

MASTER'S THESIS

Action repertoire of the 'Big Noise in the Street': bodily practice and spatial dissemination as social movement

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**Action Repertoire of
the '*Big Noise in the Street*' –
Bodily Practice and Spatial Dissemination as Social
Movement**

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for the degree of Master of Philosophy**

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Abstract

In the past, sociologists have contributed to an understanding of social movements in Hong Kong by adopting an organizational and structural approach. These studies assume an intermediate level of action that mediates the discontent of individuals and their affiliation to social groups and organizations. However, these studies fail to examine the concrete processes of such mediation in any meaningful detail. In other words, current approaches provide only limited explanatory power of how social movements develop. Such approaches fall short of providing any significant explanation about how and why specific social movements in Hong Kong come about.

This thesis tries to probe into the question of 'social actor' involved in collective actions in Hong Kong by a study of *Big Noise in the Street*. The *Big Noise* is formed by a group of people from diverse backgrounds: including *inter alia* social work, translation, law, civic group and organization, and theatre. This group constitutes what Melucci (1989) would regard as a submerged network, and practices 'street theatre' as its major form of social action. This thesis details the processes by which the participants have engaged in negotiating their visions and deeds. It further studies how the participants made sense of these negotiations in order to configure their social actions.

In the process, the author provides an analysis of these street performances within theoretical framework centering around 'body' and 'space' as analytical concepts. He also seeks to demonstrate the significance of these social actions in the current local social-political context by an ethnographic reconstruction of the street performances that this group of people stage on various occasions; including their activities on June 30, 1997, the

day of Handover of Hong Kong to China.

In summary, the thesis supplements an organizational and structural model of social movements with a substantial ethnographic account of social action repertoire(s). As a result it lays down an empirical basis to formulate a bottom-up grounded theory. Such a theory takes the social actor who engages himself/herself in collective actions as its starting point. Such an exercise provides new levels of understanding of social movements in Hong Kong. In this sense, the thesis enriches the current discussions of social movements in Hong Kong.

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