



BEST DISSERTATION

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The Link Management Limited — A Socially Responsible Corporate?



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Introduction

Most of the corporations have placed “Corporate Social Responsibility” (“CSR”) at the top of their business agenda today. It is because an integration of the social and environmental concern with the economic interest of the corporate would help them to sustain their business in a profitable and respectable way. Thus, to measure the CSR/ sustainability performance of a corporate, both

financial and non-financial performances have to be taken into account.

The Link REITs is the most renowned, world-wide real estate investment trust in Hong Kong since 25 November 2005. Yet, the reputation of The Link REIT is controversial under the management of The Link Management Limited (“The Link”). From the financial point of view, The Link’s excellence financial performance in the past nine years is well known (Chart 1-7). From the non-financial point of view, stakeholders like the small tenants, customers and local communities complain a lot about the changes brought after the divestment of retail and car parking facilities to The Link.

Valuation (HK\$'M)

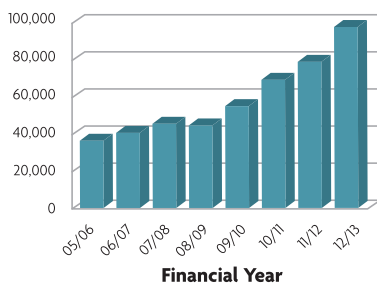


Chart 1 — Value of The Link Properties
 Source: The Link (2009, 2013)

Revenue (HK\$'M)

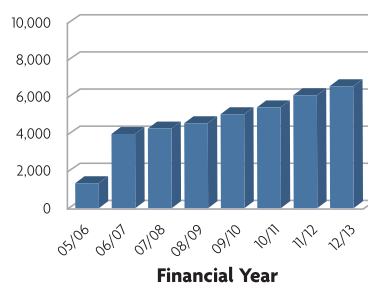


Chart 2 — Revenue of The Link
 Source: The Link (2009, 2013)

Net Property Income (HK\$'M)

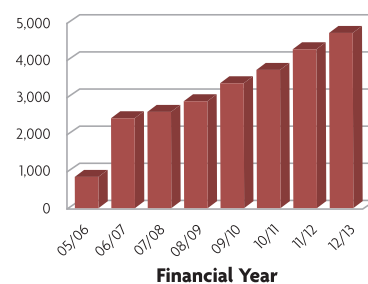


Chart 3 — The Link net Property Income
 Source: The Link (2009, 2013)



Chart 4 — Unit Price of The Link
Source: Google — Finance (2013)

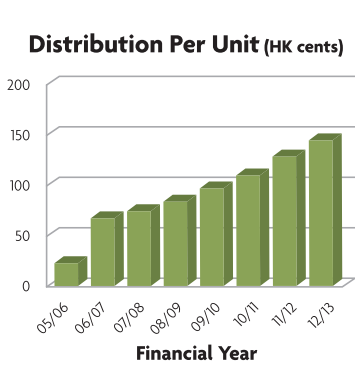


Chart 5 — The Link's distribution per unit
Source: The Link (2009, 2013)

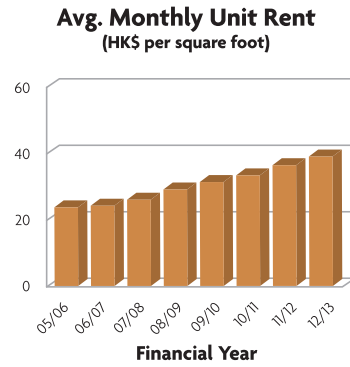


Chart 6 — The average monthly unit rent of The Link
Source: The Link (2009, 2013)

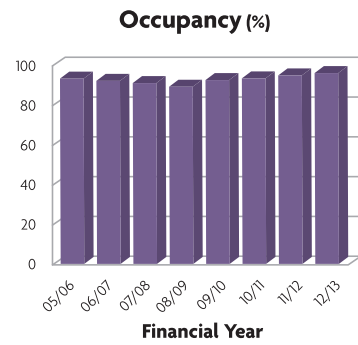


Chart 7 — Occupancy of The Link Properties
Source: The Link (2009, 2013)

In view of a mismatch between The Link's non financial performance and the social aspiration, The Link has been changing its practices in the management of CSR. In 2012/13, Mr. George Hongchoy (2013) revised its corporate social agenda under a sustainability framework with seven key focus areas (Fig. 1).



Fig 1 — The Link Sustainability Framework
Source: The Link (2009, 2013)

In The Link 2013 Annual Report, Mr. Nicholas Sallow-Smith, Chairman of The Link expressed his concern over the role and purpose of The Link in the community and the importance of Corporate Social Responsibility (“CSR”), instead of showcasing the financial performance (The Link, 2013).

Moreover, The Link has adopted the Dow Jones Index and the FTSE4Good Index Series, two commonly used standards to measure the non-financial performance in recent years.

Significance of the study

The new protocols under The Link sustainability framework are very fruitful, yet the efficacy of them is uncertain. The Link is using many set of voluntary standards to enhance social reporting and to emphasis on its CSR management, but awards and recognitions given under the said indexes may not be good proxies to reflect the social or environmental effects when the data are mostly unverified externally and frequently unreliable due to insignificant sample size with poor response rate (Aaron Chatterji and David Levine, 2006; Michael E. Porter and Mark R. Kramer, 2006).

If the sustainability reporting is just a process of imitation, following some benchmark or standard, it is a vehicle for allowing corporations to adopt a set of criteria in getting recognitions rather than a true reflection the CSR/sustainability performance of a company. The aim of this research paper is to address the discrepancies between the aspirations of The Link and the society against each other and to have critical understanding on The Link’s non-financial performance.

Literature Review

As Michael E. Porter & Mark R. Kramer (2006) suggested, successful corporate need a healthy society; vice versa, a healthy society needs successful companies. Business and society are interdependent. When the pursuit of one’s own interest begins to harm the society, this pursuit must be checked, because selfishness at the expense of another is a moral flaw (Gabriel Flynn, 2008).

While corporate attention to CSR heightened, many corporate started running their business with the principle of sustainability (Judith Hennigfeld, Manfred Pohl & Nick Tolhurst, 2006). CSR creates attribute intangibly as a reputation of quality, reliability and honesty (A. Mc Williams and D. Siegel, 2000). This sort of reputational capital as referred by Kevin T. Jackson (2004) is wealth generator and source of competitive advantage. Therefore, companies try to establish a socially responsible corporate image by publicizing its CSR performance. However, without the substance, its reputation for social consciousness would temper public criticism in the event of a crisis (Michael E. Porter & Mark R. Kramer, 2006). Because corporate reputation is not a short term image which created by means of marketing or public relations, it is not just about what people think and feel about a company. For a reputation held by a corporate, it requires consistent behaviour over a period of time to change; it is based on the firm’s character, it is associated with all aspects of the firm, cutting across all departments and divisions and it impacts all constituencies including consumers, investors, shareholders, employees, business partners, and local communities (Kevin T. Jackson, 2004).

Corporate Social Responsibilities under the operation of sustainability

The understanding of CSR leads to the approaches to “corporate citizenship”, “sustainable business” and “business ethics” as well. The core principle of all these concepts is to address the non-financial performance of a company.

In 1991, Carroll has introduced a four-part model of CSR (Fig 2) which encompasses the economic, legal, ethical and philanthropic expectations placed on organizations by society at a given point in time. Overlaying Kevin T. Jackson’s paradigm for building reputational capital (Fig. 3) onto Carroll’s CSR model, with the concept of triple bottom line for sustainability as a base including three major considerations, i) economic; ii) social; and iii) environmental (Elkington, 1998), a three-dimension tetrahedron is formed to explain the structure of an evaluation system against the CSR/sustainability performance of a company (Fig. 4).

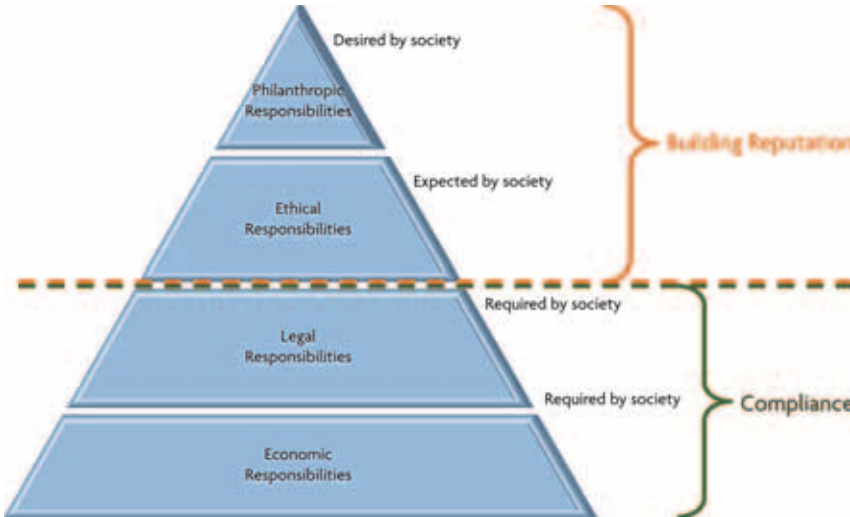


Fig 2 — Four-Part model of CSR
 Source: Carroll (1991)

<p>“Above the Line” (Reputational) Liabilities Court of public opinion (media, activists) Court of key constituencies (employees, customers, investors)</p>
<p>“Below the Line” (Legal) Liabilities Court of Law</p>

Fig 3 — a paradigm for building reputational capital
 Source: Kevin T. Jackson (2004)

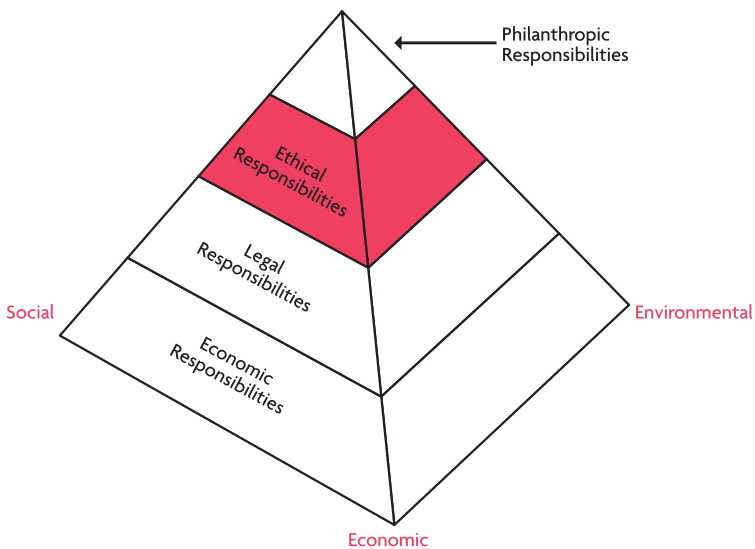


Fig 4 — An evaluation system against the CSR/sustainability performance of a company, highlight (RED) of the research subject

Business Ethics is the key to Sustainable Business

To achieve the goal of CSR/sustainability, corporations have to move from the compliance to the building of reputational capital. Corporations are responsible to the society at large indirectly, while corporations' survival is directly depending on the key constituencies' level of satisfaction and favouritism towards the corporation. Employee,

customer and communities play an important role as key stakeholder constituencies to map out the context of the reputational liabilities.

A moral system of a corporation diffuses the stated and promoted ethical values from the individual level to the organizational level, and then interacts with the society. The healthy relationship between the corporation and the key constituencies should be built on the virtues (Table 1), as suggested by Patrick E. Murphy (1999).

Virtue	Definition	Related Virtues	Applications
Integrity	Adherence to a moral code and completeness	Honesty, Moral courage	Conveying accurate and complete information to stakeholders
Fairness	Marked by equity and free from prejudice or favouritism	Justice	Selling and pricing products at a level commensurate with benefits received
Trust	Faith or confidence in another party	Dependability	Confidence that salespeople or suppliers will fulfil obligations without monitoring
Respect	Giving regard to views of others	Consideration	Altering products to meet cultural needs and refusing to sell unsafe products anywhere
Empathy	Being aware of and sensitive to the needs and concerns of others	Caring	Refraining from selling products to consumers who cannot afford them
Transparency	Making actions clear to others	Openness	Being open with stakeholders

Table 1 — Core virtue ethics of a corporate and its application

Source: Patrick E. Murphy (1999)

Research Design

While The Link's survival and excellence financial performance clearly proved its compliance against its "Economic Responsibilities" and "Legal Responsibilities", focus of the analysis would be on The Link's achievement against its "Ethical Responsibilities", via the examination of i) The Link's moral system/ethical practice; ii) The Link's reputation audit; and iii) The Link's ethical performance

The work environment provided by The Link attributable to the patterns of the moral reasoning of the decision makers will be examined. While for The Link to build reputational capital via ethical practice or the establishment of a moral system, The Link should form and support its ethical business culture by the following steps:—

1. Create a culture and climate that emanates from the top of the organization. With good leadership that lead his employee consistently, places the espoused ethical values on daily operations.
2. Assign an independent CSR department to oversee the company's ethics programme, policies and to assess the ethical implications of the company's activities via reputation audit and to inculcate ethical behaviour to the employee in a systematic way with consistent support from the managerial hierarchy.

3. Treat the employee right; create satisfying relationships with the employee, so that the employee would fully appreciate to share and perform the company's ethical practice with loyalty.
4. Perform to impress the stakeholders and to build relationships with them. Adjust company's positioning of its reputation strategy, reputational attributes and distinctive moral characteristics by having a regular reputation audit which address room for improving the moral system continuously.

By a reputation audit/perception test, nodes that connect different components at different levels of The Link's moral system/sustainability model will be tested. Perception gap appears when the dissemination of the espoused ethical values becomes ineffective at any of those nodes. To address the perception gap(s) between the individual level and the organizational level, The Link internal constituency consisting both managerial staff and non-managerial staff will be invited to receive the perception test; and for the perception gap(s) between the organizational level and the societal level, perception from The Link external constituency will be compared with The Link internal constituency.

Ethical Performance Indicators on Related Virtue	Perception Drivers <i>(Scoring Scale: 5-4 Positive; 3 Neutral; 2-1 Negative)</i>
Awareness and understanding of the Link's mission (Integrity)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The Link is providing value and quality service — The Link is partnering with local communities — The Link is delivering sustainable growth
Advocacy toward The Link (Trust)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — I prefer visiting The Link's shopping centres more than other — I promote The Link to my friends and people that I meet
Performance of The Link's major function in the society (Fairness)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — Products and services in The Link's shopping centres are good value for money — Good trade mix — Tenants are fairly treated — Attractive promotional activities — A pleasant shopping environment is provided
Awareness of the Link's CSR identity (Respect)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The Link has a positive impact on the communities where it has a presence — The Link has taken measures to limit environmental impact
Understanding of the Link's effort on works apart from its major function (Empathy)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The Link is a caring company — BFA facilities and services are adequately provided
Effectiveness of the communication between The Link and the key constituencies (Transparency)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> — The Link is open by providing sufficient and efficient communication platform

Table 2 — Modification of the applications of core virtue ethics for The Link's business operation

Among The Link's portfolio of assets, perception test for The Link external constituency will be conducted at Sau Mau Ping and Lok Wah. These two locations are both within Kwun Tong district, one of the most populated districts in Hong Kong. In terms of operations, there is no big differentiation between the two, only which philanthropic activities has been planned at Sau Mau Ping in FY2014/15 under the programme, "The Link Together Initiatives", but there is none planned at Lok Wah.

Although the findings from the perception test cannot be considered to be statistically representative, they will be referred broadly to help differentiate between positive and negative views. Gaining an insight into individuals' perception on The Link and an appreciation of how The Link is positioned, an interview with a member of The Link sustainability department would be a thorough examination on how The Link should digest and interpret the findings, so as to path a way forward, enable some prediction to the future.

Limitations

While The Link's action of philanthropy was first launched in September 2013, data on the implications of the programme are limited. The effect of the programme at this initial stage is not expected to be remarkable or contradictive against The Link's non-financial performance.

Analysis and Discussion

The discussion will include i) an empirical analysis on The Link's moral system/ethical practice prior to The Link's CEO personnel change in 2010; ii) an analysis of the results from the reputation audit in a form of questionnaire survey; and iii) an investigation in a form of interview on how The Link's ethical performance operates in a sustainable manner.

The Link's Moral System/Ethical Practice

CEO — Leadership

The personnel of The Link's CEO changed in May 2010, context of The Link CSR management changed remarkably, too. Lead by The Link's current CEO, Mr. George Hongchoy, the moral system of The Link were being revamped and reinforced with more details at the individual level and the organizational level.

Mr. George Hongchoy is a highly visible figure who would disseminate his espoused values outward incrementally via his act, his interviews, the media and etc. He presented himself with a character of resilience, and he clearly articulated the importance of trust, caring, respect and transparency in maintaining sustainable relationships with various stakeholders.

An Independent CSR Department — Sustainability Committee

While CEO has successfully convinced the board of directors and other constituencies to adopt sustainability as a corporate goal, The Link formed a sustainability committee as think tank, a sustainability working group as an executive arm to formulate and implement a corporate sustainability strategy (Fig. 5).

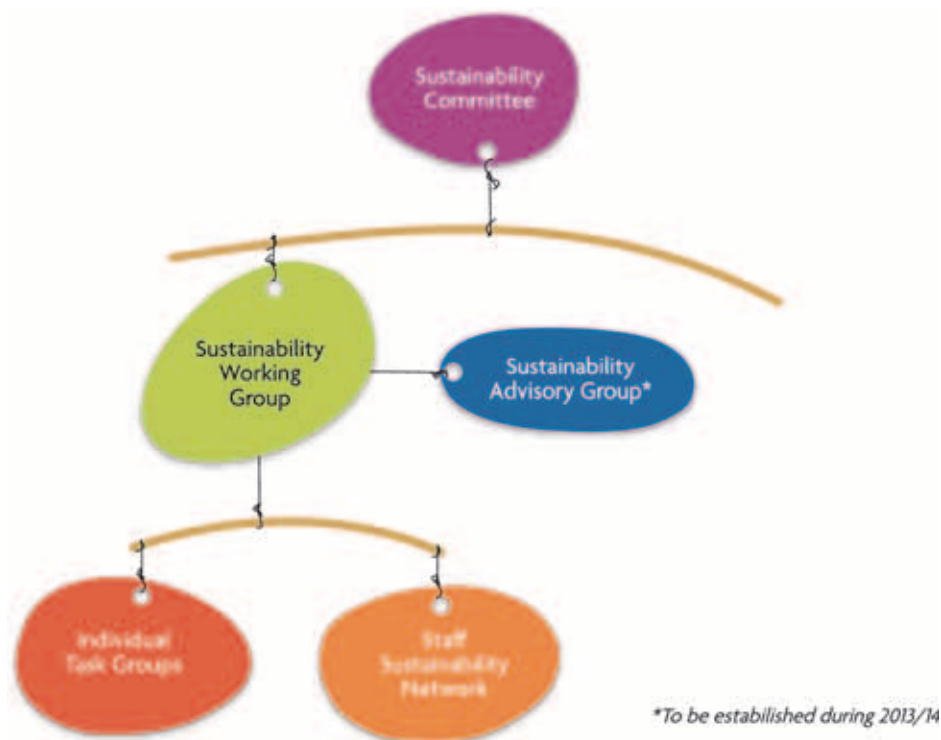


Fig 5 — The Link sustainability management model
Source: The Link (2013)

The Link — Business Culture

The Link devoted a tremendous amount of resources to provide a fair, equitable and transparent work environment for its staff via numerous channels of engagement, so as to create a positive and ethical business culture. Only if employees are being treated fairly and decently, they would be attracted by those engagement programmes and the programmes would start to take its effect to motivate the employee.

While The Link is moving fast on its transition, The Link is struggling in the trust building and the development of corporate culture. The abstract idea of sustainability/CSR is difficult for some to translate into daily operations. The process of ethical dissemination from the middle management is therefore being challenged.

The Society — Corporate Social Responsibilities

Despite the legacy issue, The Link is undergoing a transition to reposition its shopping centres, therefore it would not be surprising to note that the social expectations is incongruous with The Link's behaviour. Meanwhile, The Link has started to support its CSR performance by philanthropic activities. With the community engagement programmes, it catalyzed the process in building reputational capital, reinforced stakeholder's loyalty and somehow steering The Link to pursue a higher set of ethical standards.

The Link's reputation audit

In the reputation audit, there are fifteen perception drivers giving a contextual overview on the Link's ethical performance and each of the drivers will give an indication on the ethical performance on each related virtue that is universally accepted by the society.

Perceptions at the Organizational Level

Generally speaking, employees of The Link are positive about the performance of The Link (Fig 6). Most of them have a good sense of mission (Fig 6, Item 1-3), but not everyone believe that they are already working as part of the team to achieve The Link's goal. The Link is undergoing a transition, but most of the employees feel that they are hanging there, not knowing what to do or to help.

Employee felt that The Link is delivering a benefit to the society through its core business, (Fig 6, Item 6-10), thus they are proud to promote The Link to their friends and people that they meet (Fig 6, Item 4). However, The Link might still not be good enough to attract shoppers when comparing with other shopping centres (Fig 6, Item 5), which means that The Link competitiveness might not be as strong as other private shopping centre operators.

Employees who learnt about the great achievements of the company at The Link Annual Town-hall meeting would be impressed, yet they are expecting The Link to do more to limit environmental impact and to be more caring to the society (Fig 6, Item 11-14).

The Link is attached with a poor public image, where negative feedbacks on its business operations and outcry from the society asking the Government to buy back The Link are being heard at all times. Yet, the respondents believe that the amount of negative "noise" in relation to The Link has been reduced, because The Link is paying greater regard to its social responsibilities (Fig 6, Item 15).



Fig 6 — Results of the reputation audit on The Link's employee

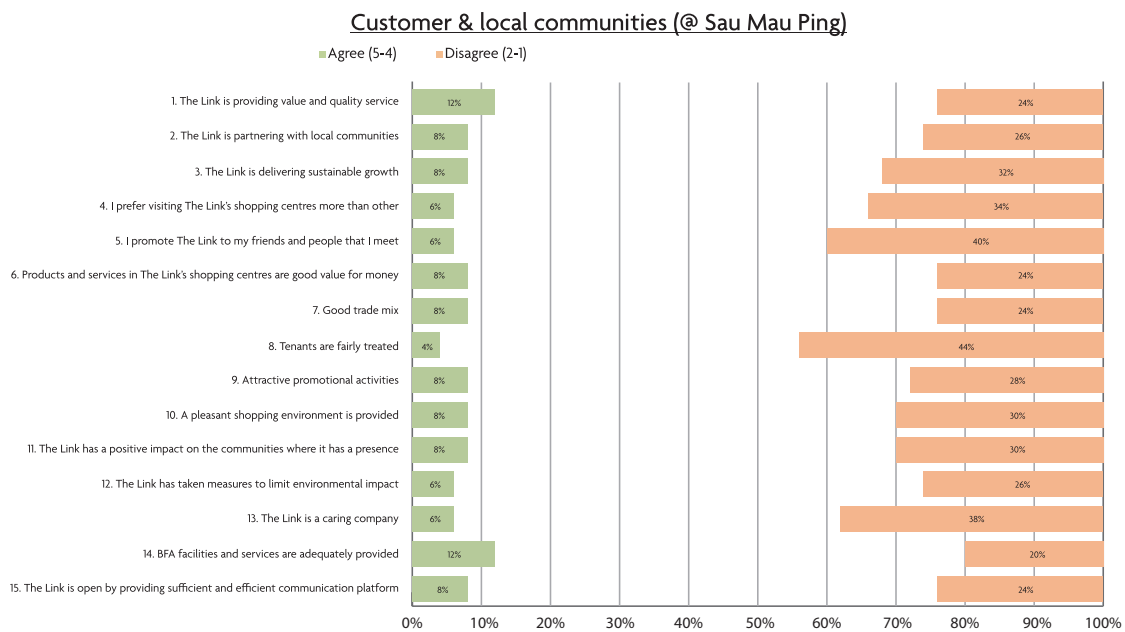


Fig 7 — Results of the reputation audit on The Link's key external constituencies at Sau Mau Ping

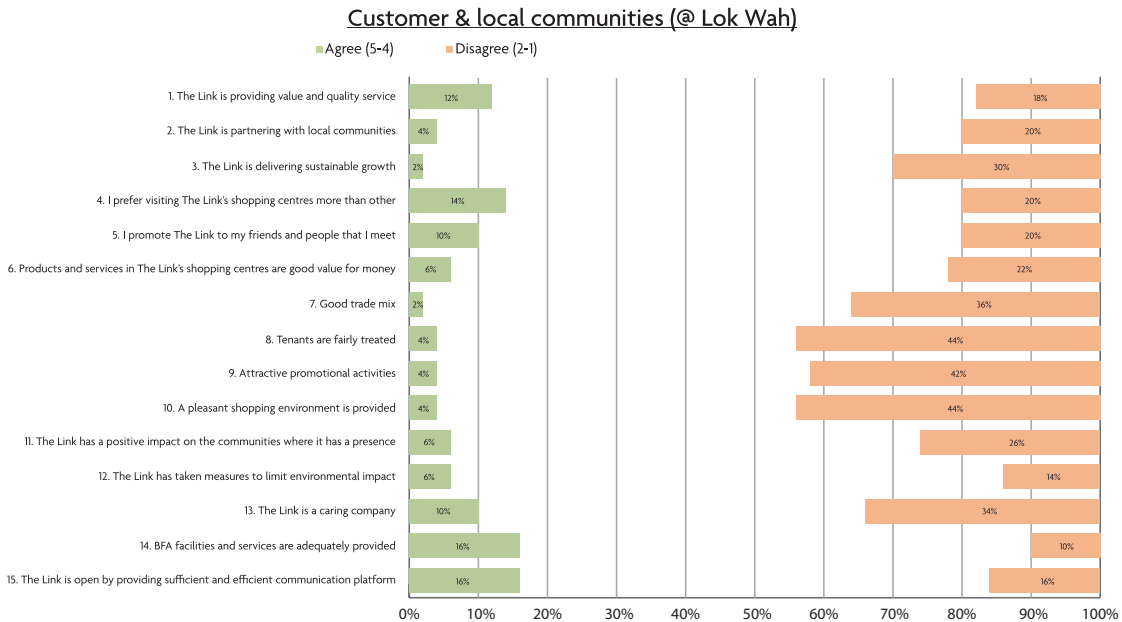


Fig 8 — Results of the reputation audit on The Link’s key external constituencies at Lok Wah

Perceptions at the Societal Level

Respondents from Sau Mau Ping and Lok Wah share similar negative perception of The Link (Fig 7 and 8).

Some of the shoppers mistakenly think that The Link has connection with the Government. Conflict arises when people do not see The Link is taking care of the community as they expected and at the same time, making a lot of profit. (Fig 7 and 8, Item 2, 11 & 13).

Against The Link’s commitment to its mission statement, there is a majority of people showing their disagreement (Fig 7 and 8, Item 1-3). Not only upon the social aspect, which the people are discontent with, it is also the way The Link attains its financial achievements by “rent raising” which the people despise.

In terms of services, the perception in majority from Lok Wah was found to be relatively more negative (Fig 7 and 8, Item 6-10) than those from Sau Mau Ping. It may be because on the day when survey was being conducted at Sau Mau Ping, a philanthropic event under “The Link Together Initiatives” was taking place. The overall impression on of The Link’s performance in its major functions was therefore leveraged by the philanthropic act.

Besides, the negative perception also explains why visitors from Lok Wah are less confidence to shop at The Link’s shopping centre or to promote The Link’s shopping centre to others (Fig 7 and 8, Item 4-5).

Perception Gaps — Internal vs External

Integrity (Fig. 9) — The key external constituencies think that The Link's performance is not in adherence to its mission. They expect The Link to be standing with the wider community. In response, The Link is seeking opportunities to maximize the potential of the portfolio, and to expand its corporate citizenship under a sustainability framework. On the contrary key internal constituencies of The Link believe that they are achieving the company's goal.

Trust (Fig 10) — There are not many of the key constituencies having great confidence in The Link. In The Link's segment, shoppers want a particular mix of tenants, including low cost and independent options. The Link have to defrost the perceptions that visiting The Link shopping centre is strongly associated with "daily needs" shopping, rather than discretionary spending or a pleasant experience. So that The Link's key stakeholders would not have viewed The Link with their own misconception and wrongly accuse The Link with deception.

Fairness (Fig 11) — The media being sympathetic to small tenant and the public blame The Link for rising prices attribute to the negative sentiment of the key external constituencies. Internally, The Link presents the results from their mystery shopper programme annually, plus there are announcements and news update periodically, employee of The Link would be able to build and institutionalize internal knowledge and experience. Thus, at the organizational level, there is no big perception gap between the managerial level and the non-managerial level. However, the results are still not appealing, it shows that most of the employees see a lot of room for improvement for The Link to run its business.

Respect (Fig 12) — To respect and to be respected, it requires understanding to a multiple of cultures in the society. Key external constituencies do not aware or recognize The Link's CSR identity. Although at Sau Mau Ping, philanthropic activities has been taking place, it is not yet taking an effect on meeting the social expectation as having a positive impact on the communities where The Link has a presence. To limit environmental impact, the key external constituencies might simply understand The Link's effort in reducing the green house effect or in enhancing the energy efficiency as an approach to cut cost on electrical bill.

Empathy (Fig 13) — Understanding the plight of others does not require The Link to be soft or sentimental in making decisions. Empathy entails being sensitive but not necessarily be responsive all the time. The Link therefore engaged its key constituencies via various channels to understand and empathize with the diverse needs of the key constituencies. However, the responses from key external constituencies are negative, the results are ranging from 22% to 29%, while from key internal constituencies, they are more positive.

Transparency (Fig 14) — providing meaningful information to the key constituencies attributes to a higher level of transparency and is helpful for the establishment of promising relationships. During survey some of the interviewees expressed that there are insufficient signage, directory and advertisement for promotional activities. It explains that the meaning of meaningful information should be information that the key constituencies can be access easily.

For the internal, CEO of The Link advocates the idea of "data management", yet collection of useful data has been an enduring task in previous years. The Link is gaining an insight from all those data, so as to generate a detailed understanding on

how to differentiate the true needs from all the voices. Meanwhile, employees are lost about how The Link is delivering its mission. The employees might have strong desire and will to do good for The Link, but they do not feel being empowered to make a real difference in shaping the company's future.

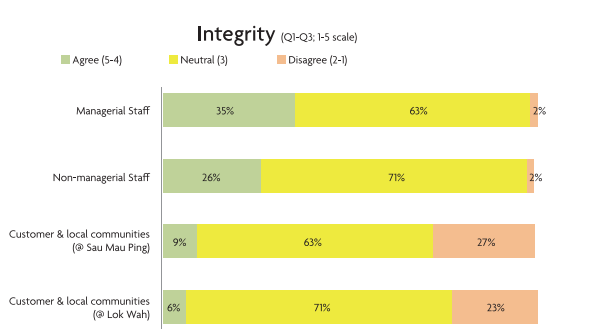


Fig 9 — Results of the reputation audit concerning interviewee's awareness and understanding of the Link's mission

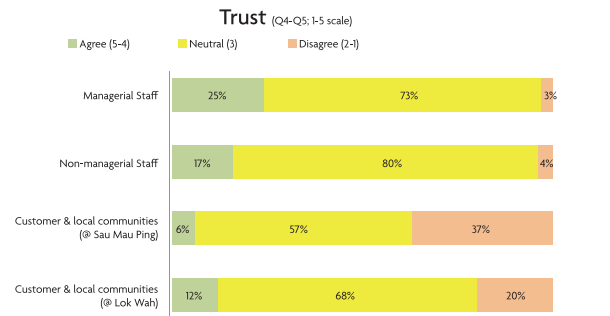


Fig 10 — Results of the reputation audit concerning interviewee's advocacy toward The Link

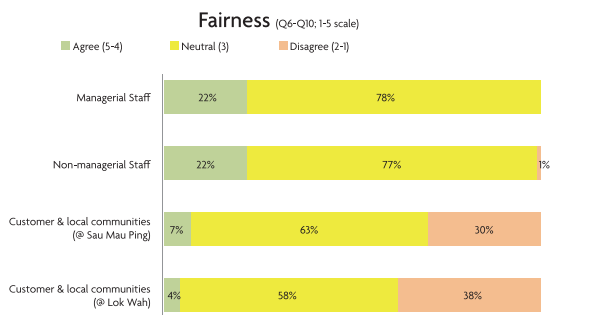


Fig 11 — Results of the reputation audit concerning interviewee's perceptions of The Link's Performance in its major function in the society

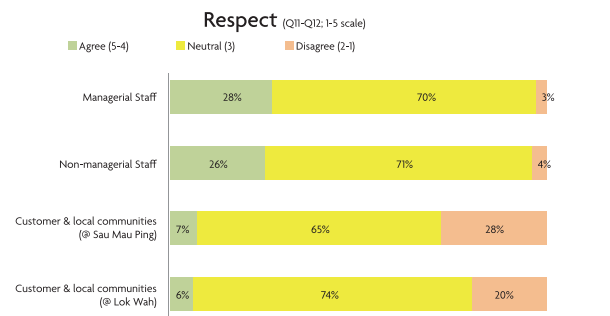


Fig 12 — Results of the reputation audit concerning interviewee's awareness of the Link's CSR identity

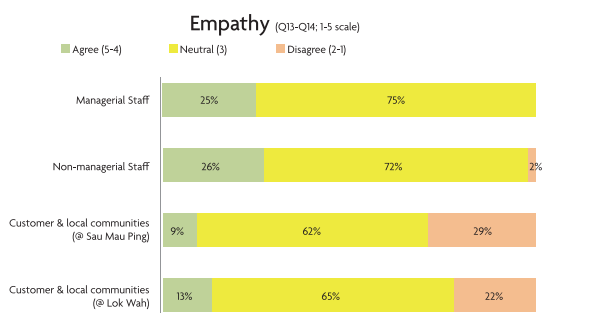


Fig 13 — Results of the reputation audit concerning interviewee's understanding of the Link's effort on sustainability

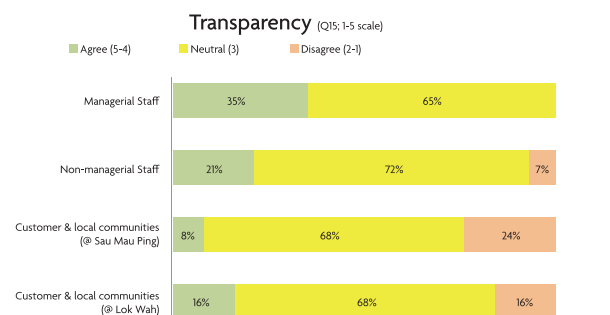


Fig 14 — Results of the reputation audit concerning interviewee perception of The Link's effectiveness of the communication

There are obviously perception gaps at the societal level, while at the organizational level, there are areas that particular focus would be needed. Same reputation audit is recommended to be exercised annually or biannually. Without the comparables from previous years, respondents' scoring on each perception drivers can also provide an indication on The Link's ethical performance.

The Link's ethical performance

From the informative interview, the interviewee shared his understanding about CSR and sustainability.

"...Both concepts are about 'equilibrium'. We have been doing a lot on sustainability these years, but The Link is a private operator, we would not do anything purely for a single purpose to protect the environment or to do charity for the society."

The Link's moral system/ethical responsibilities

About The Link's moral system, "leading by examples" is a key to success as the interviewee said. By means of ethical practice, The Link is building up an ethical character with great virtues, like trust, integrity, caring. To explain The Link's ethical responsibilities, the interviewee referred to the seven focus areas under The Link sustainability framework. To derive the needs of the stakeholders, the interviewee stressed the importance of communication and said,

"Changes happened to the society every day. We cannot box up ourselves. We need to communicate with our stakeholders, to understand their needs. Thus, we have formulated different engagement channels to communicate with our stakeholders and to build relationships with them."

Perception Gap

The formation of perception gap is mainly borne upon the privatization of assets from HA. The interviewee agreed and said,

"We are a young company. We had a little bit of a difficult birth and a difficult childhood as well, so that is sometimes reflected in some of our behaviour. Of which some employees adopted a defensive approach when facing challenges from the public."

To narrow the perception gap, the concept of sustainability has to be integrated throughout the organization, the interviewee expressed that "teamwork" and "creativity" are the key elements.

"We need to change, like Obama said. Our staffs need to know about the change, the society needs to understand about the change. Change means we are not operating The Link in the way which HA does in the past. We are a private entity. We operate to meet the needs of the market and the society. And for that we sometimes have to be creative..."

"Without the people, nobody is doing the job. Yet we need our people doing the right thing and making the right decision. Hence, we have been doing a lot of training and maintaining ongoing dialogue with our staff at all levels, in order to build a strong team."

By the end of the interview, the interviewee concluded The Link's business purpose by its sustainability objectives. Although every action done by The Link could be for a multiplicity of motives, The Link's ultimate goal is to create value for the community as a whole, so as to provide sustainable returns for its stakeholders.

Conclusion

The Link's reputation today stems from the residual impact of a difficult birth and little effort in filling the void of perceptions in the minds of the society. Driven by the pressure from the society, The Link engaged its stakeholders in a pro-active manner, in order to improve the company's public image and to win the support of stakeholder. However, The Link's moral system is still too immature to perform. The Link struggles to align its ethical behaviour with the social expectation under the same set of virtues which is found acceptable by the society universally.

The Link's sustainability framework has to be supported by a moral system that penetrates through an individual level to the societal level. Though, to mitigate the impact of the CEO personnel change, The Link need to have an ethical business culture encompasses prescriptive elements that lead the employee to perform and to achieve the company's goal.

Through the dynamic process, The Link ethical business culture is getting into shape but very unstable. Perception gap appears between managerial and non-managerial staff. Because the implementation time for the ethical engagement programmes is too short and the turnover rate is high. For service to be delivered in care constantly, it needs to be supported by ethical guideline of the company, training for ethical decision making and periodic performance audit. The Link has these well equipped, though its ethical performance is random at its fast growing process.

Perception gaps at the societal level, between The Link and the society are even larger, when The Link's employee cannot deliver their service with ethical demeanour, so as to allow the legitimate expectations of the society to be met. Plus, the misconceptions and recurring negative sentiment from the society, The Link's credibility and reputation is poorly damaged. There are little social attention and recognition on the good side of The Link or the changes made by The Link.

Building of reputational capital in a form of branding development would be helpful for re-positioning The Link's future business and to unleash The Link's potential. Nevertheless, The Link should remember that brand building has to be on the ground of ethical practice. The pursuit of positive corporate identity could be achieved by uplifting the corporate image, but for the pursuit of positive reputation, The Link need to perform with consistent behaviour over a period of time.

As The Link's Board of Directors had said to Mr. George Hongchoy in 2002, "you are starting from a low base". Yes, The Link is starting from a low base, too. There is a lot of scope for changes, adaptation and possibilities. In time, The Link's action will speak for itself while people from the society are always welcome to give their feedback. Even if today you cannot agree with The Link's business outlook, in the near future you may see and experience The Link differently, a socially responsible corporate.

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Improving Redevelopment of Public Housing Estates: Place Attachment and Social Capital in the Old Portion of Pak Tin Estate



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Introduction

Public housing has been addressing housing need of low income families in Hong Kong for over half a century. It not only maintains social stability, but also gives a feeling of 'home' to the public housing recipients. In addition, it recorded the urban landscape transformation and collective memories of our last generations. Yet, Hong Kong has been experiencing an expanding population. Based on the figures released by the Census and Statistics Department (2013), up to mid-2013, the population reached 7,184,000. The supply of housing cannot meet the rising demand. Shortage of housing supply is one of the reasons for the sky-rocketing residential property price and rent in the city. The government formulated various kinds of policies to tackle housing problems. Increasing the densities and plot ratios of public rental housing (PRH) redevelopment projects is one of the examples for addressing the excess housing demand. Moreover, the old PRH estates need redevelopment because

of the obsolete facilities and amenities. Although the old public housing had an irreplaceable value in the city's development, redevelopment is necessary for old public housing estates in order to sustain residents' living quality and address social changes. Meanwhile, redevelopment actually brings gains and losses to various stakeholders in the society.

In line with the government's policy, the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) endorsed and implemented the "Refined Policy on Redevelopment of Aged Public Rental Housing Estates" in 2011. According to the Information Services Department (2012), in addition to applying the two existing criteria (i.e., structural safety and possibility of economic repair) when considering the clearance and redevelopment of aged public housing estates under the Comprehensive Structural Investigation Programme, the build-back potential of aged PRH estates and availability of rehousing resources were also contemplated by the HKHA. The inclusion of the two new criteria aims to fully utilize land resources for increasing flat production. Old portion of Pak Tin Estate redevelopment project was the first batch of projects affected by this policy. Under the refined policy, the plot ratio of Pak Tin Estate will be increased from 4 to 6. After

the completion of redevelopment, the number of total build-back flats will be 5,650 which have net increase of 2,150 flats. Such expansion after redevelopment can help address the surging housing need. However, during the redevelopment process, some of the affected residents suffer losses in terms of emotion and feeling to a place, neighborhood, sense of belonging, identity and so forth. Understanding the social impacts of redevelopment on the residents of the old portion of Pak Tin Estate is crucial for improving future redevelopment plans which can better address the feelings of residents. Therefore, this paper aims at:

1. investigating the social effects of redevelopment on PRH residents of the old portion of Pak Tin Estate in terms of place attachment, social mix and social capital;
2. evaluating whether rehousing need of residents can be fulfilled;
3. identifying problems and worthy achievements in the implementation of redevelopment plan; and
4. recommending methods for making improvement in future redevelopment projects in public housing estates under the refined policy.

An Overview of Redevelopment Process in the Old Portion of Pak Tin Estate

According to the HKHA (2013), the existing Pak Tin Estate is located at 51 Pak Tin Street in Sham Shui Po. It covers 14,075 hectares and is composed of 20 blocks of buildings of various types, including Harmony 1, Harmony 3, Non-standard, Old Slab and Small Household Block. The older portion of the estate comprises Blocks 1–3 and Blocks 9–13. The newer portion is made of new residential building blocks. The first intake of tenants dated 1975.

According to the Legislative Council Panel on Housing (2012), in order to resettle the affected households, the HKHA will adopt a phased clearance approach. In the first stage, the Housing Department will clear Blocks 1–3 and 12, comprising of about 950 PRH flats. The affected households will be relocated to Shek Kip Mei Estate. After the demolition, 1,400 new PRH flats will be provided. They will be scheduled for completion in 2018/19. Upon the completion of first stage, the second stage will commence. The Housing Department will then clear the old Pak Tin Commercial Centre and Blocks 9–11 and 13, consisting of about 2,550 PRH flats. The affected households in this second stage will have *in-situ* rehousing or will be relocated to So Uk Estate. After the demolition, a new community hall will be completed in 2015/16. Moreover, 2,000 new flats will first be completed in 2020/21 accompanied with a new shopping centre. 2,250 new flats as well as ancillary retail, carpark, public transport, school and community facilities will then be built in 2025/26.

Literature Review

Place Attachment

Place attachment is a process in which an individual experiences the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional embeddedness in his sociophysical environment (Brown and Perkins, 1992). It is an emotional bonding between people and place. Person is an actor in the concept of place attachment. Place attachment can operate at individual and group or community levels. At the individual level, a person has strong connection and attachment to a place which can bring personal memories and such strong place attachment can contribute to a stable sense of self (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Similarly, Brown and Perkins (1992) stated that, over a long period of time in developing, familiarity, stability and security arise upon the attachment process, resulting in the establishment of a long-term bonding between people and their homes and communities. Given

the stable sense of self to the environment, a deep embeddedness can be beneficial. At the group or community level, Low (1992, p.165) defined place attachment as “the symbolic relationship formed by people giving culturally shared emotional/affective meanings to a particular space or piece of land”. Shared meanings to a place and bonding between families and communities create place attachment.

Both individuals and groups have psychological interaction with a place. A crucial feature of place attachment is the bonding and attachment of affect, emotion and feeling to the place (Scannell and Gifford 2010). Brown and Perkins (1992) postulated that place attachment gives rise to positive affective and emotional experiences, for example, feeling of security, self-esteem, self-worth, self-pride and a sense of belonging. However, when the positive bond has not been developed or maintained, some negative experiences will arise such as entrenchment in a lower-class status, feelings of drudgery, detached and alienated. Place dependence also relates to the feeling of drudgery (Brown and Perkins 1992).

Coupled with affective and emotional qualities, cognition (thought, knowledge and belief) and practice (action and behavior) also function in place attachment (Low and Altman, 1992). Regarding cognitive aspect, the memories, beliefs, meaning and knowledge of an individual in connection with the central settings has great value to him (Scannell and Gifford, 2010). Moreover, Scannell and Gifford (2010) illustrated that people can create place meaning through memory and associate the meaning with the self.

To explain place attachment in a cognitive way, Proshansky et al. (1983, p.59) employed the concept of place identity which is “a sub-structure of the self-identity of the person consisting of, broadly conceived, cognitions about the physical world in which the individual lives”. According to the description of Proshansky et al. (1983), place identity is composed of variety of cognitions which have the relation to the past, present, and expected physical settings. While a person selectively engages in or interacts with his environment or place on both conscious and

unconscious level, the cognitions are developed gradually. A person experiences and interacts with the physical settings from the process of ‘now going on’ to ‘being remembered’. Proshansky et al. (1983) further explained that when the positive valenced cognitions of the settings for the individuals’ place identity are greater in value than the negative valenced cognitions, place belongingness will arise.

Action and behavior are also the psychological process for place attachment. In the behavioral level, place attachment, as the positive affective bonding between an individual and a place (Hidalgo and Hernandez, 2001), is exemplified by proximity-maintaining behaviors (Scannell and Gifford, 2010) so as to maintain closeness in proximity to a place. On the other hand, Riger and Lavrakas (1981) divided places into two dimensions for investigation, namely social and physical place attachment. Social attachment is defined as ‘bondedness’ which is composed of social ties or connection, belongingness to the neighborhood and familiarity with neighborhood residents. Physical attachment is described as ‘rootedness’ related to the length of residence, ownership and intention of staying.

Disruptions in Place Attachment

Disruptions were defined as “any severe loss may represent a disruption in one’s relationship to the past, to the present, and to the future, hence, these losses generally bring about fragmentation of routines, of relationships, and of expectations, and frequently imply an alteration in the world of physically available objects and spatially oriented action” (Brown and Perkins, 1992, p. 281). Brown and Perkins (1992, p. 280) stated that “when place attachments are disrupted, individuals struggle to define their losses in order to identify what types of connections will provide them with a meaningful relationship to the world”. Since the events in the lives of individuals and groups have the characteristics of uniqueness and non-repeat in the process of attachment, the old attachments are not easily replaced upon the reconstruction for network of people and places.

Social Mix and Social Capital

The emergence of social-mix policy in many developed countries is a response to the negative effects of high level of poverty concentration and social segregation (Goetz, 2010). Policy makers have advocated the social-mix idea in an attempt to disperse poverty and minimize social segregation and its negative impacts. The idea of social mix relies mainly on the notion of neighborhood effect which assumes neighborhood composition does affect residents' life chance because moving low-income people to middle-income neighborhoods can improve the former's prospects of interacting with the latter who could be the sources of useful information and positive role model (Goetz, 2010).

Social capital theory posits that diversifying resident profile in low-income neighborhood enhances interaction of people from different groups, thus improving disadvantaged people's access to social capital (Curley, 2010). Coleman (1988) conceptualizes three forms of social capital. The first form is related to obligations, expectation and trustworthiness in the social structures. When A does her friend, B, a favour and expects B to return the favour someday, it creates expectation in A and obligations in B. Information channel in social structures is another form of social capital. Very often, people make choices and act based on the information they have. But acquiring information is not without cost. Coleman suggests that people can obtain information by use of the social relations they maintain for other purposes. The third form of social capital in social structures is effective norms and sanctions. Effective norm that admires education achievement within a community encourages children to study hard. Effective sanction against crimes can reduce crime rate in a community and increase residents' sense of security when walking alone in the street at night.

Putnam (2000) conceptualizes two kinds of social capital namely 'bonding capital' and 'bridging capital'. Bonding capital develops when people socialize with others who are alike, for example, commonalities in race, income, social status, religion and so on. Bridging capital occurs when one makes friends with people who are different, thus connecting one network to another.

Methodology

This is an explorative study with a limited number of interviewees. In order to understand the dynamics of place attachment and social capital among residents in the redevelopment process, a qualitative research method was used. The qualitative data collection strategy adopted by the interviewers was in-depth interview. The questions the interviewers asked were open-end in order to allow the residents to express their opinions of the redevelopment issue and their experiences or feelings of the relocation more freely. Two groups of sample units were selected for study. Each group had ten interviewees respectively. The two groups of sample units included the residents already relocated from old portion of Pak Tin Estate to Shek Kip Mei Estate in the first phase of redevelopment (Group 1); and the residents who were living in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate but would have in-situ rehousing or would be relocated to So Uk Estate in the second phase of redevelopment (Group 2).

Two sets of questions were designed separately for the two groups of interviewees. The questions in each set were mainly divided into five sections: (1) general information, (2) living experience in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate, (3) place attachment, (4) social capital and (5) overall comments on relocation and redevelopment issues. In both groups, the areas that the questions covered were the background of interviewees, the length of residence and living experiences in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate, the feelings and social relationships with neighbours in Pak Tin Estate, their adaptability in the new environment, and their comments on the arrangement and process of redevelopment.

Convenient sampling technique was adopted. The interviewers conducted interviews with relevant residents in the streets, common areas or parks nearby Pak Tin Estate and Shek Kip Mei Estate in March 2014. Coupled with convenient sampling technique, quota sampling technique was also used as a supplemental technique to achieve higher representativeness in the population. For instance, since some of the elderly residents in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate were the victims of fire disaster, such identity characteristic could be sought in the section of general information before the interview began. It is because some of the elderly experiencing the catastrophic fire disaster in the squatter area of Shek Kip Mei would be selected in order to study their degree of memories in the community, and their losses or gains upon redevelopment. In addition, snowball sampling technique was used in the interview so that the interviewees were asked to recommend other people for the interviews.

Interview Result and Discussion

Feeling of 'Home' and Length of Residence

The results of the interviews show that the residents living in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate for over thirty-eight years tended to have a stronger feeling of 'home' and social rootedness to the estate because they developed affective and emotional ties with the community, and had long-established neighbourliness and roots of generation for years. Their attachment to this estate was strong. On the contrary, the residents living in Pak Tin Estate for less than eighteen years tended to have a weaker feeling of 'home' towards the estate because they worked outside the estate and seldom participated in the community activities.

Place Identity and Collective Memories

The old portion of Pak Tin Estate adjoined the squatter area of Shek Kip Mei where a catastrophic fire broke out in 1953. At the end of the 1960s and the 1970s, the victims of the fire disaster were gradually moved to Pak Tin Estate from the resettlement blocks in Shek Kip Mei.

Therefore, many elderly residents living in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate were the victims of the fire disaster. They shared the same experiences and memories. For instance, an elderly resident said that his neighbours at the squatter area were warm and kind in that decade and they all helped each other after the fire disaster. Later, his family and neighbours were allocated to the resettlement blocks respectively, and then moved to Pak Tin Estate. Therefore, he was affectively attached to the estate because he had a lot of memories related to the past with his family and neighbours. The response of the resident show that place identity developed in the self-identity of elderly residents by sharing the same experiences and memories which relate to the past.

Social Attachment

The results of the interviews also show that residents with close connection with friends or neighbours in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate have higher place attachment and strong belongingness to the neighbourhood. For example, a resident had been relocated to Shek Kip Mei Estate for several months and come back to Pak Tin Estate to visit the old friends and neighbours because of their long-term neighbourhood relationship.

Feeling 'Lost'

The research results show that the feeling of 'lost' has been found among the residents upon disruption in place attachment and social connection caused by relocation and this implication is obvious in the group of elderly residents. Many elderly residents believed that their lives, daily routines, relationship to the physical environment of Pak Tin Estate, relationship to the past memories and social network were lost after relocation. They also suffered anxiety and sleeplessness because they could not adapt to the new environment. Additionally, they found it difficult to establish connection with new neighbours and therefore could not benefit from the redevelopment. The worry about the 'lost' feeling resulted in the demand for in-situ rehousing and controversy over

unfair relocation arrangement. On the contrary, well-educated young adults did not feel 'lost' because they were weakly-bonded and weakly-rooted to the neighbourhood and community at Pak Tin Estate. They also expressed that they easily adapted to the new environment and believed that redevelopment could improve their living quality.

Impact on Bonding Social Capital

Support, trust and shared norms are some important indicators of the quality of relationships and key dimensions of social capital (Curley, 2010). 80% of the respondents thought that they could receive support from neighbours and friends in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate when they were in need and 60% thought that there was trust and shared norm among neighbours in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate. The results indicate that most of the respondents had good and deep relationships with their old neighbours and strong bonding social capital inhered in the relationships. Mutual assistance such as collecting newspapers or other recyclable materials for senior neighbours, helping repairing faucets or fluorescent tubes, sharing food and daily necessities among neighbours were very common in the old Pak Tin Estate. Such kind of social networks constituted part of their daily lives and a kind of bonding social capital they can rely on when needed.

However, 50% of the respondents of Group 1 replied that contacts with the old neighbours of Pak Tin were substantially less frequent after moving to Shek Kip Mei Estate and 20% of the respondents of Group 1 even had no contact with their old neighbours. The relationship has changed due to infrequent contacts after relocation because people were dispersed and the community was disrupted. Displacement of residents means pushing them to leave their original social structure and thus deprives them of social relations within a familiar environment and the bonding social capital inhered in it.

90% of the respondents of Group 2 thought that the relationships with his fellow relocated residents would change after removal from the existing buildings due to a decrease in proximity among them. Adapting to a new environment is often stressful, particularly for the elderly whose daily activities are mainly within the living neighbourhoods. Concerns about future changes and loss of friendship definitely affect the quality of life of the affected residents.

The results clearly show that almost all relocated interviewees failed to build up social connection to the new neighbourhood. 60% of the respondents replied that they did not make any new friends in the new living place and 70% found it difficult to make new friends after relocation. All respondents described the relationships with new neighbours are "not close" and "unfamiliar". 70% thought there were no trust and shared norm in the new neighbourhood. No respondents thought that they could obtain support compared to that in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate. All the feedback reveals that the social bonding of the relocated residents with their new neighbours is very weak. Trust and shared norm must be built on communication among people. However, most of the respondents had a strong feeling of their neighbours just minding their own business without caring about others in Shek Kip Mei Estate. Unfamiliarity to the new environment and lack of communication opportunity made it difficult to build trust with new neighbours.

Impact on Social Mixing and Bridging Social Capital

The first phase of the redevelopment project of Pak Tin Estate mainly relocated residents to another public housing estate – Shek Kip Mei Estate. It is believed that social mixing has not really occurred in the relocation neighbourhood because the relocated residents were not exposed to more affluent neighbours.

The interview results obviously show that bridging social capital was not yet developed because 60% of the respondents replied that they did not make any new friends in the new living place and no respondent thinks that he/she benefited from living in the new neighbourhood. Developing social ties is the first step to accessing bridging social capital. However, most respondents thought that social integration into the new neighbourhood was very difficult and therefore expected social and economic benefits resulted from better access to bridging social capital after relocation are out of the question.

Recommendations and Conclusion

Redevelopment of Pak Tin Estate gave rise to the disruption in the residents' attachment to their old home and old estate, thus resulting in their emotional distress, fear and anxiety. Since many residents have lived in Pak Tin Estate for a long time, they are familiar with their living environment. They have strong feeling of home and feeling of stability. Moreover, a sense of belonging has developed among the residents. These feelings are especially obvious in the elderly residents because they have a long length of residence in Pak Tin Estate and most of them are the victims of the fire disaster at the squatter area of Shek Kip Mei. They have collective memories and deep rootedness in the estate. Therefore, the 'lost' feeling arise in these affected residents when they are relocated to a new place. Coupled with the 'lost' feeling, anxiety, fear, hopeless and sleeplessness also arise.

Meanwhile, disruption in social bonding with old neighbours is another social effect of redevelopment on the resident of Pak Tin Estate. In some cases, after relocation, the affected residents and their old neighbours are allocated to different residential blocks in Shek Kip Mei Estate. In other cases, the affected residents have been relocated to the new estate, but their old neighbours still stay in the old portion of Pak Tin Estate for rehousing arrangement. Therefore, relocation will make the residents lose their social network and neighbourhood.

Additionally, the affected residents find that they have encountered difficulty in adapting to the new environment and establishing social connection with the new neighbours. Obviously, physical deterioration and inability to adapt to the new environment restrain the elderly residents from creating meaning for the new environment and establishing a social network.

Certainly, positive social effect has also been brought by the redevelopment of Pak Tin Estate. Some residents agree that redeveloping the old estate has improved the living quality. It is an advantage of redevelopment.

According to our research results, some recommendations are proposed to prevent the negative social effects and strengthen the positive social effects.

1. The HKHA should put more effort into facilitating social integration of the relocated residents. Since communication is the first step to building trust and shared values which are important elements of social capital, more estate-based activities should be launched regularly to provide opportunities for the relocated residents to be acquainted with their new neighbours. Besides, ongoing counselling and supportive services should be strengthened to help the relocated households to adapt to the new living environment, for example, cooperating with Social Welfare Department for emotional assistance and providing residents with information of the facilities and resources in the new neighbourhood.
2. More consideration should be given to the social ties of residents in the redevelopment process. It is observed that senior interviewees with strong place attachment and social bonding criticized the unfairness in the relocation process because residents involved in the first phase of the redevelopment have been relocated to a nearby public housing estate – Shek Kip Mei Estate, while residents involved in the

second phase will be moved to the newly redeveloped buildings of Pak Tin Estate i.e. *in-situ* rehousing. The Hong Kong Housing Authority should take into account the special circumstances and needs of each affected household and respect their choices. Since the number of flats within Pak Tin Estate will be largely increased after the redevelopment project is completed, it is possible to allow those involuntary relocatees in the first phase to return to the newly redeveloped blocks of Pak Tin Estate. As such, senior residents can continue to live in their home place where they are rooted and disruption to community network could be minimized.

3. Nowadays, redevelopment of public housing in Hong Kong has two objectives: the build-back potential by increasing plot ratios to address housing demand and improvement of living quality. Therefore, continuation of redeveloping public housing is highly recommended. Implementing the redevelopment of public housing is worthwhile because the designs and facilities of new residential blocks can cater for the expectation of residents and keep pace with social changes.

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