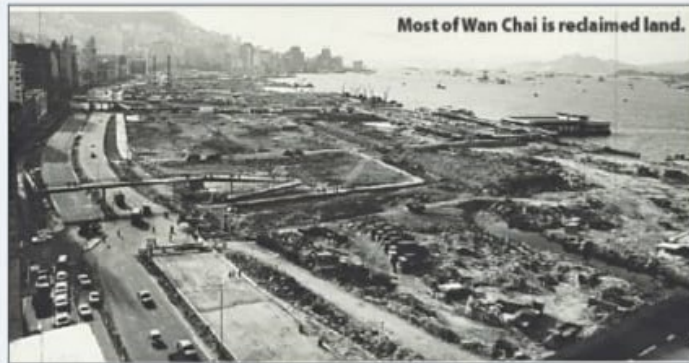


City Talk



Most of Wan Chai is reclaimed land.

RECLAMATION IS HERE TO STAY

Human beings prefer living on flatland, especially locations near a river or a sea.

Nature somehow helps to create

flatland by landslides as the result of torrential rains.

As hillsides erode and rocks and soil fall to lower levels, more flatland is formed, and such sites are ideal places for human dwellings.

But for modern cities, if we see a large piece of flatland near the sea with a straight waterfront, it is most probably reclaimed land.

Most people know that, on Hong Kong Island, all land north of Queen's Road is reclaimed.

But maybe not a lot of people notice that, most of the western side of Kowloon, all the way from the West Kowloon Cultural District, Yau Ma Tei, Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Lai Chi Kok, Kwai Chung, Tsuen Wan and Tuen Mun were also reclaimed.

Reclamation Street in Mong Kok is now the mid-point of the Kowloon peninsula, likewise Ferry Street in Yau Ma Tei.

I do not need to point out that the names give the game away, as anywhere to the west side of that street was reclaimed in stages over the past century.

Further north in the New Territories, most of the Kwai Chung container terminal, Tsuen Wan west, Gold Coast in Castle Peak, and the Castle Peak power station, and many other parts, are similarly formed.

So is our new airport at Chek Lap Kok, which took its name from an island in north Lantau.

If you work in any modern tall office along the waterfront, or live in a new apartment with harbor views, you are most probably on reclaimed land.

Even if you live inland, near some hillside, chances are that the land is formed after excavation for rocks to fill in the sea to make land.

Do we know how Kornhill is formed? It was cut from a hill in Quarry Bay,



Nuts and bolts

Edmund Leung

and a giant conveyor belt – built across the hillside, crossing over King's Road to the waterfront – transported the gravel quarried from the hill to barges, to fill the Kwai Chung creek to make Kwai Chung container terminal seven.

There are numerous other examples of how land is formed by cutting hills and filling the shallow part of the shore.

Hong Kong has excellent geological characteristics for redamation.

Most of our land is on hard granite, which can easily be quarried to make gravel.

As gravel has high mechanical strength and is impervious to water, it is an excellent fill material for reclamation purposes.

We are not alone in creating land through reclamation.

Our near neighbor, Macau, has reclaimed land in Coloane and Taipa to create the Cotai Strip, which is where most of the new casinos and hotels are located.

This scheme is so successful that most of the new land formed in Hengqin is made in a similar way.

Further away, Singapore has a successful reclamation project in Marina Bay, again creating valuable land for commercial development.

There are many other examples in Japan and Korea, and in many other cities all around the world.

With the above pieces of history, we should not despise land formation through reclamation, but at the same time we should not reclaim indiscriminately.

I shall try and describe the technical and environmental aspects of how these reclamation projects were done in my next article.

Veteran engineer Edmund Leung Kwong-ho casts an expert eye over Hong Kong's iconic infrastructure