

**CARESCAPES: TRANSNATIONAL URBAN REDEVELOPMENT OF THE  
POST-COLONIAL HONG KONG**

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Abstract

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COLONIAL HONG KONG**

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Drawing upon the massive redevelopment catalyzed by the government-led urban renewal in Hong Kong in the past two decades, this research pays attention to how biased normalization of *care* and *dependency* contributes to a neoliberal regime of urban redevelopment that dictates more than 200 urban renewal projects. It examines the ways in which the regime reconfigures the daily existence of urban citizens, and moreover, the intense competition among Pearl River Delta (PRD) cities. Taking a transnational perspective from below, it reveals how the denial has affected a particular population on the move and more importantly, unsettled the civil society. By theorizing “carescapes” as a heuristic device, it trace the ways in which the transnational circulation of rent/capital travels across borders at the cost of care and needs. It illuminates the multiple displacements of care: the displacement of reproductive space and nested dependency relations; the displacement of urban residents to make room for the elite visitors; the

displacement of citizens on a transnational scale, including both the underprivileged migrants and the elite expatriates who struggle to stay put in the liquid labor market.

Keywords: Carescapes, Care Ethics, urban renewal, citizenship, migration, Hong Kong

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Shu-Mei Huang, Seattle

*This dissertation is dedicated to those who are striving to care for others in the city.*

## Introduction

### *1. Dependency, Care and the City*

*Independence is not the same as being unattached. Independence from subsidy and support is not attainable, nor is it desirable; we want and need the webs of economic and social relationships that sustain us. It is not beyond our current ability to imagine a new concept of autonomy, one that recognizes that the individual lives within a variety of contexts and is dependent upon them. (Fineman, 2004, p. 28)*

The world in the first decade of 21st century was in turmoil. The war on terror, the 2008 global financial crisis, the Arab Spring and the ongoing EU debt crisis in the following years, continuously rendered a growing sense of uncertainty in political discussions all over the world. As of 2012, continuous debt crisis in Greece, Spain, and Italy brought about debates on “Is Greece dragging down the EU”<sup>1</sup> and questionings welfare dependency. There is the *Occupy Wall Street movement* furiously pointing to the corrosive power of major banks and multinational corporations over the democratic process that has been tolerated by deregulation of international finance and Neoliberalization of the states.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, conventional wisdom still deeply believes in the doctrine that free market works as the most efficient and just mechanism. Votes for marketization of nearly every perspective of life and human existence, including housing and care, remain strong.

Meanwhile, the health care overhaul talks in the US strived to confront persistent ideas of freedom of choice and self-responsibility to persuade the public to reconsider care as an essential need and possibility for politics. Whether the subject is a state or a person, however, we continuously see dependency being condemned and care being reduced as something external to the public sphere (Fraser & Gordon, 1994; Fraser & Honneth, 2003; Kittay & Feder, 2002) Dependency is understood against prevailing anxiety to grow the economy and rendered as straight monetary relationships between the taxpayers and the recipients. On one hand, the one

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<sup>1</sup> The theme of dragging down has been prevailing in popular media. For example, Sudip Kar-Gupta (June 18, 2012) *Spain, Italy concerns drag Europe shares back down*. Reuters.

<sup>2</sup> See more from its official webpage. <http://occupywallst.org/about/>

who pays accuses the dependent of being incompetent and irresponsible; for the one who receives care or bailout, there has been fear for losing autonomy or even sovereignty. We saw the kind of resentment occurring in the health care cut for immigrants and refugees in North America or in the mounting protests against bailout deals and austerity plans in Europe.<sup>3</sup> As commentator Paul Krugman nicely put it,<sup>4</sup> the Greeks should not be victimized in the euro zone since Americans never stop the central government from bailing out the housing bubble in Florida. It is worth pondering how boundaries of community and responsibility are drawn to mobilize the politics of blaming the victims or even worse, the aliens.

This research that I carried out in the city of Hong Kong during 2009-2011 does not attempt to tackle the ongoing financial crisis but the normalized conceptualization of dependency and care, and how that normalization continuously factors in our thinking of transforming the urban landscape for everyday people to settle down next to each other across class and nationalities. The undervaluation and underrepresentation of care in production of space, I argue, prevents the redevelopment of the city to accommodate transnational practices that can nurture diverse citizenry and sustain the vibes of the city. There is a pressing need to understand how the reconfiguration of built environment influences urban dweller's relationships with the city, be it the new arrival who struggles to settle down, the long-timer who identifies herself as "the local," or the expatriate who somewhat voluntarily displaces herself to keep up with the changing world. Tracing their passages through the lens of care, their embeddedness in the city become blurred, interconnected, fluid, which cannot be adequately explained by class relations or planning theories. It requires a reworking of the placed-based urban redevelopment and territory-based governance through care. In the light, this project aims to demonstrate how "care" can and should be placed in studying urban redevelopment and housing. More importantly, to reclaim space for care in the city, alternative thinking of citizenship through contextualizing care in the cross-border politics is indispensable for both citizens or non-citizens.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, the Massachusetts Legislature cut about 26,000 legal immigrants from Commonwealth Care to save \$130 million in 2009. The reform was ruled illegal by the state's highest court in 2012. See more in Chelsea Conaboy, (January 06, 2012) *State must cover legal immigrants*. The Boston Globe.

<sup>4</sup> Paul Krugman (June 17, 2012), *Greece as Victim*. NYTimes.

To capture the moving subjects and the shifting historiographies of the expanding capitalist economy since the 1980s around Hong Kong, especially the opening up of China's market in 1979 and the handover of the colony from UK to China in 1997, I start by telling the story of Mr. W and Mrs. W to present certain trends that run through my writing.

## ***2. Drifting from Pearl River Delta to Hong Kong: 30 years in a glance***

Departing from his hometown, Jiangmen- a township in midwest Guangdong, Mr. W arrived in Shenzhen in mid-1980s. In the past decades, Mr. W witnessed the transformation of Shenzhen from a small township into one of the most important industrial cities in China. Since the 1979 economic reform, indeed, the Pearl River Delta region (PRD) saw foreign capital flooding into the manufacturing industry in Dongguan and Shenzhen in contrast to continuous emigration to Hong Kong throughout the 1980s.<sup>5</sup> With the intensification of money flow and human border-crossings, people living in PRD had been more aware of world-wide political-economic changes and Mr. W is one among them.

Mr. W had a clear memory of the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989 (hereafter 1989 Protest). He vividly recalled, “It was so obvious that many foreign investors (largely Hong Kongers) were terrified by the crackdown. The industrial town, no, almost the whole PRD, was shut down and it took a while to thrive again after the fear faded away.” (interview, 21/05/2011) Interestingly, his habit of constantly watching Hong Kong news through informal satellite TV shaped his imagination of Hong Kong long before he landed the city. “The mainland news would not cover the event (1989 Protest). [...] I remembered watching those Hong Kong movie stars and celebrities raising funds for supporting those college students. It is said that the donation went on for more than twelve hours...” (interview, 21/05/2011) The memorable fundraising event took place in the Victoria Park, one of the most significant public places on Hong Kong Island,

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<sup>5</sup> Though no official record available, the emigration from mainland via PRD to Hong Kong is estimated to be 800,000 up to 250,000 people during 1950s-1980s. Some report suggests that the number reached roughly 500,000 during 1979-1981 before a major immigration policy change in 1980. See more in Chapter 8.

where an annual candlelight vigil commemoration of the 1989 Protest<sup>6</sup> be continued for decades. Mr. W did not know about it though he and his wife resided in a neighborhood near the park.

From 1992 to 2001, Mr. W worked for a Hong Kong employer and met his wife Mrs. W in the same company in Shenzhen. He considered that the best moment in his life: “In comparison, we were doing better [...] The employer provided us housing and food, though simple food, but its much better than the majority already.” The stability availed by secured housing and benefits had been rare in Hong Kong and so was the case in the PRD in recent years.

Soon after the 1997 handover, Mrs. W immigrated to Hong Kong to reunite with her parents, who were two among the hundreds of thousands of mainland migrants seeking shelters in the city during the 1970s. The W family managed to remain footholds on both sides of the Shenzhen River, with the wife constantly commuting back home in Shenzhen weekly. With the economic boom in China starting in 2000s, however, the seemingly decreasing gap between two sides made Mr. W hesitate whether he should follow his wife’s will to relocate the whole family in Hong Kong. Still, his curiosity in the metropolitan lifestyle in Hong Kong became an everyday reality in 2006.

Mr. W did not foresee the winding path ahead. Neither did he realize that socio-economic difficulties were actually facing the lower class whether they were new arrivals or not. Settling into a crowded tenement apartment in Wan Chai, the couple were not prepared for unemployment and displacement caused by urban renewal in the following few years. Evicted by their previous landlord, the couple strived to find another flat though the rent was doubled. “Its extremely difficult. Now my wife worked as a janitor (in a high-end residential tower) in Central...twelve hours a day, you know...”(21/05/2011) What he did not know, however, is that the apartment from which the family was displaced is going to be converted to another serviced apartment to cater to the globe trotters like those privileged foreign tenants served by his wife.

Mr. Wu was deeply upset. I’d like to have a place where I can stay for a while without paying that much rent [...] and we don t know if rent would continue to increase...and the

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<sup>6</sup> The vigil had been organize for consecutively 23 years. It is said that the record-high turnout in 2012 reached nearly 180,000 people. See more in Crystal Chui and Patrick. (June 5, 2012) *Tiananmen Protesters Gather In Hong Kong In Remembrance*. Bloomberg.

expensive transportation cost... Unlike Mrs. W who had a relatively stable waged job, Mr. W tried hard to find a niche in the second-hand electric market but he had not been successful. He saw his family not doing better than an equivalent four-persons household living on welfare. He noted, “You know, they would receive roughly \$1,290.1 (and living in subsidized housing) while we earned \$2,580 but spent more than half of our income for rent and basic living. It’s very ridiculous!” He repetitively talked about the conflicting feelings of seeing China becoming an economic power but he ended up becoming out of place in Hong Kong, the city that he had been admired. Sadly, their Hong Konger parents (Mr. W’s in-laws) could not offer much help as they themselves were long-term welfare recipients.

To Mr.W, the city of Hong Kong left little space for grassroots entrepreneurs or the working class. His frustration was echoed by several cohorts- most of whom struggle in facing the rapid global economic restructuring across the border. The epochal change was too much beyond their apprehension. Like many other underprivileged families, the Ws gradually found themselves being displaced not only in the city of Hong Kong but on the other side of the border. Settling down becomes an unprecedented challenge.

### ***3. Care, Border Crossings, Citizenship***

The increasing presence of mainlanders since the handover, including immigrants from the lower to middle class, tourists, business visitors, and the new rich visitors who may be immigrants seeking citizenship through investments at the same time, continuously post challenges to the already conflict-ridden practices of citizenship across the border. It engenders new paradigm of identity politics toward conservatism and protectionism. Yet there is empirical challenge in sustaining the urban Hong Kong against a rapidly growing China, which imposes national and regional development discourse that pressures the city to undo its boundary. In the mean time, the mobility promised by the Hong Kong passport (visa free to 147 countries as of Oct. 2012), and the *permanent residency* (a legal visa status) secured by the HK ID card, both become uncertain like the territory when the border crossings woven with everyday tactics of locating basic needs continuously challenge the state control of the border and the coherency of one national community. These conflicts between the cosmopolitan nature of the city state and its ethnic connection with the nation state, I argue, exposes the limits of the model suggested by T.

H. Marshall in his famous essay “Citizenship and Social Class” in the service of the Keynesian welfare economics in 1950. In a city where the sense of political membership in democracy is weak and social membership is deflected by neoliberal regime, the confidence in having one community sharing commonwealth with a common purpose is fading. Moreover, there seems no more promises that a community based on blood and ethnicity would necessarily share a common vision for the future, which is not so much a postmodern condition as to an inherent irony in ethnic nationalism.

Recent scholarship starts to question the normalized association of nation-state with citizenship, especially “birthright citizenship.” As Engin F. Isin argues (2012), it is “birthright as fraternity” that blurs the boundary between citizenship and nationality. Following the conceptual analogy between “*birthright citizenship* and *inherited property*” drawn by Shachar (2009), Isin points out that immigrants who seek to join the political community by “choice” could imply stronger consent and commitment to political membership whereas the adverse effects of such institutionalization of birthright, as Hannah Arendt ([1951]2004) demonstrated, indeed “ranged from unjust regulation of movements of people to tragic consequences of death, suffering, displacement, statelessness, and Holocaust” (Isin, 2012: p. 451).

The call for questioning “rights as inherited” offers new direction to thinking about the contested terrain between constant reformation of citizenship and the actually none-existing autonomous state polity in Hong Kong. In theory, ideally, immigrants's active move and participation in the society may appear more desirable to the conceptualization of a democratic state as based on social contract. In practice, nevertheless, a person's decision making process is more or less informed by her caring relations and thus she is never alone making the choice as an individual but as somebody's mom or daughter, wife or significant other. The missing “care” in theorizing practices of citizenship and border crossings, I argue, is a significant point of departure for this research. Against the neoliberal conceptualizing of citizens as the self-care individuals, we need to have a more nuanced understanding of “care” as the significant social practice not above or below politics/moral life but a part of what human life and human coexistence are all about (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p. 19).

With a focus on care, we shall see at least two folds of caring relations nested together into a lifeworld where urban citizens struggle in "being a self while being with each other"(Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p. 18). The historically contingent weaving of care, as it has been in Hong Kong, include but is not limited to, the kinship-based caring relations that bind individuals across the border and the management of welfare care with which the colonial governance keep peace with the subaltern citizens via distribution of welfare goods as colonial citizenship (Ip, 2004). Where the colonial welfare regime rules with its planning rhetorics of urban safety and hygiene, as Ip suggests, "displaces if not represses" the rise of social citizenship concept, familial caring for one another, I argue, could nurture rather than deprive social citizenship if care is not excluded to the private domain. It is with these thinkings of care that I would like to articulate the missing lines between care, urbanization, and citizenship because it is insufficient to understand citizenship without the city, where urban space is largely transformed and extended by practices of care contributed or demanded by citizens, non-citizens, and non-human citizens.

These theoretical questions are not raised in a tabula rasa but grounded in the post-handover Hong Kong, a city now sees issues of housing and wealth gap escalating to an unprecedented political crisis. The shortage of affordable housing and lack of land for urban amenities, despite the decade-long government-led urban redevelopment, epitomize a problematic redistribution of space and care. Citizenship is constantly remade in the processes in which undervalued care work is employed as invisible service to upgrade properties, turning local housing stock to accommodate multiple border-crossings driven by corporate business management and financialization of the city. I aim to reveal how the question of citizenship is embodied and accommodated in the built environment by two lines of research inquiries. They can be independent theoretical explorations but are interconnected empirically.

### ***1) Placing care in studying urban redevelopment and housing:***

Combining analytics taken from Marxian geographies and feminist care ethics, I bring attention to the reproductive of the city. It examines new streams of redevelopment and investment interest predicated on exploitation of care work and expropriation of space for care, which further perpetuate inadequate housing delivery and poverty. It aims to provide insights into understanding the transnational movements of labor and capital through transforming urban

space and displacing care. How exactly is care being expropriated in transforming space when redevelopment seeks new strategies to challenge limits to capital? I will continue the theoretical exploration in Chapter 2.

## ***2) Rethinking citizenship through contextualizing care in the cross-border politics:***

Ethics of care, as Tronto suggests, cannot be fully understood unless being placed in its full moral and political context. To understand how care is implicated in border crossings, we need to understand it as both “a complex cultural construction and the tangible work of care” (1993, p.124). It is much more complex than the stereotyped constructs of mothering or the disengaged decision making in terms of joining or leaving particular political community for one’s own good. It forces us to think concretely- “It is a way of making highly abstract questions about meeting needs return to the prosaic level of how these needs are being met. It is a way of seeing the embodiments of our abstract ideas about power and relationships”(Tronto, 1993, p. 124). It asks for a more careful valuation of the realization of the city’s everyday life against the cross-border politics- *who* is doing care work to meet whose needs and *where*? Why are some care work excluded, devalued, or displaced, and how is certain border produced by that exclusion, devaluation, and displacement? How was valuation of these care work charged with histories and politics and resulted in particular spatialization of care? The researches can be as concrete as the arrangement of housing for care workers or as abstract as the register of visa status or residency because they all matter in forcing us to challenge the citizen’s participation in taking care of the city- an active practices of citizenship that cannot simply be explained by blood, fraternity, consent, or choice.

## ***4. In Search of Languages for Care: “Carescapes” and Landscape of Care***

In recent years, a distinctive scholarship of “landscape of care” emerges from health geography (Milligan and Conradson 2006; Milligan and Wiles, 2010). Concepts of “landscape” and “topography” are engaged to focus research on “the complex embodied and organizational spatialities that emerge from and through the relationships of care” (Milligan and Wiles, 2010, p, 740). It focuses on substantial practices and experiences of care, how care is shaped by socio-structural processes, and where care is located in both physical and institutional environment.

Researches in this vein examine a range of care settings that is not limited to health care provision, such as hospitals, nursing homes, hospices, day-care nurseries, homeless shelters, and asylums (eg, Wolch and Philo, 2000; Brown, 2003; Conradson, 2003).

Engaging “landscape of care” as an analytic framework, the scholarship is particularly concerned with the “spatial manifestations of the interplay between the sociostructural processes and structures that shape experiences and practices of care”(Miligan & Wiles 2010, p. 739). Other than “interdependency” and “reciprocity” emphasized by existing literature on feminist care ethics (eg, Tronto, 1987; Kittay, 2001, Fine & Glendinning, 2005), it stresses the multidirectionality of the processes of care and the multivalent nature of care.

“Multidirectionality,” as Miligan and Wiles note, can occur in several overlapping senses:

*(1) care often involves networks rather than dyads; (2) even within dyadic relationships different kinds of care, including physical and affective, are frequently exchanged; (3) care can be expressed as delayed or extended reciprocity (eg, care for an ageing parent may reflect reciprocity for care received in childhood); and (4) care providers frequently derive significant benefits such as new perspective, a sense of pride or satisfaction, learning new skills or developing a vocation, a sense of power, or alleviation of guilt.*

(Miligan & Wiles, 2010, p. 737)

The topographical quality of “landscape” is adopted to avoid the theoretical pairing of active care givers and passive care recipients that could overemphasize the unidirectional delivery of care and direct, intimate interaction between care givers and care recipients. Rather, care involves reciprocal dependence in which both recipients and providers are involved in the coproduction of care and moreover, the reciprocity can be delayed and extended (Fine and Glendinning, 2005; Miligan & Wiles 2010). Due to the enduring complexity of landscape of care charged by emotion, power, and socio-economics, there is often tension occurring as geographical notions, such as “distance” and “proximity,” do not necessarily describe the nested dependency in a straight sense.

“Proximity” does not guarantee intimacy as the often enclosed care settings may induce vulnerability for both care givers and care recipients. “Distance” does not promise access as

urban space is largely organized by logic of rent rather than care. While technology of care, as Miligan and Wiles suggest (2011, p. 747), can make a physically distant care socially and emotionally proximate, we have to recognize that a wide range of care work still demand immediate, bodily hard work carried out by care givers whose presence can be hidden from the public and social scrutiny. Meanwhile, the visibility and invisibility of care, perpetuates the neoliberal thinking that separates care (non-paid care) from economy as Green and Lawson suggest (2010) and thereby gives rise to a globalization of care economy (Hochschild, 2000; Yeats, 2009; Lutz, 2011) that selectively commodifies specific kinds of care. What is less addressed is how the ideological displacement of care allows redevelopment of urban landscape to undervalue space of care. My research aims at illuminating the exploitative displacement and as a result a oftentimes careless re-urbanization of landscape. It intend to pinpoint the nodal points where transactions and translations of care occur.

In line with scholarship of “landscape of care,” however, I am endeavoring to bring to light the the multitude of actions and transactions that brings about landscape of care. Beyond delineating how the spatial manifestation of care extend as network, I pay more attention to how care work is nested; rather than illustrating how the network of care look like, I focus more on how care is displaced, undervalued, underrepresented, misrepresented, abused, and so on. Inspired by Actor Network Theory (Latour, 2005) that focuses on how the social changes (rather than what the social is), I adopt “care-scapes” as a heuristic device in hopes of a more dynamic understanding of “networking” of care, through which the caring acts are constituted by and constitutive of new forms of production of space. Mobilizing “carescapes”<sup>7</sup> as an ongoing spatial practices, I emphasize the dynamism of care and the agencies moving through nested caring relations—the interstitial space where care is hidden or flatten within urban landscape. Using the “-scape” in the making rather than “landscape” already in place, I focus my discussion of care as the particular, the partial, the incomplete (land)scape that is transient and easily escaping from the purview of public policies and our thinking of urban space.

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<sup>7</sup> “Carescapes” appeared in “Organisations Carescapes: Researching Organisations, Work and Care”(Macie, Linda, et al 2008), where the term is used to discuss a balanced management of work-life relations can benefit both the employees and employers. Concerning care in quite different way, my usage here focuses on the connectivity between a wide range of actors who do not necessarily have official employment relations but situated in the same project of space production.

I see the shifting urban landscape as terrain where space and care demand one another, yet the current redistribution of *care* and *space for care* tends to displace care and service work required to reproduce our lives, such as cooking, cleaning and other domestic work (Preston et al., 2000; McDowell, 2003). Yet it is important to note that social reproduction is not limited to domestic work nor family confine (Anderson, 2000, p.11) The reproductive needs can be collectively organized though rarely recognized in a highly individualized society. The neglect continues the assumption that production is only about product and labor, ignoring the fact that city constitutes a means of production owing to the social relations embedded in space as Lefebvre (1991) reminds us in “the Production of Space.” For example, we tend to ignore how much the city relies on both the non-paid cleaners and underpaid cleaners who take care of a wide range of spaces and amenities for the city to operate. Yet, it is important not to fetishize “space” but to recognize the reproductive work and caring relations that enable the production of space. Using “carescapes,” I would like to capture the dynamism of enabling and in doing so to connect scholarship of care ethics and “landscape of care” with Marxian geographers’s research on capitalism and urbanization. Moreover, I would like to challenge the territorial concepts and planning techniques that are taken for granted in drafting the city’s future. I will take the discussion further in Chapter 2.

### ***5. Structure of the Dissertation***

I begin by placing care in the cross-border politics between Hong Kong and China in the first chapter. It contextualizes the theory underpinnings and empirical concerns of this project—the everyday effects of transnational urbanism in the post-handover era. It is then followed by a tracing of my research journey in *the field* during 2009-2011: my interdisciplinary exploration of theories with the unfolding of fieldwork experience and my reflexive thinking of methodology (Chapter 2). The chapter presents my engagement of theories of care ethics, geographies of care, citizenship theories, and Actor Network theories with respect to my passages following a wide range of actors in Hong Kong and beyond.

Chapter 3 illustrates the discursive sites where my research investigation started: a series of institutional changes that shaped the landscape of housing and development in Hong Kong in the past century, including Rent Control, Urban Renewal, and housing/rehousing policies. Riding

those historical currents, I discuss how the property regime of urban renewal has been built and how land rent has become a key to understand the conflicting practices of urban citizenship..

The remaining five chapters portray my field research that had been mainly located in two sites, Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po-two districts, where urban renewal projects led by URA concentrated in the past decade. An important note to mention beforehand is that those chapters should not be considered as only empirical chapters or cases studies to examine theories assumptions. Instead, my research in the two sites is to trace the connections between the seemingly unrelated spatial divisions and settlers rather than to compare them. By examining the production of space facilitated by URA projects, I traced the circulation of rent and translation of care through the built environment, and how various actors contributed to the processes. Chapter 4 sketches the gentrifying Wan Chai, where urban renewal started in early 90s and has continued and largely realized through 2012. Drawing upon several highlighted projects-including the contentious project of Wedding Card Street, it teases out the problematic displacement of community. Chapter 5 takes a closer look examining how Wan Chai has been turned into a lucrative urban village where global nomads settle down on various terms depending upon their variegated assignments subject to corporate expatriation. With a focus on reproduction of space, it discovers how some emergent serviced residences are becoming frontline where transnational corporate operation and transnational branding of real estates meet, of which various trends leads to a process of re-urbanization as *expatriation of the city*.

Before moving to Sham Shui Po (chapters 7-8), chapter 6 takes up a core issue of this research- the nested dependency relationships between production and reproduction of space, expatriation and the displacement, and how these relationships constitute transformation of urban landscape. In the chapter, with a working concept “carescapes” I try to articulate my following actors and their care practices in Wan Chai. In so doing it reveals how urban renewal gives rise to certain new forms of real estate operation that is predicated on privatization and undervaluation of care. It sheds light on the processes in which displacement of jobs and caring relations are produced and meanwhile bear on to particular communities who struggle with the reorganization of space, care, and rent.

Through carescapes, chapters 7-8 illustrates the massive displacement brought by urban renewal projects and beyond in the past decade. In chapter 7, the issue of displacement of community is revisited in the context of worsening poverty in Hong Kong. Chapter 8 furthers the investigation of translation of care into rent and its involvements with transnational coordination of care. I sketch out how I follow those who travel across multiple borders in the midst of remaking of Hong Kong, raising questions about the relationships between re-urbanization of cities and internal/international migration within PRD region. It reveals the politics of bordering and mutated space of citizenship as integral to transforming urban landscape. It thus points to the inherent conflicts of the global city project that insists to manage boundaries and citizenry against the constant needs for care labour across the border.

In conclusion, I argue against the normalized claims that see redevelopment as the inevitable agenda for the project of globalization and suggest that the circulation and translation between care and rent should become the center of urban politics. Furthermore, I probe the constructs of dependency and autonomy on two levels- among urban citizens and among city states- and argue that the tendency to strengthen the state regime by demarcation and exclusion in urban planning have produced poverty and displacement rather than sound democracy and wellbeing for people across class and countries. In mobilizing the idea of carescapes, I provide accounts that urges re-placing care into our understanding of cities and citizenship.

## Chapter One

### Nested-dependency relations across the border(s)

#### *1.1 City on the Move and Citizens Living within Care*

Since July 1st 1997, Hong Kong, has become one of the Special Administrative Areas of China (HKSAR). It will maintain self-governed status through 2047. The agreement of “one country, two systems” ensured by the Basic Law is not as simple as it reads. Being considered the best arrangement for both Hong Kong and mainland China, the capitalist system and people’s ways of life allegedly would continue a high autonomy, which was ironically based on the colonial governance model under *the Sino-British Joint Declaration* signed in 1985 and then being engineered during the period between 1980-1997.<sup>8</sup> As Ghai points out (1997), the constitution of Basic Law to some degree limits the political autonomy of the HKSAR given its over-specification of economic system, for example, in revenue, taxation, finance, etc. Indeed, the simultaneously exclusive and inclusive bordering process shaped by the Basic Law, implies a paradoxical state of politics that confuses both the citizens and the city.

Over the past decade, more than 460,000 mainlanders like the W couple arrived in Hong Kong to seek for better life with their families. The issue of reunification immigration- with spouses or with parents, just like Mrs. W, has been rendered as burdening the city in terms of welfare resources and population quality in the post-handover era. The scholarship on the history of border crossings (Ku & Pun, 2004; Salaff, Wong, & Greve, 2010; H. F. Siu & Ku, 2008; Wong, 2007) documents the degree to which immigration and emigration have been imbricated in the development of Hong Kong. But the anxiety over “the new arrivals”(mainlander immigrants who have not obtained permanent residency) grows as Hong Kongers live in fears for space and opportunities grab by the non-locals.

Ethnic Chinese- especially residents of the Mainland- is historically a special category in making up Hong Kong’s demography. They compose most of the “foreigners” in the city in terms of both the tourists or immigrants. The main immigration channels have been stipulated

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<sup>8</sup> The Governor then, Murray MacLehose visited China in 1979, discussing the lease issue of the New Territory, leading to the first formal discussions between China and Britain during the visit of the Prime Minister of Great Britain, Margaret Thatcher, to China in 1982.

into the constitution of Hong Kong during the colonial period. Since 1980, there has been a working quota system, admitting mainlander immigrants based on kinship or marital relationship with local Hong Kongers, with the quota varying along the years and currently the cap is 150 persons per day. Through this quota-based *One-Way Permit program* (OWP), the number of new arrivals numbered to 43,379 in 2011.<sup>9</sup> The OWP holders are the major source of population growth in Hong Kong other than the population contributed by birth.

Another controversial immigration policy has to do with the formulation of “right of abode” in 1987 and coming into force after 1997. It ensures the residents’ entitlement to political and social citizenship. It is granted to the babies who were born to Hong Kongers or the ethnic Chinese babies who were legally born in Hong Kong regardless of the residency status of their parents as of the time, an exclusive right ensured by the article 24 of the Basic Law of Hong Kong (functioning as its constitution). The exaggerating estimate of 1.67 M mainlander immigrants coming with their “right of abode” resulted in unintended social conflicts and the saga of maternity care crisis, which I will further discuss in the chapter 8.

The HK administration has attempted to attract more talented and skilled migrants through creating new immigration programs (see Table 1.1). The implementation of the quota-free *Admission Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals* (ASMTP, since 2003) and the quota-based *Quality Migrant Admission Scheme* (QMAS, since 2006) were to admit applicants who are not required to secure an offer of local employment before their entry to Hong Kong. Yet the approved cases of ASMTP, amounting to 49,021 up to 2011, can hardly compare with OWP holders. The 2,094 quotas allotted for QMAS up to 2011 is less significant and, still, nearly 80% of successful applicants came from the Mainland. Other than these specific programs, the non-Chinese residency seeker may apply for *the General Employment Policy* with an approved employment in advance. From 2007 to 2011, there were some 131,300 approved cases, roughly varying between 20,000 to 30,000 each year. The majority applicants were adopted as administrators, managers, executives and professionals, coming from USA, UK, and Japan.

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<sup>9</sup> The Summary results from the 2011 Census (2/2012) published by the Census and Statistics Department, HKSAR.

Table 1.1 Typologies of Immigration/Access to *Right of Abode* in Hong Kong

Types of Visa	related immigration scheme	period	access to <i>Right of Abode</i>	immigration control	applied only to Chinese Nationals	extended to dependent
<i>One Way Permits (OWPs) for Settlement</i>	<i>Family Reunion</i>	No Limit	Yes	China	Yes	No
<b>Exit-Entry Permit</b>	<i>Individual Travel Scheme</i> Visit Relatives Group Visit Business	7-90 Days	No	China	Yes	No
<b>Visit/Transit</b>		14-90 days (180 days for Britains)	No	HK		No
<b>Employment</b>	(As Professionals) <i>General Employment Policy</i>	Conditional	Yes	HK		Yes
	(As Imported Workers) <i>Supplementary Labour Scheme (SLS)</i>	Conditional	Yes	HK		No
	Domestic Helpers from Abroad	Two Years Contract; Renewable	Under Juridicial Review	HK		No
<b>Special</b>	<i>Capital Investment Entrance Scheme (CIES)</i>	For Settlement	Yes	HK	requires Chinese Nationals to obtain other citizenship before application	Yes
	<i>Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals (ASMTP)</i>				applied to only Mainland Chinese	
	Quality Migrant Admission Scheme (QMAS)	For Settlement	Yes	HK		Yes
<b>Study</b>		For Settlement	Yes	HK		Yes

Indeed, the cross-border movements have been complicated by the geographical proximity and changing ties between Hong Kong and China. Through out the 1980s, illegal immigration from the mainland reached nearly the same amount of legal immigrants- 20,000 per years in the mid-1980s (Vagg, 1993). While illegal immigration has been highly reduced in the past decade, constant travels became alternatives for the mainlanders to reside in Hong Kong when the issuing of *Two Way Permit* (TWP, an Exit-Entry Permit for Traveling to and from Hong Kong)<sup>10</sup> allows them to stay in Hong Kong from 7 up to 90 days. The numbers of TWP holders increased rapidly after the launch of *Individual Visit Scheme* since 2003- about 800,000 to 900,000 Mainland visitors travel to Hong Kong monthly. It is also worth noting that the number of frequent trip makers (who travelled at least once a week between the Mainland and Hong Kong) had increased by 92% from 368,500 in 1999 to 708,800 in 2009. Among them, there were 44,600 cross-border commuters traveling for work on a daily basis (54% of them were living in the Mainland) and about 7,600 were cross-boundary students living in Shenzhen. Taken together, the mass of visitors and immigrants from the Mainland calls into question the conventional territory-based urban planning, which assume a relatively static consideration of population, patterns of mobility, and utilities in need. The inability of current administration to respond to urban dynamism brings about growing social anxiety over the various kinds of border crossings.

In this heterogeneous city where many urban residents live like visitors and visitors sometimes live like residents, it has been tricky for Hong Kong to address immigration control and citizenship as a city state since the late 70s. The colonial pragmatism seemingly demonstrates the likability to address citizenship independent from the nation state and to grant “permanent residency” to people of *right of abode*--the Hong Kong permanent residency. It’s legal status, as Ghai noted, “is both more inclusive and more exclusive than a citizenship as it allows the accommodation if non-nationals at the same time it excludes categories of nationals” (2001, p. 144). Meanwhile, the fact that ethnic Chinese has been treated specially in

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<sup>10</sup> *The Exit-Entry Permit for Traveling to and from Hong Kong and Macao* issued by the Bureau of Exit and Entry Administration of Chinese Ministry of Public Security allow mainlanders to visit and re-entry Hong Kong for trips of a variety of purposes, including travels, business visits, family reunion, etc. Take the permit for family reunion as an example, it is good for either one 90-day-journey, or multiple journeys for 14 days visit within 90 days validity. Unlike OWP, there is no quota.

the quota-based system of OWP and TWP largely charged by the Chinese administration, makes it even difficult to identify and locate the state(s)-whether it is the HKSAR or the Chinese administration approving the OWP. Over the three decades, we have not seen practices of citizenship in consistency with theoretical constructs of state-society relations, political community, or the ideal citizen as conceived by the Greek philosophers. The ambiguous existence of the quasi-city-state, the absence of democratic politics, and the contested identity of Hong Kong in the making, all of which seem to confirm that the institution of citizenship in Hong Kong is not as simple as the imposed ethic of the enterprising self to replace the colonial law-abiding subject but an ongoing political project rendered by inherent conflicts.<sup>11</sup>

### *1.2 Struggle over Dependency and Autonomy*

The city has experienced unprecedented challenges in the past 15 years, in both political and economic terms. The political system has been ridiculed as partial-democracy or democracy as a style (Lau, 2002). There have been outrageous protests asking to overhaul the nearly 50 % functional constituencies (which allows for corporate votes) that have been instrumentally maintaining the elite group-corporatist state inherited from the colonial governance. The election of the CE of HKSAR raises more doubts as the election is limited to a committee of 1,200 members elected from respective sectors, so-called “small-circle election.”<sup>12</sup> Following the financial downturn and outbreak of SARS in 2003, there had been vast dissatisfaction with the Tung Chee Hwa administration, leading to the most phenomenal turn out on 1 July 2003 calling for universal suffrage of CE and then Tung’s resignation in 2005.<sup>13</sup> Yet the annual Hong Kong 1 July march and increasing protests against top-down politics continued. As of July 1 2012, the fifteen anniversary of the return, there were allegedly 400,000 people joining the march.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See more about “the enterprising self” and a series of articles addressing the theme in the changing politico-economic and ideological contexts in Hong Kong in (Ku & Pun, 2004)

<sup>12</sup> Keven Drew. (March 5 2012). Scandals in Hong Kong Raise Fears About China. NYTimes.

<sup>13</sup> Since 1 July 1997, Hong Kongers have kept asking for universal suffrage and ensured freedom of speech, resulting in a large-scale protest on July 1st in 2003. The actual number of protest participants ranged from 350,000 (as quoted by the police) to 700,000 (as quoted by protesters), but the generally accepted figure is 500,000. The protest in 2003 demanded that Tung step down. Tung resigned on 10 March 2005, only three years into his second term.

<sup>14</sup> Hilda Wang and Jacob Fromer. (July 1, 2012) Protesters March as New Hong Kong Leader Is Sworn In. NYTimes.

Those disputes are related, but not limited to requests for formal democracy, ranging from issues about housing, land speculation, privatization of public space, intensification of cross-border traffics and moreover, politics of the *right of abode* that has triggered serious identity politics in the past decade. Against all odds, HKSAR's request for interpretation of the Basic Law from the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress in China raised questions of its judicial independence being undermined in 1999, shaking its self-governance in a profound way (佳日思, 陳文敏, & 傅華伶, 2000; 馬嶽, 2010).

Against the backdrop, the ideological opposing of “autonomy” to “dependency” becomes a significant clue for researchers to trace the role being assigned to/ taken by Hong Kong in the globalization project along with China. From a transnational perspective (Olds, 2001; M. P. Smith, 2001) that sees the global flows as social and political constructs with which local actors are enrolled in transnational, territorial networks within distinct social spheres, the discourse of a global Hong Kong could be read with a global sense of place (Massey, 1994) that would not easily allow territorial boundaries and neither the local nor the global to become sources of normalized claims and dominance. In such a city as intrinsically global (McDonogh & Wong, 2005, p. xi) it seems more meaningful to understand how socio-economic flows change direction and how entanglements actualize within the network than mobilizing the globalization discourse to perpetuate particular politico-economics.

Still, the strong imprint of liberal theories that emphasizes individuals as self-responsible beings contributed to historical bias against dependency and thereby discrimination toward dependents who receive care (Fineman, 2004, pp. 33, 49-52; Ku & Pun, 2004). They also fostered the assumption that the cared-for loses her autonomy in obtaining care. The idea is imposed onto international relations and even more so in exemplifying the highly debated ties between Hong Kong and China upon the coming of fifteenth anniversary of the handover.

Recently, a debate series presented by the most important English Newspaper, South China Morning Post (SCMP), raised three questions to local politicians, analysts, and intellectuals. The questions were centered around the autonomy of Hong Kong and its seemingly increasing economic dependency on China: *has one country overshadowed two systems?*; *Has Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy been undermined?*; and *Has Hong Kong become too*

*reliant on the mainland in the light of cross-border economic integration?* The series exposes a growing fear of losing Hong Kong's unique identity and asks "Is there a danger it will become just another Chinese city?"<sup>15</sup>

These questions, indeed, have hovered over Hong Kong for years. Scholars like Stephen Chiu and Tai-Lok Lui suggest that the emergence of Hong Kong was always as the center of the 160-year-long Chinese capitalism rather than a new discovery (Chiu & Lui, 2009). Their work illustrates the increasing interconnections and interdependence between Hong Kong and China but with a note: Paradoxically, Hong Kong has repositioned itself only to find itself placed in the back seat (Chiu & Lui, 2009, p. 161). They argue against the convenient binary between autonomy and dependency,

*...the very notion of Hong Kong as a global city suggests that it has to maintain its embeddedness in both the regional economy and the global economy. [...]It has to be both embedded and autonomous at the same time.*

(Chiu & Lui, 2009, p. 162)

Indeed, Hong Kong has been a critical agent of change in China's establishment of four Special Economic Zones (SEZs) since the 1980s. The PRD had become a large production base where Hong Kong manufacturing enterprises found cheap labor and meanwhile created enormous jobs, employing about 3 million people, about five times the manufacturing employment of Hong Kong itself by the end of 1980s (Sit & Yang, 1997, p. 651, qtd on Chiu & Lui, 2009, p. 134). Meanwhile, Hong Kong has accounted for more than 65 % of total foreign direct investments (FDI) in China during 2009-12, which has to do with Hong Kong's positioning as an intermediary city where capital flows in and then out to China. Most FDI in China listed as Hong Kong-invested is in reality from various western nations, Taiwan, and China that is placed into China via Hong Kong intermediaries (Graham & Wada, 2002). It also explains why Hong Kong's performance in receiving FDI has been stronger in recent years- Hong Kong itself was the world's third largest recipient of FDI flows in 2010.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> The editor (June 11, 2012) *SCMP Debate Series*. SCMP.

<sup>16</sup> According to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development's World Investment Report (July 27, 2011), It was the first time that Hong Kong had gained third place in the global rankings, following its being fourth place in 2009 from ninth position in 2008.

Thus the economic ties between the "two systems" is not simply one or two-directional relationship. However, what I found limited is the economic-determinism that has been naturalized in understanding the dependency relations between Hong Kong and China. It ignores how real politics works on the states and the everyday people. Postcolonial scholar Law Wing Sang offers a psychoanalytic account for understanding the mutual dependency. To China, as Law argues, Hong Kong exists as an indispensable other that is to be recovered as well as to be recolonized to complete its nationalist-sub-imperial project (Law, 2009, pp. 173-175). The lingering colonialism embedded in the interdependency between two systems is important as it explains the ambivalent autonomy that is essentially a politic formula endorsed by China.

Yet, the normalized bias toward dependency is still at play whether it is from the economic talks or from the political analysis of colonialism. It is manifested in the daily existence of urban citizens across the border and the intense negotiation among cities and states. It has become a source of exclusion as hinted in Mr. W and Mrs. W's story and as we will see further in urban policy's implications of everyday people's care and needs. It is such neglect of care and anxiety toward dependency combining into a denial that has been internalized in processes of re-urbanization. This project aims to reveal the effects and processes of the denial.

### ***1.3 Remaking the Global Financial Center***

Before the handover, Hong Kong has changed from a colonial outpost to one of the core global cities (Hamilton, 1999; Jessop & Ngai-Ling Sum, 2000). Following a post-industrial restructuring of economy, the late 90s saw Hong Kong transforming into a global financial center as financial deregulation has been furthered especially after the Asian Financial Crisis. In 1999 the cap over sum of branches of foreign banks was relaxed and the ceiling of checking deposits and interest rates was removed in 2001, all of which encouraged foreign banks rapid expansion in Hong Kong. Toward the end of the 20th century, it has become one among the top five global financial centers that dominate global banking (S. Sassen, 2001, pp. 79-81). With the circulation and conversion of Renminbi (RMB) becoming a global factor in the 21st century, Hong Kong has become not only a platform for mainland enterprises to reach global investors but also a global market place for international corporations to attract enormous capital accumulated in the mainland (Chiu & Lui, 2009, p. 147). Not only Hong Kong but also many

cities compete with one another to become a hub in this financial project, including London, Singapore, and Taipei. Hong Kong's locational and political advantages keeps it relatively competitive. So far, Hong Kong appears to stand still in acting as the first and largest offshore RMB center.<sup>17</sup> The city secures its success of a capitalist economy and has been evaluated as the freest economy for 17 years.<sup>18</sup>

Hong Kong's success is not simply a result of globalization but a careful deployment of national policy of China in the past decade. The intense financial talks render the boundary between the states more porous and transient. As a financial analyst paraphrases the political statement "one country, two systems," with the internationalization of RMB the financial sector aspires for "one currency, two systems."<sup>19</sup> The enactment of *Closer Economic Partnership Agreement* (CEPA) kicked off a deepening of economic interconnection between Hong Kong and China in 2003. Recently, the announcement of the twelfth five-year plan for finance by the central government in Beijing again confirms China's attempt to internationalize its financial market through Hong Kong and it has been considered a benefit conferred to Hong Kong.

Meanwhile, the Bond market and IPO sprang up. In April 2011, the first RMB Initial Public Offerings (IPO)<sup>20</sup> by Hui Xin Real Estate Investment Trust- a subsidiary of the well-known Cheung Kong Limited established by Li Ka-Shing- notably raised \$1.68 billion/RMB 10.5 billion.<sup>21</sup> It's success was indicative of the tendency of financialization of the city. Soon, a pipeline of global corporates joined the IPOs trend in Hong Kong. In 2010, the Hong Kong Stock Exchange raised nearly \$53 billion for IPO compared with only \$42 billion for the U.S. and \$16 billion in London.<sup>22</sup> Among them, the listings of several luxurious brands were especially

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<sup>17</sup> Enoch Yiu (Jan 17, 2012) London in HK link-up to trade in yuan. SCMP.

<sup>18</sup> The evaluation was published by The Heritage Foundation. See more in Hong Kong ranked world's freest economy for 17th consecutive year. (12/01/2011). Government Press release. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201101/12/P201101120149.htm>

<sup>19</sup> Subacchi, P. (2010) "One Currency, Two Systems": China's Renminbi Strategy, Chatham House Briefing Paper.

<sup>20</sup> IPO is a type of public offering. It is used by companies to raise expansion capital and become publicly traded enterprises.

<sup>21</sup> Chen Chao. (Nov.11, 2011) Hong Kong: where next? Central Banking Journal.

<sup>22</sup> Cathy Holcombe. (January 14, 2011). Hong Kong and the Goldilocks Regulator. Wall Street Journal.

phenomenal, including the Italy-based Prada and US-based Coach.<sup>23</sup> The recent and projected increase in financial activities is considered proving Hong Kong being as a sustained global financial center.

However, the city's economic success took its toll on the people's livelihood - approximately 1.26 million people (18.1% of its population) live below the poverty line. In 2012, the newly elected CE, Leung Chun-ying stated, "*I make a solemn promise ... that the freedoms and rights enjoyed today by the people of Hong Kong will absolutely not be changed at all.*" However, the idea of "people of Hong Kong" or even "Hong Kong" has become a political question and theoretical task for urban studies more than ever. What is ahead of Leung is a growing wealth gap,<sup>24</sup> which is recently measured as breaking the record in three decades- the city's Gini coefficient being 0.537 based on data from 2011. It is among the highest in the developed world - compared to 0.482 in Singapore and 0.469 in the US.<sup>25</sup> Despite the growing inequality, the pro-growth HKSAR still firmly believed in the trickle-down theory and attributed these problems to the aging and non-productive population.<sup>26</sup>

On that note, HKSAR has thus grounded its long-term development agenda, aiming to leverage on its links with the Mainland and to reorient itself as an international business and financial centre in an extending geographies of changing PRD as many scholars have urged (Sung, 2002; Yeh & Ng, 2000; Yeung, 2002). Yet it is not a solo of Hong Kong but an emergent inter-city competition in the pearl River Delta. With the economic-geographic imagery of *the Great Pearl River Delta Region* continuously expanding to a larger area of the *Pan-Pearl River Delta*<sup>27</sup> (Pan-PRD, see Fig. 1.1), however, a regional grouping that covers one-fifth of China's

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<sup>23</sup> The trend of issuing IPO has been covered as international headlines. See more in (May 26, 2011), Luxury brands flock to Hong Kong for IPOs. Reuters.; or Rachel Sanderson, (June 03, 2011), Prada plans IPO party of the decade. Financial Times, UK.

<sup>24</sup> Hong Kong recorded in 2008 the biggest wealth disparity in Asia, with a Gini coefficient of 0.53, compared with 0.22 for Beijing and an average of 0.39 for the region. The figure and comparison are available from data compiled by the United Nations.

<sup>25</sup> The Gini Coefficient is a scale from 0 to 1 on which higher scores. In Hong Kong, it was measured as 0.533 five years ago and 0.451 in 1981. Dennis Chong and Ada Lee (Jun 19, 2012) Wealth gap hits a 30-year high. SCMP.

<sup>26</sup> Marco Lui and Patrick Boehler. (June 18, 2012) Hong Kong's Wealth Gap Widens Amid Aging Population, Inflation. Bloomberg Business Week.

<sup>27</sup> Pan-PRD included Sichuan, Yunnan, Guizhou, Hunan, Jiangxi, Fujin, Guangxi, Hainan, and Guangdong.

land area and one-third of its population (Chiu and Lui, 2009, p150) renders a picture in which Hong Kong is not the only one city wary of losing its uniqueness. Over the past decade, the thriving PRD cities resulting from their associations with Special Economic Zones (SEZ) like Shenzhen have gradually lost their relative advantages. The businessmen and politicians anxiously asked “Is SEZs still that special?”<sup>28</sup> against the emergent city buildings in the interior such as Chengdu or Chongqing in Sichuan not to say Shanghai’s becoming the most prominent shipping hub.

A series of negotiations took place and then finally brought about the Agreement on Hong Kong/ Guangdong Co-operation in April 2011. It attempted to capitalize on the manufacturing industry in Guangdong and the service-industry in Hong Kong to build world-class center of advanced-manufacturing and finance. The substantial move resulting from the agreement is the ambitious planning of Qianhai as the future "Manhattan of the Pearl River Delta."



Fig 1.1 Map of Pan-PRD  
Source: Hong Kong Trade Development Council. (Feb 16, 2005)

Currently still a strip of wetland, yet it was projected that the plan would enjoy blessing from the central government since it was written into the 12th five-year plan (2011 -2015). Guangdong authorities, leveraging on Hong Kong’s liberty in governance and economic policy, aspired to develop a new special zone that will enjoy taxation, administrative autonomy and transparent governance as a body ruled by law. Presumably the new experiment would combine the best of two worlds- the mainland's production efficiency with Hong Kong's transparency and checks and

<sup>28</sup> In 2005, at the 25th anniversary of Shenzhen SEZ, there was a series of debates in public media and academia concerning future challenges that face the SEZs.

balances - to create a magnet for foreign investment.<sup>29</sup> It is largely a product of the ideology that the strategic significance of SEZs can remain only through better regional integration.<sup>30</sup>

How would Hong Kong be reconfigured to fit into this regional-national economic framework? The announcement of *the Action Plan for the Bay Area of the Pearl River Estuary*, upon which Hong Kong would turn the many agricultural lands in the New Territories into new towns is to open up the countryside, as the new leader C.Y. Leung states in an interview with *Time* magazine.<sup>31</sup> The move is central to facilitate what the leader considered as *nei jiao*, which means internal diplomacy- a highly managed and ambiguous relationship.

Moreover, with the construction of Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong High Speed Rail, it is said that the three metropolitan areas can be integrated into one powerful economic cluster. It would allow people to leave Hong Kong and arrive in Guangzhou within 48 minutes. The aforementioned regional integration plan dimmed Hong Kong's once aspiration of transforming itself into a knowledge-based economy by constructing a Digital Port (Sum, 2002). Hong Kong could not but see itself being woven into the making of the Manhattan in the Pearl River Delta yet this imaginary Manhattan would not be located in the city.

What's taking place in everyday life in these PRD cities is very different from the birds-eye-view strategic plan imposed by political leaders and the authorities. Historiographies of the complex cross-border politics that can be boiled down to everyday interaction between the locals and the aliens are fluid and fragmented, do not necessarily come together easily as planners and policy makers assume. Intensification of inter-city, cross-border traffic transports not only commerce but also risk and fear as Darian-Smith (1999) discusses in her study of the tunnel between UK and France, all of which condition social interaction and political negotiation among agencies on various levels. In PRD region, politics of food safety and epidemics were particularly sensitive issues that most torment the public. The anxiety has been conflated with the

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<sup>29</sup> Fiona Tam (Mar. 19, 2011) Qianhai to be 'Manhattan' of the delta, SCMP.

<sup>30</sup> The then current premier of the state council of PRC, Wen Jiabao, affirmed the plan during his visit of Shenzhen at the 13th anniversary of the SEZ. Editorial, (Aug 23, 2010). The Hong Kong Economic Journal.

<sup>31</sup> Cover story. (June 28, 2012) Q&A: Hong Kong's New Leader Is a Divisive Figure, but Aims to Build Bridges. Time magazine.

aforementioned fear of losing identity of Hong Kong. As Lee points out in his observation of Hong Kong and its counterpart,

*Guangzhou's construction of a new port is seen as an unfriendly move to take away some of Hong Kong's lucrative interport trade and its leading role in logistics and transportation. Added to that is lingering resentment over the fact that the first outbreak of SARS occurred in Guangzhou but was not duly reported by the city's health officials. Consequently, Hong Kong was unprepared for epidemic.*

(Lee, 2008, p. 269)

The accumulative resentment grows into a localism with a parochial face that has manifested itself in a siege mentality (Lee, 2008, p. 276). It is such fear for Hong Kong becoming another Cantonese city in PRD that may turn itself into a global city but with “vulgar mediocrity and homogeneity”(pp. 279-280). The concern for an inward-looking, exclusive localism is shared by extensive scholarships reworking on “identity” toward being more “socially produced and multiply located”(Fincher & Jacobs, 1998, p. 4) rather than as pre-given and fixed. In considering the urban impulse of a cosmopolitan city, urban anthropologist Ulf Hannerz suggests that the key lies in the city's “willingness to engage the Other”(Hannerz, 1996, p. 103). Juxtaposing it with the politics of dependency and care, then I shall ask how cosmopolitans and metropolitan locals (as Hannerz differentiates) would willingly realize the degree to which their lives depend on “the Other” and share more accountabilities to that interconnectedness.

#### ***1.4 Urban Redevelopment in Transnational Processes***

It is against such a context that urban planning is to restructure the city. Urban redevelopment, housing, transportation planning, and land control are all deployed carefully in a way that is far from the allegedly minimal governmental intervention in economy (Adams & Hastings, 2001, pp. 246-247). The global city discourse, as Kris Olds notes (2001, p. 33), has been used by political and business groups “to ensure urban policy is formulated in a market-friendly environment” to accommodate those who can serve the global city. It is a process not only facilitating the redistribution of capital through appropriation of more valuable land in urban center area (Fong, 1985; Alan Smart & Lee, 2003) but also mobilizing the belief in “heroic

modernistic planning” (Sandercock, 2003, p. 64) in the name of "public good." Its techno-based, mean-ends rationality covers the fact that an imagined global city where qualified people have not arrived in the city is itself a great political project.

Today, inadequate housing, rampant inflation, and pending crisis of housing bubble hover overhead Hong Kong, are mostly simplified as a problems caused by unmatched demand, which thus justified urban redevelopment or suburbanization in order to boost supply. Meanwhile, identity politics is often mobilized to blame certain strangers in the city for pushing up demand. Where both strategies are largely taking place, urban planning is still carried out in a self-acclaimed politic-neutral way that does not acknowledge the settlement of urban citizen has been perplexingly subject to transnational investment that redo the links between property, residency, and citizenship.

Indeed, the association between property and citizenship becomes fragile and inconsistent when it comes to the continuous massive urban redevelopment. Urban renewal, as already-contested practices in many cities in the US and Europe (Blomley, 2004; Keating & Krumholz, 1999; Klemek, 2011), has been highlighted as a necessary move to tackle the worsening inadequate housing condition in Hong Kong since the 1980s (A. Smart & Lam, 2009). The establishment of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) since 2001 took over its colonial counterpart, ambitiously announced its plan to accomplish roughly 200 projects in 20 years. A decade passed but URA’s accomplishment has upset both property owners and tenants as none of URA projects enhance housing affordability but encourages private developers to ride the redevelopment trend and as a result has brought about unprecedented displacement. More importantly, the conceptual analogy between “citizenship” and “inherited property” becomes unstable when the ownership-based property right is stripped off by urban renewal.

The devil in the details demonstrates how urban renewal has been carried out as contested terrains where both conceptualizations of *city* and *citizenship* become questionable. To arrest urban decay, URA assumes properties and in return differentially arranges rehousing packages according to one’s tenure and status of residency. Non-citizen and propertyless residents were the most marginalized. The focus on tenure and residency, nevertheless, is selectively ignored when redevelopment is realized in the borderless capitalist economy of Hong Kong- a market where

cross-border speculation over property has rapidly increased as Chinese “hot money” made up more than 30% of the first-hand housing market.<sup>32</sup> The extreme trend is just a snapshot of the super-gentrification that involves highly mobile capital moving across the border, property regime led by the ruling class (Poon, 2005), and densification of immigration and financial service. Inspired by geographies of gentrification (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008), this research aims to unpack the multiple translocal and transnational processes that mediate the redevelopment of Hong Kong.

As mentioned earlier, migration is central to the transnational urbanism in Hong Kong. It involves variegated migratory patterns and forms of settlements—both spatially and politically. In 2002, a review of the *Capital Investment Entrant Scheme* (CIES) suggested that participants may be allowed to buy real estate again, which the government stopped in 2010 to cool the property market. Since October 2003, the scheme attracted more than 14,512 applicants, more than 80% of whom were mainlanders and as required they had to obtain foreign residency (other than China) before becoming a Hong Kong permanent resident. Whether that requirement will be removed or not remains a political question. The creation of CIES, nevertheless, epitomizes the questionable, artificial association among property and citizenship. It exposes the inherent weakness of managing the citizenry based on blood and fraternity and the irony of encouraging transnational investment by commodifying citizenship. It gives rise to new forms of liberal governance strategies that involve new ways of recognizing those who are citizens (Morris, 2003; Rose, 2000).

In the wake of serious identity politics, the infuriated community conflates impacts and practices of human citizenships with the “denationalized participation” (Saskia Sassen, 2007, p. 73) of corporate citizenships and thus ignores the issue of financial and investment deregulation and how it is materialized in the city. Thus we see the privatization of care and rampant speculation over housing unfortunately contributing to growing animosity toward mainland immigrants and heated debates on limiting entitlements to the truly deserving community, giving

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<sup>32</sup> According to Central Property, in the first half of 2010, 27.1% of buyers of first-hand property are from the mainland, compose sharing 32.4% of the total transaction volume, gaining 3% and 2.3 % compared to 2010. The trend is related to the emergent new rich who are aggressively searching for second home abroad as combining investment opportunities and insurance of better life. See more in Dexter Roberts and Jasmine Zhao (Nov. 22, 2011) *China's Super-Rich Buy a Better Life Abroad*. Bloomberg Businessweek.

rise to some conservative right wing talks in recent years. The underprivileged immigrants, again, become scapegoats in the conversation deflected by inward-looking identity politics.

A recent study by anthropologist Nicole D. Newendorp (2008) illustrated the uneasy reunions of mainland migrant mothers with their families in Hong Kong in parallel to the reunification of the two systems in great ethnic detail. Her careful analysis of the immigrant women's hard work and traveling, however, tends to homogenize the constitution of mainland immigrants under the loaded label "new immigrants." She does not consider much about the emergent trend of immigrants with higher educational background and social capital. As Helen Siu reviews it (2010), the question for future research is how to accommodate two sets of moving targets and their mutual constitution analytically. Meanwhile, the contradictions and inconsistent drawings of boundaries deployed in the inherently transnational remaking of Hong Kong deserves more attention, which involves, as Seyla Benhabib (2004) sharply points out, both crisis of territoriality and the paradox of constituting a democratic legitimacy by exclusion. This research hope to fill those gaps and thereby contribute a new perspective to urban studies.

Urban renewal -whether in the name of urban redevelopment, urban renaissance, or urban regeneration, should not be considered only as a local process of re-capitalization on urban lands in the service of the global city (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005, p. 16; N. Smith, 2002, pp. 500-501). The familiar augmentation that prevails in governmental rhetorics is epistemologically flawed as it establishes the false dichotomy of localization vs globalization as many scholars already point out (Massey, 2005; Ong, 1999; M. P. Smith, 2001; M. P. Smith & Guarnizo, 1998). The analytical separation cannot capture the complexity of urban transformation that has been inevitably permeated by transnational social practices but justify urban redevelopment. It is important to see how those difficult ties have spatially and politically intertwined in the intensified condition of cultural interconnectedness and mobility across space (H. F. Siu & Ku, 2008). In other words, there are *geographies of urban renewal* that are not confined to the dedicated blocks but at multiple sites on various scales, being woven with the transnational politics of global city. It is critical to detect how the normalized conceptualization of *dependency* and *autonomy* factor in our thinking of the naturalized agenda of urban renewal.

## Chapter 2 Research Journey and Methodological Notes

*Place as an ever-shifting constellation of trajectories poses the question of our throwntogetherness...throwntogetherness: the politics of the event of place.*

(D. B. Massey, 2005, p. 151)

Doreen Massey's note nicely sheds light on the openness and dynamism of place, which I consider as adequately catching the urban pulse of Hong Kong but also *the field* I explored-as *political events throwntogether*- in my research journey. In this chapter, I identify main questions and theoretical concerns that grounded my research in the first three sections. The fourth section illustrates how the field unfolds with my reflection over methodology.

### 2.1 Research Questions

Drawing upon feminist critiques of care being undervalued (Duffy, 2011; Lawson, 2007; Robinson, 1999; Tronto, 1993, 2002), I examining the redevelopment of Hong Kong with a focus on care, especially how exploitation of care work has been transformed in the context of unscrupulous economic growth predicated on land and property speculation in the name of globalization. Concerning care, as Duffy noted, "exploitation is of course no less problematic because it has a long history, but it certainly must be understood in a different context" (2011, p. 136). This research attempts to understand the multiple strategies of hiding and undervaluing care work in the circulation and distribution of surplus extracted from the project of redevelopment and meanwhile, how is ethics of citizenship embodied in these urban processes. As mentioned earlier, this research asks, but is not limited to, the two inquiries as follows:

- How is care displaced but employed in redeveloping the city in the post handover Hong Kong?
- How does the transforming urban landscape condition and accommodate practices of citizenship *in* and *through* the transnational assemblage of properties and spaces of care? To put it another way, how is the ethics of citizenship spatialized as care travels across borders?

## ***2.2 A Relational View on “Right to the City” with Logic of Care***

*Rights are relationships, not things; they are institutionally defined rules specifying what people can do in relation to one another. Rights refer to doing more than having, to social relationships that enable or constrain action.* (Young, 1990, p. 25)

To unbundle the normalized practices that constitute people’s everyday lives and meanwhile take away politics *of* and *in between* cities, I search for alternative ontologies that can allow this research to move beyond a superficial linking of the separated issues of care, housing, properties, citizenship, and redevelopment across disciplines. Whether mounting appeals for protecting property rights or activists’ calls for right to the city suggest “rights” as a center of urban conflicts- one of the most recent representative work after the Occupy movements is “Rebel Cities”(2012) in which Harvey encourages anti-capitalist struggles in his rethinking of both *the urban* and *the proletariat*. He calls for bridging urban-based movements and traditional Marxist class war and a more integrated understanding of the production and reproduction of urban daily life. Yet the broaden painting of the urban, without tackling some fundamental logic that influences how we conceptualize the 99% as “unorganized urbanization producers” (p.130), does not fully overcome the theoretical limits imposed by “rights talks.”

The tendency of borrowing liberal discourse of human rights to engender a more encompassing *right to the city*-including *right to housing* and *right to differences*- find itself losing political groundings in its receiving distributive welfare and universalization of freedom as “market freedom”-a reductionist belief that is predominantly favored in capitalist economy. The approach thus risks perpetuating the neoliberal logic and “systematic injustice”(Young, 2011) that dominates how a city should be transformed to enable the greatest economic growth.

Inspired by feminist care ethics (Jaggar, 1995; Robinson, 1999; Tronto, 1993, 2002) and actor network theory (ANT) (Latour, 2005), I adopt a relational ontology to challenge the distributive conceptualization of *rights* and how that has been normalized in planning and moreover, stratification of citizenry. In the following, I briefly discuss how care ethics informs an alternative approach to think about rights to the city. More extensive review is provided in my illustrating of research methodology and processes of fieldwork.

Henri Lefebvre's writing on "the right to the city" (Lefebvre, Kofman, & Lebas, 1996) has inspired rights talk with urban transformation in urban geography and planning theories (David Harvey, 2008, 2012; Mitchell, 2003). Obviously, displacement as a result of redevelopment- "accumulation by dispossession"- violates such rights, and moreover, can be considered as an encroachment of citizenship. It is certainly important to trace the connection between surplus production from urban redevelopment, distribution, and exploitation. Nevertheless, from a relational perspective, the normative concept of "rights" along with "citizenship" are both deeply rooted in liberalism/capitalism and might lead to a society in which "virtue is displaced by interest and citizenship is depoliticized" (Beauregard & Bounds, 2000, p. 246). Distributive justice based on "right" does not solve the problem facing propertyless tenants who are mostly displaced in negotiation based on property ownership. Indeed, a careful treatment of "right to city" that differentiates "the right to housing needs" from "the right to property" is required (Mitchell, 2003). Yet, as scholars of feminist care ethics suggest, "right" is not the only concept that we can use to approach needs and ask for justice (Held, 1993, 2006).

From the perspective of feminist theories of care ethics, "care" serves as a more adequate ontological concept in bringing back "the social" in political theories. Thinking of care ethics begins from what *caring for other* means, both in terms of the moral questions it raises and in terms of the need to restructure broader social and political institutions. It recognizes "the complexities of care as a practice" and how care is implicated in structures of power in society (Tronto, 1993, p. 125). *To care for* or *to be cared for* is something that people shape, invent and adapt, time and again, in everyday practice (Mol, 2008).

Seeing "care" as practices can meaningfully reconnect discrete needs and exercises of rights that are unequally nested in the network of dependencies. It creates possibilities for alternative theorization to challenge the neoliberal discourse that undervalues the nested social relations by prioritizing the individual pursuit of economic achievement such as home-ownership or waged employment.

Logic of care also emphasizes the relative context of care practices and the significant relationships that cannot be fully described by Marxist conceptualization of reproductive labor.

The concept may not be adequate on two counts: such reproduction should include “reproduction of people and labor power”(D. Rose, 1984) but the former is often dropped; using languages like reproductive labor, as Mignon Duffy suggests (2011, pp. 10-13), may inevitably fit care work into a market-based model, which is exactly many care theorists hope to challenge fundamentally. To discuss *the reproductive* as solely labour may emphasize paid care work more than non-paid care work (Duffy, 2011, p. 13) and thus reinforce the problematic hierarchical relationship imposed on them. Duffy’s differentiation of nurturant care from nonnurturant care work enables her study to tease out the tendency of professionalization of the nonnurturant care work and the continuous lack of recognition of nurturant care as inherently relational and involves meaningful intimacy among those who do care work and the cared-for. Though I am not as much against using the notion of dependency as is Duffy, I do agree with her comments that the complex, relative practices of care warrants more attention and nuanced discussion.

What I am interested in developing here, is to locate the complex, relative practices of care and to understand how localities and spatialities matter in sustaining the exploitation of care and inequality in the processes of urbanization. With a conceptual separation of nurturant care from the non-nurturant care, nevertheless, it is important to pay attention to the fact that increasingly laborers who participated in non-nurturant care work are deprived of their capability (or caring relationships) for nurturant works for their own loved ones. Expensive rent for space of survival, as one major reason to encourage the lop-sided caring relationship in cities like Hong Kong, should be integrated into a spatialized understanding of care. It would be a new clue for us to understand “exploitation of care” and “inadequate housing” differently. The extreme urban landscape in global cities where urban dwellers found it challenging to settle down, I argue, can be considered as an embodiment of this ”crowding of caring relationship” within which the meaningful intimacy has been sacrificed for making room for the re-arrangement of privatized, professionalized care.

To spatialize care in the light of feminist ethics of care thus opens up opportunities for urban politics. In an issue on the geographies of care and welfare, Brown and Staeheli (2003) articulate care, welfare, and the way politics work on subjects and bodies, then note that “a feminist ethic of care begins with an understanding of political subjects who are shaped by

myriad social relationships that are in turn contextualized in space and time”(Staehele & Brown, 2003, p. 773). Importantly, this rethinking of space and time with care ethics drew attention to the systematic marginalization or exclusion of social groups and the sites of the marginalization or exclusion that is neither exclusive to the private nor the public. Therefore, fields of political possibilities could be everywhere and the key is to locate the exploitation of care work- to spatialize the normalized biases in justifying the economies of reproductive work. I see it as a necessary path to understand what’s been overlooked in discussing the production of space. With the logic of care, it is more likely that the varied modes of social reproductions and challenges facing them can be understood in a more thoughtful way. Borrowing Massey’s words, care is extended in “space as coeval becomings”(2005, p. 189) and within the coeval process of becomings *the city* could be thought of as *caring relations of spatial politics* that are constantly mobile and multi-located.

### ***2.3 Reframing Citizenship with Feminist Ethic of Care***

“State” and “nation”, the two social constructs with which the constitution of citizenship is associated with, can be interrogated, as much as “citizenship” is a political project . It is especially the case in a quasi-city state like Hong Kong where citizenship can be inherently “provisional and conditional,” borrowing Bryan Turner’s words (2004), as it is in many democratic societies. This citizenship project, as Ku and Pun suggest (2004), is a manifold construct regarding “membership, rights, participation, and belongings.” The making of citizenship, which cannot be reduced to membership ensured by a Hong Kong ID or mobility granted by a Hong Kong passport, is constantly influx, both exclusive and inclusive, depending upon how the HKSAR reactively managed the city’s resources based on a stratified citizenship model that convince the local politics. The stratified arrangement, for example, can be seen in the exclusion of the non-citizens to rehousing as a result of urban renewal, which is justified by economic rationale given limited civic utilities and enormous demand for affordable housing. It nonetheless demonstrates the clashes between urban citizenship and national citizenship as those being excluded are often nationals without *right of abode*. Meanwhile, it indicates that people’s *right to shelter* is trumped by Hong Konger’s right to shelter. While the state maintains that the stratified arrangement is to ensure the integrity of the citizenship, it may also be the case that by

drawing a line the state keeps the “*inherited properties as citizenships*”-or the other way around, “*citizenships as inherited properties*” as Shachar suggests (2009)- to itself to ensure its authority over the city as a assemblage of assets. With the redistribution of space through urban renewal, it leads to the question that whether the redistribution is for the citizen’s goods or for the best management of assets? Though the state-owned asset is supposedly public interest which the public would have access through participation in free market, the fact that wealth gap is increasing in Hong Kong obviously does not agree with the discourse of the neoliberal regime.

There are the conflicting ethics of citizenship at play in the aforementioned scenario. Aihwa Ong’s (2006a) observation of “ethico-politics” along with the proliferation of neoliberal ethics of citizenship are useful here. Addressing citizenship within ethics, as Ong notes, “is about resolving problems of life and labor in particular milieus, creating solutions that are contingent, provisional, and varied, in connection with political and economic uncertainties” (2006: p.448). The shifts in the ethics of citizenship, brings about “ethico-politics” (Ong, 2006: p.445) that instills behavior of individual self-management as the welfare state withdraws from a direct governance.<sup>1</sup> This neoliberal ethics of citizenship is expressed as freedom- including both “freedom from state protection and guidance and in freedom to make calculated choices as a rational response to globalized uncertainties” (Ong, 2006: p.445).

Ong’s view is echoed by Ku and Pun’s account of the emergent “self-enterprising subject” in Hong Kong- those who “is always on the lookout for resources and new opportunities to enhance their income, power, life chances and quality of life in order to take advantage the rapid changes of economy and society” (Ku & Pun, 2004, p. 1). The neoliberal ethics of citizenship shifts the focus of governance from “who is the citizen for the state to take care of” to “citizen is the one who can take care of herself,” a reverse process in which urban dwellers are encouraged to self-enterprise and become responsible citizens. When the practice of this kind of “active citizenship” (in extreme economic sense) is maximized in the capitalist market, then we may call it “transnational citizenship”(Ong, p446) since the individual have her everyday life fulfilled independently from the state and from the territory-based community.

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<sup>1</sup> Ong suggests that “ethics” is used here “not in the sense of the moral guidelines but as the practice of self-care that determines how the individual constitute herself as a moral subject in a political community”(2006, p.445).

It is the elaboration on the neoliberal ethics that reminds us to be cautious about Isin's (2012) note that challenges birthright citizenship by focusing on "consent and choice" as mentioned earlier. When "individual choice" is understood as showing more active participation in a community as to birthright citizenship, the shifting ethics of citizenship that prioritizes individual choice is somehow vulnerable to the neoliberal ethical regime. It does not fundamentally challenge the instrumentalist constitution of citizenship by the state. Neither does it do justice to the caring relations being deployed in the project of "self-enterprising." In other words, one can never resolve problems of life without the other's labor in particular milieus.

To make the other's labor visible in rethinking of ethics of citizenship, I continue by engaging Selma Sevenhuijsen's locating ethics of care within notions of citizenship (1998). Her work sheds light on a discursive space for carers to bring their expertise and moral consideration into public debates. Care, as she suggests, "not only directed at 'others' (those in need of care) but also at the self and the physical environment, as well as interrelations between these"(Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p. 23). It requires one to understand the needs and values of specific others (whether they are proximate or distant) and in so doing it undermines the idea of "an unambiguous homogeneous moral subject" of citizenship (Sevenhuijsen, 1998, p. 60). It's not the generalized other subject to the "the story of the autonomous male ego" but "the concrete other," as Benhabib argues, "requires us to view each other and every rational being as an individual with a concrete history, identity, and affective-emotional constitutions"(2008, p. 485). It is a process that implies being open to the concrete other and willing to take democratic judging in practicing active citizenship. The process of "care for other" and "care to be othered" entails alternative epistemologies enabled by feminist care ethics, which is more concrete and engaged than the individualist making one's own decision.

Drawing on her contribution, I would like to spatialize the notion of active citizenship and bring it back to questioning the neoliberal citizen project of self-enterprising. I want to focus on the accomplishment of the "self-enterprising subject" that is not possibly realized without other's practices of care, especially in terms of the subject's obtainment of properties. As much as the postmodern view that the subject is ambiguous and open to others, one can not make exclusive claim to particular accomplishment in the light of care ethics, not to say the derivative

profit of particular properties. Such is the reason why the state shall redistribute social wealth by institution like taxation if we were to value care. Thus, it becomes ethically problematic when the institution is set up to encourage competition for exclusive claims, and meanwhile, devaluing the care practices embedded in the properties.

In *Paradigms of propertied citizenship*, Anaya Roy (2003) suggests that the American dream of independent citizen who stands on his own property is established on a scaffolding of social meanings, in which criminalization of homeless and normalization of exclusive claims to private properties are indispensable. Applying a transnational technique, Roy demonstrates how the propertied citizenship can be unsettled when training the political space of citizenship for the propertyless from India to the US. Paying attention to the territorial struggle between the formal and the informal sector, Roy claims that “the formalization of housing rights has greatly restricted access to the domain of housing. If informality is inherently exploitative, then formality is inherently exclusionary” (2003, p.475). The formalization of exclusive claims to entitlements, just as the reification of rights that closes the discursive space of citizenship, often makes people focus on “what to own” but ignore their obligations and shared responsibilities. Citizenship, if conceived as one’s relationship with the community and the state, is arguably not entirely exclusive, at least, not as much as the practice of ownership-based property.<sup>2</sup>

But the current inconsistency practices of citizenship in the wake of urban renewal, as can be examined in juxtaposing property-less tenants with non-citizens, have the displaced tenant's citizenship being stripped off as if they were not citizens (since they only have partial inherited properties) as much as the non-citizens or partial citizens (OWP holders yet to obtain their ID). Their conditions and locations are especially important in the city where the capitalist society sees both the properties and a variety of activities accommodated in the properties require an

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<sup>2</sup> Seyla Benhabib takes issue with the inherent exclusion built into constitution of citizenship upon democratic politics in her examination of political citizenship (2004). As Benhabib considers, the paradox of democratic legitimacy requires acts of self-legislation which are unavoidably acts of self-constitution and boundaries are necessary. “The will of the democratic sovereign can extend only over the territory under its jurisdiction; democracies require borders. Empires have frontiers, while democracies have borders”(2004, p.45). Linda Bosniak also holds similar view, as noted in her work on domestic work and citizenship, (Held, 2008, p. 498) as noted, “While the concept is commonly invoked to convey a state of democratic belonging or inclusion, this inclusion is usually premised upon a conception of a community that is bounded and exclusive. And although citizenship as an ideal is understood to commitment against subordination, in fact, citizenship also represents an axis of subordination and exclusion itself.” (2009, p.127)

increasing level of care work and in rare cases those work are not done by the property owners. More importantly, today a lot of those work are done by non-citizens and many properties are not inhabited by citizens either. The social reality implies both an ontology and an epistemology as Roy notes, requires a deeper engagement of care ethics in rethinking the governance of *citizenships as inherited properties* and *inherited properties as citizenship*. Some privileged non-citizens who can afford to purchase or rent the properties once it is redeveloped, enjoy the housing that is expropriated from some citizens. They can even obtain citizenship through the investment if approved by the CIES. Thus, the exclusive property-based rehousing for urban renewal and the CIES as two marked instances are similarly suspicious. To be more explicit, the former is the institution of citizen's "right to shelter" in order to facilitate the forceful assumption of properties (that is, urban renewal) and the second is about how the authority approves the foreigner's assumption of citizenship through owning properties. Citizenship as exclusive rights underwritten by ownership-based property, in both cases, are practiced in the most instrumentalist way to serve the neoliberal politico-economy but demonstrates no coherent political commitment and no discursive space for care, which is indeed essentially embedded in each piece of property.

Meanwhile, with "the government at a distance" (N. S. Rose, 1999, p. 49) manages the question of citizenship as issues of immigration control, resource distribution, and security, we see the formation of citizenship being ironically separated from the social dynamics of "the community." The regime employs technics of (b)ordering along the ethnic line and residency status to manage the numbers and flow in the service of market economy. It thus fails to recognize existing care practices that bind the communities across borders. Neither does it understand the ways in which people rely on one another are not necessarily consistent with current working of nation states. One of the most devastating outcome of such an ignorance is the continuous exclusion of the care workers whose labor actually ground the network of interdependency. The whole community will suffer from displacement of care sooner or later if the challenges facing care workers are continuously neglected and pushed to the limit. While "citizenship without community"<sup>3</sup> remains a provoking question, it is important to engage "care"

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<sup>3</sup> There is a special issue on the theme, "citizenship without community" on Environment and Planning D: Society and Space 2012, volume 30.

in the conversation to counter the neoliberal ethics of citizenship at work. Thinking through care, it is possible that the conceptual challenges in reworking both “citizenship” and “community” can be reformulated as more inclusive, caring dialogue rather than exclusion-based geographies and politics.

Having grounded my research with these exploratory thinkings, I ventured out for Hong Kong several times to conduct ethnographic studies during 2009-2011. In the remainder of the chapter, I illustrate how *the field* is coming to being as I walk with different actors (across class and ethnicity) who participated in the city as *caring relations of spatial politics*.

#### ***2.4 Methodological Notes and More Theoretical Underpinnings***

Inspired by ANT (Latour, 2005), I trace shifting discursive and substantive relations that gradually change how tenants live in the redeveloping city and adopt the methodology of “following the actors” to trace the “city” that travels. As Latour argues, “society is not the whole ‘in which’ everything is embedded. But what travels ‘through’ everything, calibrating connections and offering every entity it reaches some possibility of commensurability” (2005, pp. 241-242). I hold the same view in my thinking of *the city*. Instead of assuming existing conceptualization of urban renewal as a process of recapitalization of urban land (creative destruction) that displaced poor tenants, I approached the circulation and translation traveling through a variety of “mediators,” all of whom enable the rapidly changing of Hong Kong in visible and invisible ways. I imagine this research from below, transforming the orientation of the research from “trait geographies” to “process geographies” and in doing so acknowledge the interaction among researcher and actors in the field (Appadurai, 2000, p. 7). Neighborhoods, Hong Kong, and the imagination of PRD region in which Hong Kong has been literally “marginalized,” are all “regions best viewed as initial contexts for themes that generate *variable geographies*, as Appadurai notes (2000, p. 7), “rather than as fixed geographies marked by pre-given themes.” I aim to see how urban redevelopment redefines urban space in the service of emergent regional agenda, and how the various actions produce renewed geographies.

The processes-oriented approach departs from sites of urban renewal, where debates over “property right and compensation” have continued for more than a decade. Issues of rent and care gradually emerge to the surface as I pay more and more attention to the continuations and

discontinuities in inherited regulatory landscapes of rental housing and of emergent market-oriented, restructuring institutions of urban renewal authority as “actually-existing-neoliberalism”(Brenner and Theodore 2002).

With themes emerging gradually, the research task is then to figure out ways to move back and forth among various sites- including discursive sites and substantive sites- to illustrate various “networkings” of spatial practices at stake that transform the city from within. This research combines discourse analysis (Foucault, 1972/1982; Phillips & Hardy, 2002) and ethnographic methods (Bernard, 2006; Wolcott, 2008) as major research strategies to collect and analyze data, which can be considered as “bringing discourse in place” (Oberhuber & Krzyżanowski, 2008, p. 192) and meanwhile, as “reconsidering places as discursive practices.”

### ***Departing from the disappeared Wedding Card Street in Wan Chai***

Among nine focal districts of urban redevelopment over the past decade, my fieldwork started in the debris of Wedding Card Street in Wan Chai. With the lamented post-war entrepreneurship ingrained in the built environment of tenement apartments and shophouses, the case revealed a series of top-down redevelopment projects in that district. The unprecedented public anger during 2005-2008 pressured the authorities to announce a Review of Urban Renewal Strategy (July 2008-June 2010)<sup>4</sup>, giving rise to a new discursive site where the civil society once considered a space of hope. The almost two-year-long review was anchored in a workshop space nearby the six urban renewal projects in Wan Chai and was exactly where I started a pilot research in the summer of 2009.

At that time I was participating in UW Exploration Seminar *Hybrid Urbanism: Hong Kong* as a teaching assistant.<sup>5</sup> Following the seminar, I studied the case of Wedding Card Street and established contacts with a few scholars and some main community organizations concerned with the issue of urban renewal, including the *H15 Concern Group*, the community development

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<sup>4</sup> The 24-month consultation organized by URA release its concluding draft for public consultation from Oct 13-Dec 13, 2010. The revised strategy was released in Feb 2011.

<sup>5</sup> “Hybrid Urbanism: Hong Kong,” Aug 14-23, 2009, instructed by professor Jeffery Hou, Landscape Architecture, University of Washington

division in the *St James' Settlement*,<sup>6</sup> the *Community Concern Culture*, *Hong Kong Inmedia*, and *V-Artivist*, etc. These organizations composed a constellation of a wide range of community actions and heterogenous discourse, which oriented and enabled my research to focus on connections and disconnections among actions and presences/absences of actors thereof. It also allowed me to develop amiable relationships with the affected communities in a wider geographical area for a long-term research project.

After the pilot research, I scheduled my ethnographic research into several phases from October 2010 through December 2011, adding up to about nine months in the city. My strategic decision not to have any affiliation in Hong Kong turned out to be very positive to my work because it prevented the general mistrust held by civic groups toward institutions. My background as a Taiwanese researcher turned out to be a relative merit. It allowed me to enter a tense political moment more easily as Hong Kong society saw itself gradually, or forcedly as some considered, to integrate with China. Many people appeared to have more motivation sharing their thoughts with me as they recognized the historical and ethnic fellowship between two states and more or less dreamed of Hong Kong improving its autonomy toward a more independent, democratic state as Taiwan has been.

My field research was focused in, but not limited to, two administrative districts: Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po. Both districts were historical urbanized areas where URA projects and community organization concentrated. Geographically, the two districts were important in its adjacency to CBDs (Central and Tsim Sha Tsui) on Hong Kong island and Kowloon and historical registers of class and border crossings. I rented a suite in an apartment near Sham Shui Po. The locational advantage allowed me to walk to the neighborhoods within 10 minutes and combine my everyday life with daily observation easily. I could access Wan Chai within 20 minutes via cross-harbor subway and that also allowed me to immerse myself with the enormous traffic of commutes between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon.

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<sup>6</sup> *St James' Settlement* is a social work organization based in Wanchai. See more in its official website: <http://www.sjs.org.hk/>.

### *Connecting the Disconnected*

Attracted by activist campaigns such as “people-oriented planning” and “flat-for-flat, shop-for-shop,” I started by examining URA’s policies and their conversation with the affected communities, including published statements, meeting minutes, and related news coverage (2000-2012). Then it gradually became clearer that the continuous miscommunications between the authorities and affected tenants were neither simply ideological nor economic questions. Largely, these disputes and protests could not be detached from the designated properties-to-be-resumed with which URA established its projects, and the tenure relationships that positioned property owners, tenants, and URA in particular places and ascribed them particular property-based rights. Indeed, the ideas of property, property rights, and urban renewal for (justifiable) public interest have been normalized in capitalist democracies over the world despite continuous battles since 1960s in the US. But a historical review of the institutional changes that shifted from protecting tenant’s *right to housing* to property owner’s *property rights* revealed to me that the struggle over right to the city started long before the authority of urban renewal came into place in 2001. Positioning the research in postcolonial Hong Kong, I found it unsatisfactory to stop short of asking questions of community participation in a designated planning framework. Urban redevelopment does not start from the well-defined legal process but the very beginning of changing tenure patterns and rental practices. Without relaxing our conceptualization of urban redevelopment, I can never move closer to see what has been displaced and transformed except for the demolition of old buildings.

I tried to deal with the epistemological doubts by tracing institutional changes in housing and redevelopment over the past decade (1998-2010) to better contextualize the decreasing public housing supply, rocketing rental housing market, and a shifting ideology to promote home ownership. In the pilot research I have identified the revision of “*Landlord and Tenant Ordinance*” in 2004 an important legal change to study as it has left serious impact on URA’s operations. I also carried out archival research to review documents from URA, Town Planning Board, and Public Record Office in Hong Kong. In addition, I interviewed planners and officers from both the former LDC and URA, from community influenced by URA projects, to seek first-hand accounts from key agents. I will discuss these in chapter 3.

I was motivated to digress from the periphery of urban renewal procedures practices overseen by URA when I started to do participant observation with activists and concern groups in Hong Kong since October 2010. In my note taken after joining a street booth outreach with Shunning Road Concern Group in Sham Shui Po, I wrote,

*People show great doubts toward the government...a lot of them were asking: Does it help at all by signing this up?...How can there be community-based planning? It is impossible. I don't trust our government...It is useless. It is impossible that government will support this. (fieldnote, 18/11/2010)*

The kind of doubts and dismissiveness went on and on throughout the afternoon and frequently reappeared in my encounters with Hong Kongers whether they are underprivileged tenants or middle class homeowners. It had even become a theme of enormous parodies before the 15th anniversary of reunification and was picked by the Time magazine: “Can Hong Kong Trust this man?” as a cover story.<sup>7</sup> The degree of losing trust toward the government and will for community resistance could not be clearer, which made me wonder what exactly was the ongoing dispossession in the city other than properties assumed by URA.

When other volunteers and I tried to speak to them about advocating for building public housing and affordable housing in urban renewal areas, several people shrugged, replying that their residency statuses are not yet qualified for public housing. “I am still waiting,” the old lady said. They did not seem to care about what URA is going to build but they complained about the unpredictable allocation of public housing application. A man in his 70s noted that he gave it up because he did not want to move to Tsuen Wan (18/11/2010, Pei Ho Market). The call for participation in planning for the future, sadly, did not meet with these people in their “futures.” Are they not influenced by the ongoing ten urban renewal projects in Sham Shui Po? The question remained in my mind since then.

In another occasion I was participating in an uncommon public meeting in the Legislative Council. Few sympathetic legislators arranged the meeting for some concerned civic groups to express their disappointment at the conclusion of the review of URS as mentioned.

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<sup>7</sup> Cover story. (June 28, 2012) *Q&A: Hong Kong's New Leader Is a Divisive Figure, but Aims to Build Bridges.* Time magazine.

Representatives from different concern groups across districts met up at 10:00 am to prepare for the public hearing at noon. They were average people, mostly homeowners, quite different from those tenants whom I met in the market. Every neighbor was stressed by figuring out ways to effectively express both collective concern and specific issues regarding their own cases in respective projects within just two minutes (as regulated by the LegCo). Community organizers L and C were trying hard to make sure everyone know the procedure. What I did not expect, as we moved to the hall, was a formal security screening process in which each attendant was checked and labelled and then entered the hall under supervision.

In my fieldnote I wrote:

*After all the serious process, more surprisingly, less than 10 legislators attended as compared to more than 50 resident representatives attended that composed “the public.” After half an hour, the chair announced that the public hearing had to be postponed because the numbers of attendees could not meet the requirement. Most of the residents were irritated, complaining that the politicians never thought about how difficult it was for them to set aside their jobs to come...(fieldnote, 07/12/2010)*

More sadly, a public hearing like this, even if it took place as scheduled, could hardly change anything. In that particular moment I was allowed to see the disconnections among the regime of redevelopment, the disabled formal politics, and the lived experiences of everyday life. Throughout the three months of the first phase of fieldwork (Oct-Dec 2010), moments such as this challenged my research interest on participation in planning as transformative community politics. The idea of “community participation” started to fragment as I stood with those residents and shared with their disappointment but saw minimal connection of their actions with those who did not bother to speak up. These many kinds of citizens or non-citizens seem to live in disconnected cities and act in disconnected civic spaces so that displacement of certain people appear as an inevitable or tolerable process to facilitate redevelopment of the ONE city. How are these disconnections made? It urged me to shelf my previous conceptualization of “urban renewal” and the simple metaphor of bulldozers demolishing *the local* neighborhoods. Many people were displaced in the rapidly changing city. Check. But the process of remaking of city

and displacement seem to involve much more complex dynamics historically and geographically, which I cannot presume as given until finishing the study.

### ***The Dynamics of Displacement***

The sense of disconnection was furthered when I conducted site visits in Wan Chai, where URA carried out many projects right after it was established and most cases were realized or under construction already. The Wedding Card Street remained as a construction site till the end of my fieldwork. It contrasted with the sleek streetscape around “*the East*” (a private mix-use development) where international elites demonstrated the cosmopolitan city in consumption in shopping centers, office towers, and luxurious residences connected by skywalks. As the common idea aired in commercials in Hong Kong, “you don’t need to land.” Indeed, there seems no need to be grounded, which epitomizes the existence of the global citizens and their ties with the city. The well-designed “connection up in the air” is seemingly predicated on the disconnection of them with the rest of city. While local activists and citizens affected by urban renewal busily followed the battle shifting from Hong Kong Island to Kowloon, the renewed Wan Chai became a vibrant urban center for new tenants, which to me still closely contributed to the multiplicity of forces that sustained gentrification and displacement across districts.

An important question, yet ignored by the activists while they targeted the local state and institution, is about “who is the gentrifier” and the production of gentrifiers as Damaris Rose (1984) has rightfully suggested since the 1980s. Calling attention to the reproduction of labor power and employment restructuring, Rose theorizes the production of gentrifiers as an integral part to the production of gentrified dwellings and the process of gentrification without assuming a convenient outrage against displacement. Rose (2009/2010) reminds us that “First, one cannot adequately document and understand the dynamics of displacement if one only studies the experiences of the displaced or those at risk of displacement.” On that note, I would like to suggest that the production of the displacees also deserves attention in theorizing gentrification and redevelopment of the built environment. The process of urban renewal that pushed up new properties and then priced the displacees out should be more carefully examined in terms of both restructuring employment and reproduction of labor power. It is worth seeing if displacement starts from the displacees being subject to processes of devaluation of labor, then becoming

vulnerable to exploitative reproduction work for the gentrified, a process of further dispossession that is often excluded in gentrification research. The dynamics of displacement invites questions of unequal redistribution of reproduction work across gentrified neighborhoods.

Thus part of this research aimed to reveal the invisible connections between the production of the gentrified and the displaced, which are embodied in the continuously changing urban landscape even after the completion of those projects. Urban redevelopment as “production of space”(Lefebvre, 1991), constantly require intensive labor- oftentimes considered as non-nurturant care work- in the daily operation of the spatial practices, an important quality of fixed commodity that is often neglected. The undervaluation of care, as several feminist scholars have suggested, starts from the emphasis on economic production in the industrial capitalism that limits the Marxian reading of labor. Thus I turn to some important Marxian geographers’ work in the following.

### ***Limits to Capital? Revealing the Reproduction of Uneven Development***

Following Marx’s theory of fixed capital (in *Capital*, vol. 2), Harvey considers the built environment as “a geographically ordered, complex, composite commodity” in his work ‘The Limits to Capital’([1982] 2006, pp. 232-238). With a focus on the use values embedded in the physical landscape, Harvey discusses how “the production, ordering, maintenance, renewal and transformation of such a commodity poses serious dilemmas” ([1982] 2006, p. 233). Harvey’s analysis further clarifies the inherent conflicts and inseparability between capitalization and production and points out the tension between two kinds of exchange values: *the capitalized rental on old elements* and *the price of production on the new*. It provides important insight for discussing the political economy of urban renewal.

Yet this theorization of the second circuits of capital seems to overlook the no less important interaction between the capitalization and the reproduction of space.<sup>8</sup> This neglect is especially problematic when studying a highly densified landscape like Hong Kong where the

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<sup>8</sup> Here, I am adopting the Marx’s distinction between productive and reproductive to connect the Marxian geography and emphasize the labor being hidden and exploited in the reproduction of space. But I am aware of Virginia Held’s critique about the phrasing given the risk of missing the way “caring, especially for children, can be transformative rather than merely reproductive and repetitious” (2007).

increasingly complex organization of dwellings requires more intense labor to package the reproductive needs into commodified services.

Marxist scholars often undervalue the theoretical importance of the privatized, commodified services (such as maintenance, management, domestic work, etc.) and how it is integral to the production of surplus of the built environment. Meanwhile, they tend to overlook how the process is realized by dispossessing the laborers' *time* and *space* for their own reproduction (of labor and of human nature) as an irreducible part of everyday life. It is such need for reproduction that complicates the theorization of landed property and urges a more caring perspective to reveal the inseparability between the not-so-dead labour (embodied capital) and living labour in reproductive work. Indeed, as Harvey suggests, "The creation of a built environment obligates us to consider place and spatial arrangements as specific attributes of the capitalist mode of production" ([1982]2006, p.235). But what he seems to ignore, in the focus on urban geography in capitalist mode of production, is human agency's hard work in realizing and challenging the limits of spatial arrangement at the cost of their own needs. Harvey does adjust his view in later work "*Rebel Cities*"(2012) but his argument remains abstract and limited as I've mentioned. In other words, the possibility to regenerate the embodied capital cannot be reduced to reinvestment of fixed capital as it risks simplifying the built environment into only the fixed and thereof missing the important role of agencies in messing the line Marxists draw to distinguish production from reproduction.

Numerous feminist researches on the delegation and privatization of domestic work have shown that the private appropriation of use values (for reproduction) become problematic when one's home become other's workplace (Anderson, 2000; Lutz, 2011; Pratt, 2004b). This critique could be further mobilized to challenge the two kinds of exchange values of the built environment as Harvey suggests (*the capitalized rental on old elements* and *the price of production on the new*) especially when increasing actors started to make the old anew by engaging the conventionally noncapitalist, household-based production (of cooked food and cleaned houses, etc.) in redefining capitalist "properties."

The workings of "capitalocentrism" (Gibson-Graham 1996), theoretically, reminds us how many other forms of production "are seen as opposite (and therefore deficient),

complementary, the same as, or contained within capitalism” and “such ‘capitalnormativity’ confines the proliferative potential of economic difference within a binary frame” (Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2000, p. 13). What I am concerned with, in this project, is the agency’s potentials to recognize the economic differences and to manage to colonize the economic landscape where both production and reproduction work are increasingly fragmented, mobile, and commodified. Indeed, as Harvey notes, “Rent and interest as forms of distribution have to be fully integrated into the theory of the capitalist mode of production” ([1982] 2006, p. 235). What I found unsatisfactory in his analysis of capital and rent, nevertheless, is its weakness of tracing the practices in which agencies push hard to challenge “the limits to capitals” by appropriating economic differences from those who participate in the shifting economic landscape.

Likewise, Neil Smith’s (1984/ 2008) influential theorization of capital in unequal development faces similar challenges. As Smith notes, “At the very least, uneven development is the geographical expression of the contradictions of capital. The geographical fixation of use-value and the fluidity of exchange-value translate into the tendencies toward differentiation and equalization”(N. Smith, 1984/ 2008, p. 202). This argument becomes debatable when we consider the possibility to adjust the definition of use value and exchange value when household-based work and “home” are reconsidered. With a focus on the reproductive part of the built environment, it is more likely to reveal an alternative uneven development of the landscape that is invisible in Smith and Harvey’s work. Then it may be less likely for one to determinedly conclude that agencies’ spontaneous “articulation of modes of production ” is a product of the development and limits of capital, not vice versa.”(N. Smith, 1984/ 2008, p. 208) The invisible uneven development of landscape of reproduction, as Cindi Katz notes in her critiques of Harvey’s work, can only be approached by working with “the mess of indeterminacy” and studying “the practical engagements of the social actors who comprise it and the contradictions that riddle it everywhere.” (2000, p. 244) Lately, Harvey (2012, pp. 35-49) also critically reflects on Marx’s exclusion of analysis of distribution and consumption in bringing forth the generality of production of surplus value. Harvey emphasizes the inadequacy to explain actual events by simply applying the abstract theorization of general laws of motion of capital without paying

attention to particular systems (such as interest, rents, wages, and profits) that fulfill capital circulation and contribute to the active work of “fictitious capital” in land and property market. Still, Harvey stops short of explicitly engaging reproduction in his treatment of capital circulation.

The restructuring of space and reproductive work-including paid and non-paid care work, and how that advanced the capitalization on *the city*, became an important thread to follow in the second phase of my fieldwork. I paid attention to dynamics between the operation of new establishments and the disintegration of old neighborhood driven by urban renewal in my investigation of the two districts. I adopted mixed methods: observation in site visits, collection of first-hand and second-hand material of the use and condition of the built environment and dynamics of the inhabitants, informal and in-depth interviews with the new tenants and the displaced tenants, mainly to trace the connections rather than comparisons obscured by the obvious disjuncture caused by urban renewal.

## ***2.5 Research Journey***

### ***Revisiting Wan Chai: Tracing the Transnational Investment in the Local***

In Wan Chai, most buildings fallen prey to URA projects had been demolished and some projects have been built up as I started research in 2010. New home-buyers and tenants started to settle into those lucrative apartments, especially professional elites and expatriates who work in the financial sector in Central. Meanwhile, converting existing residential spaces into high-end serviced apartments has become new investment trend. It is an articulation of contrasting *time-spaces*- corporate workplace and home- that strangely resonated with the ambiguous openness/closure in globalized R&D laboratories discussed by Massey (2005, pp. 177-179) Starting from a historical review of the emergence of those new establishments (especially serviced apartments) and global tenants, I traced the local projects of urban redevelopment as transnational investment in particular spatialities and geographies to harvest the transient rent value in response to the changes in between 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2008 global financial crisis.<sup>9</sup> The

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<sup>9</sup> According to property studies and news, many office towers were retrofitted into serviced apartments after the crisis during 1997-1998. Another notable change is that Town Planning Board in Hong Kong removed “serviced apartment” from its land use category in Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) in 2000. Yet, the amount and types of serviced apartment continued growing.

investigation was carried out through extensive analysis of property reviews, topical study on luxurious residences, ADs, and annual reports provided by major developers in the area.

The serviced apartment is important “actor” not only in terms of production but also in terms of its mediating a series of invisible changes in the reproductive sphere - how “care work” is privatized and delivered as services in gentrified spaces, meeting with reproductive needs of elite tenants working for the restructuring employment in the service of global corporate city. It could be a key site to detect unrecognized transportation/ translation of reproductive labor. To make it recognizable, I relied on existing study on care work in the hospitality industry and property management and then formulated semi-structured or open-ended interviews with agents who manage the properties, such as property agents, ground managers and labor workers in Wan Chai. I considered their work integral to the enormous effort in need to redevelop the city.

Since their work was delivered to meet the reproductive demands of global skilled labor, the full circle of the transportation/translation of reproductive labor could only be completed if the everyday practice of the globalized workplace-home is also studied. Thus I interviewed with elite tenants who momentarily made their “home away from home” in these serviced residences. The elite tenants were approached through snowball sampling, starting from my personal network and purported recruitment to ensure enough diversity and representativeness of their connectivity to the corporate command.

By walking extensively in the neighborhood, engaging people in informal conversations, frequenting places where interchanges between gentrification and displacement take shape in varied intangible and tangible practices, I tried to tackle the main task of ANT research, “matters of concerns,” as Latour noted, in which “we will make sure that when agencies are introduced they are never presented simply as matters of fact but always as matters of concern, with their *mode of fabrication* and their *stabilizing mechanism* clearly visible” (2005, p. 120, Italics added by the author). It is important to make it clear that “agencies” who contribute to “matters of concern” cannot be reduced to individual human agents, otherwise the theoretical logjam of gentrification caused by overemphasizing gentrifiers would be repeated. With a focus on “mode of fabrication” and “stabilizing mechanism,” I aim to illustrate the unrecognized interchanges

between the displaced and the gentrified that ironically cover the contradictions and dispossession within the processes of resettlement- whether for the displaced or the gentrified.

### ***Arriving in and Departing from Sham Shui Po: the Repetitive Displacement***

Sham Shui Po, a district in western Kowloon where ten URA projects have been taking place, is another site where many passages of my fieldwork convene. In contrast to Wan Chai, a district that tops the average income per capita in Hong Kong, Sham Shui Po has the least average income and is known as a place suffering from aging population, increasing poverty, and concentration of immigrants. I pay attention to the most-deprived tenants and their repetitive dislocation in the context of district-wide urban redevelopment and territory-wise restructuring employment. The everyday struggle of the displaced is juxtaposed with the gentrified, seeing them as constituting one another in their both being mobile and participating in translation of the reproductive into productive in the service of the capitalist property regime.

I adopted similar research strategies to study the accomplishment of URA projects and their continuous engineering of space-times in Sham Shui Po. Among them two URA cases are examined more carefully than others: the *K20-23 project* and *Shunning Road project*. The case studies focused on the production of displacement in Sham Shui Po and then gradually involved extensive relocation locally and transnationally as the ethnographic field research unexpectedly revealed the entanglements of internal and transnational displacement of mainland immigrants across generations. The issues also stand at the center of the local state's struggle of redefining urban citizenship and state autonomy. The possibility of extending the field across the border then mobilizes my thinking of global tenants in Wan Chai, urging me to examine the ambiguous register of "citizenship" and its political implication in recapitalization on the built environment.

### ***Extending the Field Across the Border***

While the case study method allowed me to focus research energy in illustrating the production of displacement in light of the particular confrontation in between affected communities and the authorities and in context of particular urban geographies, it was also constrained in its inability to reach those being systematically displaced in the representation of displacement. It required a different research strategy to trace the entanglements of border

crossings involved in the production of displacement. Thus I diverted my research journey to work with two non-governmental organizations, one self-help group established under the Society for Community Organization (SOCO) and the New Women Arrivals League (NWAL)- a group that advocates for bettering immigrant women's livelihood. This part of research was carried out for about four months (March-June 2011).

I participated in some of their group activities and talked to them in various occasions. From there I conducted one focus group meeting and more than 30 in-depth interviews with immigrants and their families, and social workers who worked with them. Thus this research field started to evolve into tracing the network of structural forces that shape the *field* in a way similar to "extended case method" (Burawoy, 1991, 2009). In ANT's terms, it is the *field* that research tries to bring forward and, as Latour suggests, it is indeed the "work-net" rather than a social explanation of a network worth tracing. I traced trajectories of both the immigrant and the set of caring practices traveling with them and in that sense the *field* is treated as not being bounded but rather porous and open, connected by "a chain of practices"(Dorren Massey, 2004, pp. 82, 86-87).

Along the way, immigrant women who suffer from a combined displacement caused by both urban renewal and difficulties in taking care work across the border gradually become especially important actors in my studying of Sham Shui Po and beyond. I did not mean to exclude men in the research whether they are immigrants or husbands of immigrant women, which I demonstrated in my telling of Mr. W's story. However, they were indeed less engaged in this research partially due to the fact that they have much less of a share than other groups in current immigrant population. Moreover, it is more difficult to get insight from them due to their less interest or availability for participating in self-help group not to mention interview.<sup>10</sup>

To better understand sites where traveling mothers stay before their arrival, I arranged field trips to Guangzhou and Shenzhen at various times of in 2011<sup>11</sup> and focused on

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<sup>10</sup> I successfully talked to three male immigrants and three husbands of new arrivals. They show their support to their families more or less. Nevertheless their comments are less relevant in this paper.

<sup>11</sup> Trips included a visit to Guangzhou (01-04/06/2011) and two visits to Shenzhen (29/03-01/04; 27/08-10/09, 2011).

transformation of urban environment and working conditions of female labour. To contextualize the study, I reviewed shifts in immigration policy and how they were represented in media coverage. It is from the discursive making of new arrivals that I started my analysis of the contested urban citizenship along lines of care, gender, and identity in the wake of gradual integration of Hong Kong and China. The unplanned research detour made this project more unbounded, which, nevertheless, responds better to ANT's idea that social action is not only defined by interactions between actors but also is embedded within a multitude of places and ecological (spatial, material, semiotic) conditions (Latour & Woolgar, 1986). The ethnographic methods as a way of "experiencing, enquiring, and examining" (Wolcott, 1994, 2008) is not only extended but mobilized, becoming itself a chain of practices that move the researcher to better follow the actors.

As the field research closed 10 months after the *Review of URA Strategy* was concluded with a series of new, supposedly milestone policies announced by URA in the beginning of 2011, I returned to Seattle to start writing, meanwhile continuously being connected with the cross-border politics that permeated extensively into Hong Kong's everyday life. The issue of bordering in immigration and integration calls into question the idea of "the city" as a self-contained territory as many have theorized. It is rendered even messier and fuzzier by the acrimonious election of the chief executive in 2012 and meanwhile, the ambitious construction of high-speed rail network that would transport human power and the military more efficiently. The city of Hong Kong, where I started the research of urban renewal, appeared to extend more extensively than my research footprint. Or it may be more appropriate to use the passive tense, as the younger generation in Hong Kong and China prefer in their daily tweetings, the city of Hong Kong has *been extended*. Those local actions I am tracing in the global city, indeed, as Cindy Katz suggests, are different from a "placed-based" politics. In response to the global city making, they are *countertopographies*, "interwoven with local specificities and the impulse for insurgent change"(C. Katz, 2001, p. 1232).

## **Chapter 3**

### **Tenants living on the edge**

#### ***3.1 Tenants On the Edge***

For more than two decades, Hong Kongers have seen the prolonged fiasco of property owners fighting against Urban Renewal Authority (URA) and its predecessor, Land Development Corporation (LDC) regarding redevelopment by resumption of properties. The campaign has been changing, however, with the way in which property ownership has been perceived socially and politically. What has not changed as much, is tenant's voice being the most marginalized, which seems natural under the prevailing ideology constituted by property right and home ownership. Nevertheless, it is such neglect that allows several important policy changes and ideological shifts slip away from public discussion of redevelopment and thus furthers marginalization of tenants. The absence of care for tenants helps perpetuate an understanding of redevelopment only *through* ownership-based properties. In this chapter, I will bring tenants back into the picture and conjure up alternative perspectives to understand urban redevelopment.

##### ***3.1.1 Disappearing Rent Control***

Today, there is no formal security of tenure in Hong Kong after the enactment of Landlord and Tenant (Consolidation) (Amendment) Ordinance (hereafter "the L&T Ordinance") came into effect on 9 July 2004. No more standard rent or rent increase controls were applied. Moreover, since then landlords only need to give notice to their tenants one month before they want to dismiss the lease contracts. Meanwhile, a rocketing rental market has turned allegedly 170000 tenants into worsening housing situations in the past decade,<sup>1</sup> especially those impacted by URA redevelopment projects. While many civil groups were devoted to revising of Urban Renewal Strategy (URS), the seemingly pernicious influences of the L&T Ordinance were not given equivalent attention. To understand how tenants are made so invisible and irrelevant in addressing urban renewal, it is necessary to understand how protection of tenants has been

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<sup>1</sup> The number was adopted from a news in 2007, however, many civic reports suggested that the number of poor tenants living in subdivided units kept increasing whereas the Development Bureau acknowledged its inability to estimate a more precise number in 2011. It became a public debate especially after a fire accident in Mong Kong in December 2011. See more in (April 25, 2007) 170000 tenants struggling in Hong Kong. Apple Daily. A16.

considered opposing to urban redevelopment historically. In the following I briefly review the revision process of the L&T Ordinance and re-articulate rent control with redevelopment.

Mainly, the L&T Ordinance includes two components that can protect the tenants, rent control and security of tenancy. As early as 1921 the Colonial government started to impose rent control in response to rapid rent increases as mainland migration surged.<sup>2</sup> The ad hoc measure excluded new construction in order to encourage private investment in housing provision. In December, 1941, a new act was enacted to set up standard rent and more importantly, security of tenancy. Continuously, the government stated that rent control were only temporary, responsive policies to bring about a healthy and affordable housing market. The trend of reconstruction during 1953-1957 was believed to be a result of rent control and impending change of Building Code (Cheung, 1975).

Since the 1960s, mainstream discourse about rent control had shifted from caring for tenants to protecting property owners. Interest groups formed by developers and property owners, with support from liberal economists, criticized that rent control would discourage developer's interest in investing in old neighborhoods and deprive property owners of profitability they deserved. The Government, though gradually persuaded by the discourse, could not decide when to completely remove rent control. In 1962 the Government proposed "limited protection"<sup>3</sup> to strike a balance between ensuring housing of "the sandwich class"<sup>4</sup> and maintaining momentum of private redevelopment. It emphasized that housing problems can only be solved by engaging private sector to increase housing provision. With the enactment of "Rent Increase Control (domestic premises only) Ordinance," the Government regulated rentals built after Second World War, which allowed no more than 10 % increase every other year (for lease term shorter than three years). It is worthwhile noting that under rent control property owners

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<sup>2</sup> From 1911-1921, population on Hong Kong island increased by 42.1% and in Kowloon by 82.96%. In 1921 the total population was estimated at 625 666. *The 1921 Census of Hong Kong*, p152.

<sup>3</sup> The Colonial Secretary's speech in Legislative Council (26th Sep. 1962) *Proposals for Rent increase controls and security of tenure for certain classes of domestic premises in Hong Kong* (Oct. 1962)

<sup>4</sup> "Sandwich class" was a nickname given to those who could not affordable market-rate housing neither qualify for public housing. It was different from "middle class," which was yet to form until the 1970s according to sociological study in Hong Kong. Lui Tai Lok's work clearly delineated the establishment of middle class and expanding public investment during the period. See more in Lui's work (*SeeNetwork*, 2010).

were only allowed to terminate the lease when they plan to redevelop the premises (renovation did not count) (Article 53 (2)(c)).

During the 1970s and 1980s, the Ordinance went through numerous revisions in response to calling for relaxing the control over rent increases of prewar premises to keep up with inflation. For example, in terms of the amendment in July 1975, the rate was raised to 50% for domestic premises (100% for commercial ones) and then raised again in 1977 and 1978. During the period, 60% of pre-war tenement buildings were reconstructed and many attributed the trend to rent control.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, reconstruction did not necessarily increase provision of housing as expected. Quite a few landlords replaced tenement buildings with concrete apartments or commercial buildings, which might even decrease rental units. At that time, some scholars urged



Fig. 3.1 Tenement buildings in Sham Shui Po to be redeveloped by URA

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<sup>5</sup> After rent control was imposed in 1921, massive reconstruction appeared in 1923. As second world war started, many Chinese fled to Hong Kong to escape domestic war. Due to tremendous housing demand and availability of capital, another trend of reconstruction visited the city during 1953-1957. From the 1970s-80s, pre-war tenement apartment decreased by 60 %, from 9876 to 3960 buildings. *The Report of Reviewing the landlord and tenants (consolidation)*, 1980, pp.133-134. Review Committee.

the tenancy tribunal not to approve any proposal of redevelopment of premises under rent control unless increase of housing supply being ensured. However, the suggestion was not adopted.<sup>6</sup>

In December 1979, the government announced that rent control over residential premises would be expanded to include another 43,000 flats. It aroused enormous critiques from developers and right-wing economists. In the special issue on “tragedy of rent control” (1980) published by *Hong Kong Economic Journal*, the union of developers in Hong Kong stated that rent control would dis-encourage developers and hamper economy. They considered the control a measure to devalue investors’ properties to the degree that is similar to resumption.<sup>7</sup> They insisted that the market was constituted by a range of individual property owners looking after rewarding rate of rentals and the unbearable result of long-term rent control would lead to a total recession caused by handicapped property market. Critiques of rent control flooded local media and many echoed the aforementioned argument. For example, on May 14, 1981 P. Chan wrote on SCMP,

*Rent control simply mitigates the effects of shortage by giving comfort to sitting tenants at the expense of prospective tenants. Furthermore, it inhibits long-term solutions to the housing shortage. Not only is the supply of privately rented accommodation decreasing, but by engendering the attitude that rents should be low, resources are also discouraged from flowing extra housing. [...]The question which has to be answered is whether rent control is an improvement upon the free market mechanism in allocating existing housing accommodation, supplying new dwellings and redistributing income.*

In addition, “*Young Couple’s dreams of home going sour*” was also a theme being adopted to illustrate “the tragedy.”<sup>8</sup> Cases were frequently reported to show how social mobility were obstructed due to rent control.

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<sup>6</sup> See more in *The Report of Reviewing the landlord and tenants (consolidation)*, 1980, pp. 133-134. Review Committee.

<sup>7</sup> Tragedy of Rent Control (Special) (March 1980) *Hong Kong Economic Journal* Monthly Volume III, Issue No. 12, p. 29.

<sup>8</sup> C.S. Yeung, *Young Couple’s dreams of home going sour*, 24th March 1981 SCMP . Another example could be found in “The current rent control should be reformed” (March 30, 1981) *Overseas Chinese Daily*.

Economists also criticized rent control. Professor Cheung's study (1975) of those premises being imposed by rent control since 1947 to the 1970s<sup>9</sup> was considered the most important piece among many. Cheung was not only interested in the twin problem of reconstruction and eviction (caused by rent control) but also the ambiguous transfer of right between landlords and tenants. Cheung argued that it is not possible to specify the grey area between landlord's right to reconstruction and tenant's right to possession under rent control. Paying attention to the common practice of lump sum money given by the tenant to the landlord to secure tenancy, Cheung argued that the non-exclusive income as a result of rent gap produced by rent control would cause informal transaction to intervene with functioning of the market, which would result in unnecessary reconstruction or informal transactions that hamper the efficiency of housing market. Informal transaction, as Cheung observed from cases of the tribunal, including subtenancy, illegal rooftop dwelling, subdivision, lump sum money, etc., which brought about social and economic costs. Cheung's theory did not influence the government's decision then, yet provided solid arguments for liberalist politician and developers in the following three decades.

Revisiting Cheung's theory today, almost a decade from the amendment of the Ordinance in 2004, it is obvious that some of his presumption did not stand. Rental market did not achieve a better equilibrium as policy makers and the public expect. The kind of informal transaction in rental housing market clearly did not wane but increase due to many unexpected transnational forces shaped market behaviors. As Gilderbloom and Appelbaum suggested, "If sociologists have ignored the economic factors in housing market operation, economists have ignored the institutional factors" (1988, p.46). Cheung's theory of dissipation of rent could not fully capture how rental practice intertwined with other social practices that continuously traverse the conceived boundary of market and territory. On that note, reducing renting practices into simply economic transactions missed its focus though the theoretical construct itself seems perfect. I return to this discussion drawing upon my empirical study in Chapter 5 and 7.

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<sup>9</sup> The Landlord and Tenant Ordinance was enacted on May 23 1947 to replace the Proclamation of 1945, setting control on all prewar private dwellings.

The *rent (increase) control* was ended in the amendment of L&T Ordinance on 31 Dec 1998. It was considered as no necessity in moment when supply was plenty. Rent control would only deprive landlords “capacity to maintain their properties and moreover, hinder the speed of urban redevelopment.”<sup>10</sup> From the 50s-90s, the discourse about “right” had been shifting from tenant toward owner’s side and was articulated with redevelopment inconsistently, changing from “inadequate rent control would cause unnecessary redevelopment” to “rent control would slow down redevelopment.” Social conceptualization of “housing rights” was replaced by economic explanation of “property right” and with that tenants had fallen into disfavor.

### ***3.1.2 Housing Market as a Belief***

In line with economic development in Hong Kong, sympathy for the underprivileged and expectation for welfarist regime has been gradually replaced by a belief in a *laissez faire* capitalism. In regarding housing policy, an emergent idea of contractual binding which defined individual right and responsibility had replaced a collective commitment to take care of poor tenants. “Integrity of contract,” dominated debates on withdrawing rent control in terms of *security of tenancy* during the 80s until the measure was finally removed in 2004.<sup>11</sup>

Over the decades, increasing media coverage of “*deadbeat renters*”<sup>12</sup> contributed to subject making which reinforced the conceptual opposition between “property owners” and “tenants who refused to pay rent or leave.” The imageries of humble property owners were further rendered as poor elderlies, as the Legislator Ip Kwok-Him questioned in the decisive LegCo meeting before the bill was passed, “These tenements apartments were the only property those elderly count on after 30-40 years’ hard working. How can you deprive their right to live on their own properties?”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Report proposed by Housing Authority in LegCo, 22/12/1998. [online available] <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr98-99/chinese/panels/hg/papers/hg22121b.htm>

<sup>11</sup>The revision would significantly shorten the amount of time necessary to resume a property to approximately 63-70 days.

<sup>12</sup> About 36,000,000 results were available when using keywords of “deadbeat renters” in combination with “Hong Kong” (in Chinese, 租霸) to search on google as of March 2012.

<sup>13</sup> See Ip’s words in Minutes of LegCo regular meeting (June 30, 2004), pp. 5219-5222. [online available] <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr03-04/chinese/counmtg/hansard/cm0630ti-translate-c.pdf>

This seemingly convincing argument implied a neoliberal idea that shifted government's responsibility of social security<sup>14</sup> to tenants by rendering landlords as mostly elderly whose retirement counted on letting. The argument was widely received in a society like Hong Kong where "self-help" and "can-do" spirit has been appreciated (Dinnie, 2011, p. 157). The pro-elderly landlord discourse assumed that every landlord of cheaper tenement building was elderly and moreover, everybody should take care of his or her retirement life. It reinforced the long-existing ideology that government should not intervene in private spheres, including choices of housing and retirement arrangement. As of 2004, *Mandatory Provident Fund* (MPF) had been only established for six years, so that its history was not long enough to change people's mindset. Until now, many Hong Kongers still considered retirement their own responsibilities. Engaging ideology as such, those who support removing rent control thus conveniently position elderly landlords in opposition to tenants, creating conceptual conflicts of interest to justify the bill.

More importantly, the negative equity crisis during 1998-2003 following the Asian Financial Crisis set out the context for the HKSAR to overhaul rent control and housing policy. The failing housing market not only brought about social disputes but also political drama which forced the first Executive of SAR, Tung Chee-hwa to step down in 2005. To solve the political and economic crisis, a series of "Suen Nine Measures"<sup>15</sup> was proposed, including "removing rent control", to boost property market. The prevailing argument in LegCO then suggested that *security of tenancy* in order to solve the specific housing crisis during the late 70s to early 80s<sup>16</sup> lost its significance in a moment when rent dropped by almost 50% from 1997 to 2004. It harkened to the majority middle class, insisting that security of tenancy is not adequate policy when facing almost recession in housing market.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> The Mandatory Provident Fund Authority (MPFA) was established in September 1998 under the MPF Scheme Ordinance (legislation set up in 1995) to regulate and supervise the operations of provident fund schemes. Before 1998, there was no social security at work to ensure retirement plan.

<sup>15</sup> To combat the crisis, Michael Suen Ming Yeung, then served as the head of Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau, proposed the so-called "Suen Nine Measures" to boost housing market" in 2002.

<sup>16</sup> The housing crisis was related to immigration flooding from Mainland in the wake of border control change.

<sup>17</sup> Audrey EU Yuet-mee, then the chair of the committee in charge of the bill, insisted that the revision was to bring housing market back on track and government's intervention had to be reduced as much as possible. Eu suggested a clear separation of those in need of public housing and regular tenants who should deal with rental relations with their landlords according to logic of free market. See more in the minute(pp. 5159-5160) as mentioned in note 14.

There were some legislators trying to speak for the low income tenants in Sham Shui Po and other historical districts. They pointed out that more than 200,000 tenants would be influenced by a massive trend of redevelopment (whether URA or private development) if the bill was passed. Yet a neoliberal reading of the possible impact suggested that more than 200,000 flats were to be released to free market so that dynamic circulation of capital could be restored. After all, the majority were made to believe that transactional justice was more important than deliberative justice. The discursive shift suggested that in a genuine free market, both landlords and tenants can enjoy rights and freedom to negotiate depending upon their different needs.

### ***3.1.3 Building Home Ownership***

We cannot comprehend how the tenant is marginalized without understanding the transformation of housing policy in Hong Kong since the 1970s. A series of policies forged ideological shifts that transformed government's role in housing and citizen's aspiration for homeownership. Along these lines, private rentals had been gradually considered as catering to transitory demand and public rental housing was constructed as safety net only for the most underprivileged.

In response to social unrest during the 1960s, the colonial government changed its governance from least intervention to welfarist regime, investing largely in public housing and education to improve political stability and to provide cheap labor to industrial development (Castells, Goh, & Knok, 1990; Yung, 2008). Moreover, as Alan Smart suggested (2006), it was through slum clearance with relocating settlers in public housing that the government was able to make use of urban land according to an economic agenda. The Governor Murray MacLehose's announcement of a *Ten Year Housing Programme* (1973- lasted until mid-1980s) which attempted to construct 400,000 units to house those could not meet by private rental housing supply.<sup>18</sup> In the mid-1970s, the *Home Ownership Scheme* (HOS) provided subsidized build-for-sale units at discount of 20 and 50% on the estimated market price of comparable private-sector housing units to those sitting tenants in public rental housing and the means-tested households. Although the HOS started on a small scale, it now accounts for about 25% of Hong Kong's total

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<sup>18</sup> Despite the original goal never fully realized, the increasing provision of public housing did achieve its political goal. Also see Schiffer 1991, S. W. K. Chiu, Ho, and Lui (1997, 52-53) .

public housing (A. La Grange & Pretorius, 2002). What's worth noting is the nature of subsidized housing in combination with resale mechanism at market-related prices that can repay the public investment, has historically enabled the release of the residual value embodied in land but under circumstances extremely advantageous to the government. Considered as management of land value-based on the lease-hold system in Hong Kong, the scheme has successfully created a commodity of an incompletely commodified product (A. La Grange & Pretorius, 2005, p. 2483) Following the line of analysis, how to fully mobilize un-utilized land value to create public revenue appeared to be arguably more important than improving housing supply as the authorities actually decreased rental housing supply along the years. No matter what the real attempt was, the ideological work of promoting home ownership has indeed successfully prevailed the society and contributed to decreasing role of government in intervening with private rental market (A. La Grange & Pretorius, 2002).

The idea of releasing land value also changed the way the city was envisioned. When it came to late 80s, the *Metropolitan plan* and the *Private Sector Priority Strategy* aimed to bring about a back-to-city-center movement of investment, mostly private investment. Against the post-war context in which large-scale reclamation on both sides of Victoria Harbour, Sha Tin and Tuen Mun that attempted to decentralize the population, The Metropolitan plan was proposed in 1990 to relocate the population around the harbor by massive reclamation and encouraging private investment in housing. Essentially a neoliberal logic of planning strategy, it suggested that redevelopment of the city center was necessary for creating new spaces of capitalization. In the government's terms, its a strategy to fully mobilize private capital to boom urban economy (馮邦彥, 2001, p. 208).

Meanwhile, home ownership had become an index of social status that represented capable Hong Konger's first step toward joining capitalization over properties. In the midst of growing interest in financialization of housing into real estate (Alan Smart & Lee, 2003b), "tenants" lost its social and political currency. Though poor tenants did not disappear, the representation of tenants, however, was just covered by success of public housing and economic growth in witnessing surging housing market during the years toward the handover. Since 1997, the first executive of SAR, Tung Chee-hwa, made endeavor into largely expanding housing

provision, aiming to construct 85,000 flats a year to achieve a home-ownership rate of 70% by 2007, and to reduce the waiting time for public rental housing from seven years to three years by 2005. However, Tung's policy failed as the Negative Equity turned many middle-class people seeing their wealth becoming bubble within a night. Before the staggering market led to Tung's resignation, the 85,000 flats policy was suspended and thus brought the HOS an end. Housing market returned on track gradually since 2004 and in the process reaffirmed the government's withdrawal from market.

The housing crisis painted the background of the discussion of revising the L&T Ordinance as mentioned. Following 2004, Hong Kong saw a rapidly recovery of housing market and meanwhile growing tenants were trapped in inadequate housing. The waiting list for public housing was never shorten. The pro-homeownership policy appeared to be blind to the the role of the private rental sector in mitigating housing shortage and the consequences its erosion may have for efficiency generally in the allocation of housing resources in Hong Kong (A. La Grange & Pretorius, 2002, p. 738).

In these policy debates lies a remaining question about the myth of property ladder and home ownership. It encouraged people to work hard to buy their own homes and to upgrade their properties along with social mobilization. However, as Betty Yung noted (2008, p199), what people need may be a secured tenancy rather than a property of their own in many cases. Homeownership, on the other hand, could be read as a contract between the society, tenure patterns, and governance that involved more institutional arrangements than a personal aspiration or economic achievement in reviewing the HOS.

The discursive contestation regarding rent control over the past five decades has changed largely with the development agenda of the city, finally becoming subject to the ever stronger alliance between land and the ruling class. Against the context, the tenant's right to housing is displaced by property rights of owners, or more precisely, increasing investors who zealously participate in property speculation. Reconstruction/redevelopment was not by nature an economic issue when Hong Kong was colonized but *made to be an economic issue* as the city sees itself becoming an international financial center from 90s onwards. The change, both

ideologically and substantially, laid out the horizon where government-led authorities were about to renew an agenda of urban redevelopment in the next two decades.

### ***3.2 Evolving Forms of Urban Redevelopment***

#### ***3.2.1 Emergent Private Redevelopment and Real Estate Industry***

*The concept of taking property away from one person in order to sell it to another is essential to the concept of urban renewal.*

(Urban Renewal District Outline Zoning Plan, 1969, p. 67)

During the post war period, many tenement apartments were replaced by higher concrete buildings in the wake of refugees flooding from the Mainland China which turned the pre-war population of 1.6 million to 3 million by 1960. Several institutional changes shaped the ground for private redevelopment and enable the real estate industry to grow, including the acknowledgement of selling shares of undivided lease with flat of a building since 1956 (23/02/1956, Lands Department, LOCM No.1), relaxation of Building Code in 1955,<sup>19</sup> and the initiation of selling condominiums with separate occupation and housing loan in the 60s. During the time, five-to- seven-story buildings of separate occupation of two or more flats each floor became a prototype for redevelopment, which mostly fell into the category of old buildings qualified for redevelopment during 1990s-2010 (Fig. 3.1).

In 1962 a new set of building regulations further changed the control of building development intensity from building volume to plot ratio and site coverage. It would, in effect, reduce the developable area of most building sites. Accordingly, developers rushed to submit plans of all kinds in order to retain the benefit of plans approved under the old regulations within the grace period, which resulted in great property surplus. In a nutshell, redevelopment in the city was mainly driven by private capital during 1950s-60s.

Not until 1960s did the government more actively step into urban redevelopment. In 1965, the report by the Working Party of Slum Clearance (para#23) recommended that:

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<sup>19</sup> Before the amendment of Building Ordinance in 1955, most pre-war buildings could not exceed five story-high according to regulation enacted from 1903 onwards. The new ordinance allowed buildings height to be 1.41 times of the width of street it faces as maximum. By the time a 5 story-high or above building could not be constructed without application and approval by the Governor .

*where a high proportion of buildings are so dilapidated and potentially dangerous as to endanger the occupants or inhibited development of adjoining sites, or where population densities and occupancy rates are so high as to render the buildings a potential danger to the health and safety of the occupants, the area should be scheduled for urban renewal.* <sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, the report defines “urban renewal” as follows, “old and dilapidated sub-standard buildings, the planning of the cleared area to provide communications and amenities, and its redevelopment in accordance with an approved plan.”(qtd. in Mo, 1980, p. 19) It was in the report that *urban renewal* was defined as a public purpose to achieve better good for which Government may resume land under the Crown Lands Resumption Guidance and legislation to this effect to be enacted if necessary (para#107). In this light, the Town Planning Board was assigned to prepare the first *Urban Renewal District Outline Zoning Plan* (URDOZP) during 1969-72,<sup>21</sup> a plan that covered part of the Western district on Hong Kong Island, including Sheung Wan and part of Central.<sup>22</sup> As noted in the URDOZP,

*By clearing blighted areas and rehousing those families displaced into new accommodation and then subsequently rebuilding the old sites for new purposes, urban renewal can bolster the economy and provide for the expansion of essential urban functions and community requirements.* (URDOZP, 1969, p67)

Urban renewal was also considered as beneficial to urban economy, moreover, a simple physical tool of to mitigate vicious side effects of rent control- that landlords often were not able to afford maintenance of buildings (URDOZP, 1969, p68). With a clearly modernist planning idea, the poor neighborhood was considered congested, insufficient of public space, and ill-ventilated.

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<sup>20</sup> The Report of The Working Party of Slum Clearance (para#23).

<sup>21</sup> *Urban Renewal District Outline Zoning Plan* (307.3416 SHI) Printed and published by J. R. Lee, Gov. Printer at the Government Press, JAVA road, HK. 1969, May 6th, prepared by TPB, Urban Renewal District OZP No. LH 3/48 Public Work Department, 1970, Report of the Working Party on the Pilot Scheme Area.

<sup>22</sup> The area is bounded by Queen’s Road, Hollywood Road and Shing Wng Street and consists of 12.8 acres and a population of approximately 200 (gross residential density 1530 persons per acre). (The Report of The Working Party of Slum Clearance).

Several details of the study were worth mentioning to show the changes of policy logic regarding housing in general and rehousing for redevelopment in particular over the past decades. Compared to rehousing today, the rehousing study then appeared to have more concern for continuity of employment and affordability.<sup>23</sup> It suggested that displaced tenants should be offered government low cost housing “regardless of income.” It discussed the likely increased rent for displaced tenants if they wanted to remain in the same area (2.5 times more on rent expenditure if they moved into post-war flats in the area)<sup>24</sup> and efforts to provide “a wide choice as to their future place of residence” (URDOZP, 1969, p. 63) In brief, government low cost housing was considered a better option compared to other post-war buildings of uncertain quality as long as the government housing was built somewhere else because it might destroy traditional commercial and business function in the area. The judgement remained in planning logic even until today that I further discuss in Chapter 7.

In the rehousing plan we see home ownership being encouraged as it predicted that some impacted tenants would make use of compensation to pay down-payments for a post-war housing. Over all, we could see rehousing being drafted based on more rigorous survey of numbers of tenants and stocking of rentals available to meet tenant’s needs. It pictured a generous city where displacement would not be allowed, a vision which gradually faded in following reforms of urban renewal in Hong Kong.

Within the Urban Renewal District, an area of 5.2 ha was designated as “Pilot Scheme Area” that would affected 4,000 households in 1965. The very first comprehensive model, due to a lacking of fund for rehousing and coordination between departments and concerned agencies, did not finish until 1999. Despite the lapse of its completion, the outcome was considered generally achieving the objectives of physical and environmental improvements (Yeh, 1990, p. 365). The model’s financial viability, however, relied on balance between rehousing, cost for

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<sup>23</sup> According to the Planing-Engineering Feasibility Study carried out in 1968, 62.8% of households were having expenditure of less than \$6.45 per month, and it is evident that most of the occupiers were unable to afford to pay higher rents to move into other post-war buildings.

<sup>24</sup> As it noted, “Judging by the comparison between the average rental in each survey they would have to pay 2 1/2 times more on rent expenditure if they moved into post-war flats in the area.” (*Urban Renewal District Outline Zoning Plan, 1969*, p. 62)

deconstruction, and land sale. Some critiques suggested that rehousing arrangement might had been too generous (Mo, 1980, pp. 80-81).

Meanwhile, there were other experimental projects, including the Urban Improvement Scheme (Galbreath-Ruffin International & Hong Kong Housing, 1975) carried out by Housing Society, *Environmental Improvement Areas* and *Comprehensive Redevelopment areas* (Adams & Hastings, 2001; Jim, 1994; Yeh, 1990). None of them could achieve a comprehensive redevelopment of sizable area and transferable model. Interestingly, today the public considered the Urban Improvement Scheme carried out by Housing Society during 70s-80s a much better model in which redevelopment would provide affected owners or tenants in-situ rehousing and chances to buy new flats at discounted price though its scale and profitability was evaluated as not satisfying as the Housing Society as concerned.<sup>25</sup>

Generally speaking, the lapse of public effort in guiding redevelopment contrasted with the aforementioned private redevelopment and large residential estates by brownfield redevelopment such as *Mei Foo Sun Chuen* in Kowloon or *TaiKoo Shing* at Quarry Bay, Hong Kong island during late 60s-80s. Before 90s, urban redevelopment in Hong Kong had mainly taken shape in sporadic high-rise projects on small sites as “small-scale “pencil redevelopment.”

### **3.2.2 Land Development Corporation**

The establishment of the Land Development Corporation (LDC) in 1987<sup>26</sup> turned over a new leaf. It was modeled after Urban Development Corporations in the UK. With such an institution it was expected to pursue a feasible and efficient comprehensive development. When the LDC bill was introduced to the LegCo in 1987, the *South China Morning Post* opined:

*Gone will be the days when ‘nightsoil ladies’ have to climb several flights of stairs before dawn to collect sewage from the pre-war tenements which lack toilets. Replacing the eyesores will be handsome skyscrapers.*<sup>27</sup>

With public fund of \$1.3 M as start up capital, LDC worked with private developers via joint ventures through competitive tendering. Several focal areas were identified in the very

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with Melissa (Mar 22, 2011).

<sup>26</sup> LDC was established in December 1987 under the Land Development Corporation Ordinance (Chap. 15).

<sup>27</sup> Tsang, S. W. (October 28, 1987). A cure for our eyesores. SCMP.

beginning era of LDC and remained effective until today, including Wan Chai, Mong Kok, Sham Shui Po, Hung Hom, Ma Tau Kok, Shau Kei Wan, and Tai Kok Tsui. LDC started with eight projects, aiming to initiate four urban redevelopment projects during as minimum each of the next five years and to develop more projects on its own gradually (p5, LDC Annual Report, 1990/91). Most of the 52 LDC redevelopment projects were joint ventures with private developers except a few were with Housing Society.<sup>28</sup> In short, the model worked well before financial crisis in 1997 (Ng, 2002).

LDC acquired properties in project areas through private agreement and claimed to “ensure that offers made are fair and reasonable” (p17, LDC Annual Report, 1990/1991). For those unreasonable, excessive demands or absentee-owners or title deficiencies, LDC requested the Secretary for Planning, Environment and Lands under Section 15 of the LDC Ordinance to recommend resumption proceedings to the Governor-in-Council.

LDC alleged that it would offer a sufficient amount of money to enable domestic owners to purchase a reasonable replacement flat in the vicinity. The package had changed with its financial capacity and up and down of the market.<sup>29</sup> (see table 3.1) Affected owners were granted priority to purchase LDC flats at a discount price and such benefit may be extended to tenants if stocking of housing was plenty. There was a sense of encouraging home ownership in LDC’s developing a *Special Interest Rate Home Mortgage Arrangement* for owners or tenants who are in need of financial assistance.

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<sup>28</sup> Only few projects were developed by LDC, such as West Harbor City (H2) 、 Queen’s Road Central (H8) 、 Tai Yuen Street-Wan Chai Road (H10/H11), etc. Quite a few projects took more than ten years, such as the Queen’s Road project had its OZP approved on Dec. 1, 1998, finally finished and entered the market in June of 2003. It also took more than 10 year for H10/H11 to see its first phase being realized.

<sup>29</sup> As it noted in the compensation & Rehousing Packages (1991/1992), owners of domestic properties were offered “an additional allowance over and above the market value of their property to enable them to purchase a recently built flat in the vicinity.” (51, Appendix, LDC’s Annual Report 1991/1992)

Besides, a variety of rehousing options were available for tenants, including rehousing in rental flats provided by LDC,<sup>30</sup> cash payment, and special home mortgage arrangement.<sup>31</sup> LDC's cash compensation arrangement was many times more than those stipulated under the L& T (Consolidation) Ordinance.<sup>32</sup> In 1993 LDC again raised its compensation from two times of the ratable (indirect levy on properties)<sup>33</sup> to five times and extra allowance on condition.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the compensation package was considered a generous offer as compared to URA's package.

Table 3.1 *Changes regarding LDC Compensation Package for affected property owners*

date	standard for LDC compensation package	exceptional case of the year
prior to November 1991	notional price of new flats in the vicinity	
November 1991 to June 1997	notional price of 1 to 3-year-old flats in the vicinity	
April 1997 to Dec 1997	notional price of 10-year-old flats in the vicinity (Government revised its standard)	notional price of 5-year-old flats in the vicinity for Tsueng Wan and Kennedy Town Projects
After January 1998	10-year-old flats in the vicinity (LDC revised its standard)	

source: adopted from documents presented to the committee of land and planning under LegCo(Feb 28, 2001) [CB(1)71100-01(06)]& (Feb 27, 2001)[CB(1)70200-01]

<sup>30</sup> LDC acquired five properties that could provide 370 units in all, of size ranging from 400-700 sqft. They were located in Sai Yin Pun, Sham Shui Po, Des Voex Road West, Tai Kok Tsui and Tai Wai. (p6 in the Annual Review 1989/1990) Moreover, LDC initiated the Third Street project that built a residential project for rehousing displaced residents in other redevelopment projects undertaken by LDC (a 192-unit residential block). LDC also built homes and hostels especially for the elderly tenants.

<sup>31</sup> A Special Interest Rate Home Mortgage Arrangement provided applicable interest rate that was the best lending rate for the first two years and thereafter the best lending rate plus 0.5% per annum.

<sup>32</sup> Cash compensation was offered by LDC with reference to then statutory requirements and is based on the 1983 or then ratable value. According L& T Ordinance, the compensation was two times the 1983 ratable value for Part II tenancies plus removal allowance. For LDC compensation, it would offered cash compensation between 8x 1983 ratable value and 16x 1983 ratable value or 2 x ratable value of the time being, whichever is higher. It was adjusted based on size of the household. (59, Appendix, LDC's Annual Report 1991/1992)

<sup>33</sup> Rates are one of Hong Kong's indirect taxes levied on properties for part of Government's general revenue. Rates are charged at a percentage of the ratable value which is the estimated annual rental value of a property at a designated valuation reference date, assuming that the property was then vacant and to let.

<sup>34</sup> Under the new package, tenants who readily consent to fulfill their Surrender Agreement within three months of the formal offer would be given an additional cash grant amounting to 30% of the cash compensation.

Along with the Queen Street Development, LDC launched *flat for flat scheme* that offered domestic owners the option of a domestic unit upon completion of the project. A rental allowance of not less than \$25,802 was granted for each of those owners during the development period. Eligible owners may opt to exchange a domestic unit in LDC's existing properties on Third Street or Kui Yan Lane. The realization of *flat for flat exchange* was very challenging in terms of both securing enough amount of housing for exchange in the fully built-up neighborhood and the management of exchange and allocation. According to a former senior manager of LDC, Y. Y. Pon,<sup>35</sup> "Many owners affected by LDC projects opted for *flat for flat exchange*. It was very complicated, you need to show them around, to select a unit they like and we ended it up doing lottery since everybody preferred a unit of better orientation."

LDC did not end up with success, as argued by scholars, because a lack of power, resource, effective mechanisms to deal with sites and re-housing, and also was partially crushed by the market failure in 1997. Increasingly high interest rate and slow process due to extensive bargaining with owners (especially K13 in Tsueng Wan and K2 on Shanghai street) caused serious financial deficits. LDC occasionally acknowledged its financial difficulty in fulfilling rehousing and compensation toward the end of its operation (Annual Report, 1992/1993; 1996/1997). Despite its promise of no tenants left homeless, LDC gradually narrowed down its commitment to low income tenants who rented "cage homes" while it encourage family tenants to buy houses with the cash compensation.

Along with LDC in operation, the *Back to Harbour: Metroplan (Metroplan)* exhibited a planning vision for Hong Kong to bring development back to Harbour and foster a expanded city center where tertiary industry can further grow in 1990. In the light, redevelopment in the highly urbanized city center became an economic issue more than as a housing issue. Land supply and redevelopment of old districts and the industrial area were considered a collective process in terms of resource allocation and generating revenue to ensure financial feasibility.

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<sup>35</sup> The manager Y. Y. Pong's comment was referred to two major projects, the Centre and Grand Millennium Plaza. See the appendix of the Overview Report (URA, 2001).

### ***3.2.3 Years in Transition (from LDC to URA: 1997-2001)***

*A cosmetic attempt to patch up the physical manifestations of market failure.*

Legislator Christine Loh on the URA bill, 2000 (qtd. in Lai, 2000)

Toward the handover, many discussion about reforming LDC hovered the city yet never was concluded till the first executive of SAR, Tung, Chee-hwa, announced in his policy address that urban redevelopment was too slow to catch up with the city. Tung proposed to replace LDC by Urban Renewal Authority (URA), a new institution that would be granted more power to resume and carry out comprehensive plan. To the public's surprise, the to-be-replaced LDC still announced a 7-year-phase redevelopment soon after Tung's announcement. It included 26 projects that would affect more than 40,000 residents and cost more than 8 billion HKD. At a moment when Hong Kong started to experience Asian financial crisis and diving stock market, LDC's move could hardly attract any partner developer. Only one among the 26 projects, K11 in Tsim Sha Tsui, found its tender, as 25 unfinished projects were left to URA. The gap between two entities, however, resulted in the property owners' hesitation in maintaining their properties and thus turned the old buildings into dilapidated condition.

After all, URA was established on 1 May 2001<sup>36</sup> to replace LDC. It's establishment in tandem with the enactment of Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance once shed light on the practice with its encouraging planning rhetoric such as "people-centered approach," "environmentally-friendly design and planning," and "preserving social networks of the local community"(Planning and Land Branch, 2001). However, the new semi-public entity did not seem to realize those goals well. It has been regarded as a renewed redevelopment program without changing its essential logic and philosophy as it still prioritized physical redevelopment and financial success (Ng, Cook, & Chui, 2001). It failed to deliver a sustainable urban

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<sup>36</sup> The operation of URA was ensured by three documents: 1) Urban Renewal Ordinance that defined URA's accountability and authority; 2) Compensation Package that replaces LDC's; 3) URS that guides URA's work.

regeneration strategy.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, it has been blind to the rapidly changing demographics,<sup>38</sup> a critical point that I revisit in Chapter 6 and 7.

Today, the extensive debates during the transitional years between LDC and URA (1998-2001) were still recalled, especially the once well-known "Fisher-Seven-Article,"<sup>39</sup> which was considered a key to bring about the legislature of URO for URA to establish. The document was characterized by its better compensation package, benefits for displaced tenants to participate in homeownership program, and flat-for-flat rehousing. It promised to raise the standard for compensating domestic properties from ten-year-old flats to seven-year-old flats. It also promised to ensure flats for *flat-for-flat* rehousing no less than 1.2 times the number of participating owners. With Fisher-Seven-Article, Land's Bureau also submitted a document entitled "flat-for-flat program for URA affected owners,"<sup>40</sup> in which it suggested URA to apply for 1,000 public housing flats from Housing Authority for rehousing.<sup>41</sup>

The extent to which discussants argued with one another about "how-many-years" was stunning as if the particular issue was the most important matter in redevelopment. Overall, most comments submitted regarding the draft of URO<sup>42</sup> were related to compensation and property owner's bargaining power in dealing with resumption. Alternatives to reconstruction, such as

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<sup>37</sup> The main objectives of urban renewal are: restructuring and re-planning designated target areas; designing more effective and environmentally-friendly local transport and road networks; rationalizing land uses; redeveloping dilapidated buildings into new buildings of modern standard and environmentally-friendly design; preserving buildings, sites and structures of historical, cultural or architectural interest; preserving as far as practicable local characteristics; preserving the social networks of the local community, just to name a few (Alan Smart & Lee, 2003b).

<sup>38</sup> In Hong Kong, the population has been increased sharply throughout the 1990s due to a flood of immigrant works from the mainland in 90s. It reached over 7 million in 2008 according to HK Census statistics.

<sup>39</sup> On March 2000, after a special meeting regarding the matter, Housing, Planning and Land's Bureau sent out a letter to the public, in the deputy Stephen Frederick Fisher's capacity, responding to growing concern with the future operation of URA. The letter released the well known "Fisher-Seven-Article."

<sup>40</sup> *Flat-for-flat proposal for owners affected by URA projects.* (Mar 2001) LegCo. CB(1)723/00-01(03) (accessed on 1 March)[online available] <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr00-01/chinese/panels/plw/papers/a723c03.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> In the meeting reviewing the white paper of URS in the LegCo, councilors questioned that an estimation of 1000 flats in need for rehousing, a number based on a survey done in 1996, was not adequate. LegCO, CB(1)2113/99-00, minutes of *the Committee on URO Draft* (Dec 06, 1999) [http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/chinese/hc/sub\\_com/hs01/minutes/hs010612.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/chinese/hc/sub_com/hs01/minutes/hs010612.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Minutes of *the Committee on URO Draft* (a collection of submissions) [http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/chinese/hc/sub\\_com/hs01/papers/hs01\\_ppr.htm](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/chinese/hc/sub_com/hs01/papers/hs01_ppr.htm)

preservation or refurbishment were not addressed. No one seemed to pay attention to the fact that many tenants in the-to-be-renewed had no clue about the draft of URO either.<sup>43</sup>

Only a few civic groups along with some planners and scholars raised questions about civic participation in urban redevelopment and the vague notion of “public good.” In a submission by St James’s Settlement and some planning scholars,<sup>44</sup> it called for setting up institution to facilitate participatory planning so that community network and social relationships embedded in the built environment could be better sustained in new development. It also asked for a more clear definition of “public good” and how that may encroach on individual-based rights in certain conditions. However, less attention was given to the line of discussion that attempted for a genuine “people-oriented” redevelopment.

### ***3.2.4 Building Up Authority of Urban Renewal***

URA and URS have been enacted since 2001. Despite a seemingly better compensation package to property owners, URA did not address issues like “flat-for-flat exchange” or a guaranteed relocation in the vicinity for tenants, which became a point of departure for community movements later in the case of Wedding Card Street discussed in Chapter Four. In retrospect, seemingly too much concern for the compensation package made legislators and the public blind to the largely greater power and capital granted to URA. The authority was granted 1 billion as start-up capita, 100 times of the 10M granted to LDC. Moreover, URA did not need to pay a land premium for its projects and obtained more flexibility in raising Floor Area Ratio, all of which made its projects more financially feasible than LDC.

Most importantly, URA was granted power to largely shorten the process of resumption as it was not required to prove that every possible measure has been made to ensure a fair compensation as LDC was. In the past, LDC was not granted such power until it accomplished at

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<sup>43</sup> The draft of URO was released by SAR for consultation in 1999. See more in the survey carried out by the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA)(29/12/1999) The group interviewed 289 tenants living in seven old districts in Kowloon peninsula (18-06/12/1999).

<sup>44</sup> St James’s Settlement’s submission (12/1999) Urban Renewal by Citizens. LegCo, CB(1)705/99-00 (01) (accessed on 1 March)[online available] [http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/chinese/hc/sub\\_com/hs01/papers/705c01.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr99-00/chinese/hc/sub_com/hs01/papers/705c01.pdf)

least 90% of land acquisition by deal, which could take more than 5 years up to 10 years.<sup>45</sup> URA may just apply to the Secretary of Development to recommend to the Chief Executive in Council the resumption of land required for urban renewal directly within 24 months after the plan for the scheme prepared under the Town Planning Ordinance being approved. The stipulation is said to ensure that the residents do not have to wait too long to know whether their properties will be resumed and to reduce financial risk of development.

Some critics argued that resumption as such was only justifiably granted to appropriating mainly farmland for building the railway that connected Kowloon and Guangzhou rather than for redevelopment in this manner without unclear public interest.<sup>46</sup> Nevertheless, URA has been acting with the power of the Ordinance since 2002. Targeting at about 9,300 private buildings in the Metro Area, which are 30 years' old and above, URA pursued at redevelopment of some 2,000 aging or dilapidated buildings in 20 years. URA developed its 4Rs approach, allegedly “a holistic approach to unlock the full potential of urban renewal” (URA, 2005), including *Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, pReservation and Revitalisation*. Yet with cases I examine later it is clear that urban renewal is conceived as an economic project.

### ***3.3 Property Regime of URA***

Property, as tangible as it is, should be considered as “a set of relationships.” (Blomley, 2004) The set of relationships attached to the property, as noted, is “a network social relations that governs the conduct of people with respect to the use and disposition of things”(Hoebel 1966, 424, quoted in Blomley 2004, p.2). Today we often see property in terms of the ownership model as if right to use or exchange value of the property is clearly defined, which invites investigation as planning actually defines use and redefines the future use of properties in most cases. The uncertainty in property rights is probably more obvious in Hong Kong’s land management on leasehold system in which ownership and possession of residual rights to

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<sup>45</sup> LDC had to prove that it had tried every rational and possible measure to assume the property yet still fail to have the property owner to agree with the purchase before appealing for Crown Land Resumption. For example, the K2 project was announced by LDC in 1989 and did not finish its land resumption until 1999.

<sup>46</sup> For urban renewal, resumption proceedings may be instituted mainly under the provisions of the Lands Resumption Ordinance (Chapter 124) and the Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance (Chapter 563). When URO was drafted, it was modeled after Railway Ordinance, Chapter 519 for a more direct acquisition of land according to Stephen Frederick Fisher, then deputy director of Planning and Land Bureau in 2000. Hon James To Kun-sun, a legislator, was one among many who questioned the ordering of land resumption. See more in Hewwah Siaw (Mar. 27/2008) *Are Old buildings Sinful?* Hong Kong Economic Times.

properties were not totally commodified. With the “flexibility” and “certainty” largely controlled by government-led planning (Wai-Chung Lai, 2005), property relations composed by a variety of possession and redistribution of rights to land are not definite. In the case of urban renewal, property owners were turned to tenants when the lease were unsettled and ownership of residual rights over future use of the land upon which housing is (re)constructed—the ownership of “land option rights”(Adrienne La Grange & Pretorius, 2005, pp. 2474-2475)- was redefined.

In redefining the future of a set of properties for extracting rent gap and improving city image, histories and the present were disrupted in a way that community network was disintegrated to individual property owners and tenants as if they were distinctive groups and never shared space and time with one another. Ironically, URA defined owner and tenants based on a “free market” that URA itself, with its partner developers, was going to intervene drastically. It did not reserve any space or time for the affected community to retain any social relation linked with the set of properties. Neither did it prepare them to resettle in the renewed urban landscape where transactions and social interaction are to start over. On the note, I illuminate how the property regime of URA has been built up in its response to politics of “flat-for-flat” in the following.

### ***Decade-long politics of ‘flat for flat’***

*The point is to seek for land Justice and democratic planning. Let’s not talk about property owners.* (Interview with Melissa, 18/11/2010)

Unlike Melissa, an affected tenant and activist who fought against URA for almost a decade, most people failed to position URA projects in relation to distribution of land rights and civic participation in urbanization let alone questioning property ownership which has been deployed and abused by the authority. From LDC to URA, politics of “flat-for-flat” remains a site of conflict. When most affected residents saw it a problem of encroaching property right, they mostly ignored the fact that each property was embedded in a web of property relations which linked tenants with property owners and many other actors. What urban redevelopment unsettled, indeed, was the relationship which defined how much property owners could act upon their properties and how well tenants can settle based on a particular kind of tenure pattern. It was not only a set of transactions but also a network of practices that maintained owners and

tenants' everyday life *in place*. The informality and diversity of old neighborhood that allowed tenants and owners to make use of space and services without engaging privatized services or intermediaries has been significant. In the regard, the decade-long request for “flat-for-flat” in the vicinity involved right to sustain the continuity of interdependency embedded in property relations much more than a just compensation of the property per se. It requires a more careful planning process to bridge the gap.

The relationship between tenants and property owners has been complicated by the process and negative impacts of urban renewal. Tenants were further marginalized and some property owners found themselves competing with tenants for decreasing housing stock in the same neighborhood. Few of them were able to articulate it as a issue arising from problematic planning process in which property owners and tenants were actually redefined and separated to manage a redistribution of residual rights to serve the property regime of URA. To reveal the process of redistribution I shall go back to the case of Wedding Card Street (H15) in 2003, in which LDC's legacy of “flat-for-flat” took on social and political meanings in community movements.

As the H15 project was re-announced by URA in 2003, most residents were concerned with the amount of compensation against the context of a rocketing housing market from 2004 onwards. “Participation” was not yet introduced to their discussion. URA's acquisition policy mostly takes care of compensation and allowance based on ownership. An owner-occupier of domestic property will be provided the market value (on a vacant possession basis) of his property plus an ex-gratia allowance, namely *Home Purchase Allowance* (HPA), for purchase of her property.<sup>47</sup>

With reference to LDC's flat-for-flat scheme and planning concepts of “ownership-participation” through study of cases in Japan, Taiwan, and UK,<sup>48</sup> the affected community realized that through property acquisition URA took all the potential Floor Area Ratio away from

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<sup>47</sup> See more in Principles adopted by URA in property acquisition [Online available] <http://www.ura.org.hk/html/c906000e1e.html>

<sup>48</sup> With help from volunteer social workers and professionals, the concern group presented a set of challenges to URA and case study in a policy paper entitled as *Street Paper*. Funded by Wan Chai District Council, it was published and became an important document to enhance public education regarding urban renewal. See more in “Street Paper” (Wong, 2006).

original property owners. The residents called it “air right” whereas urban theorists conceptualized it as “rent gap”(N. Smith, 1979).<sup>49</sup> In the light, a concern group was formed against H15 project in 2003, of which the core members included old-timers, owners of wedding card business, and several shopkeepers on Lee Tung Street.

By “flat for flat, shop for shop” the concern group meant their right to adequate housing based on their needs and use value. For a shopkeeper, it means a shop that is situated in the same neighborhood where community and business network remain vibrant and available. For a flat owner, it means a flat of similar area that would allow her and her family to keep up with their lifestyle of combining live and work in proximity. In other words, they wanted to maintain “community network” in which many families lived and worked interrelatedly.

In addition, the concern group also differentiated “right to participation”(in city planning)” and “right to free choice” from right to values of properties. In a way their calls echoed the notion of “right to city“ noted by Lefebvre (1996) or the right to process of urban transformation as David Harvey (2008) furthered. Nevertheless, their resistance still could not changed URA’s rehousing arrangement and the Wedding Card Street was demolished in 2009. Today the campaign remains provocative in continued efforts against URA, however, many people read their calls as tricks for more cash compensation.

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<sup>49</sup> Interview with Melissa (22/03/2010).

What's missing is a relational thinking of property, rights, and the city. It requires a thinking that jumps out of the confine of property and questions the underlying majoritarianism based on share of ownership. As Iris M. Young noted, "Rights are relationships, not things; they are institutionally defined rules specifying what people can do in relation to one another. Rights refer to doing more than having, to social relationships that enable or constrain action" (1990, p. 25). Property rights refer to relationships of arranging properties upon its present and future more than redistributing *things*. It requires a rejection of the operational logic of "detaching property with rights" which persists in the land acquisition and town planning procedure under the regime of URA.

Currently, land acquisition turns active owners into passive clients waiting for distributive rehousing package and town planning redefines space as if no people on the ground. The ownership-property model prescribes urban renewal and translates properties into cash value, excluding both property owners and tenants to residual rights upon redevelopment be it option land value or right to planning. It excludes any possibility for community politics to pursue alternative redevelopment vision in its reducing planning into one-by-one dealing with compensation and acquisition. Tenants were not included until resumption being made and oftentimes the acquisition brought about forced-dislocation of the tenants that I will address later.

With the relational thinkings of rights, the call for "flat for flat, shop for shop" could be understood as a collective process of redefining properties. It's a process aiming to redefine space and social relations in a way that respects the continuity of people's everyday life and their right to participate in transforming urban landscape, a process of democratic re-urbanization. The understanding is important for us to examine URA's surprisingly announcement of its first URA flat-swap scheme in 2011 after many years of chaotic debates.<sup>50</sup> From then on, affected property owners, such as those in the two projects in To Kwa Wan, Kowloon, would be qualified to buy flats built in Kai-Tak airport or limited amount of flats provide in-situ. The eagerly awaited debut, nevertheless, was considered a counterfeit initiative which abused the campaign. The scheme requires property owners to commit to a flat with a fixed rate in the designated project

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<sup>50</sup> The redevelopment in Kai-Tak comprises about 500 units, of which 50 will be reserved for selection by owners of the old flats. The flat size varies from 400 to 600 sq ft. See more in Joseph Li, (Feb 28, 2012) *First URA flat-swap scheme announced*. China Daily.

within two months after the announcement of URA projects. Owners of interest need to make up the gap between the rate offered and compensation they received. To many, it was rather a marketing strategy than a swap. As Sham Shui Po district councilor Mr. Leung noted, “the current flat-for-flat swap was totally a counterfeit which is far away from a just exchange. If one need to pay the difference than why not just buy a new property at will?” Many elderly property owners suggested that it was impossible for them to find extra money to make up the difference not to say many tenants were not able to afford the more-than-double rent after redevelopment.<sup>51</sup>

H15 CG sent out an official letter to condemn the initiative. The group stated again that a key to achieve genuine “flat-for-flat, shop-for-shop” is community network embedded in place and right to freedom of choices. The group compared a variety of LDC rehousing arrangements to challenge the counterfeit initiative.<sup>52</sup> Without any response, URA just introduced the new “flat-for-flat” scheme and stated that “a market rate would be ensured and the scheme was after all an alternative rehousing. Affected owners could definitely receive cash monetary compensation and choose whatever they prefer as new residence.”<sup>53</sup> To understand URA’s indifference to the concern group’s voices, we shall turn to the revision of URS which ended right before URA launched its new scheme.

### ***Staging Civic Participation with URA Review***

From 2004 onwards, mounting calls pointed to URA’s long procrastination in conducting consultation for revising URS that should have taken place every two or three years. URA finally decide to have URS publicly via a 22-month-long review process of the URS starting from July 2008. The review was structured into three stages, namely *Envisioning*, *Public Engagement* and supposedly ending in *Consensus Building* by April 2010.<sup>54</sup> URA established task force, setting

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<sup>51</sup> (March 26, 2011) *The Elderly owners want cash compensation rather than flats*. Ming Pao.

<sup>52</sup> LDC offered flat-for-flat scheme to affected residents in H1, H3 and H6, who could move into LDC projects on the Third st. and High st (H4, H4A) nearby where they lived. LDC also bought properties from Housing Society for flat-for-flat schemes. In 1994, LDC once developed K4 in Mog Kok into a 26-story-high apartment to rehouse affected tenants. Shop tenants were also rehoused in other LDC cases such as H2 and Yuen Po Street Bird Garden.

<sup>53</sup> See URA’s statement from (March 25, 2011) ATV NEWS. [http://www.hkatvnews.com/v3/share\\_out/\\_content/2011/03/25/atvnews\\_148249.html](http://www.hkatvnews.com/v3/share_out/_content/2011/03/25/atvnews_148249.html)

<sup>54</sup> The Review is led by the Development Bureau of the HKSAR Government, with the assistance of Urban Renewal Authority. <http://www.ursreview.gov.hk/eng/home.html>

up website of URS review and stations to host workshops and exhibitions, all of which appeared to rendered a sense of progressiveness and upcoming reform.

In this light, a modern-looking building with its transparent glass curtain wall suddenly appeared in the mass of Tai-Yuan street bazaar in Wan Chai. The so-called “IDEA SHOP” was set up to facilitate the review process. As noted, “the Urban Renewal Idea Shop is now open to the public and is free of charge! Located at the vibrant Wan Chai core, this Shop is intended to be a community-based hub for the public to participate in the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) Review.”<sup>55</sup> Yet, when I visited the IDEA SHOP in summer in 2009, there was nobody except one staff in the neat space. The staff was a young man hired by a public relation company which took charge of outreach program for the URS Review for URA. He modestly acknowledged that he was not a planner by training and then confessed that he himself could not guarantee how much these comments would be filtered before going to the URA. Hearing such honest comment, one cannot but question how participation could turn out being positioned in the realm of public relations--It may not be far from the kind of “invited participation” noted by Faranak Miraftab (2009). Moreover, the transient space of participation was gone when I tried to revisit IDEA SHOP in October 2010 though the consultation process was not ended yet.

Civic participation, as deployed by URA, could be questioned on two fronts according to my interview with many participants in the 18-month process. First, URA is facilitating a property regime that prioritizes ownership model. In contrast to the Habermasian “civic participation” staging in IDEA SHOP, the substantive participation in urban renewal process, as realized by URA, actually refer to assembling properties, transactions, and land sale to its business partners much more than community participation. What counts is economic participation rather than participation in social or political sense. Secondly, it is a kind of procedural democracy yet how much substantial democracy is achieved is problematic. Indeed, URS review process seems to proliferate forms of participation by a series of eight road show exhibitions, five public forums and eight topical discussions, Radio Program and District Aspiration study. In addition, there were questionnaire interviews, public presentation, open

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<sup>55</sup>See URA’s official statement from its webpage. (accessed on Oct. 2009)[online available] <http://www.ursreview.gov.hk/eng/process.html>

discussion, etc. In the *Consensus Building* stage, there were workshops and town hall meeting. URA had the Policy Engagement Consultant conducting a telephone survey with a random sample size of 1,000 to gauge public feedback.<sup>56</sup> Seemingly every possible engagement skill has been adopted to facilitate a rational communication for public consultation only more than for finalization.

Toward the end of the consultation process, many once-active participants lost their enthusiasm as they realized it was a “Staging Consultation without any genuine reforms” (Interview, 06/12/2010). As one affected tenant noted,

*We had have lots of channels to voice out but the key point is that nothing changes despite many critiques! Representatives from the committee were just like a eye candy and the whole consultation process for over two years was just a large scale staging! (Mr. C, used to live on Lee Tung Street and a member of H15 CG).<sup>57</sup>*

Mr. C’s anger was resonated by politicians and committee members who participated in the consultation. Ada Wong, previous chair of Wan Chai District Council and a member sitting on the advisory committee to supervise the revision of URS, disappointedly pointed out that,

*the whole thing (the consultation) was staging and she could do nothing to change it even being assigned with such a position....The committee was dismissed before the finalization of the URS! Isn’t that ridiculous? (interview, 14/12/2010)*

Mr. Leung, a member of Sham Shui Po District Council, also shared the disappointment,

*well, URA did set up a local office to work with the district council. But it was mostly ‘chatting,’ you know? you can neither negotiate with them compensation strategy or make suggestions for the redevelopment plan. (interview, 3/12/2010)*

There were nine district councilors<sup>58</sup> from Sham Shui Po officially asked URA to provide a mix of affordable ownership housing and public rental housing with market rate housing in response

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<sup>56</sup> Review of the Urban Renewal Strategy (for discussion in LegCO on 23 Feb 2010).[online available] [http://www.ursreview.gov.hk/eng/doc/20100223\\_Legco\\_Paper\\_URS\\_Review\\_ENG.pdf](http://www.ursreview.gov.hk/eng/doc/20100223_Legco_Paper_URS_Review_ENG.pdf) (accessed on 10 Dec 2010)

<sup>57</sup>“An Even Worse New URS” (07/12/2010), Ming Pao.

<sup>58</sup> Nine council members from the political party Mr. Leung belongs to, the Hong Kong Association for Democracy and People's Livelihood, ADPL, collectively submitted a document to the district council on 9 Nov. 2010. It asked the Housing Society to consider rehousing in their joint ventures with URA, the four projects including K20, K21, K22, K23 in Sham Shui Po.

to district-wide housing demand with a reference to the *Fisher Seven Article* yet waited in vain for a response. After all the new strategy, so-called People-First *Urban Renewal Strategy*, was publicized on Feb 2011.<sup>59</sup> Several activists shared with me their exhaustion after running around for voicing out during the consultation (July 2008- Dec 2011), one of them noted,

*we were probably fooled by URA after all. URS, as a strategy that guides URA's practice, has much less legal bearing on URA's projects than URO. It seems that URA was just setting up the stage for the society to release their anger but nothing will change it's commercial logic of operation. (interview with Wei, 12/05/2011)*

### ***Property Regime of URA and Developers***

With the conclusion of Public Consultation and inaugural of new URS, URA soon launched several new schemes, allegedly, to catch up with its promise in Spring of 2011. In a new scheme “Facilitator Service,”<sup>60</sup> URA provided assistance to owners as consultant to help them assemble titles for commencing owner-initiated redevelopment via joint land sale. It established a subsidiary, Urban Redevelopment Facilitating Services Company Limited (URFS), to implement the Pilot Scheme. Besides, a *Demand-led Redevelopment* scheme was launched to accept applications for expanding the URA project list. The application criteria included inter-alia that each application is submitted by owners of no less than 67% of the undivided shares in every lot within the site; the building conditions are poor; the size of the site should generally be larger than 400 square meters. The nature of these new schemes, indeed, did not respond to any of aforementioned issues being raised. They are mainly alternative modes of assembling properties and then resale for redevelopment. One can hardly see concerns other than ownership shares and properties in sketching out these schemes. The chairperson of URA, Barry Cheung, stated that urban redevelopment was still too far behind and multiple ways of redevelopment

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<sup>59</sup> The revised URS was published in with a new title: *People-First, A District-based, public-participatory approach to Urban Renewal*. (Feb 2011). [available online] [http://www.ursreview.gov.hk/eng/doc/New%20URS%20\(Eng\).pdf](http://www.ursreview.gov.hk/eng/doc/New%20URS%20(Eng).pdf) (accessed on 18 Dec 2011)

<sup>60</sup> The public were worried that negotiation power of small owners would be worsen in the model that prioritize ownership share. As for tenants, they were not even represented in the picture. See more in *More equality achieved in resumption, no advantage if resisting to sell*. (19/04/2011) Ming Pao

should be developed to speed up resumption.<sup>61</sup> As of October 2011, URA announced that there were 25 applications for URA demand-led redevelopment project received and one or two among them would be included to URA's project list.<sup>62</sup> The chairperson's message said it all: the most important thing was to speed it up. In redeveloping Hong Kong, the regime of ownership-based property keeps a tight rein on re-urbanization of the city but URA would displace owners in its ultimate authority over properties.

### ***3.4 Forced Eviction and Repetitive Displacement***

#### ***3.4.1 The discourse of Deterioration and Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment***

*The Government is committed to arresting building deterioration.*<sup>63</sup>

(Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau, March 2006)

The kind discourse which conceptualized old buildings as a threat to the city of Hong Kong had been reiterated and reinforced. URA was considered not capable of solving the issue on its own as the statistics suggested that the entity ONLY redeveloped 800 buildings during 2001-2009 when more than 4,000 private buildings are aged 50 years or above in Hong Kong. Starting from 2006 and becoming a hotly debated topic during 2009-2010, lowering the *Compulsory Sale Threshold* to make up URA's progress has attracted a lot of attention.

*The Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance (LCSRO) (Cap. 545)* was enacted in 1998 and came into operation in 1999. In short, the LCSRO targeted buildings aged 40 years or above and vacant industrial buildings, among which many were private buildings with 9 stories or less, comprising 5-9 units. It allows a person (other than as a mortgagee) who owns no less than 90% of undivided shares in a lot to apply to the Lands Tribunal for a compulsory sale of the whole lot for the purpose of redevelopment. Yet in practice it was difficult for individuals of interest to finish the land assembly as "*All Units But One Acquired*" occurred

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<sup>61</sup> *Chair person of URA: We are so much behind.* (03/09/2011) Ming Pao.

<sup>62</sup> *25 applications for URA demand-led redevelopment project (pilot scheme) received* (31/10/2011) URA [Online available] <http://www.ura.org.hk/en/media/press-release/2011/20111031.aspx>

<sup>63</sup> Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau (March 2006), *Proposals to Lower the Compulsory Sale Threshold for Specified Classes of Lots under Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) Ordinance.* [Online available] [http://www.info.gov.hk/archive/consult/2006/industry\\_consult\\_mar06\\_e.pdf](http://www.info.gov.hk/archive/consult/2006/industry_consult_mar06_e.pdf)

in many cases. To speed up private redevelopment of these “deteriorated buildings,” a task force set up for the issue suggested to the legislative council and the public that

*Up until 2009, there are at present over 4,000 private buildings (about 9% of the total number of private buildings) which are aged 50 years or above in Hong Kong and we expect 570 buildings of this kind will add to the category every year and then the total mount to 9,500 buildings by 2019...Without proper maintenance it is very likely that the deterioration of the city will worsen rapidly.....<sup>64</sup>*

Despite many critiques against piece-meal, project-oriented urban redevelopment and opposition from the affected communities, the threshold was lowered after the legislation passed in March of 2010. The Secretary for Development then, Carry Lam, insisted that it was a necessary measure to help those property owners stuck in deteriorated buildings due to some “snails households,” especially those elderly lady landlords.<sup>65</sup> The revision designated three kinds of buildings to enjoy a lower compulsory sale threshold of no less than 80% and was enacted from 1 April 2010 onwards:<sup>66</sup>

- a) a lot with units each of which accounts for more than 10% of the undivided shares in the lot;
- b) a lot with all buildings aged 50 years or above; and
- c) a lot with all industrial buildings aged 30 years or above not located within an industrial zone.

Adding to the already problematic public redevelopment reined by URA, private redevelopment by LCSRO turned old neighborhoods into a battleground for developers. Posters that signaled the progress of property resumption could be found in Wan Chai, Sham Shui Po, West District, etc (see Fig. 3.3). Many social workers had expressed their concern for tenants and owners threatened by displacement. Besides, many property owners experienced losing bargaining power with developers because the closer to the end the easier they would become the

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<sup>64</sup> *Deteriorated buildings in Hong Kong* (19/02/2012) CB(1)1163/09-10(01) for Lower the Compulsory Sale Threshold for Specified Classes of Lots under Land (Compulsory Sale for Redevelopment) a special committee in the LegCo.

<sup>65</sup> *Lowering the Compulsory Sale Threshold: a request for the public from Carrie Lam* (March 15, 2010). Hong Kong Economic Journal.

<sup>66</sup> *Lower compulsory sale application threshold for three classes of land lot* (with videos). Press Release, Development Bureau. [online available] [http://www.devb.gov.hk/en/sdev/press/index\\_id\\_5801.html](http://www.devb.gov.hk/en/sdev/press/index_id_5801.html)



Fig 3.2 Richfield buying out properties in old neighborhoods.  
 (Left) Richfield is known to mark its success in resuming property by notable red banners and posters.  
 (Right) Richfield's practices in Sham Shui Po. The presences of redness of Richfield has pressured many property owners and tenants living in those buildings Richfield tapped into.

one being forced to accept the deal made in public auction. Again, the logic of majoritarian politics based on ownership share rules.

What's worthy of more attention was the emergence of intermediaries that deals with land assembly for mid to large scale developers. One among them was the notorious *Richfield*, a real estate corporation that specializes in property acquiring and merging. It grew quickly into a listed company in 29 May, 2007, and has been renamed as *Richfield Group Holdings Limited*, allegedly the first company ever listed in the field. Its achievement implies the profitability of redevelopment. Furthermore, this kind of private redevelopment differentiated from URA-led redevelopment in its lack of space of negotiation not to say fair rehousing offered to the tenants since no requirements from LCSRO was in place. The whole deal-making process occurred only in between the owners and the intermediaries. As mentioned, the marginalization of tenants could be dated back to amendment of the L&T Ordinance starting from the 80s. At that time there were two ways for the landlords to discontinue the lease- to resume for self-occupation or reconstruction and only the former required compensation- by default it encouraged redevelopment. After the latest amendment in 2004, it was much easier to displace tenants given only one month required for displacement notice and no legal binding ask for compensation. Indeed, it may be fair to say that a more effective exercise of LCSRO was predicated on the amendment of the L&O Ordinance. These transformation of legislation nurtured an environment where intermediaries like *Richfield* can find its niches. It is a phenomenon that begs for

examination. There has been wide coverage of its practice in popular media and the corporation is very straight forward about its goal. Richfield noted that

*We target to acquire 800 to 1,000 units of old properties every year to make money for owners and improve their living condition, as well as to provide more business opportunities for the Group, investors and developers to achieve our ultimate goal of serving the community.*<sup>67</sup>

LCSRO brought about complicated effects. Existing cases suggested that this kind of profit-oriented private redevelopment did not respond to housing demand in Hong Kong but eliminate affordable housing for the poor that I illuminate in the following.<sup>68</sup>

### **3.4.2 Forced Eviction in the process of redevelopment**

According to URA rehousing strategy, qualified tenants affected by its projects could be rehoused in public housing with an expedited application. Yet what is less known is that rehousing per se could still be a process longer than five years considering the resumption and waiting time for allocation (itself a process of no less than three years). During the period, many tenants experienced forced eviction and often lost their entitlements to rehousing benefits, which was an unintended issue resulting from the differential compensation scheme that offered more cash compensation to self-occupied owners. Despite a freezing survey conducted right after announcement of each case,<sup>69</sup> many landlords still assumed that they could pretend to be self-occupants to receive higher compensation, thus brought about the forced-eviction by redevelopment way before properties were resumed.

The revision of the Ordinance in 2004<sup>70</sup> also made the kind of eviction easier. What's worse, URA claimed that it have no direct legal bindings with tenants before owners agree to sell their properties. Allegedly URA could only legally interact with the tenants as soon as it became

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<sup>67</sup> See more in *Richfield's* profile online: <http://www.richfieldgroup.hk/profile.php> (accessed on 9 March 2012)

<sup>68</sup> See the discussion in *Carry Lam's Response to Questions of Lowering the Threshold of Compulsory Land Sale* (May 4, 2011) [online available] <http://notspacious.mysinablog.com/index.php?op=ViewArticle&articleId=3125335>

<sup>69</sup> Freezing Survey is commenced on the exact same date of announcement of each URA project. A group of social workers hired by URA will carry out the survey, a legal procedures to confirm as early as possible the affected tenants' eligibility for compensation or rehousing, and narrowing the difference in amount between the compensation for owner-occupiers and that for non-owner-occupiers, etc.

<sup>70</sup> Melody Chan (Aug 12, 2010) *URS forced the tenants to play musical chairs*. Hong Kong Economic Journal.

the new landlord after taking over properties from the previous landlords. For the reason URA reiterated that it did not have right to intervene in dealing with tenure between landlords and owners despite frequent reports of forced-eviction as mentioned.

The forced-eviction was often realized by violence or irrational raise of rent. Many cases were reported in old neighborhoods in Sham Shui Po and Central and Western District. According to a survey released in 2011, rentals increased largely in Sai Wan by 20% on average, among their samples there were 17 cases got raised by more than 30% and the highest was 57.7%. Some extreme cases covered by local media also indicated that some tenants were forced to leave as their landlord doubled the rent.<sup>71</sup> In my fieldwork during 2009-2011, I also found many cases who experienced similar forced-eviction by rent increase.

It is not that landlords would vacate their properties until they receive compensation. While they forced previous tenants to leave on one hand, they mostly would still let their properties through property agents. Due to huge demand for cheap rentals in old neighborhood, it was never an issue to find another tenant even with condition. In most occasions the agent would add conditions to the new lease to ensure that the new tenant give up any benefits offered by URA (Interview with Ali, 11/05/2011). Another common problematic practice is that some agents would market these kind of to-be-resumed-rentals to those poor tenants who were eyeing for public housing but not so familiar with details of rehousing strategy. Some tenants, without enough knowledge, would rather pay higher-than-market rent in exchange for promise of public housing (Interview with Daniel, 11/05/2011). Many of these lettings were not ensured by lease and abuse of the aforementioned legal loopholes were often heard.

Most displaced tenants found it extremely difficult to find other comparable rental housing, which became a serious problem since most of them worked long hours for low wages and could hardly afford cross-district transportation or changing jobs. They often ended up renting flats in other old apartments threatened by redevelopment either by private redevelopments or URA. There were hundreds of tenants in each URA project and many of them were vulnerable to repetitive displacement caused by redevelopment. Increasing rent, decreasing

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<sup>71</sup> The Caritas Mok Cheung Sui Kun Community Centre organized a group of low-income tenants to appeal to LegCo for their rights to housing. Their campaign:[online available] [http://mcskcc.caritas.org.hk/public/modules/service/b4a\\_doc/res26062008ppt.pdf](http://mcskcc.caritas.org.hk/public/modules/service/b4a_doc/res26062008ppt.pdf). See related media post in ( Jan 7, 2011 ) ”The poor tenants in Sai Wan asked for rehousing in-situ”. Hong Kong Commercial Daily.

provision, and various modes of redevelopment has turned securing affordable tenure a very challenging matter in old neighborhoods. Although some single elder tenants did find the cash compensation offered by URA a surprising financial help,<sup>72</sup> however, they were just a small fraction of the affected tenants and most likely displaced by LDC projects carried out by URA.

Experiencing forced-eviction harmed the displaced tenants on multiple levels. In reviewing media coverage and my interviews with them, many cases were found depressed because of too much uncertainty in the course of redevelopment while many others suffered from mental issues of all kind and sometimes they lost their jobs as a result (Interview with Ben, 28/12/2010). So far URA has not come up with any effective measure to address all those problems and conflicts driven by the resumption. It is questionable if URA should hold more accountability to tenants before resumption rather than sticking at the contractual nature of land lease. Furthermore, tenants who were affected by private developers were in dire need of help since no rehousing of any kind was ensured by law. It had become a systematic production of displaced tenants who were kicked out from one old building to another. Forced-eviction has the most serious implication on immigrants yet it was left ignored. It is also a gendered issue, particularly bearing on immigrant women, which I taken up more thoroughly in Chapter Seven.

Landlords who do not have capital were also vulnerable to redevelopment. Modest landlords of aging properties in old neighborhoods hesitated to maintain their properties in worrying that soon their properties would fall predatory to URA.<sup>73</sup> It brought about a downward spiral effect to old buildings and tenants oftentimes suffered from the deterioration housing condition. Many of them shared subdivision rooms and were not able to stay inside until midnight due to the worsening ventilation, hygiene, and crowdedness in the flat (SeeNetwork, 2010, p. 47). Another factor that contributed to inadequate housing is that in many private redevelopment cases the intermediaries tried to pressure on self-occupied owners to accept the deal they offer by purposefully creating deterioration. A variety of dirty tactics were reported

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<sup>72</sup> Actually, only affected tenants by LDC projects found the cash compensation a generous offer. Those who were affected by new projects announced by URA were entitled to much less cash compensation and benefits.

<sup>73</sup> URA did not publicize its projects until they were about to implement. It insisted the principle in order to avoid speculation centered around its projects- to lessen any intervention in free market.

such as not paying management fee, trash accumulation, arson, etc.<sup>74</sup> Nevertheless, either case as mentioned was treated by the authorities as justification for speeding up urban redevelopment, which again ignored the fact that redevelopment unavoidably has to be time-consuming and had its durational affect on people and space. The institution at work has failed to face the formation of time in space.

From what I sketched as above, it is more than obvious that institutions have imposed a set of ideologies and practices that make the society to conceive urban redevelopment as property resumption and disconnection of the contractual relationships between property owners/landlords and tenants. Despite increasing evidence showing serious impacts of this kind of problematic normalization of relationships and accountability only through property ownership, policy makers and legislators hardly change their ways of thinking. Another important issue has to do with the handicapped democracy in Hong Kong, a legislative council that could only receive bills initiated by the HKSAR due to many barriers at place to avoid bills from the other way around. When it comes to legislation proposed by SAR, most bills would pass since the functional constituency loyally supported SAR, which can be seen in amending the Ordinance, URO and URS, and then the LCSRO. Despite fourteen amendments raised by legislators during 2009-2010 that could have reserve more consideration for tenants, none of them were adopted.<sup>75</sup>

From my tracing of institutional changes from 1950s onwards, it may be fair to say that the redevelopment of the city, the momentum that would bring about repetitive displacement, starts from a rewriting of right to housing by redefining tenancy and ownership. What remains unchanged, is a dictated way of defining social relationships and spatial practices through and in the model of property ownership, a necessary step to better demarcation of rights for remaking city through free market.

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<sup>74</sup> The issue has been widely covered in popular media. See an example from a feature video from RTHK [鏗鏘集：一塊紅布] (Sep. 12, 2011). [online available] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dteemYdGOMa>

<sup>75</sup> In interviewing an activist who once worked for a legislator (29/05/2011), Lucas pointed out that most members in functional constituency were closely connected to the ruling class of the city that promotes (re)development. In his participation in helping the legislator to propose amendment to LCSRO, he saw many proposals of great potential to fix the problems, such as to raise the threshold back to 90%, to postpone the enactment for one year to have more assessment on the impacts, to include compensation package in LCSRO, to review housing process in a more integrated way, etc. Sadly, none were adopted and once the bill was passed it would be very difficult to initiate another revision without the government actively initiates amendment.

### **3.5 A City for Hundred Million Citizens? Rent, Tax, and Urban Redevelopment**

#### **3.5.1 A better home in a world-class city?**

As it comes to the tenth year of URA's operation, it stated that

*Hong Kong, like most developed cities, faces a formidable problem of aging buildings and urban decay. Some quarters of our community are living or operating in rundown areas which are in dire need of urban regeneration and environmental improvement. The Government set up the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) in 2001 with a mission to create quality and vibrant living in Hong Kong – **a better home in a world-class city.** ... - retrieved on March 10, 2010 from the website of URA (bold characters added by the author)*

The statement cleverly reduced citizen's "right to the city" to "a better residential unit in the city." It implicitly suggested that the qualified "economic man" (Pun & Wu, 2004) independent from the community is welcomed rather than a progressive citizen embedded in social relations and place making. The discourse found its resonance in frequent comments from the industry of real estate, which suggested that the city was for those who can contribute to economy to stay/buy. Those who could not afford high rent could move to other places such as outlying area in New Territories or even to Dongguan or Shenzhen. More surprisingly, the seemingly politically insensitive idea was echoed in several major politicians' public comments, one of whom is the well-known candidate running for the 2012 Executive of SAR, Henry Tang Ying-yen. Mr. Tang, then Chief Executive for Administration of Hong Kong, illustrated a vision of integrated Pearl River Delta in which Hong Kongers could move to Dongguan and commute to Hong Kong daily by 2020.<sup>76</sup> In the picture, cross-border regional integration with an improved massive transportation infrastructure will bring about a better spatial division of land use, employment, and housing that would not be limited by distance and geographies (i.e., a Hong Kong family with a monthly household income of 3,000 USD can enjoy much greater quality of life in Shenzhen than struggling in Hong Kong.) Tang's remarks sparked off wide-spread

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<sup>76</sup> 駱綺芬，林靄純. *Tang Ying Yen proposed a PRD regional integration to bring about a-billion-people market.* (July 20, 2009) Headline: HK.

discussion that considered his proposal a plan to overwhelm the autonomy of Hong Kong and similar concerns were extended to debates on the launch of cross-border planning action plan under the idea of Livable Bay Area (Fig. 3.3)<sup>77</sup> It is beyond both my research capacity and my interest to detect the intention of Mr. Tang’s proposal. However, what does seem important to this research is how structural injustice is likely to be built into this kind of proposal on top of existing social-structural processes that contributed to housing problem. I discuss the social-structural processes in the following.



Fig. 3. 3 *Cross-border planning action plan under the idea of Livable Bay Area*. Quite a few Hong Kongers were worried that Hong Kong is by default marginalized in the regional plan. Adopted from the site of regional plan from the official website of PRD Bay Area Action Plan.

<sup>77</sup> For example, a well-known talk show host Ng Chi Sum published a post “Class Wash” on Mingpao.(Feb 17, 2011). Back to 2009, two days after Tang’s remark being published, Kay Lam wrote a largely-cited post entitled *Deconstruct Hong Kong by 10 M people* (July 22, 2009) Sing Dao Daily.

### **3.5.2 Invisible Taxation through High-Land-Sale Policy**

Leaving politics aside, what is hidden in picturing the cross-border regional integration is arguably an *invisible taxation through high-land-sale policy*. It is the often ignored dynamics between tax, rent, and modes of (re)development constitute the social-structural processes to bring about structural injustice of housing. Hong Kong is known to be a place where nominal tax rate is relatively low, with a standard income tax rate of 15% on net income.<sup>78</sup> There is no capital gains tax, no dividend tax nor inheritance tax.<sup>79</sup> Following a territorial principle of taxation, HKSAR only taxes individuals on income that has been “earned in Hong Kong.”

In such a heaven for capitalism, nevertheless, a saying of “invisible taxation through high-land-sale policy” is open secret. The land-oriented receipts included proceeds from land sales, lease modifications, property taxes, stamp duties, profits tax from developers etc., and have been collected through “a deliberately slow-paced program of selling land lease rights in return for upfront payments by the highest bidders at auctions and tenders” to achieve the undeclared high land price policy (Poon, 2011). From 1970 through 1996, land-related revenue accounted for, on average, 33% of annual government budgets--actually up to 45% if profits tax from development companies and taxes on mortgage portfolio profits are included (Poon, 2011). As of 2011, just land premium (16.8%) and stamp duties constituted 27.6% of the annual revenue (see Fig. 3.4).

The invisible taxation has been sustained by land sale policy and monopoly of real estate development. It was furthered by a confluence of factors and one among them was the land supply cap stipulated by the 1983 Sino–British Agreement<sup>80</sup> governing the transition of Hong Kong. It constrained the amount of “new” land that the government could release to the market for all land use purposes in the Territory to 50 hectares. It’s widely believed that Hong Kong went through one of the longest postwar housing booms from 1987 as a result of the land-supply cap (Adrienne La Grange & Pretorius, 2005; Alan Smart & Lee, 2003b, p. 159).

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<sup>78</sup> Income tax in Hong Kong taxes individuals at progressive rates on their net chargeable income (after deductions and allowances) between 12% up to 17%; or at a standard rate of 15% on net income, whichever is lower.

<sup>79</sup> Inheritance tax was removed since 11 Feb 2006.

<sup>80</sup> Annex III (4) of the Sino-British Joint Declaration capped the total new land supply to 50 ha a year during the period 1984-97, excluding land granted for public rental housing (Hong Kong Government, 1984).

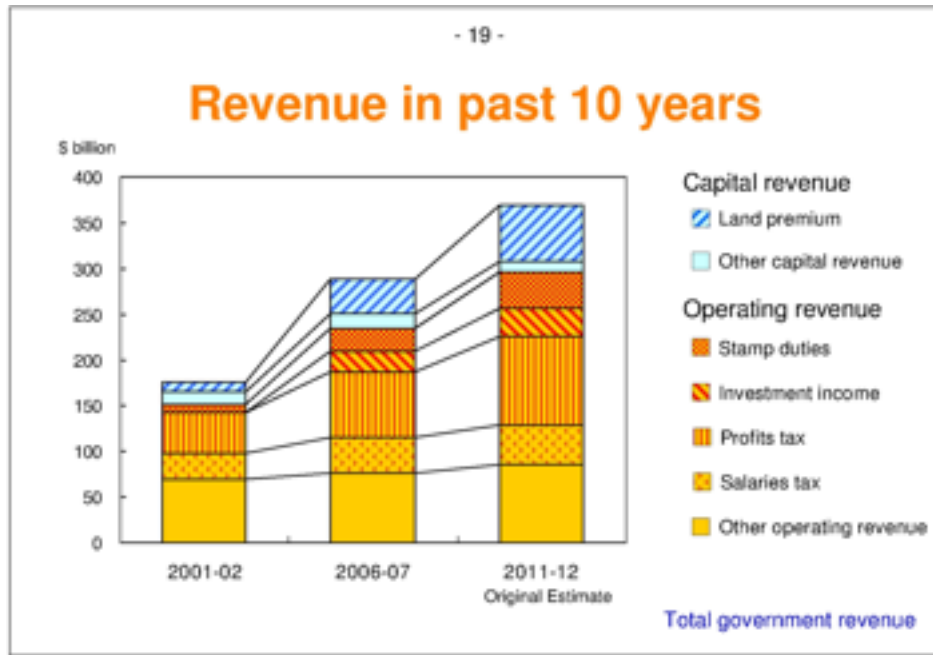


Fig. 3. 4 Breakdown of the revenue in past 10 years in Hong Kong.  
From 2012-2013 Budget Review (p.19)

As revenue from land sale remains a significant portion of budget, It follows that both the government and industries would be complicit in keeping real estate as power engine to extracting high rent, which continues to widen the gap between those who profit from properties and the propertyless and thereby sustain the systematic production of housing injustice.<sup>81</sup> Transactional cost was unjust shifted to property buyers and tenants, which arguably contributed to a vanishing middle class in the city.<sup>82</sup> Except the well-off, household disposable income is seriously limited by spending for housing, which was testified by the city's topping the global

<sup>81</sup> Many citizens have considered investing properties more profitable than waged jobs, which factored into changing labor participation and housing industry greatly since the 80s. See more in Alan Smart and James Lee's work, *Financialization and the Role of Real Estate in Hong Kong's Regime of Accumulation* (W. Lee, et al., 2007).

<sup>82</sup> As of 2010, the Median Monthly Domestic Household Income is about \$2,644.7 (2010 Census). Between 2005 and 2010, Hong Kong's GDP grew by 26 %, which did not trickle down to the lowest-earning 10% of households, whose income dropped by \$12.9 to an average of \$322.5 in 2010. Except the top 10% well-off, 80% of the population in between saw their incomes grow marginally, well below the 14% increase in the Consumer Price Index. Dr. Paul Yip Siu-fai, a senior lecturer at the University of Hong Kong suggested that "There is hardly a middle class in the city at all" given the conventional definition of a middle class in Hong Kong household should earn \$7095.6 a month or above but only about 10% of the 2.4 million households are qualified. See a related post in Martin Wong (Oct. 11, 2011) *HK's middle class vanishing act*. Hong Kong News Watch.

housing affordability survey published by *Demographia* in 2012.<sup>83</sup> Some commentators argued that over-reliance on land and real estate would make Hong Kong's finance essentially volatile. One economic critics Lu argued,<sup>84</sup> it is very likely that virtual economic operation would be the channel through which Hong Kong lost its wealth.

The logic of invisible taxation through extracting high rent has its political implications. Tenant or property owner, in the light, becomes *de facto* tax payer regardless her citizenship or civic participation, which appears economically more significant in short term but politically self-defeating in long run as the city may end up be populated by rich non-citizens. As for poor tenants struggling in coffin beds or caged rooms, the mainstream news coverage tended to naturalize their marginal housing condition as deviant behavior or as personal failure. A mix of subjects were included in the social imaginary of the underclass such as recipients of welfare, drug dealers, mainland moms or pregnant women, illegal immigrants, etc. In making them marginal the society made them exceptional and thus the inadequate housing would not be a normative priority. Poor tenant's living in inadequate housing was understood as personal failure and oftentimes as scapegoat of housing shortage since few people would try to figure out the structural production of long-term poverty and migration, as Young argued in her concern for increasing housing insecurity in the US, the structurally disadvantaged positions of tenants contributed by housing industry and housing policy (Young, 2011, pp. 45-52).

According to a tracking study (social development index study) by the Hong Kong Council of Social Service, strong economic growth did not benefit Hong Kong equally. There has been 30 % increase in the number of people waiting for public housing between 2008 and 2010. Moreover, there was 33 % increase in average spending on housing by the average household during that period.<sup>85</sup> The reluctance to understand how poverty is interlocked with housing has made the authorities blind to problems arising from urban redevelopment. The

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<sup>83</sup> According to the 2012 8th Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey that ranked cities's performance based on the median house price divided by the gross annual median household income of specific urban markets, for the 3rd Quarter of the previous year. It suggested that if housing prices exceeds 3 times annual household income, there would be serious political impediments. Hong Kong's result is 12.6 while Vancouver, the second place, is 10.6.

<sup>84</sup> Chi-Yuen Lu (Feb 01, 2012) *Financial Crisis in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong Economic Journal Monthly.

<sup>85</sup> Lo Wei (07/03/2012) *Housing affecting social development: study*. SCMP. The biannual study is based mainly on government data from 2010, and projects this year's social situation in 14 areas of social development.

intertwined economic and political relations between rent, tax, and redevelopment has greatly redefined ownership of the city. Urban renewal, as a kind of "cultural technologies" as Nicholas Dirks noted (qtd. in Smart, 2006, p. 24), has successfully "made possible, and then sustained and strengthened colonialism"- in here the form of colonialism played out as ensuring the property regime to capture residual values of land through crafting various mechanisms of urban redevelopment based on leasehold land management system. It enables social-structural process which facilitates the co-existence of various levels of commodification and de-commodification to ensure the regime's success as La Grange & Pretorius suggested (2005, p. 2486). Considering urban housing as shared by the civic community as desirable social citizenship, however, the economic success is predicated on the co-existence of various levels of expropriation and redistribution of housing to specific income groups, which is likely to displace its citizenry. What remains a question is for whom exactly the success is pursued and whether or not it is a sustainable success.

## Chapter 4

### Wan Chai On Sale

#### *4.1 Urban Renewal in Wan Chai*

##### *4.1.1 Wan Chai Sensation*

During lunch time on Queen's Road East in Wan Chai, most of the time one can see many young people in office dress dining at the QRE plaza, a "vertical plaza" that housed a range of trendy restaurants and bars where you could find "Asian delights" or "European delicacies." Some of them grabbed sandwiches from Starbucks or Subway in a rush. The diverse ethnic outlook and languages of the crowd made it hard to tell who they are working for or where they come from (see Fig 4.1 below). Along Queen's Road East comes the concentration of design boutiques, european bakeries, and lifestyle stores, especially those delicate cupcakes and hand-made chocolate which are not available in local tea food halls (*cha chaan teng*). In the same area, many foreigners were found to shop around the furniture stores for settling into the city. In a nut shell, the concentration of high-end lifestyle business suggests the consumption capability and particular taste of the neighborhood, which may be best concluded by the presence of the only Agnès b. gallery outside Paris next to the Pacific Place on Wing Fung Street.



Fig. 4.1 Around the Qre Plaza, on Queen's Road East

Those who learned of this part of Hong Kong through the 1960 British-American film “The World of Suzi Wong” or gossips about red light district would hardly recognize the area as Wan Chai. Over the past decade, Wan Chai has transformed into one of the most popular urban areas where international elites settle. Reclamation and redevelopment not only expanded Wan Chai but also transformed its urban landscape drastically, leaving some vestige of histories in certain alleys and shophouses. The neighborhood was often featured as in this following piece entitled “Wan Chai Sensation” in an English newspaper,

*A number of prestigious schools in Wan Chai create an ideal setting for families with children. And grown-ups need no introduction to the area's fame as a recreational mecca, with a wide variety of big shopping malls nearby, including Times Square and Pacific Place, and fine restaurants.*

*The icing on this irresistible cake is the comprehensive and convenient transport links....Wan Chai MTR station is just a five-minute walk away, from where*

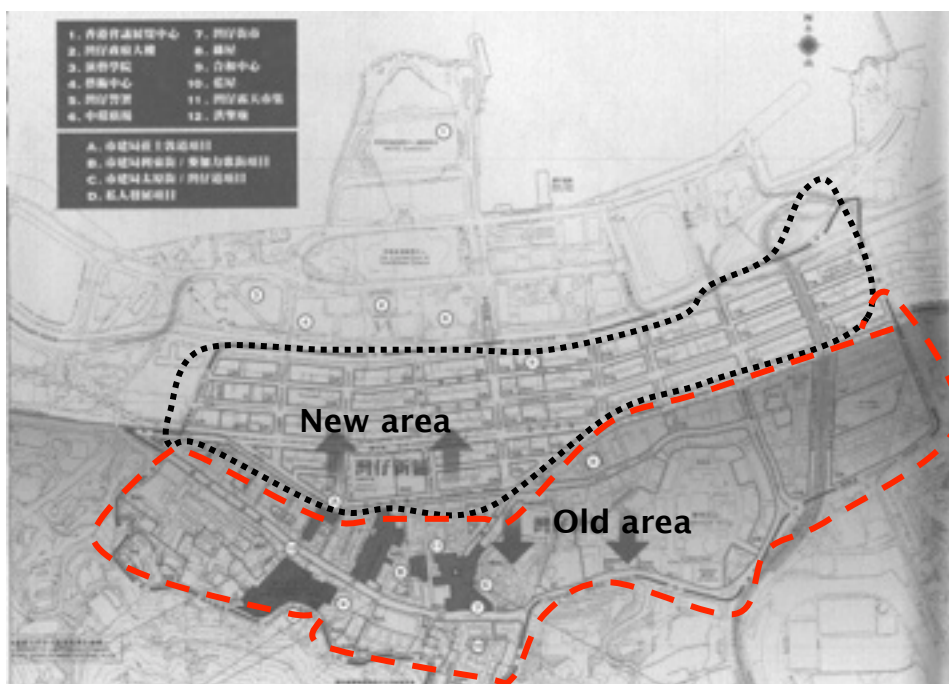


Fig. 4.2 Old area and New area in Wan Chai  
 The two areas are different in terms of urban form, social and cultural dynamics, economic development, etc. The new area was relatively recently-developed for it was built on the reclaimed area.  
 Source: Street Paper of Wan Chai (Wong, 2006)

*it's a few minutes' ride to Central and Tsim Sha Tsui. Cross-border transport services also ensure quick access to the mainland via Shenzhen.*<sup>1</sup>

Similar descriptions prevailed in commercials which attempted to sell properties in Wan Chai, a neighborhood under “Changing Sky” as locals put it. Beforehand Wan Chai had remained as a combination of business center and a relatively mundane area where local people resided for more than three decades. Johnston Road, the artery which indicates the southern edge of reclamation in 1920s, divides the seaside new Wan Chai from the Old Wan Chai enclosed by hills toward the South.

During 50s to 70s, while foreign visitors went to Irish pubs and fancy night clubs on Luard Road and Lockhart Road, a crowd of local construction workers (*Same Hong Worker*, Cantonese, literally meaning “three kinds of workers participating in interior design and construction.”) gathered at the Lung Moon Restaurant on Johnston Road from day to night. The contrasting landscape of dining not only differentiated communities but also histories. Nevertheless, the memories contributed by the working classes and their organic organization of employment and entrepreneurial spirit seemingly faded way with the demolition of Lung Moon in 2010.

#### ***4.1.2 Old Wan Chai in a Snapshot***

Old Wan Chai is referred to as the historical neighborhood where the first settlement was formed before the continuous reclamation starting since the 1920s. Initially, it was developed by some foreign traders mainly for storage and villas, centering around Spring Garden street, Albany Street (now Tai Yuen street), and Stone Nullah Lane. Due to its topographical constraints- being disconnected from Central by the camp and the hill- many of earlier settlers moved to other areas during the 1860s, leaving many warehouses to be replaced by tenements buildings built by Chinese community from 1870s onwards. In the beginning of 20th Century, *the Nullah*, originally a creek, was channelized to provide drinking water to trading ships harboring at Wan Chai, such as the *Lancelot Dent*, and many tenement buildings were built along the channel.<sup>2</sup> Today only the name of *Stone Nullah Lane* and the Blue House Complex carry on

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<sup>1</sup> Chu, C. (2011, May 12) *Wan Chai Sensation*, the Standard.

<sup>2</sup> Xia, L. (1995). *Stories of Streets in Eastern Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Joint Publishings. p.27.

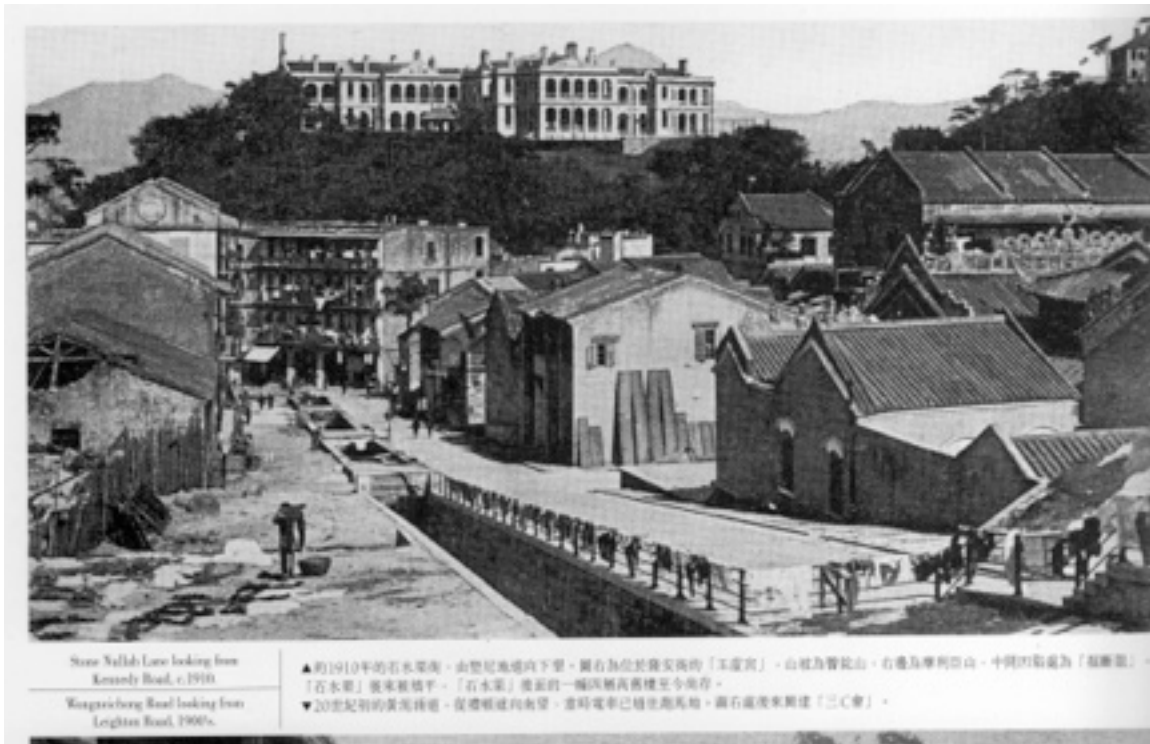


Fig. 4.3 *The Nullah Lane in 1910*. Today all of the ridged roof houses were gone except the four-story-high tenement building, that is, the Blue House, standing in the end of the lane. Adopted from Cheng Po Hung (2001) *A Century of Hong Kong Roads and Streets*. HK: Joint Publishing.



Fig. 4.4 *The Blue House* (Oct 2010)

the history of the covered channel.

Today, the Blue House serves as a bookmark of the recent past of Wan Chai. Indeed, what used to stand on the site was the very first hospital, Wah To Hospital, founded by Chinese in 1867. It was operated from 1867-1886, and then turned into a shrine to worship the god of medication (Wah To) until 1929. Later on the shrine was redeveloped into a four-story-high tenement building to house a variety of activities including a junior high school, a commercial board, a traditional clinic, and rentals, all of which were gone except the building left as the Blue House Complex as we know. Rumor has it that the workers of the Lands Department only got blue paint during the period of repairing work and thus the blue facade. It was included in URA's project H05 despite being a Grade A Historic Building, a case which I discuss in detail later.<sup>3</sup>

Reclamation along Victoria Harbor continued during the 1980s-90s in response to the Metroplan's call for reinvesting the city center. The construction of Hong Kong Convention Center & Exhibition Center (HKCEC) kicked off a series of changes in the reclaimed area in 1988 with its shiny glass curtain as the world's largest at the time. The second phase of the HKCEC complex was launched during 1994 to 1997. It featured a bird-like rooftop designed by Skidmore, Owings & Merrill LLP. Several luxurious hotels were built along with HKCEC, such as the Renaissance Harbour View Hotel managed by Marriott and Grand Hyatt Hong Kong. HKCEC made a second expansion during 2006-2009. Hong Kong Arts Centre and Hong Kong Arts School are also located in the area, along with the several government offices on Harbour Avenue, all of which constituted a Wan Chai North characterized by the emergent convention and exhibition-related business.

Today Wan Chai is of 1,000 hectare, inhabited by 164,300 people and high density of 15,500 people per km<sup>2</sup>. Having the highest median income has characterized Wan Chai for more than a decade. In the most recent census of 2010, the district's median monthly income from main employment turned out as \$2,064 while the overall median monthly income in Hong Kong was \$1419.<sup>4</sup> I will dive under the glammers outlook later to trace redevelopment of Wan Chai

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<sup>3</sup> Hong Kong only gives legal protection to declared monuments (currently 84 monuments in all). The listing system in charge by the Antiquities and Monuments Office is a non-statutory and confers no legal protection.

<sup>4</sup> Adopted from Table 38, p. 88, 2010 Population Census of Hong Kong.

contributed by LDC and URA and I suggest that the increasing inequality in housing was greatly produced by inadequate redevelopment.

#### **4.1.3 Urban redevelopment in Wan Chai**

Five among 16 projects launched by LDC were located in Wan Chai and three were finished under LDC. The residential only took up 12% of total area developed by LDC whereas 81% were predominantly developed as office (see table 4.1, 4.2 below). As many critics pointed out, the three projects finished in LDC's terms were simply peace-meal reconstruction without enhancing amenities or urban design quality. They at best resulted in several market-rate apartments in Wan Chai, most of which remained appealing to middle class residents today.

Since URA was established in 2001, URA launched a series of projects in Wan Chai. 3,138 people who used to live in 123 buildings were displaced among the total 32,232 people displaced by URA throughout Hong Kong in the past decade<sup>5</sup> (See table 4.3).

Table 4.1 Summary of land use of LDC projects finished under LDC

<b>land use</b>	<b>Office</b>	<b>Residential</b>	<b>Commercial</b>	<b>total</b>
area (sqft)	251,304	39,693	18,372	309,369
% of total area of development	81%	12%	7%	100%

Source: adopted from Summary Report of LDC (1997-2000), published by LDC.

Table 4.2 LDC Projects in Wan Chai (1988-1999)

<b>project no./ location</b>	<b>redevelopment mode</b>	<b>redevelopment outcome</b>
H5/No.1 Li Chit Street	Redevelopment with partial preservation	Li Chit Garden(residential: 108 units) and preservation of a facade of a pre-war shophouse; ; finished in 1994.
H9/ Wan Chai Road and Tai Yuen Street	taken over by URA	see table 4.3
H10/ No.38 Tai Yuen Street	Redevelopment	Tai Yuen Court (commercial: 269 m <sup>2</sup> ; residential: 100 units); finished in 1993.
H11/No. 28 Wan Chai Road	Redevelopment	Yuan Yi Court (commercial: 210 m <sup>2</sup> ; residential: 46 units); finished in 1994.
H15-17	taken over by URA	see table 4.3

Source: adopted from Summary Report of LDC (1997-2000), published by LDC.

<sup>5</sup> In all there are 32,232 people impacted by URA projects. URA Website. [Online Available] [http://www.ura.org.hk/usrAtt/222000/2010\\_p64-71\\_e.pdf](http://www.ura.org.hk/usrAtt/222000/2010_p64-71_e.pdf)

Table 4.3 URA Projects in Wan Chai (2001-2011)

project no./ location	redevelopment mode	outcome of redevelopment	impact(people displaced/ buildings demolished)
H9/ Wan Chai Road/ Tai Yuen Street	Chinese Estates Group & URA  Redevelopment + "Core Conservation" of Wan Chai Market	Phase 1: <i>Zenith</i> , on sale since 12/2006, 652 units, 43 stories mix-use: commercial, residential, community facility  Phase 2: <i>One</i> , to be finished in 2012, 237 units. The estate was developed on top of Wan Chai Market while the facade was conserved.	975 people/ 31 buildings
H15/ Lee Tung Street & McGregor Street	Sino Group and Hopewell Group  Redevelopment + preserving three shophouses	Memorandum was signed in Feb. 2010.  Residential: 1,212 units; Commercial (area): 9637 m <sup>2</sup> preserving three shophouses + design with a theme of "wedding"	1,613 people/ 52 buildings
H16/ Johnston Road	K. Wah International Holdings & URA  Redevelopment + preserving 5 pre-war shophouses	<i>J Residence</i> , finished in 2007 Residential: 381 units  The 5 pre-war shophouses on Johnston Road and Ship Street were preserved for commercial use, one among which were renovated as a complex restaurant and named as " <i>The Pawn</i> ."	333 people/ 21 buildings
H17/ Queen's Road East and Nullah Stone Lane	Nan Fung Group & URA	<i>Queen's Cube</i> , 96 units, finished in 2009  Changing used from residential to serviced apartment.	25 people/ 5 buildings
H05-026/ (Blue House Cluster) Nullah Stone Lane/ Hing Wan Street/ King Sing Street	Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme	Grade A Historic Building listed in the second batch of the scheme in Sep. 2009  According to the most recent proposal adopted by DB and URA, previous tenants were allowed to stay <i>in situ</i> while part of the cluster would be renovated with adaptive reuse, focusing on linking history, community culture, and social enterprise.  In all 14 households would stay in the cluster.	70 people/ 9 buildings
WC/001/ Mallory Street and 6-12 Burrows Street	Revitalising Historic Buildings Through Partnership Scheme	Grade B Historic Building To be finished in 2012. Creativity Industry Center operated by Hong Kong Art Center. It would house gallery and retail space on ground floor and some art studios and offices to let for art societies on 2-3 floor.	122 people/ 5 buildings
<b>Sum</b>			<b>3,138 people/ 123 Buildings</b>

Source: adopted from URA Annual Review 2009-2010 and 2010-2011

However, the number based on URA's Freezing Survey was rather conservative since it did not capture the tenants who were forcibly displaced as mentioned in the previous chapter. Neither did it cover the amount of tenants being displaced by private redevelopment. About the same time that LDC was founded, SWIRP, one among the few powerful developers in Hong Kong, started its redevelopment projects on southeastern end of Wan Chai, especially the Star Street. Over the past 25 years, SWIRP has finished the I, II, III phases of Pacific Place, including three luxurious hotels, one high-end serviced apartment *Star Crest*, etc., and a shopping center. It turned the cluster into a trendy neighborhood where fashion boutiques and high-end restaurants concentrated. The redevelopment potential around Star Street also attracted other major developers such as Cheung Kong Holdings. The trend gradually expanded to Queen's Road East, converging with URA projects and Hopewell Group's redevelopment agenda. It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the amount of people being displaced should range from 8,000-10,000 (three times of that documented by URA) as a result of various forms of redevelopment. Were they relocated in the redevelopment projects or in other flats in the same neighborhood as the authority planned? The answer is clearly no. All of the redevelopment projects carried out by URA were high-end mix-use apartments that even middle-class could hardly afford be it rental or ownership housing. For example, the averaged rent of J Residence (H16) was at least \$2709 per month for a rental of 44.9 m<sup>2</sup>, which was above the median of monthly household income in Hong Kong (\$2,322).<sup>6</sup>



Fig. 4.5 Around the *Pacific Place*

<sup>6</sup> See more in Hong Kong Fact sheet (Jan, 2012), published by Census and Statistic Department. [online available]<http://www.gov.hk/en/about/abouthk/factsheets/docs/population.pdf>

Table 4.4 Rate and rent of properties after redevelopment by URA

	price/rent after redevelopment (per sqft)	rental
H9	Phase I: <i>Zenith</i> for sale: \$1,539 for rental: \$4.0-5.2  Phase II: <i>One</i> for sale: \$1,831-2303 (price expected for pre-sale) for rental: no data available as of Jan 2012	<b>\$40.0-51.6/ m<sup>2</sup> (Zenith)</b>
H5 (LDC)	for sale: \$1,293 for rental: \$2,709/571 sqft, about \$4.7/sqft	<b>\$47.5/m<sup>2</sup></b>
H10 (LDC)	for sale: \$1,032-1,161 for rental: \$1,638/425 sqft, about \$3.9/sqft	<b>\$38.7/m<sup>2</sup></b>
H11 (LDC)	for sale: no recent data available since most of the owners kept it for rental for rental: \$2515.7/508 sqft, about \$5.0/sqft	<b>\$49.5/m<sup>2</sup></b>
H15	no data as of Jan 2012	
H16	<i>J.sense</i> for sale: \$1,752 for rental: \$2,709/449 sqft; about \$5.3-6.2/sqft	<b>\$52.9-62.1/ m<sup>2</sup></b>
H17	<i>Queen's Cube</i> for sale : \$1,935-2,064., once \$2,360 at its peak for rental: \$2,903/ 451 sqft; about \$6.4/sqft	<b>\$64/m<sup>2</sup></b>

Source: Central Data <http://hk.centadata.com/>; gohome.com.hk, and field research, accessed on 20/12/2011.

Table 4.5 Private Domestic - Average Rents By Class (\$ HKD/m<sup>2</sup> per month; 1 HKD= 0.129 USD)

Year	A Less than 40 m <sup>2</sup>			B 40 m <sup>2</sup> to 69.9 m <sup>2</sup>			C 70 m <sup>2</sup> to 99.9 m <sup>2</sup>			D 100 m <sup>2</sup> to 159.9 m <sup>2</sup>			E 160 m <sup>2</sup> or above		
	Hong Kong	New Territories	Kowloon	Hong Kong	New Territories	Kowloon	Hong Kong	New Territories	Kowloon	Hong Kong	New Territories	Kowloon	Hong Kong	New Territories	Kowloon
1999	193	173	133	197	157	116	248	183	140	274	187	177	307	186	175
2000	192	166	130	198	149	117	252	172	144	276	195	184	316	197	174
2001	187	153	120	191	146	112	254	184	141	282	233	177	328	207	186
2002	165	134	105	168	132	101	225	164	122	247	196	156	305	190	169
2003	152	122	93	147	120	88	191	157	103	216	172	133	261	182	146
2004	167	125	99	168	134	95	213	171	114	234	188	151	275	159	165
2005	188	140	106	184	145	101	243	193	122	263	205	161	318	201	176
2006	216	154	113	207	155	107	258	198	124	298	220	171	355	197	189
2007	246	170	127	237	170	118	289	220	144	335	240	195	396	228	225
2008	278	198	146	271	202	139	336	264	170	397	291	238	473	273	261
2009	236	181	137	226	174	126	272	230	142	304	236	182	362	244	209
2010	285	204	166	275	217	152	327	278	174	358	287	223	409	269	233
2011	331	241	184	314	241	168	358	288	190	399	299	243	469	294	254

Source: Property Market Statistics -prices and rents/Private Domestic- Average Rents By Class, 1999-2011.

In Wan Chai, rentals provided from LDC and URA projects were apparently more expensive than averaged rental of the same class domestic rentals in the same area. As of the 2010 Census suggested, households in Wan Chai paid the highest amount of median monthly rent of \$967 and median monthly mortgage payment and loan repayment of \$1613. In table 4.4, I summarized the averaged price of rental availed from URA projects, all of which fall into the category of B (40 m<sup>2</sup> to 69.9 m<sup>2</sup>) or C (70 m<sup>2</sup> to 99.9 m<sup>2</sup>) as stipulated by the statistics by Rating & Valuation Department (see table 4.5). As rentals, URA projects were mostly priced above \$51.6/m<sup>2</sup> and LDC's ranged between \$36.7-51.6/m<sup>2</sup> while the average was \$40.5/m<sup>2</sup> for B-class and \$46.2/m<sup>2</sup> for C-class. Considering the two most recent projects finished after 2007, a rental of nearly \$64.5/m<sup>2</sup> were 59% more than an averaged rental (as compared to the B-class). The contrast was more obvious when we compare the URA projects with the rentals they replaced (approximately 2.5 times of the averaged rate before redevelopment). Most domestic rentals before redevelopment were ranging from \$16.8-25.8/m<sup>2</sup> and they were mostly smaller units that fall into A-Class domestic rentals. To put in another way, the new rental unit was rated as \$2,903 for 45.1 m<sup>2</sup> in H17 whereas a rental unit in the previous tenement buildings were roughly \$167.7 for 9 m<sup>2</sup>. Compared to the median monthly domestic household rent in Hong Kong, \$967.7 for private residential units and \$490.2 for divided suites or other quarters in private rentals, the new rental unit still was several times higher (see table 4.6).

Table 4.6 *Median Monthly Domestic Household Rent and Median Rent to Income Ratios by Type of Quarters, 2001, 2006 and 2011*

1 HKD= 0.129 USD	Median Monthly Domestic Household Rent (HK\$)			Median Rent to Income Ratio (%)		
	2001	2006	2011	2001	2006	2011
Public Rental Housing units	1,300	1,390	1,210	10.4	13.5	10.6
Private Residential Units	5,300	5,100	7,500	27.3	25.2	25.7
Other quarters in private permanent housing	3,000	3,000	3,800	16.3	15.7	15.8

Source: adopted from 2010 Population Census.

How exactly was this kind of luxurious housing produced by redevelopment? Was it just a result of market? Who is it catering to? From the case of H17 presented by URA and its partner *Nan Fung Group* (NFG) we may better understand the phenomenon. The project sit at the cross of Stone Nullah Lane and Queen's Road East, almost across street to the Blue House. After URA finished land resumption and deconstruction, *NFG* earned the bid<sup>7</sup> and developed the project into a high-end condominium with so-called "Hip Hotel Design." It was on target for single while collar people, assuming that many investors would purchase the flats for its high-returns from letting. The project's 96 units under the brand name *Queen's Cube* went on sale in October 2010. The unit is relative small as compared to many other new projects in the area, ranging from 401 to 582 sqft. The averaged rate for sale was \$2,029.3 per sqft.

To the developer's surprise, *Queen's Cube* received lukewarm responses. Only 9 units were sold until May 2011 because buyers were discouraged by its small area and relatively high ratio of area counted as shared space. Meanwhile, many civic groups cited it as the indicative of URA's failing to redevelop for the public.<sup>8</sup> The huge rent gap between the rate for assumption (during 2003-05) and the "market rate" set in 2011- approximately \$516-645 as compared to \$1,935- invited many attacks. Anecdotal information from *NFG* suggested the developer once negotiated with URA in order to lower the rate but was rejected.<sup>9</sup> Without disclosure of the memorandum between the two parties, it is suggested that URA were to enjoy a bonus (10-40% of the profit) once the target profit is accomplished and thus it would hold to the high rate. Despite mounting critiques, URA just resisted disclosing the deal neither would it let *NFG* lower the price. In the end, *NFG* was allowed to purchase all of the 96 flats in one deal by more than \$90.3M<sup>10</sup> and URA received the bonus as agreed previously. Today *NFG* operates the project as a high-end serviced apartment and the monthly rental now started from \$2,902. What's important here, other than the secret deal and unreasonable "market rate," was the exclusion of both individual property owners and tenants from design to marketing. To make itself financially

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<sup>7</sup>(May, 17/2011) Nan Fund would buy back all units in Queen's Cube. The Oriental Daily.

<sup>8</sup> Interview with Melissa (01/04/2011) and with WY, one member of Shunning Road Concern Group.(22/05/2011).

<sup>9</sup> According to a senior director in Nan Fung, the group considered lowering down the price but URA opposed the idea. He regarded URA acting no difference from a private developer (Interview with Pink, 16/12/2011) °

<sup>10</sup> (July 21, 2011) *Nan Fung planned to purchase it all. Queen's Cube*. Ming Pao.

viable, URA runs as a corporate and it has been, indeed, making notable profit (see table 4.7). Drawing upon the transforming landscape around *Queen's Cube*, I will discuss the continuous redevelopment in various forms in Old Wan Chai in next section.

Table 4.7 Selected Projects which made profit during 2001-2009

Project No.	Location	Profit
H1	Sheung Wan	5.63
H12	Kennedy Town	4.64
H16	Wan Chai (Johnston Road)	4.06
H13	Kennedy Town	1.5
K10	Yau Ma Tei	1.29
K2	Mong Kok (Langham Place)	1.26
K27	Mong Kok	0.74
K8	Mong Kok	0.56

source: adopted from a report prepared for LegCo by URA, (June 2009),CB(1)2343/09-10(01).

Table 4.8 Summary of annual balance of URA

	Annual balance before reduction of the land premium exemption	the land premium exemption	Annual balance after reducing the land premium exemption
01/05/2001	-22	-	-22
2001/02 (11 months)	-5	-	-5
2002/03	-2	-	-2
2003/04	-1	-	-1
2004/05	30	-4	26
2005/06	15	-6	9
2006/07	8	-	8
2007/08	20	-1	19
2008/09	-45	-2	-47
2009/10	69	-32	37
as of 31/03/2010	67	-45	22

source: adopted from a report prepared by URA for LegCo (June 2009), CB(1)2343/09-10(01).

## 4.2 Urban transformation in Wan Chai from an everyday perspective

### 4.2.1 Representation for Redevelopment: Historic Preservation by Fetishism

*Tong Lau*, the Chinese tenement building that carries registers of ethnicity and nostalgia, became an object of fetishism over the past decade in Hong Kong. The emergent interest in representing *Tong Lau* in placemaking was never a case in the past century, whether in the evaluation done by the British hygiene engineer Osbert Chadwick in 1902,<sup>1</sup> or in the eyes of those town planners in charge of the first Urban Renewal District Outline Zone Plan during the late 60s-70s. In 1985, when the LDC was first proposed in the Governor's policy address,

Legislative Councillor Jackie Chan commented:

*I am most pleased to learn that Government has placed much concern on the redevelopment of old districts in the urban area... there are still many pre-war and post-war buildings in these districts which are very old and dilapidated. Should these buildings be still allowed to continue to exist in their present form, they would not only cause a bad image on the city's outlook but also form a great contrast between the old and the new.* (qtd. in Lee, 2008, p.250)

Issues of density and hygiene were raised to justify redeveloping rundown tenement buildings in old districts. Of limited area, tenement buildings referred to "any flat that can accommodate more than one tenant....and averagely, each flat was subdivided into rooms of 2.7 by 3 meter."<sup>2</sup> The building type proliferated with tremendous housing demand that never wanes on Hong Kong Island despite change of density, design, and materials with amendment of building codes along the years. Western tenement buildings, or *Young Lau*, as compared to *Tong Lau*, were mostly built during the 50-70s with RC structure and sometimes equipped with lift. A flat in *Young Lau* were usually of area of 37.16-55.74 (sqft) for 4-10 people to share. These 4-5 story-high tenement buildings were targets of redevelopment. A lot of them disappeared with redevelopment projects launched in Wan Chai or old neighborhoods in Kowloon.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1902, the hygiene engineer Osbert Chadwick was hired to evaluate the built environment in Hong Kong. He then proposed "Public Health and Buildings Ordinance" in 1903 in which specific scales of spaces were regulated.

<sup>2</sup> Corrin Chan, (2005) *A Century of Architecture in Hong Kong*, p 50, Joint Publishing: HK. See more in Ferdinand K. H. Cheung, *Tenement Building in the Light of Their Origin*, 1999.

Most pre-war tenement buildings were gone. The Blue House Complex in Wan Chai is one among a few which stand still in the city. Around the complex, one can find a vestige of historical urban fabric that ties vivid street life and vernacular organization of spaces with urban immediacy and spontaneity. Not far away from the blue House, the four pre-war tenement buildings preserved along with project H16 jointly developed by *K. Wah Real Estates* and URA is an example of historic preservation by fetishism that attracts attention. The alleged “new life” injected into the historical buildings under the name of “adaptive reuse,” turned a pawn shophouse into a fancy bar called “the Pawn” while the well-known *Woo Cheong Pawn Shop* was displaced (see Fig. 4.6 below). In the same initiative, another shophouse on 18 Ship Street



Fig. 4.6 (Top two) *The Pawn*. Next to the Pawn is the high-rise residential tower (*J Residence*) as a result of H16. (Far left ) The original pawn relocated on a much smaller lane. (Left)The shophouse preserved along with H16, now turned into a low-key, expensive, private kitchen on Ship Street.

was turned into a private kitchen that requires reservation.<sup>3</sup> Local critics and academics were worried that similar practices would be applied to the Blue House Complex under URA's Revitalization Projects in March 2005. It is an issue of preservation by fetishism that I discuss in this section.

*Tong Lau* in Wan Chai had become a popular theme for visual art, documentary, and community events after the Community Movement emerged during 2005-2007. Nevertheless, such kind of representational space was selective. Either exhibitions of historical photos or cultural events that highlighted folklore and craftsmanship rendered the “good old days in *Tong Lau*” without reference to the systematic production of inadequate housing. Moreover, most of them tended to preserve *Tong Lau* as “collective memory” in a way detached from practices of everyday life. The architectural styles and texture of antiques oftentimes replaced people's engagement in the representational space.

What's invisible to the audience was the politics of representation taking place in the operation of the Blue House Community Museum (BHCM) in the Blue House. Initially a program organized by the St James's Settlement (SJS) to engage the local community in saving Blue House from inadequate redevelopment by preservation, the BHCM turned the storefront of the tenement building into a community living room where neighbors, such as H15 CG, can discuss issues facing the neighborhood. Meanwhile, the operation of BHCM serves as a window to showcase community efforts in Old Wan Chai to cultivate a sense of ownership and awareness of preserving community assets. Against all odds, the operation of the BHCM did change the authorities' decision to adopt a more “people-based approach.” It would allow tenants to stay in the Blue House Complex after restoration is finished<sup>4</sup> to keep local social network in place.

With generous assistance provided by social workers from SJS, I was able to observe the operation of the program and multiple uses of the space during 2009-2011. I attended community meetings, culture tours, and several exhibitions in the Blue House. In addition to participant

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<sup>3</sup> The private kitchen “Ying Yan” was featured in Cheryl Lu-Lien Tan's report on dining in Hong Kong. (May 20, 2011) Inside Hong Kong's Private Kitchens. NYTimes. Choice Tables.

<sup>4</sup> The decision was announced by the Development Bureau in Feb 2008. According to my interview with key activists and community organizers, the successful operation of BHCM was the key to convince Carrie Lam, the head of Development Bureau then. Besides, the dramatic turn, some argued, also resulted from the consensus between Development Bureau and URA in compromising the Blue House project to mitigate community outrage following the demolition of Wedding Card Street.

observation, I talked to several active community members, social workers in charge of the program, and several advisors who sit on the advisory committee that oversees the program. A issue underneath the successful achievement of the case, however, is the gradual alienation of the community in the BHCM. With thematic exhibitions constantly installed there, the community volunteers frequently found themselves lacking knowledge to introduce those antiques collections that were not necessarily related to their everyday life. Instead, antique collectors or folklore experts were invited to the Museum to give a thorough archaeology of disappeared practices or materials. In guiding visitors to walk around the neighborhood, some volunteers found it challenging to deliver the same kind of historical review of vernacular architecture that the director of the program seemed to prefer. Some of them expressed frustration in keeping up with the operation of the BHCM. Some opined that introducing the neighborhood by sharing their own life stories should count as equally effective and important. Some local volunteers were asked not to criticize URA in those activities. Some may just withdraw their participation in BHCM due to negative experiences as mentioned. As Lee noted in her study of the case, there was unequal power relationship and dynamic among different participants that constituted a kind of “mediated empowerment”(C. M. Lee, 2010, p. 116).

Some members of the advisory board questioned the program as limiting community participation to assisting chores. “Many community volunteers left accordingly and many who were active in the program now were not necessarily residents in Wan Chai! “(interview Shannon, 15/06/2011) Part of the reason, they argued, was due to the director of the program acting more as an event coordinator or curator rather than a community organizer. The seemingly personal issue actually reflects a professional turn in social work that considers community development as a particular fraction rather than a foundational philosophy of their practices. For many participants who fought hard to save the Blue House for the community, the current operation of BHCM was far from a genuine community participation that could have empowered the community to have a “sense of entitlement” (Interview, 15/06/2011).

The aforementioned issue is just part of the ongoing politics of representation within the Blue House community. It is not a unique issue though. In many cultural activities centered around *Tong Lau* in the past five years, we see a tendency to replace community politics with

apolitical community culture, or even worse, staging of community. Space for “community” was reduced to surfaces just like the unfortunate Wan Chai Market with its decorative streamlined facade. The space for insurgent urban citizenship disappeared in abuse and appropriation of community culture. Most audiences, nonetheless, were complicit in a process of turning the present into the past with curators and developers. Many viewers were unaware of how communities threatened by displacement were struggling on everyday basis. However, more and more developers found various ways to “engage community” in order to change their public relations and justify their agendas. For example, *Soundwill Holdings*, an active intermediary that is similar to the *Richfield* mentioned earlier, cooperated with Hong Kong Culture Heritage Studies and Promotion Association in deliberating an exhibition entitled “*Tong Lau* in Hong Kong.”<sup>5</sup> Local media featured the vivid presentation yet made no mention of such ironic staging being sponsored by an agency that established its business on demolishing old buildings. Similar irony could be found here and there in URA and other developers’ outreach programs.

The politics of representation has its implication in substantive remaking of place. A case to the point is the building of *Pacific Place* by SWIRE since 2009.<sup>6</sup> Following the launch of Old Wan Chai Revitalisation Initiatives Special Committee in 2008,<sup>7</sup> under URA and Development Bureau’s advice, 25 historical buildings were packaged as a Heritage Trail to present the encounter of the East and West in Wan Chai, a selling point to attract private parties to invest in neighborhood revitalization. SWIRE is selected and would be investing \$2.6M in enhancing streetscape, lighting, street-side cafes, and food stalls to extend its building of “*Pacific Place*” shopping center into a “fine dining district” under the same name.

In the case of making “Pacific Place,” privately-owned public space was mixed up with commercialization of heritages in the private-public partnership model of revitalization. It’s unclear that for whom Old Wan Chai is remade. Migrant workers, immigrants, and the elderly could hardly enjoy these fine dining places. More problematically, remaking “Pacific Place” was essentially SWIRE’s continuous redevelopment of western tenement buildings around the Star

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<sup>5</sup> See more on its official webpage. [http://www.hkchspa.org/hkchspa.org/Blog/Entries/2011/7/9\\_Entry\\_1\\_3.html](http://www.hkchspa.org/hkchspa.org/Blog/Entries/2011/7/9_Entry_1_3.html)

<sup>6</sup> (Sep, 28, 2009) *Pacific Place in Wan Chai: Linking heritages and making the Star Street*. Ming Pao.

<sup>7</sup> The Special Committee’s term has ended on 14 Feb 2012.

Street and Wing Fung Street since mid-90s. In a selective appreciation of *Tong Lau* and preservation by fetishism, we see a differential treatment of *Tong Lau* vs western tenement buildings; The former becomes an object of fetishism while the latter falls victim to predatory redevelopers. Yet most tenants are faced with the repetitive displacement except for a few tenants who could stay in the Blue House.

The static representation of “community culture” had not induced effective community politics. Although there had been some attempts to present the vibrant community living in tenement buildings in Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po,<sup>8</sup> the affordable housing stock provided by tenement buildings were not recognized in the overall agenda of urban redevelopment. As one local architect noted straightforwardly, “Older buildings, whatever their quality, offer the only opportunities for many families and business to acquire space at an economic rent.” (P. C. Smith, 2006, p. 11) However, the same sympathy is absent in current selective readings of “the past.”

#### ***4.2.2 For Whom the City is Preserved?***

Near by the Blue House Complex, another URA project, Wan Chai Road and Tai Yuen Street (H9), also invited many critiques during 2006-2008. Three blocks were included in the LDC project in 1991 but were not implemented until URA took over (see Fig. 4.7).<sup>9</sup> According to URA’s report, H9 displaced 975 people and demolished 31 buildings, one among which was the Grade-C historic building, Wan Chai Market. According to agreement between LDC and the developer, H9 would be developed into a mix-use project with some civic amenities and a new market relocated at the block across street to the original market. Despite sporadic concern for the historic market building and displacement of business since late 90s, the deal remained as it was until 2006. The first phase of H9 was developed into a 43-story-high residential tower, *the Zenith* (Fig 4.10). The 652 units of the popular project were almost sold out by the end of 2007.

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<sup>8</sup> See more in *Our Life in West Kowloon* (2007) and *Our life in West Kowloon II: Where Life, Heritage and Culture Meet* (2008) published by the Society for Community Organization (SOCO).

<sup>9</sup> See more in minutes and appendix of Conservation Committee meeting at LegCo. (2007) CB(2)2417/06-07(01).

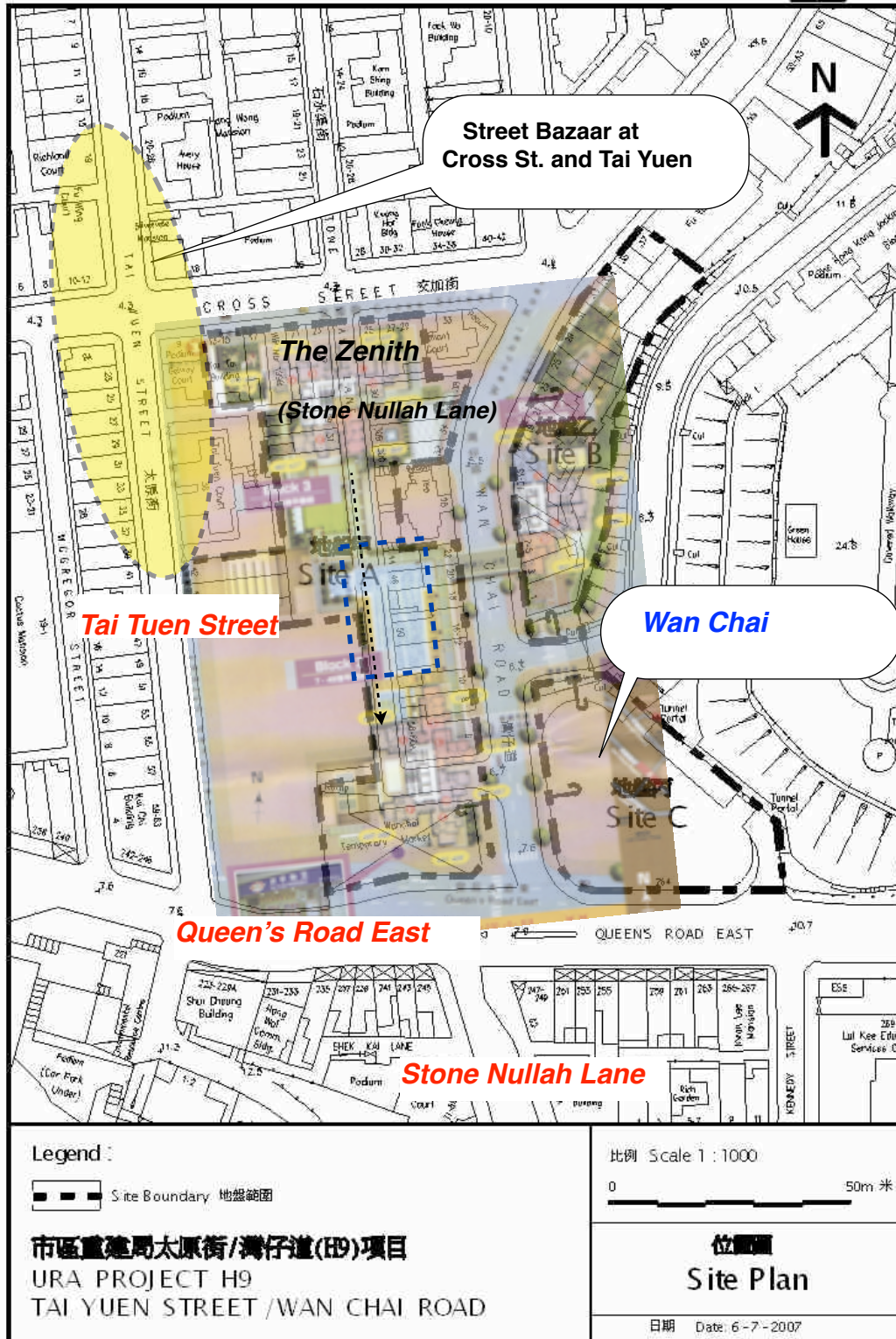


Fig. 4.7 URA H9 Tai Yuen Street/ Wan Chai Road  
 Source: Adopted from appendix of minutes of LegCO, LK/3010/99/1/SP/027

Soon Development Bureau decided to relocate the Tai Yuen Street Bazaar to make room for automobile transportation as a result of the new redevelopment. It planned to relocate 86 out of the 158 hawkers from the bazaar so that the south of Tai Yuen Street and the east of Crossroad street could receive traffic coming from Queen’s Road East (Fig. 4.8).<sup>10</sup> The plan sparked widespread outrage, especially vendors and those who shopped in the bazaars for decades. Again, “who is the community” that the authorities should serve? The wealthy residents of *Zenith* or hawkers who worked diligently for a self-contained living for more than five-decades in the bazaar? Many citizens supported the hawkers staying in the beloved bazaar for their livelihood, local economy, and for their contribution to tourism.<sup>11</sup>

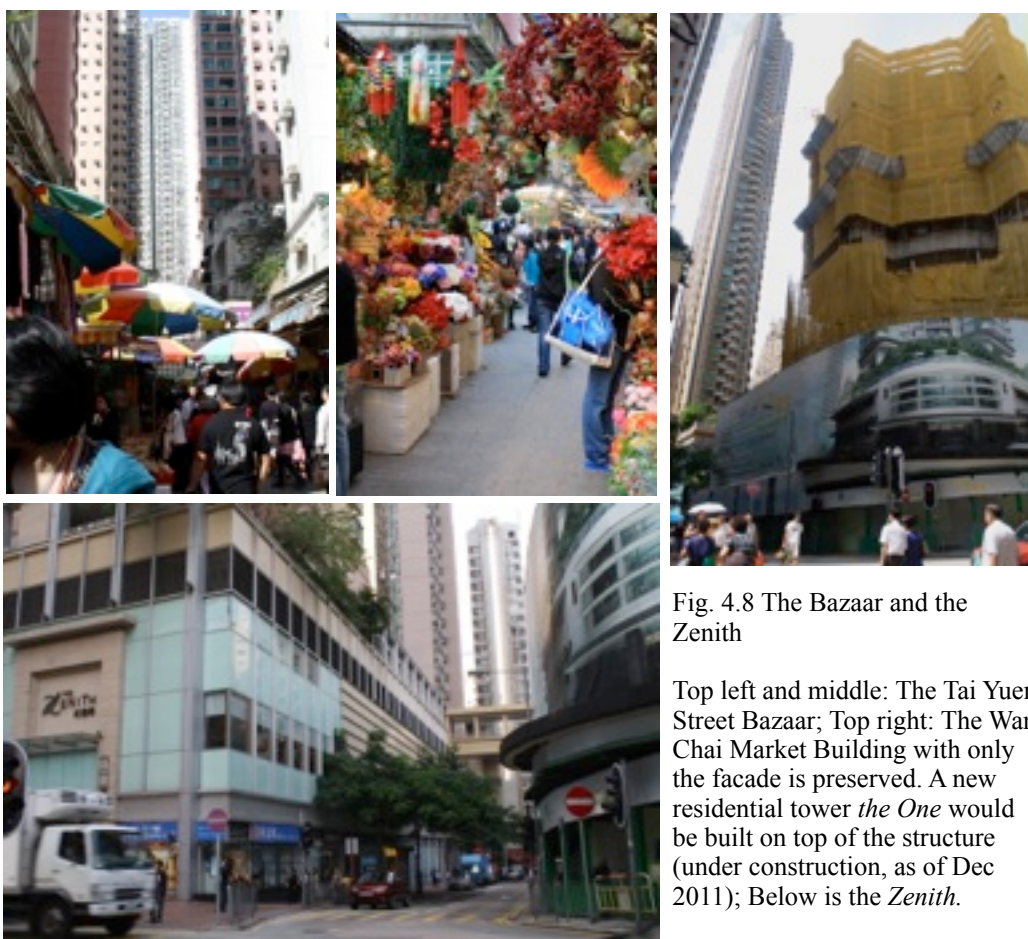


Fig. 4.8 The Bazaar and the Zenith

Top left and middle: The Tai Yuen Street Bazaar; Top right: The Wan Chai Market Building with only the facade is preserved. A new residential tower *the One* would be built on top of the structure (under construction, as of Dec 2011); Below is the *Zenith*.

<sup>10</sup> The original plan was to relocate all of the vendors in the bazaars. Facing outrageous criticisms, the authorities came up with alternative plan that would save roughly half of the vendors in the bazaar in May 2006 but the concerned public was still disappointed at the new proposal.

<sup>11</sup> In the *Community Aspiration Survey of Wanchai* regarding redevelopment (Hong Kong University, 2005), commissioned by URA. According the study, Wan Chai was featured as “convenient, diverse, and historical.” Tai Yuen Street Bazaar was identified as one among several landmarks that the community treasured.

Facing unexpected votes for saving the bazaar, the authorities, though insisting the significance of “circulation” and “hygiene,” could not but change the plan<sup>12</sup> when most legislators turning to the public and most importantly, the CE of SAR<sup>13</sup> expressed concern for the mounting negative sentiment in the city. The turn was widely considered as URA’s attempt to make a facelift.<sup>14</sup> There were too many details about dynamics among authorities, LegCO and Wan Chai District Council to be included here. What I’d like to take issue with is the idea of “public good” that supposedly is what redevelopment hope to accomplish. In the case of Tai Yuen Street Bazaar, it is clear that “the public” or “the community” was not a homogenous group who pursue the same kind of urban life. The multitude of public, or “multiple publics,” required a planning paradigm that would have accountability to the underprivileged’s livelihood rather than a selected group of homeowners in the luxurious estate. Moreover, it would allow publics to negotiate changes of space in relation to discontinuation or continuation of community-based economy. URA, nevertheless, never has considered itself the authority to play such a role despite the supreme power it holds and so many projects on its list. The highest planning authority, the Development Bureau, also stepped away unless getting political pressure from above. “The spirit of contract needs to be respected,” an idea which was reiterated by both URA and Development Bureau as much as how it was emphasized in terms of the relationship between tenants and landlords as mentioned in chapter 3.

The success of saving Tai Yuen Street Bazaar was meaningful in many ways. However, *the Zenith* has changed the neighborhood profoundly. The Stone Nullah Lane, which used to cross the block with the underground channel, was cut into two unconnected lanes. Instead, a private swimming pool was built for the Zenith’s residents. A social worker from SJS, once visited *the Zenith* by chance, observed the private swimming pool full of westerner users, as she noted, “No idea where they were from...” (Interview with Kelly, 23/03/2011) (see Fig. 4.9 for the location of the pool).

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<sup>12</sup> Una So. (November 14, 2007), *U-turn on moving Wan Chai hawkers' bazaar praised*, The Standard.

<sup>13</sup> The Executive of SAR announced the government’s commitment to balance development and preservation and cited Tai Yuen Street Bazaar as an example in his policy address for 2007/2008.

<sup>14</sup> See *Saved market to get a facelift* (14 December 2007) South China Morning Post. See more in *Wan Chai facelift to save historic market*, Hong Kong Standard (December 21, 2007).

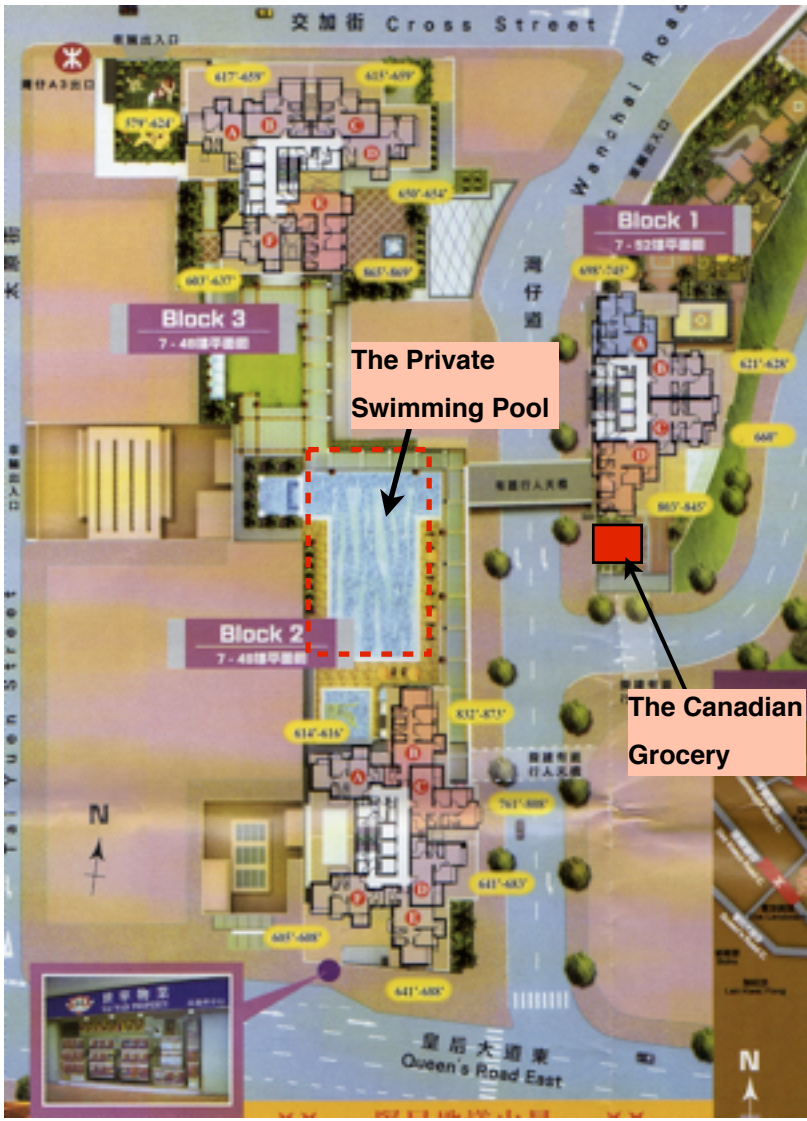


Fig 4.9 Around Blue House. Left: Gentrification taking place in Wan Chai- a trendy Lebanese bar on Amoy Street. Right: A “Blue House Restaurant” was just opened across street to the Blue House Complex in 2011.

Although many people found the loss of the historic lane disappointing, they did not have much say in the production of the private project. They could not intervene in the developer's marketing of the commercial space of *the Zenith* whether they go to the high-end grocery or not. It is the "planned lawlessness of privatization"(Greenhouse, 2010, p. 6) that is created by neoliberal practices of URA.

Doubts around *the Zenith* did not end with the final decision to save the bazaar. The second phase of H9 brought about more debates about keeping the historical Wan Chai Market.<sup>15</sup> But the authorities insisted that the development contract should be respectfully implemented with Development Bureau's support. After all, the two parties agreed upon a proposal that adopted a "core element conservation" approach. To be more precise, the facade and some core structural elements of the market would be preserved and partially reconstructed. The 38-story-high residential tower of 237 units would be built on top of the original market structure.

In my visit to the site during December 2011, the project was about to finish. The second phase, "One," had been featured in the real estate market. As I talked to one property agent randomly to see how the project was received in the market, he encouraged me to buy one before the price being further pushed up after completion. "It is going to very profitable as the *Zenith* has been. Don't worry about managing the property (knowing that I am a Taiwanese visitor). We have professionals to take care for you." "Do many foreigner investors come here?" I asked. "Of course! We have been experienced in serving many clients like you." He answered (interview with Ben, 17/12/2011). The encounter, perhaps with some exaggeration from the agent in order to sell the property, suggested that properties of those redevelopment projects were not only catering to the local rich but cross-border investors. I came across numerous similar advice for investment in talking to other property agents in Wan Chai during 2009-2011. According to local media coverage of the frequent transaction of *the Zenith* in 2011, one could earn 75% (\$ 0.44M)

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to opposition from local communities, some professional groups, such as the Hong Kong Institute of Architects, also published reports to call for preservation. See more in *A Study on Historical and Architectural Context of Wan Chai Market*. (May 2004) the Hong Kong Institute of Architects.

of his investment after selling a flat bought in 2007.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, who would not feel interested in reaping this much profit of redevelopment?

On the ground, the neighborhood around the Blue House Complex, *Queen's Cube*, and *Zenith* has become a battle ground for creative destruction whether in the form of redevelopment, renovation, or something in between preservation and redevelopment. According to anecdotal information from the neighbors, *NFG*, the developer of *Queen's Cube*, has been clandestinely buying out storefront properties on Stone Nullah Lane, that is, shops nearby the Blue House on both sides of the lane. *NFG's* drastic raising rent of its property has changed the retail business a lot in the past few years. The old grocery was replaced by 7-11 and several tea food halls were replaced by Subway (the chain restaurant) and another high-end grocery specializing in imported goods.<sup>17</sup> The Old Wan Chai has been refashioned into a trendy neighborhood which foreigners find chic, convenient, and oriental.

Other than URA projects and partner developers like *NFG*, various modes of private redevelopment joined the battle one after another. On Hin Wing Street, another street bordering the Blue House Complex, several initiatives took out without attracting too much attention to the two planning applications approved by Town Planning Board in 2011, both of which are going to redevelop tenement buildings into 25-story-high hotels--one is located at No. 5-9 Hin Wing Street and another at No. 17-19 Hin Wing Street. Of the two developers, *Goldig Investment group* was planning to redevelop the property under its own serviced apartment branch whereas *Soundwill Holdings* already profited a lot from reselling the property with the planning approval.<sup>18</sup> The two cases indicated two emerging modes of private redevelopment in Hong Kong that I further discuss in the context of making serviced apartment in Chapter five.

Similar cases prevail in Old Wan Chai. Around the site of Wedding Card Street, *the Hopewell Group* has been making its own trendy neighborhood *the East* following SWIRE's

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<sup>16</sup> New record rate of *Zenith* (\$1496.5/sqft), 06/12/2011, Wenhui, the investor buyer bought the flat for letting (rate as \$2838 per month) that was expected to have rewarding rate as 3.3%. The previous owner bought the flat at the cost of \$0.59 M in July 2007 and then earned 3.44M (75%) after resale.

<sup>17</sup> From interview with Pink, a long-time resident in Wan Chai (16/12/2011).

<sup>18</sup> According to transaction records availed from Land Registry, *Soundwill Holdings* sold the property with the permission for \$12.1M. It earned \$10.6M from the resale as compared to its investment of \$1.5M in 2007. See more in *Submission by Soundwill for Building Hotel on Hin Wing Street* (Dec 19, 2011) *The Economic Journal*.

making of Pacific Place. Right next to *the East*, another developer, *Tai Hung Fai Enterprise*, along with *InterContinental Hotel Group*, had acquired tenement buildings and redeveloped them into a 4-star 27-storey boutique Hotel under the brand name *Indigo*. The project is located on the Queen's Road East, across street to the *Zenith*. Tai Hung Fai has very similar practices in Mong Kok that is also nearby URA's redevelopment by preservation at the same time.<sup>19</sup>

Molly is a community worker closely working with tenants in the Blue House Complex. When I walked with her in the neighborhood to visit Hin Wing Street, she shared with me her doubts about the kind of preservation thematized by community culture. "Sometimes, I wonder, if promoting community culture contributed to redevelopment in Wan Chai?" (interview with Molly, 16/12/2011). One longtime resident in Wan Chai, Pink, noted more clearly, "the whole mechanism of redevelopment is for 'preserving the profitability' than anything else" (interview with Pink, 16/12/2011). Indeed, cases in Old Wan Chai seem to suggest that the transformation of urban landscape is contributing to a rocketing rental market whether redevelopment in the form of reconstruction or preservation. The thematic historical preservation carried out by URA focuses on architectural styles, prioritizes exchange value rather than use value, a superficial "heritage by designation" as opposed to "heritage by appropriation" (1998, qtd. in Tweed & Sutherland, 2007, p. 63). Contrasting the case of Tai Yuen Street Bazaar and Wan Chai Market, it is clear that URA did not consider urban ensemble as *de facto* heritage that gained its value through people's use and everyday life. Neither did it capture how community was integral to the kind of heritage by appropriation. Thus miscommunication between URA and the community played out again and again in the series of outcries asking for keeping social network for local economy whereas URA kept responding with thematic redevelopment by preservation.

#### ***4.2.3 The Underrepresented in the midst of Redevelopment***

What has not been discussed in my interrogation of representation and historic preservation are immigrants and ethnic minority in Old Wan Chai. They are the most underrepresented due to various reasons; One among many reasons was due to the difficulty in making themselves heard. As one activist noted disappointedly, "the most marginalized people

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<sup>19</sup> Tai Hung Fai acquired a historic Tong Lau on Prince Edward West and planned to renovate into a boutique hotel. The project is very close to the famous Flower Bazaar at Mong Kok, where URA project MK02 renovated 10 tenement buildings (No. 190-220 on Prince Edward West) for commercial or culture uses. See more in Loretta Ho's master thesis on the Flower Bazaar (Ho 2012).

can hardly have the luxury to participate in community politics” (Interview with WY, 12/05/2011). Unlike local residents who had lived in Old Wan Chai for more than decades, many immigrants from mainland China, especially new arrivals who had not lived long enough to obtain permanent residency, had few entitlements or social currencies to mobilize. They were not included in the collective narratives of “local culture.” They arrived in the city at the moment when low-level labor work gradually replaced manufacturing jobs or entrepreneurial business. In the past two decades, most immigrants silently worked as janitors or cleaners in residential apartments, offices, and shopping centers. It was not even possible for them to find a place in the street bazaars because the limited hawker license was either inherited or sold at high price in black market.<sup>20</sup>

While majority mainland immigrants settled down in Kowloon rather than Hong Kong Island due to connections and affordability, some still set foot in Old Wan Chai, crowding into cubicle rooms in tenement buildings on Queen’s Road East, Hin Wing Street, or Lee Tung Street before URA or developers demolished the old buildings. Based on my interviews with immigrant tenants, they were hardly exposed to community movements in the neighborhood along the years. Some families of two bread earners would work on shifts to make ends meet and each of them works as long as 12-14 hour everyday. Some single mothers living with their children could hardly coordinate work with parenting. Nevertheless, no one can foresee a better future as faced by repetitive displacement caused by redevelopment. It is too difficult for most of them to pay monthly rent higher than \$451.5, which is more than 50% of a cleaner’s labor wage. A room of the rate, however, is normally less than 100 sqft and is not available all the time. I visited one single, unemployed immigrant mother with her 5-year-old boy in a room of 50 sqft. The mom sighed, “I cannot cook for him though I truly don’t want to feed him these canned food. But what can I do if there is not even an oven or space for me to stand up to work?” (interview with Leslie, 25/04/2011) Indeed, in the room where a bunk bed took up 90% of its space, I cannot imagine how further they can continue with the limited saving brought from the mainland. My encounters

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<sup>20</sup> Since the early 1970's, the former Urban Council had stopped issuing new hawker licenses until early 2009. After a review of related policies, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene has started issuing a limited number of new Itinerant Hawker License. However, the overall goal of the policy is to gradually reduce on-street licensed hawkers. See more in Hawker Control at the Department of Food and Environmental Hygiene. [http://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant\\_environment/hawker/hawker.html](http://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/hawker/hawker.html)

with mainland immigrants in Wan Chai would be transported to Sham Shui Po, another battlefield of redevelopment to analyze in chapter six and seven.

Another underrepresented group is the ethnic minority that constitutes 5.0% of the whole population in Hong Kong.<sup>21</sup> Filipinos and Indonesians, however, were mostly migrant workers who were required to live with their employers and thus had little individual participation in housing. Therefore “White” (10.6%) and the so-called “South Asian” (13.9%, see table 4.9 below) constitute the most significant minority. The racist category of “White” and its higher social status and better capability in housing consumption will be discussed in chapter five.

Here I would like to briefly discuss the “South Asian” in Wan Chai, especially how they were not recognized but indeed tried to make a living under the shadow of redevelopment. Many of the South Asians were born in Hong Kong, following their parents coming to the city as immigrants related to the British Colonial governance. Some were the second generation while some settled down during the 70s-80s such as Nepalese and Jains (considered as Indians in the Census). Other than some Sindhis known for specializing in trading and business, more than 70% of them participated in service industry according to the 2006 By Consensus.

Table 4.9 *Constitution of ethnic minorities who fall to the category of “South Asians”*

ethnicity	Indian	Pakistani	Nepalese
population	18,042	16,518	12,564
% of total population	0.4	0.2	0.2

In Wan Chai, “South Asians” could be found to work as janitors in hotels and serviced apartments to serve expatriates and foreign visitors or as servants in groceries or restaurants. The trend is especially obvious nearby the Blue House Complex based on my ethnographic observation during 2009-2011, which could be attributed to their better English speaking skills than other ethnic groups that participated in the same industry, for example, mainland immigrants or local, elderly labor workers. Though some of them may enjoy slightly better wages in the high-end residential estates or hotels than others, they are faced with the

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<sup>21</sup> The ethnic minority totaled as 342198 people, including Filipinos (32.9%), Indonesians (25.7%), White (10.6%), Indians (6.0%), Mixed (5.3%), Nepalese (4.7%), Japanese (3.9%), Thais (3.5%), Pakistanis (3.2%), and Others (4.3%). Adopted from By Census: Thematic Report on Ethnic Minority in Hong Kong (July 2006).

displacement caused by redevelopment just like other ethnic groups. In the case of redeveloping tenement buildings on Hin Wing Street or URA's project on Wedding Card Street, there were South Asian tenants displaced but not represented in public discussion. Leaving private redevelopment aside, their entitlements to rehousing offered by URA were much more complicated depending upon their residency status (British National Overseas, Permanent Residency in Hong Kong, or nearly statelessness). Many of them experienced more difficulties than Hong Kongers due to language barriers and ethnic boundaries in community politics. Their right to adequate housing remains questionable and it has not been represented in either community movement or URA's policies. It reflects unconscious exclusion and assumptions embedded in imagining "community" whether the speaker is the policy maker, urban planners, or community organizers.

In interrogating representation and underrepresentation in redeveloping the city, one of the most critical issues is how fragments of histories and modernist planning assumption are mobilized to serve the Neoliberal agenda of redevelopment. From the cases illustrated above, there is no convincing rationale underlying the idea of "restructuring and re-planning" and "rationalizing land use"<sup>22</sup> of concerned urban areas. A public lane could be replaced by a privatized swimming pool in a gated estate and then the lively bazaar was slated for bettering private automobile transportation as most of the low-middle community do not drive. Boundaries of inclusion and exclusion were drawn inconsistently depending upon the best interest of the community selected by the authorities. The ideology of "restructuring" and "replanning" was also applied to categorization of buildings regardless of the patterning of tenure and affordability. What was not made clear, nevertheless, is that redevelopment would seriously restructure local demographics and have unequal bearing on communities along lines of class and ethnicity. Yet none of these issues were reviewed while the efficiency and profitability dominate both goals and processes of urban redevelopment. In order to speed up redevelopment, URA and its partner allies exercise in a political vacuum, which is justified by the nature of the corporate governance that runs a self-finance model with "due care and diligence in the handling of its finances"<sup>23</sup> as if

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<sup>22</sup> See Objectives of *Urban Renewal in Urban Renewal Strategy*.

<sup>23</sup> See section 10 (4) in *Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance (Cap 563)*.

the operation of the authority itself, or the circulation of investment, is more important than anything. As de Certeau noted in his reflection on redevelopment in Paris,

*...This means that renovation does not, ultimately, know what it is 'bringing back'- or what it is destroying- when it restores the references and fragments of elusive memories. For these ghosts that haunt urban works, renovation can only provide a layering out of already marked stones, like words for it.*

(de Certeau, Giard, & Mayol, 1998, p. 143)

### ***4.3 Right to Planning & Spatial Politics of Caring Relations***

#### ***4.3.1 Right to Planning***

As mentioned earlier, the processes of urban redevelopment by URA were predicated on property-ownership and presumably abuse of land resumption. The debates on rehousing had been gradually guided to calculation of cash compensation for decades until being challenged in the case of Wedding Card Street. The H15 Concern Group's (H15CG) campaign "flat-for-flat, shop-for-shop" opened up a site of community movement during 2004-2008 that tried to regain their rights and "interpretation of rights."

Before the demolition of Wedding Card Street, the place was regarded as "a complete street" nurtured by invaluable community network among a variety of local small business and longtime residents (Chow, 2005; W. Lee, Chau, & To, 2007). Among those shops is a well-maintained dynamics enabling different kinds of business in the same pool. They specialized in different kinds of printing, which required different sizes of investment, apparatus and skills and they reciprocally complemented and passed business to one another. Due to the cash compensation and rapid gentrification in Wan Chai, it is nearly impossible to maintain such well-established social network after redevelopment. The community members were both displaced and dispossessed in regard to their loss of relational situatedness and accessibility to a local network of livelihood (Lai, 2002).

It was the community's emphasis on "community network" that distinguished their aspiration from other calls for protection of property rights against urban renewal. The concerned group asked for "right to planning" and insisted that right as such is related to their relational

situatedness in the city. They implicitly suggested the kind of “right to planning” was basis for people to continue their participation in the “actually-existing-sustainability”(Whitehead, 2007).

From 2004 until now, H15 CG has been an active community group playing irreplaceable role in the community mobilizing process. With about twenty people as core members, H15 CG organized a series of community meetings, design charrettes, and extensive interviews with the affected households.<sup>24</sup> Seeing no point in negotiating with URA, the community tried to demonstrate the financial feasibility of on-site relocation by submitting a bottom-up proposal to Town Planning Board (TPB)<sup>25</sup> in March 2005. The alternative “dumbbell project”<sup>26</sup> attempted to balance interests of multiple parties and to provide various choices for rehousing (see Fig 4.10 below).

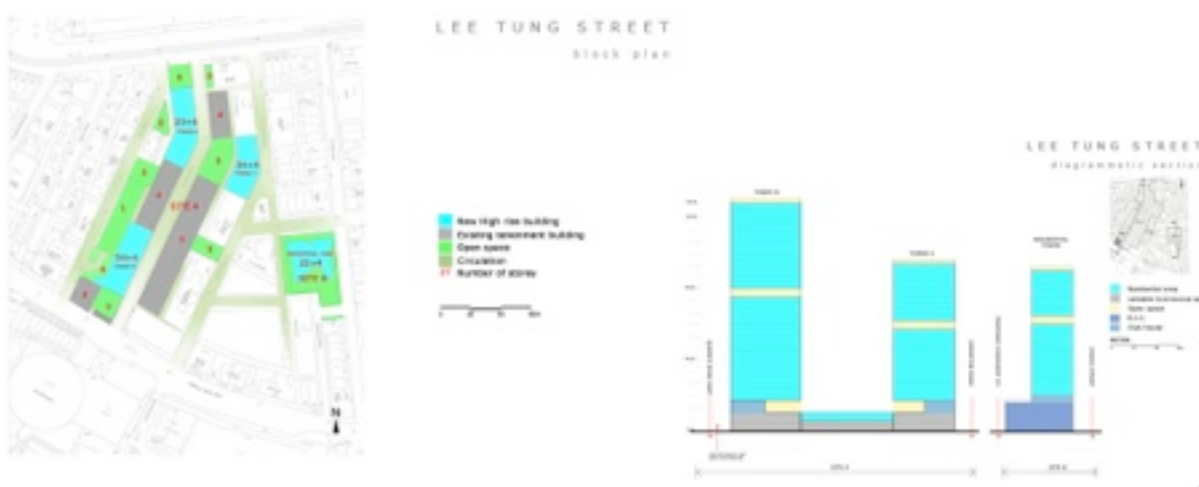


Fig 4.10 *Dumbbell proposal developed by H15 Concern Group*  
 On the left is the site plan and on the right is its sectional view. The proposal got its nickname because of the readjusted envelope is similar to dumbbell so that the screen effect of original design could be mitigated.  
 Source: H15 Concern Group

<sup>24</sup> H15 CG have organized 12 rounds of community meetings joined by more than 400 neighbors, 5 community design charrettes, a series of street exhibition averaging on for 10 days, more than 170 group meetings and interviewing more than 150 households and shops. Numbers provided by H15 CG.

<sup>25</sup> According to Urban Renewal Ordinance and City Planning Ordinance, TPB comes into play once the renewal project involves change of land use. In that case, TPB should conduct planning brief to specify principles and relevant regulations to advise planning proposal. However, before the case of H15, TPB was not required to consult the public during the process, which was contentious and then amended afterward.

<sup>26</sup> The proposal got its name because the readjusted envelope was similar to dumbbell. In the proposal certain tenement buildings were preserved to accommodate some shops and rental flats for in-situ rehousing.

It was featured in its integration of community's local knowledge and community network. The submission was awarded by Hong Kong Institute of Planners to recognize its community-based approach and better continuity of urban fabric. However, it was turned down due to missing piece of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) as required. As one H15 CG member, Melissa, noted,

*They (TPB) criticized our proposal by questioning our decision to remove a tree for making enough affordable units and said it should have been evaluated in EIA...Well, are they trying to tell us that trees are more important than people? And how can we (H15CG) ever afford the expensive professional service of EIA?*  
(interview, 14/06/2011)

Despite unprecedented condemnation from the public, the Wedding Card Street was not saved. Meanwhile, continuously growing public discussion of disappearing "local culture" in Wan Chai somehow deprived the political aspect of community movement. During 2006-2007, many of those who were not residents or tenants joined the battle through discursive practices, including writers, artists, scholars, and common people who resonated with the memory of ordering wedding cards on that street. The focus of public attention gradually shifted from asking for "community participation" toward a romanticization of community network. A relatively static expression of "collective memory" and "Wan Chai culture" displaced the notion of "right to planning."

In her work that reviewed the case of Wedding Card Street, Enci Guo (2011) argued that the H15CG and their allies somehow met URA in embracing authenticity of place and a model of redevelopment that highlighted cultural asset, which caused a "communitarian trap" as David Harvey (1997) noted in his critique of New Urbanism. However, Kuo seemed to misunderstand the relational construct of "community network" as URA did. It was never H15 CG's goal to maintain an introverted community that only privileged a certain class under the disguise of "community." Kuo's argument was only effective if we ignored the process in which URA carefully appropriated and depoliticized the community's proposal, turning it into a simple call for preservation against redevelopment. From reviewing some official responses to the proposal, it is quite clear that URA strategically avoided the emphasis on "right to planning" but picked up

the component of preservation, which brought the alternative proposal into scrutinization ruled by “heritage by designation” and totally closed space for community politics. After all, only three tenement buildings were preserved as a gesture to echo “local culture.” Ironically, URA picked up the theme of wedding and named the new project as “Wedding Garden.” The politics and economics on the street was displaced by official rhetorics and depoliticized in commodifying the cultural, leading some critics considered the community struggle as totally “cultural mass.”

In retrospect, several participants, including residents and nonresidents, reflected on the lack of representation of tenants in the case, which might be the reason why Wedding Card Street movement were somehow misunderstood as a group of middle-class property owners trying to gain more negotiation power for compensation. Indeed, the massive amount of tenants could have made the community politics more diverse and closer to the core issue of redevelopment, that is, a circulation and accumulation of capital that dispossessed the possibility for an alternative economy- alternative transaction that sustains community politics and caring relation in space. The dynamic community network was a net of “works,” as Latour noted, “Network is concept, not a thing out there. It is a tool to help describe something, not what is being described”(2005, p. 131). It was fabricated and described by tenants, shop owners, property owners in their everyday negotiation, compromises, and gradually patterning of use of space and sense of place. It was such an political ability to act and to describe *in* and *for* everyday life that the community was crying for. Including tenants in illustrating “community network” as a process of community politics might have allowed the movement to confront the stereotyped categorization of community into three seemingly distinctive, unrelated groups based on property ownership (shopkeepers/tenants/property owners). Only with the return of tenants to the picture can the long-term social process of patterning of space be completed, as H15 CG noted, “A Complete Street.” In so doing it could probably have avoided being complicit in the ownership-based ideology and thus gained a more solid ground against the Land Acquisition Act,<sup>27</sup> which ironically destroys and perpetuates ownership-based property regime.

The critique of “communitarian trap” is provocative, however, it is predicated on the

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<sup>27</sup> A host of literature (L. W. Lai, Ho, & Leung, 2005; L. W. C. Lai, 1993; 2002) has problematized how “property right” is defined in both planning legislation and Hong Kong Basic Law as one of the fundamental issues regarding urban renewal.

assumption that both “community” and “class” were *a priori* social structures, which is far from the dynamics of the process of redevelopment. The calls for “right to planning” and “flat-for-flat” imply the community’s disagreement with multiple power relations ruled by URA. The set of power relations were complex and inconsistent as much as “class” were constantly constituted by changing definition of properties in the wake of urban redevelopment. As Gibson-Graham et al. (2000, p. 11) reminded us “not to collapse together of exploitation relation and domination relation that constitute power.” The key to keep this distinction, I argue, lies in a careful reading of how “right to planning” can be disassociated with property ownership.

#### ***4.3.2 Politics of Preservation***

During the years when H15 CG fought against URA, many other urban issues, more or less related to redevelopment, gave rise to growing civic aspiration for bottom-up community politics and democracy. It could be seen from the series of movements for “Protecting Victoria Harbor,” “Preserving Star Ferry Terminal and Queen’s Pier,” “Against High-Speed Rail Budget,”<sup>28</sup> etc. “Community movement” for preserving “local culture” becomes an overarching theme. It evinced a desire to challenge the imposed boundaries of urban citizenship by stating their attachment with meaningful public space, neighborhoods, and values of community life.

By engaging the slippery notion of “community” the discourses could be both inclusive and exclusive. Ideally, community movement is inherently practice of community politics which attempts to link different spheres of urban life and subjects that were treated as irrelative. As the famous Hong Kong writer Tung Kai Cheong noted,<sup>29</sup>

*The Star Ferry Terminal is much less about fighting for preserving old matters but about changing the way how the whole city is planned fundamentally. Therefore, the purpose of action is not to lament the past but to envisioning the future. We should juxtapose Star Ferry Terminal with*

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<sup>28</sup> Since 2002, a number of groups dedicated to urban design issues have emerged, such as *Designing Hong Kong*, *Save Our Shorelines*, and *the Harbour Business Forum*. Besides, the civic media, Imedia.hk and its allies such as “Local Action” and Community Cultural Concern) played a key role in organizing opposition to the demolition of the Star Ferry and Queen’s Piers during 2006-2008. Alternative activism resulted from “Against High Speed Rail Budget” along with the case of Choi Yuen Village challenged the land politics in New Territory and the top-down cross-border regional planning in the Pearl River Delta, which itself deserves another research project.

<sup>29</sup> Tung Kai-Cheong. (Dec13, 2006) Preservation and Envision: the dual meanings of preserving Star Ferry Terminal. Ming Pao.

*issues of urban renewal otherwise we cannot fully understand the question of “considering Hong Kong as home” in a more meaningful way.*

(translated by the author, 13/12/2006)

Furthermore, some activists were very clear about how community movements in Hong Kong in the 21st century different from the 70s in considering intention of action and forms of justice. Rather than seeking for distributive justice--a logic of compensation that translates every kind of loss into cash compensation--they emphasized a paradigmatic shift from “compensation” to “preservation.” The logic of preservation assumes that certain areas of community life are just irreversible and irreplaceable, closely tied to local identities and dignity, moreover, demonstration of citizen’s right to the city. One activist, Chan King-fai, wrote about the political implications of community movement:

*Be it natural harbor or Wedding Card Street that embodied everyday life of the vernacular, the point is we people expect a city in which environmental issues and grassroots are prioritized. [...] For us the task that remains for the next battle is this war on space that has been dominated by the government and developers. [...] It is time for us to regain our right to planning and right to the city that would allow us to preserve and unveil the cultures, histories, and multiple meanings of community life.*<sup>30</sup> (translated by the author, 06/02/2006)

Chan further pointed out, “the key is that compensation is predicated on loss and dispossession while ‘preservation’ does not agree with the precondition and essentially entails dignity of community life.”<sup>31</sup> The call for a paradigmatic shift is powerful in its attack on the rationale of land resumption by compensation and moreover, its articulation of “right to planning” with “community life.” The discourse stimulates reflections on forms of agency in local politics and urban forms that constitute and constitutive of community politics, both of which have been mostly dominated by the coalition of governance since colonial times.

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<sup>30</sup>Chan King-fai (Feb 6, 2006) Victoria Harbour, Lee Tung Street, Star Ferry Terminal: three cases of urban social movements in post-handover era. Ming Pao.

<sup>31</sup> Chan noted in online discussion following the post on Inmedia. (20/02/2007) [online available] <http://www.inmediahk.net/node/195007>

Nevertheless, it has been very difficult to shake the property regime as by default the political system in Hong Kong is detached from the civil society, leaving little space for community politics. The pro-development ideology, moreover, has been ingrained in practices of urban planning. In a conversation with Keven Tu, a Hong Kong-based urban planner who assisted H15 CG to submit the proposal, he succinctly traced the issue back to the dominating ideology of “tricking-down” theory, which thus pushed urban planning to be managed in pursuit of GDP growth solely. As Tu noted,

*...from land use to community, it is essentially allocation of public amenities based on population. No space is reserved for unquantifiable matters such as culture or community....The planning department leave everything about ‘users’ to those user departments such as the Home Affairs Bureau. But they (user departments) are not doing good jobs either. No progressive agendas are available for planners to follow except some fragmented requests such as numbers of parks... and that (the numbers) is the only thing you can take issue with during consultation!*  
(Interview, 13/12/2010)

Despite formal consultation provided in the planning process, it is after all very difficult to change the mainstream ideology, which is dominated by economic development. Tu also criticized the District Council not playing its role,

*The fundamental problem that hinders a genuine participatory planning in Hong Kong lies in the lack of democracy on local level. [...] The District Council does not have autonomy and capability to deal with community culture nor can it respond to growing grassroots power. It’s totally handicapped. The communities have to find its way out if the institutions remain.* (Interview, 13/12/2010)

Tu’s words imply his hope for changes that start from the “politics of preservation” as Chan noted, a community-based politics that is not a reaction out of tribalism or exclusive communitarianism but a necessary path to regain momentum for urban democracy in and for Hong Kong. Drawing upon their arguments, I try to engage theories of care ethics to deepen the argument of “politics of preservation” in order to explicate the dynamics between diverse individuals and group that tend to escape from the envelope of “community” in the following.

### ***4.3.3 Care as Spatial and Political Relations***

#### ***Invaluable caring relations vs privatized delivery of care***

Before I close this chapter, I will invite some neighbors from “the community” to converse with theories of care ethics. In so doing I attempt to unveil the political arrangement of care and space that remained silenced in rhetorics *for* and *against* urban redevelopment.

Melissa, an active member of H15CG, has worked as a hawker in street bazaar in Wan Chai for more than 15 years. She used to live on Ship Street where she was displaced by LDC/URA project (H16/ Johnston Road). In my several conversations with her, we came across the issue of “care” unexpectedly. Once, after an extensive critique of how URA failed to understand the significance of *in-situ* rehousing, Melissa noted,

*If we can live with some acquaintances or relatives in the same area, then we can responsively support one another whenever there is need or emergency. Isn't it a great help to the government? You see, our government now has a headache investing in so-called “helping the isolated elders.” But we could have solved the problem by community efforts just like what I experienced in my neighborhood. I used to live on the fifth floor in a tenement apartment on Ship Street and on the fourth floor was another old lady living alone. Whenever she heard me passing her door, she would ask me to bring her some produce from the bazaar nearby the apartment because she was too old to climb stairs up and down. Isn't it one of the best case of mutual care? At least, I will always be looking after her in case there is a fire alarm or other emergency. ....Isn't it the most valuable network that our society direly needed? (interview, 20/03/2011)*

Melissa's comment was echoed by many of those who were displaced by URA. The reciprocal caring relations among neighbors in old districts, as she and many noted, were even more socially important than the business clustering as mentioned earlier. The patterning of tenure, affordability, and incrementally increasing interdependence among people, were integral to the kind of network. The network could be hardly sustained in a slash-and-burn redevelopment model. It ties individuals into a variety of social organizations and the processes of networking are embedded in spatial relationships.

The nested caring relations permit individuals to become care takers and be cared for at the same time. In the case of Wedding Card Street, several displaced families used to live close by their extended families in the same building or on the same street. This kind of organization of space allowed them to share care work--both child care and elderly care--and resources in a more flexible way without paying much for private care services. In many cases they talked about how elders can contribute to child care for working parents and meanwhile the presence of children benefit the elder's health. Nevertheless, due to rocketing housing prices in Wan Chai, many extended families disintegrated, relocating at different places depending upon housing availability and individual financing condition. Even those who managed to resettle within several blocks in Wan Chai found it challenging, as is Mr. Chan's case, he noted, "It is totally different from the days we were all living in the same building (3F, 5F, and rooftop dwelling on 6F)...not to say my 70-year-old mom lost her beloved rooftop garden."<sup>32</sup> The nested caring relations somehow traversed structural social and material boundaries and brought about the "the mess of indeterminacy" as Cindi Katz noted (2000, p. 241). Katz (2000, p. 244) reminds us that class is made and embodied with unavoidable messiness through "the practical engagements of the social actors who comprise it and the contradictions that riddle it everywhere." The mess of indeterminacy, however, was not carefully understood by existing categorization of tenancy based on ownership or biased conceptualization of dependency.

Unfortunately, URA has never considered alternative modes of redevelopment that may partially sustain the network. In contrast to the community's appreciation of community network, URA has continuously highlighted how urban redevelopment actually helped elderly property owners greatly since they can live on cash compensation and buy or rent a cheaper place as if receiving a reverse mortgage.<sup>33</sup> The mainstream media echoed and sometimes featured cases in which some elderly tenants, who were essentially mainland immigrants landed during 70s-80s, would consider leaving for the

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<sup>32</sup> See more stories from A Complete Lee Tung Street (2007).

<sup>33</sup> (March 26, 2011) Elderly Property owners wanted cash instead of flats for retirement. Ming Pao.

mainland with cash compensation for their retirement. In many ways URA not only avoided addressing the relationship between planning, housing, and elderly care but also justified its rehousing package by such neglect.

Meanwhile, aging population has become a pressing issue in Hong Kong during the past decade. The median age rose from 36.7 in 2001 to 39.6 in 2006 and further to 41.7 in 2011. The dependency rate<sup>34</sup> in terms of the numbers of persons aged 65 and over to persons aged between 15-64 has increased from 142 (1996) to 177 (2010). Since 2008, the Labour and Welfare Bureau has identified “Hidden and Vulnerable Elders” as an urgent issue as allegedly 70,000-80,000 elders labeled as such were in dire need of assistance.<sup>35</sup> Local scholars and concerned organizations suggested that the government should invest more in “home-based care” to balance the paucity of privatized care in the elderly home.<sup>36</sup> The Hong Kong Association of Gerontology also pointed out that elderlies tend to move into elderly home earlier than necessary when support network is not provided in their neighborhood whether they live alone or with their families.

The long line waiting for a bed in the elderly home is notable in Hong Kong—almost 30,000 people in line and 4,403 of them actually passed away while waiting as of 2010. There were about 75,033 beds available while the aging group reached 503,055 in 2010 (See table 4.10). No clear number is available to differentiate those who required special care from others. Meanwhile, more than 70% of elderlies were upset by the service provided in the elderly homes according to a survey carried out by Professor Catherine Leung and her team from Hong Kong Baptist University.<sup>37</sup>

What is missing in the picturing of elderly care is the importance of “space for care.” In addition to a bed with care, the call for home-based care implies demand of affordable and adequate housing for aging people to be cared for by their families and community. Many

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<sup>34</sup> Dependency Rate is referred to the number of persons aged 65 and over per 1 000 persons aged between 15-64. See more in The 2010 Population Census of Hong Kong (02/2012).

<sup>35</sup> Hong Kong Association of Gerontology. [http://www.hkag.org/  
http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/chinese/panels/ws\\_rccs/papers/ws\\_rccs0628cb2-1911-1-c.pdf](http://www.hkag.org/http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr09-10/chinese/panels/ws_rccs/papers/ws_rccs0628cb2-1911-1-c.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Fernando Cheung Chiu Hung (March 9, 2010). Home Care Requires Income Check? Ming Pao (lecture in the department of Applied Social Work at Hong Kong Polytechnic University).

<sup>37</sup> (Jan 25, 2010) More than 70% elders disappointed by elderly care. Ming Pao.

families would prefer to have the elderly stay home if there was enough space or time could be spared from work. Housing affordability is a key but left untouched. Thus we sadly see professionals and policy makers in social welfare blamed each other; on the other hand, the planning authorities and developers kept demolishing existing community network and affordable, though not necessarily adequate housing. The vicious impact was played out differentially on spatial divisions and Wan Chai, unfortunately, seems to bear the worst process of pricing out the elderly or leaving them “hidden and vulnerable”.

Table 4.10 Beds Provided by the Elderly Home

	a. Beds in Subsidized Elderly Home	b. Beds in Private Elderly Home	a+b (sum of beds in the same area)
<b>Wan Chai</b>	<b>516</b>	<b>1,081</b>	<b>1,597</b>
Hong Kong Island	4,360	9,820	14,180
Kowloon	8,396	17,930	26,326
New Territory	11,721	22,295	34,016
total	24,747	50,286	75,033
<b>Wan Chai/Total</b>	<b>2.08%</b>	<b>1.98%</b>	<b>2%</b>

Source: adopted from *Beds in Subsidized Elderly Homes & Beds in Private Elderly Homes* (31/12/2010), published by Social Welfare Department, HKSAR.

Table 4.11 Aging population (65+)/sum of population in the area

	2006	2010
Hong Kong (population)	12.8% (459,384)	13.3% (503,055)
<b>Wan Chai (population)</b>	<b>14.5% (22,503)</b>	<b>15.6% (23,806)</b>
<b>% of aging population (Wan Chai/Hong Kong)</b>	<b>4.90%</b>	<b>4.73%</b>

Source: 2006 By-Census and 2010 Census of Hong Kong (2.2012).

In table 4.11, we see only 1,597 beds were available in Wan Chai while aged group reached 23,806 people in 2010. URA, nonetheless, did not provide any elderly housing in its redevelopment projects in Wan Chai. The fact that there isn't any public housing built in Wan Chai further paints a grim picture of elderly people's suffering. Though there had been warnings

from medical professions concerning dementia caused by displacement by redevelopment,<sup>38</sup> still, the disconnection between departmental policies and redevelopment agenda exactly displaced those who need care and spaces of care.

Returning to the world of redevelopment and real estate, the elderly care issue was totally absent as if no elderly people live in the district. Instead, Wan Chai is illustrated as an area that benefitted from knowledge-based economy and a neighborhood where high-income elites concentrated. Experts in real estate urged corporate business to invest in all sorts of high-end service and retail such as boutiques, wineries, luxurious handbags and hotels to catch up with the cosmopolitan Hong Kong, where profitable services replaced undervalued care and laborers who deliver care work or services.

Mr. W, the Mainland immigrant tenant who was displaced by private redevelopment near the Blue House as mentioned in the introduction, talked about how his family moved from one tenement buildings to another. Since 2006, Mr. Wu and his wife and two children settled down in Wan Chai in order to stay close to their parents. Both generations were working class and can only rent small suites to house themselves. Mrs. W worked as a janitor in a high-end apartment in Central while Mr. W only had a part time job. They could have saved some rent if moving to other districts but they did not concerning their aging parents and children's access to schools. Actually, they relied on their parents to pick up their children after school (interview, 21/05/2011). Obviously, the mutual dependencies between the two-generation immigrants were absent in the new vision of redeveloping Wan Chai.

In the same block nearby the Stone Nullah Lane, ongoing displacement of the cluster of repair shops took place after the disappearance of wedding card business. They were Mr. Wu's neighbors and part of the community network around the Blue House. But they were not as lucky as those tenants who were allowed to stay in-situ (interview with Kelly, 23/3/2011).

Is there any alternative road map given these frustrated, yet still ongoing redevelopments? As the Hong Kong Institute of Planners asked, "How can we create a reasonably flexible framework for adaptation and change – a common characteristic of our older

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<sup>38</sup> (March 29, 2010) Emergence of Dementia caused by Displacement. Oriental Daily News. Similar theme was discussed in another post: (March 29, 2010) Urban redevelopment brought about emergence of dementia. Sun Daily.

areas which explains their prevailing dynamism? “<sup>39</sup> Leaving the rational and scientific-based planning aside, it seems not possible, however, to engage dynamic community in urban changes without leaving it space of community politics. Decades ago, as Davidoff (1965, p. 212) pointed out already, “Urban politics, in an era of increasing government activity in planning and welfare, must balance the demands for ever-increasing central bureaucratic control against the demands for increased concern for the unique requirements of local, specialized interests.” Davidoff stresses the importance to bring “city back to planner’s scope, and *the city*, “is its people; their practices; and their *political, social, cultural, and economic* institutions as well as *other things...*” (1965, p.220). In the case of redevelopment in Wan Chai, nevertheless, the redevelopment coalition just displace *the city*.

As Friedmann (2002) noted, the planning profession facilitates the “economic space” but fails to understand the “life space” of the city. The changing spatiality of the city and the social context of people’s everyday practice is not taken into account. What counts is the dominating economic space that is constituted by spatial relations as a combination of economic and “propertied relations”(Blomley, 2004) in which property-based citizenship and rights are privileged over everyday life. Thus urban redevelopment somehow were just fragmented exercises of assumption, assembly, and reconstruction without citizen’s engagements.

To bring *the city* back entails seeing *space as constitutive of political engagements* (D. B. Massey, 2005). It requires planners to follow people’s logic of everyday life, which is largely related to how they care for their families and how they organize “life space” accordingly. It is also the kind of logic of care that the redevelopment regime always fails to accommodate because “care” and “space for care” are not even seen when planners reduce care as distributive services and welfare programs. Care was detached from space. As much as Brown (2003) suggests that both liberal democracy and conservative politics prevent us from interpreting care as a fully political set of relations, I would like to argue that current planning practices which privilege private property and ownership model prevent care as a full set of spatial relations. This problem, as we can see in Hong Kong, has deprived people’s capability to care for those who they care for and worse still, not even able to care for themselves.

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<sup>39</sup> Response to URS review from The Hong Kong Institute of Planners (Jan 13, 2010)  
<http://www.hkip.org.hk/admin/ewebeditor3.7/uploadfile/20100121165108324.pdf>

With a focus on care, we are more likely to understand life space as in “intersubjective interdependency relations” embodied in place (Mann, 2002).<sup>40</sup> In other words, caring relations are implaced. It keeps up with Doreen Massey’s idea that *place is indeed a process*. Caring planning should be attentive to the ever-changing process of how caring relations are implaced momentarily and every move in planning that engage the implaced caring relations should require political discussion with respect to the “progressive sense of place”(D. Massey, 1993). On this note, planning and redevelopment model should be refashioned to enable the implaced caring relations.

We should not confuse caring planning with providing care services to individuals. Caring planning, instead, should return space for politics of needs interpretations back to the community. The ever-changing community knows better than others how their needs could be articulated and interpreted with certain arrangement of space. As Nancy Fraser wrote, “The politics of need interpretation” should problematize the social and institutional logic of processes of need interpretation.” (Fraser, 1989, p. 164) Instead of deciding for the community what they need, planners should strive for expanding spaces where spatial politics of caring relations unfold. Planners working for the state and capital cannot monopolize planning practices. There are other institutions, experts, and most important of all, different agents that interpret needs differently in the contested urban landscape. The pro-development and trickle-down theory should be displaced whereas caring relations should be implaced in both the processes and goals of urban redevelopment.

With a logic of care, planners are more likely to address social needs--to spatialize the needs interpretations inclusively by connecting disassociated care and needs and tracing runaway needs. Current careless legal and disciplinary boundaries that divide the public vs the private, the formal vs informal, the property owners vs tenants, the new vs old, the dependent and the care takers, should be reviewed and challenged. In such a blurring process, spatial politics allows people to permeate, to interact, to bridge across disconnected areas of life that a rational planning can never achieve. Such a focus on care is a key for a global city to live up to its citizens who aspire for caring and meaningful life. In Mol’s work on “logic of care”(2008), she argues that

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<sup>40</sup> Following Kittay’s idea of intersubjective interdependency relations, Mann (2002) articulates dependency with place. Mann also draw upon Casey’s (1993) argument in developing her theorization of implaced beings.

good care has little to do with individual patient choice but is something resulting from collaborative and continuing attempts to attune knowledge and technologies to diseased bodies and complex lives. The emphasis on collaborative practices and attention given to knowledge of those who need care, indeed, invites planners and the authorities to understand the city better by thinking through *care as spatial and political relations* rather than ages of building, undeveloped flat-ratio, or worst of all, profitability.

## Chapter Five

### Expatriation of Space and Transnational Remaking of City

In this chapter I will illustrate the production of serviced apartments and its contribution to Hong Kong's becoming a Chinese global city. I start by reviewing the historical travels of expatriates and their residence, paying attention to how the trajectories are articulated together with the increasing transnational corporate practices setting foot in the city. Engaging scholarship of globalization of labor market, I argue that the "expatriation of space" driven by flexible corporate operation is a critical edge of urban redevelopment in global cities. The process of redevelopment is individualized and embodied in the making of expatriates, whose cosmopolitan lifestyles are accommodated in flexible and responsive services to make possible "home away from home," a process of "expatriation" that is predicated on explosive care work and alienates urban space in service of transnational actors.

#### *5.1 Expatriates and Expatriation*

##### *5.1.1 Expatriates as New Tenants in the City*

"Expatriate," or "expat" as its shorthand, is defined broadly in different contexts. Literally, the word "expatriate" is derived from the Latin term *ex patria*, meaning "from the homeland." In contemporary interpretation, as Tan defined it, an expatriate is "a highly skilled individual who by his qualifications is employed by a foreign country or sent by his employers" (cited in Chang, 1995, p. 141). In a broader sense, an expatriate is any person living in a different country from where he or she is a citizen. In practice, the term is exclusively referred to those professionals sent abroad by their companies as opposed to locally hired staff, mostly manual laborers, who can be foreigners yet often labelled as "immigrants" or "migrant workers." Expatriate's residency is usually ensured by institutions or corporations under distinctive category in the host society. They are often exempt from civic responsibility (such as tax) at home on varying conditions. In strictly legal sense, "expatriation" also meant "renunciation of allegiance" as suggested by the Expatriation Act of 1868 in the United States (Rice, 2011).

Before World War II when international travel was not as common, the historical making of expatriates was often related to diaspora or colonialism as was the case in Hong Kong. A historical picture of expats was painted in "*Foreign devils : expatriates in Hong Kong*" (Holdsworth & Courtauld, 2002), showing the trajectories of British merchants developing trading networks and British officials introducing the expat community to establish legal and financial institutions to the colonial outpost. China's economic reform in 1978 was considered a milestone that attracted investment flooding through the city to China. It led to new generation of expats following the expansion of foreign banks, especially American banks, coming to Hong Kong during the 1980s. Since then the increasingly diverse social class, ethnicity, and lifestyle of the expat community have been reflected in urban landscape, for example, more and more conspicuous restaurants and recreational spaces emerged to replace the traditional closed-door British Clubs. It was in this context that the famous *Lan Kwai Fong* established its success of mixing exoticism with cosmopolitanism until today.

Today expatriates are viewed as the mobile global class with higher education and income- whose movements have been sometimes conflated with skilled migration. They were considered significant component in management of multinational corporations (hereafter MNCs) since the early 90s.<sup>1</sup> MNCs often prioritized building enterprises in postcolonial cities due to the continuity of languages, institutions, and cultural practices. Hong Kong and Singapore are both cases to the point. Some scholars argued that expats were integral to globalization of cities in that mobility of skilled international migration was both outcome of and agency in bringing about globalization (Beaverstock, 2002; Hannerz, 1996). They participated in building international financial centers through the expatriate global-local knowledge networks.

Expatriates are by default differentiated from migrant workers in most countries. In Singapore, a skilled worker who is regarded as "expatriate" holds an Employment Pass whereas a migrant worker obtains a Work Permit (Yeoh & Khoo, 1998, p. 162). In Hong Kong, foreigners who gain their entry visas for employment as professionals or entry for investment through General Employment Policy" are a lot more privileged than those who admitted into

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<sup>1</sup> The trend can be seen from the organization of the first International Conference on Expatriate Management in Hong Kong in November 1992.

Hong Kong as imported workers or as Foreign Domestic Helpers (FDH) in terms of the possibilities of switching jobs, bringing dependents along, marrying locals, or immigration. They are free to reside wherever they like as opposed to FDH being required to live with their employers as live-in helpers.

Today, the nature of the expat community has been more transient and diverse as a result of greater mobility in general and changing managerial logic of MNCs. Employees are frequently assigned to work in foreign offices on temporary terms from weeks up to months for coordinative or strategic purposes under a new trend of flexible management of human resources (Torbiorn, 1995, pp. 279-280). Meanwhile, there are more “self-initiated expats,” those who search opportunities in global cities. In Actor Network Theory’s sense, the research task here is to trace the multiple effects of the traveling and embedding of the expat community in relation to redevelopment of global cities: How are their coming into being connected to different works that redevelop Hong Kong into a Chinese global city (Chiu & Lui, 2009)? Aihwa Ong’s study of expatriates and corporate networks in Singapore provides insights to this project. Paying attention to the growing number of mobile Asian professionals in information and biomedical industries, especially Chinese returnees and Non-Resident Indians, Ong (2006b, pp. 86-88) conceptualizes “space of mutating citizenship” to illustrate a special kind of “citizenship regimes in the homeland as well as abroad” shaped by marketization along with global actors’ economic agenda. It challenges the limits of considering citizenship as a set of stabilized political elements. National policies are selectively involved in enabling “exception to neoliberalism” and “exception of neoliberalism” to facilitate the mutation of citizenship (Ong, 2006b). The examples of establishing special zones for IT or Bio-tech parks along with specific employment program to recruit foreign talents are clear. In comparison, however, the traces between urban redevelopment and global actors that I am delineating is relatively blurred because no clear boundaries of exception can be drawn under the guise of free market real estate. We may see expats in Hong Kong living with the “pieds-à-terre status,” adding speculative value to economy and real estate while their practices of citizenship linger in “a state of political liminality” (Ong, 2007, pp. 89-91). The expats’ presence in the city is part of the exception of neoliberalism.

What is fascinating, but Ong does not address much, is how such “space of mutating citizenship” takes place in the built environment. What and how has the embedding process involved circulation of capital, via practices of transnational corporate and real estate, seemingly turning the residential presence of expats into a new kind of lucrative property that attracts various border-crossings? It is not satisfying to conclude that the residential presence of expats was made possible by redevelopment and displacement of local citizens as mentioned in Chapter 4. What deserves a further analysis is the less visible hands, which carve out space of niches by reinforcing the pied-à-terre subjects in the production of space. It is with tracing the processes of *expatriation* that I hope to ascribe new meanings to theory of mutation of citizenship and to locate expats in the property regime.

### ***5.1.2 Flexibility: a Keyword in Urban Transformation***

In corporate world, how to arrange “expatriation” to maintain transnational business in most efficient form involves coordination of costs, human resources, and types of operation, all of which I consider as “expatriation” to emphasize the linkage between mobility of expatriates, circulation of capital, and moreover, the transient and heterogeneous existence of expatriate’s embeddings in between the local and the global. The philosophy of keeping flexibility in production and business management is a key to understand urban transformation of global cities yet often ignored in urban studies.

Post-Fordism ideas of “flexible specialization” (Sabel, 1982) entailed trends of “flexible production” and “labour flexibility” to bring about increasing “project-based economy.” The trends responded to not only “space-time compression” (David Harvey, 1989) along with technological innovations but also neoliberal corporate operations which capitalized on global labor arbitrage and meanwhile were attuned to increasingly unstable global finance. They contributed to the unequal concentration of expatriation in management and finance in certain global cities like London, New York, and Hong Kong. In this light, two emergent, interlocking patterns of labor arrangement should be taken into account in understanding expats’ everyday life, that is, “project-based career” and a more flexible, temporary organization of “project-based work” (Henry, Mayle, & Open University. Business, 2002). Certain intermediaries have found niches in the trend and specialized in facilitating

organization of “project-based work” for the employers and “project-based career” for the employees to ensure seamless employment with minimal cost.<sup>2</sup>

Against growing international travels, study abroad, and immigration, the notion of “internationality” (Beaverstock, 2002) also twisted the normative conceptualization of expatriation as sending/receiving process. “Internationality” means capabilities to work with international actors but the staffs involved do not necessarily appear international to the local. The trajectories of expatriation is getting more complex, constituted by a mix of HCN (host country nationals), TCN (third country nationals), not necessarily involving sending a task force from headquarter in parent countries (PCN) (Torbiorn, 1995). Thus short-term project-based expatriation has been more popular and thereby geographies of expatriation has been changing as well. A Canadian firm in Kuala Lumpur may recruit most employees from Malaysia or Singapore. In Hong Kong, the US-based construction and planning firm AECOM has many “foreign” staffs as overseas Chinese with international qualifications along with a mix of westerners, and many more Hong Kong staffs inherited from the companies that AECOM amalgamated. Borrowing Doreen Massey’s language, the process of expatriation could be considered as “alternative interpretation of place” constructed out of “a particular constellation of relations, articulated together at particular locus” (1993, p. 66).

### ***5.1.3 Expatriation as frontier of global city***

The demographical change of expats in Hong Kong has reflected the city’s changing positioning in global financial system.<sup>3</sup> With China becoming a global power engine rather than world factory, ethnic Chinese/overseas Chinese and Asian expats who have strength in languages, social connections are getting more prominent though their identity and ways of life remain blurred in the painting of expat community. Meanwhile, there has been constant warning of losing expats and the argument is grounded in the fact that cost of living and expensive international school education have made Hong Kong less attractive to expatriates

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<sup>2</sup> For example, *Just landed*, founded by a British and Germany, is one among many intermediaries who tapped into the global market of expatriation. <http://www.justlanded.com/english/Common/Footer/Expatriates>

<sup>3</sup> See an illustration of the demographic change of European expats replaced by increasing Asian, especially South Asians in Katherine Kingsbury. *Welcome to The Club*, (07/06/2007), Time Special Issue on Hong Kong 1997-2007.

than its regional counterpart, Singapore.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the competition over limited resource of expat housing or international education is undoubted, and after all is related to a paucity of land. However, expectation as such has failed to see that increasingly younger sojourners come to the city via different traveling patterns. They are mostly single, with western higher education, and setting less geographical limits to their careers. Ethnically, they may not look like “expats” but they work and live like expats in the global city. The kind of prediction also failed to take into account those who frequently come and leave, working on project-based assignments as frequent “visitors” in the city. Some high-ranking managers working for MNCs may be transferred to different countries with each term of 2-5 years when others are assigned to international offices to oversee a particular project for weeks or months.

It is not the case that reproduction issues like family housing, education for expat’s children, job opportunities for expats’ spouses are less important than before. They are still significant in conceiving a more long-term relationship between expats and the host city, especially, the ambiguous conceptualization of residency and urban citizenship. As noted by John Walsh, the communications manager at Hong Kong International School, “The implications of a lack of international school spaces are clearly economic.”<sup>5</sup> I would like to suggest that it is both politico-economic and spatial.

The embeddings of expats is an important edge of urban transformation. Currently, only few researches studied expats in relation to MNCs in Hong Kong but rarely addressed issues of gender and reproduction (Findlay, Li, Jowett, & Skeldon, 1996). In other geographies, some scholars concentrate on expat wives- the “trailing spouse”(Arieli, 2007; Berry & Bell, 2012; Yeoh & Khoo, 1998).<sup>6</sup> Mostly, existing scholarship approached the subject in management school (Arthur & Rousseau, 1996; DeFillippi & Arthur, 1998; Selmer, 1995) and only few try to understand expatriates from their own perspectives (Beaverstock, 2002).

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<sup>4</sup> Regional Representatives (Sep 05, 2011) *Hong Kong’s expat population on the decline?*  
<http://asiancorrespondent.com/64110/hong-kong’s-expat-population-on-the-decline/>

<sup>5</sup> Dennis Chong (Nov 21, 2011) Record waiting lists at schools: Rise in foreign residents is contributing to a shortage of spaces at top international and ESF institutions. South China Morning Post.

<sup>6</sup> Popular media has paid more attention to the issue. One best example could be instantiate by the comedy “The Expat Wife” presented by HotCurrie Productions. It illustrated an English “trailing spouse” and her expat wife friends’s exploration and struggle. It has been screening in Singapore, Hong Kong and Bangkok.

Some studies touched upon how flexible management in the labor market has different implications for different industries and different classes (Carnoy, Castells, Benner, & International Labour, 1997; Standing, 1999). While many self-employed expats enjoy traveling as “global careerists”(Neault, 2007), many of those on the lower rank of the ladder may find it more of uncertainty and suffering from a footloose lifestyle. In short, the complex making of the expat community is not fully studied, especially the implication of their *pied-à-terre* status in the built environment, which I illustrate in the following.

## ***5.2 Hassle-free living in serviced residence***

### ***5.2.1 Why the serviced apartment?***

Today expatriates do not live in the verandah houses like British expats did in colonial times where they were served by drivers and maids or those lived in well-equipped Japanese corporate staff housing. Instead, MNCs now prefer to provide cash allowance or outsourced staff housing management to intermediaries such as relocation companies, which brought about a new demand of corporate housing in between regular rental housing and hotels. However, hotel suites cannot satisfy many expats who stay in a local office for more than a month and are oftentimes not an economic arrangement for the employer either. Rentals in local market, on the other hand, are constrained by fixed terms, deposits, and lack of amenity and furniture, all of which made it less a favorable option for global nomads who time their accommodation with the cycles of their projects. The serviced apartment was crafted to make up the gap and to achieve “balance, life and style” as noted by the branded operator *Chi Residence* in Hong Kong.

Serviced apartment was originated in the hospitality industry in Europe and the United States. It was considered a product of “the extended stay concept” (Elke Geieregger & Arlett Oehmichen, 2008), being customized to various global nomads, “a home away from home.” It is usually a monthly-leased suite or one-bedroom apartment with service and amenities, fully furnished as a hotel suite without 24 hour service. The idea was introduced to Asia later, emerging in cities like Singapore, Hong Kong and Tokyo since the 80s. The serviced apartment was considered a convenient accommodation option for expats to stay on short terms or a transition accommodation before they figured out long-term housing. It is now

common that MNCs provided their expats one-month free accommodation in a serviced apartment and then they are on their own.<sup>7</sup> For those who traveled to work for a more project-based employment, the flexible lease and preparedness of serviced apartment can save the mobile global professionals a lot of effort and ensure their hassle-free living.<sup>8</sup> For example, the famous branded serviced residence operator, *Fraser Suites*, described itself as

*Occupying an enviable place in the heart of Hong Kong's famous Wanchai business and entertainment district, Fraser Suites Hong Kong is coveted for its location as well as its delivery of excellence. For busy executives for whom time is a premium, the serviced residence offers easy access to key business areas like Causeway Bay and Central[...] Elegant in form and function, Fraser Suites Hong Kong is designed to fulfill the exacting needs of corporate executives who appreciate the finer things in life – such as the large screen LCD TV, integrated entertainment system and high-tech 'wired' environment.<sup>9</sup>*

Clearly, not only do serviced apartments provide exact needs of the expat community, they also attempt to cater to the expats' need of a temporary home where a sense of private domain and ownership is carefully maintained as differentiated from hotels. In some cases, expats can have luxurious space for their families or friends to stay over.

The serviced apartment is not only a product of hospitality but also a profitable investment for real estate. Operators of property background gradually found the international relocation market/assignment market profitable in seeing increasing demand from corporate clients (the employers) and the relatively higher return visit rate than other kinds of housing by 50%-90% (Foxley, 2001). It is often noted that investment return rate is much higher in serviced apartments than conventional hotels due to less capital required to manage the investment (LaSalle, 2009; Younes & Kett, 2007). Moreover, hotel vacancy rates dropped while operators of serviced apartment seemed to out-performing their hotel counterparts in all

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<sup>7</sup> According to my interview with 32 expats, the only-one-month housing arrangement is common for junior to lower-rank employees as professionals in Hong Kong and big cities in China. It applies to areas including finance, consultants, skilled professionals. See the table of interviewees in the appendix.

<sup>8</sup> Kenneth Ko (Oct 11, 2006) *Hassle-free living catches on*. SCMP.

<sup>9</sup> Adopted from its official webpage. (accessed on 08/01/2012) <http://hongkong.frasershospitality.com/>

key areas despite the 2008 financial crisis (McCrow & Vos, 2012, pp. 4-5).

From the demand side, the serviced apartment is also considered a more cost-efficient option for the employers to arrange expatriation when fluctuation of global market is increasingly unpredictable. Today MNCs has been cutting down benefits to expatriates such as housing allowance, education for their kids in expensive international schools, and annual airfare back home. While expats still enjoy higher salaries than people hired as locals, only those of manager positions enjoy full benefits (Yeoh & Khoo, 1998, p. 169). As is the case in finance in which bankers used to enjoy the luxury of housing allowance as much as \$6,450-12,900 per year, it has been gradually cut down in recent years.

Seeing social practice as territorialization, the expat's everyday life of residence and social networks are spatial networks in which flows of corporations, capital, technology, and information take place (Beaverstock, 2002, pp. 527-528; Hebinck, Slootweg, & Smith, 2008). The territorialization reflected the complexity of urban conditions in various embodiments of serviced residences can be seen in different cities. The case of purpose-built rental community for corporate housing in US found its resonance in Shanghai, where the city government's joint venture with property development companies developed expatriate enclaves to accommodate foreigners yet were operated quite differently. Japanese expatriates were found to live in apartments with hotel-like services in a mixed process of "active isolation" and "passive isolation" in Guangzhou (Wang & Lau, 2008). Nevertheless, how territorialization of expatriates engendered new production of space in relation to changing urban condition was not researched except the profitability of the kind of property with presence of global elites as symbolic economy (Sýkora, 2005). With a focus on care and rent as discussed in Chapter 3, I would like unveil how the territorialization of expatriates was fulfilled by many invisible works and how the process itself has reshaped the city and the notion of urban citizenship.

### ***5.2.2 Mobilizing Carescapes***

Serviced apartments are crafted by an interesting twist of care and service in the production of new kind of relocation housing. "A sense of self-care" availed in the serviced apartment distinguished the product from regular hotel suites and has been one of the most important attractions to clients (McCrow & Vos, 2012). This seemingly subtle character is also

confirmed by my interviews with expats, most of whom talked about the significance of being able to cook for oneself even though the act of self-catering may be as simple as heating up some frozen food to keep one feeling like “home.” Meanwhile, most of these international assignees appreciate the well-maintained, adequate sense of self-catering out of a range of discreetly service, which exempt them from wasting productive time for chores.

Concerning the quality of space, the serviced apartment is expected to be larger than hotel suites for tenants to do a variety of activities which she can do at home. In Hong Kong, the most popular residence is studio or one-bed room, including en-suite bathroom, fitted kitchen or kitchenette, dining area or lounge, working area, and most important of all, internet access and direct telephone line for them to synchronize their life with the global time.

In reality, the global nomad’s elite lifestyle is not as independent as they imagine. The sense of self-catering depended on service business predicated on privatization and undervaluation of care. Without cheap care workers hired to clean the rooms and manage the properties, the elites would not be able to walk in their “ready-to-go” rooms and maintain seamless management of their work. It would not be possible for MNCs to manage project-based tasks in such a flexible way without the operators of serviced apartment internalizing all the cost of managing human resource and operational cost in most efficient way to deliver the most competitive product in the relocation housing market. What is invisible to the elite tenants are the layers of outsourcing of care work which involve a variety of agencies, such as property agency and cleaning service agency, etc.

The sense of being independent global elite is predicated on such a contested landscape of care. It is contested because care work takes space and requires intensive labor, and moreover, delivery of care work usually crisscross the problematic binary of non-market and market economies. The fact that care labour has been undervalued in Hong Kong as is the case in many other cities has made it possible for operators of serviced apartments to extract profit from their translation and the brokerage of everyday life of the global community into a set of priced services, a constellation of care work and spaces of care, which I would like to consider as “carescapes.” By mobilizing the notion of “carescapes” I try to shed light on the translation, circulation, and redistribution of care work into rent behind the showcasing of *home away*

*from home and discreet domestic services*. Following Appadurai's differentiation of five dimensions of global "scapes" across cultural boundaries (ethnoscapes, technoscapes, financescapes, mediascapes, ideoscapes)(Appadurai, 1996), here I considered "-scapes" a heuristic device that allow us to examine the performativity of a set of discrete ideas centered around "care" that has not been paid enough attention in urban studies of global cities. By mobilizing the idea of *carescapes* I want to articulate the seemingly irrelevant works (of care and rent) that actually altogether made possible the presence of expatriates and global corporate operation in its continuous growth and expansion. As Dorrian and Rose elaborated on engaging "landscape" in thinking of care, in so doing it acknowledges not only the "mobility and equivocality" inherent in conceptualizing "care" as integral to the production of expatriate housing and global city but also *carescape* in its full complexity as "a zone of transaction between multiple interests, and this meant not purifying the field in advance"(Dorrian & Rose, 2003, p. 16).

With a feminist focus on "the productive and reproductive" in care and rent being circulated in the production of serviced apartments, the relocation housing market has to be considered as means of production of global corporate projects in thinking of global cities through *carescapes*. There is too much undervalued and unrecognized care work directly and indirectly exploited by agencies involved in the production of space. What is not told in the marketing rhetorics of service apartments is the delicate techniques that allow property owners and intermediaries to harvest notable rent through *carescapes*. In this light, the MNCs can always have flexible skilled labor to fulfill its projects in the most efficient and appropriate style. The sense of being independent global elites works as a kind of "biopower" (Foucault, 1978) imposed on global expats, subjugating them to serve the global corporate governance rather than nation states. It has been so successful that most of them naturalize their sufferings as I discuss in the following.

*Carescapes* travel across borders. From a relational view of care ethics, their work and life in Hong Kong with their wellbeing served in a certain mode of dwelling cannot be separated from their familial responsibilities regardless the locations of their families. Many of those male expats who stayed in Hong Kong by themselves had their wives staying home to

take up child care and elderly care. Thus care workers who took care of expats' daily lives in this case were not limited to those who were hired to clean their temporary residence-the serviced apartments. Being separated from family is difficult for most expats but it appeared to be the most financially viable arrangement when there is no allowance for relocating their families. As mentioned, the uncertain global economy has made the MNCs cost down by increasing assignments of extended stay for single business travelers instead of footing the bill for full family travel on expat packages. The trend, nonetheless, has given rise to uneven bearing of caring responsibilities to expats and their families.

*Carescapes* are constant networking of locations and spaces of care in response to circulation of income and rent. Many expats tried to balance between their spending in foreign cities and saving for remittance- sometimes investment at home. In many cases, the junior to middle expatriates professionals were not granted enough housing subsidy to simultaneously live in serviced apartments and keep decent disposable income. Cross-border financial coordination became increasingly challenging as the terms of the international assignment unpredictable vary from weeks to months. For those assigned with terms longer than three months, they would prefer to move into a cheaper, regular private rentals after a temporary stay in the serviced apartment subsidized by their employers. Especially is the case if they have to maintain their residences at home whether by paying rent or housing loans. Cross-border rent differences sometimes allow expats to purchase houses at home within relatively short period of time if they can manage to live in budget rental apartments in Hong Kong despite inconvenience. The intimate negotiation among needs and care of different family members at different places give rise to distinctive moments of care that constitute *carescapes*.

*Carescape* is often gendered. We could see very different *carescapes* from female expatriate's passages. Yvonne is one of those traveling female directors working for an international investment bank based in Hong Kong. As a Taiwanese working mom with a toddler and her family in Taipei, she managed care work in different forms between two cities depending upon the length and nature of her travels. She sometimes traveled with her child and the Philippine domestic helper or just let the child with the helper stay in her house in Taipei. In the former scenario she needs to figure out ways to accommodate the child and the

helper in her decision of housing for extended stay, which requires a larger space with a well-equipped kitchen for the helper to prepare specific food for the child. Despite her position and relatively high salary, Yvonne- and probably none of those traveling female expats- was not given such a benefit to subsidize her care work, which means every bit of the traveling of care work has to be paid out of her pocket. Yvonne considered the spending a indispensable expense in order to keep her child staying healthy and in touch with her. Like Yvonne, many expatriates (especially females) are challenged by the uneasy coordination of child care and work. They may debate between having helpers coming in to take up the burden or adjusting their commitment to work at the cost of their career. Due to the perpetuation of seeing care work as mother's job, it is often women who suffer from transnational coordination of care work no matter how challenging or expensive it is. Sometimes *carescapes* unfold differently alone with different cultural perception of family and the idea of "all for the family" could connote contrast meanings. It could be some women giving up their jobs to follow their husbands while some women take up the responsibilities by themselves as single mother so that their husbands can explore their careers in the globe.

It is worth thinking if the elite expatriates themselves are somehow "deprived" in the process of expatriation for seeking sense of fulfillment and economic success. More importantly, the deprivation have different effects and burden in different arrangements of care work. In many cases it is their significant others or migrant helpers take on the hard work but these uneven, irregular distributions of care work often escape analysis or critiques. What's mentioned above, and the care work provided in serviced apartments, contribute to the everyday making of *carescapes* across borders. Indeed, landscapes unfold where care work *escapes* from our conceptualization of care and from responsibilities of global corporate employers and nation states. It is the neglect of *escaping care work- carescapes-* that continues the working of *the mutated space of citizenship* under the regime of global corporate governance. It is also such neglect that makes possible the efficient circulation of cheap care and expensive rent (constantly coupled together yet conflated into "service") to benefit operators of serviced apartments and investors.

### ***5.2.3 The price of being elite tenants***

Roughly, the serviced residence can be categorized into three tiers based on my field survey in Hong Kong during 2010-2011. While the “rank” and “rent” of the serviced apartment largely reflects the social class of the tenants they want to attract, the ways in which housing choice are made are much more complex from the demand side.

- 1) **High-end serviced apartment** (monthly rent \$5,160 HKD or above/500 sqft or above): Luxurious serviced apartments in this category are located in prime location and operated by international operators who have background in hospitality industry. They cater to the CEO or manager who came to Hong Kong for project-based assignments for no longer than 6 months. The rent is usually paid by the MNCs.
- 2) **Median level serviced apartment** (monthly rent between \$2,322-5,160 HKD/ 300-500 sqft): For the high income group who travel without housing expense fully compensated and those who are self-employed, they make their housing decision depending upon the term of their assignments and the carescapes they embedded. Their willingness to spend is not necessarily equal to their financial capability. Mostly, they go for median level serviced apartment to ensure that their contribution to household finance would not be sacrificed.
- 3) **Budget serviced apartment** (monthly rent between \$1,161-2,322 /150-300 sqft): For other expat professionals, the aforementioned housing expense is unaffordable and many of them would prefer lower-level or partial-serviced apartments, a budget choice that still ensures a minimal quality and flexibility better than regular rentals. Professionals working as engineers, architects or designers often opted for the rank of serviced apartment. These apartments are either located in areas outside of the city center on Hong Kong Island or of relatively small room size.

Though many expats are attracted to the “ready-to-go” nature of serviced apartments in around Central on Hong Kong Island, it is not necessarily affordable for everyone. Expats with junior positions often find it difficult to enjoy the luxurious lifestyle. As one Korean designer told me, at best she can afford monthly rent of \$1,419 for a fully furnished studio in Sheung Wan, which is “not a serviced apartment but looks like one” (interview, 15/12/2011). Many young foreign professionals like her sought opportunities to working for international firms in

connection with the Chinese market. They identify themselves as expats but do not necessarily enjoy substantial expat benefits. Location and quality of residence were prioritized over branded services due to limited budget. Thus furnished apartments with partial or no service often become their compromised options. Likewise, expats who relocated with family or managed to maintain several homes transnationally also hesitate to extend their stay in the branded serviced apartments. In the long run, they often settle into regular rentals of larger area and have their wives or cheaper domestic helper from informal market to take up the service work. Nevertheless, the provision of alternate housing is not always available under redevelopment. Some of them need to find equivalent housing options across the harbor.

So who can afford to live in serviced apartments except the CEO or the footloose visitors working on short-term projects? Most likely it is the particular expat community work in the financial sector. From interview I learned that many single, junior-middle rank banker expats are those who find a median level serviced apartment nearby Central an acceptable investment for a chic and efficient lifestyle. Analysts from leasing agencies pointed out the strong demand for serviced flats of rent between \$2,322 to 3,870 by the particular group of young, international IT bankers.<sup>10</sup>

With China growing into a global economic engine and its entering into WTO since 2001, Hong Kong not only acts as an entrepôt between China and the world but also provides provision of advanced commercial and financial services to the mainland. Notable financial development flourishes in the field of offshore banking, IPO, hedge fund, asset management, etc., all of which require a specific type of human resources who can efficiently establish connections with local capital and investment opportunities in China. For example, many Taiwanese bankers relocated in Hong Kong for tapping into the emergent market since 2007.<sup>11</sup> These investment agents traveled between Pearl River Delta, Shanghai, and Taipei to provide service to their clients (many of whom are owners of manufactories established in PRD in the late 80s) to manage the best circuits of capital that is anchored in Hong Kong. Related professionals like lawyers and accountants are also in high need. To accommodate these

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<sup>10</sup> Kenneth Ko (Oct 11, 2006), Hassle-free living catches. SCMP.

<sup>11</sup> Lin & Chen (林美姿,陳柏年) (May 2008) Financiers competing for entering China market. Vol 263. Global View Monthly. Taipei.

travelers, serviced residence was considered the most promising products to cater to this so-called “worldwide demand.”<sup>12</sup>

### ***5.3 Circulation of Capital through Production of Serviced Apartments***

Against the context depicted above, serviced residence becomes a lucrative investment product leveraging on the residential presence of global elites. Its performance in keeping rental value has been considered better shielded from the recent financial market storm due to “their unique offerings and less-elastic market demand.” More importantly, they are compared with profitability of secondary office towers and an analysis of investment scenarios demonstrated that investor gained much more return if converting the properties into a boutique serviced apartment although it will incur more than double the initial capital investment cost for conversion. Analysts suggest that the serviced apartment becomes a viable project with an IRR of 8.3% and only takes 11 years for the capital cost to be paid back as opposed to 20 years for official towers without conversion. On the other hand, the operational costs of serviced apartments could be at least 15% lower than running a hotel.<sup>13</sup> The investment trend has been highlighted especially when Hong Kong saw many secondary office towers with high vacancy after after the IT bubble burst in 2001.

In addition to the investment analysis, several changes contributed to the conversion of properties into serviced apartments. The first factor has to do with serviced apartment’s being a flexible land use that can escape regulation. The “serviced apartment” was once specified in the zoning code as short-term residential with lower requirement for civic service then granted higher flat-ratio. Nevertheless, the construction of *J-Residence*, which was approved as a serviced apartment and then converted to residential for sale invited doubts over likely abuse of the code. Following the debate, the code was canceled. Since then, serviced apartments were not regulated and either residential, hotel, or office towers can be converted into serviced

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<sup>12</sup> HKTDC, Global investors vie for HK's prime property (01/05/2006).

<sup>13</sup> Take European cases for example, it is 15% less to construct and to operate a serviced apartment as compared to a hotel because of less land and amenities in need. The averaged stay is longer- less turnover and so that reduce desk front operation work load.(Elke Geieregger & Arlett Oehmichen, 2008)

apartments upon approval. The deregulation thus makes serviced apartment a more flexible register with which investors can conveniently transform the forms of their investments.<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, financilization of real estate since the innovation of Real Estate Investment Trust (REIT) introduced into Hong Kong in 2005 made it possible for international investors to harvest rent across borders. Against the context, the serviced apartment, with its outstanding performance of rewarding rate, became a profitable investment product. More and more international operators expanded their business across borders, and *Ascott Reit* (Ascott), among many emerging cases in Asia, has been the most notable one. Ascott was established by the Singapore-based, Ascott Residence Trust Management Limited. It has been the first and the largest Reit that specializes in managing international serviced housing. As of 2012, the Ascott's asset size has more than tripled to about \$290M since listing in March 2006. Its international portfolio comprises 64 properties in 23 cities across Asia Pacific and Europe, mainly located in key gateway cities such as Singapore, Tokyo, Shanghai, Beijing, London, Paris, and so on. With continuous acquisitions of hotel industries in different countries, the Ascott has successfully operated serviced residence properties without necessarily acquiring the properties. It was a prominent example that shows how branded operation itself becomes professionalized, financialized, and allegedly in so doing further properties. The separation of operation of serviced residences and property ownership is central to both the production of serviced apartments and linking redevelopment projects across global cities into a circuit.

In Hong Kong, there has been large scale operation of serviced residence since the 90s, mainly in locations favored by expats and in places where larger construction sites were available, such as Repulse bay, Tsim Sha Tsui, Hom Hong. Many were undertaken by local developers who had enough capital and land. They were often operated by subsidiaries of the same developers. Increasing new demand for boutiques serviced apartments engendered new logic of production of space that expressed itself in a trend of acquisition of second hand properties and branded operation, which allowed new kinds of actors to specialize in the new market. I will illustrate the emergent production of serviced apartments by introducing the cases of *Shama* and *Chi Residence* in Hong Kong.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Tam Po Yiu, the chair of Hong Kong Institute of Planners (31/03/2011).

Standing at the Time Square, the most popular shopping area on Hong Kong Island, *Shama Causeway Bay* has attracted a lot of attention not only by its prestigious location but also the frequent transactions of the particular property in recent years. The branded operator *Shama* has expanded its presence through out urban center, including Central, Causeway Bay, Wan Chai. Though not the biggest operator in town, *Shama* is important in its success of making the branded operation itself an asset for investment and expansion. The original developer, Philip Morais, used to be a middle-rank developer who started his business from Clearwater Bay since 1975. Without enough land bank to compete with developer Tycoons like New World, SWIRE or Cheung Kong, Morais focused on second hand properties and gradually expanded his investment to market in London. Since 1993, Morais partnered with the British marketing specialist Elaine Young. They established successful models of creating high-rewarding rate rental by refurbishing apartments into boutique-styled residences in London and then successfully transported the model back to Hong Kong. In an interview in 2002, Morais noted that, “Typically, in Hong Kong, you buy rental properties at a 4-6 % return and we [have been] achieving 14-20 % [...] That is more than double the return on our capital value by adding in our touches and our furnishings.”<sup>15</sup> Despite increasing competition, the IRR of serviced apartments averagely remain as at least 6-10% up until 2011.

The partners soon established *Shama* to brand their serviced apartments business. *Shama* featured itself as combining the East and West, carefully tuned its style to cater to urban elites working in the finance sector. *Shama* integrated property management and hospitality service, adding extra frills such as memberships of gymnasium and salons, DVD players, wifi access, etc. to make up limited space in the dense urban setting. From 1996-2003, *Shama* found no competitors and performed strongly with an averaged occupancy rate of higher than 95%. Most of its tenants are in the financial industry and stay an average 11 months at a stretch. Up until January 2011, *Shama* operated seven properties (about 320 flats), all of which occupied the most prominent locations in expatriates’ favorite neighborhoods.

Among them the *Shama Causeway bay* as mentioned was especially important in its being a model of connecting operation of boutique serviced apartments with transnational

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<sup>15</sup> Gwyneth Roberts (Jun 30, 2002) Boutique serviced apartment business comes of age. SCMP.

investment fund. After *Shama* established its reputation in Central, it was able to acquire an expensive office tower in Causeway bay with financial support from Schroder Asian Properties (an Australia-based private equity fund).<sup>16</sup> *Shama* thus renovated the office tower into a serviced apartment with 110 flats of rent starting from \$1,806-2,193. Eying on the profitability, Morgan Stanley Real Estate Fund soon paid \$128.5 M for a majority stake in *Shama* in 2006. The deal was one among emergent foreign investors riding on the back of strong demand for commercial properties in Hong Kong. Back in 2003, Morgan Stanley actually started the trend to buy whole buildings when it paid \$108M in 2003 for Vicwood Plaza, a 38-storey mix-use tower in Sheung Wan, next to Central. Later it sold the property to Macquarie Global Property Advisors for \$333M. The prominent profit attracted more investors “in the pipeline.”<sup>17</sup>

What’s new here is the serviced residence being packaged as competitive investment commodity. Moreover, many international actors started to see the investment in Hong Kong as related to expanding their transnational presence in China more than just a local project. Again, Morgan Stanley’s investment in *Shama* is a case in point. After its conspicuous purchase of five properties managed by *Shama* and the branded operator per se,<sup>18</sup> Morgan Stanley started its investment in the serviced residence market in Shanghai under the brand name *Shama* in 2006, transporting *the Shama model* to the rapidly developing financial center and later to other major cities in the mainland. In 2009, Morgan Stanley sold out its four properties in Hong Kong except *Shama Causeway Bay* to another private equity, reaping a handsome profit.<sup>19</sup> However, Morgan Stanley had remained its ownership of the brand *Shama* and had continuously hired Elaine Young as executive to manage its increasing serviced residences in China. The Hong Kong brand has become a symbolic property that allows

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<sup>16</sup> Global investors vie for HK's prime property (01/05/2006) <http://www.hktrader.net/200605/lead/lead-CommercialRealEstate200605.htm>

<sup>17</sup> International investors such as Carlyle Group and Macquarie were some among many who tried to get a foothold in the prime central locations in Hong Kong. See more in the post as noted in note 17.

<sup>18</sup> Hong Kong Economic Journal. (22/11/2008) <http://www.chi-residences.com/assets/files/news/20081122HKEJ-Pilars-interview.pdf>

<sup>19</sup> The property where *Shama Causeway* is located had been held by Morgan Stanley for years until being sold to Pansia International Limited, allegedly a South-East Asia based corporation by \$15.5M in February 2012, much higher than the estimated value of \$10.3M HKD as of 2011.

investors to transport its brand name to upgrade properties in China.<sup>20</sup> Investors actually gained the most short-term profit in the property transaction rather than the long-term rewards from letting. Meanwhile, it is also interesting to see expats who work for Morgan Stanley become frequent tenants of *Shama* through out Hong Kong and China. Two of my interviewees working as foreign directors with Morgan Stanley had been *Shama*'s tenants for more than an year.

*Shama* and its owner Morgan Stanley are not the only player in the scene. Morais, the previous founder of *Shama*, established a new brand *Chi Residence* in the year following he sold *Shama*. With the notable capital gained after the sale, Morais gradually acquired second-hand apartments in Mong Kok, Sheung Wan, and Central, remaking them into median-level serviced apartments to attract increasing Asian clients who would prefer a slightly more affordable price of about \$1,780-6,450. *Chi-Residence* was carefully tuned and differentiated from *Shama* in pricing, more designer-look and more spacious units. *The Chi Residence* in Central, for example, provided only 19 one-bedroom flats of area as much as 1050 sqft, where tenants can overlook victoria harbor and enjoyed interiors designed by the Parisian designer Dillon Garris. Other than a series of smaller properties as such, *Chi Residence*'s new project in Wan Chai-*Chi 130*- is especially notable in its joint venture with the famous individual investor who bought the Lung Moon Restaurant (see Chapter 4). *Chi Residence* will manage and share partial ownership of the redevelopment. The whole new project designed by KplusK Associates is expected to start in 2013.<sup>21</sup> Meanwhile, *Chi Residence* not only has projects in Shanghai but also expanded its share in the Thailand Hospitality Group Cyrus since 2007.<sup>22</sup> Under the brand name of Cyrus, *the Shama model* is going to travel across the border again to remake properties, to create profit to attract international investors, and to bring about more transactions.

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<sup>20</sup> *News Digest: Hong Kong property firm looks to mainland market* (17/12/2010) <http://thechina.biz/china-real-estate/hong-kong-property-firm-looks-to-mainland-market/>

<sup>21</sup> (July 06, 2011) *Home Away From Home*. Hong Kong Trader.

<sup>22</sup> "Turning Old Theater into Boutique Hotel in Shanghai" (Oct. 25,2007) First Financial Daily. The Thailand-based Cyrus Hotels & Resorts was established in 2005, specializing in resorts and high-end hotels in Thailand, Indonesia, Fiji, and Hong Kong.

There is no enough room to further review the histories of *Shama* and *Chi Residence*. The point I want to make with the two cases is how operation itself became a symbolic property to transform local management of rentals in connection with transnational investment network of a clear destination in emerging market in major cities China. Hong Kong, in the case, becomes a global city for staging. Three trends can be identified as follows:

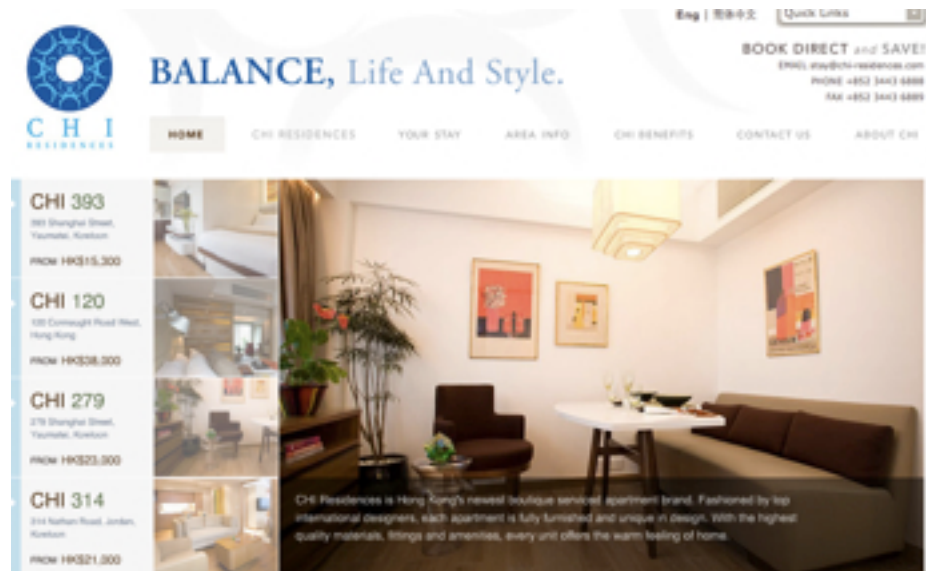


Fig 5.1 Chi Residence  
 Above: Modeling of *Chi 130* contributed by *Kplusk*, taken on the construction site in Wan Chai in 2011. below: Webpage of *Chi Residence* and its marketing points, “Balance, Life and Style”

- 1) *Financialization of commodities*: The separation of operation and properties engenders two related yet distinct commodities, both tradable and profitable. The investment circuit thanks to financialization of real estate gradually made those managed properties too expensive for any individual developer to compete with corporate investors and new forms of investments.
- 2) *Professionalization of the operation*: The professionalization of branding serviced residence became a profitable and tradable asset, opening up a market niche for median developer/operator. Its value depends on how much the operation could increase the value of the properties based on its returns and occupancy.
- 3) *Transnational Constellation of Investments*: The transnational network of investment and operation of serviced residence engender a circulation of capital that is distinct from local projects. It allows the investor to make up its loss in one city by a greater constellation of investment and most importantly (the investment portfolio), to leverage symbolic capital earned from certain places and benefit its investment in other cities.

On this note, I argue that local operation of serviced apartments has been a transnational remaking of cities much more than redevelopment of certain urban quarters in one city. Studies of these serviced apartments is no less important than understanding how the expats, as new middle class, has been an important social link of local urban culture to international corporate culture. (Bodnar, 2001 qtd in Atkinson & Bridge, 2005, p. 102). The supply of gentrified properties is also highly connected with international investment circles. Major developers as mentioned are foreign companies that are well aware of profits that can be made on “locally small but globally significant housing markets for international executive and professional classes” (Atkinson & Bridge, 2005, p. 105). Moreover, the locally small housing market is not at all small given its being anchoring role in expending a greater constellation of investments in China and Asia as is the case of Hong Kong. The reputation and capability of accumulating capital established in Hong Kong is central to those increasing Shanghai–Hong Kong joint-property development supported by city governments in Shanghai and other cities.



*H16 J residence Fraser Suites H15 Wedding Card Street Chi 130*

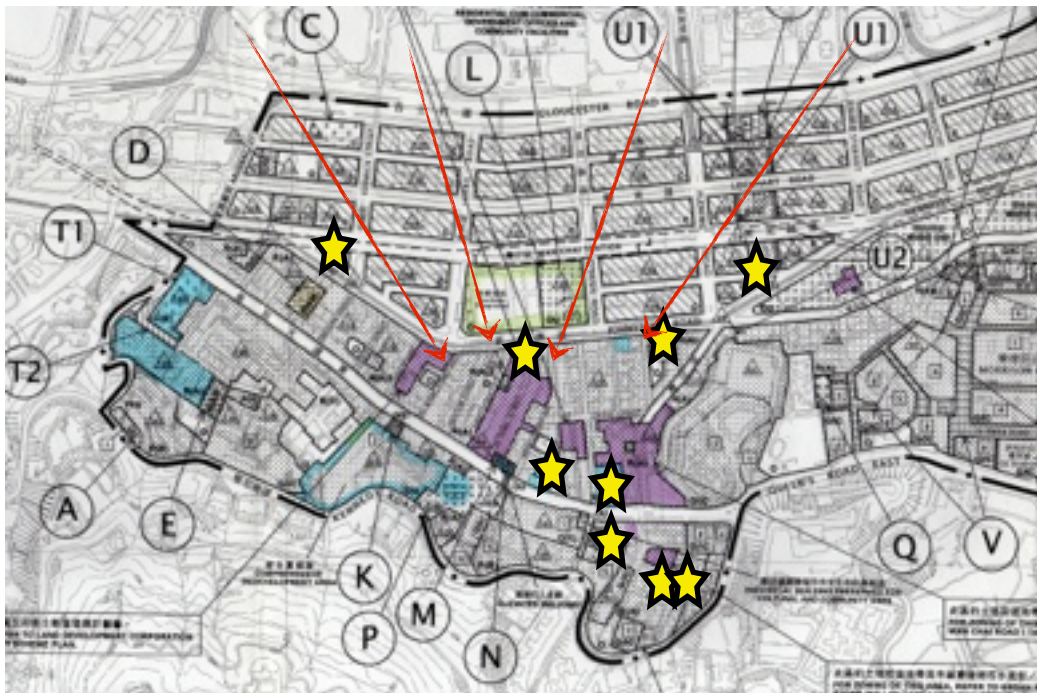


Fig 5.2 Locating Serviced Apartments in Hong Kong  
 Above: Main location where serviced apartments concentrate.  
 Below: Location of main serviced apartments in Wan Chai  
 Purple areas represented URA projects. Yellow Stars represented the locations of prime serviced apartments.

#### *5.4 Local Tactics of Branding Service*

The serviced apartment as a new concept of expat housing and transnational investments has its local implications. Some smaller local developers and property agents quickly picked up the trend and found their niches by making variations. These practices are not immediately connected to transnational investment, nevertheless, engendering qualitative changes of local properties and likely to turn them into future sites of global redevelopment. They targeted the less-well off or junior expats, who may identify themselves as expats but only enjoy modestly higher salaries than local employees. Yet they still prefer to live in boutique apartments close to work and nightlife. The kind of demand was captured by local developers and property agencies, who gradually figured out a mode of “redevelopment by branding service,” which does not necessarily involve transaction or reconstruction. It is related to redevelopment by URA but was implemented in distinctive way. In this vein, long-term tenurial relations were disrupted and turned into monthly terms with higher rent. Unlike international actors who can afford expensive branded operation by working with international branding operators, local property owners or developers created their own brands, engaging local operators to arrange modest service to their tenants. In the following I introduce emergent patterns availed in Wan Chai to show how the concept of serviced apartments has significantly permeated into landscape of rentals in old neighborhoods.

The tour starts from the site of *Chi Residence* in Wan Chai. The prominent construction site on Johnston Road, as mentioned, is going to be a 25-story-high commercial and residential tower. Under *Chi Residence*'s operation, 46 serviced-flats (450-1,450 sqft) would be added to the competitive market of serviced residence in the district. The development model is unique because a reconstruction requires enormous investment that small developers can hardly afford unless they can manage to engage global capital as Morais did. In Wan Chai and elsewhere, a more common practice of managing serviced apartments was by converting building use and upgrading property management into serviced operation. *Fraser Suite*, another serviced apartment which stands only several blocks away from *Chi Residence* Wan Chai and the *J Residence* (URA's project), is such a case.

*Fraser Suite* has been managed by the renowned Singapore-based serviced residence operator *Fraser Hospitality* since 2008.<sup>23</sup> Each flat available in *Fraser Suite* is rated from \$4,450-5,289 (as of Jan 2012). Its occupancy has remained around 90% and with that its rate has increased by 15% within three years. The 23-story-high residential tower was built in 1989. Before the conversion in 2007, the 87 rental units were managed by an arm of the previous owner, Chinese Resources (CRC). As of 2000, the flats were let at about \$1,032-1,161 and as affordable flats to middle class families. They were all gone ever since CRC sold it to its subsidiary, an asset management firm, with immediate renovation (\$10.3M) and renaming of the project into *Fraser Suites* in cooperation with *Fraser Hospitality*. Since 2007 these luxurious flats were mostly rented to corporate clients. The shopfronts on ground floor and second floor were let to some high-end restaurants at extremely high rate.

Tenants in the *Fraser Suite* were mainly expats who were senior directors enjoying partial or full expat packages. Some were granted housing allowance of \$5,160-6,450 whereas some were only granted rent as deductible up to 1/3 of their income for taxation. One of my interviewees, who was transferred from Singapore to Hong Kong, has lived in *Fraser Suites* for more than six months with no allowance. He thought it was acceptable since he had been too busy to look after alternatives. As long as the rent remained below one-third of his income, he found *Fraser Suites* an ideal arrangement. Other than tenants like him, there are expats staying in the city for short-term assignments and usually have their extended-stay in *Fraser Suites* paid by their employer.

It is worth noting that the making of *Fraser Suites* is beyond theorization of gentrification as the process also involved branding of serviced residence and transnational arrangement of corporate operation that created specific demands. CRC itself is actually an enterprise invested by the central government in China, one among the top 500 enterprises globally and one of the biggest developers in China. After making its outstanding performance, CRC then sold the property to the Singapore-based *Sino Group (Sino)*<sup>24</sup> while

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<sup>23</sup> The Singapore-based *Fraser Hospitality* just announced their expansion plan to create 25 projects by the end of 2012. *Fraser Hospitality embarks on aggressive expansion plan*, (March 25, 2011), *Business Traveller Asia*.

<sup>24</sup> CRC sold *Fraser Suite* at 580M. (Aug 18, 2009) *Sing Tao Daily*.

*Fraser Hospitality* maintained its operation- a model very similar to the *Shama* case. *Fraser Hospitality* has expanded its foothold over the world. In 2001, it launched its fourth project in Singapore on the most prosperous Orchard Road in CBD. It's projects located in major cities in China such as Shanghai, Guangzhou, Beijing and other capital cities like Bangkok, Jakarta, New Delhi, Budapest, and Istanbul. Each project was arranged differently in terms of its ownership of properties and operation- *The Fraser hospitality* does not obtain all of them given its specific role as branded operator in the industry. In this light, expats travel with different assignments can settle into different serviced suites in different cities arranged by the same hospitality industry. Their work and life travelled with these expat assignments, becoming part of the process of expatriation.<sup>25</sup>

Similar operation has rapidly increased in Wan Chai. The new owner of the Fraser Suite building, *Sino*, has been an aggressive developer in the district. *Sino* and the *Hopewell Group (Hopewell)* jointly got the bidding of redevelopment of Wedding Card Street, which included a retail, hotel, mix-use construction right next to the *Fraser Suite*. *Hopewell* itself is an important actor in Wan Chai as mentioned in previous chapter. It built the serviced apartment *GardenEast* in 2008 and managed the property under its own subsidiary. The rate of the 216 flats in *GardenEast* ranged from \$2787 -4747 (as of Jan 2012). *Hopewell* also has another plan of developing five-star hotel in the vicinity- the Mega tower project.<sup>26</sup> In short, all of the aforementioned new initiatives were clearly targeting the global community. The marketing logic has ingrained in their practices, which left the self-identified expats to look after cheaper flats in the same neighborhood.

The continuously increasing demand encouraged small developers and landlords to renovate their flats into furnished units, hoping to cater to those junior expats by a relatively cheap rate (\$1,290-2,580), which still allowed them to earn a handsome margin compared to

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<sup>25</sup> One of my friend, who is a Taiwanese architect working for AECOM in Beijing, had relocated in *Fraser Suite* in Beijing before she moved to a regular rental apartment. One of her director had been staying in the serviced apartment for more than one year.

<sup>26</sup> The Mega Tower project has been controversial many years due to its ambitious proposal that upset the community. It has failed to get its proposals approved by the town planning board. *Hopewell* finally decided to cut down its project by reducing 31% floor area, reducing stories from 93 to 55 and cutting hotel rooms from 2197 to 1024, expected to finish in 2016.

regular rentals. Two patterns stand out in the current of “redevelopment by branding service”:  
1) *Acquisition & renovation by developers*; 2) *A constellation of refurbished flats management by operator*. The two kinds of practices prevailed in Wan Chai, Causeway Bay, and Sheung Wan. I illustrate the two patterns in more case studies as follows.

### ***Acquisition & renovation by developers: The Archive***

*The Archive* is a case located on Hing Wing Street, nearby the Blue House. I happened to witness the process from the beginning to its mature operation of the project (Oct 2010- Aug 2011). I met with the architect, the operator of the ACT Serviced Apartment (ACT) and the social work organization involved in its outreach to the local community.

ACT turned two five-story high tenement apartments into a serviced apartment with a bar on the ground and an art space, *the Visual Archive*, in the end of 2010. The minimal style of the black paint and lighting design differentiated the project from the neighboring residences and repair shops. *The Visual Archive*<sup>27</sup> is a non-profit art project organized by ACT and a design lab in Poly Tech University of Hong Kong, self-acclaimed as “facebook of Wan Chai.”<sup>28</sup> *The Archive* has been featured by local press since summer in 2011.<sup>29</sup> What is not covered in the media, however, is a series of acquisitions in the past few years and future redevelopment plan under the guise of *The Archive*. ACT is a subsidiary of *Goldig Group*, a developer who has operated serviced apartments in Central and Wan Chai in the past five years. The developer was actually more interested in reconstructing their properties once conditions for redevelopment is ready. Toward the end of 2011, the developer has had its proposal being approved by the town planning board, going to redevelop the two properties soon. It is one of the two upcoming projects being mentioned in the previous chapter.

*The Archive*, indeed, was a temporary initiative which transformed its waiting for approval into a productive process of generating cultural capital by engaging community and art, a brilliant strategy to ensure its success in the historic district. With the *Visual Archive* to

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<sup>27</sup> See more in its official webpage, <http://www.visualarchive.hk/>

<sup>28</sup> Mary Agnew (Aug. 05, 2011), *Building a Vision*, SCMP.

<sup>29</sup> (Nov. 2011) *Linking Culture with Redevelopment*. Mingpao Weekly.

promote the idea of revitalizing old neighborhood and managing possible confrontation from the community, the developer successfully distracted the public's attention to art activities. The gathering of artists and trendy urbanites rendered the quiet lane into a seemingly lively place with art installations and vibrant activities managed by a public relation agency hired by ACT. For example, a group of college students coming from Moscow created a project called "Urban Narratives" by applications on smart phones to share their sensual experiences in Wan Chai; A group of Hong Kong architects were invited to lead workshops to engage students to do photo collage; the Hong Kong Designers Association met in the bar to prepare the Hong Kong Year of Design 2012, just to name a few.

In addition to the art project, *the Archive* offered suits rated as \$3,612, almost five times of the previous rate of each flat in the building. The elite tenants who stayed in *the Archive* had a rough idea of the ongoing art project but knew nothing about future redevelopment. I talked to the Dutch woman Rebecca, who happened to be the first tenant in *the Archive*, staying there on a four-month assignment. As a frequent traveler among Malaysia, Hong Kong and Singapore, she works as self-employed consultant for corporate merger cases. She found the location perfect for her to walk to the Hopewell center for work. The residential neighborhood of Old Wan Chai also made her feel more relaxed after work. Similar to many expats who worked across time zones, she spent most of her time at conference meetings with partners in other global cities even in her cosy suite, possibly starting from five in the morning till late evening. (interview, 30/4/2011) In all, R found the artistic style and customized services in the residence more pleasant than the suites provided in hotels or large scale serviced apartments. Her comment is not unique in my talking to several other tenants in *the Archive*. There were international couples who came to *the Archive* on similar short assignments or for the transitory period before they found a regular residence.



Fig 5.3 *The Archive* in Wan Chai, taken in Aug 2011

Among these tenants, an artist who followed his banker wife to Hong Kong was an exception. He contributed to the *Visual Archive* by making video clips of his conversation with passengers, hoping to piece together the community's memories of the old days.<sup>30</sup> There were quite a few installations like his work in *the Archive*, expressing appreciation of community interaction and the place. These representations successfully rendered the uniqueness of the serviced residence to its global tenants, meanwhile, engaging neighboring residents in events with assistance by the St Jame's Settlement (SJS). Despite their doubts, the social worker and several active community members found it difficult to take issue with the art events though SJS did turn down the developer's invitation of operating a community space with ACT. "I just had no idea why we should make our presence there to help them interact with the community." one social worker from SJS noted.

This case shows new paradigm of redevelopment by branding service with art and community. By breaking their exercises of redevelopment into different components and phases, the operation could accumulate cultural capital for their future projects with strategies similar to redevelopment by representation as mentioned. What is not contextualized in the space of representation is the fact that the developer itself actually created the vacancy and turned the community into fading memories. In a decontextualized performance of artistically appreciating the past, the *Visual Archive* and artists were introduced as benign actors who simply wanted to share the creative present with their audience.

What's absent were the displaced. *ACT* replicated this model in its exhibition of artworks in *ACTS Rednaxela*, a more high-end serviced apartment that provided suites of area ranging from 650-1,300 sqft of monthly rate starting from \$4,902 up to \$14,191 in SOHO. *ACT* planned to acquire more apartment buildings in Central or Wan Chai to expand its operation in three years. In a different pattern, the operation as such created symbolic capital for its future projects, transporting its credit in one place to elsewhere.

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<sup>30</sup> The artist's work is online available at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5zsfIR9nIU>

### 封面故事

「在數字化、媒體融合和資訊科技日新月異的時代，如何與社會保持聯繫，不致被邊緣化，是許多創作者面臨的課題。」

陳子建與陳冠中於2017年創設「明報」，以「明報」為名，將「明報」與「明報」結合，為讀者帶來另一種閱讀體驗。在「明報」上，除了文字報導外，還有許多以圖片為主的內容。

#### 藝術創作紀錄社區面貌

陳子建與陳冠中在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



11 是則片區山水新景的啟事

陳子建與陳冠中在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



12 是則片區山水新景的啟事

陳子建與陳冠中在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



13 是則片區山水新景的啟事

陳子建與陳冠中在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



14 是則片區山水新景的啟事

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### 非牟利發展商 平衡市場?

香港非牟利發展商，在過去十年來，以「非牟利」為名，在市場上發展。他們以「非牟利」為名，在市場上發展。他們以「非牟利」為名，在市場上發展。

陳冠中與陳子建在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



15 是則片區山水新景的啟事

陳子建與陳冠中在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



16 是則片區山水新景的啟事

陳子建與陳冠中在「明報」創設了「明報」藝術創作紀錄社區面貌的專欄，記錄了許多社區的真實面貌。



Fig 5.4 Branding *The Archive*. Above: the press coverage of *the Archive* on *Mingpao Weekly*; left middle: the original look of the properties; Below, left: the event organized in *the Wan Chai Visual Archive*; right below: the serviced suite in *the Archive*.

### *A constellation of refurbished flats management by operator*

The second mode of branding the serviced apartment has prevailed in old neighborhoods in both Hong Kong island and Kowloon. With smaller areas and more accessible price, the service provided in this kind of operation is not necessarily below standard except the lack of 24-hr on-site management. What differentiated this mode from the previous is the absence of acquisition in its operation. Despite a brand name created by the operator, the properties managed by the branded agency are often located in different buildings in different neighborhoods. Some agencies aimed to maintain their operation within a specific geographic confinement such as Sheung Wan and Central while others often managed properties across districts. Under the same brand name, what is presented to the tenants is a constellation of refurbished flats clandestinely located in different apartments. Unlike those operators who owned or operated on the whole apartment and thus upgraded the outlook of the building, these nicely furnished suites were not usually visible from the outside. The tenants were assigned to their suites by agents and found themselves staying with other local residents in an old apartment. The arrangement to some degree appeals to those expat tenants who want to integrate themselves better to the local society.

The operation in this vein could be considered a variation of long-existing property agents. They convinced landlords to have their properties turned into serviced apartments and helped managing properties and recruiting tenants, moreover, maintaining a handsome rent return for the landlords so that their properties can be sold more easily- oftentimes sold to other investors who would keep their properties managed by the same agency. The agency negotiated with the landlords and managed to earn the best margin by branding these suites with responsive service as much as possible. These suites are generally more accessible than those operated by global branded operators or subsidiaries of local developers, offering rates between \$1,290-2,580. Several interviewees in their 20-30s, working as young professionals, found these flats satisfying compared to other regular rentals where a lot of keep up and management of utilities and internet access were too much work to figure out. Although some of them mentioned the uncertain quality of service such as cleaning and delayed responses to complaints, they mostly found these deals acceptable.

Many operators are individuals who are experienced in property management. With help from their younger employees or their own children, they managed to upgrade these properties by improving the interior design and setting up interactive interface on the web to streamline the delivery of service. Despite the promising relocation market, a major risk does exist as those properties under their operation often fall prey to developers's interest- especially those who want to reconstruct the whole building and tend to acquire properties through intermediaries as the *Richfield*. The irony is that the more successful their operation is with their branding, the more likely the area where those suites located become a prime site for redevelopment that attracts developers like SWIRE. This unpredictable threat thus challenges the property agent's capability to maintain their investment in place.

It is almost impossible to exhaust variations in this kind of operation given the rapid increase of actors in the arena. They prevailed in managing properties through out popular sites on Hong Kong island, including Mid-levels, Wan Chai, Kennedy Town, Quarry Bay, etc. More interestingly, some of them even managed properties in some prominent apartments redeveloped by URA, such as *the Zenith*. These clandestine transformation of regular residences into serviced rentals escapes regulation and policy analysis, gradually replacing lower class and local tenants with expat tenants or middle class locals who cannot afford to buy houses for the time being. The kind of "redevelopment by branding service" started from rewriting of tenure patterns and management, often gradually evolve into redevelopment by reconstruction as mentioned. It is a trend of redevelopment that has not been attended but significantly influences local citizens' access to affordable housing. It is a mode of rent harvesting predicated on the invisible care work managed by operators but the distribution of profit is always to the agent's and property owner's interest.

With increasing number of actors tapping into the relocation housing market, popular quarters like Wan Chai became occupied by prime residence for expats while locals were displaced. In contrast to London, the city where developers found the regulatory policy discouraging the development of serviced apartment because the city government required any residential buildings providing lease longer than 90 days to be qualified as hotels and limited

operation in certain neighborhoods- the H2 policy reserving certain housing for citizens<sup>31</sup> (Foxley, 2001). Nevertheless, in the city of Hong Kong where economic freedom is prioritized more than anything, expatriation of space has not been identified as an issue.

The three patterns of redevelopment by branding service that I identified in this chapter, they are distinctive in their different targets and modes of operation that involved different circuits of capital. The first and the second types involved transactions of properties and sometimes reconstruction whereas the third type managed its niche by expanding property management in competition with developers in the very limited urban space. All of them, nevertheless, aimed to capture the changing leasing demand of a variety of international assignments. They zealously adjusted their management of ownership and tenure patterns to ensure most efficient harvest of rent in between selling and leasing. There is only interest in attracting corporate clients but no concern for basic needs of the grassroots tenants. Space and care had been packaged into serviced residence that can rework landscape of rentals for transporting capital of various kind across the border. The Chinese factor in marketing consideration has been more than obvious. It factored into demand, as many mainlander guests who wanted to keep long-term furnished apartments in Hong Kong as a sign of prestige and clout could ensure a certain amount of stable occupancy (McCrow & Vos, 2012). It also factored into expansion of production that many international operators considered China as one of the top-three of most important emerging markets.

Taken together, I suggest that expatriation of local space has engendered transnational remaking of cities. The production of serviced residence could be considered as means of



Fig 5.5 Serviced Suite hidden in tenement apartment in Sheung Wan.

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<sup>31</sup> Section 25 of the Greater London (General Powers ) Act 1973 was amended by the Greater London Council (General Powers)Act 1983, Section 4.

production to facilitate two distinctive but closely related operations of transnational capital in real estate and MNCs. The process of production instantiated one of the best example of fragmentation of citizenship in its involvement of *deregulation of planning*, *financialization of housing*, and *privatization of care*, all of which articulated together with new dwelling industry to serve transnational corporate business. I will continue by furthering my analysis of privatized care in the next chapter.

## Chapter Six

### Carescapes as Everyday Life

With the production of serviced apartments as a potent example, I aim to discuss the invisible care work increasingly employed in marketing urban space in this chapter. I'd like to call attention to the shifting urban landscape where space and care demand one another, yet when the redistribution of *care* and *space for care* as it is now simultaneously tends to displace care. Care work is generally under-paid while space for care is commodified with expensive price. In considering expatriate management, the managerial perspective does not discuss the invisible labor work that materializes the expatriation of the city as the work is mostly outsourced and thus erased from the horizon. Yet the carescapes are too substantial to be ignored as so many people do care work to make ends meet, which, at the same time, enables many expats to live as if they are careerists independent from the nation states and the local society. Consciously or not, their variegated spatial practices are all integral to everyday making of carescapes.

Before heading to another site of urban renewal, Sham Shui Po, I portray how many tenants, including both the privileged and underprivileged, actually live and work closely within carescapes. It is such interconnectedness between care and rent in low-income tenant's everyday life that brings care talks to the forefront of urban redevelopment. I start by tracing the trend of growing demand of specific kinds of service work in relation to the ways in which services is managed and underpriced in the production of space. It will be exemplified by a closer look of the operation of service apartment. Engaging the careworker's accounts, I then illustrate how the deliver of care work is constantly vulnerable to exploitation, though their embeddings in the process of expatriation are not well recognized whether in the serviced residence, residential towers or office buildings. In the end I connect the underrepresentation of care with rent to illustrate how carescapes are shifting unequally to serve the transforming housing market.

#### ***6.1 Counting On Care Work***

The significant share of Foreign Domestic Helpers (FDH) that makes up 6% of labor force and represents about 3.8% of the population in Hong Kong (2011 Census) is not news and has become important case for scholarship of migrant workers. In comparison, there has been less interest in understanding the processes of growing ethnic Chinese laborers joining the

service industry. They were mostly considered as a natural result of deindustrialization or at best understood as issues of unemployment or underemployment. By taking stock of statistics published by the Census and Statistics Department,<sup>1</sup> I present major trends of job vacancies and pay special attention to the expanding demand of care labor in the service of operation of urban space. It is a qualitatively changing demand, I argue, requiring two specific kinds of care work: 1) *property-oriented care work* that is needed to manage and upgrade properties like service apartments and high-rise apartments; 2) *reproductive care work* that is hired to meet the reproductive needs (cleaning, cooking, caring) so that the non-paid domestic labor can be freed to fully participate in job market, which is particularly important to single expats or women with children. According to the official categorization, the former are labeled as *professional and business services* and the latter as *social and personal services*. Both of them are increasingly important as shown in the following.

From 1991-2012, the job vacancy rate in the service industry continued to rise yet with different growth rates among sectors. There were only 2,300 vacancies in the financing, insurance, real estate and business services sector in 1981 and then the numbers grew to more than 4,800 vacancies in 2002. The vacancies in finance and insurance then gradually decreased (by 9.9% in 2012 as compared to 2011), which may indicate the saturation of the sector. Meanwhile, the rest of service industry, such as *professional and business service* (which does not include financing and insurance) and *social and personal service* continuously demand more labor (see the table 6.1). From 2011-2012, job vacancies in *professional and business service* grew by 42.4% and by 29.5% in *social and personal services*. Over all, *social and personal services* take in the largest share of job vacancies--16,493 laborers are demanded (23.28%).

Demand for certain jobs is especially strong, such as cleaning, real estate maintenance and management (including janitors and managers), beauty and body treatment, residential care services for the elderly. Take the real estate industry for example: about 60% of all vacancies in the industry were demanding janitors and property managers, to which the service apartments and high-rise buildings apparently contributed. According to Survey released by *Savills Research*

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<sup>1</sup> The statistic quoted in this section is adopted from the *Quarterly Report of Employment and Vacancies Statistics (June 2012)*, Statistics on Job Vacancies from 1981 to 2002 (March 2003) and the series of *Employment and Vacancies Statistics (Detailed Tables, 2005-2006)* published by the Census and Statistic Department.

in 2011, the stock of luxurious serviced apartments grew from less than 4,000 units prior to 1997 to over 10,000 units in 2004 and then 18,000 units in 2011, with forecasts suggesting the trend to continue. The number is indeed a very conservative measure as it does not include the lower tier of serviced apartments, such as the more than 4,000 units operated by the *Orange as* mentioned.

*Table 6.1 Trend of Job Vacancies in Hong Kong (1991-2002)*

	1991	1996	2002	2005	2012
Finance and insurance	3.7%	8.9%	10.2%	9.4%	6.2%
Real Estate	2.0%	4.7%	5.4%	6.8%	4.0%
Professional and Business Services	5.3%	8.0%	10.0%	13.1%	13.2%
Social and personal services sector	12.9%	15.9%	22.2%	18.9%	23.3%

Cleaning service is the most basic and indispensable service that characterizes the serviced apartments. There were 78,151 persons participating in the cleaning industry through 1,499 service agencies as of June 2012, a number equivalent to 3% of the total laborers participating in the market.<sup>2</sup> The workforce of cleaning service has increased by 40% compared to 2005 while vacancies increased by 500%. Moreover, cleaning work is gendered. In 2012, the ratio of female to male labors participating in cleaning is about 1.50 (33,947 females to 22,701 males). Though no statistics of the gender ratio is available from 2005, we may refer to the ratio of the total workforce of the *Social and Personal Service* (the main category contains the cleaning sector), which was about 1.83 in 2005 (291,600 females to 158,989 males).

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<sup>2</sup> *Pest control services* were also included in the category but only made up minor percentage. There is no separate statistics available. One can get a sense from the Hong Kong yellow page: 243 cleaning agencies were registered in contrast to the 18 pest control service available from the Yellow Pages.

Table 6.2 Major job vacancies demanded by production of space (2012)

jobs	number of vacancies	share of the total vacancies	Main category
<i>Cleaning</i>	1,620	2.3%	Professional and Business Services
<i>Real estate maintenance and management</i>	1,750	2.5%	Professional and Business Services
<i>Beauty and body prettifying treatment</i>	2,010	2.8%	Social and Personal Services
<i>Residential care services for the elderly</i>	1,766	2.5%	Social and Personal Services

Yet, persons participating in and vacancies available from the cleaning business should be higher than the current number because the definitions of industries and sections are based on the major business of the employers. Hence, a cleaner employed by a school will be counted as manpower in the education sector and escapes the calculation. So are those hired by the hospitality industry. Seeing *the accommodation and food service* sector taking up about 17.31% of total job vacancies in 2011 and its demand for cleaners in the hotels, it may be safe to suggest that the need for cleaning laborers is much larger than existing numbers indicate. Given that the informal operation of maid service agencies is still popular in Hong Kong, it is difficult to precisely measure the size of the workforce.

It is important to note that there are various kinds of care work employed to serve the built environment spreading across job categories but the connection is hardly attended to. In my interviews with care workers, I found some of them participating in more than one kind, for example, working as a part-time cleaner and a janitor on shifts. Meanwhile, it is also worth noting that cleaners usually demand much more intensive labor than janitors yet the latter category pays generally better--about 1.2-1.8 times than the cleaner's wage due to the regulation and the organization of the substantial work. It is relatively difficult to become a licensed janitor as the Hong Kong SAR requires the laborer to obtain a "Security Personnel Permit" and thus some physical and intellectual tests and training are required. Yet, the possibility of working on shorter shifts and low requirements make cleaning one of the most accessible jobs for low-skilled and part-time workers, which I will discuss later.



Fig. 6.1 Cleaners in Hong Kong

Left: Janitors moving around with their equipments and trollies are common street scene in Hong Kong. Right: Hiring Ads for cleaners posted by one apartment. It reads, “Hiring part-time cleaners. No limitation over age and experiences. Those who have work experiences of domestic helpers are preferred. 6-hour work time (negotiable), \$490 as the minimal monthly wage and some likely tips.”

## 6.2 Caring is Cheap Work?

In Hong Kong, everybody more or less knows that care work is hard and cheap labor. Yet the substantial details had never been exposed until the debates on the legislation of minimal wage got heated in 2010. Wide-spread reports released by the press and civic groups unveiled the exploitation of low-waged menial work in the service sector, especially 3Cs- *Cleaning, Caring, Cooking* (Anderson, 2000), as if these undervalued works were news to the city. After more than 10 years since the issue emerged in 1999, the final legislation of minimal wage was passed in July 2009 and a minimum hourly wage of \$3.6 was proposed and passed in the LegCo in January 2011 despite enormous opposition from the business alliance. It was considered a hard-won achievement since the news about the janitor being paid only \$0.9 per hour (\$100 for 14 hours a day) for cleaning the public toilets in Central remained as a striking memory.<sup>3</sup>

However, the fact that no standard working hours or clear definitions of employment and benefits were included in the bill turned “working hours” into another contested terrain. Soon many reports revealed cases of how employers abuse the act.<sup>4</sup> The popular chain restaurant *Cafe*

<sup>3</sup> The case revealed by a headline on Mingpao sparked outrage from the society and thus pushed the Legco to include the topic officially in its agenda. (2001).[Online available] <http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr00-01/chinese/counmtg/hansard/010221fc.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> (May 2, 2011) *You are fired!* (Singtao Daily). And Elaine Yau, Martin Wong and Amy Nip (May 02, 2011) *March of the minimum wage victims*. SCMP.

*de Coral* was one among many to be found excluding lunch hours in calculating working hours in order to cut down the payroll. Some restaurants excluded all non-peak hours and as a result their employers had to figure out where to go during those hours at least cost (ex. 2:00-4:30pm). In MacDonaldis, handicapped workers' working hours were cut from 4 to 1.5 hours each day and thus their income waned despite the fact that hourly wage was improved from \$3 to \$3.6.

The wage talks revealed a likely redistribution and dispossession in different divisions and organization of labor, leaving the most difficult work to the most vulnerable. The employer side, as they claimed, was constrained by expensive rent; thus the small margin of business made it hard for them to raise wages to hire staffs. Some of those service-oriented industries, such as elderly homes, even suggested importing foreign helpers instead. The center manager complained that with the same hourly wage across business, many middle-aged workers would rather switch to easier jobs such as janitors or cleaners in apartments. Some cases reported that elderly centers started to hire elderly people to take care of the elderly- some care takers were found to aged from 63-69.<sup>5</sup>

Unexpectedly, wage raises brought about a redefinition of "low-income." Many workers soon found out that wage increases may deprive their qualification for public housing. In this case, some of them would switch to part-time jobs or just resign, some even bare the risk of violation of the law by having a forged payroll.<sup>6</sup> Some critiques suggested that the underlying economic problem in Hong Kong lies in rocketing rent rather protective measures like minimal wage.<sup>7</sup> High rent and irrational rent increases keep entrepreneurs and small business hardly sustainable, making a just redistribution of economic growth an unlikely dream.

The business alliance continuously blamed the worker's request for wage increases for the notable inflation in the past few years.<sup>8</sup> The discourse remained strong when it came to reviewing of the standard minimal wage and paid leaves before May 1 in 2012. In a series

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<sup>5</sup> 阮穎嘉 (May 22, 2011) The Elderly Home hired elderly to look after elders. Mingpao. A2

<sup>6</sup> 盧曼思(April 17, 2011) Waitress in the noodle restaurant resign for public housing. Mingpao. A6

<sup>7</sup> Anna (May 1, 2011) *On Labor on the Labor Day: the Belated Minimal Wage*. Mingpao. Sunday Special.

<sup>8</sup> The inflation in Hong Kong surged to the fastest pace since 1995 as the CPI rose 7.9 percent from a year earlier after a 5.6 percent increase in June 2011. Sophie Leung (Aug 23 2011) *Hong Kong's 'Scary' 7.9% Inflation May Fuel Wages Even as Recession Looms*. Bloomberg.

debates on legislation of standard working hours and paid paternity leaves, a public remark given by the Employer representative Ho Sai-chu in a board meeting made it clear that cheap care work made Hong Kong different from other places and thus required a different logic in thinking about labour wage and benefits. As Mr. Ho noted, "It's easy and inexpensive to hire domestic workers and many grandparents are willing to help take care of the babies and the mothers. We should consider the culture of this city."<sup>9</sup> Cheap care work, indeed, is taken for granted by most people in this city generally and the operators of serviced apartment especially know how to take advantage of it and create genuine profit, to which I turn in the next section.

### ***6.3 Managing Services in Marketing Space***

As mentioned earlier, it would not be possible for MNCs to manage project-based tasks in such a flexible way without the operators of serviced apartments internalizing the cost of managing human resources and operational costs in most efficient way to deliver the most competitive relocation product. Yet, to ensure that the operational costs of serviced apartments will be at least 15% lower than running a hotel profitably, the operators organize and outsource care work in partnership with a variety of agencies, ranging from business support service agencies, property agencies, and cleaning service agencies, etc. The management and organization depend on the scale and the degree of professionalization of the service operator, which does not necessarily mean the larger one would provide better labor conditions to the service workers. In what follows I discuss the operational logics in managing labor to make serviced apartments.

#### *1) Visible services and invisible work*

Other than the fully furnished suites, one key to a successful serviced apartment is the adequate management of visible services and invisible labor work. The visible services, which are adapted from the convention in hospitality industry, often include reception, concierge services and security. To make sure its front desk service is delivered smoothly, the chain serviced apartment also requires at least one manager on night shift to oversee its operation across properties. To cater to the global elites's need to work from home, a business center is considered a must in the middle to high-end serviced apartments. Depending upon the space

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<sup>9</sup> Ada Lee.(May 4 2012) *Paternity leave? Hire domestic staff instead.* SCMP.

available for leisure equipment, an on site Gym and mini movie library are becoming common. All the services mentioned above would require at least 5-8 staffs at one time to serve the privileged tenants. Most of them are required to be bilingual, meaning English and Mandarin rather than Cantonese since more and more business travelers and expats are Chinese overseas or visiting from the mainland who do not speak Cantonese.

The invisible work, which is the focus here, includes a variety of care labor to maintain the quality of the facilities and suites, including cleaning and housekeeping. To ensure the sense of self-catering as the selling point, the services are carried out while the tenants are away. The frequency of cleaning of the suites varies from daily to twice a week, depending upon the classification of the apartments. A weekly changing of sheets is very common. Self-service laundry is provided while professional laundry and dry-cleaning services are usually available at applicable charge. Other than the services listed in the package, a lot more cleaning work is needed to maintain the facilities for business and leisure, most of which are carried out by female laborers just like that in the shopping centers or office towers. The sheet changing, as the service available in the hotels, also requires some labors to do the laundry, to dry and iron the sheets, none of which is easy work. The number of cleaners needed vary with the size of the service apartment and the organizing of work.

With the rapid increase of service apartments that not only refurbish regular housing but also office towers near the commercial business district, and the redevelopment of existing tenement apartments into new residential projects, more and more urban space where users or dwellers used to serve themselves (therefore to some degree sharing the labor needed to maintain the build environment) are upgraded to serviced-space. It is worth noting, though beyond the scope of this research, that serviced offices rapidly increase in the city, catering to the short-term, project-based, mobile workforce. It can be exemplified by the 737 “business centers”- the preferred naming of the new business- on the yellow pages in Hong Kong.<sup>10</sup> Here I can’t identify the differential demand increase for cleaning labor for serviced apartments from other kinds of

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<sup>10</sup> As the Yellow page shows the geographies of serviced offices concentrated in Central, Wan Chai, and Tsim Sha Tsui. Among the total 737 serviced offices, 389 were located at Hong Kong Island (109 in Central and 133 in Wan Chai) and 266 in Kowloon (68 in Tsim Sha Tsui). They are available with flexible lease from one day up to an year.

buildings given limited research. Yet it should be fair to suggest that the emergence of service apartments significantly contributes to the growth of cleaning industry.

## *2) Organizing the Service Work and Ordering the Space*

Unlike the sales or management departments of a sizable serviced apartments that employ regular or contract staffs with degree and work experience in Hospitality Management or related disciplines, the service work demanded by the serviced apartments is most likely outsourced to cleaning service agencies, which has been an existing practice in hotels and commercial buildings. Many large-scale serviced apartments outsource the cleaning service to a professional cleaning agency, having a group of cleaners on shifts to fulfill the labor in need. In many cases, these cleaners were required to dress in uniforms as are the staffs hired by the serviced apartment, but they will not be granted the benefits or rights the regular staffs enjoyed. Neither are they allowed to use space in the apartment to meet their own biological needs, for example, taking a rest or having tea and lunch inside the workplace. I've seen many of them gathering in the narrow alleys or nearby interstitial spaces to rest or have meals in Wan Chai.

Ironically, "the work assignments" of cleaners- similar to those of the expats- are subject to the cleaning agency's deployment so their work places may change depending upon where the demand is located. Usually the organizing of work in those I considered as "cheap copies of service apartments"- is more irregular and exploitative. With the tendency of increasing "serviced suites" scattered in the city as depicted in Chapter 5, the cleaners were asked to work across streets, neighborhoods, or even districts to fulfill their jobs. The transportation cost, whether monetary or non-monetary, is not compensated. The proportion of work and cleaners is also beyond regulation and often above the cleaner's capacity. There were cases being reported where the operator/property agent hired two or three foreign maids or self-employed cleaners to clean the 20-50 suites within a neighborhood she managed at the same time. In the serviced apartment near the Blue House, one Hong Kong woman is sent to serve the 8 rooms on a daily basis. Working in these scattered serviced suites, the cleaners often cannot figure out the whole picture of the service management or who they are serving. Meanwhile, the tenants do not know who is serving them either. Not only the service is made invisible but so are the labor relations.

The invisibility of care work, as mentioned earlier, partially is demanded by the focal marketing strategy of “self-caring” that caters to the expats’ needs of feeling at home. In my conversation with expats, and from my reading of many web logs of experiences of living in Hong Kong,<sup>11</sup> many expats, especially westerners, mention their needs to find somebody to assist house keeping yet feel uncomfortable to “see” maid working or living in the house, which may remind them of the colonial history and arouse guilt. Against the psyche, serviced apartments provides the ideal residence with affordable and invisible service to meet the busy tenants’ expectation. What is also made visible, indeed, is the layers of outsourcing that displace the labor relations and made possible a more profitable investment commodities.

### ***Questioning the neoliberal subjects by care***

It is worth thinking whether the invisibility of care work in delivering expat housing prevents the elite tenants from seeing their positionalities relying on “others” through a series of managements. It thus perpetuates the idea of “caring for oneself” and the illusory sense of individual autonomy and covers the fact that expats are located in the carescapes in relation to the care workers as Neo-liberal subjects, all of whom are deprived of the possibilities to fully understand how they are managed through their individual pursuits of economic success. These economic practices are normalized as personal “freedom” in the market that allow individuals to seek entrepreneurial accomplishment. Yet, as Wendy Brown (2005, p. 44) put it nicely, “Neoliberal subjects are controlled through their freedom not simply....because freedom within an order of domination can be an instrument of that domination but because of Neoliberalism’s moralization of the consequences of this freedom.”

Taken together, the serviced apartment can be construed as a new spatial form of neoliberal control predicated on displacing care work from the built environment. In many cases, when expatriate assignments result in separated families, the realization can be considered as a redistributing of care work that is shared across the borders- some met by *the underpaid workers here* and some left to *non-paid family members somewhere else*. The displacement of care, as a metaphorical concept, can be linked to the physical displacement constantly occurring in urban renewal and such a connection urges us to reflect on both the expats and the care laborers’

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<sup>11</sup> For example, online discussion from The Asiapat, <http://hongkong.asiapat.com/> and The City guide of Hong Kong at the expat exchange, <http://www.expatsexchange.com/hong-kong/liveinhong-kong.html>.

existence in the chain of operation and management of urban space through carescapes. It is the invisibility of care work and displacement of space for care that enact a kind of urban life where individuals are disconnected from *the others* who actually exist and support many aspects of everyday life. The kind of life, I argue, prevents all the participants to *be othered* and to engage in active practices of citizenship as Selma suggested (1998, p. 61), without which one can hardly understand how much she is deprived/dominated and becoming part of the deprivation/domination. These questions are critical to reconsidering not only the emergence of service apartments but also all kinds of new urban practices and urban forms in the city.

#### ***6.4 Carescapes: invisible caretakers of the properties***

Hereafter I turn to an ethnographic account to illustrate the work condition of janitors and domestic helpers. In Hong Kong, there were more than 42,000 apartment buildings to be “managed” yet the degree and employment organized to carry out the work varies depending upon the scale and standard of the buildings.<sup>12</sup> In most cases, it was the property management company acting as agency to hire workers and the Owners Association would pay the bill. Concerning an averaged apartment of 5-10 stories, 10-50 flats in old neighborhoods, the management of the apartment was usually taken up by one janitor and one cleaner at a time, arranged on shifts.

Without exception, the legislation of minimal wage was highly opposed by the property management industry. They claimed that the wage raise from roughly \$774-1,032 (and above) would make their business unsustainable and then caused a great deal of closure and job loss. Meanwhile, there was opposition from home owners, who accused the property management companies of manipulating the wage raise but keep it in their own pocket.<sup>13</sup>

The cleaners next to these janitors were nearly excluded in the discussion. In reality, cleaners were paid roughly \$580-619 each month by the home owners association after the wage raise. What’s ignored is that a portion of the wage went to the management company. It has been reported that the amount varies between \$129-167. To redistribute the cost, the companies often

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<sup>12</sup> According to *the database of Private Buildings in Hong Kong* published by the Home Affairs Department, there were 40,210 private buildings (including residential, industrial and office buildings), among which only 7,894 buildings are not managed under any kind of owners-based association as of Oct 2012.

<sup>13</sup> (May 8 2011) *Property owners protesting against raise of management fee in the name of minimal wage in front of the Cheung Kong Center*. Apple Daily.

asked the allegedly self-employed worker to buy detergent and trash bags out of their own pocket, which in all could mount to at best \$116. Accordingly, the wage left is at best \$348 a month--if their working hour counted as five hours a day, 30 days a month, which then left the averaged wage to be \$2.2, much below the standard. What remained unchanged is the intensive work of cleaning the hall way and stairs, collecting garbage on each floor, transporting garbage to the station by trolley, etc. In this light, many of them tried to make up enough income by taking two or three assignments on shifts.

In comparison, janitors were considered as enjoying higher income and easier job load, which would be exemplified and challenged by Ted's moments spent in looking after the apartments as follows. I was connected to Ted through his son, who is a friend of mine, a young artist doing freelance filming and documentary editing. We met right after his work in Sham Shui Po before returning to his house in the outlying area, Yuen Long.<sup>14</sup>



Fig. 6.2 The Shunning Street in Sham Shui Po. In the front were old apartments vulnerable to redevelopment, oftentimes without organization of home owners and on-site property management. In the back, the higher residential towers were those “newer apartments” (15-30 years) under management of janitors.

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<sup>14</sup> Interview with Ted on May 30, 2011.

### *Ted's everyday life*

Ted migrated to Hong Kong from Guangxi after World War II and was 82-year-old when we met in 2011. He used to work in a fish market in Yuen Long. After he retired, he had been working as a janitor for more than 17 years. He used to work in a lucrative apartment in Mid-levels (hereafter the ML) near Central. Up until 2010 the owner's association in ML thought he was too old and thus laid him off. Then Ted was transferred to the S apartment in Sham Shui Po by the same property management agency. The apartment was one among those "newer" buildings built in the 80s in the midst of old tenement apartments in Sham Shui Po.

The employer, as Ted noted, is one among few agencies which would hire senior janitors-people aged above 65. Ted explained that senior janitors can only manage certain kind of properties, for example, privately owned, stand-alone apartments rather than large scale housing estates. "Old man (*Lo Ye* in Cantonese)," a phrase to call the kind of old janitors, as Ted noted, is actually "more diligent than younger people, you know?" Though a point well-taken, I was not sure if the kind of work is appropriate for elderlies like Ted.

Each day Ted arrives in the apartment where he served as janitor at seven and finishes his work at six in the evening -11 hours but counted as 10 hours with the lunch hour not included. He has to watch the visitors and patrol the whole building three times a day. There is no restroom available in the hall way in the current apartment so he has to go across street to the play ground to access the public toilet, a time when he can leave the front desk for a break. He usually goes to *Cha Chaan Teng* next door as he finishes working. Then he may spend some time in the park with friends as he used to live in Sham Shui Po before receiving public housing in Yuen Long. Then Ted takes a bus home- a trip takes 30-50 minutes depending upon the traffic.

Compared to his wage in ML, which was \$839 per month, his current wage got a slightly raise- \$3.6 hourly wage times 10 hours a day, 26 paid days, and then comes to \$939 every month. On his day off, there will be alternating janitor to take up his job.

Ted recalled that he seldom interacted with the property management agency. He even managed to apply for the work permit<sup>15</sup> in Wan Chai himself every five years. He paid for the application fee and conducted required health inspection himself --a required procedure to ensure

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<sup>15</sup> Security Personnel Permit is issued by Security Bureau.

the health condition of a senior janitor every other year. The permit was the legal document that noted what category of building the specific janitor is qualified to look after. The agency did not cover his insurance but the Owner's Association did. Yet Ted had found it difficult to do the reimbursement and he just gave up.

Cleaning was beyond Ted's job, as he noted,

*There is a couple doing the work, about three hours a day. They are paid \$258-412 every month....They are doing OK, I guess...They are oftentimes cleaning several apartments on the same day, adding up to almost \$1290 each month.*

Seemingly he did not know much about the commission fee charged by the agency as mentioned. He then noted that cleaners in ML could benefit from reselling high-quality, second hand furniture given away by foreign tenants and he appeared to feel jealous about that.

Ted maintained the minimal interaction with the owner's association too. "They mainly communicated with the agency and then the agency sent me instruction. I had no idea how they met and what they discussed." One of the most challenging issue in his ground work, as Ted as concerned, is related to interior renovation. As he noted,

*Many among the 48 flats, you know, were rented to foreigners, on leases from 1-3 years. There is constantly new leasing and thus renovation coming along. You know that residents hated those noises (of refurbishment) [...] I tried my best to keep those workers away if it was weekend but sometimes they just would not listen!*

This issue made him caught in between unhappy tenants- who often conveyed their disappointment about the noise to the agency- and workers who confronted him in the face. "Once I fought with two workers! And I won!" I wondered how he was physically capable to defeat them and how that act was ignored by his employer. After all the annoying issue disappeared as Ted was re-assigned to S apartment. As Ted observed, the residents in ML and Sham Shui Po were very different. Only about 10% residents in ML were homeowners while most of the rest were foreign tenants under expat housing arrangement more or less. In the S apartment, instead, the residents were mostly middle-class homeowners. "I think they are more easygoing. There were less tenants coming and going here."

The rent in ML was not affordable to common Hong Kongers. It had been raised from \$1,032-2,580 during 2003-2010, as Ted recalled, then he went on and shared more details that I did not intend to ask,

*There were always people coming to check out the rentals following those property agents in ML. Many of them were working for JP Morgan. And you know, they often brought back their “girl friends,” who I think are mainly from mainland... they probably met these women from their business trips to China. These women, you know, probably all wanted to marry a rich business man but I don't think there had been any successful case....*

In all, Ted seems to be satisfied with what he earned from working as a janitor. As I asked him to compare his current job with his previous work in the fish market, he laughed and noted that, “Nothing much to do in the market! You know, nowadays there is no local harvest of fish except imports from the mainland. What do we do?”

Sending him off after finishing our long conversation, I could not but wonder how many passengers sitting in the bus were taking similar jobs. These trips that connecting their work place and residences ironically become the most possible interactions between different classes, to be more precise, varied formations of classes in the built environment.

### ***6.5 Carescapes: Female Domestic Workers***

Commodified caring work like domestic help or care work in elderly center have become most accessible job option for the low-skilled, middle-aged, unemployed people, especially females who try to contribute to household income. The discussion of “new gender arrangement” of domestic work in Europe found its echo in Hong Kong- following the idea that “female part of the arrangement remains in female hands- not those of the woman herself, but of some (ethnically and socially) other woman to whom this work is passed on” (Marianne Friese 1996, qtd in Lutz, 2011). While some of the new arrangement became invisible work in serviced apartments, others, as demanded by the market and encouraged by institutions, have been repackaged as “Smart Living Assistance” as one of the best jobs for unemployed women and taken new fragmented forms in response to local negotiation among wage, paid care work, and

unpaid care work. The exploitative nature of the care work remains but how it is institutionalized and carried out locally deserves more discussion.

Largely, the naming and making of the service has to do with the establishment of the Employment Retraining Board (ERB)<sup>16</sup> in 1992. ERB has allegedly provided training to more than 1.1M trainees, among whom more than 80% can participate in job market again. ERB considered itself facilitating reemployment in a way that efficiently reduce social welfare budget. Aiming at the market of domestic help, the initiative of *Smart Living Assistance Agency*, among its many training programs, was developed to provide placement services to graduated trainees of relevant ERB courses who then qualified as a *Smart Helper*. The courses listed as a series of certificate programs included *Domestic Helper Certificate*, *Massager Certificate*, *Child Care Certificate*, *Elderly Care Certificate*, *Certificate in Escort Service for Out-patient Visit Training*, *Certificate in Personal Care Worker Training*, *Home Care Services for Discharged Patients*, etc.

Successful cases were often featured in *ERB's* newsletter. For example, Miss T, who has finished seven programs in Musculoskeletal Massage Therapy, has transformed herself from a poor immigrant mother into a professional massager. Another case like Mrs. H, who finished seven certificate programs, two among which were English conversation and cooking, two workshops and seven classes regarding child care, and *Certificate in Post-natal Care Worker Training*, was featured as a successful case transforming from her previous role as a failed small copy shop keeper. High wage of massagers(\$15.5-23.2 per hour) seems appealing. Nevertheless, the kind of professionalized care as it was represented was far from the messy bargaining of care work in reality. I will show why “smart” is probably not an adequate term to describe the service for living later.

Life is not simple as it demands much more complex care work than individuals can imagine through out life cycle. It is probably fair to say that elderly care was not brought to public agenda until the Hong Kong-based awarded film “*A Simple Life*” (2011) did a excellent job in capturing the interdependency between working adults and elders, moreover, diminishing space and time for adequate care left in a capitalist society in telling the lady Tao’s story. Nevertheless, the film only told part of the story as it mainly focused on how Tao, who used to be

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<sup>16</sup> See more in ERB’s official web page. <http://www.erb.org/smartliving/assistant.php>

a servant for the Lee family, retired and passed away in the elderly home. What is not depicted as much is the hard work carried out by care takers in the privately-run elderly homes.

In real life, it is common to see job posts calling for care taker as follows:

*[Care workers hiring] Taking care of the patients' dining, health care, cleaning, labor and some errands; Applicants should obtain primary education, certificates of care or work or experiences in elderly' homes are highly preferred. Applicants are expected to be polite, responsible and willing to take dirty jobs; monthly wage \$1,135-1,264 (extra \$77.4 for night shifts); 7-9pm/ 9pm-7am, six days a week.*

Again, it is a job paid no more than the minimal hourly wage, with lunch hour not included. Yet it was actually a better offer availed only from public elderly homes or medical centers. Despite the conceptual separation of 3Cs are useful in analyzing the nature of care work, in reality it seems all interwoven in practices in elderly homes or medical centers and even more so in local families' hiring of domestic helpers. Care for child or elderly are oftentimes packaged into “domestic help” as many people do not consider “care” as a distinctive practice that required intense physical and emotional labor and experiences.

### ***Women Doing Care work***

Understanding care work as such is central to tracing how carescape as processes constantly shapes tenants' capability and access to adequate housing. It was not a clear theme to me until I gradually found many tenants displaced from URA projects were actually care workers. Moreover, the carescapes of domestic help is largely gendered, intersected by low-skilled immigrant labors. Thus I paid special attention to how they worked as care workers to contribute their household income and rent payment in need. Through V-artist and one of the immigrant tenants I encountered, Vivian, I was connected to New Arrival Women League (NAWL) and from there I approached a group of immigrant women suffering from work, care,



Fig. 6.3 *A Simple Life*. An award-winning film directed by Anne Hui that illustrated the elderly life of the maid and the grown up she used to serve.

and inadequate housing.<sup>17</sup> The following section is mainly drawing upon my conversation with women whom I knew through NAWL, Tina, Mary, Florida, Gloria, and Apple. Tina lived in Kwun Tong while the rest of them all rented suites in Sham Shui Po.

These five women were all mainland immigrants who came to Hong Kong to unite with their Hong Kong husbands after 2002. Here I focus in their engagement in care work and relocation. Their passages across the border would be furthered in Chapter 8. They all experienced struggling between child care and jobs as increasing rent required them to find extra financial support. Meanwhile, they had limited choices in job market since the immigrant label means that their educational background were mostly not recognized and their language barriers -not being able to read or speak English and some not even capable of speaking fluent Cantonese. In this city, these immigrants experienced the same difficulty of “downward displacement” (Skeldon, 1994) occurring to those emigrated away from Hong Kong to the US or Canada a decade ago.

Tina was the eldest among them. She was in her early 50s when we met in 2011. She used to live in Shenzhen for more than ten years as housewife when her husband was the bread winner traveling across the border. However, her marriage failed after she and her two sons immigrated to Hong Kong and she was forced to work since 2005 especially when their economic situation worsened after being displaced by URA in 2007. Both of her sons finished their primary education already and thus she was able to work part-time as domestic helpers on Hong Kong island on weekdays and as surrogate janitors in Central or Kowloon Wan over the weekend. She got a much higher wage from domestic work, as recalled, about \$6.5 each hour whereas working as janitor only paid her slightly more than \$25.8 for 12-hour-work (less than minimal wage). “But it was really hard (working as domestic helper), you cannot stop even a minute. They will scold you immediately. You have to wash and clean continuously!” noted Tina. The emotional pressure and work load made she frequenting the hospital until the doctor told her not to work anymore given her being diagnosed serious Thyroid hormone imbalance in 2008.

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<sup>17</sup> Through two self-help groups of immigrant women, one is set up by Society for Community Organization (SOCO) and another is New Women Arrivals League (NWAL), a group that aims at policy advocacy for bettering immigrant women’s livelihood in Hong Kong since 2000, I was able to carry out 30 in-depth interviews with immigrants and their families during Oct 2010-Aug 2011. Here I select only five cases to focus their experiences of care work. Most of the interviews are to be discussed in Chapter 8.

She considered herself lucky because her sons were old enough to work to make up her unemployment (one was 19 while the other was 16 as of 2008).

Marry was about ten-year younger than Tina, that is, in her early 40s. With a college degree, she used to be Chinese high school teacher in Guangzhou. She gave up her job and immigrated to reunite with her husband and no less importantly, to send her son to the supposedly better education in Hong Kong in 2003. She tried to search for part-time job to fulfill her own desire for work and to contribute to the household's economy. Yet she was disappointed by not being recognized as qualified for any teaching or secretarial jobs because she could not speak decent English. "My major was Chinese literature, what can I do? I would not know them (employers in the office) expecting a cleaner or receptionist to read English fax or mails..." On that note, cleaners in residential or retail setting (oftentimes toilets) or domestic works appeared to be a more accessible option to her. Meanwhile, it was difficult for her to coordinate child care and work as a domestic helper. "Sometimes, like Wednesday or mid-term exam days, school ended by 13:00 but I was not able to finish my job to pick him up since I need to prepare lunch for my employers." Mary was almost in tears when she recalled all the hardship, as she noted,

*It was even worse when my husband was hospitalized and I actually need to care for him there. But the community day care center told me that they cannot receive any kid who is elder than six. Therefore I just left my boy alone at home. He told me that he was so scarred and tried to cover himself by sheets.*

Domestic work, both for Marry and Tina, was too demanding. Marry found many employers not being explicit in their expectations when recruiting people. As Marry instantiated one of her employer,

*They told me that the only thing I need to do is to prepare meals for the elderly woman and look after her, paying me like \$12.9 a day and \$387 every month. I thought that was easy [...] But it turned out that they asked you to do everything, cleaning window frames, dishes, all kinds of work...*

This kind of part-time work involved exploitation of labour as the employment was not ensured by contracts. Mary also suffered from work-related injury and thus could hardly

continue working. Yet she was worried that her husband's income could not support the family in the long run as education-related spending has increased as the child grew up.

In another group,<sup>18</sup> Apple, Florida, and Gloria were about the same age, all in their 30s. They all had working experiences before coming to Hong Kong but all became housewives at the first place due to their obligations of childcare. Following the same line, they started to find part-time jobs working as domestic helpers but then encountered constraints on many fronts, as Florida pointed out,

*Many of our friends are doing domestic work since we all have to take care of our children and would not be able to do full time jobs. I know that an elderly home near my flat (in Sham Shui Po) is hiring, seemingly offering monthly wage above \$1,161. But they required applicants to have certificates, which I don't have since it is not possible for me to attend those training classes because of time conflicts (of child care, ex. picking up kids at school.)*

Indeed, location of care work matters-be it paid or non-paid. These younger mothers were geographically constrained by where they resided and where their children went to school. They could hardly afford commuting across different districts because many of them tried to coordinate care work at home and paid-care work for income. Women like Florida, needs to take care of her in-law over the weekend other than her own child (both without payment).

It is worth noting that most of these economically deprived women have ever served the lower-middle class families in Sham Shui Po or Mong Kok who do not want to hire an in-house foreign domestic helper nor an officially trained local domestic helper. "They were pretty stingy."--a comment I frequently heard from women like Apple or Florida. "We were even less privileged than those Filipino or Indonesian helpers, you know? At least they all signed a contract and granted legal minimal wage!" Florida noted. Indeed, In the light of legislation of minimal wage, the labour department in Hong Kong has adjusted the Minimal Allowable Wage (MAW) for FDHs from \$462-482 per month, which applies to employment contracts signed on or after 2 June 2011. However, what these women did not know as much is the fact that there were still employers underpaying wage to those FDHs who were not aware of the stipulation

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<sup>18</sup> I talked to Apple, Florida, and Gloria as a group conversation in NWAL's office in May 2011.

(sometimes below \$387). None of them can imagine the long-time intensity of in-house domestic work either.

In a few cases, female domestic helpers commuted between Kowloon and Hong Kong Island to work for either the serviced apartments or the better-off living in Mid-levels or Wan Chai in. They were only able to take the kind of positions when being exempt from intensive child care and if the reward is good enough to make up transportation cost. However, exploitation of care work still occurs when the single expat employers who hire part-time domestic help as alternative to living in expensive serviced apartments. They are often not willing to spend as much for the service and may just leave a to-do list in the room, demanding work way beyond the helper's capacity within scheduled two-three hours. Florida, who had experiences as such, complained that "you know, I did not agree to iron shirts. I was hired to clean the room but not necessarily everything he asked me to do!" Interestingly, Fiona sometimes refused to follow those instructions that she thought was unreasonable. In return, she would manage to leave a note in the room to express her disappointment.

Apple and Gloria also talked about the difficulty in obtaining any certificate and they ridiculing the low success rate to pass the exam only if one is religious enough. "Well, in Hong Kong you need to pray to Jesus, he will help you..." (burst into laughter). The cruel thing is that, according to their own experiences and information shared by their friends, as Apple noted, "you still get nothing better even with certificates. It is probably more practical to take up those informal, underpaid care works." Then they compared elderly care and child care, coming to an agreement that elderly care is much more challenging but may become a favorable job in near future since demand for child care might just decrease given the low birth rate in Hong Kong. "I heard that Hong Kong women keep pets instead of children." They all laughed, as if by making fun of the society they could find some way out of their everyday struggle.

I'd like to borrow Tina's words to question the value of care, as she noted,

*Hong Kongers always considered us (mainland women) not doing any good to the society. But isn't each of us trying hard to take care of our homes, our kids, and our family? Why is only going out for wage work the only thing counts as contribution?*

She then sighed, speaking of her daughter who was also married to a Hong Kong husband. “*Her two kids are just three and one (year-old). How can she manage to work? ...My daughter is suffering a lot...and you know, her husband just lost his job*”, noted Tina.

### **6.6 Rent and Care in Carescapes**

I did not visit Tina’s daughter’s place in Sham Shui Po because she was not available, though it is supposed to be a flat close to where I stayed during my fieldwork. There were thousands of subdivided suites like her residence hidden in tenement buildings in Sham Shui Po. The point I want to make is that the systematic deprivation of these underprivileged tenants, in other words, systematic production of poverty, lies in the city’s failing to provide them adequate, affordable housing. To earn and save enough rent in need to ensure their families and themselves settling into the city, they largely relied on coordinating paid care work and non-paid care work in a limited confine of geographies- those immigrant women cannot afford to live in suburban public housing estate and then commute as Ted did. The interdependency between care and place, however, falls prey to speculators and agents who know too well immigrants would pay for staying in the inadequate housing at unreasonable price to keep their social network and to maintain their children’s access to public amenities. Paradoxically, their aspiration along with ongoing “displacement” had become a niche for short-term speculation in the wake of redevelopment.

These tenants’ everyday lives were dominated by regime of property since high rent push up basics for everyday survival such as food and space. According to Oxfam’s report published in 2011,<sup>19</sup> one out of every six poor families experiences hunger. There were about 144,400 families –with children aged 15 or below – living below the poverty line, and about 22,970 of them were struggling to put food on the table. As food has been increasingly expensive- prices were up 10.5% from 2010-2011 in Hong Kong, these low-income families have to spend much

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<sup>19</sup> According to the report released by Oxfam, Policy 21. (Aug. 2011) *Survey on the Impact of Soaring Food Prices on Poor Families in Hong Kong*, about 28.0% of low income families had a monthly household income of; 35.4% had \$1,032-1,290 and 23.9% had \$774-1,032. See the project on food and poverty at Oxfam Hong Kong’s website. <http://justbite.oxfam.org.hk/trad/index.php>

more for food now, reaching 39.9% of their family income. Other than food, they have to spend about at least 19.6% of family income for rent.<sup>20</sup>

In many cases, families crowded in tiny partitioned rooms to save rent for food while singles lived a kind of bare life in tiny bedspace where they could hardly sleep.<sup>21</sup> According to SOCO's investigation in Sham Shui Po, the rent of sub-divided rooms<sup>22</sup> has increased at least 10-20% within two years. The monthly rent for a room of 40-50 sqft increased from \$154 to 194, for example. The trend was even more unreasonable for rooms of size above 100 sqft, increasing by 30-40% within two years. For a longer-term trend, according to the Rating Department's most recent report, the rent of residential rental has almost doubled in Kowloon area from 2003-2011.<sup>23</sup>



Fig. 6.4 Tenement buildings near Po On Road in Sham Shui Po  
Many low-income tenants rented suites or divided-rooms in old buildings while waiting for being allocated in a public housing estate as those towers in the back.

<sup>20</sup> Oxfam, Policy 21. (Aug. 2011) *Survey on the Impact of Soaring Food Prices on Poor Families in Hong Kong*. The survey was conducted during the period 26 May 2011 to 13 July 2011 based on a total of 600 out of 799 living quarters with the target respondents enumerated. The target respondents of the survey are low income families with children aged 15 and under. Low income families refer to those families with a monthly income less than 50% of the household median income.

<sup>21</sup> (July 24, 2011) *Food and rest for the hungry*. SCMP.

<sup>22</sup> According to the report on inadequate housing released by the Sun Affairs (Feb 9 2012), there were at least 3,900 subdivided rooms in Mong Kong, 2,700 rooms in Wan Chai, and 2,500 rooms in Sham Shui Po following as the third.

<sup>23</sup> The report is available from the Rating Department. <http://www.rvd.gov.hk/tc/publications/pro-review.htm>

Applying the ratio of rent to income to those cases mentioned above, a full-time janitor who earned \$903-1,032 at best can spend roughly \$193 for rent whereas a single mother who earned \$ 387-645 at best can afford about \$77-129. A family with two bread-winners, in many cases who earned as much as the combination of the two as estimated, altogether can contribute \$271-322 for rent, which is similar to Oxfam's report that those low-income parents living in private rental housing had to pay, on average, about \$342 for their monthly rent. Today the amount of money is just enough for a suite of 100-120 sqft in Sham Shui Po.

The aforementioned arrangement of expense also means that many poor families suffer from inadequate diet. Some eat expired food while some of them make use of distribution of free meals from charity, churches or supply from food bank. Oxfam suggested that these poor families were waiting for public housing as the only chance for them to "move up."

### ***Unrecognized Needs and Undervalued Care***

In brief, these families and individuals were not only displaced by redevelopment but also displaced in restructuring economy. Redevelopment of the city has deprived the most underprivileged of affordable space to live and work, moreover, turning them becoming waged care workers to contribute undervalued care work to make up the middle class's incapability of taking care work themselves and the disintegrating community network.

Yet the mainstream ideology tends to attribute the issue of low wage work and poverty to decreasing demand of low-skilled work in Hong Kong, which could be best exemplified by the annual policy address given by the Chief Executive of HKSAR during 2010-2011,

*In the transition to a knowledge-based economy, however, the wages of some low-educated, low-skilled workers have continued to lag behind economic growth owing to differences in education and skill levels among the working population. As a result, income disparity has widened. Less demand for low-skilled workers stemming from our economic integration with the Mainland means that these workers have to face keen competition due to excess supply. New arrivals from the Mainland have further enlarged the pool of low-skilled workers in Hong Kong, which is another cause of their stagnant wage growth.<sup>24</sup>*

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<sup>24</sup> The policy address is available online. <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201010/13/P201010130120.htm>

This kind of argument is problematic. From my investigation of the intensifying and diversifying interaction between care work and housing, it is clear that the demand does not wane but becomes more invisible and informal in omnipresent carescapes. The key, instead, is care work being undervalued and carescapes being ignored. With the ideology of “economic man (*Homo economicus*)” dominating policy and social norms in Hong Kong, these care workers- a lot of them were women vulnerable to “the gender loop”(Pratt, 2004a, p. 167), are nevertheless deemed as incapable, dependent beings, not qualified as “autonomous worker-citizens”(Manske A. 2005, qtd. in Lutz 2011, p6) Carescapes shift in a problematic way to serve a fraction of the society whereas many were left to do hard work without receiving adequate care- care workers were displaced within carescapes.



Fig. 6.5 Inadequate rental housing in Sham Shui Po

Right: rental ad showing different prices of suites and one-bedroom (\$490-684).

Left top: rental ad of “cheap suites” ranged from \$206 and above;

Left middle: from the numbers of meters one can tell how many subdivided rooms or suites are there in the building.

Left bottom: the common outlook of the tenement buildings where these

## Chapter 7

### Displacing Sham Shui Po

#### 7.1 Urban Renewal in Sham Shui Po

Sham Shui Po, literally meaning “Deep Water Port,” indicates its geographical feature and the Sham Shui Po pier, which was built in 1924 at Tung Chau Street and Pei Ho Street. Although the piers were relocated and defunct after reclamation during the late 1980s, Sham Shui Po remains as a hub of trading. Everyday, buyers from Africa and South Asia shop for apparels in the Cheung Sha Wan Road Fashion wholesale district; there is busy recycling and export of electronics and mobile phone straps around the Apliu street bazaar.

Despite its vibrancy, Sham Shui Po has always been undervalued. It is considered as the poorest district in Hong Kong, with district-wide median monthly income as \$1,344, about 65% of that in Wan Chai (see Table 7.1). Its urban landscape was characterized by the concentration of public housing estates and dilapidated tenement apartments. There were fifteen public housing estates built since the 1960s, accommodating 44,600 households, 123,300 people- about 31% of its population.<sup>25</sup> It is one of the most densely populated areas in Hong Kong today- 40,690 people/km<sup>2</sup>, more than 2.6 times as Wan Chai (15,417 people/km<sup>2</sup>) (Hong Kong Census 2011).

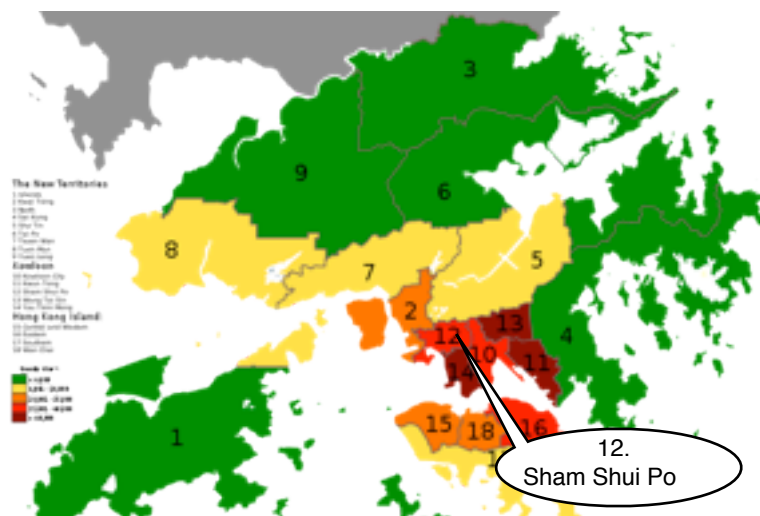


Fig. 7.1 *Sham Shui Po district*  
Sham Shui Po is one among the most popularized districts in Hong Kong (the red batch). Source: background image from Andyso via Wikimedia Commons.

<sup>25</sup> According to numbers released by Hong Kong Housing Authority as of Dec 31, 2011. [Online available]<http://www.housingauthority.gov.hk/tc/global-elements/estate-locator/>

Table 7.1 Median Monthly Income from Main Employment in Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai<sup>26</sup>

	<i>Sham Shui Po</i>	Kowloon	<i>Wan Chai</i>	Hong Kong Island
Median Monthly Income from Main Employment	<i>\$1,344</i>	\$1,406	<i>\$2,064</i>	\$1,677

Located in between the heart of Kowloon peninsula and the previously thriving industrial areas, Sham Shui Po has been a convenient place for new arrivals and the working class to access manufacturing jobs and affordable housing. Many post-war immigrants from the mainland settled down here and some of them relocated in public housing estates later. Many of their relatives and friends have followed their passages against the constantly rewriting of the border.

The mainstream society tends to conceive poverty and the lower labor force participation rate in Sham Shui Po natural results of high concentration of immigrants and aging population . However, it is quite notable, through my ethnographic study, that informal economy and alternative livelihood have remained strong in the neighborhood yet have not been represented in statistics. In this chapter, drawing upon urban renewal cases in Sham Shui Po, I discuss how current regime of urban renewal failed to recognize, and moreover, disrupted the already-existing communities and economies.

### ***7.1.1 Visually Remaking of Sham Shui Po***

Since 2003, Sham Shui Po has been redeveloped into two distinct worlds. With West Kowloon Reclamation, former sites of shipyard were redeveloped into several private housing estates, including the famous making of “Four Dragons in West Kowloon” (see table 7.2) Take *Aqua Marine* as an example. It was completed in 2003 by *Hang Lung Properties* and the South Korean-based *Hyundai Engineering and Construction*, comprising 5 residential towers and a large retail podium. Furthermore, *Aqua Marine* was one among several *Mixed Development Scheme* promoted right after the handover. A series of joint projects between the non-profit Housing Society (HS) and private developers were proposed to develop subsidized housing with market-rate housing on reclamation area in West Kowloon. According to the initial

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<sup>26</sup> Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai are two among the 18 jurisdictional districts whereas Kowloon and Hong Kong Island are larger geographical and urbanized areas.

memorandum, 30% of the total floor area developed would be sold as subsidized flats on a lottery.<sup>27</sup> Due to housing market failure as mentioned in chapter 3, the government suspended the scheme in 2002 and allowed the private developers to convert those subsidized flats into market rate ones. The government would collect 30% of the sale in return. Yet it was not only a withdraw of public investment in housing but also a violation of the government’s promise to rehouse tenants affected by LDC. As a result, *Aqua Marine*, along with other dragons, provided nearly 9,000 lucrative units, partially replacing Sham Shui Po with brand-new naming of “West Kowloon” along with the visionary building a world-class West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). Ironically, WKCD remained as a construction site until 2012.

Table 7.2 The profile of “West Kowloon Dragons”

private housing estates	Finished in the year of	floors	units	averaged price for sale per sqft (since entering into market)	Rate (per sqft)
<i>Aqua Marine</i>	2003	45	1,616	\$906 (+8.25%)	\$2.74 (+7.6%)
<i>Banyan Garden</i>	2003	57	2,528	\$892 (+4.3%)	\$2.68 (+25.6%)
<i>Liberte</i>	2003		Phase I: 1,834 Phase II: 620	\$897 (+1.5%)	
<i>the Pacifica</i>	2006	50-66	Phase I: 1,080 Phase II: 1,176	\$929 (+4.3%)	

source: from *Midland Realty*, as of April 2012

<sup>27</sup> Source: Press conference on housing policy released by the Housing Planning, and Lands Bureau (Nov 13, 2002) [Online available] <http://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/200211/13/1113240.htm>



Fig. 7.2 New and Old in Sham Shui Po  
Top: A glance of the “West Kowloon Dragons”  
Bottom: Street bazaar in old neighborhoods in Sham Shui Po

### 7.1.2 Sham Shui Po on the Rise

Echoing the building of “West Kowloon Dragons”, URA have announced 14 projects in Sham Shui Po since 2002. As of the time of writing, 166 tenement apartments were torn down and roughly 10,000 people were displaced. Up until 2012, URA partnered with HS in eight projects in addition to six projects of its own- a strategic collaboration that allows URA to utilize HS’s experiences and capital for extensive construction (see Table 7.3). HS invested roughly \$903M (including cash resumption, construction, and interest), expecting \$387M in return after sharing bonus with URA.

No subsidized flats were provided in the redevelopment (see Table 7.4). Allegedly URA aimed to provide small-middle flats for younger, first-time home buyer in Sham Shui Po. But the affordability of these flats remains quite debatable. No cheaper than the Four Dragons, each flat in these projects normally costs at least \$38.7M, almost double or even triple than equivalent second-hand properties in the same area. From rental listings it is clear that these purchases were mostly for investment, with monthly rates ranging from \$1,032-2,451. In comparison, regular rental flats (one-two bed room) available in the area ranging from \$516-903 and, moreover, suites or divided rooms lower tier down ranged below \$516.

Table 7.3 Comparing averaged rent between URA/HS projects and existing rentals in Sham Shui Po

Developer	property (year of release)	rent	size (sqft)	average rent/sqft
URA& Chinese Group	<i>ihome</i> (2009)	\$1,651	620	\$2.7
Sino Group	<i>One New York</i> (2007)	\$1,651	483	\$3.4
Sino Group	<i>One Madison</i> (2008)	\$1,032	292	\$3.5
URA & SHK	<i>Beacon Lodge</i> (2008)	\$2,451	810	\$3.0
URA & Sino	<i>Vista</i> (2009)	\$2,451	936	\$2.6
	<i>Yen Shun Mansion</i> (1996)	\$864	280	\$3.1
SHK	<i>Merlin Centre</i> (1985)	\$903	355	\$2.5
	Flat in tenement apartment	\$774	400	\$1.9
	Suits in apartment with lift (20-40 year-old)	\$387 -773	100-300	\$1.29-2.6
	suites in tenement apartments without lift (40-60 year-old)	\$361	150	\$2.4

source: field survey and rental information from Central and Hong Kong Property Web as of April 2011.

Table 7.4 LDC-URA Projects in Sham Shui Po (2001-2011)

<b>Project no./location</b>	<b>redevelopment mode</b>	<b>outcome of redevelopment</b>	<b>impact(people displaced / buildings demolished)</b>
K19/ Shunning Road/ Po On Road/ Hing Hwa St	<b>Beacon Lodge</b> Sun Hung Kai & URA	166 units; Completed in 2008. the whole property was sold to YMCA in 2010 for its establishment of a private educational center	8 buildings 327 people
K20/ Castle Peak Road / Cheung Wah Street Project	HS	149 units To be completed in 2015.	10 buildings 158 people
K21/Un Chau Street / Hing Wah Street / Castle Peak Road Project	HS	356 units to be completed in 2016	24 buildings 496 people
K22/ Hing Wah Street / Un Chau Street / Fuk Wing Street Project	HS	333 units To be completed in 2016.	22 buildings 362 people
K23/ Castle Peak Road / Hing Wah Street Project	HS	170 units To be completed in 2015.	11 buildings 344 people
K24/ Shunning Road/Fat Tseung Street/Castle Peak Road	LDC project but yet to disclosed		
K25/Po On Road / Wai Wai Road Project	<b>Heya Green</b> Housing Society	327 units Public institutes or community amenity ( elderly home ) To be completed in 2013.	19 buildings 528 people
K26/Fuk Wing Street/ Fuk Hwa Street	<b>Vista</b> Sino group& URA	173 units, mixed use; completed in 2009 \$6,868/sqft	8 buildings 264 people
K27/Reclamation Street	<b>MOD 595</b> Chinese Estates Holdings & URA	87 units, mixed use; completed in 2009. \$6,191.8/sqft	4 buildings 122 people
SSP/3/001/Shunning Road	developer yet to be disclosed.	110 units; to be completed by 2017.	5 buildings 159 people
SSP/1/001-002 Lai Chi Lok Road /Kuei Lin ST and Yee Kuk Street	Cheung Kong &URA	390 units, mixed use; to be completed by 2014.	17 buildings 551 people
SSP/1/003-005 Hai Tan / Kuei Ling St/ Pei Ho St	developer yet to be disclosed.	845 units; to be completed by 2018.	37 buildings 1,277 people
Sum			165 buildings; 4,588 people

So far, all of the finished projects as listed above consecutively popped up in the old neighborhood, expressing new fashion of lifestyle at odds with the lively crowd bargaining with each other in the street bazaars. *Beacon Lodge*, a 42 story-high, mix-used condominium developed by *Sun Hung Kai Properties (SHK)* and URA, was a case in point. It was finished in 2008 to replace 14 tenement apartments built in the 1960s. 260 families who used to dwell in 72 flats were displaced in 2002. Being considered as “boutique residence” counterpart to the four Dragons, *Beacon Lodge* featured its trendy style and swimming pool on the 25th floor podium.

With URA’s agreement, *SHK* owned both the residential and the commercial parts and the latter was operated as a shopping center. To many’s surprise, *SHK* sold the commercial part to YMCA in 2009 at \$15.5 billion. Then YMCA turned the shopping center into a “Lifelong Learning Center,” providing a range of private educational programs, including an international kindergarden, a pre-school education, extension education, etc. Unfortunately, those pricy educational programs were not quite accessible to most tenants living around the building. A common scene outside of *Beacon Lodge*, according to my observation during 2011, was foreign domestic helpers waiting for the children of their host families- those who went to those programs. Sometimes I saw contract street cleaners, mostly elderlies, taking a break at the bench and then leaving with their trolleys.

*Vista* is another case developed by Sino Group and URA--Sino Group was also the developer who joined URA and *Hopewell* in redeveloping the Wedding Card Street. With a 35-story-high building and 173 flats, it was similar to the developer’s other developments in Sham Shui Po, such as *One New York* and *One Madison*. All three projects provided one-bedroom flats to yuppie tenants, aiming to transport “New York fashion into old neighborhoods.”

*Heya Green* is one of the eight projects developed by HS, supposedly going on pre-sale in May 2012. The Japanese word *Heya* refers to a simple, isolated room. Here it was adopted to express its elegant but no-frill flats as opposed to Queen’s Cube according to directors in HS. *Heya*, as the marketing statement interpreted, is a “way of greeting others; it represents those mutual concerns and cares which connect people. Its a reflection of Sham Shui Po’s core values of human touch and a life attitude that supports building a community with no strangers.” The

rhetorics seems ironic given the fact that the establishment of *Heya Green* is based on disintegration of existing communities, which I discuss in two case studies later.

*Heya* provides 327 market-rate flats and about 80% of them are two-bedroom flats of 570 sqft, ranging from \$774 to 903 per sqft. Besides, the project would give priority to Hong Kong resident buyers and exclude corporate buyers, a means to reduce speculative activities. HS also planned to impose a five-year-long ban on resale,<sup>28</sup> which might allegedly make HS a pioneer in tackling the worsening real estate speculation. But it disappointed the pro-market camp. They argued that “the smacks of protectionism”<sup>29</sup> would affect the city's reputation as a free economy. HS has hesitated to release more details.

Prior to the election of for the HKSAR executive in 2012, then the candidate, Leung Chun-ying suggested a large-scale limitation over sales of new flats to only Hong Kong residents. The relatively aggressive campaign spoke to the increasing resentment toward the government’s inaction in solving housing problems for the locals. One among several reasons contributing to the ongoing speculation, as the public as concerned, is the launch of *Capital*

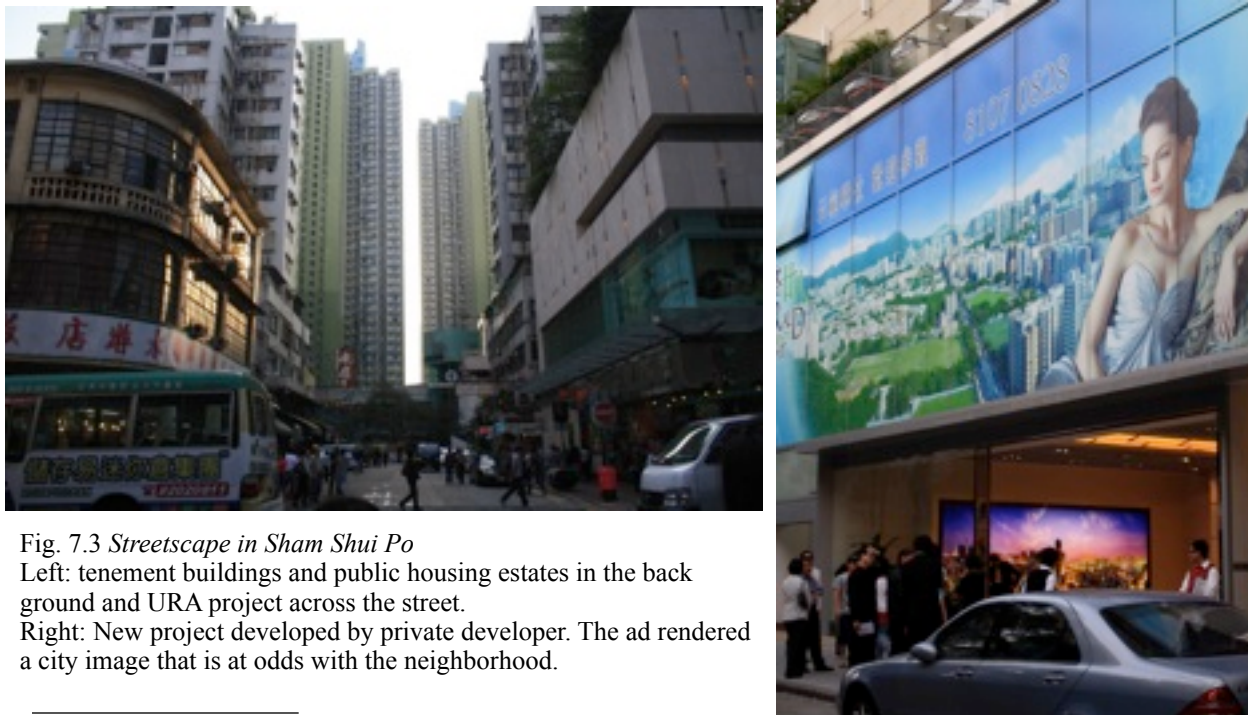


Fig. 7.3 Streetscape in Sham Shui Po  
Left: tenement buildings and public housing estates in the back ground and URA project across the street.  
Right: New project developed by private developer. The ad rendered a city image that is at odds with the neighborhood.

<sup>28</sup> (Feb 7, 2012) *Housing Society Working on Ban on Resale for Heya*. Singpao.

<sup>29</sup> Paggie Leung (Jan 13, 2012) *HK residents first in flats plan to stop speculators*. SCMP.

*Investment Entrant Scheme* (CIES) since 2003. Under the scheme, there had been 13,110 applicants and more than 40% of them investing in property with per capita \$0.93M from 2003-2011, among which more than 70% were mainlander investment.<sup>30</sup> Against the backdrop, it had become common for Hong Kongers to see real estate headlines revealing mainlanders buying out properties with record-high price in the past decade.

In Oct 2010, the government finally decided to raise the threshold of investment for admission to Hong Kong under the CIES from \$0.8M-1.3M; and more importantly, “Real estate” is suspended temporarily as a class of Permissible Investment Assets (PIA) under the CIES. Nevertheless, cross-border real estate investment did not wane and obviously immigration is just an extra benefit to attract cross-border investment.

In this case we see two themes getting blurred in housing debates: on one hand there is an obvious cross-border speculation taking over housing stock from locals that challenges the semi-national political boundary; and on the other hand there is an worsening issue of housing affordability that challenges the authorities’ reluctance to address the fading ideological boundary that keeps (some) housing as needs rather than commodities. Both issues invited sociological questioning over the mutual constitution of class and property but in reality the



Fig 7.4 *Beacon Lodge*  
URA’s project in Sham Shui Po. The podium part is now owned and operated by YMCA as a private *Lifelong-Learning center*.

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<sup>30</sup> (June 27, 2009) *More than 70% of investors came from the mainland*. USChina Press. According to immigration agencies, most of them came from the PRD area but applicants from Jiangsu and Zhejiang had been increasing in recent years.

politicians appealed to a conservative working of identity and the received wisdom of demand-and-supply theory. It is worth thinking how much a reinforcement of the territorial boundary can address the issue of speculation being built into the nature of housing market in Hong Kong.

### 7.1.3 Invisible Agents Under the Stairs

With the hundreds of property agencies on ground floor of each block, real estate ads clearly suggest an ongoing redevelopment trend. One can easily read messages like “Investment in Rentals with much better return than interest rate!” “Resale with lease. Profitable!” or “Property of redevelopment potentiality” (Fig 7.7).

Inspired by an interview with an experienced Real Estate news reporter, Romis (03/05/2011), I started to take note of the various practices of rent harvesting and stratification of property agencies. They could be categorized into three kinds based on business operation and specialization, playing different roles in shaping patterns of tenures and investment. Well-established chain agencies such as *Centaline Property* or *Midland Realty* mainly focused on selling upscale, first-hand sale of new properties in residential towers in Hong Kong and China. Median chain agencies mainly focused on second-hand properties within Hong Kong, and often operated as voluntary chain in association with individual property agents. The lowest tier, which is the most common one in Sham Shui Po, is mostly self-employed, individual agents who housed themselves in a tiny, subdivided storefront or even just the space underneath the stairs, so-called “shops under the stairs.” Many of them were



Fig. 7.5 Vista  
It's ad on the wall reads: "Live High in the City".



Fig 7.6 Street scene around redevelopment sites

individual investors and then gradually expanded their practices to serve for their neighbors (Fig. 7.8).

According to anecdotal information and my observation, a great number of the kind of agents used to be female homemakers, who transformed their investment interest into second careers. My goal is not to compare those agents thoroughly. What's worth noting, however, is the different profit structure across the three kinds- agents working for the former two were wage workers with bonus as incentives whereas individual agents were on their own in terms of operational cost (rent of the shop is the predominant one) and distribution of profit. Profit margin varied largely from one another due to the different nature of the properties. The individual agents were mainly managing properties aged 20-year-old and above, mostly flats in tenement apartments. For them, the commission fee gained from managing the lower-tiered rentals were limited (monthly rate below \$645) and they often relied on commission fee in selling properties to maintain their operation. According to Romis, they managed rentals mainly to secure their long-term connections with landlords to compete for handsome commissions for resale. "They just need to sell one flat every month and then they can sustain their business. It does not matter how much they can earn from managing those cheap rentals" noted Romis (interview, 03/05/2011). It suggests that most agents tend to convince their landlords to sell within short period of time. To make it salable, they have to market these rentals as investments. It is a logic fundamentally making the rentals in old neighborhood less and less affordable to low income people.

I started my exploration with fourteen "agents under the stairs" in Sham Shui Po throughout May 2011. Following Romis' advice I pretended to be a tenant looking for rentals. These visits were challenging and intense yet



Fig. 7.7 Common practices of property advertisement  
In the top three property ads shown in this image, they suggested how the investments were constituted by rental units. The property can be sold with leases.

did exposed me to the knots and bolts of managing properties in old neighborhoods.<sup>31</sup>

A common suite rated between \$322-451 was often one among four to six sub-divided rooms in a flat in a tenement building without lift, of area ranging from 80-160 sqft. A subdivided-room with shared bath was cheaper, oftentimes between \$129-258. My sampling outcome is not much deviating from the survey released by Sham Shui Po district council,<sup>32</sup> in which 63% of tenants lived in suites of area ranging from 70-160 sqft, rated from \$258-586. A small bathroom without bathtub often was petitioned in a corner, and sometimes equipped with a simple kitchenette- oftentimes just a sink. In many cases, the tenants had to make use of the bathrooms for washing dishes and preparing food.

In my conversation with them, these ex-homemaker agents always kindly advised me how to make do with limited space and furnitures for its most effective use, as Marsha noted, “A lot of people just got a table and put some portable oven and rice cooker and then it’s a kitchen” (interview, 06/05/2011). In another visit, the agent suggested that I get a bunk bed, which would fully occupy one third of area of the room, and then she pointed at the outlet next to the corner, noted, “that is the best location for a wash machine.” (interview, 09/05/2011) For a second I was speechless as I rarely juxtaposed these two activities-sleep and



Fig. 7.8 Independent property agencies in Sham Shui Po Both images show a typical location of several agencies in the same block. In these two cases there were four agencies in the same building competing among one another.

<sup>31</sup> I tried to select one property agent from one street in Old Sham Shui Po and through them to sample certain properties they were managing. Generally I visited 2 to 4 suites with one agent and in all I sampled forty suites.

<sup>32</sup> Hong Kong University Sau Po Centre on Ageing and Policy 21 Limited (2011). *A Topical Survey on Suites in old tenement apartments in Sham Shui Po*. Commissioned by Sham Shui Po District Council. [online available] [http://www.districtcouncils.gov.hk/ssp/doc/tc/publications\\_links/Partitioned\\_%20Room\\_%20Report.pdf](http://www.districtcouncils.gov.hk/ssp/doc/tc/publications_links/Partitioned_%20Room_%20Report.pdf)

washing-next to each other. But then I soon recalled my conversation with an immigrant woman, who told me how miserable it had been for her four-person family to live in the kind of suite (Gloria, 17/05/2011). For a continuous three years, her husband had to sleep on the floor while she and her younger son shared one bed and the elder son took the other. What I experienced in my visits was just a small fraction of the confinement and crowdedness in her everyday life.

Once in a visit the agent introduced an unusually spacious suite (180 sqft), she noted that “See, the flat is only divided into three units. There was another young woman like you and a couple who took the other two suites next to this rooms.” (interview, 11/05/2011) Indeed, conditions of these suits varied largely within the seemingly narrow span of budget in the same district and it seems to be the truth that tenants need to compete with one another to grab those “better” options.

According to Sandy, one agent who guided me to several suits on Apliu Street, the rental price has been raised as a result of decreasing supply caused by redevelopment. In addition, there had been increasing individual investors interested in buying flats in old apartments, especially those of less than six-story-high, expecting cash compensation from URA or to sell them to developers. Those apartments higher than nine-story would be less threatened by redevelopment because resumption of them would take much more time (interview, 11/05/2011). Another agent noted that many resales as such had been so profitable that some investors earned more than \$0.26 M in each transaction. In this light, no landlord would lower the rent. (interview, 06/05/2011) Their comments resonated with what I learned from other agents in Wan Chai. Rent is not following “the free market” but logic of speculation.



Fig. 7.9 A typical ad of sub-divided suites. The one on the left bottom reads: “On Castle Road, attic, 100 sqft, \$232.”

### *Cheap Copy of Serviced Apartment in Sham Shui Po*

These individual agents- more than 34,000 of them, according to statistics of certificates issued by the Estates Agents Authority- multiplied the role of property agencies: they usually specialized in rentals within certain blocks (10-20 blocks), teaming up with small business of renovation, plumbing, and moving, providing one-stop service to their clients. Some of them, according to Romis, used to be entrepreneurs in plumbing or construction and gradually established their network with property owners, accumulating their knowledge of the second-hand housing market within certain geographical confine, which required a great deal of substantial interaction with local communities. Thus some of them, with start-up capital available, would gradually tap into the more profitable business of property agency.

Among them, one property agency particularly appealed to me due to its shining plasma TVs demonstrating images of well-furnished rooms on its exterior wall. I walked in, talked to the agent, left with a package of brochure and instruction for applying for membership. This Orange Property (pseudonym, hereafter “Orange”) was a case worthy of some illustration because it exhibited a “cheap copy” of the clandestine making of serviced apartments as depicted in chapter 5. Orange focused its operation-it claimed to manage more than 4,000 suits- in old neighborhoods where accommodation options for business visitors or tourists were traditionally rare, including Sham Shui Po, Mongkok, Yau Ma Tei, Jordan, etc., areas where hundreds of thousands working class tenants concentrated.

I consider it as “cheap copy” for at least two reasons: on one hand it is much cheaper than those boutique serviced apartments in Wan Chai, providing suites of rate ranging from \$774-1,548, at least 30-50% cheaper than those existing in the market; on the other hand the service provided by the “serviced residence” is minimal but with flexibility, allowing tenants to stay for just a week up to months and with options for various levels of service, which attracts many short-term business visitors and mainlander tourists.

Thanks to advancement of electronic financing and internet, the agency operates with minimal interaction with tenants, setting up web interface. Their clients could reserve and pay online, moreover, receive a code for the electronic lock online and then just head for the suites all by themselves. Membership is preferred and rewarded but not necessary. Free cleaning service

follows a continuous stay for ten days while cleaning on demand and laundry service is available with extra charge. With flexible management, they transformed rental practices into serviced consumption supply and reduced the interaction between clients/tenants, agents, and landlords to the least at the same time.

What makes Orange special is that the agency focuses on short-term profit and with their cross-district operational knowledge of property market it spontaneously encourages landlords to sell their properties. With its systematic approach to managing properties in a more flexible way, Orange guaranteed investment return, decreasing service charge along with scaling up of the commission (with discount for landlords who commissioned more than five properties at a time), even could help the landlords manage their responsibilities to participate in Owner Association. The agency packed all of aforementioned services into “property promotion,” connecting the two sides of the coin of flexibilization of rental housing: *the demand side*-clients who needs flexible accommodation, and *the supply side*-landlords/investors, who expects complimentary rent for profit and the best performance of rent for short-term resale. This kind of practice not only recruit but actively transform regular landlords into investors, contributing to a more thorough speculation in old neighborhoods.

In See Network’s interview with one agent, it is concluded that no family homeowners would buy the flats in the old neighborhoods for self-occupation because they were all facing the streets. “No matter how trendy it looks like.[...] but you fear for the unpredictable business operation on the ground floor. A lot of them run strap shops, recycling, or restaurants. It’s too noisy to reside.”(SeeNetwork, pp. 80-81) Accordingly, most of these flats were divided into suites, rented by immigrants or some younger people who could not afford downpayment at the moment and like to live close to their families of origin. “No young people will buy flats here. Parents with children would not live here.” The agent further emphasized that many investors came for the more profitable storefronts or only buying second-hand flats in exchange for cash compensation offered by URA in near future. An important factor, as she noted, has to do with the fact that one can hardly make a mortgage from old properties; only speculators with enough capital would tape into the second-hand housing market in Sham Shui Po.



A private elderly's home

A budget hostel

A restaurant



Sub-divided rooms and suites

Fig 7.11 The hybrid urbanism in Sham Shui Po

Top: Many elderly homes are located within the apartments.

Bottom: Subdivided rooms are often located above shops, facing busy street bazaars.

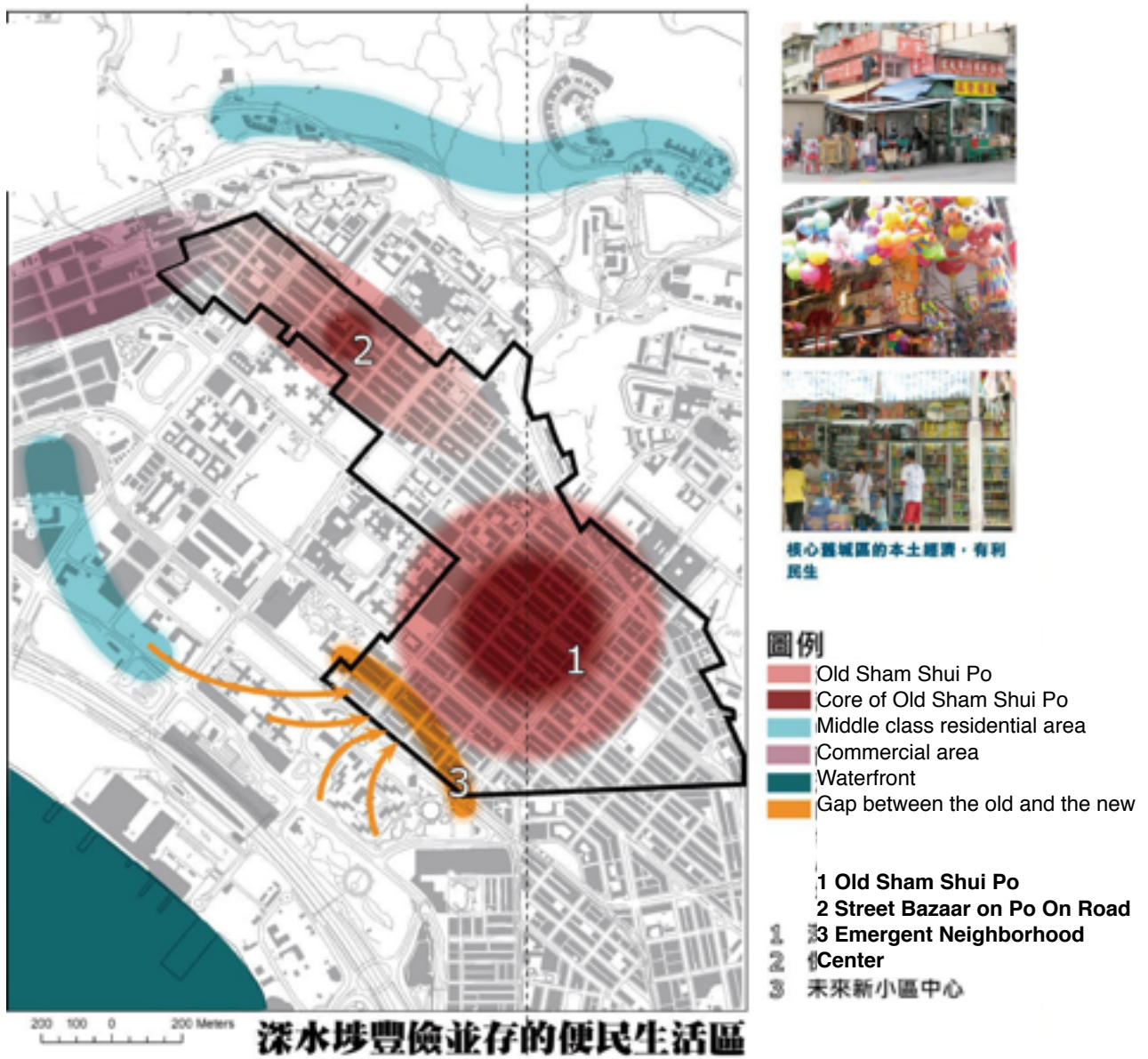


Fig. 7.12 *Spatial divisions in Sham Shui Po*  
 Source: adopted from brochure published by the Sham Shui Po District Council and See Network.

## ***7.2 Saving Sham Shui Po for the Grassroots***

### ***7.2.1 Life on the Street***

On many weekday mornings in the street bazaar on Po On Road, I wandered along the continuous storefronts and hawkers, watching shop keepers busily managing their stocks and bargaining with shoppers. Fresh produce, poultry, soy milk and bean curd shop stand next to stools that sell cheap clothing and toys. One can easily find groceries in Sham Shui Po 10-20% cheaper than other districts. Quite a few low-income or elderly people living in other parts of Kowloon, especially those who used to live in Sham Shui Po, still come here for grocery shopping. They could be found around Pei Ho Street Market or Po On Road Market all the time.

There are complex passages and messages flowing in the markets. One specific good stands out in the street bazaar is cheap, plastic duffel bag. These bags are important vehicles for “travelers” to transport goods across the border. I often heard people in the bazaar asking one another about “When are you going back to the *countryside*” or “When is she coming back?”- questions about trips going back and forth between their hometowns in Pearl River Delta and Kowloon in which they transport goods (formula, medicine, etc.) back “home” and then come back with stuffs that are not available or more expensive in Hong Kong.

Market is also part of carescapes. The elderly people, sometimes with their grandchildren, navigated the bazaar after they sent them to school or picked them up. One could also see alternative arrangements of child care in the bazaar, such as children playing around the stands while their parents or grand parents busy serving the clients.

The market streets take on different ethnic look toward the sunset. Certain business, for example, second hand electrics on Ap Liu Street, garment shops on Cheung Sha Wan Road, or strap shops on Fuk Wing Street, attracted various groups of African and South Asian traders. In the daytime most of them hang out on the street side, waiting for the moment of exchange. Most of them become diligent workers in the evening and one would be surprised by the dense communication taking place on the streets. In a nut shell, the whole old core of Sham Shui Po is like a 24-hour market-place.

### *Life after the displacement*

There were too many stories and geographies to tell in this neighborhood where displacements and migration were common themes in each person's life history. I could only focus on those being impacted by urban renewal. During my fieldwork, I walked with some of them to see the place through their eyes and bodily experiences. With their company, it was also much easier for me to visit tenants whom they knew. Given the most accessible connection and significance of the case, my conversations with them were centered around the case of K20-23.

Thanks to P.C. and Maggie, I was able to visit several tenant shop keepers who managed to stay in the same area after being displaced in 2008, including the repair shop run by Maggie's parents on Hing Wa street. I smelled the delicious BBQ pork before even seeing those people gathering in front of the shop, enjoying beer and food in the evening. The diners were actually all staffs with only one from another shop next door. Standing on the curb in front of the shop, I could see how the storefront was stocked with gears and metals, leaving very limited space for them to sit- which may explain the reason why they set up a table on the pedestrian area. Maggie's mom, Lisa, compared the much smaller shop with the previous one where they could park two to-be-repaired cars inside. "Rent for an equivalent is much higher now and we just



Fig. 7.13 Street Bazaar in Sham Shui Po  
Left: stools that sell clothing and bags  
Right: storefronts that sell produce on Po On Road



Fig. 7.14 *Shopping and recycling in Sham Shui Po*

Top left: recycling shop

Top right: street bazaar where new and second-hand clothing are always available

Bottom: textile bazaar on Kee-Lung Street

cannot afford it...” noted Lisa. Due to the nature of the car repair business, it is not easy for them to find a suitable place considering land use and their need to park cars-to-be-repaired in front of the shop. They went to many property agents and finally got this tiny place with acceptable rent. “We are not sure how much longer we could sustain[...] The rent has been raised in the past two years, adding \$387-645 more so each time.” Lisa said (interview, 28/05/2011).

Lisa then pointed to the hair salon across the street and told me that it is closing down because the owner cannot afford the rent anymore. As she noted, “Recently the landlord wanted to raise the rent from \$2,193 to 2,838.” Mr, Lee, another tenant who used to run a second-hand automobile dealer next to her repair shop, interrupted and noted that another stationary store was about to close down soon due to the same reason.

Then I followed Mr. Lee to a tire shop on the same street. The shop owner, a man in his 50s, told me that his business was doing OK. Then he sighed that



Fig. 7.15 *Non-stop Sham Shui Po*

Top left: people searching for antique records in second hand market  
Top Right: south Asian workers waiting for the evening trading  
Bottom: Elderlies chatting on the street curb.

*But the business was really bad in the beginning after relocation, losing almost 2/3 of our business. It's gradually coming back to about 80% as it was, but seemingly difficult to returned to the old days. I think it's because we stood at a much better location-a corner that was almost a center in the area. (interview, 28/05/2011)*

Mr. Lee and the gentleman also talked about certain characteristics of space required by their business, such as size, higher ceilings, access to loading and transportation, which were all relatively more available in old tenement shophouses as they were concerned.

The last stop of the day was a small grocery on the end of the street. It was run by a nice lady in her 50s, Yin, who used to be a school teacher in Guangdong province in the 1970s. She came to Hong Kong with her husband in the late 70s and then started to make their living by running the shop. Renting the same storefront for more than 10 years, they were displaced by URA(K20-23) and thus moved to the current location. Yin talked about the difficulty to keep the cliental after relocation,

*Well, most of those really loyal clients do come back. Especially those who come for the snacks I made- a kind of rice cake that she hand-makes everyday. But it is not easy to have the passer-by coming along since the location of current shop is much more marginalized. (interview, 28/05/2011)*

Indeed, I probably would not have walked to the shop without Mr. Lee's guidance because it was not close to the street bazaar- actually all of the aforementioned shops mentioned were faced with the same issue. I tried the delicious rice cake and was curious about where she could make them given the very crowded space (less than 100 sqft). She laughed, pointing to the attic above, noting that " I start to prepare for these from 5 am." Before she arrives, she needs to leave her residence in a public housing in Kwun Tong before 4:30am.

Yin's grocery, along with the cat she kept, become a site I revisited again and again. I oftentimes ran into Mr. Lee there since he continued his dealership by practicing *in front of* Yin's grocery after his shop being expropriated by URA. It was a very rare case because the kind of arrangement would not have been possible without Yin being so generous and the policing of land use being loose on the edge of the neighborhood. Mr. Lee has been hoping to find an affordable shopfront where he could continue his business in a much decent way and meanwhile

allowed his wife to do small business by selling handmade Chaozhou snacks. But it has been extremely difficult and he has hesitated to take up any of those expensive shops for unpredictable future of their business. Judging from the taste, I am confident that his wife can make a successful business. Nevertheless, according those small business operators, it is “rent” that decided if you have a chance to survive. Sadly, some of them already found it too hard to keep up with rocketing rent in the midst of redevelopment and just closed down their shops.

### ***7.2.2 Representation of tenants in Sham Shui Po***

Those people I visited were just as common as the vast majority living in old Sham Shui Po, most of whom were post-war immigrants (and their second generations) living next to new arrivals in the same tenement apartments. They were mostly working class or entrepreneurial people collectively contributing to diverse community economies in the neighborhood. What is unique, however, is that Yin, Mr. and Mrs. Lee, Maggie and her parents, were all members of *Sham Shui Po Community Concern Group* (concerning the K20-23 project, hereafter as SSP) confronting against URA during 2005-2009. Drawing upon their actions, I discuss the neglect and dispossession of community economies in URA’s property-oriented practices as follows.

On Aug 12 of 2007, a crowd of almost 300 people visited a quiet street in Sham Shui Po despite the gloomy rainy day. Full-scale murals covered more than 15 storefronts. Those lively paintings with narratives told life stories of each shopkeeper and their small business. The event, “The Carnival of Life Stories,” recalled the once-lively streetscape, showing the public what was exactly being taken away by redevelopment. For example, a gourmet sauce shop that had been operated by the same family for more than three generations; a car repair shop where the shopkeeper couple worked and lived, and moreover, functioning as a community gathering place, that is, Mr. Lee’s shop. In front of the display, a forum was formed on the street, having discussants composed by writers, artists, community advocates, talking about the importance of community-based economies. Perhaps because the event was too successful and well-covered in the popular media, the secretary-general in charge of urban renewal at HS unusually released a public letter to accuse the SSP of manipulating nostalgia for extra compensation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> *Mrs. Wang: Urban Renewal can improve community life. Proposal for conservation should have been proposed in advance.* (03/09/2007) Mingpao. Wang is the secretary of Redevelopment Division of Housing Society.

Before the event, most of those shops on Hai-Tan street and Hing Wah street had been shut down and presumably reclaimed by URA under the Cap 124 -Lands Resumption Ordinance on Oct 15 2005. The project, including four areas, was announced in September 2004 by URA/ HS. 57 buildings were demolished and 1,202 people were displaced--again, the number of tenants was probably underestimated.

To confront the imposed project, the SSP was formed at a time when the property acquisition process had come to the end in July 2005. Maggie, as the daughter of one affected tenant shopkeeper, was a central character in the group of 20-30 tenants. The relatively late resistance could be attributed to tenants' being marginalized in the whole procedure of urban renewal. HS only approached landlords in the beginning. Most SSP members were tenants and thus were not officially approached by representatives and social workers sent by Housing Society/URA until the enactment of compulsory land resumption. The belated meeting and public hearing were justified by the same logic that prioritized contractual relations as mentioned in Chapter three. The lapse of community mobilization thus largely constrained the effectiveness of community action.

From 2005 to 2007, the SSP tried every possible means to convey their belief that an alternative win-win plan was possible. In return, those who insisted staying put were sued for "illegally taking over public properties" in February 2007. The appeal terrified several elderly tenants yet they managed to attend the court with some volunteers community workers' company. The case then led to the event of "The Carnival of Life Stories" (see Fig.7.16).



**街坊給林鄭月娥的八堂課**  
**如何做個本港聯的發展局長?**  
**第六課:發展方向之公眾參與**

第六課重點:發展局長在網頁上承諾,在制定發展方針時,會致力廣邀公眾參與。

課堂練習:

1. 我看唔明白政府的政策,怎樣參與?  
 我會開工,不知道在嗰邊看到政策?

2. 我識種樹種花,但不識字,怎樣表達意見?  
 我不知道政府辦諮詢會。  
 政府沒邀請我去諮詢會,不讓我入場。

3. 我在諮詢會舉手攞文,但沒機會發言。  
 政府錄錄取真地紀錄了我的意見。  
 官員說他們只是來聽意見,不會表達意見。

4. 我發表意見後,不知道政府會喺嗰邊回應?  
 政府怎樣把我們的意見轉化成工作?

1. 思考題:讓市民參與的雙向溝通模式,可怎樣處理上述問題?  
 答: \_\_\_\_\_

2. 思考題:除了制定發展方針外,政府還應邀請公眾參與哪些工作?  
 答:  推行共同規劃的工作  監察過程  評估成效  
 改善不足  舉辦民間諮詢局官員溝通  其他



Fig. 7. 16 The Carnival of Life Stories

Right: The mural that illustrate the sauce shop  
 Top left: The Carnival of Life Stories  
 Below left: One of the sheets created by Maggie Chau. It was meant to teach the head of Planning Bureau how to be accountable. The title reads: "Lesson Six: Civic participation in redevelopment."

With bountiful production of documents, art work, and media coverage, the SSP invoked wider appreciation for already-sustainable neighborhood in Sham Shui Po that should not be wiped out. For example, following the notion of “reverse hallucination” (Abbas, 1997), a local visual artist Hui (許芷盈, 2007) dedicated to present the place existed in people’s everyday practices “that people saw as unseen” in her literary documentation of the place. These provoking works, nevertheless, can hardly move the regime of property, which actually internalize the practice of “reverse hallucination” in its operational logic.

The community’s action continued for several years. With a focus on the interconnectedness for community-based economy rather than attachments to a particular building, some of them were open to rehousing in the same neighborhood as long as they could maintain similar business network in place. Seeing no reaction from either HS or URA, they appealed to the Planning Bureau, the authority which oversaw URA and Housing Society. The SSP invited then the director of Planning Bureau, Carrie Lam, to have dinner with them on the redevelopment site, that is, *An Open Dinner Invitation (the Dinner)*. Since March 8 2009 they set up the table at eight every night, waited despite no appearance of Mrs. Lam and the action lasted for 23 consecutive nights. Along with the invitation, the group translated their views of urban renewal into “*Eight Lessons for Director Lam,*” of which each sheet explained urban renewal in accessible terms and presented how lay people perceived their everyday life. Those lessons were publicized on the Mingpao (see Fig. 7.16).

Finally, Mrs. Lam’s showed up on the 24th night. However, Lam, as usual, insisted that the agreement between the parties involved in the project had to be prioritized. Her attitude were reaffirmed by the two official explanations offered by Planning Bureau: “No such precedent (in terms of in-site rehousing)” and “We have to follow the memorandum and contract”. Yet, URA never disclosed the memorandum nor could it justify why it had to keep it as a secret document. Eventually, the SSP’s goal to push for alternatives failed.

Gradually, the members of the group gave up one by one as many found it hard to spare time from maintaining their family livelihood. In July 2009, the SSP’s action was forced to end as the very last tenant, Mr. Huang, who stayed until the police broke into his shop and arrested him, seven cats of his (all adopted from the street), and a group of outrageous supporters.

Again, the authorities saw the struggle as compensation-oriented while the community sought to maintain their self-contained life based on small business. Losing all their moments embedded in the place, they threw the critical question to the authorities: “We can not but wonder who exactly is the one who only sees money?!”<sup>35</sup>

Three years after the forced eviction, Maggie still felt outrageous when recalling the conversation. “There are too many things cannot be translated into cash,” Maggie noted.

*We are faced with the risk of losing (our everyday lives) but they just viewed it with their narrow-minded perspective. I was angry. I explained the specific need of operating a repair shop and our difficulty to find alternative shopfront. Then the government brought in those surveyors, correcting my ways of thinking and questioning me if it is that challenging to find another shop. They even suggested that the business of repair shop has been fading anyway, pointing their fingers...But I'd say they understand nothing![...]There were three of us, representing three kind of business, but none of them (the authorities and surveyors) can understand the differences among our respective operation.*  
(interview, 17/12/2010)

Maggie and her neighbors favored in-situ rehousing much more than cash compensation. “If that’s the case,” Maggie argued,

*you should then calculate in terms of needs rather than size or ages of properties. You should ask how much spending a household need to maintain and how much does it cost for them to find a similar space without loss of business and social relations. You also need to consider moving, renovation, and cost to make up losing your clientele. [...] You can make it more descriptive, engaging narratives to better understand (what we need).*

Among the 166 affected families Maggie had ever helped, there were more than 166 lively stories. For example, she talked about the 24-hr newspaper stand always guarding the corner. Sometimes a couple fought with each other and one of the two came down to talk to the

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<sup>35</sup> The SSP. (Sep 11, 2007) *Re-Housing Society: For Our Life and the Community rather than Nostalgia nor Compensation*. [Online available] <http://ssp2023.wordpress.com/2007/09/07/>

lady. For those who worked overtime, they had a chance to chat with her before going back home. Maggie was still enthusiastic when she recalled all those scenes,

*It (running shops) is great contribution![...] Such as the soy sauce store served like a community living room where elder people frequented the most. There used to be a long bench on which about seven people can sit next to one another. In front of the shop there was always an old lady collecting and organizing those recycled paper and nobody would bother her. Isn't that a social space? (interview, 17/12/2010)*

URA, after all a regime oriented its practice on ownership model, failed to respond. These stories became graphics and memories published in a book authored by Maggie Chau with the title as “*Our Home, Sham Shui Po* (推土機前種花)”.

### **7.2.3 Right to Stay Put**

Regarding K20-23, the Sham Shui Po District Council had been advocating for alternative plan to keep affected tenants in place. However, as is the case in Wan Chai, the district council only served as an advisory body without genuine power. Under the council an urban renewal panel was formed, trying to engage community in visioning the redevelopment of the district. For example, the panel sponsored Hong Kong Chinese University and the SEE Network to carry out “A Study on Community’s Visioning of Urban Renewal“(Nov. 2009-March 2010)<sup>36</sup> and as a result two books were published. One focused on histories and public space and another focused on life histories of grassroots living in Sham Shui Po shared by 108 neighbors. The latter is especially a valuable material for further understanding the significance of community network from below. Based on my reading of the books, my interviews with core members of the panel and the director of the research project (Pasty Chen from SeeNetwork), I highlight their articulation of community network and community economy under the idea of “work and live enjoyably” in the following.

Through out the texts, a recurring theme is to sustain visible community characters and invisible local lifestyles to allow residents to stay in place and to enjoy the improved

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<sup>36</sup> With the funding granted by URA, there were 8 out of 18 district councils were able to carry out the visioning study including Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai.

environment after urban renewal. The key, as most of them are concerned, is the already-existing community network that allows diversified community-based economies.

Kenneth To, one of the members sitting on the panel, noted that

*There was this wrong assumption perpetuating in our ways of redeveloping city [...]we've always seen urban renewal as a task to rescue old and dilapidated buildings by reconstruction, seeing them as objects to replace. However, we all fail to see the thousands of people, families, their wishes for so-called "work and live enjoyably"- a simple agenda as it is. (SeeNetwork, 2011, pp. 54-55)*

To's words was resonated by many resident's life stories. Most of them emphasized intangible networking of employments and residences that was underrepresented on planner's desk.

Regarding the impact of urban renewal, a survey was conducted from June 20 through July 13 2011 with district-wide visitors and residents, not necessarily affected tenants, effectively collected 661 samples.<sup>37</sup> Nearly 55% (360 respondents) of them considered the increasing rent and housing price the most unbearable impact while 47% of them recognized the improvement of urban landscape and hygiene. About 23% of them regarded urban renewal diminishing space of survival for small business.

Some younger residents were relatively critical of the upcoming plan along with URA projects to reconfigure the street bazaars as depicted on Wing Lung Street, Cheung Fa Street, etc. As Julian noted,

*I don't think they would hinder local pedestrian traffic. They mostly sell some clean clothing, towels, umbrella, items which would not make the environment messy. They've been doing business for decades and everybody has figured out patterns of interaction. We know how to get along.[...] I think the government should allow the bazaar to sustain with minimal management. I vote for re-issuing hawker's licenses for those who want to make a living.[...] They just need that minimal*

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<sup>37</sup> The research group carried out 732 questionnaires but out of them 66 samples were from respondents living out side of Sham Shui Po and 5 were not useful. In sum there was 661 samples (See more in Chapter 3 in SEE Network, 2011, *Review of Urban Renewal in Sham Shui Po*).

*space to survive, why wouldn't you let them?"* (Julian, case 70, SeeNetwork, 2011, p. 139)

Many residents considered hawkers and bazaars as central to community network in Sham Shui Po. Being asked about visioning of the area, more than 34% of the respondents hoped to see the neighborhood remaining its vibrant community economy and meanwhile 30% of them expected that it should continue as an affordable neighborhood. Nevertheless, the government failed to recognize the value of existing community economies. City-wide the authorities had gradually removed street bazaars in Sham Shui Po, Mong Kok, Central, Wan Chai (except the Tai-Yuen street bazaar), etc. Still worse, several already-implemented relocation of markets have caused loss of business due to inadequate, marginalized siting. The relocation of Tung Chau Street Jade market and the Food Wholesale market were two obvious cases.

A hawker from the Jade market pointed out another issue indirectly caused by problematic city planning, as he noted,

*you know, with manufacturing leaving the district and the city, nowadays the poor are too poor to afford any leisure after work while the rich do not bother coming here...there is no more people of interest and disposable income would collect stones and jades as the old days.* (case 17, SeeNetwork, 2011, pp. 100-102)

Indeed, his participant observation made a point about the systematic transformation of the patterns of work, life, and daily consumption that supposedly constituted "the community." What has been disintegrated by urban renewal are patterns of manufacturing and entrepreneurial employments and mix-use of space interwoven with long-term social relations.

In the following, I introduce another case in which a more marginalized group has been mobilizing similar ideas and arguments in the district.

### ***7.3 Saving Sham Shui Po for the Underprivileged***

#### **7.3.1 Shunning Road Project**

URA announced the project of Shunning Road in June 2009. It impacted those who are most underrepresented, most of whom were tenants rather than home-ownership owners. They worked as manual laborers rather than entrepreneurs. They were mostly burdened by financial stress and unstable employment. Under URA's rehousing policy, these tenants received much

less compensation than those under LDC's (such as those in H15 and K20-23). As mentioned earlier, many tenants experienced forced eviction, which deprived their entitlement to cash compensation or public housing.

The Shunning Road Concern Group (SRCG) was formed soon after the announcement with help of volunteers from H15 and V-Artivist. SRCG called into question the process of redevelopment that marginalized tenants, from acquisition, rehousing, to planning. They argued that the issue of affordability should be addressed rather than produced by redevelopment. They voiced out for tenant's right to "adequate rehousing" and by that it means appropriate relocation in response to the tenant community's needs. Conceiving housing as basic human right and in a way bypass "property ownership," they asked for low-income rental housing in the future development rather than "flat for flat, shop for shop."

Meanwhile, to resist ongoing forced-eviction in the apartments, Vivian, along with 12 other tenants, tried their best to stay until the last minute to confront the property agent, who managed quite a few flats in the five buildings. In a documentary released by V-Artivist, titled "*Walk on! Shunning Road!*" it is clear how tenants were forcedly evicted, threatened by tactics such as malicious locking up, unexpected black out, and endless verbal violence. Toward the end of the resumption, for almost a week, the group tried to push URA to recognize their rights by bodily being in the flats. They did not leave for a minute in fear of the officials would come and assume the property anytime.

The group's positioning differentiates its ways of representation from cases introduced earlier. Rather than sharing lifetime stories or memories to render unique sense of place, SRCG talked about how they went about everyday life in the neighborhood with a concept of "15-minute living circle" to emphasize how the under-privileged managed to live and work within a walkable confine economically and how they made use of affordable food and service in Sham Shui Po. It illuminated the circulation of social capital that connects individuals within patterning of spaces. If the case of Wedding Card Street is about community economy that is intertwined with post-war social relations and small business clustering, then the case of Shunning Road is about daily survival of the underclass and new arrivals that required adequate spatial patterning of housing, employment, and civic service.

In presenting alternatives, SRCG did not target the five apartments where they used to live but the block resumed by the K20-23 project. They enlarged their scope and spoke to the majority low-income people in the district be it tenants or home owners. They conducted a district-wide survey that sampling 1,000 respondents, in which they concluded that the community was longing for affordable housing, rental public housing, affordable retail space for small business and social enterprise, and amenities such as elderly center and day care center. In a way they transformed a project-oriented action into a district-wide campaign, framing their proposal an initiative to enhance housing justice in a redeveloping Sham Shui Po.

Since September 2010, SRCG set up street booths throughout Sham Shui Po, trying to engage more people to support the proposal and so far they've collected nearly 2,000 signatures. Nevertheless, SRCG had not received any positive response from the authorities though they had been busy knocking at the door of URA, HS, and even Development Bureau. It may be explained by two reasons: the unexpected competition among social movements and the ineffective outreach to mobilize the public. SRCG has been less successful in drawing attention from the media. Compared to the case of *Opposition to the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Express Rail Link* and in the same vein the case of *Anti-Displacing Choi Yuen Village* (2009-2011), SRCG and other cases against URA had not been able to mobilize broader community. The wide-spread outrage triggered by High Speed Rail touched upon almost all aspects of cross-border politics concerning Hong Kongers, the bay area economic integration, mega infrastructure, and down to community level, displacement of a whole village in New Territories.



Fig. 7.17 SRCG's community reach out Street booths organized by the SRCG to engage the public to understand their proposals.

The case of Shunning Road, however, seems to be just another case of urban renewal that continued the decade-old debate. Yet the public neglected issues of civic stratification and citizenship intersected by redevelopment, bearing particularly on mainland immigrants. As an rare case, the documentary as mentioned earlier depicted how Vivian, one among the affected tenants, a mainland single mother who had not been granted permanent residency, suffered from urban renewal and cross-border displacements. She and three children of her had a week-long sit in the Shunning Road playground to support SRCG's action. Her brave action instigated me to carry out in-depth interviews with these tenants, leading me to trace a complex nested-relationship in the block. In what follows I illustrate this exploration.

***The Halprin's and the elder woman on rooftop*<sup>38</sup>**

Halprin, in his forties, used to sell second-hand cell phones in Apliu street bazaar but he found the increasing competition and decreasing margin not enough to keep up his living. Today he worked as delivery man working in Sheung Wan.

Halprin had been living in Sham Shui Po for decades. Before moving into a public housing in Sha Tin under his father's application, the family rented a flat on Shunning Road until he went to junior high school. Meanwhile, his parents, who were both vendors in the market in Sham Shui Po, continuously rented a flat in the same area for rest and storage. Halprin took over the room from his parents when he started to live on his own. To get a larger space to accommodate his own family, Halprin moved to the rooftop dwelling of the same apartment until the apartment being resumed by URA in 2011.

The family shared the rooftop (including open space, kitchen, and bathroom) with an elderly women, who had been living there fore decades and turned sick in the past decade. The lady, according to Halprin, was herself an post-war immigrant living "alone" and had been in need of intensive care. Both economically deprived, the two households, however, developed reciprocal relationships to make up gaps of care work. Usually there would be the lady's niece coming from the mainland to look after her and the person can help take care of Halprin's son before he and his wife finished their work. But there would be moments when the relative needed to go back to renew her visitor visa, in which case the lady's daughter, who lived in

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<sup>38</sup> Based on several conversations and an in-depth interview with Halprin on 19/04/2011.

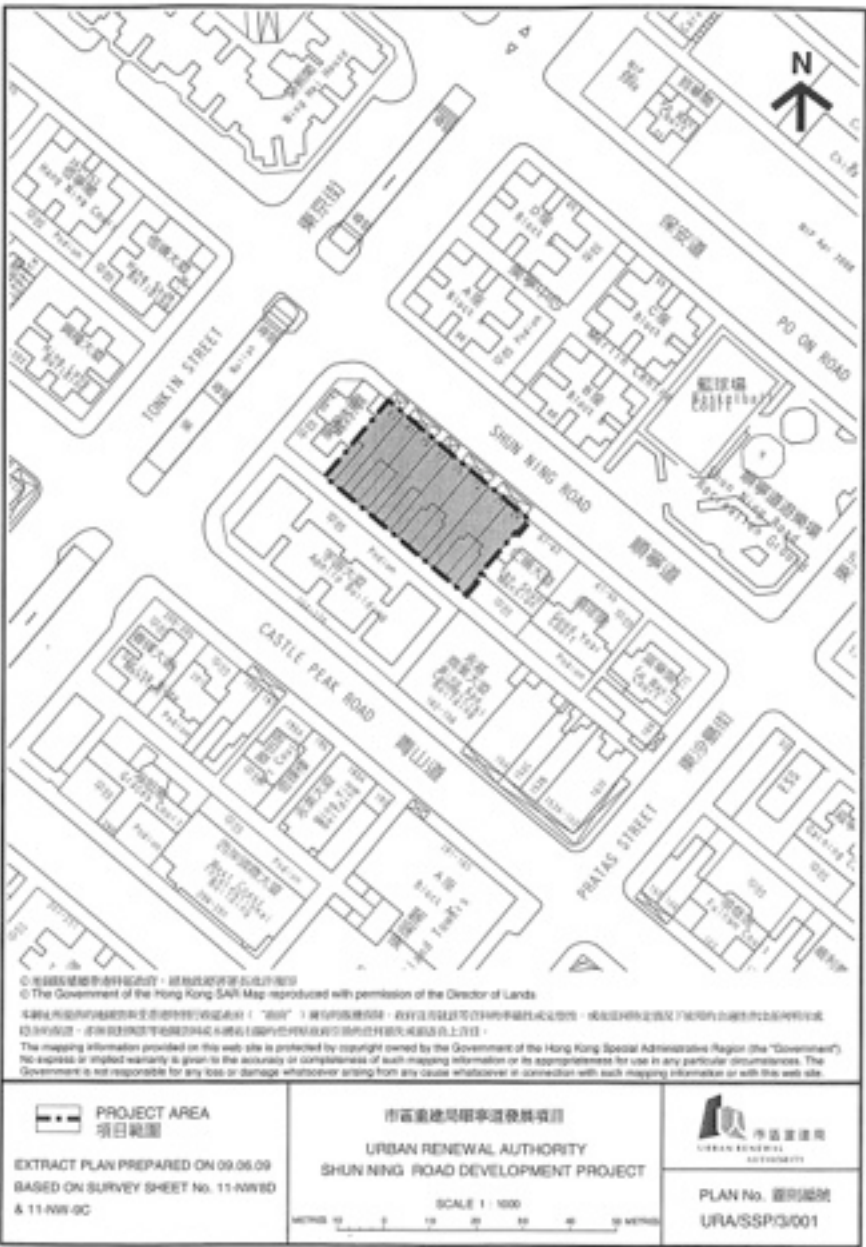


Fig. 7.18  
Shunning Road Project

Top left: the street block before demolition  
 Top right: vision of the redevelopment  
 Below: the location of the street block  
 Source: from URA website.

another block in Sham Shui Po, would send her maid to look after the elderly woman during the daytime. The maid would also care for the kid of Halprin, and in return, Halprin and his wife would pay attention to the elderly during the night.

The point I would like to make by detailing their coordination is to show the immediacy and intensity of care work that required seamless effort, which oftentimes were fulfilled by networking of care practices, including both unpaid care work and undervalued care work. It was not perfect arrangement but somehow was the most plausible the underprivileged people could achieve and would have been more challenging were it not for the close proximity.

### ***Billy and his wife***

Billy's family had lived in the flat on Shunning Road from 2002 to 2009, seeing the rent being doubled from \$129 to more than \$258. He rented the flat to accommodate his wife and two daughters, all of whom immigrated to Hong Kong from the mainland in 2000. Billy himself was an oversea Chinese migrating to Hong Kong from Indonesia during the 1970s. He was excluded from his father's application for public housing at that time given his age being above 18. Since then he had been changing jobs from manufacturing to service sector across the border, working mainly as menial laborer in recent years.

As of the announcement of the URA project, Billy had been in his 60s, working as a janitor in Sham Shui Po. His wife worked as part-time dish washer in a restaurant. Living in a neighborhood where they can manage work and life in the most efficient and affordable way is extremely crucial to the family. The couple were both active members of SRCG before the forced eviction. However, Billy's wife quitted afterward as she found the participation too much emotionally demanding. Billy had suffered from similar stress and to some degree lost his job as a result. But the unemployed man became a more active participant fighting against urban renewal in contrast to his wife. I can see him and Halprin in various occasions be it community meetings or protests.

Interestingly, Billy insisted that he would not let his daughters be involved in all those actions, as he noted, "*They need to study. I don't want them to be distracted.*" However, in a shot in the documentary, ironically, one of the daughters was studying the subject of urban renewal as an important development agenda in the tutorial for preparing the joint-entrance exam.

Billy and his neighbors were busy dealing with several issues at the same time. On one hand, they confronted the authority and asked for alternatives; to secure their entitlement to rehousing, they somehow need to seek whatever possible way to apply for a subsidized rental public housing. Meanwhile, they need to find a place to stay. Currently, Bill and his family are relocated in a flat on Castle Road across the street to where his wife works. But they are paying more than double the rent they paid at Shunning Road (\$580). Billy hoped that the short-term arrangement could satisfy his wife, who did not want to move to suburban neighborhood, before they were granted a flat in the nearby public housing (interview, 27/12/2010).

### *The irregular household and others*

In the apartment, there were two families of the same origin-brother and sister and respective families sharing one flat to save money. The irregular household-or we may say two households- then came across trouble in receiving rehousing. The two families ended up sharing the amount of standardized cash compensation based on a flat and then each of them had to



Fig. 7.19 Rooftop dwelling where the Halprin's shared with the elderly lady.

Top left: the Halprin's living area and "kitchen"  
Bottom left: open space on the rooftop  
Right: the hall way between the two families

figure out ways to rehouse themselves. Being immigrants from the mainland who can hardly speak Cantonese, they had hard time understanding the rehousing policy. Without Halprin's help they could hardly negotiate with HS and obtained the cash compensation they deserved.

Actually, many tenants left before the forced eviction, including some Pakistani tenants whose process of displacement was never figured out by the SRCG because they were just ignored in the picture. There were some tenants moving in after the project was announced, without knowing the upcoming urban renewal. Moving in after the freezing survey, they could not receive any rehousing. There was only one exceptional case in which the force-displaced tenant moved into another flat next door and managed to stay until he got cash compensation.

For the future, most likely the elder living next to Halprin would be sent to an elderly home, which might be paid by the cash compensation. Halprin himself is looking forward to receiving public rental housing nearby Shunning Road so that he can continuously rely on his auntie, who lives in Yuen Chou Public Housing Estate in Sham Shui Po, to look after his son. That would be the most affordable care work for a labor worker like him and his wife.

Ironically, quite a few individuals have managed to obtain rehousing through other venues rather than URA. Mr. Tan, one among many affected tenants, was able to receive cash compensation before he was displaced. Due to his mother as a senior the whole family thus was qualified for *compassionate rehousing*. Billy, kicked out by his landlord before the resumption, was about to be granted *compassionate rehousing* due to political pressure given by legislative councilor as of June 2011. Before that, his case had been managed by three different social workers but has not made any progress. In brief, most of the few affected tenants, in this case, received public housing via their own application but URA.

I started to do some volunteer outreach work with the group during Oct-Dec 2011. Every week several members and volunteers would set up a street booth in Sham Shui Po, trying to introduce their proposal and collecting input from the passer-bys. I also participated in community tours guided by the group, given to some high school or college students. Whenever there was an event or action, Halprin would need to ask his elder sister to help looking after his child. Sometimes one of the volunteers had to pick his child up at the school and walked him to the aunty's place if Halprin was occupied by voluntary work. Without working with them, I

would not understand how much childcare was intensive and demanding, which was largely the reason why many other affected tenants could not commit themselves to community organization because most of them had similar burden. Halprin and Vivian, after all, were rare cases.

### ***7.3.2 The Dislocated***

Most tenants found it too confusing to deal with urban renewal and rehousing, especially the working class or the elderly who had less sense of power and knowledge about institutions. Even a college graduate like Maggie once told me that she could hardly understand all the procedures and ordinances. Most tenants worried the most about their entitlement to rehousing being subject to landlord's negotiation with URA/HS. They can be rehoused only when all the properties with the same building are resumed. Moreover, the public housing units available for rehousing has been far from enough.

As of the time of my fieldwork during Dec 2010-June 2011, there were still more than 100 tenants displaced from K20-23 waiting for rehousing (three years after the displacement), leaving tenants from Shunning Road project to line up further behind. Some of them were rehoused through different channels, be it their already-submitted application prior to urban renewal or the special category of *compassionate rehousing* (CR). One has to prove that she is "in imminent need of long-term housing assistance" and "have social or medical needs and the granting of CR could help solve their problems or relieve their hardships."<sup>39</sup> For the regular application, patience or luck is required; for applicants to receive CR then they need to go to social workers or local politicians to help sending a recommendation for them. All of these unknown difficulties engender anxiety, stress, and frustration. As most policies and studies focus on the result of displacement, the process of struggling was often left ignored. The following account from Billy's and another affected tenant's experiences of displacement is an attempt to understand displacement *as spatial and affective processes*.

Once in our conversation, Billy recounted the disappointing process in which tenants gradually left the group out of frustration and fear. Billy wondered, "I don't know, perhaps they were too busy, too much occupied by work. I don't know." His wonder is a difficult question. However, the fact that most tenants left the group but still managed to rent a flat in the same area,

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<sup>39</sup> The policy was initiated since 2004. See more in Social Welfare Department. [http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site\\_pubsvc/page\\_family/sub\\_listofserv/id\\_221/](http://www.swd.gov.hk/en/index/site_pubsvc/page_family/sub_listofserv/id_221/)

desperately waiting for being granted a flat in public housing, indicated the placing of Sham Shui Po as an inseparable part of their passages of moving and waiting. This speculative analysis, emerged more clearly as I visited the Ng's in their tiny living room.

Before I recalled the encounter I should explain how I met another family who used to live in the Shunning Road apartment too. Through an artist friend C, I was allowed to participate in a project curated by the Hong Kong-based Community Museum Project (CMP) for two weeks<sup>40</sup> for a research-based exhibition titled as "Dislocated" during April 2011. CMP invited an Vienna-based artist, Elke Krasny, using "walking" as a method to understand how people's everyday life unfolds between their living and work against URA-driven relocation. I joined the team of three artists, visiting three families and talked to them about the plan of walking with certain member from respective family.

Then one evening I arrived in the Ng's flat with the team, a flat of about 300 sqft where the couple and their two daughters lived. Originally from Zhau Qing, Guangdong, they immigrated to Hong Kong in 2008 through Mr. Ng's reunion with her parents, who were immigrants during late 70s. They settled into a flat on Shunning Road since it was close to where the grandparent lived. Within less than a year, they were forcedly evicted by their landlord and thus moved to the current residence. I recognized Mr. Ng at the first glance, then realized that his joining in the SRCG was shown in the documentary *Walk on! Shunning Road* but I did not mention it in the beginning of our conversation.

Apparently, Mr. Ng was very pleasant that evening though he just finished a long day working in a construction site in Kwun Tong. He made tea for four of us, introducing the Pu-erh tea he brought from his hometown in Zhaoqing. He talked about how tea in China is better than those in Hong Kong and how tea could help sooth the hardship of life. Mr. Ng also bought rice from China, which he considered fresher and tastier. After we scheduling the walk with Mrs. Ng, throughout the evening Mr. Ng talked about his hometown. I was expecting him to talk about his participation in SRCG but he did not. Mrs. Ng was mostly busy cooking in the kitchen while two daughters studied in their room.

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<sup>40</sup>The Community Museum Project has spent more than one year to track the home-moving process of four families from the old private buildings on Hin Wah Street, Shun Ning Street, and Hai Tan Street. The study starts from objects – comparing the discarded and the newly acquired, the space usage in old and new homes, the storage solutions, and the change in social network.

In the conversation that night, Mr. Ng mentioned a few times that he wanted to return to Zhaoqing someday. His strong attachment with his hometown was picked up by the exhibition and presented with a theme: “Home is Elsewhere.” In the graphical documentation, the artists noticed how the family did not buy much furniture to organize their belongings but adopted a “piling style-storage,” using plastics and foldable containers instead. The idea of “home elsewhere” is provoking because it not only speaks to immigrant’s enduring attachment with hometown but also resonates with many affected tenants’ experiences of repetitive displacement. The same kind of “piling style-storage,” according to my observations of other poor tenants, reflected their ad-hoc response to their semi-nomad lifestyle in the city.

In the next morning, without Mr. Ng’s presence, we walked with Mrs. Ng and her daughter to the kindergarden and went grocery shopping. Mrs. Ng just quitted her job due to her pregnancy. She aspired to work after giving birth to her third kids. Within our conversation, it is obvious that Mrs. Ng has been largely confined to domestic sphere although she worked as part-time waitress on and off. She did not explore other areas beyond the neighborhood and would rather buy clothing or accessories back *home* since she knows better where to get the best deal.

It was Mr. Ng who dealt with the issue of eviction as a result of urban renewal. Along with several other tenants, Mr. Ng once appealed to the court but lost the case and thereby the cash compensation or entitlement to expedited rehousing. Then he and others gradually withdrew their participation in the SRCG. Giving up to fight against the regime of property, the couple now expect their waiting for public housing via regular application could end sooner with the new-born’s coming- the larger the household is the more points the application would be rated.

It is beyond my capability to answer Billy’s question about why his comrades left one by one. But one thing appears to be central to actions or inactions of these individuals and their families, is the strong expectation of “*Shang Lou*”, a colloquial term in Hong Kong, literally meaning “moving up,” referred to as being accommodated in public housing. Unlike Melissa or others mentioned in chapter four, many of these tenants fought against URA with a hope to obtain entitlements to “moving up.” On that note, insurgent action is apparently only one among many means to achieve the goal and this might be the reason why some people left the group when there was no immediate reward. It would be unfair to say that they did not care about

social justice. With these comings and goings, many of them strived for their family's footing in the city. The effort requires almost non-stop hard work, which did not allow them to invest time in unpredictable actions. Their aspiration for better life is just similar to Billy's persistent goal, as he sighed, "*we don't want money. We'd just hope for 'moving up,' we cannot bear anymore this continuous rent increase that can happen anytime without any reason*" (interview, 27/12/2010). It seems to me the imaginary power of "moving up" is critical to understanding a kind of unorganized, arduous urban politics from below.

#### ***7.4 Passive Resistance in Waiting for Moving Up***

"Moving up" to public housing was not viewed as positive in the beginning of building multiple-story settlements in Hong Kong. During the 1950s-1960s, those who were removed from the illegal dwellings considered them as "vertical slums" rather than desirable dwellings. Scholars who examined the establishment of public housing along with squatter clearance during the 1950s-1960s paid close attention to how a colonial project of creating modern citizens was wrapped into the housing construction in the name of pursuing sanitation and hygiene (I. C. IP, 2004; Jones, 2003). Focusing more on contingencies in institutional responses to crisis, Smart (2006) painted a different picture in which the colonial government gradually learn to gain their control over urban land in sheltering refugees after several notable slum fires during the 1950s.

Following the chaotic times, the public housing-new towns program during the 1970s intended more than shelter provision. It was considered a civic project that deliberately attempted to give a stake in Hong Kong to an immigrant population escaping from the stricken mainland. As Castells, Goh and Konk noted, "In fact, being placed on the public housing waiting list became the real declaration of a Hong Kong citizenship" (1990, p. 150). In the following decades, the move to public housing was also considered a first step toward pursuing further success of gaining of home ownership in the territory as mentioned in previous chapters.

Today, "moving up" does not necessarily suggest a smooth process of social mobilization along the property ladder. In the aforementioned cases, it is rather more about *moving away* from undesired conditions, that is, "repetitive displacement." More importantly, but less recognized, is the multiple works of "displacement" in carescapes. It involves not only securing a shelter but also coordination between places of employment and care work. In this light, it is worth noting

how tenants affected by urban renewal longed for “moving up/away” from displacement but not “moving away” from Sham Shui Po. The combination of aspiration and resistance is related to the politics and geographies of public housing in Hong Kong. To be more specific, it is about the politics of ordering in allocating public housing and *where*.

***Long waiting list for public housing: the politics of ordering***

According to current public housing policy, all the applicants aged under 65 are not qualified for housing estates in the “city” (meaning Hong Kong island and Kowloon). Tenants affected by urban renewal, however, are granted “privilege” to stay “in the same area” and allegedly expedited allocation. The rehousing strategy thus appealed to many low income families, especially immigrants, in which case they can have more job opportunities and meanwhile continue their network in the city. As Emily noted,

*Most of tenants I’ve come across were waiting (for public housing). It is relatively easier for them to be rehoused by being displaced (by URA) than to wait in line for no end. In better scenarios, they could be rehoused in Nam Cheong Estate or Pak Shek Estate (both in Sham Shui Po). Like some displaced from K20-23 were rehoused in Un Chau Estate (in Sham Shui Po), which was considered the best arrangement (Emily, social worker hired by the K20-23 project during 2003-2007, 10/06/2011).*

It is worth noting how exactly the waiting line has looked in the past decade. The HA has been staging its fulfillment of keeping the waiting time within three years since Tsang Yam-Kuen’s governance in 2005. However, as the received wisdom suggests, the devil lives in the details. As of June 2011, among the 155,600 applicants on the waiting list<sup>41</sup>, there were 89,000 “common applicants” while 66,000 were categorized as “Non-elderly One-person” (defined as single applicant who is aged below 58)<sup>42</sup> applicants and thus excluded to the promise of “three-year-moving-up.” To put it simply, 42.2% of the applicants were not counted into the promise.

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<sup>41</sup> This breakdown was adopted from (SHC 51/2011) *Memo for Subsidized Housing Committee at Housing Society: Housing Allocation of Public Housing Applicants*. The number of applicants has increased, reaching more than 176,000 as of April 2012.

<sup>42</sup> The strategic creation of new category in reordering applicants has been implemented since September 2009.

Numerous civic reports and press coverage continuously suggested that it is common for an applicant to wait for five to ten years in getting an adequate placement.

Thus it follows that an expedited rehousing granted in URA rehousing is appealing to those waiting desperately. In reality, the expedition turns out to be a challenge to the authorities given the fact that public housing stock cannot match with the need. An important reason, as the councilor Mr. Leung noted, is attributed to the authorities' failure to build rehousing buildings as promised in the delegation of three hectare of West Kowloon reclamation area for the construction. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, the project was cancelled due to the housing crisis during 2002. The shortage of housing stock therefore influenced the authorities capability to rehouse affected tenants in Sham Shui Po.

In criticizing URA's rehousing arrangement, Mr. Leung suggested that,

*According to the report URA presented to our panel (on urban renewal), more than hundred tenants have not been rehoused and it is due to Housing Society not having adequate flats in Sham Shui Po. But it is extremely important to rehouse them in the same district especially for the lower class and the elderly! It is probably easier for younger generation to adapt...But for those who have retired, it is much easier and more affordable for them to live here. Public transportation is much more accessible and goods are much cheaper. They may be poor but still can manage to survive here. They won't get lost even if they closed their eyes while walking. If they were to relocate in another district, a lot of them would find it challenging to find their way home! (interview, 12/03/2010)*

The Sham Shui Po district council released several studies about issues occurring in the process of resumption and rehousing of tenants.<sup>43</sup> Based on a district-wide survey targeting residents and tenants being affected by URA projects (as of August 2005), it suggested that more than 40% of owner residents were relocated in "new apartments"- meaning those aged above 30 years- whereas only 3% of them could afford places in apartments aged below 10 years. Many

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<sup>43</sup> Urban Renewal Panel in Sham Shui Po District Council. (Feb 2007). *Living in Sham Shui Po: Where to go in the midst of urban renewal?* Released and sponsored by Sham Shui Po district council. There were other three assessments on the project on Shunning Road/ Po On Road and Fuk Wing Street/ Fuk Wah Street focused on experiences of property owners in 2011.

property owners complained about not given enough compensation and time to prepare for relocation while most tenants were extremely distressed. More than 80% of shop tenants mentioned their economic loss and roughly 22.2% had to finish their business. Nearly 70% of resident tenants reported economic difficulty caused by displacement and roughly 98% of them, many of whom are public housing applicants, do not want to move away from Sham Shui Po.

### ***Moving Up but not Moving Away***

It is not uncommon to see tenants being assigned to public housing in Tin Shui Wai but giving it up and waiting for next assignments.<sup>44</sup> The persistence of moving up but not moving away, is not only about Sham Shui Po but also about the delegated destination where they rejected to go. During 2003-2007, several cases of poverty and domestic violence-related suicides occurring in public housing estates in Tin Shui Wai struck the society, then unveiled the issues of isolation and exclusion of the poor living in remote public housing. As one among nine new towns, Tin Shui Wai was built on land reclaimed from fishery ponds and developed into a town of roughly 300,000 as of 2011. The high concentration of public housing estates in the town housed more than 165,000 residents, constituting 61.57% of its population. The 11 estates were all built in north Tin Shui Wai, which made its concentration even striking (higher than 87%).

The stigmatized label like “city of misery”<sup>45</sup> had been cast onto people and place. In recent years, immigrants and social welfare dependents had been associated with residents in Tin Shui Wai. The society used it as an example to talk about emerging problems in Tung Chung,<sup>46</sup> another area where public housing estates concentrated.

Several studies pointed out the lack of employment and public amenities contributing to the misery (Cho, 2010).<sup>47</sup> Another line of discussion tends to blame the victims being backward, lazy and too much relying on social welfare. Either discourse renders a picture of a hopeless

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<sup>44</sup> According to current public housing policy, each applicant can receive no more than three assignments until she accepts the allocation.

<sup>45</sup> The label was given by Carrie Lam, then the secretary of the civic service, in her comments on Tong Chung coping social problems occurred to Tin Shui Wai. Lam’s comment aroused widespread debates. See more in (09/07/2006) *Carrie Lam: Tong Chung, Next City of Misery Just Like Tin Shui Wai*. Mingpao.

<sup>46</sup> *Another segregated town in Tong Chung* (June 01, 2006) Mingpao.

<sup>47</sup> For instance, there had been no public library or clinic in north Tin Shui Wai until 2006. The new Tin Shui Wai public library is to be completed in 2012 and the construction of Tin Shui Wai Hospital will be completed by 2016.

place where immigrants segregated. The imaginary power of place, therefore, discouraged many tenants living in Sham Shui Po to receive the allocation in outlying areas. It is especially the case for immigrant families for fear of losing connection and further stigma imposed on them.

Fear as such is not totally imaginary. According to Emily, who relocated her new position in the branch office of The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (HKCSS) in Tin Shui Wai since 2008, the issues bringing about unemployment have reached beyond individual conditions and performance. Not only long-time commute and transportation expense are disincentives, these public housing tenants also need to counter biases held by many employers, who often would not consider hiring residents in Tin Shui Wai to take up dispatch assignments because they presupposed them to be not responsive, as demanding higher wage to cover transportation cost, and assumed they had certain undesirable characteristics. As Emily noted.

*Many employers just did not consider at all once they know that you live in Tin Shui Wai.*

*Most dispatch assignments required prompt responses and they just want the employed workers to arrive as soon as possible. (interview, 10/06/2011)*

The issue of segregation and criminalization in Tin Shui Wai drew the director Ann Hui to present a film to shed light on the humanistic quality of the place in 2008 (see Fig.7.20). Since then, increasing investment from the government or non-government sectors have gradually improved Tin Shui Wai, yet the social stigma has been too powerful and continued to be a task facing social workers and the communities. On that note, the collective rejection of “moving north” to Tin Shui Wai to become victims is quite understandable.

As the twin issues of poverty and the wealth gap becoming increasingly serious, the public housing issue has become an unavoidable issue for the new-elected executive Leung Chun Yin to address. A new five-year-plan for building public housing was released and supposedly a total of about 75,000 public rental flats will be built by the HA during the five-year period (see table 7.6). However, numbers are not a promise for the adequacy of the housing provision. As the table shows, spatial distribution of new public housing is quite uneven. Despite a notable share delegated to Sham Shui Po may respond to local housing needs, the continuous displacement caused by ongoing redevelopment would not wane in short time.

Table 7.6 *The Five-Year-Plan for building public housing (2011-2016)*

Flat Units: (A)+(B)+(C)=75700 (2011-2016)				
year	(A)Urban Area	(B)Extended urban Area	(C)New Territories	Sham Shui Po ( % of the annual total of (A))
2011/2012	11,200 (100%)	0	0	<b>5,600 (50%)</b>
2012/2013	7,200 (76%)	2,800 (18%)	1000 (6%)	<b>1,400 (9.2%)</b>
2013/2014	6,900 (48%)	7,400 (52%)	0	<b>1,500 (9.9%)</b>
2014/2015	7,900 (45%)	3,500 (20%)	6,300 (35%)	<b>2,800 (18.5%)</b>
2015/2016	6,500 (39%)	8,100 (48%)	2,100 (13%)	<i>no data available</i>

adopted from [CB(1) 891/10-11(05)] *Construction Plan of Public Rental Housing 2010/11-2014/15*, [SHC 51/2011] *Memo for Subsidized Housing Committee at Housing Society: Housing Allocation of Public Housing Applicants*

### ***Continuous Displacement in Relocation***

In this chapter I show how the experience of displacement often discourages the most underprivileged to voice out along with other homeowners. The intensity of stress and suffering makes me wonder if it is the lack of a relational view on agency and class that discourage us from understanding the shifting ground where tenants were floating. With debates on property right, right to (re)housing, and right to planning dominating the activist discourse, what is not fully explored is the complex conditions of existence and emotions constituted by and constitutive of *displacement*. I agree with Wai Yi Lee’s argument that community conservation and resistance against urban renewal should be considered as *class talks* rather than *conservation talks*.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless, the formation of “class,” as I encountered it in Sham Shui Po, requires alternative understanding beyond capitalist



Fig. 7.20 *The Way We Are* (2008). Directed by Ann Hui. Hong Kong.

<sup>48</sup> In “15 minute living circle” Lee wrote, “In old neighborhoods we saw alternatives [...] But the mainstream discourse has resisted to understand community conservation as a *class talks*. They would rather consider it as harmless *conservation talks*. Even some activists friends were buying into this account.” Wai Yi Lee (May 2010) Issue 4. Published on line at World Labour. [online available] [www. worldlabour. org](http://www.worldlabour.org)

economy. J.K. Gibson-Graham's relational approach to *class processes* and *class emotions* is helpful here. It sees class processes always partially and incompletely, "constituted by their 'class' and 'nonclass' conditions of existence" (2000, p. 7). Moreover, it pays attention to the often-neglected "class emotions" in class talks. What is appropriate *class emotions* remains open, as noted, "We cannot presume that any particular emotions, including ones like anger, resignation, or resentment that are typically associated with class, are uniquely appropriate class emotions"(Gibson-Graham, et al, 2000, p. 7).

In this light, the constantly living experience of displacement in the varied conditions of existence calls for attention. The stress and anxiety arising from fear for displacement-especially displacement from carescapes in which housing is an important component- is deepened by the boundaries demarcated between citizens and non-citizens. Meanwhile, the politics of public housing allocation and urban renewal as mentioned earlier enabled the experience of displacement interwoven with a shared aspiration of "moving up," appealing to a heterogeneous group of marginalized people to concentrate in places like Sham Shui Po, with a hope for an ultimate secured settlement after they pay the rent during waiting. This kind of waiting in suffering has its geographies- it is only possible in certain places where tenants were allowed to make do for fulfilling their arduous care work. The dialectics between "displacement" and "aspiration for moving up", thus constitute a kind of "class emotions" in the politics of urban redevelopment. It involves interrogations of the dynamics between property and citizenship and the displacement of care in urban governance and planning.

The making of class emotions as such is far from the left-wing vision of de-commodification of housing urged by some activists. It gives up questioning the deregulation of private rental housing. Yet it shows that the seemingly passive waiting in Sham Shui Po embodied alternative resistance against dispossession and displacement of care- a keyword to understand their relationships with the city from their viewpoints. Their struggle reflects the continuous *displacement in relocation* in careless planning and housing policy as we can see with new arrivals being housed in Tin Shui Wai where they can neither pursue the well-being supposedly promised by *citizenship* nor run away from the derogatory labeling.

## Chapter Eight

### Can Traveling Mothers Ever Arrive? Cross-Border Care Practices

#### 8.1 “How to Fix a Broken Bicycle in Hong Kong?”

It was seven forty in the morning at a public housing estate in Wong Tai Sin. With the *Dislocated* team, four of us were waiting for our informant, Amy, who was displaced from Sham Shui Po in 2005 and finally was rehoused in 2009. Unexpectedly, Amy could not spend time with us because she got a call from work on a day off. Amy apologized and, instead, introduced us to her mom along with her daughter. Thus we realized that her mom, grandma Lily in her 60s, was the one taking care of the child so that Amy could commit herself to a full-time job. Lily cheerfully invited us to go grocery shopping with her and allowed us to ask about her experiences in the neighborhood.

What is not so common about Lily is that she is a Two-Way Permit holder (TWPH) and thus can stay in Hong Kong for no more than 90 days. She returns to Shaoguan (see Fig. 8.1) to renew her visa again and again with intervals of 2-3 weeks. She has been traveling across the border over the past three years. Lily noted,

*The kid's dad would not share the*

*burden of child care...not even over the weekend. He always excuses himself that he has to visit his parents in Zhong Shan (another major city in Guangdong). Thus I came here to help. (interview, 21/04/2011)*

With implicit complaints about her son-in-law, Lily explained how she went about everyday life according to other family members' schedule. She did most of the chores and cared for the child, with works ranging from daily grocery shopping, preparing meals, cleaning, taking the child to daycare center and picking her up before dinner, etc.



Fig. 8. 1 Migrant Cities in Pearl River Delta  
Major cities and townships where immigrant mothers came from in Pearl River Delta.

On the way to the market, Lily noted, *“This is the park where I can have some downtime after sending the kid to the daycare...But it is difficult to find women who understand me in the neighborhood.”* I could not fully understand her point until entering the market, seeing Lily difficultly negotiating with the hawkers. Apparently, Lily had hard time communicating with those who only spoke Cantonese.<sup>1</sup> Strikingly, the hawker gave her a face and would not patiently repeat the price. Similar interactions happened again later. Regarding her everyday interaction with Hong Kongers, Lily said, *“I learned the surrounding (of the public housing) from my daughter. But she did not have enough time to guide me navigating the city.”* Most of the time Lily lived in the confine between their apartment, the wet market, day-care center, and the park. In our conversation regarding her sense of place, Lily raised a question:

*My daughter bought a bike for my granddaughter and she like it very much. But the bike was broken more than a month ago. We don't know where or how to fix the bike. My son-in-law does not care though the kid has been so upset. I even brought a pump from Shaoguan...but it did not work. Do you have any suggestion? Otherwise we may just bring it back to Shaoguan to seek help.*

Lily's question and anxiety made me wonder how many more women like her were on their way to do care work without necessary social network. What kind of urban experiences are these cross-border caregivers participating when being most likely invisible to policy makers and planners? Thus I pay special attention to the trajectories of both the immigrants and the set of caring practices traveling with them, and how these border-crossings were intersected by urban redevelopment. In this chapter, “field” is not considered being bounded but rather porous and open, connected by a chain of practice (Massey, 2004, p.82, pp. 86-87) It is an attempt to see the porous borders as moving and transforming with these travelers, both in physical and conceptual terms, becoming a significant part of urban transformation.

## ***8.2 The making of new immigrants as locust in Hong Kong***

Migrants from the mainland are always subject to gendered, stereotyped representation, such as “country bumpkins” in TV series during the 1950s and 1960s (Ma, 1999); “Ah Chann”(uneducated people) or “ Dai Luk Por”(a derogatory term for mainland women) during

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<sup>1</sup> Being a Taiwanese, I can easily communicate with Lily in Mandarin.

the 80s and 90s (Huang, 2011; Yang, 2006), some of which remain at work in everyday interaction. Despite increasing economic integration between Hong Kong and the PRD region in post-1997 times, cross-border politics and regional identity remain in flux and continuously shapes new immigrants's positioning in Hong Kong.

The drama of “6,000 HKD handout (\$774)” triggered by the “2011-2012 Budget summary” announced on 23 February 2011 was one pernicious case in point. Initially, it was a protest against the government's budget plan that ignore issues of income inequality and inflation despite the record high \$74.8 billion in reserve (after 7 straight years of budget surplus) and caused about 10,000 protesters taking it to the street. Facing unprecedented outrage, the government eventually decided to return some of the budget surplus to the community by handing out 6,000 HKD in cash after some hectic discussion.<sup>2</sup> Yet the announcement did not stop the widely-spread anger, some of which then shifted to issue of whether or not new immigrants should receive the cash handout like all those permanent residents aged 18 or above (6.1M permanent residents are qualified, including 670,000 emigrants as estimated). Those who self-identified as hard-working, tax-payer Hong Kongers insisted that the exclusion of 310,000 new arrivals was justifiable since new arrivals were mainly dependents who did not contribute as much.

From spring through summer in 2011, the debate prevailed TV and internet. A song entitled “Under the Sky of Locust” became a hit on youtube.<sup>3</sup> It explicitly blamed the mainland Chinese for their welfare dependency just like the crowd of locusts sweeping the city.

The kind of discriminatory debates unveiled an ongoing project of (b)ordering in between Hong Kong and the mainland and was the cash handout was just one among many cases.



Fig. 8.2 “*Watch out for locust*”  
Illustration circulated on the internet to express antagonism against new arrivals.

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<sup>2</sup> The Financial Secretary John Tsang proposed that \$3.1 billion put into a Mandatory Provident Fund, which evoked unexpected outrage.

<sup>3</sup> The song was at first announced on HKGolden.COM- the most popular online forum where the younger attend. As it was shared on youtube, there were more than 377,000 clips as of 10/05/2011. [online available] <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aWZFgkJNxDM>

Another lasting issue was sparked by increasing mainland mothers taking over maternity beds in the city. The phenomenon was highly criticized by locals, especially “Hong Kong mommys.” By “pregnant locusts,” Hong Kongers attached a specific stigma to mainland mothers, without differentiating new arrival moms who are One Way Permit holders from the growing mainlanders who come for maternity care via Individual Visit Scheme (IVS).<sup>4</sup> A mix of discriminatory imageries were conflated into offensive lyrics that blamed all mainlanders as being essentially rapacious. The popularity of the song indicated the increasingly divided society.<sup>5</sup>

There is always anxiety over limited resources in densely-populated Hong Kong. It is best instantiated by the continued debate over *right of abode*, which aroused enormous fear for the estimated 1.67 million mainlanders settling into the territory in 10 years.<sup>6</sup> In addition, the presence of mounting mainland tourists since 2003 has become notable in everyday life. Worse still, there was the rapid increase of “mainland pregnant woman” coming to Hong Kong to give birth to their babies who are then entitled to right of abode (based on a combination of *jus soli* and *jus sanguinis* principles as mentioned in Chapter 1).

From 2006 to 2010, “mainland babies” rose from 16,044 to 39,822, about 45% of the 88,500 babies born in Hong Kong of the year: 6,169 born to Hong Kong fathers and 32,653 born to mainland parents, of which the latter comprises 36.9% of the sum of babies born in that year. Despite raising fees of maternity care as a filter since 2007,<sup>7</sup> the numbers kept increasing during the past five years (see table 8.1), which seriously affected availability of the beds to “local mommies.” Meanwhile, pregnant new arrival women suffered from the “punitive fee raise” that caused their families financial crisis. Some of them even considered abortion.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> From July 2003 to March 2010, residents of all of the 21 cities in Guangdong and 28 other cities can visit Hong Kong on an individual basis via IVS. Visitors are permitted to stay for no more than seven days upon each entry.

<sup>5</sup> (2011/03/13). How did 6000 HKD Cash Handout Create Social Divides? Mingpao. See another example in (2011/03/02). *A Messy Decision Process of 6000 HKD Cash Handout Caused Confusion*. Business Times Com HK.

<sup>6</sup> Appendix for LegCo, (Feb 5, 1999) “Right of Abode: Children born to Hong Kongers in the mainland” [CB(2)1846/98-99/CB2/H/1].

<sup>7</sup> Since 2007, the fee for mainlander women to give birth at public hospitals in Hong Kong rose from \$2,580 to \$5,031 with reservation and \$6,192 without reservation.

<sup>8</sup> See more in *That's her or You and Me: Interview with New Arrival Woman* (曹疏影; 鄧小樺 2008).

Table 8.1 “mainland babies”-babies born to mainlander mom in Hong Kong

Year	total babies	babies born to Hong Konger parents	babies born to HongKong Father and mainlander moms	babies born to mainlander parents (percentage of the year)
2001	48,400	40,590	7,190	620 (1.3%)
2002	48,500	39,994	7,256	1,250 (2.6%)
2003	46,200	36,168	7,962	2,070 (4.5%)
2004	47,900	24,902	8,896	4,102 (8.6%)
2005	57,300	38,148	9,879	9,273 (16.2%)
2006	65,800	40,318	9,438	16,044 (24.4%)
2007	69,600	42,795	7,989	18,816 (27%)
2008	78,700	46,203	7,228	25,269 (32.1%)
2009	82,100	46,211	6,213	29,766 (36.3%)
2010	88,500	49,678	6,169	32653 (36.9%)

source: statistics released by Department of Census and Statistics and Hong Kong Hospital Authority.

The binary constructs of “local mommies” vs “mainland pregnant women” facilitated the continuous discrimination over immigrants women. A more inclusive recognition of “cross-border families” and respective social relationships is displaced by identifying mainland pregnant women as locusts who occupied the maternity beds and resources.<sup>9</sup> The collapse of the public maternity care system quickly resonated with the growing fear. Yet the crowd of “mainland babies” did not result from single factor. Many of those middle-upper class parents were also looking after the social citizenship such as 12-year compulsory education and mobility promised by the Hong Kong passports. Partially it is related to the birth planning in Mainland China that does not allow families to have more than one child; there have been people across class taking this route. Meanwhile, some mainlander women were married to Hong Kongers but yet to obtain their permanent residency. This group, along with their transient identity, has been selectively ignored in the crisis of maternity care.

<sup>9</sup> See more in (June 5, 2011) *Increasing Mainlander Children Stay in Hong Kong for Primary Education*. Mingpao.

Since 2007, a policy change required non-qualified patients (basically non-local moms regardless of her spouse's residency) to make reservations for maternity beds and charged them \$5,031. Those who enter the hospital through emergency service need to pay \$6,192. The fee raise did not effectively stop those who can afford more than \$12,900 for medical care and travel expense to purchase Hong Kong ID for their children. Yet, the fee became a nightmare to the working class mainlander women as if they should be punished for their being non-citizen wives. While blaming the pregnant women's border-crossing, no one seems to remember that after SARS in 2003, it was the government that considered selling high-quality medical care to wealthy mainlanders a formula to boost the local economy.

From the cash handout to the maternity care crisis, new arrival women became scapegoats of short-sighted policies. Moreover, the resentment brought about conflicting ideas of population and citizenship. Conservative talks called for a stricter confinement of Hong Kong to only genuine Hong Kongers while some consider "the mainland babies" important human resources to solve the aging issue.<sup>10</sup> Yet both sides pay few attention to gender or class. Historical changes were conflated into ideological debates that are largely ruled by protectionism and conservatism.

Mei Yang, the chairperson of *New Woman Arrival League* (NWAL), shared with me how horrified she felt through out the two months of the cash handout dispute. Fighting for new arrival women for almost a decade, Yang had never experienced such a level of antagonism toward immigrants. "I received tons of phone calls and invitations to TV programs but I rejected them mostly. I was terrified..." (interview, 18/05/2011) Yang further pointed out how difficult it was for the immigrant community to defend themselves because of the fundamental unresolved question of citizenship. Yang noted,

*Facing such hatred, I cannot but talk about how us, immigrant women, have been paying our due to the society by caring for our families during our waiting for seven years to obtain permanent residency. Isn't it ironic? We oppose to the seven-year requirement from the beginning but now we have to justify our contributions by*

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<sup>10</sup> One of the best examples is Wan Chin's high-profile critiques, in which Chin emphasized "consciousness of ethnicity" and "separation principle" to manage immigration. He accused them of grabbing resources and encroaching "core value" in Hong Kong in his initiation of a series of online discussion under the rubric of *Hong Kong Autonomy Movement*, which successfully attracted a great number of young followers.

*agreeing with the policy?! [...] Don't they (Hong Kongers) know that mostly low-wage hard work are done by immigrants? When you dine in the restaurant or go to a restroom in a shopping center, those servants or cleaners are most likely new arrivals or immigrants. How can you see them as dependents?* (interview, 18/05/2011)

Whether the cash handout is a form of social welfare, a simple return of budget surplus, or a kind of economic measure to mitigate inflation, remains a puzzle. Yet Yang's comment is pointing right on the disjunction of formal citizenship with substantive citizenship resulting from polarized political philosophies; As Morris (2003) summarized, one perspective emphasizes the continuing power of the nation state while the other sees migrant's right as the manifestation of an emergent "post-national" society. The current status of Hong Kong as a special administrative area (1997-2047), however, does not fit either way.

Facing growing outrage, HKSAR cut down the quota of maternal service in public hospital for non-local pregnant women by 6,800 in 2012. Finally, it distinguished the two kinds of mainlander pregnant women in allocating quotas but insisted that mainland women married to Hong Kong residents still need to pay the much higher fee for reservation. So far how to address "mainland babies" by reconsidering "right of abode" without damaging the integrity of the Basic Law has been an wedge issue.<sup>11</sup> Before the legal talks regarding state citizenship and residency being concluded, various forms of borderings have however occurred in everyday life, seriously impacting families cross the border.

### ***8.3 Space and Geographies of Waiting***

In the introduction, I review the creation of mainlander immigrants as social subjects who travel with OWP or TWP since the cancellation of "touch base policy" in 1980.<sup>12</sup> In this section, I will trace the interwoven waiting and traveling, of which immigrants struggle in getting care work done across the border.

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<sup>11</sup> Emily Tsang (Apr 19, 2012) *Legal means' to tackle abode issue*. SCMP.

<sup>12</sup> Touch-base policy admitted anyone who had made it to land in Hong Kong successfully. By 1980, about 1,000 Mainlanders entered Hong Kong daily. The policy was ended to stem the flow of poorly educated male immigrants.

The issuing of OWP emphasizes granting approval to legitimate mainlanders in a pace that will not over-burden social and economic capability of Hong Kong. It includes three categories: children who hold *Certificates of Entitlements* (that is, the document that embodies *the right of abode*), spouses, and other dependents. The quota granted varied over the decades from 75 to 150 and remains as 150 since 1995. About 55,000 people were admitted through annually, which has become the main source of population growth in the post-handover era.

Despite its important role in terms of immigration, the authority in charge of issuing OWP does not locate in Hong Kong in both geographic and administrative sense. Eligible applicants wait in line for OWP issued by the local public security bureau at their place of household registration based on the quota system (Leung & Lee, 2005). Despite some objective criterion established such as age, waiting period, etc., it was unclear how credits was calculated until a rating system was publicized in 2008.<sup>13</sup> Local bureaucracy matters in managing the waiting- a spouse from the adjacent Guangdong province has to wait about 7 years to obtain OWP while those in other provinces wait for about 5 years (Leung & Lee, 2005). I was told that the issuing of OWP in Shanwei is particularly corruptive (interview, 26/08/2011). Furthermore, what follows OWP is more waiting- the spouses and other dependents may obtain permanent residency upon residing in Hong Kong for a continuous period of no less than 7 years.

The profile of the particular immigration from the mainland has been shifting over the years. During the 70s-80s, it was mainly young male immigrants and later on increasing elderlies coming to reunite with their children. Since the early 90s, the composition of dependents have become mainly young to middle-aged women with their children. According to most recent statistics,<sup>14</sup> for those aged 25–44, female OWPHs made up 37.7% in 2006 and 47.7% in Q1 2011- most of them were wives of Hong Kong men. The picture generated from statistics, however, fails to include two groups of immigrant women: 1) those who are removed from the category of “new arrivals” as soon as they stay in Hong Kong for more than seven years; 2) those who are considered as “visitors” such as Lily who enter the territory via TWP. The administrative

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<sup>13</sup> See more in *Exploring Hong Kong Immigration Policy through OWP (2008)*. Published by Bauhinia Research Foundation.

<sup>14</sup> *Home Affairs Department and Immigration Department Statistics on New Arrivals from the Mainland (First Quarter of 2011)*.

term of “new arrivals” may not effectively capture the complexity of immigration but label immigrants with a derogatory image. Moreover, it does not attend to the fact that many immigrants cannot assimilate despite increasing years of residence due to the urban-rural differences (Siu & Ku, 2008, p. 120). Taken together, the clandestine existence of “visitors” as residents and the neglect of the “once-new arrivals” call into question the official definition of immigration subjects by their legal status of right-of-abode or their point of arrival in Hong Kong.

The dynamic, relational nature of border-crossings cannot be captured without considering the processes of traveling and settling down. Statistics and rating system treat immigrants as individuals while in reality they mostly seek a life strategy along with their families in various ways (Leung & Lee, 2005). They were faced with numerous challenges, including childcare and elderly care, education, jobs, and more importantly, housing. To coordinate these works and cost across the border, family caregivers are often settling into Hong Kong without being recognized as residents. “Split family,” as another coping strategy, has existed for a long time (2008). However, balancing work and family caregiving needs across the border is difficult, which often demands constantly shifting geographies of care and housing. Moreover, the unstable nature of waiting affects long-term social participation, which reinforces the social and economic marginalization of mainland immigrants and caused uneasy relationships within the family (Newendorp, 2008). After fulfilling all the waiting, immigrants often silently disappeared among the growing poor, which further makes the aforementioned issues invisible, especially how the immigrants and their families were deprived during complex processes of waiting.<sup>15</sup> It has to do with the strong social bias and antagonism against new arrivals as shown in the cash handout drama. Besides, arrivals were identified by most Hong Kongers as rural, less-civilized, and of political differences. Thus most immigrants lost motives to speak out as they were eager to get rid of the stigmatized identity.

Space and geographies of waiting, including a myriad of space and geographies articulated by those who travel with transitory status, are central to understanding the complexity

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<sup>15</sup> According to the statistic cited in note 14 (Q1 2011), the greatest difficulty encountered by respondents in Q1 2011 was employment (51.4%), followed by living environment (37.1%) and language (26.7%).

of immigration processes. The meaning of “immigration” and “border-crossing” should be challenged, as Doreen Massey (2005, p. 183) calls into question the closure of identity in a territorialized space of bounded places by seeing space as relational and as sphere of multiplicity . Seeing space as relational, we may “spatialize the story” that enables “an understanding of its positionality, its geographical embeddedness; an understanding of the spatiality of the production of knowledge itself” (Siu& Ku, 2008, p. 142). In the light, I consider their *dual waitings*-- waiting for OWP and for HK ID- not as an exceptional condition but as transitional and transnational living permeated by a multitude of urban transformation across the border.

Following these travelers, I am especially interested in how they organize everyday practices around the rather mobile homespace- in other words, how they mobilize their organization of family in response to the constantly changing residency. Thus homespace is both a substantive space and a social place, an articulation of past and current practices that brought about border-crossings. As is the case in Newendorp’s (2008) analysis, many immigrant women experienced difficulty in “moving from less-dense rural area to densely-populated Kowloon” and found their dreamspace lost by the time they arrived in Hong Kong. Crowding, clatter, and control overcast homespace in her description of how immigrants lived.<sup>16</sup> She observes that many immigrant women dream of “gaining access to a modern, low rent, public housing unit” (Newendorp, 2008, p. 122).

The unrealized dream reminds us how much housing is a social-political issue but oftentimes wrapped as a technical subject into rational planning. Alan Smart’s (2003). work studied how immigrants are housed in urban context, questioning the social exclusion embedded in current distribution of public housing. Being rejected by public housing, most immigrants followed their familial network or better access to jobs to settle down in relatively shabby apartments, many of which concentrated in Kwun Tong and Sham Shui Po and are mostly more than 30 to 40 years old (Wong, 2007). According to the most recent statistics, Kwun Tong

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<sup>16</sup> Newendorp presented how life in a compact rooms can become space of conflicts. Most immigrant women experienced disputes with their husband or in-laws due to limited space for co-residence.

(12.2%), Sham Shui Po (9.1%) and Yuen Long (8.4%) were the top three districts where most immigrant respondents resided.<sup>17</sup>

What's missing in current scholarship is the convergence of urban redevelopment with complex processes of migration and as a result multiple exclusion due to social and institutional *othering* and *bordering*. As illustrated in Chapter 7, URA promises to arrange expedited allocation of public housing to displaced tenants but new arrivals are excluded.<sup>18</sup> Some of them may join with their husbands and children who are qualified for rehousing but the new arrival herself is excluded in measuring the household size. The experiences of living in crowded space in old neighborhoods under the shadow of repetitive displacement caused by redevelopment, combined into struggling moments integral to their *dual or multiple waitings* for visa, residency, and entitlements to social citizenship. In what follows I present ethnographic study of those spatial moments.

#### ***8.4 Cross-border Spatial Practices of Care***

Space and geographies of waiting are overlapped with transnational care practices. Drawing upon patterns of practices observed in my fieldwork and narratives and oral histories collected by SOCO, NWAL, and the like (何振宇, 易汶健, & 劉浩源, 2009; 趙文宗 & 陳高凌, 2008). I take heed of how care is centered in immigrant women's lives. A recent survey on childcare suggests that gaps in child care provision and affordability are major issues facing Hong Kong parents (more than 70% of the respondents reported that moms were the main care takers).<sup>19</sup> Only children age 3-6 year old can join different programs of limited hours. For those who are aged 7-12 years old, the parents are often required to pay for after-school care that is only available from a few educational institutes. Most full-time working parents cannot make up the gap without kin support. As for affordability, parents spend at least \$180 per month for child care of 3 hours daily. For those who need daily child care of 4-11 hour or so, the monthly

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<sup>17</sup> Besides, the proportion of respondents living in Kwun Tong and Sham Shui Po has been comparatively high from 2006 to Q1 2011. See its source in note 17.

<sup>18</sup> The common waiting time varies from three years to more than ten years depending upon the applicant's status and co-residents in the household.

<sup>19</sup> "Survey on Child Care"(07/2010). A joint project by Hong Kong Women Worker's Association(HKWVA), Neighborhood & Worker's Service Centre, NWAL, Women in Poverty Concern Society, and CSSA Alliance. I also interviewed with director in HKWVA.

expense is at least \$664, which is relatively unaffordable to low income families of monthly income ranging from \$916 to \$1,773.<sup>20</sup> To them, child care is obviously a heavy burden not to mention immigrant mothers who have less availability of kin network or jobs.

In the two sets of struggling caring relations as follows, I illustrate various *dynamics of traveling* that are constituted by and constitutive of care and space.

- **Care Givers Who Are In Need of Care**

In continuing the story about Amy and her mom, Lily, I show their strategies of fulfilling care work inter-generationally and transnationally. Amy came from rural area of Guangdong. Similar to many floating worker women (Rofel, 1999; Pun, 2005), she left home for working in Shunde after high school during the early 90s. Working and living in a sneaker factory for years (collaboratively owned by Hong Kong and local investors), she was introduced to her current Hong Kong husband,<sup>21</sup> whose parents migrated to Hong Kong from Zhong Shan, a major city nearby Shunde in late 70s. The couple maintained cross-border relationships for five years as Amy remained working in Shunde until getting married in 1999. It took Amy about five years to obtain OWP and finally settled down in Hong Kong in 2003.

Since then, Amy lived in a flat (of 260 sqft) in a tenement apartment with her husband in Sham Shui Po where he has been working and living for decades. She did not experience difficulties of living with in-laws as many did since her in-laws had *moved back* to Zhong Shan for retirement. Yet housing soon became a big problem since the couple's flat was unfortunately included in URA's redevelopment. With her husband and her child, the three-person household was qualified for rehousing in a two-person subsidized rental unit. Some of their neighbors, who could not bear the uncertain waiting period, moved out before receiving relocation. Considering moving cost and unstable rental market then, the couple decided to wait. It took them more than three years to be relocated in Wong Tai Sin in 2011.

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<sup>20</sup> Low income families refer to those families with a monthly income less than 50% of the household median income. Statistics is adopted from Quarterly Report on General Household Survey (July to September 2010).

<sup>21</sup> Amy's husband can be considered on among those sojourners who worked and traveled regularly between Guangdong province and Hong Kong. The cohort emerged partially response to a shifting of manufacturing from Hong Kong to major cities in PRD. Moreover, many of them belong to the cohort of illegal immigrants who were granted residency during late 1970s to early 1980s or their offsprings, and old working men who look across border for more affordable wives (Su & Ku 2008).

During the seven years living in Sham Shui Po, Amy gave birth to her daughter while she tried her best to remain employed to improve family income. Regarding work and family, Amy noted,

*To be honest, I am not very healthy. I would have stayed home if my husband can earn more. You know, in Hong Kong, it would embarrass our kid if we lived on Comprehensive Social Security Aid (CSSA)... I want to work while I am able to since I may not be able to later.....(interview, 25/08/2011)*

In the regard, she went to massage training classes and afterward obtained a certificate, working in parlors throughout Hong Kong. Currently, Amy is a massager in a high-end massage parlor in Causeway Bay. She has worked on and off among different parlors in the past years due to unstable health condition. Meanwhile, she went to a public hospital for weekly physical therapy to treat her waist pain caused by vocational illness.

On her health and work, Amy noted,

*I am always very tired. But I cannot but continue work and for this I ask my mom to come to take care of my children. I know she experienced some adjustment problems. [...] She herself is not very healthy, either. (interview, 25/08/2011)*

During the conversation in the parlor, she was actually giving me a massage given that most of her time is occupied by work and domestic work that was the only way I can talk to her without any interruption. Amy kept emphasizing the importance of “health” in securing one’s livelihood and happiness and kindly asked me to pay more attention to my body.

*...In this city you have to be very healthy to live a better life otherwise you cannot survive the enormous pressure. It was much more relaxed when I worked in Shunde though my wage then was much lower...*

she sighed and paused, then noted that,

*Here, everybody is running and they would turn back and stare at you if you are a much slower runner. What can you do? I have to run with everyone. It’s a city where you have to be rich if you want to live well...(interview, 25/08/2011)*

Amy’s mother asked her to have another baby. She disagreed, “*What for? It’s not doing any good to myself or to the baby. I told my mom that I would rather my daughter not to have*

*babies in the future.*” She seems unhappy even though her capability of securing a full-time job and getting her mom to help is a dream for many mainlander women. Being in the city for eight years and finally became a permanent resident in 2010, her view toward immigration surprised me, as noted, “*After all, I think people can travel to other places for leisure but not for living. People should stay where you were born.*” Her account implied regret in reflecting on her migration within PRD region.

Lily, Amy’s mom, appears more optimistic. In response to her request of fixing the bike, my social worker friend and I guided her to a bike shop within 15 minute walking distance from where her daughter lived. On the way she excitingly talked about how she tried her best to visually “observe” tips in grocery shopping since she could not speak local language. It was not as difficult in Sham Shui Po, as she recalled,

*There were much more mainlanders moms like me so that I would not feel so bored. It was easier to chat with shop owners on the street or friends met in the park. Here, I sit in the park by myself when my granddaughter go to schools. Same in the apartment since no one is home.* (interview, 21/04/2011)

Lily preferred living in a place like Sham Shui Po for its better social network as a combination of concentration of immigrants, vibrant small business managed by grassroots people(some of whom were early immigrants), and friendly pedestrian environment. Even though the current flat Amy’s family stay is slightly larger, newer, lifted, and better managed by HS, Lily found the neighborhood much less appealing.

It is difficult for me to imagine a granny like her traveling (7-9 hour for single trip, combining rides of rail, subway, and bus) back and forth between Shaoguan and Hong Kong every three months. Lily seems quite comfortable in traveling though. Lily noted that

*There were some women like me (meaning in similar age and traveling for similar reasons) on the same bus and I know several of them. When living in Sham Shui Po, I sometimes managed to travel with several I know.* (interview, 21/04/2011)

However, it was not easy to for her to become friends with those women since many of them were picked up by their daughters upon arriving at the station. As Lily said, “...*on the bus, it is usually quiet. I cannot sleep on the bus but weirdly, very few people talk...*” She said in a way

responding to my question about her understanding of other traveling mainlander women's experiences in Hong Kong.

Lily also talked about lives of her other three children who live in their own houses in Shaoguan. There she lives with her son and in-laws. “*My room at home is equal to the whole flat of Amy's in Hong Kong!*” She noted and laughed. Indeed, it is rather crowded for four people to live in a flat that is meant for two.<sup>22</sup> Despite the crowdedness, through home visits I can see how hard she managed her daughter's flat with everything nice and neat. Lily enjoys sharing with me a variety of food from her hometown.

*You know what? My son-in-law showed no interest in tasting the sausage I exhaustingly brought from home. He does not know how to appreciate[...] Well, he is not at home for dinner most of the time even though he ends his work much earlier than my daughter. I cook for them all anyway.* (interview, 27/04/2011)

Other than food, she also brought items that she considered cheaper, with better quality, or less accessible due to the language barrier in Hong Kong. She managed to reduce obstacles in homemaking as much as possible.

Lily and Amy's experiences, along with Amy's in-laws' earlier immigration and returns to the mainland, represent several paradigms in immigrant families across the border. Caring for Hong Kong children for their better future appears to be a belief shared among generations and parents but not so much as to the work of care. In their stories we see how practices of care, as non-paid work, are related to paid-work that fall onto family members unequally. Amy and her mom, actually are responsible for most of the care work in need. Many would assume that she had achieved what many female immigrants seek, that is, permanent residency, public housing, one free care helper, and a working husband. Yet her achievements on the surface are paid by her and her mom's hard work and extensive traveling, not to mention physical and emotional harms that are continuously burdening the two women.

The point I want to make is how family strategy is often intensively care-oriented that requires care givers do care work for others without themselves being cared for. As a massager, Amy earns wages by giving physical care to her clients while she suffers from her own health

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<sup>22</sup> Amy was not qualified as a applicant adding to their family profile since she has not achieved the seven-year requirement as the time of rehousing.

problems. Without her mom, Lily, coming across the border at the price of her own retirement life, Amy would not be able to remain employed, acting as the main bread earner since her husband, as a middle-aged worker struggling in a declining industry sector, has had a hard time finding better jobs since late 90s. Last but no less important, Amy has not informed her mom of her job because she is worried about her mom seeing massage as a sex-related job, which implicitly shows her uneasy caring for her mom.

- **Displaced Care**

Before meeting Vivian in person, I knew her name from the headline “Single Mother with Three Children Sit In Against URA” and several video clips that featured her sit-in protest as mentioned earlier.<sup>23</sup> By the time URA announced the assumption of five tenement apartments on Shunning Road in 2009, Vivian and her children had lived there for more than three years. In the clip, Vivian told stories of her travels from Guangzhou to Hong Kong and her goal to bring up her children to become righteous people. Referring to the unjust dislocation, Vivian noted, “*I believe that parent’s behavior heavily influence their children. Thus I cannot accept unjust arrangement otherwise by conforming to unjust matters I am demonstrating wrong deeds to my children.*” Her powerful comments nicely associated confronting dislocation and parenting, attracted my interest in following up her passages.

With help from SRCG and NWAL (of which Vivian is a member), I visited Vivian at her residence. Moving from a sub-divided dwelling on Shunning Road to another rooftop dwelling in the vicinity, her footprint since 1999 was far beyond imagination. The first and foremost obstacle has to do with citizenship. As Vivian has been a TWPH and thus not qualified as a household head applicant for public housing -despite all of her children being born in Hong Kong and thus entitled to permanent residents- the family would not received rehousing arrangement by URA. It is very difficult to find someone else to become surrogate household head because anyone who joins the application has to live in with them, which is not feasible. Moreover, it would ironically challenge Vivian’s being as caregiver and family head in Hong Kong as far Vivian as concerned.

Vivian grew up in Dongguan without her parent’s attendance because her father immigrated to Hong Kong right before the enforcement of touch-base policy in 1980 and then

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<sup>23</sup> (17/04/2010). *Single Mother with Three Kids Sit In Against URA*. Mingpao.

her mom and younger brother followed. Vivian was left home due to the immigration policy that only allowed mainlander parents to take one child along (under 14-year-old). Until Vivian became an undergraduate in Guangzhou, her parents went back to visit her sometimes. As the “right of abode” debate emerged in 1999, Vivian’s mom was highly worried that her daughter may miss her only chance if the final interpretation of the Basic Law by the Standing Committee in Beijing overthrew previous approval for admitting mainland children born to Hong Kong parents. She asked Vivian to skip her final examination to arrive in Hong Kong before the final interpretation. Since then Vivian started her cross-border trips that she never actively planned for.

Throughout the years, Vivian experienced marriage, giving birth to her children, and divorce. Once she lived in a tenement apartment in Sham Shui Po with her parents before they finally moved into public housing in another district. She did not move with them considering the limited size of the three-people-household flat. Before giving birth to her first daughter in 2003, she travelled back and forth between Hong Kong and Guangzhou, where she was married to a man from Dongguan. Her husband remained working in PRD while Vivian busily fought for “right of abode” and later settling down in Sham Shui Po for raising her children. The long separation with her husband, and partially due to her husband’s decision to seek a job in northern provinces, led to their divorce. Vivian recalled those moments and sighed, *“I live with so much hatred...But divorce is the best way. I made the decision because I cannot accept his affairs that is destined to happen.”* (interview, 26/08/2011)

Being a TWP, Vivian cannot work but stay home. The family lives on welfare granted to her three children. Accordingly, Vivian is extremely careful in making ends meet as housing and education are both necessary but pricy. After being displaced from Shunning Road, the family moved to a nearby rooftop dwelling where monthly rent is \$323 in early 2011. However, the new residence was located in one among three apartments falling prey to the *Richfield*. Vivian sighed,

*I knew about the ongoing reclamation before moving in. However, I have to take the flat since it is so difficult to find an affordable flat for four of us in Sham Shui Po especially rooftop flats. Rooftop flats are particularly good for children because it’s larger open space. Richfield and the like are everywhere... You find one or two*

*flats reclaimed by them in every old apartment here. Would you then avoid all of them so that no possibility to find any cheaper flat?* (interview, 26/08/2011)

As I visited her, her flat stood in rubbles as destruction for redevelopment had slowly started. I felt speechless for minutes, then asked if she'd ever thought of moving to other neighborhoods. Vivian sighed again,

*All of my children have registered in either pre-school or elementary school in this area.*

*Don't you know how difficult for me to secure a spot for them beforehand? It's almost impossible for me to relocate somewhere else and start it over considering their education. It's not practical nor economical to have them commute either.*  
(interview, 26/08/2011)

According to Vivian and many immigrant moms, where one lives decides one's access to specific schools and substantial routes that connect homes, schools, and bazaars where cheap grocery is available- the carescapes they carefully engage themselves with their families. In Vivian's case, though she managed to have her three children study within the same neighborhood, she still spent a lot of time walking her children to different schools. In a conversation with Vivian and Mei, they joked about how much Vivian was tanned after coming to Hong Kong due to continuous exposure to sun during the long summer time.

Vivian resonated with Amy's comment on care work. *"I am always tired. Oftentimes I freak out because my kids ignore everything I told them and would not concentrate on their homework!"* noted Vivian. She was often upset by the intensity of care work. Unlike Amy, Vivian could not seek help from her parents because her mom was too old for commuting from another district in Hong Kong. A cross-border trip ironically becomes easier than a cross-district commute if juxtaposing grandma Lily to Amy's mom, which suggests how distance/access is often subject to people's positioning in carescapes.

Vivian brings three children with her when she returns to the mainland for visa renewal every three months over the past ten years. It often takes about ten days waiting in Dongguan. During waiting, Vivian stayed in her ex-husband's house. Each trip is not only time-consuming but also pricey given four return-tickets (about \$128/800 RMB) and the visa renewal fee (\$16/100 RMB). Her friends and family often asked her to reunite with her ex-husband to get out

of the impasse, a suggestion that obviously neglect the fact that her Hong Kong children are not entitled to mainland social welfare.<sup>24</sup>

Against all odds, Vivian volunteered for her children's school in order to further her involvement in their education. But it is not as easy for her to build up social network as she expected. Though many of those parents are earlier immigrants, new arrivals, or even TWPHs like her, they hesitate to acknowledge the identity.

A policy change in earlier 2011 may grant the right of abode to adult mainland children of Hong Kongers like Vivian. As the time of writing, it is unclear how the policy works with the quota system and when exactly Vivian can stop waiting under continuously changing immigration policy. Meanwhile, redevelopment in Sham Shui Po unsettles spaces of care that she has been trying hard to maintain. Before her residency status in Hong Kong becomes recognized, she has to travel across the border again and again, strongly and independently. But to the mainstream society, she remains as a visitor or worse still, a clandestine welfare queen.

### ***8.5 Rethinking Citizenship in Transnational Care Work***

The stories above demonstrated ways in which the reunion immigration were spatially and temporally unfolded by transnational care work, constantly moving against practices of “bordering, ordering and othering”(van Houtum & van Naerssen, 2002) It does not necessarily start with one's border crossing or end with one's obtaining her residency. In what follows I further discuss how transnational care work was confronted by state techniques of managing citizenship in three folds and close by requesting for rethinking citizenship through care.

- **(B)ordering**

The family unity is considered an important part of human rights that entitles family members of citizens to immigrate. But the register, especially related to spouse reunion, assumes a certain type of familial or marital relation that does not recognize the immigrant's multiple roles and relationships with the host society. The rigid practices of categorizing and ordering do

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<sup>24</sup> The immobility of social welfare under the *Hukou*-unique household-registration system in China-has created many problems to migrant workers within China. See Dorothy Solinger's (1999) work for more extensive discussion on social conflicts and exclusion caused by the implementation of *Hukou* that ascribes different benefits to people born in different places. Yet its impact across border is less noticed. See more in *Local citizenship: welfare reform urban/rural status, and exclusion in China* (Smart & Smart, 2001) .

not take into account the dynamism of long-term waiting, which turns many women into victims of problematic marriages or unpredictable changes that may redefine their families.

As of 2011, there are at least 5,000-10,000 mainland single mothers who are not qualified for OWP due to changes of their marital status, such as divorce or passing away of their husbands.<sup>25</sup> Moving or staying like a visitor is not exactly subject to one's independent choices, as Apple noted, but a circuitous roadmap shaped by the *hukou* system and immigrant women's extensive migratory process (as migrant workers) in PRD region before they harbored in Hong Kong (interview, 17/05/2011). Many of them can not return to their mainland hometowns easily. On the one hand, Hong Kong children are not entitled to *hukou* as soon as they obtain HK ID, which disenfranchise them of free education and social security on the mainland. On the other hand, most women gradually lose their social capital in the course of migration. It thus becomes no less challenging for an immigrant woman to resettle in her mainland *home*.

Social welfare plays a role in the process of "(b)ordering." About 80% of the aforementioned TWPHs live on social welfare granted to their children. New arrivals, once were eligible CSSA recipients with residency in Hong Kong for more than one year, lost their entitlements after the CSSA reform in 2004. The change was considered a rational adjustment to save public spending (allegedly \$90.3M). It also implies that whoever wants to immigrate should be more economically independent. It particularly appealed to the increasing social anxiety over new arrivals, engaging discourses of "welfare queen" as is the case in USA.

The reform, nonetheless, neglects the caring relations needed to raise these children and provides no guarantee for new arrival families that may suffer from losing family-head, health problems, or any other accidents that endanger their financial situations. A survey conducted by SOCO (Dec 2009-Dec 2010) suggested that more than 90% of TWAHs had children younger than 12-year-old and 70% of them were single mothers.<sup>26</sup> While 95% of them were employed before migration, less than 4% of them had full-time jobs and about 60% of them did not work in Hong Kong- actually "visitors" were not allowed to work. The different registers which ascribe specific entitlements to them and their children do not recognize the inherently dynamic nature

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<sup>25</sup> *Cross-border single-mom traveling across border for their kids*. (08/03/2011) Southern Metropolis Weekly.

<sup>26</sup> SOCO (2011) *Impacts of Depriving New Arrival Women's Entitlement to CSSA*.

of relationships as spatial and temporal. Instead, the technics of (b)ordering seemingly deprive them and their children on both sides of the border unequally, leaving the traveling moms make do in between two systems in one city.

- **Knowledge-Power in Parenting**

Many immigrant mothers found themselves lacking enough knowledge to deliver adequate child care. Compared to the more obvious visa matters, what is less discussed is the degree to which the “love’s labor” (Kittay, 1999) of the immigrant mother is rendered with a specific knowledge/power relations (Foucault & Gordon, 1980) detected by the mainstream society’s particular view of parenting for a qualified citizen.

In my conversation with Ivy, a social worker from HKWWA, she talked about problems of mainland grandmas taking care of children that she observed in Kwun Tong.

*Despite a great help to their working daughters (immigrant moms), many mainland grandmas do not know how to raise kids properly.....for example, owing to lack of knowledge of nutrition and health or ways of parenting, some of them allow those kids to have unlimited junk food as long as they do not make trouble. (interview, 23/05/2011)*

Mainly, her comments concerned the children’s upbringing rather than blamed the caregivers intentionally. But her judgement unconsciously complied with the aforementioned disdain for mainlander women. Ironically, immigrant caregivers shared the view. Many of them found it difficult to guide their children finishing homework. Wendy and Apple, both single mothers, talked about the stress of parenting. Apple noted,

*In Hong Kong, kids have to learn English when they are just three. I know no English since I did not even finish high school. English education in the mainland was not as strong too. The best I can do is to seek help from NWAL or see if I can find a job that allows me to send him to a cram school when he is older. (interview, 17/05/2011)*

Wendy once showed me the English tutorial she bought in order to improve her son’s learning. However, she herself cannot make use of the tutorial and her only hope is to ask the

young secretary in NWAL or me to help. Yet many immigrant women do not have the same access to resources like Apple or Wendy does.

The stress was deepened as the performance of children became a source of discrimination (何潔雲, 1999; 盧家泰, 溫艾狄, & 鍾佩玲, 1998). It was often framed as an issue of “adaptation,” with which immigrant children were considered as lacking social ability, falling behind due to inappropriate parenting. Nevertheless, by “adaptation” we are, again, blaming the victims. Parenting issues occur to non-immigrant families too. Yet, their frustration is less exposed because many of them have less problem sending their children to cram schools or hiring tutors to make up the gaps.

Tina remembered well her struggle of parenting when her children were younger. Yet her two sons’ self-made academic achievement-both of them admitted to renowned universities-made her very content today. Still, Tina felt sorry when she recalled that

*When they came to visit their younger cousins in Hong Kong in 1997 before immigration, they were teased by their cousins as “country bumpkins.” Since then the stigma remains in their mind. (interview, 24/05/2011)*

The cousins mentioned were actually the second generation of immigrants born to Tina’s cousins, who came to Hong Kong during the early 80s. Tina’s cousins, however, distinguished themselves from Tina and her children. Tina was upset by that but she proudly told me, “Interesting enough, now they came to me and asked my children to tutor their kids.” Her comments point to the importance of learning in both the everyday lives of immigrant families and the dynamics between inter-generational immigrants.

Yet, cases like Tina are rare. Among the more than hundred members of NWAL, only four immigrant children were admitted to universities as of 2011. It seems not possible to expect each individual to overcome structural problems by diligent work.

- **Undervalued Care Work in Unrecognized Border Crossings**

As mentioned earlier, care work is constantly undervalued and gendered, considered as by-default responsibility of women in domestic sphere. The ideology continuously forces working mothers to decrease their devotion to jobs or shift the work to other care workers

(whether paid or unpaid). Some mothers take up the care work themselves but then fall into the category of nonproductive populace.

Considering the historical impasse, some scholars pointed out the underlying issue being lack of low-cost child care but fell short of challenging the undervaluation of care work. In Lee's study of electronic factories in Hong Kong and in Shenzhen during the 90s (Lee, 1997), she noted that the availability of assistance from kin was critical factors chartering the various patterns of working mothers' wage employment then. It might as well attach them to a particular kind of employment that perpetuate familism and gender in its recognition of familial responsibility in organizing the labour process. The power of familism and gender remains; the same kind of recognition of care was absent from workplace in Hong Kong today. Encouragement of female labor participation predicated on privatized care has been further individualized and taken for granted.

Thus many immigrant women sought help from kin across the border, or involuntarily became welfare dependents to fulfill non-paid care work.<sup>27</sup> Cases like Amy who asked for "visitors" to care for her children or some women who sent babies back to mainland homes were common. Some advocacy groups have asked for increasing public investment in child care for years.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, among the loosely-formed alliance fighting for affordable child care, a critical question is raised by a social work, Emily:

*Can't childcare- caring for one's own child be considered a decent job? Is it necessarily correct to facilitate women's labour participation by providing subsidized care like the Scandinavian countries? (interview, 10/06/2011)*

Arguably, the pursuit for subsidized child care in the service of work implicitly confirmed that care work is less valuable, an issue has been revisited in the US recently. The former director of policy planning at the State Department wrote in an article entitled "Why Women Still Can't

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<sup>27</sup> Some researchers, like Wong (2007), argue that the reliance of immigrants on informal kin network indicates that they conform to self-sufficiency, and a strong culture of Chinese familism. But I see the trend less as inherited cultural disposition as to produced by the mainstream discourses, ex. policy narratives and educational discourses.

<sup>28</sup> According to a survey conducted by NWAL and HKWWA(2010), 15.69% of the informants expected the government to subsidize care service, especially regarding immediate care service for accidents, after school care, and extending care service to age group from 7 to 16.

Have It All,”<sup>29</sup> emphasizing the structural problem that makes it impossible for women to act as both a professional and a caring mother. Her point about the necessity to reorganize the work-home relations is well taken. Nevertheless, she did not seem to reflect on the inherent exploitation in the realignment of care by hiring undervalued care work. The debates cannot be settled without a better appreciation of the value of care.

From the perspective of care ethics, care work should not be understood as confined to domestic sphere but a network of dependencies (Fraser & Gordon, 1994) that is complex and dynamic. The exclusion of care from labour participation is further abused when the limited understanding of employment is considered indicative of immigrants’ adaptation to the local and exercises of citizenship.<sup>30</sup> On that note, a benign call for immigrant’s women’s right to work may risk perpetuating the exclusion of care from work and public sphere.

Political discussion over care and work is largely shaped by the restructuring economy in global cities, but the involvement of class relations and immigration are often ignored (Tronto, 2002). The mainstream society often fails to recognize that immigrants’ interwoven lives, as noted, “have contributed to Hong Kong’s success as much as deepened their vulnerabilities”(H. F. Siu & Ku, 2008). Furthermore, it is widely ignored that much of the presence of mainland women in Hong Kong were interconnected with historical and spatial trajectories of shifting labour and capital within PRD and Hong Kong, weaving with familial and caring relations. These mainland women were not individuals coming out of nowhere. Their varied passages were constituted by and constitutive of historiographies of the post-war colonial Hong Kong and emergent capitalism in China (see Fig. 8.3 below).

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<sup>29</sup> Ann-Marie Slaughter, (July/August 2012) *Why Women Still Can't Have it all?* The Atlantic.

<sup>30</sup> According to Census data in 2006, the labour force participation rates for OWPHs at all age-sex groups were lower than that for the whole population, except for the group of female OWPHs aged over 65 (45.7% vs 60.3%) See more in *2006 By Census: Thematic Report: People Having Resided in Hong Kong for Less than Seven Years*.

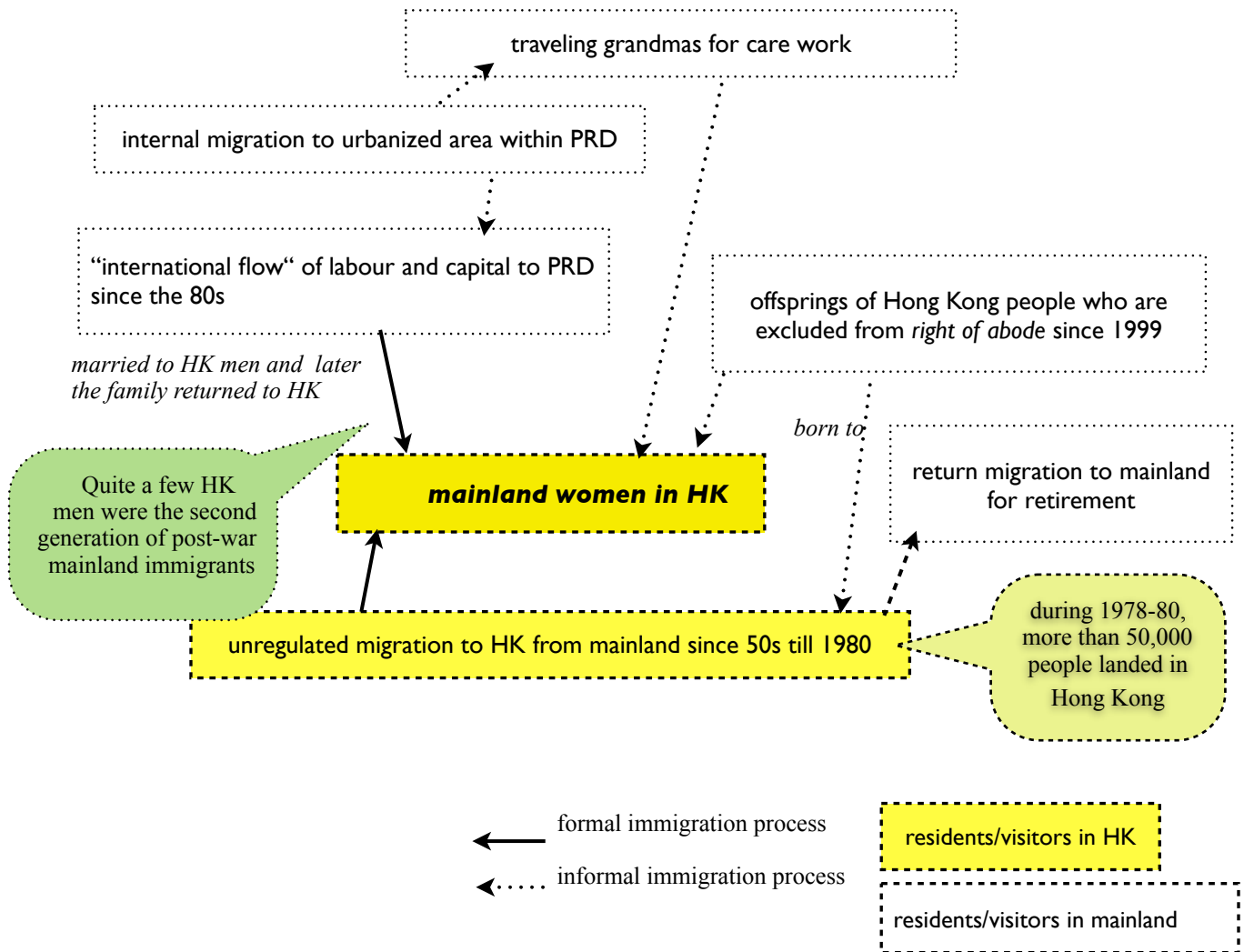


Fig 8.3 Trajectories of flow that brought about mainland women in HK

### ***Rethinking Citizenship through Care***

*Women's access to the rights of citizenship is different from men's, and mediated by men.*

(Anderson, 2000, p.186)

*Women's political standing rests on a major paradox; they have been excluded and included on the basis of the very same capacities and attributes*

(Pateman 1992:19 qtd. in Anderson, 2000, p. 186).

Emphasizing “substantive citizenship” as an active practice rather than passive attainment sheds light on the links between citizenship and care (Anderson, 2000; Sevenhuijsen, 1998). Citizenship, as participation in the public arena, indeed, presupposes and depends on the private and in a sense care workers, whether paid or non-paid workers, can be seen as indirectly participating in the public world of official employment and political meetings. Yet, care as *de facto* practice of citizenship has been mostly unrecognized, and moreover, devalued in two folds: 1) it is often discounted or even criminalized as the dependency relations crisscrossed by national borders due to the non-citizen status of the worker; 2) it is constantly mediated by both their husbands and the economically capable and culturally superior “Hong Kong moms”- a social construct with which the identification subjects the meaningful, biological caring relations to professionalization of paid care work and the greater goal of fostering qualified citizenry. Hence, immigrant moms in Hong Kong have been excluded and included on the basis of the very same capacities and attributes.

Newendorp's study argues that the exclusion of mainland women in citizenship is linked to the degree to which Hong Kongers distinguish themselves from the mainlanders as people "who have been socialized in significantly different ideologies of citizenship, presenting a major challenge to Hong Kong views of belongings" (2008, p. 259). These social imaginaries of belonging flow in everyday life as depicted in this chapter, constantly shaping exercises of citizenship from human interactions to local politics and ambivalent governance of the state. As Newendorp (2008, p. 259) notes, “Thus, just as mainland immigrants' engagements with Hong Kong people demonstrate the power of localized ideologies of belonging on their migration experiences, these rifts also expose the rifts that exist in Hong Kong's social and cultural

landscape of membership and belonging" These rifts embedded in differentiated citizenship without leaving space for care work and caring relations across the border, become fault lines where social conflicts give rise to a politics of hatred (as it has been).

Unlike the Filipino maids who were at least considered as fulfilling patriotic duty of "a modern day-heroes,"(Ong, 2009, p. 162), the mainland women struggling between low-paid or non-paid care work in Hong Kong are neither treated as qualified citizens by the advanced economy, nor in her own mainland home town. It is not at all that a transnational practice of Neo-slavery encouraged by nationalism is desirable. Nevertheless, those traveling moms were caught in between state borders without their labor participation being appreciated by an identifiable community. In a way they automatically became non-citizens when they take up responsibilities of care regardless what visas they held. Where care is discounted, oppression and exclusion arise from the denial of seeing caring as reciprocal, reproductive relations between the care workers and the cared-for. As Jacqueline Bhabha (2009) sharply observes, the one-way descending flow of familial transmission of citizenship that discounts the child citizenship's right to reunification and care, is in itself an attack on birthright citizenship. There is a need to rethink the transmission of citizenship through care. As the boundary between Hong Kong and Mainland China increasingly becomes a center of attention, it is worth asking if the complex issues of urban redevelopment depicted so far, in terms of "expatriation of city" and "displacement of care," can be controlled within a rigid border. One shall think whether the already hollow-out transnational remaking of city actually keeps the city mobile, further away from the impossible dream of building an ideal citizenry which never exists.

## 9. Conclusion

Before I conclude my journey, I first make a slight detour, juxtaposing dwelling forms in the contested borderland with those threatened by urban renewal in city center. In so doing I examine how the notion of “a better home” feeds into the Neoliberal planning paradigm. Then I probe the constructs of dependency and autonomy on two levels- among citizens and non-citizens and among city states- and argue that seeking legitimacy of the state by demarcating boundaries and excluding undesirable subjects has produced poverty and displacement rather than sound democracy and wellbeing for citizens on the move. By mobilizing *carescapes*, I finally provide accounts that point to the epistemological power of care ethics and urge replacing care into our understanding of cities and citizenship.

### ***9.1 A Better Home, Where and How?***

In the last few weeks of my fieldwork in 2011, a friend of mine kindly let me stay in her flat to save some rent. Located in Yuen Long, it is relatively far from the city center compared to my previous accommodation in Sham Shui Po. My friend, just like many local residents, takes the express bus to Kowloon or Hong Kong Island. The average commute takes approximately 50-70 minutes, at the cost of \$ 2.79-- more than enough for a basic meal. The housing estate is a typical private development resulting from the popular Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) model. TOD, considered an ideal strategy to decentralize the population crowding in Kowloon, has been widely applied in the construction of West Rail Line and expansion of metro network in the new territories in the past decade.

My friend’s flat belongs to the second phase of the YOHO TOWN, a project developed by *Sun Hung Kai* Properties and modeled after the Tokyo Midtown in Japan. It will eventually contain about 6,000 residential units in 33-40 story towers in three phases. Each phase contains one shopping center and about 2,000 flats, most of which are two-bedroom units that are favorable to the middle-class families and presumably cross-border investors. (See Fig. 9.1)

But the size of two-bedroom flats in Hong Kong is hardly half of their counterpart across the Pacific in US or Canada. “Bedroom,” as one Filipino engineer working as an expat in the city mocked, is at best “a room for a bed.” The prototypical compact flat requires inhabitants to

adjust their conceptualization of home space because one will find it challenging to put a study desk in her own flat. Instead, the estate has a private “club house” where the residents can access a variety of educational and recreational facilities, including a common study room, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a play room for children, piano practice rooms, wi-fi, and so on-- basically a thorough externalization of domestic functions to make up the insufficient space of individual flats but without the feminist spirit of socializing care appearing in the US during 1890-1920s (Hayden, 1982). There are at least 50-80 janitors and service workers at each private estate to maintain its operation. The ownership-residents pay the monthly management fee of \$232.2, which includes the clubhouse memberships and other services such as security, cleaning, mailing, and so on. The fee varies depending upon the size and age of the buildings and usually can be equivalent to the rent of a sub-divided room in Sham Shui Po.

What I experienced is reportedly a dwelling type that many middle class households have dreamed of since the late 70s. During the period, I learned to go about daily activities in the club house. For a few weeks, I went to the study room for desktop research and found myself competing with a group of high school students in preparation for university entrance exams to



Fig. 9.1 High-rise residential buildings in Yuen Long, New Territories. Photo taken on 2 June 2011.

get a desk those days. It is a well-designed, air-conditioned environment of about 30 desks, which apparently could not serve all the residents.

Questions about home and lifestyle struck me when I watched some video clips about the everyday lives of the informal rooftop dwellings published by V-artivists in the study room. Seeing those under-privileged children running on the rooftop, I could not but compare them with those children who were playing next to the study room, attended by their moms or foreign maids in YOHO Town. Now and then, I wonder, whether the high-rise lifestyle offered by TOD-projects is what the vast majority in Hong Kong or elsewhere should look after, thus leaving the city center to the expats and the corporate. Is it adequate to encourage every household to mobilize itself to settle into the kind of private estate as achieving better quality of life? Numerous TOD-developments are looming the North Eastern New Territories, which supposedly can accommodate more than 150,000 people. How can one position herself in the midst of deregulation of planning, privatization of care, and financialization of housing across the old neighborhoods and New territories? Since when has housing, the once crucial reproductive element to ensure the wellbeing of laborers and success of the industrial economy, gradually become a detached, expensive “home” alienated from resident’s caring and economic activities, and moreover, away from community? Throughout this research, I have been trying to answer this question in my investigation of the redevelopment of the city through *care*. Yet, it seems fair to suggest that the pursuit for “A Better Home” has become an atomized thinking of “home” imbued with a neoliberal ethic of citizenship, which is not only detached from a vision of a collective future but also realized at the cost of care.

### **9.2. *Displacing Care: Remaking a city without dependents?***

The neglect of care in urban development is taken for granted as much as Joan Tronto (Green & Lawson, 2011) points out, we “prefer to ignore routine forms of care,” which brings about profound implications. Failing to take into account spatial organization and basic room for care, global cities like Hong Kong are faced with unprecedented challenges to sustaining a viable urban agenda and ensuring survival space for their citizens who are constantly on the move.

The long-overdue population policy for Hong Kong was eventually announced in the end of May, 2012. It warns that Hong Kong's population would be aging fast; economically inactive people will outnumber active ones in five years as a combined result of the low fertility coupled with high life expectancy.<sup>1</sup> The main discourse, nevertheless, implicitly blames the delayed marriage and young couples not willing to give birth regardless of the worsening of sterile urban conditions. Space for care is a key in shaping demography and livelihood as discussed in the preceding chapters, but is totally ignored by the population policy.

The issue of becoming an “aging city” or “childless city,” is not only occurring in Hong Kong though. In London, scholars have noticed the same issue in relation to professionalization of the city and expensive housing prices (Hamnett, 2003). In the US, the issue of vibrant cities ironically becoming childless has attracted attention recently, such as in San Francisco, Portland, Boston, and Seattle.<sup>2</sup> Seattle, the city where I have been working on the project for years, is said to be a place where dogs outnumbered children<sup>3</sup>- a saying that echoes how mainlander women ridicule Hong Kong women’s enthusiasm for cats. City officials attribute it to the complex, interlocking formulations of densification of vertical housing, professionalization of workforce, gentrification, all of which together drive out children by making the neighborhoods too expensive for young families.<sup>4</sup> Transformation of the built environment, as I argued previously, involves circulation of rent and translation of care transnationally but has been unattended. It is impossible to shape a more family-friendly environment<sup>5</sup> if public discussion is limited to encouraging male spouses to share more care work or call for reorganization of work hours

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<sup>1</sup> It is projected that by 2020, the economic dependency ratio of Hong Kong would reach 1,042 (per 1,000 economically active persons). p.vii. in *Population Policy Progress Report 2012*. The fertility rate of Hong Kong has remained below the replacement level of 2,100 live births per 1,000 women since 1980 and is projected to remain low.

<sup>2</sup> The same issue had not surfaced in New York and Los Angeles as much partially thank to the higher fertility of their large immigrant populations.

<sup>3</sup> Seattle’s dog population is estimated to be around 140,000 and climbing while the number of children is about 93,000 and continuously dropping based on the 2010 census. See discussion in Jennifer Wing’s post: *Why does Seattle have so few kids and so many dogs?* [Online available] [http://kpluwonders.org/content/why-does-seattle-have-so-few-kids-and-so-many-dogs?utm\\_source=Facebook&utm\\_medium=Social&utm\\_campaign=FBKPLU9](http://kpluwonders.org/content/why-does-seattle-have-so-few-kids-and-so-many-dogs?utm_source=Facebook&utm_medium=Social&utm_campaign=FBKPLU9)

<sup>4</sup> Timothy Egan, March 24, 2005. *Vibrant Cities Find One Thing Missing: Children*. NYTimes.

<sup>5</sup> (Jun 12, 2012). *More family-friendly policies could increase fertility*. SCMP.

without connecting rent and care.<sup>6</sup> A sterile urban condition is a *spatial* problem, which can't be understood without recognizing the undervaluing of care and overpricing of properties of particular urban forms. It explains why some policy makers carelessly come up with measures that do not address but displace “care.”

Accordingly, the popular planning strategy that favors wealthy, children-free people in densifying urban neighborhoods makes the housing market more unaccessible. In Hong Kong, the secretary for Housing and Transportation, Anthony Cheung, considers transforming vacant industrial buildings into “dormitories for young singles” (July 7, 2012). Elsewhere in New York, mayor Bloomberg announces the “*Pilot Program to Address Need for Smaller Apartments for the 1.8 Million One- to Two-Person Households in New York City.*”<sup>7</sup> Indeed, adequate size of home is arguably subject to changing needs and social norm. But a more pressing issue that occurs across borders, one would argue, is the rocketing housing market twisted by cross-border investment and financialization as discussed in Chapter 5.

The struggling couple mentioned in the introduction, Mr. and Mrs. W, expect their children to graduate from college in five years while they themselves cannot help becoming the middle-age group whose productivity in need of improvement according to demographer's analysis. Can they overcome the polarizing job market and housing inequality in Hong Kong?<sup>8</sup> While TOD is deemed as an effective strategy to improve housing affordability -the basic logic being replacing the locational disadvantage of suburban housing by greater mobility, it is essentially an attempt to move low income people away from the city. The pro-TOD development finds echoes all over the world as is the case of London where Sir Peter Hall quotes the historical argument of Alfred Marshall (1884) that the poor people should move out to places “where they'll get better lives for themselves and their kids” (Imrie, Lees & Raco, 2009, p. 33).

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<sup>6</sup> See more discussion in a widely-debated article: Anne M. Slaughter: (July/Aug 2012) *Why Women Still Can't Have It All*. The Atlantic.

<sup>7</sup> City governmental news release. (July 9, 2012) Mayor Bloomberg Announces New Competition to Develop Innovative Apartment Model for Small Households. [Online available] <http://www.nyc.gov/html/hpd/html/pr2012/pr-07-09-12.shtml> Accessed on July 24 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Allegedly, it takes more than eleven years for an median-income household to save all of their income (\$2,464 per month as of 1st Q in 2011) without expense to purchase a flat of about 400 sq ft in the urban area. The Center for Quality of Life. (2012) Hong Kong Institute of Asia Pacific, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

One extreme example is the most recent policy aimed at housing the homeless families by expelling them from London to suburban towns or even Manchester.<sup>9</sup> Seemingly, the disappearance of urban public housing is considered as a historically unavoidable trend from either the progressive or conservative perspective. But my research suggests that greater physical mobility deprived communities of their social mobilities across race, class, and borders.

The logic of moving people around for “getting a better life” is displacing “the problem” rather than addressing it as we can find in the extreme case in Hong Kong, where demographers in line with policy makers continuously promote the idea that the elderly can consider moving across the border to enjoy a more affordable retirement life in the mainland. I argue that it is inherently flawed in conceptualizing the problem by demographic traits. It can be exemplified by the announcement of the “Guangdong Scheme” in 2012, which aims to enable 30,000 eligible Hong Kong elderly people to receive a full-year payment of *Old Age Allowance* in Guangdong or Fujian without returning to Hong Kong. The policy has been criticized as a sneaky strategy to encourage the elderly to give up their entitlements to public housing in Hong Kong. More ironically, the scheme does not seem to pick up the increasing elderly return-migration due to the rapid increase of living expense across the border.<sup>10</sup> To tackle the aging population by simply displacing the problem out of the territory of Hong Kong is pragmatically unfeasible and theoretically invalid.

The essentialist reading of population by gender or age in relation to poverty can be misleading and produces more demands for departmentalized care provisions, which, however, can hardly mitigate the loss of a nurturing environment. As shown in the preceding chapters, massive urban redevelopment caused large-scale displacement of relationships that would harm those caretakers and those who live depending on them. The devastating implications are directly reflected by the displacement of care in policies and the built environment as illustrated in the demolition of community network in Chapter 4 and Chapter 7.

The “problem of dependents,” as current policies insist, has been considered as a problem of not making full use of the youth, female and older populations. Nevertheless, most of the

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<sup>9</sup> Irene Baque. (Nov 4, 2012) *Homeless families to be expelled from London by councils*. The Guardian.

<sup>10</sup> Ming Yeung. (June 22, 2012) *High living costs drive elderly back to Hong Kong*. China Daily.

hardest work is done by many elders and female workers, especially female immigrants or “visitors.” The problem is not that they are not working but the chain of care work being underpaid and exploited.<sup>11</sup> Failing to recognize how care has been delivered, the authorities are determined to turn the unproductive dependents into a work force and, continuously misunderstanding *the problem*, create subjects to fill in those categories.

The same is the case when the population policy holds differential attitudes toward transnationality to build a city without dependents. In contrast to the local dependents to be *displaced* or *mobilized*, young, foreign talents were considered significant resources to import to enable an immediate contribution to the economy. In addition to talent, what is highly expected is the “contacts and connections” of overseas talents- especially from the Mainland.<sup>12</sup>

Meanwhile, it disfavors other transnational communities who contribute to the society in non-economic ways, such as dependents of foreign domestic workers, or family members of mainland immigrants.<sup>13</sup> Discrimination along race-ethnicity and class has been normalized under the seemingly neutral concepts of “productivity” and “dependency.” Differential arrangements as such are designed in ways in which individuals of different traits could be evaluated and ordered and their labor to fulfill needs for care could be extracted and exploited.<sup>14</sup> The extent to which care is displaced requires a re-centering of care in reflecting how the social/the spatial/the city is reorganized (Green & Lawson, 2011).

### ***9.3 Rethinking Cities through Carescapes***

The denial of carescapes in mid-term or long-term city plans projects a daunting future. Throughout this project, I recognize the agencies of actors as much as the structural problems in place and argue for a renewed conceptualization of the city by care. Rethinking cities through

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, the unemployment rate of the age group of 60 and above is only 1.9%, much lower than those between 35-59 (varying from 2.2%-3.6%), the youth unemployment rate is the highest (15-19, 11.2%). Source: Quarterly Report on General Household Survey, October to December, 2011, Census and Statistics Department. Another line about the calculation not counting the retired people.

<sup>12</sup> From Policy, S. C. o. P. (2012). *Steering Committee on Population Policy Progress Report*. Hong Kong: The Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. p. 78

<sup>13</sup> Grace Tsoi (Jul 26, 2012) *Identity Crisis*. Hong Kong Magazine Online.[Online available] <http://hk.asia-city.com/city-living/article/identity-crisis> (Accessed on 31 July 2012).

<sup>14</sup> Increasingly, policies have been created in order to take in overseas and Mainland talents at an early stage. See more in Population Policy Progress Report 2012.

carescapes cannot immediately generate actions but "*parameters of reasoning*" (Young, 2011, p. 124)(Fraser, 2009; Young, 2011) to which politicians, planners and citizens can refer in their daily practices. To sum up, I discuss how we can approach the rethinking of cities in the remaindering sections.

### **9.3.1 Rethinking Affordability and Mobility**

By connecting the productivity and the reproductivity of the city, we may understand both "affordability" and "mobility" as related and relative concepts without intrinsic merits unless being situated in carescapes. Nevertheless, as demonstrated in examining urban renewal in Hong Kong, displacement has been twisted as "mobility" to overcome the lack of affordable space for care (and thereof accessible care). It is a process of marketization of mobility in which affordability is only obtainable when one moves. Yet because we tend to forget that "mobility is practiced" we conflate "practice" with "mobility" (Cresswell & Merriman, 2011, p.5) . Moreover, who is guiding and shaping the direction of mobility in exchange for affordability? Who is taking care of the suffering resulting from practices of mobility? These pressing questions cannot be unveiled without recognizing the embeddedness of care practices.

The mainstream discourse renders the expats into international talents who can ensure a city's competitiveness. It glosses over the globe-trotters' border-crossings without revealing how much expatriation involves some necessary labor to help individuals confront the challenges of being constantly on the move. We see the normalization of "disembedding" under the guise of "flexible management" and thereof the realignment of space, service, and carework, all of which lead to a commodification of carescapes in daily lives. Thus we see the limited space and resource for care being reinterpreted as economic vehicles to attract more foreign talents. It takes many forms on various scales, as can be seen in the expansion of the educational market in addition to the housing market in Hong Kong. For example, the government aims to grow a total of 5,000 additional international school places in the next four years. Meanwhile, it encourages the children born to mainland parents living in Shenzhen to receive cross-boundary schooling to lessen the burden of local education-- the total capacity on a daily basis is expected to be around 13,000 students. The policy avoids addressing that some mainland parents would rather pay higher prices for their children to attend pricy private schools to avoid long commutes- even at

the price of purchasing properties in Hong Kong.<sup>15</sup> Again, mobility and affordability are interrelated. Promoting mobility regardless of geographies of care forces many people to find shelter in privatized care and, moreover, affordability is oftentimes reserved along the line of class rather than the state boundary.

### 9.3.2 Connecting Cities within the City

Following those being displaced from Wan Chai to Sham Shui Po and those who hesitatingly commute between the two districts in order to earn a living, geographies of urban renewal are found to occur simultaneously in multiple sites beyond the official designation of urban renewal project areas. Starting from deregulation of rent and then changes of tenure management, urban renewal actually takes place along with a renewed expectation of urban tenants and their economic participation in the city center. What is neglected is how particular chains of displacement produce particular forms of dependency in the service of urban renewal.

The process of displacement and replacement, paradoxically, generated the dialectics between anxiety about “displacement” and aspiration of “moving up but not moving away” (as noted in Chapter 7). With increase of unconnected cities within *the* city, we see social relations being twisted or deformed by fragmented spatialities for the to-be-displaced to confront the exclusion. Two interrelated problems follow suit: At first, displacement as a result of urban renewal produces economic dependents. As regards those being displaced from their survival network, they either become unemployed *welfare dependents* or carefree *service dependents* who rely on privatized care or unpaid care in order to become economically “independent.” Secondly, as much as displacement is normalized in housing and planning policies, the belief that unequal development can be overcome by mobility is perpetuated continuously. It assumes that affordable and sustainable communities exist somewhere and a renewed distribution of space and resource can be achieved by market and improvement of transportation to facilitate “humanity on the move” (Bauman, 2007, pp. 27-29).

The economic and housing problems are interwoven and cannot be easily solved by displacement. Neither can the problems be excluded from the domestic boundary since cities

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<sup>15</sup> Simpson Cheung and Cherry Wong (May 9, 2011) *Mainlanders swamp schools near border*. SCMP.

across the Shenzhen River have been mutually changing one another for decades. In other words, no one can easily settle down in the expanding transnational space whichever side of the border she moves toward. One may even wake up finding herself be displaced *at home* by the ever-enveloping transnational space, which is, perhaps, essentially the roadmap directed by urban renewal whether the policy makers acknowledge it or not. The pro-mobility discourses ignore the fact that inflation and wealth inequality are structured by regional and transnational shifts. As pointed out in Chapter 7, the trend of return migration back to Hong Kong has challenged the simple policy thinking that disposable “human waste” can be displaced somewhere.

From the preceding portraying of the interconnectedness between the developments in Central, Wan Chai, Sham Shui Po, and Tin Shui Wai, it is clear that the aforementioned logic is blind to the current of “expatriation of space.” In neighborhoods near Central, the expansion of the operational network of serviced residence has integrated residential properties into an economic circuit predicated upon expatriation. The complex network of service and carework which enable expats to confront liquid times, I suggest, brings about *exploitation in expatriation* where expats and care workers coexist without being aware of their connected positions in the production and reproduction chain. The level of exploitation at work not only damages their life space but also closes the political space where reproductive needs are interpreted and negotiated for more caring urban politics domestically and transnationally.

Hence, a focus on care is critical to a revised framework for addressing injustices and responsibilities that cut across borders (Fraser, 2009; Young 2011). We need to reconnect cities within *the city* through carescapes. It is a pressing political issue that requires more accountability to the interconnectedness among the superficially independent cosmopolitans, locals, and migrants. Urban citizens should willingly realize the degree to which their lives depend on “the Other” -- the recognition is the foundation for the politics of dependency and care. The prevailing domestic politics that deploy techniques of *Othering/Ordering/Bordering* warrant more attention, for example, the normalization of abusing Filipino maids in the recent case of a celebrity building a “toilet bed” for her maid, or as is the case in the latest census policy that aims to facilitate women with dependents to perform the “dual roles” without changing the outdated assumption that feminizes carework. More problematically, the policy target the

Mainland new arrivals coming to Hong Kong via OWP and expects them to take part in the labour market without recognizing the hard work they are already doing (Policy 2011, p. 76). The “*reification of market relations*” in blaming female migrants and the dependents with them for widening poverty “as though they are things or natural forces” (Young, 2011, p. 154), indeed, allows the government and the vast majority to avoid responsibilities of injustice.

Having said this, I argue it is the normalized denial of care and carework in need of renewed thinkings rather than the buildings to be reconstructed. Both policy reforms and ideology shall reconsider raising the next generation as a social responsibilities and stop blaming the careworkers as unproductive dependents. Care is critical to the society and should be a collective responsibility across borders. As Fineman (2004, p.289) cogently suggests, “From a philosophical perspective, it is important to point out that focusing on the caretaker’s position ultimately illuminates something general about the organization of society: what it valued and respected.” Moreover, “the migration of caregiver” and thereof care deficits being produced across the globe, be it the traveling mainland grandma or live-in FDH in Hong Kong, reveals to us that economic development of a city or a state cannot be disembedded from geographies of care if inclusive development is a desirable agenda (Lawson, 2010).

#### ***9.4 Re-Placing “Care” in Thinking City and Citizenship***

Staring from the proposal that China presented on 27 June 1984 to the British, the post-handover Hong Kong has been expected to remain in its capitalist system with the role of being “a free port and a financial centre” as the only future. Never has the belief in “*the self-confidence of the present*” been questioned; rather it has been reassured whether or not anyone sits in the pilot’s cabin, to borrow Zygmunt Bauman and Guy Debord’s words (Bauman, 2000, p. 133). Meanwhile, it is unclear who are the passengers/citizens on the vehicle. How can the capitalist city sustain its cosmopolitan status without a sustained, meaningful relation with the city dwellers? I will conclude the inquiry by replacing care in thinking city and citizenship.

##### **9.4.1 Ethics of Citizenship and the States**

In the preceding chapters, I illustrate how the Neoliberal ethics of citizenship, the self-enterprising subject as noted by Ong (2006a), is embodied in and shaped by urban

transformation. Drawing upon the sweeping trend of redevelopment catalyzed by the top-down urban renewal in Hong Kong in the past two decades, I show how the normalized conceptualization of dependency and care continuously factors in remaking the city toward a neoliberal zone where each citizen is expected to be a self-enterprising subject and where urban dwelling becomes a detached, mobile, homey service. Theorizing “carescapes” as a heuristic device, I trace the ways in which the transnational circulation of rent/capital travels across Hong Kong and its regional counterparts such as Shanghai and Singapore at the cost of care and needs. Urban redevelopment, far from being a rational planning practice, involves international speculation on rent, deployment of footloose labor, and more importantly, the multiple displacements of care: the displacement of reproductive space and nested dependency relations; the displacement of urban residents to make room for the elite visitors; the displacement of citizens on a transnational scale, including both the underprivileged migrants and the elite expatriates who struggle to stay put in the liquid labor market.

Today, citizens on the move struggle to overcome the challenges of being constantly on the move with no rest and no satisfaction of necessarily reaching the final destination. As Bauman notes, “There is no prospect of re-embeddedness at the end of the road taken by (now chronically) disembedded individuals”(2000, p. 33). The expats’ taking assignments as “involuntary nomads”(2011, p. 27), indeed, relies on re-negotiation and re-alignment of work with other laborers. The complex network of service and care work which enables expats to confront liquid times, indeed, brings about exploitation in expatriation.

Exploitation in expatriation is not limited to the urban existence of expats as independent carefree subjects. Paying attention to how care work is passed on to others and how much caring relations are suspended, we can find surprisingly similar logic of reorganization of space and care when connecting expats and low wage laborers. Of course, the scale of movement and forms of mobility may appear quite differently, such as when the laborers were required to move across street blocks and districts to deliver services, while the expats move across time zones. Nonetheless, both were subsidizing their employment by their own time and relationships, leaving their family to someone else’s care or unattended.

Moreover, the coordination among family members can be stressful and challenging, unequally bearing on women or female care workers they hired and simultaneously forming class and spatial relations among them in relation to their access to adequate care and affordable housing. These practices centered around care are significantly shaping how the private/domestic spheres relates to the public, and how the individual relates herself to the larger community. The complex chain of practices engenders constant anxiety and tension as the subjects were struggling in between falling into either the negative category of non-paid or underpaid care workers or that of illusory carefree subjects.

Taking a closer look at the social imagery of welfare dependents and immigrants intersected with the devaluation of care as shown in Chapter 7 and 8, we see the state indeed “occupies a strategic position” in the transnational care chain traveling through space. The state as “a *site* of strategic action” (Ku & Pun, 2004), challenges the Hobbesian model of social contract, operates as a shifting borderline between state and non-state with “strategic selectivity” that privileges some over others--not necessarily corresponding with nationality. Granted with different access to care and space, those mobile subjects grappled with varied forms of the state in the neglected private domain. Their daily experiences within “the state” contribute to the historical ontology of the state as “transactional reality” (Foucault, 2008: 297), which is neither as an object nor limited to an ideological effect of hegemonic practices. As Lemke interprets it, the “transactional reality” is “a dynamic ensemble of relations and synthesis that at the same time produces the institutional structure of the state and the knowledge of the state.” (2011, p. 27). Carescapes, I suggest, as important sites where citizens and non-citizens meet in transaction of reality with “the state” in flux. Tracking the multiple displacements in carescapes, we can see how various forms of states take place in the redistribution of space and care.

#### ***9.4.2 Thinking Citizenship through Care as Emotional Practice***

To illuminate the social rifts produced by the neoliberal ethics of citizenship, we shall also attend to the enduring emotional burden resulting from displacement, suspension, waiting, and moving, all of which can be affective action inseparable from care and needs. Engaging ethics of care, we recognize that these troubling feelings are not personal issues but intrinsic to social existence in crisis. In other words, care ethics offers a possibility for us to reflect on the

social relationships between citizens and non-citizens across borders and scales and challenges the epistemological status possessed by the state as it is dictated by neoliberal capitalism. *Care, as both emotion and action, is spatialized* in contemporary urban experiences but is not necessarily confined by the territorial borders.

Carescapes, as rendered by the pressing issues around housing, welfare, maternity care, and elderly care in Hong Konger's everyday life, are experienced by urban dwellers as nested moves that demand emotional engagement and disengagement. Emotions, as Jaggar suggests, "are wrongly seen as necessarily passive or involuntarily responses to the world. Rather, they are ways in which we engage actively and even construct the world"(2008, p. 692). Thus, care *as emotion and connection*, incrementally composes the urban reality we share with "others," unfolding spatially with affective actions taken by each individual in relation to those who they care for: *moving up, moving away, being marginalized, being displaced* (spatially and politically). Within the precarious carescapes, each move is vulnerable to stress and depression resulting from being displaced and stigmatized, or fear for losing capability to keep family in place to continue their daily activities. It is with the everyday practice of care as emotion that we can better understand why and how citizens react to the various forms of states and distance themselves from formal politics in particular way. The disengagement, rather than being a totally withdrawal from politics, actually breeds a particular sentiment that influences how citizens and non-citizens in Hong Kong relate themselves to the political community. The affective, spatial experiences of carrying on care against displacement of care, indeed, unsettle the carescapes where citizens and non-citizens join one another as "citizens-on-the-move." In wading the carescapes meshed with emotional practices we may recharge the seemingly ideological question of "patriotism" that has been haunting the cross-border politics between Hong Kong and China and emergent fatalist temptations elsewhere.

Lately, the unprecedented protest against the plan to indoctrinate "civic pride" and patriotism in primary education, along with the rise of pro-independence talks, brought to light Hong Konger's fear of China's extending its control over the supposedly autonomous city.<sup>16</sup> Defending the curriculum that was deemed as "brainwashing," Chief Secretary Carrie Lam, who

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<sup>16</sup> Joyce Lau (July 29, 2012) *Thousands Protest China's Plans for Hong Kong Schools*. NYTimes.

used to oversee urban renewal until the Leung administration came into place in July 2012, stated that "The focus should be to ensure teaching will achieve its desired objective: to nurture our younger generation to have the right attitude toward their family, society, and [to] know about the country."<sup>17</sup> Similar sentiments also surfaced in other debates over the development of the North Eastern New Territories bordering Shenzhen.

Viewing the situation through care, I do not agree that the collective sentiment can be reduced to an ideological rebellion against the imposed nationalism. Neither is it sufficient to frame identity politics by opposing the two systems and emphasizing the ethnic differences produced in historical processes.<sup>18</sup> I consider the politics as more fluid and messy, flowing through political and social borders in relation to the magnitude of care crisis and housing crisis in Hong Kong. Seeing care as affective practices indicative of the politics, we may better approach the complexity of the "historical ontology of the state" (Lemke, 2011, pp. 26-27) without being caught between the jurisdictional boundaries and politics of hatred. As the cases in Hong Kong exhibited, the state apparatus can hardly achieve its grand goal if people's emotional experiences around care and space are left unattended. Especially concerning certain citizens struggling with repetitive displacements and becoming refugees at homeland, it is inconceivable how "citizens-on-the-move" can actively commit themselves to "the state" when they are faced with "crisis of care."<sup>19</sup> On that note, the disconnection and contradictions between policies cannot be more obvious: Policy makers, on one hand, strategically encourage particular communities to live without regard of their attachments with the territory; on the other hand, they try hard to cultivate a sense of identity to ensure the productive citizenry staying with the dictated ideology. There is inherent irony in asking citizens to love the homeland when they, in many cases, are forced to give up their right to the city to make room for the transnational capitalist class.

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<sup>17</sup> Ivan Broadhead (04/09/2012) *Hong Kong Protests Intensify Over Communist Classes for Kids*. Voice of America.

<sup>18</sup> Yi-zheng Lian (練乙錚) (06/11/ 2012) 談護照國籍——論港人成為少數民族. The Economic Journal.

<sup>19</sup> "Crisis of care" is borrowed from Victoria Lawson, (Nov. 7, 2012) "A Crisis of Care and a Crisis of Border: Towards Caring Citizenship" Katz Lecture at University of Washington. In a way similar to how Lawson articulates the correlations between public provision of care and border control, I focus more on the changing ties between citizens and the state contributed by crisis of care.

### 9.4.3 Reclaim Space for Care within Two Systems, One City

Thinking the city through carescapes, policy makers should move away from the exclusionist logic of attracting talents and eliminating dependents toward nurturing more meaningful relationships among space, care, and “citizens-on-the-move.” Dependency, as much as notions of flexibility and mobility, is neither inherently negative nor positive but integral to human existence and organization of society. Autonomy of individuals or communities, indeed, is always a relational concept nested with a multitude of cross-border dependency relations. It is the nuts and bolts embedded in the relations that substantially shape people’s everyday lives rather than abstract conceptualization of autonomy in a vacuum. We should rethink autonomy beyond current imagination confined by economic independence and, moreover, recognize that “just as there are no autonomous, independent, and self-sufficient individuals, no nation can stand alone” (Fineman, 2004, p. 291). It becomes always suspicious when policy decisions devalue spaces of care in the name of pursuing state autonomy. When “Two Systems, One Country” was coined to ensure two distinctive political economic systems coexist under the resumption of Chinese Sovereignty over Hong Kong, as law scholar Ghai (1997, p. 144) points out, the final agreement’s primary purpose is “the conservative one of perpetuating a substantive system rather than promoting institutional autonomy which might threaten that system.” The conceptual separation of two systems within two territorial confines, indeed, presents a seemingly territorial integrity but understates the already-in-place interdependency between two systems and *geographies of care* that challenges the border on daily basis.

Taken together, it is critical to trace how dependency relationships ground the community and society historically and geographically whether the subject of study is a redeveloping city or a reforming state. We need to engender geographies of care without which human beings can hardly survive. In Hong Kong and cases elsewhere, the regime of redevelopment and thereof boundless transnational speculation over properties rapidly takes over space of survival and displaces care. The two systems that I illuminate in this project, after all, are related to but independent from *the border* that allegedly separates the genuine capitalist system in Hong Kong from the planned economy in mainland China. There is one system following *the logic of rent as capital* and the other following *the logic of care as needs*; they are liquid but not rigid, spatial but

not territorial, mutually intertwined under the guise of free market. A wide range of citizens across borders, including the desirable expats, the underserved, and the invisible care workers, are all employed to keep the systems running. Constant exclusion and exploitation arising from the dynamics between the two systems take various forms and thereby remake the city into a place where the "crowding caring relationship" has been oppressed, displaced, and commodified. The concept of "two systems, one city" warrants more attention and actions. With a recognition of the interconnectedness of the two, we shall center care in urban politics and spatialize our understanding of care to counter the overwhelming, devastating rising tide of capital that floods, but rather than raising all boats. Drifting or settling, no one can act independently from carescapes.

## Appendix A: List of Interviews

*In the following table I summarized interviews carried out during fieldwork.*

<b>Characteristics of Interviewees</b>	<b>numbers</b>	<b>themes</b>
Interviewing major participants in Wedding Card Street Movement (tenants, homeowners, activists)	25 interviewees	Wedding Card Street; URA, URS Review
In-depth interview with community workers in Wan Chai and Sham Shui Po (social workers, volunteers, community organizers, etc.)	16 interviewees	Community Participation and Development, URA, URS Review, Displacement
In-depth interview with district councilors and planners	6 interviewees	Community Participation and Development, Urban Renewal
In-depth interview with new arrivals through SOCO and NAWL	21 interviewees	Displacement, Urban Renewal, Immigration, Poverty
Walking/Working with <i>Community Museum Project</i>	3 families displaced by URA projects, 7 interviewees	Displacement, Urban Renewal, Immigration
Informational interview with property agents	20 interviews+rental visits	Housing Market, Investment, Urban Renewal
Interviewed expatriates	32 with in-depth interview/40 samples	Housing, Expatriation

## Appendix B: Interview with Expatriates

Interview with expats in Hong Kong (from Dec 2010-Dec 2012)

Nationality		Industry	
Taiwan	16	Finance	15
Oversea Chinese	4	Professional (architecture, planning, construction)	15
China	4	management	3
Netherlands	3	self-employment	3
US	2	Design and Art	3
Singapore	2	Research	1
UK	2		
Italy	2		
Philippine	2		
Thailand	1		
Germany	1		
Korea	1		

40 samples; 32 with in-depth interview

**Appendix C : List of the interviewees who were quoted in the text (in order of appearance).**

Pseudonym	Date	Place	Characteristic of the interviewee
1. Mr. W	21/05/2011	Wan Chai	A mainland immigrant, being displaced by private redevelopment
2. Melissa	18/11/2011 22/03/2011 14/06/2011	Wan Chai	A longtime resident in Wan Chai; being displaced by URA project; activist
3. Megan	6/12/2010	Causeway Bay	An ex-district councilor of Wan Chai district; activist
4. Ada Wong	14/12/2010	Causeway Bay	An ex-district chair and councilor of Wan Chai district
5. Mr. Leung	3/12/2010	Sham Shui Po	A district councilor of Sham Shui Po district
6. Wei	12/05/2011	Mong Kok	An activist and independent filmmaker
7. Ali	11/05/2011	Wan Chai	Social worker
8. Daniel	11/05/2011	Wan Chai	Social worker, activist
9. Shannon	16/06/2011	Kowloon Tong	One of the committee members who oversee the Blue House project in Wan Chai
10. Kelly	23/03/2011	Wan Chai	A social worker
11. Ben	17/12/2011	Wan Chai	A property agent in Wan Chai
12. Molly	16/12/2011	Wan Chai	A community worker
13. Pink	12/12/2011	Wan Chai	A longtime resident in Wan Chai; being displaced by URA
14. Leslie	25/04/2011	Wan Chai	A mainland immigrant, being displaced by private redevelopment
15. Tu	13/2/2010	Wan Chai	A practicing urban planner
16. Rebecca	30/04/2011	Wan Chai	An expatriate, stayed in <i>the Archive</i> (serviced apartment)
17. Ted	30/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A janitor who is now working in Sham Shui Po
18. Tina	24/5/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant and a tenant being displaced by URA project in Kwun Tong
19. Mary	24/05/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant; tenant living in Sham Shui Po
20. Florida	24/05/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant; tenant living in Sham Shui Po
21. Gloria	17/05/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant; tenant living in Sham Shui Po

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Characteristic of the interviewee</b>
22. Apple	17/5/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant; a tenant living in Sham Shui Po
23. Romis	03/05/2011	Mong Kok	A journalist focused on real estate
24. Marsha	06/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A property agent in Sham Shui Po
25. Cindy	09/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A property agent in Sham Shui Po
26. Sandy	11/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A property agent in Sham Shui Po
27. Jordon	06/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A property agent in Sham Shui Po
28. Maggie	17/12/2010	Hung Hom	A community worker, a tenant being displaced by URA in Sham Shui Po
29. Lisa	28/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A shop owner being displaced by URA project in Sham Shui Po
30. Mr. Lee	28/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A shop owner being displaced by URA project in Sham Shui Po
31. Yin	28/05/2011	Sham Shui Po	A shop owner being displaced by URA project in Sham Shui Po
32. Halprin	19/04/2011	Sham Shui Po	A tenant being displaced by URA in Sham Shui Po
33. Billy	27/12/2010	Sham Shui Po	A tenant being displaced by URA in Sham Shui Po
34. Mr. Ng	08/04/2011	Sham Shui Po	A tenant being displaced by URA in Sham Shui Po
35. Mrs. Ng	09/04/2011	Sham Shui Po	A female, Mainland immigrant; tenant being displaced by URA project in Sham Shui Po
36. Emily	10/06/2011	Mong Kok	Social worker
37. Lily	21/04/2011	Wong Tai Sin	A female mainland visitor/ mother of female immigrant from Mainland
38. Amy	25/08/2011	Causeway Bay	A female, Mainland immigrant; tenant being displaced by URA project in Sham Shui Po
39. Yang	18/05/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant; Chair of the New Women Arrival League
40. Eva	26/08/2011	Mong Kok	A female, Mainland immigrant; member of the New Women Arrival League
41. Vivian	26/08/2011	Sham Shui Po	A female, Mainland immigrant; member of the New Women Arrival League; tenant being displaced by URA project in Sham Shui Po
42. Ivy	23/5/2011	Kwun Tong	Social worker

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## **Vita**

Shu-Mei Huang was born and raised in Taiwan. Her research is driven by a broad array of interests in transnational urbanism, geographies of care, and linkages between migration and urban redevelopment. Her current work concerns mainly the new trends of urban redevelopment in East Asian cities in relation to shifting landscape of care and housing provision and how that contributes to remaking of urban citizenship. In 2012 she earned a Doctor of Philosophy from University of Washington in Built Environment. She is looking forward to bridging discussion about changing community and urban space across the Pacific Rim.