



# VICTORIA BARRACKS OF DISAPPEARANCE: CONTESTED POST-MILITARY LANDSCAPE IN HIGH-DENSITY URBAN HONG KONG

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## Abstract

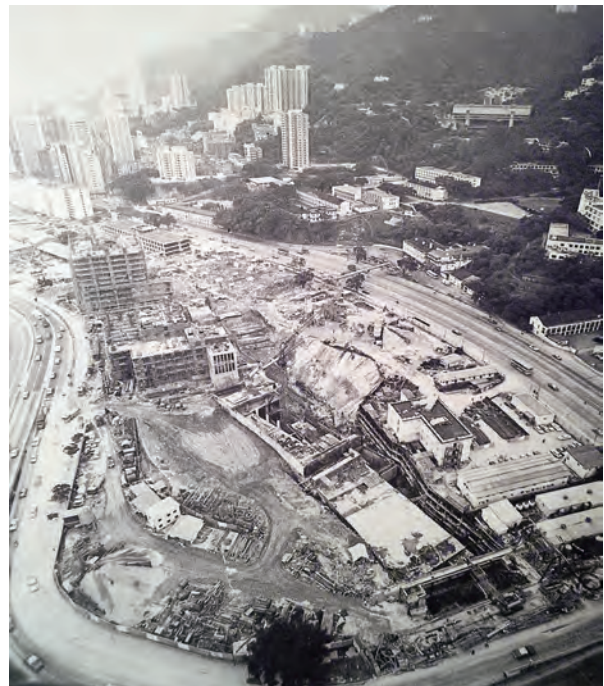
*This research paper examines the post-military landscape of the Victoria Barracks regarding the high-density urbanism in Hong Kong from the 1970s to the 2000s. The article first interprets the concept of post-military landscape according to the ideology and urbanism of the then Hong Kong society. It then studies three plans of the Victoria Barracks of different stages, showing contestations between domestic, commercial and administrative powers in controlling the military redevelopment. Several contemporary architectural projects on the site will also provide an alternative view of the transformation according to the local economic laissez-faire policy. Its influence to the unsatisfactory heritage protection leads to the disappearance and false representation of the identity of this particular military and cultural heritage.*

**Keywords:** Post-military landscape, Built Heritage, Victoria Barracks, Hong Kong Park, laissez-faire planning

## INTRODUCTION

When the Hong Kong government started the new underground South Island Line in 2009, there was a series of negotiations and contests around the construction site closed to the Admiralty Station, the first Mass Transit Railway station built on the metropolitan island. This area accumulates an extensive collection of post-war modern architecture designed by leading international architects such as Paul Rudolf, I. M. Pei, and Norman Foster [Fig. 1]. Another issue that addresses the project is the formation of the Hong Kong Park where a military campus called the Victoria Barracks once located. The Victoria Barracks dated back to the nineteenth and twentieth-century and was transferred by the British Forces to the Hong Kong government in 1979. The site is of critical importance because, in the official archaeological watching brief, its military heritage and underground artefacts require further onsite exploration and thorough examination. It arose the public attention back to the entire post-military development, questioning its history, progress, and suffering during the transformation from a restrictive zone into the public realm. Although heritages of military buildings have been renovated and converted, we argue that there was little awareness of preserving the whole site regarding post-military landscape. While the public favour this redevelopment, we maintain that it implies a disappearing heritage being contested by powers, which can be reflected by both early versions of redevelopment planning and the following changes in the architectural space. This paper challenges the proto-concept of post-military landscape protection in the high-density urban area of Hong Kong through manners of cultural representation, urban design, and built environment, all indicative of a culture of disappearance.

This paper approaches the question of a military landscape from the perspectives of heritage, planning and redevelopment issues. It pinpoints the collective memories of the post-military landscape in defining contemporary urban life. In the second part,



*Figure 1. Admiralty Station took shape with the Victoria Barracks on the slope in the background, April 1979 (Source: BJHKC, 1980:69).*

it will examine three early zoning plans of the redevelopment. In so doing, it discloses a vicissitude of compromise between the needs of urbanisation, commercialisation, heritage protection, public leisure and entertainment. By juxtaposing a final layout of the Hong Kong Park with a later architectural design on site, the Asia Society Hong Kong Center (ASHK), it demonstrates the unique strategies of either denying or promoting such a disappearing military landscape.

## POST-MILITARY LANDSCAPE: HERITAGE, PLANNING AND REDEVELOPMENT

The Second World War has primarily changed the topological formation of both the rural and urban areas in many countries. Trenches extend along the sea coast in Northern France and remain there even today. Airfields spread all over the UK, covering a large amount of grassland, fertile crop fields, and transportation cores. Shipyards have been continuously military-oriented and manufactured warships for several years. In the post-Cold-War period, this topology had to change. With military bases mostly closed, unnecessary costs of maintaining military infrastructure must be reduced to give way to productive civic modes and domestic functions (Robinson, 2013). How to recover the urban fabrics and lifestyles of these military sites becomes a dominant issue that addresses the disciplines of geography politics, economics, sociology, and urban planning. The study of this recovery has been claimed either as 'new military urbanism' (Graham, 2011), or the 'landscape of power' by landscapists (Crowe, 1958). On the other hand, many military bases, especially in the United States, had to be closed after the war and economic recession because of a limited budget to maintain the controlling network. They often occupy the places like central dock bays (e.g. Charlestown Navy Yard in Boston), railway crosses, or scenic views of the landscape along the straits (e.g. the Presidio of San Francisco). Apart from issues of heavy contamination or pollution, to make full use of these sites for domestic urban growth would bring economic benefits to post-industrial cities.

Only recently, the cultural significance of the 'military landscape' has been widely noticed due to its particular built heritage once open to the public. Military geographer Rachel Woodward identifies that this special military features of the site could intensively interact and manipulate ways of contemporary lives (Woodward, 2014:40-61). A place of the military landscape is always believed to associate with the process of different military features (Pearson, 2012:115-133; Osborne, 2004), defence (Gold and Revill, 2000; Philo, 2012:1-7), or conflicts involving similar activities. Domestic urban or rural space with military existence can also be shaped by its morphology, while infrastructure is highly controlled and altered according to the changing military needs (Pearson, Coates and Cole, 2010). Civilian experience is subject to the over-arching manner of this strange process of domesticity; and the infrastructure and memories of war that still remind visitors of stress and pressure, even after the disfranchisement of conflict and power. Military sociologist Martin Shaw maintains that a new type of social mobility around demilitarisation will always confront two basic principles: the smaller professionalised and technologized forces on the one hand, and the growing space for non-militarized citizenship with more individual freedom on the other (Shaw, 1991). The post-military landscape, therefore, can potentially contribute to the latter and develop political and cultural heritages and memories that may be inherited by the civilian present as well as urban forms that are capable of regulating future urbanisation (Bagaeen, 2006:339-352). The consequence is to commemoration of the sites, recreation or spectacles to visit; and their built forms on site – bunkers, trenches, dormitories, or ammunitions alike – may be felt not only by that military personnel and

their families but also by the civilians within the range of their power who share the memory of being once militarized.

Literature of urban planning and design, on the other hand, usually identifies the phenomenon as a partial success to the society, regarding its spatial characteristics, public and private intervention and planning system. (Ponzini and Vani, 2014:56-73) However in practice, what influences more upon the communities surrounding closed bases is the temporary loss of jobs and that they suffer initial economic disruption. Local communities have to adapt to new lifestyles and go through long-term economic recovery by increasing residential real estate value and diversifying retail sales and commercial functions.<sup>2</sup> Besides, this kind of transformation often occurs when critical conditions of public finance and political reconstruction of citizenship are underway. Stakeholders and governments struggle to maximise the revenue incomes from real estate conversion through the process, leaving local communities attained to inadequate living conditions and public services, sometimes even the relocation to undeveloped suburban areas, all of which dismantle original urban patterns and social appreciation.

Therefore, the redevelopment of the post-military landscape often leads to urban contestation due to mainly two reasons. First, conventional methods of renewal oriented by heritage and commemoration are at large incapable of dealing with this public issue from a critical point of view. They take indistinctive manners to interpret and represent military heritages comparing to other types of cultural sites. It leads to a situation that to preserve military sites into parks is more or less identical to that of a natural preserve. For most of the times, they require dominant interference by the government. Second, alternatively, the commercialisation of the sites during the process of outsourcing military facilities to public realms may seriously be subject to capitalist economies, urbanisation and dissolving communities. It follows the logic in seeking business potentials through land sales, facility renting, or government revenue. In either way, the rising expectation in conservation may instigate multi-level struggles between international tensions, social interests of power, and the civic maturation of self-identity.

In the postwar Hong Kong, the high-density urban transformation of the post-military society under the *laissez-faire* planning strategy only makes this economic and civic struggle even worse. Interests of private developers predominated the conversion process of all types of urban sites, also corrupting the formation and application of statutory planning ordinances (Cuthbert, 1995:293-310). The government claimed to take a 'positive non-interventionism' in pursuit of wealth, which led to an indiscernible extinction of public domains when public space was gradually transferred into the hands of private sectors (Cuthbert and McKinnell, 1997:295-311). In this regard, the statutory plans amended since 1939 can only be referred to as guidance without legal power, and thus often override by private business development. Historical conservation and environmental protection received rare attention in official commitment until recently, and thus placed little importance on corporate interests during the 1980s, the *Belle Époque* of Hong Kong's urban growth. It was just during this years that the Victoria Barracks, one of the military campuses on the Hong Kong Island, was under transformation [Fig. 2]. It



Figure 2. Early development in the area of Hong Kong Island, 1845, showing the barracks in the middle. Source: Ordnance Map of Hong Kong, surveyed by Lieutenant Collinson of the Royal Engineers. Reproduced with the permission of the National Library of Scotland. Document No. Map.Area.D6 (101).

would destine to be, as mourned by the prestige planning theorist Roger Bristow, a setback in the system of public participatory planning that may never recover ever since (Bristow, 1984:239). A thorough critical review of its historical transition, urban development, and social cohesion within the political and social agenda of Hong Kong can tell us how the barracks testifies the yet-to-recover urban contestation.

### HONG KONG IN THE AGE OF POSTWAR BRITISH WITHDRAWAL

The tension of the worldwide military withdrawal of the British Army was all-encompassing in the around-1980s Hong Kong. Comparing to Singapore, Malaysia, and other typical post-colonial territories, Hong Kong formulated her idiosyncrasy in urban form and self-identity of citizenship during the rocketing progress. The disappearance of British authority over the island subjugated the locals into the paradox as 'space of disappearance', for which the entire society confronted with two futures – capitalism of the west and the forthcoming socialism of the mainland China. Between them, cultural scholar Ackbar Abbas identifies popular mental insecurity that was 'contingency, on geographic and historical accidents, shaped by times and circumstances beyond its control and by pragmatic accommodation to events' (Abbas, 1997:73). Subject to this particular ideological struggle, the rising concern about heritage without laws and guidelines turned to be part of actions that displaced memory by using unclear or even false representations of identity as a way to produce new ones. The act of converting old structures quite often kept their real history untold or distorted. By drawing the case in which the Victorian-style Flagstaff House in the Victoria Barracks was transformed into the Chinese Teaware Museum, Abbas argues that to make false representations in the name of preservation has distanced a place from its colonial context. Memories disappear and re-appear as something else.

Cultural disappearance, entangled with the *laissez-faire* strategy of urban planning, has significant impacts on local historical heritage. The foundation of



Figure 3. Site plan of the Victoria Barracks, 1976. Resource: Historical Record Office, Hong Kong. Document No. MM-0115.

the first conservation body, the Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance, was belated until 1976. Hong Kong Heritage Society was established in 1977 and was disbanded later in 1983, claiming its short-lived responsibility of heritage protection (Hong Kong Heritage Society, 1977:11-14). The Antiquities Advisory Board, active since 1976, struggled to secure 39 historical sites or architecture under the condition of low government funding. It said that the then Governor-in-Council would more likely to approve the cases located in distant areas rather than those in the central districts (Urban Services Department, 1979). More historic structures had been demolished or transferred to new locations in a principle of total sanitisation and gentrification, which quite often destroys the original structures, appearance and function.

It is particularly true in the perspective of post-military landscape protection in Hong Kong. The conversion of the Victoria Barracks started in 1977 [Fig. 3]. The early stage of its redevelopment showed by three rounds of zoning plans envisioned the future Hong Kong Park at the centre of a high-density commercial district, which is a rare local case of military redevelopment. Indeed, the park receives overwhelming positive feedbacks. This park design has multiple relations to the architectural projects within the site. Neither the making of this park nor architecture nearby has seriously reviewed the conservation strategy of the historical landscape. With careful examination, the whole process of transformation camouflaged the urban contestation. Cuthbert would have identified the Victoria Barracks as nothing but a total change,<sup>3</sup> a feature that even still prevails the contemporary awareness of antiquity.

### THE VICTORIA BARRACKS IN CONTESTATION: THREE ZONING PLANS OF THE LATE 1970s

The conversion of the Victoria Barracks started in 1977 when the British government decided to return a series of military sites to the general public. The location of the Victoria Barracks was a piece of land at the centre of the high-density urban area on the island, overseeing the commercial building district of Admiralty. The whole region underwent constant historical changes since the Sino-British War in 1840. When the site became part of the colonial city then

known as Queenstown, the military forces choose to allocate the main headquarters on the hillside terrace, where visitors could enjoy the beautiful scenery up to the Bowrington Area (now called Causeway Bay). Besides, the British Navy also took a share of this central land by the sea. The two military sites cut off the connection between the towns already established at both sides (Lo, 1992:150-154 and 163). With passing decades, this urban pattern of military existence did not entirely change. Several rounds of urban proposals to relocate the campus out from the site turned out fruitless due to the negative feedback from the military forces (Bristow, 1984:37-38 and 231-242; Sayer and Evans, 1975:88). In 1957, some surplus sites around the Murray Barracks, Parade Ground, and Dockyard were on sale. A resultant statutory plan (LH3/12) was issued in 1961; and it foresaw the large-scale commercial construction around the location of Admiralty, wherein the first MTR line was announced in 1974 to connect the Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon City across the strait.

To explore the future of the Victoria Barracks, the then Governor-in-Council commissioned a special team of scholars to study the preliminary developmental scheme.<sup>4</sup> After several months, the first planning proposal was announced in June 1977 [Fig. 4]. The Victoria Barracks Planning Committee identified at least three aspects of development that the conversion should maintain. Firstly and most importantly, the new district should provide sufficient land plots and infrastructure for the future commercial growth. Second, the entire development should return the government revenue as soon as possible by both direct (land sales) and indirect (e.g. rent rates, taxes, tourist incomes) ways. Third, if with both the first two goals accomplished, then it was also necessary to protect and convert a plethora of existing buildings according to their heritage significance (Victoria Barracks Planning Committee, 1977:1). According to this plan, the entire site of the Victoria Barracks turned into four parts: high-density development of commercial and residential buildings to the northeast, Supreme Court Building to the northwest, residences at the centre, and some other government and community facilities to the east and west ends. It seemed that the committee expected no high-density context in the area, as they kept the majority of the land of up to 16.8 hectares for the public good. Land sales would have refunded the public revenue by nearly HKD 900 million.

A large amount of natural landscape and built heritage would have also survived in the plan. The Hong Kong Island was very short of land as the coastal terrains in all directions flush into the sea without compromise. Therefore, the Victoria Barracks had a large area of wooded slopes that was not suitable for any building construction except for war tunnels. In dealing with this situation, the preliminary plan separated the entire site into three terraces of different heights. The lowest ground to the northeast was planned to allocate commercial/residential buildings. The middle ground belonged to semi-detached apartments, spreading and hiding into the beautiful landscape. Many existing military facilities would change into community centres and institutions. All of these design treatments would have rendered the new Victoria Barracks with the townscape of an urban village rather than the business district. Sufficient sports facilities and cultural institutions would have maintained the publicity of space and serviced the daily

access and civic functions, in contrast with the commercial skyscrapers at the future Admiralty station nearby.

However, feedback from the following two-month public consultancy criticised the proposal by the committee. Participating groups included the Royal Town Planning Institute (Hong Kong Branch), the Hong Kong Heritage Society, the Conservancy Association and the Hong Kong Institute of Architects. Advisors from all these groups represented the highest level of academic scholarship on and social concern about the urban growth of Hong Kong. They contested that the Governor-in-Council had no right to commission the developmental plan of the Victoria Barracks to the hands of a "secret clan". The whole action bypassed the ordinary procedure of planning commission of the government and therefore was illegal. Their fire powers were also concentrated on the sharing mode of public space, questioning and criticising the necessity of central apartments which occupied higher levels of the landscape. Thirdly, all groups agreed that the existing military buildings should be preserved as many as possible to integrate into a whole natural park that symbolically equalised the Central Park in the city of New York. There was an emerging ideological struggle and conflict in the public opinions that the Victoria Barracks should develop into a whole public domain, rather than an internal garden of private properties and privileged residents.

Three months later, the special committee finished the revised plan and was required to provide a detailed conversion scheme for each military building involved. It was in this new proposal that the future Hong Kong Park came to the surface of the officials' table. The new Hong Kong Park would occupy more than 13 hectares of the area (Table 1). On the other hand, the proposal did not picture the urban design of the area as intensively as the previous one. There was only a brief planning concept stating the diagrams of existing buildings, slopes, platforms, tree coverage, and future land formation. What was mainly missing here was information like vehicular circulation, pedestrian links, built types and density, etc. It reflected, to a certain extent, a kind of reluctance to make an intensive interpretation of the design which might have drawn further criticism from the public. However, the protection of built heritage received more attention than ever before. Flagstaff House and the courtyard of the community and swimming pool (marked as HH in Fig. 5) were still of top priority regarding preservation significance. Southwest corner of the site would concentrate more dormitories of soldiers that represented many typical modernist design features. Minimalized landfill and excavation consolidated landscape preservation by keeping earth condition and topology as it once was.

The first two rounds of the redevelopment planning would have placed a good level of publicity to the reborn Victoria Barracks, if not disrupted by the Executive and Legislative Councils. The new order from the officials required another individual design office to take part in consultancy (Executive and Legislative Council Office, 1977:16). The Yunchen Freeman Ltd., an Australian architectural and planning company, was invited by the Urban Council and the Public Works Department to provide an entirely new concept over the district, and they submitted the third proposal (Plan No. LH 4/49) in August 1978.<sup>5</sup>

The role that the Legislative Council took in the whole procedure remained unclear and problematic. Urbanist Roger Bristow then complained about the authoritarian planning system. In his opinion, authentic public participation in the legislation of urban policy-making was seldom witnessed (Bristow, 1984:275). The third, as the final one, a proposal for the Victoria Barracks was never seriously challenged by the same monthly public forums and discussions as the Council took charge in for the previous plans. The consequence of it was that the new one was soon passed by the government a year later, and the public surprisingly found that what replaced and encroached the original landscape was the large-scale governmental/commercial development in pursuit of high-density urbanisation.

The final plan for the Victoria Barracks gave an intensive study of an open space system extracted from Chapter Four of the *Hong Kong Outline Plan* (Yuncken Freeman H.K., 1980:105). It also considered the detailed procedure of construction phases according to the heritage quantity, topology and landscape analysis [Fig. 6]. Under the veil of this implement, commercial building area ratio was four times large comparing to the previous zoning plans. Heritages were also in danger in that many blocks. Many highly recommended before had to be demolished and make way for the commercial development due to their better locations closed to the main road. Associating with the newly reclaimed commercial territories was the expected large-scale land excavation and fill for the high rises in luxury hotels and serviced apartments. The Legislative Council did not organise any form of public consultancy over these severe alterations in design, and approved merely and passed the proposal to the Architectural Office and the Town Planning and Highway Office for further implementation.

The scale of land excavation was too decisive to spare all the landscape features of the terraces from the height of +20m down to ground zero. The Swire Properties acquired the land plot of nearly 20,000 square meters through public auctions and planned to build the commercial centre – The Pacific Place I&I (BJHKC, 1982:20; 1985:30). It envisaged a cluster of commercial towers, including the Marriott Hotel, Conrad Hotel, and Shangri-La Hotel. The architectural design was made by a local company, Wong & Ouyang, whose fame rose during its collaboration with architect Paul Rudolf in the project of the Bond Center at Admiralty by the other side of Queensway. The massive underground podium contains twelve levels of shops and car parks. More than 120 caisson walls of 2.5 meters in diameter plunged beneath the towers and extended downward to 35 meters below the Supreme Court Road (AAB, 1988:8), keeping a high density of underground concrete construction even higher than European standard.

The three successive zoning plans thus reflect the contestation between heritage conservation and commercialised urbanisation when at times public interests advanced and compromised. In the case of the Victoria Barracks, the absence of statutory plans in power due to the *laissez-faire* strategy led to the hidden changes in land use back and forth in the post-military site. At last, government authorities provided an even larger share of profit in land sales for future commercial development. Only 10 out of 25 military buildings were recommended for retention and con-



Figure 4. First plan of the Victoria Barracks (Victoria Barracks Planning Committee, 1977 1).



Figure 5. Land zoning plan by the selected committee (Victoria Barracks Planning Committee, 1977 2). Revised by the authors.

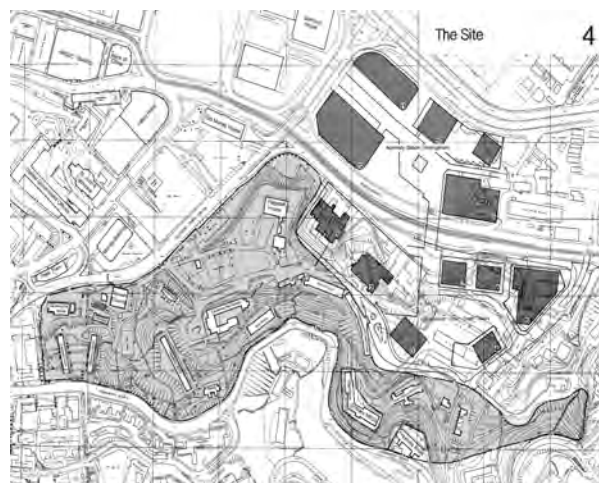


Figure 6. Site study (Yuncken Freeman H.K. 1980:22). The new commercial development area would connect the Admiralty station nearby through a proposed pedestrian bypass.

servation, and most located in the west and had no direct interference with business development. [Table 2] Reflecting Abbas' pessimism, they are space of dis-

appearance, questioning the authenticity of cultural representations and re-appearances made in the later architecture designs and heritage protections around the Hong Kong Park after the 1990s.

### RETROSPECTION: ON THE POST-MILITARY LANDSCAPE AND ITS REPRESENTATION IN HIGH-DENSITY URBANISM

In June 1988, the Urban Council announced that the remaining ten hectares of the former Victoria Barracks would change into a public domain known as the Hong Kong Park. Two phases of redevelopment would cost HKD 340 million and be scheduled to complete in 1991. A local private organisation in close relationship with the Council, the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club (RHKJC) was willing to donate HKD 170 million for the first phase. Wong Tung & Partners provided a general layout of the future Hong Kong Park in 1985. Peter Tan & Associates in the meantime collaborated as the landscape consultant. In spite of the claimed fancy title as “a green oasis inside concrete jungles”, one can see the original topology of the military landscape transformed intensively. It also underpins the future when the Colvin House was demolished for space to hold the entirely new architecture for the British Council and Consulate-General. These headquarters designed by British architect Terry Farrell in 1992 turned out to be a high quality of post-modern architecture, but forbid any penetrating views to the site from the east at the new Justice Drive.

The massive bodies of the Pacific Place and the Council separate the Victoria Barracks into two parts, leaving an indiscernible left-over in the east. It remained unnoticed to the public for the whole decade of the 1990s. The rediscovery and redevelopment of this site were very opportunist. By then, ASHK needed a central location for their new headquarters. (Cummer, DiStefano, and Lee, 2014:32). The advisory committee decided to take this large site occupied by the GG Building and a magazine compound. Negotiations between the Council and the Hong Kong government and the architectural competition followed in 2001. Out from more than 200 submissions, the winning design by Tod Williams Billie Tsien Architects (TWBTA) from the U.S. provides a horizontal extension of only two and a half stories high. It triumphs by the low-density strategy and the commitment in site preservation of historical significance of the GG building, the explosives magazine compound, and the vegetation in-between [Fig. 7].

The architects stick at their best to the topological post-military features. The main body of the centre is lifted from the rock surface, overseeing the whole landscaped area from high above. With only minor redecoration, the former GG building turned into office rooms, protected by newly installed curtain walls. It accompanies a ground-level courtyard of the Chinese-garden style, a fashionable restaurant, and semi-open theatre space. The main lecture hall on the first level could enjoy fantastic views from both sides, especially that of a double-deck walking bypass and viewing platforms sinuating through the tropical woods into the distant magazine. The building called Magazine A is now a modern exhibition space, and Magazine B a contemporary theatre. Besides, the exposed material features of artilleries, stones and bricks remain decent representations of their formal functions. Iron trails extending to the Magazine B are the clear signature of military transportation, remind-



Figure 7. Upper site plan; 2) Bird's-eyes view of ASHK; 3) Chantel Miller Gallery and berm; 4) Offices, former GG Block. Photo courtesy by Michael Moran, ASHK, and TWBTA.

ing visitors of the intense atmosphere of wartime conflicts.

As we are about to step into the third decades of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the re-urbanisation of the Admiralty districts around the Victoria Barracks is still on-going. HKJC joined with the University of Chicago to build a new academic complex on the deserted British Army's fortress of Mount Davis, where a gun emplacement had once been used as part of the Jubilee Battery during the war. Losing the traces of the memory about the Special Branch of the counter-espionage force of the local police who once took it to detain both left- and right-wing activists, Canadian architect Bing Thom (1940-2016) from Vancouver took the military base and built a sleek academic institution above. Old facilities were transformed and renovated as a heritage museum and open to the public since December 2018.

So empathetic is it to find reporter Edward Donoghue lamenting about the fast disappearing urban features in the heart of a past Hong Kong. In an essay entitled “Goodbye Wanchai,” he documents this old district just at the foothill of the barracks in a way that “it seems just about ready to give up the ghost [of memory] and be transformed into a clone of Central District” (Donoghue, 1989:68). The transformation of the Victoria Barracks in the last three decades reflects a similar power of will and endures perhaps even more severe urban disappearance. However, such a ghost is far from being given up, as long as struggles between military power, corporate interests, authoritarian planning and citizenship still exist and continue to requiem the historical significance of post-military landscape in their own ways.



Figure 8. Victoria Barracks today (in purple), showing the military sites (in red) surrounding the Hong Kong Park and the central government building (in blue). Redrawn from: OpenStreetMap (online access date: 2018/08/29).

## CONCLUSION

As a rare case of post-military landscape conservation in the contemporary high-density metropolitan areas in Hong Kong, the Victoria Barracks was a preliminary and valuable example of military landscape transformation even earlier than those counterparts in Europe and America. The result is, as Chris Chung, the then director of Peter Tan & Associates, said, the emerging use of landscaping to reflect and improve the awareness of people to use open space as a driving force to promote life quality (AAC, 1992:32). On the other hand, from it, we may see three interrelated logics of local military redevelopment. First, military existence may not “disappear” even after the closure or relocation of bases; the withdrawal of military power does not mean that the military consciousness would fail to regulate the perception of its physical presence [Fig. 8]. Second, it draws serious contestation of powers in controlling such redevelopment; they will challenge the legitimacy of the military landscape through planning systems regarding land use, built form and alteration in spatial functions. Quite often commercial development may prevail on these features and encroach public interests [Fig. 9]. Third, such redevelopment is sometimes suspicious even in the name of making public space. By adding more facilities and decorations appealing to the mass, a renewal may provide false representations of history and memory and replace the original military consciousness. It is particularly true in a post-colonial context where memories of being colonised would always be the first victims of nation-building. Although Hong Kong has no serious ideological confrontation due to a unique identity of temporality, we still witness special memories of militarisation being replaced and represented. The success of the ASHK in defying the disappearance of military landscape relies on the full awareness of the architects and landscapists to the significance of protecting the post-military site in its original forms. It demonstrates that the sustainability of the post-military landscape can be achieved by a strategic architectural

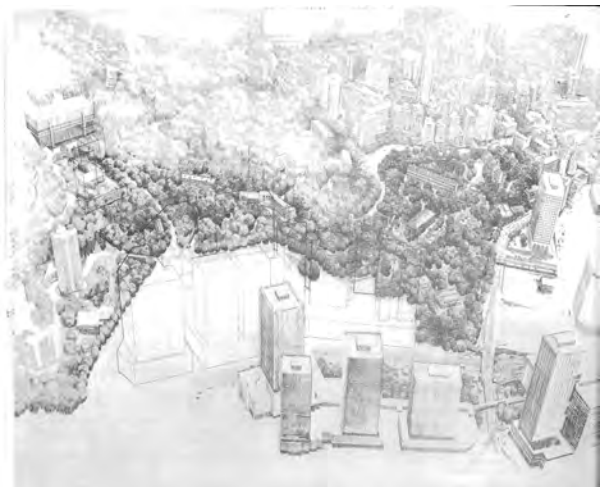


Figure 9. Pencil sketch showing the Admiralty developments encroaching the future park (Yuncken Freeman H.K. 1980).

design mainly depending on the protection of unique topology and authentic representation of military pasts through collective visual elements and structure.

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