

**THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG**  
**Centre for Environmental Policy and Resource Management**

**“Siting Locally Unwanted Land Uses: In your Backyard or in mine?”**  
**RGC Public Policy Research Project (No. 4008-PPR20051)**

### **1. Topic**

The siting of Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULUs) has posed significant challenges to planners, environmental professionals and senior government officials. This is because LULU facilities, such as landfills, incinerators, power plants and mental hospitals, are all needed by society as a whole but are disliked by residents of the host communities. The attitude of the local communities is commonly known as ‘NIMBY’ (not in my back yard). Hong Kong is not immune to conflicts arising from the siting of LULUs, as evidenced by strong local opposition to certain developments planned in Tuen Mun and Tseung Kwan O.

This research began by asking why conflicts emerge, how such conflicts have been managed in Hong Kong and other countries, whether it is possible to resolve or reduce the conflicts and how this can be achieved. The study was led by the Principal Investigator Prof. Kin Che LAM and co-investigated by team members Prof. Tung FUNG, Dr. Wing Ying LEE Joanna, Dr. Pong LAI and Ms. Lai Yan WOO Karen of the Centre for Environmental Policy and Resource Management at CUHK during 2006-08.

### **2. Methodology**

To put the matter in perspective, the team developed a conceptual framework, based on literature survey and focused group meetings, to elucidate how conflicts emerge. To study how LULU conflicts are managed in other countries, the team visited Taiwan and invited Prof. Chang-tay CHIOU, an expert in ‘Nimbyism’, to visit CUHK with separate funding. To tap the knowledge of other international professionals in this field, a conference was organized in December 2007 with experts from 10 overseas countries sharing their experiences with local government officials, planners and civil societies.

The team members found that key stakeholders hold different views, value, concerns and priorities. To unravel the beliefs and values of the public, a total of four surveys have been undertaken: one for Hong Kong as a whole, two in communities strongly opposed to LULUs, and the last one in a community in which LULUs are less of an issue. These surveys probed into beliefs and attitudes of people on the street, how they perceive the benefits and risks of LULU facilities, how much they trust those who make decisions and how LULU conflicts can be resolved.

### **3. Summary of Findings**

The team found that part of the problems can be ascribed to the lack of attention to the ‘NIMBY’ factor in strategic planning. If and when a LULU facility is needed, a rational technocratic approach is often adopted to search for the theoretically “optimal” site, with little attention to equity and environmental justice issues and socio-economic disbenefits LULUs imposed on host communities. Local grievances are often exacerbated by the lack of trust between the government and the public, entailing misunderstanding, frustration and conflicts.

To facilitate the timely dissemination of survey and research findings, the research team held an international conference, three focused group meetings with key stakeholders, a meeting with the local residents in Tuen Mun town hall. The team has also presented their findings in seminars organized by local professional bodies and through a dedicated website in which the survey findings and research papers can be found (<http://ceprm.grm.cuhk.edu.hk/LULU/Index.html>.)

#### 4. Policy Implications/ Recommendations

In summary, to minimize LULU conflicts in Hong Kong, the research team, proposes that: 1) LULU siting should be considered in strategic planning; 2) more openness, sensitivity and care should be incorporated in the public participation process; and 3) greater competence and transparency should be demonstrated in managing impacts, monitoring risks and redressing unfairness. The key is to rebuild trust and share burdens and benefits among neighborhoods for the development of a harmonious community.

#### 5. Selected Publications Related to the Research

Relevant publications related to the research are available at <http://ceprm.grm.cuhk.edu.hk/LULU/Publications/Publications.html>.

#### 6. Biography of the Principal Investigator

Prof. Lam Kin Che is a professor in Geography and Resource Management of CUHK and Chairman of the Advisory Council on the Environment of HKSAR. His research focuses on environmental issues in compact cities, human response to sound and noise, environmental assessment for sustainability and environmental strategies of China.

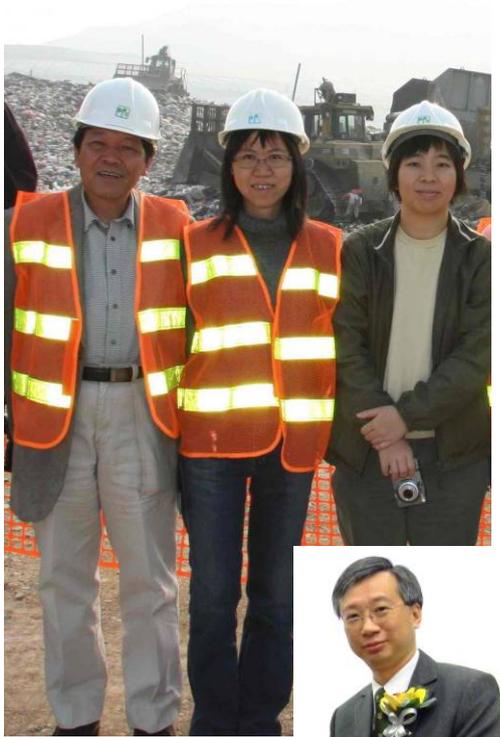


Figure 1: Research team (from left): Prof. Kin Che LAM (PI), Dr. Wai Ying LEE Joanna, Ms. Lai Yan WOO, Prof. Tung FUNG



Figure 2: Lively discussion in one of the break-out sessions