

MASTER'S THESIS

The spatiality of governing public streets: a case of Sai Yeung Choi street pedestrian scheme

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**The Spatiality of Governing Public Streets:
A Case of Sai Yeung Choi Street Pedestrian Scheme**

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ABSTRACT

Since 2000, Sai Yeung Choi Street South and the adjacent secondary streets in Mongkok, Hong Kong, have been gradually pedestrianized due to severe pedestrian-vehicle conflicts and poor air quality. Over the years, the influx of even more passers-by has led to dramatic changes in the streetscapes via the rapid increase in land rent and the homogenization of shops by chain stores. The opening of the street has also attracted various new forces including promoters of consumerables and personal services, political parties, religious groups and non-government organizations (NGOs) which organize road shows, forums and performances. Concerns and discussions in terms of 'public space' are aired due to the conflicts among these street users. Accordingly, a wide range of debates, drawing on material, social and cultural perspectives, focuses on questions like who can use it and to what extent it can be shared by the mass etc. Insightful though these debates may be, they lack a clear definition of 'public space' and ignore the important aspect of the governing of public street. As changes in the governing, and the underlying political rationality, will eventually influence the spatial practices on the street, a study of this aspect is necessary. On one hand, the Foucauldian perspective of governmentality is applied to unveil the history of governing of public streets in Hong Kong. On the other hand, inspired by the multiple dimensions of spatiality and Lefebvre's critique of everyday life, the local history of the site and the spatial stories of the street users, especially Not My Channel and FM Theatre Power would be examined in great detail. Not to take either a centred or decentred view of power, Allen's 'whereabouts of power' suggests that sufficient attention to different modalities of power should be cast to link up the two ends. Paying attention to the structure, the process as well as the agents, the research attempts to provide a more comprehensive picture of the existing phenomena.

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