

PILING IN Foreign buyers fuel property market renaissance

macaubusiness.com

OCTOBER 2009

macaubusiness

ISSN 1812-6855

SPECIAL

60 YEARS PRO

macaubusiness **ES** 11



ES
sen
ti
al



Perfect Choice
world cities Vs uncharted

Second homes
your piece of paradise

Travel in style
and with the times

Sex-capades
hotel blossoms intimacy

ESCAPES



NO MONEY NO HONEY

Sham marriages,
made in Macau

WORKING LIFE

**Macau and Hong Kong
at odds on service**

FLY MOVE

Lease of life for Air Macau



Macau
MOP 30
Hong Kong
HK\$ 35
Mainland China
RMB 30



9 771812 685006

Mário Duarte Duque

Architect
mdduq@mdduq.com

Lost opportunity

Plans to expand Coloane's role as Macau's 'green lung' are ill-thought out and wasteful, says a prominent local architect

In its 2007 Policy Address, the government said Coloane Island was to play an increasing role as Macau's green lung, and they said it would "predominantly be used for holidays, leisure, tourism and environmental protection".

Given this, the Seac Pai Van urbanisation plan, unveiled in September 2009, came as a surprise as it occupies just 300,000 square meters, or four percent of Coloane Island's 7.6 square kilometers. A small 'lung' for a big chunk of land.

The four percent is more than the 252,000 square meters that legislator Leong Lok Wa, says the SAR has lost in terms of green space.

It seems this decision with such a big environmental impact, may have a lot to do with solving Macau's public housing needs.

Due to Macau's cramped, urban layout, land management in the SAR is very different from other territories where space is viewed as urban, suburban, or rural, and development strategies include land reserves and areas of expansion. An expansion reserve is out of the question here.

Specialists

This is why the SAR has become a specialist in using two types of territorial management: usage intensification (made possible only because of the high degree of autonomy with which it's



possible to manage the SAR's lands); and land reclamation from the sea, which happens only exceptionally, since it requires special approval from the Central Government.

The commercial, residential and industrial sectors of the city are considered as urban management units, as well as environmental infrastructures, since they represent essential life support for the city.

However, they may be adjusted to suit different economic needs. The same cannot be said regarding purely environmental infrastructures, where imbalances are likely.

That is precisely what happened when the SAR's parks were robbed of space to build paths or access ramps for underground parking, and the same

will happen when the need arises to build the future light railway stations.

The same flexibility will also go to work on Coloane Island when any occupation restricts the functioning of the 'green lung'.

Consumption vs production

The Seac Pai Van Urbanization Plan - or any other for that matter - may only be classified as eco-sustainable if it provides at least as much resources as it consumes, especially in environmental terms.

Interventions are only eco-

sustainable when you take into account what you take and what you bring, and the result must fall within acceptable parameters or desired targets.

The Seac Pai Van Plan decision is on the same level as strategic plans, such is its importance.

The same administration who drafted the plan for the 60,000 residents, is now contemplating the creation of an automated public transportation system.

Lack of planning

In its first phase, the light rail system will include 23 stations to serve

the population at a rate of 21,500 residents per station. In the second phase, this will be increased to 30 stations serving 16,500 residents per station. Neither phase includes the 60,000 strong residential complex in Seac Pai Van.

If all the necessary places locations are not considered from the beginning, the new infrastructure won't be adequately built.

A lack of planning seems to have become a habit. Take for example, the Ferreira do Amaral Square (opposite Hotel Lisboa), where recently, we witnessed huge underground work to build roundabouts, a car park, commercial space and landscaping. Since no previous plans were made to receive the future light railway, the existing square will be occupied by an aerial structure.

Ideally, via communication between various institutions and government departments, public urban planning should take into consideration other ongoing public infrastructure planning. Solutions could then be better integrated, and public funds could be more wisely invested.

Mobility in our small city requires that an automated public transportation network should have initially contemplated all the distances, even if only at a general level.

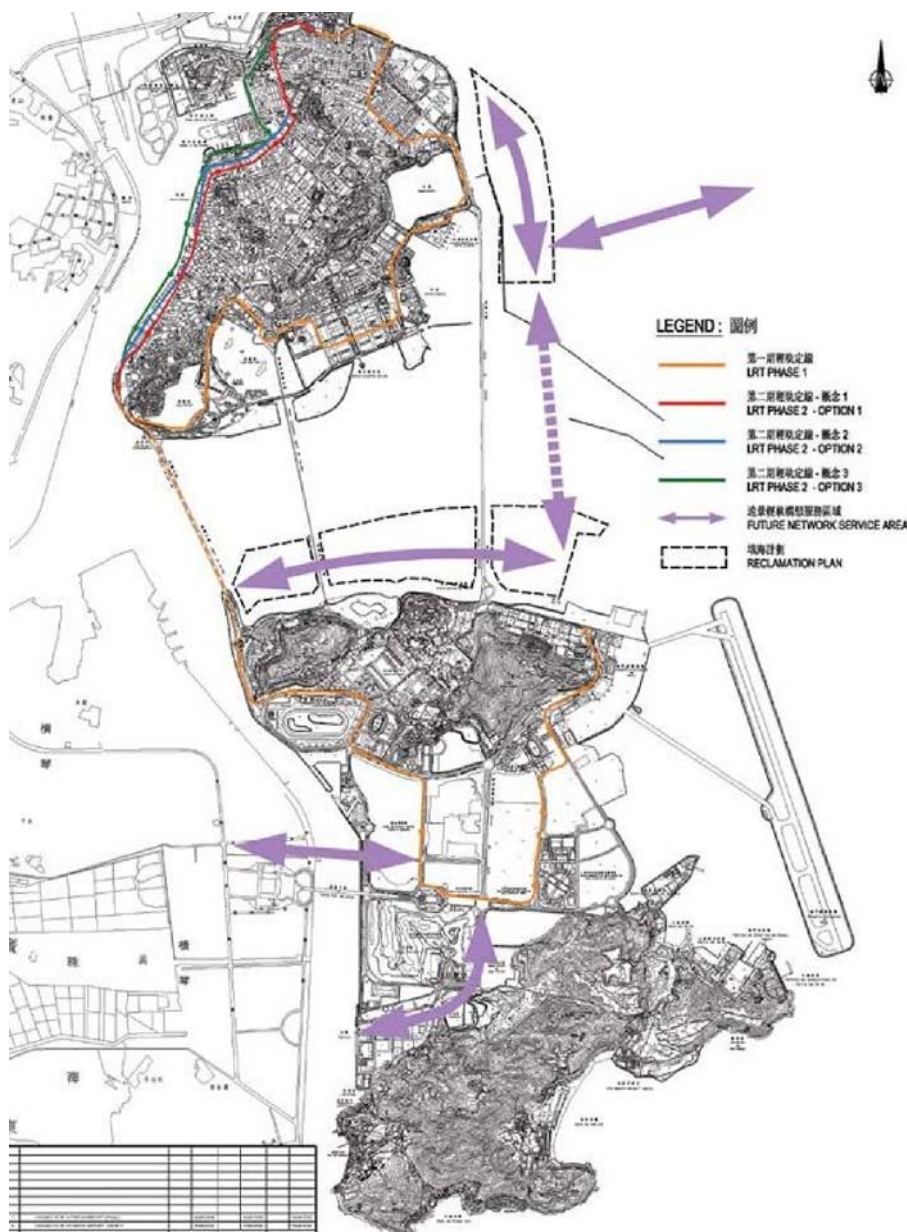
Through the same territorial management instrument – usage intensification – the network would progressively become more dense, with stations being built ever closer together.

Wasted space

Another problem in Seac Pai Van is wasted space, which could have been used to build parking spaces, and public and private roads, given that the light railway network will not include the 60,000 new people set for the Seac Pai Van complex.

When the public consultation on the light railway system was underway, it was said that residents would stop using their own cars only when comfortable public transport alternatives were provided to take them to their workplaces, homes, schools and leisure venues.

In other words, if one of these components is not included,



especially leisure, in a public transportation network that is both efficient and convenient, local residents won't dispense with their cars, even if they only use them for short weekend rides.

Therefore, a railway system that included Coloane Island cannot be viewed as an extravagance, but as a sustainable measure that would contribute towards limiting, if not decreasing, the number of private vehicles in the territory.

Since the birth of rail systems, cities have provided a means of transportation to leisure sites – first to the elite, then to all residents – because the right to leisure was rapidly recognised.

In 2009, when we compare what is happening in Macau with elsewhere in the world, standards of territorial management seem to be unclear, unwelcome or undeveloped.

Even if we admit that Seac Pai Van was necessary, to justify the plan solely on regulatory obedience seems to reflect a strictly bureaucratic approach, as well as a certain pre-disposition to falling below what was possible to achieve.

Add to that a lack of interest from the public sector to express any aesthetic qualities that would bring added value to our urban landscape.

Tedious repetition

The proposal for Seac Pai Van displays a tedious and uniform repetition of past planning misdemeanours. In other words, an unthinking strategy of knock-down-and-build with little regard to the environment.

In this particular case, that intellectual inertia was helped by the fact that Seac Pai Van has already had its natural scenery destroyed by the quarry next door.

Still, this type of location, where geological explorations have occurred, remain capable of being treated in an environmentally-friendly and elegant fashion.

In the particular case of quarries, opinions are apparently diverging. On one hand, these are gaping wounds in a natural landscape. On the other, they can reveal impressive artificial landscapes of high quality.



Therefore, many natural landscapes that have been modified, serve as an inspiration to conversion projects. Such projects are not looking to restore the initial natural scenery, but rather to take advantage of the modifications in order to make them look better.



The Seac Pai Van plan takes no advantage of the quarry. We don't even understand how the location inspired such a plan when, in other places, such locations inspired the following:



A leisure venue in Song Jiang, near Shanghai, PRC



A sports venue in Braga, Portugal.

The Seac Pai Van plan is a lost opportunity and can be considered treason – especially if you consider what is being done elsewhere in Macau and abroad.

It completely removes the possibility of equipping the SAR with quality solutions within a contemporary urban landscape, the same way we have quality within the historical heritage.