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Role of Development Plans in Development Control: A New Research Agenda for Town Planning in Hong Kong

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Abstract

In Hong Kong, the development plan has received scant attention despite its importance as a mechanism in understanding the planning practice. The role and nature of development plans in development control has ever been satisfactorily explored. Against this background, it is the aim of this paper to review both the western and local literature on development plans so as to uncover the gap of knowledge as well as to highlight a new research agenda for town planning in Hong Kong. As reflected in the literature review, our conventional conception of development plans as end products of the planning process has restricted our articulation of the roles of development plans in practice. As we are moving towards a diverse and complex society, there is a need to redefine our conception and to redirect our research focus on development plan-making and implementation in Hong Kong. Three main research directions are proposed. Firstly, future research should adopt a disaggregate perspective which pays particular attention to the contextual variations in the use of development plans in practice. Secondly, the development plan should be treated as “part of the planning process” rather than the “end product” in planning. Thirdly, our conception of development plans should be re-directed from a politically-neutral document to a social construct with key roles in the planning process. In sum, it is hoped that this comprehensive literature review will act as the backdrop for a better-informed analysis of development plans in Hong Kong.