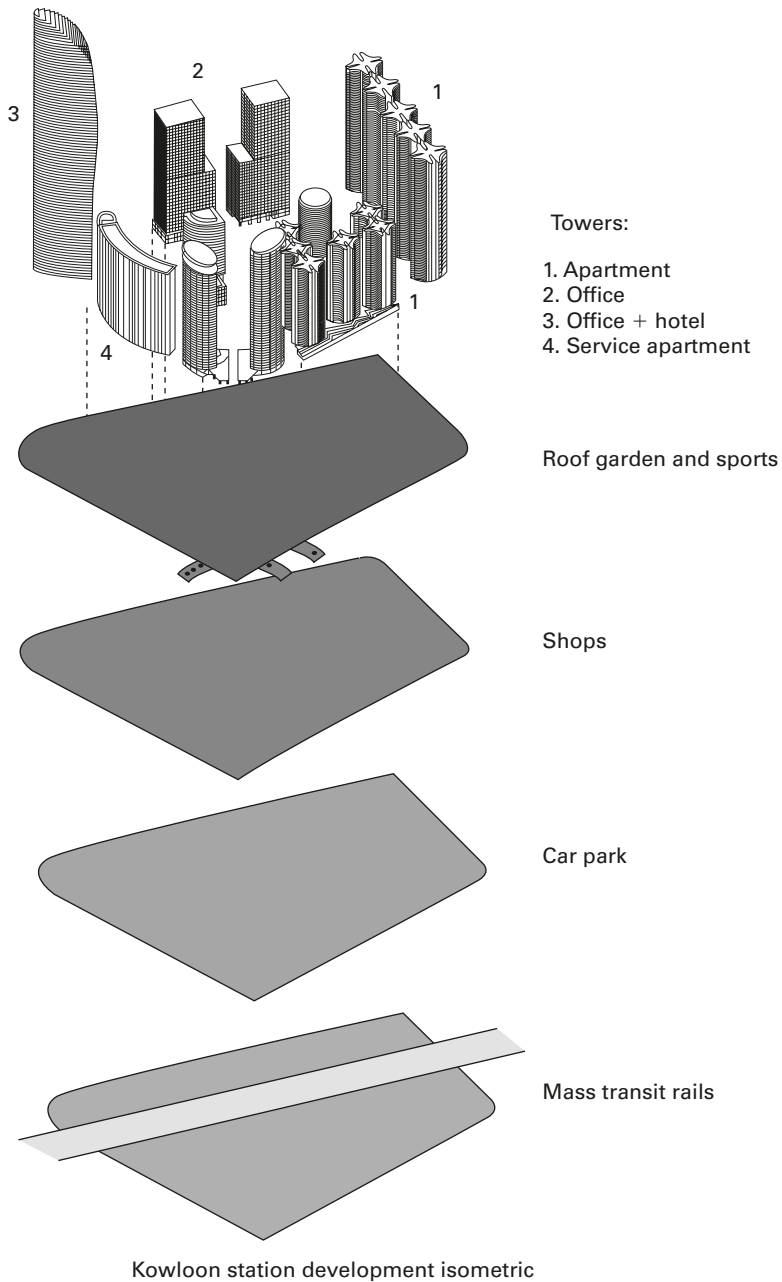


Figure 8.7
Axonometric illustration of the
Kowloon Station comprehensive
development. (Source: based on
Terry Farrell and Partners,
1998.)



Conclusion

Hong Kong is a practical example of an alternative to urban sprawl, and suggests that MILU is a more sustainable urban form. MILU optimizes land resources in a compact urban form realized by intensification (or densification) and mixed land uses, interconnected by an efficient public transportation system. Social acceptance is a

significant factor for a compact and high-density urban model such as Hong Kong (Coupland, 1997). Due to the immense pressure from market demand, real estate developers and government planners rely on an empirical approach in the search for a socially and economically viable urban form, in order to guarantee a sustainable way of living that corresponds to local preferences.

The Hong Kong case study reveals the success of the compact urban form based upon the concepts of ‘convenience, connectivity, comfort, and artificial ground’ (Zaman *et al.*, 2000). The two case studies show the typical form of several towers on top of a podium with green space on its roof, a multi-level car park, shops, or other functions underneath and within. Direct connection can be made to public transportation nodes via a subway station or multi-route bus terminal, to offer connectivity and convenience to residents and visitors. The development of the podium concept is a clear demonstration of MILU, combining a desired way of living, with an effective mechanism for the public and private sector to combine and share community-based facilities.

However, MILU with such high densities poses a unique dichotomy between privacy and communal life. It has led people to seek privacy in their small flats, but to intensive interaction in the neighbourhood and streets, with regular dining out with friends and relatives. Living in a constrained environment could be attributed to Chinese history and culture (Zhang, 2000), so in the case of contemporary Hong Kong, limited space and close proximity to other buildings and people is seen as tolerable. This close proximity has rewarded Hong Kong residents with efficiency as well as economy in the use of time and space (Forrest *et al.*, 2002).

In Hong Kong, the urban space utilization represented by MILU development is closely linked to the culture and lifestyle of the people (Hughes, 1968). The research shows that inhabitants seem to be satisfied with living in small apartments in a high-rise building that offers a high quality of living with views of harbour, natural landscapes and the sea, which are always close by. Hong Kong provides a good quality of urban life, with close proximity to facilities, friends, family, work and shops, and reliable and convenient public transport giving acceptable travel times from home to work. For children, schools are within walkable distance from residential areas. Low crime, low divorce rates and low instances of respiratory diseases are interesting indicators in favour of the acceptability of high-density living found in Hong Kong. However, it would be rash to attribute such factors to high-density lifestyles alone, without further research.

In summary, Hong Kong’s high-rise, high-density and mixed-use developments can be characterized by four concepts: compactness, verticality, connectivity and the ‘sky city’. The urban form of Hong Kong continues to offer urban dwellers an exciting and comfortable lifestyle that prospers, and most of all appears sustainable.⁵ The compact city of Hong Kong, although far from being the perfect solution, has great strengths and advantages, and is an urban form that is becoming more popular in the expanding cities of China and beyond.