

A COLONY OF SHOPKEEPERS

**Spaces of consumption in Hong Kong's New Town
public housing estates,
1954-1989**

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Declaration

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Abstract

This thesis focuses on four 'spaces of consumption' in the public housing estate in Hong Kong New Towns from 1954 to 1989. These are the hawker pitch, the hawker bazaar, modular and multi-storey markets, and commercial complexes and malls, four spaces that developed alongside the urban development of Hong Kong and the New Territories in the post-war period. My core research question is: How did modern spaces of consumption in Hong Kong's New Town public housing estates develop as a result of government interaction with everyday shopping practices in the post-war decades? Taking a non-linear approach to history, the thesis articulates the development of Hong Kong through the city's relationship to consumption practices and processes in the housing estate. It argues that spaces of consumption in public housing estates opened opportunities for Hong Kong residents to negotiate notions of colonial modernity as narrated by the colonial government through public housing and the New Towns. It also presents new readings of design and design history in Hong Kong as not only a lens of urban control, but also as everyday navigations of space. The thesis uses a design history approach employing interdisciplinary methodologies with an emphasis on materiality. In doing so, it engages with contemporary discourse of cultural history, calling for new narratives and perspectives of Hong Kong's colonial history.

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Glossary and Abbreviations

Glossary

Caa lau – a type of restaurant, for both dim sum and evening Chinese meals.

Cheung fun – steamed rice rolls, normally served for breakfast or as dim sum at a *caa lau*.

Dai pai dong – a type of street-side eatery in Hong Kong, although the term can be applied to other spaces.

Dim sum – normally a morning to late lunchtime dining experience consisting of steamed, fried and baked small plates.

Gaai si – a term for 'market' that is nevertheless applied to anywhere where grocery shopping is conducted, often referring to government-built 'wet' markets.

heoi (n.) – a village or farmer's market

heoi (v.) – 'to go'

Ho fun – flat rice noodles

Lap Sap Chung – a satirical character created by Arthur Hacker, designer and artistic director of the Information Services Department, in 1970 for the Keep Hong Kong Clean campaign.

Pang jai – a canopy, and a vernacular term for an ad-hoc market stall such as those found in Sham Shui Po.

Po tau – a shop that is generally perceived as having an 'interior' space i.e. within a building.

Si cheung – a shopping centre

Siu fan – a general term for hawker

Tong seoi – 'soup' desserts using sweet ingredients such as black sesame, red bean and often includes sweet glutinous dumplings.

Waanbou – the protection and preservation of the environment

Yum caa – literally meaning 'drink tea' but mostly refers to the dining experience of dim sum

Abbreviations (Housing)

AO – Architectural Office

COP – Colony Outline Plan

C for R – Commissioner for Resettlement

Former HA – Former Housing Authority (1954-1972)

GLCH – Government Low-Cost Housing

HKHA – Hong Kong Housing Authority (1972 – present)

HOS – Home Ownership Scheme

ISD – Information Services Department

KHKC – Keep Hong Kong Clean

PWD – Public Works Department

PSPS – Private Sector Participation Scheme

RD – Resettlement Department

RE – Resettlement Estate

TPS – Tenant Purchase Scheme

TYHP – Ten Year Housing Plan

USD – Urban Services Department

UC – Urban Council

Abbreviations (Sources)

GIS – Government Information Services

HLHKO – Historical Laws of Hong Kong Online

HKUSC – University of Hong Kong Special Collections

NA – National Archives, London

PRO – Public Records Office, Hong Kong

PHN – ProQuest Historical Newspapers

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During my last visit to Hong Kong in October 2022, I was finally able to meet my calligraphy teacher in person after a year of gatherings online. His classes have helped me to hold the Chinese characters in my hand, Cantonese on my tongue, and understand its poetry.

Each time he would write a small phrase related to his recent musings, and this particular in-person visit to his studio was no different. We talked about his ethos as a teacher, a calligrapher, and a climber. He took me through the process of crafting the characters in his studio, stroking them on the page as a rainstorm lashed at the windows that morning. I followed his lead, subconsciously filling the two remaining squares out of eight:

Zoi ha jyu tin se zi se zi, repeating the characters for 'write words' – 'beneath rainy skies, write words, write words'.

In the worst of times, keep talking and reflecting and writing. Keep writing for Hong Kong, keep writing.

Introduction

My first solo exploration of Hong Kong as a youth was simple and mundane; visiting the Cantonese bakery stand in the wet market and bringing home breakfast. I followed the familiar route to the shopping precinct in the estate below: taking the escalator down, skirting around the estate pond past the playground, crossing the pedestrian bridge over the road towards the bus terminus, and going down three flights of stairs into Kwong Yuen Estate in Sha Tin. A colonial-style clock tower stands in the middle of the plaza, looking over several brick buildings and brick-and-tile steps forming undulating walkways down the hill. I already knew the *caa lau* (a type of restaurant for dim sum and evening meals) and the wet market well, fascinated by the sights and the sensory experiences of such spaces. As I grew older and spent more time in the estate alone, I chatted to the lady at the tofu stall, sent a gift to a friend at the post office, and visited the household goods store. I caught buses across the New Territories, noticing the transition from one district to another. Growing up in the UK as a child of Hong Kong immigrants, the biannual visits to see my extended family were largely spent in these suburban areas of the New Towns. Less interested in skyscrapers, pristine designer malls and high-end fusion restaurants in the urban centres, the Hong Kong I related to was the labyrinth of local shopping centres, markets, neighbourhood restaurants and cafés on the outskirts.

This thesis is drawn from such everyday spaces and encounters. The focus of this thesis is spaces of consumption in New Towns public housing estates in Hong Kong, from the 1950s to the 1980s. My core research question is: How did modern spaces of consumption in Hong Kong's New Town public housing estates develop as a result of government interaction with everyday shopping practices in the post-war decades?

Although such spaces of consumption are integral to the landscape in Hong Kong, these spaces the cultures of and local relationship to consumption are often overlooked. Hong Kong was one of the most

significant producers of export goods in the late twentieth century, was widely acknowledged as one of imperial Britain's key ports for exchanges of goods and became one of the most contested markets for consumption in the world. In other words, Hong Kong's historical narrative is embedded in commerce. Yet few scholars have explored consumption as it exists on the ground in Hong Kong – the mundane spaces in which consumption took place on a daily basis; the cultures shared as part of everyday life; the things exchanged, bought and bartered; and the histories that these spaces encompass.

My focus in terms of consumption in this thesis is Hong Kong's New Towns. Histories of Hong Kong largely fixate on the city's main urban centres, particularly on Hong Kong Island.¹ The exception to this is the work that has centred on rural areas in the New Territories – a trend which arguably perpetuates a dichotomous rural-urban rhetoric where the development of suburbs (especially in a densely populated and rapidly urbanised city like Hong Kong) is engulfed by narratives which focus on the urban core.² This is

¹ For example, Michael Ingham's 'cultural history of Hong Kong' focuses on Wan Chai, Happy Valley, Aberdeen, Pokfulam and one chapter on Kowloon. Poshek Fu and David Desser's history of Hong Kong cinema does not mention the New Territories (in spite of some significant industry in Tsuen Wan, see Hugh Farmer's article on Hong Kong Film Studios on Industrial History of Hong Kong <<https://industrialhistoryhk.org/film-studios-hong-kong-dates-locations-layout-founders/>>). More recent Hong Kong history articles focus on particular perspectives rather than specifying locations, such as that of ethnic minorities or government actors. Poshek Fu and David Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong: History, Arts, Identity* (Cambridge University Press, 2002).; Michael Ingham, *Hong Kong: A Cultural History* (Oxford University Press, 2007).; Catherine S. Chan, 'Belonging to the City: Representations of a Colonial Clock Tower in British Hong Kong', *Journal of Urban History*, 45.2 (2019), pp321–332.; Florence Mok, 2019, 'Public Opinion Polls and Covert Colonialism in British Hong Kong', *China Information* 33.1, pp66–87.; Yui Chim Lo, 2020, 'The Last Stand of Colonialism? The Unofficial Members of the Executive and Legislative Councils and the Sino-British Negotiations over Hong Kong, 1982–1984', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 48.2, pp370–394.

² Allen Chun, *Unstructuring Chinese Society: The Fictions of Colonial Practice and the Changing Realities of 'Land' in the New Territories of Hong Kong* (Routledge, 2002).; Terry Van Dijk and Gerd Weitkamp, 'Places From The Past Lost In New Towns: Hong Kong's Old Villages', *METU Journal of the Faculty of Architecture*, 35.2 (2018), pp197–220.; James Hayes, *The Great Difference: Hong Kong's New Territories and Its People 1898–2004* (Hong Kong University Press, 2012).; Christiane Lange, 'New Territories: Deconstructing and Constructing Countryside – The Great Divide of Rural and Urban In Hong Kong', *Architectural Design*, 86.4 (2016), pp92–97; James L. Watson, 'Rural Society: Hong Kong's New Territories', *The China Quarterly*, 95 (1983), pp480–490.

particularly so in the context of large-scale development such as public housing. Although numerous studies have considered public housing estates across Hong Kong, contemporary historical literature largely does not acknowledge the distinctive role of the New Territories and the marginalised locations in the New Towns.³ Beginning in the mid-1950s, public housing was a focal point for the Hong Kong government. It remained so through into the 1980s, and satellite towns and New Towns were key to this development by way of space and population movements. Consumption was a major concern in terms of providing for new communities which were moving into the New Towns and encouraging the development of local cultures on the estates. Over time, consumption became a key strategy for planners and developers, and for the colonial government, as they sought to cultivate ideas of a modern society and landscape fit for the role of a global financial centre.

This thesis thus centres itself on the periphery, beginning with Phase I of the New Towns in Hong Kong: Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun. These areas have now grown to become significant places in their own right, but are still branded with a somewhat regional or even 'provincial' relevance to the broader histories of Hong Kong. With the New Territories came new-found land, as well as reason and justification for developing strategies for building higher and larger estates. In this first phase, the majority of public housing was built in these four New Towns districts, including some of the earliest design trials of housing estate complexes. The thesis will concentrate on the period between 1954 and 1989. These dates relate to a period of a specific public housing approach in the New Territories,

³ Miles Glendinning, 'From European Welfare State to Asian Capitalism: The Transformation of "British Public Housing" in Hong Kong and Singapore', in ed. by Mark Swenarton, Tom Avermaete, and Dirk van den Heuvel, *Architecture and the Welfare State* (Routledge, 2015), pp299–320.; Charlie Q. L. Xue, Chuen Hui Ka, and Zang Peng, 'Public Buildings in Hong Kong: A Short Account of Evolution since the 1960s', *Habitat International*, 38 (2010), pp57–69. There are some recent exceptions, notably from geographers and architects: Junwei Li, 'Immigration, Employment, and New Town Initiatives in Hong Kong', *Planning Perspectives*, 38.5 (2022), pp995–1018.; Maurice Yip, 'New Town Planning as Diplomatic Planning: Scalar Politics, British–Chinese Relations, and Hong Kong', *Journal of Urban History*, 48.2 (2022), pp361–380.

marked by two buildings built on the exact same site: In 1954, the first resettlement scheme was initiated in Hong Kong, and work on the first resettlement estate in the New Territories, Kwun Tong Estate, commenced; and in 1989, Tsui Ping Estate was completed, a landmark estate with a significant commercial complex built on the same footprint of Kwun Tong Estate after it was demolished. In this thesis, I have identified these estates as representing the beginning and the end of an approach to consumption spaces in public housing estates in the New Towns, marking a period of government ideation and development of a modern society through spaces of consumption.

Taking a design historical approach, the thesis contributes to the discourse of design and material culture in Hong Kong, and a broader historiography of Asian postwar history. I position myself at the intersection of history, design, anthropology, and urban studies, with a broad range of methodological approaches. As such, my thesis intends to assert the role of ethnographic and collaborative approaches to research, emphasising how experiences within research affect and ultimately draw out historical narratives. This is particularly important given that I conducted the fieldwork for this thesis in 2019, a momentous year which saw the beginning of the Anti-Extradition Movement in Hong Kong, as well as major and historically unprecedented change to Hong Kong society as a consequence of government responses to this movement. Thus, the thesis speaks to the urgency for richer and diverse narratives of Hong Kong history that go beyond only political, colonial dynamics and include a transnational, material and spatial approaches to the study of Hong Kong's past.

Literature review: public housing and consumption spaces in postwar Hong Kong

Housing in Hong Kong in the twentieth century has been well studied by anthropologists and sociologists. One of the first and most referenced works on early resettlement and public housing in postwar Hong Kong is the

1973 publication *Housing Provision in Metropolitan Hong Kong*, by D.W. Drakakis-Smith. Working within the field of urban geography, Drakakis-Smith is critical of the colonial government's actions, and also the representation of those actions in the documentation.⁴ This initial work spurred much of the research on public housing in Hong Kong in the following decades. At the height of Hong Kong's housing development in the 1970s, sociologists from the Hong Kong Social Research Centre (HKSRC) published frequent papers on the development of New Towns, focusing on the outcomes and ambitions for community life in these isolated outposts.⁵ Manuel Castells, Lee Goh and Reginald Yin-Wang Kwok specifically addresses the resettlement estates in *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore* in 1990.⁶ Anthropologist Alan Smart also explores many of these aspects in several publications on squatters in Hong Kong, including *Making Room: Squatter Clearance in Hong Kong* in 1992, and *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial rule in Hong Kong, 1950-1963* in 2003, as well as multiple journal articles on housing and urban conflicts.⁷

⁴ D.W. Drakakis-Smith, *Housing Provision in Metropolitan Hong Kong* (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1973).

⁵ Ambrose Yeo-chi King, *The Political Culture of Kwun Tong: A Chinese Community in Hong Kong*, Occasional Paper, 9 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1972).; Victor Mok, *The Nature of Kwun Tong as an Industrial Community: An Analysis of Economic Organisations*, Occasional Paper, 17 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1972).; Angela W. S. Kan, *Implications of Concentrated Utilization of Local Facilities and Services in Public Housing Estates in Hong Kong*, Occasional Paper, 50 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1975).; C. Y. Choi, *Housing Policy and Internal Movement of Population: A Study of Kwun Tong, A Chinese New Town in Hong Kong*, Occasional Paper, 62 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1977).; Fai-ming Wong, *Industrialization and Family Structure in Hong Kong*, Occasional Paper, 45 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974).; C. Y. Choi and Y. K. Chan, *Public Housing Development and Population Movement: A Study of Kwun Tong*, Occasional Paper, 72 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1978).; John F. Jones et al., *Neighbourhood Associations in a New Town: The Mutual Aid Committees in Sha Tin*, Occasional Paper, 76 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1978).

⁶ Manuel Castells, Lee Goh, and Reginald Yin-wang Kwok, *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore*, (Pion, 1990).

⁷ Alan Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950-1963* (Hong Kong University Press, 2006).; ed. by Alan Smart and Alan Moore, *Making Room: Cultural Production in Occupied Spaces* (Other Forms, 2015).

Although this focus on housing marked a crucial turning point in the scholarship, most of the scholars mentioned above consider housing in terms of government policy and urbanisation rather than as a 'home'. These studies, while essential for understanding the macro effects of housing policy, reveal little about the cultures generated from having to deal with such conditions. However, later studies take a more experiential approach, giving more voice to residents of public housing through ethnographic methodologies. James Lee and Yip Ngai-ming's article on family life and public housing in 2006 uses interviews to evidence the positive claims of public housing provisions. Focusing more on the realities of living in public housing, Lee and Yip find that, at least from the viewpoint of their informants, public housing did enable them to participate in local consumption cultures through the security and stability of public housing.⁸ In doing so, they present a rare case of resident perspectives of colonial structures such as public housing, adding further nuance to earlier macro narratives of housing in Hong Kong. Focusing on the interior domestic life of residents, design researcher Nuala Rooney similarly uses interviews and visual ethnographic methods in *At Home with Density* to inform how current residents of early public housing live.⁹ Her research offers intimate insights into everyday life in the public housing estate, including details of routines and relationships in individual flats. Her work also employs an emphasis on visual-material analysis, engaging directly with the space as well as in conversation with her informants. Such studies are valuable for articulating the material intricacies in everyday spaces and notions of 'home' and 'homemaking' in the wider structure of public housing.

These two works were published in parallel with a rise in cultural scholarship in Hong Kong in the 1990s.¹⁰ In spite of this distinct motion

⁸ James Lee; Ngai-ming Yip, 'Public Housing and Family Life in East Asia: Housing History and Social Change in Hong Kong, 1953-1990', *Journal of Family History*, 31:1 (2006), p80.

⁹ Nuala Rooney, *At Home with Density* (Hong Kong University Press, 2003).

¹⁰ The University of Hong Kong Centre for Asian Studies (CAS) established the Hong Kong Studies Programme in 1981 and launched the 'Hong Kong Culture and Society Programme' under Elizabeth Sinn in 1997. Notably, it was female faculty members, including Sinn, Caroline

towards culture, however, there is still only one single volume dedicated to consumption in Hong Kong. Edited by anthropologists Gordon Mathews and Tai-Lok Lui, *Consuming Hong Kong* (2001) considers consumption in a wide range of terms.¹¹ Two chapters in *Consuming Hong Kong* stand out in their relevance to this thesis. The first is Lui's chapter on 'The Malling of Hong Kong' which discusses the Ocean Terminal Mall erected in 1966 and the cultures of local Chinese youth in around the mall. The second is a chapter by Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong and Gary McDonough, who examine the cultures and spatialities of movie-going and cinema-viewing, using interviews and their own experiences of cinema in the city as evidence. Wong and McDonough suggest that neighbourhood cinemas were part of a socialisation of immigrants 'into both citizenship and consumption' by being embedded into public and private housing for the emerging middle-class population.¹² One other relevant volume from this group is Eric Kit-wai Ma's *Desiring Hong Kong, Consuming South China*.¹³ This is significant for articulating the consumption of Hong Kong, as an imagined space of cultural production and modernity, from the perspective of Southern China.

Apart from these two volumes, Janet Ng discusses the notion of the 'world emporium' and 'mall city' in *Paradigm City*. She critiques the construction of a capitalistic frame of existence in the context of post-1997 Hong Kong, where consumption has become the main strategy for maintaining order and regulating society.¹⁴ This has become a ubiquitous feature of the landscape where 'malls, arcades, and walkways [...] form a

Plüss and Pun Ngai, diversifying the scholarship on Hong Kong culture beyond dichotomies of 'East' / 'West', Hongkongese / Chinese.

¹¹ *Consuming Hong Kong* grew out of a conference, organised by Brian Moeran and supported by the ConsumasiaN Series, called 'Consumer Culture in Hong Kong' held in the Department of Japanese Studies at the University of Hong Kong in 1996. Moeran was a CAS fellow in the early 1990s, researching advertising and magazines in East Asia, including Hong Kong. See Gordon Mathews and Tai-lok Lui, *Consuming Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2001).

¹² Wong and McDonough, 'Consuming Cinema', in Mathews and Lui, p96.

¹³ Eric Kit-wai Ma, *Desiring Hong Kong, Consuming South China: Transborder Cultural Politics, 1970-2010* (Hong Kong University Press, 2011).

¹⁴ Janet Ng, 'The World Emporium and the Mall City', in *Paradigm City: Space, Culture, and Capitalism in Hong Kong* (State University of New York Press, 2009), pp89–111.

superstructure over the city or a network underground shape the episteme of the city'.¹⁵ The chapter continues to argue that consumer goods and material culture have been folded into the industry of making memory and constructing identity, particularly through memoir, museums and fiction. Ng recognises the significant (if, in her opinion, potentially misguided) desire by people in Hong Kong to 'focus on the everyday life and its objects [as] a strategy of returning signs to material reality, and returning history to the Hong Kong people. It returns a sense of the materiality of everydayness and community to the abstract space in post-1997 Hong Kong'.¹⁶ Although she takes the specific moment of the handover as the turning point for the condition and meaning of the urban landscape in Hong Kong, her critique is useful for its non-linear approach to the material and the various spaces explored.

Specific scholarship on hawkers and markets in Hong Kong, however, have been much more developed. T.G. McGee's *Hawkers in Hong Kong*, several scholars from the HKSRC, and Josephine Smart established the study of hawkers in Hong Kong alongside the scholarship of housing. As with the scholarship in public housing, these works critiqued the social and economic oversights of the colonial government with an emphasis on policy.¹⁷ More

¹⁵ Ng, p93.

¹⁶ Ng, p111.

¹⁷ T. G. McGee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong: A Study of Planning and Policy in a Third World City* (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1973). Josephine Smart, 'Dog Kings, Triads, And Hawkiers: Spatial Monopoly Among The Streer Hawkiers In Hong Kong', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement*, 4.1 (1983), pp158–163; 'The Impact of Government Policy on Hawkiers', *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 8.2 (1986), pp260–79; 'How to Survive in Illegal Street Hawking in Hong Kong', in ed. by Gracia Clark *Traders versus the State: Anthropological Approaches to Unofficial Economies*, (Westview Press, 1988), pp99–117; *The Political Economy of Street Hawkiers in Hong Kong*, Occasional Papers and Monographs, 81 (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1989).; F. Y. Tse, *Market and Street Trading: A Conceptual Framework*, Occasional Paper, 34 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974).; *Street Trading in Hong Kong: Part I - Population, Role and Characteristics*, Occasional Paper, 35 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974).; *Street Trading in Hong Kong Part II - Spatial Economy*, Occasional Paper, 36 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974).; *Street Trading in Hong Kong: Part III - An Examination of Government Policy and Conclusions*, Occasional Paper, 37 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974). Andrew L. C. Lu and H. K. Tsoi, *Hawkiers and Their Relocation in Hong*

recently, Maurizio Marinelli's chapter on contemporary hawkers and markets in Hong Kong discusses how market stallholders in Sai Ying Pun have resisted gentrification.¹⁸ McGee, Smart and Marinelli all identify the centrality of the market in the social economy of the city, as well as the politics involved in 'normativisation of behaviours' under the guise of modernity.¹⁹ However, while these studies directly link the market to the reconstruction of the city, space is not used to frame how the market functions in particular neighbourhoods, or in the everyday life of the estate. Hawkers are also not spatialised in relation to other kinds of consumption spaces such as supermarkets or malls, or indeed the wider city itself.

In recent years, urban historians, and landscape and architectural historians have been actively filling in these scholarly gaps in consumption space and public housing. The technical aspects of designing and building public housing has been explored more specifically by architect Rosman Chui Chi Wai, for example.²⁰ Several urban studies and housing studies articles explore the increasing gulf between poor and rich in the city and the effects of privatisation on public housing spaces.²¹ The history of markets, particularly Central Market, have also been updated by scholars such as Gary

Kong: A Proposed Analytical Scheme, Occasional Paper, 24 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973).; Andrew L. C. Lu and H. K. Tsoi, *Hawkers and Their Relocation in Hong Kong: Data II*, Occasional Paper, 27 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973).

¹⁸ Marinelli kindly shared his final draft (before it was published) with me in 2016. It can now be found in Maurizio Marinelli, 'From street hawkers to public markets: modernity and sanitization made in Hong Kong' in ed. Yves Cabannes, Mike Douglass and Rita Padawangi, *Cities in Asia by and for the people* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), pp229–257.

¹⁹ Marinelli, 2018.

²⁰ Rosman Chui Chi Wai, *DESIGN DNA OF MARK I 一型徙廈的設計基* (MCCM Creations, 2019); Yat-Hung Chiang, Edwin Hon-Wan Chan, and Lawrence Ka-Leung Lok, 'Prefabrication and Barriers to Entry—a Case Study of Public Housing and Institutional Buildings in Hong Kong', *Habitat International*, 30.3 (2006), pp482–499.

²¹ Anthony B. L. Cheung and N.M. Yip, 'Customerizing the Tenants, Empowering the Managers: Impact of Public Housing Governance Reform in Hong Kong', *Housing, Theory and Society*, 20.2 (2003), pp98–109; Ray Forrest, Adrienne La Grange, and Ngai-ming Yip, 'Hong Kong as a Global City? Social Distance and Spatial Differentiation', *Urban Studies*, 41.1 (2004), pp207–227.; Claudio O. Delang and Ho Cheuk Lung, 'Public Housing and Poverty Concentration in Urban Neighbourhoods: The Case of Hong Kong in the 1990s', *Urban Studies*, 47.7 (2010), pp1391–1413.; Kwok Yu Lau and Alan Murie, 'Residualisation and Resilience: Public Housing in Hong Kong', *Housing Studies*, 32.3 (2017), pp271–295.

Luk.²² Interest in markets by architects have also initiated significant research projects such as those by Hikaru Kinoshita.²³ Linguistics scholars have also started to develop interesting theoretical frames, such as Jackie Jia Lou's geosemiotic work on Hong Kong wet markets.²⁴ Forthcoming works by Carmen Tsui are a welcome expansion on market histories beyond the early twentieth century.²⁵ Shopping malls have also received updated scholarly interest since Lui's singular book chapter on Ocean Terminal. Cecilia Chu and Zheng Tan, for example, feature Sha Tin New Town Plaza as a case study for discussing public-private relationships in constructing the landscape.²⁶ Li Shiqiao theorises the movement and circulation of the entire city, understanding space through the movement of people and objects through consumption spaces like terminals and malls.²⁷ Design research projects by architectural research studio Building Narrative have also added to the discourse with new research initiatives of spaces such as estate commercial complexes and residential cafés, through the lens of design and architecture.²⁸ Their work involves both spatial surveying of commercial complexes, and activating this research through exhibition and film, adding to

²² Gary Chi-hung Luk, 'Occupied Space, Occupied Time: Food Hawking and the Central Market in Hong Kong's Victoria City during the Opium War', *Frontiers of History in China*, 11.3 (2016), pp400–430. See also Ian Tan, 'When Gaai Si Became Markets: Regulating Consumption Spaces in Colonial Hong Kong', in *Transfer: Diffusions and Mobilities in the Built Landscapes of Asia and Beyond* (presented at the Postgraduate Students Conference, Department of Architecture, University of Hong Kong, 2019).

²³ Hikaru Kinoshita, 'The Street Market as an Urban Facility in Hong Kong', in ed. by Pu Miao, *Public Places in Asia Pacific Cities: Current Issues and Strategies*, (Springer, 2001), pp71–86.; Kinoshita Hikaru, 'A study on the history of public retail markets as public facilities complex in Hong Kong', *Journal of Architecture and Planning (Transactions of AIJ)*, 563 (2003), pp245–251.; Hikaru Kinoshita and Yoichi Nishiie, 'A Study on the Historical Process of the Elevated Walkway Network Around of Central District of Hong Kong', *Journal of Architecture and Planning (Transactions of AIJ)*, 79.705 (2014), pp2479–2486.

²⁴ Jackie Jia Lou, 'Spaces of Consumption and Senses of Place: A Geosemiotic Analysis of Three Markets in Hong Kong', *Social Semiotics*, 27.4 (2017), pp513–531.

²⁵ Carmen C. M. Tsui, *Everyday Architecture in Context: Public Markets in Hong Kong (1842–1981)* (The Chinese University of Hong Kong Press, 2023).

²⁶ Tan Zheng and Charlie Q.L. Xue, 'Walking as a Planned Activity: Elevated Pedestrian Network and Urban Design Regulation in Hong Kong', *Journal of Urban Design*, 19.5 (2014), pp722–744.; Cecilia Chu, 'Narrating the Mall City', in ed. by Stefan Al, *Mall Cities in Hong Kong* (University of Hawaii Press, 2016) pp83–92.

²⁷ Li Shiqiao, *Understanding the Chinese City* (SAGE, 2014).

²⁸ See architectural studio Building Narrative's project *Hong Kong Estate Centres*, and their exhibition *Take a Seat* < <https://buildingnarrative.com/research/take-a-seat/> >

the scope of material and format of narrating histories of consumption spaces in Hong Kong.

This thesis draws on multiple approaches and research emerging in earlier discourses, utilising an interdisciplinary approach to Hong Kong history. While it shares a focus on public housing with previous research developed from the 1970s onwards, this thesis aims to make a wider contribution to the study of such spaces by considering what I refer to as 'spaces of consumption'. Conceptualising my own framework by drawing on multiple disciplines and spatial theories, 'spaces of consumption' is used here to emphasise the negotiations of space in the making of spatial culture. Continuing the work of scholars employing experiential understandings of the public housing estate, this thesis will utilise material and visual methodologies to further explore the spatial in the estate. In doing so, I aim to show how design history can open up entirely new ways of examining the everyday histories of such spaces. In resonance with the new generation of voices from Hong Kong advocating for a renewed lens on the city's history, this thesis intends to take on Massey's proposal for a 'reformulated notion of multiplicities of colonisation'.²⁹ In response to this call, this thesis offers alternative conceptions of space in and of Hong Kong, with design and material culture at the forefront of these histories.

Methodology

In order to elucidate on spaces of consumption in these contexts, I have divided the thesis into chapters which are built around four distinct spaces of consumption: (i) the hawker pitch; (ii) the hawker bazaar; (iii) the modular and multi-storey market; and (iv) the commercial complex and mall. In each of these cases, I draw on concepts from urban history, historical

²⁹ For example, see multiple authors, *Aftershock* (Small Tune Press, 2022).; Louisa Lim, *Indelible City: Dispossession and Defiance in Hong Kong* (Text Publishing, 2022); Eunice Seng, *Resistant City*, (World Scientific, 2020).

geography, anthropology and cultural studies.³⁰ Crucially, I use a design historical methodological approach to analyse each of these generic spaces. Design historical methodologies frequently involve materials and material culture as primary sources, where analysis of objects often explores processes of making, wear and tear, display and dissemination. Objects used in such approaches can also include material traditionally studied in art history and visual culture studies, such as photographs and paintings.³¹ However, the approach considers these in their three-dimensional and contextual form – for example, the processes of making, how images are framed, the texture of the paint, the fading and tearing of the photo paper, the archive, and so forth. This is combined with other methods borrowed from related disciplines – traditional archival methods, data collection and analysis, oral histories and ethnography.³² Such an inter-disciplinary approach stems from design history's changing role within design pedagogy, and collaboration between practitioners and scholars from different disciplines. Design, and therefore design history, has come to encompass everything in our material world,

³⁰ See Judith Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Berg Publishers, 2000).; Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2009).; Bill Brown, 'Re-Assemblage (Theory, Practice, Mode)', *Critical Inquiry*, 46.2 (2020), pp259–303; Doreen Massey, *For Space* (SAGE, 2005).; Robert Peckham, 'Bad Meat: Food and the Medicine of Modern Hygiene in Colonial Hong Kong', in ed. by Angela Ki Che Leung and Melissa L. Caldwell, *Moral Foods: The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia*, (University of Hawai'i Press, 2020), pp173–198.; Alan Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950-1963* (Hong Kong University Press, 2006).; Josephine Smart, *The Political Economy of Street Hawkers in Hong Kong*, Centre of Asian Studies Occasional Papers and Monographs, 81 (Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1989).

³¹ Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, *Photographs Objects Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (Taylor & Francis, 2004); Lu Pan, *Aestheticizing Public Space: Street Visual Politics in East Asian Cities* (Intellect, 2015).

³² Judy Attfield, 'Inside Pram Town: A Case Study of Harlow House Interiors, 1951-61', in *A View from the Interior: Feminism, Women, and Design*, ed. by Judy Attfield and Pat Kirkham (Women's Press, 1989), pp. 215–238.; Emily Candela and Eric de Visscher, 'Learning from "The Sounding Object": Sound Design in the Critical Reimagining of Museum Object Narratives', *Design Issues*, 39.2 (2023), pp57–71.; Daniel Cooper and Juliana Kei, 'Designing Stability: Hong Kong's Pavilion at Expo 70 and Local Expositions', ed. by Harriet Atkinson, Verity Clarkson, and Sarah A. Lichtman, *Exhibition Beyond Boundaries: Transnational Exchanges through art, architecture, and design 1945-1985* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022) pp209–226.; L. Sandino, 'Oral Histories and Design: Objects and Subjects', *Journal of Design History*, 19.4 (2006), pp275–282.

meaning that the 'toolbox' of methods that can be drawn upon is equally varied.³³

Design history is not limited to the study of works by named figures in design and architecture. Victor Margolin and Richard Buchanan offer as an all-encompassing definition that:

Design is the conception and planning of the artificial, that broad domain of human made products which includes: material objects, visual and verbal communications, organised activities and service, and complex systems and environments for living, working, playing and learning.³⁴

More recently, design scholars working to decolonise design (including history, theory and practice) assert the importance of bringing 'a sharper lens [...] on non-western ways of thinking and being' both in the way design is practised and how knowledge is exchanged.³⁵ In his 2021 keynote for the Design History Society conference, design scholar Ahmed Ansari proposed that

'now is a particularly interesting [...] and desirable time to be a design historian. The importance of design as a domain of human activity and labour vital to producing the concrete, material and virtual dimensions of modern modes of human existence is being recognised in the postcolonial world at precisely the time when the nature of said contemporary present modes of existence, products of the modern capitalist global world-system, have been laid bare'.³⁶

His lecture also goes on to emphasise the practice of design history, not as an exercise of 'knowing' and 'gathering' of 'Other' histories and 'non-designerly artefacts', but as 'embracing methodological and descriptive openness, and in paying close attention to the political situatedness of the historian-as-

³³ Leslie Atzmon and Prasad Boradkar, *Encountering Things: Design and Theories of Things* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2017).; Kjetil Fallan, *Design History: Understanding Theory and Method* (Berg, 2010).

³⁴ Victor Margolin, 'Design History or Design Studies: Subject Matter and Methods', *Design Issues*, 11.1 (1995), 4–15.

³⁵ Danah Abdulla et al., 'A Manifesto for Decolonising Design', *Journal of Futures Studies*, 23.3 (2019), p130.

³⁶ Ahmed Ansari, 'Decolonisation, the History of Design and the Designs of History' (presented at the Memory Full, DHS Annual Conference 2020, Basel, 2021) <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369010779_Decolonisation_the_History_of_Design_and_the_Designs_of_History>.

subject'.³⁷ My methodology follows this call for both an expansive understanding of design and the critical histories this entails, and a self-reflexive mode of history-writing. Therefore, design history in this thesis is the study of the broadly defined material world as expressed by Margolin and Buchanan, but also in the fluidity of methodological approaches and continuous awareness of the self in the research advocated for by contemporary design history scholars.

Since its establishment in the 1960s, design history has grown to involve a wide spectrum of design practices, including craft, mass-production, pop-culture, museums and 'the everyday'. This has been influenced firstly by feminist design historians in the late 1980s and early 1990s, who critiqued the static definition of design limited to the patriarchal realms of Modernism, including mass-production and design training.³⁸ Secondly, it has been influenced by the work of scholars in other disciplines such as cultural anthropologists, who have contributed to the discourse through their work on material culture and consumption as well as the practice of design ethnography.³⁹ More recently, global design historians, who introduce design as a transnational process and network, have shown how this approach can counter Western-centric structures of design.⁴⁰ This reflects the continuous reimagination and renegotiation of the field of design, where 'designers, unlike architects, have not worked with a set of principles and rules that have proscribed the scope of their work'.⁴¹

³⁷ Ansari, 2001.

³⁸ Attfield and Kirkham, 1989; Cheryl Buckley, 'Made in Patriarchy: Toward a Feminist Analysis of Women and Design', *Design Issues*, 3.2 (1986), pp3–14.; Brenda Martin and Penny Sparke, *Women's Places: Architecture and Design 1860-1960* (Routledge, 2003).

³⁹ Daniel Miller, *Acknowledging Consumption* (Taylor & Francis, 1995); ed. by Wendy Gunn, Ton Otto and Rachel Charlotte Smith, *Design Anthropology: Theory and Practice*, (Routledge, 2013).; ed. by Frank Trentmann, *The Making of the Consumer: Knowledge, Power and Identity in the Modern World*, (Berg, 2006).

⁴⁰ Glenn Adamson, Giorgio Riello, and Sarah Teasley, *Global Design History* (Taylor & Francis, 2011).; Yunah Lee and Megha Rajguru, *Design and Modernity in Asia: National Identity and Transnational Exchange 1945-1990* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022). W. S. Wong, 'Design History and Study in East Asia: Part 2 Greater China: People's Republic of China/Hong Kong/Taiwan', *Journal of Design History*, 24.4 (2011), pp375–395.

⁴¹ Margolin and Buchanan, p12.

In this thesis, design is used as a lens through which to focus on the exchanges conducted and the spaces in which consumption takes place, where the single design 'object' involved is the housing estate itself. This does not, however, mean that the thesis is a study of the architectural history of public housing. While it is clear that architects played major roles in implementing policy and establishing design practices, several studies have already been conducted regarding architects' agendas in Hong Kong. Rosman Chui-chi Wai has studied the beginnings of Hong Kong's public housing estates in the development of the 'pioneering' Mark series in her PhD thesis in 2014.⁴² Architectural historian Miles Glendinning and his team have also compiled an extensive database of Hong Kong's public housing, focusing on architectural features as a continuation and deviation of the Modernist movement in Europe and America.⁴³ Hong Kong housing has continuously been a focal point for architects, designers and photographers as cases for celebrating Modernism 'in use', both in visuality and function.⁴⁴ However, many studies overlook the interwoven process and history of public housing in their own specific contexts, in lieu of picturing or praising public housing estates as architectural works and aesthetic symbols of the city. In this thesis, I am less concerned with specific individuals, branded objects, companies or aesthetics, and more interested in how all of these coalesced and moved within the space of the New Town public housing estate. Rather than being devoid of people and things, I am interested in how architecture and the urban landscape was influenced or appropriated by, and in so doing was

⁴² Rosman Chui Chi Wai, 'The Architectural Origins of Hong Kong's Public Housing: The Pioneering "Mark" Series and It's Development' (unpublished PhD, University of Hong Kong, 2014).

⁴³ See 'TOWER BLOCK | Documenting and Disseminating Information about the Postwar Mass Housing Drive' <<https://towerblock.org/>> [accessed 29 August 2023]. Miles Glendinning, *Mass Housing: Modern Architecture and State Power - a Global History* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2021)

⁴⁴ Particularly through the work of artist and photographer Michael Wolf. See also Christopher Dewolf, 'The Vertical City, Part II: Why Half of Hong Kong Lives in Public Housing', *Zolima City Magazine*, 2016 <<https://zolimacitymag.com/the-vertical-city-part-ii-why-half-of-hong-kong-lives-in-public-housing/>> [accessed 17 August 2023].; Walter Koditek, *Hong Kong Modern: Architecture of the 1950s-1970s* (Dom Publishers, 2022).

'designed' by, its occupants in negotiation with government bodies in post-war Hong Kong.

With this in mind, several methods are appropriate for considering these spaces. Unlike the case for some (post) colonial territories, historical government documentation on Hong Kong is relatively accessible both in the UK and in Hong Kong. Such records reveal not only the grand plans of housing and town planning from the colonial government perspective, but also the mundane interactions between business owners and officials on issues such as licencing, complaints and policy implementation. However, while these are essential sources of information, they prioritise the official colonial narrative. The issue of language should also not be overlooked – terminologies of places and actors in vernacular Cantonese are often unrecorded in English (the only language used in official documentation in Hong Kong until the mid-1970s) resulting in missing details and cultural nuances. Audiovisual material is thus an essential type of source in retelling the narrative of life in public housing estates. Collections of photography contemporary to the period of study will be used to frame these narratives and understand the changes in use of space over time. This thesis mainly uses government photographs from the Government Information Services Department Photo Library, a collection of photographs for internal use and for government press commissioned by the colonial Hong Kong government. It will also use photographs generously shared by Dr Ko Tim-keung, a notable public historian in Hong Kong, either those published on the Hong Kong Memory website or shared through direct communication.⁴⁵ Several oral history collections conducted in Hong Kong have informed this project, including those held at the University of Hong Kong, the Hong Kong Heritage Project and Hong Kong Memory, as well as supplementary testimonies recorded by myself from residents of various

⁴⁵'香港記憶 | Hong Kong Memory', 香港記憶 | Hong Kong Memory, 2012 <<https://www.hkmemory.hk/index.html>> [accessed 12 September 2023].

public housing estates.⁴⁶ Finally, ethnographic observation of the remaining public housing estates has been key to contextualising these sources and embodying the experiences of these spaces. To physically 'occupy' the space in which one is studying has intrinsic effects on the experiential reading of this material. This has therefore been reflected in the conceptualisation of each consumption space and sites directly referenced in the thesis have been documented in the Appendices A-F.

Buildings and Images

'Occupying' space is particularly important to keep in mind when considering how to read a building. As many of the estates I am analysing still exist, crucially as public housing rather than heritage spaces, there is the question of if and how their material existence can inform the social histories of these same spaces. It is clear that these spaces do not exist as they did seventy years ago. However, the scale and flow of buildings still used for their intended purpose (even if they are inevitably not in their 'original' state) can inform a material and experiential quality of public life in these spaces. In other words, buildings can be considered as objects, tactile evidence of the past as experienced in the present. Historian Anne Laurence (in the context of seventeenth-century British and Irish country houses) argues that visiting the remains of buildings allows historians to explore more complex narratives of their social and political context.⁴⁷ She argues that architectural choices in these buildings reflect the projections of power by their designers, not only through materials and stylistic choices, but also in terms of where they are built in the landscape.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, Laurence forewarns that 'important though the evidence of the built fabric is, by itself what it can tell us is relatively limited; it is the combination of the fabric with documentary

⁴⁶ 'Hong Kong Heritage Project', 2011 <<https://www.hongkongheritage.org/>> [accessed 12 September 2023].; 'Hong Kong Oral History Archives' <<https://sunzi.lib.hku.hk/hkoh/>> [accessed 12 September 2023].

⁴⁷ Anne Laurence, 'Using building to understand social history', in ed. Karen Harvey, *History and Material Culture: A student's guide to approaching alternative sources*, (Routledge, 2018) pp106-125.

⁴⁸ Laurence, 2018.

evidence that makes the real contribution of material culture to our understanding of early modern societies', thus emphasising the importance of multi- and interdisciplinary methods and sources.⁴⁹ This ethnographic approach has influenced my own relation to these spaces, with an appreciation of movement, scale and the architectural relationship with landscape in the New Towns.

To supplement this, one significant primary source relating to buildings in the archive are photographs. Photographs are important documents of change and perspective, and of spaces now 'lost'. At the same time, simply using photographs to 'depict, describe or identify the buildings under discussion' has problematic implications.⁵⁰ On the paradox of 'imaging architecture', architectural historian Iain Borden points that in comparison to the analysis of other forms,

the three-dimensional and spatial character of architecture demands an imaging process that does more than replicate the surface of the object. Buildings in the flesh are entities which we inhabit and do not just look at – we move in them, walk around, live, work, sleep. We occupy a building and make it our own, and often over a number of years. This socio-spatial-temporal condition makes architecture a rather different entity from a painting.⁵¹

Borden argues that photography is essential not only to the production of design and published material, but also to the production of architectural history. For this reason, photographs cannot be read as the building itself. By substituting a building with a photograph, it simplifies the complex network of people, processes and cultures into a person, place or image. Reducing buildings to images (i.e. to their signifiers) without acknowledgement of whether the image is constructed with a specific agenda in mind, often removes any trace of history or human activity. In other words, photographs of spaces must be used and deeply analysed in the context of their making

⁴⁹ Laurence, p110.

⁵⁰ Iain Borden, 'Imaging architecture: the use of photography in the practice of architectural history', *Journal of Architecture*, 12.1, (2007), p57.

⁵¹ Borden, pp57–58.

(both the photograph and the space), rather than simply taking any single photograph at face value. Questioning the intentions and purpose of the photograph, and its function in illustrating the space, is an important part of analysing buildings through images.

Borden offers two strategies to tackle this issue: dialectical imagery and temporality.⁵² The combination of images of different subjects, or indeed 'zooming out' to include other objects in one single illustration, creates potential for creating new meaning.⁵³ While architecture is often captured in images devoid of any time references (weathering, dirt, people – or technical dating of an image), Borden suggests that temporality (in the form of the everyday routine use of architecture) helps to embed architecture within human history, as design-in-use rather than 'static art objects'.⁵⁴ However, he also warns that this can work to emphasise history too much, turning architecture, and architectural history, into a singular event. Showing the same building over time, recreating a sense of movement around the building by creating 'composites' of images, or re-enacting the moving subject's experience of the building through the image, are tactics Borden suggests in order to overcome this singularity. In my case, the use of photographic archives is combined with my own navigation of space, as well as analyses of space through archival documents. Multiple images of each space have been sought to inform the spatial-material understandings of the space, and these images do not stand in for the actual building for itself. As a result, the thesis incorporates significant visual analysis as a primary methodology, through the lens of space and materiality.

Outside architectural history, there are several conceptual models of using historical photographs of buildings beyond identification, in combination with other primary materials. One such example is the approach

⁵² Borden, p61.

⁵³ Borden, p62.

⁵⁴ Borden, p67.

used by historian Loh Kah Seng in his book *Squatters into Citizens*, which seeks to tell the history of the community at Bukit Ho Swee, a kampong squatter settlement that was struck by fire and became a catalyst for the public housing programme in Singapore in the 1960s.⁵⁵ Due to restricted access to government documents in Singapore, Loh primarily uses his own interviews to inform the response to the fire from the community itself, collecting over 100 accounts from past and current residents of the estate, as well as from architects and policymakers. Alongside this material, his account is supported by both personal photographs, and images from the National Archives of Singapore. In pointing out details of materials and everyday practices in these images, Loh diverts attention from rhetorical narratives of a tragic event towards traces of habitual human interactions with space – in framing a photograph of the burning kampong as evidence of care and investment in their dwellings, it draws away from the event, focusing instead on the mundanities of life in the settlement.⁵⁶ Likewise, depictions of housing developments interrupted by illegal street hawkers and laundry waving in the wind help to dispel the belief that modernity through the orderliness of public housing was readily absorbed and implemented. These images do not merely illustrate this history but rather give visual-material context to the interactions that were playing out between the residents and the Singapore government. While Loh did not have access to government documents, his use of images allows for a rich and deeply integrated connection to the space, opening up a different perspective of the history of Bukit Ho Swee beyond simply the event of the fire. Loh's use of images treats them as active objects for interpretation (beyond depiction, description or identification, as Borden warns), as powerful pieces of evidence where government documents were missing.

⁵⁵ Loh, Kah Seng, *Squatters into Citizens*, (NIAS Press, 2013).

⁵⁶ Loh, p232.

Such methodologies allude to the archive, and the making of 'archives' by scholars in processes of research.⁵⁷ The images used in this thesis are mostly from the Photo Library at the Hong Kong Government Information Services offices in North Point. The library continues to be a working section of Hong Kong's Press Office, mostly for the sale of publications and image licences. Yet it also holds approximately 400 books of contact sheets of photographs beginning in the 1960s until the early 2000s. These are kept behind a desk and retrieved on request after developing a rapport with the team working there. There is no online catalogue available, nor are many of the images within these books digitised. Knowledge of the contents of these books thus relies largely on the generosity of Mr Ho, a veteran worker who has been at the office since the early years of the Information Services Department. Each book is packaged for working use – there are no archive boxes or gloves, and piles of books are unceremoniously handed to visitors. Most of the series of contact sheets are accompanied by handwritten notes and marginalia, with many adjoining press releases taped onto the page, and each set has been marked with green and red wax markers to indicate the final 'chosen' images for publishing. After purchase, digital files of the image scans are handed over on a CD-ROM. Thus, while this is an official government archive, the unofficial nature of this set-up makes this a particularly valuable and interesting archive, rich with material to help unpack the polished façade that public housing and consumption spaces present in government press.

⁵⁷ Discourse of archives are substantial and will not be expanded on here, but this is a line of research I have been exploring in my own work as part of two research collectives, Hong Kong Design History Network (HKDHNNet) and astra*. For my own influences, see Terry Cook, 'The Archive(s) Is a Foreign Country: Historians, Archivists, and the Changing Archival Landscape', *The American Archivist*, 74.2 (2011), pp600–632.; Saidiya Hartman, 'Intimate History, Radical Narrative', *Black Perspectives*, *African American Intellectual History Society*, 2020 <<https://www.aaihs.org/intimate-history-radical-narrative/>>; Helen Hok-Sze Leung, 'Archiving Queer Feelings in Hong Kong', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 8.4 (2007), pp559–571.; Lu Pan, 'Translating Visual Archives: On the Making of the New through Three Cases of Hong Kong', *Journal of Visual Art Practice*, 18.1 (2019) pp81–98.; meLê yamomo and Barbara Titus, 'The Persistent Refrain of the Colonial Archival Logic / Colonial Entanglements and Sonic Transgressions: Sounding Out the Jaap Kunst Collection', *The World of Music*, 10.1 (2021), pp39–70.

Indeed, it was only through the development of my own circles (personal and academic) in Hong Kong that I knew this archive existed and could eventually 'pass' the scrutiny of the initially aloof Mr Ho. He informed me that many types of researchers use this archive, but as far as I have seen in my own research, few such images have appeared in or been analysed in publications. I suspect this is largely due to the widespread disregard of audiovisual material as historical evidence in academia in Hong Kong.⁵⁸ It must be said, however that over the past five years, the value of audiovisual archives in public and academic discourse has changed dramatically in Hong Kong due to recent political threats to Hong Kong's history and the global Covid-19 pandemic, locking researchers in their respective places. Hong Kong's situation was particularly strict, where even local people were isolated for much longer than other parts of the world. In response, it has been noticeable that over the last five years, anonymous archivists and librarians at the PRO and the GIS (as well as other government and educational institutions) have been working 'behind the scenes' to digitise the archive and make these images accessible in online archives and databases.⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the experience of this 'archive' and the unlimited access to these photo books has been invaluable to the research process of this thesis, informing how I will interweave existing government narratives with grassroots ones.

Spaces of consumption

The theoretical approach adopted in this thesis reflects both my own research and the topic of space. My work has been greatly influenced by

⁵⁸ This is with the exception of artists and cultural scholars in Hong Kong, who have consistently considered tactile, audiovisual material and archives in their research. For cultural scholars, see the work of Amelia Allsop; Ko Tim-keung; Brian Kwok, Tai-lok Lui; Eric Kit-wai Ma; Cindy Hing-Yuk Wong; John Wong, and Wendy Wong, to name a few. For artists, see the work of Hui Serene Sze Lok Asia Art Archive, 'Oscar Ho Hing Kay Archive 何慶基檔案' <<https://aaa.org.hk/en/collections/search/archive/oscar-ho-hing-kay-archive>>; Michael Leung, '梁志剛 Michael Leung' <<https://www.studioleung.com/>>; Anson Mak, 'Aahsun – Anson Mak' <<http://aahsun.com/wp/>>.

⁵⁹ For example, the PRO's Digital Photo Albums feature released between 2021 and 2022. 'GRS: Digital Photo Albums', 2022 <https://www.grs.gov.hk/en/digital_photo_albums.html> [accessed 12 September 2023].

geographer Doreen Massey's concept of 'spaces of negotiation' and her critique of notions of space in the history of modernity. Massey argues that space has been used to 'flatten' history into one single narrative trajectory, wielded in processes of 'taming' the spatial in colonial contexts.⁶⁰ However, she suggests that the combination of spatialising and globalising the history of modernity can offer an alternative route instead of these embedded colonial narratives. In *For Space* she proposes that:

On this reading, the spatial, crucially, is the realm of the configuration of potentially dissonant (or concordant) narratives. Places, rather than being locations of coherence, become the foci of the meeting and the nonmeeting of the previously unrelated and thus integral to the generation of novelty. The spatial in its role of bringing distinct temporalities into new configurations sets off new social processes. And in turn, this emphasises the nature of narratives, of time itself, as being not about the unfolding of some internalised story (some already-established identities) – the self-producing story of Europe – but about interaction and the *process of the constitution of* identities – the reformulated notion of (the multiplicities of) colonisation.⁶¹

In *For Space*, she defines 'space' as the 'simultaneity of stories-so-far' and 'place' as the 'collection of these stories' through multiple trajectories of connection.⁶² As such, 'place' is affective on those who encounter it through the 'practicing of place, the negotiation of intersecting trajectories; place as an arena where negotiation is forced upon us'.⁶³ Space (or the spatial) can be understood as 'the sphere of multiplicity, and the mutual opacity with which that necessarily entails'.⁶⁴ But more significantly, the 'imaginations of space and place are both an element and a stake *in* those negotiations'.⁶⁵

While place and space are intrinsically intertwined (and I agree with Massey in rejecting the absorption of place within space, finding that they are indeed distinct), this thesis is primarily interested in space and the 'sphere' of multiple, simultaneous narratives on consumption spaces in Hong Kong. This

⁶⁰ Doreen Massey, *For Space* (SAGE, 2005).

⁶¹ Italics original. Massey, p71.

⁶² Massey, p130.

⁶³ Massey, p154.

⁶⁴ Massey, p155.

⁶⁵ Massey, p155.

is justified by several points. Firstly, the discourse on Hong Kong's recent history has largely been narrated by what material has been 'lost', as articulated by cultural theorist Ackbar Abbas and his notion of the 'politics of disappearance' in Hong Kong.⁶⁶ Specific places (such as the Star Ferry Pier, the Bank of China Tower, and Shek Kip Mei Estate) have represented this disappearance to the point of rhetoric, particularly in the dialectical discourses of political history.⁶⁷ Identity as embedded in concrete notions of place continues to have resounding dominance in popular understandings of and relationships to the city. Secondly, space as a 'sphere' across Hong Kong's landscape allows me to make new narrative connections which may be 'coeval' or have potential parallels rather than clear-cut lineages of space.⁶⁸ Instead of searching for, as Massey describes places, specific 'spatio-temporal events' or encounters, this thesis moves between spaces and times in accordance with the research material itself. I find that space, as defined by Massey, is a useful lens through which to view multiple histories of multiple spaces at the same time, as opposed to the sole focus on a particular historical 'encounter' in place. In so doing, this thesis attempts to write a non-linear narrative of Hong Kong's modern history, rooted in spaces of negotiation rather than through definitive points on a map or a particular set of actions.

Broader understandings of 'consumption' open up multiple spheres of negotiation. Consumption has become a mainstay in multiple disciplines over the last thirty years, with anthropologist Daniel Miller describing an 'across-the-board sea change' in 1995, with consumption as the 'vanguard of history'.⁶⁹ In addition to the work of anthropologists and geographers

⁶⁶ Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

⁶⁷ Abbas' oft-cited theory categorises Hong Kong's architecture into three types: Merely Local; Placeless, and Anonymous. Arguably, the specific architecture he uses as examples are all 'places' to justify his idea of disappearance, but here they are devoid of people's relationships to such places, in contrast to Tai-lok Lui's study of Ocean Terminal for example. Abbas, pp63–90. See Tai-lok Lui, 'The Malling of Hong Kong' in Mathews and Lui, pp23–46.

⁶⁸ Massey, p71.

⁶⁹ Daniel Miller, *Acknowledging Consumption* (Taylor & Francis, 1995).

expanding on everyday consumption practices and geographies, scholars working in media studies have also considered the everyday consumption of media to be a form of 'active' consumption and 'interpretation of material which they consume'.⁷⁰ Since then, many historians have also started to consider consumption, particularly through the lens of empire and globalisation. Frank Trentmann's *Empire of Things* traces a lineage of 'consumption' and the emergence of a 'consumer society' from the 1960s onwards, with the terminology of 'using up', in relation to depletion of resources in production and consumption processes.⁷¹ However, Trentmann also recognises consumption to be beyond shopping, involving the whole cycle of consumption rather than simply the act of purchase.⁷²

More specific to consumption in Hong Kong, cultural scholar Eric Kit-wai Ma proposes the concept of 'satellite modernities', referring to 'the magnetic sites between centres of high-modernity and developing modernities in the rest of the world', in relation to migration histories in the region.⁷³ Using interviews with Chinese immigrants to Hong Kong to inform his cultural critique of 'consumerist modernity', Ma theorises on how material culture and consumption of media allowed avenues for both cultural and physical 'boundary-crossing'.⁷⁴ He argues that Hong Kong as a 'satellite' 'bridge[s] global and local consumer cultures and serves as a mid-way relay between well-developed global networks of the colonizing west and the developing localities throughout Asia.'⁷⁵ Space is alluded to here in Ma's language of 'mapping', 'borders' and the imagination of Hong Kong as a space of modernity for Chinese immigrants. This also allude to the transnational exchanges outside of colonial relationships. For example, Singapore (both

⁷⁰ Morley in Miller, p294.

⁷¹ Frank Trentmann, *Empire of Things: How We Became a World of Consumers, from the Fifteenth Century to the Twenty-First* (London, UK: Penguin UK, 2016), pp1–3.

⁷² Trentmann, p3.

⁷³ Eric Kit-Wai Ma, 'Consuming Satellite Modernities', *Cultural Studies*, 15.3–4 (2001), pp444–463.

⁷⁴ Ma, p447, p452.

⁷⁵ Ma, p459.

pre- and post-independence) and Japan, have been acknowledged in the literature as comparative territories for housing and consumption, but less so as direct influencers or collaborators in Hong Kong's development.⁷⁶ Indeed, the notion of 'satellites' offers a parallel to Trentmann's 'empires', focusing in on specific objects and interactions in the broader 'macro' processes of consumption suggested in 'using up'.

More recently, the consumption of space has entered the wider discourse of consumption (building on geographies of consumption), drawing on Lefebvre's emphasis on commodities as 'things' occupying spaces. Michael Goodman et al. explains that:

we are *where* we consume [...] understanding consumption and its geographies is *central* to understanding the powerful geographical imaginations and materialities of the contemporary 'society of consumers'.⁷⁷

Here, Goodman alludes to broadening spatial understandings of consumption beyond specific momentary encounters, which can thus open much more nuanced spatial imaginations and material histories. On this point, Trentmann calls for the potential 'interdisciplinary interfaces' between historical and geographical approaches to consumption. He argues that in more recent historical spatial discourses:

⁷⁶ See Brian Bridges, 'Hong Kong and Japan: Commerce, Culture and Contention', *The China Quarterly*, 176 (2003), pp1052–1067; Jiat-Hwee Chang, "'Tropicalizing" Planning: Sanitation, Housing, and Technologies of Improvement in Colonial Singapore', in *Imperial Contagions: Medicine, Hygiene, and Cultures of Planning in Asia*, ed. by Robert Shannan Peckham and David M. Pomfret (Hong Kong University Press, 2013), pp35–59.; Millie R. Creighton, 'Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticate "Things Foreign"', *Modern Asian Studies*, 25.4 (1991), pp675–709.; D. W. Drakakis-Smith and Yue-man Yeung, 'Public Housing in the City States of Hong Kong and Singapore', in *Urban Planning Practice In Developing Countries*, ed. by J. L. Taylor and D. G. Williams (Elsevier, 2013), pp. 217–38.; Danielle Hong, 'Building the Urban Commons in Singapore: The Cemetery, Red-Light District and Public Housing Estates as Sites of Contestation', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 19.3 (2018), pp404–418; Peter J. McGoldrick and Sandy S.L. Ho, 'International Positioning: Japanese Department Stores in Hong Kong', *European Journal of Marketing*, 26.8–9 (1992), pp61–73; Michael Sugarman, 'Building Burma: Constructing Rangoon's Urban Influence on Citizenship and Nationhood', *History Compass*, 14.10 (2016), pp459–469.

⁷⁷ Italics original. Michael K. Goodman, *Consuming Space: Placing Consumption in Perspective* (Taylor & Francis, 2010), pp3–4.

consumption and material culture has played at best a marginal role in the spatial reorientation of historians. [...] Notwithstanding much interesting work it has generated, it is noteworthy how much of the 'spatial turn' has remained tied to older historiographical questions of nation and statehood. [...] Most historical studies have looked at the spread of material goods and commercial cultures within well-defined national areas or individual cities treating questions of space as a given.⁷⁸

In relation to Massey's spatial theory, Trentmann observes that the negotiation of space (through material culture) is missing in historical studies of consumption. Trentmann's analysis concurs with Massey's call for 'a move away from that imagination of space as a continuous surface that the coloniser, as the only active agent, crosses to find the to-be-colonised simply 'there.'"⁷⁹

This thesis combines these various theoretical frameworks to conceptualise what I refer to as 'spaces of consumption'. Using Massey's 'spaces of negotiation' as the basis for this idea, the negotiation I am focused on are the multiple trajectories of consumption as explored across multiple disciplines but drawing on Trentmann's call for a material analysis of spatial history. Space is considered here through 'spheres', meaning that space is not defined by a physical boundary, building, abstract border or map. However, all of these spatial representations are referenced as evidence of attempts to materialise or construct space. Likewise, consumption in this thesis is focused on the processes of consumption rather than outcomes, meaning the intentions, possibilities and realities of the experience of consumption rather than the objects purchased or how they are used. Consumption is also used here to consider the consumption *of* space, i.e., the imagination and reception of spaces themselves. Such a conceptualisation of spaces of consumption allows for a more fluid understanding of space to draw out multiple spatial and material narratives at once.

⁷⁸ Trentmann in Goodman, p42.

⁷⁹ Massey, p63.

Thesis Structure

The thesis is structured around four chapters, with each of these based on a major 'space of consumption' found in New Town public housing estates. These are the hawker pitch, the hawker bazaar, modular and multi-storey markets, and commercial complexes and malls. Although I trace a rough chronology of these 'spaces of consumption' in Hong Kong, this thesis instead emphasises the non-linear histories of these spaces. In order to give adequate historical background, I have included two preambles: one pertaining to the pitch and the bazaar chapters, and the other to the modular market and commercial complex chapters. These have been included to contextualise the moments in time discussed in these chapters and provide signposts to relevant sections within the thesis. As each chapter demonstrates, these spaces overlap and coalesce with each other in the housing estate, and can be experienced to some degree in the urban landscape of Hong Kong today. A multi-layered timeline of spaces of consumption, highlighting figures, spaces, and events with relevant page numbers, is also included in Appendix H.

The first chapter begins with the hawker pitch. Drawing on the previous scholarship of hawkers, this chapter builds on the existing literature on hawkers to conceptualise the hawker pitch – a plot or areas in which 'hawking' takes place. By highlighting the notion of the 'pitch', this chapter focuses on the relationship between hawkers and space, emphasising the negotiations of space rather than the legal status or political representation of hawkers (which has been the main focus of much of the earlier scholarship in Hong Kong). The chapter introduces the 1957 *Hawker Report*, a government publication announcing the new attitudes and policies towards hawkers under the post-war Hong Kong government. This included the establishment of 'fixed pitches' and standardised stall design as a strategy to suppress and regulate hawkers. Although these policies were largely informed by conditions in the urban core, at the same time, the hawker pitch also had a

role in the construction of the New Towns and establishing new communities in the public housing estates.

The second chapter continues this line of enquiry in the space of the hawker bazaar. While the bazaar was, in theory, a temporary means to assemble multiple pitches in one structure, the actual form of the bazaar was ambiguous from the outset. The chapter outlines the history of the modern bazaar in Hong Kong, and the shift from the nineteenth-century connotations with racialised urban redlining in the colony, to the establishment of the bazaar as an estate space that, while mundane, embodied colonial negotiations of spatial control. The chapter focuses on the struggle by the government to understand and codify such a space with simultaneously defined boundaries and opportunities for spatial chaos. Such a struggle became manifest in a series of experimental bazaars, first in the 1950s following the *Hawker Report*, and then again in the 1960s with the establishment of Kwun Tong's town square by local industry and small private development adjacent to public housing estates. This chapter will also spotlight some of the key urgencies and influences around the hawker bazaar, namely the dangers of fire, and the response to Singapore's successful but draconian efforts to suppress hawkers in what Hong Kong equated to bazaars.

The third chapter will focus on the shift from temporary measures to increasingly permanent consumption structures in modular and multi-storey markets in the New Towns. Specifically designed to sit within public housing estates in the 1970s, these markets were introduced as a design strategy to simultaneously meet the shopping demands of residents and suppress illegal hawker activity in housing estates. Such spaces brought everyday discourses of modernity to the fore, in the projection of government consumption ideals and the negotiation of modernity through the market by architects, stallholders and consumers. This was particularly the case with the Hong Kong government's use of the 'module' as a concept for constructing estates (including markets) and for organising people in space. In addition, this

chapter aims to historicise the notion of the 'wet market', a colloquial English term commonly used for such spaces in East and Southeast Asia, and popularly assigned to the everyday markets in Hong Kong. Instead of focusing purely on the origin of the term 'wet market', however, I argue that the tactile, sensorial negotiations of 'wet' and 'dry' in the market is useful for further unpacking the history of the 'wet market', and how it related to colonial navigations of modernity.

The fourth and final chapter focuses on commercial complexes and malls. This chapter spotlights how the Hong Kong government imagined the landscape in the New Towns, as facilitated through the commercial complex in public housing estates. In tandem with the reorganisation of the Hong Kong Housing Authority, and a colony-wide campaign for public co-operation and civic pride, commercial complexes were spaces that embodied a new consumer society in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Alongside this, privately developed malls, in collaboration with public housing development, helped to establish New Towns as spectacular destinations for consumption with interconnected public housing estates. Nevertheless, these visions were not necessarily shared by public housing estate residents, who found ways to bypass or reappropriate these spaces in their own negotiations of modernity. Commercial complexes and these early malls were therefore some of the first forays by the government to combine public-private development and set the stage for the increasing privatisation of public space in Hong Kong.

Preamble I: 'A colony of shopkeepers'

Hong Kong was colonised by Britain in 1842 after the First Opium War. In 1860, Kowloon was also ceded, and from 1898, the New Territories was leased for 99 years from China. According to John Carroll, Hong Kong was 'founded primarily as an imperial outpost', on the premise of protecting British trade interests in China and Asia more broadly.¹ The early colonial years of Hong Kong have been largely characterised as a time when the territory was governed as a *laissez-faire* entrepôt featuring a transient population of Chinese, European, South and Southeast Asian people, although as Tak-Wing Ngo has argued, Hong Kong actually also had several significant manufacturing industries from the early twentieth century onwards.² In essence, rather than simply a channel for trade, Hong Kong has always been involved in the global cycles of production and consumption since the beginning of colonial rule.

During the Second World War, Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese. After the Japanese surrender in August 1945, Hong Kong returned to British rule. Many ethnically Chinese residents of Hong Kong who had been deported or had fled to Mainland China returned to Hong Kong at this time, but with the resumption of the Chinese Civil War in 1945, refugees also entered Hong Kong with estimations of about 90,000 people every month.³ Sir Mark Young resumed his duties as Governor of Hong Kong in 1946, with the ambition to radically democratise the political structure of the colony in line with the new decolonising policy of the post-war Labour government in Britain.⁴ However, Young's ideas did not survive beyond his term (which ended in 1947). His successor, Alexander Grantham (an experienced colonial

¹ John Mark Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2007) p12.

² Tak-Wing Ngo, *Hong Kong's History: State and Society under Colonial Rule* (Taylor & Francis Group, 1999), p121.

³ The population went down to an estimated 600,000 during the Japanese Occupation, from 1,639,337 in the 1941 census. See Saw Swee-Hock and Chiu Wing Kin, 'Population Growth and Redistribution in Hong Kong, 1841-1975', *Southeast Asian Journal of Social Science*, 4.1 (1975), pp123-131.

⁴ Carroll, p131.

officer who had served as governor in other British colonies, including Bermuda, Jamaica, Nigeria and Fiji), stated that 'Hong Kong is different from other colonies for Hong Kong can never become independent'.⁵ Nevertheless, Grantham's less radical reforms did include a removal of racially discriminatory public policy, such as reducing restrictions of Chinese living in the Peak.⁶ This marked a point of change in the way Hong Kong was ruled, with a largely segregated society (between Chinese, European and other smaller communities) gradually becoming more integrated.

A Town Planning Office was established in 1947 by the Colonial Office to survey and recommend development plans for the colony.⁷ This was conducted by Sir Patrick Abercrombie, whose career had been made in the postwar replanning of London and the New Towns movement from 1943 to 1946. Abercrombie's one month visit to Hong Kong resulted in a report published in September 1948 in which he recommended a cross-harbour tunnel, largescale land reclamation, and the creation of industrial and residential zone through the development of new towns in the New Territories.⁸ This became Hong Kong's first comprehensive urban planning report.⁹ Grantham's colonial government was unenthusiastic about these recommendations, being occupied instead with the rapid influx of refugees from Mainland China following the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949.¹⁰ Abercrombie's plan would however re-emerge in the following decades, as a key inspiration for future planning in Hong Kong (Ch 4.2). Indeed, the population of the colony increased threefold from 600,000

⁵ Carroll, p132.

⁶ Carroll, pp133–134.

⁷ See Lawrence Wai-Chung Lai, 'Reflections on the Abercrombie Report 1948: A Strategic Plan for Colonial Hong Kong', *The Town Planning Review*, 70.1 (1999), pp61–87.

⁸ Lai, p68.

⁹ Seng, Eunice. 'The City in a Building: a Brief Social History of Urban Hong Kong', *Studies in History and Theory of Architecture*, 5 (2017), p81.

¹⁰ Although many of these initial ideas have been implemented over the course of the twentieth century, Abercrombie's plan was largely ignored at the time due to its conservative population projections and the cost and scale of development. Lai, pp65–66.

at the end of the Japanese occupation, to around 1.8 million in 1949.¹¹ In an effort to bolster the recovering colony, Grantham turned back to the standard objective of Hong Kong as an entrepôt. In his 1949 address, he remarked: 'Trade is the lifeblood of this Colony...I am proud of being Governor of a colony of shopkeepers'.¹²

Negotiating housing

With a sharp increase in population to over two million people by 1950, squatting and overcrowded housing became a particularly pressing problem for Hong Kong (Ch 1.1).¹³ The war had left the city in disrepair, and with Britain also in a state of recovery, there was little by way of help or resources from London. In the 1940s, the private sector had dealt with this by increasing subdivisions in private housing, the practice of splitting tenement buildings into more living spaces therefore increasing the density of each dwelling.¹⁴ Although the speed of postwar recovery in other areas in the late 1940s was impressive (such as economic recovery), housing remained a difficult issue for the colonial government, particularly when it came to dealing with overcrowding and the extent to which the government could provide housing as part of social welfare (Ch 1.1, 2.1, 3.1).¹⁵ In the meantime, religious and philanthropic organisations led the charge in providing public housing in postwar Hong Kong. Founded in 1947, the Hong Kong Housing

¹¹ Fan Shuh Ching, *The Population of Hong Kong*, The Committee for International Coordination of National Research in Demography (Hong Kong Government Printers, CICRED Series, 1974), p1.

¹² Indeed, Ngo argues against this rhetoric in his research on the significance of pre-war industries in Hong Kong. Such a narrative was 'untold' 'because British colonizers were only interested in Hong Kong's entrepot trade.' Manufacturing was a Chinese business in a *laissez-faire* colonial system. See Chapter 7, Tak-Wing Ngo, 'Industrial History and the Artifice of *Laissez-faire* Colonialism' in ed. by Tak-Wing Ngo, *Hong Kong's History: State and Society Under Colonial Rule* (Routledge, 1999), pp119–161.

¹³ According to Vaughan and Dwyer, 2,360,000 by May 1950. T. D. Vaughan and D. J. Dwyer, 'Some Aspects of Postwar Population Growth in Hong Kong', *Economic Geography*, 42.1 (1966), pp37–51.

¹⁴ Alan Smart, 'Housing in Hong Kong', in ed. by Yi Pan and Liwen Yu *Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity* (Oxford University Press, 2003), p317.

¹⁵ Carroll, p129; Alan Smart goes into great detail on the debates in Hong Kong in the 1940s, as well as the discourses of housing and social welfare in Hong Kong thereafter. See Smart in Pan and Yu, pp308–48.

Society (HKHS) was established following a large donation from the Lord Mayor of London (with funds from the Air Raid Distress Fund). The HKHS was formally established in 1951, opening its first rental housing estate, Sheung Li Uk in an area called Sham Shui Po, in 1952. Designed by architect Michael Wright, Sheung Li Uk was the first estate to incorporate estate facilities and self-contained flats in its design. Housing management was also a major facet in the ethos of the HKHS, an innovation largely delivered in Hong Kong by women (Ch 1.1, 3.1, 3.2).¹⁶ Both these ideas of public housing initiated by the HKHS were later adopted by the Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA).

Due to such desperate housing conditions in Hong Kong, many people were erecting makeshift housing on the peripheries of the urban centres in illegal 'squatter settlements', on what was deemed Crown land.¹⁷ By 1950, the squatter population had increased to 330,000, eleven times the number in 1948.¹⁸ Although squatter clearance drives had already increased, the colonial government was concerned about the potential for resistance or coercion of squatting communities and wanted to avoid conflict (and international criticism) where possible (Ch 1.1, 1.2, 2.1, 2.2).¹⁹ In addition, a different demographic of wealthier refugees also began to arrive in Hong Kong, particularly Shanghainese industrialists.²⁰ 'Almost all major firms in Shanghai moved their operations to Hong Kong', bringing much needed capital and specialised industries such as textiles, cotton spinning, garment-making and later toy, plastic and light-electronic industries.²¹ The Korean War broke out in 1950, leading the United States to impose a total trade

¹⁶ See Christopher John Mackay, 'House Management and the Comprehensive Housing Model in Hong Kong: A Case Study of Colonial Influence', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 9.25 (2000), pp449–466.

¹⁷ D. J. Dwyer, 'Urban Squatters: The Relevance of the Hong Kong Experience', *Asian Survey*, 10.7 (1970), pp607–613.

¹⁸ Smart in Pan and Yu, p322.

¹⁹ Smart in Pan and Yu, pp322–323.

²⁰ Carroll, p134.

²¹ Carroll, p134. However, as Ngo has said, manufacturing such as rubber shoes, flashlights and tinned foods, shipbuilding and ropemaking were significant prior to WWII. See Ngo, 1999.

embargo on the PRC in 1951.²² No longer able to rely on its entrepôt status, Hong Kong became dependent on its new migrant community to boost its manufacturing industry (Ch 2.1).

Meanwhile, with the increasingly dense conditions in squatter settlements, fires became a regular occurrence from 1950 onwards (Ch 1.3, 2.3).²³ One particular fire on Christmas Day in 1953, known as the 'Shek Kip Mei fire', is frequently cited as being the catalyst for Hong Kong's public housing scheme.²⁴ Some 58,000 people lost their homes at Shek Kip Mei, with the colonial government responding with a Resettlement Programme in 1954 and an ambitious, fully-fledged public housing programme in the 1970s.²⁵ Alan Smart's seminal work on squatter fires has helped to interrupt this 'myth' and disputes some of the earlier critiques of the colonial government's approach to housing as social welfare.²⁶ He proposes instead that 'the Shek Kip Mei fire is better seen as an opportunity for innovation than a cause in itself of the Resettlement Programme' and that the fires before and after Shek Kip Mei impacted the solutions to crises in Hong Kong.²⁷ A new Housing Ordinance was announced in 1954 following the Shek Kip Mei fire, resulting in the formation of two new departments dedicated to housing: the Resettlement Department (RD) and the former Housing Authority (former HA).

The Resettlement Department (RD) was formed to design and implement housing for the emergency resettlement of victims of fire. Formed out of sections of the Public Works Department (PWD), the Social Welfare Department, and the Urban Services Department (USD), the RD was led by

²² See Xin-zhu J. Chen, 'China and the US Trade Embargo, 1950-1972', *American Journal of Chinese Studies*, 13.2 (2006), pp169–186.

²³ Smart's book *The Shek Kip Mei Myth* uses the case studies of substantial fires at Kowloon City and Tung Tau in 1950 and 1951 respectively. Alan Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth: Squatters, Fires and Colonial Rule in Hong Kong, 1950-1963* (Hong Kong University Press, 2006).

²⁴ Smart argues against the mythologisation of the Shek Kip Mei fire, but the fire nevertheless remains core to narrative of public housing in Hong Kong.

²⁵ Smart, p2.

²⁶ Smart, 2006.

²⁷ Smart, p106.

former Deputy Secretary for Chinese Affairs, and Clerk of the Executive and Legislative Councils, Ronald Holmes.²⁸ Concurrently, the role of the former HA was to provide public housing that was *not* for emergency resettlement, but rather to develop long-term solutions for the low-income population in Hong Kong (Ch 3.1, 3.3). Although it had been debated whether the former HA would take on resettlement in its scope, it was agreed by the colonial government that the 'worst features of the wild squatter areas' needed addressing as a high priority.²⁹ As such, the RD was still considered a temporary department which would be dissolved when conditions improved.³⁰

The RD built resettlement estates which were rudimentary in design, and cheap and efficient to erect.³¹ The first resettlement estates at Shek Kip Mei were completed by the end of 1954. Each block was seven-storeys high, with shops, health centres and community centres located on the ground floor; schools were later built on the rooves of such blocks. Each unit was basic and small at 24-square feet per person, with no facilities or windows, housing up to five adults (children being officially counted as 'half' an adult). Shared bathroom and washing facilities were located on each floor, and most households cooked on the balcony.³² The former HA, however, experimented

²⁸ Holmes was a significant figure in government from the 1950s to the 1970s. In 1951, he was acting Social Welfare Officer. In 1955 he would go on to become Director of Urban Services and then the District Commissioner for the New Territories in 1958. Fluent in Cantonese, he was well known for playing a key role in improving the relationships between factions of the Heung Yee Kuk (the non-governmental advisory board formed by indigenous communities in the New Territories) and with the colonial government.

²⁹ Smart, pp113–114.

³⁰ Smart, p114.

³¹ The architects for the PWD during this time were Micheal Wright and George Norton. Wright was the architect of the HKHS's first two estates, Sheung Li Uk and Lai Tak Tsuen establishing what would be known as the 'Wright Principle' based on the protection of 'human dignity and privacy' through private individual facilities in public housing. In 1963, Wright would become Director of the PWD, retiring in 1969. See Annemarie Evans, 'Hong Kong's "Father of Public Housing" Michael Wright: Last Words', *South China Morning Post*, 2018 <<https://www.scmp.com/magazines/post-magazine/long-reads/article/2131595/hong-kongs-father-public-housing-recalls-pow-camp>> [accessed 24 August 2023].

³² See James Lee and Yip Ngai-ming, 'Public Housing and Family Life in East Asia: Housing History and Social Change in Hong Kong, 1953-1990', *Journal of Family History*, 31.1 (2006), pp66–82.

with more ambitious (and much more costly) estate designs (Ch 3.3, 4.2). The first of these was North Point Estate, completed in 1957, which became well-known for its spaciousness and 'luxurious' build quality.³³ As had been the case with the earlier projects built by the HKHS, the former HA estates also featured self-contained flats and additional amenities on site. Some of the former HA projects were designed by external architects such as Palmer and Turner, while others were designed and constructed by the PWD.³⁴ At the end of construction, the former HA would manage the estates.

The construction of housing was continuous through until the end of the 1950s as the population continued to increase towards the end of the decade. It was in this period that the first two 'satellite towns' were established, these being Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan, thus beginning the process of New Town development (Ch 1.2, 2.2). Housing was pushed out to these districts in the New Territories, while both towns were expanded through land reclamation and industries moving into these areas.³⁵ At the same time, population density and continuous tensions between Communist and Nationalist Chinese refugees camps in Hong Kong resulted in one of the first major series of riots in the city in 1956.³⁶ Known as the 'Double Ten Riots', this event forced the colonial government to reframe refugees as permanent residents in need of training into 'responsible citizens'.³⁷ Following this,

³³ For details of the estate, see Hong Kong Housing Authority, 'North Point Estate, Java Road, Hong Kong', *Ekistics*, 5.32 (1958), pp229–232.

³⁴ Two significant estates built by Palmer and Turner, in 1964 and 1970 respectively, were Choi Hung Estate and Ping Shek Estate. Sai Wan Estate was designed by former HA architect T.S.C. Feltham but constructed by the PWD in 1958. Kwai Shing Estate was designed by PWD architect Colin Bramwell and also built by the PWD in 1975, and finally handed over to the new Hong Kong Housing Authority to manage. See the Docomomo HK page for details of these projects, including plans and images collated from issues of *Far East Builder*, Docomomo Hong Kong, 'Buildings, Sites and Neighbourhoods | Docomomo Hong Kong', *DOCOMOMO* <<https://docomomo.hk/documentation/>> [accessed 24 August 2023].

³⁵ It should be noted that both districts already had existing industries, particularly Tsuen Wan. See David Faure, 'Notes on the History of Tsuen Wan', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 24 (1984), pp46–104.; David C. Y. Lai and D. J. Dwyer, 'Tsuen Wan: A New Industrial Town in Hong Kong', *Geographical Review*, 54.2 (1964), pp151–169.

³⁶ Chi-Kwan Mark, 'The "Problem of People": British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949–62', *Modern Asian Studies*, 41.6 (2007), pp1145–1181.

³⁷ Mark, p1165.

Robert Black became the new Governor of Hong Kong in 1957.³⁸ Under Black, a new Census Department was formed in 1959 to conduct the first full-scale postwar population census in Hong Kong. This was completed in 1961 and would finally offer a comprehensive picture of the 'problem of people' and how to house them (Ch 1.1).

By 1961, the population had grown to 3.1 million. Although squatter settlements continued to be demolished, new ones were constantly built. Oversights in the existing resettlement and public housing schemes meant that many people were excluded from applying for resettlement or public housing – for example, those left unhoused after the demolition of old tenements did not qualify for resettlement.³⁹ In response, the Low-Cost Housing Programme was introduced in 1961, where public housing projects would be managed by the former HA. However, the former HA's housing development process was both slow and disjointed. With multiple parties involved in designing, building and managing different public housing estates, with varying production costs and population sizes, the former HA was slow to build at a greater scale, and it was clear that this programme alone could not solve the issue of widespread squatting and horrific living conditions in some of these settlements (Ch 2.1). In 1963, the government reviewed its housing policy again, commissioning a study of squatter and public housing in preparation for review. This was released in a White Paper in 1964, which paved the way for policies for Licensed Areas for temporary dwellings, accelerated construction of both resettlement and low-cost housing estates, standardised ratios for low-cost housing units, and expanded eligibility for resettlement (Ch 2.2).⁴⁰

³⁸ Black had been the Governor of Singapore from 1955-57, and colonial secretary in Hong Kong from 1952-55.

³⁹ Castells, p22.

⁴⁰ Meiyee Leung, *From Shelter to Home: 45 Years of Public Housing Development in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 1999), p82.

Chapter 1: The Hawker Pitch

1.0 Introduction

Pak choi, baked eggs, gramophone records, lace, preserved bean curd, small toys, medicinal herbs, goldfish, potted plants, dried shrimps, watches, small furniture and bottled carbonated drinks.¹ These are just some of the enticing foodstuffs, necessities, and desires offered by hawkers in Hong Kong in the post-war period. A whole life and home could be available to buy and exchange on the front of a trolley or a stall. Even more still was for sale illegally by itinerant cooked-food hawkers where for a few coins one could buy the heartiest meal of the day, a treat for the walk home from school, or the centrepiece of a family dinner.² Although hawkers continue to operate in Hong Kong at a much smaller scale, it can be difficult to imagine the dense and ubiquitous presence of hawkers in the landscape at the height of Hong Kong's post-war urban development from the 1950s to the 1980s. Hawkers ranged from individuals with innovative self-made equipment for carrying, cooking and moving their goods to sell while on the move, to the intensely packed carts and stalls that were crammed into the narrow streets and squares in the city.

To begin this thesis, the chapter will examine the history of hawkers in Hong Kong, but as part of the wider spatial-material history of consumption rather than an isolated phenomenon. More specifically, the chapter questions how hawkers were involved in the New Towns public housing estate project, both as an essential driver of post-war development and as illicit occupiers of spaces. This spatial angle aims to complicate the various networks hawkers played a role in, and to nuance the figure of the 'hawker' not simply as an economic outlier or a socio-political body, but through its spatial relationship with the social urban landscape in Hong Kong. Although hawkers have been

¹ Multimedia Information System Hong Kong Public Library (MMIS), USDAHM 24/451/64, Urban Council Policy Manual on Hawkers, 14th May 1974, pp14–15.

² Except for a few types of foods (e.g. roasted sweet potato, roasted chestnut) cooked food was and still is illegal to sell itinerantly.

associated with explicit forms of political 'resistance', I focus instead on the quotidian forms of resistance enacted by hawkers and their patrons.³ As I argue in this chapter, the space of the hawker pitch emerges in the estate as a way of navigating new notions of spatial modernity beyond the urban core into the New Towns.

This relationship between hawkers and space is most clearly articulated in what I am calling the 'pitch', the space or patch of land where hawkers operate in a fixed or semi-fixed manner. The term first appears in the 1936 Hawker Ordinance, defined as "'pitch" or "site" meaning the area allotted by the Council to a licensee for the purpose of his trade' with 'fixed pitch' as a category of hawker.⁴ 'Fixed pitch' is later defined in 1987 as 'any pitch delineated on the ground under by-law 27 or a pitch specified in a fixed-pitch hawker licence'.⁵ However, the *Oxford English Dictionary* (OED) lists 'pitch' to mean 'a place at which a person stations himself or herself, or is stationed; [...] a spot in a street or other public place occupied by a stallholder, street performer, beggar etc.' and a place 'to lay out (wares) in a fixed place for sale; (hence) to display for sale in a market or public place.'⁶ The pitch is understood more broadly in this chapter along the lines of the OED, as the space occupied (whether legally or illegally) by hawkers for the purpose of

³ See Josephine Smart for resistance of hawkers in Hong Kong. More recently, notions of quotidian resistance in Hong Kong, China and Taiwan have been explored in a special issue in *Cultural Studies*, with these being linked to the shaping of identities. Suzanne Hall has also linked the frame of 'ordinary cities' developed by Jennifer Robinson with 'everyday resistance' as part of making urban space by migrants in the UK. See Stephen C. K. Chan, 'Resistance, Activism and Ordinary Life: An Editorial Introduction', *Cultural Studies*, 36.2 (2022), pp171–184.; Suzanne M Hall, 'Migrant Urbanisms: Ordinary Cities and Everyday Resistance', *Sociology*, 49.5 (2015), pp853–869.; 'Dog Kings, Triads, And Hawkers: Spatial Monopoly Among The Streer Hawkers In Hong Kong', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement*, 4.1 (1983), pp158–163.

⁴ Hong Kong University (HKU), Historical Laws of Hong Kong Online (HLHKO), Hawker By-Laws Ordinance, 1936, p208, p211.

⁵ HKU, HLHKO, Hawker Urban Council By-Laws, 1987, A13.

⁶ 'Pitch, noun', *Oxford English Dictionary Online*
<<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/144681#eid29844398>>; 'Pitch, verb' *OED Online*
<<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/144682#eid29850768>>

sale exchange.⁷ This is interpreted as both the physical and abstract imagined boundaries of space.

Such a conceptualisation offers a wide and nuanced view on the spatiality of hawking; the pitch alludes to ideas of 'territory', the materiality, temporality and movement of the pitch itself, to pitch up or down, to cross a pitch, the pitch of a roof. A pitch can be indicated through tables and a few stools, be attached to existing structures like a wall or a road, or indeed be an imagined space. Although this chapter acknowledges that hawkers are also spaces (as well as individuals who create such space), I am more interested in hawkers' dynamic with the specific space they occupy in the hawker pitch. Such a conception brings Massey's notion of 'spheres' to the fore, where the 'pitch' here can be understood and acknowledged as the sphere or arena which actors negotiate and navigate, and thus understanding the hawker pitch as a 'space of consumption'. As a result, this chapter is less concerned with the itinerant or fixed status of hawking (a topic which has generated much debate in the past), but rather in how the space of the hawker pitch negotiated, appropriated and occupied the estate alongside New Towns development.

The structure of this chapter is informed by previous literature on hawkers in Hong Kong but is refocused on space in the New Towns, with specific reference to Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan.⁸ Acknowledging the crossovers between hawkers with squatters and squatter settlements, the first section begins with licensing, framing when hawkers could legally or illegally occupy space, and the policing of hawkers in doing so. The issue of land extended into the so-called 'hawker problem' (a term used by the government to describe their antagonism with hawkers) where, alongside

⁷ The terms 'pitch' and 'fixed pitch' is used in the 1957 Hawker Report but is not clearly defined, inferring that a pitch is a site for monitoring and licensing, and the responsibility of the licence holder. See London School of Economics, *Hawkers: A Report with Policy Recommendations*, (The Urban Council: Hong Kong, December 1957) (from here on referred to as Hawker Report).

⁸ I will explain the nature of these earlier works on hawkers later on in the chapter.

squatter settlements, hawkers were vilified for their wide and unpredictable use of valuable space.⁹ After the release of the 1957 *Hawkers: A Report with Policy Recommendations* (from here on referred to as the *Hawker Report*), and with the establishment of the Hawker Control Force, policing hawkers was approached with caution, particularly because of their close ties with the community and broader global politics on the Mainland.

The second section focuses on the stall, when the pitch could ultimately be made material and the hawker legible in space. On the introduction of a consistent hawker stall design as part of government policy, the stall and the pitch were strategies used to confine hawking to specific bounds on the peripheries of estates. While hawker-specific policing was still at a loss, social reforms and campaigns alongside wide economic prosperity did more to reframe hawkers as the 'enemy' to the public, particularly through hawker cleansing campaigns and the 'Keep Hong Kong Clean' Campaign. With the introduction of ideas of public 'rights' to space and civic duty into the public discourse, perceptions of hawkers gradually shifted towards government favour.

The final section then shifts towards the domestic sphere in public housing estates, where hawkers transformed the space of the estate and the neighbourhood into an expanded pitch. With a focus on Kwun Tong, it further explores how hawkers and consumers conceived of notions of home, particularly through cooked food. While the pitch in the estate was, more often than not, illegally constructed, the chaotic space below living quarters largely served to maintain everyday life in a new place. Such hawkers within estate confines offered an access to a range of experiences, and arguably

⁹ According to Gary Luk's research, the 'problem of hawkers' was already in popular discourse in the 1840s. Newspaper articles between the 1950s and 1980s also describe them as an 'anarchy of hawkers' and 'militant hawkers'. See Gary Chi-hung Luk, 'Occupied Space, Occupied Time: Food Hawking and the Central Market in Hong Kong's Victoria City during the Opium War', *Frontiers of History in China*, 11.3 (2016), p414.; ProQuest Historical Newspapers (PHN), 'Hawker Problems in HK: Report and Recommendations', *South China Morning Post (SCMP)*, 5th February 1958, p7.; 'Hawkers stall talk on stalls', *SCMP*, 13th December, 1972, p22.

helped to build a unique spatial material culture, with its own construction of modernity, within low-income communities in estates.

There is a large literature on hawkers, not least because of their controversial socio-political position in Hong Kong, but also because of the huge variety of hawkers that existed both within and between categories and spaces. Rather than attempting to cover the entirety of post-war history of hawkers in Hong Kong, this chapter aims instead to make connection with the extant literature surrounding hawkers (much of which was published in the very period that is covered in this thesis), and the broader everyday history of consumption.

1.0a Hong Kong Hawkers

Hawkers in Hong Kong have long been a source of fascination across scholarly disciplines, but their historical significance has tended to be overlooked. Literature on the topic in other disciplines aside from history, such as anthropology and sociology, has defined the discourse, particularly in relation to space and material culture. T.G McGee's seminal work *Hawkers in Hong Kong* opens not with the severity of the "hawker problem" but rather with the material and spatial presence of hawkers in cities:

Hawkers are a ubiquitous feature of the retailing and service distribution system of the cities of the Third World. They are visually omnipresent, moving along the streets, calling their wares, or clustered about the public markets, the narrow lanes and alleys where they erect their stalls. What visitor to these cities is not attracted by the colour, noise, and vibrancy of the markets? They add a texture, a vital quality.¹⁰

Hawkers in Hong Kong was indicative of a new scholarly interest in hawkers in the 1970s, coinciding with a boom in local social and historical research initiatives in Hong Kong. Published contemporaneously with the hawker issues at hand in that era, a significant amount of research in the book

¹⁰ It is unclear when the phrase "hawker problem" first appeared but was in popular use in both the public press and in government internal documents. See PHN, 'Hawker Problems in HK'; T. G. McGee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong: A Study of Planning and Policy in a Third World City* (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1973), pp1-2.

was conducted with an agenda to influence both local and global policy on urban development and housing, with Hong Kong as a key case study.¹¹ McGee begins by describing hawkers through economic, legal and social lenses. However, in his attempts to frame hawkers in this way, he returns to the complex question of how hawkers might be defined in Hong Kong in relation to the materiality of the hawker pitch. While he first defines hawkers as those practising legally and collectively in specific pitches (such as an authorised bazaar), other factors, such as hawkers who sell wares illegally and individually, those who build and move their stalls between 'unauthorised' pitches, or those who define themselves in other ways (such as refusing to be defined as *siu fan* – the Cantonese term for hawker), suggest that application of 'hawker' to specific physical spaces has been erratic and inconsistent.¹²

Thus, the concept of the pitch created in this thesis could be an effective alternative. In the 1980s, anthropologist Josephine Smart followed with her research on the political economies of hawkers, demonstrating the continued relevance of hawkers beyond the 1970s.¹³ Drawing on sociology and anthropology, Smart's study of hawkers in Hong Kong offers a valuable qualitative reading of the hawker environment in the 1980s, frequently considering space as a core point of antagonism between hawkers and the Hong Kong government, as well as part of hawker strategy to navigate policing and government policy.¹⁴ Examining the formal and informal approaches to space surrounding hawkers, Smart directly connects government hawker policy to hawkers' own informal practices. She argues that:

¹¹ See D. W. Drakakis-Smith, 'Urban Renewal in an Asian Context: A Case Study in Hong Kong', *Urban Studies*, 13.3 (1976), pp295–305.

¹² See McGee, pp3-10.

¹³ Josephine Smart, *The Political Economy of Street Hawkers in Hong Kong*, Occasional Papers and Monographs, 81 (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1989).

¹⁴ Josephine Smart, 'Dog Kings, Triads, And Hawkers: Spatial Monopoly Among The Street Hawkers In Hong Kong', *Canadian Journal of Development Studies / Revue Canadienne d'études Du Développement*, 4.1 (1983), pp158–163; Josephine Smart, 'The Impact of Government Policy on Hawkers', *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 8.2 (1986), pp260–279.

the spatial behaviour and operational characteristics of street hawkers cannot be fully understood outside the context of their response to state intervention. In turn, the nature of state intervention in street hawking cannot be fully appreciated until one has a thorough understanding of the state's response to the changing organizational dynamics of street hawking in Hong Kong.¹⁵

Through in-depth observation and contextualisation, she recounts the social controls at play surrounding hawker activity, including those between hawkers themselves, as well as between hawkers and the police, customers, shopkeepers and triad groups. The study makes clear the malleability of the individual and collective hawker space, which can 'expand and contract' to accommodate hawker needs and social demand, adjust to time and function, and dissipate in the face of the authorities.¹⁶ As such, her perspective offers a nuanced insight into the spatial dynamics of hawkers beyond simple cause and effect of policy, centring the constant adaptations made by various actors. I interpret this further, by suggesting that the pitch is therefore both materially composed of and shaped by these negotiations, and the spatial arena in which this takes place.

Most relevant to this chapter regarding the pitch is Smart's study 'of the effects of establishing a hawker permitted place'.¹⁷ Using the case of Shui Wo Street in Kwun Tong in 1984, she provides a broader history of hawkers in the area from the 1950s before analysing the contemporary situation. This study makes the clear link between several different types of consumption spaces and acknowledges both their co-existence and contradictions, making the connection between the construction of markets complexes, the demand for markets and bazaars, and the hawker permitted place policy.¹⁸ In doing so, she constructs a non-linear narrative of hawkers that crosses time (the overlaps in state approach, policies, attitudes, etc.) and space (consumption

¹⁵ Josephine Smart, 'How to Survive in Illegal Street Hawking in Hong Kong', in ed, Gracia Clarke, *Traders Versus the State* (Westview Press, 1988), pp112.

¹⁶ Smart in Clarke, pp101–107.; Smart, 1983, pp159–160.

¹⁷ Smart, 1986.

¹⁸ Smart, 'The Impact of Government Policy on Hawkers', p262.

spaces as well as various districts and sites of negotiation) using empirical data. Nevertheless, much of her published work is oriented towards policy rather than influencing a theoretical or methodological approach. This was solidified more recently, where Smart and her partner Alan Smart (also an important scholar in Hong Kong history and anthropology) updated this agenda in a 2017 article entitled 'Formalization as confinement in colonial Hong Kong', combining their experiences of conducting ethnographic research on street vendors and squatters respectively.¹⁹ Their conclusions relate their work, perhaps retrospectively, to the more recent discourse on informality in other places, spotlighting the earlier historiography of scholars in Hong Kong that could inform these ideas.²⁰ Indeed, the article is a reminder of the real and continuous histories of such spaces working against suppressive and often violent government structures of control, through strategic notions of space such as the pitch.

Histories of hawkers and consumption in Hong Kong more broadly, rarely include such an elastic approach to the subject. However, since this flurry of scholarly interest in hawkers in the 1970s and 1980s, the literature has recently expanded, particularly in fields such as food studies, urban planning, visual ethnography, spatiality and notions of public space, largely through a contemporary lens – again showing the significance of hawkers in Hong Kong's cultural history.²¹ This cross-disciplinary flexibility has generated a more nuanced approach, and a comparative scholarship on hawkers in Hong Kong. Still, while many continue to use ethnography as a key methodology,

¹⁹ Alan Smart and Josephine Smart, 'Formalization as Confinement in Colonial Hong Kong', *International Sociology*, 32.4 (2017), pp437–453.

²⁰ Smart and Smart, pp449–450.

²¹ Hikaru Kinoshita, 'The Street Market as an Urban Facility in Hong Kong', in ed. by Pu Miao, The GeoJournal Library, *Public Places in Asia Pacific Cities: Current Issues and Strategies*, (Springer, 2001), pp71–86.; Melissa Calaresu and Danielle van den Heuvel, *Food Hawkers: Selling in the Streets from Antiquity to the Present* (Routledge, 2016).; Ngai Keung Chan, 'Place-Making and Communication Practice: Everyday Precarity in a Night Market in Hong Kong', *Space and Culture*, 21.4 (2018), pp439–454.; Parul Rewal, 'Hawkers in Hong Kong: The Informal Sector in a Contemporary City', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society China*, 78, (1), (2018) pp285–319.; Brian Kwok, 'Spatial Tactics of Hong Kong Street Hawkers: A Case Study of Fa Yuen Street.' *Visual Ethnography*, 8(1) (2019) pp44–61.

few studies turn to material analysis in combination with historical context. Indeed, the term 'hawker' has historically been assigned to many different categories and spaces. While McGee is satisfied with the Cantonese term *siu fan* as a working definition, what is missing from his analysis (and other early literature) is any spatial analysis, despite space being the very aspect that he introduces his study with.

In response to such literature, the 'pitch' is my own attempt to emphasise the fact that space lies at the heart of the history of hawkers in Hong Kong. It is understandable that at the height of the hawker problem in the 1970s and 1980s, when these studies were published, the main objective was to affect policy change sympathetic to the hawking and squatter community. But the literature since then has rarely departed from this solely socio-political angle, despite the recognition that it is precisely the material and spatial aspect of hawkers (and hawking) that has historically made them both an attraction (to scholars) and a target (for the authorities), particularly in colonial contexts. Many also return to conclusions concerning hawker policy as opposed to broadening narratives of hawking overall. In focusing on Hong Kong consumption spaces as my own scholarly 'pitch', this thesis aims to open alternative avenues for writing Hong Kong's modern history in non-linear and non-hierarchical ways.

1.0b 'Licensed hawkers may lawfully hawk'²²

In Hong Kong, the issue of hawking had been a point of antagonism from the city's earliest years of colonisation. However, the first official hawker report to be published in the post-war period was the *Megarry Report* of 1947.²³ This report set the tone for the hard-line post-war policy against hawking with the final goal of removing hawkers altogether. Nevertheless, it also introduced 'the establishment of fixed pitches' and licences for 'Hong

²² The Hawker Report, p1; HKU, HLHKO, Ordinance No.9 of 1858, The Market Ordinance 1858, p421.

²³ Hawker Report, p1. See also McGee, pp42–44.

Kong born and needy persons' following the strife of World War II, as well as continued rigorous raids, and stringent restrictions.²⁴

With a sharp increase in population to over two million people by 1950, squatting and overcrowded housing became a particularly pressing problem for Hong Kong.²⁵ With already limited housing options, erecting makeshift housing on the peripheries of the urban centres in illegal 'squatter settlements', on what was deemed Crown land, seemed like the only option.²⁶ By 1950, the squatter population had increased to 330,000, eleven times the number in 1948.²⁷ Although squatter clearance drives had already increased, the colonial government were concerned about the potential for resistance or coercion of squatting communities and wanted to avoid conflict (and international criticism) where possible.²⁸

With this influx of people and a consequent sudden demand for more food and services, hawkers were a useful and necessary side effect of the new arrivals. With little government intervention, hawkers were able to support the population with necessary goods and services, particularly with food.²⁹ As McGee notes in his research, while police did not have the capacity to enforce hawker policy, doing so:

would involve the Government in a relief programme which it could not afford: 'It would be cruel to smash this rice-bowl by prohibiting hawking at once summarily and entirely before some satisfactory alternatives have been evolved'.³⁰

²⁴ Hawker Report, p1. During the Second World War, Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese.

²⁵ According to Vaughan and Dwyer, 2,360,000 by May 1950. T. D. Vaughan and D. J. Dwyer, 'Some Aspects of Postwar Population Growth in Hong Kong', *Economic Geography*, 42.1 (1966), 37–51. In the 1940s, the private sector had dealt with this by increasing subdivisions in private housing, the practice of splitting tenement buildings into more living spaces therefore increasing the density of each dwelling. Alan Smart, 'Housing in Hong Kong', in ed. by Yi Pan and Liwen Yu *Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2003), p317.

²⁶ D. J. Dwyer, 'Urban Squatters: The Relevance of the Hong Kong Experience', *Asian Survey*, 10.7 (1970), pp607–613.

²⁷ Smart in Pan and Yu, p322.

²⁸ Smart in Pan and Yu, pp322-323.

²⁹ McGee, p44.

³⁰ McGee, p44.

However, in 1952 and 1955 respectively, several public market halls were built. These were spaces allocated for hawking, and the hawker policy was changed to allow for unrestricted issuing of pedlar licences in conjunction with street closures and assigned hawking streets as authorised 'pitches'.³¹ While the purpose of licensing was to attempt to handle and account for the numbers of hawkers, and unrestricted issuing in attempt to encourage applications, there was also the clear intention of the government to profit from licencing fees. According to Tse, 'hawking without licences had become a semi-officially accepted fact. [...] The "laissez faire" policy of the fifties resulted in a deteriorating congestion problem in the non-prohibited areas'.³² Two main issues arose from this general free-for-all. Firstly, pedlar hawkers quickly became 'static', meaning that they would take semi-permanent positions in space in an unofficial fixed pitch. Secondly, given the unlimited licensing and lack of policing, many hawkers did not apply for a licence altogether and hawkers numbers exploded without sufficient data to allow for the government to understand the extent of the hawker situation. Thus, although the pitch was already a government-sanctioned space for hawkers in the early 1950s, such a concept was appropriated by hawkers to suit their own spatial dynamics, backfiring on government attempts to control them.

The pitch became a moot strategy for government intervention into the hawker problem, neither offering a sense of numbers of hawkers nor as a mechanism for control. While on the one hand the government understood hawking to be necessary given the dire state of the colony in the 1950s, on the other, their own lack of understanding of the hawker situation served to undermine their authority. The noncompliance by a large proportion of hawkers to apply for and maintain licences, and therefore create their own

³¹ F. Y. Tse, *Street Trading in Hong Kong: Part III - An Examination of Government Policy and Conclusions*, Occasional Paper, 37 (Hong Kong: Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1974), p206; Hawker Report, p1.

³² Tse, p206.

illegal pitches in public space, only affirmed their negative image in the eyes of the government. In McGee's analysis:

a large number [of hawkers] do not apply for, or are not allocated licenses, but still continue to practice hawking, thereby deliberately flouting municipal laws. By challenging the government's efforts to run a clean, orderly and efficient city, they earn a reputation as "troublemakers" which, unfortunately, seems to be applied to *all* hawkers. This perspective of hawkers places them in the same broad category as "urban squatters".³³

In essence, McGee suggests that hawkers without licences and constructing illegal pitches were essentially squatting. Alongside the growing presence of squatters, hawkers expanded the landscape of illicit 'pitches' beyond the confines of squatter settlements. Squatting and consumption spaces were already connected by earlier nineteenth-century policy, where the demolition of 'buildings of wood, matting, and other inflammable materials' and 'buildings[...] inhabited by persons of ill-fame and reputation, and afford shelter to rogues and vagabonds' in or in the neighbourhood of markets was a major facet of the early Market Ordinances.³⁴ Indeed, Luk's study of hawkers and Central Market reveals the everyday overlapping of living and working in the market, including hawkers' association with self-built structures on the shoreline, and stallholders 'squatting' in the market.³⁵ Such comparisons in both the archival material and the literature thus opens up questions of how the two groups occupy space in similar ways, and how these groups are articulated by the colonial government.

1.1 Pitch-up: The problems of squatters and hawkers

As squatter settlements became increasingly large in the early 1950s, both hawker and squatter communities began occupying vast amounts of land in the urban landscape, in essence, drawing out their pitches. The Chairman of the Urban Council (UC), D. R. Holmes compared the hawkers and squatters directly, stating in a memo in 1958 that '[the hawker problem] is

³³ McGee, p3.

³⁴ Market Ordinance, 1854, p286.

³⁵ Luk, pp420–422.

analogous to the squatter problem: indeed they are both facets of the same problem'.³⁶ As Mark Chi-Kwan's article suggests about the Hong Kong population increasing to over 2.5 million, where one third were refugees, 'the problem [of people] was about the consequences of excess population on finance, housing, education, medical services, social welfare, industry, commerce and even political relations and the law.'³⁷ However, while the problem is framed as about the sheer number of people (Holmes suggests even the exact same group of people), but it was also about the control and use of land. The same memo asserted that drastic measures needed to be taken to improve the 'hawker "black spots"' requiring a 'greatly increased staff' and significant resources.³⁸ Like the ongoing squatter situation, the 'hawker problem' (and the manner in which the UC were dealing with it) was increasingly put under scrutiny as the Hong Kong government attempted to rejuvenate the economy, reputation and landscape of the colony with scarce resources and funding.³⁹ One could not be dealt with without also addressing the other.

Following the 1947 *Megarrey Report*, a second review was conducted in 1956 and 1957. On the last day of 1957, an updated *Hawker Report* led by then Assistant Director of Urban Services, Denis C. Bray, was published. Beginning with a recent history, the report reads:

There have always been hawkers in Hong Kong and from early days it has been recognized that their activities should be controlled by Government. *The problem of hawker control has grown with the growth of the population*, and the official attitude towards the problem has undergone a gradual but distinct change from that of advocating suppression of a nuisance to that of accepting and tolerating an activity for which there is an obvious demand and which plays a recognized part in the retail trade of the colony.⁴⁰

³⁶ Hong Kong Public Records Office (PRO), HKRS 41-1-1336-2, D.C.S. M 13, 13th May 1958

³⁷ Mark Chi-Kwan, 'The 'Problem of People': British Colonials, Cold War Powers, and the Chinese Refugees in Hong Kong, 1949-62, *Modern Asian Studies*, 41(6) (2007) p1146.

³⁸ PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, D.C.S. M 13, 13th May 1958.

³⁹ Mark, p1166.; Alan Smart, 2006, pp108-109.

⁴⁰ Italics added. Hawker Report, p1.

In its first statement, the report establishes that policy has changed, from one of repression to one of tolerance and recognition. The issue of hawkers is again connected to that of the new population, directly relating one to the other. Indeed, it suggests an optimistic perseverance and rationalism to the cause, claiming that the recommendations, 'if adopted, [may] achieve a greater measure of success because they are concerned less with theoretical arguments about hawking and more with the detailed situation as it now exists'.⁴¹ Clearly the report's authors were confident in their assessment that Hong Kong was approaching a new dawn in dealing with crises such as hawking, in the way that they had, rather radically and seemingly successfully, responded to the problem of squatter fires.⁴² They claimed that hawkers, like squatters, would be treated with the same conscientious approach, beginning with a close survey of the situation, and the setting up of a new Police USD department.⁴³

The solution was to attempt to categorise and define the boundaries of the hawker pitch in its various forms.⁴⁴ Following the release of the report in the spring of 1957, policies such as the reduction of space used, types of licences, and hours of practice were published as to be enforced by the USD team. Such strategies were comparable to the resettlement estates, for example, through the limited numbers of adults in each unit and the implementation of rental payments. But once the recommendations were accepted, Holmes urged in the *South China Morning Post (SCMP)* that the UC did not want to impose 'any unreasonable restrictions' on hawkers.⁴⁵ Indeed, the article emphasised the slow and careful approach that the UC was hoping

⁴¹ Hawker Report, p2.

⁴² However, as Alan Smart argues, important decisions were largely left until beyond emergency levels, but such acts of welfare were publicly presented as a radically humanitarian response for a colonial territory. See Smart in Pan and Yu, pp308–48.; Smart, 2006, p109.

⁴³ Hawker Report, p2.

⁴⁴ Hawker Report, pp29–30.

⁴⁵ PHN, 'Hawker Problems in HK: Report and Recommendations of Select Committee - HOW TO REGAIN CONTROL', *SCMP*, 5th February 1958, p7.

to take, especially concerning the new USD 'uniformed and trained' special staff for hawker control. Holmes is quoted saying:

I intend to proceed cautiously and perhaps more slowly than some members might wish. *There are difficulties and pitfalls to which we should be most unwise to shut our eyes.*⁴⁶

Such caution had clear reasoning. With the riots of 1956 fresh in public memory, the UC were clearly aware of hawkers' role in public life and the influence they had in getting the public on the government's side.⁴⁷ As part of (or indeed the same group as) refugee and squatter communities, and historically associated with or susceptible to pressure from triad groups, hawkers were understood to be key nodes in community integration projects as well.⁴⁸ Thus adjustment of the hawker pitch was seen to be the most achievable option, therefore reducing the size of stalls of all types to fit within a government-authorised pitch. However, as McGee notes, 'the solution to the problem of providing enough space was not spelled out in great detail' and largely relied on existing and new personnel to somehow implement and enforce pitches while also keeping tensions to a minimum.⁴⁹ While the proposals needed to commit to enforcing policy surrounding the hawker pitch, there is no doubt that the UC was making a compromise when it came to its approach to hawkers in the hope that a more amicable relationship between the public and authorities could be reached.

⁴⁶ Italics added. PHN, 'Hawker Problems in HK', p7.

⁴⁷ The 1956 riots, also known as the Double Ten Riots, took place on October 10th. Fights took place between Pro-Kuomintang and Pro-CCP camps, mostly in the factory areas of Tsuen Wan. Violence was led by 'enraged refugees' who reacted to a Resettlement officer ripping down two Nationalist flags in Lei Cheng Uk Resettlement Estate (Cheung Sha Wan). The military and police intervened, and the riot ended in 59 deaths, over 3000 arrests, and four convicted rioters hanged for murder. In comparison to the 1966 and 67 riots, this event has factored much less in the discourse of Hong Kong's social history. See R. B. E. Price, *Resistance in Colonial and Communist China, 1950-1963: Anatomy of a Riot* (Routledge, 2019).

⁴⁸ Smart, 1983, p160; Mark, 2007, p1153.

⁴⁹ With that said, McGee also notes some of the strategic experiments that the USD and the Police (prior to the HCF) employed to 'make it impossible for undesirable elements to work a racket' such as queuing for daily allocation by ballot in November 1957. Such strategies seemed to have mixed success. McGee, p49.

The new 'special staff' was dubbed the 'Hawker Control Force' (HCF). Created and despatched between 1959 and 1960, they were assigned to various districts across Hong Kong and Kowloon, with the objective of 'exercising control' over hawkers operating in and around markets, checking licences and generally assisting police with hawker issues.⁵⁰ Neither strictly police officers nor urban civil servants, members of the HCF were presented as serving the public by shepherding hawkers and tidying spaces, and generally supervising responsible care and appropriate boundaries of hawker pitches. Split into several HCF District teams, each were responsible for keeping hawkers to the pitches they had been allocated, but it was quickly realised that 'neither space nor manpower was forthcoming in sufficient amounts'.⁵¹ Although illegal hawker arrests could be conducted by police as well, due to the vast numbers of hawkers, the HCF was overwhelmingly assigned to arrest and dismantle illegal hawker pitches, or hawkers that had expanded beyond their pitch. Nonetheless, in the early years of the HCF, it was questioned internally as to whether the UC structure could fundamentally work at all. One memo questioned 'if the existence of the HCF in 15 parts of the Island and 7 parts of Kowloon, somewhat arbitrarily selected, only pushes the problem elsewhere, and aggravates the Police's burden outside, what do we think we are doing?'⁵²

1.1a What goes on, elsewhere

Disagreements over the HCF (i.e., whether it worked or should exist at all) was present from the beginning. The question of the hawker's 'right' to their pitch in public space was at the forefront of debates. Fundamentally, whether hawkers themselves should be allowed to occupy and proliferate in the first place was questioned both in society and by authorities.⁵³ Following the release of the 1957 *Hawker Report*, the well-respected UC member Brook

⁵⁰ PRO, HKRS850-1-6, General comments on future of Hawker Control Force and Hawker Liaison Units

⁵¹ McGee p52, p55.

⁵² PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, M71, ACS(C), 4th October 1962.

⁵³ PHN, 'Hawker Problem' *SCMP*, 9th December 1966, p14; PHN, 'Hawker Problems in HK', p7.

Bernacchi added that the issue of hawkers divided public opinion, and even opinion within the Council:

individual opinions vary from the extreme of believing that hawkers who 'are, after all, only trying to earn an honest living' should be given a free hand to carry on their trade without serious interference from the Council to those who consider that large-scale hawking is incongruous and outmoded in the streets of a big modern city [...] and that the only real solution is total abolition.⁵⁴

Both extremes were justified by modernity, with the 'pro-hawking' camp viewing hawking from the perspective of humanitarianism and the 'anti-hawking' camp arguing in the interests of modern infrastructure. Indeed, the government saw it as important to be seen to have a modern approach to the colony in the eyes of the local and international press. Following the beginning of public housing in Hong Kong, in particular, the Hong Kong government questioned to what extent the colony should be seen as a welfare state.⁵⁵ As well as refugees and squatters, hawkers emerged as central figures in these debates. As independent facilitators to the refugee and squatter community, and external to official colonial government welfare programmes, hawkers were entangled in these issues as both aids and antagonists to modern ideas of colonial rule.⁵⁶ They were also a group which garnered intense public interest, as a reflection and manifestation of how the new post-war Hong Kong government planned to act in regard to social welfare. Whether hawkers would be allowed to 'pitch-up' in the street, therefore taking public space as their domain, or as their sphere, had political implications.

In addition, the discussion of *how* hawkers would be allowed to pitch was largely based around balancing factors of public perception and the value of space in hawker control decisions. A memo from the Assistant Colonial Secretary Alastair Trevor Clark, rhetorically asked whether a 'fundamental question then is, apart from the righteous need of the general public that

⁵⁴ PHN, 'Hawker Problems in HK', p7.

⁵⁵ See Mark (2007).

⁵⁶ Smart, 'The Impact of Government Policy on Hawkers', 1988.

streets and public places should be orderly, whether control of indiscriminate hawking does have an economic side to it', referencing a previous discussion that hawkers reduced the cost of living, and therefore the space used could be justified.⁵⁷ Concluding not, Clark suggested that

we could therefore afford to stand on the position that provided open places and streets which are normally seen by tourists and important visitors are kept tidy, *it does not matter very much what goes on elsewhere*. I am not quite sure how this could be wrapped up for public consumption. In any event the HCF is not yet strong enough to achieve even that position.⁵⁸

In short, there was a belief that the government could turn a blind eye to untamed hawker pitches, so long as they did not impede on the territory's international reputation. While this was not the opinion of all members of the UC, there were few other options than to find ways to prioritise HCF resources. In February 1962, a *Supplementary Hawker Report* was adopted unanimously by the UC, emphasising smaller level policy such as the speedier provision of markets and bazaars, restriction of licences, and the expansion of the HCF.⁵⁹ The report hinged on the doubling of the HCF, including an additional 74 posts for the New Territories, 'bearing in mind the tremendous expansion [...] being planned, and recognising that hawkers tend to follow the population'.⁶⁰

Indeed 'elsewhere', the New Territories had thus far been left behind and had not received any additional support in establishing and controlling hawker pitches. This was in spite of the satellite town developments having already begun. Extension of the HCF had already been put forward in 1960 by the New Territories District Commissioner D.R. Holmes who urged that:

⁵⁷ The Acting Financial Secretary however, when mentioning this possibility, retorted that 'this is a fallacy of the same order as that of allowing motorists to park on the street because it is cheaper. It is true as long as there are not too many hawkers not too many cars.' PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, M67, Acting F.S., 4th August 1962.; PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, M71, ACS(C), 4th October 1962.

⁵⁸ Italics added. PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, M71, ACS(C), 4th October 1962.

⁵⁹ Bazaars and markets will be explored further in the following chapters.

⁶⁰ PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, DUS to Hon CS, 27th February 1963, The Hawker Control Force.

conditions are as bad as in any of the urban hawker 'blackspots'. [...] The institution of stricter controls in the urban areas than those enforced in the New Territories could well result in an exodus of hawkers [...] that such a trend is a very real possibility has been demonstrated by past experience with squatters.⁶¹

This was especially urgent for Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung, where development projects had already been planned to increase to a population of half a million by 1965 through the public housing programme. In these areas, 'the problem of land utilization and town planning are difficult enough already without adding the problem caused by an uncontrollable mob of hawkers. The problem exists now and is getting worse day by day'.⁶² But by 1963, a year after the adoption of the *Supplementary Hawker Report*, the Director of Urban Services (DUS), in agreement with the Colonial Secretary, concluded that expanding the HCF to this scale was totally unfeasible.⁶³ Still it seemed too little too late, as at the 1963 Urban Council Annual Meeting, businessman and unofficial UC member Wilfred S. B. Wong warned 'we must also bear in mind the conditions [...] and future hawking problems in Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan' considering that this will bear even more pressure on the already 'mooted' HCF.⁶⁴

In addition to the general condition of the New Territories, the lack of public housing estate facilities made control of hawker pitches even more difficult in these areas, and estate infrastructure quickly proved inadequate. By 1964, hawkers in resettlement estates were already occupying the entire estate as their pitch, obstructing roads around estates, deteriorating estate blocks, and blocking infrastructure such as main road drains with 'hawker debris', thus posing serious consequences during flooding.⁶⁵ The

⁶¹ PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2 District Commissioner NT to Deputy Colonial Secretary, Hawker Control Force: Extension of Operations to the New Territories, 31st October 1960.

⁶² PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, 31st October 1960.

⁶³ PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2, DUS to Hon CS, 27th February 1963, The Hawker Control Force.

⁶⁴ PRO, HKRS41-1-1336-2 Extract of Mr Wilfred S.B. Wong's Speech, Urban Council Annual Debate 1963.

⁶⁵ PRO, HKRS 41-1-1336-2, Minutes of a Meeting held in the PWD Conference Room on Friday 15th May 1964 to discuss the Hawker Problem in Resettlement Estates, p1.

Commissioner for Resettlement was already anticipating a serious need for hawker prevention in upcoming estates as well as plans to alleviate the situation in existing ones.⁶⁶ At this point, fencing around estates to contain hawkers had been trialled with some success, but with pushback from other departments citing access to fire equipment.⁶⁷ Control through the HCF was also not possible. In October 1965, the Hawker Committee, Resettlement Management Committee, and Resettlement Policy Select Committee came together as estates had 'deteriorated greatly due to lack of control, and since he understood that difficulties in recruitment would not permit the Hawker Control Force to assume responsibility [...] within the foreseeable future'.⁶⁸ Although the Resettlement Department (RD) were prepared to make prosecutions, UC member Brook Bernacchi was 'anxious to avoid the situation arising where resettlement estate staff became "policemen" in the eyes of the tenants', all the more pertinent since the 1957 riots had begun in response to an incident with a junior Resettlement Estate Officer in Lei Cheng Uk Estate.⁶⁹

In spite of these cautions, the UC finally relented to investing in further policing of hawkers and hawker pitches rather than construction of more market facilities. Considered to be a faster and cheaper solution (and indeed a show of authoritative assertion of space after a series of civil unrest), the HCF was significantly expanded.⁷⁰ By March 1969, there were 40 public retail markets managed by the UC (not including hawkers bazaars).⁷¹ In comparison, the HCF had expanded from only 72 officers in the previous year

⁶⁶ PRO, HKRS 41-1-1336-2, Minutes of a Meeting held in the PWD Conference Room on Friday 15th May 1964 to discuss the Hawker Problem in Resettlement Estates, p1.

⁶⁷ PRO, HKRS 41-1-1336-2, 15th May 1964, p1.

⁶⁸ PRO, HKRS 438-1-44, Minutes of a joint meeting between the Hawker Select Committee, Resettlement Select Committee, Resettlement Policy Select Committee, 6th October 1965.

⁶⁹ PRO, HKRS 438-1-44, Minutes of a joint meeting between the Hawker Select Committee, Resettlement Select Committee, Resettlement Policy Select Committee, 6th October 1965.

⁷⁰ HKRS 168-13-47, A Discussion Paper for the Working Party on the Future of the Hawker Control Force, 14th November 1975.

⁷¹ PRO, Annual Departmental Report of the Urban Council, 1968-69, p13.

to having recruited 514 officers.⁷² Following the 1967 riots, recruitment drives were increased significantly and patrol areas were expanded in 1968 to include two key estate areas: Choi Hung Estate in Ngau Chi Wan and Yue Man Square in Kwun Tong.⁷³ Indeed, significant investment was quietly put into the HCF as opposed to other alternative methods. This did not go unnoticed; McGee was even interviewed in an article published at the time saying that 'more investment earlier in market and bazaar space, and less in the Hawker Control Force' would have been far more productive.⁷⁴ Even so, only the two additional estates on the periphery of the urban centres (but not as far as Tsuen Wan) were added to the HCF beat.⁷⁵ The lack of clear vision and resources for the HCF, however, resulted in a situation 'that the Force proved ineffective and sterile in performing its allotted task; it subsequently became the object of derision and scorn'.⁷⁶ Without either more markets or hawker control, New Towns estates would continue to be something of a 'wild west' in which hawkers could thrive.

1.2 Pitching roofs, stalling hawkers

Following the end of the 1967 riots, the UC embarked on further careful 'cleansing' campaigns of hawker pitches as political tensions eased.⁷⁷ The UC set up two new committees in 1968: the Hawker Policy Select Committee and the Hawker Management Select Committee. These two groups would work towards a 'New Hawker Policy of 1969' which largely reiterated the 1957 *Hawker Report* with more emphasis on policing and actioning the previous report.⁷⁸ Simultaneously the newly established City District Offices started Hawker Liaison Committees designed to keep closer

⁷² PRO, Annual Departmental Report of the Urban Council, 1968–69, p12.

⁷³ PRO, Annual Departmental Report of the Urban Council, 1968–69, p12.

⁷⁴ PHN, 'Hawker bazaars may not work', *SCMP*, 5th April 1971, p7.

⁷⁵ PRO, HKRS 850-1-6 General comments on future of Hawker Control Force and Hawker Liaison Units, 1970, p1.

⁷⁶ PRO, HKRS 850-1-6 Hawker Control Force and Hawker Liaison Units, 1970, p1.

⁷⁷ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Memorandum for Members of the Resettlement Management Select Committee and Hawker Management Select Committee, "Tidiness Teams", RM 50/69, 9th August 1969.

⁷⁸ McGee, pp62–63.

association with hawker groups in Hong Kong's various districts. Cleansing hawker-problem areas had already begun before the 1969 policy was released. Targeted cleansing campaigns had been initiated and documented carefully with 'before and after' photographs from at least the summer of 1968 until 1969, when the idea of 'Tidiness Teams' was established.⁷⁹ This is notably before the widely acknowledged 'Keep Hong Kong Clean' campaigns (KHKC) in estates and public spaces, which only began in 1972. In fact, 'tidying up', including the 'tidying up' of hawker stalls, had been framed as a public service since at least 1968, together with these earlier clean-up campaigns.⁸⁰ This had much to do with winning over public favour in the aftermath of 1967, and coincided with shifts in other public initiatives in 1969, such as the organisation of the first Festival of Hong Kong.⁸¹

Significantly, part of these 'tidying up' efforts included the implementation of standardised physical hawker stall designs. Resembling a series of plans shared in the *Hong Kong Government Gazette Supplement* some years earlier, the plan shows five different diagrams for fixed pitch, general purpose and cooked food stalls (Figure 1.01). A fixed pitch stall (shown in Diagram V) was featured in one such carefully publicised 'tidy up' in Tsuen Wan in 1969, on Chuen Lung Street (also known as Tsuen Lung St). In May 1969, a series of photographs taken by the Government Information

⁷⁹ See Hawker Bazaar chapter.

⁸⁰ HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, 2nd July 1969.

⁸¹ The Festival of Hong Kong, or Hong Kong Festival, was a festival of large- and small-scale activities across the city held in 1969, 1971 and 1973. Participants included government departments, local authorities, special interest groups, sports clubs, schools and youth groups, local businesses, arts groups, local TV and radio and others. Activities included parades, performances, demonstrations (such as those by the Fire department), fashion shows, the Miss Hong Kong pageant, and concerts. The brand identity of the festival was well known for its radical approach to its graphic design, contributing to the establishment of a modern visual language for the city for the first time. There is astonishingly little literature about the festival, with only one recent article by Allan Pang, and an impressive visual and oral history collection on Hong Kong Memory. Allan T. F. Pang, 'Entertainment, Chinese Culture, and Late Colonialism in Hong Kong', *The Historical Journal*, 2023, pp1–24.; See Hong Kong Memory, Festival of Hong Kong Collection, 2012 < https://www.hkmemory.hk/MHK/collections/festival_of_hong_kong/about/index.html>. For Hong Kong graphic design see the work of Wendy Siuyi Wong, for example, Wendy Siuyi Wong, 'Detachment and Unification: A Chinese Graphic Design History in Greater China Since 1979', *Design Issues*, 17.4 (2001), pp51–71.

Services (GIS) show 'workers of the Urban Services Department helping to clear the debris in Chuen Lung Street, Tsuen Wan' (Figures 1.02a, b, &c).⁸² As one of the streets in the existing commercial area at the time, Chuen Lung St was close to local private housing as well as a short distance from Fuk Loi Estate, a newly-built LCGH estate in Tsuen Wan. As such, the press coverage of hawkers, and the reigning in of their pitches by the authorities through both design and control forces, shaped a new narrative of government public relations and responsibility. The role of the stall was thus to give a structure and form to the pitch, where previously hawkers could define the spatiality and materiality of their pitch independently.

The huge range and vast space these independently arranged pitches covered are most clearly differentiated in the press images of these hawker cleansing campaigns. The two chosen photographs of this 'Tidying Up' (indicated by the green tick showing these images were published) show the stark contrast before and after clearance (Figures 1.02b and c). In the first image, workers in basic work attire (including gloves, a small hat, shirt and boots) are shown to be clearing huge piles of debris strewn across the street into a refuse vehicle in front (Figure 1.02b). Other photographs in the series clarify the extent of the materials removed, included various sizes of wooden boxes, metal and bamboo poles, pieces of plasterboard and barrels.⁸³ The second photograph depicts a uniformed man pointing out the structure of the 'new stalls' [(Figure 1.02c). The uniform he wears is crisp and white, with a white hat, shirt, and black leather belt. He is posed here with a small group of men, perhaps local officials or people from the local hawker association, and the staging of the photograph is clearly directive of the stalls design elements. The design of the stall is simple, made of a 'light metal roof to be painted white' and a wooden stall standing 4x3x3 feet high, reaching six feet at the

⁸² Attached press release in Government Information Services Photo Library (GIS), Book 375, 5582/1014

⁸³ GIS, 375, 5582/1014

front of the stall at the highest point of the roof.⁸⁴ The original 1960 plan is captioned with the explanation that the 'whole unit [is] to be painted green', likely to be the ubiquitous dark green that is still seen in contemporary Hong Kong.⁸⁵

A set of identical 'before and after' shots of the street show the distinct change in the materiality and spatiality of the pitch, before the authoritative measures and after as laid out by the new stalls (Figures 1.03 and 1.04).⁸⁶ The 'before' image, taken on the 1st April 1969, shows this street was covered by an array of cobbled materials, tarpaulins, sheets and boards (Figure 1.03). Produce in large baskets can be seen at the entrance to the street and reaches through into a central walkway where customers peruse the goods displayed, suggesting that they were being sold facing the centre of the street as opposed to towards the pavements on either side. The stall point of display pushed well out into the road. This is made clear by the two cars passing tightly against the edge of the end stall as customers browse. A final photograph after clearance taken on the 31st May shows the street's completed set-up with two rows of fixed pitch stalls on either side of the road, yet to be filled with goods (Figure 1.04). The bright white roofs (perhaps before painting) highlight the repetition and consistency of the stalls prior to their use, and a clear central walkway in the centre of the street can be seen. Gaps are left between the stalls, indicated by the spaces between the white roofs. Notably the stalls face inwards towards the pavements, but the central road (perhaps while still closed) is still used by pedestrians. A row of five adults comfortably taking up the space in the pedestrianised road shows to

⁸⁴ Imperial measures used in original documents. Approximately 1.2m x 0.9m x 0.9m, 1.8m at highest point of the roof. Generally, *cek*, the Cantonese for the imperial foot, is still most popularly used for everyday purposes in Hong Kong (this is different to the Mainland Chinese *cek* which is slightly larger than the imperial foot).

⁸⁵ GIS, 375, 2662/1-6; PRO, Hong Kong Government Gazette, Supplement no.2, 23rd September 1960, X1000211.

⁸⁶ Such enlarged 'before and after' photographs would be suggested for exhibition 'in the windows of City District Offices' alongside 'graphic illustrations of a licensed Cooked Food Stall, with good reasons for the insistence upon statutory hygiene paraphernalia' in a meeting in mid-1969, but it is unclear if these photographs were amongst those exhibited. See PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, HP/14/69, 2nd July 1969.

what extent the previous stalls had occupied the road. Both pavements either side remain open, and the bars at the back of the stalls and the angle of the roof tilting inwards towards the road indicate that the point of sale was now directed towards the pavement rather than the road.

Another image series taken by the GIS shows, to an even clearer degree, the proximity and overlap of hawker pitches and public housing estates, as well as further expressions of authority (Figures 1.05a and b). In October 1969, an extensive clean-up campaign along Hoi Pa Street in Tsuen Wan, which runs alongside Fuk Loi Estate, documents the presence of both the HCF and the Police on duty while the clean-up crew conducted their work. Unlike the previous series which seemed to present the new alternative stalls as a replacement for the existing hawkers bazaar (a form that I will examine in some depth in the following chapter), this series presents a rather more assertive scene – the photographs document the process from arrival to complete clearance (Figures 1.05a-c). In the middle of the series, Figure 1.05a shows the clearance of a row of hawker stalls on the northern side of the street, adjacent to the estate; the unmistakable façade of the estate, with washing lines hung out and several faces of estate residents peeking out from behind the balconies, can be seen filling the entire background of the image. In the foreground of Figure 1.05a are multiple officers overseeing the deconstruction of several hawker stalls already under way by a large crew of people. Materials can be seen piled into the back of a UC vehicle. In Figure 1.05b, two members of the HCF and the Police can be seen in the centre, where the tell-tale white uniform can be distinguished against the beige shorts and long black boots of the Police Force uniform. Members of the public and shopkeepers on the ground floor of the estate also witness the efficient undertaking.

Other images in the series suggest some resistance from hawkers against the removal of their stalls, and thus their pitch (Figure 1.05c). One candid photograph shows Elsie Elliot (UC Hawker Committee Member and a

strong advocate for the hawker community) amongst the crowd (#8 in Figure 1.05c); another juxtaposes a hawker stall set up in front of a construction site for part of the estate, a large pile of building materials, and a sign announcing 'NO HAWKING' (#30 in 1.05c). The contrast of approach to documentation between the Chuen Lung Street and Hoi Pa Street suggests that the two series were used for different purposes and audiences. Nevertheless, the very public, performative nature of the deconstruction of hawker pitches at Hoi Pa Street in itself – through the uniformed personnel, the main road in which cleansing took place in daylight hours, and the clear view that estate residents had – demonstrates the control that the UC and the colonial government wanted to project. As well as providing a service, they were also keen to present to an increasingly sympathetic public that British colonial rule was adopting a fair and assertive approach to control, particularly in light of the riots.⁸⁷ The notes from one particular Hawker Select Committee meeting, suggests such sympathy in the following terms:

good publicity in hawker matters is extremely difficult because in this field the major part of the work relates to hawker control, which is understandably unpopular among the hawkers and also likely to attract adverse comment (usually uninformed) from certain quarters of the community...this is undoubtedly an increase in public consciousness of the need generally to improve hawker areas, and this may provide the necessary counter balance to unpopular but essential measures.⁸⁸

In the context of 1967, the UC had to balance the potential for opposing discontent from both politically Left-leaning hawkers and a wider public seeking stability and peace through activities such as hawker control.⁸⁹ Any emphasis on 'positive aspects', such as improved 'appearance, cleanliness and general amenities' as well as 'economic conditions', were particularly encouraged.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, HP/14/69, 2nd July 1969.

⁸⁸ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, HP/14/69, 2nd July 1969.

⁸⁹ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, HP/14/69, 2nd July 1969.

⁹⁰ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, HP/14/69, 2nd July 1969.

1.2aThe right to pitch

In spite of some successful clearances, and removing or rearranging uncontrolled hawker pitches, reports from the Hawker Committee in 1970 showed that the clearances were short-lived: Mr Hilton Cheong-Leen, Chairman of the Committee, urged in a 1970 speech for sites for bazaars and markets, and sufficient manpower, to be provided. Finally, the New Towns were included in his plea in spite of the responsibility lying with the New Territories Department rather than the UC. Recounting an 'appalling' recent visit to Tsuen Wan, he noted:

specifically [in] Tsuen Wan, the hawker situation has completely gone out of control. Recently I saw a large Government-subsidized school in a Tsuen Wan Resettlement Estate completely surrounded on four sides by permanent illegal hawkers, which created a most unhealthy and unfavourable environment for the students attending the school. Although this problem was brought to the attention of the Government, nothing could be done as the staff of the departments concerned said they could not cope with the situation.⁹¹

With the failure of the HCF, a slow market-building programme and the continued socio-political confidence of hawkers, hawker dominance of the landscape had reached a peak by the 1970s and was destined to spread across into other areas in the New Territories. Indeed, in Tsuen Wan, issues continued well into the mid-1970s, with hawkers still dominating some of the older streets in the New Town with fears of further antagonism between hawkers and authorities, and 'dangerous' consequences for the security of Hong Kong.⁹²

Land continued to be the main issue in dealing with the hawker problem, and little attractive usable land was made available to the UC. Parking spaces were used as an excuse for the lack of appropriate government-sanctioned hawker pitches. As reported in the *SCMP* in March 1970, Colonial Secretary Sir Hugh Norman-Walker had 'told the Council [that]

⁹¹ HKRS 70-3-107, Urban Council Annual Conventional Debate, Speech by Mr Hilton Cheong-Leen, 3rd Nov 1970, p3.

⁹² See PRO, HKRS 934-4-13.

government is considering the possibility of combining hawker bazaar sites with multi-storey car parks'.⁹³ This particular article, however, had missed out the Hawker Committee's concerns, which had only recently publicly criticised the colonial government for offering the worst pickings of land for use by the UC.⁹⁴ Clearly again, various parties had strong opinions about how hawkers would appear in the landscape, even if it had been put forward that hawking would be dealt with more sympathetically.

However, with the beginning of the 1970s, another tactic was implemented to deal with hawkers and their pitch from within: a new focus on the notions of 'civic duty' and shame. Under new social reforms introduced by Governor Murray MacLehose, government relationships with the public gradually improved, and effectively reframed hawkers in the public sphere. Initiatives like the 'Keep Hong Kong Clean' (KHKC) campaign worked to the advantage of the UC rather than to the advantage of hawkers. First organised at the 28th Exhibition of Hong Kong Products in 1970-71, the UC, USD and GIS expanded the KHKC with a fully-fledged TV- and print-advertising campaign, a league of models and student volunteers encouraging the use of rubbish bins, and the famous Lap Sap Chung as its shameful mascot.⁹⁵ According to Loretta Lou, the campaign was especially effective at cultivating a collective sense of *waanbou*, meaning the protection and preservation of the environment.⁹⁶

Arguably one of Edward Arthur Hacker's most influential works as Art Director of the Information Services Department, Lap Sap Chung (the 'litter bug') provided an example of what *not* to be as part of Hong Kong's civic society. Events such as burning a giant effigy of this figure, posters of crowds chasing him and shouting 'beat filth', and songs encouraging his eradication,

⁹³ PHN, Site for hawkers in car parks, *SCMP*, 26th March 1970, p6.

⁹⁴ Bernacchi in McGee, p63.

⁹⁵ Loretta Lou, 'From Hygienic Modernity to Green Modernity: Two Modes of Modern Living in Hong Kong Since the 1970s' in ed. Yunah Lee, Megha Rajguru, *Design and Modernity in Asia: National Identity and Transnational Exchange 1945-1990* (Bloomsbury, 2022) pp11-112.

⁹⁶ Lou, p105.

all framed him (and the 'filth' he embodied) as the enemy of Hong Kong, albeit in a humorous, slapstick fashion.⁹⁷ One particular early poster of Lap Sap Chung in 1973 called upon the public to 'clean our buildings' (Figure 1.06). Lap Sap Chung towers over residential buildings as a giant monster taking over the city – a cinematic, tongue-in-cheek, and somewhat innocent approach to delivering the message of civic pride and collective effort. Only together might 'we' save 'our' buildings from the all-out destruction of litter and detritus.

Hawkers were framed as deteriorators of these buildings through the uncontrolled nature of their pitch, as estate spaces were increasingly emphasised as homes to be looked after. More specific to hawkers, traditional news outlets aligned the ongoing Tidiness Team cleansing campaigns to the HKKC campaign, alluding to hawkers themselves as real-life Lap Sap Chung. Two *SCMP* articles published in November 1972, a month after the 28th Exhibition, reported hawker clean-ups in Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate. One read:

As a result of years of misuse, the concrete surfaces on which the illegal structures stood, had deteriorated to such an extent that they have to be completely resurfaced.[...] today's operation is yet another contribution by the Resettlement Department to the "Keep Hong Kong Clean" campaign.⁹⁸

The following article, entitled 'Goodbye to old huts', reported that 'A Resettlement Department spokesman said that these illegal structures had been causing severe obstruction to tenants of the estate. He said it was time the open space was to returned to the tenants'.⁹⁹ These two unassuming articles explicitly associate the clearance work of the RD with performing the duties of restoring space, not to hawkers, but to estate residents. By neglecting their pitches, legal or illegal, hawkers were traitors in their civic duty and pride, and therefore separating them as a group from the previous

⁹⁷ Lou, p112.

⁹⁸ PRO, HKRS 70-6-812-1, 'Hawkers cleared', *SCMP*, 4th November 1972.

⁹⁹ PRO, HKRS 70-6-812-1, 'Goodbye Old Huts' *SCMP*, 25th November 1972.

squatter community they served. It is, however, notable that in the context of housing, 'tenant' is used as opposed to 'resident', further bolstering the notion of the civic 'right' to the city that the KHKC campaign projected. This anticipates the later prioritisation of home ownership, and indeed the further direction towards tenancies and the dissolving of hawker licences.

However, such a shift in the perception of hawkers, and the right of hawkers to their pitch, was not so clear cut. In the same year, there were further disputes over hawkers in the estate space, largely backed by UC member Elsie Elliot. A series of letters published in the *SCMP* from Elliot criticised an article written by Henry Ching, then director of the RD. Elliot's scathing counterargument read: 'Mr Henry Ching's exposition of "the facts" on the Kwai Chung hawker clearance is typical of the mentality of some Government servants who mistake the word Government for God'.¹⁰⁰ The conflict focused on the fact that licensed hawkers had been moved on unfairly to a bazaar site built in 1965 that was well known to be unpopular, with only twenty-four hours' notice, while illegal hawkers were being moved to more profitable new bazaars. This suggested that a hawker's right to a good pitch was arbitrary, and that having a licence did not mean hawkers could secure a suitable pitch for themselves. In other words, they were not considered to have a 'right' to the city in the way that other tenants were. Another letter published a few weeks later opened the floor to the Kwai Chung hawkers in question:

All the licensed hawkers had been paying rent to the Government for years. Since we did pay rent, why did the Government have our stalls demolished and why did they cancel our right to have stalls before the due date? We really do not understand why we, licensed hawkers, are resited to an isolated place to continue our hawking, while those who put up their stalls illegally are getting stalls in a good hawker bazaar?¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁰ PHN, Elsie Elliot, 'Facts on Hawkers, Another View', *SCMP*, 31st May 1972, p8.

¹⁰¹ PHN, Elsie Elliot, 'Hawkers Give their version', *SCMP*, 13th June 1972, p11.

Entangled with the broader politics of the right to space, hawkers participated in (via public complaints) and with (by appropriating policy) bureaucratic forms of quotidian resistance, taking advantage of various loopholes and platforms to undermine government decisions. Elliot's and the hawkers' criticisms perhaps saw through the new jovial image of government relations with the public, recognising that the underlying unfair approach towards hawkers still remained. While the city joined the parade to build up a sense of a new local identity, the negotiation of space (a mode of identity-building in itself) as part of everyday life continued.

This dispute demonstrates the realities of the changing landscape for hawkers in the 1970s. While hawkers continued to dominate in the urban areas, the somewhat public and private domestic space of the estate became a pitch where questions around which hawkers and what activities dominated had to be negotiated. With the introduction of civic campaigns and formalised market structures in estates, hawkers were cornered into siding with the government in spite of unfair treatment, while the public were increasingly brought into the fold under the authorities through well-designed advertising and social reform structures. While this certainly did not mark the end of hawkers and hawking culture, it did mean that hawkers lost a level of public sympathy. Hawkers, and the space they took up in the pitch, was said to be at odds with the image of a modern and cosmopolitan city.

1.3 The home pitch

Together with these social developments, more local research was being conducted on the consequences of such drastic urban change on both hawkers and the New Towns. Lu and Tsoi's work on hawkers in 1972, although focused on hawkers in the urban centres, also included Kwun Tong and the new estates in the satellite town. In their observations, Lu and Tsoi found that, regardless of location, hawkers played a key role in the neighbourhood:

[Hawker] dependency on the local market is high. Because of this close and recurrent relationship with the regular customers, who tend to live nearby, hawkers of this type are more sensitive to a change in location. Not only do they anticipate losing their business site but they also may find themselves deprived of their normal and customary market area as well. For such neighbourhood-type businesses the negative consequences of relocation seem most severe.¹⁰²

Indeed, this kind of research concentrated on the notion of neighbourhood much more than earlier studies had done, and with more emphasis than in government documentation. Beyond their role as facilitators for cheap food and services, hawkers were tightly connected to local relationships and kinship bonds. The study acknowledged that:

The "neighbourhood" is thus in many ways an extension of the home. The satisfaction of hawkers with their business area, their acquaintance and familiarity with neighbouring hawkers, their involvement in interpersonal relationships are among the factors which would jointly influence their attitudes towards relocation in different degrees.¹⁰³

In essence, this study suggested that hawkers in Kwun Tong understood their pitch to be an extension of their own homes, or 'the home pitch'. According to Lu and Tsoi's dataset, many hawkers chose Kwun Tong because they liked the location and thought it would be a better place for business.¹⁰⁴ About 5% of hawkers suggested that it was close to home, and more than 70% of respondents lived within 15 minutes of their stalls.¹⁰⁵ From this survey (although almost half the hawkers in Kwun Tong were unlicensed) it seems that many of the hawkers operating in Kwun Tong had taken up hawking fairly recently and at a young age, with few well-established networks between hawkers. Indeed, friends and family accounted for much of hawkers' motivation to take up hawking.¹⁰⁶ In contrast to other locations,

¹⁰² Andrew L. C. Lu and H. K. Tsoi, *Hawkers and Their Relocation in Hong Kong: A Proposed Analytical Scheme*, Occasional Paper, 24 (Hong Kong: Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973), p 3–4.

¹⁰³ Lu and Tsoi, p6.

¹⁰⁴ Andrew L. C. Lu and H. K. Tsoi, *Hawkers and Their Relocation in Hong Kong: Data II*, Occasional Paper, 27 (Hong Kong: Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973), 1A5.

¹⁰⁵ Lu & Tsoi, 1B52.

¹⁰⁶ Lu & Tsoi, 1A1.

(illegal) hawkers in Kwun Tong largely operated on carts, rather than stalls, baskets or other points of sale. The main goods sold were raw food, fruit and confectionary, suggesting that the hawkers here were relatively inexperienced, needed low stakes, and had little concern for authoritative measures.¹⁰⁷ Largely driven by family connections rather than more embedded social spatial politics (as in older hawker districts like Yau Ma Tei), the pitch in New Towns was more related to creating opportunities out of the new situation of the estate and perhaps about 'taking up space' in order to start a new life in an unfamiliar area.

Thus, the space of the estate was naturally attractive as a pitch. From the perspective of hawkers in Kwun Tong, the location of hawker stalls had to be convenient for its ease of access, and most customers visited from within the district rather than elsewhere.¹⁰⁸ As the Colony Outline Plan (COP) stated:

In low income, high density areas it is common practice for housewives to shop every day due partly to the preference of families for fresh food and partly to problems of food storage without refrigeration which relatively few families can afford or have the space for. The convenience of having commercial facilities in close proximity to the home is also highly valued by the housewife who has to work and has little time in which to do the family shopping.¹⁰⁹

As a Planning Division survey recognised, because of this deficiency of time and space at home, convenient closeness was the primary reason that hawkers flourished in New Town estates where there were few if any markets.¹¹⁰ On the other hand, consumers frequently went out of their way to

¹⁰⁷ Lu & Tsoi, IA8, IB1. Lu and Tsoi's data suggested that Kwun Tong's hawkers were rather isolated from broader hawking communities, and thus also distant from longstanding local cultures of hawking (as in Yau Ma Tei for example). This might also reflect the broader relationship to hawking in the New Towns. On the other hand, knowledge of the Hawker Liaison Unit was recorded to be higher in Kwun Tong compared to other districts, but hawkers nevertheless considered the unit to be doing badly and indeed seemed to be little concerned with any official communication surrounding hawkers and their control. See also IC1.

¹⁰⁸ Lu & Tsoi, IB2-3, IB10.

¹⁰⁹ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-11, Public Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Extract from the Colony Outline Plan, Book 3 – The Plan, Volume II Standards and Locational Factors

¹¹⁰ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Hong Kong Outline Planning Division, Town Planning Office, Survey of Hawker Customers, Kowloon and New Kowloon, December 1974, p8.

seek competitive prices and what they perceived as high-quality goods. Even with increased facilities in local areas, the ability to shop around and maintain close community contact sometimes triumphed over immediate convenience. Although 'cheapness', 'variety' and 'convenience' are criteria recognised by the Planning Division survey, the use of such criteria overlooked how any of this intersected with choice, trust and perception.¹¹¹

While hawkers did vie for proximity to estates, this did not necessary guarantee hawker integration into neighbourhood consumption patterns. Oral history records display more of the nuances of feelings for a place, influenced by habit and experience; one example is an account by Law King Hei which details how his parents navigated the lack of choice and familiarity in Kwun Tong after moving from To Kwa Wan in the 1960s:

I really felt that Kwun Tong was so rural. The environment was bad in To Kwa Wan but it was much more vibrant, more things to buy. Even my mother would go back to To Kwa Wan to buy groceries as she'd gotten to know the community there. Also because my father still worked in To Kwa Wan, after work they'd buy groceries in To Kwa Wan. My feeling was that [To Kwa Wan] was busier, [Kwun Tong] was quiet.¹¹²

Tacit knowledge and experience of a place – a shopper's own pitch – clearly informed how they shopped for groceries regardless of how such activities may have seemingly interrupted the daily routine. Kowloon City and To Kwa Wan offered a sense of vibrancy and familiarity that superseded the convenience of the shops and markets in Kwun Tong. Even though the Planning Division survey acknowledged that 'freshness' was a key factor in maintaining shopping habits, individual perceptions of quality or speciality informed by years of trust, as well as the ability to choose for one's own preferences, were overlooked as key parts of shopping decision-making.

¹¹¹ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Hong Kong Outline Planning Division, Town Planning Office, Survey of Hawker Customers, Kowloon and New Kowloon, December 1974, p3.

¹¹² Translated by author. Hong Kong Memory, TKW-LKH-SEG-001, Law King Hei, 'To Kwa Wan's centre and borders. Comparison between To Kwa Wan and surrounding areas', oral history conducted 18th February 2013, 10:27, <https://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_114/records/index.html>

Rather than simply choosing cheapness and convenience, the 'value' of goods to each household and consumer was constructed through social exchanges and experiences over time. Hawkers in New Town neighbourhoods had to manage relationships with customers and their local surroundings carefully, building networks from the ground up to establish their pitch where other areas could rely on well-established community expectations.

This mutual spatial navigation of New Towns by consumers and hawkers alike brought an unexpected volatility into the space of the estate. Competition for the best or biggest pitch was a huge concern within estate communities as well as in between districts, and in-fighting between licensed and unlicensed hawkers, and fixed-pitch and mobile hawkers, was not uncommon. In a 1974 *Sunday Herald* article about a dispute between hawkers in Yau Tong Estate, housewife Mrs Cheung Ching-pui said that while it was certainly more convenient to purchase from 'the peddlers':

I must admit that our estate has become more untidy with the influx of peddlers [...] the peddlers seem to feel that they have a right to trade at the estate. They had even marked out spaces with white paint for their stalls on the pavement.¹¹³

Meanwhile, licensed hawkers who had been moved into the local modular market and temporary bazaar felt that they had been short-changed, losing half of their business. Such territoriality of pitch had implications on the street, but within the estate, the stakes were somewhat different from before. Hawkers' brazen attitude to taking space on the estate no doubt had to do with the lack of policing, but also suggest an attempt on the part of hawkers themselves to establish a spatial culture of hawking before authorities could intervene. By drawing out the pitch themselves, thus mimicking some of the tactics utilised by the UC, hawkers took matters into their own hands, preferring to negotiate the space between them than follow other hawkers into the failing bazaar. Indeed, Mrs Cheung's comment resonates with the increasing public understanding of the estate space as requiring a 'right' to

¹¹³ PHN, T.A.Y. 'Hawkers in a Fight to Survive', *SCMP Sunday Herald*, 24th February 1974, p5.

practice and a 'right' to the land – essentially a right to the pitch. Such 'self-policing' within the community, driven by both civic campaigns and the increasing social and financial mobility of estate populations through the 1970s and 1980s, were equally powerful factors in how hawkers arranged themselves in space as regulated by the authorities.

1.3a The kitchen downstairs

On the other hand, while having to navigate these notions of rights to space, hawkers provided and created unique spatial cultures of their own in the estate. Such spatial negotiation in the neighbourhood can clearly be seen in the pitch of cooked food hawkers in estates.¹¹⁴ Cooked food hawkers, known as *dai pai dong*, had long retained a reputation as major sources of obstruction in the urban areas. In the 1957 *Hawker Report*, an entire section dedicated to cooked food hawkers stated that:

in a good site stalls can get business all day and all night. [...] The lack of control over this type of hawker has led to the complaint that he is using the public street as though it were his own private premises. The justification for the cooked food stall is that even though hygiene control is poor the stalls do serve cheap meals or snacks to many poor people, but this justification is weakened when customers are people who could well afford to patronise a proper café or restaurant.¹¹⁵

One cooked food hawker could expand their pitch and 'take over' a street on their own – perhaps even more so that other hawkers who sold groceries. The stall itself likely needed several stoves, refrigerators, freezers tanks of fish,

¹¹⁴ While cooked food hawkers made up a smaller percentage of the overall hawker population, they were an essential part of the development of New Towns from the outset to cater for construction workers. Cooked food hawking continued to be a mainstay at home as well, as early estates were ill-equipped with appropriate infrastructure for even simple home cooking. Cooking in Mark I resettlement estates was often conducted in the public corridors on the perimeter of each floor as rooms had no windows or ventilation, and although later public housing designs did include kitchen space, many designs also required initial investment by residents in order for the kitchen to function. In simpler terms, limited space for families to cook and eat together within flats meant that cheap cooked food provided by hawkers, fixed-pitched cooked food hawkers, and cheap, often illegal restaurants were essential for everyday eating, social gathering, and commensality. While this topic is beyond the scope of the thesis, this has been explored in my previous research. See Vivien Chan, *Assembling the dai pai dong: living and occupying the street in Hong Kong*, unpublished MA thesis, Royal College of Art, 2017.

¹¹⁵ Hawker Report, p11.

and 'it is this paraphernalia which causes so much nuisance'.¹¹⁶ By the 1960s, the unlimited allocation of cooked food stall licences had ceased and the majority of cooked food stall types became fixed, save for a few types of cooked snacks and confectionaries.¹¹⁷ In the 1965 amendments to the Hawker By-Laws, it was introduced to:

permit in its discretion a duly licensed hawker of cooked foods to set out in addition to each cooked food stall for which such hawker is licensed not more than 2 collapsible tables each with a surface area of not more than 4 square feet, and not more than 8 collapsible stools.¹¹⁸

Although the 'two tables, eight stools' rule was applied in an attempt to keep the open sprawl of *dai pai dong* at bay in the urban areas, it also impacted cooked food hawker pitches in the estates.

The debate over the proliferation of hawking thus applied to the housing estate as well, where hawkers were essentially making the estate and its interior space a pitch in and of itself. As had been the case for market facilities, eating facilities such as restaurants and canteens had been overlooked in initial public housing design specifications. Cooked food-hawkers stepped in to fulfil such needs. However, unlike regular hawkers of restricted goods, cooked-food hawkers were omnipresent *within* estate buildings themselves on an almost permanent basis. By 1967, it had almost become a 'set pattern' that new estates would be filled with hawkers even before estates were fully occupied.¹¹⁹ This was identified by the authorities as representing a fire hazard. As Director of Fire Services, F. Jackson claimed (and just as UC members D.R. Holmes and Wilfred Wong had warned about New Towns estates several years prior):

unless early steps are taken to remove these hawkers before they become established there will be a further problem or removal to deal with. It seems ironic that people moving in [...] are subjected to

¹¹⁶ Hawker Report, p12.

¹¹⁷ PRO, X1000211, pp382–383.

¹¹⁸ PRO, HKRS 438-1-44 Hawker Select Committee, Hawker By-Laws, 1960 – Proposed Amendments HAW/5/65 2nd June 1965, p2.

¹¹⁹ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5 F Jackson, for Director of Fire Services, to Commissioner for Resettlement and D.S. P. Kwun Tong, Sau Mau Ping Resettlement Estate, 17th October 1967.

obstructions, trade rubbish and unhygienic conditions almost before they take up occupancy.¹²⁰

At Sau Mau Ping, for example, 'inside the escape corridors food stalls and mobile kitchens have been set up, and despite specially erected barriers in the entrance approach ways and stairways, hawkers, cooked foods and "siu mei and loi mei" tables are in operation'.¹²¹ Various resettlement estate cooked food stalls were described as using hot oil and pressure kerosene stoves 'serving sit down meals' in the main stairways and corridors, 'with tables and chairs set up to accommodate 20-30 persons at a time', restricting access to fire equipment, escape routes and lobbies. Colin Bramwell, Acting Chief Architect of the PWD, even described how 'cooked food stalls could turn the lobbies into blazing infernos if overturned in an emergency'.¹²² These early comments from departments on the ground contained some of the concepts that arrived later in the KHKC campaign, where people moving into the estates were said to be 'subjected' to hawker obstruction and filth. But as the two decades of correspondence from the Fire Department show, containing all the same problems related to illegal hawkers in housing estates, these cooked-food hawkers were clearly patronised enough within estates for them to persevere.

Archival images from personal collections show this alternative resident perspective, where the hawker pitch was central to the everyday culture of estates (1.07a &b).¹²³ Two particularly lively photographs of Sau Mau Ping Estate in 1970 show, as the government documents above describe, how materially rich the spaces of corridors and lobbies could be as a result of cooked-food hawkers. These images clearly show such illegal businesses, and both show the bustling, intergenerational space these eateries provided as well as their ad hoc assemblage within the estate. This is clearest in Figure

¹²⁰ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, 17th October 1967.

¹²¹ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, W. Ackeroyd, to C. F. O, Sau Mau Ping, 12th October 1967.

¹²² PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, CA to D of FS, 25th February 1967.

¹²³ With thanks to public historian Ko Tim-keung for his generosity in sharing his photography archive with me.

1.07a where a small stall selling noodles in the foreground can be seen. A woman wearing a dark apron is serving two school-age girls. Right up to the edge of the cart are two wooden folding tables. Two women are seated eating their food, and three empty stools are unoccupied. Two empty bowls with chopsticks laid atop indicate some previous customers who may have just left. On the table is a bucket of chopsticks, and a small bottle of soya sauce. Behind is a stand renting out comics to the estate children, many of whom have been captured in the photo. In the background a lit-up sign of a shop called Chung Si Gei advertising 'drinks and special foods of all kinds' next to a Coca Cola tin-plate. The bare, graffitied concrete walls, floors and multiple doorways are tell-tale signs that the space was intended for other, if undefined, purposes rather than the ad hoc hawker space. In stark contrast, to the right of the stall in the next-door shop is a gold merchants fitted with spotlights and display cases on the wall. Such an image indicates that hawkers and their various material pitches constructed and contributed to a vibrant and varied domestic spaces in the estates.

Figure 1.07b however, depicts a much larger kitchen set-up where the pitch of cooked food hawkers overlapped directly with the interior space of the home. Not unlike the *yum caa caa lau* restaurants found in contemporary estates, the tables are already equipped with teapots and bottles of soya sauce. Two young boys in makeshift aprons loosely tied to their waists bring out freshly steamed buns. They are smartly dressed in button-downs and trousers, save for their feet exposed in sandals. The older men around them in the background, perhaps their patrons, are dressed in crisp shirts and dress trousers with belts, and have slicked back hair. A tray with two teapots and two covered plates typically used for *cheung fun* affirm that this particular kitchen focuses on steamed goods.¹²⁴ In the foreground, Formica folding tables and stools are set up ready for the next customer. Scattered

¹²⁴ *Cheung fun* are steamed rice rolls commonly served at *dim sum* restaurants. They however have much more humble roots, traditionally sold by street vendors on mobile steaming carts. *Cheung fun* are often served plain or with fillings, including fried dough-sticks, beef, pork prawns or dried shrimp and spring onions, and often served with soy sauce and sesame sauce.

throughout the photograph are stacks of large bamboo steamers like the ones that the two boys hold, while behind the counter there are several in the process of steaming. Such levels of professionalism, both in terms of dress and equipment, make the kitchen seem legitimate and permanent at first glance. However, several aspects of the photograph expose its illicit status. In the background, cables hang down freely with an overwhelmed electricity outlet on the wall. In what may be a corridor behind, staff hang their bags and towels from the window grate above, and a radio is pinned to the wall. Above them, light seeps through the canvas covering, and below and around, the walls and floors are again bare and untreated. This particular cooked food hawker demonstrates how the pitch can transform the interior spaces of the estate into part of the domestic sphere. Where the estate itself lacked, hawkers constructed a pitch that could be shared as a kitchen amongst estate residents.

Such images offer a different perspective on the hawker pitch as sites for negotiating traditional and modern space. Aside from the access and cost of foods, less mentioned in both government documents and secondary sources is the access to specialised processes, equipment and ingredients which take far too much space, time, and effort to make at home in the available cooking area of flats. *Juk* (congee, a type of rice porridge), for example, while simple and cheap to make in principle, takes a lot of time, fuel and experience to produce, and is often only worthwhile to make in bulk. Other foods require cooking skills and equipment that may not be accessible to everyday consumers. These spaces also provide room for commensality, where flats were often not appropriate places to gather to eat. These sources show the often-overlooked nature of public housing estate as complex spaces for cultural and social community lifestyles, as well as how they navigated notions of tradition and modernity using creative, ad hoc strategies in the hawker pitch.

1.4 Conclusion

In contrast to the existing discourse of hawkers in Hong Kong, this chapter has used the hawker pitch as a specific facet of a history of hawkers. Although the historiography of hawkers has largely focused on the social policy of hawkers, a focus on the hawker pitch opens up new avenues for spatial and material analysis. This includes the comparison of hawkers with squatters, two groups which overlap in the 'problems' which they are seen to have caused, namely that of dense use of the urban landscape. As New Town estates were built, hawkers and the 'hawker problem' followed, shifting the pitch from urban, downtown Hong Kong to the colony's peripheries. Although the 1957 *Hawker Report* attempted to bring in policies that could both enforce *and* show that the colonial government was sympathetic to the social contributions of hawkers, their efforts largely failed.

Disagreements about the role of hawkers, hawkers' use of space through the appropriation of the pitch, and how such use might be controlled, slowed authoritative approaches to spatial control. Deployment of the HCF in the late 1950s and early 1960s did not extend into the New Towns until much later because these were spaces that were deemed out of the limelight of local and international interest, and thus not a priority for clearance and control. Meanwhile, hawkers followed in the footsteps of squatter communities in occupying land. Indeed, they played a game of 'cat and mouse' with authorities, managing to recover quickly from cleansing operations and policing. Although their help was enlisted in the earliest years of development to feed construction workers and early New Town residents, many hawkers continued after construction was completed to establish shopping areas in zones where consumption spaces had not been constructed.

This 'right' to the pitch would be reshaped again after a period of civil unrest and social reformation. As upward mobility increased with Hong Kong's economic boom in the 1960s, together with social reforms of the 1970s, civic campaigns such as hawker 'cleansing' campaigns and the Keep

Hong Kong Clean campaign helped to reframe hawkers as antithetical to a new, modern Hong Kong landscape. Highly publicised hawker removals and new stall designs pushed hawkers into the limelight, as a tactic to display a more assertive government approach after the 1967 riots. As removals were made visible through the press and antagonistic figures (such as hawkers) satirised via the figure of Lap Sap Chung, public perceptions of hawkers became more negative. More significantly, however, such campaigns created further public notions of 'rights' to the land, making the spatial practices of hawking and the materiality of the pitch explicitly about manoeuvring bureaucratic processes and civic duty rather than hawking as a public service. As creators of material mess and spatial chaos, hawkers were increasingly framed as impeding the efforts of 'tenants' and 'citizens' to build a civic life and modern home in the new public housing estates.

However, a more nuanced, everyday approach to the pitch as estates and neighbourhoods offers an alternative perspective on hawkers as providers of material culture and consumption options. As the 1970s also brought in more rigorous research on hawkers and their influence in New Towns neighbourhoods, hawkers were no longer seen simply as antagonisers, but also direct facilitators of material and spatial culture in the isolated landscapes of New Town estates. The hawker presence in the New Towns largely involved navigating new spaces and authoritative measures through the pitch while establishing connections through friends and family, as opposed to the culture of pre-existing hawker communities and their associated politics. Hawkers of different kinds within the estate clearly provided both access to familiarity and newness through the goods they sold, allowing residents to navigate the imposed modern space of the estate with traditional gathering spaces and cultures.

In considering the pitch, this chapter takes the estate as a specific space where hawkers played a larger role in establishing new communities in New Towns. While the pitch is often only studied through licensing and

regulation, the pitch can also be a lens through which hawkers have visually and materially taken up space and navigated their role in society. What the physical stall represents, how it has transformed and utilised space, and what it has offered are equally important factors. Indeed, this post-war history of hawkers had a direct impact on the planning of the landscape in New Towns as well as urban centres. The following chapter on hawker bazaars will expand on some of these legacies, while also divulging in bazaars as a form in its own right.

Chapter 2: The Hawker Bazaar

2.0 Introduction

As discussed in the previous chapter, in December 1957, the UC released a *Hawker Report* laying out the 'hawker problem' at large. In it, the government announced the idea of a hawker bazaar for the first time:

Without any control there are fights and arguments and one could not expect hawkers to stick to lines and allow vehicles or pedestrians to move freely [...] and we may expect them to do so if the areas are intelligently arranged [...] These arguments lead to the concept of a hawker bazaar.¹

How this bazaar would exist spatially still had to be defined, but it was largely envisioned to be a temporary, or at least temporal, solution.² However, with over eleven hawker bazaars still remaining in the landscape of contemporary Hong Kong today, it is clear that the bazaar outlived the colonial imagination.³ Many of these hawker bazaars have become popular attractions, such as Pang Jai (Yen Chow Street Hawker Bazaar in Sham Shiu Po) and the Jordan Cooked Food Bazaar as part of Temple Street Market, but there have also been smaller, more mundane bazaars scattered across the region. Even those that remain today span a huge range of spatial forms – from the '*pang*' shed or 'canopy' of reed mats and haphazard self-built structures, to several-storey-high concrete buildings.

Building on my concept of the hawker pitch in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the spatial forms of hawker bazaar and the temporary market in the New Towns. As this chapter will demonstrate, the bazaar was more of a conceptual, imagined space than a defined physical space. This chapter asks how hawker bazaars and temporary markets affected the

¹ Hawker Report, p7.

² Hawker Report, pp7–8.

³ Calculated from the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department as of February 2022. Note that this is a conservative number since some bazaars have transitioned into public or cooked food markets but kept their original 'temporary' structures, and that removals of bazaars have increased significantly in the last five years. Some of these buildings even still have signs that read 'temporary bazaar'. Hong Kong Food and Environmental Health Department, Public Services (last revision 21st November 2021) <<https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/map/index.html>> [Accessed 7th February 2022]

reconfiguration of Hong Kong into a modern landscape during a period of transience. Beginning with the early trials that came with the *Hawker Report* in the 1950s, this chapter moves on from considering the specific tensions between hawkers and the colonial government through the construction of the hawker pitch, towards how multiple hawker pitches were collectively assembled in the space of the public housing estate, as both legitimate and illegitimate hawker bazaars. As I will show, the contradictions and ambiguities inherent in the very idea of the hawker bazaar is precisely what makes this space so significant in the history of consumption in Hong Kong; identifying with both hawker pitch and market features, the bazaar bridged these two spatial forms while also becoming its own kind of space unbound by material or even legal definitions. In general, the hawker bazaar denoted a temporary structure, but one which often expanded beyond the initial spatial and temporal imagination of planners and government officials (during the construction of the New Towns) while becoming intertwined with the space of the estate. This closely relates to Massey's 'spheres' as constituting multiple, simultaneous narratives. In this way, the various spaces of the hawker bazaar also contextualise '*gaai si*' — a phrase which literally translates to 'street market' but rather refers to many types of spatial forms for the purpose of everyday shopping. This thread will also be continued in the following chapter, where I turn my attention to modular and multi-storey markets.

The idea of 'the bazaar' has long been part of the colonial spatial imagination. Although the 'Chinese Bazaar' largely referred to Lunar New Year festivities in Hong Kong in most instances until the early 1950s, the spatial structure of the 'Chinese Bazaar' remained undefined (in contrast to 'English bazaars').⁴ Towards the mid-nineteenth century, the English version of the

⁴ See F. K. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century England* (Clarendon Press, 1980) pp47–49; MMIS, 'London Chinese Bazaar a Success', *Hong Kong Daily Press*, 6th January 1941, p7 <[link](#)>; 'New Venue for Chinese Bazaar', *Hong Kong Daily Press*, 10th January 1935, p7, <[link](#)>; 'Chinese New Year Bazaar Not Up to Previous Standard', *The China Mail*, 17th February 1950, p1 <[link](#)>.

'bazaar' was a recurring presence in the Great Exhibition and following Colonial Exhibitions in London and Paris, coinciding with the increased British colonisation of East and Southeast Asia.⁵ These ideas of 'the bazaar' were designed to narrate distant interior worlds, reconstructing 'otherworldly' colonial spaces distinct from the everyday space of Britain.⁶ Such constructions suggest that central to the notion of the bazaar is the implication of visual-material abundance, creating a space for delight and wonder (as well as contempt) through the colonial gaze. This gaze was also permeated onto the bazaars *within* colonies, as spaces of the 'Other' that required control and definition.⁷

However, as this chapter aims to show, the spatial concept of the bazaar took an indicative turn in the post-war period in Hong Kong with the realisation and construction of the modern bazaar. I argue that while Hong Kong's modern bazaar managed to shed its exotic image and become associated with a much more mundane colonial space, such bazaars irrevocably continued to be the site of often heated negotiations about spatial boundaries and control. In addition, this chapter continues to use materiality as the lens to view these social, spatial antagonisms and ambiguities, and how material culture has been central to the entanglement of bazaars with the urban landscape. Ultimately, the chapter traces the Hong Kong government's struggle to understand, codify and contain the ambiguous space of the bazaar, testing and wrestling with a number of conceptualisations until landing at further structured permanent iterations of

⁵ See Jo Briggs, *Novelty Fair: British Visual Culture between Chartism and the Great Exhibition* (Manchester University Press, 2016).; Peter J. Gurney, "'The Sublime of the Bazaar': A Moment in the Making of a Consumer Culture in Mid-Nineteenth Century England", *Journal of Social History*, 40.2 (2006), pp385–405. This is also while becoming spaces of distinct 'local' culture in post-colonial territories.

⁶ Laura Kriegel, 'Narrating the subcontinent in 1851: India at the Crystal Palace', in ed. Louise Purbrick, *The Great Exhibition of 1851: New Interdisciplinary Essays* (Manchester University Press, 2001) pp146–178.

⁷ See Jean Duruz, Susan Luckman, and Peter Bishop, 'Bazaar Encounters: Food, Markets, Belonging and Citizenship in the Cosmopolitan City', *Continuum*, 25.5 (2011), pp599–604.; Martin Beattie, 'Hybrid Bazaar Space: Colonialization, Globalization, and Traditional Space in Barabazaar, Calcutta, India', *Journal of Architectural Education*, 61.3 (2008), pp45–55.;

market spaces. Within this struggle is the paradox of the bazaar as simultaneously a space of control and a space of chaos.

To that end, the terminology of the modern bazaar in Hong Kong is expansive. Several labels used in government documents, such as 'hawkers', 'hawker stalls', 'cooked food bazaars', 'hawker bazaars', 'markets', 'temporary market', and the names of specific streets and squares, all relate to the notion of the bazaar and very often seep into each other in the archival record and everyday language of these spaces. This is by nature of the bazaar, which was an ambiguous ephemeral space that often took shape in between other structures, transforming and borrowing from the spaces that it occupied and often merging with other aspects of the urban landscape. Its multiplicity also reflects the structure of Hong Kong's urban planning after the 1950s, which involved multiple parties and conflicting discussions about the future. The bazaar nevertheless requires dedicated analysis separate from hawkers and markets, precisely *because* of its ambiguity. This chapter therefore intends to work with this lack of clarity and tangibility about what constituted the hawker bazaar as a central feature of the bazaar itself, including the way it was named and identified.

The first section develops on the previous chapter on the hawker pitch to trace the attempted organisation of multiple hawker pitches in the structure of the modern hawker bazaar. This section begins with the formal introduction of the modern bazaar concept by the government in the *Hawker Report* of 1957, in parallel with the resettlement programme and expansion into the New Towns from 1954 onwards. Such early 'experiments' were then expanded in the use of cooked-food hawker bazaars as part of the construction of the New Towns, as a cheap and temporary method of serving construction and factory workers, whilst also building the plan of public housing estates on the outskirts of Hong Kong's urban centre.

The second section follows some of the trials that were undertaken using different temporary structures that converged together in space as

temporary 'bazaar/markets'. Using Kwun Tong Temporary Market in Yue Man Square as a case study, this section will also theorise the spatial ambiguity of the bazaar in the New Towns, and the government's struggle to divide these structures legally, visually and materially. As a space that was both real and imagined, the ambiguity of the bazaar offered loopholes for the community as a place of work and consumption, and as a method of spatial transgression. These loopholes followed through into the home when bazaars were implemented within housing estates as opposed to simply within the neighbourhood, and how the bazaar was in fact a central cog in the functioning of New Towns in spite of the government's disdain for bazaars.

The third section will focus on cooked-food hawker bazaars, which became the increasing concern of government departments following debate on how bazaars should be designed for housing estate populations. Central to this was the discourse of 'obstruction', and how this came to define the future design of consumption spaces in estates, particularly in relation to fire. More specifically it will follow the discourse on Singapore's Hawker policy, which came to have a significant influence on the hawker bazaars from 1965 onwards in Hong Kong, particularly when it came to policing hawkers and bazaars.

2.1 'Experimental Operations'

The English term 'bazaar' emerges from a specific colonial history of 'Oriental' spaces. Anand A. Yang, in *Bazaar India*, argues that 'to read markets of the colonial era as historical texts of exchange relations emblematic of the "local way of life," [...] requires journeying through the "Oriental market," that exoticized Other place of Western imagination'.⁸ Such was the case in early colonial Hong Kong, where the 'bazaar' denominated 'red-lined' Chinese

⁸ Anand A. Yang, *Bazaar India: Markets, Society, and the Colonial State in Bihar* (University of California Press, 1998), p2.

settlements streets, such as Lower Bazaar, Upper Bazaar and Canton Bazaar.⁹ These areas were home to newly arrived emigrants from Guangdong and Fujian, and functioned as both commercial and residential areas that included the presence of hawkers.¹⁰ Although much of the literature on nineteenth century Hong Kong bazaars and markets is focused on other urban aspects (e.g., land segregation, market buildings, public health), such work also shows that the bazaar was explicitly tied to colonial negotiations of space with the Chinese population in Hong Kong through the very naming of such spaces as 'bazaars'.¹¹ Indeed, this scholarship also indicates the intrinsic relationship between bazaars and their spatial-material occupation and arrangement in space, with consistent discussions of food, land ownership, hygiene, and urban development.

Following the postwar population boom, the bazaar as a space would be re-codified. Although still linked to the spatial and material occupation of public space and the Chinese population, the use of the term 'bazaar' shifted together with other transformations of the landscape, more specifically housing and hawkers. In the late 1950s, despite the fast construction turnaround of resettlement estates following the Shek Kip Mei Fire of 1953, squatter settlements and their associated structures continued to be a significant issue, particularly on the peripheries of Kowloon. As discussed in the previous chapter, hawkers were an increasing concern for government

⁹ As Evans' footnotes in his article on Central Market articulates, the market building is distinct from the bazaar streets. Upper Bazaar in the area of Graham and Stanley Streets; Lower Bazaar is in the present-day Bonham Strand. Both were destroyed or removed in the 1840s and 1850s respectively. See Daffyd Emrys Evans, 'The origins of Hong Kong's Central Market and the Tarrant Affair', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1972) pp158–159; Daffyd Emrys Evans, 'Chinatown in Hong Kong: The beginnings of Taipingshan', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* (1970) p69–78; John Carroll, 'Chinese collaboration in the Making of British Hong Kong', in ed. by Tak-Wing Ngo, *Hong Kong's History: State and Society Under Colonial Rule* (Routledge, 1999), pp22–23.; Christopher Cowell, 'The Hong Kong Fever of 1843: Collective Trauma and the Reconfiguring of Colonial Space', *Modern Asian Studies*, 47.2 (2013), pp329–64.;

¹⁰ Lee Ho Yin and Lynne DiStefano, 'Tong Lau: A Hong Kong Shophouse Typology' *gwulo*, 5th September 2016, Available at <<https://gwulo.com/tong-lau-Hong-Kong-shophouse>>; Evans, 1970.

¹¹ Ian Tam, 'When Gaai Si Became Markets: Regulating Consumption Spaces in Colonial Hong Kong', (unpublished paper, University of Hong Kong, 2019); Cowell, p344.

departments given their ability to occupy large stretches of the urban landscape while also evading or navigating crackdowns on hawking, leading to the implementation of the fixed pitch policy. However, there were additional concerns about the arrangements of multiple hawker pitches in space. The 1957 *Hawker Report*, while somewhat sympathetic, rationalised that:

there would certainly be considerable improvements in hawker areas around markets if rubbish and hawker paraphernalia were removed every day, but the problems of congestion cannot possibly be tackled by hoping hawkers will stand aside to let each other pass [...] the intention is that the presence of some authority will prevent disorder by ensuring that hawkers stick to their right areas. *And we may expect them to do so if the areas are intelligently arranged.*¹²

Images supplementing the *Hawker Report* reveal the extent to which illegal hawkers had expanded their pitch into the space around and between resettlement estates by March 1957 (Figures 2.01 & 2.02).¹³ As can be seen in Figure 2.01, almost all the public ground space at Tai Hang Tung Estate in Shek Kip Mei was occupied by haphazardly built structures; a huge range of materials was used, from woven baskets and coverings overhead, to sheet metals, large umbrella-like covers and large pieces of wood. The roofs of these structures connect themselves to the estate block, attaching parasitically to the concrete building. Lines of washing blow overhead over the edge of the corridor balconies. A wagon can be seen in the foreground, and there is a small figure squatting and looking over to the other side of the hawker site, in the middle of the only expanse of open ground. Makeshift bridges can be seen crossing a high fall into a deep drainage channel. The photograph records the site a day before major hawker control operations attempted to clear these structures, the aftermath of which can be seen in Figure 2.02. Here, members of the Hawker Control Force laboriously clear the debris left behind by the hawker structures. The floor is visibly wet, possibly

¹² Italics added, Hawker Report, p7. It is unclear what paraphernalia specifically refers to here, but this suggests the broad spectrum of materiality of hawkers, including the goods and the stalls themselves.

¹³ The website lists that the images are from their archive The Hawker Report, 1957: Supplementary Notes (658.87 URB 1957). Hong Kong Government Records Services, Hawkers in the 1950s (last revision 21st May 2021) <https://www.grs.gov.hk/ws/erp/hawker-en.htm> [Accessed 21st March 2022]

hosed down, mixed with the dusty surface of the floors and the trash of disassembly: papers, bottles, twigs and other unidentifiable materials.

Nevertheless, the Hong Kong government understood that hawkers were a necessary component of society in 1950s Hong Kong, although clearer boundaries and restrictions needed to be set. Essentially, hawkers needed a dedicated space to operate in rather than be allowed to move around as itinerant 'peddlers'. In addition to introducing government-sanctioned hawker pitches, discussions began in the late 1950s to test the new innovation of hawker bazaars at Tai Hang Tung and Li Cheng Uk Resettlement Estates (in Shek Kip Mei and Cheung Sha Wan, respectively) in an attempt to eliminate itinerant hawkers:

Approval in Select Committee has been given for the establishments of such bazaars [...] and explanation of the goal is necessary. The bazaar will be a place where hawkers can operate by day but from which they must remove everything at night. To be successful, the boundaries of the bazaar must be clearly defined physically and in law. Eventually when hawker bazaars have been set up where they are needed, all other streets will be prohibited areas. The itinerant hawker who causes obstruction will disappear and will be accommodated in the bazaars.¹⁴

The report shows that the UC clearly prioritised the use of space as part of their policy, hoping to gain full knowledge and control of where, when and how hawkers were operating within (and beyond) these new boundaries. The report, however, is unspecific about how the bazaar would be built, how it would look and how it would physically take up space, in spite of the call for a 'clear definition' in order to succeed. Although such lack of clarity allowed for a flexibility in the bazaar's design, it perhaps also reveals the lack of preparation ahead of this proposal, with little instruction on how plans for hawker bazaars would be executed.

Alongside the *Hawker Report*, however, photographs (likely taken in the days following hawker control operations in March 1957) show the first arrangements of 'The Main Bazaar' in Tai Hang Tung Resettlement Estate

¹⁴ Hawker Report, p7.

(Figures 2.03 & 2.04). Figure 2.03 shows a bare hawker bazaar arranged in strict rows, squeezed in an elevated area between the estate and walls constructed out of the landscape. A long row of concrete tables follows the perimeter of the area against the sloping walls with no gaps in between. Indeed, this space looks specifically planned for the bazaar as opposed to having been repurposed, with clear drain off and concrete flooring prepared underneath. Within the roughly parallelogram floor plan, approximately thirty rows of five tables across fill the space, save for two rows of two tables in the front corner allowing for some room for potential buyers to manoeuvre between the stalls. Each pair of rows are positioned closer together with a slightly larger walkway between. Each table consists of interlocking concrete slabs, solidly planted into the ground and appearing impossible to move or lift without damaging the next table, and multiple people or machinery to move them. Small labels pinned to each table seem to assign the table to the hawker to whom it belongs, therefore assigning each pitch. Passers-by and a curious child give a sense of the scale of each table, reaching just under adult waist height, or the shoulder of a small child. To the right of the bazaar, a walkway which is three-persons wide leads to a main thoroughfare and more blocks within the estate. Overall, the impression of the bazaar is that it serves as quite a basic and tightly compacted means of control that, in theory, would contain much of the issues of sprawl and obstruction that had previously been associated with hawkers. Such a straightforward drawing of boundaries shares similarities with the introduction of the hawker pitch as a strategy, except that the hawker bazaar arranged multiple pitches within another structure.

Figure 2.04 depicts the same bazaar in use from above, dated within the same year. The photograph shows the dynamism of the hawker bazaar, with the huge range of foods available for sale. Stacks of vegetables can be clearly seen, as well as a spectrum of hawker paraphernalia and points of sale: Several makeshift canopies as well as hanging strings, umbrellas, boards, baskets, buckets and even what looks like a flower arch for an opening

celebration. Some of these canopies seem particularly sturdy, but nevertheless the uneven gait and tell-tale strings securing the fabric reveal they are likely designed to be taken down regularly. Beneath the tables are shallow baskets of produce, tins and larger baskets, elsewhere there are trolleys for transporting goods. Most of the people seen within the market space are the hawkers themselves, back-to-back in the narrower areas between rows, facing out to serve their customers. Potential buyers are largely seen inspecting from either side of the bazaar along the two wider channels parallel to the housing estate block.

It is with 'The Main Bazaar' at Tai Hang Tung that the concept of the modern bazaar begins, together with the transition of New Towns into sites of everyday life and consumption. Although it is unclear how the UC felt about this particular bazaar, it appears from these supplementary notes and photographs to have been seen as a special case for putting the bazaar space into action across resettlement estates and other urban environments.¹⁵ Indeed, the bazaar at Tai Hang Tung seems to have been the first of its type in the estates to have been set up as part of these early 'experimental operations', while most other cases were designed to organise street hawkers in urban areas. This suggests that modern hawker bazaars were intrinsically woven into the concept of urban resettlement, on the peripheries of the urban core and in the New Towns. Although retroactively applied after resettlement estates had first been designed, hawker bazaars were nevertheless included in the open spaces between estate blocks and would be applied to those especially in the estates further away from the urban centre. While chiefly concerned with the hawker problem at large, the hawker bazaar thus also played a key role in the construction and redistribution of the population into the New Towns, the first of which were Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan. In so doing, these estate bazaars shed the explicit and exotic association to the street that the term 'bazaar' had previously maintained (as in the

¹⁵ Hawkers in the 1950s <https://www.grs.gov.hk/ws/erp/hawker-en.htm> [Accessed 21st March 2022]

Chinese bazaar 'streets' with its nineteenth-century connotations), having been intentionally removed from thoroughfares, roads or streets and reimagined as part of the modernising schemes of public housing estates and New Towns.

2.1a Building bazaars, building the town

As already populated and industrialised areas bordering the urban core of Kowloon, Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan were attractive locations for rapid expansion. As Chan Ying-keung put it, the government were desperately looking for space to:

release [...] pressure on new industrial sites that were urgently demanded, in amelioration of the urban environment, and in resettlement of squatters which would make available more space in the urban fringe for urban development.¹⁶

The Hong Kong government quickly pushed for these districts to be redefined into 'satellite' new towns, moving squatters and refugees into rapidly built temporary resettlement housing while waiting for development of other public housing options. At the same time, from 1951 onwards, Hong Kong had also begun the process of transitioning from its long-established role as an entrepôt for trade with Mainland China towards competing in the global manufacturing industry, with places such as Kwun Tong being at the core of such plans.¹⁷ Both new towns were being physically transformed through land reclamation and the construction of factories and housing when new populations were brought in. Squatters were moved into resettlement estates and temporary resettlement 'cottages'.¹⁸ In Kwun Tong, Kwun Tong

¹⁶ Chan Ying-keung, *The Rise and Growth of Kwun Tong: A Study of Planned Urban Development*, Occasional Paper No. 30 (Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973) p7.

¹⁷ Chan, 1973.

¹⁸ Social housing in the form of cottages as both permanent and temporary solutions had already begun in the early 1950s, largely built by charitable and church organisations. There is less research conducted on the temporary structures in wait of the resettlement estates but some mentions can be found in Grenfell Ruddock and Kenneth H.C. Fung, 'Housing in Malaya and Hong Kong – A Contrast', *Ekistics*, (July 1959) 8(45) pp16–23; and Christopher John MacKay, 'Housing Management and the Comprehensive Housing Model in Hong Kong: A case study of colonial influence', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 2000, 9.25, pp449–466.

Resettlement Estate (colloquially known as *gai liu* or 'chicken coop'), the last of the Mark I model resettlement estates, was built in 1959, with crudely built structures that had no windows or cooking facilities, and in which basic bathrooms were shared. Such basic components all reflected 'temporary' and 'emergency' materiality and design.¹⁹

This state of temporality in estates was reflected in the development of the early New Towns as well. Two photographs showing similar angles of the estate (towards the industrial side of Kwun Tong facing Kowloon Bay) from 1964 and 1975 show the state of development over this period (Figures 2.05 and 2.06). Although Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate was completed in 1959, the area was still surrounded by construction sites five years after this; only in the 1970s can one see the full extent of urbanisation in the area. Occupants had already moved into Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate while the landscape, including roads, pavements, street lighting and street infrastructure, remained largely incomplete. Although workshops, shops and restaurants were allowed to open in the ground floor space, dedicated market structures were not initially incorporated into the design of resettlement and low-cost housing estates.²⁰ Shoppers were expected to rely on already established high streets in other resettlement estates, but in Kwun Tong, even major high streets had yet to be completed in the late 1960s. In this sense, the first New Towns and public housing estates in the immediate aftermath of the Shek Kip Mei fire were located in temporary, in-between states, designed to quickly address the problem of space and over-crowding rather than respond to efficient planning and design.

Subsequently, spaces labelled as 'hawker bazaars' were utilised as 'temporary solutions' to match the temporary status of development of the

¹⁹ John T. Myers, 'Resident's Image of a Hong Kong Resettlement Estate: A View from the "Chicken Coop"' in ed. Ambrose C. King and Rance P.L. Lee, *Social Life and Development in Hong Kong* (Chinese University Press, 1984) p25.

²⁰ London, National Archives (NA), Policy on Housing and Resettlement in Hong Kong, FCO 40/306, Government Low Cost Housing pamphlet, undated (c. 1966-70), Government Printers: Hong Kong.

satellite towns. Alongside the mass construction of the landscape, cooked-food hawker bazaars (one type of hawker bazaar) were brought into Kwun Tong to feed construction and factory workers in the early stages of the town's development.²¹ A land-use survey conducted in 1965 by Hong Kong University Geography student Norah Kwok Wah Chow records the increasingly productive industrial area in Kwun Tong. Alongside Figure 2.07, an image depicting cooked-food stalls in front of a factory building construction site, Kwok emphasises the centrality of the cooked food bazaar (noted as 'numerous cooked food stalls' here) to keep the district running:

In the centre of the Industrial Zone and surrounded by stately factory buildings, is a large open space about 2,000 square feet on which are situated numerous cooked food stalls and coffee stalls. Although the area occupied by these stalls is insignificant in Division I, however its importance cannot be overlooked [...] Since it is very near to the factories and it is an ideal place for the workers to go in between working hours. The price for each dish is about 80 cents and for a big bowl of rice it costs only 20 cents. [...] In fact, this small piece of land is not a waste for such commercial use. Many workers will find it a great loss if these stalls were removed away to some other place and the land be set aside for other purposes.²²

These cooked-food bazaars as described in Kwok's account were key to establishing the industrial status of these New Towns, sustaining workers in new industries (light industries and textiles), and construction in the area. During the 1950s, the UN embargo on China during the Korean War meant that Hong Kong's status as an entrepôt had ended, and newly arrived industrialists (mostly from Shanghai) seized the opportunity to start their businesses anew in the likes of Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan.²³ The cheap food provided to workers by bazaars (often one of the few viable ways in which workers could include meat in their diets) also mirrored the dependency that

²¹ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, Public Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Buildings in the Public Works Programme 1968/69 Markets and Hawker Bazaars, 22nd April 1968, p1.

²² University of Hong Kong Libraries Special Collections (HKULSC), MSS 333.7095125 C55, Norah Kwok Wah Chow, 'A Land Use Survey of Kwun Tong, Division 1' (unpublished paper, 1965) p47.

²³ See T. L. Lui and S. Chiu, 'A Tale of Two Industries: The Restructuring of Hong Kong's Garment-Making and Electronics Industries', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 26(1) (1994), pp53–70.

such industries had on cheap housing to support cheap labour and low production costs.²⁴

However, their legality is somewhat ambiguous – it is unclear from Chow's report (and was perhaps difficult for Chow herself to recognise) whether these stalls were licensed to be there. However, their relatively orderly appearance off the roads suggests the area described may have been one of the legal bazaars set up by the UC in the late 1950s, the earliest of which in Kwun Tong was opened in 1958.²⁵ Even so, these bazaars were supposed to be short-lived, only meant to last as long as it took to introduce other facilities:

the Crown Lands & Survey Office had agreed in 1959 to make available the existing bazaar site on the promise by the Hawkers (Policy) Select Committee that this would be cleared whenever restaurants were introduced to the area, and that stage of development had now been reached, so that the cooked food stalls were now required to move elsewhere.²⁶

This confirms that in these early planning stages, the bazaar was never designed to be a permanent solution, but merely a means to an end during major development phases and expected to be replaced as soon as possible by legitimate (i.e., rent-paying as opposed to licensed) businesses. Bazaars thus began as a space for literally fuelling the development of the New Towns, and for the sole purpose of kick-starting the construction of the area and industrialisation of Hong Kong rather than to establish any concrete neighbourhood structure.

However, with the rapid increase in incoming residents to the New Towns, including the families of factory and construction workers, hawker

²⁴ See Sidney C. H. Cheung, 'Hakka Restaurants: A Study of the Consumption of Food in Post-War Hong Kong Society', in ed. by David Y. H. Wu and Chee-Beng Tan, *Changing Chinese Foodways in Asia*, (Chinese University Press, 2001), pp. 81–95.

²⁵ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, Public Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Buildings in the Public Works Programme 1968/69 Markets and Hawker Bazaars, 22nd April 1968, p1.

²⁶ PRO, HKRS438-1-28, Committee Paper HAW/1/66 – Proposed Resiting of Temporary Cooked Food Stalls, Kwun Tong, 4th May 1966.

bazaars with other goods to facilitate domestic life were soon also constructed by the UC.²⁷ By 1961, several estates were already in progress in Kwun Tong: as well as the continuation of the Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate (RE) (1959), Kwun Tong Garden Estate (1959 – 1964, designed and built by the Hong Kong Housing Society) and the first Government Low Cost Housing Estate (GLCH), Wo Lok Estate (1962 – 1966) were also being developed.²⁸ This was shortly followed by Sau Mau Ping RE (1964 – 1966), Yau Tong RE (1964 – 1971), Ngau Tau Kok RE (1967 – 1970), Lam Tin RE (1970) and Ping Shek GLCH Estate (1971 – 1973).

Of these, only Ping Shek had any markets built as part of the estate design. In contrast, earlier estates had to find other solutions for regular grocery shopping. The lack of facilities in Kwun Tong prompted a similarly temporary response in the space of the temporary hawker bazaar, essentially multiple hawker pitches contained in one large boundary. On 24th November 1961, a small notice in the *China Mail* announced:

a hawker bazaar is to be constructed at Kun Tong [sic] on the eastern shores of Kowloon bay. The new building is one of several bazaars to be built to serve the housing estates in the area. There will be accommodation for 100 hawker pitches.²⁹

The 'new building' suggested something different from the basic experiments of the late 1950s – a bazaar with a proper structure and a greater scale than the early cooked-food bazaars of the New Towns.

2.2 A 'Bazaar/Market' in Yue Man Square

In the absence of dedicated permanent market structures in estates, the UC began exploring various temporary forms and structures. The first

²⁷ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, 22nd April 1968, p1.

²⁸ See Carroll, p129; Alan Smart goes into great detail on the debates in Hong Kong in the 1940s, as well as the discourses of housing and social welfare in Hong Kong thereafter. See Smart in Pan and Yu, pp. 308–48; Christopher John Mackay, 'House Management and the Comprehensive Housing Model in Hong Kong: A Case Study of Colonial Influence', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 9.25 (2000), pp449–466.

²⁹ MMIS 'A Hawker Bazaar is to be Constructed at Kun Tong in the Eastern Shores of Kowloon Bay', *China Mail*, 24th November 1961, p12, available at <[link](#)> [Accessed 28th March 2022]

consideration for a built structure to deal with the issue of hawkers and lack of facilities in Kwun Tong came in 1965, a few years after the completion of Wo Lok Estate GLCH. Members of the UC Market Select Committee (select members of the Urban Council dealing with market policy):

agreed that in order to assess the marketing needs of the new Kwun Tong area and the new, large housing estates behind it to the north, there should be a simple market/bazaar in the area already allocated for the purpose, consisting of concrete hard standing and drainage for hawkers, plus simple covered stall structures, water pipes, etc. for market stalls.³⁰

A market/bazaar would relieve Kwun Tong of the dire need for grocery facilities, still lacking even after seven years into developing Kwun Tong as a New Town. As a result, not only were government departments overwhelmed by illegal hawking, but they were also increasingly concerned by the unhygienic mixing of cooked food and meat with other goods since both were now serving the community.³¹ But a wariness to commit to more permanent, complex market structures by the UC persisted. As the vague discussion of a 'simple market/bazaar' suggests, government departments hesitated to settle on a structure in more concrete terms. This would prove to become a problem later, as the fluid boundaries of the 'market/bazaar' would open unexpected opportunities for hawkers and residents alike. Nevertheless, instead of more permanent structures, several temporary markets and hawker bazaars were planned, including one at Yue Man Square (or Yue Man Fong) – Kwun Tong's commercial centre where illegal hawkers of cooked and prohibited food were already active alongside a small bazaar of licenced vegetable and sundry goods hawkers.³²

³⁰ PRO, HKRS 438-1-44, Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1965 – March 1966, Market Select Committee, Committee Minutes MKT/3/65, Tuesday, 17th August 1965, p3.

³¹ PRO HKRS 438-1-28 Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1963 – March 1964, Hawkers at Kwun Tong Commercial Centre HAW/3/66 4th May 1966.

³² PRO, HKRS 438-1-28, Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1963 – March 1964, Hawkers at Kwun Tong Commercial Centre HAW/10/66 27th July 1966.

Yue Man Square connected the two separated zones in Kwun Tong, creating a bridge between the industrial and the residential zones by the sole main road in and out of the district, Kwun Tong Road. As the central meeting point between the two parts of the district, Yue Man Square already functioned as the centre of the district's growing local economy, largely built by private businesses or subsidised by the manufacturing industry.³³ Another HKU Geography student, Doreen Jing Ying Tung photographed the existing threshold in 1965 as part of her survey, 'the pedestrian crossing that leads directly to Yuen Man Square from the Industrial Area' (Figure 2.08a).³⁴ Access was through a tunnel in the centre of the main commercial façade, including shops on the ground floor where everyday items were sold, an inn (rooms for casual workers), small factories and dormitories for local workers on the floors above (Figure 2.08b). As the main pedestrian thoroughfare during this time, this area was passed through by most workers as they walked home or sought out further land transport out of the district at the Yue Man Fong Bus Terminus.

Indeed, the square was far from barren prior to the planned market/bazaar, and in fact had grown to become a lively community space. Tung's peer, Alice Woon Yin Kwok, waxed lyrical on the goings-on in Yue Man Square in their survey of the area:

By commercial core, it is referred to Yue Man Square where shops, restaurants, banks, studios, doctors' offices, stalls as well as street-side, small 'stores' are lining along it. This is by far the busiest street in Kwun Tong, especially during lunch hour. [...] In one street alone, which measures about 800 feet, there are four banks [...]; six restaurants of impressive sizes, one shop for Chinese herbaceous tea, one dispensary, 12 small stores including 'mobile' ones, and three theatres: the Silver Theatre, showing Cantonese and Mandarin films, Bond's and Mido Theatre under construction. It is quite a different sort of atmosphere from the humdrum industrial area. The intense

³³ PRO, HKRS 438-1-51 Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1966 – March 1967, Hawker Cleansing/Tidying Operation, Yue Man Square, Kwun Tong, HAW/11/66 21st September 1966.

³⁴ HKULSC, MSS 333.7095125 T926, Tung, Jing-ying, Doreen, 'A land use survey of Kwun Tong, with emphasis on industry, division 3' (unpublished paper, 1965) p88.

commercial odour can be detected in this core. [...] The Hong Ming Road, Ngau Tau Kok Road and Hing Wo Street have shops and restaurants too, but comparing to the Yue Man Square, their colour fades.³⁵

This passage describes Yue Man Square as an overflowing hub of activity, emphasising the sensory and dynamic of the space of consumption contained between the two separated zones. The spatial ambiguity of this liminal space between work and home offered the opportunity for daily transformation by its residents. With many of these structures and buildings being privately run rather than government initiated as a part of a wider town plan, residents and businesses had the agency to use and arrange this space themselves, in spite of the modernist vision for the industrial New Town that surrounded it.³⁶

From the perspective of the UC and other government departments, however, the most problematic issue with the square was illegal hawking. According to meeting notes of the Hawker Select Committee, for example, an adequate market/bazaar had still yet to be built in Kwun Tong. By July 1965 and government departments were increasingly pushing for a larger structure to be quickly raised at Yue Man Square to deal with the hawker situation.³⁷ Indeed, antagonism between authorities and cooked-food hawkers were much fiercer during cleansing operations and were only kept at bay by the police at that time. In September 1966, Yue Man Square 'had been completely taken over by illegal cooked food stall operators who were known to working factories by day and to hawk from early evening until late at

³⁵ HKULSC, MSS 333.7095125 K982, Kwok Woon Yin, Alice, A Land Use Survey of Kwun Tong (with emphasis on Industry) Division 4 (unpublished paper, 1965) p56.

³⁶ See Ying-keung Chan, *The Rise and Growth of Kwun Tong: A Study of Planned Urban Development*, Occasional Paper No. 30 (Hong Kong: Social Research Centre, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1973).; Tai-lok Lui and Stephen Chiu, 'A Tale of Two Industries: The Restructuring of Hong Kong's Garment-Making and Electronics Industries', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 26.1 (1994), 53–70.

³⁷ PRO, HKRS 438-1-28, Hawkers at Kwun Tong Commercial Centre, Hawker Select Committee, 27th July 1966.

night'.³⁸ Although illegal hawkers filled the gap for cooked food and groceries in Kwun Tong, as well as providing additional income for factory workers, these benefits were not necessarily viewed positively by government departments and planners.³⁹ Such policing fuelled further tensions between government and local residents about the nature of Yue Man Square and the opportunities for transgression that it offered. The role of Kwun Tong as the centre of Hong Kong's new industrial identity was also spatially contested in this way, with increasing government concern that Kwun Tong could 'look the part' as an efficient, productive machine for the metropolis.⁴⁰

However, more pressing than the disparities in attitude to everyday life and work was the notorious reputation as a site for disarray that Yue Man Square was developing within government departments. While illegal hawking had initially been one of the main concerns, the spatial and material scale of the collective hawker pitch at Yue Man Square would be illustrated only a few months later:

the entire area had become a most insalubrious mess...in all 48 lorry loads of abandoned hawker paraphernalia had been removed from the site which now presented a very much better appearance...the department was now pressing for the early formation and surfacing of the nearby market/bazaar.⁴¹

At this point, it was clear that hawkers, their paraphernalia and the 'insalubrious mess' they had allegedly created were unacceptable for the

³⁸ Although it is unclear how common it was for factory workers to also taking on a secondary job as a hawker, many people in working-class communities were used to holding multiple jobs, hence the prominence of outwork and factories within housing estates in Kwun Tong. In Lu and Tsoi's study, they found that the majority of their respondents held hawking as their main job, but this result does not clarify the possibility that they might have held other jobs. See Lu and Tsoi, Table IB40. PRO, HKRS 438-1-51 Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1966 – March 1967, Hawker Cleansing/Tidying Operation, Yue Man Square, Kwun Tong, HAW/11/66 21st September 1966.

³⁹ PRO, HKRS 438-1-51 Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1966 – March 1967, Hawker Cleansing/Tidying Operation, Yue Man Square, Kwun Tong, HAW/11/66 21st September 1966.

⁴⁰ PRO, HKRS 438-1-51 Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1966 – March 1967, Hawker Cleansing/Tidying Operation, Yue Man Square, Kwun Tong, HAW/11/66 21st September 1966.

⁴¹ PRO, HKRS 438-1-28, Hawker Cleansing/Tidying Operation, Yue Man Square, Kwun Tong, 21st September 1966.

government in terms of the appearance of the New Town. More than simply a square, Yue Man Square could be comparable to Hong Kong's nineteenth-century bazaars ('Chinatowns' as Evans names them) – materially rich spaces with the sole purpose of serving the Chinese mixed residential and commercial community, and a space of negotiation between residents and colonisers.⁴² Hastening the formation of a 'market/bazaar' (rather than any other specific structure) suggests both the desperation of government departments for rapid intervention into the urban landscape at this early stage of development, as well as a need to take control of these community initiations through the tried and tested 'redlining' systems in bazaars (albeit in streets) and market structures. At the same time, the use of 'market/bazaar' again affirms the continuous struggle to formulate what exactly such a structure might be, and how such structures would fit into the existing vision of the New Town.

As a result of this emergency, construction was escalated and by 1967 a government market/bazaar was nearing completion (Figure 2.09a & 2.09b).⁴³ The two images show that indeed, an amalgamation of a single storey structure and a bazaar (somewhat like the early cooked-food hawker bazaars) was formed in the north-eastern corner of Yue Man Square. As can be seen in Figure 2.09a, the structure of the Kwun Tong Temporary Market is indicated by the large singular roof bisecting the centre of the market area. The entrance opens up to the main pedestrian street parallel to Hip Wo Street (facing east), and the roof follows all the way to the other side, virtually touching the four-storey building opposite. A sign over the top of the entrance reads 'Kwun Tong Market' and in the South-West corner, a uniformed man patrols the area. The boundaries of the 'bazaar' aspect of the space are much less clear, but still dominate the image. Stalls can be seen on either side of the building, both a row along the central thoroughfare meeting

⁴² Evans, 1970.

⁴³ Hong Kong, Public Records Office, HKRS 438-1-51 Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1966 – March 1967, Memorandum for members of the Market Select Committee Paper MKT/8/61967 Statement of Aims: Markets.

the street leading to the Bus Terminus in the centre, and the large site behind, which covers the remaining area of Yue Man Square up until the much taller flats at the back of the square. Taken in 1969, these photographs almost certainly document the aftermath of a clean-up session for internal use by government departments, or at least before the wide, pedestrianised area once again became riddled with both legal and illegal hawkers peddling cooked food, snacks, live goldfish, slippers and other miscellaneous goods.

Although the photographs very clearly centres the 'Temporary Market' building as its focus, the materiality surrounding the building highlights the ambiguity of the bazaar space itself. Rather than a clean separation of market and bazaar, such photographs demonstrate how the market/bazaar in fact formed a single marketplace through the overlapping of objects, bodies and conditions, in spite of the different policies assigned to different produce.⁴⁴ This is most noticeable in Figure 2.09b, where each side oversteps the boundary line between the building and paved site of the square, using reappropriated objects, such as pieces of board, hung awning fabrics and lighting, to sew the two parts of the space together. In spite of the daylight coming through the awnings, the general darkness of the interior space is highlighted by the numerous artificial light flares throughout the image, until where the sunlight only shines through at the other end of this particular row of stalls where layers of various textures and materials can be seen. From here, it can be recognised how the topography of the roofing as seen from outside has been created, precariously strung and balanced on various poles and posts. Although at first glance the market and bazaar seem visually distinct, their shared precarious status, and the way both spaces intertwine with each other functionally and materially, encouraged further transgression. While the market building could theoretically separate hawkers selling meat, fish, and poultry from hawkers selling fruit, vegetables, and other goods, to

⁴⁴ Meat, fish and poultry were specifically not allowed to be sold in bazaars for hygiene reasons – however, this was often undermined both by illegal bazaars selling meat, or temporary allowances for bazaars to sell meat by the government. This will be discussed later on in this chapter and the following chapter.

both physically and administratively control the quality of the most vulnerable foods, this image shows that even in its best condition the market/bazaar was difficult to cleanly divide. Such an ambiguity relates back to Massey's 'simultaneity' in spaces of negotiation, and indeed the 'multiplicities of colonisation', which were indeed contradictory and unruly. In this sense, the total space of the market/bazaar merely extended the ambiguity of the existing Yue Man Square, where in spite of the physical building, the space retained its dynamic nature filled with sensorial experiences and materials rather than suppressing it.

2.2a Contradictory structures, ambiguous forms

The antagonism between authorities and illegal hawkers was not helped by the increasing pressure on the cramped area that had been allotted for Kwun Tong's commercial zone to serve an exponentially expanding population. As Chan describes in her 1973 study, the fourteen-acre site through and around Yue Man Square (bound by Luen On Street to the east and Yuet Wah Street to the west) completely underestimated upcoming local expansion,

When the Kwun Tong Development Advisory Committee proposed this commercial zone in Jan 1960, it was re-estimated that Kwun Tong would be developed into an industrial town of 250,000 population. However, 10 years after, Kwun Tong District had already about 500,000 population and the original planned 14 acres commercial zone has long been too small.⁴⁵

Bound on all sides by infrastructure, including buildings, roads and public transport built by both public and private institutions, Kwun Tong's 'commercial core' could not physically grow outwards. The large amount of RE and GLCH estates in Kwun Tong, with little or no structured marketing facilities, only exacerbated the hawker problems in estates. Due to the emphasis and reliance on industry to drive development in Kwun Tong, especially in the early years, development quickly became lopsided in spite of

⁴⁵ Chan, The Rise and Growth of Kwun Tong, p37.

efforts to plan ahead.⁴⁶ This context made the uncontrollable presence and popularity of hawkers in Kwun Tong, particularly in resettlement estates, unsurprising.

Only two years after the building in Yue Man Square had been completed, government departments and planners recognised the need for long-term intervention. Although the project arguably did not succeed in suppressing hawker activity (evidenced by the continuous removals through the 1970s), planners began to frame formal markets as a method to reorganise the New Towns and force people from frequenting hawkers.⁴⁷ In 1969, during the drafting of the COP, clearer and more intentional planning and prevention was acknowledged as the next step in addressing market spaces, as opposed to the ad hoc responsive implementation of bazaars set out by the *Hawker Report*. Commissioner for Resettlement, John Phillip Aserappa wrote in a letter to James William Hayes, then Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs, in 1969 that:

I believe myself that one of the main causes that has brought about the present chaos [in the estates] is the lack of proper markets. This is particularly noticeable at Ngau Tau Kok; the hawkers there have swarmed in to fill the vacuum and they are now using the estate as a general market for the whole area. The same thing has happened at Kwun Tong [...] If we are to control hawkers there must be more markets; though as the hawkers themselves and, probably, their customers as well, prefer the present system there will remain the problem of directing this commercial activity into the markets and away from estates.⁴⁸

'Proper markets' referred to planned, solid structures built for permanence in spaces specifically for estate use. For Aserappa, the problem of hawkers was only to be solved with fully realised New Town districts, where appropriate barriers could be put in place between the commercial and residential zones. In essence, he called for much more advanced planning across all aspects of

⁴⁶ See D. C. Y. Lai and D. J. Dwyer, 'Kwun Tong, Hong Kong: A Study of Industrial Planning', *The Town Planning Review*, 35.4 (1965), pp299–310.

⁴⁷ PRO, HKRS 489-4-9, Markets in Resettlement Estates, RD 5/392/65, 24th Dec 1969.

⁴⁸ PRO, HKRS 489-4-9, Markets in Resettlement Estates, RD 5/392/65, 24th Dec 1969.

everyday life, where the idea of 'self-containment', the notion that everything necessary was available within the New Town or the estate, had to be committed to.⁴⁹ Although self-containment in Kwun Tong was never the goal as a 'satellite town', the government was quickly realising they could not rely on private commercial companies to cover these necessary bases, certainly if they were to address hawker control.

Nevertheless, the design and materiality of such containment was still unclear. As shown in the market/bazaar and in the ongoing resettlement programme, buildings literally made of concrete were not necessarily more permanent, or less chaotic in their material make up.⁵⁰ Even into the early 1970s, the continuing debates and indecisions in the UC on how to design more permanent markets had already allowed the ambiguous space of the hawker bazaar to flourish. Further speculation on the concept of the bazaar and how it would function continued with the COP, and little improved on the configuration of the bazaar in the *Hawker Report*. This was because it was felt that bazaars required land that could otherwise be put to better use; the Land Development Planning Committee agreed that further studies were necessary

⁴⁹ PRO, HKRS 489-4-9, Markets in Resettlement Estates, RD 5/392/65, 24th Dec 1969.

⁵⁰ The materiality and aesthetics of concrete has been debated within discourses of Modernist architecture and heritage, and concrete's role in the climate crisis. Indeed, in Hong Kong during this period, concrete's status as a volatile, temporary and destructible material is demonstrated in the deterioration of several housing estates to dangerous levels caused by cement which had been mixed with sea water. This, and the 'temporary' nature of the market, challenges the Modernist rhetoric of concrete as a sure and stable expression of modernity. This would be a fascinating continuation of current discourses of Modernist architecture in Asia but is beyond the scope of this thesis. See Adrian Forty's book *Concrete and Culture: A Material History* (Reaktion Books, 2013). See also T. C. Liauw, 'Influence of Seawater on Reinforced Concrete Buildings', *Building Science*, 9.2 (1974), pp125–129. For further reading on concrete, materiality and heritage, see: Chun Wai Charles Lai, 'Cement and "Shanghai Plaster" in British Hong Kong and Penang (1920s–1950s)', in *Building Knowledge, Constructing Histories* [2 Vols.] (presented at the 6th International Congress on Construction History (6ICCH 2018), July 9–13, 2018, Brussels, Belgium, 2018), pp291–98 <<https://structurae.net/en/literature/conference-paper/cement-and-shanghai-plaster-in-british-hong-kong-and-penang-1920s-1950s>> [accessed 30 November 2021].; Þóra Pétursdóttir, 'Concrete Matters: Ruins of Modernity and the Things Called Heritage', *Journal of Social Archaeology*, 13.1 (2013), pp31–53. ; Martino Stierli, 'The Politics of Concrete: Material Culture, Global Modernism, and the Project of Decolonization in India', in *Rethinking Global Modernism* (Routledge, 2021).; Aidan While, 'The State and the Controversial Demands of Cultural Built Heritage: Modernism, Dirty Concrete, and Postwar Listing in England', *Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design*, 34.4 (2007), pp645–663.

to establish which trades *needed* to 'be carried out in bazaars and which could be channelled to normal retail outlets' and which sites 'could later be readily converted for other uses when and if no longer required as hawker bazaar'.⁵¹ While there was clear bias in the decision towards 'normal retail outlets', these were yet to be finalised, and were only just beginning to be explored on a widespread scale through modular markets in the late 1960s, and commercial complexes from the mid-1970s onwards.⁵²

The shortcomings of these mundane, everyday decisions meant that the bazaar allowed hawkers to appropriate these loopholes. While further government stalling on what hawker bazaars actually were and what purpose they would serve continued, illegal hawkers took advantage of the continued spatial, material, and legal liminality of the resettlement estates. In addition to the lack of visual and material distinctions between forms of market/bazaars, some illegal bazaars were legalised by the government, and were permitted to sell restricted goods like fresh meat, poultry and fish, as well as cooked food, for lack of other distribution means.⁵³ However, such measures were already a step behind illegal hawker activity and created further contradictions in estates. In documents gathered by the Select Market Committee in 1973-74 surveying markets and hawker bazaars serving estates, annotated plans show several legal hawker bazaars filling the space in between blocks on the east side of Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate (Figures 2.10a & 2.10b). The 'tolerated' bazaars were legally allowed to sell meat and fish in significant volume, with a total of 83 hawkers selling meat and fish out of 582 hawkers in 1974, in spite of long-established laws about where and how these goods should be sold.⁵⁴ To the west side, however, entirely illegal hawker bazaars formed on the border of the cliff below Wo Lok Estate (these

⁵¹ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, Provision of Land for Hawkers, 6th January 1970.

⁵² This is expanded on further in the following two chapters.

⁵³ PRO, Markets in Resettlement Estates, HKRS 489-4-9, RD 5/392/65, 24th Dec 1969, Paper by Bernard Williams on hawker problem in Resettlement Estates BVW/NWH/Memo 27th December 1969.

⁵⁴ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Hawkers in Kwun Tong Estate (Tsui Ping Road), Situation as at 30-5-1974.

were eventually re-sited to the cement playground and football field) (located at (W)). In the seventeen years following the introduction of hawker bazaars in Kwun Tong, and even with the establishment of a flourishing commercial centre, dense hawking practices still persisted within as a constant component of resettlement estates. Yet again, hawkers made the entire estate their pitch. The sheer scale of such bazaars indicate just how prolific, lucrative and necessary these spaces were to the community.

Another plan of Ngau Tau Kok Estate, a resettlement estate in the Kwun Tong area built between 1967 and 1969, emphasises this juxtaposition further by showing the beginning of the move towards market structures (Figure 2.11a, b & c). Three different bazaars are shown to be weaving under and between the long parallel structures of the buildings themselves.⁵⁵ A wide range of hawker types, including meat, fish, poultry, fruit and vegetables, dry trades and services, and cooked foods were represented here, totalling 514 hawker stalls on the west side of the estate alone. Approximately 60 itinerant hawkers fill up the road along Bazaar II, these likely being illegal hawkers (Figure 2.11b). Note that the newer development of blocks 8 to 14 on the east side are without hawkers bazaars. Instead, two 'hawker market' sites, a large 'L' shape next to blocks 13 and 14 and a smaller site at the centre of blocks 9,10 and 11, as well as three dedicated restaurant buildings, are embedded within the estate structure (Figure 2.11c).⁵⁶ The compacted ways in which these bazaars and the home came together, filling the space between and within blocks, further exacerbated the contradictory qualities of the spaces of consumption in estates. The legal/illegal, temporary/permanent legal and structural status of both the hawker bazaar and resettlement estate manifest in literal in-between assemblages, making it exceptionally difficult to 'fix' bazaars in spatial or economic terms. While Ngau Tau Kok Estate itself had

⁵⁵ Ngau Tau Kok Estate was at this point already split into Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estates (I) and Lower Ngau Tau Kok (II) in 1973 to improve management efficiency.

⁵⁶ Blocks 1 – 7 were the first blocks to be built on the estate, forming LNTK(I). This was in the Mark IV Resettlement estate design, with 16 storeys and a lift to the 8th and 13th floor. Blocks 8 – 14 were built slightly later in the Mark V design which included varied accommodation sizes, with 8-12 being the first resettlement estates built using prefabricated parts.

three 'hawker markets', all these types of structures together (hawker stalls, bazaars and markets) together in one vicinity at the same time did little to clarify the spaces of the public housing estate or how these spaces were distinguished. Indeed, it could be argued that the precarity and constant movement of all the different components of the estate helped to create more dynamic resettlement environments, albeit differently from how the colonial government had intended the situation to be.

Further to this, the drawn-out internal disputes between the UC and other departments regarding definitions of people and places exacerbated the slippery boundaries and definitions of the bazaar. One particular complaint addressed to Unofficial Members of the Executive and Legislative Council Office (UMELCO) in 1973, after the arrest of a group of hawkers trading in Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate by the police for hawking without licences, highlights this:

These unlicensed hawkers were permitted by the Secretary for Housing to trade in that particular estate. Administrative Secretary, UMELCO Office has since *raised the general question of the conflicting policies adopted by the Urban Council and the Secretary for Housing*. He has asked that no further prosecution should be taken against those hawkers who have been tolerated by the Secretary for Housing.⁵⁷

The memo continues by explaining that, 'this matter [...] touches upon a long standing dispute between the DUS [Director of Urban Service] and C for R [Commissioner for Resettlement] about the status of the hawkers trading within the old resettlement estates.'⁵⁸ Further to this were disagreements between the DUS and Secretary for Housing as to 'whether the hawkers trading in the open spaces of Government housing estates are hawkers in the context of the Public Health and Urban Services Ordinance' and 'whether or not the open spaces in housing estates are public places' which all determined whether these hawkers should be licensed by the UC.⁵⁹ Indeed,

⁵⁷ Italics added. PRO, HKRS 337-4-6352, Donald Tsang, Colonial Secretariat to UMELCO Office, 6th September 1973.

⁵⁸ PRO, HKRS 337-4-6352, 6th September 1973.

⁵⁹ PRO, HKRS 337-4-6352. Memo from Donald Tsang to R.S. Kneebone, 5th November 1973.

these debates, and the ineffectual attempts to limit hawker activities temporarily in hawker bazaars, arguably themselves caused loopholes in which hawkers could thrive – questions about whether bazaars were private or public places and whether hawkers were indeed hawking confounded matters to hawkers' advantage. Hawkers were also well used to organising, with the support of significant legislators such as Elsie Elliot. This helped them buy time for hawking to bloom again after cleansing operations.⁶⁰ Moreover, such debates had been continuous for over two decades, so that on the ground in bazaars themselves, negotiations had become 'par for the course' in everyday life on the estate.⁶¹

Nevertheless, the role of the bazaar in estate communities continued to be overlooked by the Housing Department (HD), in spite of being pointed out by other government departments. Even Hong Kong's Principal Town Planner, E.G. Pryor, in his report on shopping facilities in estates, questioned why bazaars and markets had not been considered in estimations in line with the COP guidelines:

I started investigating the question solely in relation to the provision of shopping facilities but upon further consideration I feel it is equally important to take account of the need for market and hawker bazaar stalls as these form an integral part of retailing in Hong Kong. [...] It would appear that there is a dearth of shopping facilities in many public housing estates and it would seem that it is no mere coincidence that in a number of such estates the ratio of hawkers/1000 persons is above the average for the urban area as a whole.⁶²

Pryor noted that high density urban districts such as Wan Chai differed greatly from those with high concentration of public housing estates such as Kwun Tong; such a lack of shopping facilities in the latter reflected the still relative distance of such estates from established commercial centres (without

⁶⁰ See PRO, HKRS 337-4-6352 for a series of letters written or endorsed by Elsie Elliot.

⁶¹ See PRO, HKRS 337-4-6352, M.17 Donald Tsang, 30th November 1973; Letter from L.K. Ding, Chairman of the Hong Kong Christian Industrial Committee to the Colonial Secretary, 21st February 1974.

⁶² PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Provision of Retail Facilities in Public Housing Estates, From E.G Pryor, Principal Government Town Planner to Director of Housing, 26th February 1974.

efficient transport networks) despite the needs of low-income families who resided in the New Towns, particularly in resettlement estates. He recognised in his investigations that markets and hawker bazaars were integral to the urban fabric of New Town development, equal to, if not even more important than commercial retail outlets.

The report was also the first real (albeit a relatively fast and informal) survey of hawker bazaars in Hong Kong as a space contributing significant value in Kowloon and the New Territories. As can be seen in Figure 2.12a, the map had been annotated by hand to reflect the data gathered as laid out in the report. Red indicates hawker bazaars and green indicates markets, although how these forms were distinguished in the report is unclear (based on the report, the distinction was possibly based on whether activity occurred within a formally built structure or not).⁶³ Boxes left to right indicate numbers of stalls selling meat/fish (M); veg/fruit (F); dry goods (O); cooked food (C) respectively. Green ticks and the label '完', *jyun* (meaning 'complete'), may indicate the completion of a market in that estate.⁶⁴ Although the map largely includes the main urban areas, bazaars far outweigh the presence of formalised markets across the territory. Focusing in on the Kwun Tong area, it is clear to see how significant hawker bazaars impacted the daily operation of estates, and the district as a whole (Figure 2.12b). A total of 2,514 hawkers of different types operated in bazaars in the area. With a population of 250,070 in the Ngau Tau Kok district in the 1976 by-census, it is reasonable to suggest that at this time, hawkers and hawkers bazaars significantly helped a huge population of lower-income residents to manage the distance from previous locations and facilities, sustain employment, and create a new structure of life in the New Towns.⁶⁵

⁶³ Note that the map is outdated from the report, Government and government-aided housing estates printed in 1972.

⁶⁴ This key was deduced from annotations on the attached tables to individual plans of estates, also included in the report. See HKRS1039-1-12.

⁶⁵ Hong Kong Government, Census and Statistics Department, Hong Kong Annual Digest of Statistics (1978) p25.

2.3 Obstructing prosperity

Up until the 1970s, there was very little in the way of illegal hawkers to stop them from operating, particularly within the safety of numbers in illegal hawker bazaars. Many working people turned to hawking as an important way to increase their income, particularly as low overhead costs and the flexibility of the job allowed for low risks, and could fit in around fixed salaried work schedules.⁶⁶ By 1968, 'the presence of this large number of hawkers proves the very strong demand [...] particularly true in those areas where there has been extensive industrial development.'⁶⁷ Clean-up operations proved to be increasingly fierce. Indeed, towards the end of the 1960s, negotiations between government and residents were desperate, and records made during 1966 and 1967 regularly allude to 'the disturbances' as reason to carefully deliberate whether clean-up operations would be worthwhile.

One memo warned that 'such eviction would not be easy as it might create disturbance [...] eviction was sometimes difficult and should only be used as the last weapon'.⁶⁸ Certainly any clean-ups were carefully publicised, with such publicity intended to 'negate the effects of hostile criticism from left-wing sources ready to exploit a situation' and rather emphasise 'the positive aspects of any operation [such as] by the formation of a new hawker bazaar.'⁶⁹ From the late 1960s, hawker bazaars were thus subsumed into the narrative of the post-war colonial government, as part of infrastructure designed to support the people of the colony and modernise its landscape for their benefit. In contrast to the nineteenth-century bazaar as symbolic of the past violence in urban redlining, the government vision of the modern bazaar was increasingly one of organised, clean public space and a legal employment opportunity. On the basis that bazaars could serve as peace-making

⁶⁶ McGee, pp8–9.

⁶⁷ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, 22nd April 1968, p1.

⁶⁸ PRO, HKRS438-1-78' Minutes of the Meeting of the Resettlement Management Select Committee held on Thursday, 2nd October 1969.

⁶⁹ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Publicity in Hawker Affairs, 2nd July 1969.

structures amidst the tensions of the riots, the UC and RD could not afford to stall on providing hawker bazaars for local communities any longer.

In spite of these calls, government departments which were responsible for housing were preoccupied with the spatial arrangement of bazaars, particularly when it came to decisions around the amount of ground space necessary. The 'area of land that should be set aside for hawker bazaars' was suggested at 50 square feet in the COP, but recommendations were concentrated on ensuring provisions were reasonable and not overestimated.⁷⁰ The attached Plate 3.21 Book 2 (Figure 2.13) showed four suggested layouts for hawker bazaars by the COP as of January 1968. Based on an estimated total hawker bazaar area of 10,000 square feet, each layout served approximately 24,000 – 27,000 people, suggesting a maximum of 200 hawker pitches. In general, the main difference between the layouts is in the ratios of the stalls themselves and the arrangement of the storage and preparation areas. Otherwise, only Layout 4 departs from the typical grid arrangement within the bazaar. The space between stalls and the outside wall or boundary (it is unclear whether this arrangement is under a roof or on a specific platform) range from 3 to 9 feet, with more focus on the space between stalls as opposed to the distance from the edge. Where these bazaars could be arranged within estates, and in context with other estate buildings, is likewise unclear in the COP suggestions. As with the strict space designations of public housing themselves (35-square feet per adult), bazaars were also subject to exacting scrutiny on just how much land it would take up.

However, rather more pressing hawker issues were at stake, and some of these were completely missed in the COP plan. The most important of these was around the issue of fire. Given the backdrop of resettlement in the first place, fire was surprisingly *not* a factor in the initial incorporation of hawker bazaars. Yet it is clear in the documents that departments were not

⁷⁰ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Suggested amendments to Part 7: Commerce with regard to Hawker Bazaars and Retail Markets, from Sc. COP, Working Committee No. 3 6th January 1968.

uninformed; Fire Services had long been emphasising the importance of space around bazaars and reiterated again during the writing of the COP through the Commissioner for Resettlement that twenty feet must be left clear around all buildings within estates to ensure access in emergencies and that escape exits were clear. However, the memo continues to admit that:

there is not one possible site where a bazaar would be 20 feet from a block in the whole of the West section of Tsz Wan Shan Estate, with a population of 45,000 persons. Thus the effect of enforcing this requirement in planning new estates would be considerable.⁷¹

After this somewhat nonchalant comment on the 'considerable effort' necessary, little else was said on the matter, and it is unclear whether this was then incorporated into the COP. The numbers of hawkers were emphasised instead (i.e., whether such numbers were accurate or needed reassessment), and therefore whether hawker bazaars were too large or too small for the proposed population. Although there was an urgent need to ensure that hawker bazaars were built safely, such scepticism certainly slowed down progress or design intervention regarding safety.

Indeed, housing related departments were still busy with rapidly progressing development in the New Towns, perhaps at the expense of operations on the ground. Four months later, the USD did however finally mention to the Colonial Secretary,

Further arguments for the provisions of bazaars [are] the uncontrolled activities of hawkers on undeveloped Crown Land, [...] brings the law into disrepute, represents a loss of revenue, creates considerable additional difficulties for cleansing, Police and Fire Service work, frequently constitutes a serious traffic hazard and, in particular with cooked food stalls, a fire hazard and is a disgrace to a prosperous developing community.⁷²

As the commentary reveals, however, that although fire is finally mentioned, the narrative continued to focus on a loss of spatial control and orderliness,

⁷¹ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, MacLeod, Reservation of Sites for Hawker Bazaars and Markets within the Resettlement and Low Cost Housing Estates, 15th December 1967.

⁷² PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Bristow, Buildings in the Public Works Programme, 1968/1969 Markets and Hawker Bazaars, 22nd April 1968.

finally concluding that any 'hazard' would 'disgrace' the 'prosperous developing community'. In other words, hawker bazaars were a major solution for the optics and everyday operations of the New Towns (already in the golden era of Hong Kong's manufacturing boom) rather than seen as a means of preventing loss of life, or a means of improving public health. Thus, in contrast to the nineteenth-century perception of the bazaar, which largely focused on the racialised control of the Chinese population, the role of the modern hawker bazaar became part of the narrative of the model colony as defined by consumption. However, the visual, material, and spatial disparities between these two distinct understandings of the 'bazaar' continued to be a major question, and thus allowed a gap for interpretation between government departments and hawkers themselves.

This is most clearly demonstrated in the dense illegal hawker bazaars in estates constructed by illegal hawkers themselves. Fire Services were increasingly pushing for urgent attention on such bazaars. By 1970, hawkers in resettlement estates were seen to be responsible for the already dire, even life-threatening conditions, so much so that this became the main focus for various District Fire Services, particularly regarding access to fire-fighting equipment and the major potential for fire hazards. A report by a concerned chief officer (unfortunately missing the photographs referenced) illustrated the density of the obstruction in a number of estates' hawker bazaars:

These [photographs taken on 18th March 1970 in the Ngau Tau Kok, Ham Tin, Sau Mau Ping and Wong Tai Sin] show a typical cross section of the hazards and obstructions cause by these illegal hawkers in almost every Resettlement Estate. Numbers increase daily and there is absolutely no control on them whatsoever [...] may strong representation be made to the Resettlement Department to take immediate action to remove the obstructions which come under their direct supervision.⁷³

Issues included illegal electrical supplies strewn from the blocks to hawker stalls; obstructed or completely blocked fire service inlets, hydrant and

⁷³ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Hawkers in Resettlement Estates Interim Report, From F Jackson, Chief Fire Officer, Mainland to Director of Fire Services, 20th March 1970.

hydrant valves, often blocked by 'very permanent' structures; and entire lift lobbies, entrances, passages and corridors being used as illegal restaurants.⁷⁴ Although UC and other housing-related departments were aware, the urgency expressed by the chief fire officers suggest that the departments were not concerned enough.

These obstructions, as far as Fire Services were concerned, would inevitably lead to disaster. In a desperate letter to the Commissioner for Resettlement, Fire Director, J. Milner claimed that such negligence could be fatal:

My senior commanders and I are growing increasingly apprehensive of the life/fire hazards which are being so blatantly generated in resettlement estates by hawker stalls, cooked food stalls, illegal workshops, the use and storage of dangerous goods, makeshift extensions of electrical circuits and obstructions of fire service installations. [These photos] show that we (i.e. Government) would be in a most indefensible situation if serious fire or other calamity occurred in one of the subject estates.⁷⁵

Even more damning was the observation that 'these problems do not occur in Low-Cost Housing Estates where strict control is exercised and hawkers are not permitted with the residents using the ground floor shops or buying from the local market'.⁷⁶ It is this file in particular that most vividly demonstrates the clear shift from hawkers being seen by the government as simply an 'optical' concern to being seen as a markedly spatial one, meaning a shift of government focus away from how hawkers 'looked' in space to where hawkers actually operated in space. In short, this was a shift from the visual-material aspects to the spatial aspects of the hawker pitch. While this was mainly about the obstruction to the Fire Services in their work, it also explicitly included the hawkers' physical obstruction and occupation of the estates themselves in the form of illegal bazaars. Such conditions meant that in the case of an emergency, residents could easily be trapped inside estates,

⁷⁴ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, 20th March 1970.

⁷⁵ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Hawkers in Resettlement estates Fire hazard Abatement, To the commissioner for resettlement from J Milner, Director of Fire Services, 11th Apr 1970.

⁷⁶ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, 20th March 1970.

with illegal hawker bazaars themselves having the potential to actually fuel the fire.

As for the role of government-issued legal hawker bazaars, the Fire Services were less convinced that such bazaars could be catch-all solutions for the hawker issue on estates, seeing that the bazaar form was, in effect, already the cause for these problems. In one case at Lam Tin Resettlement Estate (named in this document as Ham Tin), there were significant disparities in standards held to hawker bazaars between the Fire Services, the USD, and the Resettlement Department (RD), with the RD asserting that:

Unless effective control of this bazaar can be exercised and the illegal hawkers already in situ removed, it would appear that the provision of this bazaar is more likely to exacerbate than improve the situation.⁷⁷

Ultimately, adequate space and enough control were more important factors in improving the obstructive nature of illegal hawking, and most significantly, the ambiguity of bazaars themselves often bolstered the hawker issue. They go on to specify that as well as removing the hawkers, the bazaar must 'not be permitted under any circumstance to overspill' and encroach on the twenty feet rule, and 'no canvas, metal or overhanging tarpaulins' was to be raised.⁷⁸ In the case of a public emergency, the free use of materials by hawkers, whether within legal or illegal bazaars, was not merely a visual nuisance but also created severe physical barriers and obstructions. The Fire Service emphasised that should hawker bazaars even exist, bazaars could not only be a case of assigning and arranging space but also needed to be absolutely clear in how it interacted with its context.

In the case of Ham Tin Estate, very little efforts were made to improve the hawker bazaar situation in terms of fire safety or hawker operations. Even less infrastructure was provided than the original 1957 bazaar design trails at Tai Hang Tung Resettlement Estate (discussed at the beginning of the

⁷⁷ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Proposed Hawker Bazaar between Block 7,8, & 10 Ham Tin Estate, from Dir of Fire Services to Commissioner for Resettlement, 21st October 1968.

⁷⁸ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, 21st October 1968.

chapter); Figure 2.14 shows that little more than paving defined the hawker bazaar to be built at Ham Tin. Although some raised concrete plinths had been suggested these were thought to 'hamper the layout' when the bazaar became operative and 'may not be acceptable to the hawkers'.⁷⁹ The Commissioner for Resettlement even admitted that 'despite the present absence of control of hawkers, I consider it worthwhile to proceed with providing this bazaar even if it cannot be properly allocated and controlled'.⁸⁰

2.3a Structuring or deconstruction? Cooked-food hawker bazaars

Similar problems emerged in specific categories of hawker bazaars. From the outset, hawker bazaars were meant to deal with cooked-food hawkers — the most problematic hawkers of all in terms of both safety and nuisance. Although cooked-food hawkers had been the focus of hawker bazaars in the first instance, cooked-food hawkers quickly gained reputation for their special voracity against containment in legal bazaars, often instead forming their own illegal bazaars comprised of chaotic overlapping structures. By 1968, the Resettlement Department was despondent, saying that:

the Police position on unlicensed cooked food hawkers appears to be that they are not prepared to take any action [...] all we can hope to do is to use our powers under the Resettlement Ordinance to demolish structures. Since cooked food hawkers are particularly tough to deal with, and since because they are unlicensed we cannot (as we can with other hawkers) at least offer them an alternative site when we demolish their structures [...] We cannot hope to reduce the number of such hawkers by these means but only to keep them out of buildings and keep them mobile (i.e. structureless). Even this aim we are failing to achieve at present. Structures can be, and frequently are, rebuilt on the same day. [...] even so we face the bleak prospect of fighting a losing and literally interminable battle.⁸¹

Definitions and responsibilities were again debated when dealing with these specific hawkers and their bazaars. MacLeod's memo notes the difference

⁷⁹ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Fairey, D of US, Proposed Hawker Bazaar between Blocks 7,8, & 10 Ham Tin Estate, 19th October 1968.

⁸⁰ PRO HKRS 309-1-5, MacLeod, C for R, Proposed Hawker Bazaar between Blocks 7,8, & 10 Ham Tin Estate 3rd October 1968.

⁸¹ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, MacLeod, Unlicensed Cooked Food Hawkers in Resettlement Estates, 13th May 1968.

between the mobile nature of urban food hawkers as opposed to those in estates, partially driven by the opinion by the Police Department that hawkers within the confines of the estate were, in fact, not obstructions. The dividing line over what is 'public space' in the context of public housing estates where hawkers could be considered an obstruction, as well as who was responsible for removing them, were still in flux. As facilitators for hawkers, hawker bazaars (whether legal or not) therefore remained ambiguous as well. Although bazaars were meant to keep hawkers in one place and under control, effectively conjoining multiple hawker pitches in a single area, mobility (as part of temporality) was also valued by the government. Such contradictions made it difficult for government departments to decide how best to utilise the bazaar idea.

Innovations which were designed to 'solve the problem' of cooked-food hawkers other than hawker bazaars were questionable. Some, such as building 'annex restaurants' and allowing the sale of some hot foods in light refreshment cafés, were already being put into action with varying success. Other ideas, however, such as reducing rents for restaurants and cafés so they could compete with prices, and licencing some illegal hawkers in good, competitive sites, required legislation and approval from the Secretariat. Given the drawn-out nature of the issue, further lengthy processes were not conducive for dealing with immediate emergencies. The construction of restaurants could not guarantee the demise of these cooked food hawkers either. As MacLeod summarised in his memo, the problem would likely continue regardless of access to legitimate restaurants.⁸² Issuing temporary cooked-food stall licences in estates, which would allow the Resettlement Department more power for compliance, had already been rejected by the Food and Food Premises Committee on the basis of hygiene. His conclusion, was that:

any new policy must be based on the realities of the situation i.e. the fact that cooked food hawkers, legal or illegal, are here to stay. [...] I

⁸² PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, 13th May 1968.

would like the discussion to make a concrete decision on the specific proposal that bazaars of Cooked Food Stalls are the only solution to an improvement in control of illegal cooked food hawkers, and that they are a social necessity.⁸³

As discussed throughout this chapter, bazaars had already been a government strategy for containing cooked food hawkers since the 1950s, and especially during heightened construction works into the New Towns. Regarding the Public Works programme in 1968, the DUS advocated for the bazaar as a form of prevention in amidst the industrial development of the New Towns:

admittedly a bazaar for cooked food stalls alone has not yet been provided in the New Territories but it is surely only a logical extension of existing practice. The only really new feature would be the provision of overall roofing. [...] Due to the provision of a large cooked food stall bazaar, the position in Kwun Tong is not too bad, but it is likely that conditions at Castle Peak, Sha Tin and other developing areas will ultimately become the same as they are in Tsuen Wan unless steps are taken now to create improved facilities.⁸⁴

The key new feature of a roof proved to be an essential addition for several reasons: as argued by Bristow, a roof offered the 'opportunity to provide private water connections to stalls' as well as 'the relevant electricity supply company to provide private metered connections' rather than unauthorised wiring.⁸⁵ J. A. Towner, Commissioner for the Tsuen Wan District, added that 'the inclemency of the weather in Hong Kong discourages business' resulting in 'a conglomeration of wooden roofs [and] canvas awnings', and that roofing would encourage those with licences to take more care with hygiene standards.⁸⁶

Provision of a roof did spur further exploration into more permanent structures such as open-sided two-storey annex restaurants and, in later

⁸³ Italics added. PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, 13th May 1968.

⁸⁴ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Buildings in the Public Works Programme 1968/69 Markets and Hawker Bazaars, from Director of Urban Services to Hon. Colonial Secretary, 22nd April 1968.

⁸⁵ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, 22nd April 1968.

⁸⁶ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Cooked Food Stall Bazaars, J.A. Towner to Hon Dir of Urban Services (attn to Mr. G. A. Fairey, 22nd March 1968.

GLCH estates, single storey *dung gu ting* hawker stalls.⁸⁷ While these were not strictly named as 'bazaars', these structures directly continued and reflected the bazaar's ambiguous state as neither mobile hawker structures, nor fully enclosed, fully-fitted buildings. In the Resettlement Department annual report of 1969, the department published that 'provisions have been made for restaurants withing Mark III blocks while the Mark IV and V estates have detached annex restaurants' alongside a photograph of the first annex restaurant in progress at Sau Mau Ping Estate (Figure 2.15).⁸⁸ The image shows a simple concrete block in the midst of completion, with estate blocks seen in the background. The structure is raised off the ground with two steps of concrete foundation. Three sides of the building are open bisected by two window or entryways, and the internal space is also open plan. The back left corner of the building looks to be a stairwell to the upper area. The structure is still empty, and some small cleaning works are underway in preparation for new tenants. Later from 1975, beginning with the first GLCH estates, smaller single storey structures in small clusters (colloquially called *dung gu ting*, literally translated as 'mushroom pavilion') were built to contain cooked food hawker stalls and came to be much like outdoor kitchens catering for all mealtimes (Figure 2.16).⁸⁹ These somewhat temporal, experimental structures marked the beginning of the transition away from bazaars prior to the reorganisation of government departments in 1973, and towards a more widespread, permanent solution for the hawker issue.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ LSE, 51H R52, Hong Kong Commissioner for Resettlement, *Annual Departmental Reports, 1969-1970*, Hong Kong Government Printers, 1970, p23.

⁸⁸ LSE, 51H R52, 1970, p23.

⁸⁹ This links closely to the distinct history of fixed-pitch cooked food hawker stalls, known in vernacular Cantonese as *dai pai dong*. I have previously conducted research on this topic in my MA thesis but the particular history of *dung gu ting* and estate restaurants is beyond the scope this thesis and has potential for further research. Vivien Chan, *Assembling the dai pai dong: Living and occupying the street in Hong Kong, 1945- present* (unpublished MA thesis, Royal College of Art, 2017).

⁹⁰ This will be continued in the following chapter on modular markets.

2.4 Looking to Singapore

At the same time, other alternatives explicitly named 'bazaars' and inspired by innovations in other cities were also being explored. In an attached summary of a 1966 meeting with the Ad Hoc Committee on Restaurants it was tentatively suggested that Singapore-style hawker bazaars could be a successful option for Hong Kong.⁹¹ By the late 1960s, Singapore was considered by the USD as 'the only comparable place' for shopping standards as opposed to Western countries.⁹² Hong Kong had looked to Singapore for models for dealing with hawkers (including bazaars and markets) since as early as 1951. Singapore had established their own Hawker Inquiry Commission in 1950, an aspect of which was reaching out to other East and Southeast Asian cities for comparison.⁹³ Of the cities contacted (including Mumbai, Calcutta, Rangoon, Colombo, Hong Kong, Manila and Yogyakarta) Hong Kong's UC were one of the few to respond with hawker statistics. Notably, the Singapore Hawker Commission Inquiry does not refer to bazaars at all, rather referring to 'hawker shelters', though the description is clearly comparable to the proposal for hawker bazaars in the *Hawker Report*:

We should recommend that attention should be concentrated on preventing hawking, by fixed pitched hawkers in the open street. We can see no way in which this can be done unless Singapore can plan and build fast enough to catch up on its birth rate and alleviate overcrowding. If this is done, however, it is important to visualise a large number of very small traders as a more or less permanent feature of the city's life, and to plan carefully how their concentration can be provided for in proper shelter.⁹⁴

Still, although it is unclear when or whether Singapore indeed called or understood these shelters as 'bazaars' (particularly after Independence), the

⁹¹ HKRS309-1-5, Hawkers in Resettlement Estates, From Commissioner for Resettlement to Hon, Director of Urban Services, Commissioner of Police, Director of Fire Services, 24th April 1968.

⁹⁰ HKRS 41-1-685, K.S. Pun, Discussion between Mr. Fairey, Senior Executive Officer (Hawkers and Markets), USD and Mssrs Pryor and Pun, COP, on 4th April 1967, HKRS 1039-1-10.

⁹³ PRO, HKRS 41-1-6850, Hawkers, Report of the Hawkers Inquiry Commission, 1950, Singapore.

⁹⁴ PRO, HKRS 41-1-6850, Report of the Hawker Inquiry Commission, 1950 (Colony of Singapore, 1950) p27.

discussions in Hong Kong government department records certainly related the two forms to the extent of referencing 'Singapore-style bazaars'.

However, the literature indicates distinct differences between bazaars in the two cities, where Singapore's 'bazaars' instead defined a specific kind of market form and culture in the region.⁹⁵ According to historian Frank Chua, Singapore's *pasar malams*, (literally meaning 'night market' in Malay, but connected to the word 'bazaar' as the Malay word *pasar* is rooted in the Persian word 'bazaar') while easily confused with different enclaves in Singapore and their market activity, were 'in reality more like evening travelling flea markets or night bazaars'.⁹⁶ Although sharing common features, Hong Kong bazaars differed from the Singaporean *pasar malam* in the way that Singapore hawkers remained truly itinerant, moving from one area to the next in weekly rotation. While earlier informal markets in Hong Kong also featured these traits, and indeed many illegal bazaars were held at night, hawkers in post-war Hong Kong had largely taken to specific sites (even when removing their stalls daily) and were not confined to nighttime operation.⁹⁷ Further to this, the *pasar malam* is also not to be conflated with the later Housing Development Board (HDB) hawker centres – as Chua argues, Singapore's *pasar malams* were regulated to extinction through HDB hawker centres beginning in the 1970s until the final *pasar malam* was resited in 1988.⁹⁸ More specific to estates, *pasar malams* were banned from HDB

⁹⁵ See Victoria Francesca Galvez, 'Lived Experience in a Neighbourhood Wet Market: Culture and Social Memories of Disappearing Space' (unpublished MA Social Sciences, National University of Singapore, 2013); Anja K. Franck, 'Negotiating Gendered Spatial Boundaries: Women's Food Hawking in Penang, Malaysia', in ed. by Melissa Calaresu and Danielle van den Heuvel, *Food Hawkers: Selling in the Streets from Antiquity to the Present* (Routledge, 2016), pp208–29; Jean Duruz, Susan Luckman, and Peter Bishop, 'Bazaar Encounters: Food, Markets, Belonging and Citizenship in the Cosmopolitan City', *Continuum*, 25.5 (2011), pp599–604.; Brenda S. A. Yeoh and Lily Kong, 'Reading Landscape Meanings: State Constructions and Lived Experiences in Singapore's Chinatown', *Habitat International*, 18.4 (1994), pp17–35.; Lily Kong, *Singapore Hawker Centres: People, Places, Food* (National Environment Agency, 2007).

⁹⁶ Frank Chua, 'A History of the Singapore Pasar Malam: A Market Experience in Pre-Modern Singapore', *Crossroads: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 16.2 (2002), p116.

⁹⁷ See Ngai Keung Chan, 'Place-Making and Communication Practice: Everyday Precarity in a Night Market in Hong Kong', *Space and Culture*, 21.4 (2018), pp439–54.

⁹⁸ Operation Hawker Control began in 1966. Chua, p132.

estates in February 1970, with a five-year plan to move all remaining hawkers into the hawker centres in or near HDB estates.⁹⁹ In essence, '*pasar*' in Singapore were actually *only* in reference to 'street bazaars', taking on different names once they were forced into different urban and operational structures.¹⁰⁰ This suggests that Hong Kong government departments projected these ideas and approaches onto Hong Kong's own hawker situation, combining Singapore's tactics with a Hong Kong-specific notion of 'the bazaar'.¹⁰¹

In addition, Hong Kong's interest in Singapore in the 1960s correlated with Singapore's recent transition to independence, and with this a newly concerted effort to develop New Towns in the country. No doubt the references made here to Singapore's HDBs refers to the development of Toa Payoh beginning in 1964 — Singapore's first new town to incorporate 'neighbourhood planning'.¹⁰² As Loh Kah Seng's research demonstrates, the PAP government's vision of housing reform following the Bukit Ho Swee fire was similar to that which had been followed by the British during the colonial era.¹⁰³ There is a clear lineage between Singapore and Hong Kong public housing development, such as through the movement of colonial officers managing public projects between the two cities, most significantly J. M. Fraser (Chief Executive Officer of the Singapore Improvement Trust, 1941 – 1958, becoming Hong Kong Commissioner for Housing in 1959). However, the archives suggest that it was only after independence and the parallel rapid

⁹⁹ Chua, pp129–130.

¹⁰⁰ Chua concludes that the contemporary 'revival' of *pasar malams* in HDB estates are rather *not* continuous of the pre-industrial pasar, mainly due to the fact they are only run for celebratory occasions. Chua, p137.

¹⁰¹ It is unclear from sources about Hong Kong as to whether hawker centres in HDBs were considered 'permanent' sites within estates by Singaporean planners, therefore justifying the removal of *pasar malams* in their entirety.

¹⁰² See Wang and Yeh for comparative details between the two city-states. It should be noted that Singapore hawker centres started as stand-alone buildings which may have been close to HDB estates but not necessarily part of the estate plan. The first of these was Newton Hawker Center, completed in 1971. L. H. Wang and Anthony G. O. Yeh, 'Public Housing-Led New Town Development: Hong Kong and Singapore', *Third World Planning Review*, 9.1 (1987), pp41–63.

¹⁰³ Loh Kah Seng, *Squatters into Citizens: The 1961 Bukit Ho Swee Fire and the Making of Modern Singapore* (NIAS Press, 2013) p183.

development of these two cities from the 1960s onwards that Hong Kong began to take more serious cues from Singapore's approach to hawking and estates.¹⁰⁴ Since then, the two territories have been consistently compared, particularly in terms of their housing programmes.¹⁰⁵

Other significant social comparisons during the 1960s also point to reasons why the Hong Kong government were increasingly excited by Singaporean housing plans. Beyond the major fire catastrophes initiating public housing in the first instance, mass migration and civil unrest were also issues in Singapore's recent history.¹⁰⁶ Referencing the 1964 race riots in Singapore and the 1966 and 1967 riots in Hong Kong, Wang and Yeh remark on the social issues concerning both cities in the early to mid-1960s, where

the speeding up of public housing development programmes in the two city-states could be considered a viable means towards defusing social tension by improving the living environments on the one hand, and by disintegrating the social fabric of the squatters which was thought to be a source of social disturbances on the other. Construction activities also created the badly needed employment opportunities for many.¹⁰⁷

Hawkers were caught up in this during this period too. As Loh's research shows, hawkers strongly resisted attempts to curb their activity in estates, to the point where hawkers were using fire crackers and acid bombs, and HDB officers were trained in armed combat in response.¹⁰⁸ The dire state of

¹⁰⁴ Incidentally, many of the expatriates working in the SIT left due to the government's growing anti-colonial stance, including Fraser. Following this, it is unclear whether there was formal, direct communication about the hawker issue between the two territories, but there was certainly exchange through visits, training and suggestions, as will be discussed further in the chapter. Indeed, Liao does reveal in his oral history account with Glendinning that he was in frequent contact with Teh Cheang Wan (SIT Chief Architect from 1959 and then CEO of the HDB from 1970 – 1979) on housing developments. Liao said 'Singapore and I – we used to compare notes. They had more land at their disposal. We made good use [of what we had].' Interview with Donald Liao (interview 1), interviewed by Miles Glendinning, 21st August 2009.

¹⁰⁵ Yue-man Yeung and D. W. Drakakis-Smith, 'Comparative Perspectives on Public Housing in Singapore and Hong Kong', *Asian Survey*, 14.8 (1974), pp763–775.; D. W. Drakakis-Smith and Yue-man Yeung, 'Public Housing in the City States of Hong Kong and Singapore', in ed. by J. L. Taylor and D. G. Williams, *Urban Planning Practice In Developing Countries* (Elsevier, 2013), pp217–238.

¹⁰⁶ Loh, 2013.

¹⁰⁷ Loh, p51.

¹⁰⁸ These conflicts continued through into the 1970s. Loh, pp232–233.

Singapore's own social fabric in the late 1950s to early 1960s (followed by its rather aggressive recovery plan following unexpected independence from Malaysia in 1965) clearly resonated with the ongoing tensions and hopes for public order in Hong Kong in 1966. Discussions held in government meetings on hawkers, markets and bazaars show that while Hong Kong was working with a different set of structures dictating development decisions, government departments nevertheless held a keen eye on Singapore's Concept Plan (formulated in 1967) and the standards set out for markets and bazaars in their guidelines, as Hong Kong began preparing its own COP (beginning in 1965, published 1969). Indeed, in retrospect, Wang and Yeh conclude that 'better coordination is achieved in Singapore than in Hong Kong in the provision of various physical facilities' due to the singular decision-making powers of the HDB.¹⁰⁹ Singapore's first modern hawker centre was completed in 1971, and the targeted, violent crackdowns on hawkers in the following years effectively shifted Singapore's hawker culture from itinerance to centralised sites in standalone and estate hawker centres.¹¹⁰

Between 1967 and 1968, Hong Kong government departments began a series of in-depth research reports on hawkers in both the urban and residential areas of Hong Kong, with Singapore representing an example of what was possible. In September 1968, the USD held a meeting with Census and Statistics, Colonial Secretariats, the COP team and the Secretariat for Chinese Affairs to discuss a 'Research Project on Hawkers', with explicit mention of 'the hawker bazaars and retail markets constructed by Singapore Housing and Development Board [...] It was generally agreed that a study team should be sent over to Singapore to make a comprehensive study of the

¹⁰⁹ Wang and Yeh, p60.

¹¹⁰ Andrew Tam, 'Singapore Hawker Centers: Origins, Identity, Authenticity, and Distinction', *Gastronomica*, 17.1 (2017) p46. For the politics of planning in Singapore, see also Chua Beng Huat 'Singapore as Model: Planning, Innovations, Knowledge Experts' in ed. Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong, *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global* (London: Wiley Blackwell, 2017) pp29–53.; Hee Limin, 'The politics of public space planning in Singapore', *Planning Perspectives*, 18 (2003), pp79–103.

project'.¹¹¹ More detailed minutes specify that the 'success of the Singapore methods of dealing with hawkers in Housing Estates there seemed to be a good case for recommending that a visit should be paid'.¹¹²

2.4a Cooked-food bazaars, Singapore-style

Cooked-food bazaars in estates were specifically focused on in the Singaporean context, with the possibility of applying the Singaporean model to Hong Kong public housing estates and thereby solving the cooked-food 'hawker problem' more widely. But in light of recent riots, the issue had to be approached carefully:

It was generally agreed that considerable difficulty would be experienced in trying to abolish all cooked food hawking within estates because of the probably unfavourable reaction of the public [...] Both Mr. Ross and Mr Fairey pointed out that some success appeared to have been achieved in Singapore with the provision of special buildings for cooked food hawkers and suggested that there might well be a case for providing this kind of thing within Resettlement Estates where they could perhaps be operated as "Cooperative Restaurants".¹¹³

These restaurants would include a range of cooked-food stalls with food to be eaten at communal tables and chairs. However, the Committee on Restaurants at that time generally dismissed the idea, feeling that these would be 'impracticable in most of the old estates because of the large space required' and that, should they be incorporated into new estates, 'a large amount of propaganda [would be needed] because neither the cooked food vendors nor their customers would be accustomed to such a procedure'.¹¹⁴ Nonetheless some members felt that this could fulfil some of the more

¹¹¹ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Notes on a meeting held at USD Headquarters concerning "Research Project on Hawkers" 3rd September 1963.

¹¹² PRO, HKRS 309-1-5 Research Project on Hawkers, Notes of a meeting held on Tuesday 3rd September 1968 in AD's Office, USD, 3rd September 1968.

¹¹³ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Notes of a meeting on hawking in Resettlement Estates held in the Urban Council Chamber on Thursday 12th September 1968.

¹¹⁴ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Unlicensed Cooked Food Hawkers in Resettlement Estates, MacLeod, Administrative Officer, Commissioner for Resettlement, to Hon. D.U.S and Commissioner of Police, 13th May 1968.

pressing needs in estates, such as access to food and daily goods, as they continued to expand housing in the New Towns.¹¹⁵

In March 1969, the Hawker Policy Select Committee thus explored the possibility further of erecting 'Singapore-style bazaars' on 'larger and more permanent sites' such as industrial areas and resettlement estates.¹¹⁶ The attached plan shown in Figure 2.17 lays out an enormous 61,823 square feet plot with a total of seventy-eight eating stalls and prepared food shops. The plan only shows the ground floor, but it is clearly intended to be a multistorey building; arrows indicating 'to flats' suggest that the bazaar would constitute the ground floor within one of the estate blocks or take residents to a series of pedestrian bridges linking up with other parts of the estate. Stalls are mostly situated around the perimeter of the bazaar, with two large open courts and seating accommodation space assigned to the centre, although no furniture for seating is indicated suggesting the use of moveable stools or chairs. Entrances are available on three sides, with two parallel doors at the front and two on either side. Communal sculleries, disposal areas, public toilets and lift facilities are all indicated. The memo then specified other materialities (aside from the addition of a roof) before the bazaar could even come under consideration. These included: lightweight interior structures; satisfactory draining; a wash-up sink of 'glazed earthenware, stainless steel' with running water; and likewise, glazed earthenware wash-hand basins.¹¹⁷ It also specified that shop spaces with kitchens and food preparation had to be at least 7 feet tall and must 'be imperviously tiled or surfaced with smooth light coloured impervious material and the junctions between the floor and walls shall be coved'.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ PRO, HKRS 309-1-5, Notes of a meeting on hawking in Resettlement Estates held in the Urban Council Chamber on Thursday 12th September 1968.

¹¹⁶ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, Memorandum for members of the food and food premises select committee, Licensing of Cooked Food Stalls – Review of Policy, 24th June 1969.

¹¹⁷ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, 24th June 1969.

¹¹⁸ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, 24th June 1969.

In spite of such enthusiasm, this hawker bazaar was beyond the scope of what government departments could feasibly achieve at this point. They realised that 'the conditions in [Singapore], especially regarding availability of land, are hardly apposite to those in Hong Kong'.¹¹⁹ Land was not the only issue, however, for such 'high-class bazaars [...] even if approved financially and legally, would inevitably be a slow, laborious process, involving large sums of money', making development on this scale too much of a risk.¹²⁰ Instead, 'the faster, cheaper alternative to meet the present needs is to find as many cooked food stall bazaar sites as possible'.¹²¹ These would be provided with 'water supply, simple roofing, drainage' and other necessary components to fulfil the Hawker By-laws at that time.¹²² Still there were other avenues suggested as a means of overcoming the 'twin stumbling blocks of finance and large suitable areas' by firstly surveying where demand for cooked-food hawkers was most pressing; obtaining small sites where possible and turning them into fully roofed, water-supplied and drained off-street bazaars; and then offer the illegal cooked food hawkers to take out Cooked Food Licences in these bazaars under the basis of an agreement of tenancy.¹²³ The labelling of these bazaars as 'high-class' perhaps reveals the prejudices of the committee. As previously discussed comments about overprovision, necessity, and shopping habits of residents also suggest, the notion that these bazaars were far too generous for working-class residents and hawkers can be seen in the extent of the Singapore-style bazaar. Indeed, it might also reveal the sense of difficulty that the committee felt with regards to Hong Kong's situation in comparison to Singapore. The Singapore government could act more quickly and responsively due to their centralised development structure, and could thus exert more unified, draconian measures in urban planning, actions that Hong Kong did not feel they could risk.¹²⁴

¹¹⁹ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, Licencing of Cooked Food Stalls, Review of Policy, 20th June 1969.

¹²⁰ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, 20th June 1969.

¹²¹ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, 20th June 1969.

¹²² PRO, HKRS438-1-78, 20th June 1969.

¹²³ PRO, HKRS438-1-78, 20th June 1969.

¹²⁴ Tam, 2017.

Although these 'high-class' Singapore-style bazaars were swiftly rejected by the committee, the management strategies employed in Singapore appear to have been studied and applied. For example, as suggested in the June review, by the end of 1969, more focus was placed on bolstering the newly formed 'Tidiness Teams':

the formation of 3 Tidiness Teams [...] was therefore requested as a matter of urgency [...] it will come under the supervision of the new Resettlement Officer (Shops & Hawkers), who has recently returned from studying Public Housing and Hawker Control in Singapore.¹²⁵

Previously, cleansing responsibilities had been left to a small 'Anti-Nuisance Squad' which was charged with taking care of 'problem areas' like hawker bazaars and removing any other items too large for USD refuse vehicles.¹²⁶ As other large-scale clean-ups began to take up more of the squad's time, particularly regarding illegal restaurants, the general cleanliness of estates began to decline. The new Tidiness Teams each comprised twenty-three people (who had mostly been reassigned from estate labourer teams) and would take on the heaviest burden such as major hawker stalls, extensions, and sunshades, while newly hired labourers employed or contracted by the Resettlement Department could focus on the everyday cleaning of the estates (which still proved to be a major feat). These teams would work across multiple estates rather than being tied to single estates. Although 'the long term aim of the department is to obtain sufficient labourers [...] the department is therefore requesting further Tidiness Teams for the next estimates', whether this management structure would be sustainable was another question.¹²⁷

2.5 Conclusion

In sum, the modern bazaar in Hong Kong simultaneously provided an initial bolster for the construction of the New Towns, while also opening

¹²⁵ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78 'Tidiness Teams' Memorandum for members of the resettlement management select committee and hawkers management select committee, 12th December 1969.

¹²⁶ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, 12th December 1969.

¹²⁷ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, 12th December 1969.

loopholes for the working-class communities who moved into such estates to create their own spaces for everyday consumption. Re-emerging almost exactly a century after the imperial bazaar streets had been demolished and the Chinese population relocated, the modern hawker bazaar would similarly see through the dispersal and acclimatisation of the population in amidst the construction of the New Towns. In the cracks between government department decision-making, particularly in how the public spaces of estates would run, the bazaar offered an avenue for residents to make up for the lack of facilities in the urban landscape, not only as a means of group-initiated survival but also as a source of agency within the stale local conditions of the resettlement estate.

Although the 1957 *Hawker Report* has presented hawker bazaars as purely temporary attempts to curb hawker activity, the bazaar would take on its own life in the following decades. As it was not tied to specific structural forms or spatial sites, the ambiguous and contradictory concept of the bazaar created openings for transgression, and the spatial-material ambiguity of the bazaar aided and even exacerbated illicit activity. Its inherently debatable legal and physical structure, neither totally permanent nor temporary, mobile nor fixed, legal nor illegal, private nor public, created an environment that allowed hawkers to collectively overwhelm authorities. The bazaar was a means to appropriate space through adding and assembling structures, crossing boundaries, and consistently undercutting the government emphasis on legitimate (and profitable) commercial outlets.

The bazaar then, rather than a 'stable' space, is a manifestation and a materialisation of the negotiations between government and residents and conflicting visions of consumption in the modern urban landscape. Although attempts were made to clarify the boundaries of the bazaar and codify it in the early years of the New Towns, cases such as the market/bazaar at Yue Man Square evidence the slippage of these spaces in use, where crossing materialities grew to eventually engulf and transform the thresholds set out

by UC- approved buildings and paving. In estates too, the bazaar's parasitic nature filled the 'vacuum' of estate buildings. Against the backdrop of civil unrest and threats of fire, the bazaar was not only a central site *of* negotiation (negotiations of publicness and definition of space), but also a response *to* negotiation, in the sense that different assemblages of the bazaar were assertions of what hawkers, residents, and planners wanted and needed to address in the landscape (additional labour, lack of food supply, public satisfaction, public health and safety). Reflecting the ongoing negotiations behind closed doors in relevant government departments, bazaars were in themselves material call-and-responses on the ground in real time.

Indeed, this expands to Hong Kong's turn towards Singapore as both a colonial brethren and a competitor in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Having identified parallels in ideas of spatial and cultural modernity in the New Towns, the Hong Kong government borrowed Singapore's design and management strategies in housing and hawker policy, while simultaneously continuing to develop a localised concept and language around the bazaar. While these ideas were ultimately rejected, it is clear that Singapore's hawker centres and hawker policy were influential in Hong Kong's attempts to eradicate hawking from the urban landscape in the following decades. As the two cities continued to be compared throughout the late twentieth century, both for their impressive economic and spatial transformation, the state of their public welfare would come under global scrutiny as markers of modernity. For Hong Kong, where bazaars began as temporary placeholders for the purpose of constructing the New Towns, as cheap and effective alternatives to more substantial or acceptable consumption spaces, the purpose of the bazaar expanded by the mid-1970s to be a tool in public relations as well as a major component of the estate complex.

Preamble II: To Belong in Hong Kong

The 1960s witnessed a change in the colonial governance of Hong Kong, with David Trench replacing Robert Black as governor in 1964 during the height of Hong Kong's economic boom. However, these were also some of the most politically tense years in the colony. In spite of the explosive economic growth in the 1960s, squatting and overcrowding still persisted and the city was still unable to house people adequately.¹ Changes in housing policy could not drive enough construction to meet demand. Between 1957 and 1972, the former HA had constructed only nine estates with a total population of 220,000.² In addition, the former HA managed seventeen estates built by the PWD with a population of 400,000. In comparison, the Resettlement Department has built twenty-five resettlement estates and fourteen cottage areas with double the population in the same amount of time. Although these were substantial numbers, housing continued to strain relations between the government and the public.

From a design point of view, housing had to become much larger to accommodate the project goals of the new housing policy. Technologies in high-rise building, land reclamation and building on mountainous terrain were developed by both the PWD and the former HA during this time to maximise space on estates (Ch 3.1, 3.3, 4.2).³ These innovations were introduced by a new roster of architects in the former HA, many who were local graduates of the relatively young Architecture department at HKU or educated in the UK.⁴

¹ Castells, p24. Industries included textiles, garments, toys, plastic flowers, and other light industries.

² See Leung, p136. Projects include North Point, So Uk, Ma Tau Wai, Choi Hung, Wo Lok, Fuk Loi, Wah Fu, Un Chau, and Oi Man.

³ J. R. Firth, 'The Work of the Hong Kong Housing Authority', *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts*, 113.5103 (1965), pp175–195.

⁴ The University of Hong Kong Department of Architecture was founded in 1950. Liao became assistant architect at the former HA in the early 1950s after graduating from HKU as one of the first batch of architecture students. He was promoted to chief architect in 1960. His classmate from HKU became his assistant architect (identity unknown), and later on hired many of his ex-students from HKU. This information was recorded in an oral history conducted by Miles Glendinning, with thanks to Professor Glendinning for sharing the transcript from this interview. Interview with Donald Liao (interview 1), interviewed by Miles Glendinning, 21st August 2009.

Donald Poon-huai Liao joined in 1960 and went on to lead the design of Wah Fu Estate, a significant estate with the first commercial complex opened in 1968, and later becoming Chairman of Housing for the HKHA. Still, with all of this investment, the former HA had to consider its finances carefully.

Although resettlement estates were financed by the government, the former HA had to become much more financially active from the mid-1960s onwards. As a semi-independent organisation (although initially subsidised with half price land and low-interest loans), the former HA had always had to operate commercially and was required to pay full land and development costs from 1968 to 1973 (Ch 3.2, 4.3, 4.4).⁵ Operations of low-cost housing estates therefore had to be profit generating for the former HA, thus slowing down construction.

These pressures were further exacerbated by the 1966 and 1967 riots. Although the 1966 riots began as a protest over increases in fares for the Star Ferry, the 1967 riots were explicitly connected to pro-CCP and anti-colonial sentiment.⁶ However, in contrast to the Double Ten riots a decade earlier, several scholars argue that the 'watershed' in 1967 highlighted the rifts in Hong Kong society, with many residents starting to distance their identity from Chineseness and towards a specifically Hong Kong identity (Ch 1.3, 2.3, 4.1, 4.2).⁷ This was not only due to the growing economic prosperity of the colony, but also the background of the Cultural Revolution across the border. As well as this, local youth culture, popular culture and notions of global

⁵ Leung, p114.

⁶ See Robert Bickers and Ray Yep, *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009).

⁷ Allen Chun, 'Discourses of Identity in the Changing Spaces of Public Culture in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 13.1 (1996), pp51–75.; Shuk Man Leung, 'Imagining a National/Local Identity in the Colony: The Cultural Revolution Discourse in Hong Kong Youth and Student Journals, 1966–1977', *Cultural Studies*, 34.2 (2020), pp317–340.; Clement Tsz Ming Tong, 'The Hong Kong Week of 1967 and the Emergence of Hong Kong Identity through Contradistinction', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 56 (2016), pp40–66.

modernity had emerged in the colony through a generation who had grown up in Hong Kong, contributing to a sense of a localised belonging.⁸

As a result, the latter years of the 1960s saw the beginning of a transformation in public relations strategies by the colonial government. These were largely expressed through arts and culture. In the immediate aftermath of the riots, the 1967 Hong Kong Week changed from a promotional festival for industries to involve a mass audience. The following Festival of Hong Kong in 1969 would continue an emphasis on Hong Kong identity.⁹ In 1967, Hong Kong announced its first participation in the World Exposition to be held in Osaka in 1970.¹⁰ In addition, urban developments in public infrastructure also incorporated notions of leisure and environment. For example, swimming pools, libraries and youth groups were funded and promoted. The Colony Outline Plan (COP), the first comprehensive plan of Hong Kong since Abercrombie's 1947 plan, was finally outlined in 1969. All of these were well marketed, with the beginning of a modern visual language specific to Hong Kong's international cosmopolitan ambitions (Ch 2.3, 3.2, 4.1).¹¹

The Ten-Year Housing Programme

This initial boost in government communications and relations with the public became embedded in colonial policy under the new governor

⁸ Poshek Fu, 'The 1960s: Modernity, Youth Culture, and Hong Kong Cantonese Cinema', in ed. by Poshek Fu and David Desser, *The Cinema of Hong Kong* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp71–89.; Chi-Wan Mark, 'Hong Kong as an International Tourism Space', in ed. Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong University Press, 2016) pp161–182.; Clement Tsz Ming Tong, 'The Hong Kong Week of 1967 and the Emergence of Hong Kong Identity through Contradistinction', *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch*, 56 (2016), pp40–66.; Agnes S. Ku, 'Immigration Policies, Discourses, and the Politics of Local Belonging in Hong Kong (1950-1980)', *Modern China*, 30.3 (2004), pp326–360.

⁹ Allan T. F. Pang, 'Entertainment, Chinese Culture, and Late Colonialism in Hong Kong', *The Historical Journal*, 2023, pp1–24.

¹⁰ Daniel Cooper and Juliana Yat-shun Kei, 'Designing Stability: Hong Kong's Pavilion at Expo 70 and Local Expositions', ed. by Harriet Atkinson, Verity Clarkson, and Sarah A. Lichtman, *Exhibition Beyond Boundaries: Transnational exchanges through art, architecture and design, 1945-1985* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2022), pp209–226.

¹¹ See Wendy Siuyi Wong, 'Design Identity of Hong Kong: Colonization, De-Colonization, and Re-Colonization' (presented at The 6th International Conference of the European Academy of Design Conference Proceedings, Bremen: University of the Arts, 2005).

Murray MacLehose in 1971. Believing that poor living conditions of RE (including the missing necessary facilities) had contributed to the socio-political tensions of the 1960s, MacLehose pushed for new types of estates in 1972 in a New Ten-Year Housing Programme (TYCP) (Ch 3.3, 4.1, 4.2).¹² The following year, the former HA was reformed to become the new Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA), and the Resettlement Department and Housing Section under the USD was consolidated into the Housing Department (HD). Rather than the disparate development of housing across various different departments, housing development and management responsibilities became centralised under the HKHA. With this reform came several new objectives: a new goal of housing 1.8 million people in the next decade by building fifty-two new estates; improvement and maintenance of the environment in older estates; and finally, management of all public housing estates and facilities (Ch 3.2, 3.3, 4.3, 4.4). Crucial to this would be the comprehensive development of 'Phase 1' New Towns beginning in 1973, in Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun, with 'Phase 2' beginning in the late 1970s. Under the TYHP, capital funding was provided by the government, and from 1977 onwards, this financial arrangement was revised so that the HKHA was not required to pay any premium for land for public housing.¹³ While the incentives for this shift may have included more romantic, social democratic ideas of welfare, as Castells notes, the motivation to remove 'expressions of urban blight' like squatters and RE were clear, 'public housing is relief for the ill-housed only if it accomplishes its mission of re-establishing urban order, while making it possible to clear valuable land (Ch 4.2, 4.3).'¹⁴

Continuing with the 1960s notions of a specific Hong Kong identity under Trench's cultural programme, MacLehose introduced more civic campaigns. Such campaigns were formed in an effort to cultivate an idea of the modern, 'responsible' Hong Kong citizen, and an amicable relationship between the colonial government and the people of Hong Kong. In 1972, The

¹² Leung, p142.

¹³ Castells, p28.

¹⁴ Castells, pp32–33.

Information Services Department launched the Keep Hong Kong Clean Campaign (KHKC), for example, with an extensive visual marketing strategy including television adverts, street furniture, school programmes and public events (Ch 1.2, 2.3).¹⁵ In 1974, the Independent Commission Against Corruption (ICAC) was also formed to tackle corruption in both public and private sectors.¹⁶ Compulsory and free schooling was expanded into secondary school age, and social welfare allowances were also expanded to various groups. In 1975, Queen Elizabeth II made her first visit to the colony with great fanfare, with her stay including excursions to housing estates and community centres (Ch 4.2).¹⁷ Construction of the Mass Transit Railway (MTR) began in 1975, with the first lines connecting Kwun Tong to Shek Kip Mei and Tsim Sha Tsui. Chinese also became an official language alongside English after significant peaceful campaigning on this issue by students.¹⁸ MacLehose's beloved Country Parks Ordinance would come into effect in 1976, a policy which allow for the designation, development and management of country parks, special areas and hiking trails for public recreation (Ch 4.2, 4.3).¹⁹

However, the 1970s still saw considerable challenges in Hong Kong. Arrivals from the Mainland continued, spurred by the increasingly difficult life under Mao and the Cultural Revolution.²⁰ The end of the Vietnam War in 1975 also brought the first groups of Vietnamese refugees fleeing to Hong

¹⁵ Loretta Lou, 'From Hygienic Modernity to Green Modernity: Two Modes of Modern Living in Hong Kong Since the 1970s', in ed. Yunah Lee and Megha Rajguru, *Design and Modernity in Asia*, 2022, pp105–120.

¹⁶ Significantly, this included corruption in the police. See Ian Scott, 'Institutional Design and Corruption Prevention in Hong Kong', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 22.79 (2013), pp77–92.

¹⁷ See Mark Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945-97* (Manchester University Press, 2015).

¹⁸ Chi Keung Charles Fung, 'Colonial Governance and State Incorporation of Chinese Language: The Case of the First Chinese Language Movement in Hong Kong', *Social Transformations in Chinese Societies*, 18.1 (2021), pp59–74.

¹⁹ See Philip G. Stimpson, 'Country Parks in Hong Kong: A Consequence of Socio-economic Necessity', *Landscape Research*, 10.3 (1985), pp21–25.

²⁰ Florence Mok, 'Chinese Illicit Immigration into Colonial Hong Kong, c. 1970–1980', *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History*, 49.2 (2021), pp339–367.

Kong.²¹ The global economic recession in the early 1970s and the oil crisis in 1973-74 also affected Hong Kong economically, and halted housing construction for a few years. But in comparison to previous decades, scholars have argued that the draw of Hong Kong as an attractive location for commercial investment, outlined by government development of Hong Kong's social, political and physical environment, helped Hong Kong to continue its upward growth in spite of these setbacks.²² The development of the New Towns as part of the COP also factored this, including private investment in housing and industry as well as commercial spaces (Ch 4.1, 4.3, 4.4). Global international brands, such as MacDonalds, and new types of spaces like supermarkets, began opening in Hong Kong in anticipation of the overall shift in landscape and lifestyle of the city.²³ Public housing in estates began to feature more of these capitalist spaces, with the HKHA becoming a significant commercial landlord in the same footprint as subsidised residential homes.

Opening up, closing down

By 1980, the population of Hong Kong had reached 5 million. With Deng Xiaoping succeeding as chairman of the Chinese Communist Party in 1978, China opened its doors to foreign investment with new economic reforms. As less people amongst the younger generation in Hong Kong took careers in manufacturing, the increasing land and labour costs in Hong Kong pushed more manufacturing industries to leave Hong Kong and relocate to China. As a result, manufacturing in Hong Kong changed to specialised industries and the economy further concentrated on service and

²¹ Yuk Wah Chan, 'Revisiting the Vietnamese Refugee Era: An Asian Perspective from Hong Kong', in ed. Yuk Wah Chan, *The Chinese/Vietnamese Diaspora* (Routledge, 2011) pp1-17.; Juliana Yat-shun Kei and Daniel Cooper, 'Fluid Land: Vietnamese Refugee Camps and Hong Kong', *Change Over Time*, 11.1 (2022), pp104-120.

²² Joseph Y. S. Cheng, 'Goals of Government Expenditure in a Laissez-Faire Political Economy: Hong Kong in the 1970s', *Asian Survey*, 19.7 (1979), pp695-706.; Tai-lok Lui and Stephen Chiu, 'A Tale of Two Industries: The Restructuring of Hong Kong's Garment-Making and Electronics Industries', *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space*, 26.1 (1994), pp53-70.

²³ James L. Watson, 'McDonald's in Hong Kong: Consumerism, Dietary Change and the Rise of a Children's Culture', in *Golden Arches East: McDonald's in East Asia*, (Stanford University Press, 2006), pp77-109.

communications industries, particularly in finance. Housing and the price of rent was also affected by increasing encouragement by the government to buy property through the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS), a programme subsidising the sale of public housing (Ch 4.4). First launched in 1978, the first of these flats became available in 1980, and led to other housing experiments in collaboration with the private sector (Private Sector Participation Scheme).

With the deadline for the lease of the New Territories looming (99 years from 1898), there was increasing concern by investors on the continuation of the real estate market with the attractive conditions in Hong Kong.²⁴ Although some discussions had begun between MacLehose and Deng in 1979 which had held off a plummet in investments in the early 1980s, there were signs that the PRC intended to claim Hong Kong in its entirety in 1997 (Ch 4.4).²⁵ After Margaret Thatcher's visit to Beijing in 1982, 'it was clear that China would try to recover Hong Kong' and investor confidence fell.²⁶ Negotiations were finally complete in the signing of the Sino-British Declaration in December 1984, and ultimately all of Hong Kong would revert to Chinese rule in July 1997.²⁷ A wave of emigration from Hong Kong increased following the Declaration, and even more people left Hong Kong after the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989.²⁸

Meanwhile, the TYHP was extended in 1982 for another five years. The HKHA had not been able to meet the original target of 1.8 million housed, and squatter settlements and dense urban conditions continued to exist.²⁹ In 1987, a new Long Term Housing Strategy was announced, further emphasising home ownership for the now more 'well-off families' who were deemed able to afford to buy homes as a 'long-term solution' to the housing

²⁴ Carroll, p177.

²⁵ Carroll, p177–178.

²⁶ Carroll, p178.

²⁷ Carroll, p181.

²⁸ Carroll, p184.

²⁹ Leung, p202.

deficit.³⁰ The priorities of the HKHA therefore changed, slowing down public housing construction and marketing home ownership through various tenant-buying and home-buying schemes instead. In 1985, the old resettlement estates that had been built in the 1960s were gradually demolished, justified by the then unacceptable conditions of the units and construction. The HKHA was reorganised again in 1988 becoming more financially independent. This marked the beginning of the end of the HKHA as a primarily public housing design and construction agency.

The postwar decades in Hong Kong saw some of the most significant changes in Hong Kong's society and landscape, leading to its emergence as a global modern metropolis. Much of this transformation has its links to housing, a constant issue throughout this time that became a dominant site of negotiations between the colonial government and the growing population in Hong Kong. The problem was increasingly a space management issue and, as scholars have argued, how best to safeguard valuable Crown land for the benefit of the colony while also presenting an image of a modern Asian city.³¹ Although the problem of space has been consistent throughout Hong Kong's history, the postwar period would shift government tactics surrounding space to focus on communication and negotiation with the public on spatial issues.³² This involved carving a model of modern citizenship, through processes of cultural organisation and education, particularly through consumption. Consumption would become an important government strategy to simultaneously appease the public and organise space at the same time. Spaces of consumption were therefore key sites in the construction and negotiation of a new Hong Kong modernity for both the colonial government and the people of Hong Kong.

³⁰ Leung, p209.

³¹ Castells, 1990.

³² Cecilia Chu, 'Speculative Modern: Urban Forms and the Politics of Property in Colonial Hong Kong' (unpublished PhD, University of California, Berkley, 2012).

Chapter 3: The Modular and Multi-storey Market

3.0 Introduction

The English term 'market', in its oldest and simplest meaning, refers to 'a place where trade is conducted'.¹ The word implies exchange, whether that be of goods, money, services, or information as well as competition. It also denotes a gathering, clusters of people and things appearing at the same time in one place to conduct such exchange – this might happen daily, weekly, monthly, spontaneously or with strict regularity. But within this social organisation of the market, the physical market assembles in many ways, not only as a building or a square. A market might be held inside or outside, in a purpose-built building, in borrowed or temporary shelters, in streets, squares, playgrounds, or between buildings. The structures on and in which the market materialises also need constant care, maintenance and repair: Concrete structures with foundations, insulation, plumbing and electricity, wooden, metal or stone surfaces, make-shift shelters made of cardboard, wooden pieces, corrugated metal and plastic tarpaulin. As well as facilitating the exchange of material goods and the shelter itself, the market also needs supporting material – point of sale displays, tools for servicing products, packaging, signage, protective wares, containers, decanters, scales, weights, calculators. A whole host of materials are assembled together to make the market space and its surroundings, and not only in the act of exchange.

Such assemblages, however, take on different forms as they become part of public facilities and infrastructure. Developing on the discussion of hawker bazaars in the previous chapter, this chapter focuses on the increasingly permanent market structures that were designed and built by the UC and the HKHA from the late 1960s to early 1970s. The question at the heart of this chapter is how was the market space, as part of public housing in the New Towns, constructed to convey and adhere to government concepts

¹ 'Market, noun', *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, Available at: <<https://www-oed-com.ezproxy.nottingham.ac.uk/view/Entry/114178?rkey=KeE8Kc&result=1#eid>>

of modernity in Hong Kong? This chapter traces how the market was transformed and integrated into the infrastructure of the public housing estate through two notions of modern construction: modularisation and multi-purpose. The markets referred to in this chapter are those that were intended as long-term structures designed by government departments, rather than ad-hoc or temporary spaces as explored in the previous chapter. Like hawker bazaars, these spaces continued to be used for the purpose of everyday consumption rather than speciality goods and services. However, in practice, these markets may not have fulfilled the needs of the population in public housing to the extent that the government had hoped. These markets bring the everyday discourse of modernity to the fore, as the market and the home became more formalised in their design, and the space of the market underwent further environmental conditioning according to government ideas of hygiene and food consumption practices.

This chapter thus focuses on how markets were planned and conceived through architecture and urban design in the context of the New Towns. The first section lays out the systematic strategies used by government architects to manage hawkers quickly and efficiently in public housing estates, as part of the global discourse of modularisation, prefabrication and standardisation of public buildings. It discusses how Hong Kong government bodies were aware of, and took part in, global technical innovations in design and construction, but ultimately forged their own path on the road to urban modernisation.

The second section traces the shift in government attitude towards quality of life for public housing residents in the late 1960s, and the market's place within this. Using exchanges between 'Housing Architect 2' (an unnamed architect in the PWD) and housing and estate managers on the ground, this section identifies how market discourse within the colonial government shifted from concern for basic necessities towards customer appeal. This section also focuses on the debates around freshness and

wetness in the market in relation to the construction of a modern consumer, in an attempt to complicate and further theorise the meaning of the 'wet market' in Hong Kong. In essence, government attempts to define this particular space breaks down when understood within the environmental and sensorial sphere of the market.

The final section views the market space as it became subsumed into ever-growing public housing structures in the New Towns through the concept of multi-storey, multi-purpose facilities. Together with the administrative reform of the various housing-related departments in Hong Kong, markets became increasingly embedded in estates. However, in spite of the previous efforts of housing architects and managers to further develop markets in line with customer desires, and research proving the continuous necessity of markets in everyday life, the emphasis on commercial complexes and car parks quashed the centrality of the market in estate design.

3.0a The Asian Market

In spite of its diverse manifestations across the world, the market as a physical place is still somehow easily recognisable for its sensorial and experiential quality. However, the notion of the modern market as the global modern exchange of stocks and shares has largely overshadowed the physical marketplace in the 20th century, and the historiography of markets reflects this. In a special issue of *Urban History* on modern markets, Jon Stobart and Ilya van Damme relate this gap in the scholarship of 'the market' to the abstraction of the market space as the institutionalised economy of the metropolis, based on Max Weber's notion of 'the city as the market'.² In contrast to the literature on medieval and early modern markets, the literature on markets in modern cities is preoccupied with notions such as the 'stock market', the abstracted market price or market value, or the geographical potential demand for a commodity as determining urban life in

² Jon Stobart and Ilya van Damme, 'Introduction: markets in modernization: transformations in urban market space and practice, c.1800 – c. 1970', *Urban History*, special issue 43.3 (2016), pp361–363.

modern cities, rather than the physical space of markets themselves. Stobart and van Damme argue that as a result of this shift in the meaning of the 'market' in modern cities, the spaces also shifted towards where this market of modernity takes place – business districts, department stores, shopping malls, banks, skyscrapers – thus bypassing the marketplace in their analyses.³ Indeed Stobart and van Damme's special issue seeks to address these oversights in the historiography, using spatiality as a key approach to unpack the market place in urban histories of cities, and to expand beyond histories of European markets by using comparative analyses between case studies elsewhere.

Nevertheless, urban markets in their physical form have received renewed attention in other disciplines in the last two decades. Several themes dominate the resulting discourse, particularly when it comes to markets in non-Western contexts. Informality continues to be a persistent theme, for instance, with many recent works asserting the coexistence and co-operation of structures of formality and informality of markets, found in policies, buildings, and the actions of individual actors, rather than simply top-down forces.⁴ Related to this is gentrification and urban conflict surrounding urban markets, particularly tied to heritage, tourism and place-making. These studies often point out the resounding competitiveness of markets (as opposed to supermarkets) and the protectiveness communities have for them, regarding them as some of the few remaining spaces for true diversity or hybridity, and central to the negotiation of identity and memory.⁵ Other

³ Stobart and Van Damme, p365.

⁴ Khalilah Zakariya, 'Mapping Kuala Lumpur's Urban Night Market at Shifting Scales' in ed. Evers, C. and Seale, K., *Informal Urban Street Markets: International Perspectives* (2014) pp124–135.

⁵ Su Lin Lewis also emphasises the colonial marketplace in SEA as a site of 'plural society'. Su Lin Lewis, *Cities in Motion: Urban life and cosmopolitanism in Southeast Asia, 1920 – 1940*, Cambridge University Press, 2018, pp65–71. Martin Beattie, 'Hybrid Bazaar Space: Colonialization, Globalization, and Traditional Space in Barabazaar, Calcutta, India', *Journal of Architectural Education* (2008) pp45–55; Zhang Qian Forrest, and Pan Zi, 'The Transformation of Urban Vegetable Retail in China: Wet Markets, Supermarkets and Informal Markets in Shanghai', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 43.3 (2015) pp497–518; Christopher Mele et al.

studies point to the broader conflicts between market stalls, organisers and consumers, against urban gentrification tactics by local governments and urban planners.⁶ Thirdly, markets have been sites for urban histories of public health, hygiene and epidemics, particularly in East and Southeast Asia. Some scholars have identified markets as being designed to separate communities along race and class lines spurred by the racialised debates surrounding epidemic outbreaks and disease, but where human activity and infection nevertheless cross and spill out over these boundaries.⁷ In many cases such scholarship intersects with histories of housing, particularly where residential and commercial housing coexist. On a more local level, contemporary studies have explored the change in perception of 'hygiene' by consumers in relation to the grocery shop in markets as opposed to supermarkets.⁸ Indeed in the aftermath of global epidemics such as SARS, avian flu and swine flu, and the continuing effects of Covid-19, all have brought the market (most recently under the term 'wet market') back into mainstream and academic discourses around food management, hygiene, public health and racialised tensions therein.⁹

'Urban markets as a 'corrective' to advance urbanism: The social space of wet markets in contemporary Singapore', *Urban Studies*, 52.1, 2015, pp103–120.

⁶ Ed. Sara González, *Contested Markets, Contested Cities: Gentrification and urban justice in retail spaces* (Routledge, 2018).

⁷ Luce Beeckmans, and Liora Bigon, 'The making of the central markets of Dakar and Kinshasa: from colonial origins to the post-colonial period', *Urban History*, 43.3 (2016), p422.

⁸ Abdullahi Auwal Gindi et. Al. 'Shopping drivers of generational cohorts: A comparison between night market and wet market formats for fresh fruit and vegetable purchase in Malaysia', *Australasian Marketing Journal*, 24, (2016) p165–170.

⁹ In mainstream media: Verna Yu, 'What is a wet market?', *The Guardian*, Thursday 16th April 2020, <<https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/apr/16/what-is-a-wet-market-coronavirus>> ; Peter Beech, 'What we've got wrong about wet markets' and their link to COVID-19', *World Economic Forum*, 18th April 2020, <<https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2020/04/china-wet-markets-covid19-coronavirus-explained/>>

In anthropology: Mei Zhan, 'Civit Cats, Fried Grasshoppers and David Beckham's Pajamas: Unruly Bodies After SARS', *American Anthropologist*, 107.1 (March 2005) pp31–42.; Christos Lynteris, and lyse Fearnley, 'Why shutting down Chinese 'wet markets' could be a terrible mistake', *The Conversation*, 31st January 2020 <<https://theconversation.com/why-shutting-down-chinese-wet-markets-could-be-a-terrible-mistake-130625>>

In scientific journals: Kenji Mizumoto, Katsushi Kagaya, Gerardo Chowell, 'Effect of the Wet Market on the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) transmission dynamics in China, 2019-2020', *International Journal of Infectious Diseases* 97 (2020), pp96–101.; Patrick T. Sekoai et al., 'Insights into the microbiological Safety of Wooden Cutting Boards Used for Meat Processing in Hong Kong's Wet Markets: A Focus on Food-Contact Surfaces, Cross-Contamination and

3.0b Gaai si

The patterns in the historiography of Hong Kong's markets follow trends in the discourse of markets globally. Largely conducted by anthropologists and economists, the literature of Hong Kong markets focuses on familiar themes of informality, precarity, competition and perception rather than with design and spatiality.¹⁰ Aside from these works, the spatial and social aspects of markets have often been subsumed into the rich literature on hawkers. T. G. McGee's seminal study on hawkers in Hong Kong in 1973, followed by the influential work of Josephine Smart (1989, 2005, 2017) has made Hong Kong hawkers, and their affiliated markets, a consistent reference in studies of informal economies and urban activity in cities across the world.¹¹ However, due to being intertwined with hawkers, the imagination of markets in Hong Kong rarely goes beyond the street market. The Cantonese term *gaai si* literally translates to 'street market', revealing the nature of the market in the Bazaar streets of early colonial Hong Kong and the periodic rural farmers markets in the New Territories. In modern and contemporary use, *gaai si* can nevertheless be used refer to markets on or off the street, and is much more related to the products sold and the manner in which these goods are consumed rather than the physical type of space the activity is conducted in. The literature largely bypasses this, and markets are mostly presented as a 'container' or 'plural' for hawkers, as the end formation

the Efficacy of Traditional Hygiene Practices', *Microorganisms*, 8.4 (2020), p579; Robert G. Webster, 'Wet markets – a continuing source of severe acute respiratory syndrome and influenza?', *The Lancet*, 363.9404 (2004) pp234–236.

¹⁰ Alan Smart and Josephine Smart, 'Formalization as confinement in colonial Hong Kong', *International Sociology*, 32.4 (2017) pp437–453.; Chan Ngai Keung, 'Place-making and Communication Practice: Everyday Precarity in a Night Market in Hong Kong', *Space and Culture*, 21.4 (2018) pp439–454.; Arie Goldman et al. 'The Persistent Competitive Advantage of Traditional Food Retailers in Asia: Wet Markets' Continued Dominance in Hong Kong', *Journal of Macromarketing*, 19.2 (December 1999) pp136–139.; Jackie Jia Lou, 'Spaces of consumption and senses of place: a geosemiotic analysis of three markets in Hong Kong', *Social Semiotics*, 27.4 (2017) pp513–531.; Ursula Bougoure and Bernard Lee, 'Service quality in Hong Kong: wet markets vs. supermarkets', *British Food Journal*, 111.1 (2008) pp70–79.

¹¹ McGee, 1973; Smart, 1986; Josephine Smart, 'Time-Space Punctuation: Hong Kong's Border Regime and Limits on Mobility', *Pacific Affairs*, 81.2 Migration and Mobility (2008) pp175–193; Alan and Josephine Smart, 'Formalization as confinement in colonial Hong Kong', *International Sociology*, 32.4 (2017) pp437–453.

in which hawkers collect or as the tool used for colonial control, rather than a subject for spatial historical analysis in their own right.

There are however several recent examples that focus on the spatial-material culture of markets in Hong Kong in relation to the history of the city. Gary Chi-hung Luk's research on street-hawking reads the original 1842 Central Market as a space through the lens of Chinese and British control. Arguing that the market was 'one of the earliest urban Chinese "elite organisations" in British Hong Kong', meaning where Chinese elites managed the largely Chinese working community surrounding the market, Luk analyses the antagonisms between these parties through petty crime records, hawker policy and spatial organisation.¹² In his research, Luk evidences that street-hawking was already a problem as early as 1842, most detested for the foul smells and strange, "evil" Chinese practices.¹³ Central Market was thus established to prevent 'fish being hawked about [...] where putrid filth would rapidly accumulate.'¹⁴ The 'exposure of food sold on the roadside' by hawkers was especially concerning for Westerners living in Hong Kong, where they claimed "in a climate like that of Hong Kong, a man cannot expose his fish uncovered, or his meat uncovered."¹⁵ In spite of this, Luk concludes that these measures, both in the design of the building and appointment of Chinese management, were largely ineffective.

From an architectural history point of view, Ian Tam's study 'When gaai si became markets' emphasises the materiality of architecture of Central Market as an expression of colonial modernity. Tam shows that the Hong Kong government committees directly responded to the health and urban reforms made in the mid-nineteenth century in Britain, recognising the potential hazards of overcrowding exacerbated by hawkers which further

¹² Gary Chi-Hung Luk, 'Occupied Space, Occupied Time: Food Hawking and the Central Market in Hong Kong's Victoria during the Opium War', *Frontiers of History in China*, 11.3 (2016) p400.

¹³ Luk, p416.

¹⁴ Luk, p416.

¹⁵ Luk, p416.

motivated the building of markets. Quoting the amended 1858 Market Ordinance, Tam notes that 'new markets in the late 19th century were required to be 'constructed of stone or brick' with shops or stalls 'fitted with stone or wooden counters, proper for the purposes of trade.'¹⁶ Central, Western, Eastern, Taipingshan, So Kun Poo and Wan Chai Markets were all completed under these measures that year, with Sai Ying Pun and Shau Kei Wan following in 1864 and 1872, although rapid deterioration due to further crowding prompted the reconstruction of Central Market in 1895.¹⁷ Tam argues that the use of iron in the 1895 reconstruction, shipped to the colony from Britain and matched with the Edwardian Baroque style of architecture, literally and figuratively exported ideas of British colonial modernity and imperial power in distinct opposition to the Chinese shophouse model of urban organisation. The market was praised for its use of sanitary materials and surfaces, maximum light and air ventilation, and internal gas lighting system, as well as design features like iron sockets to enable thorough washing of floors.¹⁸ White glazed tiles were also used in later reconstructions of markets, further asserting marketplaces as spaces of cleanliness and hygiene.¹⁹

Maurizio Marinelli's 'From Street Hawkers to Public Markets: Modernity and Sanitation Made in Hong Kong' also begins with these 19th century markets but concentrates on their spatiality in their contemporary context in 21st century Hong Kong.²⁰ His analysis of historic markets Western, Central, and Bridges Street Market (built in 1906, 1939 and 1953, respectively) show the distinct patterns in which Hong Kong's colonial administrators dealt

¹⁶ Ian Tam, 'When Gaai Si Became Markets: Regulating Consumption Spaces in Colonial Hong Kong', in *Transfer: Diffusions and Mobilities in the Built Landscapes of Asia and Beyond* (presented at the Department of Architecture, Postgraduate Students Conference, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong, 2019) pp10–11.

¹⁷ Tam, p12.

¹⁸ Tam, pp17–18.

¹⁹ Tam, p22.

²⁰ Maurizio Marinelli, 'From Street Hawkers to Public Markets: Modernity and Sanitization Made in Hong Kong', in ed. Yves Cabannes; Mike Douglass; Rita Padawangi, *Cities in Asia by and for the People* (Amsterdam University Press, 2018), pp229–258.

with the problem of hawkers and the ever-increasing value of urban space over time, through the policy and structure of the buildings as they stand today.²¹ In addition, his ethnographies of contemporary public market complexes in Sheung Wan, Sai Ying Pun, Shek Tong Tsui and Kennedy Town attempt to recognise the changing perception and spatial importance of the market under gentrification.²² In his comparative analysis, Marinelli concludes that studying this transition 'offers an angle for analysing human stories of adaptation, resistance, survival and metamorphosis' related to the broader government strategies of urban sanitation and spatial re-ordering.²³ Still, Marinelli finds that the contemporary market has 'resisted the normatization of their behaviour' through the movement, appearance and informal logistics of the marketplace.²⁴

Luk, Tam and Marinelli successfully contextualise the market as a material or spatial entity intertwined in urban histories of hawkers, public health and urban planning. However, it is telling that all three studies largely focus on some of the most architecturally distinctive models of markets in Hong Kong, anomalies of the type that are continuously visible under the tourist gaze as relics of the colonial era. All these studies also begin to explore the sensorial components of the market, directing to the experiential element of the 'wet' produce through both historical and ethnographic evidence. Nevertheless, while they do often acknowledge the materialities of goods, these studies shy away from a more visceral understanding of spatiality beyond the market structure itself. It is perhaps this dichotomous divide of Hong Kong's hawkers and markets, 'from' one to replace 'the other', from 'dirty' to 'sanitary', as their titles suggest, as well as the continuous focus on Central Market (rather than the less celebrated, everyday markets in Hong Kong), that means the literature has rarely coalesced in a rich understanding

²¹ Marinelli, pp237–243.

²² Marinelli, 2018.

²³ Marinelli, p250.

²⁴ Marinelli, p251.

of markets in Hong Kong as numerous, messy, and deeply integrated local sites of spatiality and materiality.

Only one exception does indeed focus on the visceral, sensory materiality of the produce, bodies and spaces of the market. Robert Peckham's study of 'Bad Meat' relates the late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century 'modernizing drive' of meat and milk production to the racialised regulation of 'insalubrious "native" behaviour and redirect[ion of] local foodways'.²⁵ He argues that food hygiene regulation was not a by-product but rather a direct model for dealing with contaminated bodies, most poignantly seen in the repurposing of a newly built slaughterhouse into a temporary hospital for the plague outbreak in 1894.²⁶ Peckham also compares the architecture of Central and Western markets with the Bacteriology Institute, finding the aesthetic and material continuity not only to be symbolic of hygienic modernity, but directly mirroring the relationship between human bodies and food, particularly goods as unstable as milk and meat. Nevertheless, market buildings could not solve the common colonial complaint of the 'dissolution of boundaries that resulted from Chinese-food related activities. Distinctions between public and private spaces collapsed, posing threat to the social order', especially threatening when considering the crossover of Chinese workers as cooks and servants in European homes.²⁷ This led to the establishment of Dairy Farm (a business and shop producing dairy products from imported cows) in the late nineteenth century, which brought both European and Australian farmers to monopolise the milk industry, and went on to take over Hong Kong Ice Company to become Dairy Farm Ice & Cold Storage Company in 1911 for refrigerating their Australian meat and milk produce.²⁸ Refrigeration safeguarded such 'good' meat from

²⁵ Robert Peckham, 'Bad Meat: Food and the Medicine of Modern Hygiene in Colonial Hong Kong' in ed. Angela Leung and Melissa Caldwell, *Moral Foods: The Construction of Nutrition and Health in Modern Asia* (University of Hawaii Press, 2019) p174.

²⁶ Peckham, p174.

²⁷ Peckham, p178.

²⁸ Peckham, p186.

the tropical climate in Hong Kong, conditions long scorned by colonial expats for creating bad, spoiled food.²⁹

This chapter thus aims to decentralise histories of consumption in Hong Kong from the urban centres of the colony to the peripheral New Towns, and to destabilise linear narratives of market spaces. This chapter aims to apply the historical approaches of the studies discussed above to the modern context of 1960s and 1970s government-made markets in the New Towns, with a further focus on the design and materiality of the market, both in terms of space and goods, during this period. In doing so, it further contextualises the history of markets in Hong Kong beyond the Central and Western markets, addressing the lack of scholarship on Hong Kong's post-war public markets.

²⁹ Peckham, p175.

3.1 Modularisation: a systematic approach to markets

The previous chapters evidenced the lack of built markets in government urban planning and public housing in the late 1950s and early 1960s, resulting in a rise of illegal hawking to uncontrollable levels. This was particularly concerning for government officials due to the prolific sale of fresh meat, poultry and fish — all considered restricted produce which by law were only to be sold in government market structures following the introduction of the 1858 Market Ordinance.³⁰ Tactics such as the construction in the late 1950s of hawker bazaars by the Architectural Office (AO), the architecture branch of the government PWD, could not meet the demands of the growing population of the New Towns, where lack of mobility and access to the central urban districts encouraged illegal hawking to thrive.

However, in the late 1960s, further cooperation between government departments began to manifest in more consistent solutions to the need for markets. After the drafting and release of the COP in 1969 (a comprehensive review of the future population distribution and land use), the strategy for markets became more directed towards standardised concrete structures. In RE and GLCH estates, two main policies were agreed by the Market, Hawker Management, Resettlement Policy and Resettlement Management Committees in March 1969: firstly, for properly designated and constructed small markets to be provided in estates under planning and future estates; and secondly, where practical, for construction of small markets in existing estates to be covered in the upcoming Public Works Programme.³¹ However, with the dire hawker problem at hand in existing resettlement estates, immediate provisions were also necessary. Together, the USD and the Resettlement Department consulted the PWD Architect, Colin Bramwell 'regarding the feasibility of providing a relatively quick and economical design

³⁰ HLHKO, The Markets' Ordinance, 31st May 1858, p423.

³¹ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1969 – March 1970, Memorandum for Members of the Markets, Hawker Management, Resettlement Policy and Resettlement Management Select Committees, Proposal for Markets in Resettlement Estates, 12th December 1969.

for a market stall which would meet hygiene requirements'.³² The result was a modular market stall, originally intended for the selling of fruit and vegetables in low-cost housing estates which could be easily modified for the 'restricted' foods of meat, fish and poultry (Figure 3.01). Figure 3.01 shows how the modules could fit together: Modules could sit side by side, or back-to-back, containing the scalding areas of 'restricted' goods away from public view, and smaller open stalls could form around cross panels facing out toward the dry goods shops on the ground floors of estates. The design was lauded for 'its standard 16-foot square modules, suited to easy and flexible planning, and speedy and economic construction'.³³ The stall's design was flexible enough to be able to extend in different formations to adjust to the spatial limitations of existing estates, and also to meet the demands of the severely underserved market needs in estates.

Bramwell's modular market plan can be seen applied in the planning stages and in use in government plans and photographs. From the initial drafted plan in September 1969, we can see how this was applied in a layout of the upcoming Castle Peak Estate (Figures 3.02a and 3.02b).³⁴ The two different types of interlocking modules, the 27 square foot stall for vegetables and fruits, and 128 square foot stall for meat/fish and poultry, are clearly labelled and assigned here. Cruciform panels form areas for fruit and vegetable hawkers to sell their wares at one end, whereas meat, fish and poultry sellers had their own stall with designated scalding and storage rooms accessible through service ways separated from the public space. The market is shown here at the centre of the estate, contained on all four sides by domestic blocks with ground floor shops, and a car park block. Next to the market is the central recreation ground. Cooked food stalls are separated from the fresh produce market on the western side of the recreation ground, covered by a screen wall for each site and a garden area in-between.

³² PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, 12th December 1969.

³³ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, 12th December 1969.

³⁴ Castle Peak Estate was later renamed San Fat Estate when Castle Peak resumed the name Tuen Mun in 1972.

Ahead of its implementation at Sau Mau Ping Estate, a model of the market was set up at Chai Wan for UC members and the public to inspect.³⁵ Photographs of the model stall at Chai Wan Resettlement Estate give a clearer picture of each complete module (Figure 3.03a, b &c). A complete module can be seen in 6555/12 and 15 (Figure 3.03b) including the roof and raised concrete floor. Retaining the cuboid forms of the housing estates themselves, the flat roof and slim perpendicular wall structures give a visual consistency of solid clean lines and block shapes coated in pale paint, in stark contrast to the haphazard and precarious structures of the Chai Wan hawker bazaar as can be seen in 6555/7 and 8 (Figure 3.03c). Shelves line the sections around the panels for hawkers, and at the other end, a built surface for use by those selling meat and fish, simply consisting of a long concrete block, is contained within three walls with access to the service way behind. The built-in table runs almost to meet the opposite wall, demarcating a clear boundary between buyer and seller.

This modular market was finally opened at Sau Mau Ping in August 1971 again, with an even more dramatic photo series documenting the change (Figures 3.04a &b). The adjoining press release stated that 'over 200 hawkers operating outside blocks 34 to 39 of the Sau Mau Ping Resettlement Estate are being removed to four temporary sites nearby. The removal will make way for the construction of 400 modular market stalls to serve that area. [...] the new concrete modular market stalls...will greatly improve the appearance and cleanliness of the Estate.'³⁶ The compositions of the images, using striking diagonal perspectives along the channels of the estate, draw clear visual material distinctions between the 'before' and 'after'. As can be seen in the images, the patchwork of the roofs as captured from above are in stark contrast from the straight, perpendicular concrete lines of the façade of

³⁵ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Proposal for Markets in Resettlement Estates, 12th December 1969.

³⁶ GIS 375 7461/1-24 Sau Mau Ping Resettlement Estate's New Modular Market stalls, Taken by W.C Wan 9th August 1971.

the estate, with the market stalls matching precisely beneath (#12 in 2.04b). Such an emphasis on concrete as a material indication of cleanliness and a sense of permanent improvement (in spite of previous temporary markets also being made of concrete) suggested a shift in approach to markets alongside the Modernist design of estates.³⁷ Indeed, the distinct visual boundaries and structures of the two types of stalls reflected the separated administrative procedure that arose with the modular market. Where fruit and vegetable hawkers would continue to pay for hawker licenses and rent, initially \$20 HKD per month, meat, fish and poultry stalls were put up for auction to bid for the rental price by the fresh provision hawkers already operating in the estates.³⁸ This shows how the modularisation of the market allowed the UC to physically and administratively implement strategies to survey and contain hawker practices, simultaneously with the development of public housing.

3.1a 'An exercise in Industrialised Construction'³⁹

While on the one hand, Bramwell's modular market design seemed to be a simple exercise in problem-solving, on the other, the design also reflected a decade of discussions surrounding industrialised, prefabricated, and modular construction in Hong Kong and other British colonies.⁴⁰ In the early 1950s, the UK Ministry of Works had been keen to export the new British industry of prefabricated buildings to the colonies as an ideal solution to housing problems and post-war re-urbanisation. In a draft telegram by Colonial Building Research Liaison Officer, G.A. Atkinson to 'All Colonies', in 1953, he proposed that:

³⁷ As Adrian Forty states, 'Concrete is modern...it is one of the agents through which our experience of modernity is mediated....concrete realised the prospect of transforming nature, and of transforming ourselves and our relationships with each other.' Adrian Forty, *Concrete and Culture: A Material History*, London: Reaktion Books, 2013, p14.

³⁸ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, 12th December 1969. It is unclear whether the auction was only open to temporarily legal fresh provision hawkers operating in the estates, or those who were operating illegally as well.

³⁹ J.R. Firth and Donald Liao, 'An exercise in Industrialised Construction', *Far East Architect and Builder*, (February 1968) pp31–36.

⁴⁰ NA, CO 859 310, Export Houses, Prefabrication and Building in the Tropics.

technical developments now permit rapid and efficient building under suitable circumstances. I hope that the industry may now find it possible to turn the resources and ingenuity which it has displayed in the development of pre-fabricated structures for Commonwealth countries to the production of complete buildings and frameworks, suitable for Colonial needs at a realistic price.⁴¹

Atkinson later added in an article for *The New Commonwealth Journal* that 'a [prefabricated] unit of this sort can have all the trimmings of modern civilization such as properly controlled ventilation or it can be no more than four walls and a roof'.⁴² In 1952, these proved to be most popular in Australia, Nigeria and Pakistan, amongst other territories. Even though comparative colonies such as Singapore and Malaya (similar in terms of population distribution, environmental conditions and approach to urban planning — and often sharing the same colonial officers over time) also imported over £50,000 worth of units, Hong Kong was surprisingly *not* among the territories to import UK manufactured prefabricated housing.⁴³

In fact, by this time Hong Kong was already overwhelmed with squatter settlements and was preoccupied with responding to the numerous squatter fires of the early 1950s.⁴⁴ Although single-storey buildings with prefabricated units were considered, according to local architects, the major 'drawback was that the ground coverage would have been far too high and less than one third of the homeless could be accommodated on the site cleared by the fire'.⁴⁵ Likewise, some experts were dubious that prefabrication was even possible in Hong Kong. In a report of a 1958 meeting of the Engineering Society of Hong Kong published in *Ekistics*, while standardisation and prefabrication had clear economic benefits in other

⁴¹ NA, CO 859 310, Export Houses, Prefabrication and Building in the Tropics, G.A. Atkinson, Draft Circular Saving Telegram to All Colonies, 1953.

⁴² NA, CO 859 310, Export Houses, Prefabrication and Building in the Tropics., Extract from The "New Commonwealth", November 23, 1953.

⁴³ NA, CO 859 310, Export Houses, Prefabrication and Building in the Tropics., Exports of Prefabricated buildings from the UK 1950 – 1952.

⁴⁴ See Smart, 2006.

⁴⁵ B. F. Will, 'Housing Design and Construction Methods', in ed. Luke S. K. Wong, *Housing in Hong Kong: A Multidisciplinary Study*, (Heinemann Educational Books, 1978) p96.

places in the world, 'a lack of considerable construction equipment to handle large pre-fabricated units' meant that 'RCC' (reinforced cement concrete) was more appropriate for the Hong Kong context.⁴⁶ With these two limitations in place, the earliest government RE thus quickly became multistorey concrete forms, using simple construction methods and minimal equipment, with pre-casting of concrete slabs on site in the traditional way using timber framework. The first resettlement estate at Shek Kip Mei was completed in 1954, and these basic construction methods continued in later housing models, where load-bearing reinforced concrete was used as a more economic and faster alternative to the stronger, but more expensive and time-consuming method using beams and columns.⁴⁷

By the mid -1960s, systematic construction tactics for future public development emerged from the HKHA development of Fuk Loi Estate. Towards the end of the estate's completion, the HKHA and the construction firm Goodman Corporation agreed to attempt to build an additional identical block at Fuk Loi to test the 'Tilt-Up' method — a construction method developed by Japanese firm Taisei Construction Corp to build Japan's *danchi* housing in the late 1950s — as an experiment in standardisation in the local Hong Kong context. J.R. Firth, Commissioner for Housing at the HKHA, and Donald Liao, then Housing Architect, recounted their motives and results in an article in *Far East Architect and Builder* in 1968:

One object of the exercise, of course, was to find out if system building could be carried out effectively under local conditions; what modifications would be required, if any, to the techniques developed elsewhere; and how a building so constructed would withstand local weather conditions. Above all; could it save money?⁴⁸

The block was completed in 1967, and with completion came some major realisations: standardisation suited Hong Kong very well, where labourers were quick to take on the method; modifications from the Japanese

⁴⁶ Hongkong Times, 'Hong Kong Housing Problem: Discussion and Suggestions', *Ekistics*, 5.30, (March 1958) p126.

⁴⁷ Hong Kong Times, p105.

⁴⁸ Firth and Liao, p35.

techniques were negligible due to the somewhat comparable environmental conditions — a crucial differentiation from the British prefabrication proposal; and the exercise confirmed the scepticism shown by engineers a decade earlier over factory prefabrication, due to the limitations of land and 'the difficulties of transporting large components around our sometimes narrow and always congested streets'.⁴⁹ Although the project was by no means cheap, it was considered a success by the HKHA, Taisei and Goodman, further rewarding Goodman the following PWD RE building contracts.⁵⁰ While Hong Kong architects and planners were clearly aware of global modes of housing construction, prefabrication and standardisation, they also actively took their own route towards modernising their development procedures to suit local needs.

At the same time, the concept of the module was increasingly part of the discourse of international planning and architecture, including Hong Kong.⁵¹ In 1958 and 1959, *Ekistics* published several information sheets on modular design by Bruce Martin, Head of Modular Productivity Studies at British Standards Institution. Using the basis of the British 4-inch brick, Martin presented a format that could easily be scaled up to practically incorporate existing component sizes (of windows, joints etc.) while also creating the widest options for module arrangement.⁵² Indeed the standard 'unit' already dictated Hong Kong public housing design and production, where the Hong Kong government resettlement space allowance was strictly set to 24 square

⁴⁹ Firth and Liao, pp35–36.

⁵⁰ Firth and Liao, p36.

⁵¹ Members of the Hong Kong government, architecture, engineering and planning community were frequent contributors to *Ekistics* during the 1950s – 1970s. See Hong Kong Housing Authority, 'North Point Estate, Java Road, Hong Kong', *Ekistics*, 5. 32 (May 1958) pp229–232; Grenfell Rudduck and Kenneth H. C. Fung, 'Housing in Malaya and Hong Kong - A Contrast', *Ekistics*, 8.45, (July 1959) pp16–23; J.M. Fraser, 'Housing Estates in Hong Kong', *Ekistics*, 11.68 (1961) pp477–481; J.M. Fraser, 'Housing Estates in Hong Kong', *Ekistics*, 14.81 (July 1962) pp39–41; David C.Y. Lai and D.T. Dwyer, 'A New Industrial Town in Hong Kong', *Ekistics*, 18.108, Special Issue on New Towns: Industrialized Housing in the USSR, (November 1964) pp340–345; D.T. Dwyer, 'Problems of Urbanization: The Example of Hong Kong', *Ekistics*, 28.169, Balancing Urban Development and Economic Development, (November 1969) pp334–344; Otto J. Golger, 'Hong Kong: a problem of housing the masses', *Ekistics*, 33.196 Housing and Houses: Policies and Plans for Better Living, (March 1972) pp173–177.

⁵² Bruce Martin, 'Modular Design Information Sheet Two', *Ekistics*, 7.43 (May 1959), p398.

feet per adult resulting in a 120 square foot unit for a total of five adults (where children counted as half an adult) in order to significantly house the population.⁵³ In other types of public housing (i.e. LCGH and HKHA housing), the legal minimum standard was 35 square feet per adult. Again, the lack of local heavy industry meant concrete was cast in slabs on-site rather than precast into set modules.⁵⁴ But the 'modularisation of society' was still present through the organisation of people in these spaces. By strictly assigning square footage to individuals, government bodies could essentially calculate and 'predict' estate populations, and 'optimise' (essentially, significantly reduce) the space used per person.

As a PWD architect also designing public housing, Bramwell was undoubtedly informed by the strict units used in housing design when it came to designing markets in public housing estates as well.⁵⁵ Hawker numbers were set in the COP in 1969, recommending 153 stalls to 10,000 persons, or approximately 1 stall to 60 persons — a number derived from hawker surveys in existing urban areas (mainly Yau Ma Tei) in 1966.⁵⁶ Indeed, this strategy was not only practical in terms of its numbers, but also for spatial and hygienic order and management. Modularisation and industrialisation allowed for quick and efficient construction that could also restrict the amount of space used by each hawker and the number of hawkers of each food type. This therefore also clearly demarcated the boundaries of legality, as one of the challenges of hawker management in the late 1950s and early 1960s had simply been identifying and suppressing illegal activity. With this

⁵³ In 1970, this increased to 35 square feet per person with the Mark VI model of resettlement, bringing the standard up to par with HKHA and Government Low Cost Housing allocations. Will, p99.

⁵⁴ Will, pp99–115.

⁵⁵ Bramwell notably designed Kwai Shing Estate, regarded as one of the largest and most technologically impressive public housing estates at the time. See *docomomo hk*, 2020, Kwai Shing West Estate, public housing, Available at <https://www.docomomo.hk/project/kwai-shing-west-estate/>.

⁵⁶ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Standard of Provisions of Market/Hawker Stalls, Informal meeting between USD, AO, Housing Dept and Town Planning Office 28.8.1973, pp1–2.

new outline, it was finally clarified which department was responsible for controlling which space:

Management of the future markets in Estates will be the responsibility of the Urban Services Department, but staff of the Resettlement Department will be responsible for demolishing illegal hawker stalls found outside of the boundaries of the markets. This will be the interim arrangement until Urban Services Department staff are available to take over hawker control in the estates. The Police will also be requested to take action against illegal cooked or restricted food hawkers in the vicinity of these markets.⁵⁷

Through the modular market, the public housing estate market could be visually and spatially standardised across public housing estates for the first time, creating clear boundaries between legal and illegal hawker practices. Hawkers' legal status was bound to material and administrative infrastructures, requiring them to take part in orders of hygiene, licensing, and space.

How the module created visual and spatial order is further illustrated in photographs of the modular market in use at Kwai Hing LCGH Estate in 1972 (Figures 3.05a & b). Photographs of the fruit and vegetable hawker area show the space available to hawkers. The market in Kwai Hing Estate appears to be of a similar layout to the market in Castle Peak Estate, with at least 4 cross walls with 'restricted' food stalls at the end. Each section is lit by a single inbuilt lamp with individual switches to each stall, and hawkers display their license over the doorway in their module. Modules are clearly delineated in the ceiling, retaining the module perimeter through the beams, and hawkers (perhaps consciously for the photograph) have even kept within the invisible boundary of the wall panels, keeping clear walkways between the modules. Although the shelving and overhead storage were provided as furniture in the stalls design, most hawkers choose to construct further surfaces in front of the main public thoroughfare as the stall's point of sale. Baskets upon boxes, stools or planks of wood are strewn with piles of vegetables, and the shelves

⁵⁷ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Proposal for Markets in Resettlement Estates, 12th December 1969.

remain more practical spaces for hawkers than for display. Individual sinks were not provided, and thus buckets of water are used to clean the floors and surfaces, draining off into the covered gutter in the centre. The second photograph shows how these stalls connect to the meat, fish and poultry stalls. A packed vegetable stall faces directly across from a single meat stall, installed with extra lighting and a large refrigerator. Large tiles line the walls inside the meat stall, while small coloured decorative tiles brighten up the pedestrian walkway area. The beams along the ceiling finally end at the wall of the stall, uniting all these stalls under one roof. These restricted food stalls created a barrier on one side of the market perimeter, minimising allowance for hawkers over-spilling into the residential space and congestion in the market.

3.2 Market appeal

Bramwell's modular market anticipated the more permanent markets that would come a few years later with the reorganisation of government administration. In the first half of the 1970s, administrative reformation of government departments further pushed the development of markets in estates alongside development of public housing. The reorganisation of the UC under non-governmental control and the establishment of the new HKHA in 1973 allowed for a more unified approach.⁵⁸ The Resettlement Department and the Building Section of USD merged into the government Housing Department, further representing the shift of the agenda from resettlement towards long-term public housing. As a result, the AO ceased its involvement in public housing estate design ceding responsibility to the HKHA, who ultimately took over the majority of design, construction and management of all public housing in Hong Kong.

⁵⁸ See Liu Runhe, *A History of the Municipal Councils of Hong Kong: 1883-1999: from the Sanitary Board to the Urban Council and the Regional Council*, (Hong Kong Leisure and Cultural Services Department, 2002).

Market design however was already being improved upon prior to reorganisation, with Bramwell's modular market continuing as the foundation for estate markets. In November 1972, correspondence between the senior housing manager and housing managers across Hong Kong public housing estates shared sketches and notes by Housing Architect 2 (name unknown) for estate manager comments.⁵⁹ The document reveals that a small-scale internal survey was carried out on the design of market stalls in Wah Fu Estate, Kwai Hing Estate and Mei Foo Sun Chuen Estate, three of the most recent estates to have been designed by the former HA, PWD, and a private company respectively.⁶⁰ The findings showed that all three markets were poorly lit, had insufficient storage space and ceiling height, had inefficient drainage, or were afflicted by all of these conditions, with further observations by Housing Architect 2 on site adding improvement notes to the layout, aesthetics and finish of the markets.⁶¹ Taken in the context of these comments, the diagrams harken back to the modularisation of the market stalls, still utilising interlocking shapes around a cruciform structure, but adding more consideration of user experience, for example a raised lip on shelving and surfaces to provide simple, in-built storage and display strategies, and surfaces to prevent water spilling on the stall floor (Figure 3.06). Indeed, this communication between the housing managers and architects itself anticipated the upcoming change in dynamic between departments, with a clearer collective approach to the market and more open correspondence between government departments.

In comparison to Bramwell's previous design, which emphasised cost effectiveness and speed of construction, Housing Architect 2's redesign document suggested much more attention to user experience and appeal. While the plans show unit designs that were similar to those of the original

⁵⁹ Bramwell was identified as Architect 3, therefore confirming he was not Architect 2. See PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Proposal for Markets in Resettlement Estates, 12th December 1969.

⁶⁰ Mei Foo Sun Chuen was the first large-scale private housing estate carried out by Mei Foo Investment Ltd of Mobil Oil Hong Kong, built between 1968 and 1978.

⁶¹ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, 'The Design of Market Stalls', 22nd November 1972.

modular market, further notes consider the design of the overall market in use, regarding the layout as central to the market's appeal to customers:

No one likes confusion [...] stalls should be planned in a well-studied sequence from the point of customer entry to the most remote section of the sale area. In turn, each type of stall should be well related to its neighbours, both for the convenience of customers and the promotion of sales.⁶²

While this note from Architect 2 begins with a statement about circulation, the reason for a clear route through the market is for the convenience of the customer rather than for estate management purposes. Where previously the design of the market was framed as a means for government bodies to control and suppress hawker numbers and space, Architect 2's notes rather consider ease of use, and a purposeful, even curated, sense of the marketplace, with clear circulation for the enjoyment of customer market experience.

In tandem with ease of movement is the emphasis on aesthetic appeal. Colour and finish were referenced as important factors in framing the produce to entice custom:

since fruits, vegetables, fish, meat, frozen foods etc. are colourful in themselves, white is considered a good background tone [...] ceiling colour, since it is not in direct contact with the goods, can be of stronger shades.⁶³

Glazed tiles and rubbed granolithic finishes were chosen as suitable for the walls and shelving, distinguishing the design from the previous modular market (simply painted concrete) by using more sophisticated and expensive material finishes. But perhaps more important than surfaces, from a sales point of view, was appropriate illumination:

it should light the goods more brightly than the surroundings in order to aid the customer in appraising it and also attract and hold their attention. During my visit to Kwai Hing Modular Market Stalls, an old woman complained that those vegetable stalls facing the fish and meat stalls enjoyed far better business as their stock was brightly

⁶² PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, 22nd November 1972.

⁶³ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, 22nd November 1972.

illuminated by the additional lighting installed in the fish and meat stalls. No doubt there should be enough light for selling.⁶⁴

As indicated here from the woman's comment, and from notes taken from hawkers at Chai Wan, Bramwell's modular markets were 'dislike[d]...pointing to their darkness and lack of ventilation'.⁶⁵ Overall, however, simply the arrangement and amount of useable space through shelving and storage units were essential to correct previous market designs, where 'more space available for display of goods [would give] a neater and more appealing look'.⁶⁶ In these exchanges, there seems to be a consensus that the aesthetics of the market, here meaning ensuring that display goods looked their best, were of the utmost concern for all parties involved: architect, stallholders and customers alike. Actual sales were key to persuading hawkers of the viability of government markets, and to keeping them from transgressing back to illegal means to make a living. Unlike hawker bazaars, which were always envisioned as temporary placeholders, the modular market was developed as a means to replace itinerant hawkers and hawker pitches on a permanent basis.⁶⁷

The most important quality of market-sold goods in the eyes of consumers, particularly of 'wet' goods, was 'freshness'. A 1974 survey conducted by the Planning Division of shoppers in public housing estates found that the Chinese understanding of freshness in food differed greatly from the administration's proclaimed 'modern' ideas of freshness. The survey mourned that 'in spite of modern appliances such as the refrigerator, nearly all the hawker customers still maintain the habit of shopping once or twice daily for "fresh" food'.⁶⁸ Working-class Chinese women were particularly

⁶⁴ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, 22nd November 1972.

⁶⁵ ⁶⁵ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Memo from Secretary of Housing to Director of Housing, 23rd December 1974.

⁶⁶ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, K.C. Yeung, Housing Manager, Ko Chiu Road GLCH Estate, 13th December 1972.

⁶⁷ See PRO HKRS 337-4-6352 for discussions of the illegal hawkers at Ko Chiu Road in Kwun Tong.

⁶⁸ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Hong Kong Outline Planning Division, Town Planning Office, Survey of Hawker Customers, Kowloon and New Kowloon, December 1974, p4.

accused of being archaic and too discriminating in their preferences, thus perpetuating 'outdated' modes of consumption. While there was clearly a cultural divide between government and consumers about managing freshness, and about what constituted 'fresh goods', for other government departments, it was the need for personal choice of fresh, high-quality goods that actually informed the design of market stalls. Nonetheless, one housing manager at Ma Tau Wai did not hold back from expressing disdain of consumer behaviour, advising that

Chinese women generally are between 5'0" to 5'4" tall. They do not trust vendors during business transactions, and like to choose their own goods. Some of them even go to the extreme of "ransacking" for what they want. Customers are always right and therefore goods should never be placed high up to make examination impossible.⁶⁹

Indeed, this tactile, sensory recognition of freshness in the market had been a significant part of embodied knowledge in Chinese food practices, which led to specific preferences in the set-up of the market. Tactile strategies for checking produce, such as 'knocking' watermelon to discern the water content in the sound, smelling the meat for unusual scents, checking the clarity, shine and fullness of fish eyes to determine how long since it had been slaughtered and displayed, and indeed choosing and over-viewing slaughter of live fish and poultry to discern 'real', fresh produce, all relate to scrutinising the quality and freshness of goods.⁷⁰ This contextualises the persistence of live animals in the market, as well as the need for customer access and proximity to the goods sold. Rather than simply 'ransacking', such tactile examination of the goods was part of the negotiation between customer and stallholder, and an essential cultural act of building trust.

Nevertheless, if stallholders were going to cater to customer desires (regardless of management preferences), the marketspace had to be

⁶⁹ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Mr K.C. Ma, Asst Manager, Ma Tau Wai 6th December 1972.

⁷⁰ See Shuru Zhong et al. 'Constructing Freshness, the vitality of wet markets in urban China', *Agriculture and Human Values*, 37 (2020) pp175–185, for a qualitative market approach to the idea of freshness in particularly southern Chinese culture.

designed around these cultural expectations. Amongst housing and estate manager comments on the design, 'freshness' — of goods and space — were consistent points for future market design. Although impractical for managing health and safety, live fish and poultry were some of the most important goods offered in the market. Therefore easy access to both salt and freshwater was deemed necessary.⁷¹ Refrigeration or cold storage were essential for a number of trades (fruiterers, butchers, fishmongers) and therefore power outlets to cater for these stalls were added to the design.⁷² Using small buckets of water by hawker stalls, vegetables 'may be watered at intervals in order to maintain its freshness' and make them 'look fresh and luster [sic]', with angled lighting being considered in order to reduce direct heat and light on the products.⁷³ These exchanges between Architect 2 and the housing managers show how intimately aware both sides were of cultural customs and practice of the market, and therefore designed to navigate these needs while satisfying their own management and hygiene specifications.

3.2a Where 'the floor is always wet'⁷⁴

In this sense, the diverging discernment of the materiality of market goods, the environment of the market, and how market goods respond to such conditions, all played out in the notion of 'wetness'. While the managers largely focused on functional and aesthetic value in their recommendations, the undertone throughout the discussion remained designing an orderly and hygienic marketspace. In the Market Select Committee's annual Statements of Aims through the late 1960s and early 1970s, the goal 'to improve conditions generally in retail markets with special attention to food hygiene

⁷¹ Shuru Zhong et al., 2020.

⁷² PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Mr Fung Tung, Housing Manager, Pak Tin Estate, 12th December 1972.

⁷³ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, 12th December 1972; PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, 6th Dec 1972.

⁷⁴ *The Straits Times*, 1981-10-20, 'Markets of the Future: Team to report to Cabinet', p1, <<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19811020-1.2.2?ST=1&AT=search&k=%22wet%20market%22&SortBy=Oldest&filterS=0&Display=0&QT=%22wetmarket%22&oref=article>>.

and cleanliness' was a continuous priority.⁷⁵ Due to all of the activities involving water and ice, environmental 'conditions' of the market were persistently 'wet' and the materials recommended were those that responded to these conditions. 'Wetness' is thus a lens with which to move past spaces of consumption as 'a socio-event' and rather as a 'sphere' where the tactile sensation of wetness is both 'an element and a stake' in the imagination of the market.⁷⁶

In particular, 'floors should be waterproof, greaseproof, easily cleaned and maintained'.⁷⁷ Managers specified that floor finishes for fish and poultry stalls (the main stalls dealing with slaughter and butchery on site) especially

should be of more durable type preferably be of mosaic tile finish that just plain cement flooring[...]these stalls have to wash many times a day, and the floor is unable to be kept dry because of the nature of trades.⁷⁸ Efficient and constant drainage was therefore also paramount to the design, so that wastewater could be quickly flushed away to minimise slippage and contamination. As well as sealing against contaminated water, mosaic tiles preserved the aesthetic values of the market, where another manager suggested

it cannot be over-emphasised that floorings must be hard-wearing and easy-cleaning, and most important of, non-slippery. It would be advantageous to have mosaic tiles on dadoes on walls that attract most dirt and grease.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ PRO, HKRS 438-1-51, Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of meetings of Select Committees, 1967 Statement of Aims: Markets, 25th October 1966; PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Urban Council Hong Kong, Papers of select committees dealing with Environmental Hygiene, Food and Food Premises, Hawker Appeals, Hawker Management, Hawker Policy and Markets, Statement of Aims on Markets 1970, 7th October 1969.

⁷⁶ Massey, p155.

⁷⁷ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, 'The Design of Market Stalls', 22nd November 1972.

⁷⁸ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, K.Y. Lau, Housing Manager, Ping Shek Estate, 11th December 1972.

⁷⁹ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Mr Fung Tung, Housing Manager, Pak Tin Estate, 12th December 1972.

Managers also pointed out humidity as a factor during busy periods in the summer months, describing the market as 'sultry'.⁸⁰ These comments indicate that wetness was not only present on the ground as a result of flushing away wastewater, but in many of the practices of the market and in Hong Kong's subtropical climate. As well as the general humid and rainy weather conditions, weather during the summer period could also be severe. There were nine Signal-10 typhoons in Hong Kong between 1960 and 1979 as well as two significant rainstorms, many of which caused major damage to estate structures through wind damage and landslides.⁸¹ Wetness therefore permeated the market, both as a source of life, lustre and cleanliness, but also as a constant threat to public health and hygiene.

This is further emphasised in the language of 'wet' extending into the categorisation of food during this time. The terms 'wet' and 'dry' were in administrative use to describe market goods and translated in vernacular Cantonese as *sap fo* ('wet goods') and *gon fo* ('dry goods') since at least the early 1970s.⁸² These have been broadly defined in government documents, generally designating perishable goods as 'wet', and non-perishable goods as 'dry', although there is no comprehensive list of wet and dry goods. Instead, a list specifying 'commodities allowed to be sold by hawkers' gives a clearer idea of what constituted 'unrestricted' goods. These were separated into three classes: 'Class I' were vegetables or fruit (though not both together); 'Class II' were 'permitted food stuffs other than vegetables or fruit', which

⁸⁰ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Summary of H.M.'s/E.M.'s comments on Modular Markets, Group A, 1973.

⁸¹ List of level 10 typhoons: Mary, 9th June 1960; Alice, 19th May 1961; Wanda, 1st September 1962; Ruby 5th September 1964; Dot, 13th October 1964; Shirley, 21st August 1968; Rose, 17th August 1971; Elsie 14th October 1975; Hope, 2nd August 1979. In addition to these were several rainstorms, in June 1966 and June 1972. See Andrew Malone and Ken Ho, Learning from Landslip Disasters in Hong Kong, *Built Environment* (1978-), 21.2-3 Hazards in the Built Environment (1995) pp126-144; PRO, HKRS 70-6-810-1, Housing Estates, public - Kwai Hing, newspaper clipping, 'Fix Our Homes', *The Star*, 24th August 1971.

⁸² *Sap fo* and *gon fo* seem to predate this categorisation as part of vernacular everyday language use, but it is unclear whether the administrative use of 'wet' and 'dry' is directly translated from Cantonese. These were described as 'wet' goods from at least 1971. MMIS, UC.HAW.01.73, Lunar New Year Fairs: Distribution of Sites for Wet Goods at Last Fair (1971) 12th April 1973, p11 <[link](#)>

included eggs, dried meat and salt fish, vermicelli, and preserved vegetables, etc.; and 'Class III' were mostly non-food 'dry' goods. The memo finally justified why hawkers should not be allowed to sell meat, fish and poultry.⁸³ The 1975 *Urban Council Policy Manual* categorised 'the usual commodities sold in markets' into five categories of fresh produce: meat, fish, poultry, vegetables and fruits, and 'other' foods such as eggs and bean curd, plus non-perishable frozen, dried or packaged foods.⁸⁴ It should also be noted that, according to Luk's research, these categories were already regarded as 'departments' in the design of Central Market in 1842.⁸⁵ However unlike Central Market's original 'departments', these vague categories of commodities did not strictly segregate the 'wet' from the 'dry'.

Nevertheless, government policies and manuals made clear that the purpose of the market was to prioritise the containment and regulation of the most vulnerable foodstuffs to avoid contamination. This was because meat, fish and poultry, including live fish and chickens, were the only goods explicitly barred from hawker sales.⁸⁶ In 1969, the Urban Council did not initially approve of hawkers selling restricted goods in any capacity, justifying market buildings due to the unreliable behaviours of hawkers and volatile nature of goods in their hands:

- (1) The markets building programme has been reactivated with the aim of providing adequate retail outlets for meat, fish and poultry which need to be sold under conditions of optimum hygiene. [...]
- (2) Existing illegal hawkers of meat, fish and poultry have already shown a total disregard for the basic hygiene requirements (ample clean fresh water, clean implements and clean working conditions) and there is not reason to believe that legalizing them would alter their attitude.
- (3) For the Council on the one hand to insist upon vigorous (and expensive) hygiene requirements in fresh provision shops and market

⁸³ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Memorandum for Members of the Hawker Policy Select Committee, Committee Paper HP/11/69 Commodities Allowed to be Sold by Hawkers, 24th June 1969.

⁸⁴ MMIS, UC.CW.100.74, Urban Council Policy Manual, 15th January 1975, p88 <[link](#)>

⁸⁵ Luk, p418.

⁸⁶ On hawkers: 'Policy on control of commodities allowed for sale is fairly liberal, but fresh provisions and restricted foods are barred on hygiene grounds.' MMIS, UC.CW.100.74, Urban Council Policy Manual, 1975, 1st January 1975, p60 <[link](#)>

stalls whilst on the other hand permitting market commodities to be sold by hawkers would result in justified complaints from shop licensees and market stall proprietor, and would place the Council in an indefensible position.⁸⁷

These restrictions were also rooted in the 1858 Hawker Ordinance. Although licensed hawkers could trade in fruits and vegetables, and boatmen could sell fish outside market premises, all raw butchered meat was only to be sold through government licensed markets and abattoirs under strict police enforcement, where sellers of 'any article of food for man which shall be in an unwholesome condition' would be severely fined.⁸⁸ From this government categorisation, 'wet' and 'dry' in administrative terms were consistently more concerned with the materiality of the goods than the spatial condition of the market. This, together with the sensorial, tactile experience of *sap fo* by consumers, expands the definition of 'wet' to emphasise the unstable, visceral nature of the produce, and the potential threat to the body that this instability might bring.⁸⁹

Such connections bring the contemporary discourse of the 'wet market' to the fore. The phrase 'wet market' has yet to be afforded sufficient historical context. Although the etymology of 'wet market' is unclear, the *Oxford English Dictionary* traces the term's origins to post-colonial Singapore to HDB market spaces in the 1970s.⁹⁰ So-called 'because the floor is always wet', 'wet markets' were by 1981 already being discussed by the Singaporean Government Committee as a space of consumption that was redundant, and one which could be replaced 'by mini-supermarkets and air-conditioned

⁸⁷ PRO, HKRS 438-1-78, Urban Council Hong Kong, Minutes of Meetings of Select Committees Dealing with [...] April 1969 – March 1970, Memorandum for members of the Hawker Policy Select Committee, Committee Paper HP/11/69, 24th June 1969, p3.

⁸⁸ HLHKO, The Markets' Ordinance, 31st May 1858, p423.

⁸⁹ See Peckham, 2019. For discussions of the body and materiality, see Judith Attfield, *Wild Things: The Material Culture of Everyday Life* (Berg Publishers, 2000); and Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Duke University Press, 2009).

⁹⁰ The term first appears in newspapers in 1978, in the *Strait Times*. Newspaper SG, 'Market fish is not really fresh', *The Strait Times*, 16th July 1978, Available at <
<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straittimes19780716-1.2.43?ST=1&AT=search&k=%22wet%20market%22&SortBy=Oldest&filterS=0&Display=0&QT=%22wetmarket%22&oref=article>>

grocer shops because of changing lifestyles.'⁹¹ A year later, an article in Singapore's *Strait Times* declared 'no more "wet" shopping for the housewives in future new towns', and suggested replacing 'wet markets' with modern 'cool, dry markets' which 'would not only be clean and dry but less noisy and smelly' (Figure 3.07).⁹² In retaliation to the proposal to replace markets with supermarkets, Charlotte Lim, from the Sociology Department of the National University of Singapore, sent in a letter to the *Straits Times* the following week

Before the bureaucrats get carried away with modernising the marketing lifestyle of Singaporeans, how about asking the people concerned, consumers and well as stallholders, what they would see as preferable?⁹³

In contrast to the colonial term of the 'bazaar', the 'wet market' thus had more ambiguous connotations from the beginning. 'Wet market' was *not* an official colonial or post-colonial term for Singapore's HDB markets — or for markets in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, it was used by the government and the press to signal those qualities of the market that were deemed unsanitary and unsightly by government departments, further validating the economic and environmental modernisation of HDB estates and the phasing out of wet markets from 1986.⁹⁴ On the other hand, the term was also used by wet market users themselves to take ownership of their consumption preferences,

⁹¹ Newspaper SG, 'Markets of the Future: Team to report to Cabinet' *The Straits Times*, 20th October 1981, p1,

<<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19811020-1.2.2?ST=1&AT=search&k=%22wet%20market%22&SortBy=Oldest&filterS=0&Display=0&QT=%22wetmarket%22&oref=article>>.

⁹² Newspaper SG, 'HDB's cool, dry markets', *The Straits Times*, 7th August 1982, p1 Available at <<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Article/straitstimes19820807-1.2.2?ST=1&AT=search&k=%22HDB%20market%22&SortBy=Oldest&filterS=0&Display=0&QT=%22hdbmarket%22&oref=article>>.

⁹³ Charlotte Lim is cited as the author of 'The Position of Women in Market-place Trade in a Modern City State' published in 1980, but I have not been able to find copies of her publications or further information about her. In the letter she also describes her research as including a national survey of hawkers in 1974, and a 1981 study of marketplace stallholders. *The Straits Times*, 'Wet markets or supermarts?', 26th October 1981, p14, <<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/digitised/article/straitstimes19811026-1.2.80.1?qt=wet,%20market&q=wet%20market>>.

⁹⁴ NewspaperSG, 'Last wet market: The HDB's last wet market in Jurong has been completed', *The Straits Times*, 'Changes in store for HDB estates', 13th December 1986, p14, <<https://eresources.nlb.gov.sg/newspapers/Digitised/Page/straitstimes19861213-1.1.14?ST=1&AT=search&k=%22wet%20market%22&SortBy=Relevance&filterS=0&Display=0&QT=%22wetmarket%22&oref=article>>.

lifestyles and spaces. In short, 'wet market' in Singapore (where this English term was first used) was used to debate notions of modernity, and the kinds of environments in which modern living could and should take place.

The term 'wet market' was not adopted in official terminology in Hong Kong. Nor did it appear in the local press until the 1980s. Contrary to Singapore, however, where the term was used explicitly in reference to HDB markets, it first appears in Hong Kong in a 1983 newspaper advert for a new commercial centre and private residence by 'The Discovery Bay Lifestyle Hong Kong Resort Co' (Figure 3.08a & b).⁹⁵ Largely aimed at an upper-class, 'bi-cultural' audience, the term 'wet market' was listed together as part of an 'integrated concept' of living and recreation.⁹⁶ It was only in the 1990s that the term 'wet market' would be used more regularly in media to refer to government market facilities, recurring in the regular food column by Margaret Sheridan as she frequently unravelled 'the mysteries of the wet market and local produce' and discovered the 'culinary delights *à la* wet market' in reference to their authenticity.⁹⁷ Only a handful of articles use the term 'wet market' in other contexts in the 1990s, mostly pitting them against supermarkets, and only one article explicitly in reference to food and environmental hygiene.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ PHN, 'The Discovery Bay Lifestyle', *SCMP*, 11th May 1983, p23.

⁹⁶ Under 'Education' it says that 'Chinese language will also be taught, reflecting the bi-cultural atmosphere of Discovery Bay.' One hypothesis might be that with the growing private housing market in Hong Kong, as part of the explosion of the real estate and property development sector, 'wet market' might have been adopted by Hong Kong Resort Co. Ltd from Singaporean English to appeal to wider 'bi-cultural' communities in Hong Kong and Asia. PHN, 'The Discovery Bay Lifestyle', *SCMP*, 11th May 1983, p23.

⁹⁷ PHN, Margaret Sheridan, 'Making the Most of the wet market: Table Talks', *SCMP*, 9th April 1992, p20; 'Culinary delights *à la* wet market: FOOD', *SCMP*, 2nd April 1992, p20; 'Home Cooking? But we don't employ an amah', *SCMP*, 18th June 1992, p25; 'Why shoppers raise a storm over typhoons' *SCMP*, 8th July 1993, p24; 'Convenience heads the shopper's list', *SCMP*, 28th July 1994, p22.

⁹⁸ PHN, Stella Lee, 'Risks high as markets fail hygiene test', *SCMP*, 24th March 1993, p5; Denise Cheung, 'Teenage chefs rescue the family dinner', *SCMP*, 15th November 1995, p22; Kevin Kwong, 'Dog biscuits, sofas and don't forget the coupons', *SCMP*, 5th April 1997, p20; David Phair, 'The 'super' put back in the market', *SCMP*, 14th November 1998, p30; Jo Bowman, 'Supermarket losing fresh-food battle: Shopper's choice', *SCMP*, 29th September 2000, p5.

Despite this tentative etymology of 'wet market', I would argue that the use of the term 'wet' is useful when considering the modern market in Hong Kong. Hong Kong's unique historical and geographic conditions, and the city's volatile relationship to water in the post-war period, offers a more nuanced approach to the market as a source of life and space of control. This was not simply 'because the floor is always wet' in markets. Rather, wetness, in the sense of the visceral and sensorial properties of the goods and space of the market, drove market design to be further environmentally and administratively controlled while also accounting for everyday cultural practices. Using market structures to mitigate the 'wetness' of goods was an approach that had begun with Hong Kong's Central Market in the 1840s and was later confirmed into policy. Nonetheless, as hawkers and consumers continued to re-construct the market to suit their economic, cultural and social needs, the colonial government needed to implement more and more boundaries, ending with the technological and administrative bind of environmental conditioning and privatisation.

3.3 The road to 'multi-purpose'

As well as a change in administration, the detailed enthusiasm of the Housing and Estate Managers also reflected the wider drive for quality of life in government urban planning and housing. The correspondence between architects, managers and the HD shows that, in the early 1970s, architects and housing managers focused their efforts on ensuring lasting appeal and the long-term functioning of the estate marketplace, informed by their understanding of local marketing practices driven by customer desires, preferences and motivations. This discussion mirrored the ongoing New Town public housing policy, further propelled by the Ten-Year Housing Programme (TYHP) announced in October 1972. The language around everyday life in public housing estates transitioned from a focus on immediate and basic necessity towards ideas of convenience, circulation and aesthetics within the vision of a modern urban society. The idea of the fully formed district with

public housing estates at the centre, was also becoming more attractive and feasible during this time, with the early developments of the New Towns of Sha Tin and Tuen Mun following the pattern of Wah Fu Estate as a 'self-contained' estate. Markets followed suit, encompassing the qualities that were set out in Architect 2's design proposals.

However, by August 1973, market committees felt more detailed research and a re-examination of previous standards were necessary before pressing ahead with a new market design for the New Territories. Minutes from a meeting between the USD, AO, the new HD, and the Town Planning Office, revealed that the new TYHP standard number of hawker and market stalls were one fifth of that recommended in the COP in 1969, and were considered to be grossly over the number believed to be relevant for new housing estates.⁹⁹ After lengthy discussion in the meeting, it was decided that no fixed standard of provisions should be adopted, with a general guide of one stall to every 200 persons for government estate design purposes. However, the committee also added the caveat that:

the actual number of stalls to be provided in each district between the relevant departments, [should take] into consideration such factors as the locations of the markets/bazaars, the provision of the other shopping facilities (shops, supermarkets, etc.) and the overall needs of the particular district.¹⁰⁰

In spite of the previous efforts to construct 'proper markets' by housing architects and housing managers before government restructuring, this sustained wariness suggests scepticism by department heads over the continued relevance of marketspaces, including by the AO heads.

Further qualitative data did, however, change some aspects of the market design. All the marketing facilities in public housing estates were

⁹⁹ The new Government estate guidelines recommended 1 stall to 300 persons. PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Standard of Provisions of Market/Hawker Stalls, Informal meeting between USD, AO, Housing Dept and Town Planning Office 28th August 1973, pp1-2.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, 28th August 1973, p3.

surveyed in November and December 1973 through the estate managers and forwarded to the housing architect of the new HKHA.¹⁰¹ While the initial chart presents mostly adequate facilities in existing estates, three estates were found with inadequate facilities: Choi Hung, Wah Fu and Kwai Shing, then some of the most widely anticipated and celebrated housing projects due to their architectural and technological innovation.¹⁰² Meetings were held in January and February 1974 on 'the scale of provisions and design of market stalls for the Authority's future estates', to develop on the previous meeting's market guidelines.¹⁰³ In spite of the evidence of inadequate facilities, the findings of the survey were essentially ignored; Wah Fu Estate was the basis on which to calculate the next scale of provisions — 1 foot run of display shelf to every 25 people, with three shelves at each stall. In addition, metal shutters, power sockets and individual taps were finally provided to each stall, rather than shared facilities.

In the meantime, the design of Oi Man Estate's market stalls was agreed. This design clearly derived from the market stall design that had been developed prior to reorganisation, but stalls were finished to a higher standard this time, with fully glazed tile walls as well as the new additional features for future estates (Figure 3.09). The market building itself remained small and pared back, an open, single-storey structure placed in a garden between two blocks. While slightly more finished than the modular markets at resettlement estates, this was still a compact and basic structure, working flat against the panels with little operating space in front of the shelves (Figure 3.10). As can be seen in the image, the addition of large signage

¹⁰¹ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-12, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Group A – Market Stall Facilities, 26th November 1973.

¹⁰² All three projects were profiled in the *Far East Builder* (previously Hong Kong & Far East Builder) in their respective years. See 'Choi Hung Estate will house 43,000 in 7,585 Flats', *The Hong Kong & Far East Builder*, 16.1 (1961-1962) pp36–37.; '50-person lifts will serve HK's biggest low-cost estate' *Far East Builder*, (April 1969) pp23–25.; Donald Liao and Cheung Sing-hoi, 'Wah Fu Estate – Hong Kong's first self-contained low-cost estate, *Far East Builder*, (March 1970), pp14–19.

¹⁰³ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Notes of meetings held[...] to discuss the scale of provision and design of market stalls for the Authority's future estates, 2nd January 1974 and 8th February 1974.

distinguishing stalls and the display of produce vertically against the wall rather than horizontally, allowing for a kind of 'promenade' of goods for easy comparison and analysis, further prioritised the customer's point of view. Still, the small scale of the market relative to the population reflected the HKHA perception of market spaces as not worth investing in. This was particularly given that multi-use, multi-storey commercial complexes (containing branded supermarkets and department stores) were an attractive alternative now realised at Wah Fu Estate, and also at Oi Man Estate, not far from the estate modular market.

3.3a The multi-storey debate

Indeed, there were signs of disagreement within the new reformed administration over the market design. Secretary for Housing I. M. Lightbody, even sent a memo to the Director of Housing, asking 'I should like to know what consideration is being given to having the Architectural Office of the Public Works Department provide marketing arrangements in future estates which accord more closely with HD views on what is required'.¹⁰⁴ However, as Oi Man Estate and Lek Yuen Estate were also found to be without enough market facilities, an entirely new standard was designed in the autumn of 1975, this time involving the AO in the progress and amendment of the standard plans. The final revision by Housing Architect S.C. Cheung implemented solid market stalls for various types of goods constructed within the floor of an estate (Figure 3.11a). Following the comment of the 'sultry' conditions of the previous modular or one-storey models, a minimum of 16 feet ceilings was set in this design.¹⁰⁵ The ceiling of the market as a whole now doubled the height of each stall to allow for proper ventilation, departing from the modular market model to become more of a cavernous space containing rows of stalls within a multi-storey structure. This also allowed the

¹⁰⁴ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Memo from Secretary of Housing to Director of Housing, 23rd December 1974.

¹⁰⁵ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Summary of H.M.'s/E.M.'s comments on Modular Markets, Group A, 1973.

scale of the market to increase but without using additional horizontal land, further reflecting the increasing total population of estates, taller and larger estate blocks, and 'multi-use' concepts of newer estate design packaged within the TYHP. As housing estates became higher buildings, markets were further incorporated into housing structures, removing them from their own separate buildings.

Closer analysis of the new plan shows the distinct differences between the stall types, seen here separated into three different plans marked A, B and C (Figure 3.11b). The overall size of stalls greatly differed depending on the types of goods, where fruit, vegetable and dry goods stalls were a quarter of the size of the poultry stalls, which required much more room in which to scald the animals. All surfaces of each stall were fully finished with mosaic tiles, including walls and floors. One of the more significant additions to the plan was grating covers, made with $\frac{1}{2}$ inch thick cast iron, lining each of the stall fronts beyond the threshold of the roller shutters. Floors of these stalls were raised by 6 inches in order to accommodate a 'fall' towards surface channels.¹⁰⁶ As can be seen in Plan A in Figure 3.11b however, dry stalls would have no use for any water, and so surface channels were completely omitted from the design of these stalls. These amendments to the modular market drastically changed the environmental conditions, transforming them into large and airy spaces with more room for movement for both consumers and stallholders. At the same time walls on all sides of each stall assigned spaces more rigidly.

This expansion also reflected a shift in the administration of these stalls from licensing to letting, adjusted for different estate locations and types. Along with wider government administrative reform, estates were divided into Groups A and B, with B being the former RE now set for redevelopment, and A being the former GLCH and current and future HKHA-

¹⁰⁶ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, B.W. K. Cheung, Standard Shop Stalls, 10th December 1975.

built estates. These groupings therefore determined the approach to market space as well. Housing Architect Y.L. Pang noted that while the prototype would be used for all new estates, that 'this standard design may not be absolutely suitable for redevelopment schemes'.¹⁰⁷ Indeed this new market type was required to become a viable commercial business for the HKHA, further justifying the higher-quality materials used in the design. For example, the cost of metal roller shutters replaced the previous wooden collapsible gates, but it was argued by the Assistant Director of Group A estates, B. Leung that 'as these are now commercial lettings, the premium that we obtain should cover this capital expenditure.'¹⁰⁸ Meanwhile, Group B continued to use other design models depending on the status of the estate, where markets continued to be regarded as a public service for basic local needs.¹⁰⁹ These additions, along with the promise of slightly higher income residents with the next phase of the TYHP, made conditions different from those in the earlier modular market model.

The idea of markets within multi-purpose buildings, however, was not an entirely new innovation. Multi-storey multi-use markets, within a commercial complex or as a stand-alone market building, had already been discussed in government departments for some time. However, these did not yet seem on the horizon for the USD in 1968 ahead of the COP:

while the USD has expressed reservations about the practicability of multi-storey markets, the high land values in many districts will probably require this form of development and for future planning purposes it is assumed that sites for retain markets should generally provide for buildings of at least two storeys.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, Y.L. Pang, Standard Shop Stalls, 31st December 1975.

¹⁰⁸ PRO, HKRS 1588-3-2, The Design of Market Stalls in Public Housing Estates, B. Leung, Standard Shop Stalls, 7th October 1975.

¹⁰⁹ This further explains the continuation of temporary hawker bazaars, and other non-standard market models. See PRO, HKRS, 1588-3-3, Notes of a meeting held on 23rd July at Ngau Tau Kok Estate office to discuss markets in the Ngau Tau Kok Area, 23rd July 1975.

¹¹⁰ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Suggested Amendments to Part 7: Commerce with regards to Hawker Bazaars and Retail Markets,

Although this applied to both the densest urban areas as well as the New Towns, it was clear that multi-storey markets were attractive in the long-term, particularly as industrial innovations in high-rise public housing allowed much higher multi-storeys and larger lower floors. At the same time, however, government parties were wary of multi-use or multi-storey buildings with markets, finding it impractical and exacerbating issues already felt such as unallocated stalls and congestion.¹¹¹ The logistics of markets in themselves were also considered, and were particularly important for restricted goods that needed clean, clear passage ways for transferring and unloading into the market building, and space to carry large volumes of water and live animals through the market —all extremely difficult tasks and potential health hazards in a multi-storey space.¹¹²

Internal research conducted in 1968 in preparation for a standardised retail market in the COP had also included for a two-storey market (Figure 3.12a & 3.12b). The design placed 'mini-stalls' for fruit, vegetable and dry goods hawkers, with stalls around the sides acting as a kind of 'container'. Fish, meat and poultry stalls were split over two floors, with services and stairs on each side of the building. A roof would offer space for other public uses. Although there was approval for this from the director and secretary of housing, market managers on the ground, and representatives of market stall holders, were less convinced, objecting to the square share and arrangement of stalls on the perimeter.¹¹³ They instead suggested to 'reverse the arrangement with market stalls in the centre and mini-stalls surrounding them. This again would conform with local custom which tend to produce

attached to Memo from Sec of Colony Outline Plan (E.G. Pryor) distributed to PWD, USD, Resettlement Dept, former Housing Authority, 6th January 1968, p9.

¹¹¹ PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Record of the meeting [...] to discuss the provision and location of Markets and Hawker Bazaars in the Resettlement and Government Low Cost Housing Estate, LSO 456/CQP, 20th September 1967, p2.

¹¹² PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, General Points in Planning New Markets (including Shek Tong Tsui) attached to H.M.A. Bristow, Memo from Director of Urban Service to S.C.L.&S, 20th May 1967.

¹¹³ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Directory of Urban Services to SCL&S Colony Outline Planning, Proposed Standard Retail Market, 2nd April 1968.

rows of hawkers outside free provision shops.'¹¹⁴ They also agreed that 'multi-floor marketing is unpopular the problem being to persuade customers to ascend stairs'.¹¹⁵ Although the design was approved and published, the 116 x 116 foot design recommended in the COP was *not* adopted as the standard market where the 'Hon. D.U.S. in particular ha[d] considerable reservations about it both in principle and detail'.¹¹⁶

Some committee members however, felt there was some potential in markets as part of multi-use buildings. Superintendent of Crown Lands & Survey and Principal Town Planner, E.G. Pryor suggested instead that:

If a standard market design eventually is adopted, it is more likely to emerge from the principle of providing marketing facilities on the lower floors of multi-storey, multi-purpose buildings.¹¹⁷

Specific members of the committee, especially Pryor, were enthusiastic about combining the market space with car parks, community centres and children's playgrounds above or below the market space in two or even three-storey constructions, as it was believed to be especially advantageous in 'commuter' areas for 'more economic use of land'.¹¹⁸ Members felt that cars were to become increasingly significant as part of a working-class lifestyle with the growing economy, and Wah Fu Estate even prioritised land for three multi-storey car garages.¹¹⁹ One of these car parks connected directly to the market on the upper levels, allowing for easier access to deliveries and distribution vehicles.¹²⁰ On the other hand, the space of the market was required to stay

¹¹⁴ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, 2nd April 1968.

¹¹⁵ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, 2nd April 1968.

¹¹⁶ PRO, HKRS1039-1-12, Provision of Retail Facilities in Public Housing Estates, E.G. Pryor, 26th February 1974.

¹¹⁷ PRO, HKRS1039-1-12, 26th February 1974.

¹¹⁸ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, E.G. Pryor, Memo from S C.L.&S to Director of Urban Services, 21st March 1968.

¹¹⁹ Hong Kong Heritage Project (HKHP), Oral History Record with Donald Pun-huai Liao, Architect of Wah Fu Estate, I267.

¹²⁰ HKHP, Liao, I267.

compact lest it caused low parking densities or obstruction and therefore make the scheme unjustified.¹²¹

3.3b Foresight without markets

In effect, the market in its uncontained form was seen by the HKHA to be in the way of modern urbanisation. Although recognised as an important facility for public housing estate populations, markets remained to be second to further modern or technological features of the estate such as car parks and later, commercial complexes. As early as 1967, markets were meant to be hidden spaces in estates, ideally working as the 'guts' of the estate networks in multi-storey buildings. Government bodies asserted that 'markets should be multi-storeyed, and in RE and GLCH they should be conveniently located but not the focal points in the estates'.¹²² With the launch of the TYHP in 1973, larger plots of land for public housing estates became available in New Towns like Sha Tin and Tuen Mun, as opposed to navigating the already urbanised environments in Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan. More space, as well as more confidence with new construction methods, offered a 'tabula rasa' for incorporating the market amongst other public facilities as part of multi-storey, multi-purpose commercial complexes. Although the first estate in Sha Tin — Lek Yuen Estate in 1975 — followed the single-storey market building as at Oi Man Estate, its larger neighbour — Wo Che Estate — arrived with great celebration in 1977, complete with a 'self-contained' commercial complex with the market on the ground floor facing out to modular cooked food stalls in the centre of the estate.

New markets in these larger New Town estates followed suit. Figures 3.13 and 3.14a show two completed examples of the new 1975 standard shop stalls in the markets at Wo Che Estate and On Ting Estate. As can be seen in

¹²¹ PRO, HKRS1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, S.A. Barden, Memo from Acting Chief Engineer Traffic Engineer to S.C.L.&S, 10th April 1968.

¹²² PRO, HKRS 1039-1-10, Retail Markets, Hawker Bazaars and Hawkers, Record of the meeting [...] to discuss the provision and location of Markets and Hawker Bazaars in the Resettlement and Government Low Cost Housing Estate, LSO 456/CQP, 20th September 1967, p2.

the images, all stalls, even those selling unrestricted foods, are fully operating shops that can be shut away with rollers overnight. At Wo Che Estate, each stall has individual lights and shop fittings, and all floor and wall surface inside and outside individual stalls are fully tiled. Although completed later in 1980, On Ting Estate in Tuen Mun is rather simpler with unfinished concrete flooring.¹²³ Most importantly, the space above shop stalls are clear so as to allow for ventilation, with simple slats or completely open to the outside with air funnelling down the corridor of stalls from open doorways. As part of larger estate projects within multi-storey, multi-purpose buildings, markets could become much larger in size, demonstrated here at On Ting Estate with its wide thoroughfare.

However, at the same time, the market became engulfed in gigantic new estate constructions. Celebrated as the 100th estate built since 1954, On Ting Estate would share commercial and community facilities with its 'sister' estate, Yau Oi Estate.¹²⁴ These facilities included a five-storey market *and* a car park (most likely a market on the ground floor with car park on the floors above), a three-storey air-conditioned commercial complex, and three cooked food stalls, providing for a population of over 87,000 people connected via a pedestrian flyover (Figure 3.14b).¹²⁵ Similarly, the 'giant' commercial complex at Wo Che Estate was designed to draw in the crowds from all over Hong

¹²³ This possibly reflects the economic disparities between Shatin and Tuen Mun districts. Tuen Mun was notorious for its gang-related crime and youth delinquency. Shatin on the other hand had already been established as a frequent recreational destination when it went through the process of urbanisation. See P.Y. Wong, 'Youth and social capital: A study of the relationships among family functioning, social trust, and civic engagement of secondary school students in Tuen Mun' (unpublished thesis, Hong Kong Shue Yan University, 2007); S.W. Wong et al. *A Study of Youth Behaviour and Values in Tuen Mun: An analysis of the road to Deviance* (Tuen Mun District Board, 1995); Nelson W.S. Chow, 'Moving into New Towns – The Costs of Social Adaptations', *Asian Journal of Public Administration*, 9.2 (1987) pp132–142.; John F. Jones et al. 'Neighbourhood Associations in a New Town: The Mutual Aid Committees in Shatin', *The Chinese University of Hong Kong Social Research Centre, Occasional Paper*, 76 (1978).

¹²⁴ PHN, 'On Ting makes it estate No. 100', *SCMP*, 5th December 1980, p28; 'Homes for 87,000 in sister estates', *SCMP*, 27th March 1979, p8.

¹²⁵ PHN 'On Ting makes it estate No. 100', *SCMP*, 5th December 1980, p28; '\$68m for second phase of estate', *SCMP* 14th September 1978, p6.

Kong, conveniently facilitated by a spacious car park for 800 vehicles.¹²⁶

Tangible inadequacies found at new estates celebrated for their technological and architectural success were ignored in favour of keeping conservative numbers of market stalls. Government priorities were further emphasised by their enthusiasm for structures such as car parks and shopping malls, facilities that were believed would become essential in the near future as working-class households were predicted to be able to afford and desire cars and enjoy the conveniences of residential department stores. This apparent 'foresight' displaced fundamental market space, one of the key nodes of everyday life in Hong Kong.¹²⁷

3.4 Conclusion

The restructuring of the marketplace from the late 1960s to the 1970s mirrored overall shifts in Hong Kong's administration and approach to public housing and urban development. As more housing was needed on ever-depleting sources of available land, experiments in the construction of housing and facilities gave the government new options and approaches to public services. Although standardisation and prefabrication were already in the global architecture and planning discourse in the 1950s, due to Hong Kong's unusual geo-political circumstances, the colonial government took a different path towards modernising mass public housing and facilities. Estate markets therefore received similar treatment to public housing, culminating in PWD Architect Colin Bramwell's modular market in 1969, ahead of more permanent market spaces as negotiated in the COP. As had been the case with housing in Hong Kong, the notion of modules and units helped government bodies to calculate population and hawker numbers, and therefore their use of space in the market, by creating concrete boundaries together alongside administrative systems to further contain the persistent 'hawker problem'.

¹²⁶ PHN Shatin's giant centre opens', *SCMP* 9th December 1979, p9; PRO, HKRS 70-8-3684, Public Housing Estates – Shops, Press release, 'Shops Now Available in NT'S Largest Shopping Complex', 12th July 1979.

¹²⁷ HKHP, Liao, I267.

However, in the early 1970s, internal exchanges between architects and housing managers revealed a willingness, and even enthusiasm, to design user-centred markets that could also meet the government's own management needs. Aesthetic and experiential considerations such as colour, finish and market furniture were discussed in terms of customer appeal and cultural preference. This was linked specifically to ideas of freshness of foods between consumers and government administrators, the practices and cultures of consumption surrounding such foods, and the 'wet' conditions of the marketplace. The market therefore was, and continues to be, a central facet in the discussion of modernity in the public realm in Hong Kong.

Government fears of or distaste for the visceral materialities of the market justified the narrative of 'progress' in public housing estate design and planning. Despite the discussions about markets between managers and architects, the recommendations in the COP and the new models were largely scrapped after administrative reforms in 1973. While aspects of these plans were maintained (such as tiled surfaces, and higher ceilings for increased ventilation), the user-focused intentions were shifted back towards minimising and containing markets for estate purposes.

With the market's involvement in such powerful political debates, as tangible site of global interest and urgency, the chapter has attempted to address the major gaps in historical and theoretical contexts of markets in Hong Kong. Here, a crucial reminder is that all these spaces, regardless of their visual and material makeup, were referred to by their Cantonese users as *gaai si*; acknowledging their shared history of markets, hawkers, bazaars and wet markets, through the overlaps in policy, design and planning based on the racialised associations of 'wet' goods, affirms how central materiality is in writing a richer narrative of space and consumption in Hong Kong. Markets were enveloped into multi-storey commercial complexes, often inconspicuously taking the ground floor spaces that faced inside estates

rather than being designed to entice outside custom. This was also motivated by the increasing commercialisation of public housing estates. Branded spaces such as supermarkets, department stores and restaurants would come to dominate the public housing space, marking the beginning of the increasing privatisation of everyday life in Hong Kong. This will be expanded on in the following chapter, in which I focus on commercial complexes and neighbourhood shopping malls.

Chapter 4: Commercial complexes and malls

4.0 Introduction

A distinctly new urban form in the landscape arrived in Hong Kong in the 1960s – the mall. On the 22nd March 1966, Hong Kong's first ever shopping mall opened to the public on the prominent Tsim Sha Tsui Pier, Ocean Terminal. However, as Tai-lok Lui explains, 'the arrival of shopping malls in Hong Kong in the 1960s was not an immediate outcome of changes in the economy of local urban communities.'¹ During this time, shopping as a leisure activity was still a pasttime confined to, and geared towards, tourists and elites. Instead, he argues that for working- and middle-class people in Hong Kong, the mall was simultaneously alien and enticing:

[Ocean Terminal] served the function of delineating the boundary between the mundane reality of the locals' everyday life on the one hand, and the fantasy of alternative ways of life on the other, those enjoyed by overseas visitors coming from countries with a higher living standard.²

In other words, the mall was a chance to see how wealthy visitors consumed, what they wanted and what they had. The grandeur and material wealth in such spaces, while distant from the everyday experiences of low-income communities in Hong Kong, nevertheless offered a window onto the outside world, as well as the luxuries that it represented and the opportunities that a future prosperous Hong Kong might bring.

At about the same time, another kind of consumption space designed specifically for local working-class people was also unveiled with great fanfare. In 1967, Wah Fu Estate was inaugurated containing a small department store, Chinese restaurant, and shop space for local businesses surrounding it. These became known collectively as the first 'commercial complex' in Hong Kong. This commercial complex was a key factor in the design transformation from older housing models and a new, all-encompassing model of housing estates, and specifically aimed towards the larger plots of land in New Towns of Hong

¹ Lui, Tai-lok, 'The Mall of Hong Kong', in ed. Mathews, Gordon & Lui Tai-lok, *Consuming Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2001) p25.

² Lui, p27.

Kong's New Territories. Commercial complexes provided a structure to offer shopping facilities, while simultaneously allowing the Hong Kong government to strategically plan the urban landscape and envision a future population of shoppers. In addition to commercial complexes, malls developed alongside estates in the New Towns becoming destination terminuses and connecting points between estates, reachable by a maze of pedestrian bridges, and the city beyond.

As such, Hong Kong's commercial complexes had multiple uses beyond simply consumption. They also came to encompass much more than buildings. As well as containing shops, cafés, restaurants, and markets, they often became the site of the community offices, community centres, kindergartens, libraries and, in later iterations, cooked food centres, sports centres, and offices of the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department. Not only did the commercial complex serve as a primary centre for public welfare services; it was also designed to contain and manage the public in efficient and attractive spaces that economically benefited the colonial government.³ Non-commercial aspects of commercial complexes were just as significant, with performance spaces, gardens, seating, and spectacular architecture emphasising modern ideas of lifestyle and leisure. Commercial complexes were spaces for residents to while away time, to 'meet at the fountain', and to touch and sense new goods and environments, as well as to resist, appropriate and occupy spaces of modernity. Adjoining malls connected estate residents with the rest of the city, expanding the notion of spaces of consumption from singular sites to interconnected spaces within the district. The commercial complex and the mall would continue to influence and shape the urban landscape in Hong Kong into the hyper-consumer environment that it is known for today, where its urban centres are filled with glittering multi-functional, multi-entertainment skyscrapers, or stoic fortresses of

³ D.W. Drakakis-Smith, 'Urban Renewal in an Asian Context: A Case Study in Hong Kong', *Urban Studies*, 13.3 (October 1976) pp300–302.; *High Society: Housing Provision in Metropolitan Hong Kong 1954 to 1979*, (Centre of Asian Studies, University of Hong Kong, 1979).

administration and service. While driven by a growing hunger for material things, this pattern of hyper-modernity is rooted in Hong Kong's urban design during this postwar period, not only found in the likes of Ocean Terminal, but also in local sites like commercial complexes and malls in peripheral districts.

This chapter centres on the commercial complex as a distinct structure and space within the New Towns public housing estate, which would in turn contribute to broader ideas of a modern consumer society in Hong Kong from the 1980s onwards. The main question in this chapter is how did commercial complexes and mall spaces, built within and alongside New Towns estates, work to construct a modern consumer society and landscape in Hong Kong? As the government began moving on to the first phase of 'true' New Towns (a 'tabula rasa' as opposed to the development of existing satellite towns of Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan), commercial complexes and malls became key strategies in developing ideas of spatial modernity and further establishing a 'modern' population of consumers. With the suppression of market spaces, and in spite of the essential needs of the estate residents, commercial complexes were promoted as the ideal consumption space. This shift mirrors that of the postwar suburban experience in Europe and North America towards large-scale shopping hubs. Nevertheless, commercial complexes and malls in Hong Kong are distinguished by the largely Chinese working-class and densely populated communities residing in public housing, and the cultural clashes between British colonial ideals and local consumption practices.⁴

Rather than framing commercial complexes as attachments to estates, this chapter considers these spaces as extensions or expansions of the estate, in continuation of the 'spheres' of consumption conceptualised throughout the thesis. These types of structures were also known under other names: 'shopping centres', 'estate centres', 'commercial centres', 'estate complexes',

⁴ Janina Gosseye, and Tom Avermaete, 'Shopping Towns Europe, 1945 - 1975', in ed. Janina Gosseye and Tom Avermaete, *Shopping Towns Europe: Commercial Collectivity and the Architecture of the Shopping Centre, 1945-1975* (Bloomsbury Visual Arts, 2017), pp1-24.

'estate malls', 'shopping plazas', and 'shopping precincts'. For consistency, this chapter will refer to such spaces as 'commercial complexes' and use the individual names of these buildings. I will use the term 'mall' to refer to the privately developed shopping structures which, nevertheless, made up the extended space of estates through their close proximity and the proposed consumer base of adjoining estates. Like in the case of *gaai si*, which references multiple spatial forms, both commercial complexes and malls often go by the same name in Cantonese — '*si cheung*'.

This chapter also emphasises the fact that the commercial complex is indeed a complex – a place where multiple nodes of consumption that can be collectively experienced by simply walking through the space of the estate come together. These nodes may be stacked on top of each other, lay side by side, interwoven by bridges, or connected through everyday practices such as walking or navigation. This is particularly clear in a metropolis like Hong Kong where the pedestrian so distinctly marks the circulation of the city, here meaning the flows of movement around the urban landscape.⁵ This chapter therefore concentrates on the commercial complex as a microcosm of urban practices of consumption in their most mundane form.

I will start the chapter by bookending the innovation of the commercial complex. The first section begins by introducing the relationship between the commercial complex, the TYHP and the reformed HKHA. Introduced in 1973, the plan involved a reorganisation of the HKHA with a new focus on for living environment and social welfare spurring the integration of commercial complexes into the design of estates. I will then turn towards the end of the 1980s, when the HD published a design guide on the commercial complex laying out four distinct commercial complexes as well as the overall design approach. In contrast to public housing estate

⁵ Zheng Tan and Charlie Q. L. Xue, 'Walking as a Planned Activity: Elevated Pedestrian Network and Urban Design Regulation in Hong Kong', *Journal of Urban Design*, 19.5 (2014), pp722–744.

design, which largely replicated various estate blocks across different district terrain and conditions, commercial complexes were approached on an individual basis. This section aims to clarify the space of the commercial complex visually and materially, emphasising that the commercial complex was continuously envisioned as a shift in approach to the space of the estate as opposed to simply a building.

The second section then returns to the late 1960s, with the visions of government architects and planners in the process of designing commercial complexes as part of the estate. This section analyses two pioneering experiments in public housing estate design elsewhere in the city in the late 1960s and early 1970s — Wah Fu Estate and Oi Man Estate, designed by government architect Donald Liao. The blueprint for these estates led to the new model of public housing estate with purpose built commercial complexes, and subsequently the theoretical framework for planning estates in the New Towns. Indeed, a significant part of this process involved reframing the estate space (with the commercial complex at its heart) as a symbol of 'love' from the government to its people, but also as a space for 'self-containment' and 'self-sufficiency' for administrative control. In essence, the commercial complex was a perfect self-contained package for the government and HKHA to market estates, draw out investment and control the spaces of consumption in the estate.

The third and fourth sections takes the centre of the New Town of Sha Tin, where these ideas of a modern consumption space and lifestyle in the New Territories were executed, as a case study. The third section follows on from the two experiments of Wah Fu and Oi Man to focus on the first public housing estate in the New Territories built in this model, i.e., Lek Yuen Estate in Sha Tin. Envisioned as the 'nucleus' of the entire New Town, Lek Yuen Estate and its commercial complex embodied the idea of a modern living environment readily facilitated with modern consumption and leisure spaces, including branded spaces and spatial features. Although government

marketing emphasised the ancient and unruly natural landscape of Sha Tin, there was in fact already a successful existing market town in the district. The brief period in which Lek Yuen Estate and Sha Tin Market Village co-existed in space (i.e., before the market village was demolished) reveal the juxtaposition of these working-class community spaces, and how interaction between such mundane spaces contradicted the government vision of a modern, consumption landscape.

The final section then expands into the rapid development of two more structures that quickly superseded Lek Yuen commercial complex — Wo Che Estate and the Sha Tin New Town Plaza. Rather than treated as separate entities, both of these structures became interconnected through a series of pedestrian bridges, consequently separating pedestrians from traffic. In contrast to the previous emphasis on cars, the pedestrian became the main focus of planners and architects for their close proximity to consumption spaces. This also marked the turn towards the collaboration between private and public development manifest in such spatial features, and demonstrated how private shopping malls had a hand in shaping modern consumers and practices by their attachment to estates and their role in the circulation of the city.

Some of the sources that I draw on in this chapter are notably different from those used in earlier chapters. As a result, this chapter is based on published sources such as newspaper and journal articles from the time to supplement a lack of available government archival documents from the HKHA. In addition, oral histories, published on Hong Kong Memory and interviews I have conducted myself with current and previous residents of estates, as well as photographs from the GIS have also been used. The conceptual understanding of these spaces expressed in this chapter are rooted in my own spatial engagement with these estate commercial complexes and malls, through numerous site visits and tours, in order to experience the interconnected and expansive nature of consumption space

beyond one singular building.⁶ As some of the only remaining consumption spaces researched in this chapter, which in themselves embody decades of transformation, such tangible, on-the-ground experience of these spaces are crucial to understanding the sense of scale and movement through space. Thus, this chapter shifts towards a more specific lens on the consumer. The chapter, however, still links to the other chapters in the thesis in the way that the commercial complex has transformed public space and the public's negotiation with modernity. Indeed, the space of the commercial complex envelops the pitch, the bazaar and the market into one, making it the 'ultimate package' for the colonial government's spatial agenda.

4.0a The mall and the suburbs

Hong Kong's drive towards malls and commercial complexes in the 1960s followed an American and European model of malls from twenty years prior.⁷ The earliest shopping centres in Europe show the relationships between the creation of New Towns with a shopping centre as its core. As argued by Janina Gosseye and Tom Avermaete in *Shopping Towns Europe, 1945-1975* (a take on Gruen's *Shopping Towns USA*), spaces for 'the tantalizing logic of mass consumption' has largely been ignored in the historiography, arguing that

in contrast to state-led modernization, which often idealized the collective realm and defined it as a weighty contract between society and the individual, the collectivity of the shopping centre was described in terms of necessity, and (above all) in terms of leisureliness.⁸

In other words, modernity as imagined and realised by the state has often been given more emphasis than the practical or frivolous practices of consumption as part of the wider vision of modern life. *Shopping Towns Europe* chronicles the design approaches of some of the most important New Town shopping centres which were designed to give a sense of 'centrality' to

⁶ With thanks to Jeffrey Cheng and Kris Provoost of Building Narrative and the Hong Kong Estate Centres project for reaching out to me to share research and exchange information, as well as taking me to some of the sites discussed.

⁷ Gosseye and Avermaete, p3.

⁸ Gosseye and Avermaete, p2.

these newly created suburbs.⁹ Many of these European New Town examples involving shopping centres were developed in the 1960s and early 1970s — often deemed to be a kind of 'second wave' of New Towns in Britain and Europe — which sought to combine consumption with other public or administrative functions in a 'megastructure' urban core.¹⁰

Many of these were designed through the architectural approach of New Brutalism. Perhaps one of the most influential in terms of the megastructure concept was Cumbernauld Town Centre on the outskirts of Glasgow. This was opened in 1967 as Britain's first shopping mall connected to several satellite towns. As one of the few actually realised architectural mega-structure dreamscapes, it was 'like a colossal living vessel [...] Inside, people streamed through the structure's eight levels in a maze of escalators, elevators, ramps and stairways. They melded into the totalized environment'.¹¹

This European activity can be extended to Hong Kong at this time as well, where several radical experiments in public housing design and urban planning were also taking place. However, rather than simply replicating British approaches to New Towns, Hong Kong was experimenting with these ideas in parallel with this second wave of British New Town development. Hong Kong was quickly adapting from the small complex at Wah Fu in 1967 to imagine the vast landscapes of interconnected living and shopping in the New Territories beyond. It is in this global context that designs of commercial complexes and new models of public housing estates in Hong Kong were tested, and Cumbernauld would be a specific reference for designing the New Town at Sha Tin.¹² However, unlike in the British context where these spaces

⁹ See Yannick Vanhaelen and Gery Leloutre, 'Shopping Centres as Catalysts for New Multifunctional Urban Centralities', in Gosseye and Avaermate, pp51–64.

¹⁰ Janina Gosseye, "'Uneasy Bedfellows' Conceiving Urban Megastructures: Precarious Public–Private Partnerships in Post-War British New Towns', *Planning Perspectives*, 34.6 (2019), p2.

¹¹ Rosemary Wakeman, *Practicing Utopia: An Intellectual History of the New Town Movement* (University of Chicago Press, 2016), p272.

¹² Tan, p732.

waned in popularity, this type of architecture has come to be a defining part of Hong Kong's landscape.¹³

4.1 A complex on 'home'

The existence of the commercial complex within the public housing estate reflects the shift in public notions of the home and the drive towards privatisation. The demands of an emerging middle-class in Hong Kong spurred drastic changes in development policy in the colony in the 1970s and 1980s, and with it, a different approach to consumption. In 1977, the Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) was initiated by the HKHA to cater for a 'sandwich' society, residents who were above the eligibility threshold for public housing but could not enter the private market either.¹⁴ A similar scheme for an even higher income bracket called the Private Sector Participation Scheme (PSPS), was also started in arrangement with private developers. These two schemes marked the beginning of the privatisation of public housing in Hong Kong. In 1984, as part of the Sino-British Joint Declaration, the future of housing was also part of negotiations. As Castells suggests 'a dominant theme appears to characterise it: the privatisation of the government's housing policy'.¹⁵ Formalised in 1987 as the 'Long Term Housing Strategy', this would be handed over to the Hong Kong SAR government after 1997 and last until 2001. Many of the housing policies reassessed in this document emphasised home ownership, urban development, and the role of the private sector. Both policies, for reordering the urban landscape through housing development, and the drive towards buying property, motivated the construction and integration of commercial complexes into the landscape.

¹³ See Manuel Castells, Lee Goh, and Reginald Yin-wang Kwok, *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome: Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore* (Pion, 1990), pp22–35; Chu, 2016.

¹⁴ Such a scheme was open to families with an income between HKD 5000 – 6500 and to existing public housing estate residents, on the basis that they renounce their current unit. Castells, p36.

¹⁵ Castells, p19.

In fact, commercial complexes may arguably have been the testing ground for privatisation in the public housing space. Although commercial complexes are far less mentioned in Hong Kong's history of public housing, Castells explains that on the contrary, commercial complexes have had a significant impact on the HKHA's business model, particularly after the 1980s:

The Housing Authority has also become an important *commercial and industrial developer and landlord*. Originally this type of activity originated as a spin-off from the housing program. [...] Concerning the commercial facilities, the HA realised the potential of leasing space in its estates to all kinds of stores and businesses, both in terms of providing facilities to the residents and as a profit-making activity for the Authority, given the captive market these estates represent for the commercial premises located there. [...] For anyone who has enjoyed the intensity of the giant public restaurants or shopping malls of the housing estates, it is clear that the experience is a social, functional, and economic success – indeed, a very profitable one for the HKHA. So, in the 1980s the HKHA became a commercial developer in its own right. For instance, a big shopping center was built to lease at Lok Fu, at a cost of HK\$267 million to serve the central Kowloon area.¹⁶

Given that Wah Fu commercial complex was completed in 1967, I suggest that the HKHA was already somewhat of a commercial developer even before the 1980s, as each estate from the 1970s contained a commercial complex, or at the very least, a row of shops and a restaurant, that were leased from the HKHA. As a semi-independent agency, the HKHA's finances relied heavily on the income generated from these commercial spaces, particularly as estates and commercial complexes increased in scale, which also motivated later rent increases in spite of protest.¹⁷ While it is unclear what percentage commercial rents made of the HKHA's earnings, commercial complexes nevertheless helped to set a precedent for a public-private relationship in public housing estate spaces, ultimately leading to privatisation policies in estates later on.

¹⁶ Italics original. Castells, p33.

¹⁷ Significant protests occurred in the first half of 1976 as rents went up by up to 25% for Group B estate shopkeepers. The shopkeepers requests were ultimately rejected by the government. See press clippings in PRO, HKRS 70-8-3684, Public Housing Estates – Shops, 1976- 1979.

4.1a District, Greenfield, Large, Small

Although the idea of the commercial complex was already introduced at the beginning of the TYHP, the purpose and definition of such complexes was honed from the late 1960s through to the late 1980s. The HD issued a design guide for commercial complexes in housing estates in October 1987, outlining that as an 'essential part of our public housing estates' the guide would offer some standardisations on commercial complexes, including number of provisions, cost control on design, and notably, methods 'to minimise the extent of alteration by tenants' and minimise maintenance and repair costs.¹⁸ The guide recognised that:

unlike our standard residential blocks, it is extremely difficult to derive a standard design for commercial centres, as they relate very much to the size of the surrounding estates development, its supporting population and the geographical location of the site.¹⁹

In commercial complexes, the HD took a completely different approach in comparison to the increasingly standard design of estate blocks and the previously trialled modular markets. By this time, the HD were already well practised in various types of estates and approaches to providing facilities. The guide also clearly documents what commercial complexes needed to prioritise for both users and managers in different types of estates. However, it is also significant that the guide was a reflection on the HD's progression with commercial complexes in the late 1980s. The turn towards the HOS was already beginning, and the Tenant Purchase Scheme (TPS) would appear in the mid-1990s.²⁰ Therefore, the 1970s and 1980s marked the most significant period of development and optimisation of commercial complexes before the process of privatisation in the space of public housing estates became the norm.

¹⁸ University of Hong Kong Special Collections (HKUSC), Housing Department, *Design Guide for commercial complexes in public housing estates*, October 1987, p1.1

¹⁹ HKUSC, *Design Guide for commercial complexes*, p1.1.

²⁰ See James Lee, 'Affordability, Home Ownership and the Middle Class Housing Crisis in Hong Kong', *Policy & Politics*, 22.3 (1994), pp179–189.; Chan Kam Wah, 'Prosperity or Inequality: Deconstructing the Myth of Home Ownership in Hong Kong', *Housing Studies*, 15.1 (2000), pp28–43.; Chen Yun Chung and Pun Ngai, 'Neoliberalization and Privatization in Hong Kong after the 1997 Financial Crisis', *China Review*, 7.2 (2007), pp65–92.

With this in mind, the guide classified existing estate commercial centres into four types: (A) District Centre, (B) 'Greenfield' Centre, (C) Large Neighbourhood Centre and (D) Small Neighbourhood Centre (see Figure 4.01). These are typified in the guide by Lok Fu, Butterfly, Chuk Yuen and Pok Hong Estates respectively as ideal examples that provide similar basic provisions and facilities, and also supported tenants and management on the ground. Other similarities mostly involve types of tenants, such as restaurant and cooked food centres, a range of shop facilities, and supermarkets, however their discrepancies are largely spatial, with specific technicalities, aesthetics, or types of users for the space. These include questions as to whether air-conditioning or escalators would be necessary, whether there should be a 'special feature' to attract shoppers, whether the 'capture level' (the various levels of potential customers based on proximity) would be solely targeted at 'inside' or inclusive of 'outside' customers to the estate, number of storeys, and their direction and proximity to transport networks and traffic. The complexity of each type of commercial complex is also referenced in terms of age and original intention, where 'Greenfield' types, after fulfilling their original goal of jump-starting the area the estate was built in, needed to adjust to a much more competitive market with other commercial complexes (which were increasingly private developments) in the local area. While many of these estates used repeated spatial forms, both in terms of estate blocks and arrangements in space, the varying terrain and conditions of the New Town districts meant that commercial complexes had to be designed on a case-by-case basis.

Indeed, images in the guide show that this individualistic approach opened up opportunities for experimental spatial design (Figures 4.02a & b). The chosen images on these pages show the wide diversity of design elements used to fulfil specific needs and ideas for the community. Features at Lok Fu Estate (completed 1984) — covered pedestrian areas, multi-storey staircases across the centre, wide facades with space for signage and direct

access to the public transport on site, share elements with other older estate complexes. On the other hand, Butterfly (1983), Chuk Yuen (1986) and Pok Hong (1985) Estates encompass rather more unique design features that constructed a particular identity for that estate. Ideas such as circular courtyards, greenhouse walkways, archway facades, dramatic steel sunshades and interesting uses of garden space and foliage created individual aesthetics and vied for customer appeal. The guide stated that the 'design approach' to such spaces 'must be able to attract people. The more people attracted, the more opportunities for shopping, business, social activities, etc. are [sic]'.²¹ Attraction was not limited to the residents of estates, but bringing in outsiders was also important for the sustainability of the commercial complex; in fact, the sheer scale of Lok Fu, a massive and expensive district hub, was designed to draw people in from beyond the estate. Unlike in previous consumption spaces, new aspects related to leisure were added as key additions to the design approach. Where previously the 'needs' of the residents, cost of production, and prevention or deterrence of undesirable activity were emphasised in the design of other consumption spaces, the commercial complex instead prioritised spatial beauty, individuality, and even how the commercial complex aesthetically and culturally tied the estate with the broader district area.

This prioritisation of aesthetics is reiterated in the guide's primary aims on the purpose of commercial complexes. While user and logistical needs were still important considerations, aesthetics and spatial experiences were as, if not more, significant for their connection to profit. All four types of commercial complexes needed to prioritise:

Meeting the essential shopping needs of the residents in the estate and maximising at the same time the commercial potential of the centre on the site; Providing a place that would form a focal point for social and cultural activities and a place that would strengthen community identity; Enhancing the visual environment of the whole

²¹ HKUSC, *Design guide for commercial complexes*, p3.1

estate; From operation and maintenance points of view, design of commercial centres should be energy conscious.²²

Five key priorities can be drawn from this passage: consumer shopping needs, commercial potential and profits for tenants, community culture and identity, visual environment, and ease of operations. Spatially, these could be achieved through the plan and specification of the building, such as boundary lines, centralised spaces, and the inclusion of garden spaces and specific lighting.

One example concept specified in the guide was the entrances of individual shops where 'the design concept shall be based on the idea of 'walk-in' shop'.²³ In this case, 'there is no glass shopfront but a security shutter. The shop and the shopping arcade become as one space.'²⁴ Here, the boundary line between shop space and public space is hidden as a means of enticing customers to 'walk-in'; implied in the removal of glass is the physical and tactile consumer interaction with shop owners and shop goods rather than only 'window shopping'. At the same time, built-in shutters defined a boundary for tenants to stay within rather than allowing 'overspill', as well as preventing shops from opening beyond the hours of the complex. All of this could be monitored by management within the confines of the arcade. Constructing 'one space' between the shop and the shopping arcade was therefore, in theory, beneficial to all parties: customers were not alienated by barriers, tenants could encourage more interaction and sales, and management could easily survey spaces for any boundary-crossing by tenants or customers.

Another aspect of spatial design specified to fulfil these objectives was the 'special feature', especially important in District, Greenfield, and Large commercial complexes. Examples of special features included:

sculpture, skylight, bullet lifts, computer controlled signage, flashing neon lights, water features, etc. [These] can make a very worthy

²² HKUSC, *Design guide for commercial complexes*, p3.1

²³ HKUSC, *Design guide for commercial complexes*, p4.2

²⁴ HKUSC, *Design guide for commercial complexes*, p4.2

contribution to the environment of the shopping centres and to the estate as a whole.²⁵

While the feature in itself may not have facilitated direct consumption of goods, it was recognised by the HD as a significant draw to spending time in the space and bringing people in close proximity to the shops. In essence, these special features were designed to be 'a worthy contribution' towards the consumption of a lifestyle, emphasising excitement, novelty and leisure *through* shopping as part of the everyday experience of the estate. As purely aesthetic and sensory objects signifying culture, technology and modernity, these special features (in conjunction with the commercial complex overall) were envisioned to create individual identities and cultural value for different estates, which in turn translated into rental and later buying prices. The spatial 'enhancement of the environment' had the dual purpose of reconstructing cultures of consumption as part of everyday life and creating economic value through the individualisation of the estate spatial experience.

4.2 The estate as a town

Many of these ideas are rooted in one particularly radical estate design in Hong Kong — Wah Fu Estate. Wah Fu was an idyllic public housing estate located next to Pok Fu Lam's Waterfall Bay, considered locally as an auspicious location.²⁶ Facing out along a ragged cliff on the southwestern side of Hong Kong towards Lantau Island, a series of cuboids rise from the bay (Figure 4.03 & 4.04). Looking down from the peak above in the late 1960s, the landscape around is dwarfed in comparison to the estate and the small farming villages scattered around the undulating terrain. Less noticeable in the photograph, but located at the centre of this enormous construction, is Wah Fu's commercial complex, known as 'Wah Fu Centre' — the first of its kind to have been built in Hong Kong.

²⁵ HKUSC, *Design guide for commercial complexes*, p14.1

²⁶The bay is significant in local urban mythology (both colonial and Chinese) as one of a few sites claiming the lore of how Hong Kong was given its name for where the freshwater meets the sea. See Christopher DeWolf, 'Waterfall Bay: Where Ghosts, Gods and Speedo-Clad Swimmers converge' *Zolima Mag*, 26th October 2017 <<https://zolimacitymag.com/waterfall-bay-where-ghosts-gods-and-speedo-clad-swimmers-converge/>> [Accessed 20th March 2023]

With the opening of Wah Fu Estate in 1967 came the beginning of a new turn in the design of not only public housing, but the urban landscape overall. Indeed, the ambition for housing had expanded beyond shelter to become a space to foster community and lifestyle. Donald Poon-huai Liao, an architect who later become Secretary of Housing and Chairman of the HKHA from 1980 to 1985, described the vision for Wah Fu Estate:

[The estate should be] a community yes, it should literally be a New Town. You have 50,000 people living in this place, it's not only a housing estate, actually it's a new town. So how does a town work; you start by erecting a commercial centre, [within it] there's a library, you have two post offices, HSBC, Standard Charter Bank, on the ground floor there's a big market. Back then, it was the first time we made one small department store. Upstairs we put in a (large) restaurant, a small restaurant [...] Household goods store, of course that was an obvious addition, and [...] schools, you had to have a school.²⁷

The commercial complex functioned at the heart of the estate, accessible by a series of stairs and raised pathways, complete with everything 'a busy housewife' would need (Figure 4.05).²⁸ Here, Liao describes a commercial complex which encompasses much more than one single building for shopping, inclusive of civic spaces and spaces for gathering, all with a sea view and sea air. Such provisions set a new bar for the purpose and promise of the public housing estate as a self-contained miniature town, a space that would not only house but also allow residents to learn, experience and consume modernity. As the centre of this new kind of estate, the commercial complex embodied these utopian ideas.

As argued by Miles Glendinning, Wah Fu Estate's design offered two new approaches to the public housing estate, using the commercial complex

²⁷ Translated by author. HKHP, Donald Liao, 1267.

²⁸ *Converging Paths at Public Housing Estates*, 'The Birth of Wah Fu Estate: An interview with Donald Liao, the Chief designer of Wah Fu Estate', *Hong Kong Housing Authority*, 2019. [Available at: <https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/photos-and-videos/videos/converging-paths/index.html>] [Accessed 24th March 2023]

design to navigate previous spatial and population issues.²⁹ Firstly, the design exploited the existing landscape of the site, by utilising the sloping terrain to create convenient access and safety across the estate with the commercial complex at its core. With the car park set below the commercial facilities of the estate, residents could walk between homes and the open-air multi-storey commercial complex, effectively separating cars from pedestrians and opening up space for leisure and views. Secondly, the land-use planning of British New Towns was adapted to deal with the population numbers that the HKHA needed to make to fulfil housing targets, such that 'each estate compress[ed] the population of Stevenage or Harlow into a few acres, [and] a comprehensive, multi-level 'town centre' could immediately be provided, domesticating and routinising the Brutalist megastructure ideal'.³⁰ Such a feat was hailed by other municipal bodies around the world as 'something of a conjuring trick'.³¹

In contrast to previous iterations of public housing estates in Hong Kong, consumption space became the driving force of how the estate would run effectively. However, even more significantly, the commercial complex signified a shift towards selling, and therefore consuming, the space of the estate as a whole. Spatial, visual and material experience was clearly paramount to the design ethos, where the commercial complex featured as 'the heart and pride of the estate [...] whose promenade decks offer magnificent views out to sea and the distant islands'.³² In later interviews, Liao waxed lyrical of Wah Fu as a piece of art 'I thought of creating a sculpture, I thought I would do whatever I could to preserve the beautiful scene.'³³

²⁹ Miles Glendinning, 'Wah Fu Estate', *Twentieth Century Society*, July 2011
<<http://c20society.org.uk/botm/wah-fu-estate-hong-kong/>> [Accessed 3 January 2020]

³⁰ Glendinning, 'Wah Fu Estate', 2011.

³¹ 'Wah Fu: Hong Kong's first self-contained low-cost estate' *Far East Builder* (March 1970) p15.

³² 'Wah Fu', p16.

³³ HKHA, 'Converging Paths at Public Housing Estates',
<<https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/photos-and-videos/videos/converging-paths/index.html>> [Accessed 24th April 2023]

Other similar estates with prominent commercial complexes followed suit in the next decade. After the excitement for Wah Fu Estate within the international architectural community and the announcement of the TYHP in 1973, Oi Man Estate was inaugurated the following year in a similar model, boasting a three-storey, indoor and air-conditioned (the first with this feature) commercial complex (Figure 4.06).³⁴ A newspaper article for Oi Man Estate's official opening yet again uses the rhetoric of a 'little town within a city':

At Oi Man which fits the description of a little town within a city, some 46,000 people can live and work in a clean, healthy and amiable environment [...] The Housing Department's architects paid particular attention to providing plentiful commercial facilities both to meet the tenant's needs and to provide a shopping centre for the Homantin district. A three-storey air-conditioned commercial complex has shopping arcades on each of its three floors with space for a total of 90 shops, two banks, two large restaurants, a supermarket, a department store, a café, and the Estate Office.³⁵

Alongside Oi Man commercial complex, a further twenty-five shops on the ground floor of estate blocks where 'every item necessary in the day to day running of a household is available on their shelves', a market and modular street food stalls were also included.³⁶ In addition, hawkers were strictly not allowed on site. Speaking on managing the design of Oi Man, Liao proudly describes his process as simply applying 'common sense' to the design, including multi-storey car parks, landscaping, and principles of individuality, safety, efficiency, and 'leisure'.³⁷

4.2a 'Love the People'

Love the People – a fitting name indeed for a splendid project. For Oi Man, as it is known in Chinese, will shortly be a self-contained township population of over 46,000. [...] A feature of Oi Man will be a multi-storey shopping complex.³⁸

³⁴ 'Wah Fu', pp14–19.PHN, C.D. Sung, 'A Showpiece of Public Housing in Hong Kong', *SCMP*, 20th November 1975, p1.

³⁵ Sung, p1.

³⁶ Sung, p1.

³⁷ HKHP, Donald Liao, 1267.

³⁸ PRO, HKRS365-1-454, Love the People, Hong Kong New Low Cost Housing Estate, 1973.

Opened on the cusp of the TYHP, Oi Man translates from Cantonese to 'Loving the People'. In other words, it was literally named as an expression of 'love' to the Hong Kong population. Given the context of the TYHP as a response to the 1966 and 1967 riots, Oi Man was an act of political appeasement which attempted to show that the colonial government understood the interests of the public, and demonstrate that this new holistic approach to housing would continue. Although proud of its achievements, the HKHA admitted that Wah Fu was an experiment which, in spite of its impressive design and commercial complex at its core, struggled to find tenants for a long time due to its isolated location.³⁹ Oi Man, on the other hand, was immediately popular due to its prime location near Mong Kok in Kowloon's urban core. From the beginning, an emotional narrative was placed upon Oi Man where the commercial complex formed part of this gesture of trust from the government to the public: 'Much thought and planning designed to give its tenants the best possible in relation to the money spent has gone into the building of Oi Man'.⁴⁰

Like Wah Fu, Oi Man was again lauded as 'the showpiece of public housing in Hong Kong' for its 'modern facilities and futuristic planning' (Figure 4.07).⁴¹ Described in a newspaper article as 'a shopping first for HK estate', it detailed that 'tenants will be able to shop in air-conditioned comfort', escalators will 'facilitate movement of shoppers from floor to floor', and 'shoppers can sit back and relax' in the café in the shopping arcades.⁴² Even several years before its opening, applicants were enticed by its technological and environmental features, not only expressed in the air-conditioning and escalators in the commercial complex, but also in the ways in which such spaces were interwoven into broader everyday ideas of leisure aside from consumption. An earlier *SCMP* article in 1973 found in a survey that 'all the

³⁹ HKHA, *Converging Paths at Public Housing Estates*, <<https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/photos-and-videos/videos/converging-paths/index.html>> [Accessed 24th April 2023]

⁴⁰ Sung, p1.

⁴¹ Sung, p1.

⁴² PHN, 'A shopping first for HK estate' *SCMP*, 29th July 1974, p7.

applicants desired to live in this “nice modern super-sanitary estate” where the roofs of the commercial complex also doubled as a children’s play area, and the plaza with covered market stalls will be placed alongside a lush sitting-out area ‘separating the shopping area from the busy public road’.⁴³ Indeed, its central location in an expensive district near good schools and ‘high-class tenements’ created additional demand for a flat in these estates. The Oi Man commercial complex, and the ideas of leisure, lifestyle and class that came with it, allowed for would-be tenants to desire and aspire to a different life, ‘as a housewife in Pin Street, Tai Kok Tsiu, Mrs Ho Siu-han, evaluates the estate thus “Who doesn’t want to live in such a high-class flat at such low rent?” Her family is one of the numerous applicants’.⁴⁴

Even with the much lower rents than the surrounding middle-class area of Ho Man Tin, many incoming residents found the cost too much. While many were relieved to have a better life it was also tough to make ends meet; in another newspaper article following up with families at Oi Man Estate in 1977, many admitted that they certainly pushed themselves to make the rent with additional income coming from outwork.⁴⁵ New facilities such as piped gas, while available, were left unused due to the cost.⁴⁶ In an oral history record, retired UC civil servant Sham Hing Hei also attested to the difficulties in the beginning to afford the lifestyle that Oi Man Estate presented:

When we moved to Oi Man Estate [from an illegal tenement rooftop hut in Kowloon City] actually we could fit everything into one cardboard box. We didn’t have much to move, we moved ourselves, some clothes, we brought over the little TV. [...] When we got there, our environment improved a lot. But then, the pressure on us increased immensely. [...] It was difficult from the moment we moved in. Every month I would be waiting for my salary from the Urban Council [working in the Pest Control department]. On pay day, we would be calculating the money to pay for milk powder, this costs this much, that costs that much, and luckily my wife was also helping us to

⁴³ PHN, K.C. Tsang, ‘Oi Man – a nice modern super-sanitary estate’, *SCMP*, 19th March 1973, p8.

⁴⁴ Tsang, p8.

⁴⁵ PHN, Emily Lau, ‘Families find good life at Oi Man’, *SCMP*, 3rd May 1977, p8.

⁴⁶ Lau, p8.

get through by sewing outwork. At first it was tough because there were several months where we couldn't make ends meet. After buying enough milk powder, we barely had enough for rice.⁴⁷

Mr and Mrs Sham also said that they had only had the opportunity to move into Oi Man in the first place because many families on the waiting list felt the rent was too expensive and had turned down the offer. At the same time the HKHA was trying to fill out the flats for Queen Elizabeth II's visit as part of her first tour of the colony in May 1975.⁴⁸ After almost ten years of waiting, the Shams said 'we were willing to be flexible with where we lived and to tough out the more expensive rent. If we didn't accept it, then we would be waiting for a flat for much longer'.⁴⁹ For families like the Shams, there was little choice in how to improve conditions for themselves and their children. Personal sacrifices were made even to simply take part in the standards of living put forward in public housing estates like Oi Man.

Indeed, as the Shams demonstrate, leisurely consumption activities as part of everyday life were not on the agenda for many residents. As a result, they had to navigate other modes of consuming space in order to inhabit the estate. Purchasing things, even at the commercial complex designed to serve the residents and local area, was not possible. However:

[for recreation] there was a lot of space. Sometimes we would walk around the commercial complex, at most we would go to visit the dai pai dong to have something to eat. But in terms of recreation, we would mostly go to Mong Kok to buy things, walk down to Yau Ma Tei, we would walk down to Hung Hom to buy groceries because it was comparatively more expensive up here. But we didn't do much else: if you had time, you would simply be finding other ways to boost your income.⁵⁰

⁴⁷ Translated by author. Hong Kong Memory, LKF-SHH-SEG-008, Sham Hing Hei, 'Living in Oi Man Estate, a government low-cost housing estate', 24th Feb 2011 <Available at: https://www.hkmemory.hk/collections/oral_history/All_Items_OH/oha_54/records/index.html> [Accessed 19th April 2023]

⁴⁸ Sham, LKF-SHH-SEG-008.

⁴⁹ Sham, LKF-SHH-SEG-008.

⁵⁰ Sham, LKF-SHH-SEG-008.

In lieu of material things or expensive items, the Shams would use these consumption spaces as places to walk to or through as a means of living in the estate. While they would continue to shop elsewhere for groceries for their competitive prices, the consumption spaces in the estate seemed to be for the purpose of absorbing an improved environment as its resident, as opposed to simply a consumer to buy goods. Walking allowed residents to contextualise the space where they lived. But shopping in the commercial complex was not considered a part of their lifestyle, as they chose instead to continue using the traditional shophouse areas and markets nearby in Mong Kok and Yau Ma Tei to consume for leisure. Even if the spaces designed for consumption on the estate were not used as intended (meaning that residents spent money there), they did nevertheless add to how the estate itself was consumed, as the kind of estate that could offer 'the good life'.⁵¹

Oi Man's popularity led to the production of a twin estate in Tsuen Wan, Lai Yiu Estate (completed 1977, Figure 4.08).⁵² This again was touted to applicants to offer a much-improved environment from their previous housing, through the same well-facilitated estate but in the New Town of Tsuen Wan instead of adjacent to Kowloon. Another article noted that at Lai Yiu 'while some families are obviously well off and have decorated their homes beautifully [others are] struggling to maintain a minimum standard of living.'⁵³ On interviewing the wife of a hawker and mother of the family Mrs Chiu, the article continues that

she admitted her children are undernourished [...] the family budget is extremely tight but [she] does not want to apply for public assistance and possibly leave her family open to ridicule. [...] As it is, the family is so poor that furniture consists of two bunk beds, a few chairs, a table and a cupboard.⁵⁴

While many low-income families aspired to better living standards and a more comfortable lifestyle, the reality was that such ideals constructed in these estates were difficult to meet for some families, particularly in the first few

⁵¹ Lau, p8.

⁵² Lau, p8.

⁵³ Lau, p8.

⁵⁴ Lau, p8.

years after the TYHP and new HKHA policies. With a clearer distinction between lower- and middle- class families, Mrs Chiu expresses a sense of social entrapment in living in a more expensive estate with expectations of lifestyle.⁵⁵ Indeed, these differences were starker in New Town estates. Oi Man Estate was its own special case. Even if Lai Yiu was designed as a 'twin estate', its more isolated location in Kwai Chung meant residents could not explore other avenues for daily consumption in order to save money. In an article in *The Star* in 1978, The Chairman of the Helping Hand Committee claimed residents in Tsuen Wan estates were paying 30-40% more for consumer goods, blaming the HD's new tendering system for shopping premises for high prices and illegal sublets.⁵⁶ Citing the new estates in Tsing Yi and Kwai Chung (such as Lai Yiu), estate residents 'had no alternative' because there were no other markets nearby: 'This is a captive clientele and the residents are captive customers'.⁵⁷

4.2b Self-contained centres

The experiences at the likes of Lai Yiu Estate undermined the rhetoric of 'self-containment' and 'self-sufficiency' in the more isolated estates, even with the excitement over the commercial complex. Indeed, this was already well-known from Wah Fu Estate since filling up the huge number of flats there was a struggle from the beginning. Put off by the distance and the cost of travel to workplaces in the urban centres, further measures such as television adverts and various promotions were attempted to 'sell' the modern facilities at Wah Fu to attract people to move there.⁵⁸ Donald Liao backtracked on his visionary catchphrase of 'the estate as a town', saying in an *SCMP* interview at Wah Fu Estate's inauguration that:

it would be unfair to call it a new town. It has no industry and was never intended to be a new town. But because of its location, outside

⁵⁵ Lau, p8.

⁵⁶ Lau, p8.

⁵⁷ PRO, 'Tenders blamed for steep prices', *Star*, 11th May 1978, HKRS 70-8-3684.

⁵⁸ HKHA, *Converging Paths at Public Housing Estates*, <<https://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/en/about-us/photos-and-videos/videos/converging-paths/index.html>>

an urban area, it has to have many of the services and facilities which new towns have.⁵⁹

While Oi Man Estate enjoyed the most popularity for its 'high class' flats, estate facilities and location, other estates that followed (the majority of which were to be in the New Towns of Tsuen Wan, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun) would need much more than an on-site shopping mall to market these more expensive flats located even farther away than Wah Fu.

But still, the ideals of self-containment, in individual flats, in estates, and in the New Town itself, persisted through the commercial complex. In 1979, the government published the first chapter of *Hong Kong 1979*, their annual yearbook, dedicated to New Towns introducing:

The three towns – Tsuen Wan, Tuen Mun and Sha Tin – have been planned as self-contained communities providing housing, hospitals, schools, shopping, community amenities and light industry.[...] The new towns are laid out as self-contained centres for convenient and agreeable living.⁶⁰

Individual booklets detailing the development plans for each New Town also led with a quote from MacLehose's housing plan announcement speech on 18th October 1972, urging that 'the housing in the new towns must be accompanied by a full ration of what is essential to modern life'.⁶¹ The publications admit that it had been difficult to convince people to move to the New Towns and hoped that providing a town 'built as a whole' with adequate facilities could attract them.⁶² Even if Liao had publicly stated that the estate could not truly be considered 'a town', the rhetoric continued in

⁵⁹Donald Liao in *SCMP*, 24th March 1968 (article not found on PHN), quoted in Built Heritage Research Collaborative, Faculty of Architecture University of Hong Kong, 'A Self-Sustaining Community', *Wah Fu Estate Project* <<https://wahfuestate.hku.hk/a-self-sustaining-community/>> [Accessed 19th March 2023]. Note that Wah Fu Estate continued to be described as a 'new town' estate with Liao himself even rehashing the rhetoric in many later interviews, such as the oral history record in HKHP, and Miles Glendinning's oral history account.

⁶⁰ HKHP, T284, Hong Kong Government, *Hong Kong's New Towns*, (Hong Kong Government Printers, 1979), p1.

⁶¹ HKHP, T285, Hong Kong Government, New Territories Development Department, *Hong Kong's New Towns Tuen Mun*, (Hong Kong Government Printers, 1975), p1.

⁶² HKHP, T285, p12.

the description of New Towns and the estates planned there. Indeed, the promise of the commercial complex, and space for leisure and recreation, was continuously used to state how self-contained the estates in the New Towns would be.

Thus the commercial complex served to sell a lifestyle. As Drakakis-Smith put it in 1979, 'relocation will involve considerable changes in family lifestyles. In this respect, the ability of government housing to attract tenants is a crucial initial factor.'⁶³ Factors other than commuting times and workplaces would need to be emphasised in order to convince prospective tenants. Would-be tenants had to be willing to sacrifice some of the everyday expectations such as cost of living, proximity, and convenience; in exchange, the promise of space, cleaner and safer environments for raising a family, and a prosperous working life enabling aspirations of consumption, was embodied in how these estates were sold. However, many of the targeted types of families had other priorities. Larger families with multiple generations had social and financial ties to urban centres, and these families were less likely to be convinced by modern notions of family and lifestyle. Whereas the younger, smaller families 'flexible and adventurous enough to consider moving to the new towns' may have been enthusiastic about such ideals but were often overlooked in the affordability and eligibility for flats on public housing estates.⁶⁴

A self-contained 'modern life', however, had major benefits to the colonial government. Even then, as Drakakis-Smith critiqued, the 'nebulous optimism' for New Towns success (in terms of private investment and population acceptance) did not match the mechanisms put in place to do so.⁶⁵ While Drakakis-Smith is more explicit about the lack of real attraction to the private sector, he implies that the government assumed population would

⁶³ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, p119.

⁶⁴ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, p121.

⁶⁵ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, pp119–120.

readily take to moving to the New Towns for what they think would be a lifestyle ideal even though 'in the past the inclinations and the actions of the colony's population have not always coincided with those preferred by its administrators.'⁶⁶ He continued on to suggest that rather more effective in actual movement of the population to the New Towns is the convenient displacement of families in estate conversion processes – in other words, systems displacing people living in cheap but badly designed estates into more expensive and 'self-contained' estates, with no other shopping facilities aside from the on-site market and commercial complex, could be framed as an act of social welfare.⁶⁷ In short, the commercial complex both sold the idea of a modern lifestyle in public housing, and also became the outlet where residents were forced to spend money.

What's more, Drakakis-Smith points out that while improved design and self-contained agenda of these estates did have humanitarian motives, the commercial complex did have direct financial implications. While improved facilities might benefit individual families (at least, if their priorities matched those of the HD),

in the past [commercial facilities] have been underprovided and underpriced. The Housing Authority receives an almost insignificant return from the 10,000 shops in its old estates and gets no benefit at all from the large scale private commercial developments which have occurred in large estates with too few shops. The private sector has thus made considerable capital from the government's spatial concentration of potential customers. To avoid this the Housing Department now constructs large retail shopping centres, premises in which are leased at near current market rents. These serve the dual purpose of providing better facilities for the residents and increasing the government's revenue.⁶⁸

The meaning of self-containment can be inverted here to ask what, or more accurately who, exactly is being contained within estates. Although the self-contained rhetoric has largely been framed in terms of functioning spaces at

⁶⁶ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, pp119–120.

⁶⁷ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, pp121–122.

⁶⁸ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, p123.

various scales, the commercial complex most vividly pictures that such a containment required ready consumers in order for such estates, and therefore New Towns, to function. The commercial complex embodied self-containment in the literal and spatial sense of housing the various necessities of modern life (according to government standards) in the estate, but also was self-contained as the core mechanism that the HKHA could market, profit and maintain economic relationships with individual estates after initial entry. Furthermore, the addition of the commercial complex provided a space to tangibly address the sprawl of squatters and hawkers directly through the dual methods of suppressing hawkers and educating a consumer population. In other words, the commercial complex was the perfect package, not for consumers, but for the HKHA: While an absolute self-containment of estates or New Towns may not have been successful in functional terms, the commercial complex was a powerful self-contained mechanism for containing people in such spaces, whether by aspiration or coincidental displacement, towards government socio-economic ideals.

4.3 'The nucleus around which the rest of the new town will grow'

However, with the pressure of the TYHP and some resistance from the public, some of these initial promises of self-containment needed adjustment. After the experiments with Wah Fu and Oi Man as 'new towns', the new public housing estate in Sha Tin on the other hand was envisioned in 1971 to be the central node and the catalyst for growing the first 'true' New Town, Sha Tin:

Development of the town as a whole will lag behind the building and occupation of the estate and the provision of community requirements cannot wait until they come into being as a part of normal town growth. This would merely repeat the problems faced in urban estates and for this reason essential facilities for the daily life of a community should be built into the Sha Tin Housing estate from the outset. The estate will thus form the nucleus around which the rest of the new town will grow.⁶⁹

⁶⁹ National Archives, Kew (NA), FCO 40/353, Memorandum for Executive Council Government Housing Estate at Sha Tin, 23rd November 1971, Policy of Housing and Resettlement in Hong Kong, pp2-3.

Although Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan were technically reassigned as New Towns, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun posed new challenges. Whereas Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan were already well established with industry and some communities based there, their relative proximity to the urban core meant they were closely connected and integrated with Kowloon after development in the 1960s.⁷⁰ On the other hand, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun were '*tabulae rasae*', with only small rural communities in place before development. However, the much larger distances from Kowloon's urban centres with very little in the way of transport networks, especially for Tuen Mun, meant that development would inevitably be lop-sided in the beginning.⁷¹ Indeed, the spatial aspects of the two New Towns were significantly transformed through a roster of land reclamation projects specifically for public housing estate development.⁷² Thus, as envisioned in the proposal for Sha Tin above, estate facilities like commercial complexes were significant placeholders while development surrounding estates continued, feeding and fuelling 'the nucleus' before the rest of the New Town was provided.

Between Sha Tin and Tuen Mun, Sha Tin was considered the closest in potential to the ideal New Town, as it already had a reputation as a picturesque tourist destination and had good transport links with Kowloon.⁷³ As a result, the first public housing estate with a commercial complex, in the model of Wah Fu and Oi Man, was raised in Sha Tin after the TYHP was announced.⁷⁴ Photographs of architectural models of 'the Proposed Sha Tin Housing Estate' documented the design process (Figure 4.09). The model shows what would become Lek Yuen Estate, with the Shing Mun River oriented at the left side of the model.

⁷⁰ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, p117.

⁷¹ See Eddie C. M. Hui and Manfred C. M. Lam, 'A Study of Commuting Patterns of New Town Residents in Hong Kong', *Habitat International*, 29.3 (2005), pp421-437.

⁷² See R. Glaser, P. Haberzettl, and R. P. D. Walsh, 'Land Reclamation in Singapore, Hong Kong and Macau', *GeoJournal*, 24.4 (1991), pp365-373.

⁷³ Drakakis-Smith, *High Society*, p117.

⁷⁴ Castle Peak Public Housing Estate, later San Fat Estate, was completed earlier in Tuen Mun in 1971 under the PWD, but the estate did not include a commercial complex.

The overall commercial areas of the estate essentially worked in three tiers. Below the shopping centre and the pedestrian walkway is the shopping deck with access to the single-storey wet market in the centre. Below the deck is another floor leading to cooked food stalls and an underground car park. The top-down view shows the shopping centre in the middle of the estate complex, with the shopping centre block perpendicularly bisecting a block of flats (Wah Fung House). Next door is a restaurant, overlooking the bus terminus several floors below, with a walkway over the road connecting to the cinema. An elevated pedestrian walkway leads to a triform restaurant block located directly overlooking the main road crossing the river in one direction, and the most northerly block on the estate in the other. The entire estate is arranged roughly in a parallelogram plan, with major infrastructure on all four sides to contain all the major facilities within.

This proposal was mostly executed according to the model (save for the recreational area), and the current Lek Yuen Estate retains this working plan. Completed in 1975, Lek Yuen Estate transplanted the best of the Wah Fu and Oi Man models, showing off new and improved facilities that included a large commercial complex in an open, central area, a cinema and amusement centre ('Sha Tin Fun City') with a cinema and arcade, a large bus terminus and an amoeba-shaped water fountain (in place of the proposed football pitch or swimming pool). Before the development of the surrounding structures, the main access point was via the bus terminus, a spacious and grand space of arrival into the centre of the estate complex, with the fountain on one side and the façade of the commercial complex on the other. Unlike Wah Fu Estate and Oi Man Estate, where the shopping precinct or centre was either underground or at ground level, Lek Yuen Estate was built on flat, reclaimed land. Uninterrupted by rolling mountains or severe cliff-faces, the central public area at Lek Yuen Estate was elevated and surrounded by residential buildings which, as seen from the northern direction, channel the eye towards the commercial structure beyond the fountain (Figures 4.10 & 4.11).

Oncoming views of the estate were framed by the long pedestrian bridges. Multiple levels and pedestrian links were proposed to 'generate a natural pedestrian flow' to encourage shoppers to use the facilities within the confines of the estate.⁷⁵ Open public space was no longer a premium – while flat sizes largely remained similar to the previous public housing estates, the public and commercial spaces were deliberately large and provided a pleasant picture from the balconies and bridges above (Figure 4.12).

Similar to its predecessors, Lek Yuen Estate commercial complex featured a department store, a large restaurant and a supermarket at its core. Several major brands dominated the tenants of the commercial complex. Press images of Lek Yuen Estate feature the opening day of Swing Superstore and Fairview Restaurant, for example, the two largest occupants of the complex (Figure 4.13). Sweeping windows across the entire two floors of Swing Superstore looked out onto the arriving residents and shoppers from the bus terminus, as well as allowing patrons to look down on the meandering fountain gardens below. Swing Superstore was a new chain of department stores, a recent venture by the successful Hong Kong businessman Daniel Koo and an arm of the fashionable Shui Hing Department Store on Nathan Road in Tsim Sha Tsui. In fact, the department store at Oi Man Estate was also a Swing Superstore, but Lek Yuen housed a 'Main Store Branch' representing the New Territories.⁷⁶ Wellcome Supermarket was also an occupant, documented in *SCMP* in 1977 with several shoppers in the store (Figure 4.14). Branded goods such as Coca Cola and 7-UP, tinned fruit, Pokka coffee, and cigarettes, feature prominently near the cashier in the photograph. In the background, a child sits in a trolley as her mother pushes her around while perusing the goods on the shelf. Moreover, the store is neatly arranged into stacks of products and aisles of shelves. Each aisle is marked with numbers above, alongside fluorescent lights lining the ceilings. The floors are clean and tiled and a

⁷⁵ NA, FCO 40/353, Memorandum for Executive Council Government Housing Estate at Sha Tin, 23rd November 1971, p 3, Policy of Housing and Resettlement in Hong Kong.

⁷⁶ HKUSC, HKLS 658.87, Shoppers Weekly, No. 7, p6.

turnstile barrier marks the entrance, so that patrons enter only one at a time. Although customers have entered in much more casual clothing, such as the father with a white tank top, two workers can be seen wearing shirts and full-length trousers. The irregularity and ad hoc nature of consumption spaces such as hawker pitches, bazaars and even later modular markets are now absent in these types of consumption spaces. Perhaps the only signs of informality are the handwritten boards in irregular styles hanging from stacks of products and taped to the tiled podiums across the store.

Such brand domination in estates, full of branded items in a calculated modernised environment, emphasised a consumption consciousness based on specific types of spaces and goods. Both Swing and Wellcome, as well as other brands in commercial complexes, featured heavily in the pages of *Shoppers Weekly*, a free bilingual weekly magazine 'for supermarket shoppers', offering a glimpse of idealised middle-class aspirations (Figures 4.15a-h).⁷⁷ First published at the end of 1980, its target audience addressed 'the whole family between the ages of 11 and 55, but it's not, as you will see inside, just about shopping.'⁷⁸ Much of the contents were focused on advertising, with other content such as money-saving tips, interior design, fashion updates, local news and events and recipes. Chinese and English adverts and content largely remained the same between the two versions: Swing advertised its seasonal sales featuring imported goods like Jacques Esterel leather handbags from Paris, Spanish suede jackets and Italian woollen cardigans, Japanese infant slack-suits, US towel gift sets, and British and European gift chocolates and biscuits; Wellcome was historicised in an effort to sell their 41st store in Sai Wan Ho, emphasising their technological approach to the supermarket space with the use of air curtains instead of glass doors, large refrigeration space and their revolutionary check-outs.

⁷⁷ HKUSC, HKLS 658.87, *Shoppers Weekly*, No.1, cover.

⁷⁸ HKUSC, HKLS 658.87, No. 1, cover.

This kind of ephemera provides a picture of the spaces that were emerging and dominating estates from the mid-1970s, connecting would-be patrons to the wider network of stores elsewhere in the urban core, and material culture from all over the world. The broader content of the magazine visualises a multi-cultural cosmopolitanism, concerned with both local cultural events and structures (such as Chinese New Year celebrations and the Tsuen Wan Arts Festival), and both Asian and Western food products. Fashion and interiors however, and particular emphases on specific family structures, daily routines, and priorities still turned towards Western standards of living as the middle-class ideal. These assumed ideas such as grocery shopping once a week, kitchens with ovens, and one particular article scrutinising the lack of English education in young Hongkongers. Returning to the commercial complex, the prioritisation of such consumption spaces, and the explicit exclusion of others within the estate, narrates a particular type of material and spatial modernity that suited the HKHA and colonial government, one that emphasised a Westernised (yet still Asian) capitalist cosmopolitanism.

4.3a Heoi gaai si, Sha Tin heoi⁷⁹

In spite of their all-encompassing presence on Lek Yuen Estate, the department store, restaurant, and supermarket had competition in Sha Tin as well. One of the most significant consumption spaces was 'Sha Tin heoi' or in English, Sha Tin Town, or Sha Tin Market Village.⁸⁰ Formally built by the Sha Tin Rural Committee in 1958, the town was already well-established by the time Lek Yuen Estate was to be executed in the 1970s. In an HKU land-use survey, Geography student Sheila Chow's 1964 account reflects the fact that:

Though it is still an agricultural area, Shatin has gradually grown into a small town. Inside the Shatin town, there are many shops, stores, studio, and restaurants. Moreover, a theatre which is the only theatre in the Shatin district is situated there as well. *Therefore, this town is the commercial centre of the whole Shatin.* Its importance owes much

⁷⁹ 'Heoi gaai si' means 'to go to the market'.

⁸⁰ 'Heoi' refers to a market town or farmer's market. As well as often being formed of permanent structures and residents, it can also refer to temporal spaces that may appear once a week at a specific day and time or may move around to different sites.

to its position. The Shatin train station is facing it and the Kowloon to Shatin buses also (no. 15b) has its terminus there. Both of these has contributed much in hastening the development of Shatin Town.⁸¹

Although romanticised in government publications as part of the 'green lowlands and fertile valleys' beyond 'the nine dragon hills' in the New Territories, Sha Tin's existing developments were severely underplayed in the announcement of the TYCP.⁸² Popular for its shops and restaurants, images collected from land-use surveys illustrate a colourful promenade of commercial spaces in Sha Tin Town (Figure 4.16 & 4.17). The village was spatially arranged into rows of one-storey commercial buildings including shops with signage also branded with Coca-Cola and 7-Up, and multiple air-conditioned cafés and restaurants to choose from. These were intermingled with other residential, commercial, and administrative buildings, as well as a regular weekly marketplace. Visually, the space mirrored the chaotic arrangements of the old urban tenement shops, with baskets placed at the roadside, tarpaulins used as additional roofing, juxtaposed with the multiple layers of signage and advertising. But modernity here is still expressed through their use of modern technologies such as air-conditioning, and the consumption of such goods like Coca-Cola, but reappropriated and spatialised in a self-assembled multi-sensorial space.⁸³

As people moved into Lek Yuen Estate in the 1970s, this market town provided competition for the shops inside the estate by offering competitive prices and alternative services to those in the commercial complex. In interviews with local residents, married couple Mr Lai and Mrs Ho who moved in 1975 and 1984 respectively, and Mr Li who was a teenager during his time at Lek Yuen Estate, Mr Lai remembered that

Sha Tin *heoi* was next to Sha Tin railway station. So, lots of people who needed to buy groceries would go there. The wet market here was

⁸¹ Italics added. HKUSC, Land Use Surveys, Sheila Chow Yim-Bing, A Land Use Survey of Sha Tin Town, 1964, p33.

⁸² HKHP, *Hong Kong's New Towns*, p1.

⁸³ See Daniel Miller, 'Coca-Cola: A Black Sweet Drink from Trinidad', in *Material Cultures* (Routledge, 1998).

already opened with the estate, but the *heoi* was there too. Of course, the prices were different, some people liked to buy here, some liked to buy there, some people liked that Sha Tin *heoi* had fresher goods, so they'll run over there to buy their groceries. I remember that I also bought groceries there before. The *heoi* was there every day at a specific time, rather than the type of *heoi* that would run one day a week.⁸⁴

Mrs Ho recalled that:

Actually, ever since I got married [in 1984] and moved here, I don't think I've used the wet market [on the estate] once! I used to work in North Point, so I would buy my groceries there before coming home. I'm sure lots of people did go there, but since the stalls didn't get much business, the prices are higher. Because its more expensive, more people would go to the *heoi* to buy groceries.⁸⁵

They also remembered that illegal hawkers would also operate in the areas surrounding the estate, meaning residents could buy groceries in the early hours before hawkers packed up their stalls by 7am to avoid the hawker control officers. In short, these recount the many other options in competition with estate commercial complexes, particularly in the early stages of development. Lack of local workplaces in the beginning meant that those commuting could continue daily grocery shopping in other parts of the city. Their accounts even asserts that in spite of the commercial complex being designed in part to remove the presence of hawkers, hawkers nevertheless still found ways around the boundaries set by the estate design and management. Residents who stayed close to home could seek out traditional means of shopping such as the market village or itinerant hawkers as viable alternatives in price and produce, particularly for fresh local goods from the continuing agriculture in the area.

Of course, many still did use the market within the estate commercial areas. Conversely, Mr Li described the *heoi* as too far for regular shopping:

We walked over there [to the *heoi*]. At the time we considered it a long walk, even though it might only have been 15 minutes. So, we

⁸⁴ Ho Wei Lan and Peter Lai interviewed by Vivien Chan and Francis Chan about living in Lek Yuen Estate, Hong Kong, 22nd April 2019.

⁸⁵ Lai, interviewed by Chan, 22nd April 2019.

didn't go there often, no. They changed the landscape quite a lot. I remembered they placed a construction site outside of Lek Yuen Estate, all together, all sand, there's all nothing. I think that's now where the New Town Plaza shopping complex is, at that time everything was so remote, it was all covered by sand. The construction site lasted quite long. And then we had to walk across there, so to us [the *heoi*] was outside the estate.⁸⁶

The walk across the construction site to the Sha Tin *heoi* can be seen in the images of Sha Tin New Town under development (Figures 4.18 & 4.19). To the left of the images, taken between 1975 and c. 1978, is the south-west most block of the estate facing towards the area laid out for Sha Tin New Town Plaza. To the west of this is the low-lying Sha Tin Market Village, which, although small, is not unsubstantial in the types of structures built, and the permanence and orderliness of the town. Walking across this stretch would be harsh and exposed in the sandy heat, where other means, such as the hawkers in the early morning, may have been closer and more sheltered.

Other types of goods such as clothing and furniture were much less of a priority. Mr Li's description of Lek Yuen commercial complex also largely focused on the wet market, which was the domain of the wives and mothers of the estates as opposed to a space he would engage in. The department stores and the supermarkets were peripheral to the lives of all three interviewees, who found them much too expensive or at odds with the consumption culture of frugality: 'we won't buy something unless something is broken; at that time, we only buy things we really need'.⁸⁷ Although these accounts have different perspectives and usage of the commercial complex in the early years of Lek Yuen, this precisely disrupts the all-encompassing narratives of containment and convenience. Notions of modernity as part of the space are peripheral to the informants means and experiential preferences. They all navigated the prescribed spatial modernity of the estate in their own ways, neither full rejecting nor accepting the lifestyle constructed

⁸⁶ Peter Li, interviewed by Vivien Chan about living in Lek Yuen Estate, 4th November 2019.

⁸⁷ Li, interviewed by Vivien Chan, 4th November 2019.

through the commercial complex. At the same time, many chose to literally distance themselves from consumption spaces on the estate, walking across the '*tabula rasa*' reclaimed land to reach the *heoi* for an alternative engagement with modernity.

4.4 Bridges of convenience

Soon after the opening of Lek Yuen Estate, it was announced that the market town would be demolished to make way for a bus terminus.⁸⁸ In addition, the opening of Lek Yuen Estate commercial complex was soon superseded by the opening of the New Territories' 'largest single shopping complex ever built' next door at the new Wo Che Estate.⁸⁹ Bigger and grander than its neighbour, Wo Che was the beginning of Sha Tin's expansion from a 'nucleus' to a string of structures along the river. Attached by a pedestrian link through the two estates, funnelling people from one building to another, the estate was designed to allow prospective shoppers to walk from Lek Yuen all the way to the Sha Tin Racecourse, The Jockey Club's second-largest horse racing venue. It was envisioned that the commercial complex at Wo Che would draw the gamblers from the racetrack. The complex sported a 'three-storey open-air podium and sitting-out area for shoppers on the third floor and a series of cascades provides an eye-catching backdrop to the main ground-floor entrance', as well as yet another water feature, and a cool, air-conditioned environment throughout the shopping complexes arcades.⁹⁰ Once again it was reiterated that 'much planning and thought has gone into making the Wo Che commercial complex a completely self-contained shopping centre'.⁹¹

⁸⁸ Caption of image, 'The future Sha Tin New Town Centre', C. Y. Yu, *SCMP*, c. 1970s, Available at [<https://www.gettyimages.no/detail/news-photo/the-future-sha-tin-town-centre-with-the-shing-mun-river-in-news-photo/1126288342>]

⁸⁹ PRO, HKRS70-8-3684, 'Shops now available in NT'S Largest Shopping Complex', Public Housing Estate Shops, 12th July 1979.

⁹⁰ See Ch 3 on the modular market.

⁹¹ PRO, HKRS70-8-3684, 12th July 1979.

The boundaries of the spaces of consumption in the estate thus grew increasingly layered. The interlinking of Lek Yuen Estate and Wo Che Estate through the raised pedestrian walkways and bridges were specifically designed to facilitate consumption more easily. Donald Liao is quoted in a HKHA press release stating that:

"Wo Che is an outstanding example of the 'new generation' of estate we are now building with all the domestic blocks linked together by a network of overhead pedestrian walkways allowing quick and safe access between blocks and to and from the commercial complex." [Liao also added that shops will be placed] in the most convenient locations for customers so that they could make daily purchases with comparative ease and not have to cover long distances when buying daily necessities.⁹²

Such bridges allowed movement around the estates to be directed in a controlled manner towards consumption spaces on the estates. While framed here through the narrative of safety and convenience, the language again reflected that of consumption spaces like supermarkets which provided 'safe' and 'convenient' access to goods based on modern Western standards.⁹³ The act of walking between and through spaces was commodified through the notion of convenient proximity to consumption and leisure spaces, in addition to the marketing of estates overall through commercial complexes and pleasant environments.

In contrast to the earlier emphasis on car parks in estates in the early 1960s, the pedestrian became the dominant concern of planners and estate architects.⁹⁴ This is arguably for the pedestrian's role in consumption and constructing consumption spaces. As argued by the urban scholar Zheng Tan,

Hong Kong's multi-level pedestrian networks were built throughout the territory of the city, resulting in an all-encompassing pedestrian

⁹² PRO, HKRS70-8-3684, 'Overwhelming' demand for shops in giant commercial complex', 17th July 1979.

⁹³ See chapter on modular and multi-storey markets.

⁹⁴ In fact, in this case, the car is prioritised more by private developers of the New Town Plaza whereas the rejection from the government was on the basis of 'community', see Cecilia Chu, 'Narrating the Mall City', p3.

environment [...] it is a product of ever deepening entanglement between commerce and circulation in a congested urban fabric.⁹⁵

Describing it as a 'lubricant' for Hong Kong's daily economic operations, Tan adds that 'walking becomes a manipulated activity' connecting home and shopping centres, amongst other places.⁹⁶ Following the history of pedestrian bridges in Hong Kong, he connects how the emergence of 'weather-proofed integrated pedestrian networks', mostly connecting commercial centres in coordinated development between public and private entities, came alongside Hong Kong's urban identity formation.⁹⁷ He argues that pedestrian bridges and walkways, like public housing and transport networks, were also forms of social subsidy and welfare.⁹⁸ As such, consumption spaces were 'annexed' by these pedestrian bridges which would increasingly interconnect public and private organisations.⁹⁹

These social-spatial notions of walking and pedestrian bridges can be applied to the estate as well. While Tan largely focuses on the circulation between pedestrian bridges and private development spaces of Sha Tin New Town Centre in his case study, the initial pedestrian raised walkways between Lek Yuen and Wo Che Estates through the commercial complexes preceded the bridge to the New Town Plaza (NTP). As the NTP was not completed until 1984, the bridges between the two estates were already providing coverage between and around the estates before the addition of private developments like the racecourse and the private shopping mall.¹⁰⁰ Such bridges offered opportunities for residents to 'practice' negotiations with spaces of consumption, where bridges could provide seemingly natural 'offshoots' from the spheres of the *gaai si*.¹⁰¹ Conceptualising the pedestrian bridges in this

⁹⁵ Zheng, p722.

⁹⁶ Tan, p723.

⁹⁷ Tan, p726.

⁹⁸ Tan, p726.

⁹⁹ Tan, p730.

¹⁰⁰ PRO, HKRS70-8-3684, 'Overwhelming' demand for shops in giant commercial complex', 17th July 1979. This was also confirmed in my interview with Peter Lai.

¹⁰¹ This also relates to Massey's idea of 'throwntogetherness'. See Massey, pp149–153.

way further nuance the space of the public housing estate as a 'multi-purpose' space for life, work and consumption, to understand these actions in space as simultaneous – one can cross a bridge and be consuming at the same time.¹⁰²

However, the crossovers of private and public spaces already within the estate should not be overlooked; the bridges and walkways channelling people through the estate towards the commercial complexes, particularly in examples like Lek Yuen Estate, further emphasise how specific modes of consumption practice were reinforced through the circulation design. For Mr Lai and Mrs Ho, its bridges became a specific point of reference for Lek Yuen's unique popularity both in hindsight and in its contemporary status:

The bridge has linked the whole estate together from the shopping mall all the way through; the design aspect that is most important is this bridge. Back then, it hadn't been connected in that direction [over the main road]. We had to cross the road on the ground. But once they raised this bridge, everyone from Wo Che and Lek Yuen could cross over to the New Town Plaza, so it was convenient for everyone to walk over there. [...] Looking at all of Sha Tin's estates, it's Lek Yuen that has this unique quality.¹⁰³

This might further suggest that such bridges prepared residents for the spatial connection to planned private consumption spaces in the neighbourhood to come. The elevated walkways spatially and experientially connected the commercial complexes on the estate to other consumption spaces that departed from previous modes of everyday consumption on the ground, such as hawkers or the market village. Indeed, the 1987 commercial complex design guide writes that the 'success of a commercial centre is largely attributed to the dispositioning of the centre' ensuring that the complex be 'conveniently accessible and interlinked with domestic blocks by means of covered walkways, footbridges and the like.'¹⁰⁴ The pedestrian could quite literally experience the everyday from a different perspective, but at the expense of consumption modes cultivated on ground-level or outside of the

¹⁰² Massey, p155.

¹⁰³ Lai, interviewed by Chan, 22nd April 2019.

¹⁰⁴ HKUSC, *Design for commercial complexes in public housing estates*, p3.1.

circulation trails. Custom was thus effectively 'recirculated' off the ground and into the commercial complex, and later extended to include private shopping malls in its circulation.

4.4a A fortress along the river

The twin estates would soon be joined by their most important neighbour to form a fortress for consumption and living along the river – the Sha Tin New Town Plaza (NTP) (Figure 4.20).¹⁰⁵ In May of 1982, the development company Sun Hung Kai Properties announced that work would commence on the first phase of NTP, a shopping mall costing a total of \$1 billion.¹⁰⁶ The announcement coincided with the company's tenth anniversary, where in their first decade, the group had started to develop private residential estates in the New Territories including Tsuen Wan and Sha Tin.¹⁰⁷

The NTP however would be:

the Sun Hung Kai group's largest project to date with all development taking place in-house including project planning, architectural engineering and construction works. [...] High quality commercial and recreational facilities are to be accommodated in two low-rise blocks [...] the company is already talking to several large international and local department store chains, restaurateurs and cinema operators in order to line-up the key tenants in advance.¹⁰⁸

One such key tenants for the NTP was the department store. This spot was taken up by a Japanese retail group, Yaohan, with this store being the first for

¹⁰⁵ In fact, it should be noted that the Sha Tin Town Centre is made up of several mixed commercial and residential malls and office buildings including Lucky Plaza, Shatin Centre, Wai Wah Centre, Sha Tin Plaza, Hilton Plaza and Citylink Plaza (formerly KCR House), as well as two more phases of New Town Plaza (NTP II and NTP III). These were all developed between 1983 and 1990. All of these malls are connected through interlinking bridges and atrium arcades. While the interior and exterior design are very clearly distinguishable, the spatial experience through and between these spaces are continuous, if only noticeable through the glass door 'interfaces' and printed logo stickers on the doors. The mall linked via pedestrian bridge to Lek Yuen Estate is Lucky Estate, completed in 1983.

¹⁰⁶ PHN, Les Nicholls, 'SHK Properties ready to start work on Shatin Project' *SCMP*, 15th May 1982, p21.

¹⁰⁷ SHK's first estate ventures were the Tsuen Wan Centre Estate, and they also participated in the development of City One in Sha Tin.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholls, p21.

the company in Hong Kong and its largest store outside Japan.¹⁰⁹ Unlike the other well-known luxury Japanese outlets on Hong Kong Island, the president of Yaohan instead emphasised in an interview that 'we want to serve the masses not exclusive groups' adding that it hoped to attract residents of other New Towns.¹¹⁰ Wo Che Estate commercial complex's 'giant' achievements were thus swiftly overtaken by NTP at double the acreage of space, and a vast range of novel shopping and recreational activities.¹¹¹ NTP was also directly connected to the Kowloon-Canton Railway Station, which brought shoppers from across the city into the New Territories. What's more, NTP's architectural features were extravagant, with 'Southeast Asia's largest musical fountain' (at a price tag of \$2 million) and 'Asia's largest' glass arc skylight.¹¹² Finally a pedestrian bridge leading into Lek Yuen Estate was also installed. Together with Lek Yuen and Wo Che Estate from west to east, the three entities formed a wall alongside the Shing Mun River, where the centre of the New Town could be seen as a wide panorama from across the rivers and bridges to the south.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ PHN, Peter Robinson, 'Shatin to get HK's biggest department store', *SCMP*, 20th September 1984, p29. There has been significant literature in the last 30 years on Japanese consumerism in the 1980s and 1990s, where Hong Kong was a lucrative market for Japanese culture. Rika Fujioka, 'Western Models and Eastern Influences: Japanese Department Stores in the Early Twentieth Century', in *The Routledge Companion to the History of Retailing* (Routledge, 2018).; See Rika Fujioka, 'The Pressures of Globalization in Retail: The Path of Japanese Department Stores, 1930s–1980s', in ed. by Maki Umemura and Rika Fujioka, *Comparative Responses to Globalization: Experiences of British and Japanese Enterprises*, (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2013) pp181–203; Kerrie L. MacPherson, *Asian Department Stores* (Routledge, 2013).; Brian Bridges, 'Hong Kong and Japan: Commerce, Culture and Contention', *The China Quarterly*, 176 (2003), pp1052–1067.; Annie Hau-nung Chan, 'Consumption, Popular Culture, and Cultural Identity: Japan in Post-Colonial Hong Kong', *Studies in Popular Culture*, 23.1 (2000), pp35–55.; Millie R. Creighton, 'Maintaining Cultural Boundaries in Retailing: How Japanese Department Stores Domesticize "Things Foreign"', *Modern Asian Studies*, 25.4 (1991), pp675–709.

¹¹⁰ PHN, Robinson, 20th September 1984, p29.

¹¹¹ Wo Che commercial complex is 16 acres, where SNTP is 29 acres. See PHN, 'Shatin's giant centre opens', *SCMP*, 9th Dec 1979, p9; and 'SHK plans \$1 billion projects', *SCMP*, 7th December 1984, p35.

¹¹² PHN, 'SHK's \$320 m New Town Plaza opens' 4th December 1984, p42.

¹¹³ While it is not the primary focus of this thesis, it is significant to note that this urban plan resonated with other colonial planning projects (such as Canberra and Durban) through the 1950s and 1960s, specifically the work of major mid-century architect and planner William Holford. Holford Associates was indeed consulted for the planning of Sha Tin New Town in 1973, but the plans seem to have already been designed around an axial plane. Archival material shows that Richard Gray (Holford Associates Partner) is complimentary of the plan and its progress, saying 'My general opinion of the 'state of planning' is that at the technical

In December 1984, the NTP promised 'an exciting new Christmas experience for all the people of Hong Kong'.¹¹⁴ An illustrated newspaper advertisement called for customers to 'join in the fun of Hong Kong's newest, largest, and most exciting shopping and entertainment complex' for its fountain and rooftop gardens, department stores and exciting new shops, Japanese snacks, fireworks, variety shows, the latest movies and exhibitions, all only a short train, bus, or car journey from Kowloon and Hong Kong Island (Figure 4.21).¹¹⁵ The illustration collages various vignettes of the space, featuring both the busy crowds and spectacular architecture. Dominating the image is the arched skylight, around which several other key locations such as the circular atrium with a grand flight of escalators, a spherical clock tower, and the musical fountain in full splendour. Cars, buses, and a long line of train carriages disappear into the distance, depicted as arriving at a multi-storey car park. Beyond is an outline of traditional Chinese architecture, perhaps alluding to the To Fung Shan Centre which was a short distance from the shopping mall. Scenes of shoppers seeking various conveniences and entertainment offer an opportunity for onlookers to imagine the possibilities of the NTP for themselves: a mother shopping for the latest tinned goods at the supermarket while her daughter learns ballet; a woman starting a new job as a teller at an international bank; a young family walking hand-in-hand, arms laden with branded paper bags and new toys; men and boys playing sports and enjoying the waterpark and bowling. An almost holographic still of the climactic scene in *Star Wars: Return of the Jedi*, the latest Hollywood blockbuster, hovers over the atrium. A full aerial view of the entire complex

level it is extremely good; that systematic co-ordination would soon tie up the loose-ends; *that on the whole Hong Kong has more to teach us than we have to bring in from the outside*', showing the tenacity and drive of the PWD at that time, but also Hong Kong's role in international Modernist planning movements. By the 1970s, urban planners had largely moved away from axial plans, making the case of Sha Tin is an unusual one. Thank you to Dr Juliana Yat Shun Kei for sharing this material and some of her initial research on the history of the built environment. Italics added. William Holford Archives, University of Liverpool, Richard Gray, 15th June 1973, Sha Tin New Town, Primary review of planning.

¹¹⁴ PHN, 'Shatin New Town Plaza', *SCMP*, 3rd December 1984, p11.

¹¹⁵ PHN, 'Shatin New Town Plaza', p11.

completes the image, demonstrating the vastness of such a consumption space promising a spatial experience 'you'll never forget!'¹¹⁶

A series of GIS press photographs taken in 1986 clarify the spatial experience of the mall as visitors moved through its floors (Figures 4.22a & b). The series begins outside the main atrium facing towards the river, where the outdoor performance area and gardens were still being developed at that time, but the large, mirrored lettering of New Town Plaza is clearly designed to be seen from across the river (Figure 4.23a). Other images show the bright interiors of the central atrium on the third floor, with the musical fountain on show (Figure 4.23b). Plants can be seen throughout the space, with some surrounding the fountain and even large palms planted along the perimeter, while the fountain is cordoned off with rope barriers. Banners hang from the upper floors with the NTP logo, and glass-fronted shops with fluorescent lights, signage and displays can be seen on each level. Other images in the series show the dramatic interior setting including the circular receptions desks, bright sky-lit exhibition areas, and long-line views through wide, tile-floor arcades. Signage directing through the mall reveal some of the contemporary local fashion brands such as G2000 and Crocodile, as well as global chains like McDonalds. The interiors of Yaohan are heavily featured, showing hangers lined with crisp short-sleeved work shirts, T-shirts, and polos (Figure 4.23c). Other images feature workers arranging garments and rearranging stock in long V-neck dresses, dress shirts and long trousers, with black low-heeled shoes and coiffed short hair.

As the rope barriers, directional signage and uniformed staff indicate, this kind of commercial space demanded specific types of bodies and practices. These literally demonstrate how circulation technologies like escalators, but also signage, atriums, garden furniture, channelled

movement in space [to become] a controlled, repeated, and risk-free activity (Sennett 1992, 1994; Urry, 2007). As a part of the circulation

¹¹⁶ PHN, 'Shatin New Town Plaza', p11.

system of the city, the multilevel pedestrian network filtered and channelled the walkers, thus turned walking into a part of the chain of production and consumption.¹¹⁷

Notably, the Yaohan staff were trained with 'Japanese concepts' emphasising service and manners.¹¹⁸ Such a behavioural focus resonated with the ongoing social campaigns such as Keep Hong Kong Clean, but was further developed through an educational variety show to be broadcast from the NTP atrium on Radio Television Hong Kong 'Stand on Right; Walk on Left'.¹¹⁹ The campaign (co-sponsored by NTP) was designed for visitors to 'develop a habit' encouraging 'courtesy' and 'efficiency' as part of the motivation for following these rules within the space of the NTP and beyond.¹²⁰ As part of the broadcast, two hundred students with local celebrities staged an 'action day' moving throughout the space from the mall to the rail and metro station. Such performances of space were designed to assert the types of consumers and practices allowed in the space that had been constructed. At the same time, they also revealed the anxieties of both private developers and government departments for appropriations and violations of a space that relied so heavily on circulation to function, so close to potentially hostile spaces like housing estates.¹²¹

As part of this 'fortress' for living and shopping, and literally attached by pedestrian bridge to the NTP, Lek Yuen and Wo Che Estate are inevitably entangled in this cycle. Such a tethering to the mall was always part of the master plan to fulfil and expand the 'need' for shopping as part of the new objectives for the HKHA on the basis of 'community'.¹²² As discussed by architectural historian Cecilia Chu, Sun Hung Kai's demands for the car park was exchanged for more 'community facilities' in the mall (such as the

¹¹⁷ Tan, p725.

¹¹⁸ Robinson, p29.

¹¹⁹ PHN, 'Take a stand on the right side', *SCMP*, 19th December 1984, p25.

¹²⁰ PHN, 'Take a stand on the right side', p25.

¹²¹ See also PHN, Cathy Yeung, 'Crushing problems face huge new plaza', *SCMP*, 18th November 1984, p9.

¹²² Chu, p4

bowling arena and the skating rink depicted in their advertising), meaning that for the government, more could be gained from the private-public relationship, while Sun Hung Kai could be praised for its contribution to society.¹²³ As Tan succinctly put it, 'it is the moderation between physical planning and economic incentives that created a dynamic equilibrium between the public good and capitalist logic'.¹²⁴ Spaces such as the pedestrian bridges, extra floors of the mall, the fountains and skylights, and 'convenient' direct access via the commercial complex, were physical manifestations of these spatial-social-economic entanglements. Merely walking through the space, without having to buy anything, worked to dislodge previous consumption practices and coax out new 'modern' ones. This dynamic constructed in the mall space, and refracted into the estate through these spatial objects, is continuously narrated as common good, courtesy, community participation and civic pride.

Rather than shopping, the impressions of the Lek Yuen residents were rather more nuanced, and cognizant of the social and spatial dynamics between the estate and the NTP. For Mr Li, the one meaningful spatial experience was to walk across to see the fountain show:

We had a fountain at Lek Yuen, at that time it was really something great because you look at it and thought 'it's a fountain!' At that time, we thought it was beautiful. [...] The New Town Plaza had a music fountain, they claimed to be the first one or whatever, but anyway it was a very new thing to us. They had performances once or twice every afternoon, so then you sit there and wait for the music fountain to start. [When they first opened] there were not many visitors. I still remember that many families said "Wah... it will close very soon, so few people [will come]! Such a big place, no commercial value! People won't come!" Of course, they were all wrong.¹²⁵

Mr Li's most vivid impressions juxtaposed the scepticism for the scale of NTP with the pride and awe of the fountains between Lek Yuen and NTP.

Enjoyment of the interior environment was part of the experience in both the

¹²³ Chu, p3.

¹²⁴ Zheng, p727.

¹²⁵ Li, interview with Chan, 4th November 2019.

commercial complex and NTP, but shopping as an activity in itself was out of the question. While he would sometimes visit Swing Superstore to enjoy the air conditioning, 'New Town Plaza had expensive stuff that we couldn't afford. As a lower-end people, you feel uncomfortable walking into these highly priced shops, so I don't even remember visiting any of them'.¹²⁶ Although, on the one hand, spatial aspects of the commercial complex and mall inspired new experiences and ideas of everyday life, the alienation from such a scale of consumption remained. Isolation was a particularly important factor especially as the speed of development and the popularity of a space like NTP engulfed the idea of the estate as a nucleus. Part of the consumer education of commercial complexes then was indeed to expand spatial worlds, swapping the streets of settlements for the spatial imagination of other, modern lives and places in Hong Kong and beyond.

4.5 Conclusion

The emergence of the commercial complex marked a shift in government language and attitude towards social welfare structures such as public housing estates. Notions of 'home', as opposed to merely shelter, were part of discussions of public housing from the beginning of its history in Hong Kong. However, such notions were not realised at on a major scale until the reorganisation of housing-related departments in 1973. MacLehose's Ten-Year Housing Programme is credited with constructing the city as it is known today, but the commercial complex is also rooted in this expansion process as the government-authorised space of consumption. This is in contrast to the hawker pitch and the hawker bazaar as discussed in previous chapters; although both spaces were conceived by government strategies of assigning space to consumption, neither space was envisioned as a permanent feature of New Towns estates. Commercial complexes were designed to construct and prepare a consumer society and landscape, fuelling and nurturing a budding desire by an emerging middle class for material things by also

¹²⁶ Li, interview with Chan, 4th November 2019.

creating expansive ideas of modernity through consumption. By the late 1980s, individual public housing estates were designed to embody individual identities and values through the commercial complexes, as a way of increasing the cultural value of the estate and the New Towns by extension.

These ideas were experimented first in the now famous projects of Wah Fu Estate and Oi Man Estate. The rhetoric of the 'estate as a town' helped to imagine a future landscape for working-class communities that fostered leisure, beauty, efficiency, and prosperity. Such spaces had major political implications after the 1966 and 1967 riots, where commercial complexes and estates became monuments of 'love' and gestures of generosity from the government in exchange for peace and stability. Indeed, the notion that the estate could be self-contained, as facilitated by the commercial complex, fuelled this idea that the HKHA had thought of everything the people could want for in the estate. The realities, however (which are often forgotten in the nostalgic memories of such iconic spaces), were rather tougher for working-class families who had yet to afford the lifestyles these estates embodied. As we have seen, illegal hawkers continued to use the estate as their pitch alongside commercial complexes to cater for residents who could not afford the products on sale in the branded stores in the commercial complex.

Still, the ideals manifest in Wah Fu and Oi Man Estates were transposed to the New Towns, firstly through Sha Tin. Located amidst picturesque scenery, and within closer reach of the urban core than the other New Towns, Sha Tin had the potential to become the heartland of an emerging middle-class in Hong Kong. Lek Yuen Estate was built to become the 'nucleus' of Sha Tin, including the introduction of a large commercial complex filled with branded goods and chain stores. Although such consumption space was proscribed, residents found other ways to consume, whether through their commuter routines, illegal hawkers, or through the well-established market town across the construction site of the upcoming New Town Plaza.

Indeed, many had little choice but *not* to consume. The commercial complex was instead more valuable for the spatial experiences it offered (such as air conditioning, escalators, elevated walkways, and decorative fountains), creating new opportunities to negotiate and engage with spatial modernity in Hong Kong. At the same time, the HKHA added incentives for this significant population in the city to become consumers. The commercial complex was ultimately designed for this purpose, though residents found ways to navigate around these prescriptions, whether by sheer disinterest or by seeking alternative outlets.

However, the rapid speed and scale of development in Sha Tin in the mid to late 1970s eventually eliminated such alternatives and residents were coerced into participation. This was done particularly through the use of pedestrian bridges which interlinked Lek Yuen Estate firstly with Wo Che Estate and its much larger commercial complex, and then the New Town Plaza. Again, language played a significant role in framing these links as 'convenient' for moving through the New Town but nevertheless channelled people towards and through spaces of consumption within estate confines and beyond. The final addition of the New Town Plaza thus constructed a 'fortress' for consumption, one that was connected by a series of pedestrian bridges above ground and away from the low-lying hawker pitches, hawker bazaars and markets. This landscape of consumption, massive structures interlinked through funnels overhead, has become a defining aspect of Hong Kong's contemporary landscape. Indeed, it is easy to find yourself lost in the maze of malls and pedestrian bridges over multi-lane roads, searching for the correct skywalk to cross over, even today. This 'Mall City' is navigated through the barrage of signs, sounds, and smells, the polite but pushy uniformed staff, and shiny marble floors, only to be awoken from the dreamscape by the humidity and noise of the outside world.¹²⁷ Such a world of consumption has been in

¹²⁷ Stefan Al, *Mall City: Hong Kong's Dreamworlds of Consumption* (University of Hawaii Press, 2016)

part brought on through the commercial complex, multiple stores, multiple products, multiple consumptions at a time.

Conclusion

A colony of consumers

In 1989, the Tsui Ping Shopping Circuit was inaugurated on the site of the demolished 1959 Kwun Tong Resettlement Estate. Bisected by Tsui Ping Road through the middle of the estate, Tsui Ping is a unique take on consumption spaces for public housing estates after several decades of repeated modular units; three floors of 'streets' parallel to the road, open-air promenades and bright, coral-painted spiral staircases. The design apparently aimed to recreate the shopping street once more, a nod to old Chinese shophouses as well as perhaps a reference to the prominent Modernist vision of 'streets in the sky'.¹ A few years later, Kwong Yuen Estate Commercial Complex in Sha Tin, with its winding town square concept sloping down the hillside and furnished with a clock tower, was also completed, earning a Hong Kong Institute of Architects Merit Award in 1992.² By the early 1990s, consumption culture at home in public housing estates was already the standard in commercial complexes. Hong Kong's own popular culture, in film, TV and music, had already started to take hold both locally and abroad.³ The younger generations of Hongkongers who grew up in the 1970s and 1980s began to reject manufacturing and started seeking more cosmopolitan employment and lifestyles.⁴ No longer seen as a 'colony of shopkeepers', Hong Kong from the 1990s onwards instead flourished as a colony of consumers.

This thesis has traced the early introduction of consumption into the everyday sphere of the housing estate from the 1950s through to the 1980s, whether by the colonial government or by those living in these estates. Quotidian spaces (i.e., hawker pitches, hawker bazaars, modular markets and

¹ Informal conversation with Rosman Wai, 4th November 2019.

² 'High Standards Draw Top Praise', *SCMP*, 1993 <<https://www.scmp.com/article/43406/high-standards-draw-top-praise>> [accessed 6 September 2023].

³ Kam Louie, *Hong Kong Culture: Word and Image* (Hong Kong University Press, 2010).

⁴ Chang-Tai Hsieh and Keong T. Woo, 'The Impact of Outsourcing to China on Hong Kong's Labor Market', *American Economic Review*, 95.5 (2005), pp1673–1687.

commercial complexes) for mundane or somewhat 'passive' forms of consumption have largely been ignored in the literature in favour of the spectacular consumption spaces found in Hong Kong's urban and financial core. The rapid explosion of some of the world's tallest buildings from the early 1990s onwards – phallic totems symbolic of East Asian hypercapitalism in the twentieth and early twenty-first century – have dominated discourses of this city's spatial modernity.⁵ While consumption spaces have inevitably changed alongside the transformations in the city, the mundane spatial experiences of hawkers, markets and commercial complexes can indeed still be felt on a daily basis, and continue to contribute to the social and cultural life of the city, and its historical narrative as a former British colony and now as a Chinese Special Administrative Region. Consumption as experienced on the ground in Hong Kong, however, is due adequate contextualisation, beyond the nostalgic or hyperbolic notions of 'disappearance' that has shaped 1990s musings of the city.⁶

This thesis covered four important spaces of consumption in Hong Kong's public housing estates, specifically in the context of New Town development. The first chapter developed from existing literature on hawkers to consider what I have defined as the hawker 'pitch', beginning in the 1950s, as a space for negotiating the boundaries of the public housing estate, as well as the notion of public space more generally. The second chapter then focused on the hawker bazaar, an ambiguous spatial assemblage of objects and hawkers which, although codified by the Hong Kong government, allowed

⁵ Carolyn Cartier, 'The State, Property Development and Symbolic Landscape in High-rise Hong Kong', *Landscape Research*, 24.2 (1999), pp185–208.; William Wai-Ming Chung, 'Design Trends of Tall Building in Hong Kong' (unpublished Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2003) <<https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/29554>> [accessed 6 September 2023].; Larry R. Ford, 'Skyscraper Competition in Asia: New City Images and New City Form', in *Imaging the City* (Routledge, 2001).; Tsung-Yi Michelle Huang, *Walking Between Slums and Skyscrapers: Illusions of Open Space in Hong Kong, Tokyo, and Shanghai* (Hong Kong University Press, 2004).; D. J. Huppatz, 'Globalizing Corporate Identity in Hong Kong: Rebranding Two Banks', *Journal of Design History*, 18.4 (2005), pp357–369.; Barrie Shelton, Justyna Karakiewicz, and Thomas Kvan, *The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric* (Routledge, 2013).

⁶ Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, (University of Minnesota Press, 1997).

for transgression through its legal and material ambiguities. The third chapter mapped the shift into formalised structures for consumption through the introduction of the modular market, which brought with it standardising strategies that were used across global modern developments. This chapter also pointed to the semantics of consumption practices, and the flexibility of vernacular Cantonese surrounding space and material, which opened up parallel understandings and experiences of modern consumption spaces. The final chapter turned to the commercial complex and its relationship with the construction of co-ordinated public-private urban spaces in the New Towns. The increasing trend towards privatisation since the 1980s brought my discussion to the present-day privatisation of consumption spaces in public housing estates, and the overall prevalence of malls and shopping terminals in Hong Kong's landscape.

Spatial themes

Several themes have emerged across these chapters. Firstly, the thesis has shown how what I refer to as 'spaces of consumption' were themselves negotiations of modernity between residents and authorities. In the chapter on the hawker pitch, for example, the overwhelming presence of hawkers and the lack of government control to draw adequate boundaries for hawker practices, allowed residents and hawkers to reconstruct the space of the estate towards their own preferences and needs. In the chapter on modular markets, planners and architects needed positive acceptance from both stallholders and customers in order for the market to continue, and thus made decisions about infrastructure and types of goods in response to customer needs. Through consumption practices, low-income residents of public housing estates could adapt ideas of modernity to suit their own lifestyles as small forms of quotidian resistance. Even with the introduction of commercial complexes, the ambivalence with which many locals approached new spaces such as department stores and supermarkets (appropriating these for modern comforts such as air-conditioning and entertainment), speaks to the ways in which modernity as prescribed by the colonial government was

not simply accepted or totally rejected by residents and stallholders alike. This adds to the existing discourse of colonial modernity, looking to the everyday adaptations and navigations of the colonial urban landscape as modern in themselves rather than simply responses to Western ideas of modernism.⁷

To extend this further, the thesis also contextualises Hong Kong as part of a global network of spatial modernity. The constant comparisons made between Hong Kong and Singapore by colonial planners, as well as Hong Kong's connections to Japan, interrupt the tendency to understand late-colonial Hong Kong purely in relation to Britain. While British understandings of spatial modernity did come into consideration at various moments, particularly in relation to notions of hygiene, safety and modular 'units', my thesis defies straightforward applications of Western modern aesthetics and politics in late-colonial Hong Kong. This is clearly articulated in, for example, the way in which the modular market was designed, where British pre-fabrication techniques were considered but were ultimately rejected in favour of other modern construction techniques, like those from Japan. In the case of bazaars, the Hong Kong government looked not to Britain itself, but to an independent Malaysia and Singapore for new approaches to controlling spaces of consumption. In commercial complexes, Japan was the main model as tenants and producers of cultural capital for Hong Kong instead of traditional European outlets. British New Town ideas – while certainly relevant – were adjusted to fit with Hong Kong's unique landscape, spatial configurations and sensibilities, ultimately resulting in unique notions of spatial modernity and consumption. These were not always government-imposed, however; hawkers were especially active in shaping how new ideas such as the 'bazaar' were developed. Such dynamics connect the spatial

⁷ Tani Barlow, 'Debates over Colonial Modernity in East Asia and Another Alternative', *Cultural Studies*, 26.5 (2012), pp617–644.; Yunah Lee and Megha Rajguru, *Design and Modernity in Asia: National Identity and Transnational Exchange 1945-1990* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2022).; William Siew Wai Lim and Jiat-Hwee Chang, *Non West Modernist Past: On Architecture & Modernities* (World Scientific, 2012).

history of Hong Kong to the wider discourse of colonial and post-colonial modernisms in East and Southeast Asia in the postwar decades.

The design processes of these spaces show the slow, messy, and incongruent negotiations between different parties around the importance of different kinds of consumption, and how they would manifest in the Hong Kong landscape. After construction, spaces of consumption worked to create and maintain Hong Kong's urban development, often beyond their intended purpose and shaping the landscape as it is known today. This is most evident in the modular and multi-storey markets which were initially temporary spaces. Such spaces even refracted back into the urban core, where later Municipal Service Buildings were designed and built in Kowloon and on Hong Kong Island in the 1980s after New Town public housing developments, likely modelled on the multi-storey markets and commercial complexes developed in estates.⁸ Although shopping and commerce has long been the narrative of Hong Kong from abroad, typified by Hong Kong's city skyline, this thesis has argued that it is the consumption spaces of public housing estates that have shaped the spatial modernity and imagination of the city for many (and perhaps most) of its residents. On-street market bazaars, wet markets, street food hawkers, elevated pedestrian walkways, multi-purpose, multi-storey buildings, housing privatisation – all of these were established on a widespread scale through consumption in public housing estate spaces and the neighbourhoods surrounding them. These types of spaces have come to define Hong Kong as a cosmopolitan, multi-sensory, metropolis.⁹

⁸ I have previously researched cooked food centres at Municipal Service Buildings as part of my MA thesis *Assembling the dai pai dong*. More recently, there has been one thesis in conservation on Shek Tong Tsui MSB. Mathilda Zuhui Liao, 'Collective Memories and Attachments of an Urban Community: The Spirit of Place of the Shek Tong Tsui Municipal Services Building and Its Immediate Surroundings' (unpublished MSc thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2021).

⁹ These have been encapsulated in Hong Kong cinema, as well as the backdrop of Hollywood movies (*The Dark Knight*, *Contagion*, *Fast & Furious 6*, *Doctor Strange*, *Ghost in the Shell*, *Godzilla vs. Kong* etc.). Anthony Bordain's visit to Hong Kong famously captured these spaces. In recent years, local Hong Kong Youtube channels also focus largely on local sites, food and culture. Similarly, English-language Hong Kong online magazine *Zolima CityMag* writes extensively on local interests and spaces.

Furthermore, this research has drawn out the experiential nature of consumption spaces, and how such experiences nuance colonial urban histories. In this thesis, consumption has not only served as a lens through which to view and define spatial activity, but also as a mode of spatial experience in itself. By unpacking the experiential and sensorial aspects of consumption spaces, such as wetness, experiences of smells and textures and material assemblages, spatial history can prioritise everyday experiences of space as opposed to only the imposed ideas of spatial experience by authorities. By moving through the space of the public housing estate, multiple layers of consumption take place; not only has consumption been a mode for working- and middle-class residents to imagine the possibilities for living in the housing estate, but also a mode to appropriate and express their own forms of modernity. For example, walking around the estate stores only to window-shop, setting up a fully-functioning restaurant in the estate corridors, or watching the water fountain in the estate, all helped to create broader notions of spatial modernity in the city. These had less to do with explicit exchange in the practice of consumption, than with self-definition, presentation and experience of space. Such practices relate to the framework of 'spaces of negotiation' by Massey, where consumption in combination with the 'sphere' of estates can be a mode to understand multiplicities of modernity under colonialism in Hong Kong. Responding to Massey and Trentmann's call for more nuanced, interdisciplinary spatial narratives, spaces of consumption in public housing estates are sites that challenge 'flattened' colonial histories of Hong Kong.¹⁰

In addition, this thesis has re-evaluated definitions of design in Hong Kong beyond simply forms of control. While design in Hong Kong has been analysed through various design disciplines (particularly architecture), scholarship on design outside legitimised practices has still yet to be

¹⁰ Trentmann in Goodman, P42; Massey, p63.

developed. Although this thesis has used aspects of architectural history as the basis for some of the consumption spaces discussed, my use of global design history as a framework has worked to destabilise linear narratives of successful, failed or famous design. The hawker bazaar is a particularly useful example for its ambiguity as a design intervention. While the bazaar was intended to create a spatial semblance of regulation, it ended up as a space representing visual and material chaos capable of endangering the colonial government's image and reputation. Such examples interrupt the idea of the apparent 'mastery' of design and architecture. Even the narrative of the New Towns used consistently by architects and planners, especially when it comes to the rhetoric of self-containment, self-sufficiency and convenience, comes undone once the spatial and material work of hawkers, stallholders and working-class residents of New Towns are considered. Design history offers a lens with which to acknowledge both legitimised and spontaneous contributions to consumption spaces and the public housing estate.

Hong Kong Design History

The thesis has taken a design historical approach to the research, drawing from my own background as an image-maker and design historian. Design history is useful for its capacity to cross disciplines, allowing opportunity to tap into historical processes of making, the relationships between networks of people and institutions, and the broad interpretations of objects and images as research material. Through the analysis of the estate as an 'object', I have shown that the estate is made up of multiple nodes rather than a hollow shell, or an image-building. The estate was and continues to be alive with the changing routines, decisions and objects moving through its spaces. The practice of consumption is ideal for augmenting these mundane expressions in space, as a space that encompasses 'things', but also highlighting that there are indeed alternative spaces within the estate aside from individual flats. Spaces of consumption in estates are perhaps some of the most overtly public spaces; hawker pitches, bazaars, markets and commercial complexes provide spaces in which to navigate relationships with

new spaces and communities. These spaces therefore have had significant impact on Hong Kong's consumer society and landscape, and on the construction of a modernity that is specific to this city.

Indeed, a design historical approach is a helpful diversion from the dominating discourses of identity and politics in Hong Kong. In spite of the strong local presence of cultural studies and Hong Kong history from the 1960s onwards, the emphasis on culture in the scholarship shifted towards identity politics in the run-up to and immediate aftermath of the Handover in 1997.¹¹ This has further deepened with the internationally publicised protests in Hong Kong in 2014 and 2019.¹² Meanwhile Hong Kong history has largely

¹¹ Between 1990 and 1999, for example: Marilyn B Brewer, 'Multiple Identities and Identity Transition: Implications for Hong Kong', *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 23.2 (1999), pp187–197.; Joseph Man Chan, 'Mass Media and Socio-political Formation in Hong Kong, 1949–1992', *Asian Journal of Communication*, 2.3 (1992), pp106–129.; Allen Chun, 'Discourses of Identity in the Changing Spaces of Public Culture in Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore', *Theory, Culture & Society*, 13.1 (1996), pp 51–75.; Tai-Lok Lui, 'Hong Kong Society: Anxiety in the Post-1997 Days', *Journal of Contemporary China*, 8.20 (1999), pp89–101.; Eric Kit-wai Ma, 'Reinventing Hong Kong: Memory, Identity and Television', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 1.3 (1998), pp329–349.; Kerrie L MacPherson, 'The City and the State: Historical Reflections on Hong Kong's Identity in Transition, 1997 and Beyond', *Cities, The Return of Hong Kong to China*, 14.5 (1997), pp279–286.; Gordon Mathews, 'Hèunggóngyàhn: On the Past, Present, and Future of Hong Kong Identity', *Bulletin of Concerned Asian Scholars*, 29.3 (1997), pp3–13.; Gordon Mathews, 'Names and Identities in the Hong Kong Cultural Supermarket', *Dialectical Anthropology*, 21.3/4 (1996), pp399–419.; Karin G. Wilkins and Peter D. Siegenthaler, 'Media and Identity in Hong Kong', *Peace Review*, 9.4 (1997), pp509–513.; Siumi Maria Tam, 'Eating Metropolitaneity: Hong Kong Identity in Yumcha', *The Australian Journal of Anthropology*, 8.1 (1997), pp291–306. This would continue through into the early 2000s, see in particular Anthony Fung, 'What Makes the Local? A Brief Consideration of the Rejuvenation of Hong Kong Identity', *Cultural Studies*, 15.3–4 (2001), pp591–601.; Mirana May Szeto, 'Identity Politics and Its Discontents', *Interventions*, 8.2 (2006), pp253–275.; Steve Tsang, 'The Rise of a Hong Kong Identity', in *China Today* (Routledge, 2003).

¹² On the Umbrella Movement: Johannes Chan, 'Hong Kong's Umbrella Movement', *The Round Table*, 103.6 (2014), pp571–580.; John Flowerdew, 'Understanding the Hong Kong Umbrella Movement: A Critical Discourse Historiographical Approach', *Discourse & Society*, 28.5 (2017), pp453–472.; Francis L. F. Lee and Joseph M. Chan, *Media and Protest Logics in the Digital Era: The Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong* (Oxford University Press, 2018).; John Lowe and Eileen Yuk-Ha Tsang, 'Securing Hong Kong's Identity in the Colonial Past: Strategic Essentialism and the Umbrella Movement', *Critical Asian Studies*, 50.4 (2018), pp556–571.; Yew Chiew Ping and Kwong Kin-ming, 'Hong Kong Identity on the Rise', *Asian Survey*, 54.6 (2014), pp1088–1112.; *Citizenship, Identity and Social Movements in the New Hong Kong: Localism after the Umbrella Movement*, ed. by Wai-man Lam Cooper Luke (London: Routledge, 2017).

The discourse become noticeably more nuanced surrounding the Anti-Extradition Movement, but nevertheless focus on politics: Susanne YP Choi, 'When Protests and Daily Life Converge: The Spaces and People of Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Movement', *Critique of Anthropology*,

focused on colonial and political histories with an emphasis on its relationship to Britain.¹³ While this scholarship is profoundly necessary, it leaves the cultural nuances in Hong Kong behind in its narrative in comparison.¹⁴ In solely focusing on Hong Kong identity as the contextual lens or motivation for culture, the scholarship then serves the purpose of distilling these identities through specific events and legacies.¹⁵ However, research which takes design history as its starting point embeds Hong Kong's identity politics in the mundane everyday. Spatial and material manifestations show how such ideas of identity are fluid, contradictory and constantly transforming. Design history emphasises multiplicity and non-linearity in history, engaging with the real experiences and understandings of Hong Kong's cultural landscape while not ignoring the contemporary urgencies of the city's politics.

My goal in this thesis has been to bring forward these material observations and historicise such spaces. With that said, however, design history as a discipline has also reached a significant crossroads, and my work seeks to address the major absences in the discipline in conversation with the

40.2 (2020), pp277–282.; Hiu-Fung Chung, 'Changing Repertoires of Contention in Hong Kong: A Case Study on the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement', *China Perspectives*, 3 (2020), pp57–63.; Brian C. H. Fong, 'Diaspora Formation and Mobilisation: The Emerging Hong Kong Diaspora in the Anti-Extradition Bill Movement', *Nations and Nationalism*, 28.3 (2022), pp1061–1079.; Heike Holbig, 'Be Water, My Friend: Hong Kong's 2019 Anti-Extradition Protests', *International Journal of Sociology*, 50.4 (2020), pp325–337.; Ming-sho Ho, 'How Protests Evolve: Hong Kong's Anti-Extradition Movement And Lessons Learned from the Umbrella Movement*', *Mobilization: An International Quarterly*, 25.SI (2020), pp711–728.

¹³ Robert Bickers and Ray Yep, *May Days in Hong Kong: Riot and Emergency in 1967* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009).; Mark Hampton, *Hong Kong and British Culture, 1945-97* (Manchester University Press, 2015).; Kwong Chi Man and Tsoi Yiu Lun, *Eastern Fortress: A Military History of Hong Kong, 1840–1970* (Hong Kong University Press, 2014).; ed. by Tak-Wing Ngo, *Hong Kong's History: State and Society Under Colonial Rule* (Routledge, 1999).; Priscilla Roberts and John M. Carroll, *Hong Kong in the Cold War* (Hong Kong University Press, 2016).; Ray Yep and Tai-Lok Lui, 'Revisiting the Golden Era of MacLehose and the Dynamics of Social Reforms', *China Information*, 24.3 (2010), pp249–272.

¹⁴ This has been critiqued by several scholars for example: Carolyn Cartier, 'Culture and the City: Hong Kong, 1997–2007', *China Review*, 8.1 (2008), pp59–83.; Yiu-Wai Chu, *Lost in Transition: Hong Kong Culture in the Age of China* (State University of New York Press, 2013).; John Nguyet Erni, 'Like a Postcolonial Culture: Hong Kong Re-imagined', *Cultural Studies*, 15.3–4 (2001), pp389–418.

¹⁵ This argument has been made recently in Helena Wu's recent book *The Hangover After the Handover*, particularly in chapter 5 'Another Rock, Another Hong Kong Story'. See Helena Y. W. Wu, *The Hangover After the Handover: Things, Places and Cultural Icons in Hong Kong* (Oxford University Press, 2020).

work of other emerging early career researchers.¹⁶ As is the practice of some design historians, I have borrowed theories and methodologies from neighbouring disciplines including architectural history, anthropology, sociology, historical geography and visual and cultural studies, channelling these through the lens of design. This approach contributes to the decolonisation of design history, where anonymous, untrained non-Western actors, and the so-called 'un-designed' objects, are at the core of the research, alongside legitimised spheres of design.¹⁷ Such an approach shows that the design process is often much less straightforward than it is presented, and design objects will always be transformed beyond the intentions of the designer through use. This approach also justifies the multi-disciplinary aspects of design history; for me, and for this topic, a design history of Hong Kong necessarily looks for methods according to the presence and absence of different research material. I have had to look for sources in both legitimised and alternative archives, as well as conduct observational site visits, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the spaces I am considering. Pairing a focus on design with a wide diversity of material and deep contextual knowledge offers a unique perspective that can acknowledge multiplicity and contradiction as being central to historical narratives of space.

'Be Water': An appearance of history

In recent years, there has been a resurgence in Hong Kong studies, becoming especially visible since 2019. Although Hong Kong studies has been in existence since the 1960s with the Centre for Asian Studies, and several dedicated centres in Hong Kong, Bristol, Vancouver, California and Singapore, the discipline is somewhat siloed in the context of UK academic and popular

¹⁶ This is both in design and architectural history more broadly as well as a developing Hong Kong design history. Platforms such as Decolonising Design, Futuress and Modernity and Coloniality have been instrumental in my thinking during what has been somewhat of a 'renaissance' in design history. Scholars such as Sarah Ahmed, Ahmed Ansari, Sarah Cheang, Davinia Gregory-Kameka, Christine Guth, Saidiya Hartman, Yunah Lee, Shannon Mattern, Sabrina Rahman, Sarah Teasely, meLé yamomo have influenced me as mentors and scholars I frequently reference.

¹⁷ See Tristan Schultz and others, 'What Is at Stake with Decolonizing Design? A Roundtable', *Design and Culture*, 10.1 (2018), pp81–101.

discourse. This is even more the case for Hong Kong history, alongside endemic colonial structures and practices in the discipline of history and in British universities overall.¹⁸ Although cultural studies was prevalent in the early years of Hong Kong studies, colonial and political narratives have since dominated the field.¹⁹ While my work speaks to both colonial history and politics, I started out my academic career peripheral to these more traditional academic spheres. However, since the beginning of my doctoral studies, it has been encouraging to see that there have been many more young scholars also working to diversify Hong Kong studies and Hong Kong history, and an opening-up of discourses seems to be on the horizon. Some 25 years after Ackbar Abbas' theorisation of the 'disappearance' of Hong Kong and its culture, the cultural history of the city materialises again with vigour.

Within my research and broader academic endeavours, I have sought to bring more multi-disciplinary scholars and design historians together. In 2017, I co-founded the Hong Kong Design History Network, a collective of design and art historians, academics, curators and cultural workers focused on the design histories and material cultures of Hong Kong. Since then, we have worked together to discuss methodologies and approaches to design history in Hong Kong, in collaboration with three Hong Kong design studios, culminating in the Hong Kong Pavilion at the London Design Biennale in 2021. The resulting exhibition was a live speculative history, visualising discourses and collectively writing Hong Kong's historical narrative on the walls of the

¹⁸ This has most recently come to light since 2018, with the Race, Ethnicity and Equality Report published by the Royal Historical Society in October 2018, reporting the underrepresentation of Black and Brown scholars and students, and discriminatory cultures and structures in the discipline of History in Britain. Further investigation of the government education policy following the Windrush scandal in 2018 and worldwide protests during Black Lives Matter also revealed how the violent histories of colonialism had been actively censored from the UK Education National Curriculum. 'Race, Ethnicity & Equality Report | RHS' <<https://royalhistsoc.org/racereport/>> [accessed 8 September 2023].

¹⁹ This issue has been critiqued to some extent, largely in cultural studies and anthropology: Erni, 2001.; Esther M. K. Cheung, 'The Hi/Stories of Hong Kong', *Cultural Studies*, 15.3-4 (2001), pp564-590.; Lisa Law, 'Defying Disappearance: Cosmopolitan Public Spaces in Hong Kong', *Urban Studies*, 39.9 (2002), pp1625-1645.

gallery with visitors in London and online.²⁰ We continue to work together to develop academic research and public engagement projects. Through this work, I have cultivated a research practice based on experiential exchange and collaboration. Indeed, some of the core ideas in the thesis reflect my own research methodology and experience both as part of the collective and as an individual scholar; I was often directed to archives, personal photography and graphic design archives, and other collections through colleagues and peers. I was taken on walks around neighbourhoods resulting in stories shared by family members. In my freelance work, I have co-authored work with Hong Kong artists, writers and researchers. These experiences have all informed my approach to research and have shaped how I read and interpret the material. Rather than restricting myself to traditional academic spaces or confining my work to official archives and documents, my research methodology reflects an approach grounded in my own everyday experiences and observations, and a collaborative approach to knowledge and understanding.

When I began my PhD, I never would have anticipated that the time I spent researching Hong Kong would be one of the most significant periods for my generation. I undertook my field research for my doctorate in 2019, from April to June, and again in October, during which I was able to craft my own movement and connection through the city. I saw Hong Kong in its immediate antecedence and in the aftermath of the Anti-Extradition Movement, during which I grieved for a loss of a connection to a city I felt I had only just begun to comprehend. This was exacerbated in the autumn of 2019, when I saw the remnants of battle in public spaces and universities, and violent negotiations in the very spaces that I would consider in this study. All this was followed by the Covid-19 pandemic, a time in lockdown when we would ordinarily be able to come together in support of each other. At the same time, I realised my 'self-indulgent' topic, the seemingly frivolous acts of consumption in spaces close to my experience and heritage, was meaningful to more than just myself.

²⁰ The pavilion was designed and researched in collaboration with three design studios in Hong Kong: aona, Trilingua and k2 between 2018 and 2020.

This thesis narrates another time in Hong Kong's history, refracting into the city's present. Now as I write this, I have a much stronger conviction and understanding of what Hong Kong means to me, and my purpose as a design historian of Hong Kong. The work has inevitably become deeply personal, and it has been important to me to make it so. In essence, I became a Hongkonger in this time.

This was not only my experience. The young fighters on the front lines, and the many supporters on the peripheries found themselves lost without a history they could relate to, causing a new rise in anonymously written public histories on social media.²¹ Design and architectural histories have been significant too, finding a footing with a public audience looking for new ways to connect with the landscape beyond a history of colonial subjecthood. A surge in queer history, feminist history, literary translation, social practice and engagement, independent art spaces, ad hoc exhibitions and festivals, research residencies, diasporic conversations and roundtables, art, design, and craft festivals, book festivals, mobile libraries and independent archives have all added to this movement in Hong Kong in the last five to ten years.²² True to the mantra and reminder to 'Be Water' (taken from 'be water, my friend', a quote by Bruce Lee on the philosophy of self-acceptance in his martial arts practice, which was re-appropriated during the Anti-Extradition Movement) these collaborative endeavours have ebbed and flowed across the world as many seek to continue their lives and the legacies of Hong Kong elsewhere.²³

²¹ Some examples include (disseminated online and on social media, especially Instagram): HK Architectural History, Hong Kong Shift, Hong Kong Historical Shops, Street Sign HK, Hong Kong Collectible, Hong Kong Modernism, Old HK in Colour, Hong Kong Toy Museum. This is in addition to long-standing forums such as Hong Kong Place, Gwulo and Industrial History of Hong Kong, and platforms such as ZolimaMag, Mill Milk and others.

²² Queer Reads Library, The Oxonian Review, Kai Fong Pai Dong, gwobean, Black Window, zine coop, Open Press, PHD gallery, Current Plans, Islanders space, Speculative Place, Lausan, Liverpool ESEA Network, to name a few.

²³ In the UK alone, there is noticeable activity on a local level through small Hong Kong community events and spaces opening in the last three years. In the arts, there is an increasingly significant presence of Hongkongers in the UK: bloc projects, Re:water, Studio 226, esea contemporary, Migrants in Culture, Studio Voltaire, Asymmetry, V&A Lates, Tate

As a child of first-generation Hong Kong immigrants to the UK, with the privileges of native English and British institutional experience, I have also had the pleasure of mentoring numerous students from Hong Kong that they can indeed look to home in their own work. As their tutor I have organised international collaborations between students in attempts to understand their ways of life. Outside of teaching, I have had the chance to meet numerous artists, designers and academics working here and manoeuvring British institutional systems, supporting their work and helping them where I can as a peer, colleague and friend. While Hong Kong history has existed as a discipline for decades, these public, collective and radical histories outside and in between institutions are the spaces that I identify with most. This holistic work, building trust, offering support, sharing knowledge, and growing and writing together, is a value that I feel is core to this project, and to my own purpose in my academic career.

So in lieu of this, what can a design history of Hong Kong offer in this (re-)appearing space of Hong Kong history? What can it contribute? In this thesis, I have attempted to show how design history can materialise a history relevant to the everyday experiences of contemporary Hong Kong, offering intimate and sensory ways to unpack the city's history and spaces. A design history of Hong Kong can focus in on the micro-interactions in space, through images, objects and experiences, and recontextualise them into the wider historical frame. It allows for a nuanced, multi-layered non-linearity that can be reassembled to open up new perspectives from different voices. It can utilise speculation in the writing of history, find routes in ephemeral and temporal material and bring scholars from different disciplines together around a tactile 'thing'. As Hong Kong's colonial history becomes gradually distanced from the landscape, there is value to finding histories on the ground of the almost invisible, yet omnipresent spaces and objects that have

Lates, have all hosted Hongkongers in exhibitions and arts programming in the last year. The Hong Kong Film Festival UK have also held successful national programmes since 2019.

become ubiquitous to the experiences of Hong Kong. Like water, history can also be fluid – ungraspable yet fundamental, transformative and pliable.

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