

Hong Kong's Architectural Resistance:
Practice Through Research

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This thesis research politically charged public spaces in Hong Kong due to the past social movements and acknowledges its uniqueness formed by the intuitive use of the vernacular public spaces in the context of both day-to-day life and social movements. The way of freely utilizing elements in public spaces makes the public space in Hong Kong a space to be, a space to express, and a space to resist. However, a unique public space like this often causes misunderstanding, misrepresentation, and sometimes fear from other sides. Thus, this thesis aims to create a subjective analytical view of the formation and usage of HK's public spaces to create a viewport into this case and hopefully inspire future strategies made in social movements.

HK is not only known for its highly dense urban development and as an economic center but in its post-colonial phase has also faced many political challenges that sparked many social movements in the past, all with engagement with the public space. However, the strategy of the movement changed during the Umbrella Movement, marking the transition into occupying movements in HK; it allowed more connections and space for the citizens to voice their citizenship due to the similarity that it provides with a typical day in HK. The Umbrella Movement not only showcases the impact of being present in space compared to past movements but also highlights and takes advantage of the characteristics of HK urban public spaces.

The occupying movement in HK demonstrates how architectural resistance can be an impactful element that can conceal, transgress, and transform. This thesis conducts a series of analyses to illustrate public space development in HK in a historical context and its relationship to individuals. It identifies the connection between the development and the use of the public space today in a catalog.

Table of Content

Booklet - context: political event

Booklet - context: architecture

Booklet - typologies

Booklet - case studies

Booklet - context: political event



"The pro-democracy movement in post-handover Hong Kong had long been an intense struggle between the hybrid regime and pro-democracy civil society." Yuen, S., & Chung, S wrote in Explaining Localism in Post-handover Hong Kong: An Eventful Approach. Voicing pro-democracy thinking is a form of insurgent citizenship; this insurgent citizenship is based on their claims to have a right to the city and their right to the rights.

This catalog is going to examine the Umbrella Movement, also known as Occupy Central with Peace and Love in Hong Kong, as a critical social movement in Hong Kong history and how it has had a lasting impact until today. The movement took place from 26 September to 15 December 2014, triggered by the attempts from the mainland to reform the Hong Kong electoral system as a system with direct Mainland governance influence. The movement started with student-led occupying actions in multiple districts in Hong Kong, starting with quiet sitting sessions with no formal organization, asking for a "True Fair Free Election" (). Later, the Occupy movement was joined by other citizens after students; some groups faced the police force that caused friction on a small scale with no further escalation in violence. The number of protestors peaked at more than 100,000 to occupy Central, Causeway Bay and, Mong Kok, Tsim Sha Tsui, and citizens joined and occupied the main roads, sidewalks, tram stops, and public plazas, changing the hierarchy and functions of elements in public space comparing to a typical day in Hong Kong.

What is powerful about changing the public realm of Hong Kong into a space of expression, a space of change, and a space to perform a sense of citizenship is the negotiation between local lifestyle and the heavy dependence on public spaces. In the context of Hong Kong, streets and public spaces are present in every aspect of life. The engagement of the street is active all day long with different groups of people. Simultaneously, streets are not just pathways to walk on; they are also spaces where you can find grocery shops, food stalls, restaurants, vendors, and places to hang out with friends. Streets and sidewalks negotiate dimensions constantly throughout the day based on the dominant activities.

This thesis research puts the focus on the five key neighborhoods: Mong Kok, Tsim Sha Tsui, Yau Ma Tei Central, and Causeway Bay, not only because this is an important site in the umbrella movement but also due to the characteristics of those neighborhoods. They are architecturally developed by vernacular architecture typologies, providing intuitive public spaces to use in protests and making HK a unique place to voice one's citizenship.

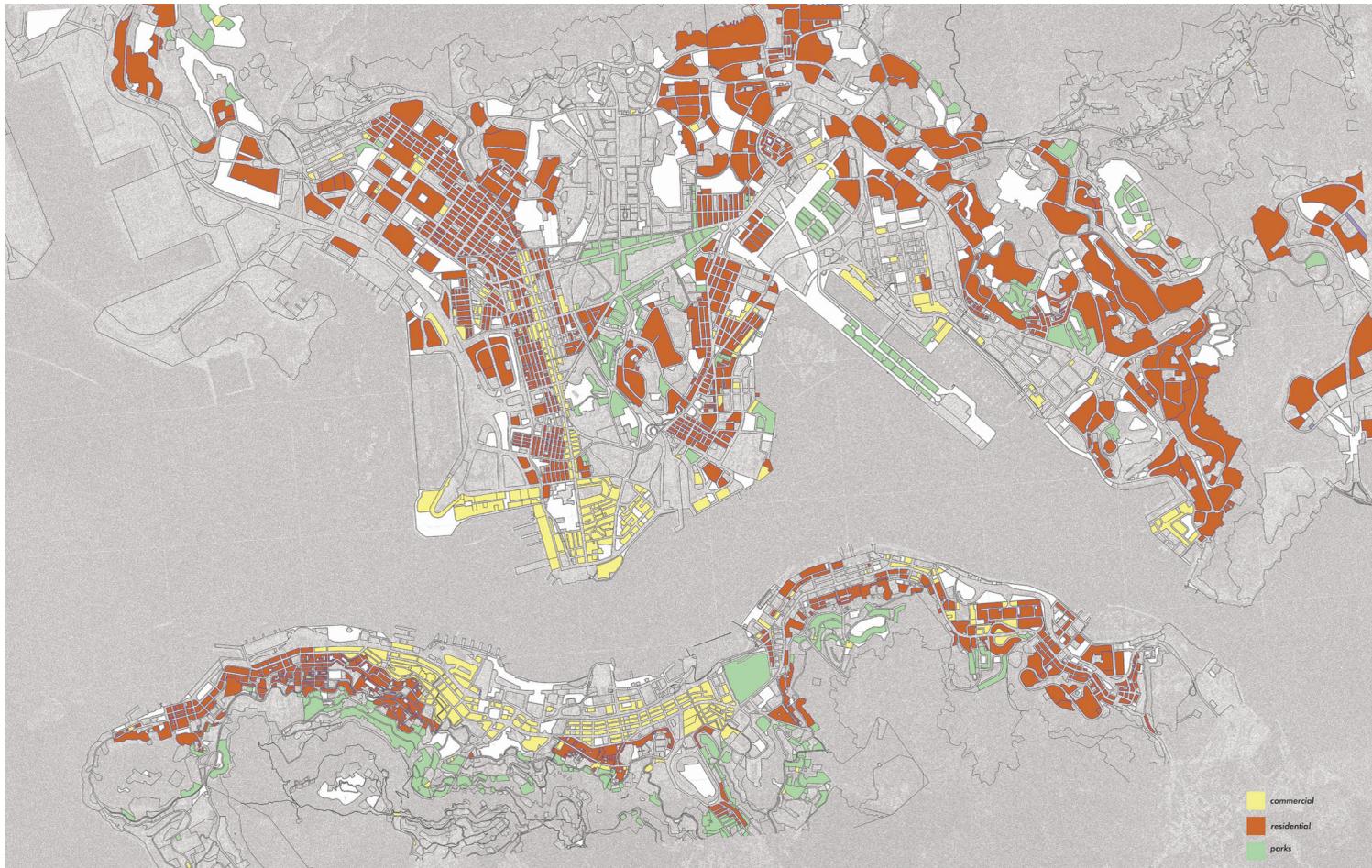
During the Occupy movement, macro events were made up of microelements, such as separate marches, speeches, and struggles with the police, which also had boundaries that marked them off while at the same time forming a part of the larger event. This restriction forced the protestors to naturally seek different opportunities to engage in the occupying movement through architectural elements around them, which provided concealment and transgression.

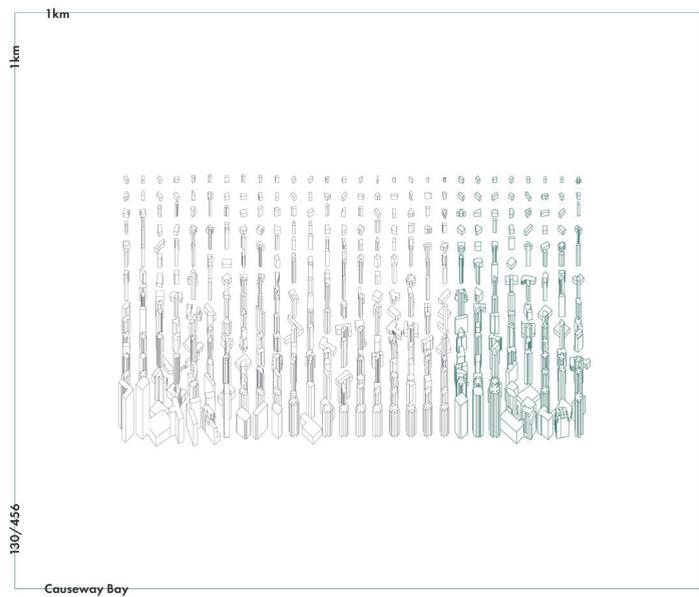
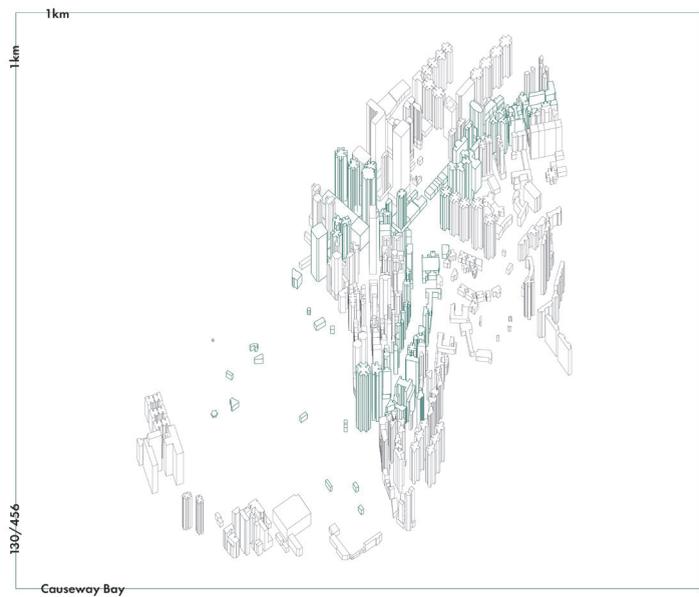




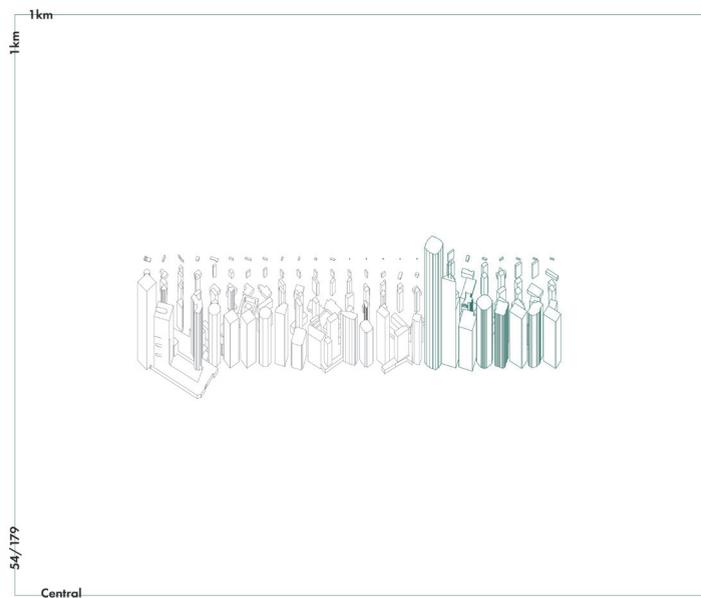
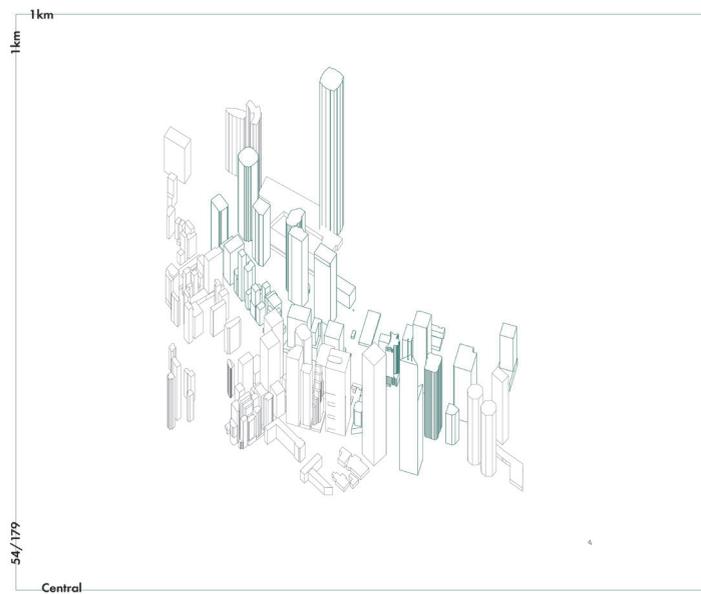


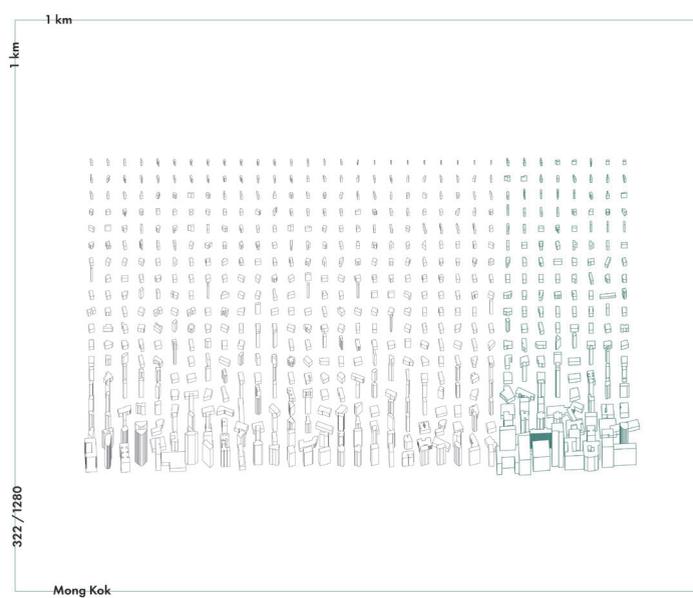
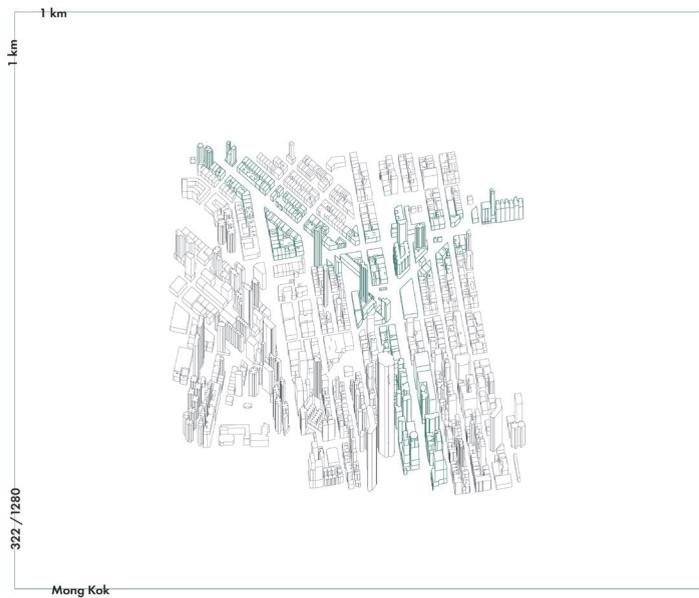
Community zoning

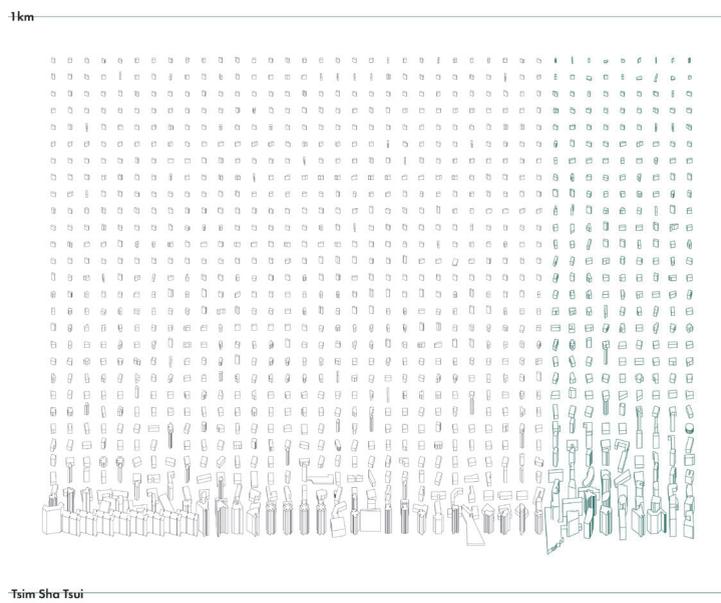


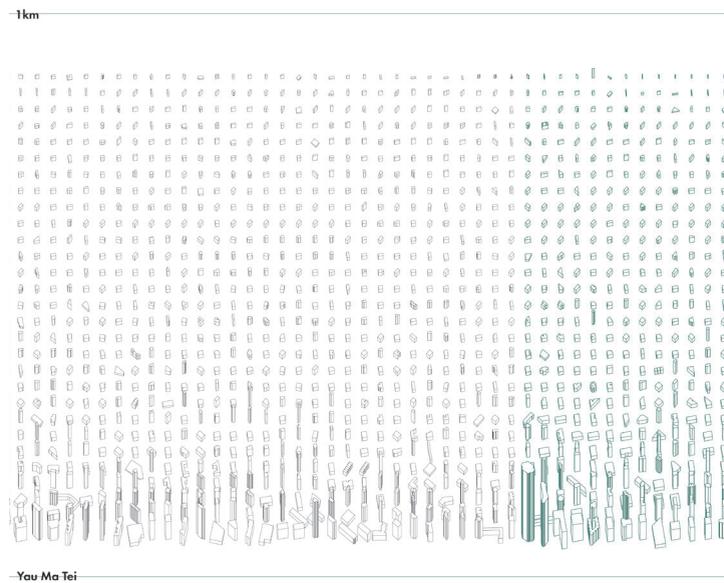


Community impact









Historical reasons:

The Umbrella Movement was triggered by Beijing's decision on election rights in Hong Kong; this also addresses the long-rooted historical and social struggle in Hong Kong post-handover years. In line with the terms of the Joint Declaration and the subsequent Basic Law, a document based on the Joint Declaration but drawn up by China, with input from local HK participants, Hong Kong was to be a Special Administrative Region of the PRC with a high degree of autonomy and its system of gradually developing democratic government, the PRC being responsible only for defense and foreign affairs. The arrangement is due to last for 50 years. As the 50-year term is approaching halfway, the PRC is starting to implement new political measures toward Hong Kong.

As a developing democratic government, Hong Kong had many social movements in the past, as they are all considered critical moments in society; the umbrella movement is one in recent years with many aspects worth discussing in the social impact. Although Hong Kong has many social movements and public protests regarding internal conflicts, the Umbrella Movement is a turning point in reconsidering the form of protest in Hong Kong. In the past, extensive protest breakouts often ended with direct violent conflict between the police and the protestors, such as the Fish Ball Movement, the movement for street food vendors to maintain a place in future city planning. Thus, it is essential to look at the umbrella movement as a case that defines new ways of expressing a voice in the public that merges with the street-life lifestyle. This approach is not only the outcome of rethinking the previous social movement in Hong Kong, which has caused tough conflict between civilians and the police force, but also the Occupying Wall Street Movement, which inspired it.

The umbrella movement includes:

- Occupying the streets.
- Posting on public walls.
- Surfaces of public transit.
- Using presence, text, and surfaces as a temporal presence in space as a form of expression.

Hong Kong protests: What is the 'Umbrella Movement'?

© 28 September 2019 · Comments



Thousands of protesters are gathering in central Hong Kong to mark the 8th anniversary of the Umbrella Movement that brought parts of the city to a standstill for over two months at the end of 2014.

There are also bigger protests expected on 1 October when China celebrates its 70th anniversary.

What is the umbrella movement?



Demonstrators brought Hong Kong to a virtual standstill in 2014 when they demanded the right for the territory to pick its own leaders.

For many years, Hong Kong was run by the UK on behalf of the former British Empire. That was until 1997, when control of the city was handed over to China.

雨傘革命 - Google Search

google.com/search?q=雨傘革命&eq=雨傘革命&gs_lcrp=EgZjaHVsWUyB9

About 1,390,000 results (0.29 seconds)

維基百科
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雨傘革命·維基百科，自由的百科全書

雨傘革命（英語：Umbrella Revolution），又稱雨傘運動（Umbrella Movement）或佔領行動（Occupy Movement），是指於2014年9月26日至12月15日在臺灣發生的系列學動真...

臺灣政治方案 真雙編 讓美與和平佔領中國、「讓美繞道」撤回立法、大遊行

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香港佔中五週年：從雨傘運動的「和理非」到「反送中」的「勇武」

Sep 27, 2019 — 五周年，歐美媒體最先以「umbrella movement, from within reasons to bravery」為大台以及溫和民主派認為「革命有「港版」和「爭取政改」的意思，可能會得報北京...

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雨傘革命 - 香港網絡大典

「雨傘革命」（Umbrella Revolution），指於2014年9月26日至12月15日在臺灣發生的系列學動真...

Internet Archive
Umbrella movement in HK internet Archive

Radio Free Asia
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专栏| 纵横大历史：香港的故事第二十二讲雨傘革命

Sep 15, 2021 — 2014年9月26日，雨傘革命（Umbrella Revolution）「和平佔領」運動，在佔領中環的12月15日被鎮壓了下去。

BBC
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香港占中五周年：从雨傘运动的“和理非”到“反送中”的“勇武”

Sep 27, 2019 — 当年，欧美媒体最先以「雨傘革命（Umbrella Revolution）」来形容运动，但大台以及温和民主派认为「革命有「港版」和「争取政改」的意思，可能会得报北京...

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雨傘革命

3 Representation:

The umbrella movement is the first larger social movement against the Chinese mainland political party; this has attracted attention and is featured in various media worldwide. However, the representation of this movement also varied in different ways:

1. In the Hong Kong news reporting representation, the editing supported and focused on the protester's perspective with the government's response. The news articles act as a history documentation tool while evoking emotion and connection with the public point of view. Understanding the writing from this perspective requires more knowledge in the context of Hong Kong.

2. The Western portrait of the case is more natural, focusing on introducing the "why" of the case. Instead of focusing on real-time reports of the case, it acts more like a guide to investigating today's Hong Kong. It gives readers who have no previous understanding of Hong Kong's context a brief introduction and the leading forces in the movements.

3. On the Mainland, reporting of cases is dramatically different; not only is it difficult to find any report on cases due to heavy censorship, but The few reports do cover the actual event, only delivering a denying the movement and the "ultimate failing" fate of Hong Kong movements, encouraging the reinforcement of the new policy the PRC established.



Booklet - context: architecture

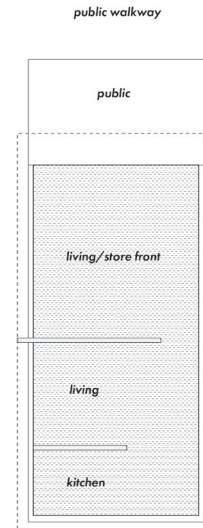
Regional:

Hong Kong is a city in a mountainous land by the ocean with a subtropical climate. Its architecture style was natively developed to adapt to the functions of production and protection of its residents.

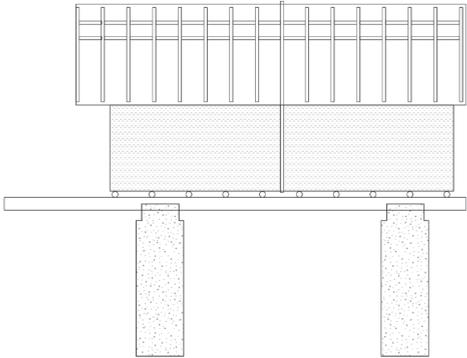


Pang Uk (stilt house):

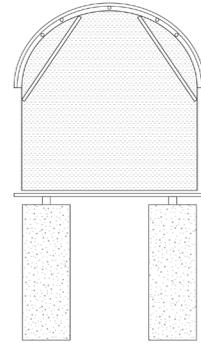
Pang Uk (stilt house) is a vernacular architecture type that was developed by the fishing village that lived by the water. The main body of the house is situated halfway off the land and into the water, which is propped up by stone and wood. The structure of the house is built by using bamboo to accommodate the high humidity in the region. This type of house typically has outdoor public space built out individually, and sometimes, some joint public spaces can be found. The advantages of building outdoor space with bamboo are that it allows the residents to adjust and repair the structure when needed and provides natural shading and ventilation mechanisms for the hot and humid climate.



stilts house ground plan



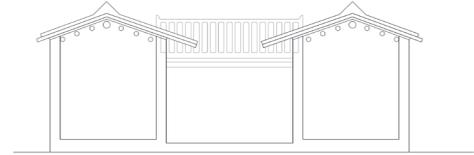
stilts house elevation



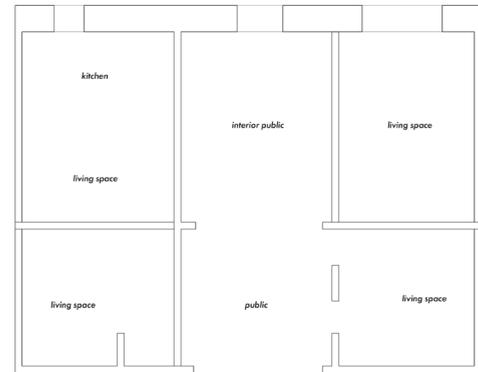
stilts house section

Wall village:

Wall village is the vernacular architecture type that takes advantage of the flat land near the mountainous region of Hong Kong; the Hakka population migrated down to Hong Kong to maintain the architectural organization that encloses family members with the same surname—internally providing private housing units with shared interior and exterior public spaces typically around a central atrium. Later, the presence of the wall had diminished; the definition of “walled” is therefore approximate because many formerly walled villages have lost their enclosure and can now be applied to those villages with a characteristic rectangular plan and positioning of semi-public gatehouse and shrine. The construction method remained the same as a hybrid of the mud wall and wooden structure. Today, around 80 fully preserved and functioning wall villages are recognized by the Hong Kong official planning board. They are going through maintenance, adaptation to urbanization, and future sustainable village renovations.



walled village section



walled village plan

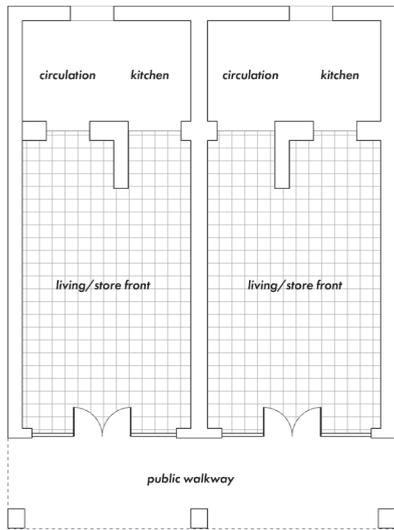
Tong Lau:

Tong Lau is the urbanized type of vernacular architecture; these are tenement buildings from the 19th century that serve both commercial and residential use with a half-enclosed walkway that is joined to the adjacent building. It is built using a wood structure and features a narrow, typically 15-foot length, and the length will be determined by the length of the lumber locally.

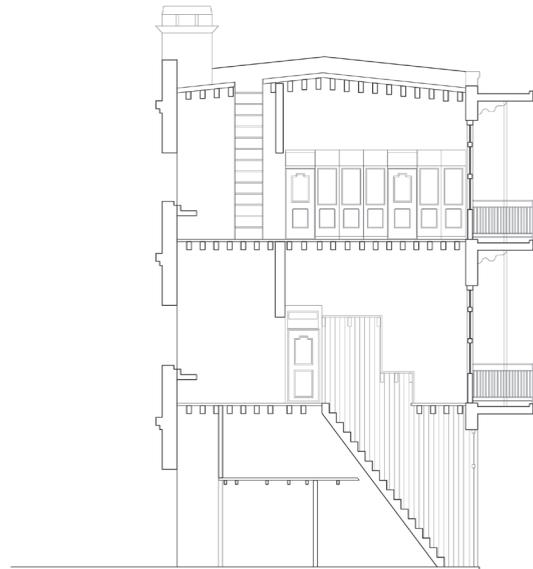
Tong Lau is typically 3-4 stories tall, with a ground floor filled with food vendors and small local shops. As more immigrants flooded into Hong Kong, the demand for goods and space for living has risen significantly. This resulted in what we observe today, that the upper-level residential area has a reduction in the square footage shrinkage to sometimes less than 100ft² a person, in extreme cases. For the vendors on the ground floor, they faced an increase in customers and demand in the number of foods. Naturally, the vendors started to extend outside of the boundaries of the interior space to the street: shop vendors extend their business by setting up temporary awnings and containers on the ground at certain hours of the day, food vendors sometimes set up tables and chairs on the street to accommodate more customers. Today, in some districts in Hong Kong, it is common to find that some streets are filled with tables and tents, and food vendors set up on the road after rush hours to host more tables. This temporal occupying of the street sometimes lasts until the end of the late-night food hours.



Tong Lau ground elevation



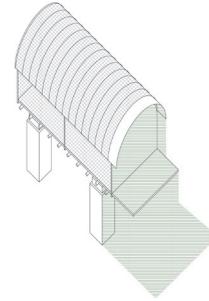
Tong Lau ground plan



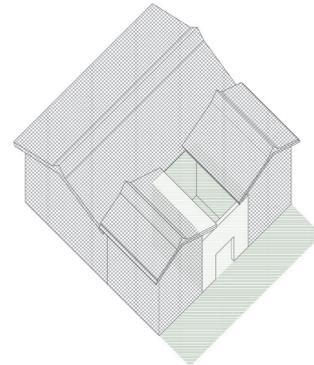
Tong Lau ground section

Vernacular public space:

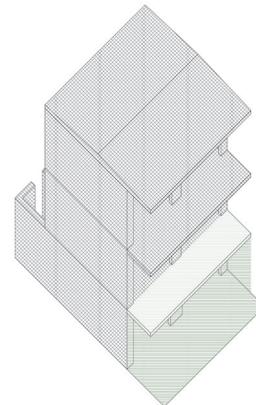
All three types of vernacular architecture show the native strategies to adapt to the geography, the climate, and the developed lifestyle in historical and modern Hong Kong. They all showcase a characteristic of the unique public space usage in Hong Kong. Firstly, it responds to the humid hot climate that forced the design to be open with large apertures to introduce natural ventilation that allows continuous connection to the outdoor space. Secondly, due to the increasing density of the population, the space in the interior realm can no longer fulfill the needs of the occupants, therefore resulting in today's Hong Kong's unique social environment in its public space. Varies of types and scales of public social spaces are formed without the reliance on a permanent structure.



old times



old village



today

Booklet - typologies

Underlying reasons:

The public realm is a space that merges social life and public living, which can result in ever-changing experiences. As illustrated in the Vernacular Architecture booklet, the public spaces are not a modern systemic architecture development but an element embedded in the HK culture. This element alone has created spaces unique to HK and can be used under different scenarios. To complete the image of the uniqueness of HK public space, the study has to include the temporal structure that is often built on top of the architecture. This type of temporal structure not only serves as a fast building structure that is locally sourced and built, but they also adopted a strategy to build in a limited space with adaptation to the vernacular building surfaces and edges.

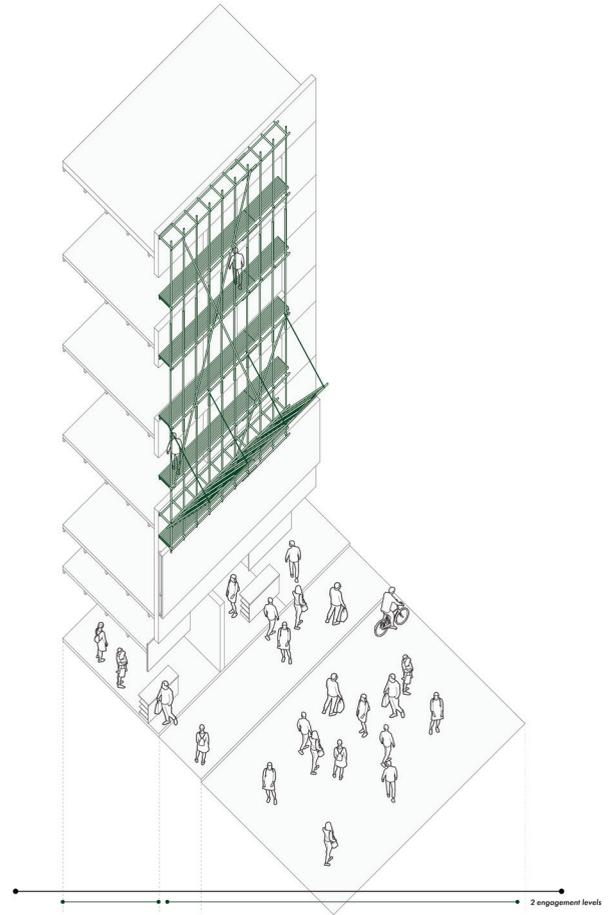
This thesis is interested in finding how temporality in the elements can define different levels of engagement in all scenarios—taking the approach of extracting each element from its context and examining its relationship to individuals and to social groups. Looking into opportunities to use the elements as a medium to translate the temporal experience in both social life and social movements and organizing the typologies from the level of engagement to the public life.

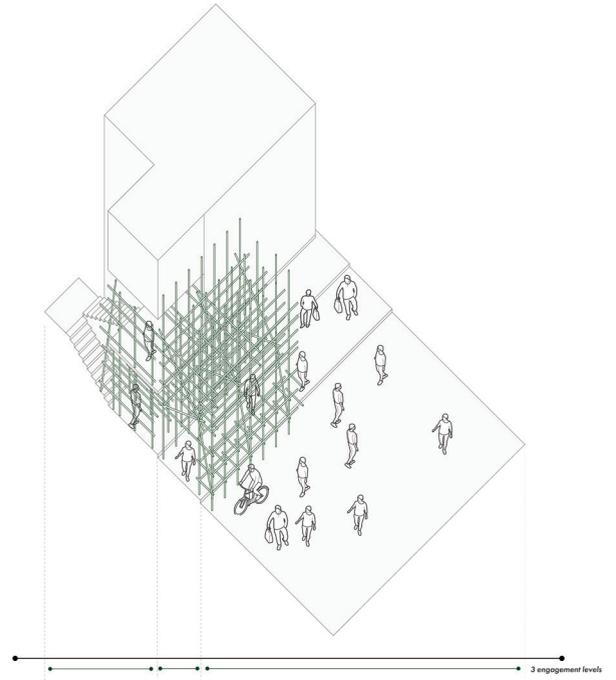
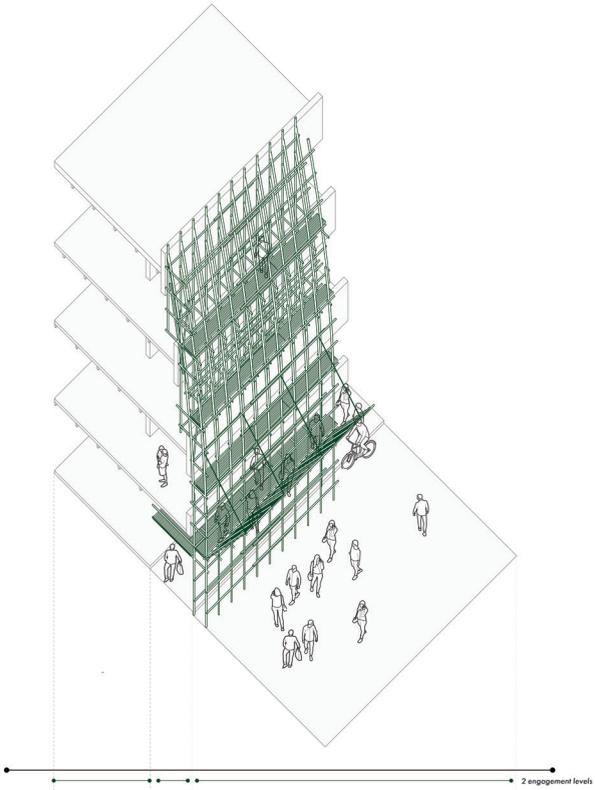


Scaffolding:

Scaffolding in Hong Kong urban spaces is a key element that marks the temporal change in the streetscape and the adaptive tool to morph and mimic the experience of the architectural element that is built on top of it. The use of scaffolding in Hong Kong is not only unique in the bamboo use that has been preserved as how it was historically performed. This method of constructing the scaffolding has adopted other kinds of small-scale public spaces, such as temporal extension of shops and temporal extension of an existing building/structure.

The bamboo scaffolding uses a type of bamboo grown in southern China; each type has a different diameter and strength after it is air-dried. The bamboo length varied, estimated to be 10ft to 20 ft, but it was light for carrying by the worker during construction. The bamboo is classified by its diameter for use in different functions in a scaffolding structure; the thicker pieces are dedicated to structural support, and thinner pieces are used for building canopy/overhangs and surfaces. The level of dependency on a building and public spaces varies in the way of application, as identified in this booklet. The scaffolding can be suspended from the street, as an additional thin surface covers the building and the visible elements are the semi-translucent mesh and the workers who walk within. The scaffolding can morph the existing building, making the scaffolding not a temporary replacement but a temporary alternative. This morphosis can extend to the side wall and partially the street, engaging in the interior-sidewalk-road transitional public space. Since this type of construction morphs the existing elements, it gives the opportunity to not establish a connection to a building as an anchor and as a starting point, it can start to take form in either place in the interior-sidewalk-road transitional public space, taking shape independently in a space or merging multiple spaces together.



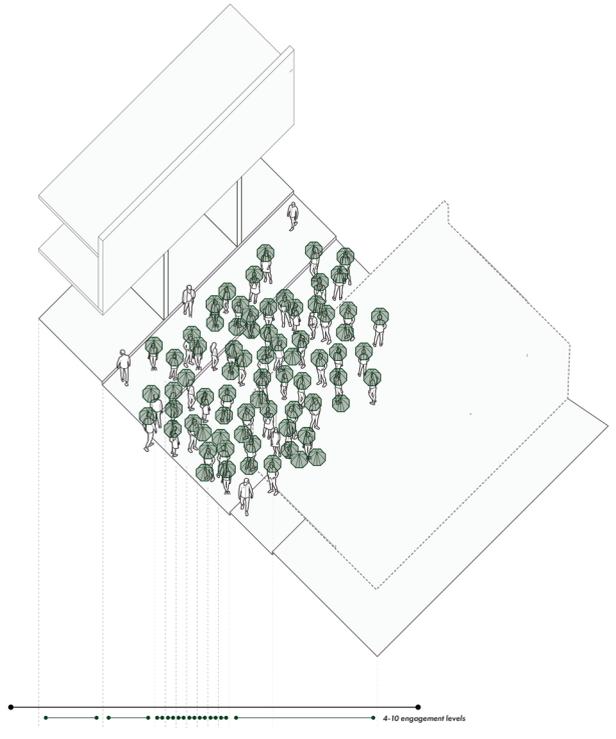
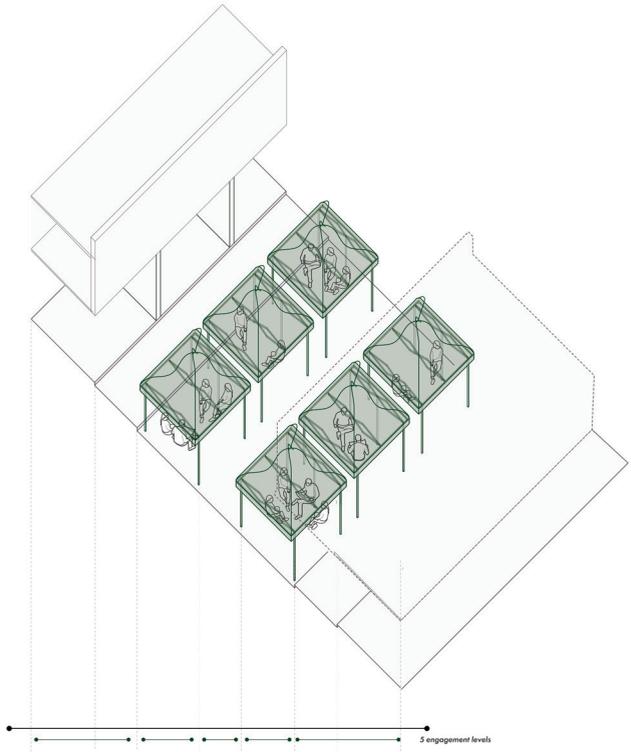


Umbrella/tent:

The umbrella (often yellow) symbolizes the umbrella movement, but due to the climate, umbrellas and tensile structures are very commonly seen in the region. The region receives heavy rainfall during the summer and a lot of sunlight with high temperatures throughout the year, so the addition and temporal structure need to accommodate the climate.

On a typical day in Hong Kong, shops and restaurants often extend their business on the sidewalk and sometimes onto the road, depending on the time of the day. During a social movement, the protestors use yellow umbrellas and tents to not only protest themselves against surveillance exposure but also to mark a sense of presence in space.





Booklet - case studies

Occupy Wall Street:

Occupy Wall Street (OWS) was a left-wing populist movement against economic inequality, corporate greed, big finance, and the influence of money in politics that began in Zuccotti Park, located in New York City's Financial District, and lasted for fifty-nine days—from September 17 to November 15, 2011.

The motivations for Occupy Wall Street largely resulted from public distrust in the private sector during the aftermath of the Great Recession in the United States. There were many points of interest leading up to the Occupy movement that angered populist and left-wing groups.

Hong Kong Fish Ball Movement:

"The Fishball protests exploded on the streets of Mong Kok, the shopping heart of the Kowloon peninsula, at the start of Chinese New Year. The police had planned to close the district's unlicensed food stalls, which sell fishballs on skewers and other traditional Chinese snacks. The news leaked out, and protesters organized on social media ahead of the raids, and the standoff that resulted spilled over into violence as darkness closed in.

But why are young political activists willing to go to the wall for fishballs? "China has had really wonderful street food for at least 800 years, and it is part of the culture of Hong Kong," says Chinese food expert Fuchsia Dunlop, author of *Shark's Fin and Sichuan Pepper: A Sweet-Sour Memoir of Eating in China*. "It's affordable and it's fun. The street stalls are very much part of Hong Kong culture, but they've been disappearing as part of the process of redevelopment and urban renewal."

Chinese A4 paper movement:

During the pandemic extreme lock down period in 2021, an outbreak of protests all around China happened. This is the first large scale protest since the student movement in 1989. The protests did not have a unified voice in the beginning, it started as independent requests in each province and city. Each of them was suppressed on social media for any discussion and mentioning, including deleting and blocking users' accounts. The event escalated when the fire outbreak in Urumqi residential building, public gatherings were held for condolences and the dissatisfaction of the policy escalated.

Students started a silence occupy movement all around the country, by holding up a blank piece of A4 paper. The paper with no content addresses the strict surveillance and censorship that are reinforced during the pandemic and the silencing of the tragic cases of death due to the policies.

During this social movement, many organizers received help from Hong Kong students in social movements for Chinese student to protest themselves against the police and governance force. Including safety in physical and communication.

“不要核酸要吃饭 不要封控要自由 不要谎言要尊严；不要文革要改革 不要领袖要选票 不做奴才做公民”。

"No covid testing,
we want food to eat.
No lockdowns, we want freedom;
No lies,
we want dignity;
No Cultural Revolution,
we want reform;
No [dictatorial] leaders,
we want elections;
Not to be slaves,
we want to be citizens."