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HIDDEN AGENDA? CULTURAL POLICY IN
HONG KONG'S URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

by
ZUSER Tobias

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the Degree of
Master of Philosophy in Cultural Studies

LINGNAN UNIVERSITY

2014

ABSTRACT

Hidden Agenda? Cultural Policy in Hong Kong's Urban Redevelopment

by

ZUSER Tobias

Master of Philosophy

For many years industrial buildings in Hong Kong have formed some of the city's most vibrant cultural clusters by providing local artists with low-cost space to pursue their creative work. However, recent efforts by the government also targeted these areas for commercial revitalization. By 2020 the industrial part of Kwun Tong, a densely populated district in Kowloon East, will not only have been transformed into the city's second Central Business District, but also seen the majority of the current cultural workers leaving due to the rapid valorisation of land. Nevertheless, these on-going struggles over spatial power have also opened up a new space for a critical debate on Hong Kong's urban planning and cultural policy strategies. This research uses the non-compliant Kwun Tong livehouse Hidden Agenda as a case study to shed light on the prospects for Hong Kong's cultural diversity in its material, social and symbolic form of cultural clusters. By critically investigating research across different disciplines, I argue that—although the mere exposure of the contradictions between cultural planning and urban creativity discourses is significant—the governmental conditions that have been enabling the emergence of such spaces in the first place are often neglected by scholars and planners alike. Therefore, in order to understand both the destructive and productive impact of spatial power on Hong Kong's cultural production, this thesis aims to examine the room for maneuvers within planning and policy discourses by expanding the Foucauldian approach of cultural policy studies to the domain of space.

DECLARATION

I declare that this is an original work based primarily on my own research, and I warrant that all citations of previous research, published or unpublished, have been duly acknowledged.



SIGNED

(ZUSER Tobias)

Date: 18 Oct 2014

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL OF THESIS
HIDDEN AGENDA? CULTURAL POLICY IN
HONG KONG'S URBAN REDEVELOPMENT

by
ZUSER Tobias

Master of Philosophy

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADC – Arts Development Council

CBD – Central Business District

CDAV – Cattle Depot Artist Village

CFPA – Council for Performing Arts

CHC – Culture and Heritage Commission

C.I.A. – Culture Industries Association, a gallery in Kwai Chung

CLIC – Community Legal Information Centre

CPS – Central Police Station

CPU – Central Policy Unit

EKEO – Energizing Kowloon East Office

FEHD – Food and Environmental Hygiene Department

FF01 – Fly The Flyover01 (first realized public space beneath Kwun Tong flyover)

HA – Hidden Agenda, a livehouse in Kwun Tong (case study)

HAB – Home Affairs Bureau

HKAC – Hong Kong Arts Centre

HK\$ – Hong Kong Dollar

HKET – Hong Kong Economic Times

HKSAR – Hong Kong Special Administrative Region

IT – Information Technology

JCCAC – Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre

JCCT – Jockey Club Charities Trust

KITEC – Kowloonbay International Trade & Exhibitions Centre

LCSD – Leisure and Cultural Services Department

LLB – Liquor Licensing Board

NGO – Non-Governmental Organization

NPO – Non-Profit Organization

OU(B) – Other Specified Uses (Business) (town zoning category)

OZP – Outline Zoning Plan

PMQ – Police Married Quarters

PRC – People’s Republic of China

RCB – Recreation and Culture Branch

SCMP – South China Morning Post

sqf / sqm – square feet / square meters

TDS – Territorial Development Strategy

URA – Urban Renewal Authority

WKCD – West Kowloon Cultural District

WKCDA – West Kowloon Cultural District Authority

XXX – “Triple X”, an art space, club and gallery in Sheung Wan

Other specifications:

‘China’ refers to the People’s Republic of China (PRC)

‘Hong Kong’ refers to Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR)

The spelling of names and places that are primarily situated in and linked with Hong Kong or Taiwan follow the most common spellings (e.g. Tung Chee Hwa; Kowloon; Taipei). The spelling of other Chinese names, cities and provinces follows the Chinese pinyin standard (e.g. Mao Zedong; Guangdong).

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1 INTRODUCTION

“The first place was just dodgy. The sink was always leaking. When you washed your hands it dropped just right on the floor (...) and some friends actually slept next to the stage in bunk-beds, like in a dormitory. It looked really crappy. It was so small, we could only run shows for less than one hundred people. Basically, every time there happened some hilarious things, like sometimes the dog was running around and pooped on the stage, or the cat pissed on the audio panels.”

(Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

In early 2009 the livehouse Hidden Agenda staged its first concert in one of Hong Kong’s gritty industrial buildings—practically illegal, as it did not obtain any necessary permits.¹ Five years later Hidden Agenda does still exist—illegally—and is regarded as one of the most infamous underground venues in the region. However, its ultimate expiry date has come closer, since the government has targeted the industrial areas in the city for a large-scale commercial overhaul. With the increasing economic pressure for such non-compliant spaces, the lack of cultural policy strategies within urban redevelopment projects has raised serious concerns about both the sustainability and diversity of locally produced culture. Or to put it bluntly: While space in Hong Kong is scarce, space for culture is even scarcer. Taking an interdisciplinary approach across cultural and urban studies, this qualitative research aims to analyze the discursive formation of cultural space that is entangled in contradictions of Hong

¹ The term “livehouse” is a Japanese-English creation that is commonly used in the Asian-Pacific region and usually refers to a small or medium-sized venue for live music performances.

Kong's cultural policy and urban planning.

1.1 Background

In 2013, when the newly appointed Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) held his anticipated first policy address, he used the term “space” for three different domains: housing, land supply and arts (Leung, 2013).² The latter was accompanied by the cultural vision to “give young artists and new arts groups more room for development” and by concrete plans such as the provision of creative space³ in an industrial building (Leung, 2013: 66). In fact, this can be deemed a historical event, since it was the very first time that the need for creative space was officially recognized as a policy concern in the annual address of any acting HKSAR Chief Executive.⁴

However, the demand for arts spaces in the city has already taken a prominent stand in cultural policy debates as early as 1998, when more than 20 arts groups spontaneously occupied the Government Supply Depot in Oil Street, an abandoned building on Hong Kong Island that was reserved for commercial redevelopment (Cartier, 2008). After negotiations with the government about the necessity for cultural space the artists were offered a temporary lease, but had to leave the premises in 2000. Eventually, selected groups involved in the occupation were provided with an

² The exact terms are “living space”, “underground space” (referring to structures that are built underground) and “creative space” / “arts space”.

³ The terms “arts space”, “creative space” and “cultural space” (as well as later “creative industries” and “cultural industries”) are used interchangeably in this thesis. Similar to what Lily Kong called “creative/cultural spaces” in “creative cultural clusters”, these terms refer primarily to physical indoor places where cultural forms—such as music, visual arts, literature, drama and dance—are produced or consumed. These can be private studios, rehearsal rooms or small venues.

⁴ Compare Tung (1997-2005) and Tsang (2005-2011): <http://www.policyaddress.gov.hk/>

alternative studio at the Cattle Depot Artist Village on the Kowloon side, a former slaughterhouse and Grade II heritage site.⁵

This establishment of Hong Kong's first official arts cluster, which remained under the supervision of the government, also coincided with the emergence of a less visible arts scene. When Mainland China gradually opened up the market to foreign investment under the reforms of Deng Xiaoping, a lot of factories moved from Hong Kong to Guangdong Province, where the production costs were significantly cheaper. The arrival of the Asian financial crisis further diminished the amount of local manufacturers, so that by the late 1990s only 20% of all former factories were still operating in Hong Kong (Mak, 2012). Soon more and more people, among them many artists, became aware of the abandoned industrial areas with their suddenly affordable leases and decided to rent or buy their own spaces, with Fo Tan (New Territories), Kwun Tong (Kowloon) and Chai Wan (Hong Kong Island) being the most popular districts for these endeavors (Cartier, 2008). However, according to Hong Kong's stringent town planning ordinance, the permitted use of space within industrial buildings is defined by the zoning plans. In the meantime many industrial areas have been rezoned by the Town Planning Board to more business-friendly categories, but the legal establishment of entertainment places, restaurants, shops, art studios and apartments is still restricted. Nevertheless, authorities have usually turned a blind eye on non-compliant users as long as they kept a low-profile. As a result these peripheral clusters have been literally out of sight from Hong Kong's cultural display and

⁵ In Hong Kong, Grade I refers to the highest ("outstanding merit"), Grade II to medium ("special merit") and Grade III ("some merit") to the lowest heritage rating. Recently, the suitability of graded heritage sites for creative use has been questioned by artists and media, as any alterations (e.g. painting walls, removing interior) are highly restricted.

symbolic economy and also been barred from gentrification, with the positive side effect that rental costs in these areas remained significantly low.

Meanwhile, with the global dissemination of creative industry and creative city discourses, cultural policy debates in Hong Kong started revolving around the West Kowloon Cultural District, a yet-to-be-realized 40 hectares cultural quarter with theatres and museums, as well as selected heritage sites and their transformation into creative hubs.⁶ But given Hong Kong's unparalleled scarcity of land, these top-down projects have not only raised concerns over the allocation of public funding, but have also been accompanied by divergent views on the best possible use of space. Since further land reclamation in Victoria Harbour is prohibited by law⁷ and therefore the opportunity for new real estate projects in prime locations kept to a minimum, the potential of industrial areas to overcome the shortage of office space in the city soon received attention from the government.

In total, there are around 1,435 industrial buildings in Hong Kong that form a legacy from the 1970s when the city was one of the biggest consumer goods producers in the world, especially for toys, textiles and electronics. Most of these buildings are multi-storey flatted factories with fragmented ownerships that have made a smooth transactions of properties rather difficult.⁸ Therefore, in April 2010, the government introduced measures to encourage the *revitalization*⁹ of *under-utilized*¹⁰

⁶ e.g. Central Police Station, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre, Police Married Quarters, Comix Home Base (Mallory/Burrows Street), Cattle Depot Artist Village (see Ch. 4).

⁷ The "Protection of the Harbour Ordinance" from 1999 prohibits further reclamation projects by recognizing the harbor as a "special public asset" and "natural heritage" of the Hong Kong people that needs to be preserved and protected (Cap. 531, 3).

⁸ According to the EKEO (Interview, 2013), in extreme cases the ownership of one premise can be scattered among 300 to 400 people.

⁹ Chinese: 活化

¹⁰ Chinese: 使用率偏低

industrial buildings by offering favourable conditions for acquisition, conversion and redevelopment of such premises.¹¹ This led to a significant valorization of industrial properties that increased both rent and sales prices. According to an investment company, no other asset class in Hong Kong has been appreciating so significantly for the last five years (SCMP, 2012). While at first sight the policy appeared to support community renewal, it especially assisted large developers to acquire property interests more easily (Mak, 2012).

These measurements also had a major impact on creative spaces located in industrial areas. Responding to increasing concerns from the community, the Arts Development Council (ADC), a statutory body mainly responsible for the allocation of public grants, conducted a survey in 2010 on the “status of industrial buildings for arts activities and future demand”. Among other findings, the report showed that the majority of artists that rented studios in industrial buildings (about 65%) were of relatively young age (between 20 and 39) and practiced either music or visual arts (each around 37%). In its conclusion the ADC confirmed that these spaces have been adversely affected by the revitalization measurements and offered policy recommendations to the government (ADC, 2010). Since then, grassroots organizations such as the Factory Artists Concern Group¹², R.I.P.¹³ and Hong Kong Culture Monitor¹⁴ have organized independent campaigns to raise awareness for these issues in local media and social networks.

¹¹ For the exact wording of the measurements, see: http://www.devb.gov.hk/industrialbuildings/eng/policy_initiatives/policy_measures_to_encourage_redevelopment_in_non_industrial_zones/index.html

¹² Chinese: 工廈藝術家關注組

¹³ Abbreviation for Revitalisation Internalize Partnership (sic!), Chinese: 自然活化合作社

¹⁴ Chinese: 香港文化監察

Eventually, the previously mentioned 2013 policy address both acknowledged the necessity for creative space and made a direct reference to the conversion of an industrial building in Wong Chuk Hang, an area in the Southern part of Hong Kong Island that has become a new popular base for art galleries that rate adequate exhibition space over a costly and spatially limited presence in the CBD (SCMP, 2013). Hong Kong's rise within the global arts auction market, the internationalization of the annual art fair and the pervasive branding campaign of the future flagship museum "M+" inside the WKCD also created new platforms and occasions to engage with local visual art, much of which being in fact produced in industrial buildings. In the case of Fo Tan, the annual open-studio days (Fotanian) have played a significant role for both the recognition and accessibility of this industrial area as a dynamic arts cluster. In January 2013, more than 30 000 people visited the event, a fivefold increase of visitors when compared to 2007. Currently, there are around 100 studios in Fo Tan with more than 400 visual artists that form an "unlikely arts cluster in an unlikely city" (Kong, 2012). In 2012, Fotanian received a grant of HK\$ 2 million out of the newly established Arts Capacity Development Funding Scheme from the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB).

However, the dominant focus on visual arts has also marginalized cultural clusters where other art forms prevail and where the symbolic, economic and cultural values that are usually attributed to Fo Tan are apparently absent. One of these areas, for instance, is Kwun Tong (and especially its sub-district Ngau Tau Kok) that—allegedly—holds the highest concentration of band rehearsal rooms in the entire city.¹⁵ While some insiders estimate that on average each of the 300 industrial buildings in

¹⁵ San Po Kong is considered to be another cluster that is especially popular among performing arts groups.

Kwun Tong has accommodated between three and four music groups during the peak years, the government usually refers to the figure of 500 arts groups (including musicians) that together occupy around 2.7% of industrial spaces in this area.¹⁶ However, given the illegal nature of many spaces, it can be assumed that the responses in official surveys under-represent the non-compliant cultural use of industrial buildings (Interviews, 2013; 2014).¹⁷ Nevertheless, according to the ADC (2010) survey, roughly one third of all industrial arts spaces in Hong Kong are located in Kwun Tong, outpacing runner-up Fo Tan that holds approximately one fifth. Thus, it almost goes without saying that the city's longest serving underground venue has emerged in the midst of Kowloon East.

Hidden Agenda, originally used as an apartment and rehearsal room, was converted into a livehouse in 2009, primarily to provide a platform for local bands that were practicing in other industrial buildings nearby. Subsequently, however, the project took its own course and Hidden Agenda has become a crucial address for international bands that are on tour in South East Asia, and especially for the strong underground music scenes in Mainland China, Taiwan and Japan. The program of the venue is usually tailored along alternative genres such as post-rock, folk, punk, hardcore, metal, indie pop, reggae, R&B and experimental music. Depending on the popularity of the performer, a regular show can attract between 30 and 300 visitors, the latter being also the current maximum capacity of the venue. Before Hidden

¹⁶ A survey conducted by a commercial research institute for the HKSAR Planning Department in 2011 counted 504 cultural and creative workshops (including art, music and film studios) in the industrial areas of Kowloon Bay and Kwun Tong (Planning Department, 2011).

¹⁷ See Annex for a detailed list of all interviewees.

Agenda opened, similar concerts of this dimension had often been restrained to non-profit youth centers, commercial bars and multi-functional restaurants on Hong Kong Island.¹⁸ Indeed, venues with roughly comparable capacities can still be found in Sheung Wan, Central and Wan Chai, with the difference that they are primarily run as bars, cafés, restaurants, clubs or galleries with additional live music.¹⁹

Nevertheless, despite its comparatively non-restrictive physical environment, the future for Hidden Agenda is not very promising. Ever since the government introduced the measurements for the revitalization of industrial buildings, the venue had to cope with significant rent hikes and was forced to move its location twice after disputes over rent and land-use violations. Meanwhile, Kwun Tong has become one of the most attractive areas for investment and property speculations, following a master plan that aims to develop the district into Hong Kong's second CBD. Nearby government-led redevelopment projects at the Kwun Tong Town Centre and the former Kai Tak Airport have already commenced.

But for all that, Hidden Agenda has still managed to continue its weekly live shows, in spite of restrictive regulations for land use, public entertainment and fire safety. However, with the increasing pressure from the Lands and Fire Services Department, the founders doubt that the venue can remain open until the end of the lease in 2015. This time, given the financial and motivational burden that comes with it, a third relocation is very unlikely and although other industrial areas do not face

¹⁸ See Table 3 (p. 71) for an overview of current livehouse venues, bars and youth centers.

immanent redevelopment plans, Hidden Agenda is fully committed to stay in the self-proclaimed “Kwun Tong Art District”.

1.2 Research Questions

This thesis considers Kwun Tong to become a crucial test-bed for the scope and capability of Hong Kong’s cultural policy strategies. However, in the face of an imminent redevelopment, it is of even greater importance to ask how non-compliant spaces such as Hidden Agenda have been able to sustain themselves and how they have found room for maneuvers within existing policies and discourses.²⁰

Hidden Agenda is a very peculiar case study that does actually not represent a “regular” cultural space in Kwun Tong, but by offering a niche for independent music, the livehouse has rendered the peripheral industrial area both accessible and relevant for a community beyond the district. Every weekend around 200 people visit the shows in Kowloon East, although their gatherings are—factually—illegal.

At first sight, this subcultural context certainly offers a wide range of interesting foci that might follow common approaches in the field of cultural and urban studies: a comprehensive ethnographic study of artists and visitors in this area could give useful insights into the social, economic and cultural dynamics of the cluster; similarly a venue such as Hidden Agenda could offer an interesting entry point for a critical analysis of the local independent music scene and its relation to Kwun Tong; another approach could adopt the common critique of creative city models and lay out their

²⁰ Most cultural spaces in Kwun Tong—that serve as venues or interact with visitors on a regular basis—share similar concerns regarding redevelopment. When this thesis refers to spaces “such as Hidden Agenda”, it also includes venues like Osage Gallery, Musician AREA, HK Farm (now closed), startfromzero, The Salt Yard etc.

inherent contradictions with urban planning discourses. All of these would be relevant projects, with some of them currently even being realized by other postgraduate students in the city. However, when in 2020 Kwun Tong will have become the city's second Central Business District, Hong Kong will have also lost its densest agglomeration of creative production. So what is actually at stake here? And do cultural policies really matter?

Since the 1980s and 1990s, globalization, economic changes as well as the rise of the creative economy have all triggered reactions across universities, research institutions and government agencies in order to address the new challenges for the cultural sector. Among these responses, one was formed by the pro-active approach of cultural policy studies that emerged from the field of cultural studies and was initiated by scholars such as Tony Bennett. However, the development of this new study area was also determined and conditioned by various national factors, especially in the political and institutional context of Australia and Great Britain at that time.

Arguably, most of the research in the area of urban cultural policy is informed by the disciplines of human geography and sociology as well as by the scholarship from specialized creative economy departments and research institutions. The comprehensive and ambitious work of scholars such as Lily Kong (on Singapore) and Michael Keane (on China) has contributed a lot over the last years to demystify and particularize concepts of creativity, clusters and cultural policy in specific Asian contexts. However, the case of Hong Kong—with a few exceptions (e.g. Kong, 2012)—usually only attracts marginal attention in English academic literature, where it is often limited to references such as the (yet-to be realized) West Kowloon Cultural District, the (rather unrepresentative) Cattle Depot Artist Village or the Cyberport (as

an IT cluster project that allegedly never lived up to its expectations). Nevertheless, in recent years, the emergence of “collective memory” as a public concern has offered a new emphasis on the problematic synergies between cultural industries and heritage preservation (e.g. Ku, 2010). Besides, there have also been prolific historical accounts on Hong Kong’s cultural policy, covering the years before and after 1997 (Ooi, 1995; Cartier, 2008).

However, to my knowledge, there has been hardly any attempt to articulate the issues of space and urban planning with the Foucauldian approach of cultural policy studies, which aims to understand the governmental domain of culture by analyzing institutions and discourses (Bennett, 1995; 1998). This research has identified the distinctiveness for cultural policy studies in its focus on the “politics of detail” and its emphasis of “governmental power” over concepts such as hegemony. Although the case of Hidden Agenda and Kwun Tong poses some crucial difficulties for the “usability” of this approach, this thesis nevertheless argues for its “usefulness”—even with regard to two particular challenges:

First, as an independent and non-compliant space, Hidden Agenda operates both outside and in opposition to Hong Kong’s public institutions, which, however, does not mean that it is only a space of resistance. Celebrating its fifth anniversary as an illegal livehouse in 2014, it has managed to sustain despite rising rents, terminated leasing contracts and fierce regulations. While these conditions are often subsumed under a general hegemonic power, this research aims to analyze and comprehend the technologies and tactics that Hidden Agenda has adopted in its various interactions with authorities.

Second, space in itself is a very controversial domain in Hong Kong, where the

scarcity of land resources inevitably resonates in debates on urban redevelopment projects as well as their necessity, efficiency and utility. However, in contrast to public facilities such as museums, theatres or concert halls, the cultural use of private space is often only associated with subsidized or commercial activities. Arguably, different cultural clusters in Hong Kong have also been subjected to various forms of spatial power. Hence, instead of merely foregrounding the ideological origin from the perspective of political economy, the research aims to understand the reality for cultural spaces by looking at urban planning in detail, how it permeates a wide range of policies and to what extent it might accommodate culture within its own responsibilities.

Arguably, the domain of cultural policy studies has no similar anchorage or tradition in Hong Kong's research sector. Nevertheless, as this thesis aims to expose, the features and traits of this particular approach might also shed light on issues that are often underrepresented in current research on cultural policy.

It is from these idiosyncrasies that the basic research questions finally derive:

1. How has Hidden Agenda been determined and changed by the spatial and governmental conditions of Kwun Tong's industrial area?
2. How has the case of Hidden Agenda informed urban and cultural planning processes in Kwun Tong?
3. How does the case of Hidden Agenda and Kwun Tong relate to cultural policy and cultural cluster strategies in Hong Kong?

While narrow in scope—in order to stay within the limitations of a master thesis—these questions should help us to understand both the destructive and productive impact of spatial power on Hong Kong's cultural production.

1.3 Methodology

At an early stage of this project, the majority of literature was informed by popular discourses of creative industries, creative city and creative class—however, the more I dealt with the space of Hidden Agenda, the nature of the cultural cluster in Kwun Tong as well as the struggle with redevelopment projects, the more it seemed that these concepts—while highly relevant for policies and academic works—have limited relevance for the actual practices and concerns of the people and organizations involved. So instead of establishing a critique of Hong Kong's discourses that dominate cultural policy, this thesis uses the approach of cultural policy studies to specifically look at how an illegal cultural space such as Hidden Agenda managed to operate for more than five years, how it interacts with different actors, and how existing conditions have provided room for maneuvers in the form of tactics and governmental power.

Therefore, the intended contribution of this research is to test and contest the usability of cultural policy studies along three criteria:

- 1) its relevance for cultural spaces such as Hidden Agenda, that operate mainly outside mainstream cultural policy discourses
- 2) its applicability for the domain of space and urban redevelopment, that have not been major concerns for Foucault and Bennett
- 3) and, given the national context of its emergence, the feasibility of its transfer to the spatial, social and political particularities of Hong Kong.

By identifying and analyzing the room for maneuvers within policies and discourses, this research expands the Foucauldian approach of cultural policy studies

to the domain of space and urban planning. For this purpose, the livehouse Hidden Agenda is used as a case study to create a confined entry point for a manageable holistic investigation at both micro- and macro-level. The selected texts for the discourse analysis include official reports, commissioned studies, policy papers, legal ordinances, newspaper articles and documentary movies (in particular *Hidden Agenda: The Movie* and Anson Mak's *On the Edge of a Floating City, We Sing*), with further evidence being provided by zoning plans, event documentations, images and statistics. This is complemented by primary data that was collected during numerous field trips through direct observations and in-depth interviews with different stakeholders. The interviewees include various artists and visitors affiliated with the local music scene and Kwun Tong in particular, representatives of Hidden Agenda, the deputy head of the Energizing Kowloon East Office (Development Bureau), the owners of four other non-compliant venues in Hong Kong and the founding member of the non-profit advocacy groups "Hong Kong Culture Monitor" and "Factory Artists Concern Group" (see Annex for a detailed overview of all interviewees).

1.4 Objectives and scope

Situated in the broad field of cultural studies, this research aims to examine current and future policy frameworks, although, given its degree-seeking format, not so much out of an aspiration to "intervene directly in bureaucratic and business spheres", but rather to expose room for maneuvers and—if adequate—the "failures and absurdities" (Morris, 1992: 470) of existing policies in Hong Kong's cultural domain. However, in order to facilitate an in-depth analysis with a strong focus on policies, the scope of the research will also be significantly limited in three areas:

In the last years, issues of urban redevelopment have given rise to invaluable projects such as the virtual mapping of *Kwun Tong Culture*, initiated by scholar and film artist Anson Mak in 2009. Since then this online platform has created a rich database of images and memories around the former Kwun Tong town center, which will undergo a complete overhaul until 2020. While the industrial buildings nearby must be seen as an integral part of everyday life for the local community, this thesis primarily aims to foreground the situation of cultural spaces, which are subjected to a different set of urban renewal strategies (“revitalization”) as well as a different authority (EKEO) than the former residents of the town center (“redevelopment”, Urban Renewal Authority). Therefore this research will be confined to issues of space and policy in Kwun Tong’s industrial area only.

Another particularity that poses a challenge for this research can be seen in the heterogeneous use of industrial buildings in Hong Kong. While there is a significant artist community in Kwun Tong, there are nevertheless many other kinds of spaces that often use similar tactics in response to policies, whether illegal apartments, restaurants, training facilities or shops. At the same time, Hidden Agenda might be generally understood as a subcultural space, but given its implications for a much broader domain, the proposed methodological approach addresses primarily the governmental aspects in relation to space rather than the identity formations of its users (i.e. local underground musicians).

Eventually, the geographers Leung and Soyeze (2009) also identified a missing debate around the preservation of Hong Kong’s industrial heritage, despite its enormous contribution to the urban identity during the 1960s and 1970s. While the valorization of Hong Kong’s industrial buildings in the context of their historical and

geographical contingency could certainly open up new approaches, it is unfortunately not within the conceptual reach of this thesis. Nevertheless, I hope that my research can contribute to new knowledge of organically evolved cultural spaces in Kwun Tong and will eventually encourage further explorations within those aforementioned areas.

1.5 Structure

The thesis is divided into five parts. Following these introductory notes that defined the questions and methodology of the research, the following chapter will lay out the theoretical framework, which—in the form of a literature review—covers discussions on urban space (Ch. 2.1), cultural cluster and creative city discourses (Ch. 2.2) as well as cultural policy studies (Ch. 2.3). In the third chapter, the case study of Hidden Agenda will be used as an entry point, starting with its spatial analysis in the context of Kwun Tong's industrial area (Ch. 3.1). Drawing from empirical fieldwork, the next part will discuss the emergence, development and complex identity of Hidden Agenda as well as its tactical maneuvers used within existing policy frameworks. This is followed by an analysis of the Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO) and a juxtaposition of various discourses (Ch. 3.2). Eventually, the third chapter will conclude with a comparison between Kwun Tong and Fo Tan by looking at their overall sustainability as organically evolved cultural clusters (Ch. 3.3).

In the fourth chapter, the research will shift the perspective from micro- to macro-level in order to analyze the emergence of cultural discourses within Hong Kong's urban planning strategies, illustrated by various models of planned cultural clusters in the city (Ch. 4.1). By comparing these official manifestations of cultural policy strategies with Kwun Tong, the thesis aims to expose and analyze the dynamics

of spatial power in relation to Hong Kong's cultural development (Ch. 4.2). The last part of the chapter will problematize Hong Kong's culture portfolio and offer suggestions for potential changes in its organization (Ch. 4.3). Finally, the thesis will be rounded off by a brief summary, the conclusion and further perspectives (Ch. 5).

2 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

There is nothing but offices, one after the other.
(Henri Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 128)

Over the last decade, research on cultural policy across different disciplines—whether cultural studies, human geography or sociology—has been mainly concerned with two domains: the first one usually investigates the “expediency of culture” (Yúdice, 2003) by both analyzing and comparing the economic, social and cultural impact of creative industries and cultural clusters as well as their political and legal framework within which they are promoted, permitted or restricted (Throsby, 2001; Crane et al., 2002). The second domain has taken a more critical stance over the neo-liberalization of culture as “cool capitalism” (McGuigan, 2009)—especially in relation to urban social-economic inequalities—by (re)framing concepts such as “cultural citizenship” (Stevenson N., 2003; Miller, 2006; Miller, 2011) and the “right to the city” (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]; Harvey, 2012; Brenner et al., 2012). Eventually, both academic approaches, albeit from different positions, address the global discourse of creativity and its various articulations with city (Landry, 2000), economy (Howkins, 2001) and class (Florida, 2002).

At the same time, the inherently territorial scope of policies—whether global, national or urban—has given cultural policy debates an important spatial dimension, echoed in core concerns over “display” and “accessibility” (Williams, 1989). This might also explain why a significant proportion of regional research on creative industries and cultural clusters has come out of academic fields such as urban studies,

geography and architecture. Given the relevance of both cultural policy and urban planning in the redevelopment of Kwun Tong's industrial area, this thesis argues for a convergence of these different approaches through a theoretical framework that covers the relational issues of space, city, culture and policy.

The following literature review is therefore divided into three parts: The first section commences with an examination of both abstract and material models of the production of space, in particular "other space", and will then move to practical concerns in relation to urban planning and gentrification. It will further examine Hong Kong's peculiar spatial conditions and policies. The second part offers a discussion of globalized creative city and cultural cluster models and the related emergence of Hong Kong's branding as "Asia's World City". Eventually, in the third section, the research will engage with the controversial field of cultural policy studies and its struggles with notions of value, hegemony, resistance and governmentality.

2.1 Space and the City

Space is more than just a physical entity. Instead it holds connotations of time, distance, freedom and belonging that have shaped its complexity as an academic concept (Berland, 2005). Especially in the urban context, the on-going struggle over "the right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]; Harvey, 1990; Brenner et al., 2012) and the resistance against places of dominance (de Certeau, 1984) have produced important critical tools to analyze the production of space and its own productive power. While this research does not aim to solely focus on an analysis of spatial practices in Kwun Tong, the specific otherness and cultural function of the case study requires a critical understanding of some fundamental concepts in this domain that will be contrasted in

the following section.

2.1.1 The Production of *Other* Space

According to French Marxist thinker Henri Lefebvre (1991 [1974]), space must be conceptualized as a social construct – or in other words: Space is produced by how it is envisioned, organized and experienced by its users, who, in turn, are constituted by the economic distribution of place across different social strata. Throughout his oeuvre, Lefebvre conceives the urban formations and spatial practices as a result of capitalist forces. This has become most explicit in the (often concentric) creation of city centers and their surrounding peripheries. “Worrisome groups” are being pushed outwards, while access to the center, as a “locus of decision, wealth, power and information”, is regulated by the scarcity and hence lopsided value of space (Lefebvre, 1991 [1974]: 375).

For analyzing different spatial practices within cities, Lefebvre (1991 [1974]) proposes a conceptual triad of space that consists of three interrelated pairs: spatial practice/perceived space, representation of space/conceived space, and representational space/lived space. These analytical tools not only capture how space (including creative space) is produced by the existing materiality (the built environment), but also foreground how different agents inform this production through their own embodied, mental, and social experience (Carp, 2008: 131).²¹

This dialectical triad of space is echoed in Lefebvre’s macro-perspective on the composition of cities. In his earlier work *The Urban Revolution* Lefebvre (2003 [1970]):

²¹ See Chapter 3.1 for a more detailed explanation.

128-129) distinguished three “urban forms”: isotopia, heterotopia and utopia. While the theory of heterotopic studies is usually attributed to Foucault, the concepts of these two French contemporaries radically differ from each other (Harvey, 2012a: xvii).²² For Foucault (1986 [1984]: 24-27) heterotopia are defined by their contrast to *u*-topic places and have a cultural and usually disciplinary function within a society, which he further illustrates with examples of cemeteries, brothels, psychiatric hospitals, prisons, sacred places, libraries, gardens and festivals (Johnson, 2006). Thus, while Foucault is primarily interested in the governmental nature of heterotopic institutions, Lefebvre’s concept of heterotopia is determined by its dichotomy to aforementioned isotopia. Literally meaning “identical places”, isotopia “are created by state rationalism”, whereas heterotopia run against this conformity and become both “the other places and the places of the other, simultaneously excluded and interwoven” (Lefebvre (2003 [1970]: 128).

This reading is shared by Harvey, who identified in Lefebvre’s heterotopia—in contrast to Foucault’s—a revolutionary movement of “a spontaneous coming together in a moment of ‘irruption’; when disparate heterotopic groups suddenly see, if only for a fleeting moment, the possibilities of collective action to create something radically different.” (Harvey, 2012a: xvii). Given the non-compliant and counter-institutional nature of Hidden Agenda, Lefebvre’s concept offers a useful framework to analyze the production of the *other* space and its role for a place-bound identity formation.²³

²² Heterotopia are “real places ... that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like counter-sites, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted.” Heterotopia and utopia are necessarily reciprocal, best described by Foucault’s analogy of a mirror as convergence of the virtual (utopia) and real place (heterotopia) (Foucault 1986 [1984]: 24).

²³ The research area of heterotopology, which is based on Foucault’s oeuvre, has been criticized for its ambiguous use of key terms such as “space”, “place”, “site” and “location” (Casey, 1998: 300). However, as

Further, by stressing the reciprocity of different urban forms, Lefebvre's production of space favors a dialectical view of contradictions over a fetishization of space (Merrifield, 1993), which further helps to expose the relations between non-compliant spaces such as Hidden Agenda and the conformity of generic urban areas in Hong Kong:

“The isotopy-heterotopy difference can only be understood dynamically. In urban space something is always happening. Relations change. Differences and contrast can result in conflict, or are attenuated, erode, or corrode.”
(Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: 129)

Lefebvre juxtaposed the classification of isotopic, heterotopic and utopic urban forms with other models, as he argued that the concept of space is far too complex to look at from a one-dimensional perspective. Another—what he called—“more concrete” grid classifies the users and uses of space according to their public, private or mediational characteristics, which are drawn along spatial boundaries that mark the “transition from one sphere of control to that of another” (Low, 154). In the city, these boundaries are often used as “political devices for social control and discipline” (Low, 2000: 155) that categorize users and practices along certain aesthetic, cultural, ethnic, social or economic values. While such boundaries are often imagined as both physically and socially, they are also productive, as humans depend on symbols to order and conceive the space they live in. At the same time, boundaries can also become spaces of interaction as “locales where different people, activities, and ideas come into contact with one another” (Low, 2000: 155).

Johnson (2006) argues, this should be rather seen as a result of translations from French into English (e.g. *espace*, *lieu* and *espacement*) than conceptual negligence.

While both Lefebvre and Foucault avoided any geographic distinction between the terms “space” (as the general) and “place” (as the specific) (Casey, 1993; Agnew, 2011), de Certeau (1984 [1980]) put forward a reversed differentiation. For him, a place refers to a distinct location that automatically excludes other elements and therefore indicates a *stable* condition. At the same time, space, instead of being the abstract dichotomy, is defined as “a practiced place” that is composed of mobile elements which imply instability²⁴ (de Certeau, 1984 [1980]: 117-118). In the case of urban places such as cultural clusters where the spatial practices of everyday life (de Certeau’s main concern) intersect with cultural production and consumption, de Certeau’s understanding of space could take over a dominant role, although his concept of resistance has been criticized within cultural policy studies (see Chapter 2.3). The duality of space and place is again mirrored in de Certeau’s differentiation of *strategies* (management) and *tactics* (action). Strategies require both the autonomy and stability of a place to control power relationships by delimiting the influence of exterior forces (de Certeau, 1984 [1980]: 34-39). On the contrary, it is exactly the absence of a permanent place and the exposure to other forces that enable tactical maneuvers:

“The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power. [...] It operates in isolated actions, blow by blow. It takes advantage of ‘opportunities’ [...] What it wins it cannot keep.”

(de Certeau, 1984 [1980]: 37)

In other words: Stable places are managed by strategies, instable spaces by tactics.

²⁴ These thoughts were later echoed in Augé’s (1995: 83-85) elaboration on de Certeau’s understanding of non-places.

In this regard de Certeau's understanding somehow coincides with another of Lefebvre's analytical grids to classify space. By measuring "the order that exists beneath the chaotic surface of space", Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: 366-367) distinguishes "spatial planning and development" from productive forces that run against these strategies with the aim to establish a "counter-space".

By using a variety of tactics, Hidden Agenda has established a "space of the other" that operates across these relational and dialectical concepts of perceived-conceived-lived space, heterotopic-isotopic-utopic space, public-private-mediational space and strategic-tactical space. Chapter 3 will draw upon some of these concepts to analyze and understand the spatial production of Hidden Agenda in the context of Kwun Tong's industrial area.

2.1.2 The Gentrification Trap

While these spatial theories and terminologies are useful to explain the social, economic and cultural nature of urban settings, it is in the domain of urban planning where the real battles over space have been fought. More than 50 years have passed since the term gentrification was used for the first time to describe the rapid changes in London's residential inner city areas.²⁵ Originally, gentrification referred to the appropriation of low-income neighborhoods or redundant factories by more affluent classes (in Lefebvre's terms this would be the capitalist re-appropriation of the center by displacing the unprivileged to the periphery), but with the rise of the postindustrial city (Ley, 1980), the global city (Sassen, 2001 [1991]), the postmodern city (Clarke,

²⁵ The term was coined by sociologist Ruth Glass (1964), but its sudden emergence does not mean that the phenomenon of "gentrification" has not existed before (Clark, 2005).

1997, 2003; Wynne and O'Connor, 1998) and the creative city (Landry and Bianchini, 1995), this narrow meaning, which was mainly derived from American and British case studies, has become deficient and too exclusionary to explain similar urban dynamics all around the world.²⁶ In response to the increasing “chaos and complexity of gentrification” (Beauregard, 1986), Clark (2005) argued for a broader definition to focus again on its common causes. He concluded that whether run-down neighborhoods are taken over by art lofts, boutique shops and cafés or are revitalized from top-down by urban planning authorities and real-estate developers, both of these forceful changes are still rooted in the “commodification of space, polarized power relations, and a dominance of vision over sight” (Clark, 2005: 24). At the same time, with the increasing use of euphemisms such as “revitalization”, “regeneration” and “redevelopment”, the term gentrification has become to some extent a positive indicator for urban change that is often used interchangeably with neutral terminologies such as neighborhood renewal (Smith, 2002).

It is this ideological appropriation that critical urban theory has since tried to reject (Smith, 2002; Brenner et al., 2012). The critique especially takes issue with the “celebration of gentrification and its denial of displacement” (Slater, 2012: 189) caused by a growing involvement of scholars in policy making and city planning.²⁷ Lefebvre’s (1996 [1973]) call for an urban revolution has been carried on in the “right to the city” movement that became the ideological foundation for critical urban theory, primarily advocating the de-commodification of housing (Brenner et al. 2012). Harvey

²⁶ The discipline of geography has struggled ever since over the elasticity of a proper definition. Lees, Slater and Wyly’s (2010) comprehensive *The Gentrification Reader* dedicated nearly 30 pages to this discussion.

²⁷ This critique is echoed in the debates on cultural policy studies (see Ch. 2.3).

(2012b) saw a new urban revolution based on this demand as “past due”, but concluded that the current state of crisis requires pragmatic compromises to achieve sufficient alliances. Even Lefebvre recognized the right to the city “as utopian (not to say pejoratively utopist)”, but insisted that it still must guide “the imperatives ... of plans, projects and programmes.” (Lefebvre, 1996 [1973]: 196)

While Lefebvre created his concepts in response to his experience in Paris in the 1960s, a more pragmatic debate was underway in the USA. Jane Jacobs’ (1961) *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, probably the earliest manifesto for urban diversity, was an emotional attack on urban planning practices that had for long time dominated the development of housing, streets and public spaces in North America. Especially detailed is her critique of Le Corbusier, an early 20th century architect whose concept of the “Radiant City” has been most influential, also for colonial cities in Asia. Siu (1998) argues that Hong Kong’s urban planning has been aligned to most of the propositions put forward by Le Corbusier who associated a well-rounded development of cities to three conditions: progress over traditionalism, verticality over horizontality, and density over sparsity. Although his ideas were driven by his faith in providing the physical environment that can achieve a harmonious society where human rationality stands above capitalism, Le Corbusier nevertheless conceived the complexity, diversity, messiness and individuality of the urban as the ultimate barrier for the realization of his vision (Siu, 1998: 64-69). However, Hong Kong’s scarce land resources and the resulting hyper-density have practically led to a diversity that transgresses Le Corbusier’s zoning approach (Abbas, 1997: 88). Even though commercial and residential areas are separated, their spatial proximity results in overlaps of spatial practices and sensory experiences that have had crucial implications

for regulatory policies.

For Jacobs, however, diversity and density was the most intrinsic value of the city that—when welcomed and maintained—would eventually also help to overcome crime and poverty. The “pretended order” of town planning, built on segregation and physical class containment, aggravated urban problems by ignoring and suppressing “the real order” (Jacobs, 1964: 15). Therefore, Jacobs argued that urban planning processes should facilitate community engagement when designing public places such as squares, parks and streets. This participatory and case-sensitive approach, known as *place-making*, has become a popular town planning tool and was also adopted for the redevelopment of Kwun Tong (see Chapter 3.2.4).

However, Jacobs was also criticized that she had focused merely on the built environment for her analysis and hence had failed to recognize that space is a complex social product (Zukin, 2009). Being herself a “gentrifier” of Manhattan’s West Village, she lost sight of the key process of gentrification, that is “how people use capital and culture to view, and to shape, the urban spaces they inhabit” (Zukin, 2009: 17). But even today, the affluent classes—including artists and academics—find themselves in the same gentrification trap where they both appreciate and defend the aesthetics of their own imagined urban authenticity without actually problematizing their own complicity in the accompanying process of displacement (Zukin, 2009).²⁸ Therefore, as a follower of Lefebvre’s “right to the city” movement, American sociologist Sharon Zukin (2009: 245) suggests that the claim for authenticity needs to be equated to the

²⁸ “...by constructing the habitus, latte by latte, of the new urban middle class.” (Zukin, 2009: 18)

right of ownership. Only this could enable authentic users within urban planning processes, while respecting “the social classes and ethnic groups that have made these spaces authentic”.

2.1.3 Hong Kong: “The Paradigm City”

Arguably, during the last decade, public debates on Hong Kong’s fading cultural authenticity have been on the rise. In the wake of “rapidly transforming identities” and a new “desire for history” in this postcolonial era (Erni, 2001: 392), urban redevelopment projects triggered fresh concerns over the erasure of collective memories. The demonstrations in response to the demolition of Lee Tung Street, Star Ferry Pier and Queen’s Pier in 2007 and 2008 have not only contested the government’s absolute authority over public space, but also exposed the lack of recognition for heritage preservation and community values. However, it would be far-fetched to see the emergence of a substantial “right to the city” movement, even though the mobilization against the Guangzhou-Hong Kong Express Rail Link (“XRL”) in 2009 affirmed growing concerns for people’s livelihood in the city (Chan, 2012: 115). Nevertheless, the increasing privatization of public assets that followed Hong Kong’s neoliberalization after the 1997 Asian financial crisis, has also fostered resistance to “demystify the government’s invented budgetary crisis and to de-legitimize the government’s direct subsidizing of private interests” (Chen and Pun, 2007: 86).²⁹

Interestingly, gentrification has hardly been problematized in Hong Kong’s public

²⁹ Recent examples would include the West Kowloon Cultural District, MTR, Western and Eastern Harbour tunnels, Link REIT (and its acquisition of commercial complexes of public housing estates) etc. (Chen and Pun, 2007).

realm (Ley and Teo, 2013). While some academics attempted to identify different forms of gentrifying processes in densely populated areas such as Kennedy Town (private-led gentrification), Mong Kok (public-led gentrification) and Quarry Bay (developer-led gentrification) (La Grange and Pretorius, 2011), Ley and Teo (2013: 14-16) argued that the lack of critical debates around gentrification is less based on the exceptionality of Hong Kong that would render Western models unfit than on a widespread affirmative view that such development is necessary to enhance social mobility. As their analysis of newspaper articles has shown, the most common public critique of redevelopment projects was related to insufficient compensation rather than concerns over a loss of community value.

Another reason for this reluctance might be found in what Ackbar Abbas (1997) called “culture of disappearance”.³⁰ While his understanding of space is clearly informed by Lefebvre, Abbas—as a scholar concerned with architecture—focused primarily on the built environment in Hong Kong and how it produces and is produced by cultural practices. By attributing the overall specificity of local buildings to three distinct features—stylistic receptivity, constant rebuilding and hyper-density—Abbas (1997: 80-82) identified three different types of built space: the merely local (colonial and indigenous buildings), the placeless (generic office and hotel towers) and the anonymous (the endlessly replicated residential, commercial and industrial blocks). While the potential disappearance of the merely local frequently stirs up public debates, the emotional attachment to the anonymous is significantly lower.³¹

³⁰ Abbas (1997: 25) developed in this context the concept of *déjà disparu*, “the feeling that what is new and unique ... is always already gone, and we are left holding a handful of clichés, or a cluster of memories of what has never been”.

³¹ There have been noteworthy exceptions in recent years, especially for old “tong lau” tenement buildings (e.g.

Drawing from the conceptual bandwidth of Lefebvre, de Certeau and Abbas, Janet Ng (2009: 5) sees urban space in Hong Kong as both “ideologized and political”, which can only be properly accessed “through the cultural imagination from within”. Although avoiding any reference to Foucault’s concept of governmentality, she further argues that the production of space is not only an externally directed imposition of state ideologies, but at the same time shaped and altered by individuals that either re-enforce the material inscriptions of dominant ideologies or try to challenge them. Ng (2009: 65-67) is primarily concerned with the ideological imagination of Hong Kong as a paradigm for a global capitalist city, where rational politics of a free-market economy have produced an orderly space. By analyzing places such as parks, museums and shopping malls, she argues that space in Hong Kong is organized according to “the aesthetic of capitalism and the bourgeoisie” (Ng, 2009: 68). While Hong Kong also becomes another paradigm for the spatial tensions between neoliberalism and everyday life, Ng, nevertheless, still shares the positivist approach of resistance with de Certeau:

“If in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded. The language or power is in itself ‘urbanizing’ but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counter-balance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power.”

(De Certeau, cited in Ng, 2009: 3)

While scarcity and hyper-density are commonly seen to be at the bottom of Hong

Blue House) and historical public housing estates (e.g. Mei Ho House of Shek Kip Mei Estate; Lower Ngau Tau Kok Estate).

Kong's on-going struggle over space, the local economy depends at the same time on a profitable exploitation of its land resources which often turns the problem to the advantage of the proprietor (Abbas, 1997: 86). In contrast to many other cities in the region, government revenues generated from properties take up a significantly higher share within the general revenue account and are the city's second most important source of income (SCMP, 2014).³² Therefore, out of public (self-)interest, the HKSAR government regulates supply and demand for land by releasing new sites in piecemeal fashion in order to receive high land premiums from real-estate developers through bidding processes. This is made possible by the peculiarity of land ownership in Hong Kong, where all land is owned by the People's Republic of China and administered by the HKSAR government. The Chief Executive usually grants leases to individuals, institutions or corporations for a certain period of time (50 years or more). As rightful owner, however, the government can theoretically revoke ownership rights if there is a breach of the leasing contract.

The first of three parts in this theoretical framework introduced the key concepts around the production of space, urban planning and gentrification. While these are mainly Western models, references to Hong Kong were made where applicable. Generally, the aforementioned spatial and urban theories are concerned with everyday life and urban change. As this thesis deals particularly with cultural spaces, the following section will discuss how culture has been utilized in urban planning debates

³² While Macau generates around 84% of its revenue through gaming tax, Beijing and Shanghai mainly relies on profit, business, salary and value added taxes.

in the wake of global economic shifts and the rise of the so called creative economy.

2.2 Culture and Space

The industrial areas of Hong Kong are often referred to as vibrant clusters where artists and other creative workers are concentrated. The following part will therefore carve out the emergence and variations of the cultural cluster concept that is inextricably linked with the creative turn in urban planning approaches. Eventually, this section will discuss the relevance of Hong Kong's "Asia's World City" campaign in relation to a new symbolic economy.

2.2.1 Cultural Cluster Confusion

The shift from a manufacturing to a post-industrial economy in the 1980s and 1990s forced many urban planners to think about the reorganization of space. With more and more factories being relocated to low-cost production bases in developing countries, abandoned industrial buildings in inner city areas or near the waterfront have become undesirable markers of urban decline (Mommars, 2009: 46-47). Zukin (1995) argues that this development coincides with the rise of the "symbolic economy", when cities recognized and fostered "the production of symbols as basic commodities" and the self-conscious "production ... of spaces as both sites and symbols of the city and of culture" (Zukin, 2001: 1).

By "placing local cultural activity on the urban agenda in order to improve city life and the fabric of the built environment", a new "cultural planning" approach (Stevenson D., 2003: 104-105) set out objectives to articulate a diverse range of urban policies. One of the most common strategies was the development of cultural clusters.

Clustering, in the general sense, refers to the concentration of certain industries, businesses and skilled workers that are able to benefit from each other on grounds of proximity (logistics and exchange), specialization (collaboration and competition) and resource sharing (infrastructure, talents, research). While originating from the realm of industrial economics, the cluster concept has been revived with the rise of the knowledge economy—especially in areas of IT, education, design, research and the arts where sociality and exchange are deemed crucial factors for productivity and success (Marshall, 2003 [1890]; Porter, 1990; Mommas, 2004).³³ However, the usage of the term across very different fields has also undermined its clarity and universality, especially for cultural clusters that have ever since been uncritically subjected to the same analytical framework as their counterparts in the business and industry sectors (Kong, 2006).³⁴ Similar to the previously discussed conceptual inflation of gentrification, the cultural cluster is nowadays an overstretched signifier that can describe almost any kind and degree of a spatial agglomeration, provided it is, in one way or another, affiliated with cultural activities or the flexible notion of cultural and creative industries (Mommas, 2004; Keane, 2011).³⁵ Overall, cultural clusters can be

³³ Alfred Marshall (1997 [1890]) first described the economic concept of a cluster, meaning a certain place where related industries decided to group—mainly encouraged by logistic advantages (e.g. shorter transportation routes). Later, Michael Porter (1990) introduced the model of a “business cluster” to improve productivity, competition and innovation, especially in relation to a rising knowledge economy.

³⁴ In this thesis the term “cultural cluster” is used interchangeably with “arts cluster” and “creative cluster”. In recent years scholars such as Mommas (2009) and Kong (2009) started to use converged terms such as “cultural-creative clusters” to problematize the definitional ambiguity of cultural and creative industries. For a more detailed discussion see Kong (2006, 2009), Cinti (2008), Cooke (2008), Keane (2011) and Hesmondhalgh (2013).

³⁵ Although the terms “cultural cluster” and “cultural district” are often used interchangeably in English literature (“cluster” is supposedly more common in the USA and Asia, while district is preferred in Europe), Cinti (2008: 71) argued for a significant difference between cultural district as place for production and cultural quarter as place for consumption. While this might be true in the narrow European context, these definitions, once transferred and translated into other countries, could be discussed ad absurdum, as cultural quarters such as the West Kowloon *Cultural District* (own emphasis) suggest. The industrial area of Kwun Tong is commonly described as a cultural cluster, arts area or arts district. Arguably, the term “district” implies a more homogenous and place-bound entity, while “cluster” stands for a more flexible concept. Another distinct formulation is “artist village” (or sometimes “arts village”), implying a focus on cultural production, especially in the area of fine arts.

divided into two categories: the planned cluster and the organically evolved cluster (Kong, 2009; ADC, 2010).

While the cultural planning approach put culture on the agenda of town planners and various government departments, it was the notion of the creative city that elevated these strategies to a visionary concept. In the wake of the creativity discourse, clusters were not only regarded as policy tools to regenerate urban neighborhoods, but also to boost innovation and contribute to economic growth. However, the lack of evidence as to *how* this exactly happens has also led to various interpretations of *how* these clusters should be planned in order to be (deemed) successful (Keane, 2011: 46-49).³⁶

2.2.2 The Creative Turn

In recent years both planned and organically evolved cultural clusters have been increasingly used as place branding strategies by municipal tourism and trade departments that see the urge to position the city within a global competition for talents and investment. In contrast to concepts of the global or postmodern city that have been used as umbrella terms to label commonalities of historical, economic, social and cultural changes in different places, the *creative city* originated outside the academia. Inevitably associated with British urban consultant Charles Landry, who coined the term in the early 1990s (Landry and Bianchini, 1995) and conceptualized it in greater detail a few years later (Landry, 2000), it presents itself as a “toolkit for urban innovators” in response to the serious challenges for cities in the wake of Post-Fordism

³⁶ Nevertheless, there seems to be a growing academic advocacy for protecting organically evolved cultural clusters from gentrification and real-estate investment—whether in New York (Zukin, 2011), Seoul (Kim, 2011), Taipei (Lin and Han, 2012) or Melbourne (Shaw, 2013). Many of these clusters are nowadays recognized for their positive impact on the urban image, creative industries and quality of life (see also Ch. 2.3.2).

(Scott, 2006). The consequences of this drastic transition from a manufacturing to a postindustrial economy have been especially grave for second and third tier cities which were secluded from the social dynamics and cultural resources that helped to mitigate these challenges in larger metropolises (Bianchini and Parkinson, 1993).

Landry's (2000: 246-253) concept of the creative city was indeed driven by objectives for employment, social equality and sustainability. It also called for the training of "urban literacy" as a necessary skill to read the city from various perspectives and to challenge hierarchical orders of planning processes by drawing on multi-disciplinary insights, ranging from urban economics to cultural studies:

"A full understanding of urbanism only occurs by looking at the city from different perspectives. By reconfiguring and tying together a number of disciplines penetrative insights, perceptions and ways of interpreting an understanding of urban life emerges. [...] Traditionally, however, the discourse on urbanism has been dominated by architects and urban designers." (Landry, 2000: 247)

It is in such a (utopist) vision of inclusive and participatory planning, where ideological intersections with Lefebvre, Jacobs and Zukin are most evident (see Chapter 2.1). Further, Landry's emphasis on the precondition of institutional reforms and the creative permeation of bureaucracy is close to a Foucauldian approach in cultural policy (Bennett, 1998) of identifying room for maneuvers within institutions and practices (see Chapter 2.3).

While this early notion of the creative city remained limited to Western-European cultural policy issues³⁷, it was especially the publication of *The Rise of the Creative*

³⁷ The early concept was often associated with case studies such as Bilbao (Guggenheim Museum), Essen (Zeche Zollverein) and the European Capital of Culture project.

Class by Richard Florida (2002) —and to some degree John Howkin’s (2002) *The Creative Economy*—that diverted and expanded the concept (and especially the terminology) into a controversial academic discourse. Subsequently, the focus shifted from cultural capital (both hard- and software) to human capital (talent) as the thriving force for urban regeneration.

According to Florida, the attractiveness of a city for the “creative class” is mainly defined by “3 T’s”: talent, technology and tolerance. In 2012 he extended this model with a fourth “T”, territorial assets, giving the “quality of place”—including the built environment, the social diversity and the cultural vibrancy—a bigger weight in assessing the “creativity” of cities (Florida, 2012: 280-281). In this context, the creative city concept has become a branding and marketing strategy for an increasing world city competition. Given this obvious implication of an economic instrumentalization of culture, Florida’s approach has been widely criticized by being both too generic in its evaluation standards and too exclusionary in its dichotomy of a creative and therefore also obviously *non-creative* class (Marcuse, 2003; Peck, 2005; Shaw, 2006; McGuigan, 2009). At the same time, the demand for recognizing cultural diversity (Landry, 2000) and street-level culture (Florida, 2002) in urban planning processes, has been challenged by the contradictory nature ascribed to planning and creativity (Leslie, 2005). In her keynote speech at the Inter Asia Cultural Studies conference in Singapore, Kong (2013) summarized eloquently the delusions of the creative turn in academia, or what she called “The Seven Deadly Sins”, such as the economic reductionism of arts and culture, the romanticization of creative labor and

the “fallacy” that creative city models guarantee competitiveness.³⁸

Nevertheless, creativity has become a global buzz word for governments to be featured in place branding strategies and related urban regeneration projects. This development was closely interwoven with the emergence of the creative industries discourse that originated in the UK from where similar policies have been rapidly disseminated to other parts of the world, including Hong Kong and China (Keane, 2007). Although many of these concepts have been extensively theorized within academic and commissioned scholarship, they nevertheless remain subjected to the ambiguous definitions of policy makers in municipalities, provinces and nation-states (Peck, 2005; Pratt, 2009).

With the establishment of the *CreateHK* office in 2009 (under the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau), the HKSAR government also underlined its dedication to develop Hong Kong into a creative city:

“Hong Kong’s vision is to become an international cultural hub. Indeed, the city is an ideal place for artistic expression and creation. Hong Kong’s lively arts and culture scene offers a rich variety of events, featuring local and international performances throughout the year. It is also a leading centre for multi-media, advertising and design.”
(Brand Hong Kong, 2013)

The main task of the office is to boost the creative economy, with a main focus on film, digital entertainment and design. Although the creative industries have been referred

³⁸ The Seven Deadly Sins of the creative turn: (1) the ambiguity based on the lack of consensus which sectors should be subsumed under the term creative industries; (2) the often unsupported presumptions that creative industries are economically beneficial and therefore indispensable for economic growth; (3) the economic reductionism of art and culture and their instrumentalization for a purely economic agenda; (4) the romanticization of creative labor; (5) the preference of creative industries policies to support large conglomerates instead of nurturing small and medium-sized enterprises (illustrated by examples from Singapore); (6) the inability of creative class strategies to address issues of social equality by reinforcing rather than challenging neoliberal development in cities; (7) the “fallacy” that the construction of creative cities will increase competitiveness and guarantee economic growth.

to as one of Hong Kong's six pillar industries (Tsang, 2009), their contribution to the annual GDP has not exceeded 5% during the last years (HKSAR, 2009, 2012).

2.2.3 Hong Kong: "Asia's World City"

In 2001 Hong Kong introduced its new branding campaign "Asia's World City" after previous attempts such as "Hong Kong Is It" or "City Of Life" had failed to make any considerable impact. While the re-branding earned criticism for its high production costs and its generic logo, it is still in use in present-day (with only minor design overhauls).³⁹ Interestingly, the Central Policy Unit—the highest policy advisor to the HKSAR government—invited Charles Landry and Sharon Zukin for a seminar titled "The Culture of World Cities" during the campaign launch.⁴⁰ Since then, commissioned studies have been clearly informed by the concepts of Landry, Howkins and Florida (HAB, 2004; ADC, 2006; Kong et al., 2006; Chu, 2011). After the *Baseline Study on Hong Kong's Creative Industries* in 2003, the Home Affairs Bureau published *A Study on Creativity Index*, which was almost entirely based on benchmarks proposed by Florida. While the study attested Hong Kong a generally positive growth of its overall creativity index between 1999 and 2004, it did not provide any policy recommendations or suggestions for improvement.

However, Stephen Chu (2011: 46) argues that this branding campaign has also suppressed Hong Kong's vernacular culture by neglecting the city's peculiar "glocalness". Drawing from the wording of two influential cultural critics—Lung

³⁹ British PR consultancy Burson Marsteller coordinated the campaign and US branding firm Landor Associates created the logo. The entire project allegedly cost HK\$ 9 million.

⁴⁰ For transcripts of Landry's and Zukin's presentations, see: http://www.cpu.gov.hk/txt_en/events_conferences_seminars/conference_20010731.html

Ying-tai⁴¹ and Chan Koon-chung⁴²—Chu demands that:

“Hong Kong has to be aware of the initially self-reinforcing but eventually self-defeating boom-bust process, recognizing that its success was not built on Central District Values but vibrant hybridized cultures.” (Chu, 2011: 55)

Instead, the current branding seems to give up on rather than to promote the inherent “personality” (Florida, 2002), “authenticity” (Zukin, 2009) and “quality” (Landry, 2000) of Hong Kong. It is this quest for distinction that eventually brings the debate back to the evaluation and definition of culture within cultural policy discourses.

2.3 Policy and Culture

Raymond Williams’ (2002 [1958]: 93) concept of culture has enabled the very important articulation of two meanings, “the arts and learning” and “the whole way of life”, that also laid the foundation for the emergence of cultural studies in Britain. At the same time, however, this complementary (instead of mutually exclusive) understanding has also become one of the biggest challenges for a pragmatic engagement in policy making which usually requires applicable models, compromised decisions and measurable outcomes.⁴³ In this regard, the sociological notions of culture put forward by Bourdieu—especially in relation to “distinction” and “cultural

⁴¹ Lung Ying-tai is an internationally acclaimed writer and cultural critic from Taiwan. After serving as the first Director of the Cultural Affairs Bureau in Taipei from 1999 to 2003, she joined the Journalism and Media Studies Centre at the University of Hong Kong as guest professor. In 2012 she was appointed as Taiwan’s Minister of Culture.

⁴² Chan Koon-chung gained fame as both journalist and science-fiction writer. His novel *The Fat Years* has been translated into 13 different languages.

⁴³ Williams (1984), who himself was involved in the British Arts Council between 1975 and 1978, also attempted to define “five senses” of cultural policy, which according to him have either a displaying function (in the sense of a “national culture”) or a regulatory function (i.e. funding, access and censorship). McGuigan (2004: 64) identified these five senses as “national aggrandizement”, “economic reductionism”, “public patronage of the arts”, “media regulation” and “negotiated construction of cultural identity”.

capital”—have offered useful tools for the assessment of culture in relation to economic, social and symbolic factors (O’Brien, 2014: 2).

This tension between critique and pragmatism has also led to a substantial debate in the 1990s, mainly among British and Australian cultural studies scholars, which eventually resulted in the formation of cultural policy studies as a multidisciplinary academic—yet practical—field of inquiry (Miller and Yúdice, 2002). The ideological discrepancies of that time were accentuated in a tartly dialogue between Jim McGuigan (1996, 2004), who insisted on a critical and communicative cultural policy approach based on Habermas’ notion of the public sphere, and Tony Bennett (1992; 1998), who primarily argued for the “usability” of cultural studies for cultural institutions and practitioners (Lewis and Miller, 2003).

It was in the wake of these intellectual differences that the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* emerged as a platform in 1994, putting forward the definition of cultural policy as:

“[T]he promotion or prohibition of cultural practices and values by governments, corporations, other institutions and individuals ... [that] may be explicit, in that their objectives are openly described as cultural, or implicit, in that their cultural objectives are concealed or described in other terms.”⁴⁴

While this definition recognizes the ambiguous nature of cultural policy (that is: to be always present, even in absence), it primarily relates to the regulatory domain.

⁴⁴ See: <http://www.tandfonline.com/action/journalInformation?show=aimsScope&journalCode=gcul19>

However, from a contextual perspective, cultural policy is also a contingent national formation that developed along historical and cultural trajectories in different parts of the world. Therefore, international comparative analyses are often not only difficult, but even inherently problematic (Heinrichs, 1997; Zuser, 2009). Arguably, this is of special importance in the Asian context, where the formulation of an explicit cultural policy usually coincided with the formation of a new (post-colonial) nation-state. Nevertheless, the “culture portfolio” of each country—meaning the positioning of culture within ministries—differs drastically in this region (Lindsay, 2004: 63-65). Put in the context of cultural globalization, Crane (2004: 12-17) argues that nowadays governments can determine their degree of participation through cultural policy strategies, particularly by means of preservation, protection and promotion.

2.3.1 Resistance and Governmentality

The set of problems that is always at the bottom of debates on cultural policy is based on the intersection of two concepts: culture and value. While the latter refers to three different ideas about economics, personal expression and morality, this complexity is also mirrored in both Williams’ and Bourdieu’s relational understanding of culture. Eventually it is the domain of cultural policy where “the difficulty of defining culture and the difficulty associated with value are displayed clearly in the attendant problem of making judgments” (O’Brien, 2014: 3-4). Similarly, Throsby (2001: 84-85; 2010: 112-113) argues against a conflation of cultural and economic value. According to him, cultural value consists of six different characteristics—social value, historical value, aesthetic value, spiritual value, authentic value and symbolic value—that all together need to be weighed against purely economic rationality in

decision making processes. Nevertheless, *how* cultural value can be adequately measured (e.g. Throsby suggests that this is done by elected expert committees and societal surveys) still remains one of the most controversial challenges.

With the emergence of cultural policy studies, Australian scholar Tony Bennett has mainly taken issue with two prevailing concepts in cultural studies: hegemony and resistance. For Bennett both of them are highly problematic for a pragmatic approach which he sought to establish. In his critique, he first confronts prevailing logics of resistance—particularly as described by Stuart Hall and Michel de Certeau—with an effective agency of change. For Hall and Jefferson (1993 [1976]), resistance is firmly associated with a working class and is operated both outside from and in opposition to the dominant culture, with the degree of resistance being determined by a “more or less settled cultural equilibrium” (Bennett, 1998: 172). However, for Bennett, the “primarily defensive and so reactive qualities” of this oppositional resistance have often resulted in a limited political value (Bennett, 1998: 172-173). De Certeau, on the other hand, sees resistance not as inherently defensive, but as “a creative, adaptive play in the space of the other” (Bennett, 1998: 176), where tactics, as the art of the weak, are used to create temporary spaces wherever power seems to be currently absent. For Bennett, de Certeau’s poetic account has taken the oppositional resistance to the extreme, until it reached the point where the passive tactics as ordinary practices of everyday life represent a deprivation of any position in a power-relationship and a state of “ubiquitous and all-triumphant” panoptic power (Bennett, 1998: 177). In this understanding of resistance, the “effective agency” and the “rich variety of means ... to take issue with those forms of power which oppose and oppress them” might be crucially diminished. Drawing from Foucault’s “microphysics of power”, Bennett

tends to believe in a more productive and contextual form of resistance:

“Rather, it is that any form of resistance, when looked at in detail, in its particular contexts and conditions, will reveal itself to be a similarly intricate and complex part of a multi-faceted set of practices through which the subordinate resist and take issue with, while also seeking both to understand and to educate, the cultures that subordinate them.”
(Bennett, 1998: 188)

Bennett’s comparison of the Gramscian and Foucauldian understanding of power is built upon similar arguments to question the uncritical use of hegemony within cultural studies. For Gramsci, power is held by a unified ruling bloc from where it descends to the subordinated classes that in turn might countervail the ideological and cultural forces from above. As such a counter-movement most likely arises from unsatisfying living and working conditions, the dominant power will try to get the active support from society to legitimize their claim for rule (Bennett, 1998: 68-71). It is here where Bennett also identified the main difference to Foucault’s governmentality:

“Governmental power, by contrast, has no such singular anchorage, authorization or function, but is rather characterised by the diversity of the objectives which it pursues, objectives which derive from and are specific to differentiated fields of social management rather than resting on some unifying principle of central power.”
(Bennett, 1998: 70)

Gramsci suggests that the politics of consent are achieved through “ideological state apparatuses of both state and civil society” that continuously expose the subordinated classes to their hegemonic culture and values (Bennett, 1998: 68). However the Gramscian analysis of power looks “*through* rather than *at*”

(Bennett, 1998: 68; original emphasis) these institutions, and therefore “fails to take adequate account of the more mundane and technical means through which power is routinely exercised” (Bennett, 1998: 70). In other words: While Gramsci focuses on the mental dimension of conduct, Foucault puts the institutions and technologies in the center of power/knowledge production:

“The problem is not changing people’s consciousness—or what’s in their heads—but the political, economic, institutional regime of the production of truth.”
(Foucault, cited in Bennett, 1998: 71)

2.3.2 (Sub)Cultural Citizenship

Nevertheless, hegemony and resistance have played a significant role in analytical accounts on British subcultures in the 1970s (Hall and Jefferson, 1993 [1976]; Hebdige, 1979). Even if venues such as Hidden Agenda are mainly affiliated with marginal music genres, the fluid character of today’s subcultures have transcended most of the former social, economic and cultural boundaries that determined their formation. Instead individuals are rather enabled by their consumer identity “to create new forms of contemporary sociality—small-scale social configurations that operate beyond modernist class borders” (Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003: 12; Maffesoli, 1996). While sociological analyses have increasingly a-politicized subcultures, some scholars argued that the Gramscian hegemony model is far too complex to be left aside:

“In particular, it is the work of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) that is commonly cited here as a way of allowing us to move from an ‘inherently’ radical notion of subculture, coupled to a monolithic conception of dominant culture, to a position that recognizes the differentiation and multiplicity of points of power in

society and the way that various cultural formations and elements articulate within and across these constellations of power in complex and non-linear ways to produce contingent and modificatory outcomes.”

(Muggleton and Weinzierl, 2003: 13)

Despite its political connotation, the domain of subculture has also been articulated with aforementioned urban creativity discourses (Florida, 2002; Landry, 2000). For cities that are associated with a prolific cultural diversity (e.g. Berlin, Amsterdam, Melbourne), “subcultural economies” have indeed become an integral part of their symbolic capital. This has also led to a broader recognition of subcultural spaces in relation to urban planning and gentrification (Shaw, 2005; 2013). While this might increase their susceptibility for being instrumentalized by local governments, the possibility to experience subculture is also a genuine concern for many marginal groups. Nick Stevenson (2003: 135) argues that consumer culture has become “one of the key places” where “the right to be different” can be effectively pursued. Coining the term “cultural citizenship”, he sees a productive interrelationship between consumption and the role of citizens:

“Commercial and aesthetic cultures, in contemporary society, continue simultaneously to raise and to obstruct issues that can be related to the cultural nature of citizenship. Many marginalized groups have searched for an identity through a commercial culture, not only because other more ‘political’ avenues have been blocked, but because it has come to signify, increasingly within our culture, a domain of pleasurability and identification.”

(Stevenson N., 2003: 135)

Recent cases—such as the rejection of a free-to-air TV license for a new broadcasting company—have illustrated that “cultural citizenship” is also a relevant concept in Hong Kong, especially given its succinct history of cultural policy strategies.

2.3.3 Hong Kong: “The best cultural policy is no cultural policy”

In the case of Hong Kong, Ooi (1995: 273) summarized the code of practice of the British colonial government as “the best cultural policy is no cultural policy”, echoing the “present in absence” ambiguity mentioned at the beginning of this section. The first heydays of cultural development were between 1977 and 1982 when seven of the city’s major representative arts groups were formed.⁴⁵ In 1982 the government created the Council for Performing Arts (CFPA), which—as the name indicated—still excluded visual arts and literature from its range of duties (RCB, 1993). Since 1987 cultural policy debates also started to be regarded as relevant within intellectual circles. The drama group Zuni Icosahedron established the Hong Kong Cultural Policy Study Group that responded and commented for a few years on policy developments, with a major publication in response to the 1993 *Arts Policy Review Report* by Hong Kong’s Recreation and Culture Branch.⁴⁶ Following part of the recommendations formulated by the study group, the government established the Arts Development Council (ADC) as a statutory body in 1995, which also replaced the CFPA (Hui, 2007).

While the ADC is primarily responsible for allocating direct subsidies, the responsibility for cultural policy is currently assigned to the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB). The total budget allocated for “arts and culture” in the fiscal year 2013/2014 was HK\$ 3.3 billion, of which 3% were distributed independently by the ADC on a project grant basis. Roughly 75% of the budget were spent on the maintenance on

⁴⁵ Hong Kong Chinese Orchestra, Hong Kong Repertory Theatre, Hong Kong Ballet, City Contemporary Dance Company, Chung Ying Theatre Company, Zuni Icosahedron.

⁴⁶ Nowadays the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) can be considered the equivalent of Hong Kong’s former Recreation & Culture Branch (RCB).

public libraries, public performing arts venues (including programs such as the Hong Kong arts festival), as well as public heritage sites and museums.

Although Hong Kong has built up a fundamental cultural hardware across the city between 1964 and 2000 (including landmarks such as City Hall, Cultural Centre, Arts Centre, Museum of Art, Academy for Performing Arts, Coliseum and Heritage Museum), the recent debates on cultural policy revolved around the preservation of heritage sites and the WKCD. The latter, which was announced by then Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa in 1998, has since then often been presented as the purported savior of Hong Kong's cultural development, with one of its statutory obligations being the promotion and enhancement of "excellence, innovation, creativity and diversity in arts and culture".⁴⁷ From the very beginning, this mega construction—to be literally built from scratch on 40 hectares of reclaimed land—has been criticized for its local detachment and its likelihood of falling prey to private real-estate developers (Lee et al., 2013). Similarly, while heritage preservation has indeed received greater attention in the post-colonial era, the commercial purpose often remained the driving force behind recent projects:

"[I]t is in effect a product of the deepening of the market principle under the ideology of neo-liberalism and a worldwide expansion of the tourist industry. The gist of the discourse is to turn culture, arts and heritage into business while passing the economic burden of restoration, maintenance and development from the government to the private sector."
(Ku, 2010: 384)

For Ku (2010) this tendency is especially evident in the Central Police Station, a

⁴⁷ See West Kowloon Cultural District Authority Ordinance (Cap. 601)

historical site that will be turned into a creative cluster by the Jockey Club Charities Trust (after the government had faced strong resistance against its initial commercialization plans). In recent years, similar appropriations of heritage buildings have been realized with the Police Married Quarters (PMQ) in Central and the Comix Home Base in Wan Chai. However, these clusters do not only serve the creative industries, but—together with the WKCD—have also become important displays for Hong Kong’s aspiration of becoming “Asia’s World City” (Cartier, 2008: 64).

2.4 Relevance of Concepts

The theories and concepts laid out above defined the framework for this research along three lines: the rather abstract domain of space, the methodological approach of cultural policy studies and the practical field of urban and cultural planning.

Cultural policy studies understands itself as a pragmatic domain that should produce usable outcomes. However, in the case of a non-compliant space such as Hidden Agenda—that operates outside governmental institutions and technologies—the thesis will also challenge the limitations of this approach in the light of conditions that are distinct to Hong Kong.

The first part of this research will focus on the concept of spatial practices that have produced Kwun Tong as an organically evolved cultural cluster. It will then move to a detailed analysis of organizations, policies and discourses, while addressing both the subcultural and commercial (“livehouse”) nature of Hidden Agenda. Within the context of redevelopment, the thesis will also refer to previously discussed issues of gentrification and place-making.

The second part of the research aims to establish an articulation between the

domains of space and culture. Drawing upon concepts of urban and cultural planning—that (almost literally) build the bridge between spatial production and cultural policy studies—the thesis will compare different creative cluster models. Eventually, theories of spatial power, cultural citizenship and culture portfolio are adopted to offer both conceptual and pragmatic conclusions in relation to Hong Kong's cultural policy strategies and the particular case study of Hidden Agenda.

3 CASE STUDY: HIDDEN AGENDA

“I definitely think that industrial buildings are the saving grace for Hong Kong music. For people to be able to practice their art and then to also be able to perform their art in this space that has no governmental restrictions, is a blessing and so no wonder when areas like Kwun Tong are in fear of being gentrified that people are up in arms about it. But unfortunately, this is Hong Kong and when money is the key ingredient to everything – that’s what’s going to happen eventually.”

(Interview: Farooqi, 2014)

Over the years, Hidden Agenda has been described as an “underground venue” (CNN), an “independent music venue” (Time Out), one of “the city’s hottest hidden venues” (SCMP) and “the city’s most clandestine live music venue” (Lonely Planet).⁴⁸ After all, these paraphrases have one thing in common: they refer to a physical location with a cultural value that seems to be rare in Hong Kong. However, when Hidden Agenda staged its very first concert, it neither laid claim to a particular “agenda” nor pursued the aspiration of becoming an established livehouse. Situated in the midst of the organically evolved cultural cluster in Kwun Tong, the venue was rather a product of spontaneity and opportunity that gradually turned into a serious commitment to Hong Kong’s local music scene.

Using Hidden Agenda as a case study, this chapter consists of three parts. The first section uses Lefebvre’s conceptual triad to analyze the spatial production of Hidden

⁴⁸ See: CNN (2011; <http://travel.cnn.com/hong-kong/play/hong-kongs-underground-venue-hidden-agenda-refuses-close-165446>); Time Out Hong Kong (2011; <http://www.timeout.com.hk/music/features/54390/hong-kongs-top-new-music-venues.html>); SCMP (2013; <http://www.scmp.com/magazines/48hrs/article/1271094/going-underground-citys-hottest-hidden-venues>); Lonely Planet (2013; <https://www.facebook.com/hiddenagendahk/posts/476780715714958>)

Agenda within and in relation to the surrounding industrial area. The following part will scrutinize Hidden Agenda in terms of its operational layout as well as its response to regulatory policies outside the cultural spectrum. In addition, this section deals with the formation of different discourses and the role of the Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO). Eventually, for the third part of this chapter, Lily Kong's (2012) recent research on Fo Tan is used as a reference to evaluate the cultural, economic and social sustainability of Kwun Tong as a cultural cluster. Challenging the completeness of her model in relation to Hidden Agenda, this thesis suggests "governmental sustainability" as a fourth category for assessing the conditions for cultural spaces in Hong Kong. The findings and citations in this chapter have been mainly generated from in-depth interviews with the deputy head of EKEO, representatives of Hidden Agenda as well as various musicians and cultural workers that are affiliated with Kwun Tong.⁴⁹

3.1 Production of a "Kwun Tong livehouse"

The 1,400 industrial buildings in the city are the last tangible legacy of a time when Hong Kong was one of the leading manufacturing bases in the world. During the heydays of industrialization in the 1970s, more than 870,000 people worked in factories, fueled by a steady influx of immigrants from neighboring countries.

The development of Kwun Tong started in the early 1950s with the construction of resettlement estates for refugees from Mainland China. In the following years, the government reclaimed land along the shoreline of Kowloon Bay. Flat, low-lying and

⁴⁹ See Annex for a detailed list of all interviewees.

in striking distance to a growing labor force, this area was most suitable for the establishment of a new factory cluster. As a designated “industrial area”, the organization of space in this newly formed part of Kwun Tong differed from its urban counterparts that were mainly used for residential and commercial purposes. While the social fabric of industrial areas has undergone major changes in the 1980s—when high vacancy rates and low rental prices attracted more and more *non*-industrial users—the sustenance of its industrial hardware and inherent spatial practices has also shaped a certain governmentality of space. The following analysis uses Lefebvre’s conceptual triad to analyze the dialectical production of perceived, conceived and lived space in the neighborhood of Hidden Agenda, paving the way for discourse and policy analyses thereafter.

3.1.1 Perceiving Kwun Tong

The industrial area of Kwun Tong is situated in Kowloon East and separated from its surroundings by “natural” borders: to the south-west by a fly-over highway construction (Kwun Tong By-pass) and the harbor (Kwun Tong Typhoon Shelter), to the north-east by busy arterial streets (Kai Fuk Road / Kwun Tong Road) and the viaducts of the Kwun Tong subway line (the former shoreline before reclamation). This geographic constellation determines the physical framework in and through which the perception and practices of each user take shape. Indeed, the first layer of Lefebvre’s conceptual triad—spatial practices/perceived space—is merely concerned with an empirical evaluation of the bodily experience of space and how it informs the patterns and behaviors of daily routines and rituals. In other words, the production of space starts from how people move within physical space while accommodating its

sound, texture, smell and shape through all of their senses. Of course, each perception differs from one person to another, but they drastically depict the discrepancies between internal users and external planners. In reality, the embodied experiences of actual locals are often overruled by non-local professionals who claim to provide a more sophisticated understanding of the space based on their expertise (Carp, 2008: 132-134). Being aware of the limitations for such a comprehensive analysis within this domain of perceived space, this research will use one of the regular visits to Hidden Agenda as an illustration of how the physical characteristics of the industrial area inform a distinct set of spatial practices.

When accessing the industrial area by foot from the nearby Ngau Tau Kok subway station, the first section consists of a lengthy underpass that ends at the northern edge of Lai Yip Street, from where it is a short walk of around 450 meters to the livehouse. The front sides of most premises along the way consist of wide doorways for the loading and unloading of goods. While many of the walls are covered with graffiti or rent advertisements (see Image 1 below), the dense pattern of factory buildings is only occasionally interrupted by private businesses, such as car repair shops. In contrast to commercial or residential areas in Hong Kong, the prohibition of retail and



Image 1: Rent advertisements for vacant units in industrial buildings (posted on a wall in Ngau Tau Kok)

entertainment businesses reduces the number of outsiders significantly. Consequently, sidewalks are less frequented and the fast pace of the city appears slower than usual.

The few common spaces in this area include a handful of eateries (often former industrial canteens), a traditional “dai pai dong”, a sports ground and several convenience stores. All of them are widely dispersed, but have also become the (literally) common ground of routes and daily rituals for different users—regardless of whether they are workers, artists, or visitors. The most apparent sensory transformation along this particular way takes place during evening hours. Although some factories and stores operate for 24 hours, traffic nearly ceases at night and people start walking freely across the streets rather than making detours through pedestrian crossings. Meanwhile, the industrial noise that dominates the soundscape during the day is replaced by noticeable silence. However, when turning from the main roads into back alleys this quiet moment gives way to muted sounds from nearby band rehearsal rooms.

From the outside Hidden Agenda is rendered invisible (see Image 2 below). No banners or street signs indicate the right direction or address. At night those in the know enter the venue by slipping through a small gate in the middle of a closed garage



Image 2: 15-17 Tai Yip Street, Kwun Tong, the industrial building where Hidden Agenda is currently located

door and by taking one of the spacious industrial elevators to the second floor. The space itself appears dark and dimmed. The windows are covered with cloth in order to block the light from outside and the walls are plastered with posters and graffiti.

3.1.2 Conceiving Kwun Tong

While the previous part aimed to sketch the sensory and experiential domain of spatial practices, the significance of Hidden Agenda lies rather in its contribution to conceptualizing the idea for the cultural use of industrial buildings, which is theorized within the second pair of Lefebvre's triad, representations of space/conceived space. It mainly refers to how people make sense of and think about the space in which they move while simultaneously understanding this process as a mental activity that is reflected (and to a certain extent materialized) in plans, signs, models, theories, and discourses. In praxis, the formulation, interpretation, and opposition of laws and regulations play a significant role in this process and are therefore the main examples that are used to illustrate the duality of representations of space/conceived space hereafter.

As previously explained, the development of different urban areas in Hong Kong is primarily determined by town planning zones that compartmentalize the land according to its most suitable and therefore strictly defined use.⁵⁰ In order to stimulate the anticipated regeneration of Kwun Tong, the government rezoned its industrial area into "other specified uses (business)". This adjustment entailed that the conversion of

⁵⁰ One purpose of this regulation is to avoid any unauthorized and sudden change in the urban landscape, such as the construction of an apartment high-rise within a country park or industrial area, where the accommodation of residents seems to be inappropriate, unsafe or inexpedient.

industrial buildings into commercial space—and hence the construction of new office towers—would be legally guaranteed. However, this also contested the continuation of the site-specific practices and routines of industrial workers and artists.

Therefore, the recent development needs to be understood in relation to a more fundamental change in conceiving the expediency of space in industrial areas triggered by the introduction of government measures to revitalize industrial buildings in Hong Kong. Prior to this, non-industrial tenants such as artists offered an opportunity for owners to generate income from otherwise unprofitable objects. Given that most of these spaces remained private studios and were therefore literally kept out of sight from public discourse, a non-compliant use of industrial buildings was generally tolerated, although it seemed to be in conflict with existing legislations and must have been noticed by authorities as early as 2001.⁵¹ However, as industrial areas in Hong Kong are not conceived as merely redundant and visually unpleasant anymore, a master plan such as the transformation of Kwun Tong into another CBD has been turned into an exemplary *representation* of urban redevelopment that simultaneously excludes other conceptions and spatial practices, regardless of whether their nature is industrial or creative.

Eventually, at the end of 2012, the authorities aligned the physical *representations* with their own *conceptions* and changed road signs in the district accordingly from “industrial area” to “business area”, which appeared not only diametrical to the visual dominance of the rather gritty industrial buildings, but also to how some users thought

⁵¹ In that year eight fine arts students from CUHK organized the first open studio event in Fo Tan.

about and imagined their space. Some local artists strongly resisted this imposed change in representation. They started a counter-campaign based on guerrilla tactics—such as graffiti and stickers—to articulate their own conception of space, proclaiming the establishment of the “Kwun Tong Art Area” instead.

Although these divergent views of conceived space eventually led to the emergence of political activism, which is undertaken by groups such as the Factory Artists Concern Group and R.I.P., a common space such as Hidden Agenda offered a symbolic site for the contestation and negotiation of these dominant concepts.

However, it is also necessary to recognize that a space such as Hidden Agenda has been produced by the rigid town planning zones as much as they have negated it. For instance, the strict division of residential and industrial areas renders common problems otherwise associated with nightlife venues, such as noise nuisance or execution of closing hours, negligible. Simultaneously, the lack of traffic, street life and residential use naturally leads to the allocation of fewer resources for surveillance of that area, which is reflected in a less apparent presence of the law. Nevertheless, other grounds still remain upon which the existence of Hidden Agenda is constantly challenged, such as fire safety regulations, liquor licensing, hygiene, and entertainment definitions (see Ch. 3.2.3).

3.1.3 Living Kwun Tong

While the previous two sections, by offering selective descriptions, aimed to illustrate the dialectical relationship between spatial practices and representations of space (or perceived and conceived space), the third part of Lefebvre’s conceptual triad goes beyond these understandings. The duality representational space/lived space is

where both the perceptible and conceivable aspects of space extend to a deeper meaning that might not be adequately expressed other than symbolically (and therefore, most often, though not solely, creatively or artistically) (Carp, 2008: 135). Even for Lefebvre (1991 [1974]: 40) this part of the triad is “highly complex and quite peculiar, because ‘culture’ intervenes here”.

On stickers issued for its fourth anniversary in 2013, Hidden Agenda defined itself as a “space for live” in a “Kwun Tong art district”, hinting at its symbolic role for a larger community that might not necessarily address and be of any actual concern to a broader public. However, by filling the void of a mid-sized live venue for local and foreign music acts, it has not only received international media exposure, but has also been given a certain extent of recognition from foreign institutions. When Hidden Agenda needed to undertake its forced relocation at the end of 2011, it decided to film the entire process and the ongoing negotiations with different authorities. The resulting documentary, *Hidden Agenda The Movie*, has since then been screened during numerous occasions in Hong Kong and other cities in South East Asia, building up a transnational discourse that also became part of Hong Kong’s official contribution to the 2012 Venice Architecture Biennale. In this regard, Hidden Agenda draws upon its quality of being—what Eric Ma (2002a) called—a “translocal space” that is inspired by practices, plans and symbols from abroad (in this case, other famous music venues) and reproduces them by using the resources that are locally available. This makes the space not only universally recognizable (even without knowing about its socio-spatial context), but also helps to facilitate an articulation with translocal spaces in similar situations.

In contrast, the on-going redevelopment plans for Kwun Tong under the broader

vision that “Kowloon East should become another premier CBD of Hong Kong to support our economic growth and strengthen our global competitiveness” (EKEO, 2013a) reflect the official definition of a social and mental privilege that Lung Yingtai (2004) famously called “Central District Values” (Chu, 2011: 48). These values not only permeate the logic of the city’s urban planning, but also create their own *representational spaces* (with a modern skyline as its materialized symbolic economy) that manifest themselves in the *lived* experience of the users as the one “true space”.

After having laid out the external factors and spatial practices that have produced Kwun Tong’s cultural cluster, the following part will look at the internal transformations and the prevailing discourses from the viewpoint of Hidden Agenda as a non-compliant livehouse.

3.2 Hidden Agenda: Space, Policies, Discourses

In 2008, H., one of the co-founders of Hidden Agenda, moved to an industrial building in Kwun Tong, where space was larger, more affordable and less regulated than in Hong Kong’s residential areas. While using it primarily as an apartment, he also set up a rehearsal studio to which he occasionally invited friends to play informal live gigs. Given the lack of regular performance venues for the large number of bands in Kwun Tong, the establishment of a livehouse seemed to be the next logical step.

Initially, H. used the name “Hidden Agenda” for his former retail shop in Causeway Bay, where he sold t-shirts and head shop utensils as reference to drug-using countercultures.⁵² However, since associated with a non-compliant livehouse, the

⁵² Head shops sell paraphernalia that can be distributed legally.

name has gradually taken up ironic and political connotations. As suggested in the previous part, while Hidden Agenda is indeed a—purposefully—*hidden* heterotopia that is placed at the cultural and spatial periphery of Hong Kong, it also became a symbolic space for resistance that helped to exemplify the conception and significance of industrial buildings for local artists, particularly musicians.

3.2.1 Generation Gap

Since its emergence in 2009, Hidden Agenda relocated twice and has been undergoing drastic spatial and organizational changes. However, the eviction from its previous sites also created new opportunities and challenges.⁵³ During an interview for this research, one co-founder referred to the different locations of Hidden Agenda as the first, second and third generation, indicating a rather controversial evolution of this space over the last years (see Table 1 on p. 62 for a comparative overview of all three generations):

“When we started in the first venue, there was no rule. We just invited friends to run the show. If they wanted to play until 3 am, we just did that. It was not about how to sustain the venue. It was totally not. But now we have to pay a huge rent every month, so a lot of things have changed.”

(Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

The *first generation* of Hidden Agenda was housed in Choy Lee Industry Building (1A, 46 Tsun Yip Street) and measured around 2,000 sqf.⁵⁴ At this time, any economic concerns were still secondary. The basic rent was covered by H. who anyway used the

⁵⁴ 2,000 square feet (sqf) = 185 square meters (sqm)

space for his private purpose and any income generated from ticket and liquor sales was immediately re-invested in better music equipment. Most of the musicians and visitors remember the first venue as a very casual place where no particular rules applied. However, shortly after the government introduced the revitalization measurements for industrial buildings, the landlord seized the opportunity to sell the premise and H.'s contract was eventually terminated. The "Immediate Closure Concert"⁵⁵ in January 2010 lasted for two days and featured more than twenty local bands. One month later, Hidden Agenda and concerned musicians organized a protest march to the office of the Arts Development Council, asking the question why an organic and vibrant cluster is subjected to a top-down "revitalization".⁵⁶ During this demonstration representatives of Hidden Agenda delivered the decorated metal door of the first venue to the ADC and asked the council to keep it until it provides sufficient support. Joined by artists from Fo Tan, this also became the starting point of the Factory Artist Concern Group as the first comprehensive advocacy group across different cultural sectors. By the end of 2010, the ADC eventually conducted the aforementioned survey on the cultural use of industrial buildings, which was the first scientific proof that cultural users in those areas have reached a significant dimension.

Despite its sudden eviction, Hidden Agenda established itself as a livehouse within the first year and filled a void in the local music scene. The small and informal character of the first generation was beneficial for drawing less attention from authorities, but it soon reached its physical limits in terms of capacity and cost recovery.

⁵⁵ Chinese title: 馬上封音樂會

⁵⁶ The Chinese name of the protest was 生勾勾被活化大遊行

Being still primarily a living space and rehearsal studio at that time, the closure of Hidden Agenda exposed the general threat of a sharp increase in land value and rent by the government's new approach to industrial buildings.

Table 1: Overview of Hidden Agenda's "three generations" (own table)

Hidden Agenda	1 st Generation	2 nd Generation	3 rd Generation
Time	01/2009-01/2010 (1 year)	03/2010-12/2011 (1 year, 9 months)	02/2012-present
Size	2,000 sqf	4,000 sqf	4,000 sqf
Rent	n/a	HK\$ 10,000	HK\$ 25,000
Income	tickets/liquor	tickets/liquor	tickets
Program focus	local	local/international	international
Eviction	lease terminated (premise sold after introduction of revitalization measurements)	lease terminated (potential land use violation)	n/a (currently investigation regarding land use and fire safety violation)

Nevertheless, in March 2010, Hidden Agenda opened its *second generation* in Ko Leung Industrial Building (6/F, 25 Tai Yip Street) which has already become infamous for housing a significant number of rehearsal rooms (see Image 3 on p. 63). The premise itself had no permanent security guard and was poorly maintained, which enabled H. to negotiate a monthly rent of HK\$ 10,000 for a gross floor area of 4,000 sqf (370 sqm). Compared to the previous space, the new location was solely used for the purpose of a livehouse, which eventually also triggered more serious concerns about the management, efficiency and sustainability of the venue. Given the initial learning process and financial investment, the organizational transformation took several months, during which H. subsidized around 40% of the rent.



Image 3: The abandoned second generation of Hidden Agenda

The comparably large space allowed the booking of better known artists that also attracted more visitors from other parts of Hong Kong. During the second year in the new building, the number of monthly shows increased steadily and for the first time Hidden Agenda could operate completely self-sustained, with liquor sales contributing a significant proportion to the income. Eventually, Hidden Agenda has also become an established brand for Hong Kong's underground scene that received attention from Taiwanese Minister of Culture Lung Ying-tai, the Consulate General of France and international media such as CNN, The Guardian, Huffington Post and China Daily.⁵⁷ The success and popularity of the second generation is often attributed to the gritty appearance of the space that can be aligned with the “translocal imagination” (Ma, 2002a) of other subcultural locations. In particular, people started comparing Hidden Agenda with CBGB, a former underground venue in New York, that—although shut down in 2006—is widely considered to be the forerunner of contemporary livehouse

⁵⁷ Lung Ying-tai met with representatives of Hong Kong's music scene during her official visit in November 2012, including singer Anthony Wong (黃耀明) and members from Hidden Agenda and Backstage Live Restaurant. In 2011 Hidden Agenda was an official venue of the festival Le French May, during which police showed up to inspect the livehouse.

culture. For Hidden Agenda this reference also meant that it had achieved a certain subcultural credibility which was not only confined to Hong Kong.

“The second generation was right in between some dodgy-ness and some coolness. We (...) got bigger and more developed. But people referred to the CBGB, because the toilet was still crap, covered with different stickers and paint jobs ... [A]ctually the visitors told us what CBGB was ... we didn’t have a clue.” (Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

However, during the heyday of the second generation, Hidden Agenda’s conflicts with different authorities increased. Representatives from several government departments as well as police officers controlled the venue frequently and instituted procedures on several grounds, ranging from the lack of an entertainment license to the violation of land use regulations. By the end of the year 2011, the landlord yielded to the Lands Department and terminated the lease with Hidden Agenda precociously. During these months of investigation, Hidden Agenda reacted once more with a public campaign, emphasizing that its resistance is not just for the sake of the venue, but the Kwun Tong music cluster at large:

“[D]enying the fact that we are a music Live House could be the best decision. But if we deny, at the same time we justify this pathetic cultural policy, and all the band practice rooms, galleries and theatres that rely on factory buildings can only operate under the dim light. We have to clarify that Hidden Agenda is not a pub, not a multi-purpose venue, people come for the music, music IS the very purpose (...) Kwun Tong industrial area is the most important breeding ground for the HK music scene, it is a MUST for a Live House to sit right in the middle of this cluster.”⁵⁸

Before the final closure on New Year’s Day 2012, Hidden Agenda organized

⁵⁸ See: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/hidden-agenda/hidden-agenda-%E7%99%BC%E8%A1%A8%E6%9C%80%E6%96%B0%E8%81%B2%E6%98%8Estatement-from-hidden-agenda/215797808450757?fref=nf>

“Relocation Live”, a four day event on two consecutive weekends, in order to raise funds for moving to a new location in Kwun Tong. Retrospectively, the second generation of Hidden Agenda was both a result of accumulated experience and a more concrete understanding of translocal livehouse culture. At the beginning, the financial capability and commitment of co-founder H. allowed an organic growth by steadily adapting to the new spatial and economic conditions. While the low rent, the grittiness of the building and the overall lack of surveillance still created a rather unrestricted atmosphere, it was the bigger capacity and the more diversified program that eventually increased the publicity of the space and attracted more people from beyond Kwun Tong. Subsequently, however, Hidden Agenda also came into the government’s field of vision.

The *third generation* of Hidden Agenda opened in February 2012 in Wing Fu Industrial Building (2A, 15-17 Tai Yip Street), only a few buildings further down the road. With an area of 4,000 sqf, the venue is of similar size as the previous one and can host shows for up to 300 people. However, the overall conditions of the premise, with two modern elevators and guards on duty, as well as the on-going valorization of property in the industrial area have raised the fixed costs significantly. When they settled for a monthly rent of HK\$ 25,000, which is two-and-a-half times the amount paid for the second generation, Hidden Agenda was once more forced to adapt to the situation. While again becoming more professionalized, it seemed difficult to keep up the image of the previous location.

“The third generation now is really, really established in the way we can possibly run it. I think the essence got lost. If certain people come around now, they won’t recognize it anymore as a CBGB.” (Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

From the very beginning, Hidden Agenda has been operated as a non-commercial venue. Friends worked voluntarily without remuneration and any surplus was reinvested in the project. This loose structure was also reflected in the organization of the space. Among the core team of volunteers, which could be up to 20 people, all matters were thoroughly discussed and decisions were made collectively. However, starting with the third generation, even more commitment was required. Meanwhile, two members, who work for Hidden Agenda in a full time capacity, receive a monthly compensation, provided that there are sufficient funds available after all other expenses have been paid. However, this shift to a more hierarchical management of the livehouse also led to internal tensions:

“There are always different agendas between the volunteers ... Actually, all of them put their personalities ... into Hidden Agenda. Now [the] ideology changed ... in terms of effectiveness [and] tidiness. Some ... want very strict rules how the venue should be used.”

(Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

One of the most contentious issues was about sponsorship. While some argued that a commercial sponsor would undermine the nature and ideology of the space, for others the cooperation with an audio company was merely a rational decision. Further tensions appeared in relation to the program. In the beginning, Hidden Agenda was especially dedicated to promoting the local music scene, but the bigger space and the aspiration to accommodate diverse music genres has led to an increasing internationalization of shows. In the past, around 80% of all featured bands came from Hong Kong and Mainland China, but in 2013 this ratio was almost reversed.

“[A]fter some really serious meetings ... we realized that we lost the very essence of Hidden Agenda, to promote our local music.”

(Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

In addition, Hidden Agenda has also lost ground on subcultural music genres that can only attract a very limited audience. Given the fixed costs and the relatively large space of 4,000 sqf, shows for 20 to 30 people are hardly viable from an economic perspective. In recent months, this niche has been filled up by smaller venues such as C.I.A. in Kwai Chung and the new Musician AREA in Kwun Tong. If Hidden Agenda receives inquiries for experimental music, they will usually refer the artists to them. (See Table 2 below for a summary of landmark events in relation to Hidden Agenda.)

Table 2: Overview of landmark events in relation to Hidden Agenda (own table)

2000/2001	Industrial buildings are increasingly used by non-industrial users, including many visual artists and musicians
09/2005	First “guerrilla gig” near Kwun Tong Ferry Pier
01/2009	Hidden Agenda (1 st generation) opens
10/2009	Government introduces “measurements to revitalize industrial buildings”
01/2010	Hidden Agenda (1 st generation) is closed down
02/2010	Protest march to ADC, subsequently formation of the Factory Artist Concern Group
03/2010	Hidden Agenda (2 nd generation) opens
11/2010	ADC survey on cultural uses of industrial buildings is published
7/2011	Hidden Agenda receives letter from Lands Department to leave the premise
10/2011	Government reveals plans to transform the Kwun Tong industrial area into the city’s second CBD
12/2011	Hidden Agenda (2 nd generation) is closed down
02/2012	Hidden Agenda (3 rd generation) opens
07/2012	Energizing Kowloon East Office opens
01/2013	Fly the Flyover01 underneath the Kwun Tong bypass is opened to public
01/2013	The need for “arts/creative space” is for the very first time mentioned in the annual policy address of the Chief Executive
02/2013	Hidden Agenda celebrates its 4 th anniversary
05/2013	Hidden Agenda launches the “Exterminating Kowloon East” campaign
11/2013	EKEO starts a “market sounding exercise” to find potential NGOs to manage the flyover space on a long-term contract
01/2014	Musician AREA moves from Kwai Chung to Kwun Tong

3.2.2 Hybrid Space: illegal, sub-cultural, commercial?

Given its contradictory transformation, Hidden Agenda appears as a hybrid space that operates across different spatial identities which are only tied together by the

heterotopic nature of Kwun Tong's industrial area. This section analyses the relational meanings of Hidden Agenda as a space for subculture, a livehouse and a non-compliant space.

As a *non-compliant space* in an industrial building, Hidden Agenda shares an identity with other illegal places, many of them are small businesses such as training centers, indoor football courts, pet crematoriums, restaurants, war game venues and retail shops. As not all of them dare to operate as openly as Hidden Agenda, they often depend on word-of-mouth and informal channels to attract customers. Up until now, however, there has been no significant research about the history and diversity of illegal practices in Hong Kong's industrial buildings. All in all, cultural venues such as Hidden Agenda only represent a small part of Kwun Tong's non-compliant spaces that make use of the temporary absence of power. However, the formation of alliances in resistance to the revitalization plans of the government has turned out to be rather difficult, not only with other users, but even within Kwun Tong's cultural sector.

“When we talk with other activists in Kwun Tong, we realized we failed from the very first beginning, because the notion of the right to the city wasn't introduced in the right way. I think the majority still thinks the development has to go like this way. And when it comes to political action, a lot ... are not ready for this. At the protests we organize in Kwun Tong, we always have familiar faces, maybe 30 people or less.” (Interview: Hidden Agenda, 2013)

In contrast to urban redevelopment projects under the URA that often directly intervene with the acquisition and conversion of buildings, Kwun Tong's induced gentrification has rather confirmed the wide-spread affirmative view that such development is necessary to enhance social mobility (Ley and Teo, 2012). Nevertheless, it has also pressurized landlords that used to be sympathetic of creative

spaces prior to the revitalization project. Given the rapid valorization of land, industrial buildings have become objects of investment and the—theoretical—threat by the government to dispossess owners in case of land use violations has gained weight in recent years (Interview: Chow Chun Fai, 2013).

As a *subcultural space* Hidden Agenda is—above all—dedicated to the promotion of marginalized music genres that have remained underrepresented within Hong Kong’s live music scene. However, far from being contained within rituals, styles and “restrictive class-based homologues” (Weinzierl and Muggleton, 2008: 6), as put forward in the early emergence of subcultural studies in Great Britain (Hall et al., 1976; Hebdige, 1979), Hidden Agenda very much transcended any social and cultural boundaries. Arguably, the venue does not represent a coherent subcultural movement in Hong Kong, which also enabled its significance across diverse genres.

“When Hidden Agenda opened up and filled this incredibly important void giving us all a place to watch, perform and organize shows – it kick started a new level of music in Hong Kong. It also raised the maturity of a lot of people, so [they] started becoming more professional about ... shows.” (Interview: Farooqi, 2014)

While the first concerts of local bands only attracted a small circle of people, Hidden Agenda’s growing size and profile also changed the composition of visitors. Now, international shows are often frequented by a mixed audience of locals and non-locals. Nevertheless, in addition to its cultural work, Hidden Agenda’s specific subcultural value also derived from its location. Being a heterotopic (“underground”, “alternative”, “illegal”) and self-reliant (“indie”) space in Kwun Tong, it shares an identity with cultural producers in nearby industrial buildings (“We are from the factories”). Both audience and participants have shaped the spatial practices that operate within and

around Hidden Agenda. However, while this thesis has not adopted a sociological approach to analyze the social, cultural and economic background of visitors or musicians, the detachment of spaces such as Hidden Agenda from distinct subcultural formations also suggests a less significant role of the audience in contributing to the struggle over spatial power in Kwun Tong.

Eventually, as a self-dependent *livehouse*, Hidden Agenda is a place for cultural consumption and therefore—conceptually—part of Hong Kong’s creative industry. Since 2009, the venue was continuously forced to improve efficiency and to work along economic rationales, sharing the same concerns with other music venues in the city. While it understands itself as a non-commercial space, Hidden Agenda nevertheless has approached an “immovable paradox” (Harvey, 1989: 238): In spite of its opposition to the capitalist logic of Kwun Tong’s urban redevelopment, it had to engage with “question[s] of value” and “the necessary organization of space and time appropriate” to its own reproduction (Harvey, 1989: 238). In order to promote concerts and attract as many visitors as possible, Hidden Agenda adopted diverse marketing tools and by April 2014 it accumulated more than 10,000 followers on its Facebook page.⁵⁹ There have been a few other livehouse venues in Hong Kong that can be compared with Hidden Agenda in terms of location, program and size (see Table 3 on p. 71 for a detailed overview), but currently the Kwun Tong livehouse is the only factory space that operates on a weekly basis. From time to time, Musician AREA (Kwun Tong), C.I.A. (Kwai Chung), Love Da Café (San Po Kong) and Rock Angel Band House (Fo Tan) organize single shows for a limited audience.

⁵⁹ In comparison, the page of “Backstage Live Restaurant”, a livehouse in Central, counts around 6,500 “likes”.

Table 3: Selective overview of most significant past and current livehouse venues in Kowloon, Hong Kong Island and New Territories (own table)

	Nature of business	Location	Legal status	Size
Rock Angel Band House (since 2014)	“livehouse”: renting of venue	New Territories, Sha Tin, Fo Tan industrial area	n/a	max. 150 ppl.
C.I.A. (since 2013)	“art gallery/experimental art space”: tickets, merchandise	Kowloon West, Kwai Chung industrial area	n/a	max. 80 ppl.
XXX (since 2011)	“art gallery, art space, electronic music club”: tickets, liquor sales	Hong Kong Island (NW), Sai Wan, Western District (before: Sheung Wan)	registered business (liquor license)	max. 200 ppl.
Beating Heart (2011 – 2013)	“livehouse”: tickets, renting of venue, beverage, recording	Hong Kong Island (NW), Shek Tong Tsui (industrial building)	n/a	max.. 200 ppl.
Strategic Sounds (2011-2012)	“livehouse/underground club”: tickets	Kowloon East, Ngau Tau Kok, Kwun Tong industrial area	n/a	max. 80 ppl.
Hidden Agenda (since 2009)	“livehouse”: tickets, beverage, merchandise, renting of venue	Kowloon East, Ngau Tau Kok, Kwun Tong industrial area	n/a	max. 300 ppl.
Musician AREA (since 2009)	“livehouse”: renting of music and lighting equipment, renting of rehearsal rooms, music lessons, recording, renting of venue	Kowloon East, Ngau Tau Kok, Kwun Tong industrial area (before: Kowloon West, Kwai Chung industrial area)	n/a	max. 200 ppl.
Backstage Live Restaurant (since 2007)	“restaurant”: food & beverage, liquor	Hong Kong Island, Central	registered business (liquor license)	max. 180 ppl.
Music Zone @ E-Max KITEC (since 2007)	“livehouse”: renting of concert facilities, beverage, merchandise	Kowloon East, Kowloon Bay	investment company of Hopewell Holdings Ltd.	max. 600 ppl.
Grappa’s Cellar (since 2005)	“restaurant”: food & beverage, liquor, renting of venue facilities	Hong Kong Island, Central	registered business (liquor license)	max. 400 ppl.
Hang Out at Youth Outreach (since 2002)	“youth center” (indoor basketball court): renting of space, donations	Hong Kong Island (NE), Sai Wan Ho	registered charitable NPO	max. 350 ppl.
Warehouse Teenage Club (since 1991)	“youth center” (music venue): renting of space, donations, tickets	Hong Kong Island (SW), Aberdeen	registered charitable NPO (Wofoo Social Enterprise)	max. 150 ppl.
The Wanch (since 1987)	“bar”: liquor, food & beverage	Hong Kong Island, Wan Chai	registered business (liquor license)	max. 100 ppl.
Fringe Club (since 1984)	“public art space”: self-funded (tickets); lease for nominal rent	Hong Kong Island, Central	non-profit arts organization	max. 120 ppl.

Nevertheless, all of these industrial locations were initiated by local individuals that have been personally invested in Hong Kong's local music scene. In contrast, the livehouse venues on Hong Kong Island—e.g. XXX (“Triple X”), Beating Heart, The Wanch—were founded by affluent expatriates who are—arguably—very exemplary representatives of Florida's creative class. While most of them are in senior management positions, they have established their own livehouse not out of entrepreneurial esteem, but what they perceived as shortcomings in Hong Kong's cultural offering (Interview: Beating Heart, 2014; Strategic Sound, 2014). As registered businesses they mainly generate their income from food and beverage sales to cover the high operational costs in these districts. Therefore their engagement with entertainment is often guided by economic considerations to target their program to a broader audience. Located in the densely populated CBD with many mixed residential and commercial blocks, these venues have also been subjected to very rigorous law enforcement practices regarding liquor sales and noise nuisance.

3.2.3 “Room for Maneuvers” within Non-Cultural Policies

Nevertheless, both commercial and industrial livehouse venues have learnt to manage and manipulate the boundaries within they are able to operate. Drawing upon the case of Hidden Agenda, this section analyzes the non-cultural regulations as well as the tactical maneuvers in response to them—including aspects of land use, liquor licensing, entertainment licensing and noise control.

Land Use

Any town planning project in Hong Kong is strictly determined by the publicly

accessible Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) that compartmentalizes land according to its intended purpose. The most common zones are “residential”, “commercial”, and “other specified uses (business)” (abbreviated as OU(B)).⁶⁰ Currently, the permitted uses of industrial buildings located in OU(B) excludes places of public entertainment or restaurants/bars, under which a livehouse could be potentially legalized.⁶¹ In order to circumvent this definition, Hidden Agenda asked each guest to sign up for membership that was valid for one year and stated clearly that “the premises where Hidden Agenda is located is private and no admittance is allowed unless with this card”. If authorities would have controlled a breach of land use during a show, the livehouse could have argued that only members of a private club are present. By using this tactic, Hidden Agenda usually increases the bureaucratic workload for relevant authorities to prove the non-compliant nature of the venue. If a space is suspected to violate the current land use regulations, the Lands Department might start an investigation of which the last consequence could be a dispossession of the current landlord. Although the government usually restrains from this step, it remains a potential threat that is sometimes brought up during negotiations (Interview: Chow, 2013).

Liquor License

Any establishment in Hong Kong—whether bar, restaurant or club—that intends

⁶⁰ Other common categories are government/ institution/ community, green belt and open space. Land development projects of the Urban Renewal Authority, such as the Kwun Tong Town Centre, are outlined as a separate zoning category.

⁶¹ The only exception is made if industrial buildings have already a non-industrial section in the lower ground floors that are physically separated from any spaces for industrial use. The majority of industrial buildings in Kwun Tong, however, do not fall within this category, as their ground floor is usually reserved for the loading and parking of trucks.

to sell alcoholic beverages needs to apply for a liquor license from the Liquor Licensing Board (LLB) under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD).⁶² The future licensee is also required to place advertisements in newspapers to seek public opinion from nearby residents who can voice out their concerns during the application process and the final public hearing. Based on objections that are brought up during that time, the LLB can define additional conditions for the licensee such as fixed time frames when it is not allowed to play music or sell alcohol (e.g. from 11pm to 8am). However, in several occasions the board has also been accused of being inconsistent with these conditions.⁶³ Violations of liquor licensing laws are considered a serious offense in Hong Kong and also put the venue at risk to criminalize its guests.

In its first and second location, Hidden Agenda sold alcoholic beverages to visitors without having obtained a liquor license. Since then, as a repeat offender, the venue has been blacklisted from any future applications to the LLB. Currently, in order to circumvent the regulation, Hidden Agenda gives out beer for free and invites guests to donate an unclarified amount of money. In addition, it is tolerated that people bring their own drinks to the concerts. Although lawyers suggested that the livehouse could also sublet several square meters and outsource liquor sales, Hidden Agenda decided not to provoke the concerned authorities any further. For the founders of Hidden Agenda, the consumption of liquor during concerts is an inextricable part of livehouse

⁶² All applications made to the board are at the same time referred to the Police Commissioner and District Officer for further comments.

⁶³ When a bar in Central filed for a judicial review on grounds of unreasonableness, Mr Justice Kevin Zervos ruled that the conditions of the LLB were in fact unreasonable (*Sabinano II Marcel R v. Municipal Services Appeal Board* (2014), see: <http://www.hklii.hk/eng/hk/cases/hkcfi/2014/382.html>)

culture and therefore carries not only substantial economic, but also cultural value that contributes to the authenticity and credibility of the place. However, this opinion is not necessarily shared across the entire local music scene. For members of Musician AREA, for instance, the focus on liquor consumption in music bars on Hong Kong Island was one of the reasons to create an independent space on the Kowloon side where music can be put again in the foreground.

Public Entertainment License

In 2011, the Lands Department informed the FEHD about the case of Hidden Agenda and the livehouse was requested to apply for a temporary “place of public entertainment license” to overcome its illegal status.⁶⁴ In a first reaction, however, the representatives of Hidden Agenda argued that they organize cultural events instead of entertainment shows and refused to follow the order. The official definition of the term, as it appears in the Places of Public Entertainment Ordinance (Cap. 172)—enacted in 1919—is indeed quite broad:

“[A] concert, opera, ballet, stage performance or other musical, dramatic or theatrical entertainment; a cinematograph or laser projection display; a circus; lecture or story-telling; an exhibition (...) of pictures, photographs, books, manuscripts or other documents or other things; a sporting exhibition or contest; a bazaar; an amusement ride (...); dance party.”⁶⁵

Overall “*public* entertainment” refers to any entertainment “to which the general

⁶⁴ There are two kinds of Public Entertainment Licenses in Hong Kong, one particularly for cinemas and theatres, and another one for “any other kind of entertainment”. The “Place of Public Entertainment License” under the FEHD should not be confused with the general “Entertainment License” issued by the Home Affairs Department (Office of Licensing Authority). The latter only refers to operations of amusement centers, mahjong parlors, lotteries, tombola, trade promotions (e.g. lucky draw) and public dance halls.

⁶⁵ The last amendments of this definition were made in 2002.

public is admitted with or without payment”. Currently there are only 138 permanent entertainment licensees registered in the FEHD database.⁶⁶ At the same time, the Lands Department treats the license as a proof that there is no violation of the land use and that the premise has met all safety regulations to which “places of (public) entertainment” are automatically subjected to. Compared to Mainland China, where also the type of performance has to be approved by the relevant authority for its lawfulness, the HKSAR government does usually not impose any regulations on the content of cultural events (Xu, 2013; Zuser, 2011).⁶⁷

Noise Control

In Hong Kong the exposure to noise in private and public spaces is regulated by the Noise Control Ordinance along both objective and subjective criteria: “noise emission standards” (in decibels) and “annoyance”. In urban areas (including most of industrial, commercial and residential areas) the acceptable noise levels must remain below 65-70dB(A) during the day (7am to 11pm) and 55-60dB(A) at night time (11pm to 7am).⁶⁸ These regulations are also considered to have hampered Hong Kong’s potential to become a popular entertainment hub in Asia. Several attempts during the last decade to establish the Hong Kong Stadium near Happy Valley as an outdoor

⁶⁶ The majority of licensees are indoor playgrounds such as Jumpin’ Gym USA.

⁶⁷ Nevertheless, all foreign artists that are remunerated for a performance in Hong Kong are required to apply for a working visa from the Immigration Department beforehand.

⁶⁸ dB(A) – Decibel is a unit to measure and evaluate noise levels. A-weighted decibels “dB(A)” indicate that the value takes the sensitivity of the human ear into account. The range between 60 and 70dB(A) is equivalent to average road traffic noise in a distance of 25 meters, 80dB(A) to railway noise in a distance of 25 meters. Various sources that emit similar noise levels at the same time will lead to a slight increase of the overall noise level. The risk for hearing impairment increases disproportionately. For every three additional decibels, the recommended time of exposure decreases by 50%. For more information see the platform of the Environmental Protection Department for Noise Education: http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/noise_education/web/ENG_EPD_HTML/index/index.html

venue for pop music concerts failed due to on-going complaints by residents that required organizers to stay within the allowed limit of 70dB(A) (SCMP, 2007).⁶⁹ One of the last entertainment events was a government-backed health rally in 1994 that featured performances by local Canto-Pop stars, but also proved the infeasibility of outdoor shows in this stadium:

“Organisers tried to keep the amplified noise level to the legal limit by encouraging the audience to cheer by waving or clapping with white gloves provided at the venue. However, only about half the crowd were reported to have worn the gloves and the 70 decibels legal noise limit was occasionally broken by cheering.” (SCMP, 1994)

Currently, the noise control in the city is monitored and administered by the Environmental Protection Department. While a certain noise level can be measured objectively, other sounds that might be even significantly below the legal limits, can nevertheless be deemed an “annoyance”.⁷⁰

As noise usually has a direct impact on people’s living quality, the enforcement of the law in residential and mixed areas in Hong Kong is taken very seriously and has become one of the main concerns for bars and music venues. Given the nature of the industrial area in Kwun Tong and the lack of nearby residents, noise levels have never been a serious issue for Hidden Agenda. When Musician AREA operated its previous industrial space in Kwai Chung, another tenant filed a complaint and the venue was prosecuted for noise nuisance. However, the court eventually ruled that it is reasonable

⁶⁹ Another single charity event for orphans in May 2003 after the SARS epidemic stirred up discussions when five residents filed noise complaints despite having knowledge of the charitable cause (SCMP, 2003). The last attempt for a pop concert in 2007 pleased the surrounding neighborhood, but was not well received by the audience that criticized the poor sound quality (SCMP, 2007).

⁷⁰ The Environmental Protection Department defines noise as follows: “Noise is unwanted sound. Usually the sound of a violin is referred to as music [and] is something pleasing. Depending on other factors, the sound may be perceived as noise.” (See: http://www.epd.gov.hk/epd/noise_education/web/ENG_EPD_HTML/m1/intro_1.html)

to assume certain noise levels in factory buildings (Interview: Musician AREA, 2014).

3.2.4 Friend or Foe: Energizing Kowloon East Office

Although Hidden Agenda and other activist groups criticized the revitalization measurements for their negative impact on Hong Kong's cultural development, their campaigns had relatively little impact on policy level. Similarly, the subsequent survey by the ADC—that had underlined the significance of industrial buildings—did not bring any changes in existing regulations. However, in recent years the Development Bureau became increasingly aware of the dimensions of non-compliant users, whose concerns were brought up in meetings of the Town Planning Board and district councils.

In the case of Kwun Tong, the government decided to implement a new redevelopment approach that—given its scale—was unprecedented in Hong Kong. By establishing a physical presence through the Energizing Kowloon East Office (EKEO), the Development Bureau put urban planners and the users of industrial buildings in striking distance to each other. While this proximity facilitated more opportunities for direct communication, it also increased tensions between different interest groups. This section will therefore analyze the role of the EKEO in the transformation process of Kwun Tong and its engagement with spaces such as Hidden Agenda, culminating in a comparison of two discursive strands.

In 2011, then Chief Executive Donald Tsang announced the plan for the “Development of Kowloon East”, the biggest urban renewal project that has ever been

undertaken in Hong Kong.⁷¹ In contrast to Kai Tak, where the government will invest up to HK\$ 100 billion over the next years, the industrial area of Kwun Tong is supposed to transform “organically” without significant public investment, simply by attracting developers from the private sector. Therefore, the main purpose of the EKEO, which was set up on the former site of Kwun Tong’s paper recycling station⁷² in 2012, is:

“...to steer, supervise, oversee and monitor the development of Kowloon East with a view to facilitating its transformation into another premier CBD of Hong Kong to support our economic growth and strengthen our global competitiveness.”⁷³

Overall, Hong Kong’s urban renewal strategy consists of three different approaches: redevelopment, rehabilitation and revitalization (Development Bureau, 2011). The strategy of revitalization, as held up by the EKEO, is seen as a “soft” process that will “enhance vibrancy of degenerated localities without massive destruction of the original built environment” (Development Bureau, 2007). However, this approach must be seen in stark contrast to the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) that implements redevelopment and rehabilitation projects by direct intervention.⁷⁴ The URA especially targets “old, dilapidated buildings with poor living conditions”, where intervention is deemed necessary and beneficial for the community. While this

⁷¹ In total, the redevelopment area covers 488 hectares across Kai Tak (320 hectares), Kowloon Bay (91 hectares) and Kwun Tong (77 hectares).

⁷² The closure of Kwun Tong’s Public Cargo Working Area (PCWA) in 2011 was discussed controversially, especially regarding its significance for employment and waste management.

⁷³ See: http://www.ekeo.gov.hk/en/about_ekeo/ekeo.html

⁷⁴ Rehabilitation refers to the prolongation of the building’s lifespan by encouraging, supporting and implementing timely renovation and maintenance. This is similar to the concept of preservation, when sites of historical, social and cultural significance are concerned. In contrast, redevelopment—as defined by the Development Bureau—is a more far-reaching process that targets dilapidated buildings with the intention to re-plan and re-build entire urban areas for an overall alleviation of living standards.

top-down approach of the URA can often accelerate the development process, it is usually preceded by long negotiations over compensating and displacing former owners and tenants.

The EKEO in Kwun Tong is headed by town planner Raymond Lee and government architect Winnie Ho, who directly report to the Development Bureau. Since its establishment in 2012, the office has published three updated versions of a conceptual master plan and organized several conferences to engage with academics, experts and the community. Compared to previous redevelopment projects by the Development Bureau and the URA, the EKEO decided to use a place-making approach (see Ch. 2.1.2), which still has an experimental character in Hong Kong:

“We didn’t know our approach, when we set up the office. ... Actually, even within the government, there are a lot of question marks, [such as] whether we should set targets [for office space supply]. But in an old district, we gradually understand that hard targets may not be the best way.”⁷⁵
(Interview: EKEO, 2013)

The EKEO sees place-making both as process and philosophy to “capitalize on a local community’s assets, inspiration, and potential”, and to energize the hard- and software of Kwun Tong’s industrial area.⁷⁶ The office itself, however, is only a temporary construction and will be removed once the transformation is under way—ideally before 2020. In terms of hardware, the EKEO is responsible for refurbishing government land and providing a clean and tidy environment to attract future

⁷⁵ Currently, the office supply potential of Kowloon East is estimated at a gross floor area of 4 million sqm, of which 2.9 million are located in Kowloon Bay and Kwun Tong. 2.7 million sqm are needed to meet Hong Kong’s future demand of Grade A offices until 2030. (See: [http://www.greening.gov.hk/tc/people_tree_harmony/doc/glo_seminar_20130807_combined_\(compressed\).pdf](http://www.greening.gov.hk/tc/people_tree_harmony/doc/glo_seminar_20130807_combined_(compressed).pdf))

⁷⁶ This wording was directly taken from the website of the “Project for Public Spaces” (PPS). Founded in 1975 in the USA, this organisation is considered to be the pioneer for place-making in contemporary urban planning.

developers. As one of its first acts, the office suggested to promulgate the future CBD identity of Kwun Tong by replacing all road signs that read “industrial area” with “business area”.



Image 4: Graffiti claiming "Kwun Tong Art Area" after road signs were changed from "industrial" to "business" in 2012 (Source: Facebook)

Fearing a faster valorization of property values, the new signage was fiercely opposed by some artists nearby. Subsequently, one sign was retouched with graffiti, crossing out the word “business” and replacing it with “arts” (see Image 4 above). Since then, the EKEO especially focused on the redesign of open space near the waterfront promenade, which was already opened in 2010 and is managed by the LCSD. In 2013, the office opened a public space next to the promenade, right beneath the flyover of the Kwun Tong Bypass highway. This new outdoor venue, called “Fly the Flyover01” (indicating that similar spaces will follow), is generally regarded as a test-bed for utilizing redundant spatial resources in the city.⁷⁷ While the EKEO has been promoting the space as an informal cultural venue for the general public, where events

⁷⁷ Since then, lawmakers suggested to use flyovers also for markets, arts centers, rehearsal studios, recycling depots, offices and temporary housing. (See: http://www.thestandard.com.hk/news_detail.asp?we_cat=4&art_id=131051&sid=38981219&con_type=1&d_str=20130215&fc=8)

could be held for free and without any formal approval, the flyover was received skeptically by the music community in Kwun Tong. Artists complaint that the “fuss” around the new venue actually distracted from the problems for cultural spaces, which have become more serious since the EKEO started to actively promote the commercial transition (Interviews, 2013; 2014). In addition, the independent music scene has used similar spaces around Kwun Tong Ferry Pier as early as 2005 for a so called “guerilla gig” series, which usually took place at night without any prior application to the police department. By refurbishing the flyover, this space of resistance was quasi re-appropriated by the government. Nevertheless, the EKEO tries to enforce only a minimum set of regulations:

“I think you can feel the difference. [Hong Kong] is usually quite an over-managed place. So we tell our guards: Forget about what you did in your previous job. Here you only need to watch for safety.” (Interview: EKEO, 2013)

However, the unapproved appearance of graffiti also caused some internal disagreements:

“That time, actually, we struggle a bit. The graffiti is not that bad and it is difficult to judge between art work and graffiti. But it is a bit scary and so we decided to remove it. Now our rule is: Okay, you can do graffiti, if you inform us. Then we can allocate a space for you.”
(Interview: EKEO, 2013)

Although the office also tried to encourage musicians from Kwun Tong to use the flyover space, Hidden Agenda called for a boycott, which has since then been held up by many bands and music promoters in Hong Kong. Instead, the space is most frequently used by photographers, skaters, cyclists and smaller community organizations.

While currently the flyover is still supervised by the EKEO, it is planned to

outsource the management to cultural NGOs in the future. By the end of 2013 the office started a market sounding exercise to analyze the interest and capabilities of potential candidates as well as the necessary conditions for a leasing agreement. The flyover space has become the main project to integrate “creativity, arts and culture” into the revitalization of Kwun Tong which is recognized as “an ‘incubator’ for artists and creative industries”:

“In line with Government’s commitment to find opportunities to provide suitable spaces for artists, art groups and creative designers in Kowloon East, Energizing Kowloon East Office aims to utilize the unused spaces under the Kwun Tong Bypass for creativity, arts and cultural use and turn them into contemporary cultural hub [sic!] in Kwun Tong for all to enjoy and contributing to enriching the lives of Hong Kong people.” (EKEO, 2013c: 8)

Other future projects of the EKEO in the domain of creativity and culture include the intended transformation of the playground in Tsun Yip Street into an Industrial Heritage Park as well as a proposal bidding for “Kai Tak Fantasy”, a future leisure and entertainment hub at the site of the former airport. However, the emergence of this cultural agenda rather increased than resolved the tension between nearby artists and the EKEO. A counter-campaign of different cultural users in Kwun Tong accused the office of “exterminating” Kowloon East with its “energizing” approach (see Image 5 on p. 84).⁷⁸ Nevertheless, there has still been a direct exchange between Hidden Agenda and the EKEO to discuss potential solutions for the current struggles of the livehouse.

⁷⁸ This campaign also called for the submission of photos to EKEO, together with a stamp that reads “dead due to energization” (Chinese: 因起劲而死亡).



Image 5: Exterminating instead of Energizing: the original EKEO logo (above) was mocked in a counter-campaign by artists (below)

To overcome the on-going distrust, some of the meetings also involved external mediators.⁷⁹ Although there is some basic sympathy for the difficulties which artists currently face, the EKEO sees the cultural sector only as a marginal interest group among many others. In addition, given its priority for a place-making approach, the influence and responsibility of the office are limited to the visible space and do not extend to the inner life of industrial buildings. Nevertheless, the EKEO seems fully aware that its organizational structure on bureau-level could certainly help to facilitate better communication with other policy bureaus regarding the situation of artists in Kwun Tong:

“I think the good thing is [that] this office is ... part of the Development Bureau, so it’s easy for us to work with other bureaus. We know that the bands and some other artists are not happy.”
(Interview: EKEO, 2013)

In the case of Hidden Agenda, the EKEO believes that it would be possible to come to an agreement with the Lands Department—which operates under the Development Bureau—to tolerate such a livehouse within existing land use regulations. However,

⁷⁹ e.g. Ada Wong, founder of the Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture and Make A Difference (MaD)

the bottom line is set by the Fire Services Department (under the Security Bureau) that will not authorize a public venue inside a still functioning industrial building due to safety concerns:

“Because these are the things that cannot fit into the industrial buildings. Not that they cause noise or anything to the existing tenant, it’s the danger of the existing uses that will affect the customers. So the line is: If they use it as their own studio ... they know the place very well. It’s already a lot of work to make the fire department move the line up to this point. We tried to push further ..., but they said, it’s the life of the people and the life of their firemen. ... It really cannot go further.

(Interview: EKEO, 2013)

This argument is usually countered by foregrounding the general risk for all users in industrial buildings—especially factory workers—which should require all owners of such premises to take necessary precautions (Interview: Chow, 2013).

With regards to the cultural value of these spaces, the EKEO also decided to seek policy advice from the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB), which currently oversees Hong Kong’s official cultural policy, as well as CreateHK (under the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau), which promotes creative industries. However, neither of them identified any ground for getting involved. While HAB defines its responsibility primarily in the funding of “high art”, CreateHK is mainly interested in the future “Kai Tak Fantasy” project (Interview: EKEO, 2013).

In summary, the EKEO understands itself only as facilitator for the organic transformation of Kwun Tong. However, by adopting the concept of place-making for a primarily aesthetic change of an area that is “not particularly pleasing visually”,⁸⁰

⁸⁰ See: http://www.ekeo.gov.hk/en/about_ekeo/background.html

its actual possibilities to intervene when the redevelopment entails material disadvantages for some interest groups are in fact very limited. The justification for this non-interventional approach is usually explained with reference to Hong Kong's steadfast economic values:

“If [private developers] choose to refurbish a building that is just a quick sell off for cash flow, we still respect them. That's Hong Kong. That's another important value that we should treasure. Freedom to decide what you want to do with your money, your property, your wealth. But on the other hand, we promote ... good practice [and] good heart. [T]hey can choose to have that good heart or not. It's up to them.”
(Interview: EKEO, 2013)

Although based on different reasoning, many artists also derive their rights for cultural space from the free market economy, as they understand the top-down revitalization measurements as an unfair manipulation that has favored real-estate conglomerates (Interviews: Chow, 2013; Hidden Agenda, 2013; Strategic Sound, 2014).

One of the keywords in this dispute is the term “under-utilized” that has been used by the government continuously in relation to industrial buildings, indicating that the current use of land has not tapped the full potential.⁸¹ For the Development Bureau, the best utilization for Kwun Tong's industrial area is the provision of Grade A office space that should help fostering the values and aesthetics of Hong Kong's second CBD. For many cultural users, on the other hand, relatively low vacancy rates reflect that the current spatial resources are not only fully utilized, but that there is a high demand for them across many sectors, which might all be displaced in the near future (see Table 4 on p. 87 for a comparison of discourses between cultural users and the Energizing

⁸¹ Compared to the verb “to use”, “to utilize” can be considered a judgmental term that narrows down the use “for a particular purpose”. (See: <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/utilize>)

Kowloon East Office that were touched upon in this section).

Meanwhile, gentrification of the industrial area has already started and the redevelopment is seen widely as “inevitable”, but even though the domain of “culture, arts and creativity” has become part of the place-making process, the majority of the creative community does not want to contribute to the transformation that will eventually cause its own displacement.

Table 4: Comparison of discourses between cultural users and EKEO in relation to Kwun Tong’s redevelopment (own table)

	Cultural users	EKEO (Development Bureau)
Vision	Organic cultural cluster (for social and cultural purpose), representing (sub)cultural values	Central Business District (for economic purpose), representing “Central District Values”
Objectives	Return to previous land status (industrial zone, no revitalization policies); fully legalize cultural use of industrial buildings	Facilitate development in accordance with the business zone; encourage conversion of industrial buildings into office space
Rights	Choice and development based on free-market economy (revitalization policies are seen as unfair intervention)	Choice and development based on free-market economy (integration of cultural use cannot be forced upon private developers)
Utilization	Artists fully utilize land resources (argument sometimes backed by statistics of low vacancy rates in Kwun Tong)	Industrial land resources are not fully utilized (land value lower than other areas; sometimes backed by statistics of comparably high vacancy rates in Kwun Tong)
Perception	“Extermination” (the current revitalization plan will exterminate the dynamics of the cultural clusters)	“Revitalization” (the area needs to become aesthetically and culturally more attractive to facilitate its transformation)
Cooperation	EKEO’s place-making approach aims to instrumentalize culture for its own purpose	Place-making approach should increase vibrancy and interaction with local communities

The following section will therefore look at the different aspects of Kwun Tong’s sustainability as an organically evolved cluster outside Hong Kong’s cultural policy strategies.

3.3 Just another Fo Tan?

The cultural cluster in Kwun Tong cannot be analyzed in isolation from other organically evolved art districts in the city. Given its rising profile as a visual arts area, Fo Tan has become a “significant other” to further define and recognize Kwun Tong’s particularity. In the following part, the given context and previous analyses will be translated into a discussion of sustainability, by juxtaposing the specificity of music-related cultural space in Kwun Tong with the prevailing art studios in Fo Tan, using Lily Kong’s (2012) recent study as a reference. According to Kong (2012), the overall sustainability of a cluster is constituted by three sub-categories: economic, social, and cultural sustainability. However, drawing from the peculiar case study laid out above, this research argues for an extension of this model by introducing governmental sustainability as a fourth category that determines the viability of organically evolved clusters in Hong Kong.

3.3.1 Cultural Sustainability

The cultural sustainability of Fo Tan is mainly tied to its industrial environment that is beneficial for producing any kind of visual art. In fact, appropriate physical space is “a very fundamental condition for sustaining certain types of artistic work” (Kong, 2012: 186). The high ceilings, concrete floors and spacious units that can hardly be found anywhere else than in those flatted factories are therefore one of the most important arguments for painters, artisans or sculptors to buy or rent their studios in this area. Meanwhile, the proximity to existing factories in Fo Tan offers not only convenient access to both materials and specialized craftsmanship (e.g. woodwork),

but also a certain industrial “grittiness” that is often perceived as authentic and inspirational (Kong, 2012: 186-187).

A creative space such as Hidden Agenda certainly draws upon similar resources in Kwun Tong. However, although live music venues as well as rehearsal rooms can also be found in other parts of Hong Kong and the feasibility is not only bound to the specific physical characteristics of industrial buildings, their cultural sustainability must be somewhat derived from the peculiar spatial practices that are facilitated by existing zoning regulations.

3.3.2 Social Sustainability

With regard to social sustainability, most of the artists in Fo Tan agree that its proximity to the Fine Arts Department of the Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) in Sha Tin has played a significant role for the area’s social dynamics. While this influence might not be as dominant as it was previously,⁸² the geographical location encourages ongoing ties between the institution and the local arts community. At the same time, the cluster has also fostered interaction between different users (both industrial and creative) and a broader public, especially through local galleries and the annual Fotanian festival. However, as most of the artists prefer to work individually in their own studios, some people also seem to miss a permanent and user-friendly *common space* such as a café or canteen that could increase the connectedness within the community (Kong, 2012: 187-191). Nevertheless, by referring to Benedict

⁸² During the first years, the majority of the artists in Fo Tan was affiliated with the Chinese University and consisted of students, graduates, and faculty staff. Later, however, more institutions started to offer their own arts programs, which diversified the composition of the cluster (Interview: Chow, 2013).

Anderson's (1991) concept of an "imagined community", Kong (2012: 190) suggests that the mere knowledge of having like-minded people around remains one of the most important factors for motivation and inspiration of artists in Fo Tan.

In contrast to the individualistic art studios, the rehearsal spaces in Kwun Tong are usually collectively organized. Several bands often rent and share the same unit, which also increases the creative productivity by allowing spontaneous improvisation and collaboration between different people and across different music genres. Although this happens behind closed doors, Hidden Agenda initially offered the *common space* where these bands could perform their artistic work in front of a live audience and simultaneously engage with the music of others. While such a space might be missed in Fo Tan, the artists there have already established the Fotanian festival, which has turned the arts cluster into a widely recognized brand. Arguably, spaces such as Hidden Agenda serve a similar function for Kwun Tong by connecting it with a community beyond the district, especially by inviting internationally respected bands and seeking cooperation with reputable organizations such as consulates or cultural institutes.

Other than Fo Tan, Kwun Tong is not located nearby any tertiary institutions, which also means that the social production of its arts cluster needs to be derived from other geographical aspects. Kwun Tong is not only one of the most densely populated districts of Hong Kong, but also one of the areas with the highest ratio of public housing. Nevertheless, according to the ADC (2010) survey it accommodates the largest share of Hong Kong's creative spaces in industrial buildings.

Although the survey findings do not offer a district-specific breakdown of income and educational background, the high proportion of bachelor and postgraduate degrees

among visual artists in Fo Tan certainly implies a clustering of people with a relatively high social, economic, and cultural capital. Therefore, the site-specific emergence of a music cluster in Kwun Tong, in which the costs for rent are often shared by several people and credibility is not significantly linked to academic qualification, should be seen likewise as a result of the socio-economic context of the nearby residential areas and their influence on distinct spatial practices that have apparently identified music as a preferred art form (Interviews: Chow, 2013; Hidden Agenda, 2013; Farooqi, 2014; Strategic Sound; 2014; Musician AREA, 2014).

3.3.3 Economic Sustainability

The third and final aspect of Kong's (2012) analysis is concerned with the economic sustainability and mainly refers to how cultural clusters respond to a potential commercial development. In the case of Fo Tan, although it fulfills the most common prerequisites for commercialization, the actual effects on the popularity and affordability of spaces have remained rather low, even after the years following the revitalization measurements for industrial buildings.

In contrast, the relative proximity of Kwun Tong to the current CBD on Hong Kong Island and large-scale real estate projects such as the development of Kai Tak accelerated the valorization of industrial premises and will eventually threaten the economic viability of the creative (and industrial) spaces. However, even if the question of funding and proper legalization of the venue could be solved, once the development is under way, the increasing commercial and residential gentrification of the surrounding neighborhoods would simultaneously affect other aspects of sustainability and a forced closure or displacement could therefore be inevitable.

3.3.4 Governmental Sustainability

Arguably, the sustainability of a space such as Hidden Agenda cannot be fully captured by the cultural, economic and social aspects mentioned above. In order to fill this void, this research suggests two further dimensions of *governmental sustainability*.

The first one is determined by the actual spatial practices that have been shaped by governmental power. On the one hand, the operation in disguise is a result of zoning laws that—theoretically—render many of the city’s post-industrial activities and business operations illegal. On the other hand, the growth of cultural clusters (and an allegedly low vacancy rate of industrial areas in general) has been based on a shared understanding of utilization. Different authorities have been tolerating non-compliant uses, as they also helped to countervail the rapid decline and redundancy of industrial buildings, while securing income for landlords. The elasticity of the legal framework has been confined by a set of commonly known bottom lines—mainly related to issues of health (hygiene, liquor) and safety. As a result, Kwun Tong and Fo Tan largely remained within the domain of production and manufacture. They maintained the “residual practices” of an industrial base while engaging with the “emerging practices” of non-industrial users. At the same time, given the barriers for places of consumption that would most likely attract more affluent users, classic gentrification processes have not been a great concern for organically evolved cultural clusters in Hong Kong, especially compared to often cited examples from Europe (e.g. Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin) and the USA (e.g. Brooklyn, New York). Instead, the industrial areas have been restrained from creating their own inherent valorization cycles that otherwise could have been stimulated by their potential for cultural and creative appropriation of space.

Nevertheless, this process was eventually imposed by the revitalization measurements in 2009 that added a value-based judgment to the term “utilization”, indicating that the “best” and most preferable use requires a fast integration into Hong Kong’s commercial property market. As previously mentioned, Ng (2009) argues that urban space in Hong Kong is both “ideologized and political”. Although avoiding any reference to Foucault’s concept of governmentality, she further argues that the production of space is not only an externally directed imposition of state ideologies, but at the same time shaped and altered by individuals that either re-enforce the material inscriptions of dominant ideologies or try to challenge them. Currently, the main difference between Kwun Tong and Fo Tan is their position within Hong Kong’s urban renewal strategy. While Fo Tan is still listed as an industrial area, Kwun Tong has already been rezoned for business purposes in 2001, allowing more commercial spaces to settle down. Nevertheless, cultural spaces such as art studios, live venues or galleries are still restricted in both districts. While the production of visual art is of rather introverted nature and does not affect its immediate neighbors, Hidden Agenda and spaces nearby very much depend on the indifference and tolerance by other tenants. However, given the lack of (legal) residents, noise levels are currently less problematic. In addition, streets and premises are less monitored within industrial areas, which also adds to the production of a subcultural imagination.

The second domain of governmental sustainability in relation to organically evolved clusters such as Kwun Tong is related to civic power. Following Bennett’s interpretation of De Certeau, the use of spatial tactics implies an exclusion from a power/knowledge relationship and a temporary escape from a panoptic power. But it is here where the social and cultural differences between Fo Tan and Kwun Tong

become most apparent. While many of the visual artists in Fo Tan have purchased their own units, musicians in Kwun Tong mainly rent their spaces, which already puts them in a considerably weaker position within redevelopment debates. Hidden Agenda was one of the first successful attempts to claim a space within a power/knowledge relationship by transgressing the previous border of passive resistance (de Certeau), calling for social action (Lefebvre) and becoming a professional livehouse.

Arguably, Hong Kong's industrial areas have flourished as places for non-compliant use, because the physical, social and economic environment has not reflected the necessity for a capitalist-aesthetic order nor established a similar surveillance system as in purely residential and commercial districts. However, the introduction of measurements to revitalize industrial buildings, with favorable policies for real estate corporations, can be understood as an intervention to enable a fast and large-scale gentrification process through which Kwun Tong will also undergo a major ideological and governmental shift in the years to come.

4 CULTURAL POLICY AND URBAN PLANNING

“Some of the underground groups they try to escape from everyone. They think they can just hide and do their own thing. Of course they are not asking for funding or any help from the government. But if they are still hiding, it is not easy to show the real truth to the government what we [the artists] have been doing for years.”

(Interview: Chow, 2013)

The previous chapter shed light on the transformation of Kwun Tong’s industrial area in the face of imminent redevelopment. By using the livehouse Hidden Agenda as a case study, the analysis of spatial practices, relevant policies and discourses not only revealed contradictions between urban planning objectives and arts spaces in a distinct local setting, but also a more far-reaching detachment of grassroots culture from expedient creativity discourses as outlined in the conceptual framework (Chapter 2.2). The fourth chapter will therefore shift its level of investigation from the specific case of Hidden Agenda and Kwun Tong to the macro-perspective of Hong Kong’s cultural policy strategies in order to understand the relationship between urban planning and cultural clusters in the city.

The chapter is divided into three parts: The first section discusses the context for the changes of Hong Kong’s urban planning strategies and their impact on the emergence of planned cultural clusters, which will be analyzed along their positioning, zoning and management. Drawing upon the findings from the case study, these clusters are then related to Hidden Agenda and the industrial area of Kwun Tong. It is through this juxtaposition that the thesis aims to foreground the struggle over spatial power as well as the significance of tactics and strategies used for the cultural appropriation of

space. Eventually, the last part of this chapter elevates the discussion to the domain of cultural governance by exposing Hong Kong's dispersed "culture portfolio" and giving recommendations for a change in policy responsibilities.

4.1 Cultural Clusters: Strategies, Planning, Policies

Until now, this thesis has mainly dealt with Kwun Tong as a so called organically evolved cultural cluster. As such, the area has come into conflict with policies and planning objectives that have been undermining its economic, social, cultural and governmental sustainability (see Ch. 3.4). However, at the same time, planned cultural clusters have also been increasingly integrated into Hong Kong's various approaches to urban redevelopment. The following section will therefore trace the articulation of these two domains.

4.1.1 Urban Planning in Hong Kong

Hong Kong's Town Planning Ordinance was enacted in 1939 and during its first years—in anticipation of a potential war—mainly concerned with hygiene and safety standards. However, a more comprehensive zoning of land as well as an overall urban renewal strategy were only introduced in the decade after 1945, for which the government commissioned British town planner Sir Patrick Abercrombie. Since 1984 Hong Kong's urban planning is framed by the Territorial Development Strategy (TDS) "to guide future development and provision of strategic infrastructure, and to help implement government policy targets in a spatial form" (Development Bureau, 2007: 1). During the following years, the TDS had been updated twice (1986 and 1988), before it was eventually fully reviewed in 1998 after an eight-year consultation process.

The most recent—and still valid—TDS was published by the Development Bureau in 2007, titled *Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy*. It covers the overall planning vision, the planning choices and the planning strategy for the next 20 years (Development Bureau, 2007). By providing the visionary planning framework for the whole territory, the TDS is also the broad guideline for sub-regional development strategies as well as urban renewal projects on district-level.

This administrative domain of urban planning is also subjected to a statutory system. As briefly discussed in the previous chapter (Ch. 3.2), the Town Planning Board (TPB) is responsible for the overall categorization of land use by drafting, gazetting and approving Outline Zoning Plans (OZP) in accordance with the Town Planning Ordinance (see also Chapter 3.2.3). An OZP usually consists of the zoning plan for a specific geographic area (currently the territory is divided into 140 OZPs) and accompanying notes that define all permitted land uses (Civic Exchange, 2006). Any amendments of the OZP through the TPB must be preceded by a planning study and the publication of a draft plan, to which eventually “any member of the public, whether or not he is the lessee, has a right to object” (Lai, 1997: 26).

Arguably, the emergence of culture as an urban planning concern is closely linked to the changes of Hong Kong’s TDS in reaction to new economic, social and political challenges. The TDS Review, published in early 1998, set out that the “Metro Area” should become a center for cultural functions for which the provision and promotion of new tourist attractions will be essential (Planning, Environment and Lands Bureau, 1998a; 1998b). The plan for the WKCD, which was announced just a few months later, can be seen as a first direct response to these strategic objectives. In fact, the decision for using the newly reclaimed land in Victoria Harbour for a cultural quarter was based

on a previous survey, which stated that “1.3 million tourists ... were interested in cultural, entertainment and major events, and believed that Hong Kong should enhance the promotion of these activities among tourists” (Housing, Planning and Lands Bureau 2005; Lee et al., 2013). Serving both Hong Kong’s symbolic economy and property market, the WKCD was initially supervised by the Development Bureau, but the commercial direction of drafted plans soon “activated” a civil society within Hong Kong’s cultural sector. After strong resistance against a potential “single-package” privatization, the planning of the WKCD was restarted in 2006 (Lee et al., 2013: 56). At first, the Development Bureau insisted on remaining the sole party responsible for the project, as another statutory body “would only create an unnecessary overlap” (Development Bureau, 2005). However, on-going doubt that the bureau could adequately address the expectations of a “world-class” cultural quarter led to the establishment of the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCDA) in 2008, putting the entire project under guidance of international arts administrators.

This controversial debate around the WKCD also coincided with the emergence of the city’s first comprehensive cultural policy strategy. In the early years of 2000 the government established the Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC) to formulate policy recommendations, of which 90% were eventually adopted by the Home Affairs Bureau (HKSAR, 2004). Since then, Hong Kong’s cultural policy is guided by five basic principles: “people-oriented”, “diversity/pluralism”, “holistic approach”, “freedom of expression” and “partnership” (CHC, 2003).⁸³

⁸³ The aspect of “community-driven”, which was put forward by the CHC as a sixth principle, was not adopted for the policy framework.

Following the financial crisis, Hong Kong has also become increasingly receptive for ideas that could improve its international competitiveness and image as a global city (Cartier, 2008; Chu, 2012). While the branding campaign for “Asia’s World City” started in 2001, new mainstream concepts of creative city (2001), creative industries (2003) and creative class (2004) had a traceable impact on local policy debates (CHC, 2003; Hui, 2003; HAB, 2004). The *Hong Kong 2030* strategy was clearly informed by these aspects, integrating for the very first time “culture and arts development” into an overall planning vision and acknowledging its positive effects on living environment (“aesthetics”, “street arts”, “vibrancy”), tourism (“heritage”, “world-class”) and economy (“cultural and creative industries”) (Development Bureau, 2007). However, by offering only a visionary guideline, the TDS still left enough room for independent planning decisions, such as the choice between decentralization and consolidation. With fewer land available for so called new town projects and a decrease of land reclamation, urban renewal—used as an umbrella term for redevelopment, rehabilitation and revitalization (see Ch. 3.2.4)—has become one of the core strategies for Hong Kong’s Development Bureau. The following section will therefore analyze how this approach has affected the emergence, nature and organization of planned cultural clusters.

4.1.2 Cultural Clusters

Arguably, for a long time clustering of various professional guilds (including artisans) has been an integral part of Hong Kong’s urban life.⁸⁴ Cultural clusters in the

⁸⁴ e.g.: second hand electronics in Sham Shui Po, printing industry in Lee Tung Street, red light districts in Wan Chai and Portland Street, kitchen utensils in Yau Ma Tei, dried seafood in Sheung Wan, electronic goods and

sense of modern discourses, however, have just been gradually introduced, starting with the provision of multi-functional public facilities such as the City Hall in Central in 1962. The Hong Kong Cultural Centre⁸⁵—together with its nearby museums—formed a second cultural focal point by providing a mix of entertainment, education, high arts and open space on the Kowloon side.⁸⁶ However, since the announcement of the WKCD, culture has been increasingly instrumentalized for development projects. Table 5 (p. 101) offers a selective overview of the city’s planned cultural clusters since 1998 in reversed chronological order. Based on this selection, this thesis suggests three prevailing models of clusters that differ in planning, funding and operation:

- Artist villages (primarily production-oriented; initiated and managed by government, NGO or private company; examples: *Cattle Depot Artist Village*, *Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre*, *ADC Arts Space*)
- Creative industry clusters (primarily mixed-use; initiated and managed by government or NGO; examples *Police Married Quarters*, *Central Police Station*, *Comix Home Base*)
- Cultural quarters (primarily consumption-oriented; initiated and managed by government; example: *West Kowloon Cultural District*, *City Hall* and *Tsim Sha Tsui waterfront*)

sneakers in Mong Kok etc.

⁸⁵ In terms of its architecture, Abbas (1997: 66) criticized the Hong Kong Cultural Centre for its “modernist placeless structure” and “neglect of the local”.

⁸⁶ The City Hall, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts and the Hong Kong Arts Centre formed another cultural agglomeration across the harbor in Central and Wan Chai. Although all these venues are now among the oldest and most established ones, they were realized outside (or on top) of existing urban areas: the three locations on Hong Kong Island were built on newly reclaimed land, while the Tsim Sha Tsui cluster replaced the former railway terminus after its relocation to Hung Hom.

Table 5: Overview of planned cultural clusters in Hong Kong (own table)

Project	Mode / Year	Operation	Financier
ADC Arts Space Factory building	<i>“artist village”</i> : subsidized private arts spaces in Wong Chuk Hang announced 2013 by Chief Executive, opened 2014	Hip Shing Hong Group (owner/operator) in cooperation with ADC	HKSAR (HK\$ 8 million, through ADC)
Comix Home Base Heritage site	<i>“creative industry cluster”</i> : self-funded NGO-led project, temporary tenancy agreement with operator (cultural use not pre-determined) announced 2011 by URA, opened 2013	HK Arts Centre	URA (HK\$ 200 million), infrastructure
Police Married Quarters (PMQ) Heritage site	<i>“creative industry cluster”</i> : self-funded NGO-led project, temporary tenancy agreement with operator (creative industry use pre-determined) announced 2009 by Chief Executive, completed 2014	Musketeers Education & Culture Charitable Foundation (supported by HK Design Centre, Polytechnic University, and HK Design Institute of the Vocational Training Council)	HKSAR (HK\$ 560.1 million), infrastructure; Musketeers Foundation (HK\$ 110 million), operation
Central Police Station (CPS) Heritage site	<i>“creative industry cluster”</i> : self-funded NGO-initiated project in partnership with government (land remains government-owned; cultural use not pre-determined) announced 2007 by Chief Executive, intended completion in 2015	(Selection under progress)	HK Jockey Club Charities Trust (HK\$ 1.8 billion); infrastructure
Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (JCCAC) Factory building and heritage site	<i>“artist village”</i> : self-funded NGO-initiated project, temporary tenancy agreement with operator announced 2005 by Chief Executive, completed 2008	HK Creative Arts Centre Ltd. (subsidiary of Baptist University; supported by ADC and HK Arts Centre)	HK Jockey Club Charities Trust (HK\$ 69.4 million), infrastructure
Cattle Depot Artist Village (CDAV) Heritage site	<i>“artist village”</i> : Government-initiated and public funded project in response to Oil Street artist movement announced in 2000, completed in 2001	Development Bureau (before Government Property Agency under the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau)	HKSAR (HK\$ 23 million), infrastructure
West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) New site	<i>“cultural quarter”</i> : Government-initiated and public-funded project; announced 1998 by Chief Executive, intended completion of 1 st phase in 2015	West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (statutory body)	HKSAR (HK\$ 21.6 billion), infrastructure

Given the nature of organic clusters that are especially focused on cultural production (and based on this also serve a marginal consumer culture), the following analysis will focus on two of these three models: *artist villages* and *creative industry clusters*.⁸⁷ As some of the projects are currently still under construction, the examples will be further narrowed down to four cases that have already been realized (at the day of writing) and therefore offer concrete evidence instead of mere assumptions. These are Cattle Depot Artist Village (CDAV), Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (JCCAC), Police Married Quarters (PMQ) and Comix Home Base.

Artist villages

The *Cattle Depot Artist Village* (CDAV) was Hong Kong's first officially sanctioned cultural cluster. In 2001, the government turned the former slaughterhouse in Ma Tau Kok into a temporary arts space and provided subsidized studios to artists who had been formerly involved in the Oil Street movement (Cartier, 2008). Initially managed by the Government Property Agency (under the Financial Services and the Treasury Bureau), the premise was transferred to the Development Bureau in 2011.⁸⁸ For several years, the CDAV has been regarded as an improper cluster by both artists and media, leading to a lower occupancy rate (SCMP, 2007; SCMP, 2009). The critique mainly referred to two shortcomings: First, the management restrained the accessibility for the public, hampering the interaction with a broader community.

⁸⁷ While there also have been successful private endeavors (e.g. Foo Tak Building in Wan Chai), this macro-analysis is limited to officially planned clusters that directly relate to Hong Kong's cultural policy and hence provide the necessary counterpart for the following discussion of spatial power.

⁸⁸ Arguably, the time of its establishment also coincided with the growing awareness for Beijing's 798 Art District. Given their pioneering nature, both CDAV and 798 remain showcases for cultural clusters in their respective cities.

Second, the property is a Grade II historic building and so alterations of the space are generally prohibited.⁸⁹ In 2008, the Arts Development Council published a study on potential measurements to improve the spatial conditions, funding, and management system (ADC, 2008), however with limited impact.⁹⁰ According to the current OZP, the Cattle Depot is still reserved for “Government, Institution or Community Use” and “Open Space”, but a potential rezoning into a business zone (“OU(B)”) to facilitate synergies with the nearby Kai Tak Development is under consideration (TPB, 2013).

While the CADV remains an entirely government-led project until today, NGOs such as the Jockey Club Charities Trust (JCCT) have been taken on a crucial role for Hong Kong’s arts development for several decades.⁹¹ In cooperation with the ADC and the Hong Kong Arts Centre, the trust also funded the establishment of the *Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre* (JCCAC), which was completed in 2008 and has become a prime example for the cultural appropriation of industrial buildings. Although not representing a project that was initiated by the government, it was welcomed for taking over responsibility for a factory estate in Shek Kip Mei. In contrast to regular industrial buildings in Hong Kong, factory estates used to be public owned premises that were built by the Housing Authority as part of resettlement efforts in the 1970s. During the last 10 years, most of these estates have been closed and subsequently demolished. The Shek Kip Mei Factory Estate was vacated in 2001 and remained empty for several

⁸⁹ In a recent article, HK Magazine categorized CDAV as a failure for heritage preservation in Hong Kong. See: <http://hk-magazine.com/city-living/article/heritage-done-right>

⁹⁰ In 2008, the Development Bureau commissioned the Arts Development Council for a research paper on the future of the CDAV that compared the feasibility of different organization models, drawing from international references and the accumulated experience from other local cultural clusters.

⁹¹ The JCCT, for instance, financed the renovation of the Hong Kong Arts Centre and the construction of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. The trust has also been a continuous sponsor of the Hong Kong Arts Festival.

years, causing recurrent costs of almost HK\$ 350,000 per year. It was eventually the proposal and investment provided by JCCT that avoided the likely demolition of the building. In 2007, the TDS described JCCAC as “an important milestone towards innovative reuse of obsolete industrial buildings.” (Development Bureau, 2007)

However, given the on-going disappearance of a great number of factory estates in recent years, it is unlikely that JCCAC becomes an adoptable model for similar premises. In total, HK\$ 69.4 million were invested for converting the building into an arts center that currently accommodates 124 studios for discounted rental prices. While the management of JCCAC has been outsourced to a subsidiary of Hong Kong Baptist University on a temporary tenancy-agreement, the government keeps the ownership of the building and therefore full control over the land. According to the OZP, the JCCAC is the only cultural cluster in Hong Kong that is located within a designated residential zone (see Table 6 below for a comparison of OZP details).

Table 6: Statutory Outline Zoning Plan of current cultural clusters (own table)

Cultural Cluster	OZP Zoning	Reference
West Kowloon Cultural District	West Kowloon Cultural District Development Plan	S/K20/29 (2013)
Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (Shek Kip Mei)	Residential (Group A)	S/K4/27 (2012)
Cattle Depot Artist Village (Ma Tau Kok)	Government, Institution or Community; Open Space	S/K10/20 (2008)
Central Police Station (Central)	Other Specified Uses: “Historical Site Preserved for Cultural, Recreational and Commercial Uses”	S/H3/29 (2013)
Police Married Quarters (Sheung Wan)	Other Specified Uses: “Heritage Site for Creative Industries and Related Uses”	S/H3/29 (2013)
Comix Home Base (Wan Chai)	Urban Renewal Authority Development Scheme Plan Area	S/H5/27 (2012)
ADC Arts Space (Wong Chuk Hang)	Other Specified Uses: “Business”	S/H15/29 (2014)
Industrial Area (Kwun Tong)	Other Specified Uses: “Business”	S/K14S/18 (2013)
Industrial Area (Fo Tan)	Industrial	S/ST/29 (2013)

Creative Industry Clusters

While clusters such as CDAV and JCCAC can be understood as the first experiments for local artist villages on the Kowloon side (ADC, 2009), the recent transformation of historic sites—such as the *Police Married Quarters (PMQ)* and the *Comix Home Base* (Green House)—was mainly driven by a convergence of growing concerns for heritage preservation and creative industries.⁹² In 2009 the government inaugurated the CreateHK office and at the same time then Chief Executive Donald Tsang announced the “Conserving Central” campaign that should coordinate the redevelopment of valuable heritage sites on Hong Kong Island (Tsang, 2009).

After the PMQ had been declared a Grade III historical building in 2010, the government also approved a proposal from a private foundation to turn the quarters into a creative industry cluster that is specialized in design. Similar to the model of the JCCAC, the foundation has been given a temporary tenancy agreement to manage the premise after the government had provided an initial investment of HK\$ 500 million for the conversion of the site. Although the PMQ is generally regarded as a non-profit operation, it is expected that it will be self-sufficient in the future. In addition, every five years a profit share of 50% will be handed to the government. Before the opening of the PMQ in April 2014, the OZP was rezoned to “other specified uses” annotated “heritage site for creative industries and related uses”.⁹³ The zoning allows a mix of production (“studios”, “office”), entertainment (“eating places”, “shops”) and

⁹² Another example is the future Central Police Station (CPS) on Hollywood Road that will be developed into a mixed-use cultural and creative industry cluster during the following years. The project was initiated and funded by the JCCT.

⁹³ At the same time the OZP of the Central Police Station was adjusted to “other specified uses” annotated “historical site preserved for cultural, recreational and commercial uses”.

education (“training centers”, “schools”).⁹⁴

A second example for a creative industry cluster model is the *Comix Home Base*, which opened in 2013 under the management of the Hong Kong Arts Centre. It is dedicated to the local cartoon industry and includes an exhibition area, a small studio for artists-in-residence and a library. Located in the former Green House in Murray/Burrows Street (Wan Chai), the Grade II heritage site remains under the responsibility of the statutory Urban Renewal Authority (URA) that has overseen its redevelopment. Following requirements for public accessibility, the URA decided to lease the upper floors to the Hong Kong Arts Centre for five years, while reserving the courtyard and frontage for public and commercial use. According to the OZP the building is currently located in a special development area without use restrictions.

In summary, the establishment of Hong Kong’s planned cultural clusters has often followed a similar procedure: First—as laid out in Table 5 (p. 101)—the new cluster is presented by the Chief Executive as part of an overall strategy (e.g. integrated in the policy address), after which its management is outsourced to a NGO. At the same time, the government remains the proprietor of the building and can therefore offer beneficial conditions to the management company, which operates the cluster under a temporary leasing agreement, varying between 5 years (Comix Home Base), 7 years (JCCAC) or 10 years (PMQ)⁹⁵. Generally, the cluster is expected to be a self-financed, self-sustained and in some cases also profitable operation.⁹⁶ Depending on its location,

⁹⁴ Uses for hotels and offices are not prohibited, but need prior permission from the Town Planning Board.

⁹⁵ Comix Home Base: Hong Kong Arts Centre; PMQ: Musketeers Foundation; JCCAC: Hong Kong Baptist University

⁹⁶ For the PMQ the government receives 50% of the operational surplus every five years (the other 50% and the surplus during other years will be reinvested in the quarters).

the Town Planning Board might adjust the zoning plan to accommodate newly agreed uses and exclude others that seem detrimental to the intended nature of the project.⁹⁷

4.2 Cultural Policy in Hong Kong's Urban Redevelopment?

In its latest territorial strategy, the Development Bureau acknowledged the need for “very different accommodation requirements and infrastructure support” in the cultural sector, as artists “tend to scatter among other land uses, e.g. commercial/residential areas or industrial districts” (Development Bureau, 2007: 66). The ADC (2010) report on industrial buildings proved this assumption right and the need for “creative space” was officially recognized in the 2013 policy address (Ch. 1.1). However, as the case study has shown, the accommodation of such needs is often detrimental to the dominant objectives of current urban redevelopment projects and hence the “freedom of choice” for both real estate developers and cultural users (Ch. 3.2.4). By juxtaposing aforementioned artist villages and creative industry clusters with the naturally evolved cluster in Kwun Tong, this section aims to foreground how spatial power has been established and subsequently challenged. After investigating how aspects of planning and ownership have shaped the fundamental conditions for cultural clusters, the research will then draw upon de Certeau's dual concept of *space/place* (and *tactics/strategies*) to analyze Hong Kong's overall cultural policy approach.

⁹⁷ In comparison, the management company of Hong Kong's Cyberport, which was established as a cluster for information and communications technology during the early 2000s, is fully owned by the HKSAR government.

4.2.1 Establishing Spatial Power

By defining the physical environment and its intended use, both the administrative (strategies) and statutory (zoning plans) *planning* systems have had a significant impact on spatial practices and cultural clusters in the city. However, at the same time, they cannot enforce how users will eventually perceive, conceive and represent the space. Therefore, the degree to which internal practices eventually cohere with external plans, can be an important indicator for the distribution of spatial power. Cultural spaces such as Hidden Agenda are generally rendered illegal by OZPs that do not permit the use for artistic and public entertainment purposes. Prior to the redevelopment of Kwun Tong, several livehouse venues emerged in industrial areas, but disappeared again after a short while.⁹⁸ Any changes in zoning plans had a marginal impact on industrial areas and most practices could continue as before, mainly—as argued earlier—due to specific governmental conditions (see Ch. 3.3.4).

For official artist villages such as CDAV and JCCAC, planning visions and strategies were also not the decisive factors for establishment. While the Cattle Depot was rather spontaneously “exchanged” for an occupied premise in Oil Street, JCCAC was initiated by a NGO that took over a redundant government-owned factory estate. Although both of these places set a precedence for the cultural use of industrial buildings and abandoned heritage sites, their model of arts clusters has since then not been adopted for similar spatial resources (e.g. Cheung Sha Wan Abbatoir, Kwun Tong Factory Estate). Nevertheless, since then culture has been increasingly incorporated

⁹⁸ e.g. IMNet (2004-2009); N.Set Music (2008)

into Hong Kong's overall planning vision, leading to a greater recognition of arts and creative industries for future development strategies.

Besides planning, spatial power is also established through *ownership* and its related rights and obligations.⁹⁹ In contrast to Fo Tan, where some artists acquired entire factory units, most of the studios in Kwun Tong are only rented on short-term leases. Therefore, even a space such as Hidden Agenda does not operate outside the “politics of free-market economy” (Ng, 2009). Contrarily, the scattered ownership of industrial buildings, the fierce competition among landlords and the overall abundance of similar spatial resources have offered nurturing conditions for an organic cluster. However, the rapid valorization of property in recent years has changed the situation. Although many landlords are still willing to rent out their space for cultural use, they might be dispossessed or barred from reselling their property if they do not comply with the land use stipulated in the leasing agreement. Therefore, even independent cultural spaces increasingly rely on the sympathy of their landlords and how they handle pressure from different authorities (Interview: Chow, 2013).

In comparison, most premises that accommodate Hong Kong's planned cultural clusters have remained under direct public ownership. While this entails a certain degree of stability and long-term perspective for users, the temporary transfer of management responsibilities to NGOs (JCCAC, PMQ, Comix Home Base) also passed “the economic burden of restoration, maintenance and development from the

⁹⁹ While the government is the sole proprietor of all land, it can transfer its using rights for a limited time (most commonly 50, 75 or 90 years) through a leasehold system. During this period the lessee is fully responsible for the maintenance and compliance of all premises within the contracted area and liable to a yearly rent (3% of the ratable property value). The government, on the other hand, is entitled to dissolve any leasing agreement if the land is misused or payments are not received. As the land leasehold system generates a significant part of the income for Hong Kong's revenue account, a steady increase of land value is in the government's budgetary interest (See: http://www.fig.net/pub/fig2007/ppt/ps_02/plenary02_03_tse_ppt_2261.pdf).

government to the private sector” (Ku, 2010: 384). Planned cultural clusters are usually operated under a certain mission statement to define expected users, who are then selected through a tenancy application assessment. Effectively, artists and creative workers need to prove that they are eligible for occupying subsidized space and receiving the related economic, social and cultural benefits. Individual leases are usually limited to one or two years, after which the tenancy will be reviewed.

4.2.2 Struggle over Spatial Power

As laid out in Chapter 2.3, Bennett argues that oppositional resistance is inadequate for an effective agency within the domain of cultural policy and therefore less productive than the Foucauldian understanding of “governmental power”. However, the relevance of spatial power in the case of Kwun Tong might suggest otherwise. Despite its cultural policy approach, this research argues that de Certeau’s conceptual differentiation between *place* and *space* (as well as *strategies* and *tactics*) offers a useful framework to analyze the impact of spatial power on cultural spaces, cultural clusters and—eventually—cultural policy in Hong Kong.

As the detailed analysis of the case study has shown, Hidden Agenda depended less on the materiality of a certain place than on the various conditions that have produced its *space* (as a *practiced place*) in Kwun Tong. Over the last five years, the livehouse has changed its location three times. While the lack of stability has deprived Hidden Agenda from the possibility of making strategic decisions—such as investing into better hardware or meeting conditions to obtain a proper license¹⁰⁰— it also

¹⁰⁰ Given the land use regulations for industrial buildings, an application for a temporary license for a “public place of entertainment” requires a costly waiver fee, which does not guarantee the final approval.

enabled the livehouse to adjust to the changing conditions and claim its space within the industrial area. Similar to the guerilla gigs, which artists in Kwun Tong have organized since 2005 (see Ch. 3.2.4), Hidden Agenda was able to challenge the spatial power that has been framed by urban planning and land ownership. The distinct governmentality of industrial space (Ch. 3.3.4) further increased the opportunities for *tactical* maneuvers (Ch. 3.2.3).

However, the redevelopment of Kwun Tong changed the existing power relations drastically. The rapid valorization of land turned industrial buildings into strategic investment objects, which—as such—are less accommodating for cultural spaces. At the same time, the EKEO used its own *strategies* for public space and converted the flyover into a symbolic *place* for Kwun Tong’s creative potential. However, its panoptic characteristics failed to represent the introverted industrial *spaces* for cultural production that have been produced outside (and in absence of) this form of spatial power. Eventually, when compared with Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, Kwun Tong did not provide the material preconditions that could have facilitated the cultural appropriation of a government-owned premise. In contrast to its equivalent in Shek Kip Mei (now the JCCAC), the Kwun Tong Factory Estate, built in 1966 with 817 units, was demolished in 2008 “due to its obsolete design and deteriorating condition”.¹⁰¹

As discussed earlier, Hong Kong’s planned cultural clusters are generally located in premises under public ownership that have either been vacant or extensively

¹⁰¹ See: <http://archive.news.gov.hk/isd/ebulletin/en/category/healthandcommunity/080912/html/080912en05002.htm>. Since then the former lot in Hang Yip Street has remained vacant.

renovated before their cultural appropriation was decided. Compared to Kwun Tong, however, the cultural space has not emerged from existing spatial practices, but was entirely subordinated to the characteristics of the materiality of the *place*. The latter also dominates the branding and identity of the cluster: Cattle Depot Artist Village, Police Married Quarters, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre and Comix Home Base have all become place-based representations for the arts and creative industries as means for heritage preservation. In contrast to Hidden Agenda that was produced by the *tactics* of its operators, the *strategies* of the proprietor have become the decisive elements for the cultural appropriation of the place.

Hence, when comparing the struggle over spatial power between planned and organically evolved clusters, it appears that cultural policy in Hong Kong follows a strictly *place-based* approach. Urban sites that are deemed suitable for cultural appropriation are primarily determined by their geographic location, their historic value, their zoning of land use, their current redundancy and their public ownership. However, while they offer a strategic and stable environment for cultural development, they also disregard the spatial practices that have shaped organically evolved clusters like Kwun Tong.

So far this chapter has mainly investigated the use of culture within Hong Kong's dominant town planning strategies. However, while it is possible to draw significant conclusions from the struggle over spatial power, aforementioned creativity discourses have only played a minor role in this analysis. The following section will therefore discuss the relevance of these concepts for Hidden Agenda as well as the risks and opportunities that might emerge from them.

4.2.3 Creative Industries and Cultural Citizenship

Arguably, the justification for planned cultural clusters is based on two fundamental arguments (or assumptions): First, local artists and creative industries are unlikely to achieve similar outcomes if they are subjected to the free market economy. Second, culture can be considered as expedient for generating economic, urban and societal benefits. The cultural appropriation of industrial areas, on the other hand, has not operated in accordance with this logic. While many artists keep their studios intentionally private and do not feel obliged to engage with the public, the zoning laws have also suppressed the development of common spaces such as Hidden Agenda.

However, since the government targeted industrial buildings for revitalization, the question if and how to seek recognition from both authorities and the public—and hence establish an effective agency—has gained importance. In the case of Fo Tan, the annual open studio event became a crucial platform for claiming the significance of the cluster and its cultural production, backed by statistics of steadily growing visitor numbers:

“I would say we are using Fotanian as a brand to show the government that even though we organize it as artists, we are very systematic and also well-known overseas.

(Interview: Chow, 2013)

After the foundation of a limited company that made the artists eligible for public funding, Fotanian received a grant from the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) in 2012. However, it is unlikely that this strategy can be easily adopted for other organic clusters:

“Fo Tan and Kwun Tong need to be communicated differently to the government. We have to show how they [the government] ignore the arts scene in East Kowloon, while they create West Kowloon. And that they can’t organize shows with all these bands [in Kwun Tong], when

they actually try to knock their homes down.”
(Interview: Chow, 2013)

In contrast to the visual arts cluster in Fo Tan, which has received direct support from the HAB in recognition of its symbolic and cultural value, the music cluster in Kwun Tong is far less conceivable for authorities, as shown in Ch. 3.2.4. Although generally affiliated with creative industries, there remains a certain misconception about the position of Hidden Agenda in this field, which has complicated the assignment of a clear label:

“[For the HAB] music is divided into two categories: the one that performs in City Hall and does not make any money needs support. The one that reaches out to young people, like Eason Chan, is commercial and therefore part of the creative industry.” (Interview: EKEO, 2013)

While Hidden Agenda might qualify as a productive member of Hong Kong’s creative industries, such a recognition does not automatically lead to certain benefits. Currently, CreateHK endorses industries according to their economic potential and their contribution to economic growth, criteria that seem inapplicable for an underground venue.¹⁰² Although these factors might hamper a recognition within the official categories of arts and creative industries, one of Hidden Agenda’s identities is that of a livehouse and, as such, a space for consumption. Arguably, when cultural spaces are invested in the struggle of spatial power, the activation of cultural citizenship—in the sense of a fundamental right to consume—can become a decisive factor for their sustainability. Similar to Fo Tan, Kwun Tong has gained a certain

¹⁰² Another possibility for recognition within this sector is related to land use regulations. Recently, the Development Bureau introduced the category “creative industries” for some OZPs. While “venues for performances and theatrical entertainment” are included in this umbrella term, the definition has been only used for newly renovated heritage sites such as PMQ and Central Police Station.

degree of recognition through Hidden Agenda and its relevance for a broader community. Nevertheless, if spaces such as Hidden Agenda remain excluded from the prevailing discourses of recognized arts and creative industries, the effectiveness of agency that derived from their governmental power will decrease if the distinct spatial practices of industrial areas continue to vanish. Therefore, the next section will use once more the case of Hidden Agenda to look at the organization of Hong Kong's "culture portfolio" and to identify its current shortcomings.

4.3 Culture Portfolio

For many artists in Hong Kong's industrial areas, the lack of a cultural bureau is a significant factor for the general struggle over recognition and legality. While it is not expected that the establishment of such a bureau would immediately improve the status of organically evolved cultural clusters, it is the concentrated political responsibility and liability that would be seen as its most needed feature (Interview: Chow, 2013).

The term "culture portfolio" describes the placement of cultural affairs within the administrative framework of a government. Although the domain of "culture" can sometimes have its own ministry, it is also commonly paired with other related fields such as education, information, tourism, youth or economy (Lindsay, 2004: 66-67). In the context of South-East Asia, the emergence and formulation of cultural policies coincided with the establishment of post-colonial nation-states that understood culture as an integral part for building up their national prestige (Lindsay, 2004). However, as a special administrative region (and a former British colony), Hong Kong has not shared this responsibility for nationhood, which is also mirrored in the lack of foreign

affairs that are solely represented by China. While this particularity has certainly diminished the significance for—what Williams (1989) called—“cultural policy as display”, the government nevertheless dealt with “proper policies” (McGuigan, 2003) that have regulated, funded and utilized arts and culture in Hong Kong for at least several decades. The lack of a designated bureau for cultural affairs is also reflected in the rather functional than strategic arrangement of responsibilities that can be similarly related to Hong Kong’s place-based cultural policy approach, which was identified in the previous section.

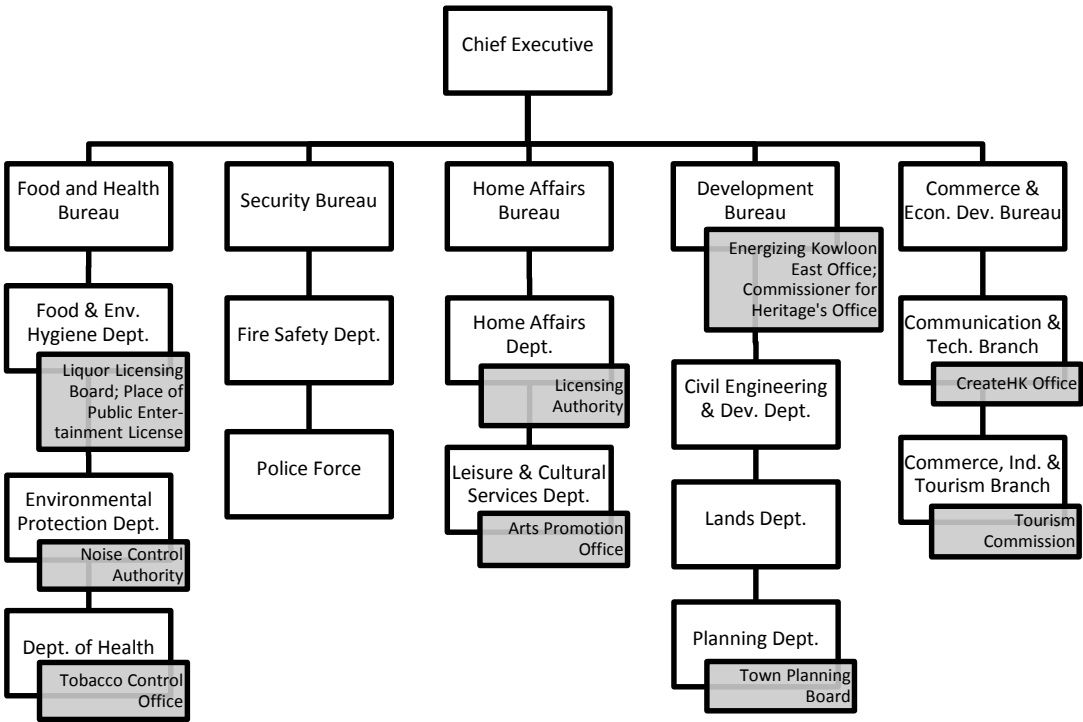
Arguably, the current “culture portfolio” is mainly dominated by the Home Affairs Bureau, the Development Bureau and the Commerce and Economic Development Bureau. On an operational level, cultural policies are implemented by several statutory bodies—established under their respective ordinances (e.g. ADC, Hong Kong Arts Center, WKCDA etc.)—as well as various NGOs that often operate within “arm’s length”. At the same time, these institutions have taken up the role as intermediaries between government bureaus and artists.

However, in contrast to planned cultural clusters that operate under public ownership, non-compliant cultural spaces—while excluded from the place-based policy domain—have to face an even more complex portfolio. For instance, Hidden Agenda is subjected to policies and regulations of five different bureaus that vary in priorities, interpretations and agendas (see Table 7 on p. 117 for an overview). While this has hampered participatory planning processes and negotiations, it also created beneficial loopholes for non-compliant spaces whenever overlaps of responsibility occur between different government departments.

Currently, the revitalization of Kwun Tong is conducted under the supervision of

the EKEO, which is guided by the objective to establish a second Central Business District in 2020. However, the “soft” revitalization approach of the office has also facilitated direct dialogues between artists and government departments, without the usual mediation through statutory bodies or NGOs. While a general commitment from the Development Bureau to tolerate rehearsal studios in industrial buildings has not necessarily improved the prospects for cultural spaces, it nevertheless demonstrated that there has been both communication and negotiation across different bureaus and departments. At the same time, it revealed that neither the Home Affairs Bureau nor CreateHK consider the cause of an organically evolved cultural cluster in Kwun Tong within their interest and responsibility (see Ch. 3.2.4 and Ch. 4.2.3).

Table 7: Organization chart of departments and authorities in the HKSAR that are practically engaged with issues of urban and cultural planning (own table)



Currently, the establishment of a cultural bureau remains an unlikely scenario for the near future, which leaves industrial areas primarily subjected to Hong Kong's town planning strategies that have been determining the built environment, spatial practices and governmental conditions of organically evolved cultural clusters. Hence, temporary and project-based organizations such as the EKEO, which operate on bureau-level while being physically present in the concerned areas, would be most receptive for a stronger integration of—not merely place-based—cultural policy concerns into Hong Kong's urban redevelopment.

5 CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

Instead of establishing a mere critique on creativity and urban planning discourses, the methodological approach for this research was drawn from the field of cultural policy studies to aim for a pragmatic analysis of non-compliant spaces in Kwun Tong, while facilitating an articulation between concepts of space, urban planning, cultural clusters and governmentality. The final chapter will start with a brief summary that will also address the research questions as set out in the introduction (see Ch. 1.2). The following conclusion will be accompanied by an outline of further perspectives that have derived from this study.

Overall, the thesis was divided into a micro- and macro-perspective. First, the case study of Hidden Agenda was used as an entry-point to scrutinize the impact of urban redevelopment on Kwun Tong's industrial area. In this context, the music venue presented a peculiar space that was able to transgress the passive nature of organically evolved clusters, which had emerged outside urban planning strategies and in contradiction to Hong Kong's stringent land use regulations.

By using Lefebvre's conceptual triad of perceived-conceived-lived space, the analysis started with a detailed account of the spatial practices that produced (and have been reproducing) non-compliant cultural spaces in Kwun Tong. It also laid out the various perceptions, symbols and representations that have been associated with and imposed on industrial areas by different interest groups.

In a sense, this introductory analysis has already touched upon the most significant aspects of this research by sketching the discrepancies between space, urban planning

and cultural policy. Moving away from Lefebvre's abstract notion of space, the research then scrutinized Hidden Agenda in its practical form as a place of both (sub)cultural production and consumption. It laid out how the venue changed from a personal and private endeavor—that only relied on the patronage of one person—to an organized and well established livehouse that filled a void in Hong Kong's local music scene, while negotiating between its various identities of being an illegal, subcultural and to some extent commercial space. Although Hidden Agenda had to operate within an “immovable paradox” to secure its independence and reproduction, it has still become a representational space for resistance against policies that have been challenging the cultural appropriation of industrial buildings. While being prosecuted for violating various regulations (mainly related to land use, liquor, public entertainment and fire safety), it made use of Kwun Tong's governmental conditions to contest factual decisions by different authorities. Arguably, similar livehouse venues that are located in commercial or residential zones would not be able to operate illegally for such a long time.

Nevertheless, the redevelopment plans for Kwun Tong also led to an increasing politicization of the space. In order to understand the different discourses that emerged from this situation, this research looked at—“rather than through”—the Energizing Kowloon East Office. Adopting the so called place-making approach, the EKEO aims to facilitate an organic redevelopment process by attracting private developers and improving the built environment of public spaces. However, the integration of “creativity” into the conceptual master plan rather increased than eased the tensions with some local artists. Since then, the space underneath the flyover has become a controversial site for the aesthetic vision and gentrification of Kwun Tong's industrial

area. At the same time, this attempted instrumentalization of culture also opened a room for maneuver, through which Hidden Agenda could tap into existing power-relations. Although refusing any participation in the flyover project, affected groups could now directly address the Development Bureau through the EKEO. Nevertheless, there still remain major discursive differences regarding the utilization of space, the guiding values for development and the underlying principles of a free market economy.

Drawing upon these findings, the chapter eventually investigated Kwun Tong's sustainability as an organically evolved cultural cluster in relation to its social, economic, cultural and governmental conditions. In particular, this research identified two dimensions of governmentality: First, non-compliant spaces such as Hidden Agenda have been shaped by a distinct set of spatial practices that have contested Hong Kong's dominant spatial ideologies while creating a heterotopia for otherwise unviable activities. Second, using Bennett's critique of de Certeau's disempowered resistance, Hidden Agenda transcended oppositional resistance by (forcefully) engaging with different bureaus. In summary, this micro-perspective exposed both a conceptual and real detachment of the redevelopment process in Kwun Tong from Hong Kong's cultural policy discourses at large, rendering concepts about creative city and creative industries practically irrelevant for a space such as Hidden Agenda that is mainly determined by the struggle over spatial power.

In order to investigate the actual relevance of these concepts, the perspective was raised to a macro-level in the second part of the thesis. By tracing the integration of culture and arts into the territorial planning strategy over the last 15 years, the research identified and analyzed different models for the establishment and operation of Hong

Kong's most significant cultural clusters such as the Cattle Depot Artist Village, Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre, Police Married Quarters and Comix Home Base. Generally, most of the clusters have been outsourced to NGOs under short-term leasing agreements, while the government keeps the ownership of the premises. During recent years, such clusters were increasingly adopted by urban planning strategies, especially in relation to creative industries and heritage sites on Hong Kong Island. Subsequently, these planned clusters were compared with Hidden Agenda and Kwun Tong along the concept of spatial power. After giving a detailed account of how aspects of planning and ownership have set the framework for power relations, the research used de Certeau's dual concept of *space/place* to contest Bennett's disregard for resistance and underline the incompatibility between Hidden Agenda and Hong Kong's place-based cultural policy approach.

Eventually, the research expanded its perspective to the organizational framework that currently defines and implements culture-related policies. The particular case of Hidden Agenda was used to problematize Hong Kong's "culture portfolio" and to argue for a reassignment of responsibilities across different government sectors, especially by alleviating the significance of culture within the Development Bureau—and hence within the domains of planning, zoning and land use.

Although this research has actually not identified a true 'hidden agenda' in Hong Kong's cultural policy and urban redevelopment (as the title might have suggested), the peculiar relationship between these two domains remains complex and contradictory. Currently, the city's cultural development is determined by—what I coined in this thesis—a *place-based cultural policy approach*. The nurturing of local

talents in the arts and creative industries highly depends on the vacancy of government-owned premises, the material justification for cultural appropriation and the zoning of land use. Once outside this place-based framework, cultural spaces and clusters are neither considered a policy responsibility nor an expedient resource for redevelopment. Industrial areas, however, have for long time provided these nurturing spatial, economic and governmental conditions that enabled artists to pursue their activities without any need for recognition or financial support. Meanwhile, some of these contingent clusters have turned into rooted landmarks of Hong Kong's arts scene. At the same time, variations in urban and social fabric have facilitated the production of different art forms by drawing, for instance, visual artists to Fo Tan and musicians to Kwun Tong.

Following the Foucauldian approach in cultural policy studies, this thesis analyzed both the productive and destructive conditions for cultural production in industrial areas by showing how they informed (and subsequently changed) the organizational, operational and tactical nature of Hidden Agenda. However, while operating factually outside the domain of official cultural policy discourses, Bennett's framework also too easily disembarked from the struggle over (spatial) power, as put forward by de Certeau. When accommodating the role of non-compliant spaces and organically evolved cultural clusters it is therefore necessary to recognize the *usefulness* of both governmentality *and* resistance as significant and relational concepts. This would also broaden the *usability* of cultural policy studies as an academic field of inquiry that utilizes both critical and pragmatic methods.

When comparing Hong Kong's planned and organically evolved clusters, de Certeau's concept of *place* and *space* is not only useful to establish the conceptual

differences, but also the contradictory similarities between these formations. Over the last five years Hidden Agenda has undergone a significant transformation, which has both undermined its informal character and strengthened its position within the cultural sector. No matter what, these contradictions will further increase: If there is the opportunity to continue as an unstable *space* in Kwun Tung, Hidden Agenda must continuously adjust its efficiency as a livehouse to sustain itself under ever changing conditions. Likewise, if Hidden Agenda would accept a *place-based* solution from the government—e.g. through the provision of a redundant public facility nearby—it will lose its relevance by sacrificing both its non-compliant and subcultural identity.

The case certainly exposed a profound detachment of Hong Kong's invisible grassroots culture at the peripheries from cultural policy strategies at the centre that are mainly confined to *fixed places* in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. This in itself is not a critique, because arguably industrial areas turned into productive clusters not only despite the lack of recognition, but also due to the distinct heterotopic and governmental conditions. However, given the current struggle over the sustainability of cultural spaces in the face of Kwun Tong's imminent redevelopment, the question remains whether and to what extent such organic clusters should be of concern for cultural policy. At the same time, it remains unclear how cultural venues such as Hidden Agenda could be conceptually accommodated by the current creative industry discourse—given that their often unofficial and non-commercial status renders them insignificant for any relevant statistics of annual reports. Although theoretical concepts of creative cities actually regard alternative “street-level culture” as an important resource for urban development, there seems to be a missing link between the officially sanctioned creative industries and their alternative alterations. In the case of Kwun

Tong, it turned out that neither CreateHK nor the Home Affairs Bureau could provide any advice to the Development Bureau on how to deal with this non-place-based cultural cluster. Nevertheless, the practices and symbols associated with Hidden Agenda have become increasingly transferable across space. The livehouse has changed its location for three times over the last five years as a response to rising rents and legal prosecution, without diminishing its role for the local music sector.

By referring back to my somehow inquiring title: “Cultural Policy in Hong Kong’s Urban Redevelopment”, I would eventually say: The integration of culture into urban redevelopment processes—although fully recognized in planning visions—is not necessarily a concern of cultural policy. In fact, while the EKEO intends to use ‘culture’ and ‘creativity’ for its place-making approach, this does not entail a new approach in cultural policy towards arts spaces in industrial buildings. Nevertheless, under Hong Kong’s current government portfolio, spaces such as Hidden Agenda raise crucial questions for Hong Kong’s cultural development, but the current responses are only found within domains that are not conceived as cultural policy responsibilities in the first place. It is therefore necessary to establish research in cultural policy studies that also acknowledges a governmental, tactical and strategic domain that is practically detached from mainstream concepts such as creative city, creative class and creative industries.

While this research used the case of Hidden Agenda and Kwun Tong to discuss the current state of urban planning and cultural policy in Hong Kong, it has also arrived at two particular problems in the areas of *creative industries* (Ch. 4.2.3) and *translocality* (Ch. 3.1.3), which could not be adequately addressed within this master

thesis. Nevertheless, I hope to further investigate these issues in the future, as this thesis has provided a valuable foundation for the understanding of the relational aspects of space, urban planning and cultural policy. Certainly, these particularities are embedded in the historical, economic, cultural and social context of Hong Kong, but they are not necessarily unique to this place.

EPILOGUE

“Queen’s Pier” by King Ly Chee (2008)

*This is all that’s left of my past
Every time a building gets torn down
My heart gets ripped apart
When I walk down these streets,
No long familiar to me
The image in my head is now dead.*

*Now that you’ve erased the identity
What’s left of our history?
No not another mall!
Does the blood and sweat of our forefathers mean nothing?
This time you’ve gone too far
Their blood and sweat
Created all of this
Will be a memory
We will never let forget*

*In time we’ll live to regret
The decisions that have been made
In time we’ll be questioned
Why we didn’t do something.*

*With the sounds of destruction
When the walls come crumbling down
Our history will drown
Ripped away from us forever
How can we live with this shame
That we didn’t protect her name.*

*Stand up and protect our home
Stand up and protect what’s ours
Raise this issue in your home
Raise this issue in your school
Raise this issue with everyone
Just don’t let these walls fall*

*Robbed me of my memories
Taken away from me
Stolen my history
Tell me what’s left for me*

Time to take back what’s been lost

APPENDIX

List of Interviewees

Chow, Chun Fai - visual artist, founder of Fotanian open studio event and founder of the Factory Artist Concern Group and Hong Kong Culture Monitor

Farooqi, Riz - founder and singer of the Hong Kong hardcore band King Ly Chee (active since 1999)

Ho, Winnie - deputy head of the Energizing Kowloon East Office (HKSAR Development Bureau)

Representative of Strategic Sounds - a former livehouse in an industrial building in Kwun Tong

Representative of Beating Heart - a former livehouse in an industrial building on Hong Kong Island

Representatives of Musician AREA - a livehouse and music business in an industrial building (previously located in Kwai Fung, currently located in Kwun Tong)

Representatives of Hidden Agenda - a livehouse in an industrial building in Kwun Tong

Various musicians that live and rehearse in industrial buildings in Kwun Tong, Ngau Tau Kok and Tuen Mun

The identity of some interviewees will be protected due to potential violations of current land using regulations.

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