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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Visions of public and private mobility: the Kowloon railway terminus in Hong Kong

Adonis M.Y. Li*

Department of History, 10/F Run Run Shaw Tower, Centennial Campus, University of Hong Kong, Pokfulam Road, Hong Kong
*Corresponding author. Email: adonisli@connect.hku.hk

Abstract

This article explores and complicates notions of public and private urban mobility through the exploration of one site of transport, the Kowloon railway terminus in Hung Hom, Hong Kong. It considers the question: how did the conflicts and tensions between public and private forms of mobility affect policies for the urban environment in colonial Hong Kong? This article explores the Hung Hom railway terminus and its tensions and interactions with automobility and other forms of transport, most pertinently the bus network. Hong Kong's imperial and colonial context further throws into question seemingly straightforward divisions of public and private mobility.

Introduction

On 24 November 1975, a new railway terminus opened in the British colony of Hong Kong. The Hung Hom terminus, the southern endpoint of the Kowloon–Canton Railway (KCR), was described by the acting governor as 'a handsome addition to our skyline'.[1] The new station, with its drab grey exterior and a cubical multi-storey car park above it, was criticized on practical and aesthetic grounds almost immediately. A journalist derided it as 'that inefficient monstrosity of a terminus'.[2] One newspaper reader described it as a 'singularly unattractive morgue'.[3] Two historians later considered it 'enslaved to the motor car, surrounded by great road ramps, and dominated by an unpleasant multi-storey car-park. Now it repels rather than beckons, and Hong Kong has destroyed another of the fine colonial buildings of the territory.'[4]

[1]Hong Kong Public Records Office (HKPRO), HKRS461-1-15, 'Speech by His Excellency the Acting Governor on the occasion of the opening of the Hung Hom Railway Station on Monday 24th November, 1975'.

[2]C. Snyder, 'One final plea for old KCR terminus', *South China Morning Post* (*SCMP*), 14 Mar. 1977, 11.

[3]A.G., 'Put planetarium in Hunghom', *SCMP*, 7 Jul. 1977, 9.

[4]J. Richards and J.M. MacKenzie, *The Railway Station: A Social History* (Oxford, 1983), 77–8.

This article considers the question: how did the conflicts and tensions between public and private forms of mobility affect policies for the urban environment in colonial Hong Kong? To answer this question, one specific site will be explored in close detail: the KCR Kowloon terminus in Hung Hom and its interchange with other forms of transport. In doing so, this article complicates and problematizes notions of public and private mobility. Hong Kong's imperial and colonial context further complicates seemingly straightforward divisions of public and private mobility.

Mobility by automobile, or automobility, is 'the dominant culture' that defines what 'the good life' is, and a requisite for 'an appropriate citizenship of mobility'; the 'auto' also denotes the car as a private vehicle to the exclusion of all others.[5] It is thus a private form of transport. Public transport, on the other hand, is normally understood as forms of transport designed and used by groups of people, generally operated by and for public benefit and at a fixed schedule. As this article will demonstrate, this rigid dichotomy breaks down somewhat in the Hong Kong context, and the site of the Hung Hom railway terminus provides an opportunity to delve into this tension.

This article contributes to a growing literature on colonial mobilities and modern experiences. For some scholars, colonial mobility and racial politics went hand-in-hand. Tilman Frasch's comparative study on trams in colonial Rangoon and Singapore found that urban public transport modes were contingent on complex political and racial contestations between different societal groups, and between competing forms of mobility.[6] Michael Pante has shown that urban motorized mobility was entangled with ideas of white racial superiority in Manila and Singapore.[7] Liora Bigon has found that the Lagos steam tramway consolidated racial segregation, which paralleled the effect of the Peak Tram in Hong Kong.[8]

For other scholars, imposing order onto perceived urban chaos was the key for colonial governments. In Ann Stoler's words, 'a "colony" as a political concept is not a place but a principle of managed mobilities, mobilizing and immobilizing populations according to a set of changing rules and hierarchies that orders social kinds'.[9] David Arnold has explored how traffic in India was portrayed as a need for colonial order to be imposed, but also how the discourse on traffic itself became a site of contestation between colonial actors.[10] Similarly, Raghav Kishore has explored how different 'scales' of the colonial government in Delhi had their

[5]M. Sheller and J. Urry, 'The city and the car', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 24 (2000), 737–57; P. Freund and G. Martin, *The Ecology of the Automobile* (Montréal, 1993), 9.

[6]T. Frasch, 'Tracks in the city: technology, mobility and society in colonial Rangoon and Singapore', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46 (2012), 97–118.

[7]M.D. Pante, 'Mobility and modernity in the urban transport systems of colonial Manila and Singapore', *Journal of Social History*, 47 (2014), 855–77.

[8]L. Bigon, 'Tracking ethno-cultural differences: the Lagos steam tramway, 1902–1933', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 33 (2007), 596–618; J.M. Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 2007), 42; P.F. Leeds, 'Evolution of urban transport', in H.T. Dimitriou and A.H.S. Cook (eds.), *Land-Use/Transport Planning in Hong Kong: The End of an Era* (London, 1998), 16.

[9]A.L. Stoler, *Duress: Imperial Durabilities in Our Times* (Durham, NC, 2016), 117.

[10]D. Arnold, 'The problem of traffic: the street-life of modernity in late-colonial India', *Modern Asian Studies*, 46 (2012), 127.

own visions of imposing 'order' onto what they saw was a chaotic city and spatial configuration.[11] Kate McDonald has warned historians against uncritically adopting the points of reference used by historical actors in our analyses; within mobility histories, this is made more crucial as movement was taken as a marker of modernity by imperialists, often with violent consequences, as her case-study of Japanese imperialism shows.[12]

Hong Kong was a node in global imperial mobility networks. Its place in the fictional *Around the World in Eighty Days* illustrates how the colony was caught up in 'the world's mobilities…being remade by Anglo-imperial hegemony'.[13] Indeed, migration and movement between Hong Kong and other places has been the focus of many studies.[14] However, there is a dearth of academic histories on mobility within Hong Kong itself. This case-study of the Hung Hom terminus redresses this paucity.

This article also contributes to an emerging literature on the history of roads and automobility. Automobility's triumph over public transport in the US and Europe has been well-covered elsewhere.[15] Automobility's proliferation could be totalizing, though Simon Gunn has shown how the imposition of the 'car system' in Britain was a more gradual process.[16] For example, in Birmingham, automobility was imposed onto an urban fabric that had been first shaped by tramcars and motor buses, whilst in Nagoya, Japan, underground streets provided an alternative to the motor-dominated surface roads.[17] De Greiff *et al.* have called for more, holistic and transnational, studies into the history of roads, which are largely absent in the literature on the history of technology.[18] In the same vein, the car park's absence in much of the historiography on urban mobilities is surprising.[19] This article

[11]R. Kishore, 'Planning, traffic and the city: railway development in colonial Delhi, c. 1899–1905', *Urban History*, 44 (2017), 253–69.

[12]K. McDonald, 'Imperial mobility: circulation as history in East Asia under empire', *Transfers*, 4 (2014), 68–87.

[13]D. Lambert and P. Merriman, 'Empire and mobility: an introduction', in D. Lambert and Peter Merriman (eds.), *Empire and Mobility in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Manchester, 2020), 1–2.

[14]E. Sinn, *Pacific Crossing: California Gold, Chinese Migration, and the Making of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 2013); E. Sinn, 'Hong Kong as an in-between place in the Chinese diaspora, 1849–1939', in D.R. Gabaccia and D. Hoerder (eds.), *Connecting Seas and Connected Ocean Rims: Indian, Atlantic, and Pacific Oceans and China Seas Migrations from the 1830s to the 1930s* (Leiden, 2011), 225–47; R. Skeldon (ed.), *Reluctant Exiles? Migration from Hong Kong and the New Overseas Chinese* (Hong Kong, 1994).

[15]Peter Norton reveals how automobile manufacturers weaponized the history of the car to buttress automobility: P. Norton, 'History as motordom's tool of agenda legitimation: twentieth-century U.S. urban mobility trajectories', in M. Emanuel, F. Schipper and R. Oldenziel (eds.), *A U-Turn to the Future: Sustainable Urban Mobility since 1850* (New York, 2020), 67–90.

[16]J. Urry, 'The "system" of automobility', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21 (2004), 25–39; S. Gunn, 'People and the car: the expansion of automobility in urban Britain, c. 1955–70', *Social History*, 38 (2013), 220–37.

[17]S. Gunn and S.C. Townsend, *Automobility and the City in Twentieth-Century Britain and Japan* (London, 2019), 74, 97.

[18]A. De Greiff, E.L. Herazo and J.S. Soto Triana, 'Local, global and fragmented narratives about road construction: an invitation to look beyond our disciplinary space', *Journal of Transport History*, 41 (2020), 6–26.

[19]Exceptions include J.A. Jakle and K.A. Sculle, *Lots of Parking: Land Use in a Car Culture* (Charlottesville, 2004); S.S. McDonald, *The Parking Garage: Design and Evolution of a Modern Urban Form* (Washington, DC, 2007); C.J. Moutou, 'Car parking matters: adapting to changing customer mobility

addresses the paucity in roads and car park historiography by focusing on the Hung Hom terminus, a rail, bus and automobile interchange. It is thus a 'transmodal' case-study, looking at both rail and road and their relationship.[20]

Urban mobility in Hong Kong

Hong Kong was occupied by the British in 1841 as a colony predicated on external naval mobility, as an imperial outpost of British naval defence, and as an economic beachhead into China. As for mobility within the city, human-powered forms like sedan chairs and rickshaws were gradually replaced by mechanized vehicles.[21] On Hong Kong Island, the Peak Tram entered service in 1888, followed by the Hong Kong Tramways in 1904.[22] In 1861, the Kowloon peninsula across the Victoria Harbour was added to the colony's territories, necessitating cross-harbour inter-urban transport. By 1876, steam launches operated passenger services in the harbour; in 1933, the government granted the first cross-harbour vehicular ferry franchise.[23] Public transport service could cause considerable political controversy, for example during boycotts and strikes.[24]

Private firms operated almost all forms of transport. The one exception was the KCR, operated by the Hong Kong government's Railway Department. In October 1910, the local section of the KCR was completed, and it quickly provided 'steady third class traffic' between Kowloon and the New Territories, the colony's hinterland leased from the Qing Empire in 1898.[25] However, the railway was largely insignificant in terms of passenger numbers for the first half-century of its existence. Lack of pre-war data precludes comparison, but Table 1 shows that after World War II, the KCR consistently accounted for less than 1 per cent of the total number of journeys on scheduled public transport, mostly because the towns along the line had low populations until the 1980s. Before the Mass Transit Railway was built in the late 1970s, the bus network was the backbone of Hong Kong's public transportation.[26] Most of the population could not afford cars.

Though rail passenger travel in the post-war decades was statistically insignificant, the KCR was important on two other counts. First, much of Hong Kong's food supply arrived by rail. Table 2 shows the KCR's cargo traffic in relation to cargo movement via other modes. Over 99 per cent of rail cargo traffic was imports from China, and much of this was food sold by the People's Republic of China (PRC) in order to earn foreign exchange. More important was what the KCR

in neighborhood town centers of an inner city area of Sydney', *Journal of Urban History*, 39 (2013), 690–708.

[20]On the importance of 'transmodal', 'transdisciplinary' and 'transnational' transport histories, see G. Mom, 'The crisis of transport history: a critique, and a vista', *Mobility in History*, 6 (2015), 7–19.

[21]Ma K.-y., *Cheshuimalong: Xianggang zhanqian lushang jiaotong* (Hong Kong, 2016); C.M. Fung, *Reluctant Heroes: Rickshaw Pullers in Hong Kong and Canton, 1874–1954* (Hong Kong, 2005).

[22]C.K. Leung, 'The growth of internal public passenger transport', in D.J. Dwyer (ed.), *Asian Urbanization: A Hong Kong Casebook* (Hong Kong, 1971), 139.

[23]Leeds, 'Evolution of urban transport', 16–17.

[24]J.-f. Tsai, *Hong Kong in Chinese History: Community and Social Unrest in the British Colony, 1842–1913* (New York, 1993), 270–87.

[25]*Administrative Reports for the Year 1910* (Hong Kong, 1911), R6.

[26]Leung, 'Growth of internal public passenger transport'.

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Table 1. Passenger journeys on scheduled public transport (in thousands). *Source: Annual Digests of Statistics* (Hong Kong, 1968, 1978, 1982).

Year	Buses	Ferries	HK Tramways	KCR	MTR	Total	KCR as percentage of total
1951	214,850	106,390	134,040	2,840		458,120	0.62
1956	311,110	119,040	157,480	3,600		591,230	0.6
1961	555,640	148,620	180,590	5,870		890,720	0.66
1966	829,680	217,510	181,590	8,740		1,237,520	0.71
1971	811,859	217,816	157,995	9,639		1,197,309	0.81
1976	948,671	192,786	128,163	12,491		1,282,111	0.97
1981	1,223,626	73,739	160,442	17,123	222,914	1,474,930	1.16

Table 2. Commercial cargo movement by mode of transport (in tonnes). Figures for 1951–66 converted from long tons. *Source: Annual Digests of Statistics* (Hong Kong, 1968, 1978, 1982).

Year	Air	Rail	Road	Sea	Total	Percentage by rail
1951	3,048	276,352	11,176	5,683,504	5,974,080	4.63
1956	3,048	215,392	12,192	6,577,584	6,808,216	3.16
1961	6,096	329,184	11,176	8,296,656	8,643,112	3.81
1966	21,336	1,036,320	58,928	12,377,928	13,494,512	7.68
1971	75,464	1,007,046	70,853	14,858,890	16,012,253	6.29
1976	163,235	1,422,510	72,070	23,340,941	24,998,756	5.69
1981	290,305	1,779,707	524,975	35,618,940	38,213,927	4.66

represented.[27] The 'first tentacle, the first artery through which the red blood of trade will flow to and from this centre of British interests' was first built to allay fears of a Beijing–Canton trunk line diminishing the colony's role in the China trade.[28] The KCR consistently represented hope for increased Hong Kong–China trade. This attitude persisted throughout the years. For example, one newspaper in 1975 thought 'permanent arrangements of China supplies of raw materials…will add to our geo-political stability and to our future economic viability'.[29]

Automobility gradually developed in Hong Kong. It is not known when the first automobile arrived, though in 1900 one newspaper prophesized the coming of the 'fearsome vehicle' that 'strikes terror into the bravest heart'.[30] By 1907, six motor cars were registered in the colony; by 1939, this number had increased to

[27]As Tim Cresswell points out, the representation of mobility could be different to the actual movement or its everyday practice. T. Cresswell, 'Towards a politics of mobility', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 28 (2010), 19–20.

[28]'Opening of the Kowloon–Canton Railway: our future trade artery', *SCMP*, 1 Oct. 1910, 11; C.B. Davis, 'Railway imperialism in China, 1895–1939', in C.B. Davis, K.E. Wilburn and R.E. Robinson (eds.), *Railway Imperialism* (New York, 1991), 155–73; H.S. Pereira, 'Railway imperialism revisited: the failed line from Macao to Guangzhou', *Technology and Culture*, 62 (2021), 82–104; N. Miners, 'Building the Kowloon–Canton–Hankow Railway', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 46 (2006), 8–9; T. Spain and O. Betts, 'Developing China's "international" railway: the Canton–Hankow line, 1898–1937', *Journal of Transport History*, 40 (2019), 322–40.

[29]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Railway with a bright future', *Star*, 26 Nov. 1975.

[30]Gleaner, 'Gleanings by the way', *Hongkong Telegraph*, 27 Jan. 1900, 2.

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4,439.[31] The Hong Kong Automobile Association, dominated by male European expatriates, was formed in 1918.[32] After World War II, the number of private cars registered in Hong Kong increased over twentyfold, from 9,764 in 1951 to 211,556 in 1981. In 1951, there was one car per 206.4 people in Hong Kong; by 1981, this number was reduced to 24.4.[33] By the 1960s, planners and architects in Hong Kong, influenced by the Buchanan Report on traffic in Britain, suggested multi-level development in business centres to improve safety for pedestrians.[34] As Figure 1 shows, the growth in private car ownership far outstripped that of any other motorized vehicle in the colony. Congestion quickly became an issue due to Hong Kong's hilly terrain, its density centred on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon and the harbour between the two urban areas. Complaints about congestion were commonplace in newspapers from both motorists and public transport passengers.[35] One newspaper even took it upon itself to suggest road layout changes, which apparently alleviated congestion.[36]

Buses, as mentioned above, formed the backbone of Hong Kong's public transport network after World War II. They competed directly with automobiles for road space. By 1966, journeys on Kowloon Motor Bus services (the company responsible for services in Kowloon and the New Territories) accounted for over 50 per cent of all passenger journeys.[37] In the post-war decades, the bus network coverage gradually sprawled over Hong Kong, linking villages and emerging towns with ferry piers, allowing for passengers to reach the business districts of the southern Kowloon peninsula and central Hong Kong Island. By the mid-1960s, 'most sizeable communities in the New Territories and the outlying islands could be reached from urban Hong Kong…without change of mode'.[38]

The first Kowloon terminus

From the earliest days of the railway, there had been disagreements over where the Kowloon terminus should be. In 1912, Federated Malay States government architect Arthur B. Hubback was appointed to design a terminus in Tsim Sha Tsui on the tip of the Kowloon peninsula.[39] The terminus was a grand redbrick station, and with

[31]P.F. Leeds, 'The development of public transport in Hong Kong: an historical review', 1982, unpublished manuscript, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections, 26; *Hong Kong Administration Reports for the Year 1939* (Hong Kong, 1940), 31.

[32]'Automobile Association: successful inauguration', *SCMP*, 15 Jun. 1918, 3. This was also the case in Singapore: Pante, 'Mobility and modernity', 863.

[33]*Annual Digests of Statistics* (Hong Kong, 1968, 1978, 1982).

[34]Zheng Tan and C.Q.L. Xue, 'The evolution of an urban vision: the multilevel pedestrian networks in Hong Kong, 1965–1997', *Journal of Urban History*, 42 (2016), 689–91. For its impact on the UK, see S. Gunn, 'The Buchanan Report, environment and the problem of traffic in 1960s Britain', *Twentieth Century British History*, 22 (2011), 521–42.

[35]'Traffic snarls on Hongkong roads become worse', *SCMP*, 8 Aug. 1972, 7; Yiqun Xihuan jumin, 'Xiyingpan jiaotong zuse', *Wen Wei Po*, 20 May 1971, 5.

[36]'Ben bao gaishan Zhongqu jiaotong jianyi', *Kung Sheung Evening News*, 23 Aug. 1963, 4.

[37]Leung, 'Growth of internal public passenger transport', 141.

[38]*Ibid*., 146.

[39]Hubback's Kuala Lumpur railway station was 'one of the most spectacular stations in Asia' and 'the Taj Mahal of the Train World'. Richards and MacKenzie, *Railway Station*, 77; A. Jackson, *Buildings of Empire* (Oxford, 2013), 124.

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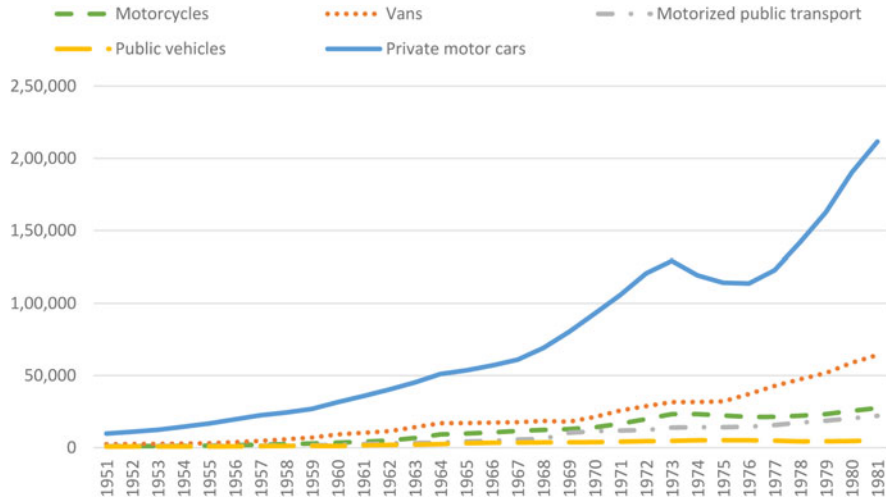

Figure 1. Registration of motor vehicles in Hong Kong, 1951–981. Motorcycles: includes motorized cycles. Vans: includes goods vehicles. Motorized public transport: includes taxis, buses and minibuses. Public service vehicles: comprise the categories of 'public cars' and 'crown vehicles'. *Source: Annual Digests of Statistics* (Hong Kong, 1968, 1978, 1982).

its clock tower it became an iconic landmark of the area.[40] A bus terminus and a cross-harbour ferry pier were adjacent to the railway terminus, allowing for easy inter-modal interchange. However, it soon became obvious that the choice of location was a mistake, as it hindered development of the Kowloon peninsula and lacked the capacity to facilitate future growth in freight traffic. In 1929, a community leader opined 'the railway stands in the way of the best development of Kowloon' for road traffic reasons, suggesting that the station be transformed into a 'magnificent motor vehicle terminus' instead.[41] This was an early automobility-related reason for moving the station.

In the 1940s, two British advisors suggested moving the terminus, though for different reasons related to public and private mobilities. In 1941, David J. Owen suggested a new site half a mile east of the pre-existing station, but some wanted the station moved to Hung Hom, further east.[42] For Owen, Hong Kong was a 'very important asset to the Empire', and moving the terminus was necessary to 'tap sources of trade, yet untouched, in rich territories in China and so tend to the expansion of the trade of the Port of Hong Kong'.[43] Thus, the railway was to serve both private profits and imperial goals. In 1948, famed town planner

[40]It was demolished in the late 1970s after a failed campaign to save the station. Only the tower remains. C.S. Chan, 'Belonging to the city: representations of a colonial clock tower in British Hong Kong', *Journal of Urban History*, 45 (2019), 321–32.

[41]'KRA annual meeting: development of waterfront impeded by railway property', *SCMP*, 1 Mar. 1929, 7.

[42]Owen was former Port of London Authority manager and was hired to advise on Hong Kong's port. D.J. Owen, *Future Control and Development of the Port of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 1941), 23; 'Hongkong port', *SCMP*, 28 Apr. 1941, 10.

[43]Owen, *Future Control*, 11.

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Patrick Abercrombie's radical re-envisioning of Hong Kong's urban form was published.[44] His 'drastic' plan for the railway was to remove the line south of the Kowloon hills entirely and to convert the approach into a 'really modern arterial road' to Canton. Abercrombie's new terminus would be on reclaimed land on the north-western shore of Kowloon.[45] His vision was based chiefly on local urban considerations. He mused on how a cross-harbour rail, road and pedestrian tunnel would become 'a symbol of the unity of interests of the Colony'.[46] In the post-war spirit of reconstruction, Abercrombie foresaw a future in which improved intra-colony mobility led to a closer integration of the two urban parts of the colony. This was a public-centred vision of mobility for Hong Kong.

Apart from one year of transporting war supplies to China, goods traffic on the KCR had been disappointing since its construction.[47] For Owen, the position of the terminus was an imperial matter: improve the rail–water interface to better serve the Empire. His vision was not based on previous evidence of the KCR facilitating goods traffic; instead, he based it on the potential of mobility for imperial and private profit. But for Abercrombie, this was a local matter: he aimed to make long-term plans for the colony holistically. Though both were British colonial experts, brought in for their planning expertise, their visions differed. Abercrombie's suggestions were not heeded, owing to factors external to Hong Kong, most significantly the huge increase in population following the resumption of the Chinese civil war and the Communist takeover of China.[48]

In 1957, British consultants suggested a new terminus, with room for expansion, on the Hung Hom reclamation.[49] The Public Works Department (PWD) wanted the new station to run at the same capacity, but the Railway Department emphasized interchange facilities between the station and the harbour for both freight and passengers.[50] The consultants urged the government to go beyond 'a like for like replacement of facilities', which could 'prevent future expansion and development'.[51] For the PWD, the move away from Tsim Sha Tsui was necessitated by a local need to develop the area, free up land and facilitate smoother road communications in Kowloon. For the Railway Department, the move represented a chance to expand the terminus facilities and to serve increased traffic, in both passengers and cross-border freight. The two government departments espoused competing visions of the railway's purpose. Surprised by the report, the government's Executive Council decided not to act on the recommendations.

[44]M. Miller, 'Abercrombie, Sir (Leslie) Patrick (1879–1957), town planner', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, 23 Sep. 2004, accessed 9 Dec. 2022, www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-30322.

[45]P. Abercrombie, *Hong Kong: Preliminary Planning Report* (Hong Kong, 1948), 14.

[46]*Ibid.*, 14.

[47]Chan Lau K.-c., 'Britain and the Sino-Japanese war: arms traffic to China through Hong Kong, 1937–-1941', *Asia Quarterly*, 3 (1977), 175–202.

[48]Though the report had some long-term effects: L.W.-C. Lai, 'Reflections on the Abercrombie Report 1948: a strategic plan for colonial Hong Kong', *Town Planning Review*, 70 (1999), 61–87.

[49]HKPRO, HKRS934-10-51, V.A.M. Robertson, *Kowloon–Canton Railway (British Section): Report, Scheme and Estimate for Re-siting Kowloon Terminal Station*.

[50]HKPRO, HKRS934-10-51, Sir William Halcrow & Partners to Hawtrey, 30 Apr. 1958; HKPRO, HKRS934-10-51, Robertson, *Kowloon–Canton Railway*, 3.

[51]HKPRO, HKRS934-10-51, Sir William Halcrow & Partners to Crown Agents, 29 Oct. 1958.

The Railway Department, headed at various times by a general manager or a chief engineer, was responsible solely for the KCR. Though the railway began as a cross-border railway, after the founding of the PRC in 1949 the passenger service mostly served local passengers, as part of Hong Kong's public transport network. Fares rose infrequently in the post-war decades, and the railway had no projects requiring large capital investments. The only potential for growth was the eventual revival of the China service. As noted above, in terms of passenger numbers the railway lagged far behind the buses. The Railway Department catered to a small constituency – the KCR's few passengers. On the other hand, the PWD was responsible for a wide array of factors in the colony's built infrastructure. By 1965, the PWD oversaw port works, roads and traffic, sewerage and drainage, architecture and town planning.[52] In this regard, the PWD saw the railway as a small part of the colony's wider public transport network, with less than 1 per cent of the passenger numbers, and did not foresee an increase in the near future. Therefore, a station running at the same capacity would suffice.

The increase in road traffic would soon necessitate a move. As noted previously, the number of vehicles on Hong Kong's roads, especially private motor cars, soared after the war. By the 1960s, the Tsim Sha Tsui terminus was becoming untenable, not because of structural issues with the building or an uptick in cross-border goods traffic, but because of worsening congestion. Concurrently, the government was frantically building new roads across the colony to meet increasing demand.[53] The Hong Kong Executive Council thought the terminus should be moved 'as soon as was practicable'.[54] The tracks leading to the Tsim Sha Tsui terminus bisected the Kowloon peninsula, hampering effective land-use in a territory where land was perceived as scarce.[55] By 1964, preparations for the move to Hung Hom were set into motion.[56] However, the move was delayed, due to factors relating to the new terminus' interface with other modes of transport.

The terminus' links with other modes of transport

A cross-harbour road link had been considered as early as 1902, and Abercrombie's grandiose plans for a tunnel were discussed earlier in the article. In the late 1950s, it was thought that a bridge between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island was viable, but later, a tunnel was deemed more appropriate, after complaints from the aviation and maritime industries.[57] As the vehicular ferries were quickly becoming

[52]Ho P.-y., *The Administrative History of the Hong Kong Government Agencies, 1841–2002* (Hong Kong, 2004), 117.

[53]Ho P.-y. *Ways to Urbanisation: Post-War Road Development in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 2008), 70–88.

[54]HKPRO, HKRS34-3-32, 'Minutes of the 17th meeting of the Executive Council of Hong Kong', 15 May 1962.

[55]Unlike in Delhi, where the city was bisected by railway tracks for political reasons, in Kowloon the bisection was the result of poor foreplanning. Kishore, 'Planning, traffic and the city', 256; HKPRO, HKRS34-3-83, Colonial Secretariat, 'Kowloon Canton Railway: removal of the Tsim Sha Tsui terminal to Hung Hom reclamation: XCR(68)93', 30 Mar. 1968.

[56]HKPRO, HKRS156-2-386, 'Notes of a meeting to discuss the location of railway workshops in the New Territories', 9 May 1964.

[57]The National Archives (TNA), CO 1030/1697, Colonial Secretariat, 'XCR(63)109 Cross harbour road link', 1 Apr. 1963.

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inadequate due to increasing traffic, in 1963 the government decided to forgo normal tendering procedures and granted a concession to a new company set up to build and operate a tunnel.[58] The Cross-Harbour Tunnel opened in August 1972, the second of Hong Kong's major road tunnels.[59]

Rather than prioritizing either public or private mobility, however, the design of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel and its interface with the KCR was an attempt to balance both the public and the private. Not only was the tunnel built for automobility reasons, but it was also to alleviate pressure on the ferries and to bolster bus transport. The tunnel's toll plaza included a large bus interchange, which served new cross-harbour bus services between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island.[60] In 1967, the railway terminus' move to Hung Hom was delayed so that the toll plaza's design could be improved.[61] 'Unless the railways were moved at the same time as the tunnel was constructed', noted a PWD official in 1969, 'the area could turn out to be a mess at a later date.'[62] The tunnel was meant to mesh with the KCR at Hung Hom as a transport interchange, allowing for easy transfers between rail and bus. In this regard, the KCR was part of an integrated public transport policy.

Thus, rather than a solely automobility-serving road infrastructure, the design of the Cross-Harbour Tunnel in relation to the KCR complicates the dichotomy between public and private forms of mobilities. Another example of this was how the new terminus was affected by plans for what would later become the Mass Transit Railway. By the mid-1960s, planning was underway for an underground mass transit system, to be operated by a statutory corporation, government-owned but highly autonomous.[63] The plan in 1967 included a Hung Hom underground mass transit station with 'direct transfer' to the railway terminus.[64] Delays occurred after space was reserved underground and different piling techniques were used, both at increased costs, to avoid potentially costlier work later.[65] Hung Hom was to be a node between surface rail, underground rail, automobile and bus traffic. The next section further explores the automobile component of the site.

Multi-storey car park

To go directly above the station was a multi-storey car park. The first multi-storey car park in Hong Kong opened on Hong Kong Island in December 1957.[66]

[58]*Hong Kong: Report for the Year 1965* (Hong Kong, 1966), 193.

[59]The first was the Lion Rock Tunnel, which opened in 1967. 'Governor opens tunnel – "the insoluble solved"', *SCMP*, 3 Aug. 1972, 1.

[60]Chen Zhihua and Li Jianxin, *Xianggang bashi bainian tuibian* (Hong Kong, 2021), 98–114.

[61]HKPRO, HKRS39-1-32, Hum to Clarke, 4 Sep. 1967.

[62]HKPRO, HKRS310-1-12, 'PWD land conference decision 18/12/69', 18 Dec. 1969.

[63]R. Yeung, *Moving Millions: The Commercial Success and Political Controversies of Hong Kong's Railways* (Hong Kong, 2008), 68–71.

[64]Freeman, Fox, Wilbur Smith and Associates, *Hong Kong Mass Transport Study: Report* (Hong Kong, 1967), 69.

[65]HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-96, Wilkins to ASCL&S(L), 21 Feb. 1970; HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-99, O'Rorke to Stanton, 22 May 1973.

[66]"Three-tiered central car park opened', *SCMP*, 9 Dec. 1957, 6.

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Motorists soon complained it was inadequate.[67] There was even one suggestion for a multi-storey car park to be built over the Tsim Sha Tsui railway terminus.[68] The first multi-storey car park in Kowloon entered service on 11 January 1965.[69] However, disputes over parking continued. In one instance, a 'small-time expatriate civil servant' left notes on cars in public parking spaces to secure spaces for himself, for which he was decried in the press.[70] In 1970, a mass brawl between hardware store workers armed with metal rods was reported to be over parking spaces.[71]

The plan to build a multi-storey car park on a podium over the Hung Hom terminus was never in question. The idea was that motorists could park their cars in the car park and change onto the KCR for trains to the New Territories, onto cross-harbour buses to Hong Kong Island, or onto the underground rail. The car park thus served both private and public mobility. As early as 1964, the PWD recommended multi-storey car parks above the station.[72] Multi-storey car parks were built across Britain in the 1960s, and Preston bus station, a brutalist behemoth with a multi-storey car park in its design, was a standout piece of 'traffic architecture'.[73] One PWD engineer emphasized that the Hung Hom terminus car park should be 'made *as large as possible* compatible with the restrictions of the site'.[74] In negotiations with the Hong Kong financial secretary, the car park was seen as integral to the entire scheme of the station move.[75] By the time the station entered service, the car park was given almost as much publicity as the station itself, being described as 'the most conspicuous feature on the skyline' in the area.[76] It was to be the symbol of a modern railway terminus, to the extent that, in an unfinished state, the car park and terminus hosted Queen Elizabeth II during her visit to the colony in 1975. 'Progress Hong Kong', the name of a trade exhibition, was daubed over the car park's exterior.[77] Figure 2 shows the cubical car park above the railway station and bus interchange.

This positive image did not last for long. KCR General Manager Reginald Gregory called the car park a 'wasted opportunity' that prevented the 'maximum exploitation of space'.[78] The vertical clearance was not enough for one motorist, who scraped the top of his van on the air-conditioning unit at the entrance of the station.[79] One suggestion was to turn the car park into a planetarium.[80] With a staff shortage and poor usage numbers, the top three floors were converted

[67]Trezise, 'Multi-storey car parks', *SCMP*, 28 Sep. 1960, 12.
[68]R.P. Pomeroy, 'Railway/ferry terminal', *SCMP*, 8 Mar. 1963, 14.
[69]'Zhongjian Dao tinchechang jin chen kaifang tingche', *Kung Sheung Daily News*, 11 Jan. 1965, 4.
[70]'Xiao xiao waiji gongwu renyuan shifou xiangyou mou xie tequan', *Kung Sheung Evening News*, 28 Oct. 1967, 1.
[71]'Zheng bochewei yinqi chongtu', *Wen Wei Po*, 27 Jul. 1970, 4.
[72]HKPRO, HKRS39-1-32, Robson to Hon CS, 21 Dec. 1964.
[73]E. Harwood, *Space, Hope, and Brutalism: English Architecture, 1945–1975* (New Haven, 2015), 304, 314–15.
[74]Emphasis in original. HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-96, Saunders to GME(TT), 21 Jan. 1971.
[75]HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-96, Robson, minute, 5 Jan. 1970.
[76]J. Marchant, 'Shops, restaurants, mail centre, 7-storey car park', *SCMP*, 25 Nov. 1975, II.
[77]G. Chambers, *Supertrader: The Story of Trade Development in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong, 1989), 79.
[78]B. Choi, '$1,000 million plan to develop KCR', *SCMP*, 19 Jan. 1976, 1.
[79]Never Again, 'Close scrape at Hunghom', *SCMP*, 15 Aug. 1979, 15.
[80]A.G., 'Put planetarium in Hunghom', *SCMP*, 7 Jul. 1977, 9.

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Figure 2. The Hung Hom terminus and multi-storey car park, as seen from Cross-Harbour Tunnel entrance. *Source:* 'Kowloon Station, Hung Hom', *c.* 1970s, S2008.0091, University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections.

into a temporary sports centre less than two years after the car park's opening.[81] This proved popular, but the opening of the nearby Hung Hom coliseum, the development of the nearby land and the electrification of the KCR drove up demand for parking spaces.[82]

Automobility's proliferation had its limits, as the struggle with filling up the car park illustrates. David Edgerton has shown that novel technologies, in this case, a multi-storey car park in a public transport complex, need not be immediately disruptive, as old technologies persist and co-exist with the new.[83] Here, there was another reason behind the poor initial take-up, this time to do with international flows of fuel. As Figure 1 shows, although car ownership numbers increased dramatically from the 1950s onwards, there was a slight dip in the mid-1970s. The government attributed this to increased vehicle licensing fees, introduced in the budget in 1974 ostensibly as a measure to raise money for various public works schemes as well as to limit the number of vehicles on the roads.[84] However, this coincided with the global oil crisis of 1973–74. The financial secretary was at pains to stress that Hong Kong had not been too badly affected by the oil crisis, but the cost-of-living crisis badly affected key components of the 'car system', namely

[81]'Hongkan tingchechang shao ren yong', *Wen Wei Po*, 25 Jun. 1977, 8; 'Hunghom car park may be re-opened', *SCMP*, 10 Aug. 1978, 8.

[82]'Parking space shortage shuts sports centre', *SCMP*, 22 Apr. 1982, 21.

[83]D. Edgerton, *The Shock of the Old: Technology and Global History since 1900* (London, 2008).

[84]*Hong Kong 1975: Report for the Year 1974* (Hong Kong, 1974), 142; *Hong Kong Hansard*, 27 Feb. 1974, 594–6.

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fuel and tyres.[85] The oil crisis was one event in a wider process of reconciling automobility with environmental concerns in Britain and Japan.[86] Though car ownership in Hong Kong continued to rise after this brief blip, this episode shows how local automobility needs interacted with global economic trends. Mass car ownership facilitated local flows of people, hitherto unattainable with public transport or walking, but automobility itself was contingent on global flows of fuel and energy.

Facilities for Chinese freight

The almost intuitive designation of the KCR as a part of Hong Kong's public transport network is complicated by its freight operations. As detailed above, the lack of expansion potential for freight hampered the former Kowloon terminus. As early as 1929, a newspaper editorial suggested the KCR would remain 'a mere tramway service' indefinitely unless the terminus was moved to Hung Hom to better facilitate freight traffic.[87] A British wartime report noted the terminus' lack of sufficient space for growth and 'meagre' marshalling facilities.[88] The railway's first post-war annual report warned the freight facilities would soon be 'inadequate'.[89] The hoped-for trade never came, due to world war, civil war and the Communist takeover of China in 1949. Instead, a steady southbound traffic of foodstuffs gradually developed after the Korean War and the subsequent US trade embargo on the PRC. By early 1950, the Railway Department confirmed that the vast majority of that trade was conducted with PRC state agencies.[90] Thus, although the railway's passenger traffic was part of the colony's public transport network, the cargo traffic fulfilled the PRC's need for foreign exchange.[91] As an underfunded single-track line, capacity that could have served passengers was instead used for Chinese state cargo. This complicates the view of a government-run railway as a natural component of the public transport network. Whilst other transport modes in Hong Kong were privately owned, they all had the aim of moving Hong Kong's people. The one government-managed exception instead ran its cargo operations for the Chinese regime's foreign exchange needs.

This conflict between the KCR as a public, passenger-carrying railway and as a PRC-aiding cargo railway is illustrated by tensions between two engineering visions espoused at around the time of the new terminus' completion. After Reginald Gregory was appointed general manager in April 1974, the railway looked towards increased trade with China again. Gregory was previously an engineer on British Railways' London Midland region and was later seconded to Sri Lanka and

[85]*Hong Kong Hansard*, 27 Feb. 1974, 561; E. Towner, 'Air fares, oil and petrol go up', *SCMP*, 21 Feb. 1974, 1, 22; E. Towner, B. Choi and P. Choy, 'Sharp twist for Hongkong's spiralling prices', *SCMP*, 22 Feb. 1974, 1, 24.

[86]Gunn and Townsend, *Automobility*, 157–9.

[87]'The railway terminus', *SCMP*, 9 Mar. 1929, 8.

[88]TNA, WO 252/1468, 'Hong Kong–Canton area: railways', 46.

[89]*Annual Report of the General Manager, Kowloon Canton Railway, 1946–47* (Hong Kong, 1947), 1.

[90]HKPRO, HKRS170-1-568-2, 'Monthly report – February 1950', 4 Mar. 1950.

[91]Hong Kong was the PRC's 'most valuable source of foreign exchange': C.R. Schenk, *Hong Kong as an International Financial Centre: Emergence and Development, 1945–65* (London, 2001), 12.

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Ghana as a financial and managerial advisor.[92] His appointment in Hong Kong signalled a change in the government's intentions. In his first months on the new job, Gregory frequently spoke in public about how China's freight output to Hong Kong would increase and how the KCR would accommodate it.[93] This was a break from the inward-looking railway administration of the two decades prior. In December 1974, Gregory visited China, the first official trip there by a KCR general manager since 1949, and would visit annually throughout his tenure.[94] Even before the completion of the new terminus, he suggested that parts of the multi-storey car park above the station should be converted into a warehouse for the China Travel Service (CTS), the Chinese state organization responsible for freight traffic.[95]

Gregory was at odds with engineers in the PWD's Railway Division, for whom the KCR was primarily a local railway for local passengers. These engineers had been in the colony for longer and had different visions for both the terminus and the railway itself. Kafayat Rahmani described the Hung Hom project as a 'civil engineer's dream'.[96] He was in East Africa before arriving in Hong Kong in 1971.[97] Siema Grunberg, chief engineer in the Railway Division, had been in Hong Kong since 1964 and saw the project from inception to completion.[98] Grunberg's father built parts of the Trans-Siberian Railway, and the younger Grunberg had worked on railways since 1935; like Gregory, he had experience in Ghana and the London Midlands region.

Despite their strikingly similar professional experiences, Gregory and Grunberg had vastly different visions of the railway. Gregory, with his secondments to former colonies at an early stage of his career, became what Donna Mehos and Suzanne Moon have described as a technical expert in a decolonizing world who provided portable expertise. Rahmani and especially Grunberg, on the other hand, had place-specific knowledge, due to their long stays in Hong Kong.[99] The 'portable' expert saw the KCR as a cross-border freight and passenger railway; the engineers with local expertise saw the line through the lens of local public transport. Gregory's vision, espoused through skilful use of print and broadcast media, promised a return to a mythical railway past, in which the KCR took its rightful place as the British extension of the Chinese railway network, connecting China with the rest of the world. It was a vision based on the potential of mobility. Grunberg's vision

[92]'Meeting in London 20th November 1957', *Journal of the Institution of Locomotive Engineers*, 47 (1957), 548; 'New head of KCR appointed', *SCMP*, 4 Apr. 1974, 8.

[93]'KCR to face freight rise', *SCMP*, 24 May 1974, 8; B. Choi, 'First train load of oil next month', *SCMP*, 5 Jun. 1974, 1.

[94]KCR general managers frequented China before the Chinese Communist Party took power. *KCR Annual Departmental Report 1974–75* (Hong Kong, 1975), 10.

[95]HKPRO, HKRS681-2-10, Meyers to DED, 19 Dec. 1974.

[96]'Pakistanis play big role in HK progress: engineer working on "dream project"', *SCMP*, 23 Mar. 1973, 10.

[97]K. Rahmani, 'Construction of the Mnyusi–Ruvu line: East African railways and harbours', *Journal of the Permanent Way Institution*, 82 (1964), 55–62.

[98]J. Marchant, 'Key man in the giant project: railways part of his life', *SCMP*, 25 Nov. 1975, IV.

[99]D.C. Mehos and S.M. Moon, 'The uses of portability: circulating experts in the technopolitics of Cold War and decolonization', in Gabrielle Hecht (ed.), *Entangled Geographies: Empire and Technopolitics in the Global Cold War* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 43–74.

was grounded in the lived experiences of the KCR. It was a part of a public transport network first, and a cross-border freight facilitator a distant second.

An article by the PWD engineers reveals the differences in these visions for Kowloon. Freight facilities were given less attention than the expanded passenger facilities. Their explanation for why the station had to be moved only mentioned local passenger services and land utilization reasons: the new terminus' 'adequate holding space' would prevent overcrowding and would allow for better land use, as the railway would no longer bisect the Kowloon peninsula.[100] Though they acknowledged the growth of goods traffic on the KCR, freight facilities were only given passing references. Better track alignment also meant better road layout, thus improving road mobility. For the PWD's engineers, passenger traffic was key. Since direct passenger traffic to Canton had been suspended since 1949, there was no mention of this in their article. For Grunberg and Rahmani, this was a local railway terminus that happened to also serve cross-border freight.

But for Gregory, this was a local line with international potential. The line could tap into China's interior. Soon after his arrival in Hong Kong, he suggested 'essential' changes to the layout of the new terminus' goods yard to cope with increased freight traffic from China.[101] He tried to secure some land near new railway workshops in Sha Tin for a CTS-owned warehouse, since no space was allocated to the CTS at the new terminus.[102] Grunberg defended the designs which predated Gregory's arrival; since the CTS had known for years that the terminus would be moved but did not apply for any facilities until March 1974, 'it has only itself to blame'.[103] The tension between the railway as a public transport component and as a cross-border freight line for non-public benefit led to persistent bickering between the engineers.

Gregory looked for ways to accommodate the CTS at Hung Hom. Later in 1974, he allowed the CTS to use the transit shed and half of the goods office at Hung Hom.[104] Eventually, he was able to secure a standalone site in Hung Hom for the CTS.[105] In 1979, this site was sold, ostensibly via public auction, to the CTS for HK$33.8 million.[106] Though Gregory had left Hong Kong by this stage, he got his way.[107] The Hung Hom site conformed to his vision for the KCR: a railway that catered for Chinese trade, the purpose it was created for and fought for by British interests at the beginning of the century. The vision of the terminus as a local, public mobility facilitator in the post-war period was replaced by that imagined by Gregory, the terminus as a facilitator of Chinese freight.

[100]S. Grunberg, K. Rahmani and V.J. Mansfield, 'Planning and civil engineering aspects of a new railway terminus in Hong Kong', *Proceedings of the Institution of Civil Engineers*, 60 (1976), 623.

[101]HKPRO, HKRS461-1-15, 'KDER1(4)/A: Kowloon Canton Railway', 14 Sep. 1974; HKPRO, HKRS461-1-15, Gregory to Jones, 17 Sep. 1974.

[102]HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-100, Gregory to Grewal, 11 Jul. 1974.

[103]HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-100, Grunberg to Gregory, 16 Jul. 1974.

[104]HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-101, Gregory to Tsang, 19 Aug. 1974.

[105]HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-100, Crown Lands and Survey Office, 'Notes of a meeting held on 11.6.', 12 Jun. 1975; HKPRO, HKRS1689-1-100, Kennett, 'Notes for PWD conference', n.d. Sep. 1975.

[106]'Hunghom site fetches $33.8m', *SCMP*, 23 Feb. 1979, 7.

[107]'KCR chief takes the safari special', *SCMP*, 17 Feb. 1978, 8.

The new terminus in the press

Though the new Hung Hom terminus' opening was meant to signal the start of a new and modern KCR, it instead provided an opportunity to reflect on the railway's role in Hong Kong. Newspaper commentators agreed that the KCR was underfunded and underdeveloped, and therefore one strand of public discourse was on the railway's shortcomings as part of the local public transport system. One tabloid noted how the 'KCR for many years operated virtually in the doldrums and its profits were not ploughed back into its development'.[108] Another held the government directly responsible for withholding much-needed investment from the railway, which meant it was 'left behind by the two bus companies and the various ferry routes'; it also claimed the Railway Department used the new terminus as a 'scapegoat' to deflect all criticism.[109]

Other newspapers focused on the KCR's potential role in the New Towns project, a positive outlook on the railway's future position in the city's public transport network. The *Express* thought that adequate public transport via the KCR was a vital prerequisite to the New Towns project's success.[110] Referring to a projected population increase in the New Towns, the *Star* considered the KCR to have 'a very definite and essential role to play in New Territories development', whilst the *South China Morning Post* thought the terminus was 'long overdue', especially due to growing populations in Sha Tin and Tai Po.[111] Thus, some newspapers focused on the railway's role in Hong Kong's public transport network. The new terminus would funnel in commuters from the projected New Towns into urban Kowloon, fulfilling its role as a site of local public mobility.

The railway's cross-border element also came under scrutiny. After praising the new terminus, the *Hong Kong Daily News* looked forward to a reinstatement of the through passenger train to Canton.[112] For the *Sing Pao*, no matter how modern the new terminus was, the through train was the railway's *raison d'être*: 'The biggest mission of the new station is to take on the mission of the direct Kowloon–Canton through train. Before this is realized, a magnificent, perfect Hung Hom terminus cannot fulfil people's needs.'[113] Rather than the cross-border passenger service, the *Sing Tao Jih Pao* focused on freight:

> In the past, this city was merely a re-export station for freight between China and overseas. At that time, KCR trains could go straight to Canton, with the possibility of further connections. Since the mainland became Communist, these re-export opportunities were lost, and the KCR's freight traffic underwent some dismal days until recently, when freight traffic has quickly increased. But the present traffic is different: in the past, the KCR's freight traffic was mostly foreign goods destined for China, but now it is mostly mainland

[108]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Railway with a bright future', *Star*, 26 Nov. 1975.
[109]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Hongkan zongzhan dai lai yi gu zhaoqi', *Wah Kiu Man Po*, 26 Nov. 1975.
[110]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Xianggang jiaotong-shi shang de xin biaozhi', *Express*, 30 Nov. 1975.
[111]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Railway with a bright future', *Star*, 26 Nov. 1975; 'The new Hunghom rail terminus', *SCMP*, 26 Nov. 1975, 2.
[112]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Xianggang de yuanjing', *Hong Kong Daily News*, 26 Nov. 1975.
[113]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Zongzhan yuanmei fenzhan ruhe', *Sing Pao*, 30 Nov. 1975.

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> products for Hong Kong or for re-export to other ports. In terms of goods destined for this city, as long as Hong Kong's position is unchanged, it should continue to increase. As for re-exports, the future is unclear, as the Chinese Communists may soon expand the facilities of the various ports on the coast, to replace this city's transhipment role. Therefore, the KCR's main mission in transport is mainly focused on the section from the Kowloon peninsula to Lo Wu, the so-called British Section, and the core should be the supply of materials to Hong Kong.[114]

Thus, newspapers in Hong Kong did not agree as to the railway and its new terminus' most important role. Was this a part of the local public transport network first and foremost? Or was its role as a 'tentacle' of trade paramount? That tension continuously played out during the planning of the Hung Hom terminus and continued to be debated.

Conclusion

The construction of the Hung Hom railway terminus brought together different, competing visions of urban mobility in Hong Kong. This article has shown that these competing visions of the railway and its terminus led to negotiations and conflicts. Through looking at the interactions, connections and competition between different mobilities, this transmodal study has shown that simple dichotomies of public and private mobilities are not enough to describe Hong Kong's mobilityscape.

Besides redressing a lacuna in the Hong Kong transport history and in the histories of roads, this article has brought into relief some issues with basic dichotomies of public and private urban transport. This article has shown that whilst the designation of a government-owned railway as public transport appears straightforward at first glance, this is less simple when we consider its role as a cargo-carrying railway, mostly for the foreign exchange needs of another government. This tension between the public and the China-oriented forms of traffic on the KCR continuously played out over the decades. This article has also shown the limits of a straightforward 'private' delineation for automobility. The planned integration of automobile, surface rail, underground rail and bus transport on the site of the Hung Hom terminus shows different forms of public and private urban mobilities entangling together.

What are some of the implications of this case-study? To begin with the local: if, according to Tim Edensor, there are national forms of automobility, then Hong Kong can be argued to have a distinctive civic/municipal automobility, or at least a municipal 'motorscape', with the ubiquitous multi-storey car park.[115] Large vertical complexes proliferated across Hong Kong, often with a shopping mall on the lowest levels, a multi-storey car park either above the mall or underground and office or residential tower blocks extending upwards, access to which is provided by a podium.[116] In a city where land is perceived to be at a premium, the vertical

[114]HKPRO, HKRS70-7-249-1, 'Hongkan xin chezhan jiancheng qiyong', *Sing Tao Jih Pao*, 28 Nov. 1975.

[115]T. Edensor, 'Automobility and national identity', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 21 (2004), 108.

[116]S. Al, *Mall City: Hong Kong's Dreamworlds of Consumption* (Hong Kong, 2016); B. Shelton, J. Karakiewicz and T. Kvan, *The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric* (London, 2011).

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multi-storey car park is seen as a logical solution to the parking problem. The Hung Hom terminus site, with its multi-storey car park and stadium, was an early symptom of this trend.[117]

As for wider implications, Hong Kong was a forerunner in privatized public transport. As noted throughout this article, most of the public transport modes were operated by private companies. The Railway Department was 'hived off' into a statutory corporation in 1983.[118] The government's lack of interest in operating mobility infrastructures meant even the container terminal was not funded by public funds, a rare exception globally.[119] Hong Kong has long been used by neoliberal thinkers as a model to learn from.[120] As debates continue globally over how to categorize different forms of transport, a reappraisal of the parameters should be useful.

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[117]Shelton, Karakiewicz and Kvan, *The Making of Hong Kong*. For the Hung Hom coliseum, see C. Lai, Chen Yanbei and Yuan Weiran, *Mishi de modeng: Xianggang zhanhou xiandaizhuyi jianzhu 25 xuan* (Hong Kong, 2021), 78–85.

[118]Yeung, *Moving Millions*, 71–5.

[119]M. Levinson, *The Box: How the Shipping Container Made the World Smaller and the World Economy Bigger* (Princeton, 2016), 319.

[120]Jamie Peck, 'Milton's paradise: situating Hong Kong in neoliberal lore', *Journal of Law and Political Economy*, 1 (2021), 189–211.

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