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C. Y. Choi and Y. K. Chan

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PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND
POPULATION MOVEMENT: A STUDY
OF KWUN TONG, HONG KONG

by

C.Y. Choi* Y.K. Chan

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* Work on this project was done while C.Y. Choi was a staff of The Chinese University of Hong Kong, and he is now a staff of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

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Dr. C.Y. Choi (1942-) received his B.A. (Sociology) from the International Christian University in Japan in 1965, M.A. (Sociology) from the Western Reserve University, U.S.A., in 1967 and his Ph.D. (Demography) from the Australian National University in 1970. He was formerly a Lecturer in Sociology, United College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong and is currently a staff of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

Dr. Y.K. Chan (1944-) received his B.S.Sc. from the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1967 and a Doctorat d'Université (Très Honorable) from the University of Bordeaux, France. Currently he is Lecturer in Sociology, United College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

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PUBLIC HOUSING DEVELOPMENT AND POPULATION MOVEMENT:
A STUDY OF KWUN TONG, HONG KONG

I. Public Housing in Hong Kong

Hong Kong is an extremely crowded metropolis. Her land area of slightly over 1,000 square kilometres is hilly, and the formation of suitable building sites is difficult in many areas. Over 77% of the population (4.5 million in 1977) reside on the built-up areas of Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, and New Kowloon which together constitute only 11% of the total area of Hong Kong. Development of the New Territories had been slow until the early 1970's when it had become clear that the older urban areas will be unable to absorb any further population increase and industrial development. For example, in 1971, Mongkok district has already a population density of over 150,000 persons per square kilometres.

This extreme overcrowdedness of Hong Kong is of course the result of very rapid population growth since the Second World War. Two large scale immigration waves, roughly during 1945-47 and 1949-52, brought into Hong Kong over one million refugees. When the first post-war census was taken in 1961, Hong Kong's population size had already reached the 3 million mark. Birthrate was high, reaching a peak in the mid-1960's when yearly births exceeded 100,000 and there was a continuation of in-migration from China. In the five years of 1961-1966, another 600,000

was added and the population rose to 3.7 million. Although fertility began to fall significantly after 1965, the rate of growth averaged around 2.0 per cent per annum. The pressure of population continued to be high on all facilities and services, particularly housing, throughout the whole post-war period.

Hong Kong's Housing Policy

Hong Kong has always had a problem of housing shortage. Before the Second World War, several commissions of inquiry recommended that low cost housing schemes be made available by the government to alleviate severe housing shortage and to improve sanitary conditions (Pryor, 1973). Although these inquiries did not give rise to concrete policies regarding government low cost housing, they nevertheless indicated that the problem was well recognized.

The post-war situation differs from the pre-war one in one critical aspect. The post-war housing problem was of an overwhelming magnitude. The hundreds of thousands of refugees setting up sheds and huts on the hillside and on roof tops presented a problem not only of accommodation, but also of health, of fire, and of other natural disasters, as well as of public order (Podmore, 1970). So immense was the housing problem that the government after the War discarded its policy of relying

upon private estate developers to provide most or all of the housing units. A Resettlement Division under the Urban Services Department was created to look into the possibility of resettling the refugees. After two disastrous fires in 1954, a Resettlement Department was set up to provide temporary but immediate housing for the 50,000 fire victims. The massive program of resettlement began initially to provide housing for victims of natural disasters and for occupants of dangerous dwellings but later also to resettle squatters.

In 1953, the government estimated the number of squatters at around 300,000 (Hong Kong, 1956). Thereafter the number increased. By 1959 there were about 500,000 squatters; in 1964 they had increased to 550,000. After 1964, the number fell to 443,000 (Hopkins, 1970). In recent years, the squatter population has continued to drop, but only slowly (33%, 1964-1976). The 1976 Squatter Control Survey revealed that there were still 274,427 squatters (Hong Kong, 1977).

At its peak in 1964-1965, the population of squatters formed about 20 per cent of the metropolitan population. These figures are of great significance in view of the effort the government has already put into resettling the squatters. In 1956, two years after the fires of 1954, 69,000 persons were resettled in government multi-storied estates. By 1964, the number of resettled

persons was 544,200, and in 1968 the number of persons residing in government housing estates increased to almost 1 million. With such a large number of persons resettled, the squatter population might be expected to have declined rapidly and that by 1964 almost all squatters would have been resettled. This did not happen, and it is clear that there were constant new additions to the squatter group.

Unlike the situation in many cities in Southeast Asia, the squatters in Hong Kong are not migrants from rural areas. According to surveys done in the 1950's (Johnson, 1966), roughly one half of all squatters consisted of families whose heads were born in Hong Kong or were residents in Hong Kong since 1946 or before. The demand for housing was great. 20% of urban housing was destroyed in World War II and private development after the War had been slow until the mid 1960's. This pushed the rentals up beyond the reach of many poorer families (Munder, 1969). One author concluded that "many of the new migrants since the War crowded older residents out of their accommodation in tenements and took their place" (Hopkins, 1970). A survey in 1968 showed that half of the squatters interviewed were living in private tenements before they became squatters and 45% of these reported that they chose squatting to gain accommodation either rent free or with a low rent (Hopkins, 1970).

In 1963, a "Working Party on Government Policies and Practices with regard to Squatters and Public Housing" estimated that potentially as many as 125,000 persons might be added to the squatter population each year from various sources including natural increase.

In view of the tremendous pressure, the government accelerated its building program of public housing. The Resettlement Department established in 1954 acquired a permanent status in 1958, and immediately raised the target of rehousing 50,000 persons a year to 100,000 and planned to build resettlement blocks of higher quality. The earliest buildings in the mid-1950s were seven-storied H-shaped blocks, with communal washing and toilet facilities on each floor. The rooms varied in size from 86 square feet to 152 square feet, but most of them were 120 square feet designed to house families of 4 to 5 persons. Children under 10 years of age were considered half an adult. These buildings, called Marks I and II, were meant to be temporary, and construction of more of this type was suspended in 1964. Since then, in later designs called Marks III to VI, slightly better facilities were provided, including toilets and water taps in the units. Each unit also had a private balcony for laundries and for cooking. In 1964, following the 1963 Working Party report and a subsequent White Paper, a long-term resettlement building policy was formulated. The yearly target of resettlement was raised again, to

150,000 a year; and in 1966, the 24 square feet per person rule was amended by 35 square feet per person.

The number of persons resettled increased rapidly. In 1964, 10 years after the first resettlement estates were built, about half a million persons were accommodated. By 1969, five years later, over 1 million were resettled, representing about one quarter of the total Hong Kong population.

Table 1

Authorized Population in Public Housing,
By Types of Housing, 1955-1977* (in thousand)

Year	Resettle- ment Estates	Government Low Cost Housing Estates	Housing Authority Estates	Housing Society Estates	Total	Per cent of Hong Kong Population
1955	85	-	-	6	91	4
1959	230	-	17	28	275	9
1961	360	-	39	31	430	14
1964	702	-	128	50	830	25
1965	740	67	133	77	1,017	28
1966	830	67	134	90	1,121	31
1967	944	83	138	96	1,261	34
1968	1,025	127	149	108	1,409	37
1969	1,071	161	167	108	1,507	39
1970	1,094	188	205	113	1,600	40
1971	1,148	258	218	122	1,746	43
1972	1,176	331	218	125	1,850	45
1973 *	1,183		514	128	1,825	43
1974	1,181		565	131	1,877	44
1975	1,180		607	141	1,928	44
1976	1,165		662	145	1,972	44
1977	1,125		736	150	2,011	45

* Not including so-call "Cottage Areas" which had an estimated population of 40,126 at March 1977.

** There is a break in the statistical series with the establishment of the new Housing Department which absorbed all activities formerly under the Resettlement Department and the Housing Authority. Since then, Government Low Cost Housing Estates and Housing Authority Estates have been combined and called Group A Estates, and resettlement estates called Group B Estates.

Source:--

- i) Resettlement Department, Annual Report, 1955/56 - 1972/73. Government Printer, Hong Kong.
- ii) Hong Kong Housing Authority, Annual Report, 1959/60 - 1976/77. Government Printer, Hong Kong.
- iii) Hong Kong Housing Society, Annual Report, 1976. Ye Olde Printeric, Ltd., Hong Kong.

There are three other important housing agencies apart from the Resettlement Department. The one with the longest history is the Housing Society, which was established in 1951 with a low-interest government loan. The Housing Society designed its self-contained flats on the basis of 35 square feet per adult, and these flats were primarily intended for families whose income was under HK\$400 per month. This was subsequently increased to HK\$1,250 per month in 1970; the limit has been lifted up again later and currently varies according to family size and type/location of the accommodation. Primarily a private effort, the Housing Society's building program has been slow relative to the two other housing agencies. Nevertheless, by 1967, over 110,000 persons were housed in the Society flats. Although numerically less impressive, flats designed by the Society are of higher quality and contain private toilets, kitchens, and balconies. This design later served as a model for the Resettlement, Housing Authority, and Low Cost Housing estates.

The second important housing agency, the Housing Authority was established in 1954 with a government loan on a similar basis as the Housing Society. But the management of the Authority was under the control of the Urban Council, about half of the members were appointed by the government and half elected. Again, similar to the Housing Society, self-contained flats were designed

for the lower to middle income families - those earning between HK\$500 to HK\$900 per month, subsequently raised to HK\$1,250 per month in 1970, and to HK\$1,800 per month for a family of three persons to a maximum HK\$2,600 for a family of 10 or more in 1977. Other factors, such as degree of overcrowding and sharing, were also taken into account as criteria for tenant selection. With a larger initial government loan, the Housing Authority had a more rapid building program, and in 1969, Authority estates housed a total of 164,000 persons. Both the Housing Authority and the Housing Society depended on the government for the allocation of sites, and the lack of suitable sites was a constant deterrent to more rapid expansion.

The Authority won the confidence of the government, and in 1962 the government made more funds available to it. Since then the building rate increased relative to the Housing Society. Moreover, at the same time, the government decided to build another type of public housing - the Government Low Cost Housing - and passed the management of these estates to the Housing Authority. The Low Cost Housing estate units were designed and built by the Public Works Department and were intended to be of similar quality as the Authority units. Different from the Resettlement estates, which were intended primarily for squatters and the homeless created by natural disasters, the Low Cost Housing estates were for the lower income groups. In this

sense, the criteria for tenancy were similar to those of the Housing Society and the Housing Authority.

By 1977, nearly two million persons were housed in the various types of public housing. This was 44 per cent of Hong Kong's total population, making the public housing project of Hong Kong one of the most ambitious in all non-socialist countries.

The existence, at least until 1973, of four different public housing bodies is certainly one indication of the lack of coordination and long-term planning for housing provision in Hong Kong. Admittedly, the urgency of the problem made it necessary for the government to accept and encourage any private agency to build low-cost units on a large scale; but the initial reluctance of the government to become the landlord of a substantial proportion of the people is another factor which led to an inability to coordinate the various efforts in a more systematic way. A Housing Board was set up in 1968 as a liaison between the various bodies; only in 1973 was a new Housing Department established to centralize the activities of the Resettlement Department and the Housing Authority. Even then, the Housing Society still maintains its independence. A new Housing Authority, however, was created in 1973 which advises the government on all aspects of housing including the private sector. The Housing Department is established under the new Housing Authority.

Location Problems - The Concept of Industrial New Towns

Almost all public housing is built as estates, that is, as a cluster of buildings housing from a few thousands to tens of thousands of persons. The largest single estate houses more than 100,000 persons. In the newer public housing estates, the ground floor of each building is used for commercial purpose, for shops of various kinds. Market places, schools, playgrounds, social welfare agencies, banks, post offices, and other community services are also located within the estates. Apart from work, employment, and some social utilities and recreation, the estates are planned to be almost self-sufficient communities. Consequently sites of considerable size are needed for their construction. Because the urban built-up areas are already congested, most of the estates are built in the fringes of the urban area, on the south side of Hong Kong Island, in New Kowloon, and, more recently, in the New Territories. Much of the redistribution of population towards these areas is thus the result of the location of public housing estates; and government policies on allocating sites for this purpose will more or less determine, in a broad sense, the pattern of population distribution in Hong Kong in the future.

While many of the earlier housing projects were developed primarily as an immediate relief to housing shortages and therefore had not taken proper consideration

of other social and economic aspects such as community facilities and employment location, later projects were designed with a view to establish integrated and partly self-sufficient industrial new towns. Not only are many community facilities provided within or adjacent to public housing estates, plans for these estates often include the provision of factory sites for industrial development. The availability of a large pool of labour force in nearby estates is an added attraction to industries in these new towns.

These developments offer solutions to the relief of residential overcrowding and to a more rationalized location of Hong Kong's rapidly developing industries. Many small scale industries previously located in overcrowded residential areas have been assisted to relocate to new premises in new towns. Establishments of larger-scale enterprise are also assisted because suitable sites are now available. The earlier new towns, i.e. Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan, have now become Hong Kong's main industrial centres.

In 1972, Hong Kong Government announced a ten-year housing plan to house a further 1.5 million population which, according to the Hong Kong Housing Authority, would provide "permanent self-contained accommodation, in a reasonable environment, for virtually everyone in Hong Kong" (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 1973-74). Although

some of these new housing developments would be re-developments of older estates, large portion of it would be the further development of new towns in the New Territories. Tsuen Wan New Town is expected to house about 860,000 persons, Sha Tin New Town to house 524,000 persons and Tuen Mun New Town to house 486,000 persons. Concurrent with these major new towns, expansion of the market towns of Tai Po, Fanling, Shek Wu Hui and Yeun Long will take place to meet an eventual population in the region of 400,000 people (Hong Kong, 1977). The projected population for these developments in the New Territories is estimated to be over 2.1 million, or more than twice the population size in 1976. This population target is expected to be achieved by 1985 (Hong Kong, 1976).

A system of industrial-residential new towns is rapidly becoming the mode of living in Hong Kong. The overcrowded and appalling conditions of many older built-up residential areas guarantee a continued demand for low cost public housing. While the rent and purchase price of private dwelling units are beyond the reach of many (and they would still be rising), public housing in one of these industrial new towns is often the only realistic answer.

The concept of industrial new towns has emerged over a considerably long period of time in which solutions to the dual problem of residential congestion and industrial

land shortages were formulated and tested. Redevelopment of built-up areas would not have opened up enough land for the building of sizable new towns. The necessity to build fast for large number of people left no choice but to open up new sites. When new sites are formed, it is possible to integrate industrial and residential development planning. It is in this context that Kwun Tong as the first planned industrial new town is developed and tried.

II. Kwun Tong and the Role of Housing in Its Development

Proposals for the development of Kwun Tong was made in the 1950s when the government attempted to provide more industrial sites for the booming industry. Available land at that time was already fully occupied and industrialists urged the government to take early action (Kwun Tong Kaifong Association, 1975). An Inter-Departmental Committee was established in 1954 and this Committee recommended Kwun Tong as the site for the first planned industrial development. There are several reasons for this choice (Y.K. Chan, 1973):

1. Kwun Tong was a refuse dump and the 1,000 squatters could be cleared without much difficulties.
2. The geological structure facilitated site formation - the hills north of Kwun Tong were badly eroded and could be levelled easily.

Soil excavated could be used to reclaim land from the sea.

3. Kwun Tong is adjacent to the Kowloon built-up area and this close contact is an advantage because Kwun Tong was not planned to be fully self-sufficient.
4. Strategically located, Kwun Tong could be linked to other part of Kowloon by an improved road system and to Hong Kong Island by sea.

The recommendations of this Inter-Departmental Committee was accepted and work began in late 1954. In 1956, the government published the "Kwun Tong Development Plan" which proposes the development of Kwun Tong to house about 120,000 persons. The plan also provided for a commercial centre with shops, offices, schools, cinemas, markets and other public amenities, four residential areas, a public park and a swimming pool.

As industrial growth has been rapid, sites released by the government were keenly sought after by industrialists. Factories and high rise factory buildings were quickly built. As early as 1958, production in some factories had already started. Up to 1971, private investment in building cost alone was estimated to be over 1,000 million dollars; this is several times more than the estimated amount which the government spent on reclamation and site formation (Y.K. Chan, 1973). Much of these investment had

been on industrial development. In December 1975, factories operating in Kwun Tong were employing 105,000 persons or 15.5% of the total Hong Kong labour force (Hong Kong, 1976).

Besides the provision of industrial land which led to the growth of industries, another important aspect in the development of Kwun Tong is the provision of public housing which provided low cost residential units for about half a million population in the area.

The building of public housing schemes had started in 1958-59; the first was "Garden Estate", a Hong Kong Housing Society project which completed its stage-one building programme in 1960 and stage-two programme in 1966. The former Resettlement Department of the government also started its building programme in Jordan Valley and Tsui Ping Road in the late 1950s.

In 1961, the Kwun Tong area, comprising of Ngau Tau Kok and Lei Yu Mun census districts, had a population of 81,000. By 1966, the population had grown to 252,000 and further to 553,000 by 1971. The 1976 census counted 575,000 persons in Kwun Tong, the majority (over 78%) lived in public housing estates. In a brief 20 years, Kwun Tong has become a major residential complex of more than half-a-million population. The number of population residing in all public housing estates and their growth and distribution is as follows:

Table 2

Authorized Public Housing Population in Kwun Tong, 1973-77

Estates	1971 census	1973 ^a	1974 ^a	1975 ^a	1976 ^a	1977 ^a
Ping Shek	22,802	27,385	27,322	27,511	27,183	26,861
Wo Lok	12,204	12,283	12,173	12,149	11,910	11,715
Upper Ngau Tak Kok	35,780	37,477	37,154	36,891	36,428	35,812
Kwun Tong (L.Y.M.R.)	7,156	6,806	6,439	6,456	6,337	6,239
Ko Chiu Road	(b)	17,378	19,875	22,127	22,302	22,305
Garden Estate	20,641	21,110	22,230	22,230	22,230	22,230
Yau Tong	17,243	27,185	27,098	26,695	26,448	26,206
Lam Tin	51,432	67,985	76,177	86,504	91,867	91,831
Kwun Tong (T.P.R.)	44,446	55,405	54,289	53,893	52,091	80,867
Lower Ngau Tau Kok	48,863	54,930	55,058	55,515	55,294	54,862
Jordan Valley	15,589	19,456	18,953	18,760	17,604	16,566
Sau Mau Ping	81,300	116,501	123,659	125,501	129,069	128,464
All Estates	357,456	463,906	480,427	494,232	498,763	493,958

(a) Authorized population

(b) Established in 1972

Source:-

- i) 1971 Census, private communication.
- ii) Housing Authority, Annual Reports, 1973/74, 1974/75, 1975/76 & 1976/77. Government Printer, Hong Kong.
- iii) Hong Kong Housing Society, Annual Reports, 1973-1976. Ye Olde Printer, Ltd., Hong Kong.

The number of residents in all estates increased by about 35,000 between 1973 and 1976, or 7.5 per cent in three years. Some of this represent further completion of estate building programmes (e.g. Lam Tin), but much of it represent natural increase. And the decrease of approximately 4,000 people between 1976 and 1977 may reflect the out-movement of the younger generation who became married (will be elaborated in later section).

Although public housing building programmes appear to have reached a saturation point, and further development appears to be restricted to the private sector, the importance of public housing in Kwun Tong is evident. Over 80 per cent of Kwun Tong's residents now live in public housing.

III. Population Movements in Kwun Tong

Movements into Kwun Tong

The residential movements into Kwun Tong's public housing estates are not entirely voluntary. The Resettlement Estates (now called Group B Estates), by regulation, resettle those who urgently need immediate housing. Under urgent circumstances, there is very little left for the individuals to choose from. Thus, government officials decide the location of their settlement depending on the availability of vacant units. A large proportion of Kwun Tong's residents had moved to Kwun Tong through this

process of allocation. The other three types of public housing accept applications from eligible families. Eligibility criteria include monthly income, number of persons in the household, urgency of need for housing assistance etc. Formerly, different criteria were applied to different types of housing, but these were standardized since 1973 after the new Housing Department assumed the responsibility of the former Resettlement Department and Housing Authority. Although in theory, individual households can apply for particular types of units to suit their own requirements, the allotment of units to applicants is determined more by the availability of vacant units than by individual choice. In theory, it is possible for an individual household to reject an offer; but in practice, the waiting list is so long that if one rejects an offer of a relatively undesirable located unit, one might have to wait for as long as four to five years before another offer could be made again. The urgency of housing has made it necessary for individual families to accept almost any offer.

The origin of Kwun Tong's residents is, therefore, very diverse. A 1975 survey (Choi, C.Y. and Chan, Y.K., 1977)* indicated that many (12%) have moved to Kwun Tong.

* This is a survey of 1,293 households in Kwun Tong. The following discussion of residential movements utilizes data from this survey.

from as far as Hong Kong Island, and many had moved many times previously before they finally moved to Kwun Tong. The average frequency of residential movement since marriage is 2.2 times but over 30% moved 3 times or more.

Among those who moved from other areas to Kwun Tong, a large majority had moved from a private dwelling outside of Kwun Tong to a public housing estate. Many also moved to a private estate (13%). But again very few moved from public housing elsewhere to a private dwelling in Kwun Tong. Transfers within public housing sectors were also infrequent among those who had moved from outside of Kwun Tong.

Table 3

Percentage Distribution of Movements by Types
and by Place of Previous Residence

Type of Move	From Kwun Tong & Kai Tak	From other Areas	All origins
	Weighed* %	Weighed* %	Weighed %
Private-Private	11	13	12
Public-Private	3	1	2
Private-Public	55	79	66
Public-Public	32	7	20
Total %	100	100	100
Number of households	601	491	1,092

* The sampling fraction differed between public and private sectors, the weighed percentage corrects the over-sampling of private housing sector.

Source:- Housing and Internal Migration Survey, Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, winter 1975.

Overall, public housing acted as destination for 86 per cent, and private housing for only 14 per cent of all moves. The public-to-private movements were rare and insignificant in total movements. Much of the private housing in Kwun Tong were occupied by households which previously were in private housing.

The reasons for the above pattern of movement are not difficult to find. Public housing development is of much larger scale than private development and rent in public housing is often only a fraction of the market rent. In spite of the small size of public housing units, they are often larger than the rooms and bed-spaces in the private units. The reasons for moving to Kwun Tong are often stated as "space" and "demolition". In the private sector, 39 per cent of all those who moved into Kwun Tong said that "space" was the important factor for their moves and 20 per cent mentioned "demolition". This pattern does not vary between this district of last residence although the lack of "space" as a motivation to move appears to be strongest (53%) among those from New Kowloon, and "demolition" the strongest (31%) among those from Hong Kong Island. These differences, however, are slight. A large proportion (41%) have moved to a self-contained flat in Kwun Tong from rooms/bedspaces elsewhere; this represents an important step in social upward mobility. Some have become owners of flats although the number involved is small.

Table 4

Type of Residence before moving to Kwun Tong*

Type of last residence	Type of residence			
	Public		Private	
	No.	%	No.	%
<u>Private</u>				
Flat	31	(5)	165	(36)
Room	146	(23)	181	(39)
Other Private	83	(13)	42	(9)
Temp. Structure	222	(35)	16	(4)
<u>Public</u>				
Group A	21	(3)	16	(4)
Group B	88	(14)	36	(8)
Cottages	41	(7)	3	(1)
Total	632	(100)	459	(101)

* Excluding 202 cases of new households

Source:- Housing and Internal Migration Survey, Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, winter 1975.

In the public sector, many more were from temporary structures, bed-spaces, rooftop, and sheds, etc. This is necessarily so because public housing was designed to resettle persons in need of housing.

Movements within Kwun Tong

Many of those who moved frequently had moved within Kwun Tong, frequently as squatters until public housing was available to them, and this explains the large proportion of households which had Kwun Tong as their previous residence (Table 3).

Movements within Kwun Tong are important as a component of total moves. Of all previous moves, 30 per cent of households in public housing and 29 per cent of households in private housing had moved from an address within Kwun Tong. The establishment of new households are also important, but they are more significant in the private sector. Single persons who live in public housing Group B (former Resettlement) estates could be granted, upon marriage, units in Group B estates for the new households, but they are not eligible to apply for Group A estates. New households which are allocated units in public housing estates are not many.

Much of the movements within Kwun Tong are movements from the private sector to the public sector. Movements from public to private are much less frequent and indicate

the stability of residents in public housing estates. Low rent would appear to be the main factor. There are also considerable movements within the public sector and these represent the transfer of temporary government housing schemes (called Licensed Areas or Cottages) to the estates and the reallocation of suitable units within estates to households whose size had changed.

Movements out of Kwun Tong and/or out of Public Housing

In a community as new and as rapidly growing as Kwun Tong, one does not expect much out-migration from the community. Neither does one expect much out-migration from the public housing estates because public housing units are already a big improvement upon private units of similar cost and rent. Nevertheless, the 1975 survey and incomplete data from public housing records (Choi and Chan, 1977) show the existence of some out-migration of individuals and households from Kwun Tong and from public housing estates.

Marriage migration appears to be the most important form of migration for single individuals, but they do not represent the total volume of individual migration. Other motivations for out-migration includes work, overcrowding and transportation problems.

Data from the 1975 survey show that apart from marriages, overcrowding is an important reason for members of households to move away. 13% of movements away from public housing estates are of this type.

Much of the movements away from their family of origin are movements to the private sector; this is true regardless of the original type of housing. Overall, 49 per cent moved to "rooms" and similar accommodations in the private sector. There is, however, an important proportion (38%) among the public sector who moved within this sector.

Table 5

Type of Housing to which the First Out-Migrant had moved

Destination: Type of Housing	Origin				Total Weighed Distribution
	Type of Housing				
	Public		Private		
	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>No.</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>%</u>
Flat	10	10	21	34	13
Room	42	42	25	40	41
Other Private	8	8	6	10	8
Group A	10	10	3	5	9
Group B	28	28	5	8	25
Cottage	2	2	-	-	2
Temp. Structure	2	2	2	3	2
All types	102	100	62	100	100

Source:- Housing and Internal Migration Survey, Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, winter 1975.

This reflects some successful effort within public housing in the absorption of population growth. But the trend is clear; when the sons/daughters have grown up (regardless of whether these households are in the private or public sector), they move to the private sector and occupy poor housing. Only very few, (particularly among public housing households), can afford to rent/buy a flat when they move away from their household of origin. This implies a large proportion of the newly married who, because of unavailability of public housing and high rent in the private sector, have to be satisfied with just rooms or even less.

The choice of location is also very much limited. A large proportion found rooms and other accommodations in Kwun Tong (33%) and in nearby Kai Tak (13%), while others moved back to older private residential areas (17% to Kowloon Peninsula, 3% to other New Kowloon etc.).

This pattern of out-migration of young adults suggests a migration cycle process which is probably unique to urban environments where public housing dominates the housing scene. This migration cycle involves the following steps:

1. Population growth creates intense housing shortage, this shortage becomes more severe when old private units become unfit for dwelling.

2. Government builds public housing in the periphery of built-up areas to provide low cost dwelling units for people affected by housing shortage.
3. Massive transfer of population and families from built-up areas to the periphery occurs as public housing programs are completed.
4. Families in public housing estates grow and their children reach the ages of marriage and form independent households. Congestion in public housing units prevents the formation of joint families, and although the married sons/daughters as well as parents/parents-in-laws might wish to reside together, this is not possible in most cases.
5. Continued severe housing shortage makes it difficult for housing authorities to provide additional units for these married sons and daughters; the long waiting list of applications from the private sector for public housing exerts great demand.
6. For reasons of marriage, change of location of work or simply of the desire to live independently, young adults will need to move back to the private housing sector. Since rent is high, they will have to satisfy with inferior accommodation.

7. Some of the older built-up areas which were vacated earlier when the population moved to public housing estates, would now have been re-developed. New residential buildings would have been built. These new developments provide some housing for those who now move back to these areas from public housing estates.

There is not enough evidence to measure the extent of this migration cycle, but there is no doubt that this exists and will become prevalent as more children grow to adulthood.

Commuting and Away from Home

It could very well be expected that Kwun Tong residents would become the major supply of labour force for local industries. This, however, is not entirely the case. A 1970 survey reported that only 48 per cent of all employees actually lived in Kwun Tong and the rest commuted from other areas. While 60% of all "general" workers were recruited from within Kwun Tong, only 24 per cent of all clerical and managerial ones were recruited locally (V. Mok, 1972).

Similarly, among the working population in Kwun Tong, only 54.4 per cent worked locally, the rest commuted to other localities for employment. This exchange of labour force between Kwun Tong and other areas shows that

much of the work created in Kwun Tong was of skilled and unskilled blue-collar type and those who were not in these occupations had found it necessary to work outside of Kwun Tong. It also reflects the very rapid growth of Kwun Tong which had not left enough time for adjustments.

Data from the 1975 survey (Choi and Chan, 1977) also indicate that, in both private and public dwelling units, some members of households spend several nights a week away from their family; many spend as many as four nights a week away from home. The survey counted 13.4% of all households having at least one person in the household who frequently spends nights away from home (3% having more than one member). The stated reasons for staying away are overwhelmingly "close to work and school", and imply the acute problems involved in commuting; but the congested housing condition is certainly another reason, although it is not stated as such. Almost all those who stay out frequently stay with friends and very few stay with relatives. This is true among those in public housing and also among those in private housing.

A significant finding concerning living away from home is that many are male heads of households. In total, 3% of all households interviewed had their male heads living away from home for more than 3 nights a week. In the private sector, this is 33% of all persons who

frequently live away from home, and in the public sector, where there are also considerable sons who do likewise, male heads are 22% of the total.

The problems of adjustment, which might arise when the male head is often away, have not been investigated thoroughly and should constitute one important topic of social research in Hong Kong.

IV. Discussions

About 45% of Hong Kong's present population live in public housing estates and a large proportion of public housing are constructed as part of new town development in Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan. More new towns are being developed in the New Territories and their population will eventually be about 25 per cent of the total Hong Kong population. This paper on Kwun Tong has concentrated on the effect of housing policy on the movement of population and its implications.

Public housing and new towns play an important role in the economic and social life of Hong Kong's population. The future distribution of population and industries is almost totally dependent on the location of public housing and new towns, thus influencing transportation, land-use and other economic developments in the regions affected by these new towns. Social and family life too will be greatly

influenced by the type of physical environment in these public housing estates and the facilities provided. The Kwun Tong study gives us some clues as to what life in Hong Kong's new towns would be like if present housing policies continue.

It is beyond doubt that public housing in Kwun Tong is a great improvement over the shabby squatter huts and congested tenement flats which many Hong Kong residents have to be contented with. Although critics can rank Hong Kong's public housing as "primitive" by most "objective" standards, there is nevertheless some indication of satisfaction from Kwun Tong's public housing residents.

There are, however, several emerging problems:

1. With children now growing to adulthood, extreme congestion and transportation problems have caused many young people as well as male heads to spend several nights a week away from home. In some households, this has meant early separation of adult children from the family before they are married; and in other households, this has meant the regular absence of the father from the family. This, together with the increasing rate of entry into the labour force for young people and women, will have important influence on the Hong Kong family.
2. Present housing policy accepts applications for public housing from families and not from individuals. Young people reaching marriageable age will need to move

away from public housing and to "return" to private housing upon marriage. This results in a migration cycle involving 2 generations - the parents generation moving from the private housing sector to the public, usually from old built-up areas to newly developed areas, and the children generation making the return moves, although private buildings in the old built-up areas may now be re-developed.

3. As the standard of living slowly rises, there will also be a rise in the level of demand concerning space and the quality of dwelling units. What is being offered at present is perhaps adequate now, especially when they are compared with the past, but the level of tolerance among residents in regard to space and quality of their units may not continue for long. This problem will become specially acute if the private housing sector shows rapid improvements. In the recent one or two years, there has been substantial upgrade of private housing qualities and this can be expected to continue. It is perhaps reasonable to expect those who become dissatisfied with public housing to move out to private ones. But this could lead to the gradual stratification of the society into two layers - the wealthy ones living in private residential buildings and the poor in public housing. This is not the situation now, and should not be in the future. It is

important to improve the quality of public housing, even though this may imply an increase in rent. Given the increased income and the very low proportion of expenditure spent on public housing, it is reasonable to assume that those residing in public housing units are willing to pay slightly more for better accommodation.

4. Kwun Tong is a city in itself, if only in terms of population size. If Kwun Tong is administered as a city, various economic and social policies would be co-ordinated as much as possible. There is a case for Hong Kong to establish "regional" administration units (e.g. New Town administrations) in its governmental structure so that policies concerning housing, industry, transport, education, etc. can be co-ordinated for the benefit of the regions. Perhaps, Kwun Tong, being near the main built-up areas, is not suitable for separate administration, but other new towns would benefit from the experience of Kwun Tong.

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