

Thinking of Kowloon Walled City Living Style: Research about Youth Living in Modern City Reflections

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Keywords: Kowloon Walled City, Living Style, City Development, Youth Generation, Interior Design

Abstract: The Kowloon Walled City is one of the most mixed and diverse population living areas in China. Before its demolition, it was considered a filthy, chaotic, and outlaw land. On the other hand, when we look closer, it was also founded as a living community with order, rules, and regulations in a big city where the poor can share space with the rich in Hongkong. Urban development is inseparable from the fresh blood of young generations. The relationship between the city, youths, and housing development is a set of coupling effects. The actual situation is the conditions, and the speeds of urban development may not keep up with the needs of young people, which causes them to encounter problems in life. These will cause low work efficiency, public security crises, and even political incidents. However, the case of Kowloon can point out what we do next to fix problems that the young generation encounters in the development of the city. In addition, with some experiments and investigations, hopefully one day, we can get this done.

1. Introduction: Kowloon History

The Kowloon Walled City began in the Song Dynasty. It was originally a fishing village on the Kowloon Peninsula. After the British took over Hong Kong in 1898, it became the last gathering place of the Qing government. In 1941, the British government decided to construct Kai Tak Airport starting from Boundary Street in the north of the Kowloon Walled City, which completely separated Kowloon from other parts of Hong Kong. With the mixed population in Kowloon, it is difficult to rectify. The British government did not restrict the area but only stipulated that Boundary Street to the north belongs to the United Kingdom and is called the New Territories; Boundary Street to the south belongs to Kowloon and continues to be under the jurisdiction of the Qing. After the fall of the Qing Dynasty, and there was no clear jurisdiction over the country, Kowloon became a "three no-holds-barred" zone for a while. Many people who violated the law in Hong Kong fled there and then settled down. Such as smuggling, robbery, even murder continued [1-2]. Coupled with the influence of the Second World War, many refugees and homeless people entered the Kowloon by crossing the sea. Because there was no place to live, people began to build arbitrarily facilities such as circuits and waterways, and there was no fixed power supply equipment in the city. All resources are provided by illicit means from the vicinity. The Kowloon Walled City is therefore known as the

largest slum in Hong Kong [3-4].

In 1958, the British government began to restore Hong Kong's economy and wanted to take advantage of the population of Kowloon, so a large number of cheap labour began to be exported from the Kowloon Walled City. By the late 1960s, the city had a resident population of 50,000 and an area of only 0.026 square kilometres, equivalent to the area of three and a half football fields. The crowded space contains houses, schools, workplaces, Chinese medicine, Western medicine, dentists, shops, churches, temples, altars, etc. The Walled City has all necessary characteristics of a small vertical town. And there are not many of these service institutions, such as more than 80 dental clinics. Many practitioners have no professional qualifications at all, and people living in the Kowloon Walled City don't care about these, if they can be cured [5].

On March 3, 1992, the British colonial government decided to demolish parts of the Kowloon Walled City, and many police workers were stationed there. Because the government considers the land "garbage", many people cannot get compensation. Some elderly people and young people took to the streets to protest or simply chose to stay at home and wait for the demolition, committing suicide more decisively. The protracted demolition and confrontation went on for several months. On July 2, 1992, the Kowloon Walled City was demolished. On July 1, 5 years later, the People's Republic of China took back Hong Kong, which now is a historical park right now. Even if no one looks back, still many celebrities missing, like Stephen Chow, To Qifeng, Andy Lau, and so on [6].

2. The Kowloon Living Style

The permanent residents of Kowloon Walled City are around 50,000 people, and the number of people coming and going on weekdays is even more numerous. Life here is completely different from the outside world, and the Kowloon Walled City has its own set of logic.

For the public infrastructure system, Kowloon does not have a fixed source of drinking water. When the population was small, it mainly relied on well water to meet its living needs. After the 1970s, many new chemical enterprises were built upstream, resulting in the pollution of drinking water, but residents still did not give up the use of this part of the water but switched to washing clothes [7]. By 1987, the domestic water supply of more than 30,000 residents depended on 8 taps connected to the public water supply system. However, due to the remote location, Kowloon even gave birth to a group of special "water thieves", who only need to pay 30 per month. Some people deliver water to their homes in Hong Kong dollars, and this phenomenon continued until 1993[3].

Electric circuits are also self-sufficient in Kowloon. Earlier, some residents went to the New Territories to connect electric circuits privately for their living. Later, due to the increase in the number of people, the government had to set up circuit boxes outside Kowloon. Lines have been chaotic for a long time. After the Kowloon fire in 1977, the government had to replan the electrical wiring.

The second is the construction of living space. In the beginning, living space of the Kowloon Walled City was only on the first floor, as the population increased, almost all constructions were carried out in the form of verticality. So, to minimize the difficulty of construction, no pipelines were set up on all floor buildings, and all bathrooms were set up in a public. Almost 50,000 people shared 16 squatting pits, and it was necessary to queue up to go to the toilet. In addition, to avoid affecting others, some drug addicts often go under the public toilets and take drugs in the corners of the walls.

The third is the house's power supply water system, which is mostly concentrated in the building aisle mezzanine. Fourth is the public space for rest. Most of these spaces are arranged on the top floor, with simple vegetation, tables, and chairs for rest. Residents' needs for clothes drying, TV signals, etc. also need to be fulfilled through roofs and balconies. Large and small antennas and

clothes drying poles are gathered and stretched out in all directions for drying. Some people who are in poor conditions or who have just entered the city will also hang their clothes in the damp aisles, relying on the sultry summer weather to heat and dry. By the 1980s, families with good conditions could already install and use independent toilets. The chaos of sewage channels made the sanitary conditions here unsatisfactory, and the treatment of garbage, viruses, and faeces was not very effective. So, the outside world called the buildings of the Kowloon Walled City "pig cage houses".

Next is the education service system and security. The Kowloon Walled City has its factories, schools, kindergartens, and a temple in the centre of town. Residents in the city can complete their children's education here just to show their identity. When you reach primary school, you can choose to go out of Kowloon to study in the New Territories or still live in. On the other hand, the security level in Kowloon Walled City was very high, even though the crime-related activities here have not stopped. Before the establishment of the Independent Commission against Corruption, Kowloon was controlled by triads. This illegal organization has extremely strict gang rules, such as not allowing cannibalism, private robbery, no introduction of bandits, and no molesting of women in the same gang. Therefore, although the conditions are difficult, the neighbors are very close and understand each other. Therefore, ordinary criminal cases are also very rare. Kowloon Walled City even organized its media "Walled City Welfare Association" to broadcast news to the majority of residents and organize community activities.

3. New Poor after Kowloon Disappear

Coupled with Hong Kong's past shortcomings in education issues, many Hong Kong young people have begun to express their demands in extreme ways. In the past, Hong Kong's independence and rioters have become synonymous with Hong Kong. To this end, the SAR government has made a lot of efforts, including introducing foreign capital to create job opportunities, optimizing the public rental housing system in Hong Kong, and encouraging young people from Hong Kong to work in the surrounding areas of the mainland, such as Shenzhen and Guangzhou, which have eased the development of the city to a certain extent. However, in the long run, the development of the Hong Kong SAR still lacks enough optimization.

On the contrary, a 1998 poll by the SAR government showed that 63% of the people still expressed nostalgia for the way of life in Kowloon Walled City. At the same time, Hong Kong is ranked the 7th safest in the world, which means the region has a low crime rate and a high level of safety. Because of these endorsements, Hong Kong has managed to become the city with the highest rental income in the world, which comes from the government and NGOs. Non-governmental organizations, such as office buildings, blocks, and community housing, and government organizations' rents come from public rental housing, public land, and ports. These incomes have become one of the foundations for Hong Kong's development and stability. On a year-on-year basis, Hong Kong's social welfare expenditure in 2021 will be HK\$93.9 billion, accounting for 19.3%, compared with HK\$82.3 billion in 2020, an increase of 14.2%. Most of the funds are invested in education (15 years of free compulsory education), youth (transportation allowance, tuition assistance), old age, medical security, unemployment benefits, maternity, and disasters.

Under the circumstance that the government is vigorously promoting development, housing prices in Hong Kong will not fall but rise. In 2021, housing prices in Hong Kong will increase by 5% per square foot, and young people still cannot afford to house. Even if it is a rental house, the average price is as high as 5,000 Hong Kong dollars per month, which leaves many people with few choices. Most of them can only temporarily hide in the form of shared renting or educational

accommodation in student apartments. Young people enjoy very little rental dividends, and they have to undertake at least 44 hours of work a week. This situation makes the youth group very dissatisfied, and a paradox also arises. The harder they work, the higher the land price in Hong Kong, the more complete the government work facilities, and the better the welfare system; and young people do not have access to urban housing resources, so the increase in land prices is not beneficial to them, and the possibility that they will face next it is an overall increase in the cost of living, rent, and transportation. Except for a few young people in Hong Kong who can survive, it is very difficult for most outsiders or immigrants without a solid foundation in Hong Kong to survive here normally. These people are more like the fuel for urban development. They are passively abandoned after their use value is exhausted. Many young people in Hong Kong even think that the best way out is to go to jail. These materially generated poor have also become a new phenomenon of the poor in modern cities. It means a group of people who have a hard life and work hard, but their progress cannot keep up with the development speed of the city, and they are gradually abandoned.

4. Linking Research about City Living

Before starting to look for a solution to the problem, it is necessary to sort out the relevant research.

Firstly, youth status is a key reference factor for the future development of a city. This has been made clear in the study of the urban coupling effect. Although industrial development and economic indicators are essential, the youth group cannot be ignored. Once the supply of youth labour and creativity in cities is insufficient, new problems and crises will arise in urban development [7].

Secondly, the community environment is no longer a simple problem. Population growth brings the expansion of communities, and the gradual increase of communities leads to the continuous enlargement of cities. In Abuja, Nigeria, a segment of the population is called the occupants of formal spaces. Although the houses are dilapidated, these people still have the corresponding infrastructure, housing, transportation, entertainment, and economic development conditions. Rather than destroying the lives of residents here, poor construction has spawned a unique slum economy; the other part is Nigeria's open-air dwellers, who also host informal spaces. The living conditions of these people are equally worrying, and they also need to face a series of hidden dangers such as health and disease. These people gather in a scattered way, and most of them choose to live in water sources, caves, or densely wooded places. Although there is no hardware, the community of these people is much better. Because of the openness, the communication between people has increased, and the grouping of open-air communities has made these loose communities relatively safe. The Nigerian government does not encourage this state to persist for long. So, they took the necessary steps to make life better for more people. Instead of bringing people directly into the city, however, they took the approach of building new buildings and functions to set up new neighbourhoods to see if they could come together to form new satellite cities. When the development reaches a certain level, new communities will naturally join the city and complement a certain function of the development. In Europe with better conditions, people are beginning to choose compact housing for living. Their furniture designs are compatible with better functions such as storage, display, dining, and more. For others that cannot be achieved, they are often left to the community to solve. This is true in Denmark, Belgium, Sweden and Switzerland [8].

Finally, affordable housing can alleviate housing demand to a certain extent. Research shows that the real estate market in developed countries such as the United States started and developed rapidly because the affordable housing system was established earlier. In these countries, the affordable housing and commercial housing systems have a stable and common development. In addition, the

construction of the affordable housing system is relatively complete, and the investment in construction scale is relatively large. The contribution of affordable housing to housing prices in developed countries such as the United States is about 3:7. Representing Singapore, a newly industrialized country, the Housing Authority has a relatively well-established affordable housing system: the important ratio of affordable housing to house prices is about 2:8. Therefore, the sustainable development of urbanization plays an important role in the social and economic development of the city, which is also related to the degree of integration between the urban population and the city. As one of the key issues of population influx into the city, the housing issue also affects the sustainable development of the city. In addition, in the process of urbanization, the coupling and coordination relationship between the supply of affordable housing and the price of commercial housing in the real estate market has become a key research issue. That is to say, the lever of housing supply will always be biased towards the disadvantaged groups, but the difference between the speed of supply and the speed of economic development will cause this bias to be slow or fast.

5. Experiment with Youth Living

The youth groups should be analyzed more carefully. To prevent them from being affected by urban transition areas, namely, slums, or to cause them to transform into the "new poor", it is reasonable to help them gradually integrate into modern urban life. When carrying out this part of the research, they should subdivide and study their expectations for housing needs, living space needs, personal income, and expenditure ratios, etc., to understand their abilities, interests and needs, and combine these three points to continuously improve the design of their experience. For this reason, in my graduation thesis, topic I took the young people in Kunming, China, as an example, and subdivided their housing needs.

For example, in terms of housing demand, China has commercial housing, housing services (branded housing) provided by hotels or specialized enterprise groups, public rental housing provided by state-owned enterprises or units, and affordable housing. After sample testing, it was found that because of different states, the demand for housing types will also change constantly. Older youths prefer to buy commercial housing, while younger youths do not have enough financial capacity but want to experience a feeling of independence. They prefer public rental housing. The need for personal privacy increases with age beginning in 2020, the term "social fear" has become popular on the Chinese Internet to describe this state of mind. Of course, there are many reasons for autistic social fear, including safety, environment, network atmosphere, personal characteristics, etc. This will aggravate the sense of distance between people in the community, making it difficult for us to simply solve the current problems through space design, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: House Type Requirement at Different Age Level (Data Coming from 800 People and 200 Persons for Each Age).

AGE/HOUSE TYPE	Commercial	Brand	Collective	Affordable
14 AGE---17 AGE	3.69%	13%	81.54%	0.73%
18 AGE---24 AGE	23.4%	13.67%	52.33%	10.6%
24 AGE---35 AGE	67.1%	0.79%	13.47%	18.64%
35 AGE---44 AGE	71.9%	2.91%	7.3%	17.89%

In addition, the research on income also helps us grasp the scale of solving problems and avoid some unrealistic designs. Judging from the income situation of the youth, they have fixed monthly expenses (rent or mortgage), variable expenses, commuting expenses, and meal expenses. In the

previous research, I collected 1,000 samples from 4 different age groups. The survey lasted for 2 months and finally got two curves, which are the income level and the expenditure level. Most respondents struggled to make ends meet before the age of 35, and excessive spending was common. After the age of 35, this situation will gradually change.

Among the expenditure items, the proportion of rent or mortgage expenses is gradually increasing, and this part of income may even exceed 50% in first-tier cities. According to the survey, 24- to 44-year-olds bear the highest rent expenses, which can reach 41% to 47% of the total monthly income. The higher the proportion of fixed expenditure, the less can be invested in space change. In addition, with the development of events such as the increase of family members and the birth of children, the non-fixed expenditure is also increasing, and the pressure on children's education and daily necessity purchase is also increasing. By the age of 35 to 44, this spending reached an average of 33%. In addition, ordinary household cars, high-speed rail, subways, etc., which have been popularized in China, are also dividing up people's income, accounting for about 15%. Therefore, apart from these, young people of the older age group spend only 11% of their income on daily life, such as buying vegetables and cooking. Therefore, the cost of catering may be as high as 54%, and almost three meals a day are solved by takeout. According to this part of the research data, the average share of fixed spending was 37%, the rest were non-fixed spending at an average of 21.5% and commuting at an average of 14.5%. Based on the average monthly income of 2,682 yuan in Southwest China in 2021, the average monthly non-fixed expenditure is 576.63 yuan. This is the minimum budget standard when we carry out house renovations in the later stage. This standard will be adjusted according to the different service groups, and the overall rate will not exceed 21.5%, so as not to affect their lives. For example, referring to the average income of young people in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of 20,000 Hong Kong dollars, the cost of investment in reconstruction should not exceed 4,300 Hong Kong dollars, as shown in Figure 1.

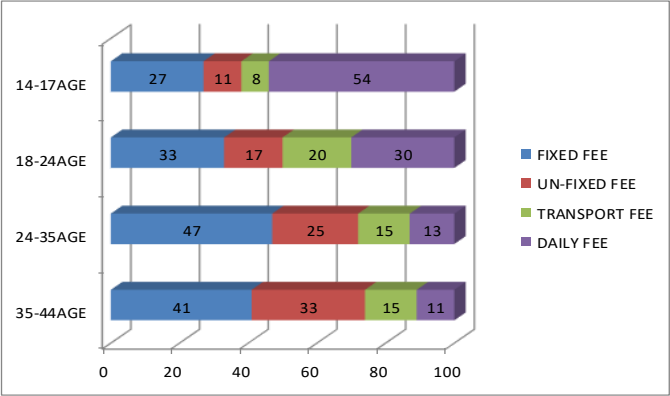


Figure 1: Personal Outcomes Paying Proportion

We should study the empathy mentality of young people, design a community under the premise of the cost of living, and gradually guide them to change to a normal and positive attitude, breaking the current state of "social fear" of non-communication and non-cooperation. In the previous survey, I learned about some needs of young people in the stage of living alone, as shown in the following Figure 2.

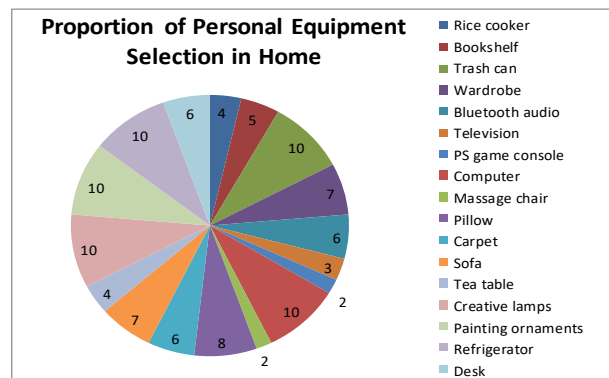


Figure 2: Proportion of Personal Equipment Selection in Home

A yet-to-be-verified study shows that when people are in a good mood, they take the initiative to do things they would otherwise not want to do. Aside from the influence of human psychological factors, being able to be in a comfortable environment can greatly improve a person's work efficiency and increase his desire to socialize to a certain extent. WeChat, LINE, and Facebook all belong to this category. Their popularity confirms people's desire to communicate and express their emotions because this kind of expression can be irresponsible and don't have to worry about follow-up communication problems, a one-sided emotion express. Of course, community design is not aimed at unilateral expression. Of course, we hope that more people can reach practical exchanges and form some beneficial cooperation based on exchanges, to get rid of the isolation and helplessness of young people in the new urban atmosphere. Perfecting the needs is only the first step to achieving the goal. With the help of equipment, young people may find more common languages. In addition to some reasons obtained from the experience of Kowloon, a certain books, music, games, and recipes that they read together. Some other hobbies may help them form empathy. Perhaps with the help of these means, our design in the interactive space will be more useful, especially in the relatively closed public rental housing design, some smaller interactive spaces can play its value. For example, combining Internet thinking and connecting some originally unrelated personal spaces may be able to solve this problem.

Continuing the previous topic, research should better plan space based on the living habits of young people, help them improve their quality of life, and form good habits before integrating into urban life, provided that they have an understanding of their living habits. A more intuitive method is to invite them to live in a real space for some time and record their life trajectories and habits to be helpful for subsequent research. In the previous stage of the experiment, I also sampled related issues, and currently, some preliminary data can provide a reference, such as the living state of the selected objects in my delimited space.

Due to limited conditions, there are large and small choices. The youth living space in some high-density cities will be even smaller than this. I set the space to alpha, meaning large space, and beta, meaning small space. Then I chose some friends to check in and observe their different living habits in the morning and evening. The picture below shows the living time of the test subjects in the delimited space, from dark to light. The longer the stay, the more frequent the use of this part of the space, which may be related to their personal preferences. Sorting these hobbies and contents will also help to select the most important parts to carry out later in the design practice.

6. Conclusion

The youth of Hong Kong SAR, China will be different from some parts of continent China, but many problems exist among young people from all over the world at the same time. To solve the

problem from an architectural point of view, it will focus on the change of space. From experience, it is necessary and useful to learn from the practices of various countries, but from the perspective itself, it is necessary to analyse specific problems in terms of habits and needs. There have been some failures in China in the past, such as helping rural residents have a better life experience. As a result, the budget and design are too different from the living conditions of the countryside itself. The example of the Kowloon Walled City proves that the satisfaction of the residents' own needs is often the key factor in promoting the change of spatial form. Similar to the idea put forward by Louis Sullivan, the form follows function, which is the trend of modern architectural design. In addition, during my study, I also found that community function is valued in both Europe and Africa, which has become a way to alleviate community conflicts and stabilize the social situation. If any region can meet the needs of people and is within the scope permitted by law, there is no right or wrong, high or low. We should also discard the tinted glasses, stop sticking to the view that social order is lacking due to poor economic conditions, and focus more on problem-solving.

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