

MASTER'S THESIS

High density development and spatiality of Sham Shui Po, Hong Kong: a Lefebvrian approach

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ABSTRACT

Reinterpreting the issues of urban density development in Hong Kong, this thesis studies the spatial-temporal production processes of Sham Shui Po as a high density social space. Lefebvre's theory of 'the production of space' is applied for a qualitative-based theoretical-empirical analysis. This study criticizes past literature on urban density issues in Hong Kong, dominated by discourses built upon absolute space approach, for their reductionist methodologies and findings simplifying man-space relations and concealing in-depth socio-political implications. The analysis is centred on three dialectically related elements: spatial practices, conceived spaces (objective, abstract knowledge of space), and lived spaces (subjective values on space).

Deciphering the geographical-historical interactions of the spatial trialectics over Sham Shui Po in general and at individual level, particularly residential and street-commercial spaces, this thesis suggests that Sham Shui Po is deeply influenced by the spatial abstractions of formal density control comprising planning knowledge, legal establishment, capitalist processes, and informal control on spatial practices. They have together rendered Sham Shui Po a space technically and functionally organized in terms of the development of residential and street spaces, resulting in massive property development, widespread space subdivision for high density dwellings, and unique street life with dynamic and transient concentration of corporeality and materiality.

It is also found that recently inhabitants are subject to a dissipation of spatial resistance for alternative dwelling practices due to oppressions from continuously enhanced conceived spaces re-imposing on them and their living spaces. Individuals influenced by consequentially renewed social identities can also be found trapped into high density spaces physically and institutionally, as their spatial practices have been separated, confined and simplified within both interior-residential and exterior-street spaces. Sham Shui Po reveals itself as different spatial mismatches when inhabitants' lived spaces for securing their spaces of everyday life are without proper response. Deepening the spatial traps and mismatches, the research area is as well undergoing redevelopment processes in reproducing other forms of high density physical fabric, at the expense of original socio-spatialities, through spatial default and historical disconnection.

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