The Shek Kip Mei Myth

Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950–1963

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— *Britta Erickson, The Art of Xu Bing*

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Introduction

THE AIMS OF THE BOOK

The kind of place and society that Hong Kong became during the second half of the twentieth century was profoundly influenced by one of the world's largest public housing programmes, to the extent that no aspect of its contemporary organization can be adequately understood without reference to it. This uncharacteristic intervention in a colonial territory otherwise reputed for unabashed allegiance to a non-interventionist economic ideology presents a puzzle that has been repeatedly addressed by scholars. Why did public housing grow so massively from such unpromising soil? What was its contribution to Hong Kong's rapid economic development after World War II? The consequences of this dramatic shift in approach to the provision of shelter and the development of space have been pivotal not only for Hong Kong, but ramify much more widely. John Carroll has recently suggested that Hong Kong may have been "the most important place in China for more than 150 years, precisely because it was politically not part of China".[1] A comparable claim could be made for the period of China's economic reforms since 1979, and due to what has come to be called the "rise of China", the global consequences of Hong Kong's role in this epochal transformation may have been even greater.[2] The explanation of the origins of Hong Kong's public housing, then, has much more than local importance. This book is not intended to explore the consequences of Hong Kong's adoption of public housing as the main solution to the provision of shelter and the redevelopment of land, but to offer new ideas on why this path was adopted in the first place.

Most narratives of the beginnings of public housing adopt to some degree what I describe in this book as the "Shek Kip Mei myth". The official version, as summarized by the Secretary for Housing, Planning and Lands, Michael Suen Ming-yeung, is that "we built simple, low-cost shelters to a minimum

standard to meet emergency needs resulting from a tragic Christmas night fire in 1953 in Shek Kip Mei".[3] Most academic versions have differed on the motivations underlying the resettlement of the fire victims and its social and economic consequences, but don't question the basic features of this narrative: squatter resettlement began in response to this massive fire, and that the genealogy of the contemporary public housing programmes can be traced back to this founding moment. I describe this story as a "myth" not simply because I think that in many important ways it is wrong, or at least inadequate, but also because it has a mythical quality in the more positive sense: a "narrative that effects identification within the community that takes it seriously, endorsing shared interests and confirming the given notion of order".[4] Given the low level of development of public participation and social welfare in colonial Hong Kong, public housing came to be both a key strategy for building a sense of citizenship and commitment by Hong Kong residents, and a symbol for the positive dimensions of the colonial legacy. Both became extremely important after the 1966 and 1967 riots and in the long transition to the return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, and can be seen clearly in the housing reforms of the 1970s initiated by Governor MacLehose. It appears to be at this time that the Shek Kip Mei myth took mature form; as the book will demonstrate below, it was much less apparent in the 1950s.[5] Instead, there was greater recognition of the continuities between squatter resettlement in the early 1950s and those undertaken afterward. The Shek Kip Mei story condenses, simplifies and intensifies a much more complicated history, as do all good myths. It expresses an important truth, but the antagonist that had to be responded to by the colonial culture hero was not a single fire, but a whole series of large squatter fires that plagued Hong Kong throughout the 1950s.

While certain innovations, particularly direct governmental construction of multi-storey buildings, are undoubtedly present in the responses to the loss of homes by 58,000 squatters, there had previously been other massive squatter areas fires, such as the 1950 Kowloon City and 1951 Tung Tau fires that left tens of thousands without shelter.[6] The minimum number of people who lost their homes during the decade to squatter fires totals 190,047. The real number was certainly higher, perhaps substantially so, since this estimate includes only those fires discussed in official documents, and is based on official estimates which are often lower than those suggested by others observers. As one example of the underreporting, the Fire Brigade Annual Report for 1952/1953 mentions 50 outbreaks of fires in squatter settlements for the year, but only gives numbers of fire victims for the most important fires. The politics of enumerating fire victims emerge in several of the

chapters. While Shek Kip Mei was undeniably larger than any of the other fires, it seems unlikely that the difference of scale by itself explains a dramatic shift in government policy.

In fact, close examination of confidential governmental documents of the time indicates that at least the initial response to the Shek Kip Mei disaster was not a sharp break from earlier policies regarding squatter fires, clearance and resettlement. Previous fires had prompted significant shifts in government legislation, policies and practices. Furthermore, it is only subsequent fires, such as the one in Lei Cheng Uk in November 1954, that turned a provisional experiment into a permanent programme. We need to see the fires in a broader context to make sense of what went on between Kowloon City (1950) and Shek Kip Mei (1953) and afterwards. My analysis of these cases suggests that earlier, as well as subsequent, fires also had an impact that contributed to the eventual solution to the cycle of disaster and inadequate response leading to subsequent crises. The other, mostly forgotten, squatter fires, both before and after Shek Kip Mei played crucial but neglected roles in shaping Hong Kong housing policies, and hence the very nature of contemporary Hong Kong itself.

Bonham Richardson has commented that "as scholars of fire know, their subject is everywhere and nowhere".[7] Fires have throughout history prompted the restructuring of cities and often served as the catalyst for the earliest forms of urban planning regulations. Yet, fires have received little critical attention in comparison to public health, for example. This book provides the first detailed exploration of the impact of squatter fires on the policies of the Hong Kong Government in the 1950s and offers a new explanation for the large-scale provision of Resettlement housing. I argue that a crucial element of an adequate explanation for this pivotal change has been neglected in previous accounts: the geopolitical vulnerability of a British colony on the edge of communist China during the early stages of the Cold War. The precarious situation of Hong Kong, acknowledged by consensus as indefensible, could be destabilized by the emergence of civil disturbances, particularly when Beijing or Guangzhou intervened on behalf of the victims of "British imperialist oppression", as it did repeatedly in response to the suffering of fire victims. In the absence of these contextual constraints, squatter clearance without resettlement would have met the concrete needs of the Hong Kong. Such an approach would also have been much more consistent with past practices and beliefs about the proper role of the state and the need to discourage illegality, as well as conserving resources that were constantly seen as inadequate to practical demands.

Beyond these basic objectives of exploring a series of fires whose impact has been neglected and offering a better explanation of how housing policy developed in the 1950s, this book will also provide new perspectives on the nature of early postwar Hong Kong government and society, and colonial cities more generally. The illegal occupation of land challenged an important source of government revenue, hobbled legal forms of development since many or most sites would have to be cleared before building could proceed, and raised massive problems of public health and safety. The inability of the government to control the squatter problem reveals the limitations on its capacity to regulate even a small and compact colonial territory, despite the absence of significant domestic political constraints. By considering how the proliferation of squatter settlements developed and how efforts to control them floundered again and again, new vistas onto the nature of colonial rule are opened. In a broader context, disasters have frequently initiated significant changes of directions in societies around the world. Their impact is often magnified greatly by patterns of repeated disruptions.[8] Disasters are not the simple catastrophic intersection between a human population and a hazard, but result from historically produced patterns of vulnerability. Fires, unlike other natural disasters such as earthquakes or floods, are more like epidemics in generally being caused by human actions or inactions, and thus share the moral freight of blame and justification.[9]

Disasters offer insights into broader processes within a society, since "basic social organizational forms and behavioral tenets of a society are exhibited and tested under conditions of stress".[10] Given certain conditions, they can initiate changes in direction for a society. The Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927 prompted many direct responses but more broadly initiated sharp shifts in perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of the United States Federal Government, well before the more noted New Deal response to the Depression.[11] Closer to the specific topic of this book, Christine Meisner Rosen has explored city rebuilding after great fires in Chicago (1871), Boston (1872), and Baltimore (1904). The burnt districts provided great opportunities to resolve environmental problems that were previously insoluble, but local politics influenced the extent to which these occasions resulted in substantial reform. After all three fires, people "welcomed the destruction as an opportunity" to improve sanitation and urban planning but their accomplishments were "limited by the continuing existence of many of the factors that had created the problems in the first place".[12] The same can be said about the Squatter Resettlement Programme in Hong Kong. How the opportunities were exploited set Hong Kong on a particular path to development, but it is essential to understand that the path taken, hence contemporary Hong Kong, could have been different.

I am particularly interested in the unexamined assumptions about what were considered to be practicable courses of action. Routine bureaucratic procedures and processes underlay and channeled decisions in particular directions (or generated resistance to or non-consideration of less familiar directions). During crises, or when inconsistencies that previously cohabited peacefully come into explicit conflict or contradiction, some of these assumptions may come jarringly to light, as options are considered and broad principles may be open for reconsideration. Squatter fires, and the political problems that they caused, regularly brought such features of the colonial mentality and institutions to light. The body of the book is organized around specific fires that generated important shifts in policy, but in all cases they also serve to cast light on other issues related to the governance of colonial Hong Kong. Issues that will be addressed in the context of one fire or another include concern for how fire precautions might give the "appearance" of property rights in squatter settlements, the differential treatment of old villagers in New Kowloon compared to the rest of the New Territories, how postwar Hong Kong should be planned, problems of maintaining control over the encouragement of corruption among those responsible for squatter resettlement, the management of street-sleeping fire victims, and the "unreliability" of the Chinese population in the context of fundamental worries about subversion (from both communists and the Kuomintang) and instability. This last issue is one that has re-emerged in a very different form in the twenty-first century. The groundswell of demands for democratization since half a million people demonstrated on 1 July 2003 against the anti-subversion law has revived Beijing's fears that Hong Kong might serve as a base for subversion and that democracy is a prelude to a demand for independence. Half a century after the events portrayed in this book, Hong Kong's people are again seen as unreliable subjects whose ultimate loyalties cannot be trusted, even if the "external" power is now in the People's Republic of China rather than the United Kingdom. Despite some continuities, however, Hong Kong has been dramatically transformed in the last half century, changes that were in substantial part shaped by the choices adopted in the mid-1950s. Hong Kong without public housing would have a completely different landscape and society. I will try to show that things could have been considerably different. One of the problems with the Shek Kip Mei myth, and indeed with most other explanations of the origins of public housing, is the assumption that the path taken was one that was inevitable, the only questions being when and how, questions that were answered by the crisis of the Shek Kip Mei disaster.

APPROACHES TO COLONIAL RULE

When anthropologists address government policies and programmes, they tend to stress the need to bring ordinary people, the targets of interventions, into the picture, in order to either show how they are affected, how their responses influenced the outcomes, or how the processes should be understood from their perspectives.[13] That is not my main objective in this book, since such efforts have been the driving force of all of my past research on Hong Kong. I have argued that contemporary Hong Kong cannot be understood without attention to the impact of squatters on the landscape, on the constitution of a public housing programme, and along with other small manufacturers operating out of legal domestic quarters or publicly-provided flatted factories, in both generating Hong Kong's export manufacturing-based economic "miracle" and its transfer into mainland China after the beginning of China's reforms in 1979.[14] Obviously, I consider bringing ordinary people back in to our explanations important, and to a considerable extent I will be doing so in this book. Whereas apathy on the part of squatters has been seen as part of the distinctive nature of the Hong Kong housing experience,[15] if one looks carefully at the pre-1954 period (as well as the late 1970s and early 1980s), the strenuous, and occasionally militant, response of squatters to clearance without resettlement was a crucial part of the situation that made solving the squatter problem so difficult. It is precisely the stubborn persistence of the squatter problem despite sustained governmental efforts to resolve it that needs to be understood, if we are to make sense of the puzzle of the non-interventionist Hong Kong Government becoming by far the largest provider of housing in the territory.

However, the response of squatters to dislocation without adequate compensation is the part of the puzzle that I understand best from my past ethnographic and archival research. The other side of the equation was much more mysterious to me at the beginning of this project: what were government officials thinking and saying among themselves that would lead them to make the momentous, and apparently uncharacteristic, decisions that they did in the 1950s? In part, this involves reconstructing the "official mind" or "cosmologies",[16] in both explicit and taken for granted forms, that underlay their actions and choices. Ronald Hyam sees the concept of "trusteeship" as central to an "official mind" at the Colonial Office which in general "was humane and progressive, unable to identify with extreme right-wing attitudes to Empire" and was most comfortable with "radical administrations" such as the Labour government from 1945 to 1951. Trusteeship was the doctrine, first espoused by Edmund Burke in 1783,

that colonial rule ought to be exercised ultimately for the benefit of those subject to rule, and that it should involve development and mentoring for eventual self-government.[17] In practice, of course, administrators are rarely convinced of their immediate dispensability, however much they may feel that their actions are bringing that day closer. As far as implicit dimensions of the colonial mind, the postcolonial theorists have made major contributions to our understanding of its various dimensions, including the racist, sexist and class-based assumptions on which colonialism operated.[18] Mundane procedures and routines are often greatly resistant to change, even when explicit ideology shifts gears.

While useful, a focus on the mentality of colonial officials would seem to go only so far. First, there is the question of interests and the political economy of imperialism. Neo-marxist theories of British imperialism usually focused on the contribution that the Empire made to the growth of industrialism by providing cheap raw materials and captive markets for manufactured exports. In an influential critique, Peter Cain and Anthony Hopkins have argued that these arguments misinterpret the operation of the metropolitan economy and its influence on the Empire. Rather than the Colonial Office serving the interests of manufacturers, they saw the primary movers of British imperialism as being the "gentlemanly capitalists" who emerged from the interaction and interdependency of the older landed aristocracy and the new commercial and financial bourgeoisie.[19] One result was that "the British Empire was held together mainly by the widely held concern for sound public finance and balanced budgets in both the metropole and the colonies and dominions".[20] Criticisms of Cain and Hopkins's thesis, however, argue that in fine-textured studies of interactions between colonial decision-makers and representatives of financial interests, there was often more mutual distaste than solidarity. Administrators often saw their job as involving a need to protect "their people" from the rapaciousness of private interests and resulted in "an increasingly sour relationship between expatriate business and the state".[21] It is possible to reconcile separation and mutual dislike between colonial officials and financiers within the colonies with an overall complementarity of interests, but evidence for the argument must take a different form. My interests in this book are not with the overall explanation of British imperialism, but with how things worked out on the ground, and how administrators responded to specific crises. The fundamental mechanisms of imperialism provide at best a context within which local responses must be located, but considerable diversity in British colonial rule demonstrates that we must map the primary interests onto local outcomes with very great care and subtlety.[22]

These considerations lead to a second reason why it is necessary to go beyond ideas about the "official mind" or "colonial mentality" in explaining colonial administration and policy shifts. The relationship between thought and action is complex and rarely can be understood as a simple enactment of underlying ideas, whether explicit or tacit. Instead, actions are best seen as practical accomplishments. Ideas are capable of prompting diametrically opposed courses of action. In part, this is because actions make sense to the actor in a particular context and set of practical concerns. Even when abstract principles or rules are explicitly announced, they must be applied in concrete circumstances if they are to have more than rhetorical effect. Critical legal theorists have demonstrated that no matter how hard legislators try to specify how legal rules should be applied, an inextinguishable residual of indeterminacy requiring interpretation remains. Attempts to impose rules are countered by processes which reinterpret, sidestep, resist or subvert the application of those rules to particular cases.[23] The colonial mentality or official mind in action takes on dynamics that cannot easily be read off from an understanding of the abstract principles or even taken-for-granted procedures. At the same time, the actions cannot be understood without reference to the mentality and principles from which they spring and which are used to legitimate them.

Such an approach seems to me to be particularly relevant for an analysis of the British colonial service, who saw themselves as generalists employing common sense to develop practical solutions to particular challenges rather than dogmatically applying ideologies and theories. Like them, my approach here will be concerned more with practical adequacy rather than theoretical coherence: my ambition is to sketch out the intersection between engrained expectations, established procedures and their application to unruly places in very difficult conditions. The application of Michel Foucault's ideas to the study of colonial administration provides many useful starting points for this approach, but there are limitations for my purposes. In particular, Foucauldians have usually devoted much greater attention to the procedures than to their application in difficult, often refractory or resistant, conditions. It is true that colonies usually "penetrated more intensively into the lives of individual peasants than traditional governments had ever been able to do", to the extent that in 1939 J. S. Furnivall appropriated the term "Leviathan" to describe British colonial rule in Malaya.[24] The intensity of intervention could even be much greater, or at least less restrained, than in the European homelands. Timothy Mitchell proposes that because Foucault's work concentrated on France and northern Europe:

> this focus has tended to obscure the colonizing nature of disciplinary power. Yet the panopticon, the model institution whose geometric order and generalized surveillance serve as a motif for this kind of power, was a colonial invention. The panoptic principle was devised on Europe's colonial frontier with the Ottoman Empire, and examples of the panopticon were built for the most part not in northern Europe, but in places like colonial India.[25]

I will examine this approach in more detail in chapter 2, and throughout the book I will follow their prescription to examine in close detail the techniques of rule, the practices by which knowledge is generated in order to facilitate control, and the need to pay close attention to what might seem like the minutiae of technical procedures and discussions. But the Foucauldian perspective has tended to exaggerate the extent of control exercised by colonial administrations. For example, John and Jean Comaroff state that colonizers:

> everywhere try to gain control over the practices through which would-be subjects produce and reproduce the bases of their existence. No habit is too humble, no sign too insignificant to be implicated. And colonization always provokes struggles — albeit often tragically uneven ones — over power and meaning on the frontiers of empire.[26]

It may be common that colonizers do attempt to gain such all-encompassing control (although most historians of Hong Kong would be dubious about this claim), but whether or not they succeed in such ambitions is another matter altogether, and one that is too often neglected by those who apply Foucault to colonial governance. It also doesn't seem to fit the squatter problem very well, yet extensive squatter areas sprang up in many colonial cities. A fuller development of the promising beginnings of the Foucauldian analysis of colonial governance requires an examination not just of the techniques of control and surveillance, but also of the circumstances of their failure, what "kept the machinery from working properly", in a Kenyan official's words,[27] and the interactions between the two. Despite the limitations of colonial interventions to resolve the squatter problem, repeated failures to control the squatter problem eventually generated a government housing program that dramatically expanded government knowledge of and control over everyday life. While from a Foucauldian perspective this might be seen as an indication of how even apparent limitations result in an expansion of disciplinary power, from another vantage point it suggests that even

expanded power might be rooted in weakness more than in overwhelming panoptical power.

GENEALOGY OF THIS PROJECT

My concern, or rather fascination, with the question of how and why the desire to clear troublesome squatter "eyesores" was transformed into squatter resettlement began from a very different research perspective than the project discussed in this book. Field research for my doctoral dissertation, conducted between 1982 and 1985, involved participant-observation research on the clearance of squatter areas in Hong Kong. My wife, Josephine Smart, who was simultaneously doing research on illegal street vending, our newborn daughter Jasmine, and I moved into Diamond Hill squatter area. Living in the community is an important part of the anthropological approach to ethnography; it facilitates the observation of daily interactions, which helps to ground interviews in the concrete and the specific. It also has the strategic advantage of facilitating serendipitous encounters with phenomena that might never have emerged from simply asking questions, particularly those developed as part of a structured questionnaire. (I have found that this is also a merit of archival research.) Walking through Diamond Hill, talking with residents, participating in local activities, observing responses to a clearance that displaced households only a dozen yards from where we lived, provided for a much stronger "experiential" sense not only of what it was like to live in a squatter area, but also how the loss of a home there would be experienced. In fact, this was an area where we had rather more experience than we would have wished, since our house was burned down in a small squatter fire while we were away from home. Our host's mother was killed in the fire.

This tragedy did not immediately set me onto the path of historical research. Instead, I first entered the Public Records Office, then in the inauspicious setting of the Car Park Building in Central, because I could not make sense of the built environment of the informal settlement where I was living and studying. Preparing for field research had involved intensive reading on squatter settlements, a literature considerably dominated by Latin American research. I was predisposed from this remarkable body of work to expect to find low-income individuals who built their own dwellings out of scavenged materials, who had collectively organized invasions, and where the forms of access to housing were almost exclusively non-commodified.[28] Instead, I found that most residents had "purchased" their dwellings, despite

their illegal status and the steadfast refusal of the Hong Kong Government to do anything that might be seen as acknowledging property rights in squatter houses. I also gradually came to know an extremely complex built environment. The "typical" ramshackle corrugated galvanized steel roof, usually held in place against the typhoon winds with the contribution of large stones and old tires, and plywood construction were indeed common, particularly on the fringes of Diamond Hill which was all that most non-residents saw as they rode by on the busy Lung Cheung Road that cut through the middle of the squatter area. But in the central areas, anomalous forms of construction were more common. There were old village houses, some said by residents to be more than two hundred years old. There were now-dilapidated three and four-storey apartment buildings built of reinforced concrete. There were larger buildings subdivided into a warren of cubicles, which residents told me "used to be lived in by rich people". The high quality of these residences was attested to by the survival of a garden gazebo with a Chinese-style tiled roof, now subdivided and with additions to form several separate dwellings. An unusual tiled lane turned out to have been the deck of a swimming pool, now filled in and covered over with temporary structures. In short, rather than a homogeneous shanty town occupied by the urban poor, there was a complex sedimentation of very different types of structures, varying greatly in size and quality of constructions, and undermining many of my expectations of what a squatter settlement should look like. Attempts to make sense of Diamond Hill's landscape through interviews didn't resolve my confusion, and I first turned to the archives in order to learn how the area came to look like it did.

Attempting to reconstruct the local history of a squatter settlement forced me directly into a consideration of how shifting government policies and practices had had a pervasive impact on the character of these areas. The onset of the Resettlement Programme had a particularly strong effect, encouraging me to attempt to examine broader policy files. However, many files that I expected to be open based on the thirty years rule were still closed, particularly those related to the beginnings of the squatter resettlement programme. The documents that I did have access to, combined with publicly available documents and my own ethnographic observations, convinced me that prevailing explanations for the origins of squatter resettlement were inadequate, in part because some of the basic assumptions were simply wrong. I always wanted to return to these questions, and have been delighted to discover that the documents that I previously unrequitedly desired are now almost completely accessible, although I have not been able to locate some documents in the Hong Kong Public Record Office.[29]

The story that I have reconstructed from these documents is even more fascinating, I believe, than I had expected it to be. In the next section, I summarize the three main explanations of squatter resettlement, outline my previous critique,[30] and indicate some shortcomings of that argument, which this book will try to correct.

EXPLAINING THE ORIGINS OF HONG KONG PUBLIC HOUSING

The three main explanations for the origins of public housing in Hong Kong focus on, respectively: 1) governmental intervention to improve public welfare in a situation where the private sector was incapable of producing affordable housing;[31] 2) the need for intervention in order to free up scarce land for private sector development that was otherwise obstructed by illegal squatting;[32] and 3) state intervention in order to reproduce labour power at a cost low enough to support development through export-oriented manufacturing.[33] More recently, MacKay[34] and Faure[35] have focused on pressures from Britain as a key factor for changes in squatter and housing policy. In addition, Margaret Jones and Ip Iam-cheong have argued that sanitary concerns were the main reason for innovations in rehousing squatters.[36]

The role of the Shek Kip Mei fire in these accounts is primarily that of a catalyst or spark: perhaps determining the timing of large-scale explanation but not the cause in itself, which needs to be sought in broader dynamics or motivations. It is more central in the welfare explanation: the idea that the Hong Kong Government began to directly provide housing to meet massive housing needs that the private sector was unable to satisfy. While the current official account stresses the needs of the Shek Kip Mei squatters themselves, academic proponents of the welfare explanation have focused more on the needs of the general public.[37] However, the welfare position seems to be clearly contradicted by government statements at the time. In his critique of the welfare position, David Drakakis-Smith demonstrated that the one million squatters resettled by 1971 were relocated onto land equivalent to only 34% of the space previously occupied. Moreover, they were generally resettled on land that was more peripheral and less valuable than where they had previously resided.[38] David Faure has recently offered an intriguing argument that public statements that intervention was not done out of consideration for the welfare of squatters should be seen as a subterfuge rather than prima facie evidence of what they were thinking. Contrary to academics' usual biases that lead us to be sceptical of claims that government

is simply acting for the public good, we may be too ready to accept governmental disclaimers of welfare as a motivation. Faure suggests that while the local government, and particularly unofficial influentials in the Hong Kong community were not interested in intervening on the behalf of welfare, the Home Government was. Playing up the emergency of Shek Kip Mei allowed them to succumb to Colonial Office pressure to do more about the housing and squatter problems.[39] I will consider these interactions in detail later. For now I will simply indicate that my examination of the Hong Kong side of this correspondence does not support his argument, revealing little sense of pressure in the Hong Kong Colonial Secretariat to accede to the suggestions on social welfare reforms, particularly in the area of low-cost housing.[40]

Drakakis-Smith identified the reason for squatter resettlement as the desire by Government to make land available for development by private enterprise and for public works. Although state intervention in order to encourage private building seems paradoxical, he argues that the bottleneck created by illegal usurpation of land could only be overcome through government action. While consistent with some of the outcomes, the support for private developers approach fails to explain why squatters should be rehoused and not simply cleared (which would make even more land available for private development). It also neglects criticism of the programme by developers and private property interests during the period. In a debate in the Legislative Council on 3 July 1947, the majority of unofficial members (that is, those who were appointed as opposed to being government officials serving ex officio) criticized the government as impeding rebuilding. Some argued for the need to "remove all unnecessary Government impediments to private enterprise" in private sector construction and others suggested that crown rents and premiums were too high and building lease restrictions too demanding. It was pointed out that the building ordinances prevented the building of affordable houses using lighter construction materials.[41]

If the government had truly been committed to maximizing the freedom of action of private property developers, squatter clearance without resettlement would have been a more optimal approach. This would also have been consistent with the strongly expressed desire of officials to regain control over potentially valuable space. What is missing from all three explanations is a clear explanation of why clearance without resettlement was either not desired or not achievable. What is also underplayed are the conditions that prevented the private sector from providing legal housing. It was not simply the poverty of the refugees: rents per square foot were as

high or higher for cubicles in squatter structures as they were in legal private housing.[42] Rather, as the 1947 Legco debate discussed above suggests, governmental restrictions were a major factor. Despite Hong Kong's fame as a place where capitalism is largely unfettered, a major exception concerns the control of land, ownership of which is monopolized by the state, with private interests restricted to leasehold. Furthermore, obtaining rights and permissions to develop land has been a complex and time-consuming process, and one which largely excluded indigenous villagers in the peri-urban areas from being able to undertake it by themselves, as I will discuss below. The centrality of the state in land administration combined with a colonial government in considerable disarray after the Japanese occupation[43] to generate a virtual deadlock when it came to making land available for building. From 1945 to 1954 no more than 200 acres of crown land were allocated to new urban housing, and less than thirty acres of this were auctioned on the open market, the rest being granted by private treaty for non-profit uses. Despite this, even by 1958 the private sector was still investing 80.56% of all capital expenditure on housing, excluding the cost of land.[44] The inability of the private sector to cope with housing the rapid influx of refugees was itself in part a product of state intervention. Richard Wong has stressed the importance of the imposition of rent control in 1945 as a major contributor to the housing problem.[45] The three rival explanations tend to take "failure" for granted, so that the question was not whether Government would intervene in direct low-income housing provision, but only when, how and why.

The problem of explaining squatter *resettlement* and not just squatter clearance also undermines the sanitation/public hygiene approaches offered by Jones and Ip. Both provide compelling evidence that the government saw squatter areas as deeply problematic because of the threats they posed to public health. But it is hardly at issue that the government wanted to wipe illegal settlements off the map. Although health and sanitation concerns were undoubtedly central to the colonial official worldview, even without this, they would have wanted to eradicate squatter colonies for reasons of public order, freeing up land for development, and general aesthetics. What none of these desires explains is why clearance without resettlement was not viable. A similar objection applies to Richard Wong's argument that public housing was a "response to the devastating consequences of rent control", since he only accounts for one of the conditions that fostered the growth of the squatter problem, without addressing why these groups had to be rehoused at government expense rather than simply displaced.[46]

The third explanation concentrates on the impact of public housing on the Hong Kong economy. It has received a great deal of attention because of its adoption by the influential urban theorist, Manuel Castells, in his co-authored book entitled *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome*.[47] The argument is that public housing reduced the cost of labour and thereby facilitated the rapid growth of export-oriented manufacturing, the basis of Hong Kong's rapid economic expansion from the 1950s until the opening of mainland China after 1978. The problem with this functionalist argument from effects to causes is that it is largely without empirical evidence, although it may have been a contextual factor that helped make the expansion of low-cost housing feasible and attractive, particularly in the later period.[48] That it may have had the effect of allowing lower wages does not in itself provide a mechanism for the initiation of the programme. In any case, low-wage manufacturing is consistent with the extensive toleration of illegal squatter settlements, where labour power can also be cheaply reproduced.

In response to the empirical and theoretical inadequacies of the three explanations current at the time, I proposed in 1989 an alternative approach that emphasized the way in which the eviction of squatters without permanent resettlement raised the risk of destabilization of the diplomatic situation. Violent responses from displaced squatters occasioned political responses from China, to be discussed in chapters 3 and 4.[49] Anger and the likelihood of violence resulting from displacement achieved influence that they would not have had if not for the context where an "indefensible" British colony was precariously perched on the edge of a country where the anti-imperialist Chinese Communist Party had recently come to power in Beijing (Tsang 1997, Mark 2001, Lui and Chiu 1999). Recent publications on Hong Kong in the aftermath of the rise to power of the Chinese Communist Party in 1949 have emphasized the importance of geopolitics for Hong Kong in the postwar period, and note the concern about the potential for internal disorder. Mark (2000:838) concluded from his study of Foreign Office records that the "likelihood of a direct Communist military attack on Hong Kong worried the British less ... than the internal unrest caused by the influx of refugees and Communist-inspired strikes". A key argument of this book is that a close examination of the impact of large squatter fires prior to Shek Kip Mei reveals the operation of these influences, but also allows us to understand the close relationship between what is happening at a very local level among disgruntled victims of fires and uncompensated clearance and the geopolitics of the early Cold War era.

Since the key confidential files were still closed when I conducted my doctoral research in the 1980s, this critique and alternative explanation

were based primarily on the use of public documents, newspaper coverage and the construction of what seemed to be a plausible account to explain the transformation of squatter clearance into squatter resettlement. My recent archival research has largely supported my earlier argument, but it has also opened up various areas that are much more complex than I had previously understood. First of all, while my approach had the merit of expanding the focus on domestic processes by paying attention to the international context, the understanding of that context was insufficiently nuanced. In this volume, I will develop a more sophisticated treatment of the constraints and incentives upon the Hong Kong administration in the context of the early Cold War and widespread pressure for decolonization. David Faure's critique is important in that he identifies significant shifts in British Home Government and Colonial Office policy toward welfare and development in the Empire. But understanding the impact of these London-based pressures on housing policy requires a careful look at how Hong Kong responded and the strengths of the sticks and carrots that London could use to promote reforms.

A second limitation was that I took for granted that it was reasonable to treat Christmas Day 1953 as the beginnings of squatter resettlement, hence public housing provision in Hong Kong. I accepted some of the teleological assumptions that I criticized other authors for. From the perspective of officials at the time, the response to the Shek Kip Mei fire only became the "beginning" substantially later. Indeed, as late as 1960, Commissioner for Housing Fraser could describe squatter resettlement as beginning in 1952. If we do not automatically accept the construction of multi-storey blocks as the essential feature of what defines public housing as "beginning", we can indeed see some of the legislative changes adopted in 1952 as comparably radical in signalling new approaches to the squatter problem. I will suggest that what was most significant about the new Resettlement Estates was that they "worked" in a way that previous initiatives had not. In the context of land and capital shortages, squeezing large numbers of people into less land than the displaced squatters had previously occupied overcame various financial and organizational problems in a way that earlier resettlement schemes could not. The availability of new sources for expenditures from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund also served to encourage this new direction. In chapter 5 I will examine in detail what precisely was new, and what was not, about the response to the Shek Kip Mei disaster.

The other major limitation in my initial efforts to explain direct provision of low-income housing by the Hong Kong Government is that I failed to appreciate the culture of colonial administration and how the nature of the "official mind"[50] along with established procedures and precedents influenced

not only how things were done, but even what could be envisaged as possibilities. In order to comprehend why rolling back governmental impediments to private development, particularly in the form of building by the villagers of New Kowloon, was hardly considered while apparently radically new forms of direct intervention were eventually adopted, it is necessary to begin from an appreciation of how administration was organized, how inter-departmental tensions sidelined possibilities that might on the surface seem sensible, and how the pressure of day-to-day coping put a premium on initiatives that could be thought of as "practicable". In addressing these issues, I hope to be able to go beyond the specific focus on explaining the origins of public housing in Hong Kong, important as this may be for the subsequent course of Hong Kong's development, and make some contributions to the understanding of colonial administration as a practical and constrained endeavour.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

I have organized this book around a sequence of fires in squatter settlements that occurred between 1950 and 1955. The fires examined in detail are only a minority of the total number of fires that occurred in this period. While some of them are massive in scale, others are substantially smaller than others that are not central to this narrative. The decision about which fires to focus on has been based on those I discovered to have had a significant impact on some relevant dimension of squatter and housing policy. I read every file held in the Hong Kong Public Records Office that could be discovered to deal with squatter fires between 1945 and 1960. I also read all the documents that addressed squatters, squatter settlements, housing policy, defence and a wide variety of other related topics. While it is possible that there were other fires that influenced the course of government attitudes and decisions, from my survey the following ones seem to have been most pivotal. Other fires will be addressed in passing as relevant, but the main case studies have served most effectively as milestones on the path to the Resettlement Programme, or otherwise demonstrate some of the underlying principles of government worldview and practice.

In the next chapter, I will put the remainder of the book into a broader context by discussing the specific features of colonial cities that intensified some of the general challenges of colonial governance and generated some unique problems. In chapter 3, I then proceed to a general description of Hong Kong in 1950, the year after the 15 October 1949 communist liberation

of the neighbouring province of Guangdong and the context of my first fire case study, the Kowloon Walled City fire that left an estimated 25,000 people homeless.

This fire demanded the attention of the government because of the anomalous legal status of Kowloon Walled City, where a major political crisis had erupted in 1947 over attempts to clear squatters within the area. The Kowloon City fire inspired an important interdepartmental debate about the risk of fires in squatter areas and what precautions could and should be taken to manage the situation. The key policy of clearing fire lanes emerges in this context but continues to arise throughout this volume. The Walled City fire is also used to introduce the ways in which the fragile diplomatic situation limited freedom of action in relation to the squatter problem, and demonstrates the ways in which China, both before and after the Communist victory, intervened in Hong Kong issues related to the "downtrodden" victims of "heartless British imperialism". The analysis of the Tung Tau fire in chapter 5 will demonstrate that such interventions occurred regularly in relation to squatter fires, and concerned the Governor of the time deeply. The aftermath of the Tung Tau fire helped to undermine the 1952 resettlement scheme, and also reveals tensions between the indigenous villagers of New Kowloon, where the majority of squatter settlements developed, and the Hong Kong government. In chapter 6 we arrive at last at the disastrous Shek Kip Mei fire. I suggest that rather than seeing it as a sharp turning point, we need to consider continuities with prior efforts at dealing with squatter fires and resettlement, and to recognize that the immediate response was seen as an experiment which might not have been repeated. Discussion of a small fire that happened three months later will highlight the decisions that resulted in what became known as the "Tsun Wan treatment":[1] allowing fire victims to rebuild in a form of regulated squatting rather than rehousing them in a Resettlement Estate, again emphasizing continuities with prior practices. The chapter also addresses the organization of tolerated street sleeping that was an important part of the response to squatter fires. The Tai Hang Tung fire of July 1954, analysed in chapter 7, began the process of turning the experiment into an ongoing programme and department. This chapter also examines the efforts at improving fire precautions in the remaining squatter areas, particularly a continued emphasis on fire-lanes, previously discussed in chapter 4. Chapter 9 is concerned with the Lei Cheng Uk fire, which completed the process of turning multi-storey Resettlement into an ongoing programme. The other main theme of the chapter is to trace the circumstances of fire victims after the new Resettlement regime, who were ironically excluded from Resettlement in order to discourage access-motivated arson.

As chapter 9 indicated, the establishment and large-scale expansion of the multi-storey Squatter Resettlement Programme did not by itself resolve the problems it was started to address. Squatter areas continued to "blight" the landscape, and fires repeatedly burned them down. The most fundamental goal for the Hong Kong government in all its efforts with regard to the squatter problem was to end illegal encroachment on Crown land, with all its implications for government control over society and key sources of revenue. Chapter 10 traces efforts to prevent new squatting, and how the post-1954 policies of squatter "containment" not only failed, with a variety of negative repercussions, but did so in part because of unintended consequences generated by the housing interventions themselves. The concluding chapter will draw together the argument and address the question of the limits of power in a non-democratic colonial city and what failures mean for our understanding of colonial governance. While examining the technologies of control in colonial rule is of great importance, it is equally necessary to consider how and when they failed.

11 Conclusion

A series of crucial decisions about Hong Kong's future were made in the 1950s, of which the launching of a massive programme of public housing provision had perhaps the greatest impact on the subsequent paths that were taken by the society as a whole and the lives of millions of individuals. It certainly had the greatest effect on the physical nature of the urban landscape. I have argued that if we are to understand why Hong Kong became the kind of society that it has become, we need clearer accounts of why such decisions were made, and to consider how the paths taken could have been different.

Myths can have great power. Far from being "mere fictions" or errors, they can be seen as "that small class of stories that possess both credibility and authority".[1] Stories about the past provide understanding in the present and motivate personal and collective actions toward shaping the future. The Shek Kip Mei myth provides a powerful story of how a war-ravaged society beset by a flood of refugees, dreadful living conditions and natural disasters took charge of its future, shaping its landscape with deliberation and compassion. As a result of these interventions, Hong Kong tried to elicit an increased sense of commitment from its residents, who were expected to reciprocate the beneficence of its previously more distant rulers. Whether academics conclude that the Resettlement Programme that started in response to the great fire on Christmas Eve, 1953 should be explained by concern for the welfare of the fire victims or the badly housed population generally, or how it cleared the ground for profitable private development, or because it subsidized labour costs for the manufacturing boom that ensued, the core narrative of immediate response to a great disaster is generally not questioned. Nor is the inevitability of public housing as the only viable solution to the unmet demand for affordable housing doubted: the only issue was when and how the colonial government would step in, and more recently whether or not they should step back out. One result of

this is that another foundational myth of Hong Kong, firm adherence to laissez-faire or "positive non-interventionism", is preserved. If there were no viable alternatives to public provision of low-cost housing, then these principles were not compromised by this response to "market failure". As a consequence, the nature of Hong Kong's political economy need not be seriously reconsidered, so that one powerful myth has helped to preserve another.

I have not attempted to "debunk" the Shek Kip Mei myth simply "because it is there". Instead, I believe that the importance of public housing in all dimensions of Hong Kong's economy and society means that its emergence should be given the respect of careful historical research and a nuanced and balanced explanation. If a distant, authoritarian government without any elements of true representative government can move from great reluctance to invest in social welfare to becoming a major provider of housing within a few years, and experience considerable success with this programme, the processes that generated and enabled this outcome may offer considerable general insights into social change.

This book has attempted to demonstrate that the Shek Kip Mei myth, and more generally, standard academic treatments of the beginnings of Hong Kong's Resettlement Programme, tend to suffer from two historical flaws. First, they identify the Christmas Day fire as the major turning point, without paying sufficient attention either to precursors of that shift or the continuities after the event with previous modes of operation and perception. Second, they present the emergence of a public housing programme as more or less inevitable, and fail to recognize the extent to which historical accidents and contingent outcomes might have resulted in either a completely different path or at least put in place rather distinct variations of the same basic developmental direction. One reason for these flaws is that research is concentrated on those decisions and events that, after the fact, are seen as leading in the direction taken. By contrast, issues and topics that are assumed to have been dead ends and backwaters are generally neglected. So while Shek Kip Mei is regularly referred to as a milestone on the path to the contemporary Housing Authority system, other major squatter fires have been almost completely forgotten, as have the squatter resettlement programmes that existed prior to 1954 and continued after in the form of resite and cottage areas, and continue to this day as interim housing. Mythmaking generally involves combining the actions of multiple agents and events into stories involving a hero and a cause, or an enemy. Selective amnesia about contributing but marginalized events that contribute to the overall drama naturally results. The same can be said for the other fires in

Hong Kong's squatter settlements in the decade of the 1950s. Many people's lives were greatly affected by these forgotten fires, and I hope to have demonstrated that the fires had significant consequences for Hong Kong's politics and policies.

In this research, I have investigated all of the cases within the class of "squatter fires in Hong Kong in the 1950s", rather than simply reinterpreting the one iconic event that has been seen as important. I read all of the files on squatter fires during the decade, and explored every other file that seemed to have even remote relationships with squatter fires, since the relevant documents were often found in very unexpected places. I have not attempted to give attention to all these fires in this book, nor would it have been possible, given the limitations of information. Nor do I attempt any kind of quantitative treatment of my sample, because it is biased by what cadet officers and their superiors considered significant. "Uneventful" fires, even ones that affected several thousand people, were only lightly documented, for example by the Fire Department's incident report. If they didn't raise issues that needed to be dealt with at senior levels, they weren't discussed, and any information collected remained primarily unwritten. Rather than simply a "bias", however, this process allows me to concentrate on a distinct subset of "squatter fires, 1950–1960", that is, "squatter fires that received attention in policy discussions in the 1950s". As it happens, most of the members of this class fall into the first half of the decade, and within a year following Shek Kip Mei. This does confirm that the Christmas Eve fire was important, but my interrogation of the Shek Kip Mei myth does not deny that. No other squatter fire generated the volume of official documents that it did, although records on the Kowloon City and Tung Tau fires are in the same order of magnitude. What this research has demonstrated to me is that some kind of "Shek Kip Mei" had to take place, but it could have happened anywhere with a similar concentration of easily flammable huts. Most relevantly, it could have happened two years earlier with Tung Tau, or in 1950 in response to the Kowloon City. If the fall had been unusually wet in 1953, it might not have happened until Fa Hui on 1 November 1955 (when victims from 428 huts were offered 50,000 yuan of "comfort" from the Chinese government), or even Model Village squatter area (1700 in 250 huts) in November 1958.

There is a bias on my part as well in the fires that I've chosen to include as case studies in this book. First, there had to be sufficient material on the fire, or the issues raised by the fire had to be weighty enough to justify a chapter length analysis. Second, a litany of fires "inconsequential" in policy terms (although invariably deeply consequential for those affected) would

not have made for a compelling narrative. Thus, despite my criticism of historical narratives that pick out "milestones" or high-points in presenting the unfolding of a path towards something significant in the author's present, my selection and organization of the case studies has emphasised those that have helped "develop the plot". I discuss fires which either resulted in significant policy shifts, or which foreshadowed conflicts and tensions that in the future would result in related shifts. Third, research has focused on those cases which I ultimately found the most fascinating, and which seem to shed some new and intriguing light on the government and society of Hong Kong in the 1950s.

I have ordered my somewhat chaotic collection of fires throughout a decade into a linear narrative, where each succeeding chapter develops part of the story as government decision-making on the periodic crises of squatter fires and the squatter problem more generally. How does this approach differ from plotting out the path of what are perceived to be significant milestones in a teleological narrative that interprets the past in terms of its significance to the present? First, because I began with an open mind about how the different fires related to each other, beyond the hypothesis that more than a single large fire had been influential in determining the course of Hong Kong in the 1950s. I tried to be open to following the cases where they lead, and then thinking through the implications even of dead ends, detours and back waters. Second, the research method helped me to retain an awareness of the many points at which things could have turned out differently. A small number of decision makers engaged continuously in discussions about a variety of problems, of which squatter fires were only one variety. One Assistant Secretary might be more committed to a particular issue, have more time to do research, or just be more persuasive than another. Apt comments and insightful suggestions often seem to have helped shift policy decisions, even if only incrementally and modestly. Similarly, individuals or organizations could sometimes succeed in turning government's attention in particular directions, even if that did not determine the outcome of deliberations. I have explored a number of such points at which things seem like they could have worked out differently: the loss of control by Public Works over the Resettlement Programme, the tenement fires of 1957, the proposal for reducing governmental obstacles to private real estate development in 1947, repeated suggestions for the expansion of squatter resettlement into a broad-based low-income housing plan.

At the same time, history is not simply contingent, "one damn thing after another". There are also structural tendencies and basic, continuing logics behind governmental decision-making. These include the importance

of land-based revenues to government stability, the geopolitical situation within which local actors must operate, the availability of resources, and the eternal revenge of unintended consequences against even the most well-intentioned and carefully planned interventions. These, and other factors, make certain outcomes much more likely, and others much more difficult to accomplish. Perhaps the most significant of these underlying structural factors that influence choices are the limits to and constraints upon governmental power.

As Meisner demonstrated in her study of city rebuilding after great fires in Chicago, Boston, and Baltimore, such fires provided opportunities to address urban problems that had previously seemed insoluble. She identified a number of barriers to desired environmental improvements in cities, and shows how fire sites could contribute to overcoming these constraints. One constraint was the physical durability of obsolete structures, and continued demand for space within them, reducing the attractiveness of redevelopment for their owners. While the durability of squatter huts was somewhat questionable, effective demand for them was a fundamental constraint on the ability of Hong Kong to deal with the squatter problem. Demolition tended to result in reconstruction, so that the very lack of durability (temporary materials) made them seem like weeds popping up continually after being rooted out. The second barrier was the high cost of making most improvements. Property owners often lacked the resources to make desirable changes. Again, this was less of a problem with squatter structures, since the financial costs of demolition were relatively low. Hong Kong's topography, however, made site formation very difficult and expensive, and the building ordinances increased the cost of constructing legal structures. This barrier was in principle not a serious one, because the only property owner for squatter settlements on Crown land was the government. Consistent budget surpluses meant that it could afford to make the desirable changes.[2] The third friction in the structural redevelopment process was that many property owners had no interest in renovations or redevelopment, but were content to collect rent on dilapidated dwellings. This barrier was formally eliminated in squatter settlements, despite the widespread existence of squatter landlords, because they had no legal rights to block demolition. In fact, many might have wished to improve their dwellings, particularly to increase their size in order to rent out more cubicles, but were restrained from doing so.[3] Informally, of course, the relatively high rent that could be collected from desperate house hunters meant that landlords had incentives both to resist clearances (chapter 5 discussed allegations that squatter landlords were the "ringleaders" behind squatter

clearance protests in New Kowloon) and to develop new squatter structures on the same site or elsewhere afterwards. Barriers to entry made it extremely difficult for entrepreneurs who built squatter structures to engage in legal private development.

While some fundamental challenges of improving the urban environment applied in Hong Kong as they did in the three American cities, the lack of private property rights in the squatter areas meant that, if the colonial government wanted to remove them, regulatory constraints on their redevelopment were much less. For Meisner, governmental intervention "offered the perfect solution" to barriers and market breakdowns that inhibited environmental improvements.[4] Such interventions were politically contentious, and struggle over them often prevented effective action. In the context of electoral democracies, contention meant that politicians competed for the votes and the financial support on all sides. In the case of the United States, there were also many constitutional and legal limits on how municipal governments could intervene. The result was that large-scale redevelopment projects, or new environmental legislation, were extremely difficult to achieve in the absence of ground-clearing disasters, and often even after them.

Once again, Hong Kong had the advantage when it came to launching radical interventions. The only elections were for the Urban Council with its minimal powers, and politics were extensively "absorbed", as Ambrose King so aptly phrased it, by the appointment of potential public leaders to advisory boards, which bestowed more status than effective power on the appointee.[5] The Hong Kong government was at most modestly constrained in its actions by the need to maintain support from Hong Kong Chinese. The idea that Hong Kong residents were politically apathetic and uninvolved, however, has been persuasively critiqued by Lam Wai-man. Her work supports the evidence in this book that the anger and sense of injustice of ordinary people could lead to substantial mobilization.[6] Although by and large the colonial government paid most attention to the wealthiest sectors, even these groups were quite limited in their ability to impose their will on the colonial government.[7] If political constraints prevented the government from resolving the squatter problem, it was not electoral politics, or even the advisory system that impeded its actions. Still, my reading of the squatter files suggests that the efficacy of the Urban Council may have been underestimated by scholars such as Norman Miners and Steve Tsang who rather sneeringly refer to its restriction to "trivial" sanitary concerns. As chapter 2 suggests, sanitary concerns were hardly unimportant in colonial cities, and when the domain of sanitation extends to vast stretches of illegal encroachment over Crown land, such issues could gain considerable

significance. Nor were appointed Council members always subservient to official requirements and expectations. Various chapters have demonstrated the divergence between Unofficial and official opinions and approaches. Even though the government could override Unofficial opposition, they seem to have generally attempted to work for consensus, which at least required attention to the concerns that Unofficials raised, with modest modifications in the formation and implementation of policy. If the Unofficials in the Urban Council were so inconsequential, it is hard to see why officials occasionally became quite irritated about the deleterious effects of their interfering in the clearance appeal process, for example. Still, compared to democratic governments, bureaucrats ran the show and politicians had influence only to the extent that the colonial authorities wished to allow it.

Politics in a broader sense, however, did significantly constrain government efforts to resolve the squatter problem. Domestic politics in Britain limited the degree of repression that could be endured without embarrassing questions, and did encourage some kind of efforts to deal with the abysmal housing situation in Hong Kong, as David Faure stresses. But, given the inability of Britain to provide adequate financial support for housing provision on the scale that would be necessary to generate appreciable improvements, moral arguments in the British legislature and press, mediated through the Colonial Office, could not compel heavy expenditure on the part of the Hong Kong government. If clearances of Crown land required heavy repression against protesting squatters, though, British domestic politics could have restrained or punished such actions. A greater limit on the repressive squatter clearance option was the fragile geopolitical situation of Hong Kong during the early Cold War period. Hong Kong was held only at the forbearance of China. The United States was prepared to mute its disapproval of British imperialism for the "greater good" of solidarity against the Communist bloc and maintaining "stability" within the Empire. But Washington was not prepared to give London carte blanche, particularly should the colony provoke intervention in Hong Kong by Beijing. While diplomatic and media criticism and comfort missions were largely posturing rather than precursors to more radical interventions against Hong Kong, violence on the streets resulting from attempts to deal with the squatter problem posed serious diplomatic problems. In addition, Governor Grantham and other colonial authorities, particularly the Commissioners of Police and commanding officers of the defence forces, saw squatter settlements as serious security concerns. If an invasion, or even a blockade, were to be launched by Beijing, civil disturbances might render Hong Kong ungovernable.

These constraints on clearance without resettlement derive in turn from the possibility that squatters would not accept eviction quietly. In fact, they often did go relatively quietly, particularly when clearances were kept small enough that the power of a crowd to create a confrontation did not come into play. The more basic problem, though, was that even when squatter settlements were cleared without disruption, many or most of the dispossessed either attempted to re-squat in the same location, unless the site were vigilantly guarded. As long as there was either no other viable housing alternative for the displaced squatters, or the attractions of squatting compared to available legal options compensated for the risk of eviction, the squatter problem was like squeezing a balloon: the displaced volume would simply reappear elsewhere. As chapter 10 explored in some detail, if an adequate supply of affordable housing was not produced, profit opportunities in the squatter housing market invariably undermined squatter control unless considerable resources were devoted to patrolling. Despite this limitation on ending the squatter problem altogether, it did not necessarily in itself prevent land development that would meet the government's needs; clearance would simply be another cost whenever land was needed for development. Comments from government officials, discussed in chapter 5, suggest that clearance without adequate resettlement arrangements became particularly problematic as small squatter settlements grew together into vast agglomerations, particularly in New Kowloon. Here another kind of politics comes in, the constitution of legitimacy and illegitimacy. If squatters believed that the colonial government was acting unjustly and illegitimately depriving them of the only homes that they could find, organized protest and violence became more likely. Although the extent of public legitimacy of the colonial government was very low at least until the 1970s, routine injustices were widely accepted. It was when government actions went beyond certain expectations, or when groups were left with no alternatives, that grievances could spark social unrest.

In summary, the main limits on the ability of the Hong Kong government to resolve the squatter problem were the sheer scale of the problem, the potential political and diplomatic consequences of clearance without resettlement, and the tendency for squatters to rebuild on-site or elsewhere after demolition of particular settlements. Underlying everything was the government's failure to ensure the provision of adequate quantities of affordable housing. That is where the innovation of the multi-storey Resettlement Estates was of the utmost importance. Previous resettlement schemes required more land than was made available by clearance. By maximizing the density of residential accommodation on a site, the Estates

could "get ahead" of the problem, accommodating cleared squatters while eventually making surplus land available for other public purposes or for auction to the private sector. This could be done without excessive public subsidies while keeping the rents much lower than in private tenements or even in squatter settlements. As I have argued elsewhere, it was not the only way in which the need to develop substantial amounts of new housing could have been accomplished: reducing the constraints on development of agricultural land in New Kowloon and elsewhere could also have produced large amounts of new housing. Abdicating that much control, however, does not seem to have been seriously considered. If multi-storey Resettlement could so easily "cut the Gordian knot", as Commissioner for Resettlement Holmes so aptly put it, the question becomes less why did the government chose to take this approach than why was it not adopted earlier?

I have argued, in contrast to previous explanations, that the establishment of the multi-storey Resettlement Programme did not result from either concern for the welfare of those unable to obtain affordable housing (whether from within Hong Kong or through the influence of London) or an indirect strategy to facilitate the accumulation strategies of private property developers. Removing illegal settlements that impeded both private and public development, and which were perceived as deeply objectionable on many other grounds, undoubtedly was a central motivation, but it does not explain why squatters were not simply dispossessed of their illegally occupied land instead of being housed as government expense. Almost everyone seemed to think that other categories of Hong Kong residents were more worthy of government assistance than were squatters, but almost all expenditures on public housing prior to the 1970s went to squatter resettlement.

The adoption of multi-storey Resettlement is better understood as the eventual result of a learning process punctuated by a continuing series of crises. The Kowloon City fire showed the potential catastrophes that lurked behind the rapid growth of illegal settlements, but the lessons taken by the Chief Officer, Fire Brigade on the need for greatly enhanced precautions against future fires were not adopted due to considerations of cost and the risk of giving the appearance of legality to squatter structures, combined with what seems hard to see as anything other than casual neglect of the possible fates of thousands of people. The Tung Tau fire made clear the political and diplomatic costs of inadequate arrangements for resettlement for fire victims. Important legal innovations for more effective squatter clearance followed in its wake, but the types of resettlement adopted were incapable of resolving the fundamental problems due to their inefficient

use of scarce land. Although largely forgotten, considerable efforts were put into the design and implementation of the Wakefield Report-inspired 1952 resettlement programme. Even if it failed to "break the logjam", its techniques continued to be utilized as a component of squatter resettlement for decades afterwards, notably in the treatment of later fire victims and squatters residing in non-surveyed structures. The Shek Kip Mei fire did not immediately result in the beginning of an ongoing multi-storey Resettlement Programme, despite its common presentation as having done so. Instead, commitments undertaken by the Executive Council to rehouse all the fire victims and to set the rent at ten dollars a month produced a context in which new architectural models were needed if these commitments were not to demand the provision of housing off the fire site to tens of thousands of victims. How and why they were convinced to make these commitments, presumably without being fully aware of the ramifications, remains uncertain. The documentary record doesn't provide enough evidence to decide whether the text of the commitments was a shrewd device to guarantee the acceptance of innovative programmes, or a miscalculation in the heat of the moment. I believe, however, that even before the fire, the old resettlement approach had been recognized as unworkable and that a policy shift in the direction of something like the multi-storey approach was already underway. Shek Kip Mei provided the perfect excuse and opportunity to change directions. On this, I agree with David Faure, although I disagree with his account of the underlying motivations and where they originated.

Although it was possible that multi-storey Resettlement could have started before the Shek Kip Mei fire, it is possible that the "experiment" could have been kept to a one-time only initiative. After all, even with the higher densities, there was no land surplus from the Shek Kip Mei fire site. It was the geographically fortuitous Tai Hang Tung fire that finally provided enough developable space in a convenient location, creating the spatial slack in the system that made proactive squatter clearance and not just fire victim emergency resettlement possible. It was after the Lei Cheng Uk fire that the experiment was finally publicly declared a success and the Resettlement Department and Programme established in bureaucratic formalities. The Li Cheng Uk fire had a major impact by reinforcing government fears that they might be encouraging arson as a means of access to the Resettlement Estates. These concerns resulted in the exclusion of fire victims from access to the multi-storey Estates. The "Tsun Wan treatment" had represented an early policy decision that created a two-track resettlement system, and was particularly fascinating for the way in which it clearly revealed the logic of decision-making underlying governmental choices.

The primary motivation behind the research and writing of this book has been my desire to unravel the mystery of why the laissez-faire Hong Kong government became one of the largest landlords in the world. In the course of exploring some of the back roads of Hong Kong history, I believe that some new light has been shed on Hong Kong in the early postwar period that force us to reconsider how and why the colony became the unique place that it is today.

The study also has implications for our knowledge of colonialism, and social process more generally. Beyond the specifics of the puzzle that I've tried to solve, one of the wider questions that this research addresses concerns why rulers make decisions that divert resources to marginalized groups. Explaining this is particularly interesting when the decision-makers would have preferred to use these resources in other ways, and when these groups are not valuable as potential votes. One element of this situation that I have stressed is the need to attend to the failures of power. The inability of the Hong Kong government to resolve the squatter problem, even after impressively expanding the scope of government intervention in housing throughout the 1950s, offers some important lessons. After all, as I have argued in this Conclusion, the limits on the power to restructure urban space were apparently much less in this colonial city than in Baltimore or Chicago. It is not that the reorganization of space was unimportant, rather it was central to government interests and functions, both because land was urgently required to facilitate urban growth and development, and because land-based revenues were a significant fraction of total government funds. By closely exploring failures of control, new questions are raised about the nature of colonial urbanism. The Foucauldian emphasis on techniques of rule is immensely productive and has inspired much of the analysis of the management of the squatter problem in this book. But a fuller analysis requires analysis of the concrete impact of strategies of control, a dimension largely absent from this approach. When strategies for control do not achieve their purposes despite strenuous efforts, opportunities open for new ways of thinking about colonial rule, and power more generally. In particular, the lessons of this study indicate a need to rigorously explore connections between small scale events like the rebuilding of demolished illegal dwellings and apparently very distant processes such as the geopolitics of continued colonial rule, since the conditions that undermine or transform power may result from unexpected quarters.

While it has not been possible to draw out the broadest implications in any detail here, I believe that my reconstruction of the crisis-driven origins of multi-storey squatter resettlement offers some insights into the dynamics

of reform and welfare provision, particularly in authoritarian societies without popular representation. Natural disasters have repeatedly instigated changes in direction in the People's Republic of China, for example the Tangshan earthquake, the famine following the Great Leap Forward, or the recent SARS outbreak, and the inadequate responses to them prompted important shifts in direction and undermined the legitimacy of the regime. Crises challenge the status quo, but they also offer opportunities for reforms that might not be possible in more stable times.

Notes

CHAPTER 1

1. Carroll, *Edge of Empires*, 191.
2. I have discussed the role played by Hong Kong in China's post-1979 transformation in a series of publications, most recently in Smart and Hsu, "The Chinese diaspora", 544–566.
3. Suen, "Foreword", xvii.
4. Coupe, *Kenneth Burke on Myth*, 6.
5. To clarify, the narrative of a beneficent colonial government responding to a disaster and resolving an ongoing social problem takes the form of a "political" rather than "sacred" myth. A political myth can be defined as an "ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group". Flood, "Myth and ideology", 181. This seems to match the essentials of the Shek Kip Mei narrative in accounts of postwar Hong Kong history, as can be seen in its treatment in the Hong Kong Museum of History.
6. Numbers here are a difficult challenge. Many reports at the time gave estimates as high as 30,000 but later official numbers are as low as 10,000. Screening completed on 11 December 1951 included a total of 11,961 fire victims (K. Barnett, Chairman of Urban Council to Colonial Secretary, 14 December 1951, HKRS 163-1-1416, "Confidential periodical reports on squatter clearance".) The process of generating these numbers is a complex issue in its own right, and as resettlement became a common expectation, officials regularly voiced suspicions of large numbers of imposters. If Faure (*Colonialism and the Hong Kong Mentality*, 28) is right and the Government was attempting to overcome Unofficial resistance to squatter resettlement, then it would have been in their interest to accept high estimates which would magnify the sense of emergency.
7. Richardson, *Igniting the Caribbean's Past*, xii.
8. This pattern has been termed "punctuated entropy" by Dyer, "Punctuated entropy as culture-induced change", 159–185.
9. Richardson *Igniting the Caribbean's Past*.

10. Oliver-Smith and Hoffman, "Introduction: why anthropologists should study disasters", 10.
11. Barry, *Rising Tide*, 422.
12. Meisner, *The Limits of Power*, 11. The theoretical implications of her research are brought out more explicitly in Meisner, "Business, democracy, and progressive reform".
13. Anthropological approaches to policy are effectively examined in Shore and Wright (eds.), *Anthropology of Policy*. I particularly appreciate their emphasis on the ways in which anthropology can help to reveal the "historical contingency and inventedness" (p. 17) of the taken-for-granted cognitive and cultural elements of policy and the policy process.
14. Smart and Smart, "Capitalist Production in a Socialist Society", "Local citizenship", and "Transnational social networks".
15. Dwyer, "The problems of in-migration".
16. Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation*; Hyam, "The primacy of geopolitics", 29.
17. Hyam, "Bureaucracy and 'trusteeship' in colonial empire", 264.
18. Washbrook, "Orients and occidents".
19. Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*.
20. Dumett, "Exploring the Cain/Hopkins paradigm", 8.
21. Misra, "Gentlemanly capitalism and the Raj", 162.
22. Cell, "Colonial rule".
23. Moore, *Law as Process*.
24. Hyam, "The British Empire in the Edwardian era", 59.
25. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 35.
26. Comaroff, *Of Revelation and Revolution, Volume 1*, 5.
27. Quoted in Myers, *Verandahs of Power*, 20.
28. For details on how the need to reconsider this paradigm, particularly the non-commodity nature of squatter housing influenced the course of my research, see Smart, "The squatter property market".
29. I have, however, been informed by a former government official that many documents, particularly those pertaining to political activities and the Special Branch, were "sterilised" prior to the 1997 handover.
30. I first published this argument in Smart, "Forgotten obstacles, neglected forces", and subsequently in Smart, *Making Room*.
31. Hopkins, "Housing".
32. Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*.
33. Castells, Manuel, Goh, Lee, and Kwok, R. Yin-Wang, *The Shekkipmei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore*.
34. Mackay, "Housing management and the comprehensive housing model in Hong Kong".
35. Faure, "Colonialism and the Hong Kong Mentality"; Harris, R., "The silence of the experts".

36. Jones, "Tuberculosis, housing and the colonial state"; Iam-Chong, "Welfare good or colonial citizenship?"
37. Other than Government publications, the clearest proponent of the welfare approach is Pryor, *Housing in Hong Kong*.
38. Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, 34.
39. Faure, *Colonialism and the Hong Kong Mentality*, 28.
40. When Creech-Jones, Secretary of State, forwarded the report from his Social Welfare Advisor, W. H. Chinn, that David Faure emphasizes as evidence of Colonial Office pressure, the two points he stressed in particular in his cover dispatch were consideration of a separate Social Welfare Department and his hopes that it would be possible to include in the official policy being prepared "a plan for the treatment of juvenile delinquency on a comprehensive basis. ... in the present conditions of Hong Kong delinquency can easily degenerate into crime and, apart from the human wastage, the Government is then faced with increased non-productive expenditure on prison services. I hope that all measures for the treatment of delinquency will be pressed ahead as quickly as circumstances permit." It is interesting that Faure does not mention this issue at all. The result was that when the Hong Kong Government finally did get around to sending a report on social welfare as requested, the main points highlighted concerned an initiative to create a reform school and an argument for why a separate Social Welfare Department did not make sense in the particular context of Hong Kong, Creech-Jones to Grantham, 4 March 1949, HKRS 41-1-5404, "Social welfare — general policy".
41. *Hong Kong Hansard*, 3 July 1947, pp. 191–206.
42. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report*, 1954/55, p. 35.
43. For detailed accounts of the problems involved in restoring British rule after World War II, see Coates, *Myself a Mandarin*; and Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong: Britain, China and the Japanese Occupation*, chapter 6.
44. Special Committee for Housing, "Final report of the Special Committee on Housing", Government Printer, Hong Kong, 1958, p. 20, and enclosure XI.
45. Wong, "The housing problem — a new perspective".
46. Ibid, 1.
47. Castells, Goh and Kwok, *The Shekkipmei Syndrome*.
48. Chiu, Ho and Lui, *City-state in the Global Economy*.
49. Grantham, *Via Ports*.
50. Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation 1945–1963*.
51. See chapter 7, note 1.

CHAPTER 2

1. De Bruijne, "The colonial city and the post-colonial world".
2. Collins, quoted in King, *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World-Economy*, 51.

3. Ross and Telkamp, "Introduction".
4. On the structuring of space to respond to and prevent riots in British Guiana, see de Barros, *Order and Place in a Colonial City.* On colonial cities as dangerous sites of sedition, see Derderian, "Urban space in the French imperial past".
5. Durrheim and Foster, "Technologies of social control"; Pasquino, "Theatrum politicum".
6. Abu-Lughod, "Tale of two cities", 429.
7. King, *Urbanism,* "Colonialism, and the Capitalist World-Economy", 19.
8. King, *Colonial Urban Development*, 6.
9. For this interpretation of King's work, see Metcalf, "Architecture in the British Empire", 593.
10. Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 6.
11. On efforts to prevent British officials from fraternizing with or marrying non-Europeans, see Hyam, "The British Empire in the Edwardian era."
12. Rabinow, *French Modern*, 290.
13. Dirks, "Foreword", ix.
14. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt*, 38.
15. Mitchell, *Colonising Egypt.*
16. King, *Colonial Urban Development.*
17. McGee, *The Southeast Asian City.*
18. Quoted in Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 62, 63.
19. Yeoh, *Contesting Space,* 1.
20. McGee, *The Southeast Asian City*, 51.
21. Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 65.
22. Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 66.
23. For discussion of many aspects of Asian colonial port cities that cannot be addressed here, see Basu (ed.), *The Rise and Growth of the Colonial Port Cities in Asia.*
24. Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 65.
25. Lee, quoted in Home *Of Planting and Planning*, 66.
26. Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 39.
27. Quoted in Yeoh, *Contesting* Space, 86.
28. Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 75.
29. Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 86.
30. Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 66.
31. Martin, quoted in Iam-chong, "The Rise of a Sanitary City".
32. Curtin, *Death by Migration*, 4.
33. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 65.
34. Curtin, *Death by Migration*, 160.
35. Wylie, "Disease, diet, and gender", 280.
36. Arnold, "Introduction: disease, medicine and empire".
37. Arnold, "Introduction: disease, medicine and empire", 14.
38. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 97.
39. Bashford, *Imperial Hygiene,* 187.

40. Donzelot, *The Policing of Families*.
41. Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 101.
42. Jones, "Tuberculosis, housing and the colonial state".
43. Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 112.
44. Harris, "Singapore in context".
45. Opposition, and fear of opposition, placed considerable limits on sanitary reforms in Bombay, according to Ramanna, *Western Medicine and Public Health in Colonial Bombay*, 4. Limits on responses to the 1896 bubonic plague outbreak are discussed by Catanach, "Plague and the tensions of empire".
46. Yeoh, *Contesting Space*, 119.
47. Bremner and Lung, "Spaces of exclusion".
48. C.O. 129/626/6, 12 July 1951.
49. Bremner and Lung, "Spaces of exclusion", 239.
50. Bremner and Lung, "Spaces of exclusion", 240.
51. Home, *Of Planting and Planning*, 105.
52. Harter, "Hong Kong's dirty little secret", 4.
53. This brief summary ignores the differences between Foucault's early work, and his later work that concentrated on the governmentality of liberal rule, where control is achieved by loosening control. Despite this, little work has been done in this tradition on areas where rulers are unable to achieve direct control, rather than adopting rule at a distance as a deliberate strategy.
54. Foucault, "Governmentality"; Tang, *The Foucauldian Concept of Governmentality*, 139.
55. Osborne and Rose, "Governing cities", 738, emphasis in original.
56. Fernandes and Varley, "Law, the city and citizenship in developing countries", 3.
57. Osborne and Rose, "Governing cities", 738.
58. Myers, *Verandahs of Power*, 132.
59. Smart, "Predatory rule and illegal economic activities".
60. Baken, *Plotting, Squatting, Public Purpose and Politics*, 46, 50.
61. Arnold, *Colonizing the Body*, 157.
62. Heyman and Smart, "States and illegal practices".
63. Leeds, *Cities, Classes, and the Social Order*, 225.
64. Collier, *Squatters and Oligarchs*.
65. McAuslan, "Urbanization, Law and Development".

CHAPTER 3

1. Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-american alliance at war*, 1.
2. Louis, "Hong Kong: the critical phase, 1945–1949", 1062.
3. Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War*, 213; Tang *Britain's encounter with revolutionary China, 1949–54*.
4. *Hong Kong Annual Report 1952*, 3.

5. Bickers, "The colony's shifting position".
6. Whitfield, *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance at War*, 39; see also Shlaim, Jones and Sainsbury, *British Foreign Secretaries since 1945*, 38.
7. Heinlein, *British Government Policy and Decolonisation.*
8. Diamond Hill's village population was reduced from 600 to 200, although how many simply never returned from the Mainland is unknown. Smart, *Making Room.*
9. Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, 263.
10. Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, 265.
11. Tsang, *A modern history of Hong Kong*, 142.
12. Hayes, *Friends and Teachers*, 9.
13. Minutes of Executive Council Meeting of 1 October 1901, HKMS 156-1-31.
14. King, "Administrative absorption of politics".
15. Smart, *Making Room;* Smart, "Participating in the global"; Smart and Lee, "Financialization and the role of real estate". On Shanghainese manufacturers, see Wong, *Emigrant Entrepreneurs.*
16. Snow, *The Fall of Hong Kong*, 303.
17. Endacott, *Government and People in Hong Kong*, 185; Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong*, 137.
18. Tsang, *Democracy Shelved*, 163.
19. Great concern at the Colonial Office during this period with the Malayan Emergency, and China's possible involvement with it, would have both magnified Grantham's worries, and London's receptivity to the raising of security alarms. For an excellent discussion of the transfer of knowledge on counter-insurgency, see Mockaitis, *British Counterinsurgency, 1919–60.*
20. HKRS 259-6-1, "A report on the population of the colony, mid-year, 1949 — Department of Statistics, 12 June 1949".
21. Hopkins, "Housing the poor", 276.
22. Podmore, "The population of Hong Kong", 25.
23. Podmore, "The population of Hong Kong", 44.
24. Ku, "Immigration policies", 338.
25. Dame May Curwen, Chairman of the British Council for Aid to Refugees, 1 June 1957, HKRS 40-3-459, "Refugees — U.N. survey on Chinese refugees in Hong Kong".
26. Ku, "Immigration policies".
27. See Carroll, *Edge of Empires.*
28. Ngo, "Industrial history and the artifice of laissez-faire colonialism", 126.
29. This was even the case in the politically sensitive context of trade unionism, where government controls were at first primarily limited to ensuring that unions did not get involved in politics, see Chiu and Levin, "Colonialism and labor relations in the last colony", 246.
30. Louis, "Hong Kong: the critical phase, 1945–1949", 1061.
31. Quoted in Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 133.

32. Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 43.
33. Tsang, *Democracy Shelved*, 170.
34. Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 133
35. Zhang, *Economic Cold War*, 157.
36. Miners, "Industrial development in the colonial empire", 54.
37. Ngo, "Industrial history and the artifice of laissez-faire colonialism", 123.
38. Szczepanik, *The Economic Growth of Hong Kong*, 159.
39. Choi, "State-business relations and industrial restructuring", 147
40. Ngo, "Industrial history and the artifice of laissez-faire colonialism", 134.
41. Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*, 20, 26.
42. Address by the Governor, *Hong Kong Hansard*, 7 March 1951.
43. Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong*, 157.
44. Ingrams, *Hong Kong*, 69, 73.
45. Ingrams, *Hong Kong*, 77.
46. Interdepartmental Committee on the Squatter Problem "Report", 17.
47. Special Committee on Housing, "Final Report", enclosure I; Pryor, *Housing in Hong Kong*, 22.
48. Jones, "Tuberculosis, housing and the colonial state", 679.
49. Jones, "Tuberculosis, housing and the colonial state", 682.
50. This argument is developed at greater length in Smart, "From village to squatter area", and Smart, "Forgotten obstacles, neglected forces".
51. HKRS 259-6-1, "A report on the population of the colony, mid-year, 1949 — Department of Statistics, 12 June 1949".
52. H. W. Carrie, Chairman, in minutes, 7 July 1950, HKRS 156-1-2528, "Housing committee — appointment of the new".
53. 25 August 1950, HKRS 156-1-2528, "Housing committee — appointment of the new".
54. Leeming, *Street Studies in Hong Kong*, 161.
55. Leeming, *Street Studies in Hong Kong*, 161.
56. Smart, *The Political Economy of Street Hawking in Hong Kong*.
57. Hayes, *Friends and Teachers*, 58.
58. Public radio announcement by C. U. C. Barnett, press release, 17 January 1952 of the new Emergency (Resettlement Areas) Regulations, 1952, HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of Wakefield Report".
59. McDouall notes that, "Urgent and top-level representations were ... made to Government by the Military Authorities to sweep away at least the more notorious of these morale-destroying and disease-ridden haunts". McDouall, "Report on squatters", 8 November 1950, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
60. Jones, "Tuberculosis, housing and the colonial state", 653.
61. In an interview with Mr Bray, he discussed this survey, stating that no one had told him to conduct this research, but he had the freedom to decide to do it. Since they were screening the squatters anyway, he decided to add some questions to the forms.

62. Bray, *Statistical Analysis of Squatter Data*, 283.
63. J. C. McDouall, "Report on squatters", 8 November 1950, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
64. J. T. Wakefield, "Report on squatters, simple-type housing for squatters, and permanent housing for employees of govt. and utility coys [companies]", 9 April 1951, HKRS 1017-3-6, "Provision for unemployment — unemployment relief schemes". I was fortunate to uncover a copy of this crucial report in this unlikely file, since it was absent from the obvious files, including, "Implementation of the Wakefield Report".
65. J. C. McDouall, "Report on squatters", 8 November 1950, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
66. Minutes of Executive Council Meeting of 5 December 1950, included in "Wakefield Report", HKRS 1017-3-6.
67. Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing, 1963, prepared by the Resettlement Department (Paper No. WPH 3/63 [in HKRS 163-3-87, "Grading of departments and superscale salaries — Resettlement Department"]).

CHAPTER 4

1. HKRS 41-1-5778, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City on the 11th January, 1950".
2. "Savingram from Governor Grantham to Secretary for State, Colonies", 24 January 1950, HKRS 41-1-5778, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City on the 11th January, 1950".
3. Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong*, 191.
4. Harter, "Hong Kong's dirty little secret", 7.
5. Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong*, 191.
6. Tsang, "Pest-infested K'loon Walled City said involved in disputes", *Hong Kong Standard*, 29 July 1949.
7. Wesley-Smith, *Unequal Treaty 1898–1997*; Tsang, *Democracy Shelved*.
8. *Via Ports*, 132.
9. Tsang, "Pest-infested K'loon Walled City said involved in disputes".
10. Translation included in Memo, Commissioner for Resettlement to Colonial Secretary, 24 February 1965, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
11. "Squatter control survey September/October 1964", 19 September 1964, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
12. HKRS 909-1-8, "Kowloon walled city — public works within the".
13. Harter, "Hong Kong's dirty little secret".
14. "Savingram from Governor Grantham to Secretary for State, Colonies", 24 January 1950, HKRS 41-1-5778, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City on the 11th January, 1950".

15. HKRS 41-1-5778, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City on the 11th January, 1950".
16. In forwarding the report on Hong Kong by his Social Welfare Adviser (to be discussed in chapter 6), Creech-Jones stressed to Governor Grantham that "Co-operation with voluntary organisations clearly presents special difficulties which will require careful handling if the good will now available through voluntary effort is not to be dissipated in a sense of frustration at the intervention of Government. ... I therefore hope that it will be possible to make early arrangement for closer supervision of grant-aided institutions". 4 March 1949, HKRS 41-1-5404, "Social welfare — general policy".
17. "Kowloon City Fire: S.W.O. report" sent to the Colonial Secretary, 17 January 1950, HKRS 41-1-5778, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City on 11th January 1950".
18. Memo from Social Welfare Officer to Secretary for Chinese Affairs, 1 May 1954, HKRS 163-1-1682, "Kowloon city fire relief".
19. Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing, 1963, prepared by the Resettlement Department (Paper No. WPH 3/63 [in HKRS 163-3-87 'Grading of departments and superscale salaries — Resettlement Department]).
20. Assistant Secretary Denis Bray to Financial Secretary, 10 October 1951, HKRS 337-4-28A, "Hing Wah Village at Chai Wan — Resettlement Area D".
21. DCS to CS, 14.12.49, HKRS 63-1-1231, "Fire Services — squatter areas — Correspondence re fire precautions to be adopted in".
22. It should be pointed out that it is the Kowloon Walled City involvement that particularly raised concerns among officials. However, other statements make it clear that there was concern about the political impact of clearances, particularly partial ones for fire-lanes.
23. Chief Officer, Fire Brigade to Colonial Secretary, 9 December 1949, HKRS 63-1-1231, "Fire Services — squatter areas — Correspondence re fire precautions to be adopted in".
24. Deputy Colonial Secretary, 19 May 1950, HKRS 63-1-1231, "Fire Services — squatter areas —Correspondence re fire precautions to be adopted in".
25. 20 May 1950, HKRS 63-1-1231.
26. 8 November 1950, HKRS 63-1-1231.
27. Fehily to Colonial Secretary, 23 May 1950; Graham-Cumming to Fehily, 20 May 1950, HKRS 63-1-1231.
28. R. R. Todd, Colonial Secretary to Governor Grantham (via Financial Secretary), 14 July 1950, HKRS 63-1-1231.
29. HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
30. For a good discussion of the development of colonial policing and the Special Branch in India, see Arnold, *Police Power and Colonial Rule*.
31. COFB Cox to Colonial Secretary, "Squatter fires", 12 March 1959, HKRS 41-1-8858.

CHAPTER 5

1. Chairman, Urban Council to Colonial Secretary, 14 January 1952, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City", HKRS 337-4-249.
2. The Social Welfare Officer's report noted that "After a fire such as this it is not worth the while of every victim to remain at the site awaiting relief", 28 November 1951, HKRS 337-4-249.
3. Extract from Social Welfare Officer emergency relief diary, 28 November 1951, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City", HKRS 337-4-249.
4. "Where can the victims go?" 10 December 1951.
5. "Savingram from Grantham to Secretary of State for the Colonies", 15 December 1951, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City", HKRS 337-4-249.
6. D. R. Holmes, Acting Social Welfare Officer to Colonial Secretary Nicoll, 3 December 1951, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City", HKRS 337-4-249.
7. "Inward telegram to the Secretary of State for the Colonies", 22 March 1952, COS37-17669.
8. "Huge Kowloon parade turns into violent riot; police attacked; tear gas used to disperse mob," 2 March 1952.
9. "All quiet in Kowloon", *South China Morning Post*, 3 March 1952, p. 1, 7.
10. Special Branch — Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, paper no. 1, January 1958, HKRS 742-15-13, "Special Branch — reports on individual organizations".
11. Tsang, *Democracy Shelved*, 101, 103.
12. Mark, "A reward for good behaviour in the Cold War", 838.
13. Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited*, 102.
14. Mark, "A reward for good behaviour in the Cold War", 861.
15. Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*, 26.
16. Tsang, *Democracy Shelved*, 173.
17. Louis, "Hong Kong: the critical phase, 1945–1949", 1065.
18. Louis, "Hong Kong: the critical phase, 1945–1949", 1076.
19. Memorandum from Commander, Hong Kong Regiment, 9 April 1951, HKRS 369-1-15, "Defence force review".
20. HKRS 369-1-15, "Defence force review".
21. Assistant Defence Secretary to Defence Secretary, "Civil measures for Defence Scheme — Light and Power Emergency Plans", 24 November 1956, HKRS 369-11-5.
22. "Discussion with Hong Kong Electric, Il ACS (D) to A5", 8 March 1949, HKRS 369-11-5, "Civil measures for defence scheme — light and power emergency plans".
23. Commissioner, ESC to CS, 30 April 1960, HKRS 369-11-5, "Civil measures for defence scheme — light and power emergency plans".

24. "Minutes of a meeting held in the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs", 23 September 1949, HKRS 42-5-3, "CMDS — Chinese (Emergency) Advisory Committee".
25. "I am getting extremely tired of the phrase 'schools for workers' children". Those we have had so far have been more than a thorn in the flesh and I cannot see the schools suggested ... being any better. ... Sufficient damage has already been done by the Bishop's committee trying to run five schools for workers' children." Director of Education, to Colonial Secretary, 24 June 50, HKRS 163-1-1153, "Low cost housing scheme — labour house — proposal of Trade Union Council for".
26. HKRS 920-1-2, "Societies ordinance". This file includes a compilation of societies denied registration and it is a fascinating list ranging from a drivers' instructors association to the Hong Kong Chinese Basket-ball Society.
27. Tsang, "Strategy for survival", 317.
28. "Minutes of a meeting held at the Colonial Secretariat", 4 June 1951, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong."
29. Grantham, *Via Ports*, 159.
30. Hong Kong Weekly Intelligence Telegram No. 115, 9 February 1953, CO 1023/164. On the occasion of a fire in November 1955, the Wen Wei news quoted a letter from the Kwangtung Branch of the Chinese People's Relief General Association, which sent RMB$50,000 in relief: "The people in Kwangtung are much concerned about you for your unexpected affliction. On behalf of our fellow countrymen in the Province and in Canton, this Association hereby earnestly sends its consolation." HKRS 41-1-8494, "Squatter fire — Fa Hui village, Kowloon Tsai".
31. Deputy Colonial Secretary to Colonial Secretary, "Squatter fire — Shek Kip Mei — Policy re:", HKRS 163-1-1677. It is worth noting here that this concern about comfort missions lasted at least until 1968. After a landslide, a minute noted that "Instructions were given immediately after 13 June to call a meeting between departments and voluntary agencies of all kinds to consider how best to combat Communist comfort missions by large local volunteer groups who would do what hard pressed official parties could not — guard deserted homes, property and shops, reassure and assist or entertain those who were upset but did not qualify for official aid, organize hot tea, help to clean up homes, etc." Social Welfare Department, 27 June 1968, "Disaster Relief", HKRS 41-1-6890, "Social welfare — social welfare office emergency relief organisation".
32. As late as 1963 it could still be stated that "Problems of accommodation are always in ferment and a display of tactlessness can easily give rise to unpleasant consequences". "Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing", July 1963, HKRS 1633-87, "Grading of Departments — Resettlement Department".
33. Quoted in Louis, "Hong Kong: the critical phase".
34. Clayton, *Imperialism Revisited*, 101-2.
35. Lorenzo, *The Attitude of Communist China toward Hong Kong*, 37.
36. Lorenzo, *The Attitude of Communist China toward Hong Kong*, 38.

37. Lane, *Sovereignty and the Status Quo*, 70, 71.
38. Lombardo, "Eisenhower, the British and the security of Hong Kong".
39. Mark, "A reward for good behaviour in the Cold War"; Whitfield *Hong Kong, Empire and the Anglo-American Alliance.*
40. "China: defence of Hong Kong: Cabinet conclusion", 9 May 1949, CAB 128/15, CM 33(49)2, reproduced in Hyam (ed.) *British Documents on the End of the Empire.*
41. Smart, "Unruly places".
42. "Wakefield Report", 9 April 1951, HKRS 1017-3-6.
43. R. R. Todd to Colonial Secretary, 9 November 1950, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
44. DCS (C.B. Burgess) to CS, 16 November 1950, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
45 Minutes of the Fifth meeting of the Chinese Advisory Committee, 20 December 1950, HKRS 163-1-779, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
46. "Wakefield Report", 9 April 1951, HKRS 1017-3-6.
47. "Memorandum for Executive Council: the squatter problem", X.C.S. 42/51, HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Implementation of the Wakefield Report".
48. "Memorandum for Executive Council: Squatter resettlement scheme", X.C.S. 2/52, HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of the Wakefield Report".
49. HKRS 41-1-6556, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City".
50. "Memorandum for Executive Council", X.C.U. 34, 25 January 1952; Chairman, Urban Council, Barnett to Colonial Secretary "Monthly progress report on squatter clearance and resettlement", 14 December 1951, HKRS 41-1-6556, "Serious outbreak of fire in Kowloon City".
51. Chun, *Unstructuring Chinese Society*, 96.
52. I have argued this at some length in Smart, "From village to squatter area" and *Making Room.*
53. Chairman, Urban Council, Barnett, "Government policy on squatter resettlement", 17 January 1952, HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of the Wakefield Report".
54. HKRS 337-4-249, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City".
55. R. Black to Sir Gerard, QC, Courts of Justice, 22 October 1952, HKRS 337-4-249, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City".
56. For details of his fascinating life, see his autobiography, Chen, *China Called Me.*
57. Translation of letter in Chinese dated 21 July 1952, HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of Wakefield Report".
58. Chen to G. Walton, Assistant Secretary Lands, 9 December 1952, HKRS 337-4-249, "Squatters at the village of Tung Tau, Kowloon City".
59. Barnett to H. G. Richards, 18 September 1951, HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of the Wakefield Report".

60. Chairman, Urban Council, KMA, Barnett to Commissioner of Police, 29 February 1952, HKRS 163-1-780 "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of Wakefield Report".
61. Kowloon Thirteen Villages Committee, *Silver Anniversary Commemorative Issue, 1957–1982*.
62. "Report for quarter ending 30 June 1957", HKRS 283-2-5, "Secretariat for Chinese Affairs quarterly reports".
63. McDouall to Colonial Secretary, 29 November 1957, HKRS 163-1-939, "Demolition of a house at Wong Tai Sin alleged to be ancestral property belonging to Lam Yung Kau".
64. Assistant Colonial Secretary (Lands) to Deputy Colonial Secretary, HKRS, 163-1-1089, "Town planning of North Kowloon".
65. Assistant Secretary Denis Bray to Deputy Colonial Secretary, 28 June 1955, HKRS 41-1-5484, "Water supply in Cha Kwo Ling village".
66. 15 July 1955, HKRS 41-1-5484, "Water supply in Cha Kwo Ling village".

CHAPTER 6

1. See Smart and Lee, "Financialization and the role of real estate" for an account of the persistent centrality of real estate in Hong Kong's political economy.
2. HKRS 156-1-579, "Housing — miscellaneous documents from the Secretary of State on".
3. AS4 (Denis Bray) to Deputy Colonial Secretary via AS1 (Barty), 17 September 1953, HKRS 156-1-4065, "Squatter resettlement area W — Chuk Yuen".
4. "Brief synopsis of 12 months of squatter resettlement work". Barnett, Chairman, Urban Council to Colonial Secretary, 19 November 1952, HKRS 163-1-781, 'Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on'.
5. 17 November 1952, HKRS 163-1-781, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on"; "Squatter clearance — Government to be asked for more time", *South China Morning Post*, 19 November 1952.
6. "Squatter resettlement", Commissioner of Police D. W. MacIntosh to Colonial Secretary, 31 December 1952, HKRS 163-1-781, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on".
7. "Housing Hong Kong's 600,000 homeless". Pamphlet available in Hong Kong Collection, University of Hong Kong library.
8. HKRS 163-1-780, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — implementation of Wakefield Report".
9. "Notes of a meeting held in the Council Chamber", 12 January 1953, HKRS 163-1-781, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on".
10. Minute from AS 1 Barty to Deputy Colonial Secretary H. G. Richards, 10 January 1953, HKRS 163-1-781, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on".

11. Minute from Colonial Secretary to Governor Grantham, 14 January 1953, HKRS 163-1-781, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on".
12. Miners, *The Government and Politics of Hong Kong*.
13. "The Governor's Budget Speech", HKRS 163-1-781, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — policy on".
14. "Record of a meeting held at Government House on 26.12.53", HKRS 163-1-1578, "Shek Kip Mei fire — early policy decisions".
15. X.C.U. 437 & 438, Executive Council Minutes, HKRS 163-1-1578, "Shek Kip Mei fire — early policy decisions".
16. Colonial Secretary to Governor Grantham, 5 February 1954, HKRS 163-1-1677, "Committees — Shek Kip Mei — Minutes of meetings of ... Coordinating Committee".
17. Anderson, "Some Chinese methods"; Rooney, *At Home with Density*. Hong Kong public housing was regularly used as a test of hypothesis about the possible pathological effects of over-crowding, see Lee, "High density effects in urban areas".
18. Bray, "Recollections of a Cadet Officer Class II", 18.
19. HKRS 163-1-1578, "Shek Kip Mei fire — early policy decisions".
20. HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers". I have as yet been unable to find the final report of this committee, other than some excerpts reproduced in other documents.
21. "Resettlement of squatters", Executive Council Minutes, 6 April 1954. Minutes of the Urban Council, 5 January 1954.
22. HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
23. Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, 56.
24. Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, 44.
25. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1955*.
26. Faure, "In Britain's footsteps", 660-1.
27. Faure, "In Britain's footsteps", 665.
28. Secretary of State for the Colonies, Creech-Jones to Grantham, 4 March 1949, HKRS 41-1-5404, "Social welfare — general policy".
29. Lee and Petter, *The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy*, 181.
30. The squatter and housing problems were addressed at some length in Chinn's report, but he also recognized the difficulty of resolving it: "The most obvious Social problem in Hong Kong is the appalling over-crowding caused by the influx of refugees — a problem not likely to be easily and quickly solved. This enormous and unregulated increase in population combined with the shortage of living accommodation and the difficulties of large-scale building during the past nine years, has had a serious effect on the social and economic life of the colony and has created a number of dependent problems". HKRS 41-1-5404, "Social welfare — general policy".
31. Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*, 50.
32. Pederson, "The Maternalist moment in British colonial policy".

33. Lee and Petter, *The Colonial Office, War, and Development Policy*, 16.
34. AS1 to Colonial Secretary, 15 December 1950, HKRS 156-1-2528, "Housing committee — appointment of the new".
35. HKRS 156-1-3425, "Town planning — report of Sir Patrick Abercrombie on".
36. HKRS 156-1-579, "Housing — miscellaneous documents from S of S on".
37. Jones, "Tuberculosis, housing and the colonial state".
38. There was an interesting discussion about the composition of this committee, including a comment after representations about the need for a "lady" representative, that "one (only one) lady might be useful". HKRS 156-1-1899, "Cheap housing schemes — proposals for".
39. HKRS 156-3-5, "Housing schemes — main policy file".
40. HKRS 156-3-5, "Housing schemes — main policy file".
41. Assistant Secretary Denis Bray, 21 October 1953, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and reset — general questions".
42. AS4 to DCS, 21 October 1953; Colonial Secretary to Deputy Colonial Secretary, 11 November 1953, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement: general questions".
43. 30 June 1953, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
44. DCS to CS, 13 March 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
45. D. R. Holmes to DCS, 15.March 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
46. D. R. Holmes to DCS, 15 March 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
47. Deputy Colonial Secretary to Colonial Secretary, 26 March 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
48. Mackay, "Housing management and the comprehensive housing model in Hong Kong".
49. Welsh, *A history of Hong Kong*, 454.
50. HKRS 156-1-4429, "Squatter fire at Tai Po Road on 20 Nov 1954", D. R. Holmes, Commissioner for Resettlement to Colonial Secretary, 26 November 1954.

CHAPTER 7

1. While "Tsuen Wan" has come to be the standard Romanization for this coastal New Territories district to the northwest of New Kowloon, "Tsun Wan" was the spelling used in the files dealt with in this chapter, so it will be used in this discussion.
2. "Disastrous fire in Tsun Wan", *South China Morning Post*, 26 March 1954, 1. The larger figure is given by the Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1954–55*, 12.

3. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1954–55*, 26. The Tai Wo Hau tolerated area later received squatters displaced for the construction of the Tai Lam Chung water pipeline, on which see discussion of Cha Kwo Ling in chapter 5, and development of the industrial town of Tsuen Wan. For details of the latter, see Hayes, *Friends and Teachers*, chapter 6.
4. "Fire at Tsun Wan, New Territories", Minutes of Executive Council Meeting of 6 April 1954.
5. Smart, *Making Room*.
6. HKRS 156-1-4429, "Squatter fire at Tai Po Road on 20 November 1954".
7. D. R. Holmes, Commissioner for Resettlement, 22 November 1954, HKRS 156-1-4429, "Squatter fire at Tai Po Road on 20 Nov 1954".
8. "Cottages for Taipo Road fire victims", *South China Morning Post*, 1 December 1954.
9. Holmes, Commissioner for Resettlement to AS1, 24 April 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong – Policy".
10. 4 May 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
11. HKRS 41-1-6727, "Squatter fires — report of relief for fire victims"; HKRS 41-1-7660, "Fire — outbreak of in squatter area of Homantin Area 'A'"; Denis Bray, *Hong Kong Metamorphosis*, 51.
12. A particularly interesting discussion of such complaints can be seen in HKRS 156-1-4804, "Squatter fire in an area above Lin Fa Kung Street, East Near to Queen's College".
13. AS4 (Denis Bray) to Colonial Secretary, 18 January 1954, HKRS 163-1-1743, "Shek Kip Mei — Shamshuipo streets".
14. Memo to Colonial Secretary, 5 February 1953, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
15. Deputy Colonial Secretary to Colonial Secretary, 1 February 1954, HKRS 163-1-1677, "Committees — Shek Kip Mei — Minutes of meetings of ... Coordinating Committee".
16. "Savingram from Governor Grantham to Secretary of State for the Colonies", 26 January 1954, HKRS 163-1-1578, "Shek Kip Mei fire — early policy decisions".
17. HKRS 163-1-1578, "Shek Kip Mei fire — early policy decisions".
18. "They lost homes but not life", *South China Morning Post*, 27 July 1954.
19. AS1 to Deputy Colonial Secretary, 11 November 1956, HKRS 163-1-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
20. 11 November 1956, HKRS 163-1-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
21. For example, HKRS 156-1-4804, "Squatter fire in an area above Lin Fa Kung Street, East Near to Queen's College".
22. AS 4 (Denis Bray) to Colonial Secretary, 18 January 1954, HKRS 163-1-1743, "Shek Kip Mei — Shamshuipo streets".
23. *Annual Report 1954–55*, p. 14.
24. 5 January 1955, HKRS 163-1-1846, "Squatter fire at Grampian New Village on 5-1-55".

25. HKRS 41-1-8176, "Tai Hang Tung fire relief (Kowloon Tong) — expenditure on".
26. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report*, 1955-56, 31.
27. "Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing — The Resettlement Programme: 1963 review", Paper No. WPH 3/63, HKRS 163-3-87, "Grading of Departments and Superscale salaries — Resettlement Department".

CHAPTER 8

1. "Squatter fire disaster — thirty thousand homeless in Kowloon blaze", *South China Morning Post*, 23 July 1954, 1.
2. HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
3. HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
4. A very useful examination of this kind of discourse in Hong Kong is available in Ip, "The rise of a sanitary city". While this pervasive attitude towards squatter settlements is clearly part of the motivation for colonial authorities to want to eradicate them, it does not in itself explain why squatters would be resettled rather than simply evicted.
5. 22 July 1954, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong".
6. "Fire rehousing plans — big ferro-concrete structures for Tai Hang Tung area." *South China Morning Post*, 11 August 1954.
7. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1954–55*, 14.
8. "Finance committee meeting of August 11, 1954", HKRS 41-1-8176, "Tai Hang Tung fire relief (Kowloon Tong) — expenditure on".
9. "Memorandum for Executive Council — Squatter resettlement", X.C.C. 56 for discussion on 9 November 1954.
10. *Annual Report, Resettlement Department 1954–55*, 15.
11. *Annual Report, Resettlement Department 1954–55*, 15.
12. A. P. Weir to Superintendent of Crown Lands and Surveys, Grunden, 7 January 1954, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
13. Weir, 7 January 1954, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
14. Commissioner of Police to Director of Public Works, 13 January 1954, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
15. COFB Gorman to Colonial Secretary Bristow, 15 October 1959, HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
16. COFB Gorman to Colonial Secretary, 20 October 1954, HKRS 163-1747, "Squatter fire at Li Cheng Uk on 1-10-54".
17. Chief Officer, Fire Brigade, *Annual Report 1952–53*, 2.
18. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1954–55*, 26.

19. COFB to Colonial Secretary, 3 November 1955, HKRS 41-1-8494, "Squatter fire — Fa Hui village, Kowloon Tsai".
20. HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
21. HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
22. Governor Grantham to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 26 January 1954, HKRS 163-1-1578, "Shek Kip Mei fire — early policy decisions".
23. "Kowloon Tsai fire", *South China Morning Post*, 24 July 1954, 6.
24. COFB to Director Public Works, 25 November 1953, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
25. Deputy Colonial Secretary to Colonial Secretary, 13 October 1954, HKRS 163-1747, "Squatter fire at Li Cheng Uk on 1-10-54".
26. Deputy Colonial Secretary to AS3, 10 November 1955, HKRS 163-1747, "Squatter fire at Li Cheng Uk on 1-10-54".
27. Gorman, COFB to Colonial Secretary, 19 December 1960, HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
28. COFB to CS, 17 January 1961, HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
29. 2 April 1958, HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
30. COFB to CS, reporting on fire in Tai Kok Tsui, 13 April 1960, HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
31. 15 January 1953, HKRS 41-1-7660, "Fire — outbreak of in squatter area of Homantin Area A".
32. There had been a history of dissatisfaction about pay and conditions among employees of the Fire Brigade, who felt that they were poorly treated in comparison to the police. A strike involving 179 members of the Brigade occurred on 12–26 July 1946, *Report of the Chief Officer, Hong Kong Fire Brigade, 1946–47*. These concerns persisted at least until 1965, when Cox, Director, Fire Services noted that "the Administration's policy in establishing and substantially increasing emolument differentials between members of the Police Force and those of the Fire Services has, in the eyes of the rank and file of the latter, downgraded their status and insidiously undermined their morale". This minute was written in an effort to obtain new equipment through arguments about their potential for subduing civil disturbances without the use of deadly force. HKRS 163-3-248, "Fire services — role in disturbances".
33. Gorman to Colonial Secretary, 20 October 1954, HKRS 163-1747, "Squatter fire at Li Cheng Uk on 1-10-54".
34. For example, in HKRS 41-1-8490, "Squatter fire at Ho Man Tin Resettlement Area at 9.7.55".
35. Gilbert, "Public getting a little tired of squatter fires", *Hong Kong Standard*, 28 November 1954.
36. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1954–55*, p. 14.
37. ACSC to DCS, 18 January 1961, HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
38. "Arson theory in Kowloon squatter fires", *South China Morning Post*, 28 November 1954.

CHAPTER 9

1. Commanding Officer, Fire Brigade to Colonial Secretary, 6 October 1954, HKRS 163-1747, "Squatter fire at Lei Cheng Uk on 1-10-54".
2. "Kowloon fire disaster", *South China Morning Post*, 2 October 1954, 1.
3. Police report, 2 October 1954, HKRS 163-1747, "Squatter fire at Lei Cheng Uk on 1-10-54".
4. Police Commissioner Heath later responded to a request from the Commissioner for Resettlement that "I regret I must insist that no clearance be arranged between 15th September and 12 October", 10 July 1959, HKRS 163-3-64, "Squatter clearance and resettlement — general questions".
5. 6 October 1954, HKRS 163-1-1231, "Fire Services — fire precautions to be adopted in squatter areas".
6. Holmes, Commissioner for Resettlement, "Memorandum for Resettlement and Clearance (Policy) Select Committee", HKRS 163-1-1746, "Squatter fire at Lei Cheng Uk".
7. "Memorandum for Executive Council — Squatter resettlement", X.C.C. 56, 9 November 1954.
8. Excerpt from "Report of the emergency sub-committee on resettlement", 27 March 1954, HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
9. HKRS 156-1-5872, "Lei Cheng Uk village — compensation for land resumed at".
10. "Memorandum R(P) 32/63 for the Resettlement Policy Select Committee", 5 February 1964, HKRS 881-1-60, "Resettlement and Resettlement Schemes — Cultivators and Pigbreeders — Resettlement of".
11. Copy of press release, D. R. Holmes, Commissioner for Resettlement to Colonial Secretary, 26 November 1954, HKRS 156-1-4429, "Squatter fire at Tai Po Road on 20 Nov 1954".
12. HKRS 425-3, "Exco minutes, 11 January 1955".
13. There is a wide literature on these issues. See, for example, Turner, *Housing by People*; Drakakis-Smith, *Urbanisation, Housing and the Development Process*; Aldrich and Sandhu, *Housing the Urban Poor*; Harris "The silence of the experts".
14. "The Resettlement Programme" Memorandum, X.C.R. No. 357, for discussion in Executive Council, 19 November 1959.
15. Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing, 1963, prepared by Resettlement Dept. Paper No. WPH 3/63 HKRS 163-3-87, "Grading of departments and superscale salaries — Resettlement Department".
16. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report 1954–55*, 14.
17. HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
18. HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".
19. HKRS 156-1-4808, "Squatter fire at Fa Hui area, north of boundary street".
20. HKRS 41-1-8858, "Squatter fires".

21. HKRS 163-1-1749, "Fire in Chuk Yuen Village on 14-12-54".
22. Walton, Commissioner for Resettlement, 1 October 1956, HKRS 156-1-4429, "Squatter fire at Tai Po Road on 20 November 1954".
23. Keen to Colonial Secretary, 15 April 1957, HKRS 890-2-56, "Shelter and accommodation for fire victims".
24. AS1 to DCS, 17 May 1957, HKRS 163-3-20, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — Policy".
25. A policy review document in 1963 stated that it was not "possible to offer immediate resettlement to persons of certain special categories, whose cases may otherwise deserve compassionate consideration. These include: (a) victims of natural disasters (e.g. fires, typhoons, rainstorms, landslides, etc.); (b) dwellers of rooftops or other non-domestic spaces in tenements ... where the tenements are being demolished for redevelopment or condemned as dangerous; (c) boat squatters causing obstructions to shipping ...; (d) imposters at clearance sites on 'D-days' and persistent squatters, who have satisfied the authorities that they genuinely can find no alternative place to live. These categories of compassionate cases are increasingly being allocated temporary sites, on which they are allowed to build, at their own expense, huts of specified dimensions, and subject to certain stringent conditions". "Resettlement Department, Appendix XI — resiting of squatters — procedure and documentation", June 1963, HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
26. "Resettlement Department, Appendix XI — resiting of squatters — procedure and documentation", June 1963, HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
27. "Select Committee Paper P.13.57", HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
28. 3 May 1957, HKRS 890-2-56, "Shelter and accommodation for fire victims".
29. This is indicated for example in the complex considerations about slum clearance as an alternative to public housing in HKRS 39-1-29, "Slum clearance scheme", and in every major report on the housing problem.

CHAPTER 10

1. "Working Party on Housing Report", CO 1030/1178, "Housing finance in Hong Kong — Policy — report of special committee".
2. "Registration of disaster victims near completion", *South China Morning Post,* 29 December 1953.
3. The question of who was officially the "coordinating" or "competent" authority for various squatter/resettlement related activities arose repeatedly, particularly in relation to the formation of the new Resettlement Department. A directive was sent on 16 December 1953 to the Director of Public Works regarding squatter policy from the Colonial Secretary, which indicated that the "Director

of Public Works is, in his normal capacity responsible" for preventing the extension of existing squatter areas, the formation of new ones, and the demolition of all "unauthorized unoccupied and uncompleted huts wherever they may be found". However, in practice Public Works did not routinely patrol squatter areas, and their ineffectiveness in preparing a priority plan for squatter clearances may have been a factor in the delegation of the multi-storey Resettlement Programme to a new Department rather than being a division of Public Works, as discussed in chapter 6.

4. 6 June 1954, HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
5. Smart, *Making Room*.
6. Smart, "Unruly places"; "Agents of eviction".
7. "The squatter problem", 3 May 1963, HKRS 260-22-39, "Working Party on Squatters".
8. Baken, *Plotting, Squatting, Public Purpose and Politics*, 20.
9. Special Committee on Housing, *Final Report, 1956–58*, 12–13.
10. Minutes of the first meeting, 22 July 1963, HKRS 163-9-307, "Working party on housing".
11. "Department of Resettlement Paper P.33/55 for discussion at Urban Council 13 April 1955", HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
12. "Report of the emergency sub-committee on resettlement", J. D. Clague, 27 March 1954, HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
13. 9 February 1955, HKRS 337-4-403, "Command of squatter patrols".
14. Tensions also predated this period, of course, as evidenced in previous chapters. In addition, a memorandum from Mr. Barnett, the Chairman of the Urban Council, to the Colonial Secretary on 5 February 1953 insisted on the necessity for a "firmer hand, and preferably *one* hand, in squatter clearance". HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
15. Special Committee on Housing, *Final Report, 1956–58*, p. 18.
16. "Paper 38/55 for discussion at April 19, 1955 meeting of Resettlement and clearance (policy) select committee", HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
17. HKRS 41-1-8968, "Kowloon disturbances, 1956 — financial arrangements".
18. "Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing — The Staffing of the Resettlement Department (Policy and Practice)", Paper No. WPH 23/63(c), August 1963, HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
19. "The squatter problem", 3 May 1963, HKRS 260-22-39, "Working Party on Squatters".
20. "Squatter survey by police division", Memo from Commissioner for Resettlement to Principal Magistrate, North Kowloon Magistracy, 15 February 1965, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".

21. HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
22. "Squatter problem: far reaching recommendations by resettlement committee", *South China Morning Post* 31 March 1954, 5, 8.
23. For detailed discussion, see Smart, *Making Room*.
24. Smart, "Unruly places".
25. 29 May 1962, HKRS 156-10-388, "Resettlement estate south of Diamond Hill".
26. "The staffing of the Resettlement Department (Policy and Practice)", Paper No. WPH 23/63(c), HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on housing — background papers".
27. "Working Party on Housing Report", CO 1030/1178, "Housing finance in Hong Kong — Policy — report of special committee".
28. January 1961, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
29. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report, 1959–60,* p. 39.
30. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report, 1958–59*, p. 38.
31. "The staffing of the Resettlement Department (Policy and Practice)", HKRS 934-9-40.
32. "Memorandum for the Working Party on Housing — The Resettlement Programme: 1963 Review", HKRS 934-9-40, "Working party on Housing — Background papers".
33. Ku, "Immigration policies", 336.
34. "Agenda item for Finance Committee Meeting, July 22, 1964", HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
35. "Memo to Secretary, Standing Committee on Departmental Gradings and Superscale Salaries", 23 October 1963, HKRS 163-3-87, "Grading of Departments and Superscale salaries — Resettlement Department".
36. 11 October 1963, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
37. HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
38. Bill Yim, "Plight of Kowloon squatters", *South China Morning Post,* 15 September 1963.
39. "Squatter situation serious", *China Mail,* 2 September 1963.
40. *Sing Tao Daily,* 21 December 1963, English translation in HKRS 70-1-290, "Resite areas — No. 7 Cemetery resite area, Diamond Hill".
41. "Memorandum for Members of the Urban Council — Squatter Control Policy", Committee Paper CW 101/62, HKRS 163-3-21, "Squatter problem in Hong Kong — policy".
42. Minutes of the Urban Council, 29 March 1963.
43. My discussion here does not imply that there were not other pressures that encouraged the formation of the Working Party. Another fascinating crisis for resettlement policy occurred in 1962, when after months of protest, Commissioner Morrison recommended postponing controversial increases in flatted factories rent in Cheung Sha Wan because of "the embarrassing reaction to shop rent increases". Previously, Secretary for Chinese Affairs McDouall had written that "The disadvantages of a climb-down were fully appreciated but these would have to be weighed against the position which would arise if

the Government became committed to a course of action which was not based on sound principle and might if there were widespread defiance spark out disturbances not only amongst shopkeepers but among resettlement dwellers generally". HKRS 160-1-40, "Resettlement Department".

44. Memo from C. G. M. Morrison, Commissioner for Resettlement to Secretary, Standing Committee on Departmental Gradings and Superscale Salaries, 23 October 1963, HKRS 163-3-87, "Grading of Departments and Superscale salaries — Resettlement Department".
45. Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, 69.
46. According to the 1967–68 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Resettlement, "This outbreak was aggravated if not instigated by speculative small building contractors, who, quite illegally, put up a large number of huts for sale to prospective squatters", 6.
47. Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Report, 1961–62*, 4, 6.
48. Census and Statistics Department 1981, *Hong Kong Census Main Report*. Hong Kong: Government Printer.

CHAPTER 11

1. Lincoln, quoted in Schilbrack, "Introduction", 8.
2. Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*.
3. Smart, "Impeded self-help".
4. Meisner, *Limits to Power*, 50.
5. King, "Administrative absorption of politics in Hong Kong".
6. Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong*.
7. Two recent histories both support this claim, and provide it with much more nuance than I can offer here. See Carroll, *Edge of Empires*; and Goodstadt, *Uneasy Partners*.

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