

Subject: **GE2244 The Hidden City**
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INDIVIDUAL PAPER

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INDIVIDUAL PAPER

1. Critique of Hidden Space Paper (Ng, Tang, Lee, & Leung, 2010)

The paper analyses the Hong Kong's land reclamation policy, precisely the demolition of the Star Ferry Pier in Central harbour by applying Lefebvrian theory of conceived and lived space. The authors claim that the Governments reclamations destroys the lived space, of the people of Hong Kong, by replacing it through infrastructure and commercial venues, notably the Governments conceived space. Lefebvre's spatial triad sees the conceived space as a kind of order, implied by specialist and politicians on the lived spaces of society. He argues that, for the state this lived space that is shaped through experience and interpretation of the citizens is not a priority, because it's neither logical nor rational. But this rationality of the state often provokes opposition within society, and he encourages that inhabitants demand control or partizipation in the shaping of their lived space.

The authors analyse the top-down approach of the Government of Hong Kong urban development towards the Star Ferry Pier, a place linked to race and right issues of the local citizens towards the british in the middle of the city of Victoria and therefore embedded with historical context that adds up to the lived space of the Chinese community in Hong Kong.

The Star Ferry Pier has been relocated four times due to land reclamations along the shoreline of the Victoria harbour. Despite the former relocations did to not provoke any reactions, the latest reclamations plans incited heavy opposition. Because the place is historically important, the Star Ferry, involved in the 1966 social movement events, the hunger strike of So Sau-chung, which followed riots after his arrest. The achievements of those movements are symbolized through the Star Ferry Pier and stand for the opportunity that the new generations of Hong Kong gained in opposition to the Victorian Hong Kong. They gained the right to be in the city center and form a new lived space of their own. After the Asian financial crisis, Hong Kong emphasized on the economy and planned to reclaim land at the place of the Queen's Pier, to build commercial centers, roads and other facilities. This conceived space was a pure top-down urban planning, and was about to dispose of the lived space of the new generations. Those plans provoked the response of social activists and associations that criticized the attack on peoples lived space, they provided more sensible alternatives to preserve the pier. Only after the demolition of the clock tower in 2006, they took further action and occupied the Queen's Pier to protect it. The demands for a heritage conservation plan and a democratic panning system where not answered, and on August 2007 the remaining 30 protester have been removed and the Pier demolished by February 2008.

The authors condemn the top-down approach of the Hong Kong Government, they emphasized the importance of the symbolic importance for the post-WWII people of Hong

Kong, how it legitimated their presences and reinforced their identity. Therefore it is reasonable that people fight for their lived space and stress the importance of Lefebvre, who claims that people need to break the silence and stand up for their lived space. On the other hand the authors set also into perspective that the opinion of the activists do not take into account the other voices in the society.

The chosen case study is a very good example of the theory of Lefebvre, it illustrates especially the consequences of people's silence towards their lived space. I do not agree with the authors about the overvaluation of the activist voices towards other stakeholders. Because lived spaces with such an amount of historical and social value can not simply be balanced through commercial interest. A top-down approach of the Government and the demolition of those lived spaces is a loss for the new generations and especially for future generations, that will not be able to relate to those places anymore.

2. What I Have Learned from the Course

The course helped me to shed light on the hidden dimensions of Hong Kong. In the first place to learn about the different perceptions of space was an interesting approach to understand past and present social struggles of the Chinese community within the British Colony. That everybody produces images about a place and that reality often offers very different perspectives that are not as popular as a renowned skyline or tourist attraction. To analyse those spaces through the theory of Lefebvre and to discover the simultaneously existing and socially created spaces has enabled me to take the different perspectives into account.

But also to analyse the influence of globalization through the five scapes by Appadurai helped to understand this particular place in East-Asia. The flow of people, technology, but certainly also the influence of media and the flow of ideas. It was an illustrative example to analyse those scapes on the Chungking Mansions with a high density of different ethnicities.

To learn about income inequality and the hidden people in Hong Kong, be it the very rich or the extremely poor gave me some new insights on how to perceive the cities *laissez-faire* policy. The tax policies seem to have a huge influence and social programmes might have been neglected in the past. The exercise about the different housing situation has been helpful to picture the situation of the different income families in Hong Kong.

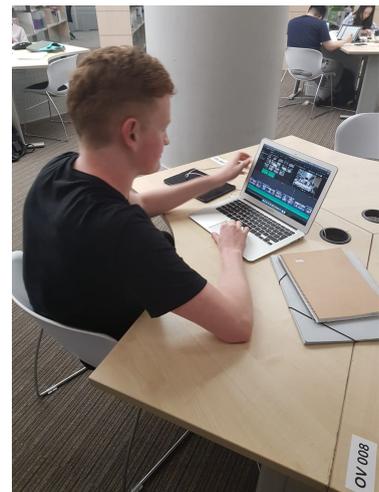
Finally the urban regime that governs Hong Kong, and is focused highly on business helped me to understand how the transition from British dominance to a oligarchy-like conglomeration that spread through all the different sectors, boosted by Chinese capital. To get to know the two country - two systems approach and the implementation to the Legislative Council gave me a better understanding on how the power structures shape the political sphere in Hong Kong.

3. Field Notes

My participation on the group project took place in the elaboration of the topic and to set up the fieldwork with my group mates. In the fieldwork itself, I focused on the observation part of our study. I was present at the interview in Sham Shui Po, Dragon Center on March 24 to observe the surroundings of the interviewees area and I further observed the areas of the other two interviews through the video and photo material we gathered on site. My task was to put in order the raw materials, in order to display and compare the findings in our group presentation. Therefore I was working on the slides concerning the part about the observation findings, as well as helping out my group mates to finalize their slides. On top of that I did a research on the educational effects of low-income families, because we could not gather sufficient information in the interviews in the first place.

In preparation for the blog, I was working on the assembling and editing the video material for the observation part. There I mainly faced creative and technical issues, that could be resolved with a certain investment of time and adequate persistence.

One of the issues we faced, was that the three cases we analyzed were similar, which makes it hard to find surprising findings. Our group had the right dynamic and motivation to face those problems. In the blog we will focus on more profound literature reviews what concerns the educational aspect of our topic to address the critic we faced in the presentation of our field work study. We will connect those reviews with the observations and descriptions we presented, to provide a proper answer to the research question.



(Left: Photo taken by me during the observation in McDonalds, Dragon Center, Sham Shui Po on March 24, 2019 while my groupmates conduct the interview with Kelly, Right: Me editing the observation video on iMovie in the Run Run Shaw Library in CityU)

What I have learned is mainly the problematic of narrowing down the topic, to be able to answer the question efficiently. It was maybe the main problem our group faced. On the other hand I value that due to the blog I have a diverse task in contrast of other classes, but I think writing an essay on a specific topic would have been less time consuming and have a more efficient learning curve.

Bibliography

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