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**Power, participation and everyday politics
within state-led urban renewal in
Hong Kong**

A thesis
submitted in fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of
Doctor of Philosophy in Geography
at
The University of Waikato
by
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WAIKATO
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An ounce of practice is worth a thousand words– Mahatma Gandhi.

*E te Atua tukua mai ki a au
te mahurutanga ki te whakaae ki ngā mea
e kore nei e taea e au te whakarerekē,
te kaha ki te whakarerekē, i ngā mea
ka taea e au,
me te mātauranga e mōhio ai au he aha
te aha*

行之里千
下足於始
~ 老子

Abstract

This thesis identifies and examines the ways power, participation, and everyday politics shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong. Hong Kong has a long history of state-led urban renewal, which continues to lead to displacement and change the form and function of neighbourhoods. Driven by profit, and a culture in which redevelopment represents progress, Hong Kong's urban development context is shaped by ongoing coloniality, increased integration with China, growing inequality and a rapidly changing civil society with evolving and competing urban aspirations.

Scholarly narratives of Hong Kong and its urban development practices and outcomes are ordinarily set against Eurocentric global city narratives that emphasise its rapid transition from a colonial outpost in the nineteenth century to a global financial hub. These narratives fail to capture diverse everyday aspirations, perceptions, and experiences of urban renewal in Hong Kong, including those related to the interventions of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA). This thesis demonstrates how used in conjunction, analytical optics of postcolonial and postpolitical theory can enrich understanding of outcomes of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong. This study draws on a range of qualitative methods, including interviews, participatory stakeholder mapping, focus groups and historical and contemporary documents, to generate rich data supporting new insights into Hong Kong's urban development context, and advances critical urban theory.

Analysing urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong through postcolonial urban and postpolitics optics highlights three critical insights. Firstly, urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong are shaped by competing and entangled urban aspirations. The URA elite utilises the inter-referenced urbanisms of other Asian cities to articulate and legitimise their urban aspirations. Notably, other competing interest groups also inter-reference other Asian cities to challenge the form and function of the URA, and this challenges and reinforces its taken-for-granted authority. Secondly, the URA, which functions as a corporation, uses various strategies to displace politics surrounding its aspirational profit-driven urban renewal practices. Paradoxically, this includes incorporating democratic principles and authoritarian style disciplining tactics that strengthen the state's authority and creates a fertile ground for resistance, repoliticisation, and the enactment of everyday politics. Lastly, paying attention to urban informality and contrary to postpolitical scholarship that places 'proper politics' at a distance from the state (Etherington & Jones, 2018; Swyngedouw, 2014b), everyday politics is enacted and reconfigures state-society relations from between the state and non-state groups, and as already emphasised by postpolitical scholars, at a distance from the state. Moreover, these everyday acts of politics include the mobility of neighbourhood politics across the city and everyday acts of survival.

Critical insights developed in this thesis highlight the relational and situated nature of tensions between normalised and entrenched inequality on the one hand and everyday acts of politics on the other. Significantly, broadening our understanding of how power, participation and everyday politics shape urban renewal outcomes also broadens possibilities for imagining and acting out alternative, more equitable urban development trajectories in Hong Kong.

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Acronyms and Abbreviations

ANU	Australian National University
CFSC	The Christian Family Service Centre
GCR	Global Cities Research
HKSAR	Hong Kong Specially Administered Region
LDC	Land Development Corporation
LegCo	Legislative Council
MTR	Mass Transit Railway
NGO	Non-government organisation
ODAAG	Old District Autonomous Advancement Group
PPP	Public Private Partnership
TPB	Town Planning Board
TBO	Town Planning Ordinance
UoW	University of Waikato
URA	Urban Renewal Authority
URAO	Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance
URF	Urban Renewal Fund
URSST	Urban Renewal Social Service Team
SVhk	Social Ventures Hong Kong

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 A seed sown

I spent the first 13 years of my life in Hong Kong. My family returned to Aotearoa at the end of 1998, a year and a half after Hong Kong's sovereignty returned to China. In my earliest years, my parents were missionaries and whilst they studied Cantonese, I was cared for by my Amah 阿嫲 (nanny) on a public housing estate. By the time I started primary school, my parents had left the mission and were working in their chosen professions. My mother, an international development practitioner, worked full time managing health programmes for Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) in Hong Kong's Vietnamese refugee detention centres and later worked with a local NGO supporting new migrants from China settle into Hong Kong. My father also worked full time as a geologist and environmental scientist for an engineering firm. He worked on some of Hong Kong's most iconic infrastructure projects, including bridges, highways, and cross-harbour tunnels. For a significant part of my childhood, I lived in a large village house in what was then the rural Lam Tsuen Valley, surrounded by sugar cane fields tended to by elderly Hakka women. I went to an international school and spent many weekends at a recreational club with other ex-pat families. I grew up knowing that Hong Kong was a very different city for different people. Reflecting on these early experiences highlighted to me how Hong Kong's rapid transformation in the 20th and 21st centuries was (and is still) shaped by diverse and often competing aspirations, naturalised inequality, and everyday acts of resistance to urban exclusion.

In late 2006, I returned to Hong Kong to work as a project officer for a non-governmental organisation (NGO) supporting refugees and asylum seekers. To be close to work and new friends, I moved into Yau Ma Tei, one of the most densely populated neighbourhoods in the world. Years later, when I began to develop the focus of my PhD, I read about the Urban Renewal Authority's (URA) interventions into my old neighbourhood and the surrounding areas. I knew from experience that the living conditions in areas the URA were intervening in were harsh and needed investment, but my experience also told me that these neighbourhoods were vibrant and some of the only affordable places outside of public housing for low-income people to live.

After a series of informal meetings with NGOs and professionals involved in or interested in urban renewal in Hong Kong, I realised just how unique, and complex, Hong Kong's urban development context is and became aware of the strategies the URA utilised to maintain its authority over neighbourhood change and urban development more broadly in Hong Kong. Together with my experience, this knowledge raised questions for me. What is the rationale

behind the URA interventions? Who is participating and benefiting from its interventions? How are the URA's interventions perceived and experienced by different interest groups? Is there resistance to the URA's interventions, and if so, what form and function does it take? Two themes ran through the questions I raised: the importance of context and the centrality of power.

1.2 Urban renewal, the URA and neglecting the everyday

Hong Kong, a densely populated compact city and special administered region of China, has a long history of urban renewal dating back to the colonial authority-initiated slum clearances in the late 1800s (Adams & Hastings, 2001). Today, primarily undertaken by the URA, state-led urban renewal continues to be a leading cause of displacement and neighbourhood change in Hong Kong (Heisler et al., 2020). Theoretically, urban renewal in Hong Kong commonly refers to improving the physical, socio-economic and ecological aspects of decaying areas in the city through different interventions, including redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalisation and heritage preservation (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b). In practice however, urban renewal in Hong Kong mainly refers to large scale urban redevelopment (Lai, 2010; Yung & Sun, 2020).

To date, most urban renewal scholarship in Hong Kong foregrounds the aspirations of the URA and neglects or minimises diverse, competing, everyday aspirations that shape outcomes of its interventions (Adams & Hastings, 2001; Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Yung et al., 2014). Competing everyday aspirations include asylum seekers and refugees at risk of displacement, and other low-income groups. The neglect or minimisation of competing voices and aspirations within urban renewal scholarship in Hong Kong reflects and reinforces the URA's dominance over Hong Kong's urban development trajectory, the naturalisation of inequality and the displacement of urban politics. Significantly, failure to recognise how politics is displaced within URA interventions limits our understanding of the form and function of everyday resistance and influence and the opportunities that everyday acts of politics present for imagining and acting out more equitable urban futures in Hong Kong.

To identify and examine how Hong Kong's unique and diverse urban development context shapes outcomes of URA interventions, this thesis foregrounds nuanced everyday perceptions and experiences and draws on emerging postcolonial urban scholarship. To identify and examine the everyday form and function of power shaping outcomes of URA-led urban renewal, this thesis draws on aspects of postpolitical scholarship. Context, here, involves Hong Kong's history, and the related form and function of its economic and

governance system, which shape the environment of opportunity and constraint in which urban renewal is acted out and resisted. Power here refers to the capacity of an institution, group of people or individual to initiate, participate, resist, and ultimately shape urban redevelopment processes and outcomes that affect an individual and community's everyday life (Fenster & Kulka, 2016).

1.3 Postcolonial urban critique and filling a gap with postpolitics

Urbanisms have always been conceived of comparatively (McFarlane, 2010). How Hong Kong is compared and presented in relation to other cities is not neutral. Taken-for-granted Eurocentric narratives that foreground its global city status and rapid transition from a colonial outpost in the nineteenth century to a global financial hub dominate how urban scholars, urban policymakers and managers, and some everyday urban dwellers perceive and experience the URA's interventions (Charrieras et al., 2018; Huang, 2015; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Siu, 2011).

In contrast, postcolonial urban scholars focus on developing a more global urban studies that can speak to the experiences, innovations, and interventions that make up *all* cities. At its core, postcolonial urban theory provokes relational thinking about place, knowledge, and power (Roy, 2016b) and raises critical questions about how agency and everyday experience shape contemporary urbanisation processes and urban forms in diverse contexts (Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2018; Schmid et al., 2018). Furthermore, postcolonial urban scholars experiment and expand new and emergent theoretical and methodological tactics to investigate knowledges about cities (Roy, 2009a) and commit to practising deep reflexivity, including their own world views and assumptions (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020).

Critics of postcolonial urban scholarship argue that postcolonial scholars are committed to a 'new particularism' that does not offer any 'coherent' concept of the urban. For these scholars, complaints of Eurocentric epistemological bias are exaggerated (Scott & Storper, 2015), and its critiques, such as those of global cities research (GCR), are polemical, partial, oversimplified, and misrepresent a diversity of scholarship (Van Meeteren et al., 2016). In addition, scholars utilising a political-economic approach argue that postcolonial urban scholarship fails to account for wider global capitalist processes in which urban processes unfold (Brenner & Schmid, 2015).

In response, postcolonial scholars assert that its critics have misread historical differences as empirical variation and question what their critics count as theory and who gets to claim it as such (Robinson & Roy, 2016; Roy, 2016b). Postcolonial scholars are committed to paying attention to and acknowledging situated knowledge rather than a commitment to particularism

or a particular/universal binary. Notably, postcolonial urban scholars make a distinction between what is 'universal' and 'global'. 'Global' urban processes do not necessarily (here, usually do not) take on a 'universal' form or are universally experienced (Robinson & Roy, 2016). For these scholars, universalist frameworks based on what they see as a small number of iconic Euro-American cities cannot account for Southern urban realities (Parnell & Pieterse, 2016).

Postcolonial approaches raise important questions about how URA-led urban renewal processes in Hong Kong are understood, practised, resisted, and transformed. They foreground diverse everyday experiences and the agency of those involved and directly affected by urban renewal. However, neither postcolonial urban approaches nor its critiques pay enough attention to spatial contradictions and conflicts surrounding the URA's interventions. Specifically, they fail to account for the stealthy ways the URA displaces politics to maintain its privileged position and the effect this has on the form and function of everyday politics. This thesis demonstrates how theoretical concepts of western-inspired postpolitics can complement a postcolonial urban approach to address this knowledge gap.

Postpolitics is an emerging body of scholarship that has evolved from Europe to diagnose the nature of urban governance and politics since the end of the Cold War. Postpolitical scholars highlight the emergence of consensus forms of governance (Davidson & Iveson, 2015; Legacy et al., 2018; Rancière, 1999; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014; Žižek, 1999) and, consequently, the effect this has had on realising radical democratisation and egalitarian emancipation (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Haughton et al., 2016; Legacy et al., 2018). At the core of a postpolitical vision is that instead of playing mediator between clashing interest groups with different ideological perspectives, urban institutions (like Hong Kong's URA) have become managers of technical processes and policies focused on economic growth and displacing political antagonisms (Haughton et al., 2013; Temenos, 2017).

Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014) explain that scholars utilising postpolitics as a framework currently deploy it in two ways. Firstly, they deploy it to describe and explain instances of urban spatial politics suffering from the 'postpolitical condition'. Secondly, scholars deploy the framework to identify examples of 'politics proper' or the 'truly political' often part of a broader project to revitalise possibilities of a spatialised emancipatory project (Swyngedouw, 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). Although much of the postpolitics scholarship is still based on the experiences of the global North, studies exploring its applicability to non-western contexts are growing (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Choplin, 2016; Hou, 2018; Hui & Au, 2016; Lam-Knott et al., 2020b; Neo, 2010; Raco & Lin, 2012; Seo, 2020) and this thesis contributes to this growing body of work.

My experiences of Hong Kong in my early years and later living and working in areas affected by state-led urban renewal eventually led me to think that bringing postcolonial urban and postpolitics scholarship into conversation could enrich debates within urban studies. Postcolonial urban scholarship makes visible diverse everyday experiences and the agency of those involved and directly affected by state-led urban renewal. Postpolitics scholarship highlights how naturalised inequality is maintained through the depoliticisation of state-led urban renewal interventions. Used together, postcolonial urban and postpolitics scholarship can deepen understanding of the form and function of everyday politics and highlight potentialities for imagining and acting out alternative, more equitable urban futures in non-western contexts.

1.4 Research aim, objectives, and methodology

The overall aim of the thesis is to utilise the theoretical lenses of postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics to identify and examine the way power, participation, and everyday politics shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

There are four key objectives:

1. To review postcolonial urban and postpolitics scholarship and identify critical aspects relevant to understanding urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.
2. To identify and discuss diverse and competing aspirations and perceptions of urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.
3. To identify and analyse the role of state-led urban renewal processes and practices in the urban development trajectory of Hong Kong.
4. To identify and examine how ongoing tensions and struggles between different interest groups shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

To address the aim and objectives, this thesis employed a qualitative interpretive inquiry approach. In line with postcolonial and postpolitical optics, a critical stance that emphasises exposing and critiquing inequality (Denzin, 2017) and identifying sites of activism (Denzin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) is taken. The study focuses on URA-led urban renewal interventions across diverse communities and areas in Hong Kong. A broad approach highlighted diversity and connections within and between different interest groups and neighbourhoods, enabling new meanings and interpretations to be constructed.

To generate rich in-depth data this thesis utilised multiple methods across two phases of data collection. The first involved 49 semi-structured interviews, stakeholder mapping, secondary

data collection and a field diary. The second phase involved four focus groups with a total of 18 participants. Three sampling strategies including criteria sampling, maximum variation sampling and snowballing sampling were utilised to keep the research focused and ensure that participants included those beyond the 'usual suspects' (Braun & Clarke, 2013), such as elite planners. Research assistants/translators were utilised to enable those that might have otherwise been excluded, to participate. Participants in the study are diverse and include people directly affected by URA interventions, NGOs, activists' groups, the URA and other government departments. Specific postcolonial urban theory and post politics optics relevant to this study underpin the Reflexive Thematic Analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2019) approach taken to construct meaning.

1.5 Thesis overview

Chapter 1 has introduced the thesis, including its origins, gaps in knowledge related to Hong Kong's urban renewal context and related power dynamics. It has made a case for utilising optics of postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics to help bridge a gap in knowledge and generate new insights. Following this, the overall research aims, and objectives and summary of methodology were presented.

Chapter 2 provides a review of the literature on the postcolonial critique within urban studies. The review includes a review of the foundations of this critique, an overview of comparative urbanisms and the ordinary cities critique. New and emerging postcolonial urban optics relevant and utilised in this study are then discussed, which include the notions of urban informality, urban aspirations and urban inter-referencing. Following this, a review of key critiques of postcolonial urban scholarship are discussed, including critiques from the agglomeration and urban land nexus approach, global cities research, and the planetary urbanisation framework. Responses to these critiques from postcolonial scholars are then presented, followed by a discussion of the limitations of postcolonial urbanism and its critiques in identifying and examining how power shapes spatial politics and outcomes of URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong.

Chapter 3 provides a broad overview of postpolitics scholarship, including its application to non-western contexts. Jacques Rancière's relational approach, which equates acts that presuppose equality as acts of politics, is then discussed. Specifically, Rancière's tripartite analytic that makes a distinction between 'the political', 'politics' and 'the police' and his related concept of 'distribution of the sensible' is relayed. In addition, a review of how these analytical concepts have been utilised to analyse spatial politics of diverse state-led and non-state-led urban development processes and practices is presented. Literature critiquing postpolitics

scholarship is then reviewed. The chapter concludes by contending that when used in conjunction with postcolonial urban optics, Jacques Rancière's relational approach to identifying and examining spatial politics can contribute to new knowledge on spatial politics shaping outcomes of URA-led urban renewal interventions.

Having established the theoretical lens and related gaps in research that have informed the thesis, chapter 4 outlines and reflects on the methodological approach employed. Firstly, a more detailed description of the origins of the thesis is presented to help contextualise the study, followed by a discussion outlining the rationale for the qualitative interpretive approach employed to meet the research aims and objectives. The significant role that research assistants/translators played in the research is then highlighted followed by a description of the thematic approach utilised for analysis. Details of the sampling strategies and each method utilised is then described with the chapter concluding by highlighting important ethical considerations and key learnings taken from undertaking the research.

Chapter 5 introduces Hong Kong and the urban renewal context in which this research is situated. More than providing a description, this chapter draws attention to and critiques how certain narratives, particularly the global city narrative, have come to dominate how scholars, urban policymakers and managers, and everyday urban dwellers come to think about and interact with diverse urbanisms in Hong Kong. The dominance of the global city narrative and the centrality of redevelopment are related to Hong Kong's economic and political system, which are shown to be the direct and indirect result of colonisation and ongoing coloniality. This chapter demonstrates how an 'ordinary cities' (Robinson, 2006) critique draws attention to everyday less visible urban experiences and practices, contesting dominant narratives and ongoing coloniality.

Having set the context in which this study is situated, chapters 6, 7 and 8 together present the empirical findings of the research. Chapter 6 utilises the postcolonial urban optics of urban aspirations and urban inter-referencing to explore the dynamics and effects of competing and entangled aspirations within URA-led urban renewal processes and practices in Hong Kong. The chapter highlights how the dominance of the URA's aspiration shape the environment of opportunity and constraint in which urban renewal interventions and resistance to interventions unfold.

Chapter 7 builds on chapter 6 and utilises Jacques Rancière's tripartite analytic, drawing mostly on 'the police', 'the distribution of the sensible' with some reference to the emergence of 'the political' to identify and examine how the URA depoliticises its processes and practices to maintain a consensus on its authority and interventions. The chapter demonstrates that despite the URA attempts, displacement of politics is incomplete as different interest groups

with competing urban aspirations resist the naturalised inequality maintained by the URA's interventions. The interaction between the URA's depoliticising intervention strategies and resistance are a catalyst for everyday politics, and the point of departure for chapter 8.

Chapter 8 utilises the postcolonial optic of urban informality to enrich and expand Jacques Rancière's conceptualisation of 'politics' to include less visible, incremental everyday acts. Here, urban informality highlights multiple forms of politics at play, shaping the context in which resistance to URA interventions unfolds. The transformation of everyday politics through URA interventions challenges widely held assumptions that informality belongs to the poor and formality to the state. The chapter highlights the critical role of new evolving relationships between interest groups in the transformation and mobility of everyday politics across the city. The chapter demonstrates that the direction that urban renewal takes in Hong Kong is determined by ongoing tensions between postpolitical forces and everyday politics.

This final chapter draws together the knowledge constructed in relation to the aim and objectives and reflects on the study's contribution to urban studies scholarship. I identify and demonstrate three key messages of the thesis. Firstly, how entangled aspirations are a valuable entry point for scholars to explore urban politics. Secondly, the value of learning from ongoing tensions and conflicts to examine the outcomes of state-led interventions. Finally, the importance of expanding scholars' understanding of politics to recognise new and evolving opportunities for imagining and acting out alternative urban futures. Following this, key limitations and further research opportunities are discussed before ending with a personal reflection on the research process.

CHAPTER 2: A POSTCOLONIAL CRITIQUE OF GLOBAL URBANISMS

2.1 Introduction

Contemporary urbanisation processes present significant challenges for urban research and theory (Schmid et al., 2018). For Schmid et al. (2018) these challenges are threefold: urban areas growing in scale; an increase in complexity and emergence of multiple urban outcomes across diverse contexts; and the necessity to simultaneously analyse urbanisation processes as well as the urban form to reflect the dynamic and innovative character of urban change (Schmid et al., 2018). This apparent increase in the visibility and speed of urban change requires new ways of thinking about and theorising the urban. Scholarship from postcolonial urban theory has much to offer urban studies as it adapts to remain relevant to contemporary urban opportunities and challenges (McCann et al., 2013; Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2018; Schmid et al., 2018).

The first objective of this study is to review postcolonial urban and postpolitics scholarship and identify critical aspects relevant to understanding urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong. In this chapter, I introduce postcolonial urban theory scholarship and, more specifically, review postcolonial urban optics relevant to understanding urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong, including notions of the ordinary city, urban informality, urban aspirations and urban inter-referencing. The review then identifies and discusses key critiques of postcolonial urban scholarship, including critiques from the agglomeration and urban land nexus approach, global cities research (GCR), and the planetary urbanisation framework. Responses to these critiques from postcolonial scholars are then presented. The chapter concludes by discussing the limitations of postcolonial urbanism and its critics in identifying and examining outcomes of urban renewal, such as those led by the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) in Hong Kong.

2.2 The foundations of the postcolonial critique

In recent years scholars from diverse fields of study have drawn on various strands of postcolonial theory to challenge taken for granted assumptions about the nature of the urban within critical urban studies (Lawhon et al., 2020; Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2018). These scholars contend that the variegated nature of urbanisms is messy and dynamic, not reducible to a single theory or metanarrative (Derickson, 2015; Leitner & Sheppard, 2016). These include scholars from the diverse fields of urban geography (Bunnell et al., 2012; Jacobs, 2012; Myers, 2014), anthropology (Appadurai, 2004; Gough, 2012), feminist studies (Butcher & Maclean, 2018), political ecology (Koch, 2013; Lawhon & Truelove, 2020), policy studies (Lowry &

McCann, 2011; Ward, 2018) and urban planning (Roy, 2011b; Yiftachel, 2006). These scholars argue that metanarratives such as those of political economy approaches are not only ill-equipped to deal with the diversity of global urbanism, but more problematically reinforce inequality and limit the potential for alternative urban trajectories.

At its broadest, postcolonial urban theory is focused on developing a more global urban studies, one that can speak to the experiences, innovations, and interventions that make up *all* cities. At its core, postcolonial urban theory provokes relational thinking about place, knowledge, and power (Roy, 2016b). Necessarily, this involves rejecting categories and hierarchical assumptions of cities, in favour of experimentation and expansion of new and emergent theoretical and methodological tactics, and a commitment by researchers to reflexivity, including of their own world views and assumptions.

2.3 The ‘Southern turn’ in urban studies

From the early 2000s, the Euro-American centre of theory production and hegemony within urban studies has been increasingly questioned and challenged (Rao, 2006; Robinson, 2002; Schmid et al., 2018). During this time, inherited Eurocentric theories and concepts that structured research and practice proved to be inadequate and potentially harmful for explaining the nature and experiences of cities in the global South (Robinson, 2006; Schmid et al., 2018). The ‘Southern turn’ in urban studies is marked by scholarship that takes experiences and understanding of the global South as its point of departure to explore urban research and theory making (Lawhon & Truelove, 2020; Rao, 2006).

Postcolonial theory has strongly influenced the ‘Southern turn’ in urban studies (Schmid et al., 2018). Lawhon and Truelove (2020) identify three iterations of the southern urban critique's intellectual foundation. The first of these iterations is that the global South is empirically different from the global North. But, as they explain, this position in itself does not meaningfully challenge the ontology of conventional approaches. Indeed, this is counter-argued by some scholars as evidence for a need for a universal urban theory in which postcolonial urban theory is subsumed (Storper & Scott, 2016).

A second iteration is that the global South has different research and knowledge production genealogies. For example, Roy (2009a) calls for new geographies of theory to investigate existing knowledges about cities. Lawhon and Truelove (2020) agree with this sentiment; however, they explain that as with the first iteration based on empiricism, one based on alternative traditions does not do enough to alter the status quo. They propose a third iteration, that researchers focus on deconstructing their own assumptions about cities more deeply. Here, the global South is a ‘concept-metaphor’ that can be utilised to deconstruct knowledge

- power relations. As part of a wider analytical project of postcolonial theory advanced by interlocutors such as Dipesh Chakrabarty (Chakrabarty, 2009), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Spivak, 1996), and Edward Said (Said, 1994), this approach insists that the colonial encounter and rationalities are deeply embedded in the present (Porter, 2017).

The introduction of postcolonial theory for Lawhon and Truelove (2020) is the strongest version of 'the Southern critique' of urban studies. They put forward three possible modes for a more spatially and theoretically diverse urban studies: that Southern (or regional) urbanism is a distinct field of study; those urban studies recognise that all theory is partial and located; and the need to move from decentring urban theory to a more general global urban studies based on a world of cities contributing to ongoing conversations grappling with the middle ground between the universal and the particular. Indeed, postcolonial urban theory is not a totalising rejection of urban theory developed within the context of the global North or an argument for particularism and empiricism. It is these very binaries, particular/universal, traditional/modern, global South/global North, informal/formal, or urban/rural, which postcolonial urban theory seeks to disrupt (Sheppard et al., 2015)¹. A central area of urban studies that postcolonial scholars have critiqued and sought to disrupt is how cities are compared. The following section discusses comparative urbanism and its role in postcolonising urban studies.

2.4 Comparative urbanism

Urbanisms have always been conceived of comparatively (McFarlane, 2010). However, these comparisons are not neutral. McCann et al. (2013) explain the criteria in which cities are normatively evaluated and compared, construct authoritative and powerful mental maps of 'world cities' that influence policymaking and city-making. What we study, read, or claim about a city is always set against other kinds of urban possibilities or imaginaries (McFarlane, 2010). Furthermore, research is still shaped by colonial ideas inside and outside academia, reminding us of the politics of knowledge production and the difficulty of rethinking what we know and think through southern cities (Lawhon et al., 2020). This challenge is demonstrated by the scholarly debates surrounding the relevance and value of applying the western inspired concept of gentrification to the Hong Kong context (Ley & Teo, 2014, 2020; Lui, 2017) with some scholars arguing that such conceptual overreach is problematic because it fails to

¹ The continued use of the binary global South/global North as a political and analytical lens is described as "strategic essentialism". First coined by postcolonial feminist scholar Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, strategic essentialism here refers to temporarily accepting and utilising essentialist foundations and categories (such as global South) as a political strategy for collective representation to pursue a political end such as equal rights (Pande, 2016). Importantly, Lawhon et al. (2020) state that the long-term goal of strategic essentialism is to undermine the very idea of southern cities as a distinct category; it is a means to an end rather than an end in itself.

account for different historical and contextual configurations of urban processes (Lui, 2017). The limitations of how Hong Kong and its urban renewal context has been compared and constructed is discussed in more detail in chapter 5.

Urban comparison is not new in urban studies; however, its popularity has waxed and waned, and it has a complicated history (Robinson, 2016a; Wood, 2019). Recent urban scholarship has been critical of inherited standard approaches to urban comparison, in particular, where cities have been treated as bounded and isolated units of analysis (Jacobs, 2012; Leitner & Sheppard, 2016; Nijman, 2007; Robinson, 2006, 2016a; Schmid et al., 2018). The genealogy of comparative urbanism has been thoroughly analysed over the last 15 years or so. For in-depth accounts, see Robinson (2006), Robinson (2016a), Ward (2010), McFarlane (2010), Wood (2019). To establish the context for how contemporary comparative urbanisms are understood and applied in this study, a brief history is below.

2.4.1 From shared features to the world economy

The first period of comparative urbanism was from the 1940s to the 1960s. Inspired by American sociologist Louis Wirth's work on city life, this period of comparative urbanism scholarship reconfigured ways of understanding the relationship between urbanism, modernity, and tradition (Robinson, 2016a). During this time, Africanist anthropologists from the Manchester School critiqued the dominant hypothesis of the Chicago School (from which Louis Wirth was part of) that postulated a modern 'here' and 'now' against a traditional 'there' and 'then'. Studying in a wide range of contexts, but particularly in the Copperbelt of Zambia, central Africa, these anthropologists highlighted that rather than urban ways of life being dominated by a blasé attitude or indifference (as was identified within western theories of urban modernity), urban dwellers in the Copperbelt cities of Zambia creatively engaged with and constructed new urbanisms.

These new urbanisms revised ethnic identities and formed new connections and associations. Importantly, rather than mirroring social relations of the rural life deemed 'traditional' by western accounts of modernity, they were found to be specific and invented forms of urbanism. These anthropologists found that there was no progressive dichotomy between tribalism and urbanism, instead each shaped and reinvigorated each other. Against the understanding held by both the African authorities during this time and the Chicago School theories, African city dwellers were not natives and traditional but urbanites and modern (Robinson, 2006, 2016a).

This appreciation of difference demonstrated that central urban areas formation was not a universally similar process, but varied and with complex histories (McFarlane, 2010; Robinson, 2006). Robinson (2016a) argues that through critical encounters with Wirth,

anthropologists from the Manchester School demonstrated a new way of thinking across diverse cities across the globe. However, the rise of developmentalism from the 1970s stalled this earlier contribution to comparative work. At this time, comparative urbanism became embedded within categorisations and hierarchies that divided cities into categories such as less developed/more developed, third world/first world, global North/global South (Wood, 2019). Indeed, much energy directed to analyse urban processes to date has been spent trying to identify and label different 'types of cities' based on emergent functions such as global city or mega city (Schmid et al., 2018).

With increased globalisation came another turn in comparative urban studies, the emergence of GCR (Friedmann & Wolff, 2017; Hall, 1998; Sassen, 2001). While earlier work such as those of the Manchester anthropologists focused on shared features, such as migration and industrialisation in diverse and distant cities, this Marxist inspired political economy approach focuses on bringing cities together through their interconnectedness within the context of the world economy. A range of comparative experiments exploring the interdependent dynamics of the world economy has followed, highlighting the need to think of cities in wealthier contexts in the same analytical frame as those of poorer economies. In particular, this scholarship emphasises how cities are critical points of spatial articulation of the world economy (Robinson, 2016a; Ward, 2010). These two approaches (shared features and world economy) have helped shape dominant normative scholarly narratives of global/world cities.

While transnational in nature (Robinson, 2006) and creating a space for diverse cities to be considered within the same analytical framework (Wood, 2019), global/world cities approaches have limited scope of comparability because they often focus on a small number of 'global cities' or a specific set of 'global city functions', such as nodes of command and control, all of which have inscribed categories and hierarchies that still privilege the experience of a minority of cities (Robinson, 2006). Robinson (2006) argues that it is the Eurocentric lens of urban modernity, which seeks to oppose tradition with modernity and consequently places cities in hierarchies, that has been at the core of what has led to cities being divided up in terms of their level of development. Here, the global North (specifically, cities such as Los Angeles) were (and still are in many contexts) assumed to be the originators of modernity and the rest (the global South) as imitators, in a constant state of playing catch up and in need of intervention.

Even though modernisation never entirely operated in the teleological manner proposed by Northern theory (Sheppard et al., 2015), urban modernity (or the new, leading - edge of urbanism) where some cities might be first, and others follow, continues to inform theoretical innovation within urban studies. For some, urban studies has inherited an impoverished notion of comparative urbanism which is both caught up in a history of categorisations, hierarchies

of developmentalism and inherited a tendency to compare with and learn from the 'usual suspects' (McFarlane, 2010). For postcolonial urban scholars, urban studies requires a theory that can travel widely, tracking diverse circulations that shape cities, thinking across similarities and differences to understand better the diversity of ways of urban life (Schindler, 2017; Schmid et al., 2018). Importantly, this is not just to abandon or dismiss existing concepts and theories developed in western academia, rather to engage critically with it, always keeping conceptualisation open to inspiration from other cities and revisable (Robinson, 2016a, 2016b).

As will be highlighted in chapter 5, scholarly narratives of Hong Kong and its urban development practices and outcomes are ordinarily set against Eurocentric global city narratives that emphasise its rapid transition from a colonial outpost in the nineteenth century to a global financial hub with global city rankings. Yet, this thesis will help explain how these narratives fail to capture diverse everyday aspirations, perceptions, and experiences of places such as Hong Kong, reinforcing ongoing coloniality within the academy and, relatedly, ongoing coloniality within urban renewal processes and outcomes.

2.4.2 Ordinary cities

In the mid-2000s, Jennifer Robinson developed and utilised the idea of 'ordinary cities' as a way to 'postcolonise urban studies' (Robinson, 2006), which has been instrumental in opening new lines of inquiry (Lawhon et al., 2020; Schmid et al., 2018). Robinson's seminal work built on the arguments of Amin and Graham (1997), that all cities are best understood as 'ordinary', rather than as 'third world' or 'global' or 'world cities'. For Robinson, colonial and neo-imperial power relations remain deeply embedded in the assumptions and practices of contemporary urban theory. In particular, she argues that categorising cities through the world and global cities scholarship privileges certain cities and specific features of cities over others (Robinson, 2006). In this context, the notion of urban hierarchies of global or world-class cities has foregrounded economics as the primary measure of urban expansion, which consequently, emphasises the capacities of global elites, international corporations, and professionalised creatives in the development and renewal of cities (Hall, 2015). For Robinson, this not only fails to account for the diversity and complexity of urban life but also damages cities' prospects everywhere (Robinson, 2006).

In contrast, a 'world of ordinary cities' is a critique and framework that brings the city as a whole, in all its diversity, into view (Robinson, 2006). A 'worms eye view' as opposed to a 'birds eye view' of global cities research, ordinary cities research takes seriously the political and economic aspirations of the everyday urban majority (Maringanti, 2013). The ordinary

cities critique encourages urban scholars and urban policymakers and managers to engage with and be inspired by, a plurality of entangled urbanisms and modes of inventiveness in all cities (Hall, 2015; Qian & Tang, 2019; Schmid et al., 2018), including diverse histories, urban experiences and ways of being urban (Clarke, 2012). Importantly for Robinson, ordinary does not imply that cities are explored through mundane activities; instead, it is to insist all cities are unique and not some examples of any special category (Qian & Tang, 2019; Robinson, 2006).

Since Jennifer Robinson's seminal work, 'ordinary cities' has been drawn on by critical scholars to study diverse urbanisms such as 'best practice models' (Montero, 2017), contested urban infrastructure projects (Connolly, 2019), Sino-South African megaprojects (Reboredo & Brill, 2019), cross border trade and economic expansion of small border cities in China (Qian & Tang, 2019), and emerging cosmopolitanism and migrant resistance at the street level in cities of the global North (Hall, 2012, 2015). It is critical to emphasise that the ordinary cities critique is relevant and applicable to all cities, not just small cities or those on the peripheries of global city hierarchies and league tables (as commonly represented in ordinary cities scholarship). Smart and Smart (2017b) concur with Robinson (2002), calling for attention to 'ordinary cities' and the ordinary practices that make life possible for non-elites. Reflecting on the ongoing role of informality as survival in relation to inequality in Hong Kong, they argue that practices of informality offer possibilities for bottom-up urban development that increase urban diversity and vibrancy. They suggest that opportunities to create jobs and provide affordable housing and services may lie at the intersection between formality and informality. How the formal and informal relate to each other in shaping opportunities for more equitable urban development in Hong Kong is highlighted in chapter 8.

2.4.3 Applying an ordinary city comparative analytic

As I outline in chapter 5, this thesis takes the ordinary cities critique as the overarching comparative framework in which to contextualise Hong Kong, and its urban renewal milieu. Schmid et al. (2018) explain that a critical goal of comparative urbanism is to enrich the vocabulary that urban scholars draw on to enable a more differentiated view of the world that better represents the dynamics of urbanisation. Despite an impressive range of scholarship on urban comparison, there still remains uncertainty about how to theorise and do comparative urbanism (Wood, 2019). The following section highlights the comparative analytical approach of scholars drawn upon in this study to apply an ordinary cities critique.

Starting from a place in which *all* cities are thought of as 'ordinary' and drawing inspiration from Deleuze (1994), Robinson (2016b) suggests that urban comparisons be thought of as

'genetic', tracing the existing interconnected genesis of repeated, related, but distinctive, urban outcomes as the basis for comparison, or as *'generative'*, where other instances or other concepts inspire invented analytical proximity as a basis for generating conceptual insights. Robinson (2016b) identifies three methodological tactics that can be used as a part of a genetic and generative comparative strategy: composing *'bespoke'* comparisons across diverse outcomes or repeated instances to generate conceptual connections (for example, see Schmid et al. (2018) comparative study of the urbanisation process across eight diverse metropolitan territories); tracing genetic empirical connections amongst cities to inform understandings of different outcomes to compare the wider interconnections and extend urbanization processes themselves (for example, see Wood (2019) on three approaches to tracing in Johannesburg, South Africa); and launching distinctive analyses from specific urban contexts or regions into wider conversations, (for example, see Chua (2015) on inter-Asian referencing as shifting frames of comparison). For Leitner and Sheppard (2016), practising a comparative analytic within urban studies comprises at least four aspects: close engagement with a multiplicity of actors involved in production of urban processes including different sites, cultures, and histories; attending to how agency is distributed across the social and material worlds in uneven ways; attending to situated knowledges of those familiar with context; and being reflexive, prioritising responsible relationships with those we engage with during research practice and positionality in relation to what and who is being researched.

Drawing on Robinson (2016b), in this study, *'genetic'* (Robinson, 2016b) comparisons are made by diverse participants in the form of inter - referencing urbanisms of other cities. The inter-referencing practices of diverse interest groups involved or interested in urban renewal in Hong Kong are a focus of chapter 6. Furthermore, key contributions of this thesis discussed in chapter 9 include *'generative'* (Robinson, 2016b) comparisons. Distinctive knowledge constructed through emerging postcolonial and postpolitics optics on urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong is taken into broader conversation with scholarly debates on the nature of the urban, comparative urbanism, and the role of urban studies in building more equitable urban futures.

2.5 New and evolving concepts

Despite increasing recognition and scholarship on the value of a resurgent and reframed comparative urbanism, empirical studies are still light on the ground (Schmid et al., 2018). As demonstrated by scholars such as Gough (2012), Schmid et al. (2018) and Wood (2019) however, interest in generating and applying reformulated or new theoretical concepts is opening up new opportunities for empirically focused comparative research. For example,

Sheppard et al. (2020) explain how urban informality has been stretched and reformulated to open up new ways of thinking about comparative urbanism.

In this regard, the postcolonial urbanisms of urban informality, urban aspirations, and urban inter-referencing are especially relevant to exploring how power, participation and everyday politics affect outcomes of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong. Thus, the literature on these three critical Southern optics is discussed below.

2.5.1 Urban informality

Urban informality is one of the Southern optics utilised in this research. The notion of informality was initially developed and utilised to explain the relationship between rapid urbanisation in growth and diversity in informal economies of the global South (Hart, 1973). Keith Hart's (1973) seminal article 'Informal income opportunities and urban employment in Ghana' described how the poor utilised informal income opportunities to get by when neither corporations nor the government could provide sufficient employment opportunities (Bromley, 1990). During the 1980s well known Peruvian economist Hernando de Soto published 'The other path: the invisible revolution in the Third World' (de Soto, 1989), which argued that informality was a symptom of underdevelopment resulting from governmental bureaucracy whereby business and governmental elites manipulate the system to their own narrow advantage (Bromley, 1990). For de Soto (1989) informal activities highlight untapped entrepreneurialism, which the state can harness to contribute to the national economy through market forces, free trade, and privatisation. Here, informality is conceptualised as both a problem resulting from people being excluded from property rights and an opportunity, an untapped entrepreneurial economic resource (Heisel, 2016). de Soto (2000) argues that capitalism requires a proper property rights system like the west for capitalism to work in the global South. Furthermore, he claims that providing the poor in the global South with property titles (privatisation) will provide them with access to untapped capital.

Despite evidence that formalising property rights, as claimed by de Soto, fails to improve the poor's socio-economic status, such neoliberal populist (Roy, 2009b) conceptualisations of informality persist in normative urban development programmes (AlSayyad & Eom, 2019). Postcolonial urban scholars have long been critical of approaches that take for granted informality as a defined and often connected set of socio-economic activities that are 'outside' (and can be corrected through incorporation into) the formal (Altrock, 2012; Bunnell & Harris, 2012; Marx & Kelling, 2019; McFarlane & Waibel, 2012; Roy, 2005, 2009b). These scholars have developed alternative conceptualisations which have evolved to incorporate diverse practices including (but not limited to) informal housing (Cirolia & Scheba, 2019) and hawkers

(Chan, 2018; Schindler, 2014)². Utilised to analyse urban dynamics, identify poverty politics and challenge injustices (Marx & Kelling, 2019; Sheppard et al., 2020) postcolonial scholarship on urban informality is framed both within the wider context of neoliberal urban governance (Chatterji, 2005; Hackenbroch et al., 2016; Roy, 2009b) and through everyday lived experiences (Chan, 2018; Schindler, 2014; Simone & Pieterse, 2018).

Defined broadly, urban informality is a 'mode' of living and interaction and as an organising logic, a system of norms that connect different economies and spaces in ways that govern processes of urban transformation (AlSayyad, 2004; Roy, 2005; Schindler, 2014). For Simone (2019, p. 617), informality is "...intensely situated in the specifics of articulation: of how bodies and materials of all kinds are related to each other. It concerns what of those relationships can be subject to contractual form, and what incipient forms emerge outside of such contracts." Thus, informality asks questions about what is lost with formalisation and what is gained through new and emerging potentialities. Moreover, as demonstrated by Chan (2018) study of hawkers placemaking and communication practices within a night market in Sham Sui Po, Hong Kong, multiple informalities can be practiced simultaneously within and outside formal institutions or rules and regulations. This example importantly demonstrates that in Hong Kong, urban informality is intrinsically related to the formal and, contrary to popular understanding, is a practice of the ruling elite as well as lower-income groups.

In more recent scholarship the relational nature of urban informality is emphasised. Here urban informality is understood to be both intertwined with but also outside of neoliberal urban governance logic (Chan, 2018; Chien, 2018; McFarlane, 2019; Sheppard et al., 2020). Indeed, as Simone and Pieterse (2018, p. 39) demonstrate when exploring urban inequality in the context of the global South, urban inequality cannot simply be accounted for through structural drivers but also through informal practices and survival strategies, how things get done "...amid overlapping and dense social relations". Rigon et al. (2020) make a similar argument in their study exploring urban informalities in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Firstly, they draw attention to the contradictions between the normative discourse of urban informality policy and interventions, and what urban informality is in practice. Secondly, the effect this has on producing injustices in the lives of urban residents. More than just challenging the ingrained categorisations of formal/informal, Rigon et al.'s (2020) study highlights the political use of the term informality, in particular taken-for-granted assumptions that it is something that belongs to the poor. In this thesis, how informal and the formal relate to each other to shape the

² Although not a focus of this thesis, urban informality has also led to the emergence of new and related concepts such as 'popular economies' (Simone, 2019), 'secretions' (Simone & Pieterse, 2018), 'the hustle economy' (Thieme, 2018), 'plotting urbanism' (Schmid et al., 2018), and 'grey spaces' (Yiftachel, 2009).

production of space within the context of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong is highlighted in chapter 8.

The complexity in the way the formal and the informal relate to each other in the production of space has prompted some urban scholars, e.g. McFarlane (2012) and Banks et al. (2020) to call for new scholarly approaches to thinking about urban informality. For example, McFarlane (2012) demonstrates how, used as a heuristic device, a focus on informal practices can challenge the 'supposed illegality of slums' against the 'legality' of formal development in Mumbai. Here urban informality works as an urban critique, exposing the double standards of state claims around informal settlement and the clientelism that facilitate 'formal planning'. In contrast, Banks et al. (2020) argue for seeing urban informality as a site of critical analysis across economic, spatial and political domains to better understand power in context. Their focus on the relationships, attitudes, agency, and strategies in which urban informality is defined reveals deeper insights into multiple actors, their relationships, and strategies involved in urban informality, which consequently demonstrates how urban informality simultaneously offers opportunities for extraction, exploitation, and exclusion for different groups.

Despite its broad use and development, questions around what 'urban informality' (Altrock, 2012) or 'knowing urban informalities' (Marx & Kelling, 2019) actually means across a diverse body of work remains. For Altrock (2012) a governance framework can help to move towards a generalised understanding of informality. For him this means thinking about the different ways in which social interaction leaves the realm of the 'formal'. Utilising institution theory, Altrock (2012) identifies two ways in which social interaction leaves the realm of the formal. Firstly, when a social interaction takes place in a setting that is not covered by formal rules and, secondly, informal interactions (behaviours) that take place within a framework of informal institutions that fill the gap where formal ones do not work properly.

Importantly, Altrock (2012) draws attention to the motivation for informal social interactions. However, he leaves the informal interactions that take place in settings covered by formal rules at best insignificant, and at worst, non-existent. Even if we consider 'formal rules' to include 'unwritten' cultural understandings, informal social interactions still occur in settings covered by 'formal' rules. Chapter 8 of this thesis highlights, for example, how informal interaction between people affected by URA interventions and URA funded social workers can enact everyday politics, highlighting the importance of complementing universal readings of urban informalities with 'everyday' experiences that take into account local agency.

Taking a different tactic to answering questions around what 'urban informality' is, Marx and Kelling (2019) identify three dominant approaches to how urban informality is conceptualised. First, informality as a condition, essentially naming and categorising bounded entities as

'informal' to have political effects. Here 'informal' is used as a descriptor qualifier for 'informal conditions'. For example, the UN-Habitat's criteria for identifying an 'informal settlement' is an instance of informality as a condition. Second, informality as laws, which draws on the idea that there is a plurality of legal systems such as religious laws, state laws, and customary laws that co-exist. Moreover, state law is not necessarily the dominant referent in the activities of people. From this perspective, customary law can be just as 'formal' as state law, and state law can operate in an 'informal way'. Third, informality as currency, which refers to an interest in the social and spatial organisation of how people make a city. In particular, the social effects of acknowledging actors, activities, people, or spaces as informal may have and be mobilised as 'political currency'.

Despite the rich insights provided by all three approaches, Marx and Kelling (2019) note that two key critiques related to persistent binaries in urban informalities scholarship remain. First, the concept of urban informality is often imprecise, related to the in/formality binary and can mean anything to anyone. Second, the contribution that urban informality makes to knowing the urban more generally remains confined to the 'urban non-west'. Sheppard et al. (2020) also recognise that urban informality has primarily been circumscribed to the non-west and neglected in western urban theory. Through comparing the poverty politics related to informal housing in Jakarta, Indonesia, and San Francisco and Seattle in the United States of America, they not only demonstrate the relevance of urban informality to the metropolises of the global North, but also its potential as a tool for comparative urbanism. They highlight both similarities in the relational production of wealth, poverty, and social difference, and divergences such as mechanisms of unequal capitalist geographical development and effectiveness of contesting capitalism in poverty politics. The findings of the study by Sheppard et al. (2020) reiterates McFarlane's (2019), argument that scholars need to consider urban informality beyond the image of slums or informal labour in the global South to other realms to build a more global urban studies.

A central focus of discussion and debate around urban informality is related to how it is applied/related to housing and shelter (Cirolia & Scheba, 2019; Sheppard et al., 2020). Globally, city managers and elites develop and implement various urban redevelopment or regeneration strategies to achieve or maintain world ranking status. Thus, urban redevelopment/regeneration has become a natural site for scholars to deploy urban informality. Sadikoglu and Ozsoy (2018) use informality to explore collaboration and contradiction associated with the legalisation of informal settlements in Istanbul. They argue that the initial informality has had significant impact on the recent legalisation of informal settlements. Moreover, they highlight the informal builders are as much rule makers as rule-breakers because the new developments must conform to the neighbourhood's character and

rules established by the initial informal builders. Here, the agency of informal builders and the strong relationship between informal and formal practices in jointly configured urban space is emphasised. The strong relationship between informal and formal practices, agency and the reconfiguration of urban space is observed in the everyday politics surrounding URA-led interventions discussed in chapter 8.

Other scholars have also made a connection around the relationship between informal and formal practices and the agency of those affected by state-led urban development initiatives. For example, Hackenbroch et al. (2016) deploy informality to compare three forms of space production including strategic urban planning, urban extension at the agglomeration fringes and, inner city urban regeneration. Focusing on Dhaka and the Pearl River Delta they argue that in the context of planning and urban development processes in the global South, informality “can become a window for balanced transformations and carefully negotiated agency” (Hackenbroch et al., 2016, p. 249). Chien (2018) makes a similar argument. She focuses on the entrepreneurialism of informality associated with urban regeneration projects in Taipei. Here the entrepreneurial aspirations of local government coevolve with the informality of squatters to form new variegated forms of urban transformation which can provide hope.

The examples described above demonstrate that the informal is inseparable from understandings of the formal (McFarlane, 2012) and is constantly shifting. The boundary between what is ‘formal’ and ‘informal’ is produced through negotiations and struggles between different interest groups (Schindler, 2014) and is situated and contextual. Despite continued debate and critique of analytical and political challenges of the urban informality optic, it is a critical tool for scholars to identify and examine relational situated urban dynamics and identify injustices (Marx & Kelling, 2019; McFarlane, 2019; Rigon et al., 2020; Sheppard et al., 2020). Furthermore, urban informality can draw attention to, and inspire, progressive politics, and alternative more equitable urban futures. For these reasons, urban informality is utilised in chapter 8 of this thesis to identify and examine how ongoing tensions and struggles between different interest groups shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

2.5.2 Urban aspiration

A focus on urban aspirations is another Southern optic utilised in this study. Aspirational geographies are a new and evolving area of postcolonial urban studies that foreground aspirational dynamics of everyday lives in cities and, importantly, draw attention to possibilities and potentialities for alternative urban development trajectories (Bunnell et al., 2018). As a concept, urban aspirations refers to both wished-for future selves, and wished-for forms of

urban space and sociality (Bunnell, 2019). For example, individual aspirations for improved living environments and wider aspirations for a more equal and sustainable city. Always related, both types of urban aspiration can reinforce or counteract each other, or indeed lead to new aspirations.

For Goh et al. (2015), aspirations drive urban transformation. Held by both urban policy and planning elites, and everyday urban dwellers, aspirations form the cultural terrain in which different interest groups battle to shape the city but also where new alliances and solidarities among members of these groups are forged. Aspirations can involve the movement of people, for example migrants aspiring for better educational opportunities or quality of life, but importantly are also related to people who remain in place (Carling & Collins, 2018). Images and imaginings of 'elsewheres' can expand the imagination and possibilities of the future in the everyday here and now (Bunnell et al., 2018). In Hong Kong, competing and entangled aspirations shape outcomes of URA-led urban renewal, the focus of Chapter 6 of this thesis.

Unlike aspirations scholarship of economic behaviour and educational psychology that emphasise individual aspirations, urban aspiration draws on the recent work of anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who argues that aspirations are 'never simply individual' but form part of cultural systems (Bunnell, 2019). For Appadurai (2004), although the capacity to aspire is both universal and culturally defined, privileged groups in society are better able to connect their individual desires and wants to wider cultural contexts. The battle against poverty and inequality necessitates increasing the 'capacity to aspire' of the poor which entails access and exposure to various networks, opportunities and possibilities (Ruszczyk & Price, 2020) and replacing an 'ethics of probability' with an 'ethics of possibility' (Appadurai, 2013).

AbdouMaliq Simone also emphasises possibilities and potentialities in his work on urban aspirations (Simone, 2008, 2015, 2016). Rather than focus on cultural capacity however, Simone draws attention to the way the urban majority construct the city in a way that makes the city itself a flexible resource for organising everyday life (Simone, 2008). Here, urban aspirations are represented in the everyday practices of individuals outside formal channels where on the one hand, they aspire for a more equal starting point but on the other, they maintain their capacity to navigate the ever-changing city (Simone, 2015). Chapter 8 highlights how in the context of URA-led urban renewal this tension makes visible acts of everyday politics.

A focus on urban aspirations makes visible a variety of alternative visions (and practices) to the efforts of urban policy and planning elites to (re)make cities in the image of a 'world class' elsewhere (Bunnell, 2019). Bunnell (2019) identifies four general areas that studies of urban aspiration examine. Keeping in mind that often more than one of these areas of interest is

visible within a study. These areas include: human imagination (Chu, 2018; Prabaharyaka, 2018); wider systems of evaluation as to what constitutes better urban futures (Collins et al., 2014; Ho, 2017; Zaman, 2018); individual and collective efforts to realise those futures (Ruszczyk & Price, 2020); and socio-spatial environments of opportunity and constraint (Elinoff, 2012; Padawangi, 2019; Prabaharyaka, 2018; Tan & Bunnell, 2020).

Although there are some examples of urban studies scholarship that draw on aspirations in relation to inequality in the global North (for example, see Raco's (2009) work on welfare reform and subsequent creation of 'aspirational citizens' in the UK), most of the urban aspiration scholarship is emerging from the context of the global South and in particular, within and from Asia³. For Bunnell and Goh (2012) there are three observable dynamics of aspirations at play within Asian cities. These include, first, the dominant role the developmental state has played in cultivating and managing aspirations for the remaking of cities including the memorialisation and monumentalisation of heritage. Second, the state incorporating and accommodating free market forces for urban renewal, where middle class aspirations and commercial value of heritage are emphasised. Third, the emergence of new civic networks and alliances between middle class residents and marginalised residents. These dynamics are visible in the urban renewal context in Hong Kong, although the memorialisation and monumentalisation of heritage is arguably driven as much (if not more) by heritage preservationists and activists' groups rather than the aspirations of the state as will be highlighted in chapters 6, 7 and 8 of this thesis.

Urban aspirations are highly relational, situated and visible in the everyday lives of people attempting to secure the urban present and claim a space in the urban future. Ruszczyk and Price (2020) demonstrate this in a study that explores the collective aspirations of two urban communities, one in Bharatpur, Nepal and the other in Zarqa, Jordan. Their study demonstrates how even modest imaginings and aspirations for the future acted out in everyday practices, are entangled with broader urban dynamics and the evolving relationship between urban residents, authorities and other third parties. Prabaharyaka (2018) also draws attention to how everyday practices act out aspirations for the future that are entangled with wider urban dynamics. By examining the modern imaginary of planning, design and maintenance of Jakarta's future sanitation infrastructures, Prabaharyaka (2018) demonstrates how paying attention to 'the art of caring' by informal maintainers makes visible, diverse, and entangled practices that reflect new imaginings of aspiring futures, one in which informal maintainers assume a vital role in the city. Although not emphasised by Prabaharyaka (2018),

³ This is partly because nations across Asia have gone through and continue to go through significant social, economic and political transitions (Lim & Apple, 2018) including initiating multiple and diverse 'modernisation' projects (Ong, 2006).

the practices of informal maintainers are also everyday acts of politics. The everyday politics of informal maintenance practices of URA-affected people is discussed in chapter 8.

More than just realising a prior aspiration, 'acting out' the future in the present continually gives rise to new imaginings and revised calculations of aspiring futures (Bunnell et al., 2018). Ho (2017) demonstrates the emerging and relational nature of urban aspiration through her study on the aspirations of African students studying at universities in Chinese cities. Here, aspirations for the future are entangled with globalisation of trade between China and Africa and the motivations of African households to send young adults to be educated in universities in China. Focusing on the everyday experiences of African students in China, Ho (2017) highlights that although experiences in Chinese cities translate into urban aspirations for how they would like African cities to develop, their material experience of racialisation in Chinese cities, such as through employment barriers, often gives rise to follow-on aspirations such as onward migration to another city 'elsewhere'. Chapter 6 and 8 draw attention to how the experience of the URA's interventions can give rise to new aspirations for migrant groups such as asylum seekers in Hong Kong.

The logic of development and progression has ordinarily been understood as movement from past to future (Zaman, 2018), however aspirations for the future are not only based on real or imagined elsewhere of the future and the present but also 'elsewheres' of the past. For example, over the past decade the protection of historic buildings and landscapes has been a major preoccupation of states and civil society groups in Asia. The conservation of heritage is a future-orientated intervention (Chu, 2018). There are multiple motivations and rationalities at work in conservation of heritage including: sustaining a particular image of history and heritage to attract tourists and 'brand' the city (a form of commodification of the environment) (Chu, 2018) and in some instances as a way to negate/distance the present (Zaman, 2018), and/or justification for redevelopment projects (Glass, 2018) and to imagine alternative urban development trajectories (Chu, 2018; Liew & Pang, 2015; Zaman, 2018). Aspirations that draw on the past of 'elsewhere' importantly challenge the unidirectional logic (Zaman, 2018) of progress and open possibilities for alternative, more equal futures as highlighted in chapter 8.

An emergent heritage paradigm in Asia has created space for multiple stakeholders, including an assemblage of international NGOs, private enterprises, and community groups to challenge the state (Barber, 2014; Chu, 2018). Comparing the dynamics of Hong Kong and Macau, Chu (2018) demonstrates the diversity in motivations for heritage conservation activists. Furthermore, she explains how the diverse narratives utilised in conservation campaigns are reworking existing discourses about the city. She makes three key arguments. Firstly, that people do not support heritage campaigns for the same reason. Secondly, that the presumed divide between official and unofficial heritage is far from clear, as government

officials and heritage activists often deploy similar rationalities in their causes, with some also maintaining close relationships with each other. Thirdly, that different forms of colonial heritage have continued to be a key reference for constructions of cultural imaginaries of the past. Relatedly, a growing desire to build a more democratic postcolonial society amongst increasing economic and political integration (and tension) with China has helped invigorate alternative visions of urban futures in Macau and Hong Kong. Chu's (2018) arguments resonate with the emergence and motivations of new alliances related to heritage preservation within the urban renewal context of Hong Kong and the appropriation of heritage preservation by the state to maintain the dominance and legitimacy of its urban world city aspirations (discussed in chapter 7).

Urban redevelopment is a prevalent and contested aspirational strategy and is practiced globally and in context-specific ways in cities of Asia. Individual and collective aspirations within urban development initiatives inform/shape each other in complex ways in Asia. Padawangi (2019) utilises the notion of 'exemplary centre' to explore the forced evictions and aspirations of marginalised populations living in three river settlements in Jakarta. Padawangi (2019) draws attention to the relational nature of aspirational future-making practices when she explains how the spatial uncertainties of the urban poor are both a product of the dominant 'exemplary centre' and the resource with which to challenge it. Here, alternative 'exemplary centre' narratives from the urban poor are partly aligned with the existing narratives of city officials. Padawangi (2019) makes a similar point to Ruszczyk and Price (2020) when she highlights how the urban poor keep aspirations modest as a strategy to resist and challenge dominant narratives of the 'exemplary centre'. As stressed in chapter 6, the aspirational future-making practices of low-income groups in the Hong Kong urban renewal context are both relational and strategic; however, attention to ongoing everyday politics (discussed in chapter 8) suggest that aspirations of the urban poor in Hong Kong are perhaps not as modest as they might first seem.

The optic of urban aspirations draws attention to multiple and everyday ways in which urban development trajectories are shaped (Goh et al., 2015). Competing images, visions, and mental pictures of 'elsewheres' of the present (Prabaharyaka, 2018), the past (Zaman, 2018), or future (Padawangi, 2019) are part of the politics and power dynamics of a city. The city is where the 'world class' aspirations of urban policy and planning elites are both entangled with and challenged by the aspirations and everyday practices of NGOs and grassroots groups (Elinoff, 2012; Padawangi, 2019), heritage activist groups (Chu, 2018), middle class supporters (Liew & Pang, 2015) or individual urban dwellers (Ho, 2017; Prabaharyaka, 2018). These competing and entangled urban aspirations are relational (Tan & Bunnell, 2020), informing and shaping each other in complex ways, inspiring and determining possibilities for

alternative urban development trajectories. As will be identified and discussed in Chapter 6, there are multiple, competing, and entangled aspirations shaping and shaped by outcomes of Hong Kong's state-led urban renewal processes and practices.

2.5.3 Urban Inter - referencing

Related to urban aspirations, inter-referencing is the third Southern optic utilised in the study. Inter-referencing implies "...an assemblage produced from networks of relations onto which governments and their territories are woven" (Phelps et al., 2014, p. 38) and draws attention to how space is produced in reference to models and ideas of urbanism (Roy, 2011b). Inter-referencing is utilised as a conceptual tool across diverse disciplines including media studies (Chua, 2015; Iwabuchi, 2014), education (Lim & Apple, 2018), cultural studies (Chua, 2017; Haines, 2011) anthropology (Siu, 2011) and perhaps most frequently within urban policy mobilities (Lowry & McCann, 2011; Phelps et al., 2014). Much of the scholarship on inter-referencing is produced from, and for, the context of the global South and in particular Asia (Chua, 2015; Ong, 2011). This is both the result of postcolonial urban scholars' attempts to deconstruct and provincialize western scholarship but also because there is increasing inter-referencing urbanisms among cities of Asia (Chua, 2015; Ong, 2011). For Chua (2015, p. 71), instances of inter-Asian referencing, in particular, demonstrate an epistemological shift in the generation of knowledge in Asia.

It is important to note that inter-referenced urbanisms can be unusual, contradictory, brutal, and even violent. For example, the 'Shanghaisation of Mumbai', which has displaced many informal settlement dwellers (Roy, 2011b) or racism and classism experienced by non-western migrant workers in inter-referenced 'brand Dubai' (Haines, 2011). However, Roy (2011b) points out, that contradictions and disjuncture are also political openings, creating a space for contestation. Inter-referencing is political. It involves multiple and conflicting power relations. Diverse urban actors utilise inter-referencing to promote, legitimise their urban development aspirations and decision-making practices but also, contest those of others.

There are numerous ways in which diverse urban actors, including those from the public and private sector, engage in processes of inter - referencing. Inter - referencing includes extant citations, allusions, aspirations and comparison practices such as 'best practice' models (Montero, 2017), commercial urban megaprojects (Reboredo & Brill, 2019) grass roots development plans (Connolly, 2019) and social movements (Chua, 2017). Often based on imaginings of antecedent urban experiences, these inter-referencing practices relationally (re)constitute cities (Bunnell, 2015) and highlight the symbolic contents of the urban that are mobile (Phelps et al., 2014). Exceeding forms of practices that assume the west imposes

globalisation on the rest, inter-referencing draws attention to both examples of homegrown neoliberalism and new practices of inter-referencing that show South - South emergent global referents (Roy, 2011b).

Policy mobilities scholarship that traces extant intercity references has occupied a significant part of contemporary urban inter-referencing scholarship (Phelps et al., 2014) and has been instrumental in identifying homegrown neoliberalism and more recently, South-South inter-referencing. For example, Lowry and McCann (2011) detail and interpret the mobilities, practices, and identities that tie the reproduction of False Creek in Vancouver to Hong Kong and Dubai through networks of inter-Asian connection and referencing. They suggest that global urban development and neoliberal statecraft can be analysed in useful ways through critical cultural productions. However, despite its potential, policy mobilities scholarship often reduces inter-referencing effects to neoliberalism from above with reference to American or Western European antecedents (Phelps et al., 2014).

Emphasis on neoliberalism from above is partly due to methodological preferences of policy mobilities scholars who ordinarily start from the presence of a particular policy and then trace back pathways across time and space (Bunnell, 2015; Phelps et al., 2014). Bunnell (2015) argues that urban scholars need to question assumptions of policy and model transfer from above and diversify their methods for exploring inter-referencing effects. As will be highlighted and discussed in chapter 6, paying attention to everyday inter-referencing practices of heritage preservationist, grassroots groups, highlights how Asian urbanisms are inter-referenced to articulate and legitimise alternative urban aspirations to those of the dominant URA in Hong Kong.

As more examples of South-South (Reboredo & Brill, 2019) and South-North (Montero, 2017) inter-referencing become visible, analytical emphasis on the mobility of trans-Atlantic neoliberal urban policy is gradually shifting. Importantly, this has opened opportunities for imagining alternative urban trajectories. Phelps et al. (2014) explore the mobility of ostensibly progressive urban policies within the global South, specifically Indonesia. Focusing on Solo, a city in Indonesia, as a case study, they investigate how policy development and exchange has played a role in its emergence as a model progressive city. Their key point is that urban inter-referencing and policy mobility in Indonesia are ambiguous, cumulative, and self-reinforcing. Here, policy reform is intertwined with, and exceeds, neoliberalism, making it hard to pin down where the original aspiration came from.

The influence of policy mutation at the 'original' site of an inter-referenced practice and its entanglement with the wider urban processes as legitimising and enabling the mobility of urban policy/planning best practice is emphasised by other scholars. Montero (2017) explains

that it was changes to rationalities behind Ciclovía Bogotá, Columbia's weekly street closure program initiated in the 1970's to promote biking and physical activity, which allowed Ciclovía to survive and eventually emerge as international 'best practice'. In particular, he highlights how the alignment of Ciclovía in the mid-2000s with a transnational network of sustainable transportation and public health advocates were core to its recognition (and mobility) as a 'best practice' model. This rationality is different from mobilities approaches, which emphasise policy mutation and transformation at the site in which a policy or programme is adopted as key for mobility. Through elevation to 'best practice' Ciclovía is inter - referenced. Importantly, Montero points out that despite often being celebrated as South-South policy exchange, it is in fact mediated by global North-based organisations showing the entanglement of cities and urban policies and practices of the global South and North.

Intertwining between global and local is similarly emphasised by Reboredo and Brill (2019) in their study on urban inter-referencing practices of a Chinese megaproject in Johannesburg, South Africa. They explain how the aspirations to create a futuristic commercial activity site in Johannesburg for Chinese businesses was still mediated by non-Chinese consultants, the city government, and local politics. The megaproject represents a manifestation of both global trends and a reflection of place and context-specific factors. In response to calls for more analysis of the trend of Chinese inspired urban spaces in Africa, they argue that urban mega-projects need to be recontextualised to focus on local features and factors. Indeed, these local features and factors ultimately decide the direction a project takes and whether it is considered a success or failure (and by whom).

One-way urban policy and ideas travel and are inter - referenced is through the past and current mobility of people. Siu (2011) demonstrates how inter-referencing across cities in Asia has been shaped through past and present mobile populations through a focus on Hong Kong. By treating Hong Kong as a 'moving analytical target' she demonstrates how the aspirations, entrepreneurial and cultural practices of multi-ethnic groups that settled in Hong Kong in the last century have given Hong Kong its historical global character and a strong place identity for the locally born. Here, amidst an ensuing economic downturn, a shrinking middle class are drawing hard lines against new immigrants from entrenched citizenship positions in Hong Kong. However, she argues that with forging "The New Silk Road" and strategic participation in emerging Chinese markets, some Hong Kong residents have sought global opportunities, overcoming what she calls a "fortress mentality", changing Hong Kong's world structure and cultural styles (Siu, 2011, p. 151)

There is increasing inter-referencing of urbanisms among cities of Asia (Chua, 2015; Ong, 2011). Cities like Hong Kong increasingly draw on and inter - reference urbanisms of other cities in China and Asia (Siu, 2011). These inter - referenced urbanisms include city elites

(Lowry & McCann, 2011; Reboredo & Brill, 2019) and those of activists and subaltern urban dwellers (Connolly, 2019). Inter - referencing practices are utilised to promote and legitimise urban development aspirations and practices. They are shaped by local contexts and are not neutral. As will be highlighted in chapter 6, inter - referencing can deepen socio-spatial inequality and shut down alternative urban aspirations. Paradoxically, everyday inter - referencing practices also create opportunities to imagine and act out alternative urban futures. How the inter - referencing practices of the URA, professionals such as planners and architects, NGOs, heritage preservationist groups, and grassroots groups seek to shape outcomes of urban renewal in Hong Kong is outlined in chapter 6.

2.6 Critiques and limitations

As postcolonial urban scholarship has grown within urban studies in recent years, so have critiques of it. These critiques come from different schools of thought within urban studies and share similarities and differences in their intention and motivation to study urban form and related processes. The most notable critiques of postcolonial urbanisms have come from scholars that conceptualise the urban through the lenses of urban agglomeration and the urban land nexus (Storper & Scott, 2016), GCR (Van Meeteren et al., 2016) and planetary urbanisation (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). These critiques raise important questions about the relevance and transferability of universal theory and which processes count as constitutive rather than just the outcome of urbanisation (O'Callaghan, 2017). As this thesis draws on postcolonial optics, it is essential to explore these critiques and examine what they draw attention to/obscure concerning urban renewal processes and practices.

2.6.1 Key critiques

Agglomeration and the urban land nexus

The urban agglomeration and urban land nexus approach to conceptualising the urban reflects prevailing developmentalist approaches that emphasise the economic geographical dimensions of urban development (Mould, 2016). The basic premise of this scholarship is that the reason for the existence of cities everywhere is their role as centres of economic production and exchange (John et al., 2020; Mould, 2016; Scott, 2017; Scott & Storper, 2015; Wu, 2020). Urban scholars that draw on the agglomeration and urban land nexus framework utilise it to identify, explore, and contrast contemporary urbanization processes (and challenges) within and across diverse cities and regions (Scott, 2017). This framework is increasingly applied to explore and compare urbanisation processes in cities and regions of the global South.⁴

In contrast to postcolonial approaches, key proponents of agglomeration and urban land nexus approaches such as (Scott & Storper, 2015), stress that meaningful comparative work requires a clear universal urban theory and common language for urban research before a comparison is made. They propose that all cities be understood through a theoretical framework that incorporates the (related) two processes of urban agglomerations (clusters of productive activity) and land use and human interactions. They call this the urban-land-nexus (Storper & Scott, 2016). Furthermore, they contend that it is both possible (and desirable) to distinguish what is fundamentally an urban phenomenon from the rest of social reality with this framework. Here, the city is understood to be ontologically distinct from the social and political relationships in which it is embedded (Mould, 2016). This claim does not suggest that the variety of cities is unimportant but instead that variety is secondary to identifying all cities' common dimensions.⁵

Storper and Scott (2016) argue that postcolonial urban scholarship is committed to a 'new particularism' and does not offer any 'coherent' concept of the urban. They assert that rejection of analytical findings or theoretical concepts developed from cities of the global North by postcolonial urban scholars limits urban studies' vibrancy and its ability to understand and address the challenges of an 'urban era' of humanity. They specifically identify what they see as three significant failures of postcolonial urban theory. Firstly, its exaggerated complaints regarding Euro-American epistemological bias in contemporary urban analysis. Secondly, its

⁴ For example, spatial structuring of metropolitan Manila (Serote, 1992), comparing gentrification processes in Dar es Salaam and Mwanza in Tanzania (John et al., 2020), and inequality and collaboration through interregional trade in Jing-Jin-Ji region, China (Guo et al., 2020).

⁵ Scott and Storper (2015) identify five key variables that mould the individuality of cities 1. overall levels of economic development 2. The rules that govern resource allocation 3. Prevailing structures of social stratification 4. difference in cultural norms and tradition 5. the overarching conditions of political authority and power.

highly selective critique of modernism-developmentalism. Thirdly, its strong methodological commitment to theoretically unstructured comparativism (p. 1121).

Furthermore, Scott and Storper (2015) argue that any new and/or unsuspected insights that come from identifying differences in cities of the global South will contribute to radically reconceptualising current understandings of urban agglomeration processes and associated dynamics of the urban land nexus. To be sure, utilising this framework in the global South may draw attention to differences (John et al., 2020; Wu, 2016, 2020)⁶; but whether such difference can reconceptualise understandings of urban agglomeration in a way that can be considered 'radical' is debatable. If anything, it seems Scott and Storper's (2015) argument that frames differences in urban dynamics in the global South as potential sites to radically reconceptualise an established theory, highlights an epistemological bias in its approach.

Global cities research

In contrast to the agglomeration and land nexus approach, the GCR approach to the urban contends that urban service function has 'gone global' (Taylor, 2016). GCR scholarship focuses on bringing cities together through their interconnectedness with the world economy (Friedmann & Wolff, 2017; Hall, 1998; Sassen, 2001; Taylor, 2016), the flows of which impact the future of social change (Taylor, 2016). Hoyler and Harrison (2017) identify four central elements underpinning global city theory: connectivity, highly skilled labour, command and control, and advanced producer services. It has evolved to engage with different disciplines, theoretical frameworks, geographical contexts, and methodological approaches (Hoyler & Harrison, 2017).⁷

In response to postcolonial critiques of GCR, Van Meeteren et al. (2016) identify and address what they see as problems related to how postcolonial urban critique has evolved genealogically. Specifically, they argue that postcolonial urban interventions are polemical, partial, oversimplified, and broadly misrepresent the diversity of GCR. They contend that the analyses of GCR by contemporary postcolonial urban scholarship have morphed into what they consider to be a set of 'straw man' truisms'.... aimed at "invisible, yet comprehensive, literature" (p.253). They take issue with how these truisms firstly, portray GCR as holding 'top-down' views, secondly, skim over its ontological, epistemological, and methodological diversity, and relatedly, thirdly, accentuate a polemical divide between global cities/ordinary city research hindering the development of broader scholarship in globalization urbanisation.

⁶ For example, Wu (2020) explores the effect of agglomeration in emerging cities in China and demonstrates the hybrid nature of urbanisation led by both (and related) market mechanisms and the state. Furthermore, he argues that although agglomeration exists in urbanisation processes in Chinese cities, it is also being created, remade, and shaped by multiple actors whose motivation may not be related to agglomeration.

⁷ From the growth of Beirut's expatriate world-city functions (Krijnen et al., 2017) to the effects of Metro Manila's changing intra-firm divisions of labour in advanced producer service firms on its position 'on the map' of dominant economic flows (Kleibert, 2017) GCR research is diverse.

For example, they highlight how Roy's (2009), area-based strategic essentialisms risk becoming a more general regional heuristic.

To bridge what they see as a communication problem between the two approaches (postcolonial urban scholarship and GCR), they advocate for 'engaged pluralism' (Barnes & Sheppard, 2009) and critical realism as an epistemological bridge (Van Meeteren et al., 2016). They suggest that such an approach can help GCR and postcolonial urban scholars draw on each other's insights to understand the relentless expansion and effects of global capitalism and related intensification of urbanisation and change them for the better more fully. Hoyler and Harrison (2017) concur with Van Meeteren et al. (2016) that postcolonial critique has mischaracterised GCR. They interpret the postcolonial critique of GCR as an 'intellectual call to arms' to internationalise urban theory through more comparative modes of urban theory. They take issue with the perception that this necessitates a rejection of theories derived through GCR and the development of new alternative forms of theorisation. They note that there seems to be limited space to refine, extend, and advance existing theory. To some extent, they see this as an attempt by postcolonial scholars to replace the global/world cities narrative with a counter narrative of 'ordinary cities'. In response, Hoyler and Harrison (2017) argue that there is an urgent need to move beyond calls for 'new theory' to revise and 'stress test' existing concepts, go back to the original focus of GCR and associated intellectual claims before it was captured and reappropriated by 'corporate social science' and urban policy gurus and, lastly, similar to Van Meeteren et al. (2016), that GCR should re-engage with 'actual' global cities research and put engaged pluralism into practice.

Planetary urbanisation

Different again, planetary urbanisation is an epistemological orientation that contends that the urban cannot be treated as a bounded territory and that urban processes are being reproduced and remade within the context of contemporary capitalist modes of production (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). Brenner and Schmid outline seven theses as part of this new epistemological orientation: 1. the urban and urbanisation are theoretical categories, not empirical objects, 2. the urban is a process, not a universal form, settlement type or bounded unit, 3. urbanization involves three mutually constitutive moments—concentrated urbanisation, extended urbanisation, and differential urbanisation, 4. the fabric of urbanisation is multidimensional, 5. urbanisation has become planetary, 6. urbanisation unfolds through variegated patterns and pathways of uneven spatial development, and 7. the urban is a collective project in which the potentials generated through urbanisation are appropriated and contested (Brenner and Schmid, 2015 p. 163-177).

Scholars that subscribe to the planetary urbanisation thesis contend that urbanisation is proliferating everywhere and that the planet has become subsumed into a single, urban-dominated system (Kumar & Shaw, 2020) in which the urban is amorphous and boundless (Merrifield, 2013). Here, old conceptual categories such as urban/rural, city/countryside, society/nature, North/South dichotomies are inadequate to make sense of rapid and extending rates of urbanisation, and associated social and spatial economic dislocations (Brenner, 2019; Brenner & Schmid, 2015; Khan & Karak, 2018; O'Callaghan, 2017; Reddy, 2018). The planetary urbanisation framework views urban space as, first and foremost, the product of capitalist processes that are inherently contentious (Brenner, 2019; Merrifield, 2013). Planetary urbanisation tends towards generalisations and abstraction (O'Callaghan, 2017). In contrast to postcolonial urban theory, which contends that all comparison starts from 'somewhere' to look at 'elsewhere', planetary urbanisation is seeing 'everywhere' from 'nowhere' (Peake, 2016).

Planetary urbanisation scholars share with postcolonial scholars a commitment to epistemological reflexivity and conceptual reinvention (Brenner & Schmid, 2015). However, they critique postcolonial scholarship for failing to account for wider global capitalist processes, uneven spatial development, and geopolitical power in which urban processes unfold. In short, 'the context of the context'. They also critique its city-centricness and focus on particularities. Importantly, Merrifield highlights, that although "planetary urbanisation may be a theory trying to figure out totalisation under contemporary capitalism, it shouldn't itself be a totalling theory" (Merrifield, 2018, p. 1606)

Planetary urbanisation is a useful way to think about the integrated nature and the extensive reach and shared effects of contemporary global capitalism. Merrifield (2018), for example, argues that planetary urbanisation can help identify how the affinity of mutual disadvantage, despair, suffering, and hope are recognised. There is a question, however, that remains: how does this epistemology reflect the everyday lived experiences of urban dwellers, which are shaped by and shaping global economic systems? Recognising the limitations of high-level abstractions in which planetary urbanisation is currently posited, some scholars are experimenting with utilising/comparing planetary urbanisation in conjunction with other theoretical frameworks not limited to, but including postcolonial urban theory (Khan & Karak, 2018; Kumar & Shaw, 2020; O'Callaghan, 2017; Peake et al., 2018; Schmid et al., 2018)⁸.

⁸ For example, Schmid et al.'s (2018) study draws on postcolonial critiques and the epistemology of planetary urbanisation to compare urbanisation processes in eight large metropolitan territories and generate new comparative concepts.

2.6.2 Postcolonial responses to its critics

Postcolonial scholars assert that its critics have misread historical differences such as empirical variation and question what its critics count as theory and who gets to claim it as such (Jazeel, 2018; Robinson & Roy, 2016; Roy, 2016b). Indeed, Collins (2016) highlights how Van Meeteren et al. (2016) 's criticism of postcolonial critiques insinuates that particular styles of critique and debates are considered 'acceptable' within urban studies but others not so much. Furthermore, rather than a commitment to particularism or a particular/universal binary, as often implied by its critiques, postcolonial scholars are committed to paying attention to and acknowledging situated knowledge. A distinction here is made between what is 'universal' and what is 'global'. 'Global' urban processes do not necessarily (here, usually do not) take on a 'universal' form or are universally experienced (Robinson & Roy, 2016).

Postcolonial urban scholars emphasise the ethico-political implications of reducing the diversity of contemporary urban form and experience to an all-encompassing meta-narrative. For these scholars it is a deeper nuanced understanding of the urban's many constitutive outsides (including the rural) that allows for alternative development trajectories and radical undecidability (Peake, 2016; Reddy, 2018; Roy, 2016a). They reiterate that universalist frameworks based on what they see as a small number of iconic Euro-American cities cannot account for everyday Southern urban realities (Parnell & Pieterse, 2016; Schindler, 2017). Collins (2016) illuminates how ingrained Eurocentrism is in urban studies. In response to Van Meeteren et al.'s (2016) critique and invitation for postcolonial to join GCR and participate in 'engaged pluralism', he inverts their question, that asks 'whether the alleged 'straw man' of GCR can speak in response to its postcolonial critiques?' with 'what if the global city was postcolonial'?

By inverting the question, Collins (2016) highlights the fundamental argument that gets missed in critiques of postcolonial urban scholarship. In particular, the value of a heuristic perspective in exploring what it means to be 'global' both as a symbolic expression and as a material transformation of experiences, and the significance of new relational comparative urbanisms that start from unlikely cities, and unlikely places, generate unexpected, alternative conceptualisations of cities and links between them. These alternative conceptualisations are potentially transformative in how scholars understand cities' form and experiences and how uneven development and inequality in cities might be addressed.

2.6.3 Limitations of postcolonial urbanisms and its critiques

Critiques of postcolonial urban theory by scholars of agglomeration and the urban land nexus, GCR, and planetary urbanisation importantly draw attention to the uneven geographies and

urban inequalities related to capitalist modes of production. They prompt urban scholars to look more closely at wider, globally interconnected, constantly shifting patterns of urban power dynamics. Influenced by contemporary capitalist modes of production, these urban power dynamics shape the form and experience of diverse urban environments. Importantly, these critiques also reveal misunderstandings and missed opportunities to generate fresh perspectives and a more inclusive urban studies through more situated accounts of global urbanisms (Collins, 2016; Robinson & Roy, 2016; Roy, 2016b). Moreover, neither postcolonial urban theory nor its critics pay enough attention to spatial contradictions and conflicts surrounding urban development. Specifically, for this thesis, they fail to account for the stealthy ways the URA displaces politics to maintain its privileged position (the focus of chapter 7) and, relatedly, the effect this has on the form and function of everyday politics and the possibilities this presents for alternative, more equitable urban futures (chapter 8).

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced postcolonial urban theory scholarship and, more specifically, identified key analytical frames used in this thesis, including the ordinary cities framework, urban informality, urban aspirations and inter-referencing. Following this, key critiques of postcolonial urban scholarship and responses to these critiques from postcolonial scholars were discussed. Finally, the limitations of postcolonial urbanism and its critics in examining spatial politics related to urban redevelopment were identified. The following chapter will review the literature on postpolitics with a specific focus on Jacques Rancière's relational approach to understanding spatial contradictions and politics within the context of urban development, which is suggested here to help address the limitations of postcolonial analytics.

CHAPTER 3: POSTPOLITICS: A COMPLEMENTARY LENS

3.1 Introduction

Postpolitics is an analytical lens that foregrounds the causes and effects of depoliticisation that have emerged in contemporary urban governance. In this thesis I introduce the postpolitical lens to extend insights into postcolonial urban perspectives and their value for examining urban renewal in Hong Kong. In the context of the global South, some scholars have found postcolonial approaches to politics and postpolitical thought as useful and complementary in exploring depoliticisation at the level of urban governance and to a lesser degree politicisation on the level of the everyday (Choplin, 2016; Temenos, 2017). As such, this approach provides a useful probe to address the limitations of postcolonial urban theory and its critics, uncovering the contradictions and conflicts within spatial politics surrounding the Urban Renewal Authority (URA)'s intervention and what this means for everyday politics and possibilities for alternative, more equitably urban futures.

This chapter will review the literature on postpolitics and, more specifically, Jacques Rancière's relational approach to understanding spatial contradictions and politics within the context of urban development. It first introduces postpolitics scholarship, including its application to non-western contexts. Secondly, Jacques Rancière's relational approach to 'politics' is reviewed in detail. This review is followed by a discussion of scholarship that utilises a Rancièrian approach to explore and analyse the politics of state and grassroots initiated urban development projects. Key critiques of postpolitics scholarship are then discussed. Finally, the chapter concludes by summarising the critical points of the review and making a case for utilising Rancière's relational approach to politics as a complementary lens to postcolonial urbanisms in exploring how power, politics, and participation affect outcomes of urban renewal.

3.2 The foundations of postpolitics

Initially developed to diagnose the nature of urban governance and politics in post-Cold War Europe, postpolitics has been spread from its geographical origins to diagnose the nature of urban governance and politics in other western liberal democracies and, more recently, to non-western contexts (Lam-Knott et al., 2020b). Postpolitics is varyingly conceptualised as a condition (Imrie, 2013; McClymont, 2018; Neo, 2010; Temenos, 2017; Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014), an era (Wells, 2020; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014), an imaginary (Raco, 2014; Raco & Lin, 2012), a critique (Diken, 2014), an arrangement (Swyngedouw, 2009), a moment (McAuliffe & Rogers, 2018), an approach (Etherington & Jones, 2018), a narrative

(Ormerod & MacLeod, 2019), a regime (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2015b), a logic (Kaethler et al., 2017) a formation (Kamat, 2014), and a process (Ruming, 2018; Yee, 2020).

While there are differences, the postpolitics thesis highlights the disappearance of the traditional left and right political divides (Mouffe, 2005; Raco & Lin, 2012), the emergence of consensus and pragmatic forms of governance (Davidson & Iveson, 2015; Legacy et al., 2018; Rancière, 1999; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014; Žižek, 1999), and consequently, the effect this phenomenon has on radical democratisation and egalitarian emancipation (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Haughton et al., 2016; Legacy et al., 2018). The tone and focus of the scholarship on postpolitics has been set by its three key thinkers Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière and Slavoj Žižek (Legacy et al., 2018). Postpolitical scholarship within urban studies takes the position that contemporary democracies have become depoliticised and that formal state-centred processes and spaces for participation do not offer grounds for public debate or contestation (Beveridge & Koch, 2017; Haughton et al., 2013; McClymont, 2018; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). As Lam-Knott et al. (2020a) explain, “whilst the term ‘post’ in ‘postpolitics’ infers that societies now exist under conditions that transcend ‘the political’, postpolitical governance is in itself a political act, involving the management of different opinions to establish consensus and minimise contestation”(p.2).

In ideological terms, the postpolitical era is often associated with Francis Fukuyama’s proclamation of the ‘end of history,’ symbolised by the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the seeming final victory of the capitalist free market over communism, which was purported to mark the end of 20th Century historical struggles between competing ideologies (Reynolds & Sezerszynski, 2014; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). In other words, class infused categories such as those entrenched in communism came to be considered no longer applicable. Instead, a ‘second modernity’ characterised by a new sub-politics of self-identity, cosmopolitanism, and consensus-building is now embraced. (Raco & Lin, 2012). This rise of ‘big tent’ consensual politics is seen to be quintessentially embodied in the so-called ‘Third Way’ market-orientated social democracy (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2015b; Metzger, 2017; Raco, 2014).

This vision of a world without enemies or conflicts is postpolitical (Mouffe, 2005). It is a view that advocates for and legitimises depoliticised consensual forms of participatory processes prevalent within urban renewal processes and practices. Within urban contexts, at the core of this postpolitical vision is that instead of playing mediator between clashing interest groups with different ideological perspectives, urban institutions (like Hong Kong’s URA) have become managers of technical processes and policies focused on economic growth and displacing political antagonisms (Haughton et al., 2013; Temenos, 2017). For Mouffe (2005), blindness to the political in its antagonist dimension is not a mere empirical omission but a

constitutive one. Herein lies the paradox; the displacement of antagonism ultimately increases its instances (Hui & Au, 2016; Swyngedouw, 2011). This paradox is perhaps most acutely brought to the fore in scholarship exploring the emergence of new social movements (Swyngedouw, 2014b).

Wilson and Swyngedouw (2014) explain that scholars utilising postpolitics as a framework currently deploy it in two ways. Firstly, to describe and explain instances of urban spatial politics suffering from the 'postpolitical condition' (the focus of chapter 7), such as through the technocratic management of 'ordinary' urban protest (Haughton et al., 2016), urban sustainability programmes (Mössner, 2016; Raco, 2014; Raco & Lin, 2012), urban regeneration projects (Ruming, 2018; Vento, 2017), spatial planning practices (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2012; Gabauer, 2018; Haughton et al., 2013; Hui & Au, 2016; Imrie, 2013; Legacy et al., 2018; Monno & Khakee, 2012; Neo, 2010), the development architecture of the global South (Choplin, 2016; Kamat, 2014; Wells, 2020), or global climate change programmes and agendas (Blühdorn, 2014; Kenis, 2019; Swyngedouw, 2010).

Secondly, scholars deploy the framework to identify examples of 'politics proper' or the 'truly political' (the focus of chapter 8). The search for the 'truly political' is typically associated with sporadic outbursts of urban violence and insurgencies such as the urban protest movement occupying Syntagma Square in Athens, Greece 2011 (Kaika & Karaliotas, 2014; Karaliotas, 2017) or 'ordinary' urban protest in Manchester, UK (Haughton et al., 2016). There are, however, scholars who have deployed 'politics proper' in other contexts. These contexts include contested urban development projects (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018) participatory practices of slum upgrading (Boano & Kelling, 2013), urban harm drug policy reform and, as illustrated by Jaeger (2014), within global governance.

For some postpolitical scholars, identifying 'politics proper' or the 'truly political' is part of a wider project to revitalise possibilities of a spatialised emancipatory project (Swyngedouw, 2011, 2014a, 2014b; Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). For Swyngedouw (2011), revitalising possibilities of a spatialised emancipatory project rests in the tension between politics, which is always specific, local, and particular and the universalising process of the democratic political that functions under the universal signifiers of equality and freedom. There is no consensus around the nature of postpolitics itself or a vision of 'what politics should be' nor should there be if we are to take seriously the depoliticising effects of consensus politics (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). Instead, Swyngedouw and Wilson (2014) emphasise that the focus is to challenge the post political by exposing its operations, vulnerabilities, and points of rupture.

3.3 Postpolitics in non-western contexts

Although much of the postpolitics scholarship is still based on the experiences of the global North, studies exploring its applicability to non-western contexts are growing (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Choplin, 2016; Hou, 2018; Hui & Au, 2016; Lam-Knott et al., 2020b; Neo, 2010; Raco & Lin, 2012; Seo, 2020). Neoliberal forms of spatial governance identified in postpolitics scholarship can be associated with changing norms around political structures and participation within the urban development context in diverse non-western contexts. In an early example, Neo (2010) explores how 'consensus politics' was a deliberate tactic used by planners and golf proponents to skirt around and manage dissent towards constructing new golf courses in Singapore. In this context, golf course politics became framed as a struggle between opposing but still 'legitimate', land-use demands rather than a meaningful debate about land use with compromise (consensus politics) as the only rational solution. For Neo (2010), this represents state agencies' retreat to an assumed position of objectivity and neutrality and the emergence of a postpolitical condition.

As shown in the example above, urban development processes can work to displace politics in non-western contexts. Similar to western contexts, participatory processes are also utilised by managerial city elites to legitimise their urban development aspirations. Focusing on four cases, the development of landfills, URA-led renewal, the development of a high-speed rail project, and the development of a new town, Hui and Au (2016) argue that the dynamics of postpolitics are also taking root in Hong Kong. Examining consultation processes in all four cases demonstrates how divergence in opinions in consultation processes is disciplined to provide consensus. Combined with a managerial approach to conflict resolution, this reduced political contentions to policy barriers. Furthermore, they explain how the idea of 'stakeholders' within urban development rhetoric conceals an inclusion-exclusion logic where those in power mediate who are included and excluded. The displacement of politics through URA-led participatory processes, which similarly explores this theme, is a focus of chapter 7.

Partnerships between the public, private and not-for-profit sectors are common in neoliberal urban governance arrangements and observable in non-western contexts. Investigating aspects of participation and partnership of CSA-URP, a project to create a 'sewing village' close to Dongdaemun Fashion Market and the K-fashion hub, in Seoul, South Korea, Kim and Cho (2019) demonstrate how attempts by the government to offer an alternative to developer-led, profit-seeking, focused urban redevelopment are postpolitical in character. Kim and Cho (2019) argue that the new organisation serves consensual policy processes that hide top-down pre-arranged decision making. Furthermore, a new focus draws on a creative underclass' cultural capital to induce an influx of people and investment, consequently

displacing the more political and contentious issues of precarious living and working conditions.

Although Neo (2010), Hui and Au (2016), and Kim and Cho (2019) make good cases that the dynamics of postpolitics have indeed taken root in Asia, their insights can be enhanced through more nuanced understanding of the effects of depoliticisation. In particular, the role that emerging resistances (both formal and informal) play in reshaping the rules of the game and boundaries of what is possible advances how depoliticization is understood. The role of emerging resistances in shaping urban development is recognised by Raco and Lin (2012). Their study on the politics of sustainable development planning in Taipei revealed both its postpolitical agenda and its limitations. They contend that conflict has found its expression in other ways, including protest movements and nonconformist modes of political intervention rather than eradicated through urban planning. For these scholars, research should not just focus on how postpolitical discourses are constructed, but the extent to which they shape day-to-day politics and urban development trajectories, a core focus of chapters 7 and 8 of this thesis.

International development discourse and related best practice models are a way neoliberal forms of urban governance originating in the west have spread across the globe. Wells (2020) demonstrates how consensual, technocratic governance processes were evident in recently democratised Myanmar (as of 1st February 2020 under military rule). Using the case of a complaints management procedure designed for the development of a Special Economic Zone (Thilawa SEZ) on the outskirts of Yangon, Myanmar, Wells (2020) highlights how a new emphasis and integration on 'international standards' and democratic principles of inclusion and participation constrains, dilutes, and diffuses voices of citizens and civil society groups in new ways. For Wells (2020), the postpolitical nature of the complaints mechanism is revealed in four ways. Firstly, the integration of democratic principles into the complaints mechanisms' documents and discourse. Secondly, any grievances were reduced to the level of the particular rather than the universal so that individuals could be negotiated with and brought into a consensus. Thirdly, the reconfiguration of citizen-state relations through new dispersed governance arrangements that serve to reconfigure state-society relations in ways that defuse opposition. Finally, the inevitable incompleteness of postpoliticisation with civil society groups at once opponents and participants in the process of politicisation.

The postpolitical character of international development practices is also emphasised by Choplin (2016). Comparing ideas from postcolonial urban scholarship (quiet encroachment)⁹

⁹ First coined by Asef Bayat to describe survival strategies, resistance and politics of "informal people" in the Middle East, quiet encroachment is "a silent, patient, protracted and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in an effort to survive hardships and better their lives" (Bayat, 1997, p. 57)

with those from postpolitical thought, Choplin (2016) explains how under the guise of promoting ideals of greater social justice, pro-poor urban programmes in Nouakchott, Mauritania function to familiarise what she calls neo-city-dwellers with developmental ideals of ownership, microloans, and a free-market system. Using the example of a slum upgrading programme and subsequent resettlement operation, she shows that politics is sterilising rather than empowering civil society as claimed by international development institutions and donors such as the World Bank and United Nations Development Programme. Importantly, however, she also highlights that incremental everyday resistances and embryonic forms of mobilisation such as demonstrations by returning refugees fighting for recognition and equal rights exist within these broader depoliticisation forces. Choplin's (2016) key argument is that the postpolitics and postcolonial urban theory theses refer to different urban dynamics and scales of analysis that coexist but can be jointly considered to understand urban political processes at different scales of analysis.

In some non-western contexts, neoliberal forms of spatial governance associated with changing norms around political structures and participation occur within an authoritarian context, drawing attention to nuances and the situated form and function that postpolitical governance strategies take. Exploring the relevance and applicability of the 'radical democratic' proposal put forward to combat postpolitics by scholars such as Erik Swyngedouw in a non-western context, Matijasevich (2020) uses the case studies of Singapore and Thailand to argue that postpolitics has been bolstered by authoritarianism, making it difficult for civil society groups and ordinary citizens to challenge the postpolitical consensus. Matijasevich (2020) contends that the struggle against the postpolitical order in authoritarian contexts is also a struggle for democratic norms and institutions. In short, Matijasevich's (2020) key argument is that 'radical democracy' or the radical reconquering of public space is unlikely to bring about change without an expansion of rights, reducing the number of issues considered 'untouchable,' and a broader shift in political culture.

The emerging heritage paradigm in Asia (as discussed in the previous chapter), is a good example of postpolitics occurring through the establishment of heritage as an urban governance tool. Zhu (2020) for example, demonstrates how heritage has become a soft but powerful urban governance tool in urban development projects in Xi'an, China, where disagreements between societal actors and governing bodies are obfuscated. Here, Xi'an's new heritage landscape has become an effective practice to evoke people's national pride, making it difficult for people to criticise and challenge the state, echoing postpolitical conditions where consensus between state and society is enforced. Like Matijasevich (2020), Zhu (2020) emphasises the difficulty of challenging taken-for-granted consensus within an authoritarian governance context. Here, any acts of resistance are described as being temporary,

fragmented and based on individualist conceptions of 'a good life' rather than any sustainable sense of community building. Zhu (2020) however, also makes the point, that while heritage projects can work to manage and model urban populations, they still allow for multiple 'unofficial channels' to contest the state's hegemonic urbanism.

Despite the growth of scholarship exploring the applicability of postpolitics to non-western contexts, Lam-Knott et al. (2020a) highlight there are conceptual challenges to applying postpolitics and related concepts' notions of consensus politics to non-western contexts which have very different socio-political development contexts. They argue that more research is needed to explore the form and function of postpolitical urban governance mechanisms on state-society relations, grassroots mobilisations, politics, and possibilities for alternative more equitable urban development trajectories in non-western contexts. This thesis contributes to this growing body of work.

Within urban geography and planning scholarship, a growing number of scholars are taking a more relational approach to explore mechanisms of postpolitical urban spatial governance (Haughton et al., 2013; Raco & Lin, 2012), identifying examples of 'politics proper' (Kaika & Karaliotas, 2014; Karaliotas, 2017; Temenos, 2017; Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018) and exploring opportunities for supporting and increasing emancipatory politics (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Dikeç, 2005; Legacy, 2017; Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017; Novák, 2020; Swyngedouw, 2011). This evolving body of work includes under-analysed elements of postpolitical theory such as the role that informal action (Legacy et al., 2018), ongoing urban resistance (Raco & Lin, 2012) or 'everyday politics proper' (Temenos, 2017) play in reshaping and challenging the boundaries of what is possible in the postpolitical city. These scholars commonly draw on the work and philosophy of Jacques Rancière, whose work is relational and saturated with spatially sensitive concepts and ideas (Nicholls & Uitermark, 2017). The next section discusses Rancière work in more detail.

3.4 Jacques Rancière's relational approach to 'politics'

Jacques Rancière doesn't use the term postpolitics but instead writes about post-democracy, which refers to what he sees as 'advanced plutocratic consensus' of contemporary governance arrangements (Van Puymbroek & Oosterlynck, 2014). His fundamental concern is the denial of recognition experienced by dominated and oppressed peoples and the need to listen to (not interpret) the voice of the excluded as equals (Boano & Kelling, 2013). Rancière's understanding of politics is based on his conceptualisation of the political difference, a tripartite division between the political, politics, and the police (Novák, 2020). The political difference refers to the distinction between society as instituted social order and the

impossibility of finding a concrete foundation or 'ground' for any social order (Marchart, 2007). This post-foundational ontology starts from the position that all social orders are contingent and structured to conceal their own ground (Marchart, 2007; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). For Rancière, this contingent nature of the ground is characterised by the presupposition of equality.

For Rancière, *le politique* or 'the political' refers to the presupposition of unconditional equality. Equality is not an end state but a starting point (Boano & Kelling, 2013). Equality here is given content through its performative staging and enacting (Swyngedouw, 2011; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). For example, when Gandhi went to the sea to make salt during the struggle to end colonial rule in India, he both staged (or acted) out equality and exposed naturalised inequality within colonial rule. The recent and ongoing protests for political voice and participation in Hong Kong can be viewed as another example of this.¹⁰ The protesters, many of whom are students, don't ask for permission to protest or speak but act out their equality and expose naturalised inequality disrupting the established order of executive-led governance.

'The political' for Rancière, exists in relation to *la police* or 'the police'. 'The police' is first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, ways of saying. These bodies are then assigned by name to a place and task that determines what activity or voice is visible and not (Rancière, 1999, 2010). Rancière's understanding of 'police' is what everyday contemporary common parlance would refer to as everyday interest group politics and contemporary technocracies such as policy making, parliamentary legislation, judicial decision, and the multitude of economic arrangements that make up urban governance (Chambers, 2010). It is important to note, for Rancière, is that the police is not identical to 'state apparatus' and, therefore, does not presuppose an opposition between state and society (Dikeç, 2005). Within this perspective and as I will demonstrate in detail in Chapter 7, Hong Kong's URA is a part of 'the police' that names and assigns value to people, places, and things in ways that determine what activity or voice is visible and what is not. Under this definition, non-state actors such as NGOs that have contracts with the state are also considered the 'police.' The police order is predicated upon saturation; the police do not recognise a lack of excess or surplus, which is not accounted for in the police's symbolic order. Importantly, this lack of excess opens up the possibility of the return of 'the political' (Swyngedouw, 2011).

For Rancière, the police reproduce a social order that naturalises inequality as common sense. Here, common sense inequality refers to the *partage du sensible* or 'the distribution of the sensible', a partitioned spatial organisation. Rancière (2004) defines the distribution of the

¹⁰ Since the protests in 2019 there has been an increasing crackdown on dissent.

sensible as “the system of self-evident facts of sense perception that simultaneously discloses the existence of something in common and the delimitations that define the respective parts and positions within it.” (p.12). Phrased differently, the distribution of the sensible refers to any social order that has implicit shared norms that are self-evident and unquestioned. These shared norms include who and what belongs to the social order and the naturalised capacities or hierarchical positions of the individuals, groups, and things within it (Grange & Gunder, 2018).

The ‘partition of the sensible’ sets the divisions between what is visible and invisible, speakable and unspeakable (Boano & Kelling, 2013). Thus, the ‘partition of the sensible’ is essentially about aesthetics, a system of a priori forms determining what is made (or allowed to be made) accessible to the sensory experience (Dikeç, 2013; Grange & Gunder, 2018). For Rancière, it is the very line that divides what is legitimate/illegitimate, those that have a part/ those that don’t, which always leaves open the possibility of ‘dissensual’ part taking and therefore ‘politics’ (Panagia, 2010).

Many people have ‘no part’, or as Dikeç (2005) and Swyngedouw (2014a) state are ‘unaccounted for.’ These include apolitical consumers, precarious workers, undocumented migrants, and disenfranchised citizens (Swyngedouw, 2014a). Within URA-led urban renewal processes and practices in Hong Kong, many affected peoples are ‘unaccounted for’ within the police order that naturalises inequality as common sense. One example is the higher-than-average number of asylum seekers and undocumented workers that often live in some URA affected neighbourhoods. Equality begins with a dis-composition of the dividing line between the sensible and insensible. For Rancière, the police and politics are enmeshed. Politics is possible not despite the police but because of it (Dikeç, 2005).

The essence of politics (*la politique*) for Rancière is the manifestation of dissensus. It is the meeting ground between the political and the police (Rancière et al., 2001). For Rancière, politics is not only about conflict. The conflict has emancipatory potential only when the notion of equality is at stake. There is no privileged political subject pre-existing the moment of politics. Instead, the subject comes into being when claiming equality through an action, the presupposition of equality (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). Swyngedouw explains, “Emancipatory politics is refusal to be restricted to the places distributed to them in the police order (the factory/the home); it disrupts and reclassifies and claims what is not authorized” (Swyngedouw, 2011, p. 375). The assertion of equality takes its political shape and modifies the regime of the visible (Rancière, 1999). In Hong Kong, for example, the URA’s intervention into neighbourhoods confronts resistance (see chapter 8 for further discussion). Intentional or not, resistance embodies equality in visible and less visible ways, which disrupts the prevailing social order maintained by the URA.

'Politics proper' in the Rancièrian sense is ordinarily understood as something that people do 'together' and in solidarity with others (May, 2010). Politics proper unfolds through the staging of equality that exposes a 'wrong' in the prevailing distribution of the sensible (Dikeç, 2005; Swyngedouw, 2011; Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). Put simply, 'a wrong' is the police's failure to recognise equality (May, 2010). Politics proper is not about identifying the excluded and trying to include them (the logic of identification belongs to the police). Instead, it is to question the 'given' natural order of things. It is questioning the whole and its portioned parts in a way that validates the equality of any speaking being to any other speaking being (Boano & Kelling, 2013). For Swyngedouw (2014b), 'proper political' acts at a distance from the state and instead occur in public spaces like streets and squares.

Drawing on Rancière, Swyngedouw (2011) identifies four ways scholars can think about the staging of political dissensus, including firstly, moving away from embracing the multitude of singularities and micro-politics, which he sees as sustaining the postpolitical order. Secondly, paying more attention to modalities of repoliticisation, which are predicated upon universalising egalitarian demands and include outbursts of urban protests but also the kinds of demands expressed when, for example, undocumented immigrants claim egalitarian space. Thirdly, to understand that undertaking action is (paradoxically) a refusal to act, to stop asking what they (the governing elites) want, to stop wanting to be liked. Finally, to traverse the elite's fantasy that mobilises the commons for self-interest¹¹.

For scholars who draw on Rancière, politics is a permanent possibility, but the emergence of 'politics proper' is rare (Dikeç, 2005; Haughton et al., 2013). Haughton et al. (2013) explain that 'politics proper' is not about the negotiation of demands or interests but a process of political subjectification involving the translation of particularised demands or interests into universal demands. Indeed, it is only when demands transcend a particularised framing and start to work as a stand-in for a universal message of equality that conflict becomes 'properly political' (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). For example, those in Hong Kong affected by URA led urban renewal shift from advocating for themselves to advocating for housing rights for all, as discussed in chapter 8. As Swyngedouw (2011) explains, subjectification is not simply the assertion of an identity but the refusal of an imposed identity by the police order (also highlighted in chapter 8).

It is important to recognise that particularising and universalising frames are intrinsically linked, and multiple framing can occur simultaneously; one cannot be without the other (Van

¹¹On the one hand, elite fantasies promise that their designs will guarantee the enjoyment of all and, on the other hand, invoke imminent catastrophe and disintegration (such as ecological disintegration and excess migration) if their fantasy is not realised. This cultivation of relentless fear, consequently, disempowers and limits the potential for designing alternative urban futures (Swyngedouw, 2011)

Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). For many of these urban scholars, the postpolitical condition has foreclosed fundamental questions around human rights and social justice, which has, therefore, reduced debate (politics proper) to moments of violent rupture (Temenos, 2017). This thesis builds on the work of other scholars such as Temenos (2017) and Choplin (2016) to broaden our understanding of 'politics proper' to less visible, more incremental everyday practices.

The following section more specifically reviews scholarship that utilises Rancière's relational understanding of 'politics' to identify and examine spatial politics related to contemporary urban development initiatives across diverse contexts. These urban development initiatives include state-initiated and grassroots-initiated development, both of which are relevant to the aims and objectives of this study.

3.4.1 A Rancièrian approach to state-initiated urban development

Critical urban scholars have drawn on Rancière to identify and examine spatial politics related to state-led urban development and policy initiatives. Importantly, this scholarship highlights how strategies utilised to displace politics, such as through prescribed participatory planning practices are never 'complete' and can work as a catalyst for resistance and potentially reshape urban development trajectories. For example, Legacy (2017), draws on Rancière's relational approach to challenge the prevailing sentiment within critical planning scholarship that there is a crisis in participatory planning. She utilises the case of a successful campaign to end the controversial East West Link Road project in Melbourne, Australia, to demonstrate how decisions to engage the citizenry in prescribed ways can induce other forms of citizen participation. Legacy (2017) contends that attempts made to control and subvert citizens' engagement with the city's processes only provided further incentive for ongoing transformation and antagonistic expression of participation beyond the state. Furthermore, she argues that the potential for participation in planning cities rests in the influence these other manifestations of citizens' participation have in reshaping processes of planning.¹²

The simultaneous displacement of politics and emergence of the political has been identified and examined within the context of state-led post-disaster planning practice. Yee (2020), for example, draws on Rancière to examine the post-disaster planning process of Tacloban City, Philippines, after Typhoon Haiyan in 2013. First, he demonstrates how postpolitical planning discourse based on technocratic expertise and knowledge that emphasised urban competitiveness, sustainability, and consensus drove the Philippine state's post-disaster

¹² Thus, the framing of 'crisis in planning' for Legacy (2017) strengthens a narrow conception of planning that assumes that it must be provided for through participatory technologies made available in the planning system.

reconstruction efforts. Secondly, he explains how postpolitical planning discourse and practices simultaneously facilitated the emergence of insurgent mobilisations such as 'The People Surge', a grassroots organisation of disaster survivors supported by a wider national activist network Yee (2020)¹³. This emergence of insurgent mobilisations demonstrates how attempts by the state to depoliticise urban redevelopment can act as a catalyst for participation beyond the state and ongoing politics.

The complex way postpolitical state-making practices and resistances interact to shape the emergence of the political in context-specific ways is highlighted in outcomes of urban policy mobility across different cities. Temenos (2017) brings literature on policy mobilities into conversation with Rancière's understanding of the 'properly political' to explore the connection between activism for drug policy reform and the postpolitical conditioning of urban politics. Comparing harm reduction policy across cities in the Caribbean, European and North American contexts, Temenos (2017) demonstrates how encounters between the formal politics of state-making (considered to be postpolitical) and the everyday politics¹⁴ enacted through diverse urban spaces such as streets and public health clinics simultaneously contribute to the making of these places. Furthermore, Temenos (2017) highlights that the paradox of drug harm reduction is, on the one hand, a radical social movement with a rationale based on scientific evidence. On the other hand, its political struggle is played out in the postpolitical arena that rather than enclosing 'politics proper' creates an opening for its emergence elsewhere within urban governance. Temenos (2017) echoes Legacy (2017) when she contends that a more nuanced understanding of 'the political' is needed in urban governance, one that recognises that everyday political actions can be ongoing and incremental.

Scholars draw on Rancière to identify and examine spatial politics related to state-led urban development and policy initiatives (Legacy, 2017; Temenos, 2017; Yee, 2020). The critical point these scholars make is that postpolitical state-making practices are a catalyst for context-specific resistance that can reshape urban governance. Furthermore, ongoing (sometimes incremental) interactions between competing forces highlight the ever-present possibility of the emergence of the political within state-led urban development policy and practice. The incompleteness of the URA's strategies that work to displace politics within its interventions are highlighted in chapter 7.

¹³ The People Surge is made up of community leaders and activists, criticised government consultations as 'non-democratic and subsequent plans as 'money makers'. These activists protested against the 'no-build' zone, and resettlement plans proposed in the state-led reconstruction plan and developed a counter plan that pushed for 'onsite' development to give the urban poor settlement sites within their original barangay (village or ward) (Yee, 2020).

¹⁴ Here 'everyday acts' and technical practices are understood as political actions that are ongoing and incremental (Temenos, 2017)

3.4.2 A Rancièrian approach to grassroots-initiated urban development

Critical urban scholars also draw on Rancière to identify and examine spatial politics related to grassroots-initiated urban development and policy initiatives. For some, the political potential lies in the multiple forms that participation can take and its ability to transgress consensus politics despite pacifying elements and the politics of recognition. For example, Boano and Kelling (2013) draw on Rancière's work to explore the relationship between design and politics within participatory processes in slum upgrading in South East Asia. In particular, they utilise his principle of equality, the conception of the distribution of the sensible, and his reflections on the politics of aesthetics to demonstrate the political potential of design and participatory urbanisms. Boano and Kelling (2013) use the demand-driven housing development project in Baan Mankong, Thailand, to demonstrate that participatory urbanism can transgress consensus politics despite pacifying elements. In particular, they explain how marginalised communities in the housing development project leveraged collective resources as bargaining power to claim politically legitimate participation. For them, communities locating the agency of change with themselves (the excluded) is an act that presupposes equality and represented a fundamental shift with conventional participatory development practices, which they argue crucially reformed the design practitioners' role.

In contrast, other scholars have deployed Rancière's understanding of political difference to identify and explore conflict and related opportunities for politics within grassroots urban development initiatives. For example, Van Wymeersch and Oosterlynck (2018) explore the interaction between ongoing depoliticisation and 'properly political' practices within the context of a contested urban development project 't' Landhuis' (translating to 'The Manor') in Ghent, Belgium. Originally, 't' Landhuis was abandoned organic farmland that (with consent from the private owner) was taken over by squatters to start an urban farming initiative until the owner sold the site to the City of Ghent. When the owner sold the land, the 'autonomous ecological centre' developed on the site was threatened as the City of Ghent intended to erect a football training complex. Exploring three phases in conflict¹⁵ resulting from the sale of the land they demonstrate both how occupiers of 't' Landhuis acted as 'properly political subjects' by claiming their right to have a view on the future of the city and how they were drawn into negotiations with the 'police order' to formalise their organisation in order to save their garden allotments and which put them into a more particular subject position. Van Wymeersch and Oosterlynck's (2018) key point is that emancipation is messy, incomplete, and requires

¹⁵ The three phases in conflict resulting from the land sale included, firstly, no voice in property holding democracy. Secondly, from voice to noise, and finally, the conflict repoliticised through the right to housing as a new universalising strategy (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018).

navigating a difficult tension between particularisation and universalisation by grassroots groups.

For some the ongoing tensions between particularising practices of the state and universalising practices of alternative grassroots urban development initiatives is what fosters possibilities of urban politics and activism. Novák (2020) draws on Rancière to examine the concept of post-politicisation in relation to the struggle for Klinika, an autonomous social centre in Prague, Czech Republic. He demonstrates how the postpolitical functions in a post-socialist city, pinpointing specific times and spaces where activists of Klinika managed to turn a particular demand into a universal and consequently re-politicise the postpolitical order. He also shows how local district leadership and state authorities responded by utilising postpolitical arguments and tools to repress the activists and depoliticise the debate. Furthermore, when activists from Klinika were evicted, they were able to politicise the dispute again when they challenged the property system. The key point made by Novák (2020) is that postpolitics is not linear or one way. Instead, a 'ping pong' type interaction between postpolitical forces of order and the repoliticising acts of radical opponents of the status quo foster urban politics and activism.

Scholars also draw on Rancière to identify and examine spatial politics related to grassroots-led urban development practices. These scholars highlight different ways grassroots-led urban development practices transgress consensus politics. Furthermore, opportunities for politics lie in conflict and tensions between particularising postpolitical strategies of the state and repoliticising universalising acts of resistance of its opponents. The role that ongoing tension between particularising postpolitical strategies of the URA and repoliticising universalising acts of resistance play in the politics of alternative grassroots-led urban development initiatives in Hong Kong is discussed in chapter 8.

3.5 Critiques and limitations of postpolitics

Many critical urban scholars have found value in the analytical tools that postpolitics provides for exploring contemporary urban governance arrangements and relatedly their effects on realising alternative urban development trajectories, while others have raised concerns (Yee, 2020). Firstly, scholars have highlighted postpolitics' essentialising and reductive tendencies (Beveridge & Koch, 2017; Crossan, 2018; Etherington & Jones, 2018; Lerner, 2014; Ormerod & MacLeod, 2019). These essentialising tendencies are further highlighted when deploying postpolitics' critique to non-western contexts with distinctive socio-political developments and histories, including colonial and postcolonial regimes (Lam-Knott, Connolly and Ho, 2019). Secondly, critics of postpolitics emphasise that its focus on the 'proper political' moment

downplays a multitude of other forms of political activity (Crossan, 2018; Temenos, 2017). Some urban scholars have gone so far as to reject whether postpolitics as a phenomenon exists (Dean, 2009) or argue that labelling it as such can reproduce the very effects it claims to be exposing (Apostolopoulou, 2020; Beveridge et al., 2014; Etherington & Jones, 2018; Larner, 2014; Metzger, 2017).

Many scholars who are critical of postpolitics scholarship find that its constricted understanding of the relation between the 'political', processes of depoliticisation and the empirical effects of depoliticization is problematic (Beveridge & Koch, 2017), especially in terms of its ability to reflect agency and everyday lived experiences (Beveridge & Koch, 2017; Crossan, 2018; Larner, 2014). Beveridge and Koch (2017) explain that although the postpolitical thesis is useful for opening a window to the ways power is exercised within empirical studies, the constricted but universalised understanding of the political/politics reduces the real, lived experience of political action and the plurality of agency. For Larner (2014) this 'one size fits all approach' limits the potential of postpolitics to identify and describe the opportunity that everyday, less visible, less explosive forms of spatial politics play in imagining and acting out alternative urban futures. Drawing on her engagement with Coexist, an urban community organisation based in Bristol, UK, Larner (2014) demonstrates how everyday, more relational governance strategies utilised by diverse actors assembled around Coexist lie in stark contrast to the depoliticised, post-democratic institutions highlighted by postpolitics literature. Furthermore, she contends that it is in the inevitably incomplete and paradoxical experiments like Coexist that opportunities for disagreement, dissensus, and new political formations will emerge.

Similarly, other scholars highlighted that postpolitics scholarship marginalises the transformative potential of democratic work that takes place in private or semi-private spheres. Drawing on his experience with anarchist influenced grassroots organisations (specifically the Glasgow Social Centre), Crossan (2018) explores three critical aspects of social centre politics including, the blending of private and public life, consensus decision making, and enacting equality-as-tactic. He demonstrates that contrary to the postpolitical thesis, the political is not in retreat. While contestation is evident, the overriding political practice in this context is a collaborative heuristic learning environment that Crossan calls 'a pedagogical politics of place'. For Crossan (2018) the 'properly political' does not necessarily constitute a 'confrontational' set of relations.

In contrast, other critics of postpolitics scholarship argue that it does not emphasise the state's central role in politics enough. Etherington and Jones (2018) argue that postpolitics scholarship fails to account for the state's continuous existence as a social relation and an arena for politics and secondly as a regulator of uneven development and the subsequent

conflicts and struggles that arise from this. Using the case study of the vision-making dynamics of the city-region of Sheffield, England, they explore the politics of welfare reform and employment policy. Identifying and analysing emerging social struggles and conflicts that directly engage with the city region's devolution agenda demonstrates how 'bottom-up' counter-hegemonic visions play a role in repoliticising the Sheffield city-region governance landscape. In contrast to postpolitical approaches, which tend to place meaningful change outside the state, Etherington and Jones (2018) argue that it is essential to find ways of working within the state to intensify internal contradictions and conflicts.

Metzger (2017) argues that to understand postpolitics better, researchers need to think about where it appears, through which techniques and practices, and under what conditions. This extends to exploring the applicability of postpolitics to non-western contexts (Lam-Knott et al., 2020b). When reflecting on postpolitics' critiques, it is crucial to keep in mind that ultimately postpolitics does not describe a reality but criticises the way reality is given meaning (Kenis, 2019). Indeed, as Kenis (2019) explains, while its critics argue that postpolitics' focus point makes it blind to actual existing forms of resistance, creating an openness to forms of resistances is precisely what the critique of postpolitics is all about.

Recognising the limitations and universalising tendencies identified by its critics, some postpolitics scholars are, importantly, expanding their understanding of 'politics' to include less visible, more incremental everyday practice (Choplin, 2016; Temenos, 2017). For example, Temenos (2017) demonstrates through a study on mobilities of drug policy activism that by bringing literature on postpolitics into conversation with a policy mobilities approach, scholars can broaden our understanding of 'politics proper' to account for the 'everyday' less visible ways that drug policy activism leads to political change.

3.6 Conclusion

As an analytical lens that foregrounds the causes and effects of the depoliticisation that has emerged in contemporary urban governance, postpolitics is useful as a complementary lens to address limitations of postcolonial urbanisms in identifying and examining spatial politics and contradictions shaping the outcomes urban renewal. There is a growing body of scholarship that explores the applicability of postpolitics to non-western contexts (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Choplin, 2016; Hou, 2018; Hui & Au, 2016; Lam-Knott et al., 2020b; Neo, 2010; Raco & Lin, 2012; Seo, 2020). These studies demonstrate the global reach of neoliberalism and related consensus politics. Importantly, however, they have also highlighted how global processes and practices manifest (and are experienced) in context-specific ways that create diverse and unique opportunities and constraints for imagining and acting out alternative urban

futures such as within authoritarian contexts (Matijasevich, 2020; Zhu, 2020). This thesis contributes to this body of work.

To foreground diversity of context and everyday experiences in the non-west, postpolitics scholars, such as Choplin (2016), have jointly utilised postpolitics with postcolonial urban optics in their analysis of urban politics to draw attention to different (but coexisting) urban dynamics and scales of analysis. Although Choplin's (2016) approach provides valuable insights into the dynamics of urban politics in Nouakchott, Mauritania, and highlights the potential of bringing scholarship of postpolitics into conversation with postcolonial urban theory, what is missing from her analysis and discussion is an emphasis on relationality.

A core focus of postcolonial urban theory, relational thinking about place, knowledge, and power (Roy, 2016b), emphasises that rather than just 'coexisting', processes of depoliticisation and repoliticisation are intrinsically related. In short, processes of depoliticisation do not belong to the level of urban governance, and processes of repoliticisation do not belong to the level of the everyday. Instead, tensions between processes of depoliticisation and repoliticisation are identifiable across and within different scales of analysis.

With its emphasis on rationality, Rancière's approach to politics is particularly useful in this study as it highlights how strategies of depoliticisation are never 'complete' with the possibility of the emergence of the political always present. The incompleteness of the URA's strategies that work to displace politics within its interventions is highlighted in chapter 7. Importantly, Rancière's relational approach also demonstrates how ongoing tensions between depoliticising and repoliticising forces are the catalyst for 'politics' that can imagine and act out alternative urban futures.

Critiques of postpolitics scholarship have highlighted its limitations, especially in its neglect of the everyday and its rigidity in what counts as 'proper politics' (and an example of common epistemological bias found in much urban scholarship). This thesis builds on the work of other postpolitics scholars who have drawn on policy mobilities scholarship (Temenos, 2017) and postcolonial urban scholarship (Choplin, 2016) to expand our understanding of 'proper politics' to include less visible, more incremental everyday practices. In particular, 'everyday politics' is utilised in chapter 8 to identify and examine how ongoing tensions and struggles between different interest groups shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous two chapters established the theoretical lenses that have informed this research. This chapter sets out and reflects on the methodological approach. I firstly describe the origins of the research before outlining and reflecting on the qualitative approach taken, restating the aims, objectives, and foundations as the driving force behind the approach. The importance of reflexivity and awareness of positionality and subjectivity in the research is then discussed followed by the role of research assistants/translators in cross cultural research. Reflexive Thematic Analysis, the qualitative method of analysis utilised in this study, is described, followed by a discussion of what rigour and trustworthiness means for the approach taken here.

Following the discussion and reflection on the methodological approach, the mechanics of undertaking the research are described including the sampling and recruitment strategy, the specific data collection methods employed including semi-structured interview, participatory stakeholder mapping, focus group, secondary data collection and field diary and data preparation and analysis. Finally, I highlight key ethical considerations and reflect on what I have learnt through my experience of researching urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

4.2 Origins of research

How I came to do this research is multi-layered. These intertwined layers have emerged from my childhood to the present day. I moved with my Pākehā¹⁶ parents to Hong Kong in 1985, the year I was born. My family returned to live in Aotearoa when I was 13 years old. My childhood experiences of Hong Kong, what I studied at university, my work with diverse communities in Hong Kong and Aotearoa, and being a mother of three children have influenced my research. However, working with refugees and asylum seekers in Hong Kong in 2007, whilst living in an illegally subdivided flat in Yau Ma Tei (a highly populated district in Kowloon City), most influenced my decision to undertake research on urban renewal in Hong Kong.

In late 2006, after completing my honours in international development at the University of Auckland, I got a job working as a project officer with an NGO providing social work services to refugees and asylum seekers in Chungking Mansions.¹⁷ During the year I worked as a

¹⁶ Pākehā is a Māori-language term commonly used to refer to New Zealanders of European descent.

¹⁷ Chungking Mansions an infamous block of five 17 storied building in the heart of the central business district in Kowloon, Hong Kong. It is known for its cultural diversity, boutique eateries and shops, cheap guesthouses, criminal

project officer with asylum seekers and refugees, I became familiar with the everyday lives and neighbourhoods in Kowloon that asylum seekers, refugees and other ethnic minorities lived/spent time in.

To be closer to work, colleagues, and new friends I had made in the refugee/ asylum seeker community, I moved out of a flat I was sharing with an old Hong Kong school friend in Sai Kung to a small, subdivided flat on the 6th floor of a walk-up in Yau Ma Tei. My shower was literally over my toilet, separated from my two-hob kitchen burner by a stiff shower curtain. The small size of flats in my neighbourhood meant the streets were buzzing in the evening, with locals spending time with their families on the streets and eating out at local dai-pai-dongs 大牌檔¹⁸. My new friends showed me where I could buy a plate of Yeung Chau Chow Fan for under HKD20.00 (about NZD 3.50) in close-by Mong Kok. I saw asylum seekers that lived close to me doing 'under the table work' for African businessmen buying second-hand electronics goods from the back of vans in Sham Shui Po. I regularly ate at a local Nepalese restaurant, where I recognised the wait staff as asylum seekers (also 'working under the table'). I also noticed that many of my neighbours and people selling and buying from my local wet market¹⁹ spoke Mandarin rather than Cantonese. My family spent a fair amount of time in Kowloon when I was growing up²⁰; however, we lived in less populated places in the New Territories, so this was a new, exciting (albeit at times challenging) experience of living in Hong Kong.

During this time, I became acutely aware of my unearned white privilege (Bhopal, 2018; McIntosh, 2020). I chose to live in the place I lived. I wanted the experience, but at the age of 21, I had many choices that many people around me did not have. I worked as an English teacher in the evenings and weekends to supplement my monthly salary. My white face, a degree from a recognised university, and permanent residency status, was a golden combination. My Nepalese co-worker, a mum of two, who spoke three languages, did not have this privilege. She was also paid HKD 2,000 (roughly NZD360.00) less than me a month even though we both had the same job title and comparable responsibility²¹. The centre manager at the time, also Nepalese and the centre's medical doctor, pointed out that the NGO paid me more for no other reason than I was a white expatriate. Other scholars have highlighted how the racialisation of migrants and white privilege is mediated and shapes the everyday lives of

activity, and a popular meeting place for asylum seekers and refugees. My role was managing the women and children's programmes.

¹⁸ Often tucked next to a building or in alley ways, dai-pai-dongs are cheap open-air eateries.

¹⁹ A wet market In Hong Kong is a traditional market that sells reasonably priced fresh meat, fish, vegetables, and other perishable goods. Most Hong Kong neighbourhoods have a wet market.

²⁰ My family regularly attended a church and belonged to a recreational club in Jordan, a ten-minute walk to Yau Ma Tei.

²¹ The only difference in our roles being my co-worker focused on South Asian ethnic minorities (with some form of visa or residency status) whilst I focused on refugees and asylum seekers in mine.

different migrant groups in Asian cities (Collins, 2018; Lan, 2011; Li & Liu, 2021). My experience of living and working in Hong Kong tells me that that inequality in Hong Kong is not only often accepted but also often justified.

An unexpected loss of a close family member at the end of 2007 meant I returned to live in Aotearoa in 2008. In the years following my return, I went back to university to do a master's degree in international development. I gave birth to three children and worked on multiple community development projects for the Auckland Council, during which time urban development and, more specifically, urban regeneration, were hot topics. As a community development advisor, my interest was in inclusion and community participation.

In early 2016 I enrolled in a PhD at the Australian National University (ANU) and commenced exploring a wide range of literature related to urban renewal, research methodology and theory. After reading about the Urban Renewal Authority (URA)'s interventions in Hong Kong, I became curious about the impact that urban renewal was having in Hong Kong, particularly in the neighbourhoods in Kowloon that I had become familiar with when living in Yau Ma Tei and working in Hong Kong. Compared to wealthier areas of the city, the physical living conditions in many URA affected neighbourhoods, especially in parts of Kowloon, were harsh and needed investment. Overcrowding, poor airflow, and decaying buildings are an everyday challenge for people living in these areas (including myself when I was living in Yau Ma Tei). However, my experience also told me that these neighbourhoods were some of the only affordable private housing options left in the city and provided critical social networks and informal employment opportunities for those economically and socially excluded from other parts of the city.

During the first six months of my enrolment at ANU, I contacted an academic in the social work field at a Hong Kong University who had done some work on urban renewal to tell him about my interest in focusing my research on urban renewal in Hong Kong. He introduced me to professionals and NGOs who were (or had been) specifically involved in URA-led urban renewal projects in Hong Kong. Towards the end of 2016, I undertook a 10-day research scoping trip to Hong Kong where I met with the academic I had been corresponding with and arranged some informal meetings with the professionals and NGOs that he had introduced me to via email.

These informal meetings highlighted the diversity of neighbourhoods, perceptions, experiences, and outcomes related to urban renewal in Hong Kong. Together with my experience, this knowledge raised questions for me. What is the rationale behind the URA interventions? Who is participating and benefiting from its interventions? How are the URA's interventions perceived and experienced by different interest groups? Is there resistance to

the URA's interventions, and if so, what form and function does it take? Two themes ran through the questions I raised: the importance of context and the centrality of power. The meetings also confirmed a decision to focus on URA-led urban renewal interventions and to explore broadly rather than one specific neighbourhood or group of people. I anticipated that going 'wide' would enable new meanings and interpretations to be constructed, which would contribute to scholarship and be potentially useful for some of the participants (especially NGOs and activists).

I spent the rest of 2016 and early 2017 designing the research and planning the fieldwork. Then, after getting ethics approval from the ANU Human Ethics Committee in early 2017, I commenced my first fieldwork and data collection phase. I spent six weeks in Hong Kong from early April to Mid-May in 2017 and then returned to Hong Kong for three weeks to conduct more interviews in April 2018. Between fieldwork trips in the first phase of data collection, I (or my translator based in Aotearoa) transcribed and translated the interviews. During this period, I decided to change the direction of my research project and transfer my studies to an Aotearoa-based university. My PhD candidature was confirmed at The University of Waikato (UoW) in November 2018. I quickly applied for and was granted ethics approval for the second phase of data collection. The second phase of data collection involved conducting focus groups to update participants on the initial themes and change of direction. I also extended the research to explore processes and practices of participation related to URA interventions. In early March 2019, I returned to Hong Kong to meet with interview participants willing to help organise focus groups. I returned to Hong Kong for this second phase of data collection in late April 2019.

4.3 Research Approach

4.3.1 Research foundations

The ontological and epistemological assumptions of this study are relativism and social constructionism. As discussed in chapters 2 and 3, the study's critical theoretical assumptions are based on postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics. Postcolonial urban theory draws attention to messy and variegated urbanisms, diverse everyday experiences and urban actors' agency (Derickson, 2015; Leitner & Sheppard, 2016). Postpolitics highlights the emergence of consensus forms of governance and how depoliticising state-centred processes and practices of participation do not offer grounds for public debate and contestation (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014).

4.3.2 Qualitative inquiry

A qualitative interpretive inquiry was the overarching methodological framework utilised. In broad terms, a qualitative inquiry is interested in holistically exploring how people engage in meaning-making and make sense of the world. It helps us understand how systems function and their effect on individuals and wider society (Bryman, 2012; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Patton, 2015; Winchester & Rofo, 2010). In a qualitative inquiry, meaning is not discovered but is constructed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Context matters (Patton, 2015), and multiple perspectives are sought, valued and reported on through rich descriptions (Creswell, 2014; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Winchester & Rofo, 2010). As will be highlighted throughout this chapter, qualitative research is personal. The researcher is the crucial instrument of inquiry and brings aspects of themselves, such as their values and beliefs, into their research (Patton, 2015).

Qualitative research is rife with ambiguity (Braun & Clarke, 2013). There are diverse qualitative methodologies that traverse different fields and disciplines and use different types of data (Bryman, 2012; Liangputtong, 2019; Winchester & Rofo, 2010). I wanted to utilise a qualitative approach that would allow me to explore in-depth the diverse ways state control, participation, and everyday politics affect the outcomes of urban renewal in Hong Kong. As Percy et al. (2015) explain, a general qualitative approach is helpful for studies that aim to explore a broad range of opinions, ideas and reflection and often have larger sample sizes than other qualitative approaches²².

In this research, I explore diverse perspectives and experiences of urban renewal in Hong Kong, including (but not limited to) those working in government departments and people directly affected by urban renewal interventions. It can be challenging to get people in these groups to participate in research. One advantage of a general qualitative approach is that multiple methods can be drawn on and adapted to reach groups who may not otherwise participate in research (Flick, 2017; Liangputtong, 2019).

A general qualitative approach allows for new questions to be asked, enriches data, and provides opportunities for learning and advancing theory (Kahlke, 2014). As discussed below, I utilised multiple qualitative methods that enriched the data that was collected. First, this rich data enabled me to demonstrate how emerging optics of postcolonial urban scholarship make

²² In a general qualitative inquiry, epistemological and theoretical 'allegiance' is not prescribed by a specific qualitative methodology such as ethnography or phenomenology or case study (Kahlke, 2014). Some scholars are critical of general approaches (Kahlke, 2014; Merriam & Grenier, 2019), with some critics going as far as arguing that general qualitative research design is often poorly thought through and articulated (Kahlke, 2014). However, other scholars argue that there is no one way to interpret qualitative inquiry and that we are all bricoleurs (Denzin, 2017).

diverse everyday experiences and the agency of those involved and directly affected by urban renewal visible. Secondly, it enabled me to demonstrate how optics of postpolitics can be used in conjunction with postcolonial optics to enrich our understanding of everyday politics and related potentialities for imagining and acting out alternative, more equitable urban futures in a non-western context.

Qualitative inquiry is a rich and complex field that can be experiential or critical (Braun & Clarke, 2013). Critical scholars are committed to exposing and critiquing inequality in everyday life (Denzin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) and taking an interrogative stance towards meaning-making and experiences expressed in data (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Merriam & Grenier, 2019). A critical stance does not just interpret the world but seeks to challenge injustice and identify sites of change and activism (Denzin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). There are two distinct layers to the critical stance taken in this study. Firstly, the analysis draws on postcolonial urban theory in conjunction with, and critique of, the western-inspired lens of postpolitics. As described in chapter 2, postcolonial urban theory is a site of change and activism within urban scholarship in and of itself. Secondly, empirically speaking, a critical lens exposes the often taken-for-granted assumption of the role that the market and capitalist ideals of profit and progress play (and are maintained) in urban renewal processes and practices in Hong Kong. Furthermore, a critical stance draws attention to how everyday acts of resistance challenge these assumptions.

4.3.3 Reflexivity, positionality, subjectivity

As noted in the origins of my thesis discussed above, reflexivity, my positionality and subjectivity have shaped my research. Research is situated, partial and embodied. As the prominent feminist scholar Donna Haraway highlights, foregrounding the situated nature of knowledge “allows us to become answerable for what we learn how we see” (Haraway, 1988, p. 583). In the latter stages of my research, it has been feminist scholarship (England, 1994; Haraway, 1988; McDowell, 1997; Mohanty, 2003; Rose, 1997; Whitson, 2017) that has deepened my understanding of the complex, messy and related ways in which reflexivity, positionality and subjectivity have shaped the processes, practices, and outcomes of my research.

Reflexivity has different meanings in social science (Bryman, 2012). Here, reflexivity refers to deep, critical reflection on the research processes and my role as a researcher (Braun & Clarke, 2013). It is an awareness of inequitable power dynamics that inevitably shape research contexts and process (Whitson, 2017). It involves asking questions and thinking about what it is that I know as a researcher and how I have realised that (Patton, 2015). Braun and Clarke

(2013) highlight two types of reflexivity in research, functional and personal. Functional reflexivity refers to paying critical attention to how research tools and processes influence knowledge creation. Related to functional reflexivity is personal reflexivity, which refers to making the researcher and their positionality visible in the research and includes the researcher's physical body and what they do with themselves (embodiment).

In relation to this research, positionality includes my more easily recognisable characteristics such as being an educated gwáilóu 鬼佬²³ middle-class woman in my mid-30s of European descent. My positionality also incorporates less visible characteristics such as my experience of growing up in Hong Kong, what some would consider an unconventional upbringing, and my leftist political beliefs and values. Beyond positionality, subjectivity includes emotional reactions such as feelings of affiliation, disaffiliation, comfort, and discomfort of myself and my participants (Whitson, 2017).

Being aware of subjectivity is about being critical of how my positionality and that of my participants are brought into, negotiated with, constructed, and sustained through the research process (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Dowling, 2010). For example, on finding out the schools I had attended in Hong Kong, some participants (those who had attended, or whose children who had attended, similar schools) changed how they interacted with me, engaging with me with more familiarity and warmth. They asked me about my time in Hong Kong, what years I had been at school and whether I knew certain people. They made comments like "well, you know what it's like in Hong Kong" assuming I shared similar experiences and outlook as theirs. In short, they saw me as a Hong Kong (expatriate) 'insider' with a commitment to Hong Kong and (in relation to the interview subject) a vested interest in urban renewal outcomes. This recognition and validation, now a minor part of my identity, influenced the perceptions and experiences that participants shared with me.

In a different context, on finding out I had worked in a local NGO, NGO participants also saw me as an 'insider' but in relation to my NGO experience rather than my connection to Hong Kong. Again, the interaction changed to become familiar and warm. During the interview, these participants spoke openly about the challenge and frustration of staying true to their values as social workers within a complex funding environment. They also made comments like, "you know what it's like", knowing I care about social justice and assuming my experiences with complex funding arrangements with the state in my own work.

In contrast, in interviews with non-English speaking affected residents, especially those identifying as mainland Chinese, I felt I was seen as an 'outsider'. In these interviews, being

²³ Gwáilóu is a common Cantonese slang word used by both Hong Kong Chinese and westerners to describe westerners in Hong Kong.

an 'insider' related more to ethnicity and the ability to speak Cantonese rather than a school or time spent living in Hong Kong. In these interviews, I relied on research assistants/translators (discussed in next section) and, through their translation, shared stories of my family and emphasised my family values, to connect with participants for whom I was an 'outsider'. Here, subjectivity is understood to be relational, contingent, and in a constant state of becoming.

Reflexivity is being critical of how different facets of my positionality and subjectivity become more influential (and visible) at different times and spaces during the research process, reflections on which are woven throughout the chapter.

4.3.4 Research assistants/translators in cross cultural research

My Cantonese is limited to basic greetings, language I need to bargain in the market and giving directions.²⁴ Utilizing research assistants/translators enabled me to include people in the study that would have otherwise been excluded (particularly those directly affected by the URA's interventions) and make diverse experiences visible between and within different groups (Resch & Enzenhofer, 2017).²⁵

Although research assistants and translators significantly shape cross-cultural research processes and outcomes, they often remain invisible, and the implication of their involvement is not well explored (Berman & Tyyskä, 2011; Hennink, 2008; Stevano & Deane, 2019). My research assistants/translators were collaborators and active producers of knowledge (Berman & Tyyskä, 2011). In this study, research assistants/translators were often the first recipients of the primary data collected (Resch & Enzenhofer, 2017).

I was fortunate to have had the support of an academic in the social work field who recommended two master's social work students, to act as research assistants/translators for the interviews. Both students were in full-time employment when I returned to conduct focus groups in 2019, and so on the recommendation of one of the Aotearoa-based research assistants/translators, I employed a master's student studying English Literature at HKU to translate the focus groups. Two Hong Kong Chinese friends who live in Aotearoa also acted as research assistants/translators throughout the research process²⁶.

²⁴ My lack of language skills is a limitation. If I had the time and capacity, I would have studied Cantonese before (and during) the research.

²⁵ I also had participants in the focus group act as 'informal translators' even when a paid translator was present. Beyond the scope of this thesis, the role of 'informal translators' in cross-cultural research is something I would like to explore in more depth in the future.

²⁶ Liamputtong (2008) argues that non-professional translators aware of the issues relating to the research project can be as good as professional translators.

Training for research assistants and translators is essential for ethical research (Hennink, 2017; Stevano & Deane, 2019). I spent time with all research assistants/translators explaining the purpose of the research and my expectations around their role. This training included emphasising the importance of ethical conduct and getting them to sign a confidentiality agreement (see appendix A). Together, we identified and discussed any anticipated challenges in the interviews, focus groups, transcriptions, and translations.

Research assistants and translators create 'triangular' power dynamics, where the values and beliefs of the researcher, research assistant and participants simultaneously shape data collection and subsequent outcomes of research (Hennink, 2008; Stevano & Deane, 2019). These subjectivities are on top of the more objective characteristics of positionality, such as gender, ethnicity, and class, that all those involved take into the research process (Manohar et al., 2019). For example, the young male social work student who acted as a research assistant and translator during interviews was interested in the project and skilled at building rapport with affected people. Middle-aged women with children and older women enjoyed his attention and sense of humour. He was invaluable in building rapport with URA affected Cantonese-only speaking males, who I found the hardest to connect with.

I brought this research assistant/translator to interviews with some professionals who had expressed concern over their English language skills. We both noticed (and discussed) how he was often overlooked and even ignored in interviews with professionals, especially older males. After one such interview, this research assistant/translator said that he would have to go overseas if he wanted to do a PhD because he would not get interviews with professionals as I had. He put this down to the ongoing privileging of foreign expertise.

In contrast, the research assistant/translator I worked with on the focus groups was highly professional and dedicated to translation but was not as socially comfortable in the URA affected neighbourhoods. Before arriving at one focus group site, she alerted me to criminal activity and poverty in the area and²⁷ I felt that some of the participants picked up on her discomfort of being in the neighbourhood. In particular, the young activists (of similar age to her) were a bit dismissive of her and jumped in to translate for the non-English speakers in the group before she had a chance to. It felt to me that, in some ways these activists saw me (related to my interest in urban renewal and social justice) as more of an insider than my Hong Kong Chinese translator.

Different again, my primary transcriber and translator in Aotearoa, my good friend who is 20 years older than me and politically conservative, had strong views about URA-affected people criticising the compensation and URA. She told me that she felt angry when transcribing and

²⁷ I was aware that the neighbourhood had (for a long time) a reputation for illegal activity but felt it was safe.

translating the interviews of 'those greedy people'. She said she understood she needed to remain 'unbiased' when translating but did suggest I speak to her husband to get 'the other side of the story'. My second Aotearoa-based research assistant/translator is also 20 years older than me but sees herself as 'non-political'. Although she found listening and checking the transcription and translation interesting, she said she had been away from Hong Kong for too long, and all her family was now in Aotearoa. She did not have an opinion on urban renewal. Unlike my relationship with my research assistants/translators in Hong Kong, which was based on employment, my relationship with my Aotearoa-based research assistants/translators were more based on friendship and reciprocity.²⁸

I asked the research assistants/translators to reflect on their experience working on the research project²⁹. I gave them a list of questions, emphasising that there was no right or wrong answer. Some responses were more detailed than others, but they all gave me some insight into how I was perceived, the research assistants' perceptions and experiences of the research, and the limitations of the project.³⁰ For most of the research assistants/translators, my lack of language was the biggest limitation. Research assistants/translators make cross-cultural research possible, but they are not neutral. As described above, the positionalities and subjectivities of research assistants/translators significantly shape and are shaped by the research process and its outcomes.

4.3.5 Reflexive thematic analysis

Analysis of data in this study is based on an interpretive qualitative paradigm. In an interpretive qualitative approach, meaning is not inherent or self-evident. Analysis goes beyond description or the obvious to explore meaning on a deeper level (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Patton, 2015). In my research this approach involved going beyond describing the experiences and perceptions of urban renewal processes and practices to explore how and why particular accounts are given (Braun et al., 2019). I used reflexive thematic analysis as general method for analysis.

Reflexive thematic analysis is a flexible and creative approach to thematic analysis that emphasises the subjectivity of the researcher as an analytical resource and puts great value

²⁸ I met and become friends with my primary research assistant/translator at a women's group six years ago. Her daughter has worked with me on a community development project. When I have gone back to Hong Kong, she gives me gifts to deliver to her friends and family, and I bring back products that she cannot get in Aotearoa (or that are cheaper in Hong Kong). I met my second Aotearoa-based research assistant/translator through our children eight years ago. Her son and my eldest daughter were in preschool and now school together. We have a close relationship, and she calls me, her little sister.

²⁹ I could not get hold of one research assistant/translator who had only helped translate the first set of information sheets and consent forms before pulling out of the project due to other work commitments.

³⁰ I realise that despite my best efforts to say otherwise, they may have felt like they needed to 'tell me what I wanted to hear'.

on immersion in data and ongoing iterative reflection in analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Nowell et al., 2017). There are other characteristics of reflexive thematic analysis that make it distinct from other forms of thematic analysis. In reflexive thematic analysis the researcher is cognisant of the philosophical sensibility and related assumptions informing analysis, coding, and generating themes. Themes represent shared meaning patterns organised around a central organising concept and are the analytical output of coding. Codes are not predetermined but constructed through an open and organic engagement with the data (Braun & Clarke, 2020; Braun et al., 2019). In this context, analysis is never complete rather the researcher makes a decision about when to move on to the next phases of analysis such as reporting (Braun & Clarke, 2021) .

4.3.6 Rigour and trustworthiness

Much has been written about rigour and quality in qualitative inquiry (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Mills & Birks, 2014; Patton, 2015; Tracy, 2010). In the 1980s, Lincoln and Guba (1985) promoted trustworthiness with four accompanying criteria, including credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, as an alternative to more positivist notions of validity and reliability in assessing the quality of qualitative research (Bryman, 2012; Morse et al., 2002). Numerous scholars have since built on Lincoln and Guba's concept and related criteria for trustworthiness (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Braun & Clarke, 2013; Merriam & Grenier, 2019; Tracy, 2010). This literature was a starting point for identifying what rigour and trustworthiness meant for my study.³¹

I understand rigour and trustworthiness in three ways: firstly, as reflexivity and adopting a stance of openness (Patton, 2015) at all stages of the research processes; secondly, paying attention to and critiquing scholarly literature on the quality of qualitative inquiry (Mills & Birks, 2014); thirdly, checking data sources against others; and finally, documenting all processes and practices undertaken in all phases of the research. Trustworthiness is not assumed but earned (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010) by my participants, research assistants and other scholars.

4.4 Undertaking the research

I spent a total of 12 weeks on fieldwork in Hong Kong spread over two years. See appendix B for a table outlining key temporal phases of the research. It is common in qualitative inquiries

³¹ There are many different forms of qualitative inquiry and criteria for trustworthiness and rigour in qualitative research is relative and depends on the research project (Denzin, 2017; Liangputtong, 2019).

to utilise more than one data collection method. I utilised two primary data collection methods, including semi-structured interviews and focus groups and three secondary or supporting data collection methods, including participatory actor mapping, secondary data, and a field diary. Following a discussion on the sampling and recruitment strategy, a description and reflection of each of these five data collection methods is presented below.

4.4.1 Purposeful sampling and recruitment

Qualitative inquiries often employ more than one sampling strategy (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010). The fundamental rationale for sampling in qualitative research is strategic, driven by the purpose of the research and desire to generate in-depth, rich data (Bradshaw & Stratford, 2010; Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2015). This research utilised three specific sampling strategies across two phases of data collection. I chose criteria sampling, maximum variation sampling, and snowballing sampling as the most likely to generate insight and in-depth, information-rich data related to the research aim and objectives and these were utilised in both phases of data collection.

Given that the research aim and objectives are broad, I needed to be clear about what I was including/excluding in the data collection to keep the research focused. My criteria included only focusing on URA-led urban renewal processes and practices and only including participants that had been/were involved in or directly affected by URA interventions. Initially, I identified and targeted two different groups of participants, those who had been/were involved somehow in URA-led urban renewal (but not directly affected) and those who had been/were directly affected by URA interventions. Later I differentiated these groups into seven groups: 1. directly affected residents and/or property owners; 2. directly affected business operators and/or property owners; 3. NGO professionals; 4. other professionals (such as planners, academics, politicians); 5. past and current URA employees; 6. Activists; and 7. volunteers. At the outset, I aimed for 1/3 of the participants to represent those directly affected by URA interventions, including those living/working in the streets surrounding the URA intervention.

I also employed a maximum variation strategy. I wanted to include 'the usual suspects' (Braun & Clarke, 2013), such as middle-class professionals vocal on urban renewal issues in Hong Kong but also those less visible and more challenging to reach groups, including low-income migrants and asylum seekers that were often missing from urban renewal discourses in Hong Kong. I decided not to limit the study to a specific URA-led project site or affected neighbourhoods, instead keeping it open to diverse experiences in different contexts related to URA interventions. As a sampling strategy, maximum variation enabled me to identify

meaning-making patterns (Braun et al., 2019) across the heterogeneity of urban renewal experiences in Hong Kong.

A third sampling strategy, snowballing, was utilised to guide recruitment. Snowballing is an especially useful technique in cross-cultural research where the researcher may not have direct access to participants (Liamputtong, 2008). Snowballing uses an initial contact or group to propose (and help recruit) others who have relevant experience of the subject under study (Bryman, 2012). For the interviews, I recruited most of my participants through three contacts who introduced me to willing participants. These participants then introduced me to other willing participants (snowballing) who meet the criteria. The contacts included an academic in the social work field, a volunteer at a migrant worker NGO, and a well-connected Hong Kong friend living in Aotearoa. For the focus groups, I recruited my participants through four interviewees that had participated in the first phase of data collection. This included a heritage preservationist, a housing rights activist, and two social workers from URA-funded NGOs. These interviewees arranged the time and location of the focus groups, sent out information sheets in English and Chinese, and invited people to participate.

A participatory mapping exercise I utilised at the start of interviews helped me identify several government departments involved in URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong. I tried to recruit participants from these departments through contacts on websites but was not very successful. Four days into my first fieldwork trip, someone from one of these departments called me to say, “yes, we know about you and your research Ms Sewell”. They thanked me for my interest but told me that I would not be interviewing anyone from their department or other government departments I had contacted. They suggested I look for relevant information on their website. At the time, I was surprised to receive the phone call and hear that these different government departments/agencies had so quickly become aware of my study.

As a strategy, snowballing worked well because it built on established relationships and demonstrated trustworthiness. It also enabled me to recruit participants from more vulnerable groups sensitively. NGOs guided by ethics of conduct were the ones that introduced me to people directly affected by URA interventions. In my interactions with these NGOs, I noticed (and was impressed) by their sensitivity and protectiveness of URA-affected people.

There are ‘no rules’ for sampling size in qualitative inquiries (Roulston & Choi, 2017). The scope of the research drove the sample size. In particular, this included the aim and objectives, which emphasise diverse perceptions and experiences, the quality of data I collected and what was practicably possible with the time and budget I had (Braun & Clarke, 2013). I anticipated that I would need between 30-40 interview participants and 10-20 workshop participants to address the aim of the research. I interviewed 49 people and held four focus groups with a

total number of 18 focus group participants. Together, this sample size generated substantial, diverse, in-depth information-rich data to meet the aims and objectives of the research.

4.4.2 Secondary data

I collected and analysed various secondary data sources in this study, including scholarly works, policy documents³², public reports³³, popular media³⁴, websites³⁵ and independent publications³⁶. Time and resource constraints meant that almost all the secondary data sources utilised in this study were written or already translated into English³⁷. In this study, secondary data helped develop a broad understanding of the research aim and context and was, secondly, used to compare and integrate with primary data to strengthen analysis and contribute to the overall rigour and trustworthiness of the study. Alternative media and publications of NGOs helped provide detail and context to the diverse acts of resistance to URA interventions described by some participants. I sourced some of the secondary data sources, and some of my interview participants directed me to or gave me others. I did not code secondary data or upload it into NVivo.

4.4.3 Semi-structured interviews

The first phase of the data collection involved semi-structured interviews. Interviews are a valuable method to explore things that we cannot observe, understand what we observe (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015) and learn about the experiences of a wide range of individuals (Liamputtong, 2019). Urban renewal is increasingly becoming visible in urban environments, but the processes, practices, and diverse experiences that shape outcomes are not so visible. Semi-structured interviews are the most common form of qualitative interviews (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In simple terms, they are an interview approach that is both organised and flexible (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

I utilised an interview guide that included an overall outline of the interview structure, demographic questions I asked all interview participants, and a list of areas and related

³² Policy documents include for example, The Urban Renewal Strategy, The Hong Kong Government 2030+ Planning Vision and the URA ordinance.

³³ Public reports include for example, official publications, laws, ordinances, and regulations published in the Hong Kong Government Gazette, and a study report funded by the URA on urban renewal politics in Asian Cities.

³⁴ Popular media include for example, English-speaking newspapers and online articles.

³⁵ Websites include for example, government websites such as the Development Bureau and the URA and websites of NGOs and activist groups.

³⁶ Independent publications include for example, a critical review of urban renewal in Hong Kong by the Civic Exchange and a report on urban renewal in Hong Kong by the Urban Displacement Project.

³⁷ In Hong Kong, all government-related policy documents and reports are in Chinese and English. One of my translators in Aotearoa helped translate one small (privately published by an NGO) book. I used a translation tool on the websites of two online alternative news articles.

questions that I used as prompts for conversation. See appendix C for interview guide. The interview guide meant that I followed the same basic lines of inquiry with each participant (Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2015). The continuity in topics discussed helped keep the interviews focused, which was important given the added complexity of utilising translators and interviewing many participants in their second language. Although I utilised an interview guide, I did not rigidly stick to predetermined topics and questions and encouraged spontaneous conversation.

Interview questions are highly dependent on the knowledge of the researcher (Roulston & Choi, 2017). Although I had spent a significant amount of time reading about urban renewal and the Hong Kong context, it became apparent early on that some topics and questions I had developed were meaningless for many of the participants. For example, sustainability was too abstract and did not translate easily into Chinese. After discussing this issue with my research assistant/translator, I decided to take this topic out unless participants raised it. Instead, I asked participants what their understanding of the relationships between the physical environment and people was. This was more easily translatable and relatable. I tried to vary the types of questions I asked and included descriptive questions and storytelling questions (Dunn, 2010). My first question in interviews was asking them about their own story, how they came to be involved in or directly affected by URA-led urban renewal. I encouraged participants to be open and expand on their answers (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

Although I told participants that a translator was available, most professionals, even those who seemed to struggle to express themselves in English, wanted to be interviewed in English. Balanced illustrative examples highlighting diverse perspectives helped me explain the questions and demonstrate that there was no 'correct answer'. This strategy saved them from asking me to explain the question again, 'giving them face'. In Hong Kong, 'saving or giving face' is a cultural concept that means showing respect to others, often someone of higher social standing.

Interviews ranged between 20 minutes to one and a half hours long. Prioritising the comfort of my participants, I asked them to choose a convenient time and location for the interview. Interviews took place in various locations, including offices, cafes and restaurants, people's homes, and local parks. For the most part, this worked well; however, the background noise in interviews conducted in some coffee shops and McDonald's was challenging for transcription. Moreover, allowing participants to choose the location of the interview did pose some risk. Participants came from diverse backgrounds. See appendix D for breakdown of demographic information of interviewees.

4.4.4 Participatory stakeholder mapping

As part of the semi-structured interviews, I utilised participatory stakeholder mapping as a data collection method. Over the last two decades, the theory and practice of participatory mapping have grown to include a wide range of applications (Brown & Kyttä, 2018). Participatory stakeholder mapping helped me identify and target groups to interview and highlight diverse perceptions and experiences of the power dynamics shaping outcomes of URA-led urban renewal.

Participants were given a blank piece of paper at the start of the interview and asked to draw a map of all the different stakeholders/ groups they thought were involved in URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong and draw lines representing relationships between different groups. I emphasised that there was no right or wrong answer, and even if they could only think of one or two stakeholders, it was still useful to me. Under the participant's direction, I, or my research assistant/translator in the case of a Cantonese speaking participant, offered to write for them if they were unable or uncomfortable writing. A total of five participants asked us to write for them.

I felt that some of the participants (in particular, professionals with busy schedules) thought the mapping exercise was a waste of time. Consequently, the start of these interviews was a bit awkward, and I had to work hard to build rapport with them. However, other participants seemed to enjoy the exercise, taking time to add detail and referring back or adding to it throughout the interview. The maps constructed by participants were diverse. See figure 1 below for examples of participatory stakeholder maps created by participants.

Processes of power and control are made visible on maps (Sletto, 2009; Sova et al., 2015). In general, professionals drew maps that identified multiple stakeholders and the relationships between different stakeholders as hierarchical and linear. In contrast, participants from NGOs and activists highlighted the complexity and messiness of stakeholder relationships involved in URA-led urban renewal and the power of partnership between the public and private sectors to shape URA-led urban renewal outcomes. In general, those directly affected by URA interventions could identify the least number of stakeholders and were less sure of relationships between them. It struck me that the maps were both used to put people and things in their place (Sletto, 2009) and (as in the case with maps drawn by activists) draw attention to power relations and blockages to change (Kindon, 2010).

The maps of people directly affected by the URA interventions spoke the most to me. More than just highlighting the (direct or indirect) exclusion of those most affected by URA interventions, the sparse stakeholder maps drew attention to the power and taken-for-granted authority of certain types of knowledge. Those who were able to name and articulate the

4.4.6 Focus groups

The second phase of data collection comprised four focus groups. These focus groups provided an opportunity to present and get feedback on the provisional themes I had developed from the first phase of research and explore further processes and practices of participation related to URA interventions. Often used in conjunction with other methods (Cameron, 2010; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018), focus groups are an increasingly popular form of data collection in the qualitative study and are effectively group interviews (Bryman, 2012). Consisting of between 3-8 participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013), focus groups are flexible and take various forms, with some more structured than others (Cameron, 2010; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018).

What distinguishes focus groups from other methods is collecting data from multiple participants at the same time and the social interaction and discussion between focus group participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Cameron, 2010; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018; Patton, 2015). Focus groups are characterised by dynamism (Cameron, 2010), usually emphasise a specific theme or topic in-depth (Bryman, 2012), and highlight how meaning is negotiated between people, opening up new or unexpected ways to generate knowledge (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Cameron, 2010). The researcher is a moderator in the focus group, actively promoting and managing the interaction between focus group participants (Bryman, 2012).

An advantage of focus groups as a data collection method is that data quality collected through other methods (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018) and within the focus group itself is enhanced through the inbuilt checks and balances of participant discussions (Bryman, 2012; Patton, 2015). Indeed, the focus group reinforced issues and themes identified in the interviews. Moreover, in focus groups, participants questioned and challenged each other's accounts of participatory processes and practices.

Focus groups were conducted in English or in Cantonese with detailed translation. I developed and utilised a focus group guide to ensure continuity between groups and simplify the translation process. This focus group guide included an overall outline of the focus group structure and process, group rules (including a commitment to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of other participants) and a list of topics and questions. See appendix E for the focus group guide and focus questions in English and Chinese. There were two sections to the focus group topics and discussion. The first question broadly asked what participants thought was the outcome of URA-led urban renewal for people's everyday lives in Hong Kong. The second section focused on participation, including URA-led participation, NGO-led participation and resident/community-led participation.

Although focus groups take various forms, there is a strong preference for homogenous groups in qualitative inquiries (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). It has been demonstrated that participants are more likely to share information with peers who understand their views (Morgan & Hoffman, 2018). The four focus groups in this study are considered homogenous. To adhere to ethical principles of research and manage the risk of psychological harm (Dowling, 2010), a social worker from one of the NGOs who helped organise one of the workshops for affected people also attended the workshop to provide support and care to participants.

Focus groups ranged between 40 minutes and one and a half hours. I did not collect demographic data for each participant. Instead, I wrote general descriptions and reflections on the participants and context of the focus groups. See appendix F for a table presenting description and reflection on focus groups.

4.4.7 Data preparation and analysis

Of the 49 semi structured interviews conducted in the first phase of data collection, 31 were fully conducted in English, four were a mix of Cantonese and English and 14 were fully conducted in Cantonese. Interviews were audiotaped, uploaded into a password protected central database and then transcribed verbatim. Two interviewees did not want to be audio recorded; in which case I took as accurate notes of the discussion as possible and put notes into the same format as audio transcriptions.

I listened to all audio recordings of all interviews conducted in English at least once, checking transcriptions for accuracy and consistency of style. Interviews conducted in Cantonese and Cantonese and English were translated into English after being transcribed into Chinese. All 14 of the transcription and translation of interviews conducted in Cantonese were checked for accuracy and style by a second research assistant/translator.

Of the 41 interview participants who also drew stakeholder maps, 31 were done in English and 10 in Chinese. I photocopied the maps constructed in Chinese and, with the help of a translator, wrote the English translations next to the Chinese characters on the photocopies.

Of the four focus groups conducted, one was fully conducted in English, and three conducted in Cantonese and English. The focus groups were all transcribed verbatim by a translator; however, detailed translations during the focus groups and the added cost and time needed to transcribe meant that the transcriptions were not then fully translated into English in the same way that interview data was. Instead, the transcriber/translator added details missed by the translator in the field in brackets next to the Chinese. All three of the four-group transcription, conducted in Cantonese/English, were checked by a second translator.

I uploaded all interview transcripts, notes, descriptions and reflections, maps and focus group transcripts into NVivo for analysis. NVivo is a computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software programme (CAQDAS) that helps manage, organise and assist researchers in the coding and theme development (Woolf & Silver, 2018).

I have specifically drawn on and adapted Braun and Clarke's six phases of reflective thematic analysis to guide my approach. The six phases include data 1. Familiarisation, 2. Generating codes, 3. Constructing themes, 4. Reviewing themes, 5. Defining themes, and 6. Producing a report (Braun & Clarke, 2013, 2019; Braun et al., 2019). Rather than a prescriptive guideline to be followed rigidly, Braun and Clarke (2020) argue the six phases are about a flexible guide to thoughtful engagement with data and the analytical process. I added a second coding phase after phase three (constructing themes) and merged phases five and six. This adaptation reflects the particularities of my research design, including a change in research direction, two phases of data collection and the challenge of translation. The period encompassing the first phase of data familiarisation in the first phase of data collection to final stage of reporting and writing was three years. Appendix G outlines and describes the specific phases of analysis I undertook in my research.

4.5 Ethical considerations

Ethical clearance was sought and received from the Human Ethics Committee of Australian National University and the Human Ethics Committee UoW see appendix H for ethics documentation.

Protecting the rights and privacy of research participants and ensuring their confidentiality is central to the conduct of ethical research (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Bryman, 2012; Dowling, 2010). All participants of the interviews and focus groups were provided with an information sheet, consent form and a list of English or Chinese questions before we met. I went through the information sheet and consent forms with participants in person to ensure voluntary and informed consent. I also went through group rules with focus group participants (including a commitment to maintaining the privacy and confidentiality of other focus group participants). Going through the information sheet and consent forms in person was especially important for participants whose first language was not English or Cantonese. One interview participant gave oral consent³⁸. For information sheets, consent forms for interviews see appendix I for information sheets, consent forms for focus groups see appendix J³⁹

³⁸ After reading the oral consent script to the participant, I recorded the oral consent and dated and signed the oral consent form (as required with oral consent at the ANU)

³⁹ I utilised two information sheets for interviews, one for people directly affected by URA interventions and all other participants. I used two information sheets because the remuneration for participating was different for the two

During interviews, several participants said “they didn’t mind” if I used their real name. However, the politically sensitive nature of the topic, together with including publicly well-known interviewees, meant I decided to use pseudonyms for all participants.

I store all electronic data in an online password-protected database with two-step verifications, and all consent forms are stored in a locked cupboard at the UoW. As an added security measure, I have deleted all data files on my hard drive. As well as utilising pseudonyms and securing stored data, I have been careful with the descriptions of participants, omitting information that might make them easily recognisable, especially in the case of well-known public figures (Creswell, 2014; Dowling, 2010).

Despite my efforts, privacy and confidentiality are hard to manage in qualitative research. As I made clear to all my interview participants before they signed the consent forms, I cannot guarantee privacy and confidentiality (Bryman, 2012). During interviews, participants often asked who else I had spoken to, in which case I politely said that I could not disclose that information. However, several participants, especially those from NGOs, mentioned they knew of others I had spoken to. One participant involved in a social worker-led housing rights working group said that on mention of my name, everyone seemed to know who I was, and several said I had interviewed them. In another situation, a legislative council member I interviewed asked to have a photo with me. He later sent me a WhatsApp message showing how he had put it up on his Facebook page and blog with the tagline “my friend Kate urban renewal researcher from New Zealand.”

At the start of each focus group, I emphasised that I would be using the video recordings of the focus group to make an easily accessible, publicly available video about the research. I cautioned that I would not protect their identities if they participated and that they should not participate if they were not comfortable with this. However, the changing political situation sparked by the Anti Extradition Law protests in 2019 made me question the validity of the consent participants gave me. It may be that some focus group participants were involved in the 2019 protests and likely more concerned about confidentiality now. Indeed, this change has also reinforced the importance of protecting my interview participants' identities. I discussed this with my supervisors and approached the Human Ethics Committee at The University of Waikato for advice. I took their advice and have put the video on hold for the time being. I will re-apply for ethics approval if I choose to revisit this in the future.

Analysis in the following chapters draws on examples and experiences related to well-known organisations and groups. There is always a possibility (however minimal) that participants

groups. The information sheets for affected people include a list of organisations that support people affected by URA-led urban renewal.

are identified through the mention of specific groups or organisations. These examples highlight that there are always risks and things beyond my control.

A commitment to ethical research is recognising and minimising the exploitative and extractive nature of research. I have grappled with the exploitative and extractive nature of research and community consultation in past work and throughout this research. I am aware of how information is extracted from communities with often little return. I take this seriously and have tried to acknowledge, respect, and as much as possible make space for reciprocity. Feminist scholar England (1994) defines a reciprocal relationship as one based on seeking empathy and mutual respect.

During field work, this empathy and mutual respect meant validating the experiences, expertise, and opinions of all participants, when appropriate sharing parts of my own story, and accepting and reciprocating hospitality. For example, several of my participants requested we do the interview in their homes and offered me drinks and snacks. I always accepted their hospitality, mindful of taking enough food and drink to show respect but not so much that I was taking food or drink away from their families. As already described, I shared with participants my personal connection to Hong Kong and stories of my family. Sharing something of myself with participants was a way for me to build a more reciprocal relationship with my participants.

For me, a commitment to reciprocity is a responsibility to 'give something back'. At the end of each interview, I expressed gratitude for the time participants had given me and thanked them for what they shared with me. Although some scholars caution against remuneration for research participants (Braun & Clarke, 2013), I felt it appropriate in the context of my research to give participants a 'thank you gift'. After careful consideration and getting advice from NGOs in Hong Kong, I gave interviewees affected by URA-interventions a HKD 200.00 (around NZD36.00) supermarket voucher and all other participants a jar of honey. I gave all focus group participants a HKD 100.00 (around NZD18.00) supermarket voucher.

Dissemination of research is especially important in cross cultural research (Liamputtong, 2008). The distance between Hong Kong and Aotearoa has been a challenge, especially since the COVID19 pandemic. I have tried to maintain relationships with some of my English-speaking participants and organisations over the years, updating them on the research and just generally checking in to see how they are in relation to the Anti Extradition Law Protests and pandemic. I am in the process of writing a simple, easy-to-access research report that I will translate and make available to participants. I plan to go back to Hong Kong when travel is less restricted to present this report to participants.

I am still working through an important ethical consideration. At what point is my project 'finished'? And what does this mean for the relationships I have built? At what point will I feel like I have 'given something back' (Creswell, 2014; Patton, 2015) and honoured the time and commitment that participants and other individuals and organisations have shown me? The current pandemic and ongoing political tensions mean that I need to rethink my exit strategy. I may not be able to maintain relationships with participants and organisations in the way that I would like.

Furthermore, participants' priorities have likely changed and people may not have the same interest in the research project. I will take the interests, feelings, and feedback of participants into consideration as I think through the next steps, aware that the current pandemic and ongoing political tensions in Hong Kong will ultimately dictate how I draw the project to a close.

4.6 Conclusion

As the quote at the start of this chapter highlights, we cannot run away from ourselves. We take ourselves, our histories, values, politics, and aspirations into our research. Furthermore, we make choices about which parts of identity we reveal or foreground during interactions with research participants, shaping the data we collect and the analytical narrative we construct. Rather than a limitation, I feel that being cognisant of my positionality and subjectivity has brought depth to my analysis and created new possibilities and directions for learning in terms of research subject and skills.

The research journey I have been on has reinforced to me the importance of building and maintaining relationships in research. In Hong Kong, sampling and recruitment strategies based on developing relationships and building trust are essential for someone not currently working or immersed in the urban renewal context. This principle extends to recruiting a suitable research assistant/translator. Research assistants/translators play an invaluable role in cross-cultural research and create 'triangular' power dynamics (Hennink, 2008; Stevano & Deane, 2019). These triangular power dynamics, which create opportunities and limitations within, are contingent on the subjectivities and interactions between the researcher, research assistant, and participants.

Utilising multiple methods and phases of data collection have been important for generating rich data. Language limitations meant I did not always have the opportunity to probe for more detail and depth during interviews in the first phase of data collection. The second phase of data enabled me to ask further questions enriching theme development. Furthermore, when I identified a bias in one method (participatory stakeholder mapping), I could draw on other more reliable data sources such as the interview and focus group data for analysis.

I also emphasise that context matters. As I quickly became aware through the phone call with the Development Bureau and conversations with NGO workers, it is hard to be inconspicuous when researching such a contentious topic. Furthermore, the rapid reconfiguration of state-society relations occurring through increasing integration with China and subsequent political struggles such as the Anti-Extradition law protests create unique and complex ethical questions to consider in reporting and disseminating research.

The next chapter describes the context of the research. In-line with a postcolonial urban approach, I utilise the 'ordinary' city (Robinson, 2006) critique as a counter-narrative to more normative accounts of Hong Kong that foreground its 'rags to riches' story and 'Asia's world city' branding to challenge and extend existing knowledges of cities and the dynamics that shape urban development in Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 5: HONG KONG AND THE URBAN RENEWAL CONTEXT

5.1 Introduction

Postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics draw attention to and critique how certain narratives, including those of urban context, come to dominate how scholars, urban policymakers, and everyday urban dwellers think about and interact with diverse urbanisms. How context is described and presented is not neutral (McFarlane, 2010). On the contrary, it can reinforce dominant interpretations and imaginations of a particular city or draw attention to what often gets omitted in how people and places are represented (Hall, 2012). For example, Hong Kong Special Administered Region of China (hereafter Hong Kong) is often described through the lens of a 'rags to riches' story, in which under British colonial rule, an island barren with rocks developed through the miracle of a free market economy into a modern global financial centre (Chan, 2007). This chapter will highlight that paying attention to less visible everyday lived urban experiences and strategies disrupts this Eurocentric and simplistic narrative.

Today, Hong Kong competes with other Asian cities in inventing itself as 'Asia's world city' (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016). This framing of Hong Kong's urban development trajectory demonstrates ongoing coloniality, masks growing inequality and limits the potential that competing perceptions and experiences present for imagining and acting out alternative, more equitable urban futures. Focusing on state-led urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong, this thesis contributes to a growing body of work that utilise postcolonial urban theory to extend and challenge existing knowledges of cities and their dynamics that shape their urban development (Lawhon et al., 2020; Robinson, 2006; Roy, 2018).

This chapter first juxtaposes the narrative of Hong Kong as 'Asia's world city' (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016) with the narrative of Hong Kong as an 'ordinary city' (Robinson, 2006) to frame the scholarly review and discussion on Hong Kong, and its urban renewal context. Then, Hong Kong's location and terrain, colonisation and ongoing coloniality, legal and political systems, population, people and culture, economy, and housing context are presented. The urban renewal context is then discussed, including its history and meaning in Hong Kong, the establishment, processes and practices of the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), outcomes of displacement, and the emergence and growth of civil society and resistance movements. Finally, an overview of knowledge and gaps in understanding Hong Kong and its urban renewal context is summarised, and the thesis's contribution is pinpointed.

5.2 'Asia's world city' – an ordinary city

The 21st century is often described as the century of Asian urbanisation (Lee et al., 2015; Roy & Ong, 2011). In many respects, Hong Kong represents the leading edge of Asian urbanisation. As discussed in chapter 2, Global Cities Research (GCR) focuses on specific sets of global city functions such as nodes of command and control of global finance that categorises cities into hierarchies, dominate normative scholarly narratives of cities. This trend is noticeable in the Eurocentric global city narratives that frame Hong Kong's urban development past and present. These narratives highlight how, over the course of a few decades, Hong Kong developed from a trading centre to a colonial outpost in the nineteenth century to a densely populated brand-named global city with all the attributes of a command and control centre for commercial and financial interests (Charrieras et al., 2018; Huang, 2015; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Siu, 2011) in the late twentieth century.

Informed by GCR, descriptions of Hong Kong are often set against a self-congratulating (Chan, 2007) 'rags to riches story' (Hamilton, 2021; Smart, 2001). For instance, the mythologised story of Li Ka-shing, whose family fled China in the 1940s and rose from a fifteen-year-old factory worker to Hong Kong's most infamous billionaire business magnate perhaps most epitomises the 'rags to riches' narrative. This global city narrative treats 150 years of colonialism as a set of noninterventionist liberal frameworks within which capitalism could flourish (Law, 2009).

Today, Hong Kong is competing with many other Asian cities in inventing itself as a world city (Siu, 2011). As a result, Hong Kong has branded itself as 'Asia's world city'. In the lead up to the transition from British rule to Chinese rule, the Hong Kong business elite promoted this branding as a way to secure Hong Kong's position as a global financial centre (Choi, 2007). This branding was later cemented into Hong Kong's urban policy through the Chief Executive (at the time) Tung Chee Hwa's policy address in 1999 (Hong Kong SAR Government, 1999). Hong Kong's vision to be 'Asia's World City' (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016) has led to a series of top-down entrepreneurial infrastructure projects aimed at economic diversification, developing Hong Kong's innovation and creative capacities (Charrieras et al., 2018; Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016), and increasing connectivity and integration of Hong Kong into the wider Pearl River Delta Region of China (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016; Huang, 2015; Siu, 2011).

Hong Kong's global city narrative of developmental success and related aspirations to be 'Asia's world city' highlights ongoing coloniality, masks growing inequality and limits our understanding of the form and function of urban development, including alternative and competing ways of being urban and making urban futures, especially amongst and for non-elites (Heisler et al., 2020; Qian & Tang, 2019; Smart & Smart, 2017b). As a counter-narrative,

the ordinary cities critique (as discussed in chapter 2) challenges ongoing coloniality embedded in the assumptions and related categorisations and hierarchies of GCR that privilege certain cities, features (ordinarily related to the global economy) and groups of people (global elites, and professional creatives) over others (Robinson, 2006) in the development and renewal of cities (Hall, 2015).

By focusing on everyday experiences, the ordinary cities critique takes the political and economic aspirations of the everyday urban majority seriously (Maringanti, 2013). Furthermore, this view highlights how the ongoing making and remaking of Hong Kong and its urban development context is relational, contingent, and offers alternative urban development trajectories (Smart & Smart, 2017b). Following a brief description of Hong Kong's location and terrain, the chapter presents a review of predominantly global cities framed literature on Hong Kong and its urban renewal context with the ordinary cities critique drawn on to identify gaps in knowledge that this thesis contributes to addressing.

5.3 Overview of Hong Kong

5.3.1 Location and terrain

Hong Kong is part of the Pearl River Delta area and is bordered by Guangdong Province in the north and the South China Sea to the east, south and west. It is one of the most densely populated and compact cities globally (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lai, 2010; Yip, 2018) and consists of three regions: Hong Kong Island, Kowloon Peninsula, and the New Territories (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lai, 2010). It has over 200 islands, with the largest, Lan Tau Island, being the location of its airport and has a total land area of 1,106km². Its terrain is hilly to mountainous, with 20% of Hong Kong's land on steep slopes. The built-up areas make up 24% of the land, of which 26% is reclaimed land. There is 443 km² of country parks and special areas and 24 km² of marine parks.

Figure 2
Map of Hong Kong



Note.[source of image] : (WorldAtlas, 2021)

5.3.2 Colonisation and coloniality

To understand the current context of Hong Kong it is important to recognise the global historical linkages in which the city as it is now known has evolved (Siu, 2011). Although not the focus of this thesis it is equally important to recognise that contrary to the portrayal of Hong Kong as a barren rock before colonial expansion (Chun, 2019) there were groups of ethnically diverse Chinese minorities living on boats and in various walled villages in Hong Kong. Some of these groups had their own sophisticated classical education institutions. Although these groups were quickly outnumbered by Han Chinese especially from Guangdong area in the early colonial era they nevertheless shaped Hong Kong's colonial city formation (Chan, 2007).

Hong Kong, like many other nation states (for example, Myanmar, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, India, Pakistan) and city states of Asia (for example, Singapore) is a former British colony. Before European expansion into South China, however, Chinese merchants dominated economic positions in the region, controlling long established trade between China and Java, Siam, Malacca and the Ryukyuan Kingdom. When the British East India Company established a trading house in Guangzhou in 1715 (Siu, 2011), many of these Chinese merchants became collaborators in colonial expansion, playing an important role in the opium trade, providing supplies for the British Navy, and spying for British military purposes (Hamilton, 2021; Law,

2009). Many other ethnic groups were involved in trade during colonial expansion. For example, Parsee merchants used Hong Kong as a trading base and were known as money lenders (Siu, 2011)⁴⁰.

Hong Kong was formally colonised by the British in three phases. First, marking the end of the First Opium War, Hong Kong Island was ceded to the British Empire in 1842 through the Treaty of Nanjing (Law, 2009). Kowloon was later ceded to Britain in 1868 when the Qing Dynasty lost the Second Opium War. Finally, the New Territories was leased to Britain for 99 years for the purpose of military defence in 1898 (Chun, 2019; Heisler et al., 2020; Lam, 2015; Ng, 2018b). During British rule, Hong Kong was occupied by the Japanese for three years and eight months in World War II (1941 to 1945). More than just territorial conquest the British interest in Hong Kong was about establishing an independent military and commercial base where they could set up their own judicial system to govern the activities of their merchants under military protection of the British Navy (Law, 2009).

As elsewhere in the British empire, the colonial authority administered Hong Kong according to the policy of indirect rule and maintenance of local tradition which separated the cultures of ruler and ruled (Chan, 2007; Chun, 2019). Indirect rule, a policy that worked to systemise, rationalise and categorise was carried out in ways particular to each colony. In Hong Kong, how indirect rule materialised related to the colonisers' aspirations to both modernise Hong Kong and turn it into a free trade port and capitalist economy and during the cold war era, steer Hong Kong away from ongoing nationalist conflicts in China (Chun, 2019). Typical of indirect rule in other British colonies, Chun (2019) explains how administering society through maintaining local tradition in Hong Kong ironically necessitated the emergence of colonial institutions to regulate the very same local traditions it aimed to preserve.

For the colonisers, modernisation and economic expansion meant mapping and re-ordering, formalising, and sanitising urban space, constricting Hong Kong's vibrant street life to a more orderly and clean space (Chan, 2018; Marinelli, 2018). In the early days of colonial rule, this re-ordering of public space included racial segregation (Law, 2009). For example, the Chinese were not allowed to reside in the central business district, were pushed away from the waterfront and certain clubs were reserved for Europeans (Hamilton, 2021; Law, 2009). Interestingly, colonial authorities tolerated some informal street markets in the designated Chinese settlements to maintain social stability amongst the lower classes (Ng, 2014).

The formalised racial segregation in early colonial Hong Kong is akin to Fanon's account of the colonial city where the hegemony of colonialism is based on processes of spatial

⁴⁰ Three Parsee merchants were some of the first board members of the Hong Kong Shanghai Bank (HSBC) when Scottish traders set it up in 1866 (Siu, 2011).

segregation through colonial administration (Fanon et al., 1965). Hong Kong remains a highly regulated (and less formally) segregated society; this is particularly evident in the planning system inherited from the British colonists. This planning system coupled with neoliberal pro-growth ideology has led to increased restriction, commodification, and public space surveillance, which has maintained and even intensified social exclusion as seen under early British rule (Yip, 2018).

Hong Kong sovereignty reverted to China in 1997 after the carefully staged Sino British Declaration was signed in 1984 between Great Britain and the People's Republic of China (here on referred to as China) (Chan, 2015; Huang, 2015). Under this agreement, one in which the people of Hong Kong had very little say (Chan, 2015), Hong Kong was promised 50 years of autonomous rule under a one country two systems mandate. The Basic Rule of Law and quasi-democratic mode of governance developed during the colonial era remains to this day (Lam-Knott, 2019b).

Interestingly, colonialism in Hong Kong does not evoke bad memories for most of its population; instead, colonialism is associated with meritocracy, wealth accumulation, and the rule of law (Chin, 2014). For many Hong Kong people, ongoing reintegration into greater China including through promotion of Chinese as the language of instruction in schools and more attention on patriotism, has left them feeling like the freedoms they experienced during British rule are being infringed upon (Chin, 2014; Choi, 2007). As Chin (2014) emphasises, it is not enough to say colonialism was part of Hong Kong's history; scholars must study how colonality of power worked through culture and everyday life during and after British rule. Hong Kong people's perceptions and feelings towards integration with greater China highlight ongoing colonality and disputes over controlling the colonial matrix of power⁴¹ by non-western states, institutions such as BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), people of colour and different religions (Choi, 2007; Lee et al., 2015).

The end of British rule in Hong Kong did not end colonality, the underlying colonial structure of management, colonial capitalist system and invisible underlying logic of colonisation remains deeply embedded in Hong Kong's present (as it does in many post-colonial cities and nation states) (Choi, 2007; Lee et al., 2015). Similar to the desires of other East Asian states to emulate the west, Hong Kong's global city aspirations to serve as a command-and-control financial centre is an example of ongoing colonality (Lee & Cho, 2012). As Choi (2007) highlights, to serve multinational corporations (the matrix of colonial power), Hong Kong must maintain the judicial institutional environment set up under British rule, undermining its own

⁴¹ The colonial matrix of power refers to statutes of management and control that emerged in the 16th century as a result of western Christian and European monarchs expanding their domain over the Atlantic and conquest and colonisation of the new world (Lee et al., 2015).

sovereignty to a supranational juridical-economic structure. Contrary to popular discourse, the threat to Hong Kong's autonomous judiciary is as much if not more from a supranational judicial-economic structure than intervention from communist China (Choi, 2007).

As highlighted above, scholarly narratives of Hong Kong highlight ongoing and deep rooted coloniality shaping Hong Kong and its urban development context. By focusing on everyday experiences, the ordinary cities (Robinson, 2006) critique brings in to view gaps in these narratives. In particular, what is left outside coloniality? Where and what is decoloniality? Or as Chan asks "What is left for de-colonisation in Hong Kong?" (Chan, 2015, p. 245). Lee et al. (2015) argue that there are two co-existing trajectories in the current epoch of the 'rise of Asia'. One is de-westernisation through the dispute over the colonial matrix of power. The other is decoloniality, which for them is attempting to delink from the colonial matrix of power through new types of social relations based on competing values of harmony, the abundance of life, cooperation, selfless success, and protection of the environment.

Ongoing coloniality in Hong Kong within the context of de-westernisation in 'a rising Asia', has undoubtedly reinforced the normalisation of inequality within the city. That being said, and as this thesis will highlight, it has also been a catalyst for imagining and acting out alternative urban development trajectories in which spatial relations have transformed, lines that segregate have been reappropriated by those excluded in the new colonial matrix of power, and going back to Fanon et al. (1965), perhaps hope for a decolonised society recognised. More than co-existing, processes and practices of coloniality and decoloniality are messy and mutually constitutive. Chan (2015) argues that decolonisation in Hong Kong is not unidirectional or the outcome of a choice between dichotomies of purely ideological or pragmatic solutions. Instead, it involves multiple complex cultural-political struggles to re-imagine the future, something neglected in normative accounts of urban development and a particular interest in this study, urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

5.3.3 Political and legal system

Hong Kong is not a national state or a city-state with its own sovereignty (Ip, 2018). Hong Kong has a unique political system characterised as an executive-led, quasi-democracy headed by a Chief Executive with extensive power with a Legislative Council (LegCo) fulfilling the legislative function to the Chief Executive (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). The Chief Executive is prohibited from having political party affiliation (Cheng, 2016) and is elected by a committee of now 1,200 people consisting of politicians, conglomerates and professionals now selected by China's central government (Cheng, 2016; Lam-Knott, 2019b). The Chief Executive selects the Executive Council and principal officials. As agreed in the Sino-British

Joint Declaration signed by the Chinese and British, a Basic Rule of Law was created in 1990 for Hong Kong, which acts as a mini-constitution and outlines the one country two systems mandate including an independent judiciary. The Chief Executive's powers and functions are established by Article 48 of the Basic Law (Hong Kong SAR Government, 1997).

Before sovereignty reverted to China in 1997, the British created and incorporated The Hong Kong Bill of Rights into the legal system to protect human rights (Cheng, 2016). They also introduced some democratic reforms. Popular elections were introduced in District Boards in 1982 and then to the Legislative Council in 1988 (Cheng, 2016; Fong, 2021). The function of LegCo is to enact, amend or repeal laws; examine and approve budgets, taxation, and public expenditure; and raise questions on the work of the government. LegCo appoints and removes judges of the Courts of Final Appeal and the Chief Judge of the High Court and has the power to impeach the Chief Executive (Legislative Council of the HKSAR, 2021).

Since its establishment, LegCo has gone through many changes, the most recent change being adopting The Improving Electoral System (Consolidated Amendments) Bill and the related Ordinance in May 2021. Under this Ordinance, the membership of the seventh term of the Legislative Council will increase from 70 to 90 seats (Legislative Council of the HKSAR, 2021). Under this new system, members of the election committee (appointed by authorities and pro-establishment bodies who also elect the Chief Executive) will make up 40 seats. Functional constituencies, which are individuals, corporates, and individual or corporate members representing special interest groups (primarily businesses and largely pro-establishment) (Cheng, 2016; Loh, 2006; Yeung et al., 2017) are reduced from 35 to 30 seats. Geographical constituencies (elected democratically) (Loh, 2006; Yeung et al., 2017), have reduced from 35 seats to 20 seats (Legislative Council of the HKSAR, 2021).

Together with other legislative changes since 1997, such as the introduction of the 2020 National Security Law, this overhaul of LegCo highlights an erosion of the established rule of law (Chu, 2018), what some scholars are calling a 'backsliding' of Hong Kong's semi democracy (Fong, 2021). Indeed, it seems that Article 68 of Hong Kong's Basic Law, which states that "the ultimate aim is the election of all the members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage" (Hong Kong SAR Government, 1997), is subject to Beijing's agenda.

Post-1997, the Chinese state has strengthened its political influence in Hong Kong, but its goal is not to turn Hong Kong into another Chinese city. Hong Kong's perceived capitalist developmental success under British rule is valued by the Chinese government. Its strategy is to dominate and exert control whilst leaving the pre-existing colonial power structure (including its political and legal system) intact to maintain the smooth functioning of the Hong Kong capitalist system (Choi, 2007). This ongoing coloniality includes keeping the ex-colonial

government administration officers and the real estate capitalist as the ruling elite (Choi, 2007; Chun, 2019).

What is missing from accounts of Hong Kong's current political and legal system is how the state, which here is a colonial political and legal system (and by in large supported by China), maintains its power amongst neoliberal reform. Secondly (and conversely), how new types of social relations that act out alternative forms of governance with competing values challenge the state's power and authority. Framing Hong Kong as an ordinary city puts the spotlight on these competing urban aspirations. As this thesis demonstrates through a focus on state-led urban renewal, colonial political and legal systems that work to maintain the status quo also provide the impetus for imagining and acting out alternative urban futures and offer hope for change.

5.3.4 Population, people, and culture

Hong Kong has gone through multiple waves of migration and periods of massive population growth. Post-World War II, Hong Kong became a safe haven for refugees fleeing war, political turmoil and famine in China (Chin, 2014; Forrest et al., 2004; Lai, 2010; Lam, 2015). As a result, the population grew from 600,000 in 1945 to 2.4 million in 1950. It is estimated that 1,285,000 people entered Hong Kong from China between 1945-1949 (Smart & Smart, 2017b). The vast majority of these migrants were ordinary people. Still, they also included a significant number of Republican elites, many of whom came from comprador⁴² families whose capitalist outlook, social capital, and related intertwined focus on business and education survived the move to Hong Kong (Hamilton, 2021).

For many of these migrants, Hong Kong was intended to be a safe haven until they could return to China or a springboard to other countries; however many settled in Hong Kong permanently (Chan, 2007). Now, Hong Kong has a population of 7.32 million (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016). Sixty percent of its population was born in the territory, 30% born in China and 10% born elsewhere (Heisler et al., 2020). It is an ageing population (Heisler et al., 2020) and possesses one of the lowest total fertility rates in the world at 1.11 children per woman (World Population Review, 2021).

Migrants from China, in particular spouses and dependents of Hong Kong men still make up the bulk on new immigrants into Hong Kong (Siu, 2011)⁴³. The other 10% of the population born outside of Hong Kong or China includes, elite expatriates, low-income migrant workers

⁴² A comprador is a person who acts as an agent for foreign organisations usually engaged in investment, trade, or economic and/or political exploitation.

⁴³ Chinese citizens must obtain a permit to visit and emigrate to Hong Kong and can only apply for permanent residency if they stay in Hong Kong for seven consecutive years (Yang et al., 2020).

from other parts Asia, and asylum seekers and refugees. There is a social and occupational hierarchy of migrants in Hong Kong (Knowles & Harper, 2009). 'Expatriate' migrants providing financial and professional services, particularly in the innovation and technology sectors are highly valued and visible in Hong Kong government planning strategies, whilst migrant domestic workers, who make up 4% of the population (World Population Review, 2021) and 10% of the working population, remain largely invisible (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016). New migrants from China are officially recognised in government policy and have a clear pathway to permanent residency, however these migrants face discrimination from many locally born Hongkongers who see them as poor, uneducated and putting pressure on housing and social services (Siu, 2011).

Hong Kong culture is popularly thought to be influenced by East Asian Confucian values (Yang et al., 2020), a 'can do' work ethic (Chu, 2018; Huang, 2015; Siu, 2011), pragmatism (Kennedy et al., 2006) and a capitalist consumer culture, that fuses both Eastern and Western traditions (Chun, 2019; Kennedy et al., 2006). These descriptions, however, do not reflect the complex history of Hong Kong and the overlapping processes of colonialism, nationalism and modernity that continue to shape Hong Kong culture. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss general counternarratives of Hong Kong's culture at length, however aspects of these counternarratives relevant to this study will be highlighted. For in-depth accounts see Law (2009), Hamilton (2021) and (Chan, 2007).

Counter narratives of Hong Kong culture worthy of mention here are the role that formal colonial education played in shaping Hong Kong culture and relatedly its urban development context. During early colonial rule, western style education and the English language was introduced by colonial authorities. English remained Hong Kong's only official language until 1974 but Chinese was properly taught in public schools and the popular everyday dialect remained Cantonese. As in other colonial settings, western styled education and the English language worked to segregate and control the Chinese population. In the early colonial era, European and Chinese children were educated separately. Interestingly, this segregation extended to within the Chinese community when its wealthy elite requested and were granted by colonial authorities a separate school for its children to be educated in English within the western tradition (Law, 2009).

Many of Hong Kong's Chinese elite were from Comprador families in China who had strategically sought out western language and education (especially in the United States) for their own benefit long before formal colonisation (Hamilton, 2021). In Hong Kong, education and the English language have been a tool of domination of one group over the other and within the same group, working to maintain an established Chinese class system (Law, 2009). As Hamilton's (2021) study tracing the lives of several of Hong Kong's ruling elite suggests,

Hong Kong's 'rags to riches stories' under a British flag fails to account for entrenched inequality related to long lines of inherited privilege that span across trans-Pacific networks outside of Britain that many of Hong Kong's ruling elite still maintain.

In the past, Hongkongers have been described as 'apolitical' where traditional family values nurture political passivity (Lam, 2015; Smart & Smart, 2017a). In light of the political unrest in recent years, this view is undoubtedly changing. However, for some scholars, political passivity has never accurately described Hong Kong's culture. These scholars draw attention to a long history of resistance in Hong Kong, including squatter evictions, labour rights, and demonstrations and petitions for Cantonese to be recognized as an official language (Chu, 2018; Smart & Smart, 2017a), with some going so far as saying that the 'apolitical' narrative is a depoliticizing discourse peddled to suppress politics (Lam, 2015). As a form of coloniality, a taken-for-granted consensus on Hong Kong's 'apolitical culture' works to displace politics and maintain the status quo. An example of a depoliticisation strategy is observed through the lens of postpolitics. Specific strategies of depoliticisation utilised by the state to maintain control over urban renewal are discussed in chapter 7.

In recent times, uncertainty about Hong Kong's future has led to the re-negotiation of identities, debate over core values and collective memories (Chin, 2014; Lowe & Ortmann, 2020; Siu, 2011) and protest. Localism (Lowe & Ortmann, 2020), demands for heritage preservation (often colonial heritage) (Barber, 2014), and recent clashes between Anti-Extradition Law protests and Beijing loyalists in 2019 (Pang, 2020) are examples and cases in point. What is absent from normative debates, discussions and demonstrations of Hong Kong's evolving culture and identity is the world views, experiences, and aspirations of low-income ethnic minorities and economic migrants. These include South Asian communities (Law & Lee, 2013), domestic workers from the Philippines and Indonesia (Mok & Ho, 2021), increasing numbers of economic migrants from Africa (Amoah et al., 2020), and the asylum seeker and refugee population, mainly from South Asia and Africa (Mathews, 2018; Vecchio & Ham, 2018). This group of people make up a significant number of the working population and, like any other group, are shaping Hong Kong culture. The ordinary cities critique (Robinson, 2006) highlights how specific features of cities have been privileged over others in urban scholarship but also how the experiences and perceptions of certain groups have been privileged over others.

Narratives of Hong Kong's colonial history rest heavily on Hong Kong people's self-identification and how they perceive China. Hong Kong's story is often told by the stories of others as either flattering (the British Colonists) or humiliating (China's loss of Hong Kong during the Opium war) (Chan, 2007; Lowe & Ortmann, 2020). In reality, Hong Kong's culture and ongoing contested identity is deeply interwoven with both its relationship with wider China,

its encounter with colonialism, wider trans-Pacific networks and, although largely invisible in normative scholarship, its connection to other Asian nations through its ethnic minorities and economic migrant population which make up a significant number of people affected by state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong.

5.3.5 Economy, the role of land, and inequality

In the post-Post-World War II era, the colonial government actively promoted economic growth (Chun, 2019) and competed with other rapidly developing 'small Asian dragons' (Siu, 2011) by expanding its small manufacturing enterprises. This pro-growth agenda was related to the Crown's expectation that its colonies were financially self-sufficient (Heisler et al., 2020; Tang, 2016), the colonialist modernisation project, and diverting competing nationalist sentiments amongst its Chinese population (Chun, 2019).

Taking advantage of China's economic reforms in the 1970s, local manufacturing businesses transferred their activities across the border to Guangdong, where labour and other manufacturing costs were lower and transformed itself into a regional business and service hub (Charrieras et al., 2018; Ip, 2018; Siu, 2011; Smart, 2001). The service sector now accounts for 93% of GDP and 88% of employment in Hong Kong (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016). Economic ties and dependency between Hong Kong and China have only increased since the 1970s. Hong Kong is a platform for Mainland Chinese investors to reach global markets and it relies on Hong Kong's capitalist infrastructure and network for inflow and outflow of capital (Chin, 2014; Choi, 2007).

Post-1997, the Chinese strategy has been to exert control but leave enough room for the pre-existing colonial structure to maintain the smooth functioning of Hong Kong's capitalist system (Choi, 2007). What has changed is China's collusion with local capitalist elites, favouring their access to the mainland's markets in exchange for their support of Beijing in local matters (Chun, 2019). This strategy has meant that real estate tycoons and ex-colonial officers have maintained their privileged positions since the handover (Choi, 2007). Increasing connectivity between Hong Kong and China is a strategy of both governments. Hong Kong's government identifies regional connectivity to the Pearl Delta Region as necessary to maintain its global competitiveness and enhance Hong Kong's economic growth potential (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016; Huang, 2019). China's economic power and related confidence disputes the colonial matrix of power, but it doesn't mean capitalism as a sphere of coloniality is over. Instead, the de westernisation of Hong Kong represents a new manager in town, one that is changing the content and the rules of the game (Lee et al., 2015).

Neoliberal reform of the Hong Kong government has also been part of Hong Kong's strategy to maintain its global competitiveness in relation to other cities in China such as Shenzhen and Shanghai and wider in Asia, including Singapore (Choi, 2007; Huang, 2019). These reforms included more 'contracting out' of public services and privatisation of public corporations, including the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), and growth in governing techniques such as emphasis on lifelong learning including subsidised English classes and introduction by social welfare departments of various "self-reliance programmes" aimed at creating a "competitive self-entrepreneurial global city citizen-subject" (Choi, 2007, p. 403).

Unlike many other urban centres and nations, Hong Kong does not deficit spend and has no sovereign debt (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). Moreover, it has one of the lowest tax regimes globally. Set up during colonial rule, Hong Kong has a maximum of 15% tax on income and no capital gains or inheritance tax (Huang, 2019). In addition, residents in Hong Kong enjoy universal healthcare and education, subsidised public transport and, for some, public housing. The Hong Kong government relies on revenue from leasing its land to provide universal healthcare and education and maintain a low tax rate and no sovereign debt (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lai, 2010; Tang, 2016).

The colonial authorities introduced a land lease management system to Hong Kong in 1841 (Heisler et al., 2020). Under this system, still used today, all land is owned by the government. The government controls the supply of land for development and redevelopment (Yung & Sun, 2020) and uses it to generate fiscal income. Most land leases are granted for between 50-75 or 99 years. Some leases are renewable while others are not. When a renewable lease expires, it is renewed, and new market-based rent assessed. When a non-renewable land lease expires, it is returned to the government, and if it is not needed for a public purpose, a new lease is granted and usually leased to the highest bidder upon payment of premium (Lai, 2010).

The continuous development of land provides a substantial, stable, and sustainable fiscal revenue for the government (Huang, 2019; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Smart, 2001; Yung & Sun, 2020). Land leases constitute between 15 and 30% of government revenue in any given year (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). This system of generating fiscal revenue through land means that a redevelopment regime is inevitable in Hong Kong (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Yung & Sun, 2020).

Superimposed on the leasehold land management system is a land supply cap restraining Hong Kong's footprint, agreed to as part of the Sino-British agreement returning sovereignty to China. Under this agreement, the Hong Kong government could only release 50 hectares of new land to the market per annum. (Huang, 2019). This agreement has led to a shortage

of developable land, increasing land prices, a high density built environment (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Yung & Sun, 2020), and entrepreneurial property activities driving economic growth in Hong Kong (Chu, 2018).

The Hong Kong government sees lack of developable land and space as the biggest challenge to economic growth (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016) and the redevelopment of land central to its economic recovery plans such as during the Asian Financial crisis in the late 1990s and early 2000s (Lam-Knott, 2019b). Paradoxically, and in conjunction with the neoliberal reforms (Choi, 2007; Huang, 2019), the government economic strategies related to the ongoing redevelopment of land has led to growing inequality. The gap between the rich and poor in Hong Kong is widening (Huang, 2015; Ng, 2018b). Hong Kong has one of the highest Gini coefficients⁴⁴ globally at .539, higher than both Singapore and Taiwan with one in five people in Hong Kong living below the poverty line. It is clear that the high social mobility experienced by former refugees in the 1980s and 1990s has not continued, and as seen in other nations that have adopted neoliberal reforms, there seems to be a downward mobility of the middle class (Siu, 2011).

What is often left out of dominant narratives of Hong Kong's economy is the long history of the informal economy⁴⁵. This informal economy includes hawking and other informal trading, informal and illegal markets, and the building and selling of illegal structures. The ordinary cities (Robinson, 2006) critique takes seriously economic practices and aspirations of everyday urban dwellers and importantly highlights the inventiveness and potentialities of urban informality. Postcolonial scholars utilise urban informality as an analytical optic to draw attention to and analyse less visible urban dynamics, identify poverty politics and challenge injustice (Marx & Kelling, 2019; Sheppard et al., 2020). Despite efforts of the British administration and now the HKSAR government to intervene, regulate and control the informal economy and related land use, it has (like coloniality) persisted (Marinelli, 2018; Smart, 2001; Smart & Smart, 2017b).

Given the growing inequality in Hong Kong, it is unsurprising that there is a need for an informal economy. It is needed to sustain livelihoods and provide everyday Hong Kong people with affordable consumer choices and housing (Heisler et al., 2020; Smart, 2001). As postcolonial urban scholars highlight, informality is not a socio-economic activity 'outside' (and that can be corrected through incorporation into) the state (Altrock, 2012; Marx & Kelling, 2019; Roy, 2009b). One reason for the persistence of the informal economy is related to an attitude of

⁴⁴ When the coefficient is 0, it means that there is perfect income equality, at 1 there is perfect income inequality.

⁴⁵ In 1983 street hawking contributed to HKD one billion to the economy accounting for 11% of retail sales (Smart & Smart, 2017b). It is thought that 20% of cell phones in Africa have come through Chungking Mansions in Hong Kong (Mathews, 2011).

tolerance by the state (Smart, 2001). This tolerance fills a gap left by market failure. For example, to address the lack of affordable housing, the buying and selling of illegal rooftop structures built during the 1950s is tolerated (Tanasescu et al., 2010), at least until the land underneath it is deemed necessary for a public purpose and resumed by the state. Tolerance of informal economies such as street hawking is a strategy employed by the government to maintain social stability when the formal market fails to provide opportunity and revenue for low-income groups (Smart, 2001). Urban informality within the context of state-led urban renewal is a running theme throughout the thesis and focus of chapter 8.

5.3.6 Housing

Despite a seeming commitment to *laissez-faire* capitalism, Hong Kong is highly interventionist in the provision, development, and management of housing. Provision of housing is one way colonial governments have sought legitimacy in their rule (Heisler et al., 2020) and maintained social stability (Smart, 2001). There have been three distinct waves of housing policy in Hong Kong. In 1953, a severe fire in a squatter settlement of Shekkipmei in Kowloon and associated civil unrest was a catalyst for the colonial government to introduce its first public housing plan. This plan included providing basic temporary housing to resettle low-income people and those made homeless by the fire (Heisler et al., 2020; Lai, 2010; Ng, 2014).

In 1972 the colonial authorities initiated a second wave of housing policy, putting forward a 10-year plan to relocate 1.8 million people living in slums and substandard houses into permanent public housing. In the late 1970s, the government initiated the third wave of housing policy, a government-subsidised homeownership programme to support low and middle-income earners unable to buy property on the private market, into their own homes (Heisler et al., 2020; Huang, 2019). Hong Kong is still one of the biggest suppliers of public housing in the world (Huang, 2019; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). Roughly 30% of all housing in Hong Kong is heavily subsidised public rental housing, and a further 15% of housing is government-subsidised sale flats (Heisler et al., 2020). There is little stigma related to public housing in Hong Kong, and it is an attractive option for middle- and low-income people. Public housing is affordable (public rental rates capped at 10% of monthly income), well maintained and better than many privately owned buildings (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Smart, 2001).

In stark contrast to the cost of renting and buying a government subsidised flat, the private housing market is unaffordable for most Hong Kong people. Although affordability matrices have their critics, housing prices have steadily increased since 1975 (Heisler et al., 2020), and for the 10th year in a row, Hong Kong has topped Demographia International's housing

affordability survey (Demographia, 2021). Foreign speculation, especially during and just after the 2008 Asian Financial crisis when the Hong Kong Dollar depreciated, contributed to this situation (Heisler et al., 2020)⁴⁶. Hong Kong is the least affordable housing market globally despite attempts by past and current governments to enforce rent controls. As early as 1920, the British introduced secure tenure and rent control legislation. This early rent control legislation persisted until 1988 and security of tenure until 2004 (Lai, 2010; Zheng et al., 2020).

Most private housing, like public housing in Hong Kong, is apartments (Heisler et al., 2020), some of which is luxury apartment blocks (Yip, 2018). However, there is also a significant amount of old low-rise housing built in the inner-city areas between the 1950s and 1960s when building regulations were relaxed and, consequently, houses made with substandard construction practices (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lai, 2010). In addition, due to complex and multiple ownership systems (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lai, 2010; Tang, 2016) and banks unwilling to lend against old buildings (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014), they have also often been poorly maintained.

In the most expensive housing market in the world, these old buildings provide some of the most affordable and convenient housing options for low-income people such as the elderly, solo parents, new migrants from China, and other migrants and asylum seekers not eligible or able to wait for public housing in Hong Kong (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). However, most of the buildings have illegal rooftop homes and illegally subdivided flats. A subdivided flat is a flat divided into two or more separate dwellings to house people. The extreme version of this being a 'cage home', where an individual can rent a bed space that can be as small as 5.8 square metres with communal shared facilities (Heisler et al., 2020; Lau, 2020).

In July 2021, a new rent control bill specifically for subdivided flats was presented to LegCo that will likely come into force by the end of 2021 or early 2022. The bill is an effort to secure the tenure of low-income tenants in rundown buildings when there is a shortage of public housing. The bill states that tenants of subdivided units must be given a contract for at least two years, during which time the landlord cannot raise the rent. After one year, tenants will only have to give one month's notice to leave. Furthermore, landlords must offer another two-year lease providing renters of subdivided units at least four years of secure tenure (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2021).

Some people in Hong Kong see old buildings and neighbourhoods as an embarrassment and associated with poverty (Chu, 2018); however, a growing number of civil society groups and organisations value and are working to preserve these old inner-city buildings and

⁴⁶ Foreign speculation has since cooled down due to the government increasing stamp duties on property transactions by foreign buyers and halting the Capital Investment Entrant Scheme, which gave Hong Kong residency to some foreign buyers (Heisler et al., 2020).

communities (Heisler et al., 2020; Ng, 2014; Yung & Sun, 2020). Aspiration for heritage preservation with multiple (often conflicting) rationalities within the context of URA-led interventions are discussed in chapter 6.

5.4 Urban renewal in Hong Kong

5.4.1 Urban renewal

Urban renewal and urban regeneration are widely utilised concepts globally in the urban planning context (Zheng, 2017). They are tools of statecraft designed to deliver on a wider governance vision of market-orientated inclusive growth (Roy 2014a). Urban regeneration and urban renewal refer to similar processes and practices, but urban regeneration is more widely utilised in western contexts, and urban renewal is utilised in Hong Kong (Zheng, 2017). Theoretically, urban renewal in Hong Kong refers to improving the physical, socio-economic and ecological aspects of decaying areas in the city through different interventions, including redevelopment, rehabilitation, revitalisation and heritage preservation (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b). In practice, urban renewal in Hong Kong mostly refers to state-led urban redevelopment (Lai, 2010; Yung & Sun, 2020). Redevelopment is framed by the state and much of the general populace in Hong Kong as positive and necessary to boost economic growth (Ng, 2018b), a common perception and justification for integrating the urban poor into market rule through urban redevelopment initiatives across cities in Asia (Roy 2014a).

Urban renewal has a long history in Hong Kong and dates back to 1884 when the first slum clearance occurred due to public health hazards (Adams & Hastings, 2001). By the 1960s, the British colonial government had started to designate areas of the city as 'urban renewal districts'. In the 1970s and early 1980s, this urban renewal was ad hoc and piecemeal (Lai, 2010; Yau, 2012). In 1988 the Hong Kong Government changed strategies and set up The Land Development Corporation (LDC) to work with the private developers to redevelop dense older inner-city areas with derelict buildings (Ng, 2002; Yung & Sun, 2020; Zheng et al., 2020).⁴⁷ The LDC was directed to work on prudent commercial principles and did not have any statutory resumption power (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). Development was slow, with only 13 redevelopment projects completed in the first 13 years (Yau, 2012).

Today, state-led urban renewal is one of the most distinctive causes of neighbourhood change in Hong Kong (Heisler et al., 2020). The government and quasi-government institutions that most shape state-led urban renewal processes and practices include The Urban Renewal Authority, The Town Planning Board, The Lands Authority, The Housing Authority, and The

⁴⁷ In Hong Kong small number of developers have become giant corporations that cover almost every aspect of Hong Kong from transport, housing, to communication and retail. These developers have become known as the land and ruling class (Huang, 2019).

Mass Transit Railway. This institutional set-up, inherited mainly from the British, generally privileges the business sectors at the expense of the community (Lai, 2010; Ng, 2014; Yung & Sun, 2020) .

What is missing from normative discourse and much scholarly work on urban renewal in Hong Kong is the everyday ways people living in areas affected by, or at risk of, state-led urban renewal informally renew and maintain their homes. This thesis seeks to contribute to this knowledge gap. Chapter 8 draws attention to the everyday politics enacted when people affected by state-led urban renewal informally maintain their homes and the possibilities this presents for alternative, more equal urban development trajectories.

5.4.2 Urban Renewal Authority

In 2001, owing to the slow progress of the LDC, the Hong Kong government (by this time HKSAR) enacted the Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance (URAO)⁴⁸. Under this ordinance, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) replaced the LDC as an established statutory body to undertake, encourage, promote, and facilitate the regeneration of the older urban areas of Hong Kong (Urban Renewal Authority, 2017). Like the LDC, the URA is a profit-making statutory body and shares similar objectives. However, there are some key differences. Firstly, the government gave the URA ten billion dollars in seed funding. Secondly, the URA was given more authority by the government to resume land. Thirdly, the URA's interventions are exempt from land premiums. Fourthly, the government gave the URA more support to rehouse affected people and finally, the URA is expected to cross-subsidise profitable with unprofitable projects and place greater emphasis on rehabilitation and preservation (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lai, 2010; Zheng et al., 2020).

There are two types of URA interventions, projects and schemes. URA projects that are small, require a freezing survey⁴⁹ but do not require the URA to submit their plans to the Town Planning Board (TPB). URA schemes that are bigger, require a more significant change of land use or infrastructure, and the process has to go through the TPB. They also require more community engagement, entailing a social impact assessment⁵⁰ before and after redevelopment as well as a freezing survey (Heisler et al., 2020; Lai, 2010). Objections and

⁴⁸ The URAO lays out the process for carrying out URA interventions. This process includes submitting a five-year corporate plan to the financial secretary with a list of projects the URA plans to implement over the next five years and projected income and expenditure, which the Financial Secretary must approve (Lai, 2010).

⁴⁹ Freezing surveys are undertaken on the day that a URA project is made public to determine the eligibility of affected people for compensation and relocation (Heisler et al., 2020).

⁵⁰ The District Urban Renewal Forum initiates early social impact assessments. They include collecting data on demographics, housing conditions, businesses, amenities. On the public announcement of a URA intervention, a second social impact assessment updates the earlier assessment and includes additional social impact mitigation measures (Heisler et al., 2020).

appeals to URA projects can be made within two months of a project being made public. For a URA scheme, the TPB conducts planning and public consultation processes under the Town Planning Ordinance (TPO), and any objections and appeals to a scheme can be made to the TPB during the inspection period. Once approval has been given, the URA can start land resumption, first by voluntary negotiation, but if this fails, through mandatory resumption (Lai, 2010).

The URA has established a District Advisory Committee to provide advice on the views and aspirations of the local community and an Urban Renewal Social Service Team to provide assistance and counselling services to URA affected people (Heisler et al., 2020). People directly affected by URA interventions are either offered compensation or, for those eligible, rehousing in public housing. Discussed in chapter 7, this thesis highlights how these policies work to displace politics and maintain naturalised inequality in Hong Kong.

In the mid-2000s, a significant shift took place in Hong Kong. The public demanded more involvement in urban renewal, and the URA led urban renewal projects became sites of contest and debate. These debates were largely centred around whether or not sites should be redeveloped or rehabilitated and the importance of local economy and heritage (Yau, 2012). The URA responded to this by conducting a review of its approach in 2011. As a consequence of the review, the URA introduced a new Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) and model of public-sector led redevelopment to guide the URA's preparation of corporate plans (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b).

The 2011 URS mandates a people-first, district-based, public participatory approach to urban renewal. The strategy states that its urban renewal approach is not a 'slash and burn' process and is based on the 4Rs business strategy of Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, Revitalisation and pReservation (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b)⁵¹. The URAO defining the URA's organisational mechanisms was determined before its guiding principles, and this new strategy, and the only mechanism described in any detail in the ordinance, is redevelopment (Lai, 2010). Irrespective of what the URS states, urban renewal in Hong Kong is dominated in discourse and practice by large-scale redevelopment (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014).

There are multiple competing aspirations at work within the 2011 URS. For example, one of the stated objectives in the URS is "redeveloping dilapidated buildings into new buildings of modern standard and environmentally-friendly design" another is "preserving as far as practicable the social networks of the local community". These two aspirations are ordinarily at odds in practice, and the aspiration for new buildings tends to trump preserving social networks and the local community—the reference to carrying out work "as far as practicable"

⁵¹ In the context of the URA's 4 R approach, preservation is spelt pReservation to add emphasis on the 'R'.

(Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b, pp. 2-3) is language that seeks consensus. Practicable implies 'sensible' or 'common sense'. Here, what is practicable or possible has already been decided and is not up for debate. These assertions of common sense and related taken-for-granted assumptions of consensus are part of what postpolitical scholars identify as processes of depoliticisation, the focus of chapter 7. Superimposed on these two competing aspirations is the overarching financial aspiration of the state, that the URA function as a self-sustaining (therefore profiting) entity: "The long-term objective of a self-financing urban renewal programme will continue to be upheld" (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b, p. 20).

5.4.3 Displacement

From its early beginnings of slum clearance in Hong Kong and now URA interventions, state-led urban renewal has led to displacement. Some scholars suggest that in the context of the city's explosive growth (Heisler et al., 2020; Huang, 2019) and the normative framing of the redevelopment as necessary to boost economic growth (Ng, 2018b), displacement has become normalised in Hong Kong. The compensation available to URA affected people is often not enough to buy another flat in the same area. For those eligible, options for rehousing in public housing are usually not in the same neighbourhood (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014).

Some scholars conceptualise displacement due to URA interventions as (state-led) gentrification (Ip, 2018; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Lam-Knott, 2019b; Ng, 2018a). Other scholars question this taken-for-granted assumption that gentrification, a western-inspired concept, is relevant and transferable to Hong Kong. For these, the concept of gentrification obscures local dynamics, displaces alternative theoretical approaches derived from non-western contexts and emphasises outcomes at the expense of process (Cartier, 2017; Heisler et al., 2020; Lui, 2017; Smart & Smart, 2017a; Tang, 2017).

The URA utilises (and naturalises) the concept of gentrification (Urban Renewal Authority, 2008, 2010), and its vernacular use is becoming more common in Hong Kong. However, most local news networks rarely use the term gentrification (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014). Indeed, unlike other cities, displacement through urban renewal in Hong Kong is understood to be the result of the intentional cleansing of undesirable groups, or diluting disadvantage but the direct and indirect result of a culture of redevelopment (Heisler et al., 2020; La Grange & Pretorius, 2014).

What is missing in narratives of displacement through state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong is an account of informality (Smart & Smart, 2017a). URA interventions eradicate and control informality, but they are also catalysts for preserving and building strategies and relationships that resist displacement and act out alternative urban development trajectories. Chapter 8 of

this thesis draws attention to the role urban informality plays in establishing and developing new and evolving groups that resist the displacement of residents and business owners affected by URA interventions. As will be highlighted, these relationships are built outside, between and within the state governing apparatus.

5.4.4 Civil society and resistance

In Hong Kong, civil society and political awareness have rapidly developed during the post-handover years (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Ng, 2018b). Frustration at the lack of democratisation and ongoing political tensions between the non-democratically elected executive-led government, and pro-democracy movement has helped create a fertile ground for civil society groups to emerge in Hong Kong (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Ng, 2014, 2018b). State-led urban renewal interventions have also contributed to the development of civil society (Ng, 2014; Yung & Sun, 2020).

Growing inequality and social polarisation in Hong Kong has led some people to question the dominant pro-growth ideology at the centre of urban renewal processes and practices in Hong Kong. These people have formed groups reframing their understanding and values related to spatial development (Ng, 2018b). Clashes between civil society, private developers, people affected by redevelopment and the state (Yung & Sun, 2020) have challenged the normalisation of displacement (Huang, 2019; Ng, 2018b). The media and the internet have enabled civil society to mobilise cheaply and efficiently in resistance movements (Lai, 2010).

Although resistance to URA interventions manifests in different ways (Heisler et al., 2020), many civil society groups in Hong Kong have developed a concern for the preservation of heritage (Heisler et al., 2020; Lai, 2010; Ng, 2014, 2018a). These groups come from different backgrounds and do not always support heritage preservation for the same reason (Barber, 2014; Chu, 2018; Yung & Sun, 2020). Some are more focused on preserving buildings or landmarks in relation to a particular cultural identity (often colonial) they represent (Yung et al., 2014; Yung & Sun, 2020). Others are more political with demands for heritage preservation related to more meaningful participation (Chan & Lee, 2017; Heisler et al., 2020) and alternative development trajectories: development trajectories in which everyday Hong Kong people's social networks and housing rights are valued above unrelenting growth-driven redevelopment (La Grange & Pretorius, 2014; Tang, 2016). Some scholars have been critical of colonial nostalgia in resistance movements, arguing that it makes it difficult to critique social inequality and power relations specific to the colonial capitalist system, which ultimately limits political imagination (Chin, 2014; Choi, 2007).

Youth have been and continue to be critical to politicising Hong Kong's growth-driven redevelopment culture (Huang, 2019; Lai, 2010; Lam-Knott, 2019a; Ng, 2014). These youth utilise creative and informal modes of community engagement and resistance strategies to make their voices heard (Lam-Knott, 2019b). From within and outside the URA, Chinese intellectuals have also played a pivotal role in challenging Hong Kong's redevelopment culture (Ng, 2014). Narratives on the development of civil society and resistance movements in Hong Kong are often framed in western-inspired language and discourse. There is, however, a time-honoured tradition for Chinese intellectuals to "speak truth to their counterparts in the established system to conserve something that they believe to be important for the future" (Ng, 2014, p. 89).

5.5 Conclusion

This chapter juxtaposes the narrative of Hong Kong 'as Asia's world City' (Hong Kong Development Bureau, 2016) with Hong Kong as an 'ordinary city' (Robinson, 2006) to frame the overview of Hong Kong and its urban renewal context. A former British colony, Hong Kong is a dense, compact, and highly populated coastal city in the Pearl River Delta region in China. Since reverting to Chinese sovereignty in 1997, Hong Kong has been governed by a 'one country two system' mandate. Its unique political and legal system is the direct result of ongoing coloniality. Hong Kong's population, people and culture have been shaped by multiple waves of migration, its encounter with colonialism, wider transpacific networks, a history of resistance and at the current juncture, a re-negotiation of identities and core values of all Hong Kong people amongst increased integration and opposition to the central authorities in Beijing.

Hong Kong's economic system and reliance on leasing land for fiscal revenue set up during the colonial era have contributed to gross inequality. This inequality is despite being one the largest providers of public housing in the world and the government's provision of universal healthcare and education for its residents. Informality fills in the gaps left by market failure and government interventions. It also means Hong Kong has a long history of state-led urban renewal, a leading cause of neighbourhood change in Hong Kong today. Replacing the LDC in 2001, the Hong Kong government established the URA as a profit-making statutory body to undertake, encourage, promote, and facilitate the regeneration of older areas in Hong Kong. The current urban renewal strategy is based on the 4Rs business strategy of Redevelopment, Rehabilitation, Revitalization and pReservation and has multiple conflicting aspirations in goals and objectives, which has ultimately meant urban renewal is dominated by large scale redevelopment. From its early beginnings to slum clearance, urban renewal in Hong Kong has led to displacement.

Focusing on state-led urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong, this thesis contributes to a growing body of work that utilises postcolonial urban theory to extend and challenge existing knowledges of cities and the dynamics that shape urban development. In this chapter, the ordinary cities critique (Robinson, 2006) is utilised to offer a counter-narrative to Hong Kong as a 'rags to riches' story (Hamilton, 2021; Smart, 2001), and 'Asia's world city' drawing attention to gaps in knowledge on Hong Kong's urban development context.

More than highlighting ongoing coloniality, the ordinary cities critique begs the question: what and where is decoloniality? The following chapters of this thesis will demonstrate through a focus on entangled urban aspirations (chapter 6), depoliticising strategies of state control (chapter 7), and everyday politics (chapter 8) within state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong that coloniality and everyday acts of politics that challenge it are mutually constitutive. Furthermore, that rather than foreclosing possibilities, ongoing disputes and shifts in the colonial matrix of power (Lee et al., 2015) create new openings for alternative, more equitable urban futures to come into being.

CHAPTER 6: COMPETING AND ENTANGLED ASPIRATIONS

6.1 Introduction

Close engagement with multiple actors involved in Urban Renewal Authority (URA)-led urban renewal in Hong Kong reveal diverse and competing urban aspirations. These aspirations are shaped by global and local processes and are messy and dynamic in nature. Comparing these aspirations highlights multiple motivations, rationalities and uneven power dynamics at work. These findings support postcolonial urban scholars' arguments that urbanisms are irreducible to a single theory or metanarrative (Derickson, 2015; Leitner & Sheppard, 2016) and their commitment to developing new and emergent theoretical concepts that provoke relational thinking about place, knowledge, and power (Roy, 2016b).

This chapter utilises literature on theoretical concepts of urban aspirations and inter-referencing in conjunction with empirical data to identify and explore the dynamics and effects of competing urban aspirations on urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong. Aspirations expressed by participants are diverse, and participants seemingly within the same stakeholder group can have different motivations for urban renewal. Furthermore, this chapter demonstrates how aspirations for urban renewal are entangled with wider urban processes and practices that both limit and provide opportunities for alternative urban development trajectories in Hong Kong. Competing aspirations identified and discussed here broadly fall under three groups: the urban aspirations of Hong Kong's urban development elite, grassroots people, and heritage preservationists. NGOs are a critical interest group; however, the URA funds NGOs to provide social services and support to affected residents, and so helps shape their aspirations, the outcomes of which are discussed in chapters 7 and 8.

6.1.1 Urban aspirations and inter-referencing

To link back to the literature review, we can appreciate how urban aspirations drive urban transformation (Goh, Bunnell, & van Der Veer, 2015). As an analytical optic, urban aspiration foregrounds the aspirational dynamics of everyday lives in cities (Bunnell, Gillen, & Ho, 2018) and refers to both individual wished-for future selves and collective wished-for forms of urban space and sociality (Bunnell, 2019). Individual and collective aspirations are relational, emerging, and can reinforce or counteract each other (Padawangi, 2019; Tan & Bunnell, 2020). Within the context of URA-led urban renewal, individual aspirations, among others, include those of recent low-income migrants to arrive, survive and belong in Hong Kong, and

Hong Kong's urban development elite's collective aspirations for developing 'walkable' and 'smart' cities.

A related analytical optic, urban inter-referencing, is utilised alongside urban aspirations to draw attention to and discuss how knowledge transfer between non-western cities shapes urban renewal aspirations in Hong Kong. Inter-referencing here refers to how space is produced in reference to models and ideas of urbanism elsewhere (Roy, 2011b), particularly urbanisms of other cities in the global South. Inter-referencing is both a deliberate attempt to deconstruct and provincialise western scholarship and reflects the increasing existence of inter-referenced urbanisms among cities of Asia (Chua, 2015; Ong, 2011). Existing inter-referenced urbanism is what Robinson (2016b) would call genetic comparisons. Diverse urban actors utilise inter-referencing practices to promote and legitimise their urban development aspirations and decision-making practices. Inter-referencing practices can both create space for and shut down politics (Roy, 2011b).

6.2 Urban aspiration for Hong Kong's urban development elite

As discussed in chapter 5, since 1999, Hong Kong has branded itself as 'Asia's world city.' Despite the recent call for rebranding to restore confidence post the 2019 democracy protests (Kammerer, 2020), this well-established claim to regional and global significance continues to shape Hong Kong's urban development. Aspirations for 'Asia's world city' are exemplified through the aspirations of China's ruling elite, Hong Kong's urban planning and design elites, and property developers. Residents affected by URA interventions often have competing aspirations (as outlined later in the chapter); however, a small number of affected people, as will be highlighted below, share the views of urban development elites.

6.2.1 Urban development aspirations of China's elite

China has played an increasing role in shaping urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong post-1997. During interviews, many participants reflected on the outcomes of increasing integration between Hong Kong and the mainland on Hong Kong's urban development and culture. These participants spoke of China's growing influence on the city's ruling elites and technocrats' urban aspirations, particularly the seduction of competing with mainland cities' form and speed of urban development 'progress'. They also spoke about the effects of everyday aspirations of migrants and property investors from China on urban development and, more specifically, urban renewal outcomes. Some of these participants referred to China as 'big brother' in a way that reflects a Confucian view of the world, highlighting an expectation that 'little brother' Hong Kong must be respectful and obey big brother China. This expectation

is not unchallenged, however. Some participants also highlighted a connection between increasing integration and the aspirations of Hong Kong youth to resist Hong Kong's capitalist-driven urban development culture.

Other participants perceived the influence of China's aspirations in Hong Kong's urban development trajectory as symptomatic of China's increasing dominance and control over Hong Kong's wider urban governance system. In reflecting on the challenges of urban renewal in Hong Kong, particularly for those working towards alternative urban development trajectories, Ann, social worker in a URA- funded social service team explained:

“So it is a big challenge for the government, they don't change, because, now Hong Kong is in a quite, Chinese government inter, interfere in this quite, I think it's quite obvious, especially like the, Chief Executive election you know they have a lot of interference in between, so I think for most of the Hong Kong people here, here and now they feel very helpless, because they do a lot of things but, seems the government is just like the same”.

Ann perceives the Hong Kong government and consequently the URA as being restricted by the aspirations of China. She draws attention to the effect of China's aspirations on those aspiring for alternative urban futures within the prevailing system. This example demonstrates how particular aspirations (such as alternative urban renewal processes and practices) can morph or feed into universal aspirations (for an independent governance system that enables alternative urban development trajectories to be imagined and acted out). This morphing from aspiration to a universal one echoes Lim's (2015) study, which found a link between the URA's aspirations and protests of the Umbrella Movement in 2014. Aspirations for urban renewal are not static; they are entangled with Hong Kong's wider socio-political environment.

Research participants that commented on the effects of mainland Chinese investors and migrants' everyday aspirations on urban renewal outcomes perceived China's wealthy elite to be buying up new properties made available through urban renewal, driving up property prices in general, and contributing to a perceived housing shortage in Hong Kong. Ann also highlighted complex, contradictory aspirations of the URA and those of China's urban elite. She explained that the URA contradict its stated objectives when its new apartments are bought up by wealthy mainlanders who are non-permanent residents; the aspiration for profit trumping the aspiration to meet the human need of the community. It appears the URA's aspirations (intentional or not) have created an opportunity for and shaped the aspirations of property investors from China.

Reiterating the sentiments shared by other participants of China's increasing control over Hong Kong's urban development trajectory, Kat, a heritage preservationist, highlighted a

connection made between the migration of mainland Chinese into Hong Kong and perceived adverse outcomes of urban renewal. Kat explained that aspirations for integration between China and Hong Kong through migration put pressure on the Hong Kong housing market, increasing property speculation and further driving up rents in the urban renewal project area. For Kat and many other participants, URA interventions are working to advance the interests of China's ruling elite rather than everyday Hongkongers. This perception is documented in other studies of urban renewal in Hong Kong (Lim, 2015). Discussed later, Kat and her fellow heritage preservationists resist and challenge the URA's interventions, aspiring for a different urban renewal vision. The aspirations of heritage preservationists like Kat's are related to the wider socio-spatial environment, including the perceived effects of migration patterns.

6.2.2 Urban development aspirations of Hong Kong's city elites

Better planning and design through urban renewal is a core objective of the URA (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b) and Hong Kong's planning elite. For many of these participants, planning and design is seen to be both a solution to perceived urban decay and an opportunity to improve urban connectivity and access to public space. Reflecting on his understanding of the purpose of the URA's urban renewal practices, Mr Teng, in senior leadership within the URA explains:

"The first one is that they want to increase the quality of space or the quality of life. That may be one of the reasons for the renewal initiative. The other one is change of land use. Take for instance, even the old industrial area is not really functioning – then we would have to make changes. So, whether you call it regeneration and renewal – anyway, we have to intervene. So that is my understanding of urban renewal".

Mr. Teng highlights a critical assumption of the URA's aspirations, to increase space or quality of life, a large-scale intervention by the state (here the URA) is needed. Paradoxically, the URA's intervention to increase the quality of space and life often involves destroying existing communities, the very thing it aspires to design during the urban renewal process. Sean, a heritage preservationist activist, highlighted this contradiction in the URA's aspirations.

"I think, for the URA, they think the solution for everything is the design of the building ... and that's what they try to do. There may be some problem in Lee Tung street in terms of dilapidation ...etcetera. And their idea is we have to raze it, I mean, is to build something beautiful and then everything would be ok. You can design character. You can design community. I think that's what they have in mind here".

Sean highlights another critical assumption that drives the URA's aspirational urban renewal process and practices, that it is possible to 'design' and 'plan' away problems and build new

(and improved) communities. The consequence, however, is that the original community is “substituted” for a predesigned one. One affected business owner of Lee Tung Street redevelopment project demonstrated the effects of such assumptions and substitution. She took me up a lift that looked as though it was only for the private residents who lived in the building to a ‘public’ rooftop garden designed for the community through the redevelopment process. The rooftop seemed to be split, with one half reserved for the private residents and the other half for public use. A security guard was monitoring the well-groomed hedges with few people utilising it. As the participant explained, the rooftop garden was far from a local community meeting place or something that represented the original community. Rather, the original community has been “substituted” for a new one.

Figure 3

Wedding Card Avenue rooftop Garden



Note. [source of image] (Holwikaiwmai, 2017)

These effects of wholesale state-led urban redevelopment projects have been observed in other contexts (Gordon et al., 2017; Shaw & Hagemans, 2015). In Hong Kong, state-led urban renewal intervention outcomes are increasingly being shaped by reference to models and ideas of urbanism in other cities in Asia. Planning documents are common sites of inter-referencing models and ideas of urbanisms (Connolly, 2019). In 2008 the Development Bureau of Hong Kong initiated a review of the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS), which included a study exploring the urban renewal strategies of six Asian cities, Seoul, Tokyo, Singapore, Taipei, Shanghai, and Guangzhou. These Asian cities were selected because of their proximity to Hong Kong and frequent cultural exchanges between them. The study's key

objective was to identify "lessons that can be learnt from policies and practice experience of the selected Asian cities and they may serve as references for the current URS review process in Hong Kong" (Law et al., 2009)⁵². Later in the report this rationale is further explained to include lessons and options for urban renewal in Hong Kong "...that are relevant and applicable to the Hong Kong context to address the urban renewal issues and problems to be used for discussion purposes during the public engagement stage" (Law et al., 2009)⁵³.

The team of scholars involved in the study developed recommendations based on the experiences of urban renewal strategies in Seoul, Tokyo, Singapore, Taipei, Shanghai, and Guangzhou to guide the wider URS review. These recommendations included considering the following: 1. the applicability of owner participation models used in the urban renewal context in Seoul, Tokyo, and Taipei, 2. taking note of the negative experiences of more privately led urban renewal in Seoul, Shanghai and Guangzhou, and 3. consider entrusting more power to District Councils within urban renewal processes such as in Guangzhou, Seoul, and Taipei (Law et al., 2009)⁵⁴.

The URS study report represents more than just a case study exploring different urban renewal policies and processes in Asian cities. The study's process and outcomes exemplify how urban elite 'inter-referencing' (Chua, 2015) practices and dynamics of wider systems of evaluation shape outcomes of URA interventions in Hong Kong. Past and current members of senior leadership teams of the URA referred to the URS study report as an important and influential piece of work still informing the URA's approach during interviews. A senior leader went so far as to tell me that it was probably the only good research work on urban renewal in Hong Kong that I could find.

The Inter-referencing practices of Hong Kong's city elite to be like/better than its 'Asian competitors' are aspirational practices. Inter-referencing practices, however, are also designed and function to limit or shut down the inter-referenced aspirations of civil society. When reflecting on the purpose of the study report, Ingrid, a former senior leader in the URA, explains:

⁵² The Asian cities were selected because of their proximity to Hong Kong and frequent cultural exchanges between them

⁵³ Specifically, the report addressed the following 'issues' 1. The roles of the public sector, private sector, civic society, and the public in urban renewal 2. Financing model 3. Diverse views on urban renewal 4. sustainable urban development 5. The planning and redevelopment processes 6. The pace of urban decay 7. The coverage of the scope of work for the URA

⁵⁴ As noted in the study report, urban renewal processes and practices in cities across Asia are diverse, evolving, and context-specific. None of the study cities were facing the same magnitude of development density as Hong Kong; however, what was found to be shared amongst all cities was first, urban renewal's role in city competitiveness and second, top-level government's pivotal role in urban renewal processes and practices (Law et al., 2009).

“That’s right, yeah. I initiated that study because I thought you cannot just talk to the public without basis because the public could easily say, “Look at Taiwan and look at that.” You can communicate with them. Yeah. They do what, if they are really doing that, they do it because of certain context”

The study highlights how the aspirations for urban renewal in Hong Kong are shaped by a particular development-centered view of renewal practices in other Asian cities, practices based on ideas of urban competitiveness and a powerful state. Secondly, it draws attention to how urban inter-referencing practices of the URA are utilised to manage the aspirations of other urban actors (managing their perception of what is possible in Hong Kong). Thirdly, this study demonstrates the influential role of scholars in shaping urban renewal aspirations in Hong Kong. How a study is conducted, whose voice is included and considered, can challenge or reinforce the URA’s dominance in managing and cultivating urban aspirations.

In this case, scholars were commissioned to undertake a study *for* the URA with a clear objective to identify lessons that could be learned and used for discussion purposes during public engagement. More importantly, this was underpinned with an added statement "...that are relevant and applicable to the Hong Kong context..."(Law et al., 2009). This added statement signals limits to the scope of the study and its potential in relation to public engagement. It takes for granted and naturalises a dominant capitalist world view in which urban renewal decisions and outcomes are situated in Hong Kong’s globalising development agenda, deepening socio-spatial inequalities. Ultimately, the URA's inter-referencing practices exclude the voices and aspirations of marginalised and low-income groups, limiting the potential for new imaginaries and possibilities for urban renewal. The function that inter-referenced urbanisms can play in deepening socio-spatial inequality is observable in other Asian contexts. For example, Roy (2011b) highlights the violent displacement of slum dwellers due to inter - referencing practices and resultant 'Shanghaification' of Mumbai, India.

Outcomes of URA interventions are also shaped through interactions between different government departments within Hong Kong. Sites of URA interventions become sites for the state to realise its wider urban objectives. For example, URA projects are often expected to incorporate government, institution, and community facilities (GIC) and/or public open spaces (POS) or Public Transport Terminus (PTT) in their projects.⁵⁵ Prue, an employee of a government department that works closely with the URA, explained that the URA's interventions created a "win-win" scenario for the government. The “win-win” scenario consequence is that the number of technical experts and managerial elites involved in URA

⁵⁵ The incorporation of social amenities into URA projects is an objective inherited from the URA's predecessor, the LDC (Ho, 2019)

interventions increases. In addition, the taken-for-granted consensus in which intervention by the (profit-driven) URA is necessary is maintained.

A significant focus and aspiration of the URA or planning related participants in this study was the opportunity for urban renewal to increase urban connectivity and efficiency. These aspirations include improving access to the Mass Transit Railway (MTR), increasing pedestrian walkways (and walkability more generally), introducing communal carparks, and open underground space to improve the street-level environment and incorporate 'smart city' initiatives. Although not always explicitly stated, these aspirations echo the in-vogue urban design rhetoric such as 'walkable and smart cities' that circulates between cities. For example, Mr Teng, in senior leadership within the URA, explained that Hong Kong's high-density living meant that it was perfect to become a 'walkable city' but not suitable for commuter cycling. Therefore, the URA was going in the direction of a 'walkable city' in its developments.

Here, certain in-vogue planning and design principles circulating between cities are selected to inform the URA decision making processes. Aspirations to be a 'walkable city' may take-for-granted a consensus that other options, such as cycling are not suitable and therefore relevant to the URA. To be clear, alternative views on cycling as a sustainable form of transport do exist in Hong Kong (Loo et al., 2019) and other high density Asian cities (Zhu & Diao, 2020) however, they are not being considered by the URA. Later in relation to the aspiration to incorporate smart city initiatives, Mr. Teng explains:

“I want to have an urban renewal information system [...] the most famous GIS company, ESRI, single port and future. In the past 7-8 years, every year Singapore send a small team of two or three colleagues to the ESRI headquarters in the States to learn the most advanced GIS techniques and not only that, they ask their headquarters to develop specifically applications suitable for use by use by Singapore”.

Here, the URA's aspirations for urban renewal are created through inter-referencing practices, although in ways that are relatively selective. It is the technical expertise of global planning and technocratic elites of one of Hong Kong's key competitors. As demonstrated earlier with the study report that informed the urban renewal strategy review, these inter-referencing practices are aspirational, competitive, and targeted at what is perceived to be 'world-class' Asian cities.

As also already highlighted, inter-referencing practices can limit or shut down aspirations for alternative urban development trajectories. Toshi, a former URA employee in senior management in the URA, explains his perception of heritage preservation in Hong Kong in relation to Singapore:

“...in Singapore they can plan and rehouse because they are the power. They are the geographical authority, they are [...] the preservation is really for Hong Kong is a non-starter, there was nothing to preserve. It is much too late. Its, that ship sailed...[...] It sank like the Titanic. We are not Singapore, we are not.”

Toshi highlights the selective nature of what gets inter-referenced by city elites and how aspirations of ‘elsewhere’ are shaped by perceptions of local contexts. Moreover, he takes for granted a common-sense consensus that there is nothing left to preserve in Hong Kong. Inter-referencing Singapore as a model within the context of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong has been noted by other scholars. Ho’s (2019) study exploring the post-resettlement outcomes of the LDC-led Langham Place redevelopment project highlighted how senior officials in the LDC thought the LDC should be a land assembly agent like the Urban Redevelopment Authority of Singapore. Demonstrating the evolution of these ideas into new arrangements, it is noteworthy that assembling land is a significant part of the URA (the LDC’s successor)’s role in facilitating urban renewal in Hong Kong.

6.2.3 Profit, opportunity, and developers

Developers in Hong Kong have a lot of power and influence. A widely held perception of many of the participants in this study is that five to six developer families control urban development in Hong Kong. When discussing who has the most decision-making power within urban renewal in Hong Kong, many participants said private developers or both the URA and developers. Participants’ perception is that the URA’s aspirations for urban renewal are entangled with the aspiration of private developers. This entanglement is partly due to the URA’s profit-driven business model, favouring public-private partnerships (PPP) in implanting its urban renewal projects. The private developers need to make a profit to work with the URA. They have a target market in mind that maximises profit, determining what redevelopment is designed and for whom. As Sonia, a volunteer at To Kwa Wan House of Stories and activist explained, the URA must pay attention to what the developers want, to be in partnership with them.

Although the developers have power and influence, the URA and developers’ relationship is not one sided. The URA was set up to make it easier to implement urban renewal, including managing all the statutory processes in assembling land. The URA has the Urban Renewal Land Resumption Ordinance to force the sale of buildings under law. Furthermore, the government supports the URA by waiving land premiums for its redevelopment sites (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b). Assembling enough land for a profitable development in areas where there are multiple and sometimes unknown buildings is difficult. A waiver of land

premiums is also a good incentive for developers to take on the URA projects. Prue, an employee of a government department that works closely with the URA, explains:

“If they want .. don’t want to go through this tedious process because they want to be ... if they want to have a better position to estimate their cash flow, to budget their time, their resources ...so they usually they would prefer go to buy land from government or just make a joint venture...”.

The process and practices of developers without a formal partnership with the URA are also shaped by the URA. Ann, an NGO social worker in a URA-funded social service team, explained that wherever the URA went, their developer "friends would follow" regardless of whether they had a formal PPP with them. She said developers made a profit by exploiting rises in property values in areas affected by URA interventions. The URA and developers' entangled aspirations reinforce a consensus that profit is king in determining Hong Kong's urban development trajectory. This taken-for-granted consensus, however, does not go unnoticed by URA affected residents or business owners.

When asked about the decision-making process many URA affected residents and business operator participants emphasised the tight relationship between the URA and developers. Recognition of this taken-for-granted profit-driven consensus by affected residents and owners is important because if it is not recognised it cannot be challenged or resisted. Furthermore, recognition and resistance of a taken-for-granted consensus can be a catalyst for alternative aspirations (which is identified in chapter 7 and discussed in detail in chapter 8)

The URA's entanglement with developers is a better option for some participants than the private developers independently initiating urban renewal. These participants felt that there was more opportunity to object and slow down the redevelopment process with URA involvement in urban renewal. Kat, a heritage preservationist activist, explained that she didn't like the URA. Still, she recognised that it created opportunities for activists to step in and alter urban redevelopment projects in ways private-led urban development projects did not. The perception here is that URA projects enable more participation than private developer initiated urban renewal projects. It is, however, not just the perception of participation that makes the URA the lesser of the two evils. Some participants shared stories and rumours they heard of how private developers would assemble land for redevelopment through strategies of manipulation and bullying to force you to sell your flat.

Mr Wang, an affected business operator who had also grown up in the neighbourhood affected by the URA's intervention, did not see such a big distinction between the URA's approach and the private developers of the past. He explains:

“Back in the old days, I mean they put .. they put poo in front of your door and your wall, you know the private developer, they try to get rid of you, to ask you to sell to them. You know, they get some gangsters to come up and you know .. Ya, they do that. They hang out in the hallway [...] follow you daughter up and down and like that [...] and URA now of course they are not saying anything threatening you but it's clearly stated in their letter saying “if you don't sell now, the Lands department won't give you as much money as we do. We are offering now so ...” but take it, so that's another way of threatening you. I don't know. It depends on how you look at it”

Here, the URA's strategies for assembling land are understood to be similar to those of private developers in terms of effects. What is also apparent here is the difficulty of questioning land assembling strategies based on the legitimacy of land laws. The URA strategies displace conflict and appear less threatening than those of private developers. In chapter 7, the conflict displacing mechanisms of the URA will be discussed in more detail.

Hong Kong's urban development elite's urban renewal aspirations are entangled with the wider urban development aspirations of China's urban elite, Hong Kong's developers, and the in vogue best practice models and urban policies of other Asian cities. In Hong Kong, the urban elite perceives intervention as necessary to address urban decay and improve urban connectivity and public space access. Aspirations and solutions to address these challenges are shaped by the selective inter - referencing of best practice models and experiences of other Asian cities. These inter-referencing practices work to legitimise the rationale behind and practices of the URA. As demonstrated here, urban scholars can be part of the urban development elite that reinforce ideas on urban competitiveness and profit-driven urban development, deepening socio-spatial inequality, and limiting possibilities for imagining alternative urban development trajectories.

6.3 Aspirations of the grass roots

The aspirations of the grassroots, here understood as those of affected residents and business operators, are diverse. A small number of affected residents shared similar aspirations to the URA and big developers; however, most URA affected participants do not share the same aspirations for the notion of 'Asia's world city' cultivated by Hong Kong's urban development elite. Instead, these participants want housing security, housing rights, and a place to belong. For some of these participants, this means hoping to benefit from the URA's promises of compensation and public housing. For others, it is imagining different forms and practices of urban renewal. For others still, urban renewal is a barrier to their aspirations to maintain their livelihoods or place to arrive.

6.3.1 Hope in the URA driving ‘progress’

All of the affected residents who shared similar aspirations to the URA and big developers were tenants rather than homeowners and were born in China. The participants assumed that the URA has unquestionable authority to direct social and economic life, reflecting an authoritarian view of development and progress and exemplifying increased integration between Hong Kong and China. Furthermore, the perception that urban development is necessary to maintain social progress demonstrates the dominance of the URA in cultivating and maintaining aspirations for urban development, including the hope of affected peoples to benefit from URA projects. Ms. Wing, an affected resident, shares this hope to benefit from urban renewal:

“Oh, after the renewal, everybody would get improved. Won’t be worse and ought to be better. In terms of economic development, it’s got to be the trend [...] Must provide space for economic ... economic growth. Such development requires someone like the URA who has that knowledge in economy ... Everybody would like to share the result”.

Ms Wing sees urban renewal as necessary for economic growth and progress. This perception echoes the rationale and aspirations of the URA and private developers. Furthermore, she perceives the URA as having the right economic skills to lead urban renewal. The view of Ms Wing highlights how everyday individual aspirations are connected to the aspirations of the URA. The seemingly paradoxical buy-in of those people most negatively affected by urban development processes and practices is observable in other cities. Exploring the production and lived experience of ‘brand Dubai’, Haines (2011) explains how individual aspirations for social mobility are intrinsically connected to the success of Dubai, so that if Dubai is a success, so too is their transformation into successful more ‘global selves’. Here aspirations for urban renewal are entangled with wider urban dynamics that are both heterogeneously particular to Hong Kong (the dynamics of increased integration with China) and irreducibly global (Hong Kong branding as ‘Asia’s world city’)(Roy, 2011a).

6.3.2 Aspirations for public housing and compensation

Many URA affected residents want to benefit from the URA interventions in some way. Those with permanent residency status are promised compensation and/or the opportunity to skip the queue for public housing. For many of these affected residents, the URA’s aspirations are accepted as the established consensus for urban development in Hong Kong. Their aspiration is to make the most out of the opportunity that URA-led urban renewal might provide them. Sam, a business operator affected by URA interventions, explained:

“As for the residents, their most concern is the compensation issue. Every time those people come, they would talk about how to compensate, how to calculate the compensation ... Anyway, this is always the main point of discussion. They never mention about how to make improvements”.

The offer of compensation from the URA has a particular effect of individualising outcomes rather than creating space for collective aspirations for other urban futures (effects of individualising outcomes of URA interventions are discussed in more depth in chapter 7). In addition, some participants noted that the URA had the power to get public housing eligibility approval for those affected residents who didn't quite fit the criteria. Tony, a social worker in a URA-funded social service team, explained:

“So some people may have ask the social service team to get the special report to declare that they are exceed the Public Rental Housing policy a little bit but ask the URA to approve them to move in the Public Rental Housing”.

Although there seems to be some room for negotiation for public housing eligibility, there is less for compensation calculations. The URA's compensation policy was set by the legislative council before the formation of the URA. The policy is based on a seven-year rule, which compensates an owner-occupier the equivalent of the cost of a seven-year-old flat in the same area as the original shop/flat. For many eligible participants, the compensation policy does not meet their expectations. Something more, however, is going on here. The particular issues of eligibility for public housing and compensation are centre stage in discussions around URA-led urban renewal, whilst the universal issue of adequate and affordable housing are either not discussed or discussed behind closed doors.

Drawing on postpolitics scholarship to explore the political dynamics of a contested urban development project in Ghent, Belgium, Van Wymeersch and Oosterlynck (2018) demonstrate how the particularisation of urban development issues initiatives works to depoliticise them. However, they also highlight how the particularisation of urban development issues can act as a catalyst for universal claims to equality. Chapter 7 will identify and discuss how the URA's policies and processes particularise and depoliticise urban development. Chapter 8 will explore the connection between particularisation and universalisation within neighbourhood resistance.

Some affected residents looked to the experiences of imagined 'elsewheres' to demonstrate both their dissatisfaction with compensation related to URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong. For Bunnell et al. (2018), imagined 'elsewheres' nurture aspirational futures and efforts to realise them. Referring to the experience of urban renewal in China, Mr Ho, affected resident and housing rights activist, explains:

“...and when the government tried to implement the land acquisition for his land, so the government gave that person the same area of land somewhere else. And then at the same time that person was also given enough money to rebuild a house and including re-furnishing fees and also rent support”.

For Mr Ho, inter-referencing imagined 'elsewheres' (experiences of urban renewal processes and practices in China), nurtures aspirations for better compensation in Hong Kong. The inter-referencing of China by affected residents somewhat mimics the inter-referencing practices of the URA and policy elites (as demonstrated in the URA-funded urban renewal study already discussed) but utilised to legitimise differing and competing urban aspirations. This example shows that inter-referencing urbanisms are prevalent in Hong Kong like other cities of Asia (Chua, 2015), but also that within one particular context, these practices may be competing.

6.3.3 Aspirations for different forms and practices of urban renewal

Some affected residents and housing rights activists aspire for alternative forms of urban renewal to the URA's interventions. These participants emphasised that urban renewal should first and foremost be about housing security and maintaining the original residents and businesses. More than just questioning the URA's interventions, these participants identified, developed, and at times presented alternative urban renewal models to the URA and the general public. Mindy, an affected resident, business owner and activist, explained the alternative urban renewal model her community group aspired for:

“...H15 group already requested for “floor for floor” and “shop for shop” deal even at starting. So, that means what people wanted was not money. See, not requesting for money was significant. Not requesting for money could avoid being claimed being greedy or asking for more... Only requesting for exchanging an apple for an apple. Exchanging an orange for an orange [...] So, actually they were willing to leave temporarily so that the area would be renewed and then to go back to the same area...”.

The alternative model of urban renewal put forward by Mindy and her community challenges the taken-for-granted assumption that urban renewal necessarily needs to have an economic focus. Furthermore, it highlights how promises of compensation and public housing fail to constrain the imaginations and urban aspirations of affected residents. Indeed, the URA's interventions is here, a catalyst for imagining alternative urban futures (a dynamic that will be discussed further in chapter 8).

In contrast, Mr Wang, an affected business operator with a strong connection to his neighbourhood felt the URA could both maintain the original community in the new buildings

and provide a housing option for people that did not qualify for public housing and could not afford a luxury apartment. He explains his alternative model:

“They can still build 30-storey high and tear it all down but put the old people back in first. They only take up maybe half of the unit. You allow them to come back and the ties will be there, the neighbourhood ties. [...] and the remaining of 20, 40 [units] you can still sell it, if you want. But you don’t have to sell it...it’s like it is two polar [opposites]. One is the public housing, very cheap, \$1000 per month for rent. And then you have the luxury building \$30k a month [...] in the middle there is nothing...[...] we don’t need to buy affordable house. We just need affordable housing [...] and then you have rental income for URA for government. That’s a lot of money coming in every month”.

The alternative model for urban renewal discussed by Mr Wang challenges a widely held taken-for-granted assumption that property ownership is the goal and best income generator for the URA and government. Mr Wang frames urban renewal outcomes in universalising terms rather than the particularising issues of compensation and public housing eligibility. Mr Wang's alternative model highlights how the spatial uncertainties of affected residents are both a product of the URA's profit-driven objectives and a basis to imagine alternative urban development futures.

It is important to highlight that although Mr Wang reframes urban renewal in universalist terms around housing affordability, the objective of profit for the URA is still maintained. Before dismissing Mr Wang's alternative model, however, it is critical to recognise that keeping aspirations modest can be an intentional strategy of resistance. For example, Padawangi's (2019) study exploring forced evictions and aspirations of marginalised populations living near river settlements in Jakarta, Indonesia, found that the urban poor partly aligned their alternative narratives with existing narratives of city officials as a strategy of resistance. Similarly, in this case, affected residents keep their aspirations modest (by maintaining the URA's profit objective) in their alternative urban renewal model that challenges the URA's taken-for-granted authority.

6.3.4 The barrier of urban renewal to place and belonging

For some affected residents, urban renewal is a barrier to realising their aspirations. These participants aspire to maintain their valued lifestyles and livelihoods, arrive and survive in a new city, and find a place to belong in Hong Kong. As highlighted in chapter 5, many neighbourhoods affected by URA interventions provide some of the city's only low-cost (non-public subsidised) rentals. In addition, shop spaces on the ground floor of the old buildings are

unique in that they are comparatively large and still affordable enough to run small scale businesses such as mechanic shops.

Figure 4

Mechanic shops and hairdresser salon in URA affected neighbourhood



Note. [source of image] author's photos

Some affected residents and business owners have been living and working in their neighbourhood most or all their lives. Sometimes these businesses are multi-generational. These neighbourhoods are spaces where informal relationships and strategies often define and maintain urban life for its residents and businesses. The URA's aspirational city-making practices are often a direct threat to low-income groups' aspirations; squeezing the space they can live and work in the city.

Despite the challenge of living and working in often dilapidated buildings with no lift, many URA affected elderly residents, and business operators, perceived the URA interventions as a barrier to maintaining their valued businesses and/or connection to their neighbourhood. Mr Lai, an elderly affected business operator, explained:

“... psychologically, I am already at my old age and this is a place where I am very familiar with. Very close to the neighbourhood as well. Where else can I move with such low rent?! To start all over again ... Here, everybody is close and with stable businesses ... [...] the impact is people have found this place where they could gather and be close to each other. They become my loyal customers...”

Mr Lai's thoughts and feeling about his livelihood and neighbourhood conflict with the URA's actions and rationale in two ways. Firstly, he wants an affordable place in the city to run his business. Many participants in the study mentioned that in most cases, original businesses

couldn't afford the rents of new shop spaces created through the URA's interventions. Furthermore, they can't afford to reopen their shops in areas close by because urban renewal pushed the rental prices up in surrounding neighbourhoods. Secondly, Mr Lai aspires to maintain his social network and connection with his neighbourhood. As he states, this is particularly important for him, given his age. Here, the URA's actions have not generated new aspirations; instead, it has reinforced existing ones. Taken up through action or not, the URA's interventions open a space to question taken-for-granted assumptions about what progress is and for whom.

One affected resident, Mr Hu, explained that he had lived with his extended family in the same neighbourhood for most of his life. Whilst still undergoing negotiations with the URA, his wife was living in the public house they had been allocated, and he was living in the original family home with his elderly and sick mother. With tears in his eyes, he said he would rather die than go to a new place and leave his home. He commented that out of the hundreds of cases, he didn't think many benefited from the URA's interventions. Again, this case shows how the URA process has reinforced existing urban aspirations. What is important to note is that, in this case, reinforced aspirations have had little to no effect on the overall outcome of urban renewal for Mr Hu and his family. His aspirations to maintain his way of life remain outside the established order and consensus on urban 'progress'.

More than just providing livelihoods and community to long term residents and business owners, URA affected neighbourhoods are often where low-income migrant groups arrive and establish communities. As Harry, a Hong Kong-based urban scholar and participant, said, some URA affected neighbourhoods could be described as an 'arrival city'. Borrowing a term originally developed by Doug Saunders (2010), Harry described To Kwa Wan (a URA-affected neighbourhood) as an arrival city. A place that enables new low-income migrants to arrive, get a foothold somewhere in a city that often excludes them, and contribute in some way to the economy.

The URA's aspirations for urban renewal threaten the critical functions that arrival infrastructures (Meeus, Arnaut, et al., 2019) play in housing and providing income generation for low-income migrants. These are the neighbourhoods where ethnic communities congregate and find a place to belong. It is where those on limited to no visas can find a short-term, affordable place to sleep and informal work to make money to survive and send back to their home countries. Two Indonesian participants in this study explained how they ended up in a URA-affected neighbourhood. They both came to Hong Kong as domestic workers on temporary visas and lost their jobs when they became pregnant to asylum seekers from Togo (whom they met in Hong Kong). Losing their jobs and staying in Hong Kong meant becoming asylum seekers themselves and finding affordable housing in a place that would accept

them⁵⁶. The aspirations and future social mobilities of migrants are not fixed, instead produced within and through arrival infrastructures of URA-affected neighbourhoods (Meeus, van Heur, et al., 2019).

Once the URA implements its renewal projects, the space in the city for these migrant communities shrinks and this makes it harder for new migrants to establish social connections and a sense of belonging, critical to urban incorporation. Urban renewal projects reinforce naturalised prejudice, exclusion, and inequality. Interestingly, many social workers commented that ethnic minorities and, particularly, refugee/asylum seekers were used to hardship and were, therefore, more resilient to the effects of urban renewal than others. Mr Teng, in senior leadership within the URA said there was a “noticeable number” of ethnic minorities living in URA affected areas and that his impression was that they were a lot easier to deal with than other residents. This view contrasts with the vulnerability that URA affected ethnic minority and asylum seekers expressed during interviews in this study.

Ethnic minorities and asylum seekers highlighted that language and cultural barriers meant that their understanding of the URA's process and practices was limited. In particular, these participants were least aware of the different stakeholders involved in urban renewal in Hong Kong and unsure of their rights within URA processes. For example, one affected resident explained that she felt violated when the URA turned up unannounced to conduct one of its surveys. She was alone at home, did not have her Hijab on, and felt she could not refuse a photo taken of her flat (with her in the background without her Hijab). This example highlights the taken-for-granted authority of the URA and its lack of awareness (or disregard) for the religion, culture, and values of communities in which it intervenes.

Aspirations of the grassroots are diverse, dynamic, and entangled with wider local and global processes. Grassroots peoples' authoritarian views on development and progress demonstrate how increased integration between Hong Kong and China is acted out at the level of the everyday. Offers of compensation and access to public housing from the URA work to distract and deflect affected residents and business owners from imagining, aspiring for, or demanding alternative urban futures. Like Hong Kong's urban development elite, grassroots groups utilise inter-referencing to develop and legitimise their aspirations for urban renewal; however, their key emphasis is that urban renewal should first and foremost be about housing security. Intervention into arrival neighbourhoods by the URA acts as a barrier for low-income migrants to arrive, survive, and belong in Hong Kong, reinforcing the naturalised

⁵⁶ Interestingly, these participants described how since meeting their partners and having children, their (and their partners') aspirations had changed. The participants hoped to get residency status through their Hong Kong-born children and stay living in their current neighbourhood in Hong Kong. Their partners who originally came to Hong Kong hoping to gain refugee status and get resettled in a third country were also now hoping to stay and make a life in Hong Kong.

prejudice, exclusion, and inequality highlighted in chapter 5. On the other hand, as also demonstrated, the URA's interventions can act as a catalyst for imagining alternative urban futures at the grassroots level, a dynamic examined more closely in chapter 8.

6.4 Preservation as an aspiration

The URA's intervention is a catalyst for aspirations for heritage preservation that often go beyond affected neighbourhoods. The motivation for heritage preservation for middle-class professionals and young people is often different from those of affected residents and business owners. Whereas the basis for preserving heritage for affected people centres on maintaining, surviving, and belonging in the present and future, middle-class professionals and youth are more focused on preserving an imagined past and creating a community based on an imagined past for the future. When middle-class professionals and young people refer to preserving heritage, they talk about physical structures, the social networks that underpin them, and elements of Chinese culture and tradition. As highlighted in chapter 2, aspirations to preserve heritage is an emergent paradigm observed in other cities of Asia (Chu, 2018; Liew & Pang, 2015; Zaman, 2018). Although heritage preservationists' aspirations seemingly conflict with the URA's, they are also often incorporated into the state's vision for the city. As discussed in chapter 7, seeking consensus from middle-class professionals is one way the URA maintains its authority.

6.4.1 Dreaming of the past: aspirations to preserve Hong Kong's character

For some heritage preservationists, the physical structure of buildings represents Hong Kong's identity. Preserving old tenement style buildings is preserving history and identity. For these participants, the URA has a responsibility to protect the character of these buildings. In contrast to the URA's profit-driven agenda, heritage preservationists are driven by an idealised notion of pastness. This idealised notion of pastness resembles the aspirational nostalgia deployed by urban dwellers in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to critique and mitigate the current negative aspects of Dhaka's urban development (Zaman, 2018). In Hong Kong's urban renewal context, heritage preservationists aspire to preserve a particular identity, the identity of those who have the privilege to think beyond surviving and negotiating the everyday.

Like Hong Kong's urban development elite and grassroots people, some middle-class heritage preservationists look to the experiences of 'elsewhere' and inter-reference practices in other cities to contest the practices of the URA and imagine, promote, and legitimise alternative ones. Sean, a heritage preservationist activist, explained that the URA should change into a Singapore-style Urban Redevelopment Authority that focused more on heritage and

community rather than redevelopment. Two assumptions were made by Sean worthy of note. Firstly, there is a taken-for-granted assumption that the URA is (and will) remain the authority on urban renewal in Hong Kong and secondly, that the Singapore URA's main objective is heritage preservation. Ironically, Singapore's URA's focus on heritage preservation is largely driven by the economic benefits of tourism and has led to what Chang (1999) calls the commodification of heritage. Paradoxically, the inter-referencing of Singapore as a model by heritage preservationist activists reinforces the URA's authority and profit-driven agenda.

For some participants, heritage preservation is not so much about preserving historic buildings but about preserving local economies, industries, and a way of life. Local economies and industries include local markets and street hawkers. Kat, a heritage preservationist, explains:

“it got my attention that this older part of Central will be redeveloped by the Urban Renewal Authority and we saw the plans. They are you know big development, huge development plans that will take away the old character of this area. Like Graham Street is the oldest street market in Hong Kong which has a lot of character, which is a very vibrant market used by many people who live in this area, including my family”.

As we can see, the URA's intervention shapes competing urban aspirations. Importantly here, preservation is not just about a particular identity and character but practical everyday life. As an old, established market, the Graham Street market is a tourist attraction, but it still provides residents' daily food needs. Notably, the preservation of character is incorporated into the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) and the URA's communication strategy. The URA publicly displayed information on its preservation work in areas connected to and surrounding the Graham Street market during redevelopment. The URA uses the preservation of heritage to demonstrate reasonableness and legitimise its intervention into neighbourhoods. The state's appropriation of heritage preservation minimises conflict, and projects a world where consensus between state and non-state actors is established. Similar observations have been made in other cities in Asia. For example, Zhu (2020) demonstrates how heritage has become a tool of the authoritarian state to govern urban development projects in Xi'an, China, in ways that make it difficult for people to criticise and challenge the projects.

6.4.2 Preservation aspirations and strategic alliance building

Aspirations of middle-class heritage preservationists are entangled with the aspirations of affected residents and business operators. Their aspirations are reinforced when they encounter and build strategic alliances with affected people who resist URA-led urban renewal. This reiterates one of Bunnell and Goh's (2012) observations of dynamics of aspirations at play in Asian cities – the emergence of new alliances between middle-class

residents and marginalised residents. Candice, an urban planner and urban researcher in Hong Kong, explained that when shopkeepers or residents in a URA project publicly resisted the URA interventions, heritage preservationists got involved and started influencing the language and framing of resistance. The motivation for preservation may be different, but a strategic alliance is formed. This strategic alliance is a collective effort to realise aspirations for an alternative urban development trajectory in Hong Kong. Explaining the discussion her heritage preservationist concern group had with URA affected peoples in Central, Kat, a heritage preservationist, noted:

“...and we feel that it is a very nice building. Ahh, It has this value, architectural cultural value[...] And it also contributes to the ambience of the area. We don't think that, you know, it's necessarily has to be torn down. So... talking with the owners, having this understanding how they feel”.

And later

“So, it really ties together. The owners themselves also value or treasure their properties, you know, as an old kind of, you know, the ambience ...etcetera. So, I think this is quite a special case”.

Building alliances with other groups/peoples resisting the URA's project is a strategic move by heritage preservationists and the affected peoples. The affected peoples are gaining support to maintain their livelihoods and way of life. The heritage preservationist finds justification for their aspirations to preserve the idealised identity and character of affected neighbourhoods. Notably, how aspirations of heritage preservationist groups and affected peoples shape each other's aspirations, differs depending on the urban renewal project's location. Most URA-affected neighbourhoods are low-income areas, such as the arrival neighbourhoods of To Kwa Wan or the industrial neighbourhoods of Kwun Tong. The context of Kat's comments above, however, is Central, a high-income area, and heritage preservationists are ordinarily dealing with higher-income residents and business owners.

Young heritage preservationists engaged with URA projects in low-income neighbourhoods such as the arrival neighbourhoods of To Kwa Wan strategically align themselves with affected peoples differently to middle-class professionals. Like older middle-class, professional young people aspire to preserve an imagined past and protect a particular vernacular community; however, for youth, heritage preservation is also about class politics, activism and resisting the wider urban development trajectory of Hong Kong. Sonia, a young volunteer and activist, explained that she got involved in URA interventions through her interest in community culture

and arts. Through her involvement with the Blue House⁵⁷ project, Sonia met with other young activists and was introduced to the work of the URA and the idea of spatial protection. Later the same participant reflected on her involvement in URA related protests:

“When I ahhh joined a protest that was initiated by the Nga Tsin Wai volunteer group and the concern group. And then we arrived the URA building, downstairs we put out the banners and talked and used the mic ...etcetera. And then there was this, a guy in suit, was in eye- glass, was looking so ..tried to look so gentleman and then he came and then checked with some residents and then talked to them ...”oh, how are you? So tired for you ...” ...etcetera [...] and trying to care for them and didn’t know who he was at the very beginning. Then he started to talk to the volunteers as well... And then he said, “actually, URA is already trying his best to do his job. There have been some improvements and I am working hard too”...[...] I thought why someone, maybe the police or someone, came to talk to the residents in a friendly way? But actually he was the community relations someone of the URA and he kept on popping up every time when we have anything to do here and always putting out that very gentleman look and that really makes me sick..”.

The aspirations for heritage preservation are shaped through interactions with other heritage volunteers and activists and the URA. As the above excerpt demonstrated, these interactions are often framed in an us/them way which also relates to power and class structure. Sonia describes the URA official as acting stealthily, controlling participation, and trying to manage public perception. Even the URA official's clothes set him apart from the protesters and affected residents. This example highlights how aspirations change over time and are political in nature. Also observed in the Singapore context city (Yuen, 2006), heritage preservation creates space for residents to make multiple claims, this is discussed in more depth in chapter 8.

6.4.3 Selective preservation as aspirational future making

Heritage preservationists are selective with which aspects of the past they want to preserve. Selected preservation is based on personal preference, the culture and values of wider society, and the URA. Middle-class professionals who aspire to preserve elements of local Chinese culture and tradition have developed strategies to raise the visibility and value of heritage preservation. Organising and supporting local festivals is a popular heritage preservation strategy. For example, Peter, a heritage preservationist activist, explained how a

⁵⁷ The Blue House is a 4-storey balcony-type tenement building in Wanchai, which was jointly conserved and revitalised by the URA and The Hong Kong Housing Society.

local 'hungry ghost festival' he was involved in was influential in gaining wider community buy-in for heritage preservation in URA-affected neighbourhoods and heritage preservation more broadly.

In Hong Kong, preserving local festivals is also a strategic move by heritage preservationists to engage with and influence the URA's process and practices. Kat, heritage preservationist activist, explains:

"For example, you know, in the Graham Street Market [...] We had been trying very hard to .. to persuade the government, "oh, don't destroy the market ...". We organized the Graham Street Market Festival, for example, for a couple of years, the street market festival. Then maybe after several years, the URA copied it. So, they do it now, right?! [...] And then they also organize events like this, market festival, to try and attract people to come to the market even during the redevelopment so that the market the hawkers will not just lost all the business, you know, disappeared. So, I think they are learning a little bit. And so, it's not totally they are not doing anything".

What is interesting to note here is that the URA appropriated the festival organised by heritage preservationists. Kat sees this as a positive sign the URA is learning and changing its approach to urban development. The appropriation of the festival also, however, works to manage the public perception and expectation of the URA. Here, acts of heritage preservationists might push the URA to do things differently but do not question its existence. This dynamic is important because (whether they are aware or not) heritage preservationists are complicit in managing the public perceptions of the URA and reinforcing an established consensus that they are the authority on urban renewal in Hong Kong.

The URA's interventions are a catalyst for heritage preservation aspirations that go beyond affected neighbourhoods. Aspirations of middle-class and young heritage preservationists evolve over time and are entangled with selected idealised notions of 'pastness', alliance building with affected resident and business operators, interactions with the URA, and experiences and practices of urban renewal in other Asian cities. Heritage preservationists will inter-reference urban renewal models in other Asian cities, especially Singapore, as an everyday aspirational practice. For youth, heritage preservation is also about class politics and resisting the dominant redevelopment culture in Hong Kong. Despite often competing motivations for involvement and the appropriation of community-led initiatives by the URA (reinforcing its legitimacy), strategic alliances between middle-class heritage preservationists, young people, and affected residents/business operators offer opportunities for collective efforts to realise alternative urban futures.

6.5 Conclusion

This chapter utilised the analytical optics of urban aspirations and inter-referencing to identify and explore the dynamics and effects of competing urban aspirations within the URA-led urban renewal process in Hong Kong. The findings demonstrate that multiple motivations and outcomes of urban renewal in Hong Kong are entangled with wider local and global processes. Aspirations of Hong Kong's urban development elites are entangled with the urban development aspirations of China's ruling elite, Hong Kong's developers, and the in vogue best practice models and urban policies of other Asian cities. Hong Kong's urban development elites utilise inter-referencing practices to legitimise urban competitiveness and the profit-driven rationale behind the URA's intervention, which respondents claim has the effect of deepening socio-spatial inequalities. The aspirations of grassroots people are also diverse. They are shaped by everyday authoritarian views on development and progress, the URA's compensation and resettlement policies, and wider migration and settlement processes. Grassroots people utilise inter-referencing to develop and legitimise alternative models of urban renewal to the URA's, that emphasise housing security. Finally, the aspirations of middle-class and young activists' heritage preservationists are shaped by idealised notions of pastness, alliance building, the URA's interventions, and the experiences and practices of other cities. Heritage preservationists also inter-reference urbanisms of other non-western cities to articulate and legitimise their aspirations.

This chapter has demonstrated how postcolonial optics of urban aspirations and urban inter-referencing, starting from one city, can trace diverse urbanisms across different interest groups within a city and to other cities showing shifting centres of urban knowledge production (at the level of policy transfer and through everyday interactions) to Asia (Chua, 2015). The dynamics between competing and entangled aspirations of different interest groups highlight multiple rationalities and the diversity of ways that urban life (Schindler, 2017; Schmid et al., 2018) presents evolving possibilities for urban politics. Nevertheless, other optics are needed to tease out the URA's stealthy depoliticising strategies, such as deflection through promises of compensation and access to public housing, that help maintain its dominance. The following chapter draws on postpolitics interlocutor Jacques Rancière's analytical concepts to identify and explore how the URA depoliticises its urban aspirations to assert its authority over Hong Kong's urban development trajectory.

CHAPTER 7: DISPLACING POLITICS TO MAINTAIN AUTHORITY

7.1 Introduction

As highlighted in chapter 6, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) plays a dominant role in shaping Hong Kong's urban development trajectory. The findings reveal the URA utilises depoliticisation strategies to manage urban aspirations and maintain its dominance. They include complex relationships with urban elites and experts, NGOs, affected peoples and Hong Kong's wider government and are deeply embedded in the URA's policy, processes, and practices. These depoliticisation strategies work to invalidate informal arrangements and relationships and keep discussions with affected people at the level of the particular so that they can be drawn into an established social order the URA works to uphold. These findings support a growing body of scholarship that recognises some relevance of analytical concepts of postpolitics in non-western contexts (Hui & Au, 2016; Lam-Knott et al., 2020a; Neo, 2010; Raco & Lin, 2012).

This chapter draws on postpolitical scholar, Jacques Rancière's analytical concepts of 'the police', 'the distribution of the sensible', with some reference to 'the political'⁵⁸, to identify and examine how the URA depoliticises urban renewal interventions to maintain a taken-for-granted consensus on its authority over urban development. Secondly, it highlights resistance and the inevitable incompleteness of the URA's depoliticising strategies. Three specific ways in which the URA depoliticises its process and practices to maintain a consensus on its authority and urban interventions are identified and examined: how the URA names, divides and assigns value to people, places, and things; how the URA manages participation; and how the URA manages the public perception of its interventions and authority. In the concluding section, I summarise the key points and lay the groundwork for chapter 8, which explores how ongoing tensions and struggles between different interest groups create openings for everyday politics in Hong Kong.

7.1.1 The 'police', 'the distribution of the sensible', and the 'political'

Postpolitics is an analytical lens that foregrounds the causes and effects of depoliticisation that has emerged in contemporary urban governance. To briefly remind the reader, the postpolitics thesis highlights the emergence of consensus and pragmatic forms of governance

⁵⁸ Chapter 8 takes the emergence of the political identified here as a point of departure to deploy Jacques Rancière analytical concept of 'politics' in conjunction with urban informality to identify and explore resistance, rupture and everyday politics within URA-led urban renewal interventions.

(Davidson & Iveson, 2015; Legacy et al., 2018; Rancière, 1999; Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014; Žižek, 1999) and consequently, the effect this phenomenon has on realising radical democratisation and egalitarian emancipation (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Haughton et al., 2016; Legacy et al., 2018). Postpolitics as a framework is ordinarily deployed in two ways, to describe and explain instances of urban spatial politics suffering from the 'postpolitical condition' and to identify examples of 'politics proper' or the truly political (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014).

As outlined in chapter 3, for Rancière *le police* or 'The police' is first an order of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, ways of saying. These bodies are then assigned by name to a place and task that determines what activity or voice is visible and not (Rancière, 1999, 2010). The 'police' reproduce a social order that naturalises inequality as common sense. Common sense inequality here refers to the *partage du sensible* or 'the distribution of the sensible', a partitioned spatial organisation (Rancière, 2004). '*La politique*' or 'the political' refers to the presupposition of unconditional equality. 'The political' for Rancière, exists in relation to 'the police'. Drawing on Rancière, the URA and its related governance mechanisms are considered 'the police' and actions resisting and challenging its authority and interventions, the emergence of the political.

7.2 Naming, dividing and assigning a value

During URA-led urban renewal interventions, the URA names, divides, and assigns value to people, places, and things. This naming process includes naming and dividing up blocks of buildings, streets and neighbourhoods, naming and dividing affected people in relation to property ownership, and naming and dividing according to residency status that naturalises inequality as common sense and reproduces an established social order. The everyday lived realities of affected people at times confront the URA's naming and dividing processes. Affected people often do not fit neatly into the URA's predetermined categories. The processes of naming, dividing, and assigning value are sometimes catalysts for the emergence of 'the political'.

7.2.1 "One big piece of meat": naming and dividing neighbourhoods

During urban renewal processes, blocks of houses are given a number such as KC0010 or KC009. This number is used to divide and assign value in several ways, including to dictate the order in which a household or business will go through negotiations, to calculate the compensation and public housing eligibility of affected residents or business operators, and to assign a social worker service provider from the Urban Renewal Social Service Team

(URSST). Some social workers and affected peoples that participated in this research expressed frustration at the lack of transparency from the URA around why some blocks of houses go through negotiations before others. In addition, these participants pointed out that the URA did not prioritise the most dilapidated and dangerous buildings.

Mr Wang, an affected business operator, commented that the URA's naming and dividing processes confused and divided the community making it harder for affected people and business operators to join forces to resist their interventions. He explained that they were all part of the same "big project", "one big piece of meat", but when people tried to discuss their concerns and complaints with their neighbours, their neighbours would respond that they couldn't comment because they were "not there yet" and "didn't know what they were talking about". For Mr Wang, the URA's naming, and dividing is a deliberate attempt to divide and confuse the affected community. The naming and dividing-up of the neighbourhood is experienced as a barrier to collective action and works to displace politics by keeping objections at the level of the particular. Keeping demands and discussion at the level of the particular is an established feature of postpolitical urban governance arrangements (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018; Wells, 2020).

It is important however, to emphasise that some affected peoples are aware that the URA's strategies work to displace politics which draws attention to the emergence of 'the political'. Ms Ting, an affected resident explains:

"... they joined forces together is because ... the first point is URA is too mean. They are too harsh. And to simply say it is what they are doing is inhuman. And but then, it is easy for residents Chun Tin Street is divided into odd numbers and even numbers so when the government go through the land acquisition process with maybe just the odd numbers first, and so like, it's trying to break the bond between the residents and so they can't join hands together"

Here Ms Ting explains how the URA's attempts to divide the neighbours was a catalyst for collective action. By joining forces, affected people break away from (and challenge) the number and place assigned to them by the URA. Novák (2020) highlights a similar occurrence with activists disputing a social centre in Prague, Czech Republic. He explains how activists turned a particular demand into a universal one resulting in a declaration of equality and re-politicisation of the social centre. Likewise, in Hong Kong, this action of joining forces pushes interactions with the URA from the level of the particular to the universal and is an assertion of equality that works to re-politicise the URA's processes and practices.

7.2.2 Privileging property ownership, and reproducing inequality

As described in chapter 5, once a URA project has been publicly announced, freezing surveys⁵⁹ and social impact assessments are immediately conducted. At this point, the URA will decide whether you are residential/non-residential, owner, owner-occupier, tenant, business owner-occupier, or business tenant. Many participants explained that affected people are entitled to specific compensation packages and/or rehousing opportunities related to their assigned category. Furthermore, they commented that the URA was careful in what they recognised as commercial operations since that equated to additional compensation.

The URA's freezing surveys and assessments that name, divide and assign value to people work to depoliticise (and therefore maintain) existing inequalities within Hong Kong. For example, in the URA's interventions, people are valued in relation to their position in respect to property ownership. By dividing affected peoples into different categories and assigning value accordingly, the URA reproduces a self-evident taken for granted social order with property owners at the top of the social hierarchy entitled to better compensation and, consequently, housing security. Notably, several participants highlighted that the dividing and assigning value in relation to property ownership is often a point of conflict within the community, exposing the vulnerability of the URA's postpolitical intervention and the ever-present possibility of the emergence of the pollical.

Although the value assigned to property owners is higher than tenants, being named as an 'owner' comes with other challenges. It is not uncommon in older neighbourhoods for informal agreements and relationships rather than legal documents to determine who owns a property and how it is used. These informal arrangements and agreements include legal and illegal (such as rooftop homes and illegally subdivided units) dwellings and businesses. This informality does not fit tidily within the URA's pre-determined processes and practices. For example, Mr Yang, an affected resident, explained that he shared the ownership of his tiny flat with his now-deceased uncle and was having trouble with the URA because it was an informal arrangement. He didn't have the documents they requested and couldn't get his uncle's signature to confirm his legal standing. Here, a seemingly functional arrangement is invalidated through the URA's intervention and an established consensus that privileges formal ownership is maintained.

Most participants in this study identified tenants as the most vulnerable group affected by the URA's interventions. Under the URA's current naming and dividing system, owner-occupiers are entitled to the largest amounts of compensation. The financial value assigned to owner-

⁵⁹ A freezing survey is conducted as soon as a URA project is announced to record who is occupying flats and shop spaces as well as ascertain who the owners are. Freezing surveys are designed to stop owners from pushing tenants out to access more compensation for themselves.

occupiers has led to some tenants being pushed out of their homes and business premises. Participants explained that some landlords moved back into their properties before the URA officially announced the project in the Hong Kong Government's Gazette to claim the full compensation⁶⁰. For others, landlords found ways to get around renewing tenants' contracts or raised the rents so much that tenants had no choice but to move to more affordable accommodation.

Although the URA's policies and freezing surveys were set up to provide some protection for tenants, some affected residents and social workers who participated in this study found them insufficient. Like property owners' challenges, some tenants also did not have formal documents to prove their tenancy. Josh, a social worker in a URA-funded social services team, explained that he often helped tenants in informal arrangements with their landlord find documents like purchase receipts with their names and addresses (dated before the freezing survey) to prove their tenancy.

It seems that under the semblance of protecting tenants, the URA's freezing surveys work to discipline and familiarise URA affected people with formality and capitalist ideals of ownership. The stealthy ways postpolitical urban development interventions work to familiarise affected people with certain values are observable in other contexts. For example, Choplin (2016) explains how pro-poor urban development programmes in Nouakchott, Mauritania, function to familiarise neo-city-dwellers with developmentalist ideals of ownership, microloans, and a free-market system.

The naming and dividing of affected people during the URA's freezing surveys also function to conceal the paradoxical position of the URA. On the one hand, the URA's freezing surveys are supposed to provide some protection for affected people (especially tenants). On the other hand, driven by profit, the URA is expected to make the acquisition process as efficient as possible. Some participants pointed out that it was ultimately in the URA's best interest for landlords to move back into their properties to make acquisition and compensation processes more efficient. Chester, social worker and scholar explains:

“...the landlord if they want to kick renter out before the URA project was launched that would be quite easy, and so so renter are some group being neglected by URA, and the URA also prefer the landlord to do something before they enter, yeah easier it will be easier, ahh because the URA don't want to face two group of people from the same apartment...”

⁶⁰ The URA is cautious to keep a potential project site under wraps until official announcements, and freezing surveys are underway. However, several participants said some investors anticipated new site locations causing property speculation.

Chester highlights how the URA's naming and dividing makes tenants vulnerable to losing their homes, not protecting them (as the freezing survey and compensation policy suggests). Several participants identified business tenants as being especially vulnerable to the URA's interventions. These participants explained that on top of the difficulty of finding a new premise to restart businesses, some had informal arrangements such as running a shop out of what is officially considered a staircase that made it difficult for them to prove their situation and access compensation. The vulnerability of tenants in the URA's interventions reinforces a social order in Hong Kong that places a high value on formal property ownership.

Jan, a social worker in a URA-funded social service team, explained how difficult it was for sex workers based in URA affected neighbourhoods to find another place to restart their business and access compensation due to their occupation. The URA's naming and dividing practices put sex workers in the difficult position of proving their work's legitimacy to access compensation. In this context, the URA's intervention reinforces a taken-for-granted consensus on what is considered legitimate/illegitimate forms of and places of employment. Furthermore, sex workers' grievances are managed at the level of the particular (proving the legitimacy of their work and use of a residential dwelling for work purposes), displacing debate and politics around more universal issues such as what kinds of work and workspaces get recognised.

7.2.3 Residency status and naturalised exclusion

The URA's naming, dividing, and assigning value to people extends to an affected person's residency status⁶¹. An affected person's residency status determines whether they are entitled to compensation and/or public housing. This strategy reproduces a social order in which some people living in Hong Kong are valued more, belong more, and are therefore more entitled/deserving of compensation or rehousing. As highlighted in chapters 5 and 6, many neighbourhoods affected by URA interventions, such as those in Yau Mong Districts and Kowloon City Districts, have higher than average numbers of low-income migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers with limited to no residency status. The exclusion of these groups in Hong Kong is reinforced through URA interventions.

Some participants in this study pointed out that some households affected by URA interventions are made up of family members who migrated to Hong Kong at different times. For example, it is not uncommon for a male 'breadwinner' to move to Hong Kong and bring

⁶¹ For example, whether an affected person is a permanent resident, a Hong Kong resident who has lived in Hong Kong for less or more than seven years, or without legal status

his wife and children out to join him after a few years. These migration patterns affect compensation and rehousing eligibility. The Hong Kong Housing Authority states that at least 50% of household members must have lived in Hong Kong for seven years and all family members must be still residing in Hong Kong to be eligible for public housing (Hong Kong Housing Authority, 2019).

The URA's naming and dividing process does not reflect the actual lived realities of many low-income migrants in Hong Kong. Low-income migrants' experiences reveal gaps in the URA's naming and dividing process that reinforce the exclusion of low-income migrants from Hong Kong's urban development. For example, under the current urban governance system, migrants in Hong Kong with limited or no legal residency status cannot be rehoused in public housing and can only access minimal compensation. These people include those on domestic worker visas, refugees and/or asylum seekers.

Ken, a former URA-funded social worker, highlighted the precarious position of URA affected migrants with limited residency status in Hong Kong and the importance of informal housing in their survival. He told the story of a former client who was a domestic worker living under the stairs of a basement in a building affected by URA interventions.⁶² Not eligible for public housing, the URA eventually gave him a small amount of compensation, but it was very difficult for him to find an affordable place to live. In this context, the seeming goodwill of the URA (in the form of minimal compensation) once again works to manage grievances at the level of the particular, distracting and deflecting debates away from more universal issues and demands such as domestic worker and/or housing rights.

7.2.4 Appropriating names and the emergence of 'the political'

The URA's naming, dividing and assigning of value to people, places and things is at times appropriated by resistance groups. For example, H15, an activist group, got their name by appropriating the name assigned to the eight streets of the URA's H15 project where the founding members of the activists' group had lived and/or worked. Mindy, one of the founding members of H15, explained how the URA naming and dividing tactic brought a group of affected people together to resist and repolitisise the URA's interventions. Enlisting the help of supportive planners and architects, H15 put forward a counterproposal to the URA's plans. Discussed in detail in chapter 8, this counterproposal based on the affected residents' claim for the right to a 'flat for flat' exchange in the proposed new development demonstrates that

⁶² According to current legislation, this has questionable legality (Immigration Department of Hong Kong, 2021).

rather than foreclosing politics, the depoliticising naming, dividing and assigning of value by the URA 'police' can create an environment for the political to emerge.

The URA is here understood in the Rancièrian sense as 'the police'. The URA's processes and practices of naming, dividing and assigning value to people, places and things work to displace politics and reinforce a consensus on the URA's authority and the unequal social order it upholds. The URA's interventions invalidated and disciplined informal ownership arrangements and relationships. Furthermore, negotiations with affected peoples are kept at the level of the particular so that individuals can be negotiated with and drawn into the established social order or 'distribution of the sensible' upheld by the URA. Importantly, however, everyday informal relationships and resistances highlight the incompleteness of the URA's postpolitical processes and practices and the ever-present possibilities of the emergence of 'the political'.

7.3 Participation and the paradox of control

The URA maintains its dominance over Hong Kong's urban development trajectory by managing and attempting to control who can participate, what is up for debate and discussion, and what or where forums for participation can occur. The URA's policy, processes, practices, and legislation that govern participation exemplify a top-down approach to urban development. In this context, on the one hand, technocratic elites and experts are invited to advise and participate in URA interventions. On the other hand, NGOs are utilised and managed by the URA to legitimise their process and practices. Furthermore, under the guise of a participatory approach, efforts to include affected people are utilised to maintain the status quo, 'the distribution of the sensible', that naturalises inequality rather than contributes to meaningful decision-making. Crucially, the URA's attempts to manage participation and exclude affected people from decision-making processes are central to the emergence of 'the political' and imaging alternative urban futures.

7.3.1 Maintaining the URA's taken-for-granted authority

As discussed in chapter 5, the URA is a semi-autonomous organisation that was seed-funded by the Hong Kong government. The URA is governed by the URA Board, members of which are appointed by Hong Kong's Chief Executive. Many research participants commented that the URA's establishment and role was determined by Hong Kong's ruling elite's aspirations for 'world-class city' status. This perception is reflected in the stated vision of the URA which is "to create quality and vibrant urban living in Hong Kong -a better home in a world-class city (Urban Renewal Authority, 2017).

As already highlighted in chapter 6, China's government appoints Hong Kong's Chief Executive and aspirations for urban development are shaped by the aspirations of China's ruling and capitalist elites. When discussing the challenges of public engagement in the context of Hong Kong, Mr Teng, in senior leadership within the URA, commented on the growing influence of China:

"The political environment makes it a lot more challenging. It is a lot more challenging and so that is coming back to this balance point. It is difficult to find this point where everyone has consensus on the plan..."

In this context, China's political elite are part of the balance point for consensus that Mr Teng is discussing here. The complex political environment Mr Teng highlights here only strengthens a taken-for-granted assumption that a consensus order (one in which the URA are the authority on urban renewal) are both already established and should be maintained. Other scholars have found that authoritarianism's influence bolsters postpolitical consensus (Matijasevich, 2020; Zhu, 2020). In Hong Kong, a struggle against the URA's postpolitical interventions often coincides with a struggle for more democratic norms and institutions. As demonstrated in the government's response to protests triggered by a proposed Anti Extradition Law in 2019-2020, a struggle for more democratic norms and institutions does come with risk.

The taken-for-granted role of the URA in urban development in Hong Kong is further entrenched through consensus-seeking review processes. For example, between 2008-2010 Hong Kong's Development Bureau led a three-stage public consultation process to review the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS review). The stated emphasis of the review was on public engagement (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b). During the review over 2,400 public opinions/comments were received (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b). The 2011 Urban Renewal Strategy document states:

"A revised Urban Renewal Strategy drawn up on the basis of the broad consensus reached during the extensive public engagement was published in draft for public consultation between 13 October 2010 and 13 December 2010 pursuant to the requirement in the Urban Renewal Authority Ordinance" (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b).

Three related assumptions are made in the URA's statement. Firstly, the goal of seeking consensus assumes that conflict is to be managed. Secondly, there is an assumption that a consensus on urban renewal is achievable, and thirdly that the opinions and comments of 2,400 people can represent a consensus. Finally, the consensus that is sought (and apparently achieved) within the URA's review works to project a world without conflict, a well-

established characteristic of postpolitical governance strategies (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2015a).

Describing the three-stage URS review process, Ingrid, a former URA employee centrally involved in the URS review, explained that during the first stage of the public engagement processes, the URA conducted two initial consultancy studies to establish an objective basis to engage the public⁶³. These studies included a building condition report and a study report that developed recommendation based on urban renewal experience in Seoul, Tokyo, Singapore, Taipei, Shanghai and Guangzhou (as discussed in chapter 6). Ingrid said that these reports were the starting point to engage the public and see what they perceived to be urban renewal problems. She went on to say that although they knew what the issues were, they let them set the agenda and come up with eight initial topics.

The study reports that supposedly establish an objective basis to engage the public, limited participation within urban renewal in Hong Kong. Firstly, the reports take for granted a consensus on the study objectives and directives given to consultants. Effectively, participation at this earliest stage is limited to the government, the URA's managerial elites and technocratic experts. Secondly, these supposedly objective studies were utilised to justify the need for urban renewal and establish a pre-determined baseline scenario to engage the public. Although Ingrid says the URA does not set the agenda, its actions say otherwise. The URA had already decided URA intervention was needed and what the problems and opportunities were. In this case, public engagement is effectively an exercise to confirm and legitimise what is already known/decided by the URA. The more universal focus on the need and purpose of urban renewal itself is left out of discussion and debate.

Ingrid went on to describe the second stage of consultations during the URS review explaining that the second stage was to discuss the eight topics identified in the first phase of the review with experts and academics in forums and topic groups. During this stage the URA invited the experts to dialogue with the public and the Development Bureau. Ingrid explains how criticism or questions were answered:

“Umm whenever there are criticism or questions or whatever, I will be the one to directly answer them so that they won't be umm missing gaps. You may not agree with me but at least that's my answer to you. Nothing cannot be explained “

⁶³ Both studies were conducted by consultants. The building condition report is not available to the public but the study report on Asian cities is.

After these forums and discussion Ingrid said a sort of consensus was made on what was essentially a 'no go'. When asked what a 'no go' was Ingrid said:

"Like, for example, you ask us to give you a new flat for an old flat. That is a no go. But if you say, "Why don't I have one more choice then maybe we could look at it?"

Ingrid said that this second stage went well even though some people did not see eye to eye with the URA, were unwilling to listen and demonstrated at every public discussion. It is clear from Ingrid's retelling of the second phase of the review that discussions were closely monitored and managed by the URA. The URA's senior leaders set the agenda and directly answered any questions or criticism that the public raised. Here, compromise is portrayed as the only rational option for those with conflicting aspirations. This postpolitical dynamic reiterates Hui and Au's (2016) study that found that divergence in opinions in state-led consultation processes in Hong Kong is disciplined to provide consensus. It is important to note that despite the URA's consensus-seeking activities, the political emerged through persistent demonstrations.

Ingrid explained that the third phase of the URS review involved developing and putting out different policy options for another round of consultations (which included the legislative council members and relevant district councils). These consultations resulted in the policies found in the current Urban Renewal Strategy, including flat-for-flat and demand-led urban renewal. The outcomes of these policies will be discussed later in this chapter.

7.3.2 Technocrats and NGOs, the "running dogs" of URA

The URA commonly utilise technocratic elites⁶⁴ and NGOs' participation in their urban renewal processes and practices. Technocratic elites and NGOs are central to maintaining the appearance of a consensus on the URA's authority and legitimising its decision-making, consequently displacing the politics of its interventions. Beyond specific strategy reviews, as discussed above, urban elites and NGOs are embedded in the everyday operations and interventions of the URA. These day-to-day operations include managing who can participate in decision-making processes, what is up for debate and discussion, and where forums for participation can occur.

Samantha, a senior manager in the URA's community development team, explained that every district affected by a URA intervention has a URA appointed an advisory committee whose role is to seek stakeholders' views and comments about the URA projects. Samantha identified these stakeholders as district council members, Legislative Council (LegCo)

⁶⁴ Here technocratic elites refer to planners, architects, academics, consultants, other professionals.

members⁶⁵, community leaders, local group leaders, professionals, and academics. Samantha highlighted that these stakeholders are handpicked by the URA rather than elected or self-selecting volunteers. The selection process she described demonstrates how the URA can appear to create space for participation whilst still maintaining tight control.

Some participants highlighted that the URA would often draw on the engagement skills of community-minded professionals to manage conflict related to its projects. Reflecting on his previous involvement with the URA, Chan, a senior civil servant and scholar, explained how the URA approached him for help on how best to deal with some of the most challenging problems and controversies they were facing in terms of public engagement. Although it was evident during the interview that Chan had good intentions to support affected communities, his participation was controlled and worked to maintain the appearance of consensus on the URA's authority and urban aspirations. Notably, some of the professionals the URA utilises in their community engagement activities recognise the URA's efforts to maintain the appearance of consensus and control participation. For example, Chester, a social worker and scholar, explains:

“for a meeting I still remember, I still remember at that time the CEO of URA come to attend our meeting, and I remember and the chairman of that committee is in fact someone who was very pro-government, and you know that the reason they came here right, and a DP [Democratic Party] member just write out several questions, challenge the chairman, and the CEO who was at that time just an attendee, he is not a member of the committee, he just asked the chairman you should stop him from saying anything more”.

There are two critical points made by Chester concerning the participation of the technocratic elite worth noting. Firstly, the chair, the person given the most authority by the URA, is pro-government and, therefore, the committee set up to favour the established consensus on the URA's interventions.

Secondly, the URA's leadership's overt interference in a local committee meeting demonstrates that it will intervene to control participation to maintain its authority. This overt control over participation (and civil society more generally) resembles that found in authoritarian regimes.

The URA also utilises expert consultants to conduct consensus-seeking community studies. These community studies help direct the URA's processes and practices, including its heritage

⁶⁵ The URA Board governs the URA, members of which are appointed by Hong Kong's Chief Executive and annual reports with audited financial statements and a related auditor's report is given to the financial secretary before being tabled at Hong Kong's Legislative Council.

and preservation activities. For example, the URA commissioned Social Ventures Hong Kong (SVhk) to conduct a 'community-making study', to assess community needs as part of the revitalisation of URA project H19 and its surrounding neighbourhoods⁶⁶ (Urban Renewal Authority, 2020). The H19 community-making study was part of the URA's aspiration:

"to reimagine the development of this neighbourhood through fresh perspectives to forge a new community consensus" (Social Ventures Hong Kong, 2020).

Here, under the URA's directive, expert consultants are expected to establish a consensus on the development of the neighbourhood. In short, community development experts can participate in URA initiated processes and practices as long as they stick to the rules of the game. For example, Kat, a heritage preservation activist who participated in SVhk consultations, explained that SVhk stuck to the terms of reference set out by the URA and were unwilling to talk about what she called the "hardware" or the planning and/or design of the place. In this context, consultations are based on a taken-for-granted baseline scenario created by the URA. Consequently, any appearance of consensus achieved is based on misleading assumptions. Furthermore, whether they are aware or not, expert consultants, even those such as SVhk, who may have good intentions are complicit in the URA strategies to displace politics. Kat's key concern was that the URA would use the findings of a limited consultation to justify its interventions to the District Council.

Like technical experts and scholars, NGOs are embedded in the URA's day-to-day operations, with one participant going so far as calling NGOs the "running dogs" of the URA. NGOs are contracted as part of the URA's Urban Renewal Social Service Team (URSST) to provide everyday social work services to affected residents. NGOs have been part of the URA's URSST since the URA's establishment in 2001. (Urban Renewal Authority, 2020c).⁶⁷ The participation of NGOs as part of the URSST is tightly controlled and managed by the URA. For example, NGOs are not given information on which blocks of buildings or people will be affected by its interventions until the announcement is made public and freezing surveys about to begin. In this context, the support that NGOs can provide affected people is limited to helping them accept what has already been decided (redevelopment) and help them access compensation and/or rehousing.

⁶⁶ The H19 project is also known as the Staunton Street/Wing Lee Street Project and is located in the Central and Western Districts of Hong Kong.

⁶⁷ At the time of this research, the Urban Renewal Social Service Team (URSST) is comprised of four NGOs: Christian Family Service Centre, The Salvation Army, The Hong Kong Lutheran Social Service and St James Settlement.

Figure 5

Office of the Salvation Army URSST



Note. [source of image] author's photo

The URA control the participation of NGOs in its interventions by controlling what they are willing to discuss with NGOs and what they are not. Sue, a URA-funded social worker, said that she and her colleagues had lots of issues with the URA, but the root of the problems was in its policies. She explained that it wasn't clear what the mission of the URA was or how they interpreted their mission. She felt that all they wanted to do was redevelop and remove people to make a profit. Sue said that the policies and how they are to be interpreted was not up for discussion. NGOs in the URSST recognise the harm caused by the URA's policies and interventions, but the URA is unwilling to discuss these concerns with them. The participation of NGOs is managed to ensure the apparent consensus on the URA's interventions is maintained.⁶⁸ Mr Teng, in senior leadership in the URA, reiterates Sue's point:

"They [NGOs] are more interested in changing the policy framework instead of providing assistance to affected people. So, my approach would be that I am working under a policy framework and I have to deliver. If you want to make changes to the policy, I don't have any problem, but it is not URA"

There are two critical distinctions made by Mr Teng here. Firstly, NGOs' role and participation in the URA processes and practices are determined by a narrow reading of the URA's policy

⁶⁸ . The URA's control over NGOs is further complicated by the funding mechanisms used to manage the URSST, which will be discussed further in the following section.

framework that maintains the status quo. Secondly, by stating that he is working under a policy framework he must deliver, Mr Teng points out that the URA's mandate is directed by a higher authority, the Hong Kong government, and its legislative system. Mr Teng's statement is important because participants were often confused about the URA and often spoke of the URA as something separate from the state. In many ways, the URA functions like a corporation; however, it is important to recognise that the URA is effectively an extended part of the state.

7.3.3 Controlling the participation of the grassroots

The participation of affected people and the grassroots is carefully managed and controlled within URA processes and practices. Strategies to manage the participation of affected people include statutory and non-statutory consultation and decision-making processes. When asked about how much URA-affected people are involved in URA decision-making processes, Mr Teng, in senior leadership in the URA, said "it depended on how you defined involvement". He explained that although "affected people as a stakeholder group" were not directly involved in decision-making processes, they could always go through relevant district or legislative councillors, government departments, or URA consultation processes.

Mr Teng's response to the question of affected people's participation in decision-making processes highlights the tokenism of official decision-making forums made available to affected people to participate or object to URA interventions. It also demonstrates how the URA's intervention maintains a taken-for-granted social order that naturalises individuals and groups' capacities and hierarchical positions (Grange & Gunder, 2018). Hui and Au's (2016) study found that the idea of stakeholders within urban development rhetoric in Hong Kong concealed an inclusion-exclusion logic where those in power mediated who is included and excluded. In this context, affected residents as a stakeholder group are assigned minimal capabilities justifying their exclusion from meaningful decision-making processes.

Many of the URA-affected people that participated in this study felt that the URA does not meaningfully consider their opinions and feedback. For example, Ms Ting, an affected resident, explained that although residents were "invited" to write letters to express their concerns about the URA project (and the URA received lots of feedback), they felt their opinions were not taken into account by the URA. Ms Ting's comments that affected people were "invited" by the URA to participate in their interventions highlights how it maintains its taken-for-granted authority over urban renewal. The tokenistic nature of the invitation maintains a social order in which inequality experienced by affected people is naturalised.

Another participant highlighted the tokenistic nature of URA's consultations. Kevin, a young housing rights activist, explained that many affected residents submitted opinions during relocation and consultation periods. Kevin emphasised that once the URA collected the opinions, they were processed through a committee that usually came out with a set of reasons of how they had already covered the affected people's concerns. He gave the example of how those who were having trouble finding new accommodation already had access to social workers to help them.

It seems here that under the guise of participation, affected residents' concerns are pacified, and politics displaced. Using the example of a campaign to end a controversial road project in Melbourne, Australia, Legacy (2017) shows how attempts to engage citizens in prescribed ways can induce alternative forms of participation. Similarly, in this context, the URA's depoliticising participatory practices were the catalyst for Kevin's involvement in a grassroots activist group that works to make visible the depoliticising practices of the URA, promote grassroots housing rights, and alternative urban development practices. This example highlights how acts to displace politics create the environment in which the political emerges. This dynamic will be the focus of chapter 8.

When reflecting on the participation of affected people and the grassroots, many participants in this study referred to the District Urban Renewal Forum (DURF) established by the URA in Kowloon City in 2011.⁶⁹ In general, participants thought DURF and the ideas that came out of it were good. However, they also felt it did not significantly change the URA's processes and practices and questioned whether it was a genuine attempt to do something different or promote an approach that the URA has already decided on. The DURF website states that the purpose of DURF is:

“to ensure that urban renewal is undertaken in a more systematic way with regard to local characteristics and aspirations and community interests at large, each DURF will be chaired by a professional familiar with urban renewal issues and its members will be drawn from a wide cross-section in the local community including District Council/Area Committee Members, representatives from established non-governmental organizations/groups” (District Urban Renewal Forum, 2014).

In this context, professionals or experts as the ones seen to ‘know best’ manage the process with grassroots people. Furthermore, as Nathan, a NGO social worker for the URA-funded

⁶⁹ DURF was established as the result of the URS review between 2008-2010, in which the public expressed their desire for a more people-centred, district-based, participatory approach to urban renewal. The URA set up the new advisory platform to strengthen urban renewal at the district level and advise the government on district-based urban renewal initiatives from a holistic and integrated perspective, including conducting broad-based public engagement activities (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011b).

social service highlighted, the participation of grassroots people is utilised to legitimise the URA's interventions:

"There are many professions inside it. Maybe the committee inside DURF has already done that portion. That's why they claim they have already done the advisory. With those information on hand, they claim they have done the advisory. It seems that this makes it easier for them to achieve whatever they desire"

Nathan highlights that under the guise of a more participatory 'bottom-up' approach to urban renewal, DURF works to legitimise the URA's pre-determined interventions, excluding affected people, and ensuring its taken-for granted authority is unquestionably maintained ⁷⁰ Furthermore, participants highlighted that many affected people could not afford to take time off work to attend the URA's meetings and consultations and language barriers meant that the URA consultation often excluded recent migrants.

One way the URA manage and control the participation of affected people and the grassroots is through managing their perceptions of choice. Jan, a URA funded social worker explained that a lack of transparency of the URA's processes and practices made affected residents feel like there was nothing they could do about the URA's intervention. A lack of transparency within the URA's process and practices more than just excludes affected residents, it also shapes their perception of choice. Sam, a business operator affected by the URA's interventions also highlighted this:

"In fact, most of the people have been living here for quite a while and have been having activities here for so long...they wish they could stay back here. However, due to the circumstances... they have no choices".

Here the URA's authority is unquestioned, participation limited, and subsequently, affected peoples' choices are successfully managed. Managing the perception of choice is another way the URA's practices displace politics, shaping Hong Kong urban development direction.

7.3.4 The paradox of managed participation

As is highlighted at different points in the discussion above, the depoliticising strategies the URA utilise to manage participation and 'seek consensus from those that count' in its interventions does not go unnoticed. Some professionals affected residents and activists

⁷⁰ There has not been another DURF since the first one in 2011. A statement on the DURF website states, "The term of District Urban Renewal Forum was ended on 31 May 2014. The proposed Urban Renewal Plan for Kowloon City, submitted to Secretary for Development on 29 January 2014 for consideration, is now available on this website. The information in this website has been archived and will not be updated" (District Urban Renewal Forum, 2014). The discontinuation of DURF is further evidence of its tokenism.

respond by participating in alternative urban practices such as demonstrations outside DURF or, in Kevin's case, involvement in grassroots activists' groups. As another example of this dynamic, in one neighbourhood, in response to recognised inequality embedded in the URA's processes and practices, frustrated business operators who are part of the automotive business decided to invite the URA to meet with them, on their terms, in their neighbourhood.

Mr Wang, an affected business operator and key organiser explained that the community set the time and location of the meeting according to their needs, not the URA. Inviting the URA to meet the community on their own terms works to remove the distance between the URA's decision-making process and the everyday lives of those the URA's interventions affect. Furthermore, by addressing the URA as a community and not individuals, affected residents turned their particular demand into a universal demand enacting a declaration of equality (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014). The enactment of everyday politics related to this neighbourhood event is discussed in detail in the preceding chapter.

The URA, as understood in the Rancièrian sense as 'the police' takes its authority for granted and enlists technocratic elites and NGOs into its specific and everyday processes and practices. In this context, the participation of affected people and the grassroots within URA processes and practices are tokenistic and tightly controlled. Interestingly, the high level of control the URA wields over its supposedly participatory activities resembles the behaviour of authoritarian regimes. The URA's attempts to manage participation in urban renewal displace politics and preserve an established social hierarchy that excludes and marginalises affected people. Importantly, however, NGOs, affected people and their allies are awake to URA's depoliticising strategies and respond through demonstrations, grassroots activism and community-led patriation forums. These dynamics demonstrate that the URA's interventions towards displacing politics are paradoxically a catalyst for its taken-for-granted authority and naturalised inequality ('the distribution of the sensible') that its practices uphold are challenged, and the political realised.

7.4 Managing perceptions and pacifying the disobedient

The URA maintains its authority and dominance over the direction of urban development in Hong Kong through managing how the public perceives its position and interventions. These strategies include managing its brand, deflecting politics through new policies, developing and utilising new governing bodies, and pacifying and disciplining the disobedient. These 'policing' strategies function to maintain 'the distribution of the sensible' in which the inequality experienced by URA affected people is naturalised.

7.4.1 Brand URA

The URA is aware of the negative perception that some of the public have of its position and interventions. Past and present URA employees who participated in this study described how the public often misunderstood the URA's intentions and wanted to change this. Cindy, an employee of the URA in the senior leadership team, explained that the URA was trying to tell a different side of the urban renewal story to the public. A story that they were not like a private developer, were not all about property prices, and (unlike private developers) have the policy to deal with affected tenants. The distinction between the URA and private developers is a branding strategy of the URA. Several participants in this study explained that although the URA often used this distinction to legitimise their interventions, their partnerships with private developers meant this claim is met with suspicion. Moreover, these participants highlighted that the effects of urban renewal, whether URA led or private-led, resulted in similar outcomes (the original residents and business operators displaced). Thus, the most significant distinction between the URA and private developers is that managing the public perception is more of a priority for the URA than private developers.

In some cases, the URA has successfully fostered a positive perception of their intentions and interventions with affected residents. Some affected residents in this study described how the URA staff who visited them were polite and offered to help with building maintenance, such as providing rat bait during acquisition. It is difficult to be critical of, or see the harm caused by the URA's intervention if they show individualised care and concern. Yvette, a planner and former LDC employee (URA predecessor), said that her old colleagues now at the URA were smart. They would identify the especially 'vocal' owners and give them special attention and support to keep them quiet and minimise the chance of a media sensation. She demonstrates how identified 'vocal' owners are pacified by drawing them into particularised negotiations with the URA, displacing politics and ensuring a consensus on the URA's authority and interventions.

Heritage preservation is another branding strategy used by the URA to manage the public perception of their interventions. The URA regularly undertakes heritage preservation activities inside and outside its redevelopment project areas.⁷¹ For example, In 2017, 'The Blue House' a cluster of revitalised tenement buildings, a joint preservation project between the URA and the Hong Kong Housing Society, was given the award of excellence, the highest level of four categories in UNESCO's Asia-Pacific Awards For Cultural Heritage Conservation (Ng, 2017b). Chester, a social worker and scholar, explained that the rationale behind the

⁷¹ To date, 60 historical buildings have been preserved by the URA (Urban Renewal Authority, 2020).

'Blue House' was to make a model and exemplar to show that the URA was reasonable and could listen to the public aspiration to preserve local heritage.

The URA's attempt to brand themselves as heritage preservationists works to demonstrate their reasonableness and ability to listen to the public. Many participants, however, were critical of the URA's preservation practices. Peter, a heritage preservationist, said that the URA's focus was on plot ratios and that its heritage preservation activities were a "distraction and propaganda". Heritage preservation here works to legitimise the status quo. Toshi, a former URA employee, describes how heritage preservation is secondary to profit maximisation for the URA:

"the only reason why we preserved that, and it was unintentionally, is because the site was big enough that we could use that plot ratio on the rest of the site. Originally, we were going to knock that down because it was a much smaller site but then... I remember going to the Planning Committee and they said why don't we make it bigger? [...] Yeah, they didn't say make it bigger so we can preserve it. Let's just make it bigger because there are other low-rise buildings that you could gain from. It was only then that me and my boss said hang on, if we can make it bigger then we can use ... why not preserve?".

In this case, preserving a historical building did not justify the increase in the development site; instead, the increase in site size enabled the URA to justify preserving the structure. The URA's preservation activities are tokenistic. Furthermore, the close relationship between the Development Bureau's Planning Committee and the URA described here highlights the extent to which, Hong Kong's wider government influences the heritage preservation practices of the URA.

Several participants noted how the URA's heritage preservation projects worked to distract the public from the collective trauma experienced from the demolition of Hong Kong's iconic Star Ferry and Queens Wharf Pier. Chan, a scholar and advisor to the URA at the time of the demolition of the Star Ferry and Queens Wharf Pier and Wanchai market (2007-2008) redevelopment project, recommended the URA preserve the Façade of Wanchai market. He explained that this was because of the timing of the project. It was just before a leadership change in the government and not long after the contentious demolition of the Star Ferry and Queens Wharf piers. He said that demolishing without any preservation at the time would have been "political suicide". Thus, as a branding strategy, the URA's heritage preservation activities here work to legitimise the URA's taken-for-granted authority and displace politics.

7.4.2 Deflection through new policies

One way the URA manages the public's perception of their interventions is by developing new policies. New policies reflect the URA's attempts to integrate democratic principles and discourse into its processes and works to deflect the public from questioning its legitimacy and authority over urban development. As mentioned already, as the result of the Urban Renewal Strategy (URS) review process between 2008-2010, several new policies were developed to address concerns and aspirations of the general public. One of the new policies was the Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme. Under this scheme, the URA takes on the role of facilitator, supporting dilapidated building owners to initiate redevelopment (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011a). Ingrid, a past employee of the URA in the senior leadership team, said that the URA's policy-making processes were "quite sophisticated". She explained that under the new Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme, if 80% of the owners in a group of buildings were willing to sell their properties, the URA would assist them in auctioning their properties to private developers.

Although, as Ingrid explained, property owners can initiate the redevelopment of their project under the Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme, the processes and guidelines set out by the URA reaffirm the URA's authority and dominance over urban development in Hong Kong. Partnerships with developers (and the related focus on profit) dictate the renewal options available. Furthermore, there are many caveats in the Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme, including no support for rehousing; 2/3 or more of the building owners must jointly apply to the URA; and the project site is preferably larger than 400m² (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011a). When the URA first developed the Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme, they committed to implementing one or two pilot projects. Interestingly, to date, there have only been three demand-led projects initiated. The URA website states:

"Recent Demand-led applications have not been conducive to the Demand-led Scheme's objectives and such an outcome necessitates a holistic review of the Scheme. The URA would take the opportunity of the Yau Mong District Study to conduct such a review to achieve a sustainable outcome and comprehensive planning gains" (Urban Renewal Authority, 2011a)

A commitment to initiating one or two pilot projects enables the URA to demonstrate that they tried to accommodate the public's aspirations and justifiably discontinue or change the scheme. Reflecting on the URA's new policies, Mary, a Hong Kong-based urban scholar familiar with the URA, said that new policies such as the Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme were a "very powerful bullet" for the URA. She explained the URA could use the development of new policy to argue that they tried, but the public was not interested in a different approach.

Another new policy developed due to the URS review was the Flat-for Flat Scheme, which provides domestic owner-occupiers of URA affected redevelopments an alternative to cash compensation. The Flat-for-Flat Scheme aims to preserve the social network of owner-occupiers affected by URA redevelopments (Urban Renewal Authority, 2015). Under the Flat-for-Flat Scheme, once owner-occupiers accept the amount of compensation⁷², they can purchase an 'in-situ' flat or flat in the new Kai Tak Development (situated on one of the lowest floors). If a URA-affected owner-occupier chooses to participate in the Flat-for-Flat Scheme, the URA fix the price based on the market value at the time of acquisition offers (Urban Renewal Authority, 2021a).

Although groups like H15 in Lee Tung Street aspired and advocated for a Flat-For-Flat exchange with the URA (as highlighted in chapter 6 and earlier in this chapter), the URA's policy is similar only in name to what these groups advocated for. Like the URA's Demand-Led Redevelopment Scheme, the Flat-for Flat Scheme is considered a 'pilot' and has multiple caveats, including being limited to a flat on one of the lowest floors. Limiting participants in the Flat-for-Flat Scheme to the lowest floors ensures the development remains profitable for developers. Like the Demand-Led Scheme, very few people have participated in the Flat-for-Flat Scheme to date as there are multiple barriers to participate. Kenny, a young housing rights activist, explained that this was because of the URA's focus on profit. He said the URA had to sell the new flats at market rates, much higher than the compensation allocated to affected people. Furthermore, he expressed frustration that the URA twisted the words and aspirations for 'Flat for Flat' advocated for by the community to fit their existing business model.

Kenny points out that despite the appearance of being people-focused, it is the profit that drives the URA's Flat-for Flat Scheme. Even if you are in the more privileged position of being an owner-occupier, you still have to come up with the extra money to make up the shortfall between the compensation received and the cost of a flat in the new development. Moreover, the Flat-for Flat Scheme participants need to rent somewhere to live until the new flat is ready to be occupied. Paying attention to how the Demand-Led Redevelopment and Flat-for-Flat Scheme functions in practice demonstrates how new policy designed to respond to the public's aspirations works to maintain the status quo in which inequality (here, people affected by the URA's intervention) is naturalised as common sense. Going back to a statement made by Ingrid earlier that the URA policy-making processes were "quite sophisticated", it is indeed sophisticated, so sophisticated that it is designed to conceal its own objectives.

⁷² The URA has policy to calculate the compensation of affected owners and tenants. Owners are entitled to compensation based on the market value of a seven-year-old flat in the same area as the original flat plus a Home Purchase Allowance (HPA) to assist the affected person in purchasing a replacement flat (Urban Renewal Authority, 2021a).

7.4.3 Governing at a distance

As already highlighted, the URA utilises NGOs in their everyday processes and practice. NGOs are part of the URA's URSST that provide social work services to affected people. They are part of the URA governing apparatus utilised to manage the public perception of its interventions. Ms Ting, an affected resident, explained that she understood that the role of the URSST was to help create two-way communication between residents and the URA, but her experience was that despite significant effort the affected people put into communicating with social workers, very little change came about. Instead of supporting communications between the URA and affected residents, the middleman NGOs are an added layer and barrier to communication, eroding the public's trust for NGOs. In effect, NGOs keep affected people at a distance from the URA, reconfigure state-society relations in ways that displace politics and ensure the URA's authority. NGOs' role in reconfiguring state-society relations to displace politics is a commonly observed characteristic of postpolitical governance arrangements (Kamat, 2014; Larner, 2014).

During the URS review between 2008-2010, the public's lack of trust in the NGOs that were part of the URSST came to a head. In response, the URA set up the Urban Renewal Fund (URF), a new governing body to support NGOs' autonomy in the URSST. Although the URF appears to respond to the public requests for the autonomy of the URSST and to adhere to democratic principles, it reduces direct communication and transparency between the URA and the URSST, further distancing affected people from the state. Cam, a social worker in the URA, funded social service team, explained that in the past, at least there was a direct line of communication between NGOs and the URA. With the URF, they had to go through another governing body which he said was not neutral but staffed and governed by people selected by the government. Cam highlights how more than just creating a barrier for communication, the URF enables the URA to manage NGOs like affected people at a distance whilst simultaneously creating more positions for technocratic elites.

Notably, some social workers and affected residents are aware of how the URF functions to conceal its own bias. For example, Alex, a social worker in a URA-funded social service team, explained that although the operation of the URF seemed more neutral, residents "were very smart" and knew that its funding source came from the URA and therefore were suspicious of its operation. This recognition of the URAs' attempt to displace politics through the URF highlights the ever-present possibility of 'the political'. Everyday politics related to the function of the URF is discussed in chapter 8.

7.4.4 Pacifying and disciplining the disobedient

The URA manages perceptions of its processes and practice by pacifying and disciplining those who do not act in ways expected of them. Reflecting on the URF's purpose and how it functions, several social worker participants in this study referred to the 'Chun Tin incident.' In short, the incident is about how an NGO part of the URSST suspiciously lost its contract to provide social work services to the residents of Chun Tin Street after they had supported and advocated for them to get a fairer compensation deal from the URA. Cam, a social worker in the NGO that lost its contract with the URF, said that he thought his team did not get their funding renewed was because his agency was perceived as "too radical" in their relationship and support of affected peoples. He further explained that the URF did not give them a proper reason for not renewing their contract and that the seemingly transparent marking process did not add. Cam highlighted how the URF was potentially used to discipline and pacify the NGO and URA affected people. He also explained that this discipline was recognised and had broader implications for the wider social work sector and affected residents. The everyday politics of the 'Chun Tin incident' and its wider implication is discussed in chapter 8.

Mr Teng, an URA employee in senior leadership, said that social workers in the URSST team were too focused on policy change and empowering affected people. He explained that he had set up his engagement team in response to work one-on-one with affected people and expedite the acquisition process. Mr Tang's comments highlight how the URA will go around or over the URSST if they do not do what is expected of them. This stealthy move demonstrates the tokenism of the URSST and the lengths the URA will go to ensure a consensus on its authority and interventions is maintained.

More than just pacifying and disciplining individual NGOs or the URSST as a whole, the URA will also try to pacify and discipline individual social workers who are part of URSST teams. For example, Ken, a former URSST social worker, told a story of how the URA threatened him after a compensation hearing in which he supported an affected person. During the meeting, the committee asked the affected person to leave the room for a closed-door discussion. The social worker questioned why the URA officials could stay in the room, and subsequently, the committee asked the URA to leave the room. Ken described how a senior manager in the URA called him after the meeting with him at the URA office. During the call, the senior manager told him that he "shouldn't behave like this" and he should do what's expected because they funded him and could fund another team. Ken went on to explain that although he said to the URA that "he will try next time" in his heart, he said, "well, you better hire another team." Following this conversation with the URA, Ken made the decision to leave the URSST.

7.5 Conclusion

This chapter utilised postpolitics and, more specifically, Jacques Rancière's analytical concepts of 'the police', 'the political' and 'the distribution of the sensible' to identify ways in which the URA depoliticises urban renewal interventions to pursue its economic objectives aligned with Hong Kong's world city status, maintain its taken-for-granted consensus on its authority, which consequently, upholds a social order in which inequality is naturalised. The analysis here demonstrates the relevance of postpolitical analytical framings and the significant nuances in non-western contexts, including an urban governance system that sometimes resembles authoritarian regimes. As shown here, the URA names, divides and assigns value to people, places and things in ways that displace politics and reinforce a consensus on its authority. In particular, these processes invalidate and discipline informal ownership arrangements. Participation within URA-led interventions are tokenistic and tightly controlled with the URA enlisting the help of technocrats and NGOs to maintain a consensus on its authority and displace politics. The URA goes to great lengths to manage the public perception of its position and interventions distinguishing itself from private developers and engaging in heritage preservation activities to manage their brand. New policies developed by the URA repackage but maintain the status quo. New governing bodies established or funded by the URA reduce transparency and enable the URA to discipline and pacify NGOs that step out of line at a distance.

Despite its dominance over Hong Kong's urban development trajectory, the URA's depoliticising strategies are incomplete. NGOs, affected people and their allies are awake to the URA's depoliticising strategies, resisting its authority through everyday demonstrations and grassroots-initiated forms of participation. In this respect, the URA's depoliticising strategies create an environment where the 'political' can emerge. This dynamic is the point of departure for the following chapter, which draws on the postcolonial urban optic of urban informality and Jacques Rancière's analytical concept of 'politics' to identify and examine how everyday politics shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong and furthermore, what this means for imagining and acting out an alternative, more equitable urban future for Hong Kong.

CHAPTER 8: EVERYDAY POLITICS AND THE MESSINESS OF EMANCIPATION

8.1 Introduction

As highlighted in chapter 7, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) strategies that work to displace politics are catalysts for resistance and create an environment for 'the political' to emerge. Paying attention to these tensions highlights ongoing moments of rupture that make everyday claims to space. The findings of this chapter support a growing body of postpolitics scholarship that takes a relational approach to explore 'politics' (Legacy, 2017; Swyngedouw, 2011; Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). It particularly builds on scholars whose work expands our understanding of 'politics' to include less visible, more incremental everyday practices (Choplin, 2016; Temenos, 2017).

This chapter brings Jacques Rancière's analytical concept of 'politics' into conversation with the emerging postcolonial optic of urban informality to identify and examine everyday politics within URA-interventions. As demonstrated below, the postcolonial urban optic of urban informality challenges and expands our understanding of 'politics' to incorporate the everyday. 'Everyday politics' is here not only related to more visible universal declarations and demands for equality but less explosive and less visible ways in which alternative urban futures are acted out. In what follows, I identify and examine specific examples of 'everyday politics' within the context of URA-led interventions. These examples include the historically significant and ongoing politics of Lee Tung Street, three diverse but related examples of becoming '*kaifong*' (loosely, neighbourhood)⁷³ in To Kwa Wan, and everyday acts of survival by marginalised people affected by URA interventions. Finally, critical points in the discussion are summarised, and specific areas of interest that are taken into the thesis conclusion are outlined.

8.1.1 Rancière's 'politics' and urban informality

The essence of politics for Rancière is the manifestation of dissensus. It is the meeting ground between 'the political' and 'the police' (Rancière et al., 2001). Here, there is no privileged political subject pre-existing the moment of politics. Instead, the subject comes into being when claiming equality through an action, the presupposition of equality (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). Politics proper is not about the negotiation of demands or interests but a process of political subjectification involving the translation of particularised demands or interests into universal demands. It is only when demands transcend a particularised framing

⁷³ "Kaifong is made up of the Chinese words kai (街, street) and fong (坊, lane), describing the bounded space of a neighbourhood. In actual usage, the term refers to individuals residing in a neighbourhood community connected by feelings of trust and conviviality" (Lam-Knott, 2019b, p. 106)

and start to work as a stand-in for a universal message of equality that conflict becomes 'properly political' (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). Subjectification is not simply the assertion of an identity but the refusal of an imposed identity by the police order (Swyngedouw, 2011).

Beveridge and Koch (2017) argue that the constricted but universalised understanding of the political/politics with postpolitics scholarship reduces the real (lived experience) of political action, and the plurality of agency. Temenos (2017) echoes critiques made by Beveridge and Koch (2017), however, she demonstrates that by bringing literature on postpolitics into conversation with other theoretical optics (for her, policy mobilities), we can broaden our understanding of 'politics proper' to account for the 'everyday' less visible acts of activism. It is at this juncture, that I turn to the emerging postcolonial optic of urban informality as a competing and complementary theoretical optic to identify and examine 'everyday politics' within the context of URA-led interventions in Hong Kong.

Urban informality is defined broadly as a 'mode' of living beyond formal norms, systems and interactions. It connects different economies and spaces to govern urban transformation processes, practices and outcomes (AlSayyad, 2004; Roy, 2005; Schindler, 2014). Informality asks questions about what is lost with formalisation and what is gained through new and emerging potentialities (Simone, 2019). Banks et al. (2020) argue for seeing urban informality as a site of critical analysis across economic, spatial, and political domains to better understand power in context. Their focus is on the relationships, attitudes, agency, and strategies that define urban informality arguing that such an approach reveals deeper insights into multiple actors, their relationships, and strategies and how this simultaneously offers opportunities for extraction, exploitation, and exclusion for different groups.

8.2 The ongoing 'politics' of Lee Tung Street

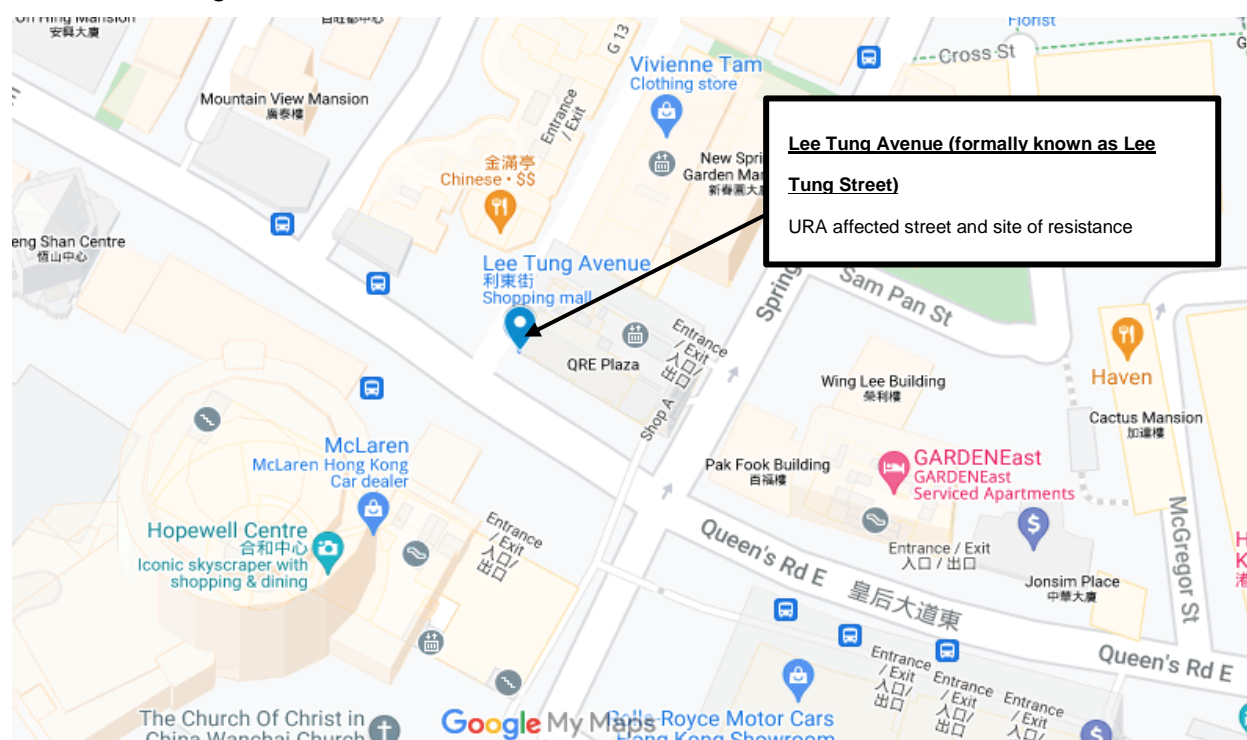
Multiple participants referred to the significance of the URA's H15 project, a project that commenced in 2003 and was completed in 2015. The project included what was then Lee Tung Street and McGregor Street in Wanchai, a centrally located district on Hong Kong Island⁷⁴. Popularly known then as Wedding Card Street, Lee Tung Street was famous for its cluster of small, closely connected, boutique businesses related to wedding card design and

⁷⁴ The H15 project affected 85 buildings 1613 people and 649 property interests (Urban Renewal Authority, 2020). Around 70% of residents welcomed the redevelopment because they would receive compensation to purchase a newer flat but the majority of shop owners objected, many demanding the right to move back into the area after redevelopment because the compensation was not enough to restart their businesses elsewhere (Ng, 2017a). In August 2005 the Lands Department enacted the Land Resumption Ordinance and announced the resumption of land at Lee Tung Street/McGregor Street for the URA's redevelopment project (The Development Bureau, 2005). 'Wedding Card Avenue' was completed in 2015 (Urban Renewal Authority, 2020).

printing (Ng, 2017a). The participants that referred to Lee Tung Street or the H15 project highlighted how the project made visible alternative urban development approaches and led to the birth of new and evolving resistance groups and social movements. Other scholars have noted the significance of the H15 project in shaping current urban planning discourse and the birth of social movements In Hong Kong (Koon, 2011; Tang, 2013) .

In what follows, I outline three ways that affected people and their allies enacted everyday politics in relation to the H15 project. Firstly, it was the moment when the affected people realised that more was at stake than fair compensation. Secondly, with the support of sympathetic professionals and activists, the community developed a counterproposal. Finally, it led to the repoliticisation of the URA's interventions resulting from its appropriation of ideas expressed in the community-led counterproposal.

Figure 6
Site of Lee Tung Street resistance



Note. [source of image] google maps

8.2.1 Something bigger than fairer compensation

Participants highlighted how a group of affected business owners and residents from Lee Tung Street very publicly resisted the URA's intervention. They explained that the compensation available to affected people was not enough to buy another property or set up their business in the same area.⁷⁵ Furthermore, the URA's intervention disrupted the informal relationships

⁷⁵ The cost of property in Wanchai was already increasing at the time, and the URA's intervention was increasing it further.

and ties that small businesses related to designing and printing wedding cards relied on to make their businesses profitable. Although resistance to the URA's intervention was initially related to the inadequacy of compensation, the affected people and their supporters realised early on that it was about something much bigger than compensation. It was about preserving a livelihood, a social network and quality of life. It was about their rights to participate in shaping the future of their neighbourhood and city.

Discussing what vulnerability meant in the context of urban renewal, Mindy, an affected business owner of Lee Tung Street redevelopment and an activist, explained that a person's vulnerability related to whether people 'speak out'.

"...if you have the guts to speak out and you make your utmost effort to fight for something then you may leave the vulnerable situation. If you don't have the guts to fight for it, you are already in the vulnerable situation. Even though you may be a major owner or you may have three building blocks, it's still useless..."

For Mindy, being vulnerable is not having a voice and, as she also emphasised, can be challenged by the act of "making oneself heard". Mindy and other participants highlighted that "making oneself heard" is difficult within the designated formal spaces and processes of the URA. Mindy explained how the H15 concern group organised their own community meetings and related actions. Supported by local NGOs, sympathetic professionals, and other interested people, these meetings created a space to connect and "speak out" against the URA's intervention. These community meetings included creating a space to share information, challenge the URA's practices, organise protests (including a hunger strike), and develop a counterproposal for redeveloping their neighbourhood. Importantly, Mindy emphasised that community meetings and actions were not about individual cases but the collective "major problem" of their "human rights" and desires for alternative futures. Here, affected people refused to be drawn into the URA particularised processes centred around compensation, instead translating their demands and actions into a universal demand of equality and acts of politics.

Interestingly, community-led meetings focused on preserving informal social and business networks and spaces, took on formal strategies and characteristics. Participants explained how the H15 concern group organised for notices to be posted around the neighbourhood with a time and date to meet at the St James's⁷⁶ offices where the H15 group would update the wider community on the information they had obtained and discuss next steps. "Once we've got everybody's consent, we would then proceed further" (Mindy, affected resident, business owner and activist). It appears here that the community utilises more formal practices

⁷⁶ St James is an NGO that receives some funding from the URA.

associated with postpolitical governance strategies (reaching an accepted consensus) to claim their right to participate in developing their neighbourhood and resist the URA's taken-for-granted authority.

Rather than delineate differences between informal and formal strategies utilised by the H15 concern group, what is interesting is the context-specific ways the boundary between informal and formal is produced through everyday politics and, importantly, that this boundary is always in a state of flux (Schindler, 2014). The URA's process and practices work to maintain an ingrained assumption that technocrats and managerial elites' practices and processes are formal whilst those of the grassroots are associated with the informal. The actions of H15 put binaries between in/formality (and the naturalised inequalities which they maintain) into question. Their efforts are not either/or. The H15 concern group utilises whatever resources and knowledge available to them to stake their claim and make themselves heard.

8.2.2 The Dumbbell Programme: leveraging elites and forming new alliances

Several participants explained that the media and the URA initially portrayed the H15 concern group as intentionally making trouble because they were greedy and wanted more compensation. Participants later highlighted how this was quelled when the H15 concern group said they did not want cash compensation but a flat-for-flat or shop-for-shop exchange in the new redevelopment. Based on these claims, H15 enlisted the help of sympathetic planners, architects, and academics to develop the 'Dumbbell Programme', a counterproposal that would enable them to stay in the neighbourhood and preserve their way of life. Participants explained that the counterproposal was named the 'Dumbbell Programme' because the community-led design looked like a dumbbell, with high-rises at both ends of the street torn down for redevelopment whilst the signature six-storey *tong lau*⁷⁷ tenement houses in the middle of the street maintained.

The Dumbbell Programme demonstrates an alternative direction for urban development in Hong Kong. A direction based on equality and the right of all Hongkongers to participate in the city's urban future. It puts community, small business, and the maintenance of social networks above profit in its design. The counterproposal developed by H15 was made possible through the support of NGOs, academics, preservationists and sympathetic professionals such as planners, architects, and engineers. Mindy explained that these supporters did not tell them what to do but offered their services and "taught them what to do". This support included helping H15 submit their Dumbbell Programme proposal to the Town Planning Board in 2005

⁷⁷ Tong Lau is used to describe tenement buildings built in the late 19th century to the 1960s. Tong Lau is designed for both residential and commercial uses.

and, after its rejection, appealing the decision in 2007. Mindy, however, emphasised that some of these professionals (not the leading architect Christopher Law) did this discreetly, not wanting their involvement publicised to ensure it did not negatively affect their own businesses.

The very public activities of H15 and its allies importantly brought into vision a wider universal issue of housing rights which led to the development of a new group called 'Old Districts Autonomous Advancement Group' (ODAAG). Mindy explained that she soon realised that the 'Dumbbell Programme' solely involved owners' concerns for 'Flat-for-Flat' 'Shop-for-Shop' exchange and excluded tenants. Along with other activists, including many young people and affected tenants, she formed ODAAG to focus on the broader issue of grassroots housing rights. Mindy, who had to give up her work after the Lee Tung Street redevelopment, said she had found a new job voluntarily working for both H15 and ODAAG.

"Speaking about redevelopment has now become my job. Have I now been shifted to another professional? I am not sure myself!![laughing]".

It is important to highlight that the affected community took the lead in the development of The Dumbbell Programme, challenging (and in the process reforming) a naturalised social hierarchy in which technocrats are the common-sense experts. Similarly, and drawing on Rancière, Boano and Kelling (2013) demonstrate how marginalised communities in a slum upgrading programme in Baan Mangkok, Thailand, leveraged their collective resources as bargaining power to claim politically legitimate participation in ways that reformed the role of design practitioners. The key point they make is a crucial relationship between participatory urbanism and the politics of recognition. By stepping into the role of 'experts' and leveraging their collective resources to develop a counterproposal to the URA's, H15 enacted politics.

Leveraging their collective resources included instigating new relationships and alliances with professionals to support their aspirations. Worthy of note is that they strategically formalised their aspirations into a plan. In a sense, they appropriated the governance tools of the ruling elite to challenge its authority. Also worthy of note is that professional allies that supported H15 utilised informal relationships that simultaneously worked to empower grassroots affected people and maintain their privileged position as urban development elites (supporting discreetly to protect their own business interests). This seemingly conflicting and paradoxical relationship highlights the complex and context-specific way the formal and informal relate to each other in the production of space (Banks et al., 2020) and, consequently, urban politics.

The process of developing the Dumbbell Programme highlights the agency and power that less economically well-resourced affected people have in imagining and producing alternative urban futures. In this context, H15 were aware of the depoliticising governance strategies of the URA and were creative in utilising the tools and skills available to them to challenge the

taken-for-granted authority of the URA. The URA's intervention on Lee Tung Street gave birth to H15, the development of an alternative development model, and new groups and alliances. Many of these groups and alliances, including H15 and ODAAG, remain active, creating ongoing moments of disruption and politics where universal messages of equality are acted out.

Figure 7

Protest banners on Lee Tung Street and Mindy in her 'new job'



Note: [source of image on left] (Crimson-Mann, 2005) [source of Image on right] author's photo

8.2.3 Appropriation and repoliticisation: the messiness of emancipation

Despite all the efforts of H15 and its supporters to preserve their homes and way of life, the Town Planning Board rejected their counterproposal, and the URA went ahead with their redevelopment plan. The URA incorporated some characteristics of H15's Dumbbell Programme into their final design to legitimise and justify its intervention. Mindy an affected resident, business owner and activist recounted, that the URA publicly stated on the radio and to newspaper journalists that they had “already accepted the H15 concern group’s essence” and that their own “Dumbbell Programme is able to meet people’s needs”. Mindy explained that H15 wrote the URA a letter to warn them about using the name of their counterproposal in their redevelopment.

The URA's attempt to appropriate the Dumbbell Programme is an insidious naming tactic used by the URA to manage the public perception of its interventions. Appropriation of selected characteristics of the plan works to keep discussion and debate about what the

counterproposal represents at the level of the particular, shifting debate and discussion away from the universal claim to equality in participating in Hong Kong's urban development. H15 publicly challenged the URA on appropriating its counterproposal and in the process repoliticised the URA's interventions. Postpolitical scholars have noted that emancipation is messy and requires navigating a difficult tension between particularisation and universalisation (Novák, 2020; Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). As described above, resistance and related universalising claims to equality such as those of the Dumbbell Programme are enmeshed with the URA's particularisation processes and are continuously evolving. Novák (2020) calls these tensions a 'ping pong' type interaction between postpolitical forces of order and repoliticising acts of opponents to the status quo.

All the participants that mentioned Lee Tung Street felt some degree of sadness about the outcome. Activists, heritage preservationists, and their allies felt sad that all the effort that affected people and their allies to make their alternative urban aspirations and voices heard could not stop Lee Tung Street from being turned into a highly commercialised development. Interestingly, Ingrid, a former URA employee heavily involved in the Lee Tung Street redevelopment, also had some regrets about the project. Ingrid said that although she felt they did a great job and described all the benefits and design features of what is now called Lee Tung Avenue, she felt sorry that they had not known earlier how important Wedding Card Street was to the community. Ingrid went so far as to say:

"If we knew...much earlier on if we knew the wedding card is so important maybe we should not touch that at all. Let it organically renew".

Ingrid's comment shows that the role of urban informality in producing space is only recognised as a result of struggle. In hindsight, Ingrid recognises the informal attitudes and relationships that make physical space in the city a meaningful place for people and the less formal strategies and practices that non-state actors employ to enable a neighbourhood to "organically renew". Postcolonial urban scholars Sheppard et al. (2020) and McFarlane (2012) highlight how urban informality is intertwined with neoliberal urban governance logic. It seems here that the 'politics' of Lee Tung Street that made visible an alternative urban development logic translated to a pragmatic acceptance of urban informality. This pragmatic acceptance of urban informality is a neoliberal development strategy that paradoxically reinforces the URA's authority and the naturalised inequality it works to maintain.

The URA may not have adopted the Dumbbell Programme, but it left its mark on Hong Kong's urban development culture and discourse. Multiple participants highlighted the Dumbbell Programme's significance in making visible a new innovative approach to urban development based on meaningful participation and the rights of everyday Hong Kongers to shape their

city. Tang (2013) explains that resistance at Lee Tung Street, including the Dumbbell Programme's development, was the city's first attempt at a participatory urban renewal plan and struggle for the right to participate in urban planning. Participants pointed out that the Dumbbell Programme got elite validation by winning many professional prizes for its innovation and community-led approach to planning. For example, it was given a Silver Award from The Hong Kong Institute of Planners. Another example of how technocratic and ruling elite attempted to appropriate the Dumbbell Programme and, in doing so, assign H15 a 'proper place' within the prevailing social order.

As the above discussion demonstrates, at multiple moments before and after the URA's intervention into Lee Tung Street, particularised demands such as demand for fairer compensation translated into universal demands such as the right to participate in the development and future of Lee Tung Street. The enactment of equality is intrinsically linked and simultaneously occurring with particularised conflicts and demands (Van Wymeersch & Oosterlynck, 2018). Notably, new and evolving groups and alliances developed during and after the URA's intervention created ongoing opportunities for imagining alternative urban futures and politics.

It is important to note that enactments of politics related to Lee Tung Street put into question the informal/formal divide that the URA's intervention works to maintain. Affected people will strategically utilise whatever resources they have available to them, including formalising their demands to make themselves heard and stake their claim to the city. Moreover, the URA and other urban elites will adopt informal relationships, attitudes, and strategies to maintain their privileged positions. The complex way the informal/formal relate to each other in enactments of politics of Lee Tung Street highlights the messiness and incremental nature of emancipation.

Figure 8
Lee Tung Street post-redevelopment



Note.[source of image on left] (YMW, 2017) [source of image on right] author's photo

8.3 The politics of 'becoming kaifong' in To Kwa Wan

Several participants in this study are affected residents, social workers and activists living, working, and volunteering in in the To Kwa Wan area. Located close to the old Kai Tak airport, To Kwa Wan is a mixed residential and commercial area. A working-class neighbourhood, To Kwa Wan is undergoing a significant urban transformation from both the URA's intervention and the development of a new Mass Transit Railway Station (MTR station) expected to be completed in 2021⁷⁸. There are currently eight urban renewal projects in To Kwa Wan. These projects will displace almost 7,000 residents (7% of the population) and construct almost 3,000 residential units (Heisler et al., 2020).

The URA's interventions are a catalyst for politics that construct the *kaifong* (See footnote 72). To Kwa Wan is one area where the URA's intervention has been a catalyst for everyday' politics' that shape the *kaifong* and the wider city. The *kaifong* is where formal and informal worlds collide. Like on Lee Tung Street, it is where the URA's aspirational city-making agenda meets resistance, and alternative urban development aspirations are acted out. In To Kwa Wan, however, there are multiple and diverse acts of resistance going on simultaneously.

These diverse resistances include more obvious ruptures such as protests and less visible, more incremental everyday resistance. Three examples of acts of resistance to the URA's intervention in To Kwa Wan are explored below. Firstly, a relationship developed between a URA-funded Social Service Team (URSST) and a URA affected community. Secondly, the

⁷⁸Multiple participants felt that the URA and MTR were closely connected. The URA decisions to intervene in particular neighbourhoods related to access to MTR stations. In Hong Kong, property close to MTR stations can demand a higher sale price.

events surrounding a community-initiated meeting with the URA and thirdly, an alternative community centre called the 'To Kwa Wan House of Stories'.

Figure 9
Sites of resistance in To Kwa Wan



Note. [source of image] google maps

8.3.1 Allies in the making of Chun Tin Street

Several social workers, affected people, and activist participants referred to the URA's intervention and resistance on Chun Tin Street. In early 2015, the URA announced a redevelopment project on Chun Tin Street called KC-008⁷⁹. Participants explained that the people of Chun Tin Street had been waiting for the URA to intervene and were initially very happy at the news of the redevelopment. The Christian Family Service Centre (CFSC) were the NGO part of the Urban Renewal Social Service Team (URSST) contracted by the Urban Renewal Fund (URF) to support the affected people of the Chun Tin Street redevelopment

⁷⁹ Chun Tin Street is a small dead-end road in Kowloon City District. The buildings on Chun Tin Street and its surrounding streets are old (50-year-old-plus) and run down. In fact, in 2010, a building on nearby Ma Tau Wai Road collapsed in the middle of the day killing four people and leaving many others homeless. The HKSAR government tasked the URA to intervene and redevelop a block of two rows of 50-year-old-plus tenement buildings that the collapsed building was part of. Completed in 2020, this URA-led redevelopment affected 660 residents/business operators. The redevelopment created 493 residential flats, 3114 square meters of commercial ground floor area(GFA), 952 square meters of community facilities and 500 square metres of open space (Urban Renewal Authority, 2021b).

project⁸⁰. In mid-2016, the URA withdrew and terminated the original project KC-008 and at the same time commenced a new redevelopment scheme called KC-008(A) that covered the same buildings but increased the number of new flats in the redevelopment from 150 (the number in the original KC-008 project) to 310 (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2016).

Participants explained that when the URA released the new redevelopment project's compensation policy, the CFSC social workers noticed discrepancies between the URA packages in the original KC-008 and the new KC-008(A) project. They noticed that the compensation amount for affected people was less and supported the affected people to challenge the URA compensation policy. Cam, a CFSC social worker, explained that his team organised community meetings for affected people to share information and organise community actions. He said these actions included publicly raising awareness of the unfair compensation policy with local politicians and the media and helping affected people to write letters of complaint and organise meetings with the URA.

The participants who mentioned the events of Chun Tin Street all emphasised how the actions of the social workers demonstrated their commitment to the rights of affected people. These participants described how strong relationships, bonds, and mutual trust were built between social workers and affected people through informal relationships and collective resistance over time. A booklet published by CFCS describes how affected people initially thought the social workers were there to help the URA kick them out of their homes (due to receiving funding from the URF) but later realised the social workers put the needs of the community above the URA's profit (Lee et al., 2018). It seems here that the everyday informal interactions between social workers and affected people (rather than a formal contract with the URA) most determined the behaviour of the social workers. This dynamic demonstrates how the formal and informal are intrinsically related (McFarlane, 2012) and that actors within the state's formal realm can utilise informal relationships, attitudes, and strategies in ways that challenge injustices in the URA interventions.

Collectively, affected people of Chun Tin Street collected over 700 quotes of property prices in the area as evidence of the unfairness of the URA's compensation which they presented to the URA Board. Around this time, the URA changed the wording in their compensation policy from enough to buy in the "same district" to enough to buy in a "similar district". This stealthy move by the URA angered affected people who felt the URA was not respecting them, "changing the goalposts" and reneging on their promises (Lee et al., 2018). Cam explained how the CFCS social workers and affected people continued to challenge the URA, and after three months, the URA changed their policy to increase the compensation allowance.

⁸⁰ Chapter 7 described the development of the URF and its relationship to the URA.

In this context, affected people challenged the URA's compensation policy using a strategy (collecting quotes) that helped formalise their arguments to make sense in the URA's logic. This strategy reveals the agency of affected people; they will utilise whatever resources and skills available to them to make themselves heard. The URA's response to the affected people's arguments of the language in its policy (from "same" to the more ambiguous "similar") is an example of how the URA will adopt an attitude of informality to depoliticise the arguments of affected people and shut down politics. Significantly, this stealthy move on the part of the URA did not go unnoticed or succeed in shutting down the 'politics' on Chun Tin Street.

Although the affected people managed to increase their compensation, the 'politics' of Chun Tin Street continued. Not long after the URA agreed to increase the compensation, the URF decided not to renew the CFCS's 'team' contract to support the affected people of Chun Tin Street. Several social worker participants explained that it was very unusual to change social worker teams before completing a URA project, especially given the team awarded the contract had no experience with urban renewal projects. Furthermore, they said the URF, which was set up to give social workers more autonomy, reduced the transparency of the decision-making processes around the URSST⁸¹. Social workers and affected people explained that although they did not have "black and white proof", they thought that the CFCS team lost their contract because they were "too radical" and supported the residents "too much".

Affected people of Chun Tin Street (many of them elderly) were also suspicious of the circumstances in which the CFCS lost their contract, hand painted and hung large banners requesting the URF to reinstate the original team. They contacted local politicians and the media to express their anger and demand their rights to be respected. During this time, the relationship between the affected people and the social workers shifted. It was the social workers who needed the affected peoples' support, not the other way around. The affected people's actions failed to get CFCS reinstated; however, like that of the social workers who supported them, their actions are the stuff of 'politics' – the 'politics' of becoming *kaifong*.

The *kaifong* of Chun Tin Street is produced through the URA's interventions. It is the URA's intervention that is a catalyst for collective resistance, new evolving relationships and alliances, and politics. Affected people become the *kaifong* when they turn their particularised demand for better compensation into a universal demand for respect, participation, and basic rights. Equality is acted out by the social workers who step outside the roles and expected behaviour assigned to them by the URA to support affected people and challenge its taken-for-granted authority. As Swyngedouw (2011) argues, 'politics' is not simply an assertion of

⁸¹ See chapter 7 for a discussion of depoliticising effects of the URF.

an identity but the refusal of an imposed identity by the police order (the URA). As demonstrated here, the ‘politics’ of becoming *kaifong* is complex, involving multiple actors and as much about refusing an imposed identity as demands for fair compensation.

The ‘politics’ of becoming *kaifong* on Chun Tin Street is still unfolding. Many affected people are still engaged in actions to resist the URAs interventions in areas close by. Mr Han, an affected shop operator of Chun Tin Street, explained that since the URA claimed their shops, the operators “are now starting this activist group to promote their ideas”. This ongoing activism draws attention to how the ‘politics’ of becoming *kaifong* is not grounded in place but moves to other parts of the city. With the mobility of the *kaifong*, new relationships develop, collective learning occurs across the city, and possibilities for imagining and acting out alternative urban futures enriched.

Figure 10

Protest banners on Chun Tin Street



Note: [source of image] photo provided to author with permission to use by (Christian Family Service Centre, 2017)

8.3.2 Tortoise with a shrunken head

Not far from Chun Tin Street is Hung Fook Street, which has been (and continues to be) at the centre of multiple community-led actions to resist the URA interventions. These community-led actions include forming community groups, organising community meetings and petitions, and organising meetings with URA officials. Mr Wang, an affected business operator and self-identified “native Tokowanaian”, has been at the centre of many of these

community-led actions. Mr Wang highlighted that he had strong relationships within the To Kwa Wan community. He explained that he had grown up there and emphasised that he could “eat for free” at a different person's house every night if he wanted to. He later explained that these informal relationships made it possible for him to initiate and lead community actions.

One of the community-led actions that Mr Wang helped initiate was organising a community-led meeting to discuss the future of the automotive industry in To Kwa Wan with the URA. Mr Wang explained that the community invited the URA to meet them in the evening on the 17th of January 2019 outside a local tofu shop on Hung Fook Street. By inviting the URA to participate in a community-initiated meeting, Mr Wang and his community challenged the URA's authority to dictate what is up for discussion and where that discussion can occur. In effect, they attempted to repoliticise the URA's intervention by exercising their agency. The community set the meeting's time and location according to their needs, not the URA's. The meeting location is important. The tofu shop is a long-time central feature of the community. By inviting the URA to meet there, the community attempted to remove the distance between the URA's decision-making process and the everyday lives of those its interventions affect. By addressing the URA as a community and not individuals, residents turned their particular demands into universal demands and enacted a declaration of equality (Wilson & Swyngedouw, 2014).

Mr Wang went on to explain that although the URA officials had agreed to come, they changed their minds at the last minute, saying that it was too cold to congregate in the street and that they had a nice office where 20 or 30 representatives of the community could meet with them. Mr Wang said he responded by saying, “...we had 100 people waiting here. It's only two streets down, come on down ... We invited you, and you agreed to come” (Mr Wang, affected business operator). Assuming a position of authority, refusing to attend the community-initiated meeting and rationalising their decision, the URA officials attempted to manage the participation and demands of affected people by drawing them into negotiations (compromises). What is interesting here is that in response to the community's attempt to formalise a meeting, the URA offers a last-minute alternative that is informal in nature. Employing an informal strategy enables the URA to exclude and limit expectations and accountability to the community. This dynamic demonstrates Banks et al. (2020) argument that urban informality simultaneously offers opportunities for extraction, exploitation, and exclusion for different groups with affected people utilising informal relationships to initiate resistance and the managerial elites such as the URA, employing informality to exclude affected people and maintain their authority.

Importantly, the community read the URA's refusal to attend their meeting as hiding from them. An independent media agency that reported on the events of the day said that the community accused the URA of being a "tortoise with a shrunken head and did not dare to see the neighbourhood" (Inmediahk, 2019). This reading of the URA's response led to the community refusing to back down and be drawn into the URA's negotiations. Mr Wang explained that everyone got mad, and 100 of them marched to the URA's office:

"we filled the hallway and screaming and yelling 'come out' 'meet with us' ... And they kept hiding in the room. They didn't even want to come out... They didn't take us away. They couldn't. There is not enough security there. Or the security couldn't do anything, I mean".

Mr Wang later explained that URA continued to say that 20-30 people from their group could fit into one of their meeting rooms for a discussion, but the group refused because they wanted everyone from their group to participate. The affected community's refusal to be divided and negotiated with is a refusal of an identity imposed on them (as non-decision makers in the URA's processes and practices) and an assertion of the right to participate as equals. The URA continued to refuse to meet the community on their terms. At the end of the evening, the community handed the URA a letter of protest, and the URA locked its office doors (Inmediahk, 2019).

The community that participated in the action did not get the URA to meet with them on their terms. Still, they became *kaifong* through 'politics', having asserted themselves as equals together. Inverting the URA's invitation to participate in a community-led rather than URA-led meeting exposed and disrupted naturalised inequality maintained by the URA's interventions. The URA responded to the community's invitation through depoliticising tactics; however, this did not go unnoticed by the community who refused to be negotiated with, repoliticising the URA's interventions. Seemingly small and insignificant, the 'politics' of becoming *kaifong* on Hung Fook Street on the night of the 17th of January 2019 brought a community together. It made visible on the streets and in the media how the URA displaces politics, something that will live on in the community's memories long after the URA resumes their properties.

Figure 11
Marching to the URA's office



Note. [source of image] (Inmediahk, 2019)

8.3.3 To Kwa Wan House of Stories and making ‘home’

The URA's intervention into To Kwa Wan has been a catalyst for creative projects that act out alternative values and urban development approaches. Interestingly, some of these creative projects have been seed-funded by the URF (under its Urban Renewal Heritage Preservation and District Revitalisation Funding Scheme). Established in 2014 by the NGO St James Settlement, To Kwa Wan House of Stories is one such creative project⁸². A small, cosy alternative community centre in a former poultry shop also on Hung Fook Street, To Kwa Wan House of Stories has become a central hub for the local community, NGOs, young activists, artists, community volunteers and academics experimenting with preservation, community development, and community-led planning projects⁸³

To Kwa Wan House of stories is about building a ‘home’ in To Kwa Wan. It is about rediscovering the area's character and helping the residents create a sense of belonging and interest in its development (House of To Kwa Wan Stories, 2014). Since 2018, To Kwa Wan House of Stories has been independent of any government agencies and is funded by two

⁸² St. James Settlement applied for funding from the URF to establish the To Kwa Wan House of Stories (also known as ToHome) in 2014. From 2016-2018 St James Settlement partnered with two other NGOs Fixing Hong Kong and Community Cultural Concern, to fund and help manage the project. Since 2018 To Kwa Wan House of Stories has been funded and managed by Fixing Hong Kong and Community Cultural (House of To Kwa Wan Stories, 2014)

⁸³ ⁸³ Examples of activities organised and run out of To Kwa Wan House of Stories includes: community mapping, collecting and exhibiting oral histories and other art and culture projects, upcycling projects, homework clubs for local children and putting on a community event like Chinese Opera and outdoor movie screenings (Urban Renewal Fund, 2021)

NGOs (independent of the URA and URF), Fixing Hong Kong and Community Cultural Concern Group, with volunteers primarily running it. Given the URF's seed funding, To Kwa Wan House of Stories could be quickly written off as yet another example of a postpolitical governance strategy rather than any meaningful alternative urban development initiative. However, this critique would be overly simplistic and, as Lerner (2014) argues, limit the potential to identify and describe less visible, less explosive forms of spatial politics.

People visiting To Kwa Wan House of Stories will observe elderly residents helping local children with their homework and passers-by stopping to greet the elderly and the children. They will see art supplies, children's toys stacked against the walls, and three-dimensional building models (developed through community-led planning activities) piled on tables. Cramped and filled with an eclectic collection of 'stuff' that seemed to spill onto the footpath, the space feels relaxed and homely. In contrast to the more visible protests, petitions and demands highlighted above, To Kwa Wan House of Stories', politics is less explosive and more incremental in nature.

The URA will eventually resume the property, home to To Kwa Wan House of Stories. Importantly, this is not a deterrent or a 'here and now concern'. People involved carry on with their community initiatives, everyday activism, and daily lives. Informal relationships, strategies, and attitudes already present in the community are intentionally built on by activists and volunteers to demonstrate alternative urban futures. To Kwa Wan, House of Stories is an important part of an emerging story of the 'politics' of becoming *kaifong* through URA interventions.

There are multiple actors (and related motivations for involvement) in To Kwa Wan House of Stories; young people are especially engaged and visible at the centre. In Hong Kong, youth are increasingly getting involved in URA related resistance groups and alliances. Mary, an academic and past URA consultant I interviewed (before the recent and ongoing protests) said she had observed that young people had become too critical of the Hong Kong government and did not believe in dialogue or more rational ways to resolve problems anymore. Young people bring this 'critical' view into the groups and it projects they initiate or get involved in and shapes the outcomes they desire from participating. Sonia, a young volunteer at the To Kwa Wan House of Stories and an activist, explained that the URA and Hong Kong Government always rejected plans that benefit the people, especially the plans that value the crucial cultural aspects in favour of profit and big brands.

For Sonia, and other young volunteers, To Kwa Wan's everyday life, including its small businesses, are an alternative to the URA's "win fast development". These participants explained that public space was used differently in To Kwa Wan compared to other parts of

the city. They explained that people living in To Kwa Wan would put out their chairs on the pavement (and streets at night) to catch up and play games. For these participants, To Kwa Wan House of Stories enabled them to be part of and preserve a particular way of life, challenging the dominant model of urban development in Hong Kong.

Young participants involved in To Kwa Wan House of Stories also emphasised that they did not want to directly engage with or negotiate with the URA. Instead, they choose to challenge the URA's authority and the common-sense inequality it works to maintain through relationship building and experimenting with less formal, more egalitarian urban development initiatives. Lam-Knott (2019b) points out in her ethnographic study exploring the use of storytelling by youth activists in Hong Kong that it is not clear how much impact informal strategies of youth have in addressing existing state-society power imbalances. Arguably, in this context, choosing not to be drawn into the URA's particularised framings (such as issues of compensation) but instead experimenting with less formal and organic urban initiatives, young people like Sonia are questioning the given natural order of things. It is an act of everyday 'politics' that embodies a message of equality and challenges existing state-society relations by reorienting the space in which the possibilities for meaningful change can occur. In short, they demonstrate that change can lie within incremental strategies at the level of the *kaifong*.

Young participants involved in To Kwa Wan House of Stories made clear that they had participated in several concern groups related to preservation, and challenging the "win fast" development of the URA⁸⁴ got them involved in the To Kwa Wan House of Stories. The informal strategies and relationships that volunteers and other interested people utilised in concern groups created opportunities for collaborative learning and a place to develop alternative development narratives. The importance of collaborative learning within community centres as 'politics' is emphasised by other scholars. For example, Crossan's (2018) study exploring an anarchist influenced social centre in Glasgow, Scotland, highlighted three aspects of alternative social centre politics: blending private and public life, consensus-decision making, and enacting equality as a tactic. He argues that even if it does not always constitute a confrontational set of relations, a collaborative heuristic learning environment is a 'pedagogical politics of place'.

In the context of To Kwa Wan House of Stories, a collaborative heuristic learning environment transformed young activists' goals and motivations from the preservation of particular places such as the Blue House or Nga Tsin Wai village into wider issues of spatial protection. In this

⁸⁴ Especially those related to the 'Blue House' (discussed in chapter seven), Chun Tin Street (discussed above) and Nga Tsin Wai Village. Nga Tsin Wai Village was a 600-year-old walled village in Kowloon that the URA intervened in to redevelop. The project commenced in 2007 and is set to be completed in 2023/2024. The last villagers were forced to leave under the Land Resumption Ordinance in 2016 (Urban Renewal Authority, 2021b). Some affected people and their supports protested against the redevelopment.

context, the emerging story of the 'politics' of becoming *kaifong* through the To Kwa Wan House of Stories is related to the 'politics' of becoming *kaifong* in other parts of the city. Thus, once again, the mobility of the *kaifong* demonstrates the potential of spatial politics in one area to shape 'politics' and related urban transformation in the wider city.

The URA's interventions are a catalyst for diverse forms of 'politics' that construct the *kaifong*. These diverse forms of 'politics' include more visible and obvious ruptures such as protests and more incremental acts of politics such as those enacted through To Kwa Wan House of Stories. New and evolving relationships formed through URA interventions create spaces for collaborative learning and enable the 'politics' of becoming *kaifong* to travel and shape the 'politics' of urban development in the wider city. Young people are particularly involved in collaborative learning and reorienting the space in which the possibilities for meaningful change can occur.

The dynamics of urban informality are central to understanding this 'politics'. As demonstrated above, the URSST will utilise informal attitudes and relationships to challenge the URA's intervention and common-sense logic. Affected people will use whatever resources are at their disposal, including formality, to make themselves heard. Activists will build on urban informality that exists in a community to demonstrate alternative urban development futures. The URA will utilise informality to depoliticise the request and demands of affected people. The politics of becoming *kaifong* is complex, involving multiple actors and as much about refusing an imposed identity (Swyngedouw, 2011) as universal demands of equality.

Figure 12

To Kwa Wan House of Stories



Note. [source of image] (Wolf, 2021)

8.4 Everyday acts of survival as ‘politics’

Not all politics is acted out intentionally. Many URA affected people's precarious lives mean participating in protests or activities such as community planning is not possible. These marginalised urban dwellers include solo parents, low-income migrants, and those with limited to no legal status. As discussed in chapter 6, some of the URA affected areas can be considered ‘arrival neighbourhoods’. Everyday acts of resistance to the URA's interventions in these ‘arrival neighbourhoods’ is sometimes just about survival. In this context, resistance is often informal and in the form of noncompliance to a prescribed identity and place within Hong Kong’s wider social system.

Resistance to the URA's aspirations is often being acted out before the URA formally intervenes in an ‘arrival neighbourhood’, but these acts of resistance are reinforced or altered through the URA's intervention. Here, everyday acts of survival are understood to be forms of resistance which, as will be demonstrated below, at times translates to everyday acts of politics. Recognising everyday acts of survival as ‘politics’ is not to minimise how the URA’s intervention work to further entrench inequality in Hong Kong. Instead, it is to highlight the agency of the excluded, and the potential that everyday acts of survival present for imagining of alternative urban futures. Three ways marginalised participants demonstrated survival as everyday ‘politics’ is identified and explored below. These include taking advantage of the informal opportunities that ‘arrival neighbourhoods’ provide to arrive, survive, and claim space, the everyday ‘politics’ of maintaining unmaintained space, and hope of secure housing.

8.4.1 Surviving marginalisation and disrupting the social order

Some of the participants affected by URA interventions explained that they had moved into the URA affected area because it was one of the only places in the city to find an affordable place to live. These participants described that more than a place to live, these neighbourhoods provided community and informal employment. For example, Ms Wing, an affected resident who had moved to Hong Kong from mainland China seven years ago, explained that her husband had struggled to find formal employment since arriving in Hong Kong. She said that this was because he was not young and was considered a migrant. People from her village on the mainland, living in the same area, helped them out by giving her husband informal work when it was available.⁸⁵

For Ms Wing and her family, the ‘arrival neighbourhood’ in which they live provides a social network, a place to belong, and provides much needed informal economic opportunities. She

⁸⁵ This work could be half or a full day, usually moving or lifting, and would earn him HKD500.00-HKD 800.00 (roughly NZD 100-140).

explained that this income was vital for the family as rents in the area had increased due to URA's interventions and other private-led redevelopment projects. Ms Wing and her family are claiming space in a city in which they have experienced discrimination. They are not just accepting their marginalised position but utilising informal relationships and strategies to get their needs met. Ms Wing and her family enact a less explosive form of everyday 'politics' that is nevertheless shaping the city. This everyday 'politics' is reinforced through the effects of the URA interventions (increased rents).

For Mara, a mum of four, former domestic worker and currently asylum seeker affected by urban renewal, the informal relationships and employment opportunities that the 'arrival neighbourhood' she lives in provides is central to her survival. Mara's status as an asylum seeker in Hong Kong means she has no legal rights to work and minimal access to financial support to help with rent and utilities⁸⁶. Mara rents an illegally subdivided unit to survive and has developed informal relationships with her landlord and neighbours. Mara proudly stated that she had a "very good relationship" with her landlord, who didn't worry too much if she couldn't pay the utility bills. She later went on to explain that her landlord also provided her with informal employment.

"Yes, you know she ask if you want to come clean my house for one hour fifty dollar.

That when I am happy ...she say... you know you can bring you kid too"

Fifty dollars an hour is more than the current legal minimum wage of HKD 37.50 (roughly NZD7.00) (Hong Kong SAR Government, 2021). In a city that excludes her from formal work and housing, the 'arrival neighbourhood' provides the necessary low rent and relationships that her family needs to survive. These acts of survival in less obvious ways disrupt naturalised inequality maintained by the URA. Mara does not 'act' in the way assigned to her in the prevailing social order. Instead, she exercises her agency utilising informal relationships to meet the needs of her family and claim space in the city. Intentional or not, Mara's landlady is engaging with Mara in a way outside what is deemed 'sensible' or 'appropriate' towards asylum seekers and is also disrupting naturalised inequality.

When the URA intervene in a neighbourhood and encounter informal relationships and strategies utilised by marginalised people that do not fit into the URA's predetermined frameworks, they are confronted with alternative ways of living and being in the city. As a result, the URA bears witness to urban dwellers acting out their urban futures without

⁸⁶ Currently, asylum seekers with government-issued recognition documents receive HKD 1,500 (NZD270) per adult or half of that amount for a child, which is paid directly to the landlord. The average rent in a subdivided unit in Hong Kong is HKD 5,000 (roughly NZD 900.00) for 132 square feet. The government will also provide HKD 300.00 (NZD54.00) per household for utilities however; the landlords of subdivided flats typically charge more than the government allowance. Despite year-on-year inflation of 2.44% annually since 2015, the subsidies amount hasn't changed since 2014 (Branches of Hope, 2020)

permission, outside common-sense logic, disrupting the prevailing social order the URA works to maintain. This encounter and moment of everyday 'politics' shifts when (as highlighted in chapter 7) the URA names and assigns a value to informal strategies (such as developing new policies and frameworks to deal with illegally subdivided units). As already highlighted above, however, depoliticising strategies are a catalyst for the political to emerge; therefore, hope remains. This dialectical relationship between the city, state and everyday life in 'arrival neighbourhoods' is central to understanding how urbanisms are produced and poverty and exclusion navigated (McFarlane & Silver, 2017).

8.4.2 Maintaining the unmaintained as claiming space

The buildings in the neighbourhoods in which the URA intervene are often in a state of serious decay, structurally unsafe and/or unhygienic. The decay of these buildings has been compounded by the subdivision of flats and subsequent pressure on plumbing, sewage, and electrical systems. Several participants in the study highlighted that the URA interventions had accelerated the very problem it was trying to address. These participants explained that some landlords choose to let their properties deteriorate, expecting (and many hoping) that the URA would resume their properties. For some participants, however, unmaintained flats were an opportunity to pay less rent. These people were willing to maintain the units themselves to create a home for their families.

Solo mum Danit explained that the owner of the unit she was renting was hoping the URA would "take his flat" and had therefore decided to leave it unrenovated for a couple of decades. Despite the poor condition, Danit was grateful for the cheap rent and cleaned the unit herself, taking on lots of minor renovations to make a home. Similarly, Ms Wing and her family took on minor renovations to rent a cheaper unmaintained unit. Exploring informal sanitation infrastructures in Jakarta, Prabaharyaka (2018) highlights how informal sanitation maintainers fill in the gap left by the city's formal sanitation system. He explains how 'the art of caring' by informal maintainers makes visible multiple versions of the city and acts out new imaginings of aspiring futures, one in which informal maintenance has an important role in Asian cities.

Danit and Ms Wing are in many ways informal maintainers' who, through the 'art of caring', fill a gap not reached by the state's formal plans, policies, and regulations. They exercise their agency by changing the living conditions made available to them, challenging the natural order of things, and claiming space in the city. These less visible acts of everyday 'politics' more than shaping the city, offer a different lens to think about what urban renewal is or could be. It is, however, crucial to keep in mind that formal recognition of 'informal maintainers' would likely lead to them being drawn into the negotiations with the URA and therefore brought into

the prevailing social order. This dynamic highlights, once again, the 'ping-pong' type interaction between everyday acts of 'politics' and postpolitical forces of order (Novák, 2020).

8.4.3 URA interventions and aspirations for secure housing

As demonstrated above, everyday 'politics' related to surviving and claiming space in Hong Kong is already in motion in arrival neighbourhoods, but is reinforced through the URA's interventions. Importantly, however, the URA interventions also sparked new urban aspirations, in particular, housing security. For the participants that had lived in Hong Kong for seven years or more and had permanent residency, the URA's intervention invoked a sense of hope that they would be able to access public housing. For participants who were not eligible for permanent residency (including those led who come to Hong Kong on Domestic Worker Visas or asylum seekers), the URA's intervention led them to question why the URA's redevelopment only benefited the wealthy. Furthermore, it was a catalyst for aspiring to benefit from the URA intervention and secure housing in Hong Kong.

In this context, the URA's intervention shifts resistance from everyday acts of survival to aspirations for more secure (and formal) housing. This shift is significant and in contrast to the perceptions of the District Council, LEGCO and the URA employees' participants. At best, these technocrats and ruling elites were sympathetic to urban renewal's effect on those with limited to no residency. At worst, they felt that these people did not need to be considered within URA processes at all as they were not Hong Kong permanent residents or were "illegals".

Mara, an asylum seeker, said that the URA'S interventions made the "rich become rich and the poor become poor". She explained that more than money, the most important thing for her was to have a secure home to take care of her kids. Importantly, rather than just accepting that this was the way things were, she said they should also "build the nice building for asylum seekers" and that it was unfair that she could only get (very minimal) compensation and not a home. This expectation that the state is responsible for housing security is interesting because it demonstrates a clear disconnect between the ruling elites' ideas of fairness and justice and those of other residents in the city.

Mara is questioning the taken-for-granted natural order of things by refusing to accept the identity and related living circumstances assigned to her and reinforced through the URA's intervention. She has translated her concerns for the URA intervention in her current living situation into a universal concern for housing security and inclusion in the city. For Swyngedouw (2011), one way of thinking about staging political dissensus is moving away from embracing singularities and micro-politics that he sees as sustaining the postpolitical

order. Seeds of resistance, however, are in the micro-politics. Paying attention to the seemingly insignificant micro-politics is a way to question whose voice, whose actions, and how 'politics' gets recognised and valued. Although there may not be much of an audience for Mara's enactment of politics at this current juncture, it is still an act of politics, a seed of resistance that has the potential to transform how urban renewal is understood and acted out in Hong Kong.

Unlike Mara, Danit and Ms Wing both have permanent residency in Hong Kong. For these participants, the URA's intervention has been a catalyst for aspirations for public housing. Danit currently earns just over the limit that would enable her to apply for public housing. However, she hopes that the URA will make a case on her behalf to the Hong Kong Housing Authority for special dispensation. Several other participants, including social workers and one participant from a government department, explained that although the URA does not publicise it, they help some affected people, typically not eligible, secure public housing. There seems to be no formal URA policy and strategy on this; instead, any special dispensation is made on a case-by-case basis.

As already highlighted in chapter 7, informal strategies and relationships utilised by the URA work to reduce transparency and deflect affected people from the more universal concerns such as housing rights. Exploring the regulation of street hawking in Delhi, Schindler (2014) explains that the boundary between 'formal' and 'informal' is produced through negotiations and struggles between different interest groups. The URA likewise show their active participation in producing and negotiating this boundary through their use of informal strategies such as the use of 'special dispensations' for public housing within the realm of a formal institution.

Although Danit claimed space in the city that marginalised her through becoming an 'informal maintainer', it does not mean she will not also take advantage of the opportunities that the URA's intervention might present for more secure housing. In the context of survival, the URA's intervention can spark hope for something better. Importantly here, this hope for something better lies within the formal realm of the state.

Not all politics is acted out intentionally. Informal relationships and strategies utilised by marginalised groups can simultaneously be working to repoliticise (refusing an imposed identity, enacting politics as an informal maintainer) and depoliticise (being deflected through the opportunity of public housing) the URA's interventions. Contrary to Swyngedouw (2011), who claims that paying attention to micropolitics sustains the postpolitical order, here, paying attention to the seemingly insignificant micropolitics disrupts naturalised inequality embedded

in critical scholarship that fails to challenge whose voice, actions, and politics get recognised and valued.

8.5 Conclusion

This chapter utilised Jacques Rancière's analytical concept of 'politics' in conjunction with the emerging postcolonial optic of urban informality to identify and examine 'everyday politics' within the URA-led urban renewal process and practice in Hong Kong. The chapter demonstrates how urban informality challenges and expands our understanding of 'politics' to incorporate less explosive and less visible ways in which space is claimed and alternative urban futures are acted out in Hong Kong. In contrast to Swyngedouw (2011), who suggests that acts of 'politics proper' takes place at a distance from the state (in public spaces and squares), everyday politics can unfold, between the state and non-state actors, and outside of the realm of the state, which significantly broadens the spaces in which to think about and act out, resistance to the URA's profit-driven interventions.

Multiple 'everyday politics' are at play before the URA's interventions. They are, however, reinforced and transformed through the URA's interventions and related struggles between different interest groups (Banks et al., 2020) in ways that challenge assumptions that informality belongs to the urban poor and formality to the state. As demonstrated here, new and evolving relationships are critical to the mobility and transformation of everyday politics across the city. Furthermore, 'everyday politics' and related emancipation is complex and messy. Everyday acts of politics related to universal claims to equality are enmeshed with the URA's processes of particularisation and are continuously evolving. This enmeshment reiterates Rancière's argument that the 'police' and politics are enmeshed and that politics is only possible not despite the police but because of it (Dikeç, 2005). The direction in which urban renewal in Hong Kong takes will continue to be determined by the ongoing tension between postpolitical forces of the state and everyday acts of politics from those that resist its world city aspirations and related interventions .

Within the context of URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong, hope emerges in the ever-present reality and possibility of everyday politics. It is in the willingness of diverse actors within and outside the realms of the state to stay open and adaptable to challenge the status quo, whether it be through acts of defiance and survival, building new relationships, protesting, preserving or experimenting with alternative forms of urban development. There is also hope in the choices that affected people, activists, technocrats and ruling elites, and scholars have about where they direct their attention and energy. Where energy and attention is directed can be

an everyday act of politics that defies the taken-for-granted natural order of things and common sense inequality.

Critical scholars must be mindful of how much hope and responsibility we put on those who are already struggling to survive. Everyday acts of politics often come out of a need to survive and relate to experiences of pain, shame, and humiliation as opposed to an empowered or intentional act that presupposes equality. Romanticising politics enacted through survival strategies has the potential to depoliticise further the lives and experiences of those most negatively affected by URA interventions. Contrary to the work of de Soto (1989) that continues to influence thinking on urban informality within urban development, our work must challenge attempts by the ruling elite to harness informal activities as 'untapped entrepreneurialism' (Heisel, 2016) to pursue their world city aspirations. Whilst highlighting and supporting the agency and power of those displaced and excluded from the city through state-led urban renewal interventions, we must also push responsibility back on the ruling elite, highlighting and challenging taken-for-granted structures of power and social hierarchies that maintain naturalised inequality.

CHAPTER 9: CONFLICTS, CONTRADICTIONS, AND OPPORTUNITIES

9.1 Introduction

Through the case of Hong Kong, this thesis demonstrates how the analytical optics of postcolonial and postpolitics theory can enrich our understanding of processes and outcomes of state-led urban renewal. The overall aim of this thesis is to utilise the theoretical lenses of postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics to identify and examine the way power, participation, and everyday politics shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong. The thesis had four key objectives. 1. to review postcolonial urban and postpolitics scholarship and identify critical aspects relevant to understanding urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong 2. to identify and discuss diverse and competing aspirations and perceptions of urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong. 3. to identify and analyse the role of state-led urban renewal processes and practices in the urban development trajectory of Hong Kong. 4. to identify and examine how ongoing tensions and struggles between different interest groups shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

This final chapter draws together the knowledge constructed in relation to the aim and objectives and reflects on the study's contribution to urban studies scholarship. To open the discussion, I first highlight the challenges and opportunities that the current conjuncture of ongoing coloniality and de-westernisation presents for critical urban scholars motivated by inequality. I then identify three key messages of the thesis and demonstrate how they respond to the central aim and objectives of the study. These three messages include: firstly, how entangled aspirations are a valuable entry point for scholars to explore urban politics; secondly, the value of learning from ongoing tensions and conflicts to examine outcomes of state-led interventions; and finally, the importance of expanding scholars' understanding of politics in order to recognise new and evolving opportunities for imagining and acting out alternative urban futures. Following this, key limitations and opportunities for further research are then discussed. The final remarks are personal reflections on deconstructing my own assumptions on the form and function of urban politics through this study and what this means for the direction I take going forward.

9.1.1 New challenges and opportunities

As inequality grows worldwide and pressures in urban centres intensify, the need to understand the form, function and exercise of power becomes more urgent. Complicating this in Asia are processes of de-westernisation following the end of formal colonial rule. As this thesis has demonstrated, coloniality in the form of colonial structures of management and

colonial capitalism are alive and well in Hong Kong. Context matters. Processes of de-westernisation that dispute the colonial matrix of power (Lee et al., 2015) present new challenges and opportunities for critical urban scholarship motivated by inequality and identifying potentialities for more equitable urban futures. This dynamic supports arguments by postcolonial urban scholars that theories and analytical tools based on the experiences of cities in the global North are ill-equipped to make sense of the diverse and dynamic nature of global urbanisms (Derickson, 2015; Lawhon & Truelove, 2020; Leitner & Sheppard, 2016).

Inequality is a slippery opponent. Clearly, there is sufficient evidence that the naturalised colonial capitalist system dominating the minds and actions of much of the world's ruling elite (and everyday people) has caused the gap between the rich and the poor to grow in western and non-western contexts. As this thesis has demonstrated, how the colonial capitalist system functions through state-led urban renewal to maintain inequality is complicated, often remaining an invisible underlying logic that is ostensibly context-specific. A critical stance to research, as taken here, does not just seek to interpret and challenge how inequality is maintained but also seeks to identify sites of change and activism (Denzin, 2017; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). As highlighted in chapter 2, despite the depth, richness, and potential for 'politics' within (and outside) the academy that analytical tools of postcolonial urban theory present, they have some limitations. In particular, the stealthy ways in which those in power displace politics to maintain naturalised inequality. For such a slippery opponent, this research helps emphasise how critical urban scholars, often driven by observations in a particular research context, should stay open to drawing on multiple analytical resources, including those inspired by western contexts (Choplin, 2016; Schmid et al., 2018).

This research started from observations of spatial transformation resulting from state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong. A physical manifestation of ongoing coloniality, Urban Renewal Authority (URA) led interventions take-for-granted the rationale that the market knows best and that property ownership is a sign of progress. URA interventions presented as encompassing democratic principles and norms, on the one hand, lead to displacement and the ongoing entrenchment of inequality in Hong Kong. On the other hand, however, URA-led urban renewal simultaneously becomes a site of struggle and contestation by bringing the often-invisible opponent of inequality into view.

This dynamic (depoliticising urban governance strategies of the state, paradoxically creating an environment of struggle and contestation) resembles forms of spatial politics observed through the lens of postpolitics scholarship (Legacy, 2017; Novák, 2020; Temenos, 2017; Yee, 2020). By focusing on state-led urban renewal interventions in Hong Kong, this thesis has demonstrated that utilised in conjunction with postcolonial optics, Jacques Rancière's

relational approach to politics can uncover complex spatial politics and potentialities for more equitable futures.

9.2 Entangled aspirations: a way to enter into exploring urban politics

9.2.1 Embracing the paradoxes of alternative urban aspirations

This thesis has demonstrated that aspirations for an alternative to the competitive 'world-class city' promoted by the URA are often imagined and acted out in ways that paradoxically reinforce the URA's taken-for-granted authority and/or profit-driven agenda. Importantly, as this thesis has established, tensions related to context-specific contradictions between competing aspirations present new and evolving possibilities for urban politics. Nevertheless, as this thesis has also shown, other optics are needed to tease out these tensions, particularly those related to the URA's stealthy depoliticising strategies, such as deflection through promises of compensation and access to public housing, that help maintain its dominance.

As an emerging postcolonial optic, urban aspirations offers an alternative approach to identifying and examining outcomes of urban change such as those of URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong identified and examined in this study. This scholarship that emphasises relationality and foregrounds everyday urban experiences (Bunnell et al., 2018), highlights the complex way in which urban change is driven by related individual and collective aspirations that are simultaneously shaped by global and local processes (Bunnell, 2019; Ho, 2017; Ruszczyk & Price, 2020). To deepen our understanding of how aspirations drive urban development (and possibilities for more equitable urban futures), as shown in this thesis, scholars can draw on other relationally focused optics such as Rancière's understanding of politics, to tease out contradictions and tensions within and between competing aspirations.

9.2.2 Aspiring whilst negotiating the present

In Hong Kong, activists, affected people, and NGOs will aspire for an equal starting place whilst simultaneously utilising whatever resources are available to them (including building new alliances and utilising more formal planning channels) to negotiate everyday challenges and opportunities of the present. In the context of this study, it is important to emphasise that negotiating the realities of the present can lead to new collective aspirations that go beyond a particular neighbourhood or group of affected people to wider demands and expectations on the state, such as housing equality. Identified by other urban scholars whose work is focused on urban development in non-western contexts (Padawangi, 2019; Ruszczyk & Price, 2020), keeping aspirations modest can be a strategic move of the urban poor to imagine and act out

alternative urban futures. Furthermore, aspiring for an equal starting place whilst simultaneously navigating everyday challenges and the opportunities they present is, as Simone (2015) has highlighted in the context of Jakarta, observable in other cities of Asia.

9.2.3 Inter-referencing urbanisms: tapering possibilities for alternative urban futures

Inter-referencing practices are complex and utilised for multiple purposes within the context of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong. This thesis has demonstrated how the URA and technocratic elites inter-reference urbanism of other Asian cities, including wider China, to compete and legitimise the URA's authority and its profit-driven rationale. This thesis has also demonstrated that grassroots groups and heritage preservationists involved in URA interventions also inter-reference the urbanism of other Asian cities such as Singapore and other cities in China to develop and legitimise what they see as alternative more equitable models of urban development. Somewhat paradoxically, however, the inter-referencing practices of heritage preservationists aspiring for alternative, more equitable urban development can reinforce the URA taken-for-granted authority because the models they inter-reference are driven by profit and commodification heritage.

This thesis builds on emerging postcolonial urban scholarship that demonstrates that aspirational inter-referencing of urbanisms of 'elsewhere' play a critical role in relationally (re)constituting cities (Bunnell, 2015). Some of these scholars have observed that inter-referencing practices of technocratic and ruling elites work to deepen socio-spatial inequalities within urban development contexts in other non-western contexts (Haines, 2011; Roy, 2011b). This study shows that despite admirable intentions, the inter-referencing practices of grassroots and heritage preservationists in the context of URA-led urban renewal in Hong Kong can reinforce the URA's authority, tapering possibilities for imagining and acting out alternative urban futures, which consequently deepens socio-spatial inequalities.

9.3 Learning from tensions and conflicts caused by state intervention

9.3.1 Postpolitics: taking root in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong's state-led urban renewal context, the capacity of those directly affected and their allies to aspire for a more equitable urban future is dependent on the context-specific opportunities for conflict and contradiction (intrinsic to the enactment of politics) that the URA's interventions create. This thesis demonstrates how Jacques Rancière's relational approach to politics is a valuable tool to tease out the complex role the state plays in urban spatial politics

and relatedly, potentialities for alternative urban development trajectories. Postpolitics is evident in the naming, dividing, and assigning value to people and places, tokenistic and tightly controlled participation, and the carefully managed 'brand' of the URA. An example of ongoing coloniality, this thesis argues that these postpolitical governance strategies work to invalidate low-income groups' informal relationships and strategies and reinforce normalised displacement and inequality. The findings of this thesis support Hui and Au's (2016) argument that, led by the state, postpolitical governance arrangements and strategies are taking root in Hong Kong, and contribute to a wider body of scholarship that explores the relevance of postpolitics to non-western contexts (Boano & Kelling, 2013; Choplin, 2016; Hou, 2018; Hui & Au, 2016; Lam-Knott et al., 2020b; Neo, 2010; Raco & Lin, 2012; Seo, 2020).

9.3.2 Resistance bolstered through authoritarianism?

This thesis has demonstrated that attempts by the URA to exclude or engage with everyday urban dwellers in prescribed ways, often facilitates the emergence of conflict and confrontation outside the formal channels of the state. Possibilities, however, for conflict and confrontation are shaped by the form, function and imaginaries of the state. By highlighting the overt control the URA has over participation and its strategies to discipline and pacify disobedient NGOs, this thesis demonstrates how the state can simultaneously embed democratic principles and norms into its urban development interventions and display more authoritarianism-styled governance strategies. Furthermore, it appears that the tension created between opposing governance strategies bolsters resistance to the URA's interventions. When applied to non-western contexts, other scholars have observed that postpolitical governance strategies are bolstered by authoritarianism (Matijasevich, 2020; Zhu, 2020) and that the potential for radical politics in these contexts is dependent on the expansion of rights and democratic norms (Matijasevich, 2020). This thesis supports arguments that authoritarianism bolster postpolitics but also highlights that authoritarianism can bolster resistance in the Hong Kong context.

9.3.3 Particularisation as a strategy to make universal claims to equality

This thesis highlights that URA's interventions create complex ongoing tensions between particularising postpolitical strategies and universalising acts of politics. In Hong Kong, those resisting URA interventions will appropriate the postpolitical particularising strategies used by the state (such as the processes H15 utilised to develop the Dumbbell Programme) to make universalising claims to equality. This observation highlights that rather than being unknowingly drawn into negotiations with the state (as much postpolitical scholarship draws attention to), those resisting the URA's intervention will exercise their agency through

intentionally using systems and processes of the state (successful or not) to imagine and act out alternative urban futures. These strategies demonstrate that within some contexts, at least, politics can occur between the formal channels of the state and other interest groups. Interestingly, the URA will appropriate the particularising strategies of those resisting its interventions to maintain its authority (the ongoing politics of Lee Tung Street and the URA's appropriation of H15's alternative redevelopment plans are particularly good examples of this). Similar to dynamics highlighted by Van Wymeersch and Oosterlynck (2018) in the city of Ghent, and Novák (2020) in Prague, enacting politics in Hong Kong requires navigating an ongoing "ping-pong type interaction" (Novák, 2020) between intrinsically linked particularising postpolitical forces and universalising acts of politics.

9.4 Recognising new and evolving opportunities for everyday politics

9.4.1 Extending enactments of politics to the everyday

In Hong Kong, like other Asian cities and nations, de-westernisation and ongoing coloniality coalesce to shape the form and function of urban development and related politics. In Hong Kong, ongoing opportunities for resistance shaped by the strong arm of the state include more visible ruptures, such as protests and confrontations, and under-explored less visible incremental acts, such as the actions of rebel NGOs or collaborative learning at To Kwa Wan House of Stories that, nevertheless, enact equality and reconstitute state-society relations. A valuable tool to tease out the complex role the state plays in urban spatial politics, postpolitics scholarship is critiqued for its constricted and universalising understanding of 'politics' that reduces the lived experience of political action and the plurality of agency to moments of rupture (Beveridge & Koch, 2017; Lerner, 2014; Temenos, 2017). Building on the work of postpolitics scholars drawing inspiration from policy mobilities scholarship (Temenos, 2017) and postcolonial approaches (Choplin, 2016), this thesis demonstrated how, in the Asian context, Rancière's relational approach to politics can be extended and enriched to include everyday practices in cities of Asia through the postcolonial urban optic of informality.

9.4.2 Embracing the tensions intrinsic to urban informality

In the context of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong, the state's interventions work to maintain a taken-for-granted assumption that technocratic managerial elites' practices are formal whilst those of grassroots are associated with the informal. This thesis demonstrates through identifying and examining tensions between different interest groups within URA interventions that the informal is inseparable from the formal. Affected people, activists and

heritage preservationists will simultaneously utilise informal and formal practices, strategies, and attitudes in ways that both repoliticise and displace politics. Furthermore, and evident in the processes and structures of engagement (and exposing the double standards ingrained in our understanding of urban informality (McFarlane, 2012)), the URA also utilises formal and informal strategies to negotiate with affected people and respond to resistance. A key point here is that there is no singular, linear road to enacting politics. Opportunities for dissent and emancipation, like constraints, are constantly evolving. This dynamic demonstrates that, contrary to popular discourse, urban informality is not something that belongs to the poor (Rigon et al., 2020). Instead, it is both a neoliberal governance strategy (drawing people into the prevailing social order) and everyday practice (Chan, 2018; McFarlane, 2019; Sheppard et al., 2020).

9.4.3 Survival strategies as everyday politics

An important contribution of this thesis made through the optic of urban informality is that the lives and survival strategies of marginalised people affected by state-led urban renewal interventions can translate to (sometimes unintentional) enactment of everyday politics. These enactments of politics are often non-compliance to an imposed identity and place in Hong Kong's wider social system (Swyngedouw, 2011). The everyday act of survival, such as informal maintenance of homes, informal employment, and informal relationships with landlords, acts out alternative more equitable urban futures. The URA's intervention creates new tensions and disrupts these survival strategies. On the one hand, some affected people are given opportunities by the state for more secure housing. For others, further exclusion makes visible naturalised inequality and, in strong contrast to the ruling elite's views, raises expectations for some (stronger than demands, and here an act of politics) that the state provides the same treatment for ALL people, including asylum seekers. The transformative potential of such granular, incremental politics is less visible in postpolitics scholarship whose definition of 'politics proper' remain constricted to moments of (often violent) rupture in public streets and squares (Swyngedouw, 2011).

9.4.4 New, evolving (and mobile) relationships and learning spaces

A constricted definition of politics fails to account for enactments of everyday politics related to new relationships and the emergence of collaborative learning spaces that form through urban politics. By extending Rancière's approach to politics through the postcolonial optic of urban informality, this thesis demonstrated how in Hong Kong, the URA's interventions have been a catalyst for new evolving relationships and collaborative learning spaces to emerge in

URA affected neighbourhoods. Furthermore, as highlighted in the politics of 'becoming kaifong', these new relationships and learning spaces can mobilise and shape urban development and politics across the wider city. In contrast to postpolitical scholarship that places 'proper politics' at a distance from the state (Etherington & Jones, 2018; Swyngedouw, 2014b), this thesis demonstrates that everyday politics that disrupts naturalised inequality in highly regulated Hong Kong, occurs between state and non-state actors, at a distance from the state and within both the private and public spheres.

9.5 Limitations and opportunities

Limitations in this study are understood to be points of departure for ongoing learning and research. Broadly speaking, limitations and opportunities for further research are here, related to comparative urbanism inspired by the ordinary city critique (Robinson, 2006). As emphasised above, the state's form, function, and power are central in creating the environment for context-specific enactments of politics within redevelopment interventions. As mentioned in chapter 5, other scholars familiar with Hong Kong's context have drawn attention to the role that Chinese intellectuals within the URA have played in challenging Hong Kong urban redevelopment culture (Ng, 2014). The participants from the URA and government departments involved in this study did not seem to be these individuals. Therefore, informal experiences and practices that work to resist naturalised inequality within the URA were likely missed in this study. Language barriers, time constraints in the field, tight regulation over public engagement and a hierarchical culture within the URA potentially contributed to this. Nevertheless, I am left with questions around who these intellectuals are and the role that informality plays in challenging Hong Kong's urban development culture from within the confines of the state? Furthermore, in what ways their actions could be considered enactment of politics?

With the ongoing influence of authoritarian governance strategies in Hong Kong and other cities in Asia, an important (and challenging) area for further research is how enacting politics occurs within the confines of the state and how tensions between democratic norms associated with neoliberalism and more authoritarian governance strategies shape enactment of politics in diverse contexts. In the Hong Kong context, this includes exploring how the 2019 pro-democracy protests (and the state's response to it) have shaped the form and function of everyday politics related to state-led urban renewal interventions.

Utilised in conjunction with postcolonial optics, Rancière's tripartite analytic (and the related concept of the distribution sensible) significantly broadens our understanding of how participation and related everyday politics shape urban renewal outcomes in Hong Kong.

However, it does not take us far enough to identify practical ways scholars and urban development practitioners can work within the context of existing institutions to transform postpolitical expectations of consensus within urban development processes and practices. To address the limitations of Rancière's approach, some critical urban planning scholars (Gabauer, 2018; Legacy et al., 2018; Legacy et al., 2019; Pløger, 2015) have drawn on postpolitical scholar Mouffe's understanding of democracy as agonistic pluralism (Mouffe, 2009, 2013) to highlight the emancipatory potential of participatory processes that recognise and respectfully embrace the inherent (and often unresolvable) conflicts associated with the use of public space and changes to land use. Of course, there is much to think through on the relevance of Mouffe's concept of agonistic pluralism in the urban renewal context in Hong Kong (especially with the growing influence of authoritarianism). Still, engagement with Mouffe, alongside Rancière, could have taken the thesis further by highlighting the potential that embracing the inherent conflicts in urban development has to transform the form and function of established institutions (such as the URA) to enable participation that challenges naturalised inequality.

Displacement is a well-documented effect of state-led urban renewal in Hong Kong (Heisler et al., 2020; Huang, 2019). I found, however, very little in the way of studies or records that identify and examine the long-term everyday effects of displacement for those directly affected by URA interventions. This knowledge gap may partially stem from a lack of locally-inspired concepts and analytical tools related to displacement. Indeed, debates around the relevance of the western-inspired concept of gentrification are ongoing in Hong Kong (Ley & Teo, 2014, 2020; Lui, 2017). A limitation of this study is a more in-depth understanding of the long-term everyday effects of displacement, especially on those with limited or no legal status in Hong Kong, and how the utilisation and naturalisation of western-inspired terms, such as gentrification by state (and scholars), mask significant differences in the form and effects of displacement in state-led urban renewal in non-western contexts.

Highlighted in chapter 6, rather than displacement or gentrification, one participant in this study said the URA interventions worked to "substitute" one community for another. A potential area for research would therefore be to explore the potential of 'substitution' as a heuristic device in examining the form and function of large-scale state-led redevelopment in Hong Kong and other cities in Asia with similar state-led redevelopment practices. In particular, 'substitution' may better reflect the everyday experiences of exclusion and discrimination faced by marginalised migrants with limited to no legal status living in neighbourhoods affected by state-led urban renewal.

There are also issues that relate to decoloniality that could be the focus of further attention. Chapter 5 highlighted how urban renewal is an example of ongoing coloniality in Hong Kong

and that de-westernisation is changing who the managers of the colonial matrix of power are (Lee et al., 2015). This thesis has utilised urban informality to draw attention to diverse forms of everyday politics that challenge naturalised inequality maintained by the URAs interventions. Arguably, some of these enactments of politics and related new social relations based on values of collaboration and equality strongly contrast with the global city profit-driven aspirations of the URA and could be considered examples of decoloniality. Somewhat paradoxically, however, and highlighted by scholars in Hong Kong (Chin, 2014; Choi, 2007), and other Asian contexts (Zaman, 2018), heritage preservationists and activists often deploy colonial nostalgia to imagine and act out these alternative futures.

This dynamic raises questions around the intrinsic role of conflict and contradiction in processes and practices of decoloniality and, relatedly, the diverse forms these tensions can take in different urban redevelopment contexts. This thesis did not tease out these critical questions with participants or within the empirical chapters of this thesis. Chan (2015) argues that decolonisation in Hong Kong is not uni-directional, nor a choice between victories of purely ideological or pragmatic solutions, but involves multiple cultural-political struggles to imagine the future. The optic of urban informality could help tease out further the tensions that diverse enactment of everyday politics in the context of redevelopment play in decoloniality in Hong Kong, other Asian cities and possibly in settler colonies of the west, such as the context of Aotearoa where I wrote this thesis (potentially an interesting comparative study).

9.6 Final remarks

From the initial seed that sparked my interest in this research, this thesis has taken me in some familiar and unfamiliar directions. Lawhon et al. (2020) argue that the strongest version of the 'southern critique' in urban studies is postcolonial theory. Part of the wider analytical project of postcolonial studies that insists on the colonial encounter being deeply embedded in the present (Porter, 2017), the postcolonial approach to urban studies emphasises that urban scholars focus on deconstructing their assumptions about cities more deeply (Lawhon et al., 2020). Always taking the past with me into the new, I have been challenged to decolonise my mind and deconstruct the ingrained assumptions I have about the form and function of urban development and related possibilities for politics.

One of the assumptions I grappled with the most in this study was the assumed role of democratic norms in addressing inequality and the lack of opportunity for politics in places seemingly absent of these democratic norms. The deeper I got into my research, the clearer it became that this Eurocentric view was a far too simplistic understanding of urban politics in Asia (and more broadly). In Hong Kong, tensions between seemingly incompatible

governance approaches (democratic norms and authoritarian strategies) created the fertile ground for politics. As the 'ordinary city' critique (Robinson, 2006) emphasises, Eurocentric narratives of a linear progression of urban development fail to account for the diversity of urban life and limit our ability to imagine and act out more equitable urban futures. In a very real way in this research process, I have been confronted with how embedded coloniality is in my own positionality as much as it is embedded in urban scholarship. Furthermore, I have seen how this embedded coloniality can shape my scholarly imagination of what possibilities there are for alternative more equitable urban futures.

Urbanisms are always conceived of comparatively (McCann et al., 2013). So naturally, as I grappled with ingrained assumptions around democratic norms to challenge inequality and enact politics, I compared what I observed in Hong Kong with my experiences in Aotearoa. In particular, I started to compare the level of awareness of strategies utilised by the state to displace politics. Initially, I was convinced that everyday people in Aotearoa were less aware of how consensus politics functions within state-led urban development interventions. On further reflection, however, I realised that this assumption was based on experiences and observations I made with a Eurocentric view of the form and function of politics.

What I have learnt through my research in Hong Kong is that to challenge inequality maintained through the urban development aspirations of the ruling elite, I need to continue to deconstruct my own assumptions, get comfortable with the conflict and contradictions so intrinsic to everyday politics, and focus my energy and attention on everyday practices that emerge in sometimes in less visible (nevertheless, powerful) ways to challenge naturalised inequality in cities. By focusing on state-led urban redevelopment in Hong Kong through the lenses of postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics, this thesis has opened new lines of inquiry to study urban politics related to redevelopment in other cities in Asia and potentially settler colonies of the west.

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Appendices

Appendix A: research assistants confidentiality letters



CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – RESEARCH ASSISTANT TRANSLATOR

I, _____ have been engaged as a research assistant on the project **A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of migrants to urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study city**, and may be required to interpret, translate or transcribe interviews in this role. In carrying out these activities, I undertake to communicate information fully and faithfully, to the best of my abilities.

I understand that all information provided by interview participants is confidential, and I agree not to use or disclose this information except as required in the course of my duties as a research assistant. I also undertake to store any records of interviews securely as directed by the researcher, and to destroy any copies of these records remaining in my possession once my involvement in the project ends.

Translator signature

Date



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Translator/Research assistant I, _____ have been engaged as a research assistant on the project, "Realising inclusion within urban regeneration policy and practice: the role of diverse perceptions, experiences and expectations" and may be required to interpret, translate or transcribe interviews in this role. In carrying out these activities, I undertake to communicate information fully and faithfully, to the best of my abilities. I understand that all information provided by interview participants is confidential, and I agree not to use or disclose this information except as required in the course of my duties as a research assistant. I also undertake to store any records of interviews/survey results securely as directed by the researcher, and to destroy any copies of these records remaining in my possession once my involvement in the project ends.

Translator/research assistant signature

Date

Appendix B: Key temporal phases of the research

Key phases of the research	Key activities
Phase 1: Explore and review (2016)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Exploration wide range of literature related to urban renewal, research methodology and theory 2. Establish research purpose and focus
Phase 2: Design and plan (2016-2017)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scoping trip 2. Developed initial research aim and objectives 3. Developed initial sampling and recruitment design. 4. Developed semi-structured interview questions, interview protocol in English and Chinese 5. Developed stakeholder mapping exercise 6. Developed research proposal 7. Ethics approval from Australian National University's Human Ethics Committee 8. Planned first phase of fieldwork 9. Recruited research assistants 10. Emailed interview questions, information sheets and consent forms in English and Chinese to initial interview participants
Phase 3: Field work phase 1 (2017)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Conducted semi-structured interviews 2. Participatory mapping with interview participants 3. Maintained field work diary

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4. Transcription and translation of interview data 5. Data familiarisation
Phase 4: Transfer and re-design (mid 2018)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transcription and translation of interview data 2. Data familiarisation 3. Transfer to The University of Waikato 4. Change in the theoretical framework and research aim and objectives 5. Design and organisation of focus groups 6. Ethics approval
Phase 5: Field work phase 2 (early 2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Presented and explained the rationale for changes to research aims and objectives to focus group participants (some of which were interview participants in phase 1 of fieldwork) 2. Ran and videoed four focus groups to go deeper on areas identified during the first phase of fieldwork 3. Transcription and translation of interview data 4. Data familiarisation 5. Analysis
Phase 6: Analysis (2019)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Finished and checked all transcriptions and translation 2. Analysis 3. Writing up analysis
Phase 7: Writing and analysis (2020-2021)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Analysis 2. Final writing up of research

Appendix C: Interview guide

Outline of the structure of the interview

1. Introductions

- Researcher (and if present) research assistant/translator to introduce themselves
- Invite participants to introduce themselves
- Ask if the participants have any questions about the researcher/researcher assistant/translator before discussing the specifics of the research.

2. Informed consent

- Go through the information sheet with participants.
- Ask if participants understand and if they have any questions.
- Ask participants are still willing to participate, if so ask them to sign or orally consent to the interview.
- Ask all participants would like updates on the research project. If so, ask for the best way to stay in contact and collect contact details.

3. Stakeholder mapping exercise

- Explain stakeholder mapping exercise
- Emphasising there is no right or wrong way to do the map
- Emphasise that it is okay, if they are unable to name or make links between different stakeholders and that their information and contribution is still valuable and important.
- Offer to write for the participant (under their direction) if they are unable or uncomfortable writing.

4. Interview questions

- Start with the question of their involvement in URA-led urban renewal
- Utilise topics and prompts throughout and ask participants to elaborate on their experiences.
- Actively Listen and express interest and gratitude at what they share.
- If participants stray too much from a relevant topic, respectfully redirect the conversation by acknowledging what they have said and asking a different question
- End questioning by asking if there is anything they think is important about urban renewal in Hong Kong that we might have missed during the interview that they think is important and if they would like to add anything.

5. Ask if there is anyone else they think I should interview (if appropriate)

6. Thank you

- Express gratitude and value of the interview
- Give a gift (voucher or honey) as thank you for participating

7. Description and reflection

- Straight after an interview, write a description and reflection. Include where the interview took place, the positionality (what is known) and how the interview went.

Demographic questions for Interview participants English and Chinese

What gender to you identify with?	您的性別是？
What is your age?	您的年齡是？
What is your marital status?	您的婚姻狀況是？
How many dependents do you have?	您有多少家人？
How many people are currently living within your household?	目前有多少人住在您的住所？
Where were, you born?	您在哪裡出生？
What ethnicity are you?	您的國籍是？
What is your first language?	您的母語是？
Do you consider yourself a migrant or a local?	你覺得自己是移民人士還是本地人？
What is your residency status in Hong Kong?	你在香港的居留身份是？
Do you publicly or privately rent, own your own home or live in a government subsidized flat?	你租住公屋、租住私樓、擁有自置物業、還是住在政府資助房屋？
What is the approximate size of your home?	你的住所大約有多少尺？

Interview topics and questions used in interviews (English with Chinese translation)

Background

What has led to you being affected by or involved with urban renewal?	甚麼令您參與市區重建或被其影響？
Has your experience of urban renewal led to your involvement with established or newly formed groups? If yes, what groups?	市區重建的經驗有沒有令你參與了成立已久或新成立的團體？ 如有，是甚麼？

General urban renewal

What is your understanding of urban renewal?	你怎樣理解市區重建？
In your opinion, who initiates urban renewal in Hong Kong?	你認為誰發起香港的市區重建？
Who do you think are involved in the urban renewal decision making processes?	你認為誰在市區重建的決策過程中有份參與？
Do you think there are other groups that should be involved in decision making processes which currently are not, if so why do you think they are not involved?	你認為有沒有團體應該參與決策過程而他們現在並沒有參與？是甚麼？ 如有，你認為他們現在未能參與的原因是甚麼？
How do you understand the relationship between the physical environment and people?	你怎樣理解環境與人之間的關係？

Governance groups and interactions

Which of the groups mentioned in your map have you had contact with?	你的繪圖裡所提及過的團體中，你接觸過哪個或哪些團體？
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What do you remember most from your contacts with other groups involved in urban renewal?	在你接觸參與市區重建的團體的過程中，甚麼令你最深刻？
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Urban renewal in Hong Kong:

Do you think there many ethnic minorities groups living in dilapidated buildings? Why/why not?	有大量少數族裔住在破舊的樓宇嗎？為甚麼？
In what ways do you think urban renewal increases human health and wellbeing?	你認為市區重建如何令市民生活得較好？
In what ways do you think urban renewal decrease human health and wellbeing?	你認為市區重建如何令市民生活得較差？
How would you define a 'vulnerable person' in relation to urban renewal in Hong Kong?	你怎樣定義在香港市區重建中的「弱勢社群」？
In what ways, do you think vulnerable people adapt to change related to urban renewal?	你認為弱勢社群怎樣適應市區重建帶來的改變？
Do you consider those without residency status or legal visas as a vulnerable in relation to urban renewal if yes, why and how? If no, why not?	你認為沒有居留權或合法簽證的人是市區重建裡的弱勢社群嗎？如是，為甚麼及如何弱勢？如否，為甚麼？
Do some people affected by urban renewal have better access to support services than others? if yes, how? and why?	你認為受市區重建影響的人比其他人更易接觸輔助服務嗎？如是，如何接觸？為甚麼？
Is there adequate support service and support for those affected by urban renewal? Why/why not?	你認為受市區重建影響的人能否獲得足夠的輔助服務及支持？為甚麼？
Do you think those forced to leave their homes through urban renewal will try and stay in the same area or leave? Why/why not?	你認為那些因市區重建而被迫搬遷的人會嘗試原區安置還是去其他地方？為甚麼？

Urban renewal and resilience

In what ways (if any) do you think urban renewal changes the way in which those affected by urban renewal interact with other groups for example, government, URA, NGO's?	你認為市區重建如何改變了受影響人士與其他團體（例如政府、市區重建局及非政府機構）之間的交流？（如有）
Do you think the experience of urban renewal will make those directly affected more able to adapt to change in the future? Why, Why not?	你認為有關市區重建的經驗能令直接受影響人士有更大能力適應將來的改變嗎？為甚麼？

Legal /policy structures influence urban renewal:

Can you think of any policies and laws that directly affect the urban renewal process (how it is acted out)	你能否想起一些政策或法例對市區重建過程及結果有影響？如有，是甚麼？它的效果又是甚麼？
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Appendix D: breakdown of demographic information of interviewees

Appendix D: breakdown of demographic information of interviewees

Demographic questions asked	Results
Gender	Self-identified as male =23 Self-identified as females =26
Age	Age under the age of 24 years=3 Age 25-34 years=8 Age 35-44 years=12 Age 45-54 years=11 Age 55-64=12 Age 65 years or over= 3
Place of birth	America=1 Germany=1 Hong Kong=31 India=2 Japan=2 Mainland China=9 Pakistan=2 Indonesia=2
Residency status	Non-permanent resident =4 Permanent resident, Right of Abode=42 Asylum seeker= 3 <i>*36 participants self-identified as locals, 13 self-identified as migrants</i>

Participant classification

Affected resident/landlord=12

Affected business operator/landlord=6

Professional NGO=10

Professional other=10

Professional past/current URA=7

Activist/volunteer=4

** Some participants fit into more than one category*

Appendix E: focus group interview guide



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Focus group guide

1. Welcome to participants and thank them for coming
2. Kate briefly introduces herself and the research
3. Ask participants if they a) have read and understood information sheet including that if they are to leave half way through I will be unable to remove their comments in transcript up to their point of leaving group. b) signed consent form c) have any questions about the focus group, research or Kate d) are comfortable with questions or bring video recorded.

Participants given a chance at this point to withdraw.

4. Participants given opportunity to introduce themselves and how they have been affected or involved in URA led urban renewal processes.
5. Group rules
6. Focus group questions
7. Ask if any participants want to stay updated on process and any publications (take email address)
8. Give all participants voucher as token of appreciation for participating.

Focus group rules:

1. Participation is voluntary and based on informed consent.
2. You do not need to agree with others, but you should listen respectfully as others share their views and experiences.
3. I would like to hear wide range of opinions: Please speak up on whether you agree or disagree. Please ask a question if you need something clarified.
4. I may call on you if I haven't heard from you in a while but if you have nothing more to add you do not have to respond just state you have nothing more to add.
5. There are no right, or wrong answers, every person's experiences and opinions are important.
6. The focus group will be video recorded and may need to be translated, therefore please speak one person at a time.
7. Please turn off your phones.

Interview topics and questions used in interviews (English with Chinese translation)

SECTION 1: URA-led urban renewal

What do you think the outcome of URA-led urban renewal is for people's everyday lives in Hong Kong?	請問你認為香港市區重建的結果對香港市民日常生活有何影響?
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SECTION 2: Participation in practice

URA-led participation

Have you been part of any URA-led consultation/community engagement activities?	你有曾參予市區重建會所設立的支詢會活動嗎?
What was the purpose of the engagement?	投入活動的目的是什麼?
Why did you participate?	你為何參予?
How did you feel after participating?	參予後你有何感受?
In what ways has this participation brought about change/not brought about change?	參予後對你有/沒有改變?

NGO-led participation

Have you been part of any NGO-led consultation/community engagement activities?	你有曾參予非政府主辦的支詢會嗎?
What was the purpose of the engagement?	投入活動的目的是什麼?
Why did you participate?	你為何參予?
How did you feel after participating?	參予後你有何感受?
In what ways has this participation brought about change/not brought about change?	參予後對你有/沒有改變?

Resident/community-led participation

Have you been part of any resident/community-led community engagement processes/resistance?	你有曾參予由市民領帶的支詢會?
What was the purpose of the engagement?	投入活動的目的是什麼?
Why did you participate?	你為何參予?
How did you feel after participating?	參予後你有何感受?
In what ways has this participation brought about change/not brought about change?	參予後對你有/沒有改變?

Appendix F: description and reflection on focus groups

Focus group	Description of focus group
Focus group 1: URA-funded social workers from one NGO	<p>The first focus group comprised four social workers from the same URA-funded social service team. Two women and two men all locally born and trained. Three of the social workers were very experienced and middle-aged. One of the women was a recent graduate. The focus group was organised by their supervisor, who I interviewed in the first data collection phase. The focus group was conducted in a small room in their office on a weekday during work hours. All participants introduced themselves in English, but most of the discussion between participants was in Cantonese. Participants were all committed to their social work practice, supporting affected people and social justice. They were all comfortable with each other, sharing similar views and experiences.</p>
Focus group 2: Heritage preservationists based on Hong Kong Island	<p>The second focus group comprised three heritage preservationists, one woman and two men. One woman and one man were locally born one man was a migrant from Europe who had lived in Hong Kong for over 20 years. The focus group was organised by the women whom I had interviewed in the first phase of data collection. The focus group was conducted in the weekend in a retro restaurant selling traditional street food in a wealthy neighbourhood on Hong Kong Island. All participants spoke fluent English and were passionate about preserving Hong Kong's unique culture and heritage, especially old buildings, and green spaces. All participants were interested in history and were active in community-led actions and activities and organising community survey and petitions to challenge the URA's interventions. Participants were comfortable with each other, sharing similar and divergent views.</p>

Focus group 3: Grass roots renewal activist group	<p>The third focus group comprised four members of a grass-roots urban renewal activists' group. Two of the members, one woman and one man over the age of 50, had been a shop operator and residents who had lost their businesses and homes due to URA intervention. The man was born in Mainland China but had migrated to Hong Kong 20 years ago. The other two members were young men and students in their mid-20's who both spoke good English. The focus group was held in the evening in a shared arts space that doubled as space for activists to meet and organise events and actions. I had previously interviewed the older women, but because she did not speak English, I communicated with one of the young men to organise the focus group. All participants were concerned about the unfair practices of the URA. The discussion was dynamic, with participants challenging each other on issues and recounts of events. I noticed that participants held the older woman's views, especially, in high regard. The young men in particular showing affection, admiration and deep respect for her.</p>
Focus group 4: URA- affected residents and business operators based in Kowloon	<p>The fourth focus comprised seven affected residents/shop owners, five men and two women, from two different URA-affected neighbourhoods. Two of the men were middle-aged. Three were over the age of 60. One of the women was in her 20s, and the other women over 60. The focus group was held in one of the participant's motorcycle repair shop in the evening. Two interview participants from different NGOs jointly arranged the focus group. The motorcycle shop owner spoke good English and supported the translator in managing the discussion between the different participants and jumping in to help translate at different points. Participants were open with each other, sharing their struggles and involvement in local community concern groups and actions. At times, the energy in the room was intense and sad. I did not expect the men in</p>

the group to let their guards down and be vulnerable in the way that they did. It was clear that the energy it took to participate and stay engaged with urban renewal related processes and practices (and related uncertainty) spanning multiple years took its toll on the participants. Unlike the other focus groups, the women noticeably spoke less than the men, and I had to actively invite them (through the translator) to share their thoughts on the topics that were being discussed.

Appendix G: phases of analysis

Phases of reflexive thematic analysis Description

–adapted from Braun et al. (2019)

Phase 1. Familiarisation of interview data	Data familiarisation involved listening to interviews, reading transcripts, and taking notes of any analytical insights. This first phase of data familiarisation led to a change in research direction, including a shift in the research's theoretical framework and a second data collection phase. During this time, I returned to Hong Kong for the second phase of data collection.
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Phase 2. Systematic coding of interview data	After my second phase of data collection was complete, I started coding the interview transcripts in NVivo. At this point, I was waiting for some interviews conducted in Cantonese to be transcribed, translated, and checked by a second translator. I started coding before I had a complete data set.
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I approached coding openly and inductively, going wide but bearing in mind the analytical insights I had made in the field and the theoretical lens I was reading and writing about. I coded each interview systematically, at times coding chunks of data to multiple codes. These codes included semantic codes and latent codes⁸⁷

After coding most of the interviews transcripts, I started to go through the codes, refining, renaming, and merging similar

⁸⁷ Semantic codes are more explicit in their content, such as 'urban renewal leads to vulnerability and latent codes are more theoretically informed and identify implicit meaning in the data such as 'naming and dividing of affected peoples as depoliticisation.' (Braun & Clarke, 2013)

	<p>ones. I reflected on the codes in relation to the research aim and objectives, what I had noticed in the data familiarisation phase. I collated all codes unrelated to the research aim and objectives into a single 'miscellaneous' code. This refining process helped reduced the codes to a manageable amount to move to the next phase of analysis.</p>
<p>Phase 3. Constructing provisional themes</p>	<p>Braun et al. (2019) explain that themes are built and given meaning at the intersection of data, the researchers' subjectivity, and the research aim. During this phase I started to look for broad patterns and clusters of codes including clusters of codes related to earlier analytical insights and subsequent theoretical lenses of postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics. I identified themes and subthemes with hierarchical structures and lateral links. I discussed the themes with my supervisors and took time to stand back and explore whether the themes and the related story I was developing addressed the aim of the research and were clearly visible in the raw data. I created multiple iterations of these provisional themes.</p>
<p>Phase 4. Systematic coding of focus group data</p>	<p>After I had coded all the interviews and developed provisional themes, the focus group transcripts came back from being checked by my second translator. I went back to phase 1 and phase 3. Firstly, I listened to and read the transcripts looking for anything in the data that did not fit into the codes and provisional themes I had developed. I did not find anything in the data that conflicted with the codes and themes instead, provided more detail and</p>

	<p>depth. After familiarisation, I systematically went through each focus group transcript and coded chunks of data to the established codes. This phase of analysis was deductive.</p>
<p>Phase 5. Revising themes and codes</p>	<p>The processes of familiarisation and coding of the focus group data helped me identify which provisional themes worked together to tell the richest story of the data in relation to my research aim and objectives. As I worked through different iterations, it became clear that most of the themes and related codes could be merged and organised under three overarching central organising concepts related to postcolonial urban theory and postpolitics. I returned to the data set to reorganise codes, themes, and subthemes in relation to these three overarching central organising concepts.</p> <p>During this phase, I also thought deeply about how each overarching concept related and built on the other to tell a story and address the research aim. I decided on the order in which I would further analyse, write about, and present the central organising concepts, themes, and sub-themes.</p>
<p>Phase 6: Writing, refining, reporting</p>	<p>Each central organising concept is the basis of an analysis chapter. Related themes and subthemes became the skeleton structure of my writing. I simultaneously wrote, questioned, revised and reorganised data. I deconstructed direct and summarised exerts to develop the overall story of the data in relation to my research aim and objectives. This final phase of analysis and reporting was creative, messy and intense. The analysis chapters demonstrate the richness of my data, the depth</p>

of analysis and how this story relates and contributes to wider scholarship.

Appendix H: ethics documentation



05/10/2018

Dear Ms Kate Sewell,

Protocol: 2017/092

A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of migrants to urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study city

I am pleased to advise you that your Human Ethics application received approval by the Chair of the HREC on the 16th of March 2017.

For your information:

1. Under the NHMRC/AVCC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research we are required to follow up research that we have approved. Once a year (or sooner for short projects) we shall request a brief report on any ethical issues which may have arisen during your research or whether it proceeded according to the plan outlined in the above protocol.
2. Please notify the committee of any changes to your protocol in the course of your research, and when you complete or cease working on the project.
3. Please notify the Committee immediately if any unforeseen events occur that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the research work.
4. Please advise the HREC if you receive any complaints about the research work.
5. The validity of the current approval is five years' maximum from the date shown approved. For longer projects you are required to seek renewed approval from the Committee.

All the best with your research,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "KT", enclosed within a blue oval.

Miss Kate Townsend

Research Ethics Officer
Research Services Division
Level 1, Geography Building, Building 48A
Linnaeus Way, The Australian National University
ACTON ACT 2601
Kate.Townsend@anu.edu.au
human.ethics.officer@anu.edu.au; animal.ethics@anu.edu.au
Ph:02 6125 7945

The Australian National University | Canberra ACT 0200 Australia | CRICOS Provider No. 00120C

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colin.mcleay@waikato.ac.nz
www.waikato.ac.nz



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Kate Sewell
Francis Collins

NIDEA

4 February 2019

Dear Kate,

Re: FS2018-42 A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of those directly affected by urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study.

Thank you for submitting an email and associated documentation advising of an amendment to your original research.

Having considered your suggested amendment, I am pleased to offer formal approval for you to amend your research to include the following:

- focus groups with stakeholder groups to discuss processes of participation within urban renewal processes in Hong Kong.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to make further changes to your project as it unfolds.

Regards,

Colin McLeay, Chair
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

Geography Programme
School of Social Sciences
Faculty of Arts and Social
Sciences
Te Kura Kete Aronui
The University of Waikato
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Hamilton 3240
New Zealand

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9174
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colin.mcleay@waikato.ac.nz
www.waikato.ac.nz



THE UNIVERSITY OF
WAIKATO
Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

Kate Sewell
Francis Collins

NIDEA

26 April 2019

Dear Kate,

Re: FS2018-42 A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of those directly affected by urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study.

Thank you for submitting an email advising of an amendment to your original research.

Having considered your suggested amendment, I am pleased to offer formal approval for you to amend your research to include the following:

- semi-structured interviews with small business owners in Hong Kong; the interviews will be video-recorded and will be held at the places of work of the business owners.

We encourage you to contact the committee should issues arise during your data collection, or should you wish to make further changes to your project as it unfolds.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'C. McLeay'.

Colin McLeay, Chair
Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee.

Appendix I: information sheets and consent forms–interviews

Interview information sheet (English group 1)



Participant Information Sheet (G1)

Researcher:

I am Kate Sewell, a PhD scholar from the Fenner School of Environment and Society, College of Medicine, Biology and Environment at the Australian National University.

Project Title: A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of those directly affected by urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study.

General Outline of the Project:

Description and Methodology: This research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the multiple interactions that shape perception and experience of vulnerable of groups affected by urban renewal in Hong Kong. This case study research includes interviews, participatory mapping, observation, participant observation and a small survey to explore this.

Participants: Participants include those people affected by urban renewal and other groups involved in urban renewal policy and or initiatives. The researcher's goal is to interview 30-40 people including 10 people affected by urban renewal. In the second stage of the research It is hoped we can survey 50-100 people.

Use of Data and Feedback: What we find out from the research will be written up into journal articles and published in academic journals. This information will also be presented at international conferences. Translated summaries of any published or conference papers will be made available if requested by participants either through email or through local NGO/support service centres.

Participant Involvement:

Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal: Your participation in this project is voluntary. You can withdraw from the interview or research at any time without providing a reason to researcher or research assistant. You may also refuse to answer any of the questions. If you decided to withdraw from the research; any notes and recordings taken from your interview will be destroyed and not used. Interviews will be audio-recorded so that researcher can check that nothing important you said is missed. All recorded interviews and related notes taken will be stored in a computer database

What does participation in the research entail?

If you choose to participate you are required to answer and discuss questions with the researcher and/or research assistant and participate in a mapping exercise. It is expected that interviews and mapping exercise together, will take between 1-2 hours. The researcher will only audio-record if participants consent to it. There are questions regarding residency status which may be sensitive. If you are in Hong Kong as an asylum seeker or refugee it will be up to you how much you choose to share about what led to your situation. If the researcher refers to any information you have given in any reports, presentations or other publication a pseudonym will be used.

Location and Duration: The fieldwork will be conducted in Hong Kong. The interview will be conducted wherever the interviewee is most comfortable. This could be in a public place, home or office. Interviewee participants will be expected to have one interview. Total time commitment expected is between 1-2 hours. Survey participants will only be required to answer survey questions in 10-15 minutes.

Remuneration: Interviewee participants will not be paid but we will give you a gift of HKD \$200.00 in supermarket vouchers for participating. Gifts are only available for interviewee not survey participants.

Risks: The researcher will try her best to hide your identity but there is always some risk that someone might recognise you based on your answers to questions. The researcher is doing everything she can to protect your identity. If you look as though you are becoming distressed or uncomfortable by any of the questions you are asked you may be asked to move to the next question or withdraw from the study. If you need emotional or legal support the researcher has a list of community organisations that can support you. The researcher will support you to contact these community organisations if required.

Benefits: It is unlikely that you will personally benefit from participating in this research, but it is hoped that that the research will support more inclusive practices in urban renewal related activities. It is hoped that knowledge gained through this research will be influence future urban policy and activities.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality: Confidentiality of all research participants will be ensured as far as the law in Hong Kong allows. Only the researcher, research supervisor will have full access to the interview and survey materials. The files will be saved in a laptop and external hard drive that is password secured. The researcher will ensure that the consent will be followed through in all research publications and presentations arising from the results of the study. Before the interview starts we will talk through what confidentiality means and what steps we have put in place to protect you. The researcher wishes to protect you as much as possible from any potential harms of participating in this research.

Privacy Notice:

- In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at https://policies.anu.edu.au/gpl/document/ANUP_010007 and it contains information about how a person can:
- Access or seek correction to their personal information;
- Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

Data Storage:

Where: The data storage procedures for the research will be following the policy of Australia and the ANU (Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 and the ANU Code of Research Conduct). All electronic data will be stored in an equipment which is password protected and locked in secure premises. All audio transcriptions, maps and field notes will be stored in the ANU hardware and locked in a secure area for five years after publication. The research data will also be archived in the ANU Data Commons, which is a specialist data archiving service for long term storage of research data. Data stored within the Data Commons could be accessed and made available by request and permission to access the data itself will be requested from the primary investigator.

How long: Research data will be stored for a period of at least five years from the date of any publication arising from the research.

Handling of Data following the required storage period: All print materials will be destroyed five years after the publication of the research. The electronic database (e.g. MS Excel worksheets) and interview notes will be stored in the ANU Data Commons for long term storage of research data.

Queries and Concerns:

Contact Details for More Information: You may direct all queries and concerns on the research project to the primary investigator:

Kate Sewell
+64 2102351983 (New Zealand Number) or
+852 97925906 (Hong Kong Number)
WhatsApp account is connected in New Zealand Number
Kate.sewell@anu.edu.au

Or her main supervisor – ~~Xuemei Bai~~, Professor, + 61 2 6125 7825; Xuemei.Bai@anu.edu.au

Contact Details if in Distress:

If you are a migrant affected by urban renewal in need of any help regarding your situation please contact one of the following community services.

1. The Salvation Army Urban Renewal social services team 2/F, Golden Name Commercial Bldg., 400 Portland Street, ~~Mongkok~~; 電話 Tel: (852) 3586 3094 / 3586 3095 傳真 Fax: (852) 3586 3401 電郵 sspursst@ssd.salvation.org.hk

2. St. James' Settlement Urban Renewal social services team 85 Stone Nullah Lane, Wanchai, HK 電話 Tel (852) 25745201 傳真 Fax: (852) 28349634 電郵 Email: amoffice@sjss.org.hk

Ethics Committee Clearance:

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2017/09) If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Interview information sheet (Chinese group 1)



Australian
National
University

參與者資訊 (G1)

研究者資料：

本人名叫蘇穎琪(Kate Sewell)，正在澳洲國立大學就讀醫學、生物及環境學院轄下的芬納環境及社會學院就讀博士課程。

研究題目

市區重建的機會及危機：香港個案研究。

概括計劃內容

- **描述和研究方法：**這次研究目的是深入了解在香港受市區重建影響的弱勢社群，是次個案調查包括：面談、繪圖、觀察和問卷調查。
- **參與者：**包括受市區重建影響的人士及發起和發展市區重建政策或有關倡議的其他持份者，研究者目標訪問 30-40 人，包括 10 名受市區重建影響的人士，並希望於第二階段研究訪問 50 -100 人。
- **資料及意見之使用：**研究發現將記錄於文獻並刊登於學術論文中，以及於國際會議中發表。如你想知道有關研究報告重點，可以透過電郵或本港社區機構提出要求，研究者會把研究的重點翻譯成中文並傳送給你。

參與者之參與

▪ 自發性參與及退出

你在計劃中的參與是自願的，你可以隨時退出和拒絕參與訪問和研究，並不需提供任何理由給研究者或研究助理，你亦可以拒絕回答任何問題，如果你決定退出研究，任何有關你的記錄或錄音都會被銷滅和不會被使用。

是次面談將會被錄音，為了令研究者可以查證沒有任何重要資料遺漏，所有面談錄音及有關筆記會儲存於電腦資料庫。

▪ 參與者將提供的資料

當你決定參與研究，你將要回答研究者和研究助理有關問題及參與討論和繪圖，面談和繪圖會同時進行，整個過程大約需要一至兩小時。

研究者僅將參與者同意才會進行錄音，問題可能涉及敏感資料，例如香港居留身分，如果你是以臨時居留或難民身分居港，你可以自行決定分享多少有關你的個人資料，如研究者將在報告、演講或其他刊物中引用有關你的資料，代號或化名將會用來代表你的身份。

- **地點和持續時間**

地區工作將會像香港進行。訪問將會在受訪對象合適的地點進行，可以於公眾地方、家中或者工作地方。面試者會參與一次訪問，時間大約是一至兩小時，而問卷調查參與者會用約 10-15 分鐘回答問題。

- **回報**

參與者不會獲得金錢回報，但我們會以港幣\$200 超級市場禮券作為感謝你參與的小禮物，超級市場禮券只適用於受訪者，並不適用於問卷調查參與者。

- **危險性**

研究者會盡一切努力保護你的身份，但當中可能會有一些人士因為你的回答而知道你的身份，研究者會盡可行的辦法保護你的身份。如果你在過程中感到有壓力，你可以選擇不回應，要求跳至下一條或退出研究，如果你需要任何情緒或法律支援，研究者已經列出了可以協助的社區團體，如你提出要求，研究者可以協助你聯絡那些團體。

- **得益**

你不太可能在這次研究中獲得任何個人利益，但希望這次研究可以推動市區重建中的共融元素，以及所得的資訊和知識能影響未來城市發展政策和活動。

私隱

研究者會基於香港法例把你的資料保密，只有研究者及研究監督才可接觸所有訪問及問卷調查資料，所有檔案將儲存於受密碼保護的電腦及外置硬碟，研究者定必須從參與者在同意書上表達的意願來於研究出品和演講中使用你的資料。

於面試開始前，我們會向你說明所有保密措施及保護你的資料的步驟，研究者會盡可能保護你避免任何因參與是次研究而的風險。

私隱聲明

- 在研究中收集你的個人資料的過程中，澳洲國立大學必須遵守個人資料法例 1988，澳洲國立大學個人資料法例轉錄於

https://policies.anu.edu.au/pol/document/ANUP_010007

它包含的資訊關於一個人如何：

- 查詢或更改個人資料
- 投訴有關違反澳洲國立大學個人資料法情況及澳洲國立大學如何處理此類投訴

資料儲存

地點：研究資料儲存的程序會跟隨澳洲法例及澳洲國立大學個人資料法例(1988)。所有電子資料都會儲存於受密碼保護的電腦以及鎖在安全地方中。所有錄音、印刷資料、繪圖和問卷會在學術論文出版後鎖於澳洲國立大學中的安全地方，為期五年。研究資料亦會儲存於澳洲國立大學共用研究資料庫。那是個專門資料存檔服務，以作研究資料的長期儲存。使用者必須得到我的准許才能接觸資料庫中的資料。

時間：研究資料會被儲存五年或以上，由研究成果以任何形式被刊登那天起開始計算。

資料處理方法：所有印刷資料會於研究成果刊登後五年被銷毀。數碼資料及圖表筆記會長期儲藏於澳洲國立大學共用研究資料庫。

問題和注意事項

聯絡方法以獲取更多信息：你可以將所有有關研究的問題和疑慮告知主研究者：

蘇錦琪 (Kate Scwell)

+64 2102351983 (紐西蘭電話) 或

+852 97925906 (香港電話)

可以透過紐西蘭電話以通訊軟件 WhatsApp 聯絡

電郵：Kate.scwell@anu.edu.au

或聯絡我的研究監督 Xuemei Bai 教授 + 61 2 6125 7825；電郵：Xuemei.Bai@anu.edu.au

如有困難時可聯絡：

如果你是受到市區重建影響的新移民而需要協助，可以聯絡以下團體

1. 基督教勵行會重慶大廈服務中心 (幫助酷刑受難人士、難民及少數族裔)

Christian Action Chungking Mansions service centre (for Asylum seekers, refugees and ethnic minorities)

地址 m.6, 16/F., Block E, Chungking Mansions, 36-44 Nathan Road, Kln., H.K.

電話 Tel: (852) 2723 6626

傳真 Fax: (852) 2723 6331

電郵 Email: ckmso@christian-action.org.hk

2. 救世軍市區重建社區服務隊（旺角）

The Salvation Army Urban Renewal social services team

地址 2/F, Golden Name Commercial Bldg., 400 Portland Street, Mongkok

電話 Tel: (852) 3586 3094 / 3586 3095

傳真 Fax: (852) 3586 3401

電郵 ssrursst@sai.salvation.org.hk

3. 聖雅各福群會中西區市區重建社區服務隊

St. James' Settlement Urban Renewal social services team

地址 85 Stone Nullah Lane, Wanchai, HK

電話 Tel (852) 25745201

傳真 Fax: (852) 28349634

電郵 Email: amoffice@sjs.org.hk

倫理委員會的批准

研究的道德倫理問題已經通過了澳洲國立大學人類研究倫理委員會的批准 (Protocol 2017/09) 如對是次研究有任何查詢或投訴，請聯絡

倫理主管

澳洲國立大學人類研究倫理委員會

澳洲國立大學

電話：+61 2 6125 3427

電郵：Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au

Interview information sheet (English group 2)



Australian
National
University

Participant Information Sheet (G2)

Researcher:

I am Kate Sewell, a PhD scholar from the Fenner School of Environment and Society, College of Medicine, Biology and Environment at the Australian National University.

Project Title: A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of those directly affected by urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study

General Outline of the Project:

Description and Methodology: This research aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the multiple interactions that shape perception and experience of vulnerable of groups affected by urban renewal in Hong Kong. This case study research project will utilise qualitative and quantitative methods. These include key informant interviews, participatory mapping, observation, participant observation and a small survey to explore this.

Participants: Participants include people affected by urban renewal and other stakeholders involved in implanting or developing urban renewal policy and or initiatives. It is expected that there will be between 30-40 interview participants and 50-100 survey participants.

Use of Data and Feedback: Findings from the fieldwork will be written as journal articles and published in academic journals. Findings are also likely to be presented at international conferences. Summaries of any published papers and conference proceedings will be emailed to interested participants in an appropriate way.

Participant Involvement:

Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal: Your participation to the project is voluntary, and you may, without any penalty, decline to take part or withdraw from the research at any time until the work is prepared for publication without providing an explanation, or you may refuse to answer a question. Should, you decide to withdraw from the research; any notes and recordings taken from your interview will be destroyed and not used. Interviews will be audio-recorded so that researcher can ensure nothing important is missed. All recorded interviews and related notes taken will be stored in a database for analysis.

What does participation in the research entail?

Interviewees are required to answer and discuss questions with the primary investigator and participate in a mapping exercise which will include discussing with the primary investigator what was included on the map. It is expected that interviews will take between 1-2 hours. Interviews are to be audio-recorded and then transcribed for analysis. The researcher will only audio-record if participants consent to it. The interview will be given a number and information of corresponding name saved separately from

transcribed interview data. If the researcher refers to information given in any reports, presentations or other publication a pseudonym will be used.

Location and Duration: The fieldwork will be conducted in Hong Kong. The interview will be conducted wherever the interviewee is most comfortable. This could be in a public place, home or office. Total time commitment expected is between 1-2 hours. Survey participants will only be required to answer survey questions in 10-15 minutes and there will be no follow up.

Remuneration: Interviewee participants will not be paid in cash but will be given a small gift as a token of appreciation. If you are not comfortable receiving the gift you can decline the offer. The funding for the incentive will come from the research fund provided to HDR students by the college. Survey participants will not receive any incentive.

Risks: Despite our best efforts to hide your identity, the risk of third-party identification remains based on the answers you provided. Upon reviewing this risk, should you decide to withdraw from the research any time, even during data analysis, you may do so. Note that all precautions to protect your identity and research data will be taken (e.g. recordings will be kept in a password protected computer, with only the primary investigator and supervisor having access) for confidentiality as far as the law allows.

Benefits: It is unlikely that you will personally benefit from participating in this research, but it is hoped that that evidence collected on the relationship between urban renewal and vulnerability will support more inclusive participatory practices in urban renewal related activities. It is expected that the findings from the research will support the current and future work of community organisations working with urban renewal projects. It is hoped that knowledge generated through this research will be reflected in future urban policy and initiatives.

Confidentiality:

Confidentiality: Confidentiality of all research participants will be ensured as far as Hong Kong law allows. Only the researcher and research supervisor have full access to the interview and survey materials. The files will be saved in a laptop and external hard drive that is password secured. Before the start of the interview, the key informant may choose the kind of attribution that they will permit during the presentation and publication of the research results (e.g. pseudonym, interviewee number or complete confidentiality). The researcher will ensure that the consent will be followed through in all research publications and presentations arising from the results of the study. Prior to the start of any discussion, confidentiality provisions will be discussed.

Privacy Notice:

In collecting your personal information within this research, the ANU must comply with the Privacy Act 1988. The ANU Privacy Policy is available at https://policies.anu.edu.au/ppi/document/ANUP_010007 and it contains information about how a person can:

Access or seek correction to their personal information;

Complain about a breach of an Australian Privacy Principle by ANU, and how ANU will handle the complaint.

Data Storage:

Where: The data storage procedures for the research will be following the policy of Australia and the ANU (Commonwealth Privacy Act 1988 and the ANU Code of Research Conduct). All electronic data will be stored in an equipment which is password protected and locked in secure premises. All audio transcriptions, maps and field notes will be stored in the ANU hardware and locked in a secure area for five years after publication. The research data will also be archived in the ANU Data Commons, which is a specialist data archiving service for long term storage of research data. Data stored within the Data Commons could be accessed and made available by request and permission to access the data itself will be requested from the primary investigator.

How long: Research data will be stored for a period of at least five years from the date of any publication arising from the research.

Handling of Data following the required storage period: All print materials will be destroyed five years after the publication of the research. The electronic database (e.g. MS Excel worksheets) and interview notes will be stored in the ANU Data Commons for long term storage of research data.

Queries and Concerns:

Contact Details for More Information: You may direct all queries and concerns on the research project to the primary investigator:

Kate Sewell
+64 2102351983 (New Zealand Number) or
+852 97925906 (Hong Kong Number)
WhatsApp account is connected in New Zealand Number
Kate.sewell@anu.edu.au

Or her main supervisor –~~Xuemei~~ Bai, Professor, + 61 2 6125 7825; Xuemei.Bai@anu.edu.au

Ethics Committee Clearance:

The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by the ANU Human Research Ethics Committee (Protocol 2017092). If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact:

Ethics Manager
The ANU Human Research Ethics Committee
The Australian National University
Telephone: +61 2 6125 3427
Email: Human.Ethics.Officer@anu.edu.au



參與者資訊 (G2)

研究者資料：

本人名叫蘇穎琪(Kate Sewell)，正在澳洲國立大學就讀醫學、生物及環境學院轄下的芬納環境及社會學院就讀博士課程。

研究題目

市區重建的機會及危機：香港個案研究。

概括計劃內容

- **描述和研究方法：**這次研究目的是深入了解在香港受市區重建影響的弱勢社群。是次個案調查包括：面談、繪圖、觀察和問卷調查。
- **參與者：**包括受市區重建影響的人士及發起和發展市區重建政策或有關倡議的其他持份者。研究者目標訪問 30-40 人，包括 10 名受市區重建影響的人士，並希望於第二階段研究訪問 50-100 人。
- **資料及意見之使用：**研究發現將記錄於文獻並刊登於學術論文中，以及於國際會議中發表。如你想知道有關研究報告重點，可以透過電郵或本港社區機構提出要求。研究者會把研究的重點翻譯成中文並傳送給你。

參與者之參與

- **自願性參與及退出**
你在計劃中的參與是自願的。你可以隨時退出和拒絕參與訪問和研究，並不需要提供任何理由給研究者或研究助理。你亦可以拒絕回答任何問題。如果你決定退出研究，任何有關你的記錄或錄音都會被銷燬和不會被使用。
是次面談將會被錄音，為了令研究者可以查核沒有任何重要資料遺漏，所有面談錄音及有關筆記會儲存於電腦資料庫。
- **參與者應提供的資料**
當你決定參與研究，你需要回答研究者和研究助理有關問題及參與討論和繪圖。面試和繪圖會同時進行，整個過程大約需要一至兩小時。
研究者選擇參與者同意才會進行錄音。問題可能涉及敏感資料，例如香港居留身分。如果你是以期刊投稿或離民身分居港，你可以自行決定分享多少有關你的個人資料。如研究者用在報告、演講或其他刊物中引用有關你的資料，代號或化名將會用來代表你的身份。

- **起點和持續時間**

所有問卷參與者會以 10-15 分鐘去回答一些附有答案選項的問題。研究助理或訪員會問你問題並將答案輸入於流動通訊裝置。所有問卷回應會被保密。所有資料會儲存於有密碼保護的電腦中。所有研究助理和翻譯員都接受過資料保密的訓練。他們清楚知道保密的重要性並已簽署有關資料保密的同意書。

- **回報**

參與者不會獲得金錢回報，但我們會送小禮物以感謝你參與。如果你不欲收取任何禮物絕對可以拒絕收取。用作買小禮物的資金由研究者正就任的學院提供。問卷參與者並不會獲取任何小禮物。

- **危險性**

研究者會盡一切努力保護你的身份。但當中可能會有一些人士因為你的回答而知道你的身份。基於這個危機，你可以在任何時間選擇退出研究。即使在資料整理的階段你也可以退出。所有可行的方法都會在法律保護下用來保護你的身份和你所提供的資料（例如：錄音會被儲存於受密碼保護的電腦中，只有主研究者及研究監督才有權存取那些資料）。

- **得益**

你不太可能在這項研究中獲得任何個人利益，但希望這次研究可以推動市區重建中的共融元素。研究結果預計能推動地區機構現在及未來有關市區重建計劃的工作。研究者希望所得的資訊和知識能影響未來城市發展政策和活動。

私隱

研究者會基於香港法例把你的資料保密。只有研究者及研究監督才可接觸所有訪問及問卷調查資料。所有檔案將儲存於受密碼保護的電腦及外置硬碟。研究者亦必須從參與者在同意書上表達的意願來於研究出品和演講中使用你的資料。

於面試開始前，我們會向你說明所有保密措施及保護你的資料的步骤。研究者會盡可能保護你避過任何因參與是次研究而的風險。

私隱聲明

- 在研究中收集你的個人資料的過程中，澳洲國立大學必須遵守個人資料法例 1988。澳洲國立大學個人資料法例轉載於 http://policies.anu.edu.au/ncr4/documents/ANUP_010007

它包含的資訊關於一個人如何；

- 查詢或更改個人資料
- 投訴有關違反澳洲國立大學個人資料法例情況及澳洲國立大學如何處理此類投訴

資料儲存

途點：研究資料儲存的程序會跟隨澳洲法例及澳洲國立大學個人資料法例(1988)。所有電子資料都會儲存於受密碼保護的伺服器以及鎖在安全地方中。所有錄音、印刷資料、繪圖和問卷會在學術論文出版後鎖於澳洲國立大學中的安全地方，為期五年。研究資料亦會儲存於澳洲國立大學共用研究資料庫，那是個專門資料存檔服務，以作研究資料的長期儲存。使用者必須得到我的允許才能檢閱資料庫中的資料。

時間：研究資料會被儲存五年或以上，由研究成果以任何形式被刊登那天起開始計算。

資料處理方法：所有印刷資料會於研究成果刊登後五年被調取，數據資料及面試筆記會長期儲藏於澳洲國立大學共用研究資料庫。

問題和注意事項

聯絡方法以獲取更多信息：你可以將所有有關研究的問題和憂慮告知主研究者：

凱瑟琳 (Kate Sewell)

+61 2102351983 (紐西蘭電話) 或

+852 97925906 (香港電話)

可以透過紐西蘭電話以通訊軟件 WhatsApp 聯絡

電郵：Kate.sewell@anu.edu.au

或聯絡我的研究監督 Xuefei Bai 教授，+ 61 2 6125 7825；電郵：Xuefei.Bai@anu.edu.au

倫理委員會的批准

研究的道德倫理問題已經獲得了澳洲國立大學人類研究倫理委員會的批准 (Protocol 2017/09) 如對是次研究有任何查詢或投訴，請聯絡

倫理主管

澳洲國立大學人類研究倫理委員會

澳洲國立大學

電話：+61 2 6125 3427

電郵：Human.Ethics.Office@anu.edu.au

Written interview consent form (English)



WRITTEN CONSENT for Participants

A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of those directly affected by urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study

I have read and understood the Information Sheet you have given me about the research project, and I have had any questions and concerns about the project (listed here

_____)

addressed to my satisfaction.

I agree to participate in the project. YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to this interview being audio-recorded (if applicable) YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to participate in a mapping exercise (if applicable) YES ☐ NO ☐

I agree to be identified in the following way within research outputs:

Interview Number YES ☐ NO ☐

Pseudonym YES ☐ NO ☐

No attribution YES ☐ NO ☐

Signature:.....

Date:.....

Written interview consent form (Chinese)



參加者書面同意書

市區重建的機會及危機：香港個案研究

本人已閱讀並明白由研究者提供所有有關是次研究計劃的資訊，本人對是次計劃有以下疑問及憂慮（列於此_____

_____並得到滿意答覆）。

我同意參與是次計劃。 是 ☐ 否 ☐

我同意面試時被錄音。（如適用） 是 ☐ 否 ☐

我同意參與繪圖。（如適用） 是 ☐ 否 ☐

我同意以下列方式在研究結果中被引用：

受訪編號 是 ☐ 否 ☐

別名（化名） 是 ☐ 否 ☐

身份不被引用 是 ☐ 否 ☐

簽名：_____

日期：_____

Oral consent form interview (English)



ORAL CONSENT SCRIPT for Participants

A systems approach exploring the vulnerability of those directly affected by urban renewal: Hong Kong as a case study

I have read to you/You have read the Information Sheet about the research project.

- Was this information clear?
- Do you have any questions about the project?
- Do you agree to participate in this project?
- Do you agree for this interview to be audio-recorded?

When I prepare the research outputs, I can attribute information to you in three ways, interviewee number, pseudonym, or I can use NO attribution and hold your information confidentially.

- Would you like to be referred to using an interview number?
- Would you like to be referred to using a pseudonym (false name)?
- Would you prefer that your information be not attributed to anyone at all?

May we start the interview/survey now?

Date of this script being read:

Appendix J: Information sheets and consent forms–focus groups

Focus group information sheet (English)



THE UNIVERSITY OF
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FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

INFORMATION SHEET FOR PARTICIPANTS OF FOCUS GROUPS

Researcher: I am Kate Sewell, a PhD student from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at the University of Waikato.

Title: Realising inclusion within urban regeneration policy and practice: the role of diverse perceptions, experiences and expectations.

General Outline of the Project:

Project description In April 2016 and May 2017, I came to Hong Kong to interview stakeholders from diverse backgrounds involved in or affected by Urban Renewal process led instigated by Hong Kong's Urban Renewal Authority. To date, I have interviewed 50 different stakeholders with diverse backgrounds and interest in urban renewal processes and practices in Hong Kong. I have gained important insights into the diverse perceptions, experiences and expectations of different urban renewal stakeholders. These insights have led me to rethink my specific research aim and objectives (this is quite common during a PhD research process) to better match the challenges and opportunities I observed during the initial data familiarisation process. The title of the research project also reflects these changes.

The aim of the research is now *“to explore the diverse ways power, politics and participation affect inclusion within urban regeneration decision making in Hong Kong”*

The key objectives are:

Objective 1: to understand the power, politics, and participation relating to urban regeneration practice in Hong Kong and how this differs from Western perspectives

Objective 2: to discover the diverse perceptions of urban regeneration actors concerning inclusion and outcomes in Hong Kong.

Objective 3: to examine the competing ways in which urban regeneration institutions and actors utilise participatory processes to make or respond to decisions in Hong Kong.

Objective 4: to identify possibilities for meaningful inclusion within urban renewal practice in Hong Kong.

Project methodology: To date, this case study research project to date has utilised three qualitative research methods. These include key informant interviews, participatory mapping and observation. In order to adequately address objective 3 and 4 of the research project a further qualitative method, focus group discussion is being utilised.

Four focus group discussions with different stakeholder groups. Specifically, these focus groups will:

1. Ask questions about the ways in which the Urban Renewal Authority, NGO'S and community/resident groups utilise participatory processes to make or respond to decisions.

The researcher will video the focus group discussions to help capture the diversity of participation and overall research process. The researcher plans to make the completed video available to all research participants.

Participants: Participants of the focus group include 1. Non-Government Organisations directly involved in supporting affected shop owners/residents, 3. affected shop owners/residents and 4. resident/activist groups. Participants will initially be selected based on prior involvement in the research project and relationship with researcher.

Use of Data and Feedback: Findings from focus groups discussion will be 1. written into a thesis 2. as journal articles published in academic journals 3. Developed into a video to help capture the diversity of participation and overall research process. Findings are also likely to be presented at international conferences.

Participant Involvement:

Voluntary Participation & Withdrawal: Your participation to the project is voluntary, and you may, without any penalty, decline to take part. Please note that 1. The focus group discussion will be video recorded, and any resource developed made available publicly 2. You can choose to leave the focus group at any time, however it will be impossible to withdraw what has been said by you up until the point of withdrawal as it will be incorporated into general discussion with other participants.

What does participation in the research entail? Focus group participants required to participate in group discussion It is expected that focus groups will take one hour.

Location and Duration: The focus groups will be conducted in Hong Kong between the 14th – 24th May. The focus group will be held in NGO offices or other space convenient for participants. Total time commitment expected is between one hour and snacks will be provided.

Remuneration: Focus group participants will be given \$HKD 100.00 Park N Shop voucher as token of appreciation. If you are not comfortable receiving the voucher you can decline the offer. The funding for the incentive will come from the research fund provided to PhD students by the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Waikato.

Risks: It is important to note that your identity will not be hidden. If you are uncomfortable with this, please do not participate in the focus group.

Benefits: It is unlikely that you will personally benefit from participating in this research, but it is hoped that that data collected through the focus group discussion will support more inclusive participatory practices in urban renewal related activities.

Privacy Notice:

In collecting your personal information within this research, the University of Waikato must comply with the New Zealand Privacy Act 1993 and Public Records Act 2005. The University Privacy Policy is available at: <https://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalConduct.html>

Data Storage:

Where: The data storage procedures for the research will be following the policy of New Zealand and the University of Waikato. (New Zealand Privacy Act 1993 and the University of Waikato Ethical Conduct in Human Research and Related Activities Regulations). All raw video data from focus groups will be stored in an equipment which is password protected. A short video compiling process and discussion across all workshops will be made available to all participants. However, only the researcher and research assistant will have access to all raw video data.

How long: Raw video data will be stored for a period of at least five years from the date of any publication arising from the research.

Queries and Concerns:

Contact Details for More Information: You may direct all queries and concerns on the research project to the primary investigator: Kate Sewell telephone +64 2102351983 (New Zealand Number) or +852 97925906 (Hong Kong Number) WhatsApp account is connected in New Zealand Number. email Ka348@students.waikato.ac.nz

Or her chief supervisor –Professor Francis Collins Telephone +64 7 838 4645 or email francis.collins@waikato.ac.nz

Ethics Committee Clearance: The ethical aspects of this research have been approved by Human Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Arts and Social Science at the University of Waikato. If you have any concerns or complaints about how this research has been conducted, please contact The Secretary of the Human Ethics Committee at the University of Waikato: humanethics@waikato.ac.nz



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FACULTY OF ARTS & SOCIAL SCIENCES

有關參與焦點小組的資料詳情

研究員: 我是 Kate Sewell，我正在 Waikato 大學就讀藝術及社會科學系博士學位。

主題: 貢獻到市區重建政策及實施所顯示出的包容：不同的看法、經驗及期望所處的角色。

項目的大綱

項目的敘述 2016 年 4 月及 2017 年 5 月，我在香港約見了一班來自不同背景、或有參與市區重建，或受市區重建局策劃之市區重建項目影響的相關人士。至今，我已約見了 50 位有著不同背景、與市區重建有關之人士。從不同的相關人士他們不同的看法、經驗及期望當中，我領悟了很多重要的見解。這些重要的見解驅使我重新審視我原有研究的目標（這在博士研究課程中都是很常見的），這使我能更加有效針對相關的議題。研究項目的主題也反映了這些轉變。

現在，這個研究的目標是「**探索不同的方式即 權力、政治及參與，怎樣影響香港市區重建計劃決策的包容性**」。

關鍵的目標是：

目標 1：在香港的市區重建項目中，去了解那些與權力、政治及參與有關之議題，並對比這與西方的觀點有何不同。

目標 2：找出不同角度的看法怎樣影響市區重建項目的決策及其包容性。

目標 3：審視市區重建機構及相關人士怎樣應看社區的參與來作出或回應有關的決定。

目標 4：在香港的市區重建項目中，尋求有重要的包容之可能性。

方案方式: 至今，這個案例研究項目採用了三種定性研究方法。主要包括：與傳訊的關鍵提供會面、參與者的記筆及觀察。為了達到研究項目的目標 3 和 4，更加採用了焦點小組討論會—另一種定性研究方法。

四個焦點小組討論會，分別有不同的相關人士在內。這些焦點組別將會：

1. 被問及到有開市區重運局、非政府組織、社區/住戶團體怎樣通過「參與過程」來作出或回應決定。

研究員將會把焦點小組討論錄影下來，把這樣多元化的參與和整個研究的過程記錄下來，研究員也計劃製作整個錄影片段給所有有份參加研究項目的人士。

參與者：焦點小組的參與者包括 1. 直接參與支持受影響商戶及住戶的非政府組織，2. 受影響商戶及住戶，3. 住戶及激進主義組織。參與者是基於先前已參與過研究項目和與研究員的關係，而作出被採用的決定。

資料與回應之使用：從焦點小組討論得來的資料將會 1. 寫成一份論文 2. 將成為期刊文章在學術性刊物中刊出 3. 製作成為錄影片段，有助把這樣多元化的參與和整個研究的過程記錄下來。研究結果亦有可能會在國際性的研討會上發表。

參與者參與之內容：

自願性之參與及退出：你對這個項目的參與是自願性質的，你或可以隨時退出項目，而你亦將不會受到任何的處罰。請注意：1. 焦點小組討論將會被錄影下來，當中提供的資料會被公開使用，2. 你可以選擇任何時間離開焦點小組，可是，先前討論的內容卻不能被撤回，因為內容已被包含在其他參與者的討論中。

參與這項研究需要什麼準備？焦點小組參與者需要參與小組討論，焦點小組討論會預算為一個小時。

地點及時間：焦點小組討論將會在 5 月 14 至 24 日期間在香港進行，到時將會借用非政府組織之辦公室或其他方便參與者的場地進行，預計所需時間大約一個小時，並將會為參與者提供小食。

報酬/禮物：所有參與焦點小組討論的人士將會得到港幣 100 元的百佳禮券作為對各位的感謝，倘若，各位覺得接受這禮券並不太恰當，可以選擇拒絕接受的，這批禮券將會由 Waikato 大學藝術及社會科學系的研究基金撥出給博士研究生備用。

風險：請注意，是次你的身份並不會被保密，倘若，你覺得並不太恰當，請你不要參與這次的焦點小組。

效益：就個人而言，從研究中可能未必得到很大的個人效益，可是，我們希望焦點小組討論所得來的資料數據，將會在實施與市區重運相關的項目中，有助推動實行更多共融參與。

私隱聲明：

鑑於是次需要採用你們的個人資料，Waikato 大學將執行新西蘭私人法案 1993 及公共記錄法案 2005，詳細的大學私隱政策，可瀏覽網頁：
<https://calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalConduct.html>

數據的儲存：

儲存在哪裏：數據存放的過程，將會根據新西蘭及 Waikato 大學的政策執行（新西蘭私人法案 1993 及 Waikato 大學道德準則條例），所有焦點小組所討論的原始視頻數據，都會被儲存在加密的設備內，工作坊之過程和討論的片段，將會編制成短片，並可供大家觀看，至於原始視頻數據的採用，只有研究員及其助理才有權登入採用。

儲存時間 原始視頻數據，將會在任何有關這個研究之發佈公佈後開始計，最少儲存 5 年。

查詢及關注事項：

有關資料之聯絡詳情： 你可以直接與研究員聯絡有關研究的查詢及關注事項： Kate Sewell 電話 +64 2162351983 (新西蘭電話) or +852 97925906 (香港電話) WhatsApp account 是直接撥駁到新西蘭的電話號碼。 電郵 Ks348@students.waikato.ac.nz

Kate 的首席指導教師 - Professor Francis Collins 電話 +64 7 838 4645, 電郵 francis.collins@waikato.ac.nz

倫理委員會之審查： 此研究項目的倫理觀點已經得到 Waikato 大學 藝術及社會科學系之人類研究倫理委員會的審批。倘若對於這份研究項目你有任何的關注或投訴，請聯絡： Waikato 大學 人類倫理委員會的負責人： humanethics@waikato.ac.nz

Focus group consent form (English)



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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

Name of person attending focus group _____

I have received a copy of the Information Sheet describing the research project. Any questions that I have, relating to the research, have been answered to my satisfaction. I understand that the focus groups will be video recorded. I understand that I can ask further questions about the research at any time during my participation. I understand that should I choose to leave the focus group it will be impossible to withdraw what has been said by me up until the point of withdrawal as it will be incorporated into general discussion with other participants.

During the focus group, I understand that I do not have to answer any questions or participate in any discussion points unless I am happy to talk about the topic. I can leave the focus group at any time and will leave the room accordingly.

When I sign this consent form, I give consent for the researcher to use the interview for the purposes of the research outlined in the Information Sheet.

Participant :

Signature :

Date :

Contact Details :

Researcher :

Signature :

Date :

Contact Details :

Focus group consent form (Chinese)



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參與者之同意書

參與焦點小組人士之姓名：

我已收到一份有關這項研究項目的資料詳情。有關這項研究的相關問題，我已得到滿意的答覆。我也得知這次的焦點小組討論將會被攝錄。在參與期間，我可隨時發問與這項研究相關的問題。我明白到，倘若我要退出焦點小組，我曾經在小組討論中所發表的意見，因已經融入於其他參與者的討論中，所以將不可能被撤回。

焦點小組討論期間，我明白我只需要回應或討論一些我樂意回應或討論的話題。我可以隨時離開焦點小組，並相應地也將要離開房間。

簽署同意書後，我將會同意研究員使用這小組討論內容作研究目的。研究目的已概述在資料詳情之內。

參與者： _____

研究員： _____

簽署： _____

簽署： _____

日期： _____

日期： _____

聯絡方法： _____

聯絡方法： _____
