

# **“Made in Hong Kong”: The (Re)Production of Publicness in the Cinematic Urban Topography of Contemporary Hong Kong**

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## Abstract

This chapter explores the cinematic representation of the socio-spatial (re)production of publicness in contemporary Hong Kong, by analysing a series of Hong Kong city films. The chapter argues that Hong Kong urban cinema has demonstrated a cinematic urban topography of the city and the fluid urban space engendered by everyday practices. By highlighting different types of urban spaces represented in the films, it examines how Hong Kong urban cinema shows deliberate layers of the city in terms of physical, social and psychological factors. Then, the chapter will shed light on the cinematic representation of the spatial appropriations of public space and the blurred public-private boundary in Hong Kong, as well as the reduction of this fluidity against a privatised urban environment. It concludes by showing how cinematic materials could be applied in urban studies relating to the historical urban milieu and a chronological study of everyday spatial appropriations in Hong Kong. At the same time, based on a general consideration of the local social background, this study offers an insight and an interdisciplinary visual method to examine the relationship between the urban strategic plan and people’s everyday socio-spatial practices in a dynamic urban context.

After the Second World War, the British planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie was invited by the colonial government to propose a strategic report on urban development in Hong Kong. In the report, Abercrombie raised the notion of market-led development as a key concept and the model of “traffic-free town center”, which were implemented in the Hong Kong of the twentieth century and provided essential guidance for the urban plans of the city that followed.<sup>1</sup> For instance, in the *Metroplan* (1990), it asserts that “continuous, high capacity, grade-separated, all weather, noise protected routes for pedestrian circulation” should be provided in the main commercial areas to create a comfortable and pleasant environment for both “workers and shoppers”.<sup>2</sup> This focus on verticality has produced a prevailing attachment to “going up” in urban strategy in Hong Kong and hence, verticality has become integral to the booming urbanization of Hong Kong and transformed it into a “city without ground”.<sup>3</sup> In this profoundly vertical city, skyscrapers and shopping malls are connected with bridges and passageways that abut, or superimpose while seeing from above, streets and other urban spaces. It, then, generates an intricate spatial configuration of the city that is difficult to be represented and studied in the same way as Nolli applied in his figure-ground map of the old Rome.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, from a political economy point of view, the foregrounding strategy of market economy also drives a total privatization of the city and a rigid management of urban space.<sup>5</sup> With the street being replaced by the privately owned public space, the city’s development is based on a vague perception of publicness or an erosion of public good, which is spatially presented in the ambiguous boundary between public and private of its built environment.

The verticality of Hong Kong and the blurred boundary between public and private, however, is not merely presented in its spatial configuration of the built environment. Within everyday life, the urban space is constantly modified through the spatial practices by ordinary people in different levels of the city. Before Abercrombie, the British civil engineer Osbert Chadwick,

in his 1882 report on the sanitary condition of Hong Kong, noted that rooftop space was used for “rear yard activities” and the street was transformed into a kitchen by butchers due to the confined interior space in the segregated Chinese community.<sup>6</sup> In this way, a three-dimensional relationship between the city and the people is also conducted in everyday urban life through the spatial praxis as a response to its geographical limitation, centralized economic development and injustice of urban space. These everyday practices, from food stalls and shop extensions to back lane storages and rooftop farms, produce an informal layer of the city that bewilders the solid boundary of public/private, urbanity/domesticity, and further obscures the conventional notion of publicness.

While urban scholars have been trying to give a legible definition and categorization, public space in the real city is often found being between more public or less public.<sup>7</sup> The Central District of Hong Kong, for instance, would be occupied by cardboard and crowds of domestic helpers and become a space of gathering and socializing on every Sunday while being the prime site of bank buildings, official center and high-class hotels on the other weekdays. The level of publicness in the urban space – squares, streets, and passageways – is varied: on one hand, their bodily appearances become a collective manifesto of their neglected existence in the city that, referring to Butler, reconfigure the materiality of urban space and reclaim the public space;<sup>8</sup> on the other hand, with the urban space being occupied by a specific group that differs in race and social status, it loses the notion of publicness for other people in the city to some extent. Therefore, the understanding of public space being a place open to all must be considered as a process of negotiation in different times and among the people. It is an everyday discourse that is constructed through socio-spatial practices of different groups against their social structures and cultural backgrounds.

## **Cinematic Urban Topography**

Where then can these everyday stories be found? For local scholars and writers, the authenticity of the urban life in Hong Kong, “a true expression of the city’s identity”, is not in the shiny skyscrapers and the spectacle of shopping malls, but in the peripheral rooftops behind those towers and in the crowded streets “from whence we can hear the sound of Hong Kong citizens’ breathing and footsteps”.<sup>9</sup> Yet, these informal and temporal practices, as de Certeau notes, being the real discourse of the city, has been commonly neglected in the official documents through a strategic totalization and an elimination of the ordinary culture and everyday stories.<sup>10</sup> With this technocratic perspective, the neglect and misapprehension of these everyday appropriations also exist in urban and cultural studies, in which it can lead to a reductive or even biased perception of the urban. Fruit Chan’s *Little Cheung* (1999), for example, a film that portrays the urban milieu in a traditional neighborhood in Mong Kok was criticized for being too nostalgic. As a response, Chan writes that “the critics seemed to be looking across to Tsim Sha Tsui from Central... They were like foreigners and refused to get in touch with things grass-roots, which have not changed”.<sup>11</sup> With this remote and elite view, the narratives of everyday life, the breathing, the footsteps, and the informal practices of ordinary people, have become a merely murmuring discourse that is easily overlooked during the investigation of the city.

The question therefore arises of how to approach these concealed everyday stories in the past that are mostly absent in the official archives and urban studies. In order to access this very process of temporary transformation of urban space and the negotiation of publicness, we have to look into other forms “constituted by ethnological descriptions” of the “micro-stories” of everyday actions and social relations.<sup>12</sup> In the context of Hong Kong, some works of local literature (i.e. novellas and poems), for example, have provided detailed depictions of the

relations between the people and the city. With an enunciation on the urbanity and social milieu from an everyday perspective, writers such as Leung Ping-kwan construct a “topographical writing” that portrays the city as a “lived” space by capturing the “sense of place”.<sup>13</sup> In this paper, it is intended to follow this topographical understanding of urban life and to illustrate the everyday hidden layer of Hong Kong through the lens of its urban cinema.

### *Hong Kong urban cinema*

Despite a long history of film production, it was not until the late 1970s when the Hong Kong New Wave cinema movement emerged that local filmmakers started enunciating the urban life and social milieu from the perspective of ordinary people, with films such as *The Secret* (Ann Hui, 1979) and *Cops and Robbers* (Cheung Kwok-ming, 1979). The movement was followed by the Second New Wave movement with directors such as Wong Kar-wai, Alex Law and Fruit Chan in the later 1980s, and the SAR New Wave after its handover in 1997. Their works, recognized as “Hong Kong urban cinema (香港城市電影)” by Leung Ping-kwan, have reinforced a new relationship between the real and reel city: “it [the city] is presented from the angle of the underprivileged, expresses the need for social change, detects problems from an everyday situation ... It is this kind of self-awareness of the city and its representation that could help us map out a gradual and complicated formation of urban culture”.<sup>14</sup>

For example, Fruit Chan, one of the most “local” directors in Hong Kong, portrays a series of marginalized groups of people and their living spaces in his “Hong Kong Trilogy” and “Prostitute Trilogy”: from a group of young people living in the public housing in *Made in Hong Kong* (1997), several ex-servicemen wandering around the Central District in *The Longest Summer* (1998), and a local boy playing with an illegal immigrant girl in the alley near his old neighborhood in *Little Cheung* (1999), to a sexual worker following her undercover

restaurant-hotel routine in *Durian Durian* (2000), a butcher's son living in a squatter area that is surrounded by private developments in *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2001), and a wife living on a boat with her *Three Husbands* (2018).<sup>15</sup> As the boy Cheung and his immigrant friend make a swing inside a lorry on the street, calling the holes torn in the roof of the truck “stars of the dark sky”, these people and their everyday lives are no longer presented as pitiable stories or the shadowy side of the glamorous city. Instead, their living environment becomes a joyful and vibrant everyday space through a variety of practices, even if temporarily. As Leung argues, these films represent the “daily tactics of negotiation”, re-examine the underrepresented urban spaces and redefine the cultural identity of the city.<sup>16</sup> Meanwhile, in addition to providing a new perspective of the city, these cinematic representations of urban space can also reveal a disappearing past. In Fruit Chan's *Hollywood Hong Kong* (2001), by capturing the clear contrast between a newly developed shopping mall and Tai Hom Village, a squatter area built by inhabitants in the 1950s, the film provides one last glimpse of the area before it was torn down in 2001. Urban cinema thus becomes a crucial primary resource by which to understand this other side of the story – the “daily tactics of negotiation” and the (dis)appearance of the everyday lived space – in the face of the market-led urban development of Hong Kong

With an abundant supply of the depictions of everyday urban space, we face a bittersweet situation: to gain the access of this archive of everyday life, one has to deal with innumerable filmic materials that are fragmented and overloaded with details. For instance, there were 3,260 films produced in Hong Kong from 1979 to 2010, but not all are related to the contemporary urban Hong Kong.<sup>17</sup> The cases discussed here need to be related to everyday situations of the city during a period of time corresponding with its production, in which the films could synchronize the development of the city and establish a reference point for other films from the same period or made using the same locations. Different from Ann Hui's or Cheung Kwok-

ming's critical realist perspective, some New Wave directors have responded to the political environment in an allegorical and imaginary way.<sup>18</sup> For example, in his film *The Wicked City* (1992), Tsui Hark portrays people coming together to defend the city in a futuristic Hong Kong being invaded in 1997 (the year of the coming Handover) by ruthless monsters apparently based in the Bank of China building. This type of film certainly depicts the psychological milieu of the city – that is, the fear of a new government and the determination in facing an uncertain future – but it contains barely any information by which to understand the everyday spatial production in the city around that period. Meanwhile, many Second New Wave filmmakers embraced a nostalgic turn rather than an imaginary future, such as Stanley Kwan's *Rouge* (1987) and Wong Kar-wai's *In the Mood for Love* (2000).<sup>19</sup> Notwithstanding their triumph in depicting the social context of the time, and in some instances exerting a certain degree of influences on the site of the film after the release,<sup>20</sup> these films provide vivid but olden portraits of the city in earlier eras – an image of Hong Kong Island in the 1930s in *Rouge* and a story of the 1960s Hong Kong from *In the Mood for Love* – in such a way that they diminish the coherence of the narrative and diverge from the contemporary context of this study.

With an aim of examining the (re)production of publicness in the urban areas, this study also pays attention to films that provide detailed information about the locations and that can therefore be deployed as a resource by which to study the urban topography of the real city. To identify the locations these films, evidence could be found in each scene or, borrowing a concept from Penz, in different “urban narrative layers” of films, for example from a road sign next to the character or a landmark building standing in the background.<sup>21</sup> Such evidence – a specific streetscape, certain buildings, and neon lights of shops and restaurants – can indicate shooting locations and the urban environment of a scene. At the same time, this type of

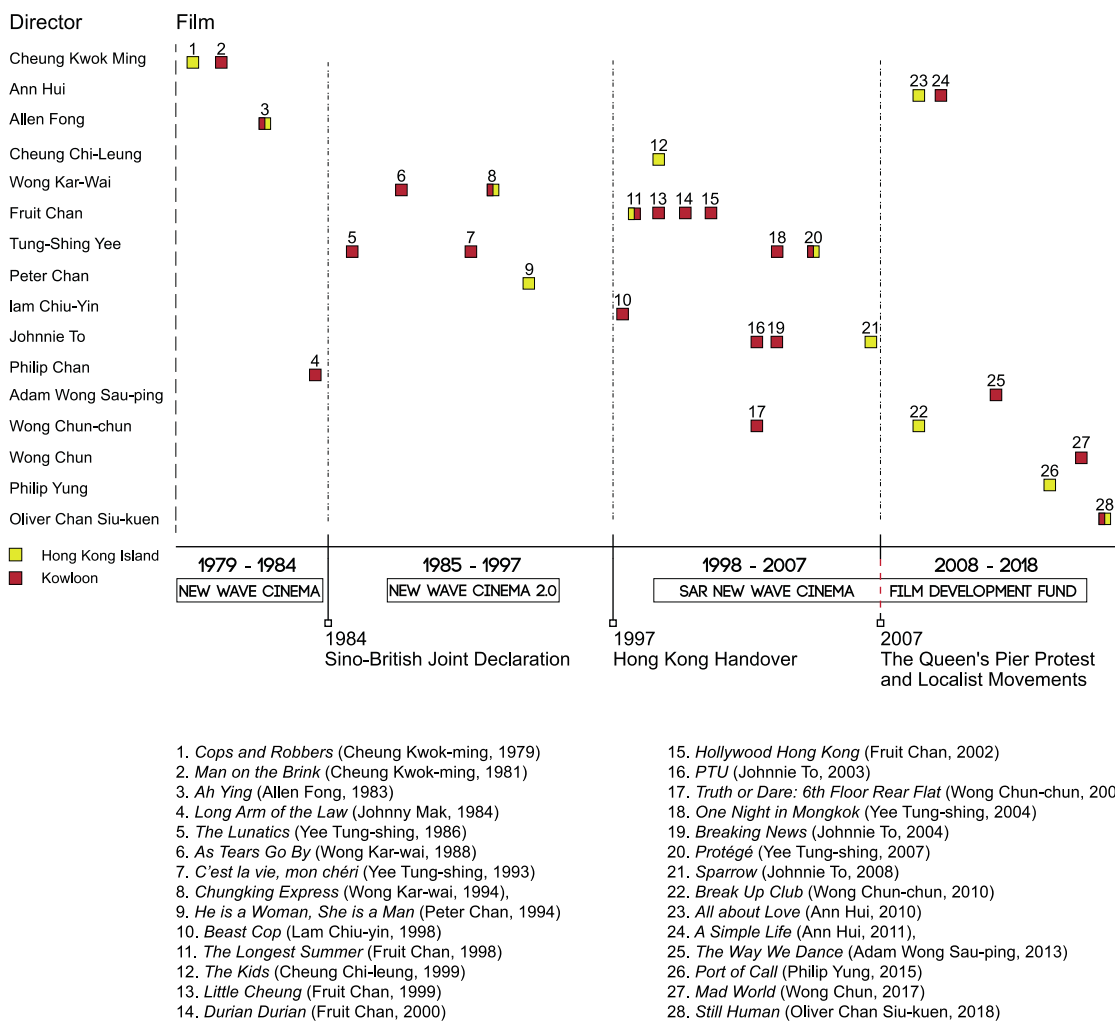
information can also be confirmed out of those layers and off the screen, for example through reference to documents from the Hong Kong Film Archive and cinema studies literature, all of which have provided valuable information for the discussion.

Based upon these criteria, after reviewing more than 3,300 films produced in Hong Kong since the start of the New Wave movement, I watched over 270 directly related to contemporary Hong Kong city and studied 28 films, including award winning productions, cinema scholars' favorites and films that evoke many echoes of Hong Kong society (Fig. 12.1). They are from 16 local directors whose social and cultural identities belong to a part of the collective identity of the city, covering different age groups, genders and backgrounds. The list includes well-established (and indeed in some instances world-famous) New Wave pioneers such as Ann Hui, Wong Kar-wai, and Johnnie To; films by young local directors like Adam Wong Sau-ping and Barbara Wong Chun-chun are also covered in the discussion. Following Ann Hui, other female directors including Wong Chun-chun and Chan Siu-kuen shed light on the younger generation and immigrant workers, and their everyday lives in the city. To interpret each of the different works from these directors, who have been widely recognized in cinema and cultural studies, could unfold a series of thorough depictions of the urban milieu (both socially and spatially).

Covering four decades, including the prime of industrialization under the collision between the colonial administration and Chinese natives, and the affluent consumer society with locals questioning the identity of the city and themselves, these 28 films provide a general picture of the geographical factors, as well as the social and cultural context, of the two areas of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, which were developed primarily since the colonial period of time based on the *Abercrombie Report* and following plans. In addition to the locations, my investigation examined different types of space, everyday spatial practices that appear in each film and its



specific social and cultural background in different areas and periods. All selected films succeed in portraying different sides of contemporary Hong Kong with detailed depictions of different levels of the city, of informal spatial productions in everyday urban life, of the ever-shifting social context throughout four decades, that is to say, a cinematic urban topography of the city.



**Fig. 12.1** List of selected films

### *Cinematic Urban Topography*

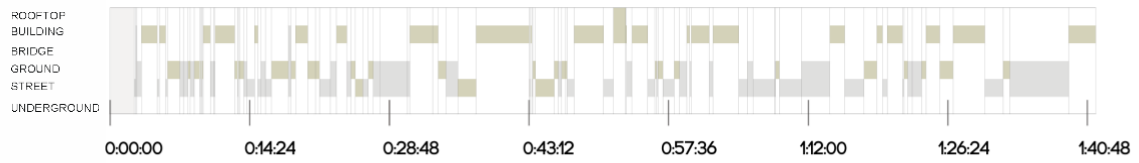
The next question to be addressed was how to decipher these cinematic depictions of the production, or reduction, of publicness that are archived in the films. How to systematically translate these scattered everyday situations of the appropriation of urban space into a series of data for further investigation? This requires a detailed study of the spatial practices in each selected film. Through critical film analysis, this study deconstructs the cinematic urban entity and the pattern “laid out by the filmmakers”.<sup>22</sup> Instead of discussing the form and style, narrative structure and editing continuity, films are deconstructed and analyzed as archival materials to examine the rhythm of everyday urban space, the transformation between formal and informal urban space, and the historical process of this transformation.

In order to thoroughly examine the urban space and spatial appropriations that the films portray, I analyzed and recorded every type of space which appeared, from the first scene to the last, noting the time duration, the level of space (underground, street level, corridor space, rooftops), the notion of publicness, types of practice and real locations. This then becomes an evidence-based, methodical database with a large number of references to the everyday (re)production of publicness in the cinematic urban topography of Hong Kong. Following the preceding discussion on public space, the space depicted in Hong Kong urban cinema can also be divided into several types based upon the notion of publicness. Although a large amount of public and private space remains public and private in the films, as users appear to follow the originally-intended uses, some public space might happen to be *occupied by specific groups*, such as protestors and domestic workers, thereby retaining its public quality, but becoming less welcoming for anyone outside the group. Then, some urban space is *appropriated for private uses* such as shop extensions and vendors, while the private space is *appropriated for public*

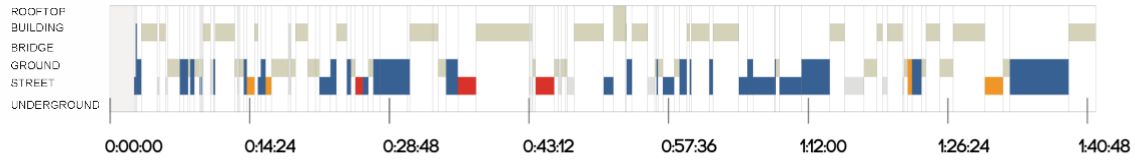
*activities* as in the case of Hong Kong's many rooftops. Meanwhile, scenes in some of the films happen *outside the urban boundaries* for instance in mountains and wetlands.

Considering this complex nature of the evaluation of publicness, the whole process of film analysis is conducted manually. In a further step, this database is then transformed into a series of film spectrums by expressing levels and degrees of publicness in different heights and colors. In the film-specific spectrum applied here, the color yellow is used to denote "public space being occupied by specific groups", blue for "public space being appropriated for private uses", red for "private space being used for public activities", light grey for "(non-appropriated) public space and cityscape", grey for "(non-appropriated) private space", white for "non-urban areas, or spaces outside Hong Kong". This method enunciates the situations where everyday practices defy and transform the established urban space in Hong Kong cinema. With the analysis of 28 films produced in varied urban areas and at different times, it provides a collective portrait of the spatial appropriations and informal transformations of urban space which happened, or are happening, in the city.

In Fruit Chan's *Little Cheung* (1999) (Fig. 12.2), for example, the urban space in Mongkok is transformed by the local residents through a variety of practices such as shop or domestic extensions and other forms of daily spatial appropriations.<sup>23</sup> While the built environment of the city may have a solid spatial demarcation based on its formal planning, the clear-cut dichotomy between public and private is diversified into a more dynamic situation in its everyday urban life. This kind of transformation could be found in all the 28 films to different extents (Fig. 12.3).



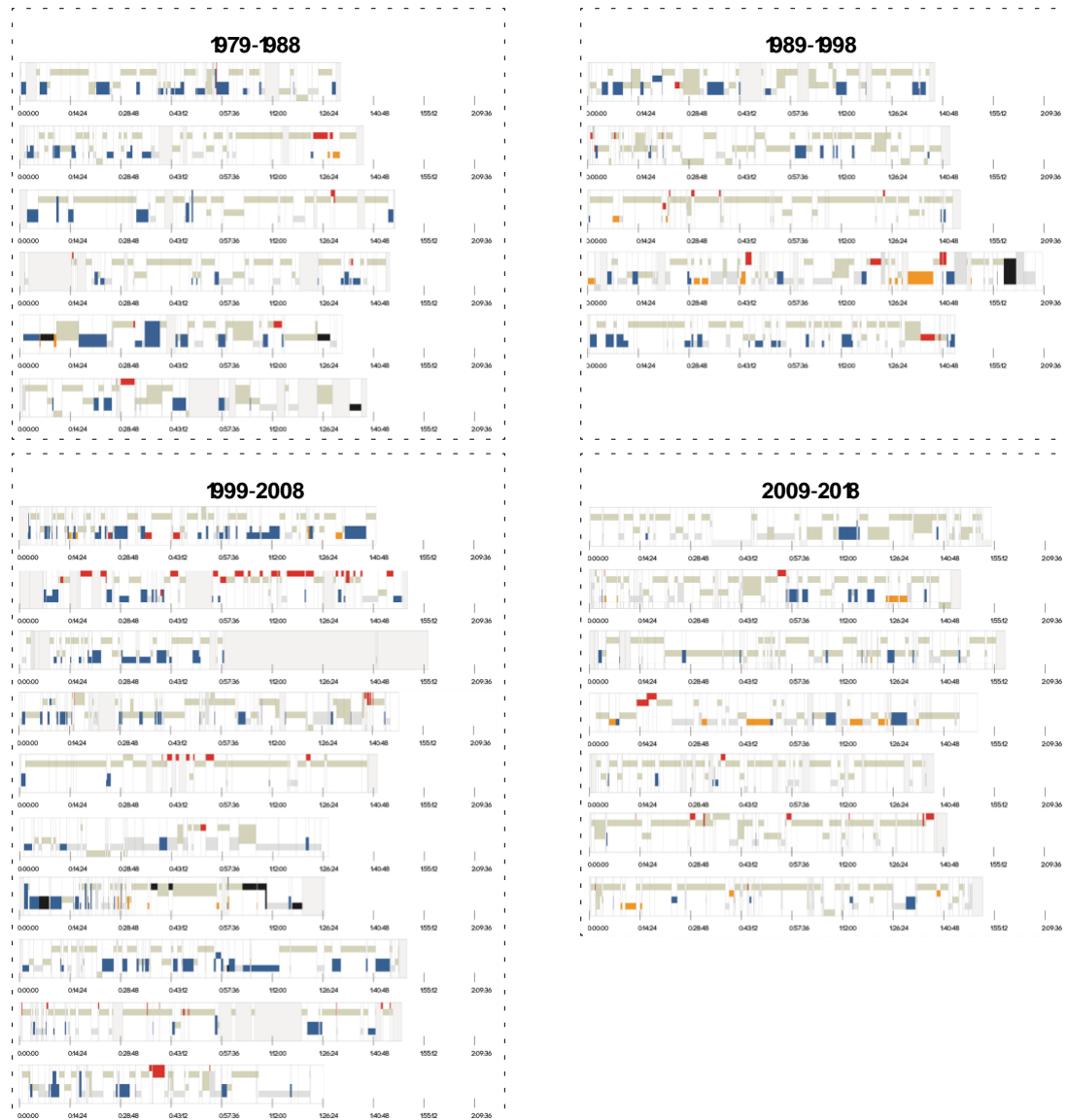
a)



b)

**Fig. 12.2** Film spectrum of urban space in Little Cheung:

a. formal urban plan; b. the everyday life



**Fig. 12.3** An overview of the film spectrums of selected Hong Kong films

### *The fluidity of everyday urban space*

What these visualized spectrums demonstrate is a collective portrait of the everyday situation depicted in the films that maps out some common factors of this cinematic urban topography. The first is that the city consists of a dynamic everyday urban space underneath the functionalist layer in Hong Kong. Each spectrum (and the film it represents) illustrates the socio-spatial pattern of ordinary people changing with the rhythmic, distinctly individual practices of their daily lives. That is to say, a same street could be appropriated in completely different ways according to the social group and time.

This leads to the second factor: the boundary between public and private space depicted in Hong Kong urban cinema is constantly shifting in the everyday level (Fig. 12.2). If the city, from the perspective of urban management, struggles to clarify the notion of public space due to its ambiguous definition and restriction as well as the commodification of pseudo-public space inside private properties, this everyday layer of tactical practice is likely to inflame the complicated situation of public space in Hong Kong. Another factor being verified through these film spectrums is that the urban verticality of Hong Kong could be considered as not only an urban strategy devised by investors, but also part of everyday life. From the old street and the narrow back lane to the corridor of the mall and the top of a theatre arch, these practices and (re)productions of publicness could be found at every level and every corner of the city, with spatial appropriations varying according to the specific urban conditions. It is therefore necessary to zoom in and start examining everyday phenomena from each level and corner.

Another example that illustrates this frontier of everyday contest against the multi-level urban built environment can be found in Wong Sau-ping's 2013 film *The Way We Dance*. In the film, a scene shows a group of young men starting a dancing battle in a tea canteen where a vacant

space has been cleared out. Then, the battleground shifts from the canteen to the corridor and the lift afterwards, and eventually, they arrive at the rooftop. Leaping over the huge gaps among the concrete structure and circulation pipes on the rooftop, the young rooftoppers trace each other and try to get hold of a cap – whoever puts the cap on top of the lightning conductor will be the winner of this game – against the high residential towers and roofs of other buildings in the background (Fig. 12.4).



**Fig. 12.4** Dancing scene in *The Way We Dance* (Adam Wong Sau Ping, 2013)

The location of this scene, the Kwun Tong Industrial Centre, was built between 1978 and 1980. With the economic boom of Hong Kong in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, Kwun Tong was developed as the earliest industrial district in Hong Kong, reaching its peak in the 1970s and the 1980s. However, following the relocation of the manufacturing industries in the 1980s, the factory buildings like Kwun Tong Industrial Centre became empty and started looking for redevelopment. Since the Urban Planning Committee proposed the regional regeneration plan and changed the land use of the area from industrial to business in 2001, most of these buildings have been turned into retail and cultural functions because of their convenient locations and relatively low rent.<sup>24</sup> At the same time, due to the strict management of private-owned open space on the ground, more and more street dancers struggle to find places, and as a result, many of them have moved into such factory buildings. The large scale of those former factories

provides a plentiful space for different activities, from practicing to performing. Additionally, the easy accessibility to the rooftop expands this spatial platform and offers more possibilities. In the film, the dancers capture this potential and make the rooftop part of their playground. The film thus visualizes the alternative appropriation of the empty rooftop, or in de Certeau's words, a tactical practice that has "a clever utilization ... of the opportunities it presents".<sup>25</sup> This fleeting bodily action produces an alternative vision of urbanity. It echoes the Lettrist International's scenario on the "rational improvements" to the city of Paris by reimagining a new function of rooftops for all citizens by opening them up to "pedestrian traffic" in the city.<sup>26</sup> Both defy the pre-existing mechanism of the city and reclaim the right of participating in the process of operating the urban space.

Following this perspective of the relationship between the body and the controlled urban space, the tactical practice and the strategic urban system, it would, moreover, lead us to another layer of *revelation*: not merely the alternative route that it reveals, but also the identity of the dancers – the identity of themselves as citizens rather than consumers. Going back to the polemological origin of the terms *strategy* and *tactic*, the game in the playground is a battle between the dancer and the city. By creating his own answer to the controlled urban space, the dancer reclaims the power of choosing the city he wants to be and thus the person he wants to be.<sup>27</sup> In her writing on the film, Hong Kong film critic Wu Junyu argues that these young Hong Kong locals embrace the spirit of hip-hop and seek their own identities through dancing.<sup>28</sup> The title of her review, *I Dance Therefore I Am* (我舞故我在), demonstrates the nature of this tactical practice in the playground – a playful yet resolute manifesto to the question of an individual's identity in a privatized and globalized city.

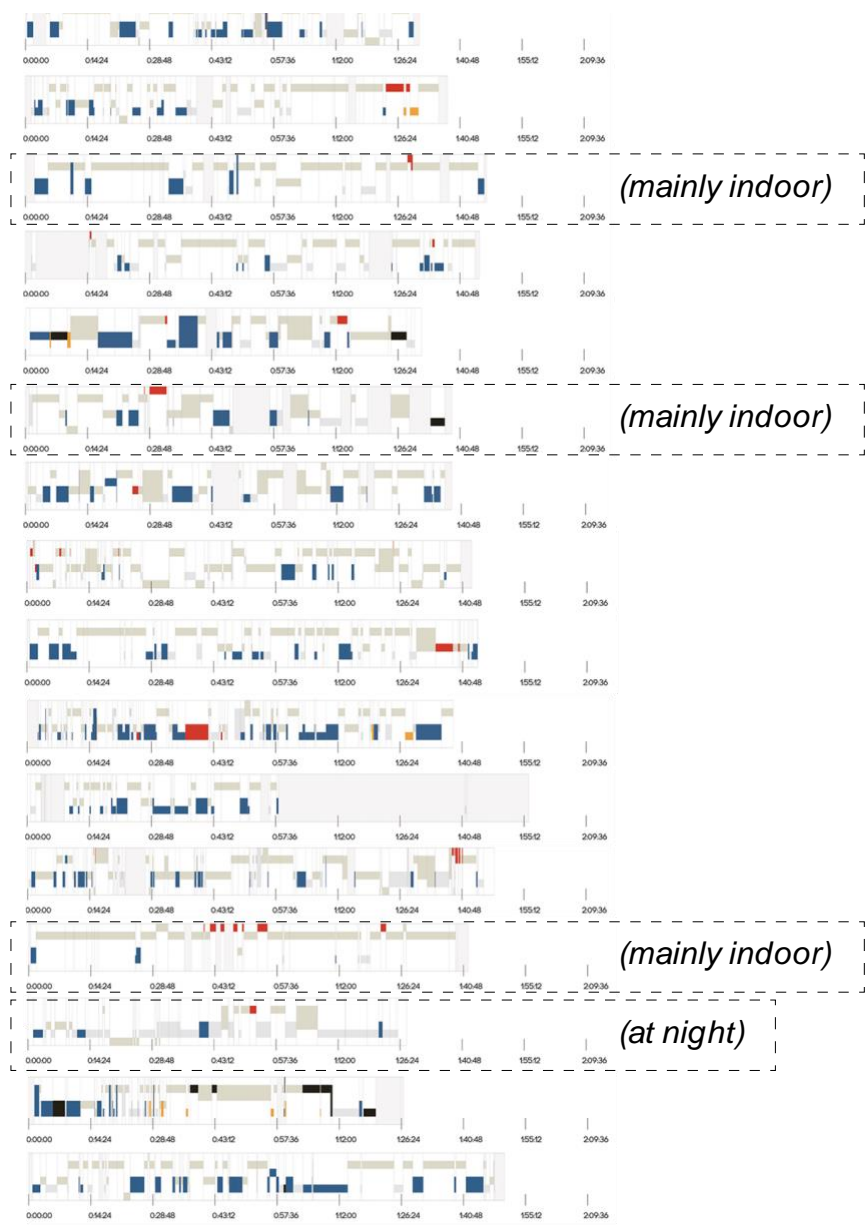
Sometimes, so the films reveal, a variety of spatial practices by ordinary people may all occur in one area simultaneously, differing, superimposing, evoking and even colliding with each other. For example, in *Little Cheung* (see figure 12.2), the blue section at the end of the spectrum indicates a general situation of public urban space being appropriated as private uses, while the scene in fact depicts a range of different practices such as shop extensions, food vendors and domestic items piled on streets. Similarly, in *The Way We Dance* a group of well-arranged plants also appears on the rooftop while dancers transform it into their playground. In Wong Chun-chun's *Truth or Dare: 6th Floor Rear Flat* (2003), the rooftop becomes a domestic "rear yard" for the tenants. Clothes are hung in-between TV aerial stands and roof structures; plants are placed next to deck chairs; a swimming pool air bed and swim rings are placed on the roof as seats for a group chat on a summer night. These activities, which happen more frequently and require more materials than dancing (even for drying clothes, tools such as strings, clips and stands are required beyond bodily movements), demonstrate another way of appropriating the rooftop: an extension of the living space.

## **Conclusion**

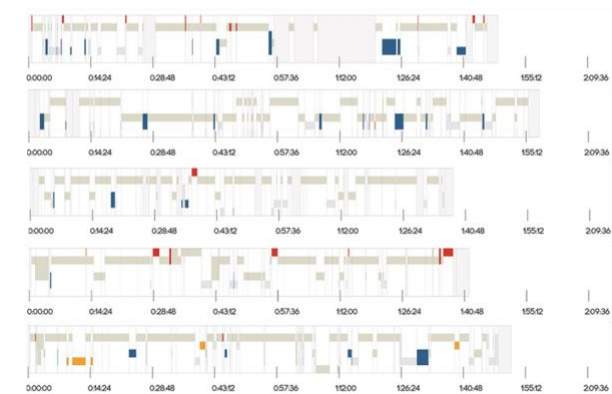
In order to understand this "history of everyday practices", I have developed an interdisciplinary approach that is based upon the affinity between Hong Kong urban cinema and the real city. The scope of this research offers a comparative case studies of individuals' everyday lives, which foregrounds the ephemeral but real (re)actions of ordinary people, and the "real discourse of the city". To study these everyday practices that are constructed and depicted in the cinematic urban topography can help understand the micro-history of the city and the transformation of appropriations with a reflection to its urban and cultural identity.



**1979**



**2004**



**2018**



**Fig. 12.5** The general decline of spatial appropriation after 2004

By putting the film analysis spectrums in a chronological order (Fig. 12.5), the result visualizes a general reduction of publicness through a gradual disappearance of spatial appropriations, thus a reduction of the possibilities for producing one's own urban (social) space. From one of the first Hong Kong New Wave films *Cops and Robbers* (1979) to Derek Yee's *One Nite in Mongkok* (2004), during this period of time, the additional layer of spatial appropriation can be found in most scenes. Even if some films were mainly shot indoors, including Wong Kar-wai's *As Tears Go By* (1988) and Wong Chun-chun's *Truth or Dare: 6th Floor Rear Flat* (2003), there were still a few practices being depicted in the street or on the rooftop. Nevertheless, it is in the late 2000s that the cinematic representation of appropriating the urban space, especially at the street level, started vanishing, which echoes a wave of redevelopment projects in the city around that time – such as the construction of Langham Palace in Mongkok (completed in 2004) and the regeneration of Lee Tung Street (2003-2007). Through these cinematic representations of the disappearing past in Hong Kong urban cinema, it becomes possible for us to expose the topographic evolution of everyday urban life and to understand the various layers of urban space within different historical periods.

It can be argued that through this cinematic urban approach, the real discourse of the city, concealed by chaotic appearances and ambiguous social relations, could be truly understood. Behind the verticality of the urban space and the ambiguous notion of publicness in contemporary Hong Kong, there is another layer of spatial production that has been murmuring in everyday life. As a response to the commodification and fortification of the urban space, the ordinary people who have been largely muted in the city's official discourse but who remain in the spotlight of cinema, utilize the ambiguity of the urban space and appropriate the planned city for their own spatial, social and mental needs. This then alters the static order of the city and forms an ever-changing field that keeps blurring the social and spatial boundary and the

notion of publicness at the daily level. With the explicit depiction of this hidden layer of everyday life, Hong Kong urban cinema has become a point of confluence for different facets of everyday urban life: spatial appropriation, social reproduction and psychological atmosphere, as well as their relations with the existing city (i.e. its built environment, economic structure and cultural context). Thus, by unfolding the real process of the production of everyday space, what this cinematic urban approach suggests is an attempt to bring insights into the everyday spatial politics of ordinary people.

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<sup>1</sup> The title of the report is *Hong Kong Preliminary Planning Report 1948*; see Lawrence Wai Chung Lai, “Reflections on the abercrombie report 1948 a strategic plan for colonial Hong Kong”, *Town Planning Review* 70, no. 1 (1999): 61-86; also see Zheng Tan and Charlie Q. L. Xue, “The Evolution of an Urban Vision: The Multilevel Pedestrian Networks in Hong Kong, 1965-1997”, *Journal of Urban History* 42, no. 4 (2016): 688–708.

<sup>2</sup> See *Metroplan* (Planning Department, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> Yiu Fai Chow and Jeroen De Kloet, “Flânerie and Acrophilia in the Postmetropolis: Rooftops in Hong Kong cinema”, *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 7, no. 2 (2013): 139-155; Adam Frampton, Jonathan D. Solomon, and Clara Wong, *Cities Without Ground: A Hong Kong Guidebook* (Oro Editions, 2012); also see Barrie Shelton, Justyna Karakiewicz, and Thomas Kvan, *The Making of Hong Kong: From Vertical to Volumetric* (Routledge, 2013).

<sup>4</sup> In *Cities Without Ground* (Oro Editions, 2012), 30, Frampton, Solomon, and Wong argue that: “without a ground, Hong Kong can have no figure-ground relationships. Rather, the city is a dense mass of figure abutting each other directly in three dimensions”.

<sup>5</sup> See Alexander R Cuthbert and Keith G McKinnell, “Ambiguous space, ambiguous rights — corporate power and social control in Hong Kong”, *Cities* 14, no. 5 (1997): 295-311; also see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (Pimlico, 1998); Anna Minton, *Ground Control: Fear and happiness in the twenty-first-century city* (Penguin, 2012).

<sup>6</sup> See Osbert Chadwick, *Mr. Chadwick’s reports on the sanitary condition of Hong Kong* (London, 1882), 26.

<sup>7</sup> See George Varna and Steve Tiesdell, “Assessing the Publicness of Public Space: The Star Model of Publicness”, *Journal of Urban Design* 15, no. 4 (2010): 588-593.

<sup>8</sup> Judith Butler, *Notes Toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvard University Press, 2018), 70-71.

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- <sup>9</sup> See Dawei Chen, "Street Landscape: the Topographical Writing of Streets in Hong Kong (街道微觀：香港街道的地誌書寫)", *Xianggang wenxue* 187 & 188, (July-Aug, 2000): 4-14.
- <sup>10</sup> See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011), 118-122.
- <sup>11</sup> See Guoling Pan, "The Emotional Map of Hong Kong Cinema", in *Location*, ed. Winnie Fu (Hong Kong Film Archive, 2006), 101.
- <sup>12</sup> See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011), 70.
- <sup>13</sup> See Dawei Chen, "Street Landscape: the Topographical Writing of Streets in Hong Kong (街道微觀：香港街道的地誌書寫)", *Xianggang wenxue* 187 & 188, (July-Aug, 2000): 13.
- <sup>14</sup> See Leung Ping-kwan, "Urban Cinema and the Cultural Identity of Hong Kong", in *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, eds. Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 238-241.
- <sup>15</sup> See Esther M. K. Cheung, *Fruit Chan's Made in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 2-6.
- <sup>16</sup> See Leung Ping-kwan, "Urban Cinema and the Cultural Identity of Hong Kong", in *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, eds. Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge University Press, 2012), 242-249.
- <sup>17</sup> For instance, among the 108 films released in 1979, only 14 films are not related with genres such as ghost, zombie, period drama and classic martial arts film. See "The List of Hong Kong Films (1914-2010)" (Hong Kong Film Archive, 2010).
- <sup>18</sup> On realistic Hong Kong cinema see Jason McGrath, "Realism", *Journal of Chinese Cinemas* 10, no. 1 (2016): 22; also see the discussion of Tsui Hark's *Wicked City* in Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* (University of Minnesota Press, 2002), 24.
- <sup>19</sup> See Natalia Chan Sui Hung, "Rewriting History: Hong Kong Nostalgia Cinema and Its Social Practice", in *The Cinema of Hong Kong*, eds. Poshek Fu and David Desser (Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- <sup>20</sup> For example, *Echoes of Rainbow* (Alex Law, 2010), a film about a family living in a traditional Hong Kong neighbourhood in the 1960s, evoked public discussions on the conservation of the filming location, Wing Lee Street, and it has become one of the tourism spots for knowing the "everyday life of traditional community" in Hong Kong, see Steve Pan and Chris Ryan, "Film-Induced Heritage Site Conservation: The Case of Echoes of the Rainbow", *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research* 47, no. 1 (2013): 125-150.
- <sup>21</sup> Penz demonstrates four layers, including people/body, zoning/planning, people/body and camera/framing, to read the information provided by city films, and to allow "the streets and the urban fabric to come to the fore". See François Penz, "Towards an Urban Narrative Layers Approach to Decipher the Language of City Films", *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 14, no. 3 (2012): 9-10.
- <sup>22</sup> Based on Bordwell and Thompson, film is an architecture, or a pattern, "that the filmmakers laid out", and film analysis, which is normally with some "specific purpose", is a critical and systematic way of interpreting certain parts of this construction. See David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson and Jeff Smith, *Film Art: An Introduction* (McGraw-Hill Education, 2018), 69, 398.
- <sup>23</sup> The main shooting locations of the film are in Portland Street and Temple Street;
- <sup>24</sup> See *Energizing Kowloon East Office Report* (2001).
- <sup>25</sup> See Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (University of California Press, 2011), 39.
- <sup>26</sup> In the *Potlatch* #23 in 1955, Debord mentions a *Plan for Rational Improvements to the City of Paris* in a letter to André Cheneboit: "With a careful rearrangement of fire escapes, and the

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creation of walkways where needed, open the roofs of Paris for strolling”, see Tom McDonough, ed., *The Situationists and the City* (Verso, 2009), 69-71.

<sup>27</sup> See David Harvey, “The right to the city”, *New Left Review* 53, (Sept-Oct, 2008): 23-40.

<sup>28</sup> See Junyu Wu, “I Dance, Therefore I Am (我舞故我在: 《狂舞派》的順流逆流)”, *Film Art*, no. 3 (2014).