



**Hong Kong & Elsewhere:
A Hong Kong Studies Symposium
2-3 July 2020**

Day One—History (Thursday 2 July 2020)

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Kowloon Walled City as an “in-between” place: overlapping geographies and assertions of place in late colonial Hong Kong, 1962-1994

Abstract

The geography of colonial Hong Kong contained many fissures and contradictions, but none were perhaps more famous and mythologized than the Kowloon Walled City, a site of contested sovereignty between the British and the Chinese. Though previous studies of the Walled City have shed light on how the settlement influenced Sino-British relations and impacted geographies of colonial difference and postcolonial memory, few have examined the Walled City from the perspective of those on the ground. Using official archives, oral histories and community publications, this paper attempts to trace how various individuals and groups utilized overlapping identities and conceptions of place engendered by the settlement’s contested status to claim belonging and power at the ostensible periphery of colonial rule. Community groups framed the settlement as inalienable Chinese territory in both historical and nationalist terms to defend their way of life in the face of demolition attempts and policy encroachments. However, they simultaneously identified as colonial subjects for whose well-being colonial authorities ought to be held responsible. Their strategic combination of multiple framings suggests an assertion of autonomy beyond either Chinese nationalism or the British colonial project. This study builds on previous work on Hong Kong and “in-between” places by considering the Kowloon Walled City (and other squatter settlements) as sites of identity formation at the interstices of hegemonic projects of citizenship and nationalism. These findings also nuance the rather linear progression of Hong Kong identity in current scholarship, suggesting narratives beyond the scales of the “local” and “national”.



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Transnational Space: A Biography of Hong Kong in Biographies

Abstract

Hong Kong is represented in world literature as a space born from a war between two great empires. Early literary representations found in biographical accounts of prominent visitors such as late Qing Dynasty’s Grand Chancellor Li Hongzhang and the 18th U. S. President Ulysses S. Grant testify to its transnational character. In their eyes, Hong Kong was an orderly, thriving city governed by the

rational laws of Britain and populated by refugees fleeing from political calamities in nearby regions. As a port city connecting the Qing empire and the Western world, Hong Kong was a place of international trade and commerce. This paper examines the evolution of Hong Kong as a transnational city from its earliest representations in various autobiographical accounts up to the present day. A rich mosaic Hong Kong history will emerge from the accounts of Li Hongzhang, Ulysses Grant, Eileen Chang, Joseph Campbell, Bruce Lee, and Edward Snowden, ending with Jeffrey Wasserstrom's 2019 account of Hong Kong Protests in *Vigil*. The paper demonstrates that Hong Kong exists as a transnational space between superpower states, its prosperity owed to its ability to straddle both sides of global power politics without being consumed by either one.



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Creation of Imaginary Kowloon: How Photo-books Published in Japan Recreate Kowloon Walled City as a Metaphor

Abstract

Kowloon Walled City (KWC), a slum in Hong Kong that was demolished more than twenty years ago, is still vivid as a backdrop for movies and games. In most cases, it is re-imagined as a chaotic crime-city full of cyber-technologies and myths. By reviewing photo-books about KWC published in Japan since the 1980s, including the process of production and consumption, I suggest that KWC as a cultural symbol can be imagined as constructed by these photo-books. These photo-books are the watershed for the image of Walled City. In the photo-books, (1) a physical site is converted into an idea, (2) a foreign slum is made possible to be comprehended under the social context of Japan, and (3) an alternative approach toward urban poverty is demonstrated. They established a model of "KWC the imaginary city" for further cultural appropriations, which can also be regarded as a reflection of the ideological shift and power structure of the urban city within the Japanese society for three decades after the late 80s.



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Fathers and Sons—Hong Kong and Xi Jinping's Father Xi Zhongxun

Abstract

Shortly after the Cultural Revolution ended, Xi Jinping's father Zhongxun was sent to be party boss of Guangdong Province on the border of Hong Kong. Zhongxun was shocked to see how much more quickly capitalist Hong Kong had developed than communist China. The situation was so serious that his first task was to stop the flow of economic migrants fleeing from the PRC. To overcome the challenge, Zhongxun sought to draw in Hong Kong capital in the form of the special economic zones. After moving to Beijing in 1980 to work in the secretariat, Zhongxun again played a key role managing Hong Kong as the man in charge of united front work. This story evocatively demonstrates how much has changed between Beijing and Hong Kong over time, the dramatically different policies the CCP has used over time to manage the HK issue, and how Jinping's policies in regard to Hong Kong may draw from a personal connection.



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Declassified Public Records and Participatory Heritage at Crossroads: A Case Study on the Social Memory Creation of Crowdsourcing Project "Decoding Hong Kong's History"

Abstract

This proposed paper aims to investigate how – given the backdrop of social and political activism since mid-2010s – the inadequacy of archival services and legislation in Hong Kong is mitigated by a contemporary crowdfunded initiative ‘Decoding Hong Kong’s History’ (DHKH) and, consequently, incites new social memory creation of British Hong Kong. Through a case study on both the ideological and operational aspects of this initiative – involving retrieving, analysing, and publishing declassified public records from the United Kingdom – this paper investigates how colonialism, socio-political activism, institutional archival practices, and participatory heritage collide and challenge the traditional roles and perceptions of archives and their users.

With an objective to promote historiographical research and the future of local public record services of Hong Kong, the context of this research shall first be established by a survey on the impact of numerous historical events, spanning across Japanese Occupation period and 1980’s Sino-British Negotiation, on the provision and obstacles of public records services in Hong Kong; this is necessary for making sense of how the deprivation of archival services were prolonged by the eventful period of the late 20th century which culminated in the sovereignty handover of Hong Kong in 1997. The ensuing democratic movements after the turn of the century – notably the 2014 Umbrella Movement – will be studied as triggers for the inception of the DHKH Project in 2017, along with the contemporaneous, rising public awareness and advocacy for archival legislation towards the end of the decade.

Day Two—Today (Friday 3 July 2020)

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The Mobility Politics of the Hong Kong International Airport Sit-in of August 2019

Abstract

For five days in August 2019, a sit-in at Hong Kong International Airport (HKIA) caused the cancellation of over 1000 flights and a two-day shutdown of the eighth busiest airport in the world. The sit-in participants were calling for five key demands including universal suffrage and the full withdrawal of a controversial extradition bill that would have enabled the transfer of criminal

suspects to mainland China. The disruption of the airport triggered global media attention, calling into question Hong Kong's status as a tourism destination, finance capital, and key node in international aviation.

Since the advent of the 'new mobilities paradigm' around 15 or so years ago, a flourishing research agenda has emerged examining the many ways contemporary social life is characterized by mobility. The renewed interest in mobility has come at the same time as a renewed interest in immobility and stoppages in which mobility is blocked, delayed or resisted. Such moments have much to reveal about the ways society depends on unimpeded movement. Via interviews with differently situated mobile subjects including a sit-in participant, an airport worker, a mainland Chinese student, a business traveler and a tourist – all of whom were present at HKIA at some point from the 9th to 13th of August 2019 - this presentation will examine Hong Kong's mobility politics and its status as a central node in the maintenance of global aero-mobility.



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Tracing Intraregional Discursive Flows via Pink Dot Events in Singapore and Hong Kong

Abstract

In this talk I aim to extend discourse analytical research that has focused on Pink Dot LGBTQ+ events in Singapore to those of Hong Kong. Owing to imagined perceptions of Singapore and Hong Kong's shared (majority Chinese) ethnic, cultural, and "illiberal" socio-political characteristics, I engage queer Sinophone perspectives on sexualities to examine the simultaneously local and transregional epistemological flows that converge and diverge within the margins of the Sinophone cultural sphere. Using a multimodal analysis of a recent Pink Dot Hong Kong promotional video, I investigate to what extent this video follows discursive strategies identified in the literature on Pink Dot Singapore as "pragmatic resistance". In this way, these strategies, like those in the Singapore promotional materials, tend to make use of (homo)normative narratives in order to comply with dominant cultural and regulatory modes of citizenship and conduct. In contrast, however, the constructions of sexual citizenship in the Hong Kong video clearly diverge from the more (homo)nationalistic strategies of Pink Dot Singapore towards a much greater ambivalence, where national alignments are noticeably absent. As a result, these constructions bring into question readings of the transnational Pink Dot movement as a homonationalist enterprise, grounded in imaginings of Pan-Asian (Chinese) normative social and cultural convergences. I therefore suggest that the ambivalences surrounding national identity, citizenship and state-sponsored values in the Hong Kong videos indicate an emergent relocalisation of Pink Dot Singapore strategies that draw attention to how queer movements in the city are being shaped within the current Hong Kong socio-political climate.



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A comparative study of *Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom* (2015) and *Yellowing* (2016): How do they relate to Hong Kong's 2019 social movement?

Abstract

In 2015, eleven documentaries were made about the Umbrella Movement. For example, the local-based independent filmmaker Chan Tze Woon has made a documentary *Yellowing* (2016) to record his stories of experiencing the important political movement. The film has been screened again during the period of 2019 protests. However, another Ukrainian documentary *Winter on Fire: Ukraine's Fight for Freedom* (2015) captured much more of local audience attention during the social unrest in 2019. Further, it was widely discussed on Hong Kong's popular forum LIHKG 連登討論區. The difference in popularity between *Winter on Fire* and *Yellowing* in Hong Kong raises a number of important questions. Considering film's potential social and political impact, the production and distribution of the films must be unpacked in a wider context.

Furthermore, in order to explore how and in what ways emotional experience of these two films are being created and further influence the audiences, the structures of these films, the social characters, the style of story-telling, and the mise-en-scene meanings will be analysed in order to try to answer the questions of emotional impact. The potential political impact of *Winter on Fire* on 2019 Hong Kong social movement will also be discussed.



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The Child in Recent Anthologies of Hong Kong Literature

Abstract

Childhood and children provide poignant metaphors for Hong Kong's existence and future, not least since the colony's "return" to mainland China and a law of the father, in which its "young" residents lacked a say. What if we suspend a child's relation to its parent, and instead elaborate a child's desires in a playground of peer-like objects? In a recent prose anthology addressed to children, 給孩子的港臺散文 [*Hong Kong and Taiwan Prose for Children*, 2019], the editors Joseph S. M. Lau and Leung Shuk Man position Hong Kong as a site of "naive" literary history through which Hong Kong residents or sojourners write about the city-state. The "child" provides a new optic to read famous and lesser known literary texts, which I examine via object relations theory in psychoanalysis and developmental narratives in modern sinophone literary history. My examples include a child's precocious mastery of classics (Ah Nong); an adult's feeling of loss expressed in toys and ordinary objects (Xi Xi); a student's language acquisition within the history of Anglo-Chinese education and translation (Dong Qiao); riddle-like tales that include abstract paintings (Yank Wong); and a stream-of-consciousness use of classical, vernacular, and Cantonese idioms (三及第) to capture fragmented self-image (Wong Bik Wan). A Hong Kong-based theory of the child, I argue, has its own phylogenetic tree of reading and desire, apart from its evolutionary narrative within modern China's civilizational struggle (Andrew Jones).



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Welcome Home: Alternative Archival Practices of Exported 'Made in Hong Kong' Objects

Abstract

Not much seems to be made in Hong Kong, as a disjuncture between a globalized narrative and dilution of identity in the production of the objects reveals a nostalgia for the 'made in Hong Kong' label. As light manufacturing factories slowly migrated elsewhere in the 1980s, what are the object histories and legacies that 'made in Hong Kong' label have today? Now, modern life in Hong Kong is reliant on a constant influx of foreign objects to partake in the global trade landscape. Hong Kong's privileged economic status by a no-sales-tax policy and well traded currency, the consumption of migratory objects has become synonymous to the identity of the city. This project is attempting to identify, examine and highlight alternative archival practices that draw stories from these migratory objects to the forefront of society. Clocks found in Germany in Sunsat in Peng Chau, beaded purses Rubbish_b in Mongkok and an eclectic range of collected objects at House of Salvage in Sai Kung identify alternative histories of how these objects found their way back to Hong Kong. This counter-narrative reveal a slew of unconventional practices to learn about these collected these objects. Methods range from relying on day jobs, the multiplicity of online forums or asking their customers what these pieces are, to a collaboration exhibition project to rediscover the beaded purse craft that Hong Kong once had.

