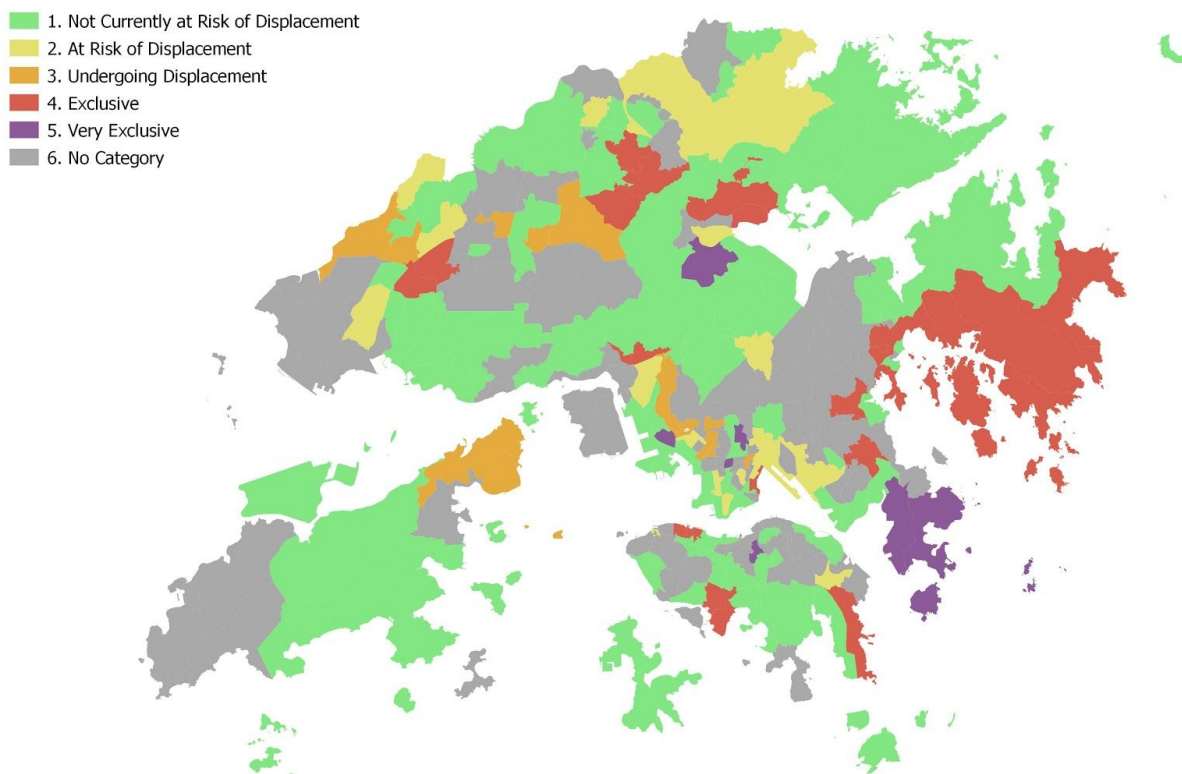
The typologies show that the majority of the TPUs which are at risk of or undergoing displacement are located in and around the Kowloon Peninsula. These designations likely indicate displacement caused by URA projects, MTR development, or related private projects. Interestingly though, there were some TPUs in the New Territories marked as "Undergoing Displacement," "At Risk of Displacement," or "Exclusive." During our interviews, we didn't investigate neighborhood change in the New Territories in as much detail so the interpretation of those designations will require further study,

113 of the 291 TPUs in Hong Kong are marked as "Not Currently at Risk of Displacement." Many of these areas are located along the coasts where there have been many land reclamation projects which have increased development without inciting displacement. The majority of the remaining regions are located in the New Territories, which has seen significantly less development.

As seen in Table 3, 98 of the TPUs are also marked as having "No Category." These areas generally have experienced a slight gain or loss in low-income households, but do not fit enough of the criteria to be designated as "Not Currently at Risk of Displacement" or "Exclusive."

Table 3: Table of Draft Typologies, 2001-2016

Category	Number of TPUs

Not Currently at Risk of Displacement	113
At Risk of Displacement	33
Undergoing Displacement	14
Exclusive	28
Very Exclusive	8
No Category	98
Total	**291**

Typology Limitations

Currently, the typologies use the number of individuals per unit as a proxy for overcrowding. We would ideally use the number of individuals per room or a similar better indicator. Additionally, our interviews indicated that ethnic minorities and immigrants tended to receive less relocation assistance and are involved in less community engagement initiatives. Therefore, we would ideally also want to include that factor in our typologies.

Additionally, our typologies are currently at the TPU level, rather than the smaller LSBG level. From our literature review, we found evidence of micro-segregation at the LSBG level. Thus, we believe our typology maps may show distinctly different micro-patterns if data at the LSBG level was added.

Lastly, our current typologies focus primarily on displacement caused by URA projects or similar developments. However, data regarding real estate and rental markets may help better capture private market pressures.

Interview Findings

Our interviews uncovered a wide range of perspectives regarding neighborhood change in Hong Kong. Interviewees raised the lack of developable land, foreign speculation, poor building conditions, limited land leases, and redevelopment as some of the key issues.

We consolidated our interview findings into four broad categories:

1. The Gentrification Debate
2. Land Scarcity
3. Private Development and Speculation
4. The Urban Renewal Authority

The URA was cited most often as the primary force behind neighborhood change during our interviews. Thus, particular focus was placed on redevelopment's impact on neighborhoods.

The Gentrification Debate

In our literature review, we found a distinct scholarly debate regarding the applicability of gentrification to the Hong Kong context. Thus, we began many of our interviews by asking what the words "gentrification" and "displacement" meant to each individual and whether they believed the terms accurately describe neighborhood change processes in Hong Kong.

A professor and former head of planning and design at the URA criticized both the terms gentrification and displacement.

> "People are being displaced, but if they are being displaced to better quality housing, is that a bad thing?"

However, other interviewees argued that both terms had gained traction in the cultural lexicon. The professor of geography we interviewed suggests that "[gentrification] is used more recently as a result of increased social activism about a lot of urban issues in Hong Kong."

One of the community organizers said that gentrification is a process which has become more noticeable in the last 10 to 15 years.

> "Gentrification is a phenomenon based on class. It's about a noticeable change in the neighborhood that pushes out certain lower classes and they're no longer able to live there and their livelihood is totally destroyed, their community is destroyed...it's more about whether the lower-class tenant will be able to stay in the neighborhood, moving around the neighborhood as well as use the public space."

Another community activist and scholar noted that the gentrification as a result of urban renewal is a slow process.

> "The urban renewal is taking place small piece by small piece in different areas and it's hard for people, even for myself, to imagine the very long process of how the

city landscape changes. So gentrification in this sense is kind of hard to imagine in scale but it is happening as people are being excluded and also they exclude themselves unconsciously because of this presumption that they will not be included in this later development so they don't imagine or even participate in the planning process."

The professor of real estate confirmed that the gentrification process as commonly defined is happening in Hong Kong and suggests that the process inherently benefits property owners in redeveloped areas.

Our interviews revealed that gentrification was a more widely used term than we initially expected. However, they confirmed that "displacement" and "redevelopment" are more commonly used for describing neighborhood change in Hong Kong.

Land Scarcity

We asked many of our interviewees about the factors which have led to rising housing prices within Hong Kong. The most prominent factor mentioned by our interviewees was the scarcity of developable land.

Due to the purported scarcity, the government has turned to reclaiming large amounts of land from the harbor in order to enable new development. This reclamation also greatly benefits the government they own any reclaimed land outright and can lease it out to generate revenue. An additional benefit is that development on reclaimed land does not directly displace any residents. Furthermore, reclamation is heavily supported by the construction and engineering sectors which have historically received large contracts.

> "Reclamation is very good business. And also, certain sectors—the engineering sectors, the construction sectors—which have always benefited from the government's policies, key supporters of their work as well, will continue to benefit whereas those in the indigenous villages the government has been trying to avoid for a long time anyway."

Figures 15 through 18 show two examples of land reclamation projects undertaken in Hong Kong, one in Wan Chai, and another in Kowloon City near Sham Shui Po.

Figures 15 and 16: Google Earth Images of Wan Chai, Dec. 2001 and Apr. 2020
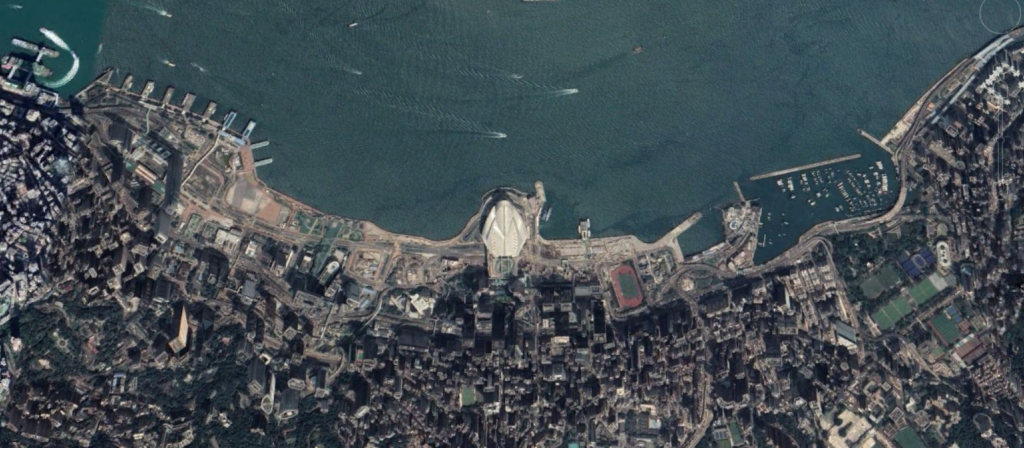
Figures 17 and 18: Google Earth Images of West Kowloon, Dec. 1999 and July 2011

As the professor of geography noted, the narrative of land scarcity is heavily pushed by the government.

> "They've done a very good [job] in mystifying the whole land scarcity thing. I think everyone believes that Hong Kong has land scarcity because that's our everyday living experience if you don't have the opportunity to see how the New Territories have been ruined by brownfield sites or all the land that actually exists."

The geography professor attributed the strength of the land scarcity narrative to the fact that 90% of the population lives within Hong Kong Island or Kowloon City. Consequently, their lived experiences demonstrate a Hong Kong in which undeveloped land is extremely limited. However, only about 24% of the total land area in Hong Kong is developed.[32] 46% of the land consists of parks or other conservation areas. 30% is available for potential future development despite claims of land scarcity.

---

[32] Mee Kam Ng, "Transformative Urbanism and Reproblematising Land Scarcity in Hong Kong," *Urban Studies* 57, no. 7, (2018), 1456

Figure 19: Topography of Hong Kong
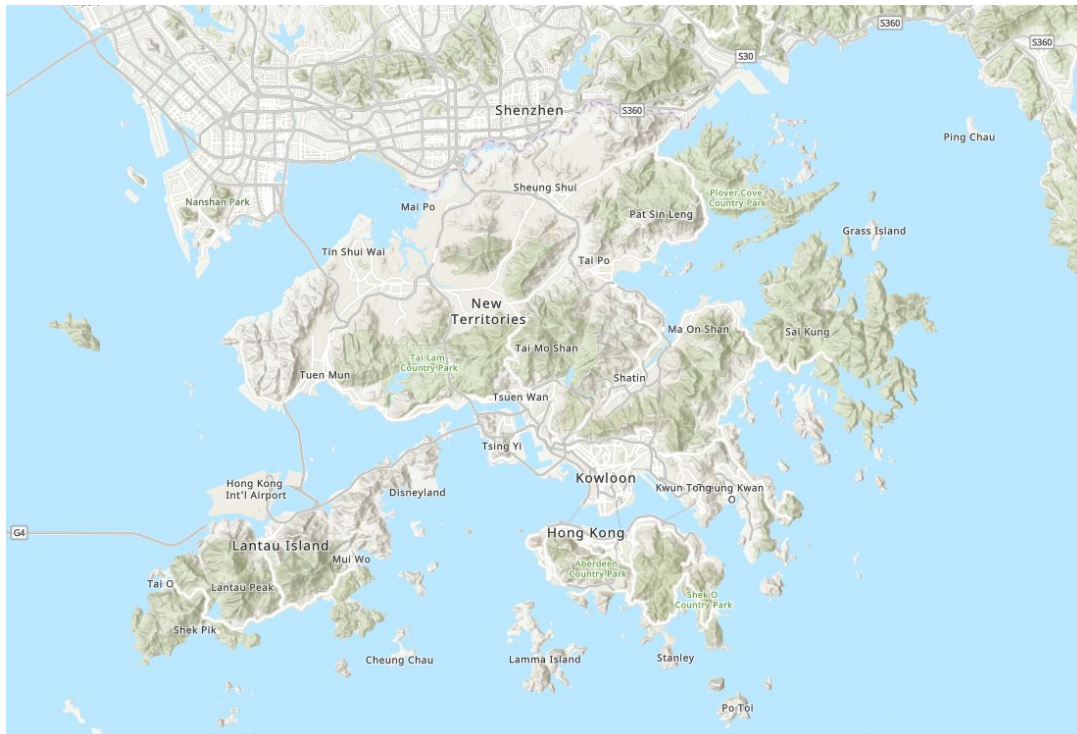
Figure 20: Population density (number of people/km2) at LSBG level, 2016

Legend

▲ MTR Station (2016)

Population Density (person/km2)

	23 – 10486	0-20% percentile
	10487 – 49089	20-40% percentile
	49090 – 100199	40-60% percentile (median=72698)
	100200 – 166213	60-80% percentile
	166214 – 484179	80-100% percentile

0 1.25 2.5   5   7.5   10
Miles
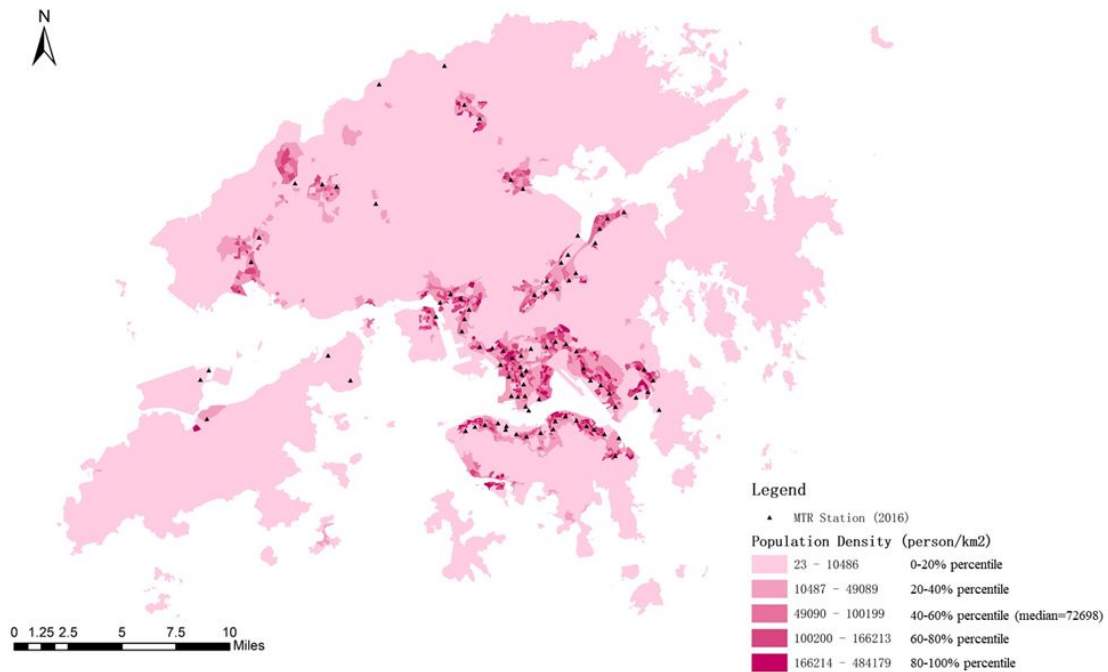
As Figure 20 shows, despite the mountains that are hard to construct housing units, most of the population is highly concentrated in the south side of Kowloon and north side of Hong Kong island, while a large area in new territories is sparsely populated.

The New Territories

The majority of undeveloped land with development potential is located in the New Territories. As the real estate professor mentioned, villagers in the New Territories have more property and development rights than land owners in other parts of Hong Kong due to historical reasons. According to the Small House Policy which was put forward in 1972, indigenous male villagers are able to build homes up to three-stories tall on land which they own. Thus, the land is relatively more valuable to indigenous male residents in the region--discouraging them from selling it to the government or developers . Furthermore, another professor claimed that the government has painted a picture of people in the New Territories as being difficult to work and negotiate with.

> "The government has presented a picture of people who own this land in the New Territories as the indigenous population who are not educated, who are very unreasonable, very difficult to talk to, and so it's very difficult to use any land in the New Territories."

Additionally, a single brownfield site can consist of small plots owned by many indigenous residents. All of those residents' interests need to be assembled together to allow development.

Technically, the Hong Kong government has statutory power: it can legally acquire any land within its borders and begin redevelopment. However, the real estate professor argued that authorities are unwilling to invoke this power for fear of criticism from citizens.

Another professor argued, however, that villagers in the New Territories have become more open to selling land to developers because of a lack of alternative uses. Therefore, brownfield sites in the area are potentially becoming more viable sites for future development.

> "If you have the land on which the government will not allow you to build houses, usually they're agricultural land, and if you're not farming anyway because of the industrialization process in Hong Kong and then the financialization of the whole economy as well...[33]And so this land in the eyes of the indigenous villagers [is] useless. Because if you have the land and need to pay land rents. It's a burden...So they prefer to sell the land to these developers...."

Private Development and Speculation

Interviewees also discussed the prevalence of private development and speculation as drivers of displacement.

---

[33] The Small House Policy allows male descendants of New Territories residents in 1898 to build one house during their lifetime. Thus, there is still significant land in the New Territories on which the policy cannot be invoked--either because the owner is not male, not a direct descendant of an indigenous New Territories resident, or if the owner of the land has already built a small house during their lifetime.

Land Leases

During the Great Recession, the government implemented a different mechanism for granting land leases called the application list system. Under this process, when a developer voiced their interest in developing a government-owned parcel, that parcel was placed in an open auction where any developer can bid on it. However, as the professor of real estate mentioned, this new system further constrained land supply.

> "The cost is when a land is taken to an auction, if no one else bids on the land, then the initial developers have to underwrite and take the land at a certain price. So then the developer thinks, well you are actually putting me under some risk…so actually you had even less land supply than ever."

The application list system was discontinued in 2013 and, subsequently, the number of land leases increased. Even with the increase in land leases, the housing supply is still heavily constrained.

Private Development and Speculation

The professor of geography noted that private development, broadly speaking, tended to follow MTR and URA developments because of the profit potential.

> "MTR extended into Western region near [Hong Kong University] and the neighborhood gentrified rapidly. But [it's] not the MTR's fault. The market capitalized on the increased accessibility and took the opportunity to redevelop old buildings there. When mass transit wasn't there, old buildings could survive but once they knew the MTR was going to extend they made plans to redevelop the area."

Generally, the professor of real estate noted that developers tended to avoid redeveloping sites within the city center because of high land prices. However, there are some cases where developers seek to create landmark developments in the city center and sacrifice some potential profit. One cited example was Pacific Place, a large complex developed by Swire Properties in Wan Chai.

The real estate professor also noted the increased prevalence of small-scale real estate investment within Hong Kong:

> "The Hong Kong people tend to be very profit-driven…People will actually make it a business model. So that means if you are able to take advantage of rising property trends, you keep on buying properties. Maybe you are owning a property for self-use, and you own one or two other properties for investment. Then you do not have to work…It is kind of crazy, but I think it's becoming more and more common for people to think like that."

Figure 21 shows the trend in real property prices in Hong Kong. Although relatively stable from 1980 to 2004, the city has seen a significant rise in prices in the last decade and a half.

Figure 21: Real Residential Property Price Index, 1980-2018
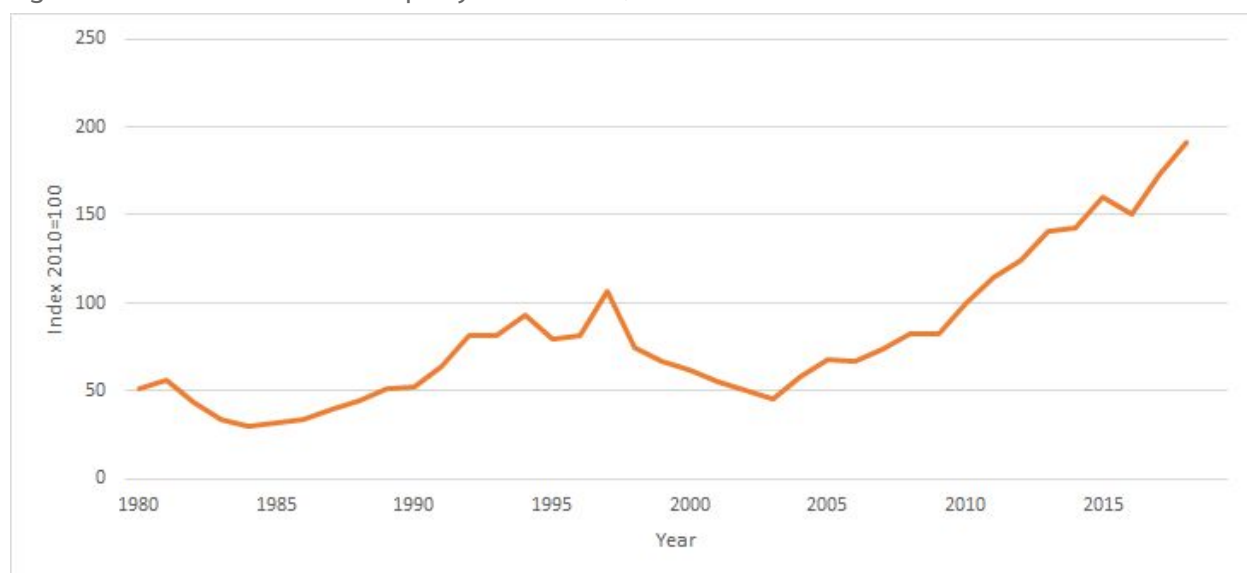
Source: Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis

Although compelling, we unfortunately could not acquire significantly granular real estate data to explore private speculation at a neighborhood level.

Foreign Speculation

The professor of real estate mentioned that significant foreign speculation occurred due to the weak Hong Kong Dollar (HKD) during and after the Great Recession:

> "There's a fixed exchange rate between Hong Kong and the U.S. And so that means in 2008, the Federal Reserve did a lot of [quantitative easing] basically printing a lot of money, and that doesn't just affect the U.S. That affects Hong Kong a lot as well…"

The depreciation of the HKD, coupled with low interest rates led to significant foreign investment in the Hong Kong housing market. Since 2010, the government has put in place a set of "cooling down policies" meant to curb foreign speculation. This includes an increase in the stamp duty on all property transactions by foreign buyers from 4.25-8% to a flat 15% rate. Additionally, the government halted the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme, which offered Hong Kong residency to certain foreign property buyers. When asked about the reason for the implementation of these measures, the professor of real estate cited public pressure.

> "The regulatory changes are for the local people…the local people do not like people with other places because they compete for local resources from here. It could be a school place, it could be a higher property price. So that is why the local government thinks it has to do something at least you know, politically correct. Might not be economically correct…but there is a strong local voice to say that well, the price really is too high and the government needs to do something."

With these restrictions on foreign real estate speculation, the real estate professor said he believed that foreign demand for Hong Kong real estate has decreased.

The Urban Renewal Authority

After our first round of interviews, and questions about public- versus private-led gentrification and displacement, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) emerged as the primary driver of neighborhood change and displacement. The following section is a deep dive into their role and the process of redevelopment.

Origin

The URA was established in May 2001 under the Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance as the statutory body to "undertake, encourage, promote and facilitate urban renewal of Hong Kong, with a view to addressing the problem of urban decay and improving the living conditions of residents in old districts". It was established to replace the Land Development Corporation which shared similar objectives but did not have the authority to directly resume or expropriate land and was required to engage in lengthy negotiation processes with land owners as a result.

Objectives and Site Selection

The URA pursues the objectives and follows the guidelines for implementation laid out by the latest Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) published in 2011. The core objectives include the timely redevelopment and rehabilitation of dilapidated buildings, historic and cultural preservation, and the promotion of sustainable development, and attractive landscape and urban design.

According to the former head of planning and design, the key factor that the URA considers when selecting sites is housing conditions for existing residents.

> "[The URA considers a] basket of indicators, like building conditions. Like, in your room there would be concrete falling down from the ceiling. Whether the building was structurally sound. In Hong Hong there are lots of 4 or 5 story structures that were built in the 1960s. In that time there was a shortage of water to mix the concrete and as a result we have swollen concrete problems. The concrete [is] breaking apart from the steel bar because of the saltwater erosion problems. It makes it unlivable inside. Plus the overcrowding conditions. One 500sq ft unit will be subdivided into 4 or 5 units for families to stay in. It's very overcrowded and they are sharing the toilet and kitchen. Overcrowding is an important part of the selection criteria."

At the same time though, they acknowledged that the URA does have a profit incentive.

> "Of course we also have to think about redevelopment potential. Once we demolish a building, we will gain financially and this is economic potential. Because URA has to finance on its own, financially we have to self-balance. Any economic gain by the redevelopment agency. If you demolish 100sq meters, how much additional

floor area can you build? That is how you calculate financial gain, in terms of gross floor area."

The URA's redevelopment projects are exempted from land premiums by the government, which allows them to buy land at a lower price and sell the property at a higher price.

Multiple interviewees explicitly characterized the URA as a developer. One professor said:

> "When the developers could not resume all of the properties the URA can come in, join partners with the private developer, and if they prove they've exhausted all their means to resume properties and they still cannot get everything then the government will intervene in accordance with the URA ordinance on their behalf. For the public interest. They work together. Very few projects are done by the URA on their own. They work together in partnership."

Community Engagement and Relocation

The URS mandates a "people first, district-based, public participatory" approach to redevelopment, of which there are two types: projects and schemes. Projects are when the URA redevelops only one building which does not require them to submit their plans to the Town Planning Board. They are required to conduct a freezing survey and to hear comments and objections. Any meetings thereafter are for explaining compensation and the relocation process. Schemes require a larger change of land use or infrastructure and, thus, the process must go through the Town Planning Board. They also require more intensive community engagement. This process offers a different but still limited opportunity for resistance. Community organizers shared,

> "We may try to get involved at least to make noise but with the realization that there's not much of a power to actually influence the process. We're still divided amongst the group whether it is actually a real process. Some of us think that it has to be external pressure to push through certain changes within policies or within the whole planning process."

The steps for redevelopment schemes are as follows:

- <u>Freezing Survey</u>: On the date on which a project is made public, the URA conducts a freezing survey to determine eligibility of affected persons for allowances or relocation.

Community organizers described the confusion residents experience in this process. "Residents probably most of the time don't know what is going on, and suddenly in the morning at 7 or 8 someone knocks on their door and says 'oh, you're being included in the project. What's your opinion about it? Do you want to move out?' You can imagine that is probably, for most of the time that report is the only formal way that includes opinions of residents."

- <u>Social Impact Assessments</u>: These occur before and after a redevelopment project is made public to collect data on demographics, housing conditions, businesses, and amenities, as well as potential feedback on impacts and mitigation measures. Stage 1 social impact assessments are non-intrusive and seek to understand who is living in the neighborhood.

Stage 2 social impact assessments seek to understand the needs of the affected population and the remedial actions that should be taken.

One professor suggested the social impact assessment is not sufficient to understand the consequences of a project. "If you really want to do proper planning then [there should be a] sustainability impact assessment. It would go beyond a social impact assessment. It should include economic and environmental impact assessments. Then we can use this data to do the renewal plan. But unfortunately that's not what they are doing."

- Objections and Appeals: There are different procedures for handling objections and appeals to URA projects depending on the nature of the redevelopment.
  - If it is a project, comments and objections can be made to the URA within two months of the project being made public.
  - If it is a scheme, any comment on the proposal can be made to the Town Planning Board (TPB) during the public inspection period. The TPB will consider the proposal and the comments received.

The URA also has a set up ongoing initiatives to facilitate conversations with the public.

- Urban Renewal Resource Centre: They set up one-stop shops for information about urban renewal in old urban areas. They also offer consultations and assistance for building owners, and neighbourhood offices in different districts to answer questions and receive comments from the public.
- District Advisory Committees: Committees are established by the URA to reflect the views and aspirations of the local community and provide advice on urban renewal concerns at the district level.
- Social Service Teams: There are urban renewal social service teams to provide assistance and counseling services to residents affected by its redevelopment projects. Social Service Teams have been established in the Central and Western Districts, Kowloon City, Kwun Tong, Sham Shui Po and Yau Tsim Mong.

The URA conducts these processes and provides resources in Cantonese and English. However, this bars many immigrants from participating in community conversations regarding redevelopment projects. As seen in Table 4, 10.6% of Hong Kong residents do not read Chinese, while 30.7% do not speak English.

Table 4: Percentage of Hong Kong Residents Who Read Chinese and English (2016)

Language	Percentage
Able to read Chinese (5 years old and above)	89.40%
Able to read English (5 years old and above)	68.24%

Community organizers also shared that the URA's efforts to relocate residents of planned redevelopment projects ignores most inhabitants.

> "Most of them get displaced...from 2007-2012...less than 30% of them get relocation from URA. Most of them either get compensation or they've left before the URA steps in which means they've been evicted or they've already relocated, arranged public housing through formal channel government not from URA."

These estimates are likely low given they don't account for subdivided units or co-tenants: two or more households that share the same apartment and contract. In these situations, most likely only one of the households will be relocated and the other will get nothing, not even compensation. Compensation and relocation are not enough to allow most households to stay within their original neighborhoods[34] and evidence suggests that there have been increased micro-level segregation pressures even as overall neighborhoods have become more economically diverse.[35]

Narrative Building

One community organizer suggested that the URA has a dramatically different understanding of the built environment than the communities that are targeted for redevelopment. "I think for the URA it's very clear they only see these places as part of urban decay that needs to be formalized, demolished, rebuilt. I don't think they'd explicitly say that but the end result is mostly expensive property developments in all these areas." This discourse of urban decay reflects some residents' lived experience. "Their environment is also very bad. They're in bad shape, they're under-maintained. And also because all these landlords wouldn't maintain these places because they knew one day they would be demolished. They're getting the most rent profit out of these areas. So it actually adds up to urban decay." But these buildings are some of the few remaining affordable places to live in Hong Kong and residents know it. "That is the difference of how the URA imagines this place. It is only about the structures. They don't think about the people, the social dynamics, the vibrancy of this neighborhood. Even though they claim they do care and have all these assessment reports."

They also shared that the old districts of Kowloon are home to a precious informality and culture that is not possible in the highly privatized spaces of URA developments. "They have more flexible use of the street spaces and there are so called illegal hawkers. They sell things, they collect things, they store their goods on the street. This allows the atmosphere, the environment of the street to be very different from those highly privatized ones."

But the URA does not have a nuanced understanding of the multiplicity of ethnicities and cultures that define a space and the redevelopment process does not respect the cultural identities of the neighborhoods' current residents unless it is easily branded. For example, in Kowloon City, there is a "known Thai hub or an enclave even for Thai communities, so there's actually a high chance for the Thai residents there to stake a claim on participating in the process, saying 'this is my neighborhood so you should consult us because this is a Thai neighborhood.'"

The aforementioned narrative of land scarcity is also essential to the URA development. As one community mentioned, "It's true that this urge for redevelopment has been rooted in this manufactured sense of land scarcity in the city." The professor of geography attributed this to the

---

[34] La Grange and Pretorius, "State-led Gentrification in Hong Kong," 514.
[35] Monkkonen and Zhang, "Innovative Measurement of Spatial Segregation," 99.

highly concentrated urban form: "Less than 1/10 of the population lives in the rural areas. Most people, their everyday lived experience tells them there is a shortage of land."

This narrative is essential for justifying URA development. One professor mentioned that part of the reason why residents are willing to accept redevelopment is because of the premise that land is scarce and needs to be upcycled in order to meet both commercial and residential demand. Residents understand redevelopment as essential to the wellbeing of Hong Kong as a whole, and thus may be willing URA intervention in their community.

Community Resistance

Unlike in other global cities, displacement in Hong Kong is not the result of a cleansing of undesirable groups or diluting concentrations of social disadvantage.[36] Rather, direct and indirect displacement are largely the by-product of redevelopment.

Resistance to URA development has many manifestations in Hong Kong and can be difficult given the pervasive narratives outlined above. An artist and community organizer said, "We are blindly committed to privatization. So what happens is that there are barely any squatting movements, people don't believe tenants have any rights. You have to buy a place in order to have a voice, most believe." Every interviewee mentioned the protests at the development of Lee Tung Street as a pivotal moment in the culture of resistance: the community submitted their opposition to the development but were entirely ignored. "There was no public participation allowed for the residents," a community organizer with Old District Autonomy Advancement Group (ODAAG) said. "It was a very iconic movement because it shifted the paradigm. Before the public perceived that any struggle in the context of urban development will only involve compensation, that people don't have enough and so they're asking for more. Since Lee Tung they've been trying to broaden the discourse by saying there has to be public participation, the right to stay put, etc."

Several grassroots organizations were mentioned in connection with resistance to URA development. ODAAG is an all volunteer organization of residents, shopkeepers, and other interested members of the public. One of their community organizers described their goals:

> "What we aim to do is form some sort of platform that the residents in different areas can come together, who are concerned about it. There are two major objectives or principles that we want to try to advance. One is to protect the public housing rights. How this would be affected not only the very individual, scattered urban renewal projects that is happening but also how this public housing rights would be impacted by the large-scale urban renewal as a whole. The other would be how to have a more democratic urban renewal planning and how people could participate in this process."

The group endeavors to enhance public awareness of the development process and help people understand they are entitled to participate and have rights in the process of urban renewal. They

---

[36] La Grange and Pretorius, "State-led Gentrification in Hong Kong," 507.

organize collective actions with residents and encourage them to engage with the process and with each other.

Case Studies

The two case studies of Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan represent diverse, low-income neighborhoods within surrounding high-value districts on the Kowloon Peninsula. These neighborhoods were selected because they are currently both centers of concentrated URA redevelopment. The presence of an MTR station at Sham Shui Po and the imminent completion of a station in To Kwa Wan make each of these excellent case studies of transit-related neighborhood change as well. Each neighborhood is home to grassroots resistance to redevelopment that reflect the cultural and place-based factors in community perception of neighborhood change.

Figure 22: Map of Hong Kong with Locations of Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan
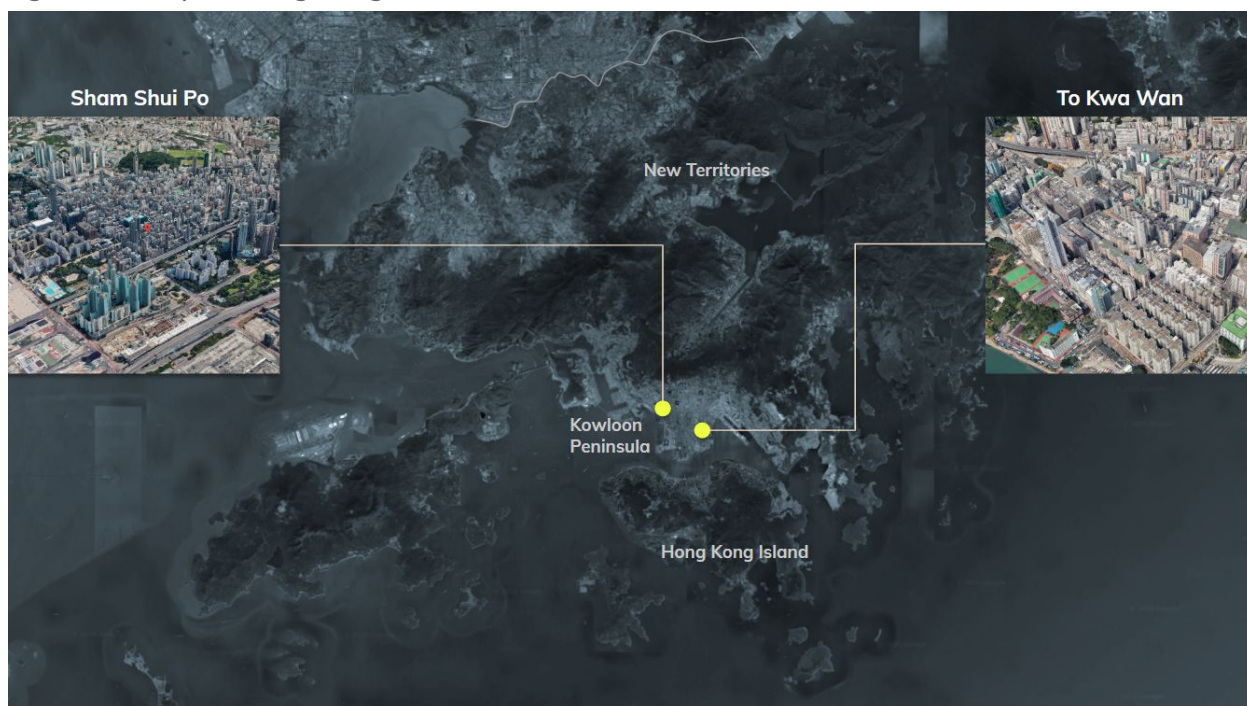
Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan have lower percentages of Cantonese speakers and people born in Hong Kong than Hong Kong overall, indicating a relatively higher percentage of non-local residents in these two neighborhoods. Although the median monthly household income in these two case study neighborhoods is lower than the median in Hong Kong, the median monthly household rent is higher than the median in Hong Kong, indicating that rent is less affordable in these two neighborhoods.

Table 5: Statistical Profiles of Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan, 2016

	Sham Shui Po	To Kwa Wan	Hong Kong
% Working population	50.2%	51.8%	51.2%

% Working population in public administration, education and social service	19.5%	22.6%	26.8%
% Working population in manufacturing, construction and other industries	18.2%	12.7%	12.9%
% Working population in retail and food service industry	34.4%	33.4%	27.1%
% Working population in transportation, real estate and business service industry	27.9%	31.3%	33.2%
Population above 65 years old	13.5%	14.3%	15.9%
Population born in Hong Kong	48.6%	55.0%	60.7%
Population with Cantonese as usual spoken language	85.5%	85.0%	88.9%
Single-headed households in same address as 5 years ago	54.3%	64.2%	75.9%
Median monthly domestic household income	HK$17,490	HK$21,750	HK$25,000
Median monthly domestic household rent	HK$4,600	HK$5,900	HK$2,180
Median rent to income ratio	29.8%	30.2%	13.6%
Average number of rooms per person	1.03 rooms	1.12 rooms	1.14 rooms
Median floor area of accommodation of domestic households (m2)	30	38	40

Source: Centamap (2016)

Most employed residents in the two case study neighborhoods work in the retail and service industries (about 30%), which is higher than the overall Hong Kong average. While the percent of the working population in public administration, education and social service in these two neighborhoods is lower than the Hong Kong average.

Sham Shui Po

Located in the western coast of the Kowloon Peninsula, Sham Shui Po is an old inner-city district, and the poorest in Hong Kong. The district is often described in Cantonese as *hou dzaap* [好雜], or

a place inhabited by "a mishmash" of poor people, a heterogeneous population of low-income and low-skilled workers, the temporarily unemployed, and the elderly.[37] The 2016 census indicated that Sham Shui Po had a monthly median income HK$7,510 lower than the city's average and houses the highest percentage of elderly in Hong Kong. The district is characterized by low levels of educational attainment, a high percentage of "new arrivals", and a high presence of ethnic minorities, specifically South Asians and Africans.[38]

The district is easily accessible via MTR but has for decades been considered a dangerous place, and a destination to consume cheap products and leave. History

While more commercially advantageous areas of Hong Kong Island were developed following the cession of Hong Kong Island to the British in 1842, the district of Sham Shui Po remained rural and isolated. Kowloon and the New Territories were leased for 99 years by the British Government in 1898 and the first development scheme drafted by the British Government involved extensive land reclamation, demolition, and building projects there. The second wave of development, the "Sham Shui Po Improvement Scheme" called for the removal of a village and the leveling of several hills. Most reclamation of Sham Shui Po was complete by 1927.[39] The gridiron pattern of the streets established in the first development scheme was extended, and included a military base, post office, police station, and open spaces.

Following World War II, Sham Shui Po's low rents attracted large communities of immigrants and refugees, and squatter settlements proliferated on the hills of the district. The notorious fire in the squatter settlements of Shek Kip Mei launched the first public housing program in Hong Kong. When the military base closed in the 1970s, the land was used for public housing estates and the Dragon Shopping Mall. Sham Shui Po was also an important industrial zone from the 1950s to 1980s with many textile manufacturers and light industrial factories locating in the area. Consistently passed over by plans for redevelopment by both government planning and private investment, the district continued to house large populations of immigrants and became a neglected enclave within Kowloon.

Urban Form

The district is characterized by post-war buildings with deteriorating facades. Many buildings from this era feature poor construction and were not intended to last more than 50 years.[40] The wide variety of family businesses and industrial uses that were once common in all of Hong Kong are still present in Sham Shui Po, appearing in sharp contrast to the modern architecture, finance, and tourism of other districts. Sham Shui Po's proximity to the old downtown airport, which was operational until 1998, meant that buildings needed to be short in comparison to surrounding districts where tall buildings maximized density.

---

[37] Christopher Cheng, "Sham Shui Po: A Marginal Neighborhood in the Centre of Hong Kong," (2012), 4.
[38] Cheng Po Hung. *Early Hong Kong's Kowloon Peninsula,* (Hong Kong: 2007).
[39] Ibid.
[40] Cheng, "Sham Shui Po," 25.

The term tong-lau refers to a distinctive mixed use building type that originated in Guangzhou and is the most prominent building typology in Sham Shui Po. The buildings are typically seven to nine stories high with no elevator and are often referred to as Chinese tenements.[41] Subdivision of tong-lau was a common practice in post-war Hong-Kong. Cage-homes, cocklofts, and other forms of subdivided rooms housed low-paid, unskilled migrant laborers.

The street markets, street hawkers, and small family businesses that characterize Sham Shui Po are considered the lifeblood of the district. The famous Apliu Street Flea Market features a street lined with stalls selling used electronics. Some scholars describe Sham Shui Po as having a "trash economy"[42] and being a "centre of leftovers"[43] due to the abundance of second-hand items that line the streets, the result of a highly consumerist nature of Hong Kong society.

There are spatial elements of Sham Shui Po that preserve a sense of the area's past while guiding its growth. Temples, such as Mo Tai, Sam Tai Tsk, and Tin Hau, and markets such as Pei Ho Street Market, and the Dragon Centre mark the religious and economic expressions of past populations.[44] The pier, the MTR stations, and the public open spaces situate the district within a fabric of culture and mobility. These spaces act as "generators of historic continuity" and should be preserved as guides for development decisions.[45]

Figure 23: Sham Shui Po under redevelopment, 2018[46]

---

[41] Ibid., 28.
[42] Wing Yung-Doris, "Trading Trash and Creating Destinies: Pakistani Community in a Second-hand Market in Hong Kong," (2010), 1.
[43] Cheng, "Sham Shui Po," 39.
[44] Pui Leng Woo and Ka Man Hui, "Continuity and Change in the Urban Transformation of Old Districts: A Case of Sham Shui Po, Hong Kong" *Projections* (2011), 109.
[45] Ibid., 101.
[46] URA "Tung Chau Street / Kweilin Street Demand-Led Redevelopment Project (DL-5:SSP)" https://www.ura.org.hk/en/project/redevelopment/dl-5-tung-chau-street-kweilin-street-project

Urban Renewal

Sham Shui Po is currently home to nine urban renewal projects, which require the demolition of all existing buildings to make way for the construction of high-rise residential and commercial towers. The sites contain the shorter, reinforced concrete buildings typical of construction in the 1950s, with commercial ground floors and upper floors of subdivided residential units. The new projects are planned for a floor area ratio twice that of the existing buildings.[47] When all ongoing URA projects are completed, 3,834 residents will have been forced to relocate. The new developments will contain 2,130 residential units and 27,573 square metres of commercial space.

Figures 24 and 25 show the physical changes that resulted from three ongoing URA projects on Hai Tan Street in Sham Shui Po. The three projects affected 1,983 existing residents. Owner-occupiers received around HK$5,000 per square foot for their flats when the developments were announced in 2006.[48]

Once completed, the new buildings will house 1,039 residential flats and 6,130 square metres of ground floor commercial space. Prices for flats in the largest of the resultant buildings, Seaside Sonata, started at HK$7.05 million (about US$900,000) in 2019.[49] The average price per square foot was HK$18,688, more than three times the compensation that was offered to the site's original residents.

---

[47] Woo and Hui, "Continuity and Change in the Urban transformation of Old Districts," 104.
[48]Olga Wong, "Evicted Father Threatens to Jump," *South China Morning Post*, (June 2014), https://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1531045/evicted-father-threatens-jump
[49] Holly Chik and Sandy Li, "CK Asset discounts its first property launch of 2019 by up to 10 per cent, bowing to a stalling market as Hong Kong's rallies bite," *South China Morning Post*, (October 9, 2019), https://www.scmp.com/business/article/3032203/ck-asset-discounts-its-first-property-launch-2019-10-cent-bowing-stalling

Figures 24 and 25: Google Street View Images of Hai Tan Street, 2011 and 2016

Displacement

Recent years have seen an influx of "creative entrepreneurs" drawn to Sham Shui Po's low rents. In the area south of Nam Cheong Street, many wholesalers have been forced out of business, replaced by newer businesses that cater to a hipster aesthetic and clientele.

In 2016, HK Walls held their 3rd annual art festival in Sham Shui Po. The festival brought together 40 artists from 17 countries to create murals, a pop-up print exhibition, film screenings, and public workshops. This event drew criticism from activists who asserted that the festival was potentially furthering the gentrification of the area. Activist and lecturer Ahkok Wong wrote, "shame on

HKWalls who used the artists as a tool for gentrification, without providing the non-local artists with the cultural context of [Sham Shui Po] Community". An artist and community organizer we spoke to echoed that sentiment, "There's a pattern out there: real estate and government are using these lifestyles to brand a once rundown area into something which demands a much higher cost of living.

In the website of ODAAG, there are concerns that the URA replaced the old buildings with luxurious housing such as Heya Delight, Beacon Lodge and Trinity Tower, which resulted in less affordable housing and more displacement of residents in Sham Shui Po[50].

Resistance

A community organizer we spoke to said that there has been moderate resistance to development in Sham Shui Po.

> "In the Fuk Wing Street project, the residents actually first demanded there be an anti-eviction initiative because they are very vulnerable to private landlord evictions and rent increases, and if they move out of the projects before the URA acquires the properties they will not get any compensation or relocation arranged from URA. So in the first stage a lot of residents demanded security, renter security. Later they demanded same area relocation because this is some kind of vague principle included in the URS... but it's not strictly followed or strictly defined so there's no policy to allow residents to demand same area relocation."

Residents are supported by the Old District Autonomy Advancement Group (ODAAG which helps them express their concerns with the relocation agenda with the URA.

That said, the residents of Sham Shui Po are not as highly organized as other neighborhood groups in their engagement with the URA. The professor of geography said,

> "In general Sham Shui Po's living conditions...it's a poorer area...so people living there are also living in subdivided flats that are not very decent. So if you have redevelopment people you will be relocated to public housing. It's almost like winning the lottery if you can get allocated public housing. So the objection voices...I don't feel like it's very strong."

They also mentioned that on average, the individual URA projects in Sham Shui Po are also smaller than the ones in To Kwa Wan. This may also contribute to more limited pushback against URA projects.

To Kwa Wan

To Kwa Wan is a bayfront district on the eastern shore of Kowloon Peninsula. Translating to 'Potato Bay', this area was named after the sweet potatoes that were historically grown by the

---

[50] "Redevelopment: a profitable business?" (in Chinese), *Old District Autonomy Advancement Group,* https://odaaghk.wordpress.com/%e9%81%8e%e5%be%80%e5%b7%a5%e4%bd%9c/knowledgeforurb anrenewal/howuramakeprofit/

Hakka people. The district is home to a large population of Indians and Pakistanis, primarily concentrated in the '13 Streets' neighborhood of decrepit eight-story buildings on the northern edge of the neighborhood. The streets of '13 Streets' are named after real and mythical animals signifying good fortune in Chinese Culture. This neighborhood is known for its concentration of car repair shops and Cha Chaan Teng diners that service the workers.

History

To Kwa Wan was once the site of a granite quarry that provided materials for construction city-wide, but particularly for the construction of the Kai Tak Airport. Following World War II, the district was largely home to light industrial uses. Factories sprang up to produce cheap electronics and plastic flowers.

Urban Form

Today, Kowloon's oldest existing public housing estates are in To Kwa Wan and are characterized by poor building standards and deteriorating facades. The Ma Tau Wai estate was constructed in 1962 and consists of five residential blocks managed by the Hong Kong Housing Society. The Chun See Mei Chuen estate was constructed in 1965 and has three residential blocks. In 2010, a five story residential building at 45 Ma Tau Wai Road collapsed and killed four people. The building was 55 years old and its collapse drew attention to the dangers faced by residents of such buildings. Approximately 4,000 buildings of the same classification, built before 1960, were inspected in the month following the collapse.

Two main roads, To Kwa Wan Road and Ma Tau Wai Road, form a V-shaped corridor through the district and East Kowloon Corridor passes through the middle as an elevated highway. The neighborhood's forthcoming MTR line has faced serious setbacks due to land subsidence and archaeological discoveries. Regardless, the station is anticipated to open in late 2020 or early 2021 along with the rest of the Tuen Ma line.

Indications of neighborhood change have taken the form of rising rents and changing commercial landscape. An old cattle depot has been transformed into an artists' village and new malls and hotels that cater to tourists have begun to spring up.

Urban Renewal

To Kwa Wan currently contains eight urban renewal projects. In total, these projects will displace almost 7,000 residents (7% of the neighborhood's population), and construct almost 3,000 residential units. The URA promised to take a "district-based renewal approach" in order to maintain the social and cultural fabric of To Kwa Wan. The Urban Renewal Plan (URP) for Kowloon City is to "Conserve History and Culture; Synergise with Surrounding Developments, Optimise Land Resources and Create Quality Living Environment". In this plan, the '5 Streets' and '13 Streets' neighborhoods of To Kwa Wan are identified as a Redevelopment Priority Areas. They are seen as essential to improving linkages with the nearby Kai Tak Development Area. The plan hopes that the neighborhoods will be "transformed into a cultural and art living district". The URP

considers the relocation of the vehicle repair workshops as part of their long-term proposal and proposes relocating the shops to the industrial Kwai Tsing District.

Figure 26: Two 30-story residential buildings, part of a URA project in To Kwa Wan[51]

Resistance

Fixing Hong Kong was formed by a group of activists at protest camps during the 2014 Umbrella Movements rallies. With the belief community spirit and political awareness is best supported at the neighborhood level, the group offers help mending broken appliances, furniture, pipes, and wiring to To Kwa Wan residents. Fixing Hong Kong is part of ToHome, an organization with headquarters on Hung Fook Street that seeks to engage the To Kwa Wan community through arts and cultural initiatives.

One community organizer said that To Kwa Wan has a strong population of ethnic minorities and asylum seekers. Asylum seekers are not offered relocation services by the URA. "A lot of them are given rent subsidies and need to find their own house and mostly end up in low grade tenant housing and some of them in To Kwa Wan and in these neighborhoods. They got nothing from the URA."

The ODAAG and members of a To Kwa Wan concern group advocate for the neighborhood's rights and needs. For example, the ODAAG conducted its own social impact survey regarding the redevelopment project KC-013 (Kai Ming Street/Wing Kwong Street)[52] which was slated to impact 200 households and 30 retail shops in 2007. The survey results showed that most tenants were

---

[51]"URA earning 12 billion in To Kwa Wan redevelopment hits record high"
https://life.mingpao.com/general/article?issue=20180620&nodeid=1529433626217 (in Chinese)
[52] The Bailey Street/Wing Kwong Street development will impact a total of 204 households (about 463 residents). The resulting development will include 9,831 square metres of residential uses and 1,966 square metres of commercial uses.

worried about rising rent, the deterioration of the neighborhood environment, and future relocation, while shop owners were concerned about the loss of their community networks, business hardship during the redevelopment, and whether they could afford to rent a shop after redevelopment. Based on the survey results, the ODAAG advocated for the opportunity for tenants and retailers to relocate within the neighborhood and facilitated meetings between the URA and residents every three months during the redevelopment process[53]. These two groups have recently advocated for regular cleaning and disinfection work in the redevelopment area during the COVID-19 pandemic, and conducted a more comprehensive social impact assessment to better understand residents' needs.

Figure 27: To Kwa Wan Residents and ODAAG Fighting for a Fair Relocation Plan[54]

---

[53] "Redevelopment report in To Kwa Wan," *Old District Autonomy Advancement Group*
https://odaaghk.wordpress.com/2017/11/19/civicsocietysiasummary/ (in Chinese)
[54] "Residents in To Kwa Wan made banner to show their dissatisfaction with the relocation process during the redevelopment process" *Grassmedia*
https://grassmediaction.wordpress.com/2018/12/07/%e5%9c%9f%e7%93%9c%e7%81%a3%e9%87%8d%e5%bb%ba%e6%88%b6%e6%8e%9b%e6%a9%ab%e9%a1%8d%e9%9b%86%e8%81%af%e7%bd%b2%e3%80%80%e6%96%a5%e3%80%8c%e5%b8%82%e5%bb%ba%e5%ae%89%e7%bd%ae%e7%9c%9f%e5%88%bb%e8%96%84// (in Chinese)

Policy Recommendations

As researchers based in the United States, we recognize that the knowledge of Hong Kong is still limited in comparison with residents, academics, and practitioners in Hong Kong. However, there were many recommendations which arose from our discussions with experts in the city.

Protecting Existing Residents

We strongly believe that Hong Kong should institute **tenant protections**. This includes the re-introduction of **rent control** and protecting residents from forced evictions. At minimum, these policies should be enforced in areas slated for redevelopment, to preempt rent hikes and forced evictions.

Furthermore, the URA should work with communities before and during the redevelopment process. Ahead of selecting sites, the organization should conduct complete **social impact assessments** and begin community engagement processes. The organization should also consistently **inform residents of their rights** during the development process. In order to ensure accessibility, the URA should consistently **provide translation services** to residents during the community engagement process.

Standardizing Relocation Options

Significant displacement occurs as a result of the URA's relocation policies. Our group believes that the URA should **amend the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS)** to have a stricter definition of the Authority's obligations to residents in a redevelopment area before, during, and after the project. This includes a more concrete definition of relocation, including a stronger commitment to relocating residents within the project's original neighborhood.

Additionally, the URA should **standardize the relocation options** made available to affected residents. These should not be dependent on how 'militant' residents are in the face of redevelopment. The organization should also **expand the eligibility requirements for relocation** to accommodate non-residents, those living in overcrowded units, rooftop tenants, and others presently left out of the relocation and compensation processes for lack of proper documentation.

Development

We encourage the URA, the Housing Authority, and other developers to **continue seeking development sites which minimize the risk of displacement**. This includes advocating for development of brownfield sites in the New Territories. We recognize the necessity of urban renewal in Hong Kong. However, we encourage the URA to **focus on improving living conditions** for people in the city, rather than centering site selection around profit maximization.

Conclusion

Our project extensively explores neighborhood change in Hong Kong. We specifically focused on the role and the operations of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and how they have increased displacement pressures. As a part of our analysis, we analyzed the overall housing and demographic changes in Hong Kong, developed typologies for displacement and exclusion in Hong Kong, and conducted a series of interviews with academics and community organizers on the ground.

Overall, we find that displacement and gentrification in Hong Kong vary greatly from traditional western notions of the phenomena. The unique geographic, economic, and governmental structures in Hong Kong create a unique state-driven planning process. The URA's developments in particular have increased displacement pressures on thousands of Hong Kongers both within our two case study neighborhoods and across Hong Kong writ large. Our exploration of Sham Shui Po and To Kwa Wan illuminate the shortcomings of the URA's community engagement processes and the nuances of resistance efforts. The more piecemeal nature of development in Sham Shui Po, coupled with the reportedly poorer housing stock have led to less community opposition, while the presence of a few large projects in To Kwa Wan has galvanized greater pushback.

With that said, we believe that there are measurable steps that the URA can take to protect existing residents and ensure that they can receive better relocation options. At the same time, we encourage academics and residents within Hong Kong to support community organizations in the city dedicated to tenant advocacy.

Limitations and Next Steps

We recognize that our work is hindered by many data limitations. For example, our typologies are currently at the Tertiary Planning Unit (TPU) level. However, we are still seeking more granular data at the Large Street Block Group (LSBG) level in 2001, 2006, and 2010 from the Hong Kong Census Bureau to improve the quality of our typologies and the granularity of our overall analysis.

Additionally, we acknowledge that our research may be limited due to the small number of interviews conducted, and the potential biases of our interviewees.

Lastly, the ongoing COVID-19 crisis has unfortunately prevented our team from traveling to Hong Kong to conduct on the ground site visits and interviews. We hope that future researchers are able to do so and continue our work.

References

Cervero, R., and Murakami, J. (2008). Rail+ Property Development: A model of sustainable transit finance and urbanism. UC Berkeley Center for Future Urban Transport.

Cheng, C. (2012) Sham Shui Po: A Marginal Neighborhood in the Centre of Hong Kong.

Cheng, P.H. (2007) Early Hong Kong's Kowloon Peninsula, Hong Kong: University Museum and Art Gallery, The University of Hong Kong.

Chiu, R. L. H. (2006). Planning, Land and Affordable Housing in Hong Kong. Housing Studies, 22(1), 63–81. doi: 10.1080/02673030601024614.

Forrest, R. and Yip, N. (2014) The Future for Reluctant Intervention: The Prospects for Hong Kong's Public Rental Sector. Housing Studies, 29(4).

Grange, A. L., & Pretorius, F. (2014). State-led gentrification in Hong Kong. Urban Studies, 53(3), 506–523. doi: 10.1177/0042098013513645.

Ho, L. S. and Wong, G. W. C. (2019) "Taxing land rent, lowering other taxes – the case of Hong Kong." Asian Education and Development Studies: ahead of print.

Ho, W. and Yung, D. (2010) Trading trash and creating destinies: Pakistani community in a second-hand market in Hong Kong. Master of Social Science Thesis, Dept. of Asian and International Studies. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong.

Huang, S. (2019) "Displacement by Neoliberalism: Addressing the Housing Crisis of Hong Kong in the Restructuring of Pearl River Delta Region," in Neoliberal Urbanism, Contested Cities and Housing in Asia, 47-70.

Lei, F., Liu, Y. M., Bao, X. H. (2011) Analysis of the Impact of Public Transport Accessibility on Hong Kong Housing Prices: Application of Hedonic Model.

Lethbridge, H. (1978). Hong Kong, Stability, and Change: A Collection of Essays. Oxford University Press.

Ley, D. and Teo, S. Y. (2013) "Gentrification in Hong Kong? Epistemology vs. Ontology," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 38, no. 11, 1286-1303.

Li, S. M. (2014). Hong Kong's Land and Housing Policies since Handover: A Political Economy Analysis. Studies on Hong Kong and Macau, 02, 17-29.

Lui, T. (2017) "Beneath the Appearance of Gentrification: Probing Local Complexities," International Journal of Urban and Regional Research 41, no. 3: 478-486.

Monkkonen, P. and Zhang, X. (2011) "Socioeconomic Segregation in Hong Kong: Spatial and Ordinal Measures in a High-Density and Highly Unequal City," Working Paper.

Ng, Mee Kam (2018). "Transformative Urbanism and Problematising Land Scarcity in Hong Kong," *Urban Studies* 57 no. 7. P. 1452-1468.

Sinn, E. (2007). Moving bones: Hong Kong's role as an "in-between place" in the Chinese diaspora. [s. l.], p. 247–271.

Smart, A. (2010). Tactful criticism in Hong Kong: the colonial past and engaging with the present. Current Anthropology, 51(Supplement 2), 321e330.

Smith, C. (1971). The Emergence of a Chinese Elite in Hong Kong. Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society. Vol. 11, pp. 74-115.

Stevenson, A. and Wu, J. (2019). "Tiny Apartments and Punishing Work Hours: The Economic Roots of Hong Kong's Protests," *The New York Times*.

Tang, W.-S. (2017). Beyond Gentrification: Hegemonic Redevelopment in Hong Kong. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 41(3), 487–499. doi: 10.1111/1468-2427.12496.

Valença, M. M. (2015). Social rental housing in HK and the UK: Neoliberal policy divergence or the market in the making? Habitat International, 49, 107–114. doi: 10.1016/j.habitatint.2015.05.017.

Wan, K. and Wong, S. (2018) The Housing Boom and the Rise of Localism in Hong Kong: Evidence from the Legislative Council Election in 2016. Available: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3472067.

Wei, Z. C., He, S. J., Liu, Y. H., and Chen, T. (2017) Examination and Implementation of Public Housing Policies in Post-handover Hong Kong: A Social Sustainability Perspective. Urban Planning International, 3, 34-41.

Wissink, B., Yoh, S. Y., and Forrest, R. (2017) "Tycoon city: Political economy, real estate and the super-rich in Hong Kong," in Cities and the Super-Rich: Real Estate, Elite Practices and Urban Political Economies.

Wong, Y.C.R. (2017). Fixing Inequality in Hong Kong. Hong Kong University Press.

Zhao, S. & Zhang, L. (2005). Economic Growth and Income Inequality in Hong Kong: Trends and Explanations. China: An International Journal. 3. 74-103. 10.1353/chn.2005.0010.

Appendices

Appendix A: List of Interviewees

Table 6: Completed Interviews

Title	Affiliation
PhD Student	College of Environmental Design, University of California, Berkeley
Professor	Department of Urban Planning and Design, The University of Hong Kong, The University of Hong Kong
Former Head of Planning and Design at the URA, Adjunct Associate Professor	Department of Urban Planning and Design, The University of Hong Kong
Professor	Department of Geography and Resource Management, City University of Hong Kong
Professor	Department of Real Estate and Construction, The University of Hong Kong
Community for the Old District Autonomy Advancement Group (ODAAG), MPhil Student	Department of Anthropology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Community for the Old District Autonomy Advancement Group (ODAAG), MPhil Student	Department of Cultural Studies, Lingnan University
Artist[55]	N/A

---

[55] This interview was conducted via email.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Dear [insert interviewee name],

We are master's students working with Professor Karen Chapple in the Department of City and Regional Planning at UC Berkeley **studying the unique neighborhood change and displacement challenges being faced by Hong Kong residents.** We are working under the Global Urban Displacement Project to create a project similar to those that you can find [here]. **Past projects have studied [Manila], [Bogota], and [Buenos Aires].**

We are setting up interviews with local experts in these subjects. We have contacted you to participate in our study on gentrification and displacement given **your knowledge and experience of neighborhood change in [insert neighborhood name or subject area].**

Would you be available for an interview with us lasting between 45 minutes and 1.5 hours about your knowledge and experience of neighborhood change? The interview would take place via Zoom.

Some of the topics that we plan to ask about during the interview include:
- Direct and indirect displacement occurring in Hong Kong
- Redevelopment projects and investment
- The movement of people within Hong Kong as it relates to displacement and neighborhood change
- Policies and programs related to neighborhood change and displacement

The interview is voluntary and completely confidential. **If you are interested in participating in this study, please contact me by email at [insert email address].** Thank you!

Appendix C: Typology Details

This section details the definitions for specific typology variables.

Low-income Population

- A household is defined as "low-income" if it makes less than HK$15,000 per month in 2001 or less than HK$20,000 in 2016. For reference, the poverty line for a three-person household in Hong Kong in 2018 was HK$16,500 and the maximum monthly income limit for a three-person household which would like to apply for public housing is HK$24,410.
- Unfortunately, the Hong Kong Census Bureau does not provide data tables which are adjusted for inflation. Thus, we approximated based on the available income categories. HK$15,000 in 2001 is approximately equal to HK$20162 in 2016.

Percentage College Educated

- This variable was calculated based on the population aged 24 and older, so that individuals who were likely still undergoing schooling are excluded.

Appendix D: URA Projects in Sham Shui Po

Table 7: List of URA Projects in Sham Shui Po

Project Name	Project Status	Existing GFA	Existing Population	Project Residential Units	Project Commercial GFA	Total GFA
Castle Peak Road/Un Chau Street	Ongoing	7,334	476	261	2,474	14,841
Kowloon Road/Kiu Yam Street	Ongoing	3,817	229	100	814	4,884
Tung Chau Street/Kweilin Street	Ongoing	10,313	552	262	4,320	13,410
Tonkin Street/Huk Wing Street	Ongoing	4,964	270	175	1,586	9,513
229 A-G Hai Tan Street	Ongoing	2,547	172	87	405	3,640
205-211 A Hai Tan Street	Ongoing	2,952	222	76	468	3,600
Fuk Wing Street	Ongoing	2,456	194	136	5,030	559
Shun Ning Street	Ongoing	3,820	130	157	7,159	1,200
Hai Tan Street/Kweilin Street & Pei Ho Street	Ongoing	25,344	1,589	876	5,317	57,399
Po On Road/Shun Ning Road	Completed (2010-11)	4,898	327	166	2,083	12,534
Fuk Wing Street/Fuk Wa Street	Completed (2010-11)	5,129	246	173	2,075	12,453
Castle Peak Road/Cheung Wah Street	Completed (2015)	5,935	158	130	1,505	9,030
Castle Peak Road/Un Chau Street	Completed (2016)	14,193	496	350	3,921	23,526
Un Chau Street/Fuk	Completed (2017)	10,114	362	275	448	19,206

Wing Street						
Castle Peak Road/Hing Wah Street	Completed (2016)	8,286	344	175	2,098	12,585
Po On Road/Wai Wai Road	Completed (2013)	9,923	528	327	957	21,214
Total		**122,025**	**6,295**	**3,726**	**40,660**	**219,594**

Appendix E: URA Projects in To Kwa Wan

Table 8: List of URA Projects in To Kwa Wan

Project Name	Project Status	Existing GFA	Existing Population	Project Residential Units	Project Commercial GFA	Total GFA
Wing Kwong Street/Sung On Street	Ongoing	16,874	831	560	4,286	25,713
Kai Ming Street/Wing Kwong Street	Ongoing	7,458	463	414*	1,967	11,800
Wing Kwong Street	Ongoing	5,023	389	414*	1,755	10,530
Hung Fook Street/Kai Ming Street	Ongoing	12,628	822	400	3,660	21,960
Hung Fook Street/Ngan Hon Street	Ongoing	21,495	1,468	750	6,843	41,058
Chun Tin Street/Sung Chi Street	Ongoing	3,738	179	310	2,454	14,724
Bailey Street/Wing Kwong Street	Ongoing	39,644	2,640	1,152	11,105	66,627
Kai Ming Street	Ongoing	2,467	122	72	308	4,545
Total		**109,327**	**6,914**	**2,830**	**32,378**	**196,957**

* The Kai Ming Street/Wing Kwong Street and Wing Kwong Streets will be combined into one 414 unit project.

Appendix F: Twitter Data Analysis

Methodology

Our team also analyzed geotagged Tweets in Hong Kong as a means of analyzing neighborhood change. We started with a dataset containing over 4 million tweets in Hong Kong between 2012 and 2016. We cleaned the dataset using the following methodology:

- Remove all of the users with less than 20 tweets
- Identify the home TPU of each user using the following criteria:
  - Ten or more of the user's tweets were made within the TPU
  - The user tweeted in the TPU on at least 10 different days
  - The user tweeted in the TPU during at least 8 different hours of the day
  - If more than one TPU fits the three above criteria, the TPU where the user most-frequently tweets is set as the user's home TPU
- Calculate the percentage of tweets made by "residents" and "non-residents" in each TPU

We also filtered out the tweets which referenced specific keywords related to neighborhood change—such as "gentrification," "displacement," and "eviction"—based on the strings in Table 9, and mapped their locations across Hong Kong.

Table 9: Tweet Keywords

Phrase	Strings
Displacement	"displace-"
Gentrification	"gentrif-", "士绅化"
Eviction	"evict-"
Redevelopment	"redev-"
Urban Renewal	"urban renewal," "市區重建局," "土地發展公司"[56][57]

Results

Figure 28 shows the ratio of non-resident tweets in each TPU. Interestingly, the New Territories appears to contain the TPUs with both the highest and lowest ratios of non-resident tweets. The ratio does not appear to match our indicators for displacement, exclusion, or any other neighborhood change variable. Thus, more analysis will be required to determine how these results can be related to neighborhood change patterns.

---

[56] "URA" was not used as a keyword because its inclusion primarily filtered tweets regarding a japanese cafe.
[57] 市區重建局 and 土地發展公司 are Chinese for the Urban Renewal Agency and the Land Development Corporation respectively

Ratio of Non-Resident Tweets

- 0.00 - 0.34
- 0.34 - 0.51
- 0.51 - 0.70
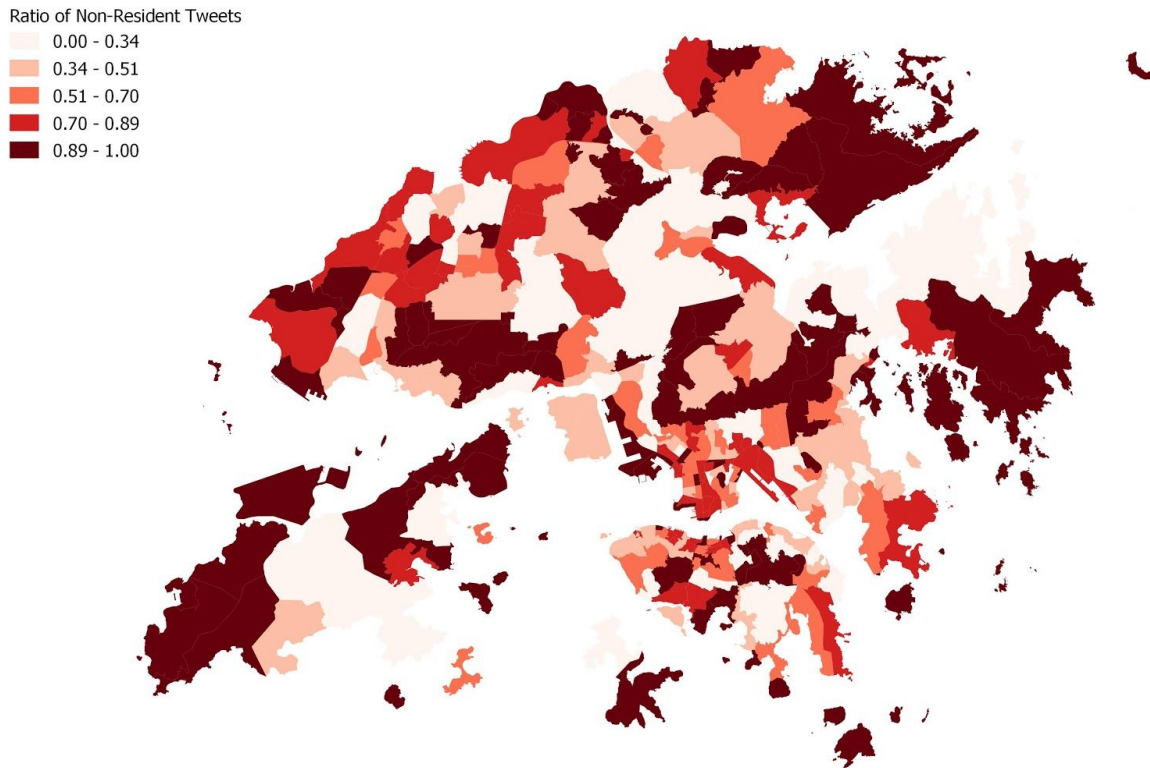- 0.70 - 0.89
- 0.89 - 1.00

Table 10 shows the number of tweets which include each topic. None of the topics related to neighborhood change was extensively tweeted about within the dataset.

Table 10: Number of Tweets Using Each Keyword

Topic	Number of Tweets
Displacement	24
Gentrification	26
Eviction	196
Redevelopment	75
Urban Renewal	43

As seen in Figure 29, most of the tweets including any of the keywords were located around the north coast of Hong Kong Island--with some tweets in Kowloon City. These two regions are also the ones which had the greatest overall number of tweets. There are very few tweets regarding

neighborhood change in the outskirts of the New Territories. There are no discernable differences in tweet patterns between any of the topics.

Figure 29: Locations of Tweets Regarding Neighborhood Change
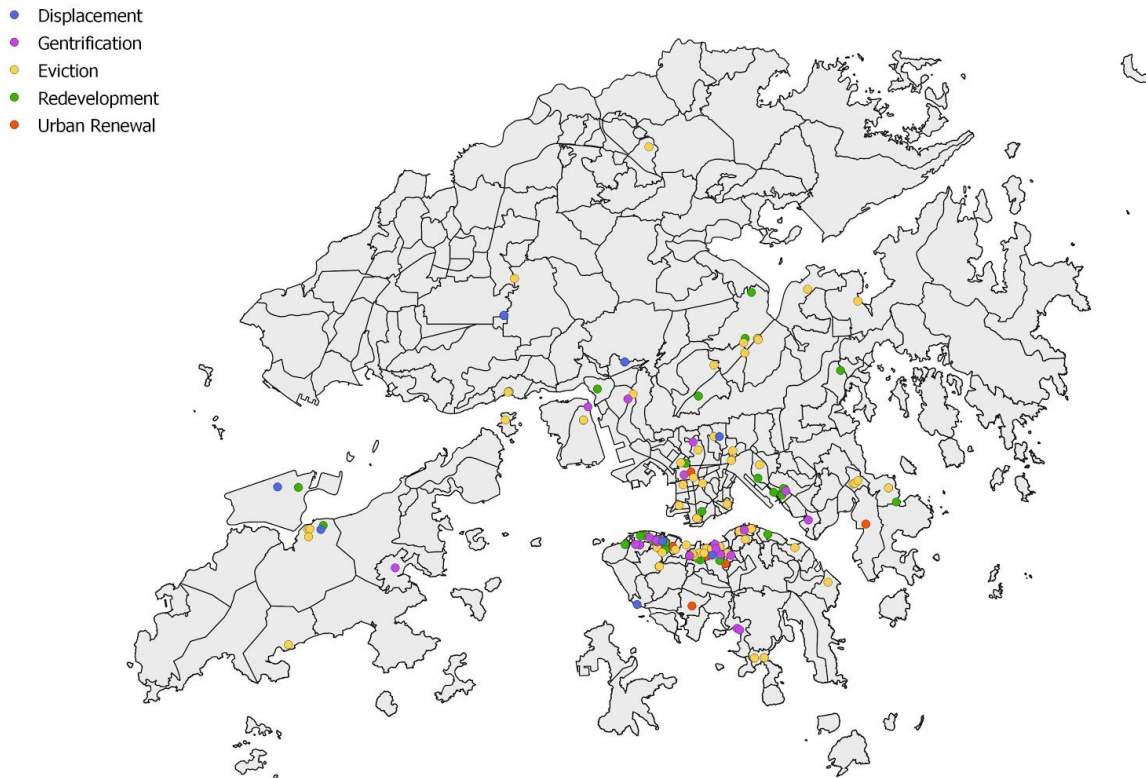
Limitations

There are many limitations to the analysis of Twitter data. Firstly, it is unclear what the demographics of geotagged Twitter users in Hong Kong are compared to the overall population of Hong Kong. Our conversations with researchers in the region revealed that other platforms such as Instagram are significantly more popular than Twitter--particularly among younger users. Secondly, as researchers in the United States, we have limited knowledge of the vocabulary used to describe neighborhood change in Hong Kong--particularly on more informal platforms such as social media.

Nevertheless, our team believes that there is value in using big data to analyze neighborhood change patterns, and intend on continuing to explore how we can use Hong Kong's Twitter data.