

Geography IA -HL



Pok Fu Lam Tsuen

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Fieldwork Question:**Is Pok Fu Lam Tsuen a shanty town/informal settlement?**

School:

Candidate name:

Candidate number:

Word Count: 1928

¹ Google Earth

A Fieldwork question and geographical context

Is Pok Fu Lam Tsuen a shanty town/informal settlement?

Many residential areas in rapidly growing cities are classified as informal settlements by urban geographers. In Wikipedia, Pok Fu Lam Tsuen (a small residential area of Hong Kong) is cited as often being 'mistaken as a shanty town by the residents of the surrounding apartments.'² My family has always referred to it as such as well. The aim of this fieldwork investigation is to assess to what extent this residential label is valid, by looking at general characteristics of shanty towns and seeing in they apply to Pok Fu Lam Tsuen.

Location:

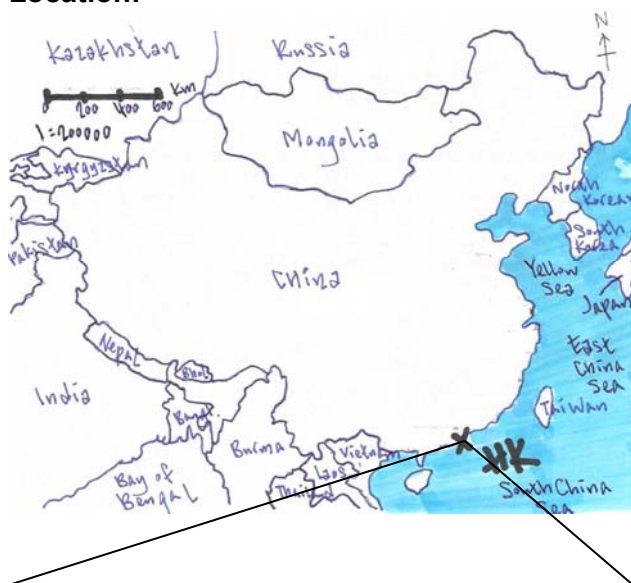


Figure. 1 map of Hong Kong

² http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pok_Fu_Lam

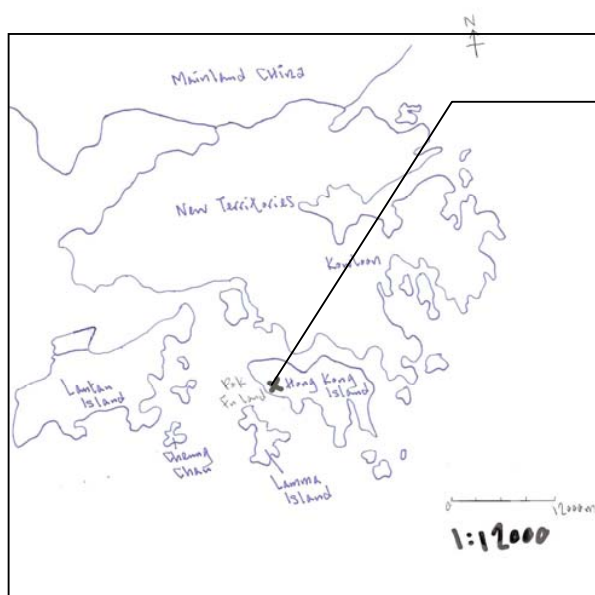


Figure. 2 Hong Kong Island



Figure.3 Pok Fu Lam Tsuen

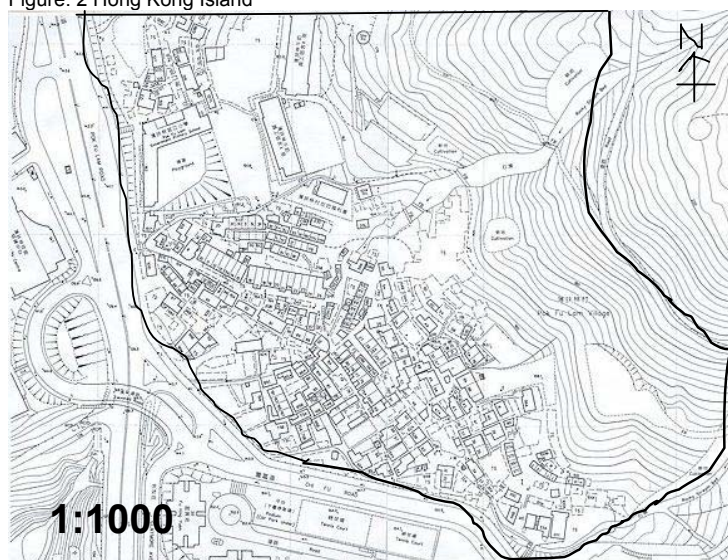


Figure.4 map of Pok Fu Lam Tsuen³

³ Central Library of Hong Kong

Figure. 5 Aerial Photo of the area⁴

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Figure. 6 Type of housing in Pok Fu Lam Tsuen

Some definitions/characteristics of shanty towns/informal settlements

According to “Global Change and Challenge—Geography for the 1990s”¹:

1. Self-built shelters created out of whatever materials residents find in hand
2. Land occupied is often distant from employment

According to “Advanced Geography Concepts and Cases”¹:

3. Overcrowded

According to Oxford dictionary of Sociology¹:

4. Low-income households.
5. Lack of public utilities and social services

Pok Fu Lam Tsuen is a shanty town?

Sub questions linked to above definitions

- A Residents have built their houses themselves from available materials such as wood, corrugated iron?
- B The land is neither owned nor rented, it is occupied ‘illegally’?
- C Residents live a long way from work?
- D There is a high density of housing?
- E Most of the inhabitants are low income?

⁴ Google Earth

- F The land occupied is not suitable for settlement, i.e on a steep slope?
 G There is a lack of services?

Word count for A 243

B Method(s) of Investigation

A survey of residents will be conducted to answer some of the above questions. This survey will be in the form of a questionnaire. It will help answer B, C and E. Assessing the percentage of households built from primitive materials such as wood, corrugated iron and cardboard will be done through observation (A). Observation and landuse mapping will be used to 'test' questions D, F and G. Observation will at all times include photography.

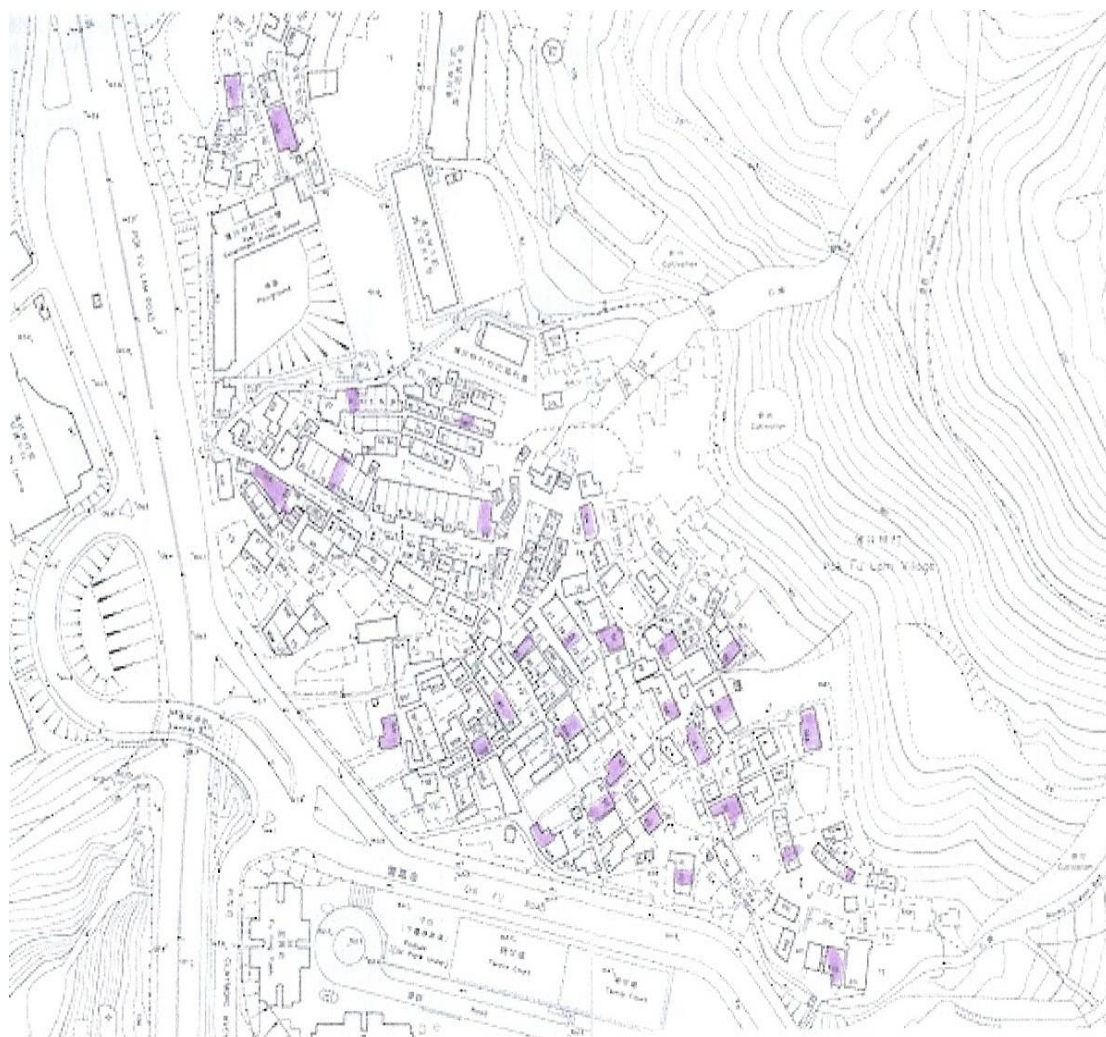


Figure.7 Distribution of the 30 chosen households to be surveyed.

An English version of the questionnaire with justifications:

Please circle the option you wish to choose

1. Sex: male / female

2. age: 14 or below / 15 - 29 / 30 - 39 / 40 - 49 / 50 or above

3. Household size: _____

4. Level of education: kindergarten or primary / lower secondary / higher secondary / university / others (please specify) _____

5. Industry: primary / secondary / tertiary
- Not in working population: homemakers/ student / retired

6. Place of work: (approximate area): _____

7. Time needed to travel from and to work: less than 10 mins / 11 - 30 mins / 31 mins - 1 hr / 1 hr or above

8. Monthly domestic household income (HK \$) 2000 or below / 2001 - 3000 / 3001 - 4000 / 4001 - 5000 / 5001 - 6000 / 6001 - 7000 / 7001 - 8000 / 8001 - 9000 / 9001 - 10000 / 10000 or above

9. Place of birth: Mainland China / Hong Kong / others (please specify) _____

10. Person who built the house: yourself / family members / government / private companies / others (please specify) _____

11. Reason for choosing Pok Fu lam village as residence: (can have several answers)

- Cheap rent
- Low cost of living
- Close to where you work
- inherited from previous family members
- Good relationships among neighbourhood
- Lack of money and opportunity to move to other places
- Others (please specify) _____

----- Thanks for your precious time!! -----

Information obtained to construct the population pyramid

Shows the predominant age group

Investigates the third aim which concerns distance from employment

Satisfies the last aim regarding immigrants

Provides data for calculation of median monthly income

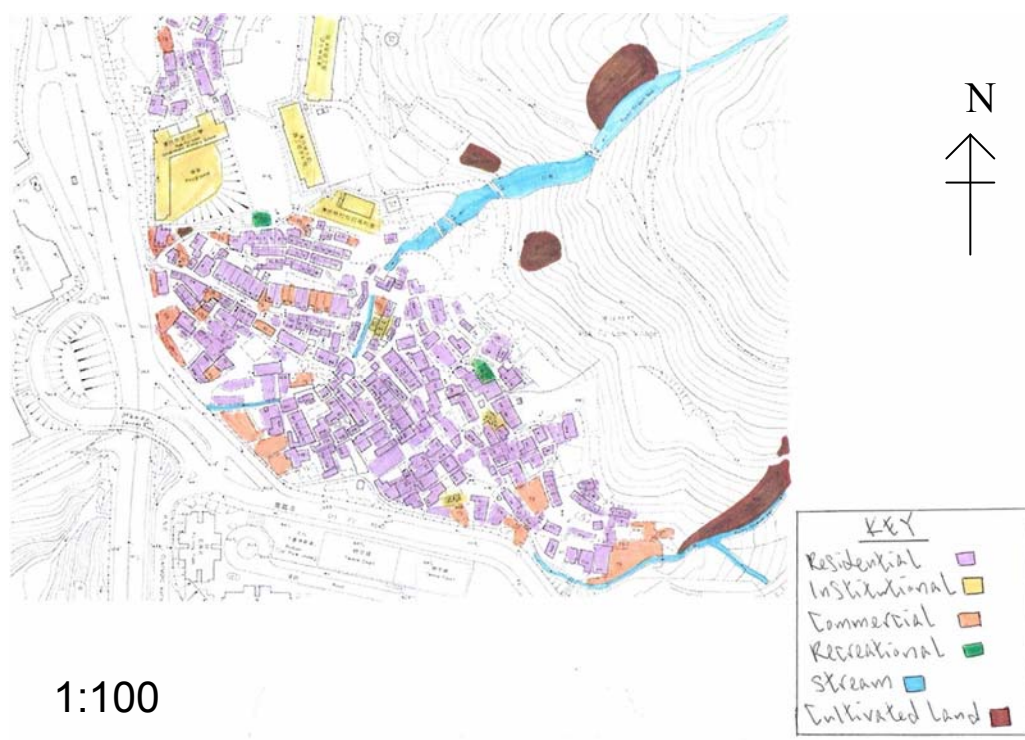
Investigates the first aim of whether households are self-built.

Word count for B 220

Figure. 8 Questionnaire

C Data collected and presented (quality and treatment)

Land use map



Data Description

Table 01 table showing who built the houses

Person who built the house	Yourself	Family members	Government	Private companies	Others
No. of residents	16	7	0	4	Nil

Table 02 Raw data of monthly income of residents within the labour force

Monthly Income (\$)	Below 2000	2001-3000	3001-4000	4001-5000	5001-6000	6001-7000	7001-8000	8001-9000	9001-10000	10001 or above
No. of residents	2	1	1	0	0	1	2	3	2	1

Table 03 Raw data of residents' areas of employment

Area of	Pok Fu	Wah Fu	Causeway	Aberdeen	Central	Kennedy	Lai Chi
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Work	Lam		Bay			town	Kok
No. of residents	6	1	2	1	1	2	1

Table 04 Actual distance of residents' areas of employment from Pok Fu Lam

Area of Work	Pok Fu Lam	Wah Fu	Causeway Bay	Aberdeen	Central	Kennedy town	Lai Chi Kok
Actual Distance (km)	0	2.4	18	6	8.4	9.6	98.4

Table 05 Raw data of age

Age range	Male	Female
14 or below	2	5
15-29	3	5
30-39	2	1
40-49	2	1
50 or above	9	6

Examples of Institutional land use

Fig. 9 Social Centre

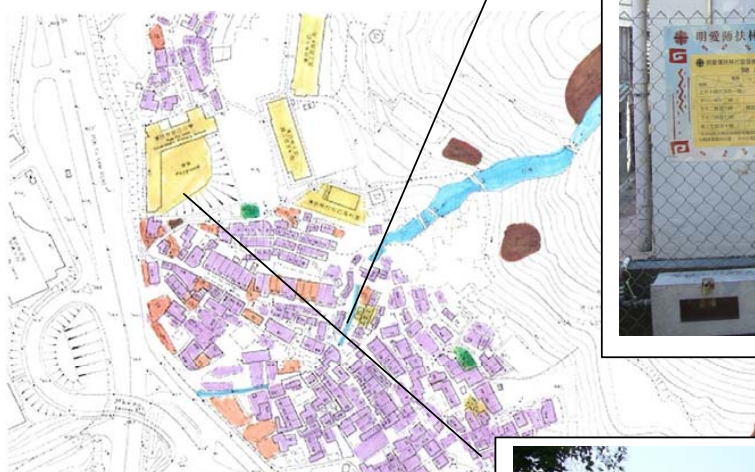


Fig. 10 Government primary school



Fig. 11,12 public toilets

Examples of Commercial land use



Fig. 13 small grocery shop



Fig. 14 a local restaurant



Fig. 14 shop selling vegetables



Fig. 15 real estates in the outest area

Examples of recreation land use**Fig. 16 resting areas****Fig. 17 table tennis and chess tables****Investigation 3**

Corrugated iron

Wood



Cement

Figures. 18-21 illustrating outer and interior of households**Table 06 Raw data of the two type of households**

Type of materials used	primitive	Modernized
No. of households	107	166

D Written analysis

Who built the houses

Total number of self-built = $16 + 7 = 23$

Percentage of self-built housing = $(\text{total number of self-built} / \text{total number of housing}) * 100\% = (23/30) * 100\% = 77\%$. The majority of households fall under the category. This high figure is probably because most of the residents have inherited their houses generation by generation from ancestors' long time ago. Looking back at the history of Pok Fu Lam Tsuen, the residents' ancestors were new migrants from Mainland China. With little capital and opportunity, they would rather build houses on their own than to buy others. As for now, when it comes to maintenance or enlargement of the households, in order to save labour cost, many of the low income residents would still prefer carrying out construction work on their own to paying private construction companies.

Monthly income

From the table, the median lies between 7001-8000 (HK\$). According to ⁵the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, the Median Monthly Income from Main Employment (HK\$) in 2001 is \$10000. Using this as standard, whoever receives a monthly income less than \$10000 can be categorized as low-income.

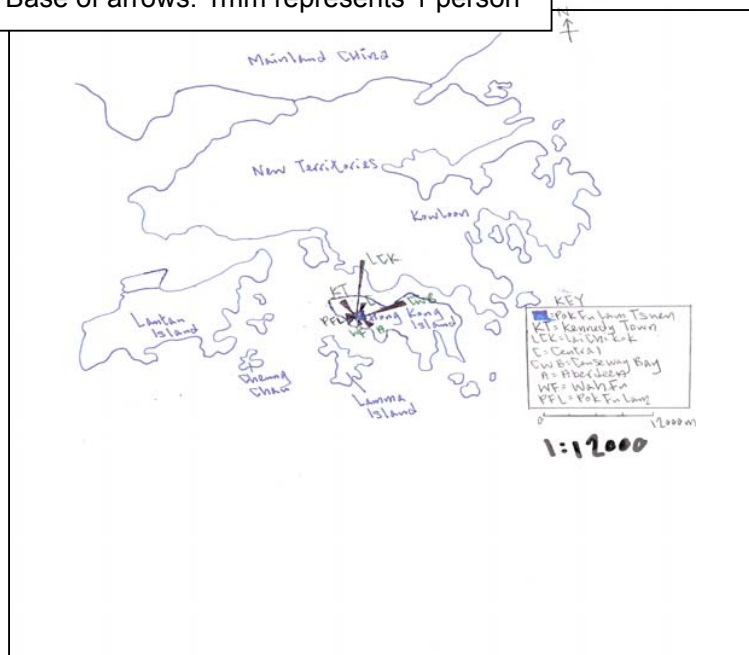
Percentage of people with monthly income below \$10000 = $(\text{number of people with income below } \$10000 / \text{total number of people in labour force}) * 100\%$
 $= (12/13) * 100\% = 92.3\%$

Since 92.3% of residents have income below the general standard given by the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, they can be considered as the poorest urban inhabitants in Hong Kong. This can be explained by the overall low educational level within the residents. From the questionnaire I used, 60% of the people have stopped studying at kindergarten or primary school level. Hence, they are less competitive in the modern society. Supported by the result from question 5 of questionnaire, the residents are often involved in primary or secondary industries. As a result, their income is generally less regular and high compared to those involved in tertiary industries.

⁵http://www.censtatd.gov.hk/hong_kong_statistics/statistical_tables/index.jsp?charsetID=1&subjectID=1&tableID=151

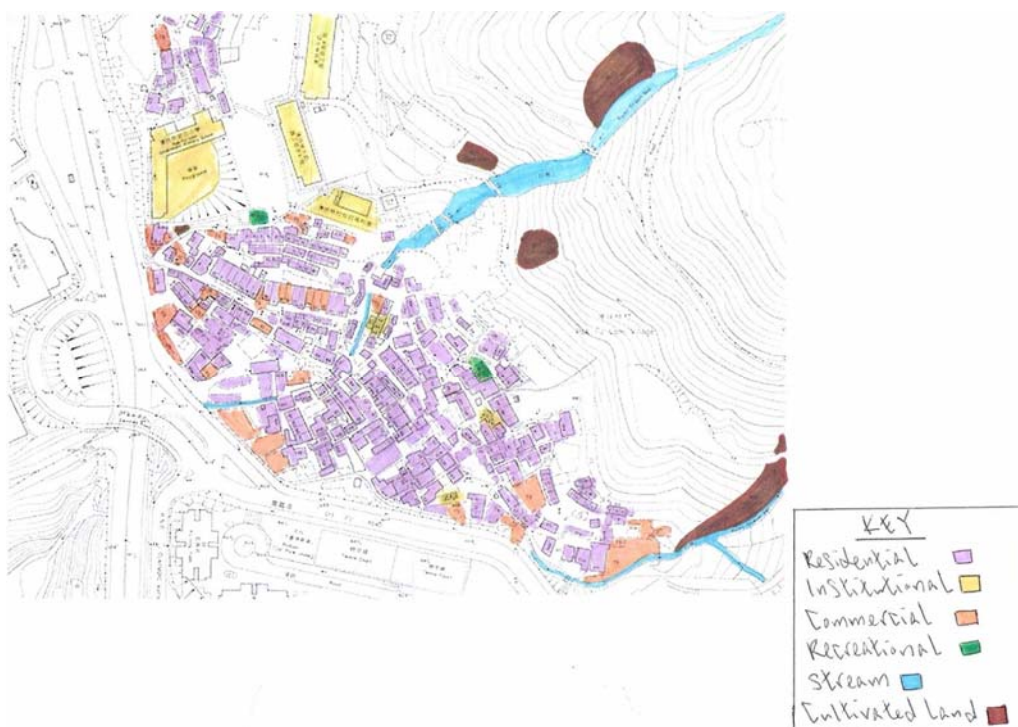
Distance to work

Scale of line map,
Base of arrows: 1mm represents 1 person



Line map 01

From the line map above, we can see that most of the residents work in area on Hong Kong Island i.e. 92% of them travel a distance less than 18km to employment. Thus it is unusual for residents to travel a long distance to employment. Quite the opposite, most of them live near where they work. This is mainly to save the transportation cost. In addition, Pok Fu Lam is not a piece of bad land. In contrary, it is one of Hong Kong's major developed areas on Hong Kong Island. With good environment and transportation links, employment can be easily developed near or within it to provide close working opportunities.



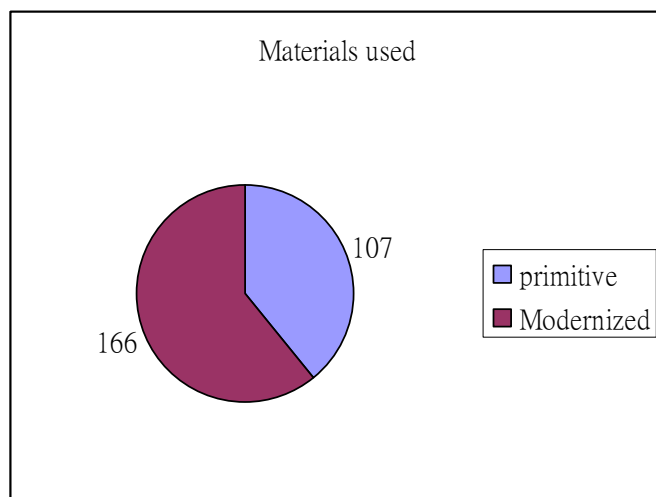
Landuse map 01

From the diagram, we can see that the major land use of the area is residential. According to the United Nations Habitat,⁶ in the average city's total space, public spaces constitute over 30%.

Percentage of public utilities and social services in Pok Fu Lam Tsuen = (units of land use of institution and recreation / total units of land use counted from map) * 100%
 = (34/307)*100%
 = 11.1% (3 sig. fig.)

This indicates a lack of public utilities and social services in the village. Such may be explained by the lack of voices from the community represented in the government council. With limited current population, the government might have foreseen the community's shrinking process. Having little say, in spite of the need of local villagers, they do not have enough say. The government thus may be reluctant to invest money on installing public utilities and providing social services to improve the circumstances within the area.

⁶ www.unhabitat.org/downloads/docs/wuf3/Intro_GIS.ppt



Pie chart 01

From the pie chat, we can see that majority of the households are built from modernized materials rather than basic, primitive materials they find in hand. The percentage of households built with modernized materials is $(166/273) \times 100\% = 61\%$.

To explain why most households appear to be built from modernized materials, we have to understand that given the original households being built so long ago, there is the need to improve the quality of them. Nowadays, modernized materials are cheaper and more accessible. In addition, the residents have become richer due to the increase in income of their spouses and their savings throughout the years. As a result, most residents would use modernized materials to re-built or maintain their households.

Word count for C and D 722

E Conclusion

The aim of my investigation is to test the validity of the general public's perception towards Pok Fu Lam Tsuen as a shanty town. According to the definition given earlier, shanty towns have five characteristics:

1. Self-built shelters created out of whatever materials residents find in hand
2. Land occupied is often distant from employment:
3. Overcrowded
4. Low-income households.
5. Lack of public utilities and social services

Referring to the above, my hypothesis that Pok Fu Lam Tsuen is a shanty town is based on five assumptions.

To conclude, since only two out of five of the characteristics of shanty towns are met, the hypothesis that Pok Fu Lam Tsuen is a shanty town is not completely justified. Even though there are certain similarities between Pok Fu Lam Tsuen and a shanty town, **Pok Fu Lam Tsuen is not a shanty town as commonly perceived by the general public.**

Word count for E 150

F Evaluation

First, concerning investigation 1, since most of interviewees the households in Pok Fu Lam Tsuen have inherited their houses generation by generation from ancestors long time ago, they do not know or remember clearly whether the households are self built. Especially interviewees under 15, they mostly do not know much about their family background. As a result, the number of useful data is limited.

Besides, I used the method of random sampling. With a small sample size, the data obtained is not comprehensive enough. I might then by bad luck have obtained an unrepresentative result. For instance, the points that I have chosen mostly lie in the southern part of Pok Fu Lam Tsuen. If say the residents there all receive exceptionally low income, due to dominating effect, the result will be significantly affected.

To minimize the effect of the error, I can increase the amount of questionnaires given out. With more sets of data, the anomalies will have a smaller effect on the overall results i.e. the results are more accurate and reliable.

Last but not the least, there are not only five characteristics of shanty towns. I have not chosen to look at all the definitions of shanty towns. Therefore, only some but not all factors such as high rates of immigration and illegal status are discussed or taken into account. As a result, the resulting conclusion does not cover all aspects.

To improve the extent of my essay, I can develop Lines of further investigation such as details of article 40 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong concerning legal rights of indigenous villagers.

Word count for F 267

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