Recollecting Identity

Food, Culture, Space and Place in the Street Markets of Hong Kong

by

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Authors Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners.

I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

The importance of culture and placemaking in defining food urbanism in Hong Kong is evident in the street markets that are at risk of disappearing. Considering current revitalization projects and the removal of local street markets, the research analyzes food urbanism through the lens of food and culture, in relationship to space and place. Focusing on the street markets and its disappearance over the years, the research looks at understanding food urbanism as a cultural structure. The project provides an insight to the establishment of street markets throughout history, placing importance on its relationship to the cultural and placemaking aspects of food urbanism.

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Preface

The most memorable trips were the ones taken with my family to Hong Kong during the summer breaks. Although it was scorching hot and fairly humid for someone born and raised in Canadian weather, I very much enjoyed exploring the streets and finding new places to have my so-called "food adventures" (fig 1.01). Hong Kong became a place of food in my heart as I was introduced to the unlimited variety of cuisines and the uniqueness of cooking right at the neighborhood street food stalls with my grandmother.

The earliest trip I remember taking to Hong Kong was during the summer after kindergarten just before starting 1st grade. I took the trip with my sister and my mother to visit my extended family in Hong Kong. At that time, my grandmother and grandfather were still here, and I distinctly remember being woken up early in the mornings as my grandfather would leave the small apartment to head to the park, walking past my sister and I who slept in the living room couch. As a curious young child, I would sometimes join him, only to find them doing some version of morning exercise with a group of other elderly neighbors. Although it wasn't to my interest, the one thing that kept me interested was the walk to the local bakery for egg tarts after my grandfather finished their exercise. I remember the soft, fluffy, and buttery tart shell that complimented the creamy and sweet custard in the center. The smell of the freshly baked goods at the bakery filled my room and I instantly forgot about the less amusing morning exercises. It became a daily routine for my sister and I to indulge in the fragrant goods early in the mornings.

My grandmother was a very sweet woman, always mindful of our cultural differences as I grew up in Canada. Every moment she had to introduce me to some Hong Kong foods, she would encourage me to try and taste some of the more traditional foods. One time, she brought home a dark purple colored, small and round shaped fruit that I have never seen before. She had just come home from the wet market and noticed that they were fresh, and wondered if I have ever had it before. This fruit turned out to be mangosteen, a fruit that was expensive in Canada but more easily available in

Fig.1.01 Image of myself in 1999 being fed by my mother from our first trip to Hong Kong.

Hong Kong at the time. I was mind blown by the sweet and creamy texture of the fruit and instantly fell in love. After watching my reaction, my grandmother would always ask the fruit stall owner at the wet markets if the mangosteen were available, and if she saw them on the side of street, she would always buy some for me to snack on. The more she bought them, the more the vendors recognized and remembered to the point where we would walk through a market and the stall owner would shout out to my grandmother to tell her that the mangosteen were in stock.

A few other trips led to more discoveries of hidden gems around the city. A cha chaan teng noodle shop across the street from my grandparent's place became a go-to lunch spot for my sister and I as we always ordered the same things every time: I would order the beef entrails with the flat rice noodles, and my sister would order the fish balls with flat rice noodles and add the beef soup base, and of course, add a cold milk tea. We continued to order the same thing so much that our aunt would pre-order if she got to the cha chaan teng first. This also happened with breakfast eats at the cha chaan teng, as my go-to order was spam and a sunny side egg on instant noodles with cold milk tea. I distinctly remember my aunt

heading downstairs from the apartment first to grab a seat, as the younger ones would take a longer time getting out the door. By the time we arrived at the cha chaan teng, my aunt would have already ordered and set out the chopsticks on the table ready for us to join her along with the occasional strangers that shared the table. The street eats are so convenient and good that I gain a lot of weight every time I take a trip to Hong Kong.

My most recent trip to Hong Kong was in the summer of 2019, just before the pandemic. Although my grandparents are no longer here to take me around, I felt like I was old enough to explore on my own and I thought I had some knowledge of what was around the area from my previous trips. I started to realize that what I knew of the city was no longer the same. The fruit market behind my grandparent's apartment had less traffic and the food stalls I once frequented had cleared from the streets. It could be because my cousins would take me to places for young adults, whereas previously I would travel under my grandparents as a teenager. It could also be that we had to be more mindful of the newest additions to the family to make sure we went to places that were clean, open, and decluttered in order to fit the strollers. Beyond this, the fundamental reason is that the world is changing.

As I completed my undergraduate degree and decided to take on Masters, I was reminded of my food adventures in Hong Kong and how I instinctively navigate Hong Kong through food. It sparked my interest in studying food urbanism and its relationship to the build environment, as well as my interest in the relationship between food and culture. As I started to look deeper into the culture and space of Hong Kong, it brought up questions of what it meant to be "traditional" or how does one consider something "cultural". As I attempted to answer these questions through food, I became curious about its relationship not only to the people but to the space and the city. With further research, I realized that these spaces that are labeled as "traditional" or "true to the Hong Kong spirit" are diminishing, threatened to eventually disappear. This immediately caught my attention and inspired me to frame my thesis around

them. I aim to bring awareness to the value of these casual yet disappearing urban spaces that are viewed as representative of Hong Kong culture, made by the people and for the people in Hong Kong.

My initial goal was to be able to capture all the remaining "traditional" food spaces through a detailed documentation of the characteristics of the space, eventually leading to a food guide map designed to incorporate local stories and histories. Due to the terrible timing of the pandemic and the ongoing flying and quarantine restrictions in Canada and Hong Kong, I went through many iterations and possibilities that included both being able to get a trip to Hong Kong and unable to make it there again in person. Although I ended up not being able to take a trip to Hong Kong during this research process, thanks to social media and the connected world of the internet, I was able to collect enough information to complete the thesis through friends and family members. I no longer have a food guide map included in this thesis, but if given the opportunity in the future, I would love to be able to share not only my stories but the stories of the people at the center of this thesis through an engaging and inspiring food guide map.

01
Introduction

This chapter introduces the inspiration behind the thesis and the personal connection to the author. It will also introduce the overall topics that will be discussed throughout the thesis and its connection to the central research question. This chapter will then conclude with an overview outline of all the sections in the book.

Introduction

The thesis research investigates the importance of culture and placemaking in defining food urbanism in the rapidly changing and developing region of Hong Kong that has a culture at risk of disappearing. Considering current government revitalization projects and the removal of local street markets, the research analyzes food urbanism through the lens of food and culture, in relationship to space and place, specifically investigating the impact of a disappearing food and culture on the future of Hong Kong's hybrid identity and the implications of revitalization projects on the expression of culture. Building upon previous scholars who have identified the social, political, and economic struggles that Hong Kong has faced after the political change in 1997, the globalization of the Hong Kong international hub image in the 2000s, and the impact of the most recent 2019 pandemic, the research looks at the impact of food and cuisine in defining a hybrid culture and identifying the intangible cultural knowledge for future generations, while also looking at urban development through patterns of placemaking. Focusing on the street markets and its development and disappearance over the years, the research looks at understanding food urbanism as a cultural structure through examining the city from a bottom-up approach and community engagement rather than current government initiatives that implement international brands and businesses within existing infrastructure. The thesis uses literature, historical research, and official government policies, along with observational narratives of the local street markets to demonstrate the culturally vibrant and socially active undermined urban landscape vital to the Hong Kong identity. Amid the disappearing phenomenon and the inevitable development of the international hub, the project provides an insight to the establishment of street markets throughout history and places importance on its relationship to the cultural and placemaking aspects of food urbanism, ultimately giving acknowledgement to those who are at the core of the informal economies that are part of the Hong Kong hybrid identity.

Fig.1.02 Connaught Road Central in the 1920s against the waterfront lined with several rows of piers to allow for merchants to trade.

In the rapidly changing and developing region with high political tension, Hong Kong, known for its tall and dense high-rise buildings and expensive rent costs, exhibits a rich cultural identity deeply connected to the foods and related spaces, including local street markets now at a risk of disappearing. From dim sum restaurants to the hybrid, flexible, and pragmatic nature of classic egg tarts and pineapple buns [1], much of Hong Kong culture focuses on the unique foods and their origins, where often one cannot describe Hong Kong lifestyle without mentioning the variety of foods and distinctive food culture. With influences from the immigration of different ethnic groups into Hong Kong during shifts in political power, and the colonization of the land by the British (1842-1997) and the Chinese (1997-present) [2], foods labeled as traditional Hong Kong style come from a complicated history and continue to grow to define the Hong Kong hybrid identity. The impact that political history has in defining Hong Kong foods as an authentic fusion makes up the complex character that can be found in various parts

1 Caroline Yiqian Wang, "Hong Kong identities through food: tracing developments and variations of pineapple buns in modern complexities", *Food, Culture & Society*, (2021): 3

2 "Hong Kong Profile - Timeline." *BBC News*. BBC, June 24, 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16526765.

of the small but dense region.

Previous definitions of food urbanism discuss the production of food and agriculture within the urban landscape, focusing on reviving a city through sustainability driven methods in attempt to understand how food is incorporated into urban environments. A commonly interchangeable term like urban agriculture generally captures current issues with food production within the urban context, comparing the growth of the population and demand for more food to the industrial food production system we are all accustomed to in the city[3]. The emerging topic around urban agriculture can be traced back to the 1996 publication of *Urban Agriculture, Food, Jobs and Sustainability* that introduces the term Urban Agriculture and inspires the body of research of food urbanism in relation to growing trends of environmental and equity concerns[4]. While there are many dimensions to food urbanism, most literature focus on the problems of the industrial food production system and its direct impact on climate change. The lesser-known side of food urbanism is the distribution and access to food, defined as food security[5], where the analysis of food urbanism is focused on the availability of food to various groups of people and the impact of those food organisms. In the context of Hong Kong, the study of food urbanism looks specifically at the vending and consumption of food in the city, in the form of wet markets and cooked food markets. It redefines the widely used definition of food urbanism, highlighting food as the primary organizational factor in urban development and its impact on cultural identity and social placemaking.

The most common place to find various traditional foods to experience the essence of Hong Kong culture is right on the streets of Hong Kong, where the dishes become key indicators of

3 "What is Food Urbanism." *Food Urbanism.* Craig, June 21, 2011. https://www.foodurbanism.org/what-is-food-urbanism/.

4 Craig Verzone and Cristina Woods, *Food Urbanism* (Berlin, Boston: Birkhauser, 2021), 33

5 FAO, *Report of the World Food Summit* 13-17 *November.* (Rome:1996)

the rich and diverse Hong Kong identity. Prior to the 1800s, Hong Kong was a fishing port that influenced settlements of fishermen and merchants that introduced the roots of the seafood cuisine (fig 1.02). As Hong Kong became a British territory in 1898, Hong Kong cuisines adapted to this wave of British immigration, leading to the creation of working-class adaptations of high-class foods as well as developments of informal working-class style dining areas such as the "Dai Pai Dongs". When the population surged from 600 000 in 1945 to 2.5 million in 1956[6] , many people turned to informal food street trading as a source of income as families found street stalls more feasible and affordable without the need to have prior experience. The organic collection of street vendors turned into informal settlements of similar-style cuisines and attracted other immigrants from similar backgrounds, eventually creating smaller dispersed pockets of hybrid cultures through the growing region of Hong Kong. This led to the development of street markets for produce, known as "wet markets", that operated mainly on pedestrian streets in villages, ultimately growing to operate on pedestrian streets within the city core. Through the common connection to foods that are reminiscent of people's hometown and the resilience nature of the Hong Kong identity, originated from the need to survive, the informal street markets become an iconic part of the Hong Kong culture through fostering unique urban spaces for food.

Although the food urbanism is known to the local population and very much popular in the international realm, their importance has declined over the past 20 years following the political and economical challenges Hong Kong faced after the "return" to China in 1997[7] as they became viewed as unproductive economies. Government authorities have been limiting expression of Hong Kong identity in various ways, including through restricting business of local food. As the street markets have posed difficult for the government

6 Blakemore, Erin, and Taryn Salinas. "The History of Hong Kong, Visualized." Culture. National Geographic, August 26, 2019. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/hong-kong-history-visualized?loggedin=true

7 "Hong Kong Profile – Timeline", *BBC News*. June 24, 2019, https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16526765

to control in terms of growth and noise, along with hygienic problems during multiple virus outbreaks, the government has imposed a system of recognized and formalized public markets. The Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) of Hong Kong currently has its own definition of public markets and cooked food markets/centres that operate within a controlled building, serving a variety of commodities from fresh produce, cooked food, to clothing and household items[8]. These formalized public markets offer a wide range of services but are very different from the FEHD identified "hawker bazaars"; areas of ground demarcated and allocated for the use of hawkers[9]. Traditional Dai Pai Dongs and local wet markets are limited due to the resistance from the government to grant licences under the name of hygiene and safety [10] . Globalization has led to street markets being demolished and removed, replaced by more "modern" architecture and ornamentation to fit the international hub image. Other local street markets are being gentrified and replaced with big box department stores and commercial, residential, and hospitality high-rises, forcing local street vendors to close or operate among international competitors [11] . The already rare typology of food in Hong Kong faces further complications when considering its impact on the future of the Hong Kong identity. As suggested by scholar Ackbar Abbas (1997), the Hong Kong culture is facing disappearance as the sense of 'place' is being threatened by the colonization and globalization of the politically intertwined region

8 "Public Markets," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date June 11, 2019, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/tidy_market/overview.html

9 "Hawker Control," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date March 10, 2021, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/hawker/overview.html

10 Tammy Lai-Ming Ho, "Hong Kong's Table Talks." *World Literature Today* 93, no.2 (2019): 52-55.

11 Blue Lapis Road. "Culture of Disappearance: Graham Street Market (嘉咸市集), Central (中環), Hong Kong." Blue Lapis Road, February 28, 2021. https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/02/26/disappearing-living-culture-graham-street-market-%E5%98%89%E5%92%B8%E5%B8%82%E9%9B%86-central-%E4%B8%AD%E7%92%B0-hong-kong/

[12] . Amid the political challenges, the culture faces a disappearance of identity through loss of local traditions, including the removal of the street markets.

Understanding the importance of street markets and the impact of its disappearance of culture through the perspective of the vendors and consumers, the thesis attempts to capture the significance of the street market elements through narratives, allowing it to exist outside of just the memory of the people. Hong Kong being an international destination exhibits various hybrid cultural foods within the local street markets, most of which are now targeted to international audiences and benefit the tourism economy, rather than providing the community space and daily necessities they once did. Using mapping methods and drawing techniques, the thesis captures the remaining and renovated street markets that are marked as key cultural sites according to residents, bringing to the front food as a factor of city making in Hong Kong. Hong Kong street markets are more than just part of the economy and should be recognized as cultural sites, respecting the people that make the street markets iconic and the food that represents the hybrid Hong Kong identity. Rather than proposing a solution to the gentrification of neighborhoods due to revitalization projects, the thesis looks at the elements that make the street markets iconic and representative of the lively culture of Hong Kong. The thesis captures the street market narratives and places the importance on learning the stories and history of the street vendors as they are the key to creating the street market, documenting the lifestyle of Hong Kong culture and keeping the culture alive at least in history. With the inevitable shift towards the international hub, the thesis acts as a platform for the community to document and capture the Hong Kong identity, ultimately recording it in history for the future of Hong Kong.

12 Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017): 86

Research Question

Hong Kong culture cannot be simply identified as it results from various immigration waves and change in political power that create what we can understand as the hybrid culture of Hong Kong. It is through this understanding that the street market becomes an important space for cultural expression where people of different backgrounds can exhibit the various elements of Hong Kong culture, ultimately creating its own unified expression. The street market is also a vital part of the local economy and community as many shop owners open family-run businesses to provide income and engagement with the neighbors. Unfortunately, under the name of health, safety, and hygiene, current government plans include removing existing street markets and replacing them with multi-use high-rise complexes that house various indoor retail for brands and shops alongside residential and office towers that are more easily managed and maintained. The removal of these street spaces ultimately challenges the existence of the hybrid culture on the streets of Hong Kong, and it is through this research where it aims to understand how this may impact the future of Hong Kong identity. If current government projects and solutions to preserving architecture are geared towards upholding the aesthetics of urban street life and the international hub image, the research proposes to bring to light the disappearing culture involving the public and working to capture the cultural aspects of the street market before they are fully removed from the Hong Kong identity.

The thesis asks: **What is the impact of a disappearing food urbanism on a hybrid identity and city making? How can we bring awareness to the critical issues that threaten the Hong Kong food culture amidst the inevitable urban development?**

02 On the Discourse of Food Urbanism and the Hong Kong Identity

This chapter will look at the current discourse of food urbanism and its relationship to the disappearing identity of the street markets in Hong Kong. It first identifies the current literature and commonly used definitions of food urbanism as it is closely tied to the emerging discourse of climate adaptation and urban agriculture. Understanding the concept of food urbanism, the chapter will move to defining the use of the term throughout the research and situate the analysis of Hong Kong Street markets as an extension of the current discourse. It will then examine the political and cultural background of Hong Kong and its influences on the identity of Hong Kong people, specifically looking at influences on food urbanism. Considering the changes in political power throughout history, the impact of the economic boom, and the mass immigration waves of various ethnicities, this chapter sets a foundation for understanding the components of the Hong Kong identity in relationship to cultural foods in the urban context.

2.1 Food Urbanism

The Hong Kong region has been widely studied for its complicated history and its current political struggles ever since the return to China in 1997 from being under British rule. Scholar Ackbar Abbas first outlines in *"Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance"* the crisis of the disappearing "erotic spaces of pleasure and encounter, the heterotopic spaces of contestation, the liminal spaces of transition and change" [1] of the Hong Kong people as they face the colonization and globalization of Hong Kong with the transfer of political power to China. Since then, various scholars have discussed the hybrid Hong Kong identity that comes from the complicated political history that brought in waves of immigration, leading to a hybrid culture expressed in cuisine and foods including milk tea, tea cafes, and pineapple buns[2]. Conversations on food, agriculture and the city have made their way into current discourses in the west and understanding where food urbanism is placed within the growing city becomes an important aspect of understanding the Hong Kong identity. This thesis explores the ideas of food security and its cultural and social relationships to food urbanism that is not largely discussed in the current discourse.

Within the discourse of food urbanism, core discussions focus on food production and agriculture in the urban landscape. The use of the term "food urbanism" has vastly been associated with topics around agriculture in the cities and revitalizing urban infrastructure through sustainability methods. Many scholars have highlighted the importance of integrating city planning with food distribution, looking at how food is produced, processed, distributed, consumed,

1 Ackbar Abbas, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance.* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017), 86

2 Caroline Yiqian Wang, "Hong Kong identities through food: tracing developments and variations of pineapple buns in modern complexities", *Food, Culture & Society*, (2021): 3

recovered, and wasted[3]. With particular focus on cultivation, much of the discourse includes scholars expressing the impact of the associated sectors on the development of urban food spaces. As Jennifer Cockrall-King stated in Food and the City (2012), "The average grocery store item travels 1500 miles from the farm to the consumer"[4], and this is just to the point of sale, disregarding the distance the produce travels to get to restaurants and kitchens before arriving on the plate. This specifically brings forward the connected infrastructures, such as transportation and labor, that go into understanding food urbanism in a particular site. Using the term 'urbanism' as the study of cities and connecting it to both the food and the spaces of food, food urbanism goes beyond the study on how food impacts the environment but must be understood in a broader context and its association to cultural identity and social placemaking strategies.

At the base, urbanization plays a key role in the change in lifestyle influenced by food consumption and access to healthy and nutritious foods. With the growth of urban spaces and decline of rural farms, not only were more jobs, living spaces, and accommodations for the workers required but there also needed to be an increase in food supply. The creation of supermarkets started with increasing convenience in access to food and allowing customers a greater variety of choices within the cities. In 1914, Albert and Hugh Gerrard invented the concept of consumers being allowed to pick their own groceries and organized the produce alphabetically, and in 1917, Clarance Saunders filed a patent for the concept of "Self-Serving Store" after opening a self-serving grocery store that was structured for consumers to weave up and down isles in a single direction until they reach the checkout point[5]. The development of supermarkets started the food production trend as people favoured

3 Yves Cabannes and Cecilia Marocchino, eds. *Integrating Food into Urban Planning* (UCL Press, 2018): 1 https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv513dv1

4 Jennifer Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2012), 51

5 Jennifer Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2012), 25-26

buying their own groceries and picking out their own items without having to travel far into farmlands while still accessing other amenities in the city. The 1990s saw the growth of global trade and commercialization of cheap food. Supermarkets became superstores and big-box stores where food was available from different parts of the world. Domestic farmers were told to upscale to compete on the global market and drove most to bankruptcy at the rate of 50 000 farms per year, allowing large corporations to buy out farmland and maximize use of economies of scale[6]. The increase in demand for food supply in the urban context meant the decline of local farmers as more and more people demanded to consume larger portion sizes and more convenient foods in the city.

The value of convenience has ultimately led to the need to industrialize the food production system. With the supermarkets built to support larger communities, a larger number of items are required to be transported to the markets. Due to the industrialization of food production, grocery stores offer much less variety than they used to. The need to transport produce has limited its selection to the specialized species that have the ability to be picked, stored, and transported without going bad or bruising due to its distances needed to travel. Only about 150 different food-plant species are grown at the commercialized agriculture scale, losing about 90% of global food biodiversity[7]. Farmers have also adapted to the industrialization, resorting to using chemicals to enhance crops' growth rate and yield in order to ensure that they are able to make sales to the supermarkets. This creates a separate food group of genetically modified foods, ultimately taking preference as it can prioritize certain qualities needed to withstand transport. A rising concern within the discourse is that industrialization has not only limited the variety but has also threatened the quality of foods available in the urban context.

This questions food security and equal access to nutritious food, a

6 Cockrall-King, *Food and the City,* 49

7 Jennifer Cockrall-King, *Food and the City: Urban Agriculture and the New Food Revolution* (New York: Prometheus Books, 2012), 28-29

conversation that many urban planners now consider as important in the urban context as in the rural context, and no longer just about developing countries. Defined as a situation when all people, at all times, have physical, social, and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food that meets their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy lifestyle [8], food security and food access, or lack thereof, is in large part driven by the economy and ends up defining the urban development of the city. The largest question of food security in the urban fabric becomes the fair and equal distribution of healthy food and its ability to provide equal access to nutritious value. With easier access to foods and supermarkets, diets are shifting towards consumption of food away from home and large packaged and processed foods, leading to non-visible health concerns with the high intake of salt, sugar and fat[9]. The urban economic development no longer becomes only about housing, services, and neighborhood improvements, but must consider affordability and accessibility to food and the quality of their related spaces.

Unfortunately, the evaluation of urban space currently does not consider the qualities of food urbanism. With emphasis on housing costs and job opportunities impacting the economy, spaces of food and their other qualities are nowhere near important in the conversation. The study of food urbanism challenges these ideas and attempt to bring forward the importance of food spaces in determining quality of life in the urban environment. Inclusion of food production within the urban fabric through fertile and cultivated spaces ultimately contribute to urban quality and can be achieved by creative appropriation of underused spaces, planned spaces for growing, and evolution of notions of urban landscape to facilitate the acceptance of productive land[10]. Beyond cultivation, spaces of food delivery and consumption can also display an increase

8 FAO, *Report of the World Food Summit* 13-17 *November*. (Rome:1996)

9 Yves Cabannes and Cecilia Marocchino, eds. *Integrating Food into Urban Planning* (UCL Press, 2018): 8-9 https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv513dv1.

10 Craig Verzone and Cristina Woods, *Food Urbanism* (Berlin, Boston: Birkhauser, 2021): 27

in urban quality when looking at the related cultural and social values. The use of the streets as a market space for the distribution and consumption of foods is considered a creative appropriation of urban space through the understanding of food urbanism and its relationship to cultural and social spaces.

The current discourse on food urbanism calls for better integration in spatial planning of urban agriculture, nutritious food outlets and farmers' markets. Shortening supply chains, meaning localizing food production to reduce environmental impacts of food transportation and waste, reducing water footprint, increasing opportunities for accessible nutritious foods, sustainable food logistics and harvesting systems, and promoting the circular food economy[11] are some of the methods of approach that designers of the built environment need to consider in food urbanism. On one end, we must consider the impact of the food production and the transport of food in the urban context, but on the other end we must also consider the vending and consumption of food in the city as equally impacting the food security of the region. Food urbanism is grounded on "the belief that design and design culture can inform the shape of future cities and that such approaches should be instrumental in the systematic evolution of measurable environmental benefits and social equity"[12]. The current discourse of food urbanism primarily focuses on the sustainability of food practice in the urban environment, but there are many other levels to consider:

> *"Geographical proximity to nutritious food, land use planning, zoning regulations, food infrastructure, regulations that favor food logistics efficiency in the last mile, and typology of food outlets are all part of the food*

11 Yves Cabannes and Cecilia Marocchino, eds. *Integrating Food into Urban Planning* (UCL Press, 2018): 13-14 https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv513dv1.

12 Craig Verzone and Cristina Woods, *Food Urbanism* (Berlin, Boston: Birkhauser, 2021): 38

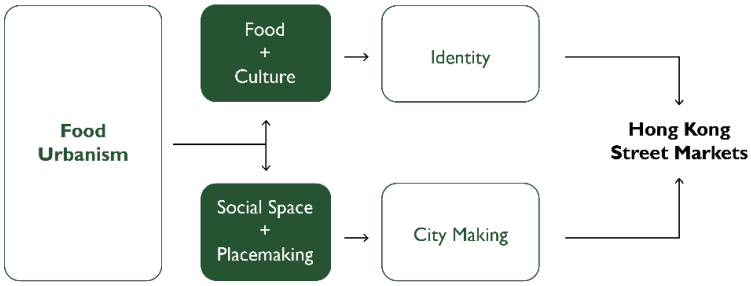


Fig.2.01 Conceptual diagram for understanding food urbanism through the lens of identity and city making in the context of Hong Kong.

environment; modifying them will have an impact on consumers' food choices." [13]

Whether for the better or worse, food markets are an important urban space that ultimately dictate the development of the urban fabric and the quality of food security. Beyond the internal food industry structure, food urbanism impacts, and is impacted, by both the social and cultural development of the city. Rather than the focus on the internal structure of the food chain, the relationship of food to the cultural vibrancy of people's identity and to the socially active place-making strategy is an extension of the widely used definition of food urbanism (fig 2.01). The thesis will focus on the distribution and consumption of food in Hong Kong, redefining the term "Food Urbanism" to the use of food as the primary organizational force in urban development and its impact of food and culture on identity and the social place-making of street markets. The development of the street markets emerged from the working class with influences from political changes, migrant communities, and the move towards the international image. While the people of Hong Kong worked towards defining their own identity of hybridity, they used food as a means of placemaking eventually leading to the evolution of street markets in the urban fabric. Through an understanding of the vending and

13 Yves Cabannes and Cecilia Marocchino, eds. *Integrating Food into Urban Planning* (UCL Press, 2018): 9 https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv513dv1.

consumption of food in the urban context, the food street markets outline a deeper investigation into the hybrid Hong Kong identity and placemaking strategy of urban development.

The definition of food urbanism applied to the region of Hong Kong expands beyond the growth of food in urban spaces and tracing of the supply chain, rather through the foods themselves, cultural characteristics of food spaces and the people, and understanding the evolution of urban space in the political history of Hong Kong, food urbanism becomes a discourse on using food and culture in defining identity as a lens for navigating an urban environment. Through the analysis of food development and related spaces, the "local foodways provide a rather mild entry point for the analysis of its unique characteristics and the community's sense of belonging by tracing its history, observing the present, and delineating a future."[14] From the individual stall to the organization of multiple stalls, street markets exhibit a uniquely hybrid culture that is the Hong Kong identity. The resilience of Hong Kong people is evident in the creation of Hong Kong labeled foods throughout the changes in political power. Practicality is seen in the assembly of furniture and organization of the space, while versatility is seen in the adaptiveness of street vendors to current trends and consumer needs. It is in the nature of street markets that the culturally vibrant and socially active Hong Kong culture is evident and prominent in the ever-developing food urbanism of the region.

Through the lens of place-making and cultural vitality, and within the discourse of food urbanism, the current direction of the disappearing street markets creates a concern for the place of Hong Kong identity and ultimately challenges the food urbanism of the city. Within architecture and urban planning, scholars have identified the significance of the Hong Kong Street market and street vendor stalls in defining culture and heritage and its development throughout history due to political, economic, and

14 Caroline Yiqian Wang, "Hong Kong identities through food: tracing developments and variations of pineapple buns in modern complexities", *Food, Culture & Society*, (2021) 1-17 DOI: 10.1080/15528014.2021.1932274,

social changes. The street market and stalls are also seen in many films and media productions as the social center for community engagement, proving to be a vital part of the people's everyday lives and the Hong Kong culture. This research focuses on the relationship of food culture to urbanism and its influence on a hybrid identity, particularly bringing emphasis on the future of Hong Kong as its street markets diminish in numbers and become replaced to match the international modern image.

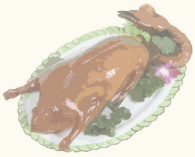
2.2 Food and Diverse Identities

The creation of food heritage is often caused by socio-economic and political changes in society, where national cuisines represent the national identity of a population. Through food and cuisines, a collective of people facing similar circumstances can use food to create an imagined community[15], creating connections through common tastes and experiences of a new home. Hong Kong serves as an example of the possibility of diverse cultures that hybridize into one defined culture through the experience of political influences, migrant communities, and eventually to the movement towards an international hub image (fig 2.02). The influence of Chinese political rule (1997 to present) and British colonization (1942-1997) has merged into Hong Kong defined traditional foods, where locals recreate and adapt dishes and meals for the growing working-class population. Hong Kong mostly consists of Cantonese speaking Chinese ethnicity, due to its proximity to the Guangdong province, making up 91.6% of the population with the remaining 8.4% being non-Chinese ethnicities as of 2021[16], including Filipino,

15 Selina Ching Chan, "Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity: Food Culture and Hybridity," China Information 33, no. 3 (November 2019): 312. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18773409

16 "2021 Population Census," Census and Statistics Department, Last revised April 7, 2022, https://www.censtatd.gov.hk/en/scode600.html

HISTORY OF HONG KONG FOODS



Cantonese and Teochew Cuisines

1920: Egg tarts introduced to Guangzhou, brought to Hong Kong after WWII

GUANGZHOU ENGLISH

Pre-1800s | 1840s | 1860s | 1890s | 1900s | 1930s

January 1842: The Treaty of Nanjing

1839-1842: The First Opium War

1856-1860: The Second Opium War

1898: Britain is awarded a rent-free 99-year lease on the New Territories

1897: Statue Square and Queens Pier (first instance of privately owned public space)

1869: Grand City Hall is built

1859-1869: Praya, public waterfront roadway, is built

1904: development of Hill District due to plague in 1894

1950s: "soy-sause western dishes" such as baked pork chop, roast pigeon, and minced chicken

1950s: Hakka cuisine becomes popular due to its rich in meat protein diet for the working class

1940: Bing Sat (ice room)

1950s: Hong Kong Egg Waffles

1945: first licenses for Dai Pai Dong issued after the second world war

1952: First appearance of Hong Kong style Milk Tea

1940: Pineapple Buns (adaptation of british pastries)

1949: Shanghainese influence foods

MAINLAND CHINESE

1950s

1960s

1937: Start of the Sino-Japanese War

1941-1945: Japan occupies Hong Kong

1946: British resume control

1949: Chinese Revolution won by the Communists

1953: Queen's Pier is relocated due to harbor reclamation

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: First appearance of
g Kong style Milk Tea

1960: Introduction of Jyun Jeong (by southeast asian immigrants)

1960s: Fishballs invented by people of Chiu Chow gained popularity and sold by hawkers

1975: McDonald's first Hong Kong location

1975: First cooked food center opened, trying to shift street vendors into a more controlled environment

1970: Singapore Fried Rice Vermicelli

1970: Malaysian beef curry

1980: Japa
seafood ud
ramen

AND CHINESE

SOUTHEAST ASIA

1960s

1970s

1970s: Hong Kong emerges as an Asian Tiger

1962: New City Hall is built

1953: Queen's Pier is relocated due to harbor reclamation

1960s: political riots and civil unrest coupled with natural disasters, increasingly multicultural society due to government reforms and increasing educational opportunities

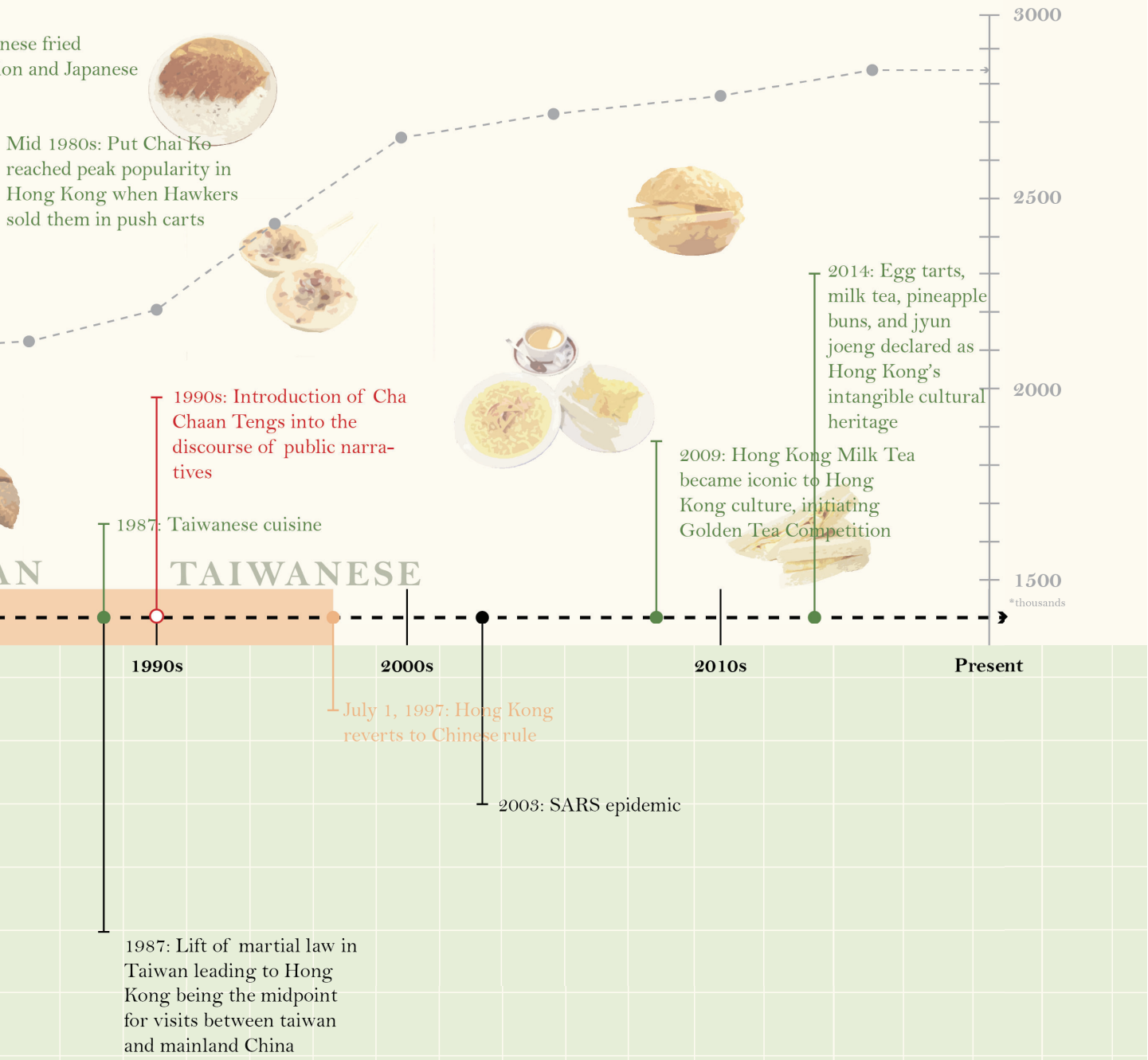


Fig.2.02 Illustrative timeline of the history of Hong Kong foods compared to the history of public space showing the development of Hong Kong hybrid culture against the colonization of political parties, including a graph on immigration numbers in the later years.

Fig.2.03 Map of East Asia indicating the context of Hong Kong to China.

Fig.2.04 Completed Praya public waterfront taken in 1923 with ongoing construction of the P&O buildings in the background and the Queen's Pier in the foreground.

Indonesian, Indian, Nepalese, Pakistani, Thai, Japanese, Korean, White, Other South Asians, and Other Asians[17]. With the many waves of immigrants into the region, the ethnic groups bring with them cultural cuisines that inspire a new type of culinary style that can be defined as the Hong Kong style. The current trend among the younger generation in creating fusion foods has also brought forth a new style of cuisine, merging high quality ingredients into traditional style foods in attempt to popularize the culture.

Before the 1800s, Hong Kong served as a backwater fishing community under China where the British merchants would illegally trade smuggled opium from India or Chinese goods such as tea, silks, and porcelain[18]. The use of Hong Kong territory as a port for trade would later prove influential on the settlement and immigration trends as it started to define itself as a unique culture. When the First Opium War broke out in 1839, China attempted to suppress the trade by destroying the merchandise and punishing traffickers, eventually leading to the handover of Hong Kong Island the Kowloon peninsula to Britain in 1842 as the Treaty of Nanjing was signed[19]. The combined area of about 80 km^2 officially put the Hong Kong port under British rule, thus starting the colonial period (fig 2.03). As British settlers started to take up parts of the Hong Kong territory, Hong Kong started seeing more formally composed public spaces such as the City Hall and the Praya public waterfront built in 1869 (fig 2.04), and the Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897[20]. As European communities started to

17 "Main Tables," 2021 Population Census HK, date accessed, March 21, 2022, https://www.census2021.gov.hk/en/main_tables.html#A104_2

18 Erin Blakemore and Taryn Salinas, "The History of Hong Kong, Visualized," Culture, National Geographic, August 26, 2019. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/hong-kong-history-visualized?loggedin=true

19 Chi-Keung Leung "Cultural Life." Edited by Kitty Siu. Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc. Accessed March 20, 2022. https://www.britannica.com/place/Hong-Kong/Cultural-life#ref11638.

20 Andrea Kyna Chiu-wai Cheng, "The Blame Game : How Colonial Legacies in Hong Kong Shape Street Vendor and Public Space Policies. "The Blame Game : How Colonial Legacies in Hong Kong Shape Street Vendor and Public Space Policies," Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1 Jan. 1970, 25-25, https://dspace.mit.edu/handle/1721.1/73700.

Fig.2.05 Local meal at a Dai Pai Dong including satay vermicelli and a glass of cold Hong Kong style milk tea.

segregate the Chinese population, the public spaces became a vessel for expression of the Chinese communities through the exchange of goods, specifically foods.

In 1898, Britain was awarded a rent-free 99-year lease on the New Territories, which sparked a mass wave of immigrants from mainland China into Hong Kong. The influence of colonial culture created some of the first opportunities for cultural mixing and allowed for the British cuisine to merge with local culture thus creating its own new type of cuisine. During this time, the local cooking styles would have to adapt to the struggling economy, therefore people created variations of classic dishes from the upper-class cuisines. The Cha Chaan Teng (translates to tea restaurant) is a classic example of an emerged culture as a result of the change in political power and the various waves of immigration, creating an imagined local taste in a place of refuge[21]. It is an indoor version of a cooked food street market that operates along busy streets at

21 Selina Ching Chan, "Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity: Food Culture and Hybridity," China Information 33, no. 3 (November 2019): 313-315. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18773409

Fig.2.06 Classic Cha Chaan Teng style breakfast including Hong Kong style milk tea, toast eggs and sausage combo, and congee.

the base of buildings and has open storefront entrances inviting customers inside. Based on the British influence of tea houses, the Cha Chaan Teng offers classic foods such as the Hong Kong style milk tea (fig 2.05) This popular drink is adapted from the British version of putting milk in tea, making it more affordable for the working class by substituting fresh milk with canned evaporated milk, and instead of using one specific type of tea leaf, tea masters would use their own mix of tea leaves originally used as method to cut costs[22]. This method of making tea became widely popular in Hong Kong, eventually leading to each tea master having their own secret combination of tea leaves, thus making each cup of milk tea different from other tea masters. The menu items typically consist of a breakfast set, lunch set, afternoon tea, and dinner set. The breakfast set was invented as result of interaction between the westerners and local Chinese population, combining the western style drink of coffee or milk tea and paired with scrambled or fried eggs, toast with butter, and a source of meat typically ham

22 Veronica Sau-Wa Mak "The heritagization of milk tea: cultural governance and placemaking in Hong Kong", Asian Anthropology, 20:1 (2021), 30-46, DOI: 10.1080/1683478X.2020.1773616

Fig.2.07 Originating from Jiangsu province of China, Yangchow fried rice is made with rice that is stir-fried with vegetables and meat, and typically includes ingredients such as ham, shrimp, peas, carrots, and eggs.

Fig.2.08 An interpretation of Fujian style cuisine, Fujian fried rice uses shrimp, mushrooms, eggs, and assorted veggies in a soy sauce on a fried rice base, sometimes using bbq pork bites mixed into the sauce. .

or sausages (fig 2.06). The lunch and dinner sets drew inspiration from western cuisines using spaghetti or rice as a base with a choice of protein cooked with soy sauce, therefore gaining the nickname of "soy sauce western dishes"[23], and a combination of western and Chinese condiments. Afternoon tea sets typically run from 2pm to 5pm, and serve smaller portions of lunch and dinner meals along with snack options such as French toast, fried chicken wings and fries, and wonton noodles. Cha Chaan Teng meals also incorporated many western influence dishes such as sandwiches, steaks, and spaghetti, but they are not made the way they would be in a western restaurant. Sandwiches in the Hong Kong cuisine do not include the dressing and cheese, steaks are served only well done with soy sauce seasoning rather than gravy, and spaghetti is served stir-fried style[24]. With the complex political history of colonial culture, the emergence of the food culture creates a new hybrid identity of the Hong Kong people and the rise of Hong Kong style restaurants and street market stalls serve as a socially active space and place for the Hong Kong urban development.

In 1949, The Chinese revolution was won by the Communists, driving another wave of people to flee to Hong Kong, thus leading to the large squatter settlements. This era brought various dialects, languages, and traditions with them as the population surged to 2.5 million in 1956[25]. This era also saw the takeoff of Hong Kong as a manufacturing hub as people with various traditions found different ways to make a living, starting the large textile, metalwork and other industries in Hong Kong[26]. Hong Kong foods do not typically fit within one classification of cuisine in the Chinese culture, even though the language use fits closely to the Guangdong province

23 Selina Ching Chan, "Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity: Food Culture and Hybridity," China Information 33, no. 3 (November 2019): 314. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18773409.

24 Chan, "Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity," 314

25 Erin Blakemore and Taryn Salinas, "The History of Hong Kong, Visualized," Culture, National Geographic, August 26, 2019. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/hong-kong-history-visualized?loggedin=true

26 "Hong Kong Profile - Timeline." BBC News. BBC, June 24, 2019. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-16526765.

whose dialect, Cantonese, is the main language in Hong Kong. As a place of in-between, Hong Kong foods act as an example of how the hybridity of foods and cuisines can influence dietary changes that reflect the cultural vibrancy of people's social lives. Within the different Chinese cuisines itself, the cooking styles, skills, and ingredients differ within each region, typically classified into four main regions: Northern cuisine, Western cuisine, Eastern cuisine, and Southern cuisine. Northern cuisines are typically representative of the early establishment of Shandong cuisines and influenced by the imperial court, Western cuisine is heavily focused on hot and spicy foods typically represented by Sichuan cuisine, Eastern cuisine emphasizes cutting skills and is represented by Jiangsu cuisine (fig 2.07), while Southern cuisine is represented by Guangdong cuisine emphasising freshness[27]. With the mass waves of immigration, Hong Kong became an example of adapting foods to local conditions and the ways food reflects the cultural lifestyle of the people. Fujian fried rice (fig 2.08), Yangzhou fried rice, Xiamen fried vermicelli, Shanghainese pork slices with picked vegetables and rice vermicelli in soup, Chaozhou-style beef noodles, and Cantonese-style wonton noodles are just a few of the examples of adapted dishes from various regions in China, some being complete inventions based on respective stereotypes of cooking styles in China[28]. Food became a tool of nostalgia, reminding people of their hometowns as they started to define their new identity within the streets of the new home. The creations and adaptations of food within the city became a symbolic space for the immigrants to construct their own identity and place themselves within a new territory.

In 1970, Hong Kong emerged as the Asian Tiger, an international financial center, thus sparking the development of the city around

27 Sidney C.H. Cheung, "From foodways to intangible heritage: a case study of Chinese culinary resource, retail and recipe in Hong Kong", *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, 19:4 (2013), 353-364, DOI: 10.1080/13527258.2011.654237

28 Selina Ching Chan, "Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity: Food Culture and Hybridity," China Information 33, no. 3 (November 2019): 315. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18773409

Fig.2.09 Hong Kong style beef curry has inspiration of Indian curry adapted to Malaysian and Singaporean ingredients served on Chinese rice.

Fig.2.10 Pork and Cabbage dumplings with sacha soy dressing at Ho Lee Fook, Hong Kong.

Fig.2.11 Left: Modern twist on classic dim sum dish using charcoal flavoured wrapping finished off with edible gold paint.

Fig.2.12 Right: Modern take on Hong Kong egg waffles using Japanese inspired flavours and toppings.

the harbourfront. On July 1st, 1997, Hong Kong was officially returned to China and under Chinese rule after more than 150 years of British rule. This would be the start of the political turmoil about the one country, two systems and the classification of Hong Kong as a Special Administrative Region[29]. Beyond politics, Hong Kong continues to develop as an international hub with its developed financial center and growing population. The culture of Hong Kong constantly morphs and changes as it incorporates popular trends from around the world, creating an even richer hybrid culture visible in the labeled traditional Hong Kong foods (fig 2.09). The desire to make the glamourous lifestyle more affordable to the working class that led to the creation of classic Hong Kong foods has now turned around, where classic Hong Kong foods of the working class are now decorated and cooked using higher quality ingredients, appealing to those beyond just the working class (fig 2.10). The need to make the business unique and stand out from competitors has forced owners to re-invent the classic dishes to keep up with modern trends. Dim sum restaurants have updated their selections to include trendy steamed

29 Byron S. J. Weng, "The Hong Kong Model of 'One Country, Two Systems': Promises and Problems." *Asian Affairs* 14, no. 4 (1987): 193–209. http://www.jstor.org/stable/30172082.

buns with gold flakes (fig 2.11), the widely loved egg waffle snack has upgraded to include western influenced ice cream and chocolate drizzle (fig 2.12) and the common stir fry noodles has incorporated Korean influenced kimchi flavours, just to name a few of the trendy fusion dishes that are popular among younger generations. With the growing attention on the small region of Hong Kong, the creation of fusion dishes has spread widely outside of the region into many settlement neighborhoods around the world. The hybrid identity created by the food and culture of the people, along with the social place making tool of the street markets and restaurants, has created a unique food urbanism within Hong Kong and has grown to influence other communities around the world.

With the culturally diverse and politically complicated history of Hong Kong, the identity of the Hong Kong people cannot be defined by a singular culture, but rather must be understood as an organic development of a hybrid culture. Street markets hold a culturally rich history, representative of the survival instinct from the many immigration waves and an urge for placemaking in Hong Kong's position as a symbolic "in between" place, a "borderland" or a "third space" for nurturing hybrid food cultures[30]. This is evident in the hybrid foods that are labeled as staple Hong Kong foods, such as Hong Kong style milk tea and Hong Kong Jyun Joeng[31]. As members of the community settled into Hong Kong and started to define their new home through connections to foods, the informally developed hybrid identity translated to the informal settlement and growth of the street markets. Market spaces are ultimately a space of the people and for the people, especially those informally developed overtime, and depict the flexibility and adaptability of a community throughout history.

30 Selina Ching Chan, "Tea Cafés and the Hong Kong Identity: Food Culture and Hybridity," China Information 33, no. 3 (November 2019): 312-313. https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18773409

31 Veronica Sau-Wa Mak "The heritagization of milk tea: cultural governance and placemaking in Hong Kong", Asian Anthropology, 20:1 (2021), 30-46, DOI: 10.1080/1683478X.2020.1773616

03 Exploring the Street Markets of Hong Kong

This chapter will explore in depth the various food typologies and available methods of food distribution in Hong Kong, defining the term "street market" in the context of Hong Kong and analyze the difference between the various commodities sold in the markets and their urban hierarchy. The chapter will then outline the focus of street foods and produce markets within the street markets as a typology reflective of the food urbanism in Hong Kong and defining cultural identity. It will look in depth at the environment and space of the markets, offering some context and insight on the activity within the markets. The chapter will then look at the current conflicts within food urbanism in Hong Kong, understanding the beauty of the street markets that set them apart from supermarkets and malls, then acknowledging the challenges and criticisms that they have received. This chapter focuses on understanding the current state of food urbanism in Hong Kong, highlighting the importance of the Hong Kong identity and city making in the street markets as they continue to decline in numbers.

3.1 Definition and Market Typology

The street market is known as a public place of gathering as an extension of the street for the purpose of purchasing and selling goods, generally understood as an open-air market often held on specific days of the week[1]. There are different terms for similar public spaces such as the Arabic *souk*, the Persian *bazaar*, Filipino *palengke*, or the Spanish *mercado*. The marketplace in Greek is called *laiki agora*, evoking the idea of congregation in a public square[2]. In all cases, the market is a space for exchanging of various goods, while also functioning as a space for community development, social interaction, and cultural expression. Some markets operate on a more permanent basis, while others operate on temporary means. Some markets are smaller and condensed, while some span over larger areas. Whether permanent or temporary, small or large, the market is both a functional and symbolic space of community and culture.

In the region of Hong Kong, the term 'gaai si', translating directly to 'street market', is used to define contemporary markets both on and off the streets[3]. Street markets in Hong Kong are understood as a condensed area of a collection of various stalls, that operate as an extension off a street or on a street serving the purpose of exchanging goods (fig 3.01). Government officials have historically tried to define the difference in markets between commodities. A list of permitted commodities sold by hawkers issued in 1969 classified fruits and vegetables, eggs, dried meats and salt fish, vermicelli, preserved vegetables, and non-food 'dry' goods as

1 "Definition of 'Street market'," Collins Dictionary, accessed April 24, 2022, https://www.collinsdictionary.com/dictionary/english/street-market

2 Maurizio Marinelli, "9. From Street Hawkers to Public Markets. Modernity and Sanitization Made in Hong Kong," In *Cities in Asia by and for the People* edited by Yves Cabannes, Mike Douglass and Rita Padawangi, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 230-231. https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048536252-012

3 Vivien Chan, "Markets Made Modular: Constructing the Modern 'Wet' Market in Hong Kong's Public Housing Estates, 1969-1975," *Urban History*, 2022, 4. doi:10.1017/S0963926822000153

Fig.3.01 Hierarchy of Hong Kong street markets known as "gaai see" and individual stalls known as "pai dong".

unrestricted goods, whereas meats, fish, and poultry were not permitted[4]. Currently, under the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD), public markets can have commodities such as fruits, dry goods and wet goods, cooked food, fresh meat or frozen meat, poultry, fish, food related dry goods or food related wet goods, non-food related dry goods and non-food related wet goods, including other categories such as service trades and newspaper stalls[5]. For the purpose of this research, these markets can be identified through three categories based on the goods available: fresh produce, cooked food, and non-perishable goods. Fresh produce markets are known as 'wet markets' throughout the city, while cooked food markets are often referred to as 'dai pai dongs'. Each type of market range in organization from a building facing the street, to permanent or temporary stalls on a secondary street, and to occupying a pedestrian street (fig 3.02). The street markets are not only a functional space for the economy of the middle class but also serve as a cultural hub and community center for the culturally vibrant and socially active people of Hong Kong.

4 Chan, "Markets Made Modular," 8

5 "Public Markets," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date, June 11, 2019, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/tidy_market/overview.html

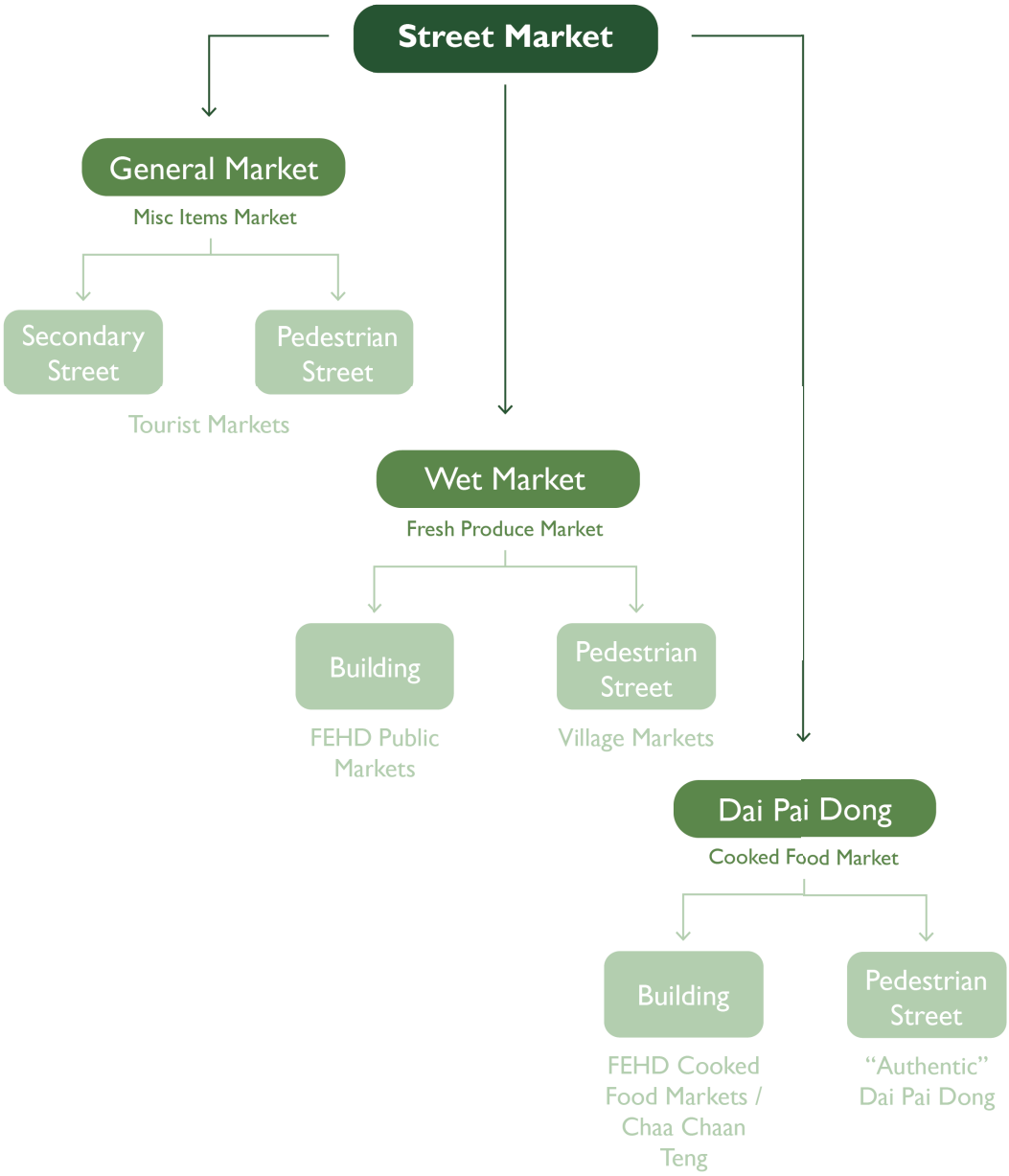


Fig.3.02 Typology hierarchy diagram using commodities as the main categories followed by spatial categories to identify the different types of markets.

Fig.3.03 Market stall owner uses patio umbrellas to create extra shading while also informally extending the boundary of the stall beyond the steel structure.

In defining the term, a street market is a unique spatial entity, identifiable in Hong Kong by its collection of market stalls within a condensed area.

At the architectural scale, the market stalls themselves are known as "pai dong", meaning "licenced stall" as vendors would require licensing to set up shop in a government approved street market[6], therefore a collection of "pai dongs" lining a street or operating along a street would be referred to as a street market. These individual steel stalls are compact and expandable, allowing vendors to collapse the shop for easy storage and expand the shop onto the walkway and intrigue possible customers with the brightly colored fruits and vegetables. The overhead compartment expands forward and out to both sides allowing for a covering over the vendor's produce. In addition to the main steel structure, many vendors create additional coverings with large umbrellas further expanding the boundary of their stalls (fig 3.03). With the use of leftover crates and modest wooden tables, vendors create many display stands allowing for their products to fill up as much

6 Marinelli, "9. From Street Hawkers to Public Markets," 234

vertical space as possible to optimize for the height in the tight corridor space. No stall in a market is the same, the base structure can differ slightly depending on the generation of the design and where the stall was built. The customizations of each stall also differ depending on the needs of the vendor, from more shelving to larger surface tables, each vendor expanding their shop using what is available. Although the base structure is separated from each other, the customized expansions create an illusion of a continuous street of produce as vendors blend together down the street. The close proximity of the stalls including their customized expansions force pedestrian traffic to be slow, allowing customers to admire and purchase various goods from vendors. With the visually dense coverings and colorful produce at multiple levels, the pedestrian is transported to the world of the street market and away from the busy life of the city.

When discussing the classic Hong Kong street market, sometimes referred to generally as a 'wet market' by locals, it typically serves the purpose of purchasing and selling fresh produce, although many markets have expanded their commodities into various cooked food items and miscellaneous items such as souvenirs, pets, wedding accessories, artwork, etc. The original term used to describe this type of market was 'gaai si', as it was once used as the name for all fresh produce markets occurring directly on the streets[7] , but as the markets evolved, the term was used to refer to all types of street markets, regardless of commodities. The differentiation between 'wet' and 'dry' goods has been used since the 1970s, some stating the reference to 'wet' goods refers to the extensive use of water within the market to keep fruits and vegetables fresh, fish and shellfish alive, and to wash access dirt and blood from the streets[8]. The use of the term 'wet' goods, or "sup fo", is generally equivalent to the perishable goods in the western understanding, whereas the term 'dry' goods, or "gon fo", is equivalent to the non-perishable goods.

7 Maurizio Marinelli, "9. From Street Hawkers to Public Markets. Modernity and Sanitization Made in Hong Kong," In *Cities in Asia by and for the People* edited by Yves Cabannes, Mike Douglass and Rita Padawangi, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 231. https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048536252-012

8 Marinelli, "9. From Street Hawkers to Public Markets," 234

Fig.3.04 Image of the interior of Wan Chai Market building on 258 Queen's Rd E, Wan Chai, Hong Kong .

Rather than being defined by its physical space, the understanding of 'wet markets' often refers to the types of commodities sold and consumed within the public market, therefore using the term 'street market' without the equivalence of the 'wet market' speaks to broader spatial delineations.

Wet markets can now be found within podium levels of buildings or within their own stand-alone building off the street (fig 3.04). All of the FEHD identified public markets fall under this category as the markets operate in a controlled environment, often barricaded off into a building or a block. These markets use the name of the street they are on and are sometimes confused with the unofficial street market that takes the same name but operates outside on the street. The interior organization of the public markets mimics the vendor of stalls on the city streets, where various vendors would set up shop within a designated stall and often flood into the walkway even within the building itself. This includes the modernized wet markets that operate in air-conditioned buildings, moving from the streets to a controlled environment.

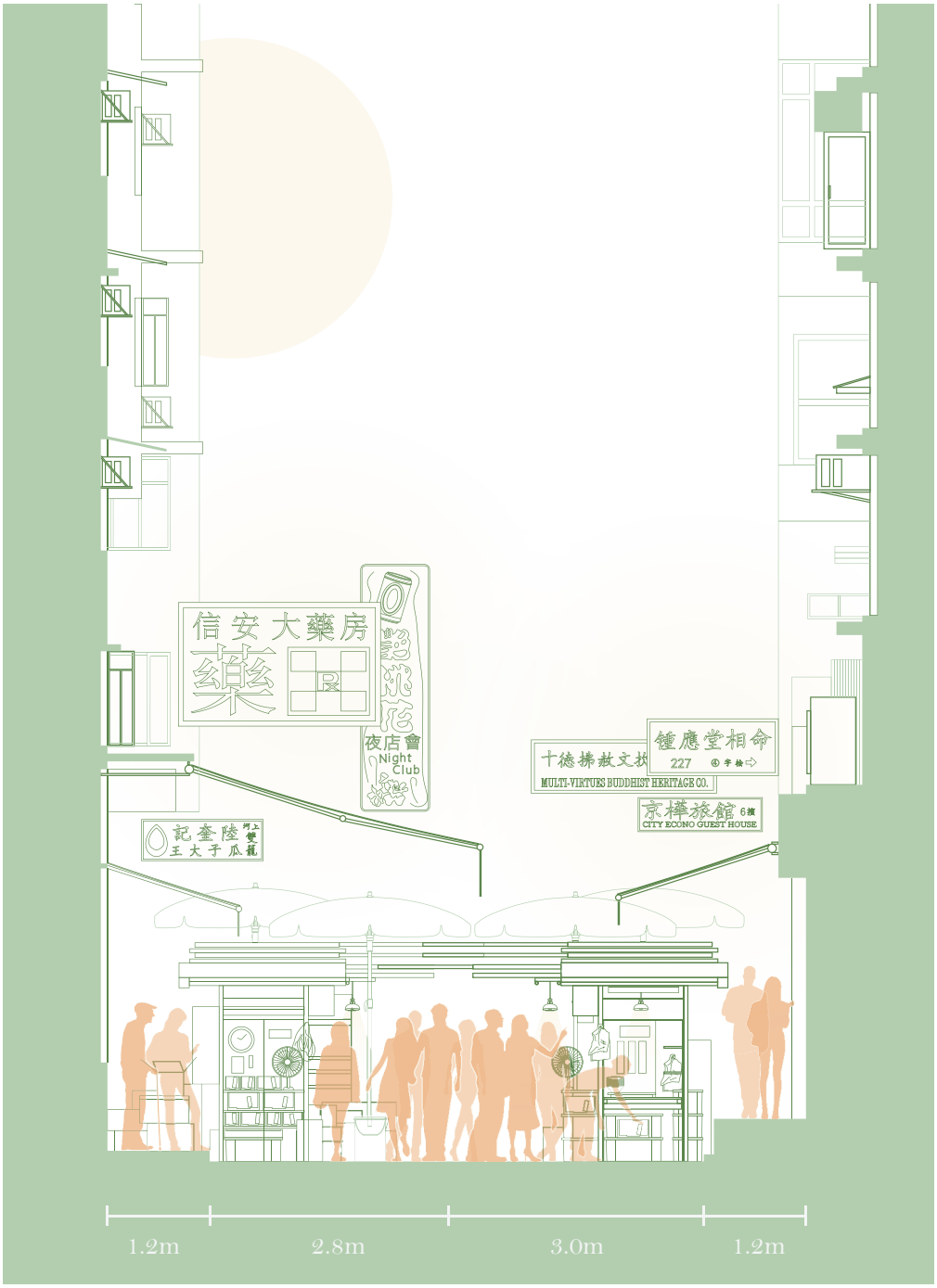


Fig.3.05 Pedestrian only tertiary street section with market stalls lining the edge of the streets expanding into the center and onto sidewalk spaces creating a sheltered market.

The traditional street market operates right on the streets of the Hong Kong, typically using sidewalk spaces and expanding stalls onto the roadside or occupying narrow pedestrian streets behind and between buildings. These markets operate permanently on pedestrian-only tertiary streets about 1-2 vehicle wide, taking up the sidewalk and edge of the street off the building store fronts, allowing a narrow passageway for pedestrians between the stalls (fig 3.05). Although they are permanent, they are not entirely formal markets as they are not recognized by the government but have a standing history and are allowed to continue to operate. The markets typically take the name of the street they occupy, and some have gained nicknames due to the unique commodities found at the street market. The traditional wet markets operate at this scale, allowing vendors to spill out onto the street and fill the space with produce creating an animated environment.

Street markets that are under the category of cooked foods are referred to as 'Dai Pai Dongs', indicating the collection of street food stands within one area. Dai Pai Dong, meaning "restaurant with a big license plate" first made its formal appearance after the second world war, where the government distributed licenses to families of soldiers who were injured or killed during service[9]. Although borrowed from the term 'pai dong', it is not to be confused with the individual stalls of any market. While some sources state there are around 100 authentic Dai Pai Dongs left in the region, others go as far to label only 25 remain[10]. The Dai Pai Dongs are a unique typology to Hong Kong that specifically serves freshly made, affordable and convenient cooked foods.

Under the FEHD categorization, these types of cooked food street stalls are referred to as hawker bazaars, another interchangeable term with 'Dai Pai Dongs'. According to the Oxford dictionary,

9 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

10 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

Fig.3.06 FEHD identified cooked food hall operates similar to a western-style food court with self-serve dining tables in the center and food stalls lining the perimeter.

a 'hawker' typically refers to someone who sells goods informally in public places, typically advertising through shouting on the streets and often associated with the term 'peddler'. Through the history of Hong Kong street vendors, illegal vendors, referring to street vendors without proper licencing from the government, was seen as 'hawking' as vendors would informally set up stalls on the streets of Hong Kong and shout to advertise the exchange of goods. The hawker bazaar (Dai Pai Dong), as suggested by its name, is a collection of hawkers within the same area under the organization of FEHD. These bazaars are an area of ground allocated and demarcated for the use of hawkers[11] that operate on a block off the street, some renovated to be situated in a permanent building while others are still constructed of temporary building materials. Hawker bazaars (Dai Pai Dongs) are under a different categorization under the FEHD due to its licensing requirements but still effectively operate within a controlled area. According to FEHD, there are currently 11 identified hawker bazaars. Particularly with the cooked food bazaars, these condensed areas operate closer

11 "Hawker Control," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date March 10, 2021, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/hawker/overview.html.

Fig.3.07 Mixed-use secondary street with a Dai Pai Dong stall to one side occupying the sidewalk areas as well, allowing for traffic to pass on the other side of the street.

Fig.3.08 Dai Pai Dongs are set up with the steel structure against a side of a building, extending the dining area sideways keeping a passageway for other traffic.

to that of the western 'food-courts' where there is central seating and several food stall fronts facing the dining tables (fig 3.06).

Outside of the FEHD recognized hawker bazaars, the Dai Pai Dongs that operate outdoors are typically found on pedestrian streets about 1-2 vehicle widths wide and in alleyways between buildings, but are occasionally found on mixed-use secondary streets sharing the lane with vehicular traffic (fig 3.07). The main structure of the stalls are typically against the side of the building and the dining tables are situated next to the stall to keep the passage way open for other traffic (fig 3.08). In some cases, the dining tables are set in front of the stall if there is more space but would not be allowed to obstruct the business of a possible storefront. The collection of Dai Pai Dongs do not formally have a name, therefore the history of these markets is difficult to trace, rather the individual history of the stalls are passed on through telling of stories by the chef and owners. Some Dai Pai Dongs currently operate on their own, taking up sidewalks and even the bottom of staircases, but ones that are found operating among others are more lively not only because it is larger, but the proximity of choices creates a miniature marketplace, and influences customers to stay to chat with their

neighbors longer.

3.2 Food and Place

Food becomes an influential organizational strategy for city making in a region where people needed to define a new identity. The streets themselves became an important space that fostered interactions within the community between vendor and consumer, assisting in defining the new identity and welcoming the new lifestyle. What makes street markets especially different from superstores and big-box department shopping is the cultural and social impact of street markets on the people of Hong Kong. The street markets also act as a vital social space for interaction within the community, a space where the old and young bond over the smell of the pineapple buns from the shop down the street, a space where neighbors discuss the daily news at a local Dai Pai Dongs while drinking their milk tea, and a space where families can anticipate meals as they shop for groceries. Without the community interactions that are fosters in the various types of street markets, the Hong Kong identity is ultimately removed from the food scenes and transforms the city into another standard metropolis. The spaces of the street markets become an important cultural and social asset to the future of Hong Kong.

A common dining style in Hong Kong called the Cha Chaan Teng (fig 3.09), more commonly known as Hong Kong style cafe, serves up Hong Kong style fast food dishes ranging from regional inspired foods to western inspired meal sets. It first appeared in the 1940s and was known to the communities as 'bing sat', which translates to an ice room, an imitation of the British-colonial coffee shops[12]. Originally created as a working-class diner serving alternative and

12 Chan, "Tea Cafes and the Hong Kong identity," 314

Fig.3.09 Classic Cha Chaan Teng interior using circular tables and foldable stools as dining furniture while displaying menu items on poster boards pasted along the walls.

affordable takes on high class western foods, the Cha Chaan teng has become an iconic dining experience nostalgic to Hong Kong[13]. All over the walls of the cafe are posters of menu items, sometimes handwritten in Chinese without an English translation. The dining experience in a local cha chaan teng differs from the western style dining although many of the menu items draw inspiration from western cuisine and ingredients. There is a culture of sharing tables in Hong Kong that foster interaction between neighbors and strengthen the community while increasing business. Smaller parties will share an unoccupied larger table allowing faster turnover for business and producing shorter wait times, but also allowing neighbors to exchange conversations and bond through similarities. Furniture in Cha Chaan Teng is simplistic and functional, originally using wooden folding tables and plastic stools, allowing shop owners to set up and take down tables and stools according to business. Modern cafes have opted for booths arranged around the perimeter allowing for more privacy during dining and sturdier chairs to limit the amount of broken furniture

13 David Y. H. Wu, "Chinese Café in Hong Kong," in Changing Chinese Foodways in Asia, ed. David Y. H. Wu, Chee Beng Tan (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001), 71-80.

Fig.3.10 Modernized cha chaan teng using booths around the perimeter of the restaurant to create smaller pockets of space for privacy.

(fig 3.10). The Cha Chaan Teng became a space of identity and a place of refuge for immigrants as they reimagined the taste of their hometowns in a new home[14], so symbolic it has followed the Chinese population to the western cities with adaptive new menu items to cater to their new population, creating a familiar taste of home.

Prior to the development of Cha Chaan Tengs, Dai Pai Dong food vendors operated mainly on the streets. Although many of the street food markets have been removed or replaced, the remaining markets continue to operate true to the Hong Kong culture. Although the number of street markets have decreased significantly from 70 000 in the 1970s[15] to an estimated 25[16] today and transformed to serve the tourism image, the popularity of street foods and

14 Selina Ching Chan, "Tea Cafes and the Hong Kong identity: Food culture and hybridity." *China Information* 33, no. 3 (2019), 312-313, https://doi.org/10.1177/0920203X18773409

15 Christopher Dewolf,"Fishballs worth fighting for: A brief history of Hong Kong street hawkers," *Zolima*, June 10, 2016, https://zolimacitymag.com/fishballs-worth-fighting-for-a-brief-history-of-hong-kong-street-hawkers/

16 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

fresh food markets remain high among Hong Kong residents and visitors. The licensed stalls would be situated in proximity to each other, settling into blocks and designated areas where they would serve affordable foods. The iconic bright green coloring of the metal makes the stall visually stand out among the gray and dull buildings (fig 3.11), while the smell of freshly made foods attract hungry residents across the street to have a seat and enjoy some snacks. The informal setting of the plastic chairs and foldable tables creates a casual environment for neighbors to share daily gossip to create a tight-knit community. The ambiguous boundary between the kitchen space and front retail area engages customers with the chef, while dining areas extend the perimeter of the Dai Pai Dong along the streets. With no formal boundary or wall, the sounds of the iron woks and the smell of the oils bounce off the adjacent buildings and attract customers from all over. Many modern Cha Chaan Tengs still operate similar to Dai Pai Dongs, where the kitchen will be near the entrance to attract customers with the fragrance of the foods or at least visible to dining guests to enhance the sense of authenticity[17]. This allows the energetic space of the Dai Pai Dongs to continue into indoor environments and live on as representative of the Hong Kong identity.

The modernized wet markets are now situated in air-conditioned buildings separated by type of produce, recognizable for their use of tile floor for easy cleaning as shop owners will blast dirt from vegetables and blood from meats right off the floor into the sewer system and red glowing lamps hanging above the fresh produce (fig 3.12). Vendors and customers develop a close relationship at the markets as customers will trust the butcher to choose the best quality product for the specified purpose, creating a greater opportunity to build community connections and develop a thriving neighborhood. Throughout the market, voices shouting prices and weight amounts can be heard as consumers often negotiate prices with vendors and specify certain cuts depending on the dish they are making. Fish, poultry and meats are separated in the "wet"

17 David Y. H. Wu, "Chinese Café in Hong Kong," in Changing Chinese Foodways in Asia, ed. David Y. H. Wu, Chee Beng Tan (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 2001), 71-80.

Fig.3.11 Dai Pai Dong uses army green paint on metal elements of the structure including the fabric tarp extending overhead of the dining area.

corners while "dry" foods such as vegetables, fruits, and other dried goods are in another area. Wet markets are usually accommodated by a newspaper stand and have recently included cooked food areas serving various cuisines adjacent to the market. By using simple technology; tiles floors for easy cleaning, and cheap labor; operating stalls with immediate family members reducing the need to hire workers, wet markets operate at a lower cost therefore further allowing produce to be sold at a cheaper margin[18]. Wet markets have become a space of Hong Kong identity, representative of the socially active community as people of Hong Kong connect through food. As popular as they are, many have been replaced and renovated for hygienic reasons, but the structure of the wet market can still be found in western style supermarkets aiming to mimic the engaging environment wet markets offer.

The street "wet markets" (fig 3.13) on the other hand are limited within the city and are mostly found in smaller villages closed off from the busy traffic or on smaller streets adjacent to larger primary streets. The entrance is typically expressed through the bright colored fruits and fresh vegetables alluding to a street full of fresh produce. Most markets sell fruits and vegetables, some dry goods and meats are found closer to store fronts as they store better in air-conditioned buildings. Products are displayed at every level on old milk crates with handwritten cardboard signs, interrupting a possible customer's line of sight as they weave through the blurred boundary between the stall edge and pedestrian walkway. Overhead are colorful fabrics creating a covered walkway for a more comfortable journey while also providing coverage for the fresh produce. Red lamps are seen hovering above some displays while loud chatter is heard throughout the street. From vendors telling customers the price of the product to customers asking for specific products, the street market is a world of its own amid the heavy populated urban life in the background. Hong Kong street markets are iconic for their welcoming and vibrant environment,

18 Arieh Goldman, Robert Krider, and S. Ramaswami, "The Persistent Competitive Advantage of Traditional Food Retailers in Asia: Wet Markets' Continued Dominance in Hong Kong," *Journal of Macromarketing* 19, no. 2 (December 1999): 126–139, https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146799192004.

Fig.3.12 Iconic red lamps used to illuminate the meat making it look more freshly cut.

Fig.3.13 Graham street wet market is an outdoor street market offering a variety of fruits and vegetables, along with occasional dry goods.

although creating a narrow space for walking between stalls the extension and flooding of the products onto the street invites customers to explore and engage with local residents. Although many wet markets have moved to indoor environments, the experience of walking through many stalls of overflowing fresh produce on a damp ground is replicated for its representation of Hong Kong culture. As indoor markets start to change and adapt towards an international audience, the fresh produce becomes high-end artisan bakeries and wine tasting shops[19], creating an organized environment with products behind glass displays and clear boundaries for stalls. The experience of the popular markets no longer resembles that of the original wet markets, but modern market development has started to adopt the wet market model in order to bring back the Hong Kong identity and create a similar engaging environment to enhance business.

Within the unique nature of the urban food vessels, there is a

19 "Shop Directory," Central Market, accessed June 2, 2022, https://www.centralmarket.hk/en/floor-directory

particular beauty within the informal markets that are unable to be replicated in the large big-box stores and supermarkets. Dai Pai Dongs are iconic to the Hong Kong food scene as they operate locally, offering affordable and convenient eats. Due to the long work hours and the limited time and space for home-cooked meals, many turn towards Dai Pai Dongs as a convenient but hearty meal that is closer to a home-cooked meal than at other competing restaurants. As the culture of the cheap food stalls became widely popular among the working class, it was nicknamed "poor man's nightclub" as it served as a social space for locals to drink and smoke freely with each other[20]. The stalls became spaces of community and leisure that gathered people with the common interest in food. Stalls would have personalized menus that reflected the background of the chef and owner, allowing then to share their origins and offer a nostalgic place for the community. With its ability to easily customize dishes and offering personalized recipes, the Dai Pai Dongs reflect the individual uniqueness of the chef and create a rich community from the ground-up. Due to its configuration and its simple assembly, the Dai Pai Dongs became a staple food culture within the dense region of Hong Kong and is still sought out by both workers and tourists.

Wet markets are popular among local residents as they operate towards a target market of locals, therefore offering cheaper, fresher, more convenient, and larger variety of choices than supermarkets. Due to its positioning towards customer needs and its short and direct supply chain, wet markets are also able to offer higher levels of service, better quality products, and an environment that fosters social interaction[21]. The markets allow greater engagement between neighbors with retailers as they can occasionally negotiate pricing and discuss product details. Many families and households

20 Christopher Dewolf,"Fishballs worth fighting for: A brief history of Hong Kong street hawkers," *Zolima*, June 10, 2016, https://zolimacitymag.com/fishballs-worth-fighting-for-a-brief-history-of-hong-kong-street-hawkers/

21 Arieh Goldman, Robert Krider, and S. Ramaswami, "The Persistent Competitive Advantage of Traditional Food Retailers in Asia: Wet Markets' Continued Dominance in Hong Kong," *Journal of Macromarketing* 19, no. 2 (December 1999): 126–39, https://doi.org/10.1177/0276146799192004.

will purchase groceries more than twice a week due to limited kitchen space, buying in smaller amounts just enough for one or two meals therefore preferring fresh ingredients. The wet markets offer options to purchase by weight whereas western supermarkets offer pre-packaged products, possibly forcing consumers to spend more than necessary and eliminating the sense of freshness in the produce. As market stall owners are typically those that prepare the produce, customers are able to retrieve direct information on the source of the produce, also enabling owners to recommend cooking methods, other produce, and dish pairings.

What the informal markets offer that large malls and supermarket developments do not is the personal and individual interaction within the community. As described by Stephan Al in the publication "Mall City: Hong Kong's Dreamworlds of Consumption", Hong Kong has become a city that focuses on the consumer society[22]. By turning into the metropolis it is, consumerism has overshadowed the valuable entity of the informal street markets. Hong Kong street markets are a site of productive community interaction and economic engagement within the middle to lower working class, defined by its collective of market stalls with fluid boundaries creating an animated and lively atmosphere. Specifically looking at food related markets, including fresh produce and cooked street foods, the street markets are a space that emerged from the eagerness to define a new home, representative of the adaptability of Hong Kong people. They foster a community relationship vital to the preservation of Hong Kong culture and present a slower but equally active society necessary for the future of Hong Kong. In the fast-paced region, food stalls offer a space for neighbors to catch up over a coffee at a local food stall and vendors to interact with customers as they shop for essential goods. While bonding over foods at the market stalls, a unique culture of exchanging

22 Stefan Al, ed. *Mall City: Hong Kong's Dreamworlds of Consumption* (University of Hawai'i Press, 2016). https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv13gvhqt.

goods at a 'pai dong' becomes iconic to life in Hong Kong. Beyond the focus on consumerist society and globalization, the food market is both a space of cultural expression, from fresh foods selling local ingredients to street food stalls offering freshly made Hong Kong dishes, and a space of social activity, from the engagement of people to the exchanging of goods, therefore vital to the food urbanism of Hong Kong and reflective of the Hong Kong identity.

04 Threats to the Street Markets

This chapter will look closely at the development of the street markets and the external forces that have limited the growth of the urban setting, ultimately leading to the state of disappearance that the street markets currently sit in. Although recognized as culturally and socially significant urban phenomenon, there have been many forces that not only limit the growth of the street markets but have worked towards a goal of eliminating the existence of the street markets. Firstly outlining the cause for the changes starting with the health concerns that are often associated with the street markets, followed by exploring the methods of improving hygiene implemented by the government. It will then explore the government's view on the street market and the need to control and contain the abundance of vendors. Looking at the methods of approach, including changes in licencing and in policy and management, the chapter will analyse the impact on the street markets that led to their disappearing state. The chapter will also acknowledge the impact of globalization and the move towards the international image, as well as the impact of gentrification and the influence of financial capital, before ending with the current conditions of the street markets and speculate on the future implications.

4.1 Government Views and the Need for Control

The market as an urban public space has often been discussed in various cultural contexts with scholars arguing for the cultural, political, and social impact of market spaces rather than the economic influence. Markets have always been spaces of community integration, where people of all backgrounds find a common public space through the everyday needs of food. Discussions around formality and informality are often associated with markets, expanding into the built environment and actions of individuals as opposed to government planning[1]. Hawker stalls became an everyday activity as it offered affordable meals throughout the day and a living atmosphere away from the busy city center. Occupying smaller streets and alleyways between buildings, to eventually transforming larger streets into temporary markets, the hawkers took advantage of their popularity and created a fruitful space recognizable as the street markets. The government, on the other hand, has had conflicts with the hawking profession as many hawkers did not legally hold licencing, highlighting hygiene maintenance concerns associated with the unregulated spaces with and its impact on development potential.

Since the early days of hawking, the census had started to distinguish the profession of hawkers, including their numbers as part of the population although typically underestimated as almost half the hawkers were mobile in 1873 and did not hold official licences[2]. The profession of hawkers became more and more popular and increased to become a significant part of the Hong Kong culture, seeing growth throughout the 19th century even after many attempts from the government to be reduced

1 Vivien Chan, "Markets Made Modular: Constructing the Modern 'Wet' Market in Hong Kong's Public Housing Estates, 1969-1975," *Urban History*, 2022, 1-19. doi:10.1017/S0963926822000153

2 Terry G. Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong : a study of planning and policy in a Third World city* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1973), 35

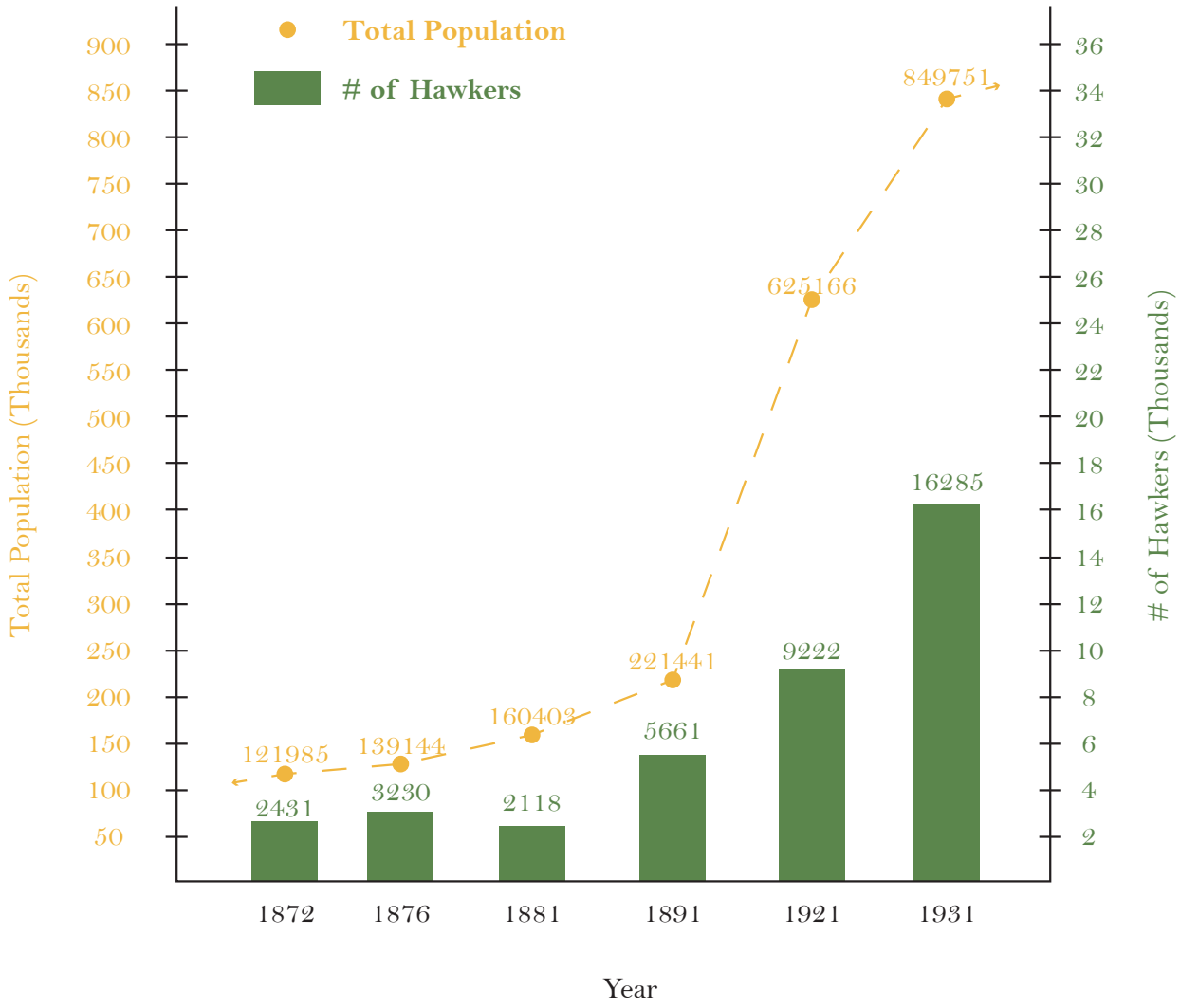


Fig.4.01 Number of hawkers in Hong Kong from 1876-1931 compared to population increase.

(table 4.01). By 1891, hawkers made up about 50% of the retailing profession, 90% of which were surveyed to be male in 1920 but number of females tripled within the next 10 years as political unsettlement in mainland created an influx of refugees into the Hong Kong territory[3]. As expected, with the many more waves

3 Terry G. Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong : a study of planning and policy in a Third World city* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1973), 35-36

of immigration into Hong Kong, the number of people occupying the lower and working class economy grew alongside the number of hawkers in the profession as it was seen as the easier means of making a living. As the profession grew, so did the reputation. The government started to associate the hawkers with the stereotypes of disruption, nuisance, unproductivity, and unhygienic.

Hawkers continued to be seen by the government as a nuisance to the public as they "obstruct important thoroughfares and give so much competition to shops and markets that the shop-keepers and stall holders are forced in their own interests to employ hawkers themselves to sell their goods"[4]. This statement by the Chairman of the Hong Kong Urban Council and Sanitary Department in 1940 reveals the councils' perception of the profession as a disturbance to the public, an unproductive economic environment, and cause of disorder to the urban development. Contrary to the council's perception, the public did not view the hawking profession as a disturbance as it was the center of socialization to the working class and proved to be a productive economy in the lower sector as it lowered housing prices and living costs, allowing the population to live affordably, and it did not limit urban development as it was an urban environment created and driven by the people. As government frequently associated hawking with dirty and unsanitary streets, causing nuisance to communities and degrading the overall image, policies put in place to improve the quality of life in the city ultimately led to the decline of street vending. According to Terry McGee (1973), Hong Kong policies towards street hawkers aimed towards four main outcomes: stabilizing the business in the specific area, relocating businesses to more appropriate areas, implementing structural measures aimed at controlling the trade, and reducing number of hawkers by creating incentives that called for the need to implement control[5]. Beyond the need to improve the conditions of the markets, the priority became to create control of the growth of the hawkers by implementing regulations and management rights.

4 Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong,* 36-37

5 Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong,* 176-182

4.2 Regulation Changes and Licencing Limitations

Government recognized hawking has operated since the 1800s as people seek unconventional ways to access food and families required means to make a living during difficult times. One of the early attempts at controlling the growth of the activity on the street came in 1845 when an ordinance was passed making a person liable to a fine of 5 pounds if they:

"Exposed anything for sale in or upon, or so to hang over any carriageway or footway, or on the outside of any house or shop, or who shall set up or continue any pole, blind, awning, line or any other projection from windows parapet or other part of any house, shop or other building, so as to cause any annoyance or obstruction in any thoroughfare," [6]

This became the introduction to regulation of the profession as more and more people turned to hawking. The government started identifying the profession and limiting allocated spaces and produce as a way to control the rapidly developing and expanding profession from bleeding into the major streets of Hong Kong (table 4.02). As street markets and street vendors increased in popularity, all street vending whether legal or illegal, became grouped under the same occupation that is hawking. Hawkers, as currently defined by government policy, are licenced individuals or families that hold the right to sell various products in open stalls on public streets[7]. They include peddlers who carry their commodities to sell from region to region and farmers who bring their products to formal markets[8]. The official start to licencing is uncertain; some say

6 Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong,* 32

7 "Hawker Control," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date March 10, 2021, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/hawker/overview.html.

8 Terry G. Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong : a study of planning and policy in a Third World city* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1973), 31

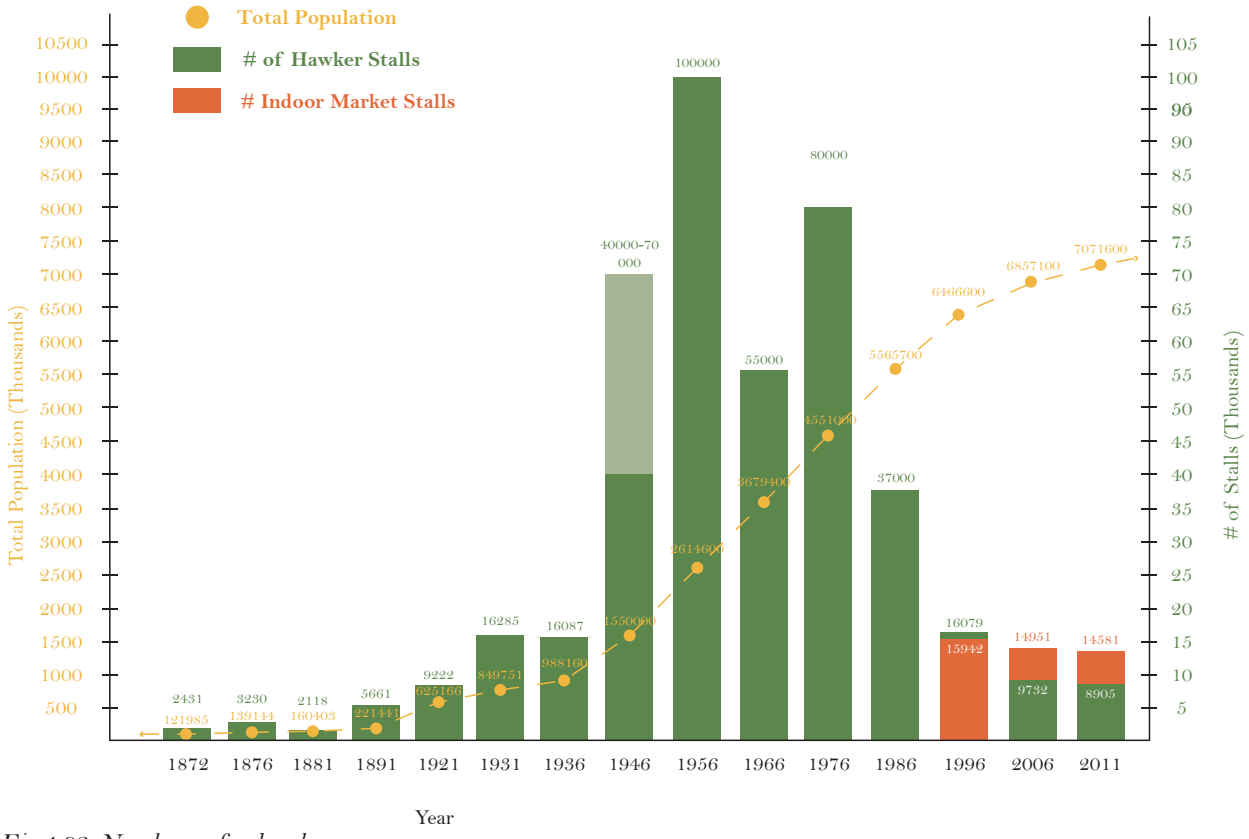


Fig.4.02 Number of hawkers compared to total population and the move towards FEHD indoor market spaces.

the introduction of licences started in 1921[9], while some say that the first official licences were distributed closer to the end of the second world war to families of soldiers who lost their lives or were injured during their service[10]. What is certain is that hawking became a popular means of retailing for the lower working class, and licencing became the method to regulate and control the profession.

The regulation of hawkers took a change after the Sanitary Board was replaced by the Urban Council and licencing and control of hawkers transferred from the police department to a regulatory

9 Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong,* 36

10 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

body outside of police services but still within the government. After the Chinese civil war in 1949, Hong Kong saw a surge in illegal hawking activity as established western-style market buildings no longer sustained the growing population[11]. In areas with lower development rates, the market became the main public space for the community, producing its own reputation as part of the Hong Kong socializing culture. The government started to recognize the significance of the market spaces at this time, appointing a committee to specifically work towards advising the rest of the government body on questions relating to hawkers. Under this committee, a report that was presented and later published on March 13, 1947 labeled the hawkers in Hong Kong as a lower class retail trade, occupation for the lazy, and emphasized the unproductivity of the profession[12], which mirrored the previous perspectives. The main objective of this committee was advise the government on how to manage the hawkers, including suggestions to relocate the hawkers to more appropriate areas and design markets to organize them into more controlled areas for regulation.

This led to the regulation under the Urban Council where market stalls licences that were issued previously were prohibited from transferring to the next generation, limiting the transfer of licence to only the spouse of the licence holder[13]. This was just one of the steps towards eliminating the hawking profession from the streets of Hong Kong. By the 1960s, the government had stopped issuing licences to new holders to work towards eliminating the entirety of hawking activities[14]. Dai Pai Dongs that were most productive on

11 Christopher Dewolf,"Fishballs worth fighting for: A brief history of Hong Kong street hawkers," *Zolima*, June 10, 2016, https://zolimacitymag.com/fishballs-worth-fighting-for-a-brief-history-of-hong-kong-street-hawkers/.

12 Terry G. Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong : a study of planning and policy in a Third World city* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1973), 43

13 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

14 Maurizio Marinelli, "9. From Street Hawkers to Public Markets. Modernity and Sanitization Made in Hong Kong," In *Cities in Asia by and for the People* edited by Yves Cabannes, Mike Douglass and Rita Padawangi, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 235. https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048536252-012

the side of streets were moved into Cooked Food Centers starting in 1975, and just 10 years later, the government had began to buy back licences offering millions to reduce the number of hawkers on the street[15]. There were plans made intended to be used as guidelines for future urban development regarding the inclusion of markets stalls for street hawkers, increasing the number of public markets by 14 in the period up to 1960, providing an additional 561 stalls for the street hawkers[16]. However, this was insufficient to accommodate the mass amount of hawkers that occupied the streets.

4.3 Globalization, Gentrification, Current Conditions and Future Implications

The regulation of hawkers changed from the Urban Council to the Food and Environmental Hygiene Department (FEHD) in 1997 after Hong Kong political power moved back to China[17]. Although the governing board had changed, the overall image of hawkers continued to be associated with an unfavourable global image and unhygienic management. Hong Kong had started to develop more public spaces centered around building the international financial center. The skyline and waterfront views became an important public entity, leading to many urban developments towards a modern and global image. According to the FEHD, the vision is to "work hand in hand with our community in building Hong Kong into a world-class metropolis renowned for its food safety

15 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

16 Terry G. Mcgee, *Hawkers in Hong Kong : a study of planning and policy in a Third World city* (Hong Kong: University of Hong Kong, 1973), 45-46

17 Andrea Kyna Chiu-wai Cheng, "The Blame Game : How Colonial Legacies in Hong Kong Shape Street Vendor and Public Space Policies," (Thesis, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2012), 74

and public hygiene,"[18]. The mission to ensure safe consumption and maintain clean and hygienic environments alludes to the need to manage the unregulated street vending that is typically associated with nuisance and a risk to the public health. Given these motives of the regulatory body, the hawking culture was continuously seen under the government as insignificant to the culture of Hong Kong, reinforcing the need for the government to push out street vendors and limit the informal street markets, ultimately eliminating the organically established and culturally rich food communities. The council ultimately disregarded the informal culture of the street markets, prioritizing globalization into the metropolis by maintaining a clean image.

Under the initiatives of cleaning up the streets, improving the city hygiene, and creating the modernized global city image, local street vendors who were at the heart of the Hong Kong culture continued to be cornered off and subsequently pushed out of business. Previous scholars have also noticed the intentions of government actions and their neglect to the significance of street markets:

> *"Progressive annihilation of street community living in the name of 'modernity' and 'urban regeneration', deliberately forgetting that the vibrancy of the street markets is a constitutive element of Hong Kong's historical development, and street markets offer alternative spaces in the city, which contribute to human flourishing and collective well-being, since they reflect a city by and for the people."*[19]

18 "Public Markets," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date, June 11, 2019, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/tidy_market/overview.html

19 Maurizio Marinelli, "9. From Street Hawkers to Public Markets. Modernity and Sanitization Made in Hong Kong," In *Cities in Asia by and for the People* edited by Yves Cabannes, Mike Douglass and Rita Padawangi, (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2018), 230.

Fig.4.03 Urban Renewal Authority Peel Street / Graham Street development proposal site plan indicating three separate site for renewal. Currently Site B is completed while Site A and Site C are under construction.

Fig.4.04 View of Graham Street Market entrance on Gage Street with towering construction surrounding the market.

With the vision to become a world-class metropolis, the current market spaces are assumed to be inaccurate of the Hong Kong global and modern image, therefore requiring the FEHD to implement regulations and management to markets in order to transform them into the desirable representation of Hong Kong. As Hong Kong style dining and consumer produce have morphed towards fitting within the international image, the classic Hong Kong food culture is removed from the urban fabric.

The government continued to 'clean up' the street markets in order to improve financial capital by replacing street markets with profitable buildings. In 2007, the Urban Renewal Authority had announced to replace a street market with HK$3.8 billion worth of residential, retail, commercial, and hotel high-rises[20] (fig

https://doi.org/10.1515/9789048536252-012

20 Blue Lapis Road, "Culture of Disappearance: Graham Street Market (嘉咸市集), Central (中環), Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, February 28, 2021, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/02/26/disappearing-living-culture-graham-street-market-%E5%98%89%E5%92%B8%E5%B8%82%E9%9B%86-central-%E4%B8%AD%E7%92%B0-hong-kong/

4.03). By replacing the informal street markets with controlled and manageable market buildings, it allows for development of residential, retail, commercial, and hospitality high-rises that not only raise the financial status of Hong Kong but attract international investments and businesses. Development of the city also includes increasing density to accommodate the large population in Hong Kong, demolishing a relatively low-density neighborhood and replacing it with 4 planned 30+ storey residential, hotel and commercial towers along with their respective retail podiums[21] (fig 4.04). As Hong Kong continues to target larger financial capital and reflecting the global image, more and more of the unique, informal, organic culture of Hong Kong disappears behind the newly identified Hong Kong culture.

The current state of the street markets is ambiguous; with most informal street markets unaccounted for in the FEHD database. According to the FEHD, there are 97 public markets and cooked food centers offering a total of about 14,000 stalls with a wide range of commodities[22] (fig 4.05). These are typically the 'street markets' that take the name of the street they are located on, but do not operate directly on the street. Most of the markets in this list are within a controlled building environment, allowing the regulatory body to fully control the markets through various aspects such as stall area, commodities, and cleaning services. Hawkers, on the other hand, have accounted for a total of 5204 hawker licences in the urban areas and another 394 licences in the New Territories by the end of 2021[23]. In this case, hawkers are understood more generally as individual stall owners who wish to trade on the streets and not be associated under one building management. The objectives of hawker control are written out as follows:

To reduce illegal hawking activities in

21 Blue lapis road, "Culture of Disappearance."

22 "Public Markets," Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, last revision date, June 11, 2019, https://www.fehd.gov.hk/english/pleasant_environment/tidy_market/overview.html

23 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, "Public Markets."

streets by taking enforcement action

To reduce on-street licensed hawking activities by re-siting eligible hawkers into new public markets and implementing the guidelines of not issuing new hawker licences under normal circumstances

To minimize through enforcement action, the nuisances created by street trading either by hawkers or by illegal extensions of shops onto the street area.

Not only has the government reverted to see the hawkers as insignificant, the FEHD has established objectives that automatically associate hawking with enforcement-requiring illegal activities, an un-pleasurable environment, and a nuisance to the communities. The objectives also reveal the intention to ultimately abolish the profession as they state to implement guidelines to eliminate new licence holders. This means to make it more difficult for one to newly enter the profession, ultimately preventing the development and growth of this part of the food industry.

The overall objectives are not the only restrictions on licencing for hawkers. Under the hawker category, there are two types of licences a hawker can hold: a fixed-pitch hawker licence or an itinerant hawker licence. The fixed-pitch licence authorizes the vendor to operate the stall at a more permanent structure, generally including 7 categories: bootblack, cooked food or light refreshments, newspaper, tradesmen, barber, wall stall, and other classes[24]. According to the FEHD website as of March 2021, the transfer or succession of the licence may only be applied to the spouse of the holder, and only in certain circumstances will the

24 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, "Public Markets."

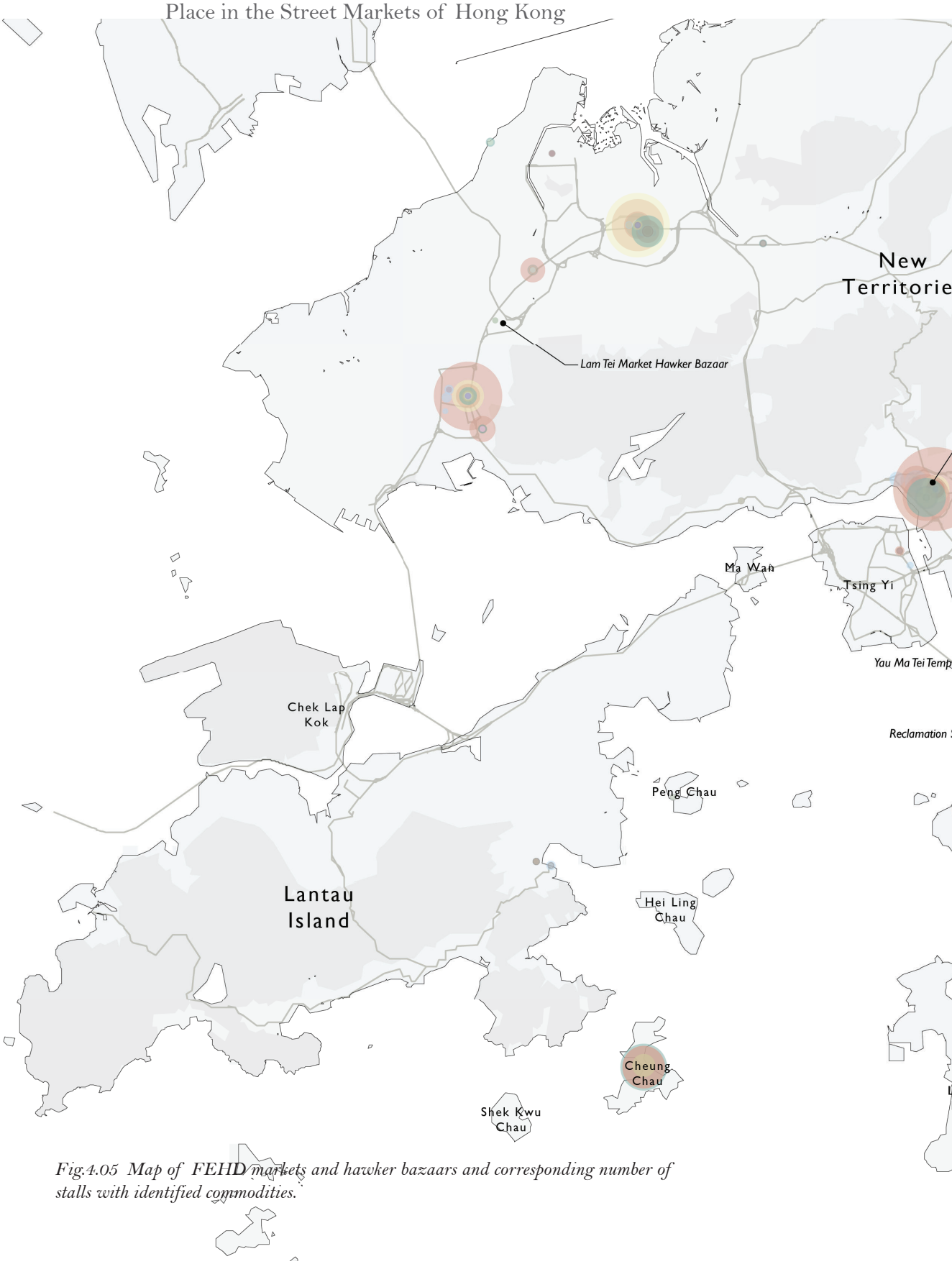


Fig.4.05 Map of FEHD markets and hawker bazaars and corresponding number of stalls with identified commodities.

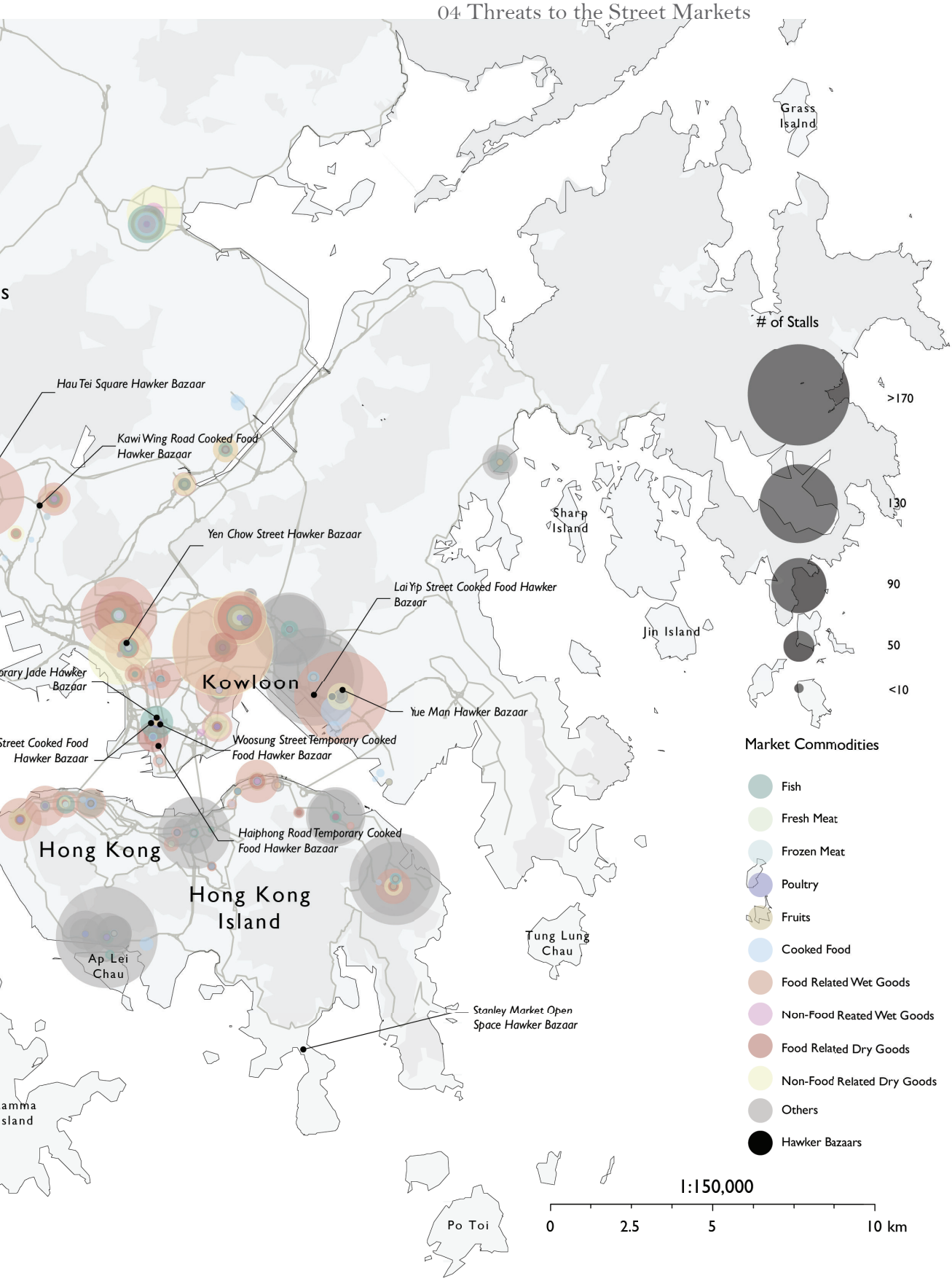

Grass Island
# of Stalls
>170
130
90
50
<10
Hau Tei Square Hawker Bazaar
Kawi Wing Road Cooked Food Hawker Bazaar
Yen Chow Street Hawker Bazaar
Lai Yip Street Cooked Food Hawker Bazaar
Sharp Island
Jin Island
Kowloon
Yue Man Hawker Bazaar
Woosung Street Temporary Cooked Food Hawker Bazaar
Haiphong Road Temporary Cooked Food Hawker Bazaar
Hong Kong
Hong Kong Island
Ap Lei Chau
Tung Lung Chau
Stanley Market Open Space Hawker Bazaar
Po Toi
Market Commodities
Fish
Fresh Meat
Frozen Meat
Poultry
Fruits
Cooked Food
Food Related Wet Goods
Non-Food Reated Wet Goods
Food Related Dry Goods
Non-Food Related Dry Goods
Others
Hawker Bazaars
1:150,000
0
2.5
5
10 km

Fig.4.06 Panoramic illustration of the vivid and animated scene of the Dai Pai Dongs created by Flyingpig in collaboration with the Hong Kong Tourism Board and Grey Group.

board allow transfer or succession to immediate family members. The itinerant hawker licence authorizes the vendor to operate in a mobile nature, including 4 categories: newspaper, frozen confectionery, mobile vans, and other classes[25]. According to the FEHD website as of May 2017, the Director has authority to specify the trading area and there is no policy that allows a succession or transfer of the licence. A temporary hawker licence is also available to hawking activities permitted by the director for a period no longer than one month and without connection to fund-raising activities for commercial or profit-making purposes. Under the terms outlined by the FEHD, it is difficult to establish a developable business as a hawker due to the many restrictions

25 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, "Public Markets."

applied on commodities, location, area, and transfer or succession of the business, giving authority to the board rather than to the vendor themselves. Although the regulations have made it possible for immediate family members to continue the operation of some of the businesses, it is not entirely easy for licence holders to carry on the legacy. With growing competition from international businesses and franchises, hawkers continue to struggle financially to keep the business running. The possibility of having their next generation take over the business is limited by the movement to work towards the modern and global image that encourage the younger generation to work in established companies, rather than what the government sees as an unproductive economy. Such policies have made it almost impossible for hawkers to maintain a hopeful future, as many see the end of their business approaching

soon.

As more and more people recognize the significance of hawkers and street markets through academic writing, the government has started to acknowledge the impact of hawkers on Hong Kong culture and social activity (fig 4.06). According to the FEHD, the Director of Food and Environmental Hygiene had completed issuing a total of 279 hawker licences between the period of July 2009 to April 2012[26]. In 2015, the government revoked the goal to eliminate hawkers from the streets [27]and allowed licences to be transferred to immediate family rather than just to the spouse of the licence holder. The government also granted HK$200 thousand to restore 10 stalls in Central including repairing roof structures and installing natural gas pipelines[28]. Although the policies have since changed and seem to be making an effort to acknowledge the cultural and social impact of these street markets, current guidelines continue to make it difficult for the hawker profession to continue and the process of transfer is not simple as the board will only permit the transfer or succession of licence under specific circumstances. These past regulations have already limited the potential for the profession to grow, and current competition with international brands and franchises have made it even more difficult to survive the food industry. Along with the ongoing pressure from government officials to abolish the hawker profession, market trends and economic growth have driven street markets into interior environments that are easier to manage and control, eliminating the heritage experience of the colorful and vibrant activity on the streets themselves. As urban development is inevitable in this rapidly growing region, not only will street markets disappear but a new culture will be written. Rather than creating more modern interior spaces for the street markets to

26 Food and Environmental Hygiene Department, "Public Markets."

27 Christopher Dewolf,"Fishballs worth fighting for: A brief history of Hong Kong street hawkers," *Zolima*, June 10, 2016, https://zolimacitymag.com/fishballs-worth-fighting-for-a-brief-history-of-hong-kong-street-hawkers/.

28 Kate Whitehead, "Dai pai dong an endangered species in Hong Kong," *South China Morning Post*, July 21, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/1556158/dai-pai-dong-endangered-species-hong-kong

inhabit in attempt to preserve the urban phenomenon, promoting the street markets to operate to their fullest by giving them the proper attention and acknowledgment of their significance to Hong Kong history allows the industry to leave its legacy as it starts to define a new chapter.

05 On the Ground: Case Studies of the Hong Kong Street Markets

This chapter will uncover the stories of the street markets through fictional encounters of real life street markets and street market vendors. The case studies will look at various market stalls starting from a general public market stall in a popular market to establish a standard, later moving to street market stalls and individual cooked food Dai Pai Dong owners on the corner of a street. The stories will explore the relationship of people to the stall history and to the foods of Hong Kong, capturing the urban development of the markets and establishing Hong Kong's food urbanism through the lens of the people. This chapter will also include observational details of real life stalls to speculate and animate the personality of the stall as a part of food urbanism that makes Hong Kong unique. Through the telling of case studies and the narrative of the market stalls through the vendor and consumer perspective, the chapter aims to further define the relationship of food urbanism to culture, identity, placemaking and city making, ultimately inseparable from the people of Hong Kong (fig 5.01).

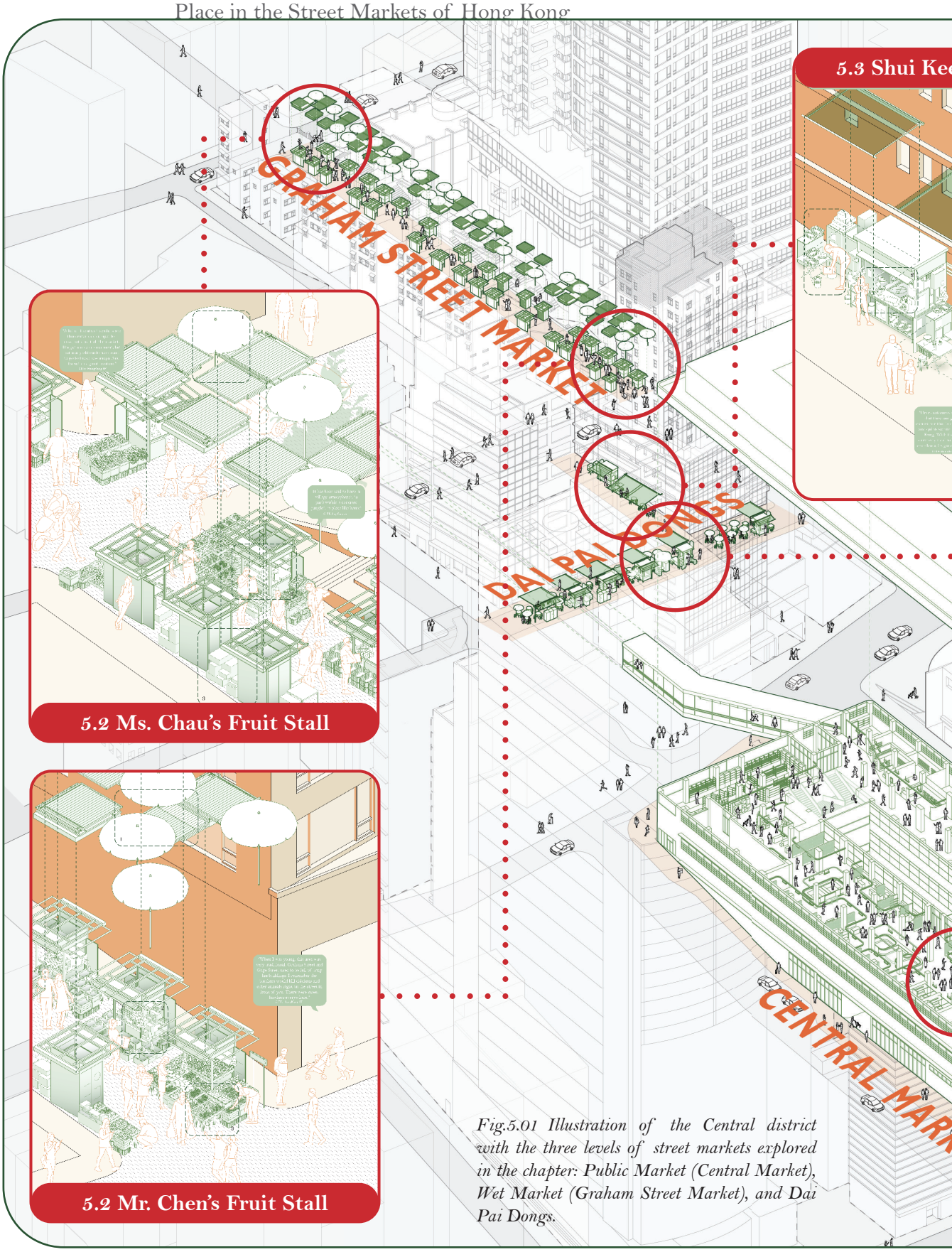
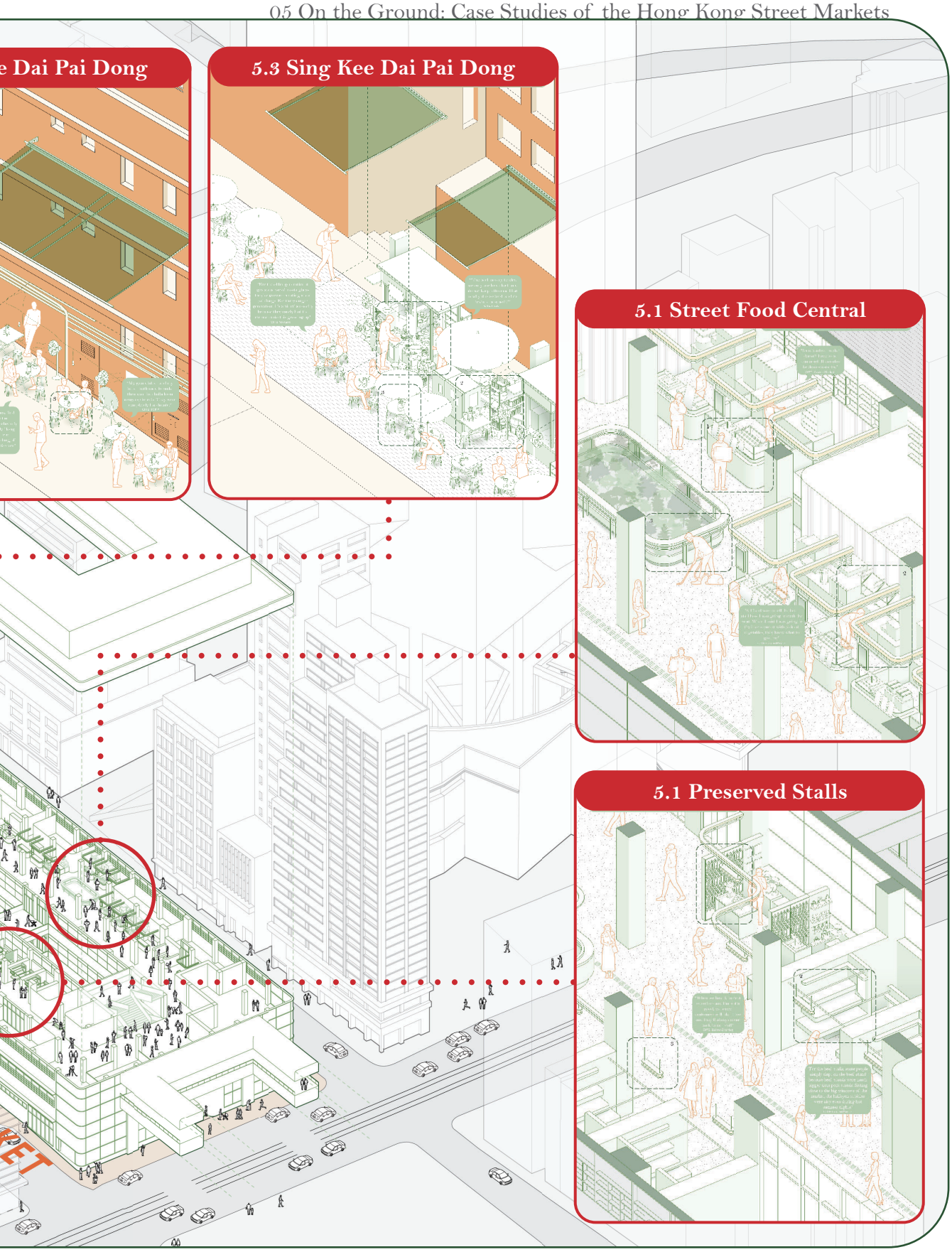


Fig.5.01 Illustration of the Central district with the three levels of street markets explored in the chapter: Public Market (Central Market), Wet Market (Graham Street Market), and Dai Pai Dongs.


e Dai Pai Dong
5.3 Sing Kee Dai Pai Dong
5.1 Street Food Central
5.1 Preserved Stalls

5.1 Public Market: Central Market

"In my expectation, the Central Market is most suitable for stores such as wonton or fish ball noodles. At the moment there's sushi and red wine." - Katty Law, conservationist and convenor of the Central and Western Concern Group. [1]

Public markets are the standard market typology according to government identifications and exhibit an idealized version of the street market culture in Hong Kong. Those that have been revitalized are known to be an almost memoir of the historical landmark while still attempting to provide the basic necessities of a street market. The first case will look at the famous Central Market (中環街市) located at 93 Queen's Road Central, Central, Hong Kong. Central Market is one of the most popular street markets in Hong Kong that recently completed a revitalization project by the Urban Renewal Authorities (URA). As part of a conservation and revitalization project, the URA restored the 80-year-old historic building including repairing structures and renovating interiors. The new Central Market embodies the concept of 'Playground for All' and transforms the landmark "into a vibrant community hotspot that combines 'Approachable', 'Energetic', and 'Gregarious', which not only preserves collective memories, but also brings new experiences to the community."[2] The Central Market now offers various vendors, including a designated dining ground, street food lane, retail area, and a Chef's Market providing a selection of specialty foods and gourmet ingredients, while also providing

1 Candice Chau, "Hong Kong's Central Market comes back to life but conservationist takes issue with 'gentrification'," *Hong Kong Free Press*, August 26, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/08/26/hong-kongs-central-market-comes-back-to-life-but-conservationist-takes-issue-with-gentrification/.

2 "Vision," Central Market, accessed June 2, 2022, https://www.centralmarket.hk/en/vision

Fig.5.02 Comparison of the first Central Market building in 1895 and the latest Central Market building in the Bauhaus style architecture.

space for exhibitions and events.

First built in 1842, under the name Canton Bazaar (廣州市場), the market was located at the intersection of Cochrane and Graham near Queen's Road Central. In 1850, the Canton Bazaar was renamed to Central Market (中環街市) and moved to the current site between the Praya (now Des Voeux Road Central), Queen's Road Central, Queen Victoria and Jubilee Streets. It was rebuilt again in 1858, 1895 and 1938. The construction of the Central Market in 1938 was rebuilt to the Bauhaus style three storey reinforced concrete structure (fig 5.02). With over 200 booths, high ceilings and equipped with many facilities, it was seen as the most advanced market at that time. The ground floor was home to 57 stalls dedicated for the trade of fish and 46 stalls allocated for poultry, the second floor had 62 stalls for pork and 40 stalls for beef, and the third floor contained 31 stalls for fruit and 50 stalls for vegetables[3]. In 1994, a part of the Central Market was converted to the Central Escalator Link Alley Shopping Arcade (中環購物

3 "Conservation Project: Stall," Central Market, accessed June 2, 2022, https://www.centralmarket.hk/en/conservation/#stall.

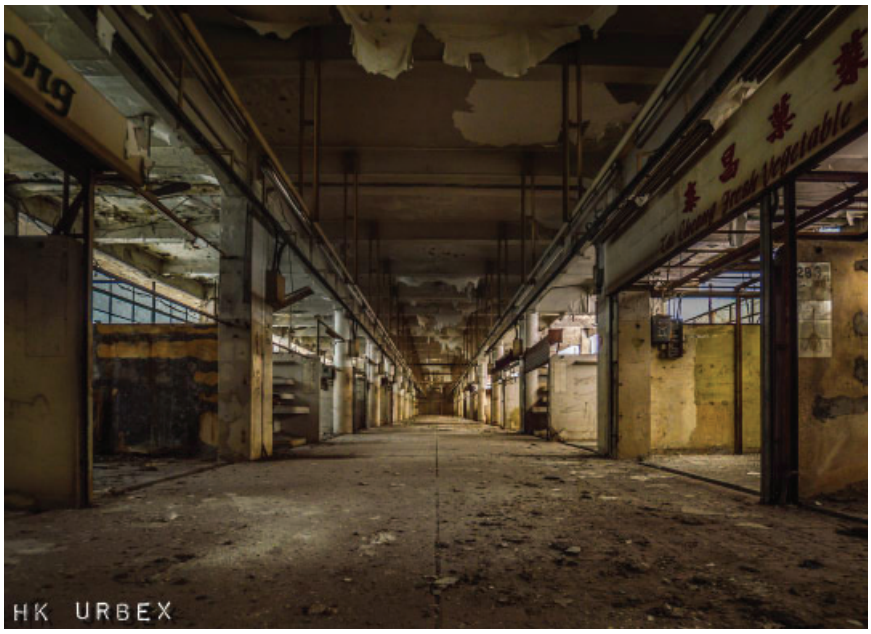


Fig.5.03 Central Market was left abandoned in 2003, leaving the building vacant and exposed to natural elements causing extreme damage especially to structural systems.

Fig.5.04 The abandoned Central Market exhibits the original bays including the construction of the stalls including a front bench/ counter and overhead signage.

Fig.5.05 Central Market reopened in 2021 showcasing some of the preserved stalls along the renovated interior hallway.

Fig.5.06 A preserved stall has been renovated and opened to the public, currently selling dried seafood items.

Fig.5.07 The Central Market staircase is photographed from the ground, back-lit by the atrium skylight sun creating a smoky and mysterious atmosphere. (1959)

廊), and in 2003, the market ceased operation (fig 5.03, 5.04). The market was put on the List of Sites for Sale by Application but with the pleas from the public to preserve the root of Hong Kong food culture and demands to preserve one of the last remaining Bauhaus-style architectures in Hong Kong, the market was taken off the list and transferred authority to the Urban Renewal Authorities (URA). In 2009, the URA launched a project to revitalize the abandoned Central Market. The project was kept under wraps until it was pretty much a done deal without any input from the public. Reopened to the public on August 23, 2021, Central Market features a variety of units for retail and food including social spaces designated for events and exhibitions. Of the over 200 original stalls, 13 were preserved and remain in the original place available for the public to visit, but are not occupied by the original type of produce the stall was designed for (fig 5.05, 5.06). The original shell of the building was refurbished but the interior elements have almost all been replaced. As the building was deteriorating, the structure of the building was repaired replacing most of the original building materials and features as they were mostly broken or damaged. Columns were replaced with a newer concrete material

to reinforce the structural integrity, while the grand staircases, most known for being photographed by Fan Ho, were preserved in their original locations and the finishes and signage were restored, although now features black metal handrails to accommodate for accessibility needs.

Despite the fact that the public showed interest in preserving the architectural gem and the local history and culture, the project was privately funded and completed renovations internally. Although some of the original architectural features were preserved and the intention to protect the urban architecture is intact, the overall preservation method is arguably ineffective. Not only does the new modern aesthetic remove the livelihood of the street markets in Hong Kong (fig 5.07), the purpose of the building has become more of a tourist attraction than an everyday street market where locals can grab daily essentials like groceries and meals. Pork, beef, seafood, and other fresh produce is only found in the Chef's market, which provides gourmet style ingredients that are not readily affordable to the vast public. What was once a designed market stall for specific types of produce is now left mainly empty and on display as an artifact. Vendors now sell souvenirs and artisan products, and the classic red lamps which were used to illuminate fresh produce are only seen as a sculpture for ornamentation. The natural and ambient lighting from the atrium is not nearly as prominent as it is masked by the many light fixtures throughout the market. The atmosphere of the market no longer embodies the practical yet vibrant activity of Hong Kong culture, but rather the international and modern city that Hong Kong has become.

The Stories of Central Market - A case of lost traditions

In the early mornings before the sun fully rises, the moist overnight air from the atrium stairway lingers throughout the market. Shop owners start their day by wiping off the glass countertops and opening the metal gates. Janitors are finishing their morning tasks by cleaning public washrooms and mopping the concrete floors. Workers at the Chef's Market on the ground floor are restocking the shelves and the coffee shops are refilling the coffee bean containers. Central market event coordinators are also seen preparing the event space on the second floor for the week's exhibition and maintenance workers are watering the plants. On the third floor, retailers are busy organizing merchandise and vendors at the street food central section are preparing the stoves for the day. With a busy day ahead, workers at the famous indoor market have much to do before the doors open.

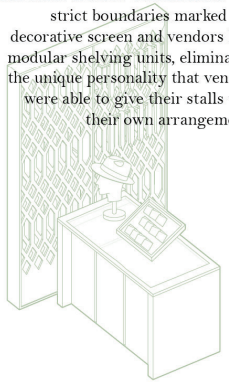
The lights turn on as the market begins to fill with visitors. Walking through the doors is a large tourist group guided by a single tour guide, explaining the history and architectural design of the newly renovated market building. Posted on poster boards along the walls are illustrations and photographs of the previous versions of Central Market, along with important contributions to development over the years. As the tour guide takes the group through the exhibition, a group of elderly follow closely behind, quietly chatting among themselves.

"This used to be the chicken slaughter area. Ah, I remember how foggy the atrium looked with the steam coming from the slaughter room across the staircase," (fig 5.09) an older gentleman tells the others.

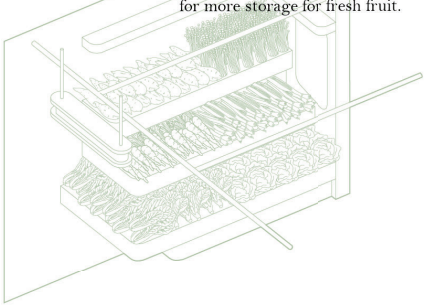
Fig.5.08 Illustrative diagram of Central Market showing the preserved stalls area and highlighting key elements including lighting additions, screen partitions, and stall organization.

Central Market: Preserved Stalls

1 The stalls are now standardized with strict boundaries marked by a decorative screen and vendors have modular shelving units, eliminating the unique personality that vendors were able to give their stalls with their own arrangements.



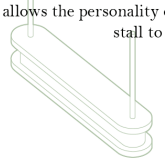
2 Fruit and vegetable stalls had shorter shelving for ease of displaying and grabbing fresh produce, and ceilings were lined with rows of iron shelves to allow for more storage for fresh fruit.



"When we buy it, taste it ourselves and think it's good, we know customers will like it too and they'll always come back to our stall"
CITE: ZolimaCityMag

"For the beef stalls, some people simply slept on the beef stand because beef stands were much bigger than pork stands. Sitting close to the big windows of the market, the halfopen cubicles were airy even during hot summer nights"
CITE: CentralMarket

3 The modular and repetitive signage hanging from above creates a cohesive aesthetic to the market but no longer allows the personality of the stall to shine.



He continued to explain that the chickens were held in wooden cages bound by a wire gauze on the outside at the time. This meant the cages were extremely heavy especially when filled with chickens, and those who carried these around would be built and muscular[4]. Occasionally, they would run after chickens that had escaped into the hallways of the market, causing chaos within the building as many customers were passing quickly through the halls. With stalls not bound to a perimeter and often flowing into the wide hallways, the market became a busy and lively environment with unpredictable entertainment. The gentleman continued by emphasizing the relationship between the stall owners and customers that went beyond simple business and expanded into a large extended family within the neighborhood. In a publication by Chinachem Group on Central Market stories, Ivan Wong, a third generation owner of a chicken stall that once operated inside Central Market shared his memories of working with his father at the stalls:

"When you sold live chickens, you first slaughtered them. Then you picked the right ones for buyers. We had colleagues who took care of the slaughtering. After the slaughtering, they brought the chickens back to the stall for the master to choose. The master picked the right one for each customer according to what dishes they were going to make. If the chickens on a given day were of particularly good quality, they could sell at a higher price, and you made more money." [5]

Chickens are now sold frozen and pre-slaughtered, not only at Central Market but almost all markets in Hong Kong. Due to the restrictions after multiple virus outbreaks, it is difficult to find live chickens available for purchase. Similarly, produce such as beef and pork are sold differently from before, mostly moving to pre-slaughtered and packaged goods.

By the time the group of elderly walked away, the tourist group had made it to the preserved stall and the guide started explaining the importance of the stall design. Each stall at Central Market

4 Chloe Lai, ed, *Central Market Rendezvous* (Hong Kong: Chinachem Group, 2021), 32-34

5 Lai, *Central Market Rendezvous*, 35

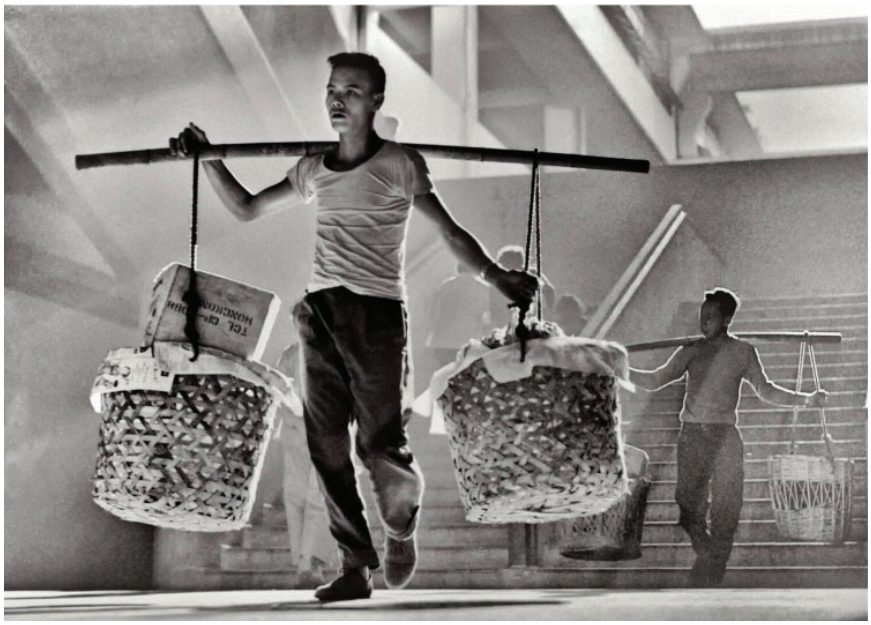


Fig.5.09 Photograph of Central Market vendors balancing produce on a basket on either side of the wooden pole (1963)

was designed with a specific purpose, directed to accommodate a different produce. The stalls designed to hold pork and beef produce were made with especially larger tables and counters, allowing the large animals to be laid on top while also causing workers to turn these counters into make-shift beds when they got tired[6]. The fish stalls had concrete counters in front of large fish tanks, while the beef and pork stalls had wooden countertops specifically for cutting large and tough meat[7]. Fruit and vegetable stalls had shorter shelving for ease of displaying and grabbing fresh produce, and ceilings were lined with rows of iron shelves to allow for more storage for fresh fruit[8]. Although most of Central Market has been renovated, the 13 preserved stalls are part of the conservation strategy and kept in their original clutters and locations to commemorate the history (fig 5.08).

The preserved stalls on the ground floor and first level are

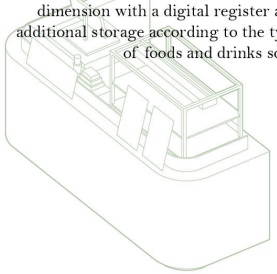
6 Lai, *Central Market Rendezvous*, 40-41

7 "Conservation Project: Stall," Central Market, accessed June 2, 2022, https://www.centralmarket.hk/en/conservation/#stall.

8 Central Market, "Conservation Project."

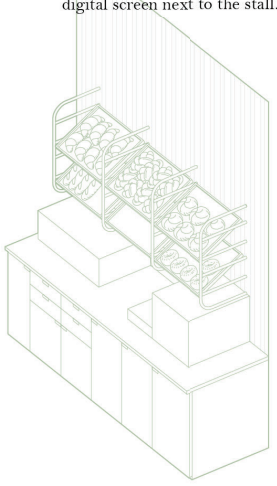
Central Market: Street Food Central

1 The booths are rounded off with a tan-colored finish and sit against a fluted wall. The counters are a standardized dimension with a digital register and additional storage according to the type of foods and drinks sold.



"An attractive market doesn't have to be upmarket. It can also be down-to-earth."
CITE: CentralMarket

2 Larger appliances and cooktops sit at the back of the booth while menu items are displayed on a digital screen next to the stall.



1

3

2

"All I did was to tell the beef stall how I was going to cook the meat. When I said I was going to fry it or steam it with pickled vegetables, they knew what to give me"
CITE: CentralMarket

3 Although each stall has their own menu and counter, most stalls currently operate in a take-out fashion as there isn't a common dining area adjacent to the stalls for customers to take a seat and eat. Instead, there is a central planter that incorporates the disposal bins under a bar-height ledge, but is currently blocked off by red ropes.

barricaded behind red ropes, on display as part of the exhibition of the history of Central Market. On the third floor where the fruit stalls used to stand, the preserved stands are available for retailers to rent as a unit but are not currently occupied by the intended produce, rather have become a tailor shop, florist, and traditional women's fashion shop. Just down the hallway are other retailers with items in a similar category, women's and men's fashion, souvenir shops, and personal care and beauty shops. A mother is heard in the distance, nostalgic of the preserved stalls.

"It's a lot quieter now, there's no shouting for produce or screaming at livestock. It has become a shopping mall with trinkets, souvenirs, and fashion," the mother sighs.

She continues to identify the cold and static atmosphere but unsure of the reason. It could be the lack of activity within the concrete walls of the market as it is still newly opened, or it could be the strict boundaries of the stalls that create division between the vendor and customers. She recalls the wet floors of the market that seemed slippery from the water that washed away the blood and dirt, how the glistening floors as they reflected the light from the atrium almost danced among the welcoming voices of the neighborhood chatter. Signage was personalized, the handwriting on the humble signage reveals a lot about the reliability and friendliness of the stall owner. Items were also sold loose, allowing customers to purchase what they needed without having to purchase a standard amount as they would now. The stalls are now standardized with strict boundaries marked by a decorative screen and vendors have modular shelving units, eliminating the unique personality that vendors were able to give their stalls with their own arrangements. The modular and repetitive signage hanging from above creates a cohesive aesthetic to the market but no longer allows the personality of the stall to shine. Whatever the cause may be, the market is not the same lively and entertaining place she remembers.

Fig.5.10 Illustrative diagram of Central Market showing the street food central area and highlighting key elements including central planting, modular front counter and back wall storage.

As the lunch hour nears, the retail shops are heading on break while the cooked food stalls start seeing more business. On the other side of the atrium, the new Street Food Central faces the afternoon crowd of customers (fig 5.10). Connecting to the Central-Mid-Levels Escalators, a hillside escalator and pedestrian walkway system, the stalls in Street Food Central mimic the Dai Pai Dongs on the streets that are lined up next to each other, offering a diverse collection of foods and cuisines in a condensed alleyway. Although each stall has their own menu and counter, most stalls currently operate in a take-out fashion as there isn't a common dining area adjacent to the stalls for customers to take a seat and eat. Instead, there is a central planter that incorporates the disposal bins under a bar-height ledge but is currently blocked off by red ropes.

A couple walks in through the connected pedestrian pathway into the market, curious about the new stores and shops offered in this historical building. Heading towards Street Food Central, they notice the rhythmic structure of the retail shops and the cohesive signage hanging from the ceiling. The booths are rounded off with a tan-colored finish and sit against a fluted wall. The counters are a standardized dimension with a digital register and additional storage according to the type of foods and drinks sold. Larger appliances and cooktops sit at the back of the booth while menu items are displayed on a digital screen next to the stall. Browsing through the menus, there are artisan bakeries, aesthetic coffee and tea shops, lavish dessert stalls, exotic snack shops, and fusion meals available. The couple was hoping to find more local eats, such as fish ball noodles or classic Hong Kong style milk tea. As they approach a bakery booth, the worker greets them kindly and asks for their order. Pointing at the feature board, they order a simple ham sandwich with a brewed coffee. The worker quickly punches in the order, collects the money, and turns around to prepare the food. Completing the order by placing the sandwich into a small paper bag and adding a protective sleeve on the hot coffee cup, the worker thanks the couple for the purchase and the couple walk away. The overall interaction between the couple and the worker seems cold, quick, and minimal, as if it were to be a fast food chain (fig 5.11).

Fig.5.11 Central Market "Street Food Central" is an area demarcated for food stalls varying from artisan bakeries to fusion cuisines.

At another booth down the hallway, a young mother with her infant carriage is exploring the selection of desserts offered at the stall. Curious about the more traditional Hong Kong desserts, she asks the worker for a recommendation, stating that she has recently given birth and would like to have something that would be good for her health. The worker is unsure of what to recommend as another customer steps up and explains:

"You should eat papaya milk (fig 5.12). It's good for helping produce breast milk and helps with replenishing nutrients to your skin!" The older woman responds.

The older woman follows by explaining the specific health benefits with Chinese dessert soups such as almond soup and tofu pudding, both of which are known to improve skin density and aid in naturally reducing fine lines and wrinkles[9]. Recommending a dessert street stall outside of the market known for their sweet almond soup that has been ground finely by hand, the woman suggests the young

9 Jessica Albert, "6 Amazing Health Benefits of Consuming Papaya While Breastfeeding," *Mom Junction*, February 9, 2023, https://www.momjunction.com/articles/papaya-while-breastfeeding_00367111/

Fig.5.12 Papaya milk is known to be healthy for new mothers as it helps maintaining youthful skin while also helping with the production of milk.

mother ask the owner for further recommendations, as the owner would know best. Content with the recommendation, the young mother settles for almond soup at the stall, hoping to visit the recommended street stall later on.

The beauty of the street markets that are unable to be replicated within a formally managed market come from the raw connection and organic growth of a community due to the interaction between customers and vendors. The small and local stall cooking comes from the experience and love for cooking of the owners, and their will to share their cuisines and home foods with the rest of the community. The ability for stall owners to specifically recommend and personalize the menu item depending on the customer attracts the people to build connections and strengthen community. The market becomes a space for the community to grow from the hearts of the people through common interests in food. As stated in the publication of Central Market stories, a resident of the area and frequent customer expresses:

"An attractive market doesn't have to be upmarket. It can also be down-to-earth." [10]

Central market has always been the go-to neighborhood market throughout many generations. It was once a place where communities were built, and identity was created. The connection between vendor and customer went beyond business and became an extension of the family. As the market closed down and reopened through the revitalization project, many aspects of the organic and raw nature of the informal markets have been replaced by the static and highly managed structure of the organization. Although hygienically improved and structurally reinforced, the market has become a closer representative of the globalized and modern image of Hong Kong, rather than a reflection of the people.

10 Chloe Lai, ed, *Central Market Rendezvous* (Hong Kong: Chinachem Group, 2021), 161

5.2 Wet Market: Graham Street Market

"It's true that a substantial part of the market is still there, but a substantial proportion has gone." Chloe Lai, chairperson of the Conservancy Association for Heritage [11]

On the contrary to public markets, wet markets are known to be an entity of its own that exists more closely related to neighborhood organized and managed street markets. The next case examines one of the oldest remaining open-air wet markets, Graham Street Market (嘉咸市集) located on Graham street, Central, Hong Kong, also expanding into areas of Peel street and Gage street. Truly on the streets of Hong Kong, Graham market is known as one of the more authentic remaining street markets, yet is still unable to escape the development needs of the region. The Urban Renewal Authorities (URA) launched a HK$3.8 billion redevelopment project titled H18 in 2007 announcing a new development across 3 sites with housing, retail, office, and hotel buildings with community facilities and allocated open space provisions[12]. Scheduled to complete in 2024, the project plans for 4 new 30 storey residential, commercial and hotel towers, including a new high-rise residential tower named "My Central" that has already completed construction with a "new" interior Graham street food hall in the podium.

With a history of over 180 years dating back to 1841[13], Graham

11 Adam Wright, "From street-side slaughter to hipster haven: Remaking the oldest wet market in Hong Kong," *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 13, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/13/from-street-side-slaughter-to-hipster-haven-re-making-the-oldest-wet-market-in-hong-kong/

12 Wright, "From street-side slaughter to hipster haven."

13 Blue Lapis Road, "GRAHAM STREET MARKET – Swansong of the Old Central, Hong

Fig.5.13 Photograph of Graham Street Market taken from the corner of Graham Street and Queen's Road Central showcasing the abundance of vendors and shoppers. (1952)

Fig.5.14 Peel Street / Graham Street Development Scheme (H18) master layout plan indicating the proposed residential towers, office and commercial spaces, and the included public open space that spans across all three sites.

Street Market is one of the oldest and most representative of the Hong Kong neighborhood market providing produce and ingredients to residents of the area since the fishing era. The market was originally located closer to the harbourfront on Queen's Road, making it a perfect destination for the neighborhood to access local seafood and fruits[14] (fig 5.13). As the harborfront border continues to move further out due to development, the market has since been concealed within the urban fabric yet remains an iconic location for both locals and tourists alike. With around 40 different vendors providing fresh and affordable produce including meats, vegetables, and dried seafoods, Graham market became a reliable location for local residents and expanded into the attention of tourists as iconic to the Hong Kong lifestyle. Other stalls offered freshly made foods, including a noodle shop and snack shop, making it a food heaven for many people. After the announcement of the renovation project in 2007 (fig 5.14), many street vendors were evicted during the construction process and promised a space in the new development,

Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, May 4, 2014, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2014/05/04/graham-street-market-swansong-of-the-old-central/

14 Wright, "From street-side slaughter to hipster haven."

although many chose to relocate as the expected raise of rent prices would not be suitable for their original business[15]. This prediction was accurate. As new construction began and towers were completed, rent prices became unaffordable to small local vendors; rather, spaces have been occupied with Japanese wagyu restaurants and artisan baked goods. As blogger Bluelapisroad stated,

> *"A 2020 property listing shows that a high level unit was selling for HK$48,960 per square feet (US$ 6,100). The asking price for the 674 sq.ft unit was HK$33,000,000 (US$ 4,255,500). To put it in context, if a tofu vendor at Graham Street Market sells a block of tofu for HK$4.00 each, she would need to sell over 12,000 blocks just to buy a square feet of residential space above her head. The HK$4.00 price has yet factored in any expense or production cost."* [16]

In the newly constructed food hall, only 10 stalls were allocated for fresh produce excluding the cooked food stalls[17]. Graham street market went from a local neighborhood market providing affordable produce and foods, to a global touristic market offering high end cuisines and ingredients.

Although the redevelopment plan is said to be called for by local

15 Blue Lapis Road, "GRAHAM STREET MARKET – Swansong of the Old Central, Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, May 4, 2014, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2014/05/04/graham-street-market-swansong-of-the-old-central/

16 Blue Lapis Road, "Culture of Disappearance: Graham Street Market (嘉咸市集), Central (中環), Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, February 28, 2021, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/02/26/disappearing-living-culture-graham-street-market-%E5%98%89%E5%92%B8%E5%B8%82%E9%9B%86-central-%E4%B8%AD%E7%92%B0-hong-kong/

17 Megan Blake, "Stifling street life: The demise of Graham Street Market in Hong Kong," *GeoFoodie*. April 10, 2014, https://geofoodie.org/2014/04/10/stifling-street-life-the-demise-of-graham-street-market-in-hong-kong/

Fig.5.15 H18 Community Workshop discussed the conservation strategy of the pre-war buildings along Graham street

residents, the project scheme did not sit well with conservation groups. According to the government project plans, some of the historical buildings will be included in the project scheme as an attempt at historic preservation (fig 5.15), but others have argued that the retention of the building does not translate to retention of the cultural and social significance of the space[18]. New high-rise towers to accommodate the growing population enhances the vibrancy of the neighborhood, but disturbs the existing low-density community and is incompatible with the neighboring areas[19]. The scheme includes a reserved floor space for the selling of fresh produce that will operate alongside the existing market and feature historical shops, but does not advocate for the success of the already existing vendors and hawkers in the area. Graham market

18 Blake, "Stifling street life."

19 Blue Lapis Road, "Culture of Disappearance: Graham Street Market (嘉咸市集), Central (中環), Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, February 28, 2021, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/02/26/disappearing-living-culture-graham-street-market-%E5%98%89%E5%92%B8%E5%B8%82%E9%9B%86-central-%E4%B8%AD%E7%92%B0-hong-kong/

currently still exists among the prominent construction sites in the area, although masked by the large scaffolding and construction noises in adjacent blocks. The once "organically thriving"[20] market representative of the dynamic and resilient culture of Hong Kong has transformed into a static and modern metropolitan city.

20 "Comment on H18 Project," Legislative Council, Hong Kong, September 6, 2007, https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr06-07/english/panels/ha/ha_hec/papers/ha_heccb2-2711-1_2-e.pdf

The Stories of Graham Street Market- A Street for Some, Market for Most, Home for All

It is not uncommon to see the street filled with people in the early mornings. Whether they are making their way to work and school, finishing their daily morning exercise routine, or leaving the hotels to start their exploring adventures, people are filling the streets with life before the sun fully rises. In the core of Hong Kong Island is a bustling street with many coexisting activities, classic of the Hong Kong urban spirit. Just under 6m wide, Graham Street is home to a diverse community from residents to tourists, and office workers to tradesmen.

Being adjacent to newly constructed residential high-rises and hotel lodging accommodations, as well as retail and commercial units, the street sees its fair share of the diverse Hong Kong population. One group of young adults are roaming the streets taking pictures of the skyline as it reflects the early sunrise on its tall glass buildings, while another group of students are running to the mini bus terminal as they make their way to early morning classes. Amongst them are the older grandmas and grandpas completing their group morning exercises at the nearby park, while several nannies are heading to resident's houses to look after the children as the parents make their way to work. Just down the block, several street-level retail shops are opening up for business while construction workers and local tradesmen are entering the neighboring block as it continues its construction from the day prior. As the streets get busier, the neighborhood culture gets louder.

Along the street lives a well known street market with many decades of history, where local vendors open shops along the side of the street leaving a narrow pathway for customers as they bump

Fig.5.16 Illustrative diagram of Graham Street Wet Market stall highlighting the use of umbrellas as shelter, individuality of the stall organization, and cardboard and styrofoam boxes as shelving.

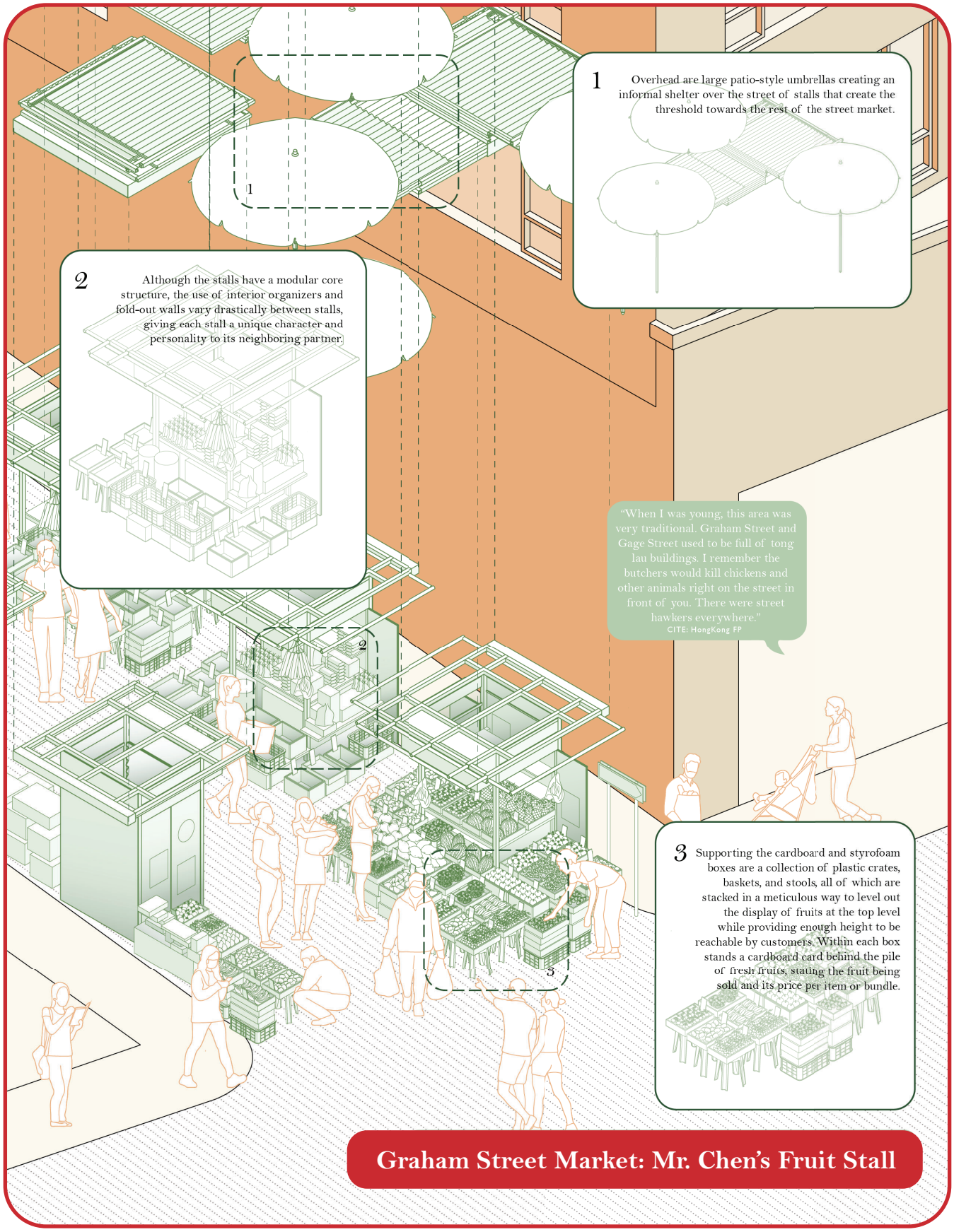

1
Overhead are large patio-style umbrellas creating an informal shelter over the street of stalls that create the threshold towards the rest of the street market.
2
Although the stalls have a modular core structure, the use of interior organizers and fold-out walls vary drastically between stalls, giving each stall a unique character and personality to its neighboring partner.
"When I was young, this area was very traditional. Graham Street and Gage Street used to be full of tong lau buildings. I remember the butchers would kill chickens and other animals right on the street in front of you. There were street hawkers everywhere."
CITE: HongKong FP
3
Supporting the cardboard and styrofoam boxes are a collection of plastic crates, baskets, and stools, all of which are stacked in a meticulous way to level out the display of fruits at the top level while providing enough height to be reachable by customers. Within each box stands a cardboard card behind the pile of fresh fruits, stating the fruit being sold and its price per item or bundle.
Graham Street Market: Mr. Chen's Fruit Stall

Fig.5.17 Inside the street market, the awnings and umbrellas shield the pedestrian from the tall glass building within the city, transporting them into another world of food.

shoulders walking through. A variety of produce and items can be found on this street market, mostly of fresh fruits and vegetables and some stalls dedicated to dried goods. Among the construction noise and sound of vehicular traffic, the voices of vendors ring through the streets. The space is filled with vendors calling out the prices of the produce reciprocated with consumers requesting the amount they want to purchase. The subtle scent of fresh fruits and dried goods fill the atmosphere, attracting more customers to wander deeper into the street market and away from the sewage smell and exhaust fumes on the main roads.

Marking the entrance to one of the market areas between Wellington St and Gage St are two fruit stands, staggered on either side of the street (fig 5.16). Overhead are large patio-style umbrellas creating an informal shelter over the street of stalls that create the threshold towards the rest of the street market. The umbrellas are anchored at the base by setting them into concrete blocks, disguising themselves within the vast array of fresh fruits (fig 5.17). Spilling out towards the main road but not quite enough to disrupt the pedestrian and vehicular traffic, the produce are spread out on cardboard and Styrofoam boxes in an unassuming way, yet

resulting in an efficient use of inexpensive leftover materials to maximize the limited space available. Supporting the cardboard and styrofoam boxes are a collection of plastic crates, baskets, and stools, all of which are stacked in a meticulous way to level out the display of fruits at the top level while providing enough height to be reachable by customers. Within each box stands a cardboard card behind the pile of fresh fruits, stating the fruit being sold and its price per item or bundle. The colorful fruits fill the scene almost hiding the standardized steel structure that marks the foundation of the stalls sitting behind all the produce. Although the stalls have a modular core structure, the use of interior organizers and fold-out walls vary drastically between stalls, giving each stall a unique character and personality to its neighboring partner.

Distant chatter from other customers reveals that the stall belongs to an enthusiastic and cheerful older gentleman named Mr. Chen. Mr. Chen's fruit stand at the end of the street welcomes visitors and customers with his vibrant and colorful collection of fresh fruits, but also with his bright and playful personality. Situated at the threshold of the street market, Mr. Chen's fruits have engaged and attracted consumers for years, as seen in the sun washed color on the plastic stools and slightly ripped umbrellas shading the extension of the stall. His stall extends to the other side of the street, framing the entrance to the street with more colorful produce in informal displays. The modular elements of the steel framed market stall are colored yellow to match the dynamic colors of the fruits and filled with even more layers of produce on the shelves. Hanging from a makeshift hook made from a clothes hanger are the plastic bags used to package the produce to customers. His shelves at the back of the stall are left empty as he has trouble getting to them with all the fruits crowding the stall base, but he uses the reverse side behind the stall to store his personal items during business hours. Light fixtures are hung on the underside of the roof framing as the canopy of umbrellas and extended roofs of stalls allow for little to no lighting within the street market, while also helping to illuminate the fruits below.

As cheerful as always, Mr. Chen endorses his fresh fruits to bystanders, "The fruits are brought in daily and are always kept in great conditions."

A customer walks up to the stand to look at the selection of bananas, confused by the variety of bananas available.

"They are not all the same!" claims Mr. Chen, noticing the confused look on the young woman.

Mr. Chen goes on to explain that some bananas are best to eat by themselves, while another variety next to it must be enjoyed cooked[21]. One variety on the table has a duller taste, while another selection is the best option if you like the super sweet and ripe bananas. Each fruit has its charm, as Mr. Chen explains to the young woman, now understanding her needs to get fruits for a child she is taking care of after engaging in some small talk. Listening to the nanny and attentive to her needs, Mr. Chen introduces her to a selection of sweet berries that children are sure to enjoy. The young woman is happy with the suggestion and purchases a bag of fresh berries along with her purchase of bananas. Mr. Chen carefully picks a vibrantly colored bag of berries and a ripe bundle of bananas, placing them in a plastic bag before handing it to the young woman and thanking her for the purchase. The fruit stand will see many more customers throughout the day, some of which are old neighborhood buddies whom Mr. Chen has served for many years and others are new faces who are curious about the opportunities within the depths of the market. Occasionally, he will assist in looking after the next door dry goods stall when the owner is on a break, but he will use the same enthusiasm and cheerful spirit to sell the products as if it were his own.

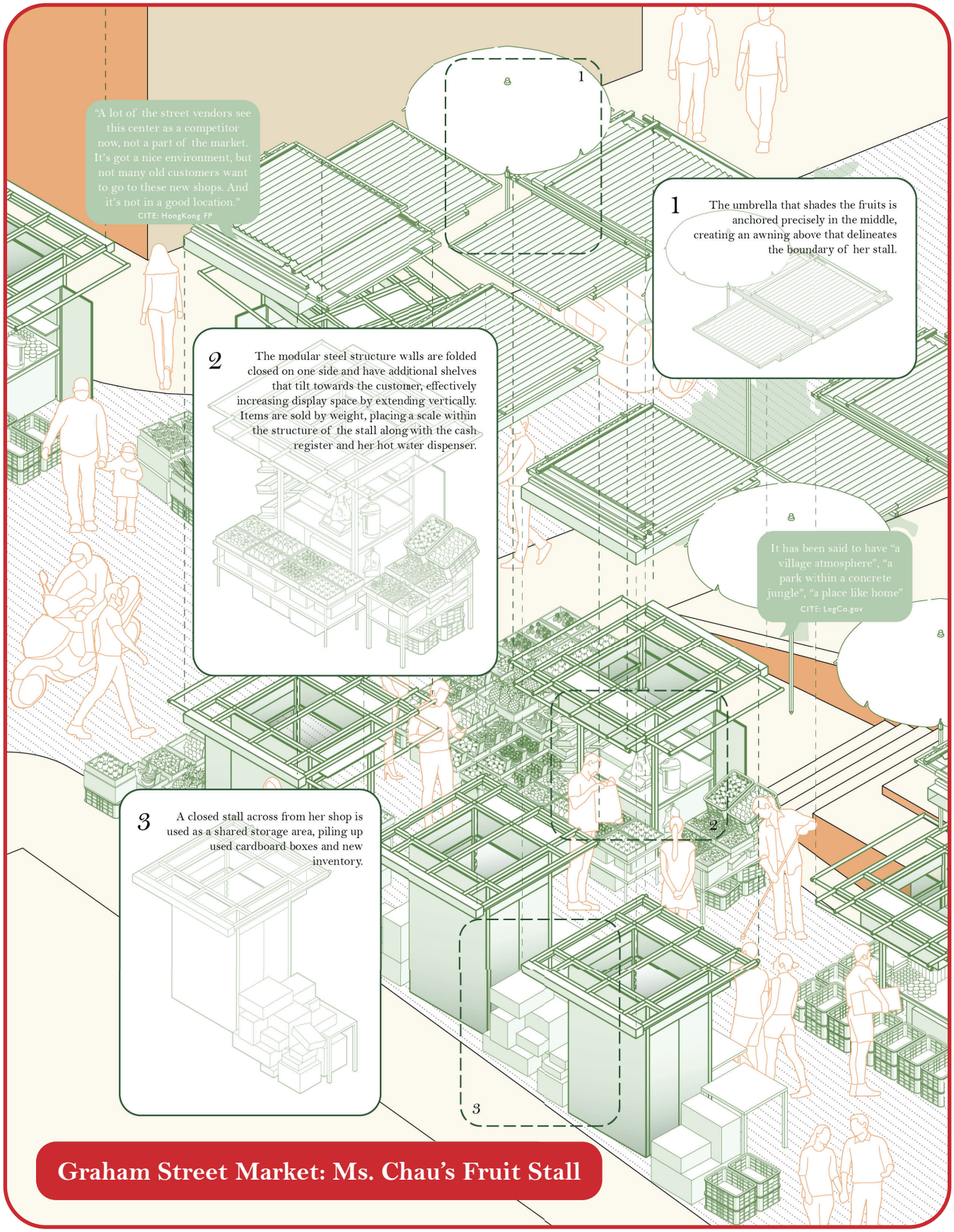
At the corner of Graham street and Gage Street, Mrs. Chau's fruit stall stands as a gateway to the depths of the street market. The

21 Megan Blake, "Stifling street life: The demise of Graham Street Market in Hong Kong," *GeoFoodie*. April 10, 2014, https://geofoodie.org/2014/04/10/stifling-street-life-the-demise-of-graham-street-market-in-hong-kong/

Fig.5.18 Fruit stall vendor in Graham Street Market on the corner of Graham Street and Gage street organizing the display onto the adjacent sidewalk to extend the boundary of her stall.

plastic crates holding up smaller cardboard boxes filled with exotic fruits are lined up in an organized manner towards the main street, reflective of the careful and diligent personality of Mrs. Chau. She takes up the sidewalk adjacent to the street in order to leave a generous path between the stalls, inviting the customers to wander deeper into the market (fig 5.18). The umbrella that shades the fruits is anchored precisely in the middle, creating an awning above that delineates the boundary of her stall. The modular steel structure walls are folded closed on one side and have additional shelves that tilt towards the customer, effectively increasing display space by extending vertically. Mrs. Chau sells her items by weight, placing a scale within the structure of the stall along with the cash register and her hot water dispenser. A closed stall across from her shop is used as a shared storage area, piling up used cardboard boxes and new inventory. Mrs. Chau keeps her stall organized, frequently cleaning the discarded stems and leaves from the ground around her produce (fig 5.19).

Mrs. Chau is the neighborhood friend, always updated on the daily


"A lot of the street vendors see this center as a competitor now, not a part of the market. It's got a nice environment, but not many old customers want to go to these new shops. And it's not in a good location."
CITE: HongKong FP
1
1 The umbrella that shades the fruits is anchored precisely in the middle, creating an awning above that delineates the boundary of her stall.
2 The modular steel structure walls are folded closed on one side and have additional shelves that tilt towards the customer, effectively increasing display space by extending vertically. Items are sold by weight, placing a scale within the structure of the stall along with the cash register and her hot water dispenser.
It has been said to have "a village atmosphere", "a park within a concrete jungle", "a place like home"
CITE: LegCo.gov
2
3 A closed stall across from her shop is used as a shared storage area, piling up used cardboard boxes and new inventory.
3
Graham Street Market: Ms. Chau's Fruit Stall

produce available throughout the market. An older couple approach Mrs. Chau and inquire about where to purchase ingredients for their hot pot dinner later that day. Mrs. Chau, seemingly familiar with the couple, introduces the vegetable stand across the street to purchase fresh vegetables, the neighboring stall for freshly pressed tofu blocks made by traditional tofu makers, and a local noodle stall further into the market selling in small scale bundles enough for a small family[22]. The couple purchases some juicy and sweet oranges that Mrs. Chau had cut out for them to taste along with a large ripe pineapple for dessert. Being the friendly and attentive neighborhood vendor, Mrs. Chau throws in a few more oranges into the plastic bag and hands it over to the delighted couple. Through these small actions and customer service, Mrs. Chau has developed a close relationship with all her customers, building the trust and reputation in her work that customers will receive the best quality fruits at the most affordable price.

Although it seems like this daily routine is established and will continue to thrive with the market, it is far from the case. With the ongoing construction on new residential and commercial high-rises in the area, the overall market is shrinking as vendors are encouraged to move into newly built market centers within the podium of residential high-rises and streets are cleared for new construction. Across the street from Mrs. Chau's fruit stall, a father explains to his son how much the markets have changed since he first walked the streets with his own mother. Stall structures were set up informally, using leftover material that was available on hand for vendors. Construction out of wooden poles would deem most reliable as it was abundantly available at a low cost. Fabric tarps were stretched to create an awning over the produce, while also providing shade for customers as they shopped (fig 5.20). Items

22 Megan Blake, "Stifling street life: The demise of Graham Street Market in Hong Kong," *GeoFoodie*. April 10, 2014, https://geofoodie.org/2014/04/10/stifling-street-life-the-demise-of-graham-street-market-in-hong-kong/

Fig.5.19 Illustrative diagram of Graham Street Wet Market stall highlighting the use of the umbrella to expand the boundary, the modular steel structure, and the use of closed stalls as storage space.

Fig.5.20 Photograph by Fan Ho of historical street markets in the 1950s to 1960s where vendors would set up their stalls using wooden poles and woven baskets.

would be displayed out in hand-weaved straw baskets and dried goods were made by laying them out on streets to dry up in the sun.

"We could walk for hours! There was just so much to see!" the father tells his son.

The father recalls watching butchers slaughter cows' and pigs' heads right in front of him as a child, allowing him to understand where the food is coming from and learn how it is prepared[23]. Most items are now prepackaged in order to limit the blood and guts that splatter the streets during preparation. With indoor markets, tiled floors allow for easy cleaning as spraying the blood away with a hose is a simple task. On the other hand, the street's drainage system is older and less reliable in clearing out the blood and guts from livestock. Ms. Yu, who works at her family-run fruit stall just down

23 Blue Lapis Road, "Culture of Disappearance: Graham Street Market (嘉咸市集), Central (中環), Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, February 28, 2021, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/02/26/disappearing-living-culture-graham-street-market-%E5%98%89%E5%92%B8%E5%B8%82%E9%9B%86-central-%E4%B8%AD%E7%92%B0-hong-kong/

the street, had given an interview for an article written by Adam Wright on June 13, 2021, for the Hong Kong Free Press (HKFP)[24] on the changes in the neighborhood. Much has changed since she started working at her family-run shop as a child. Reflecting on her childhood in the adjacent areas of the street market, she states:

"When I was young, this area was very traditional. Graham Street and Gage Street used to be full of tong lau buildings. I remember the butchers would kill chickens and other animals right on the street in front of you. There were street hawkers everywhere."* [25]* tenement buildings built from the late 19th century to the 1960s

The ability to easily maintain a clean and hygienic market indoors has led to many markets to relocate to a controlled environment. The newly constructed Food Hall, built to extend the street market with a clean, sterile, and properly maintained building for dining, sits at the far end of the street market and is where most of the relocated vendors and street hawkers have been placed[26]. Although the environment is well maintained and shows potential towards attracting younger consumers and tourists, the resident vendors have a different reaction to the new center. When asked on her opinion of the new Food Hall center, Ms. Yu replied:

"A lot of the street vendors see this center as a competitor now, not a part of the market. It's got a nice environment, but not many old customers want to go to these new shops. And it's not in a good location. My family was also given a shop there, but we just use it as a storage warehouse and

24 Adam Wright, "From street-side slaughter to hipster haven: Remaking the oldest wet market in Hong Kong," *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 13, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/13/from-street-side-slaughter-to-hipster-haven-re-making-the-oldest-wet-market-in-hong-kong/

25 Adam Wright, "From street-side slaughter to hipster haven: Remaking the oldest wet market in Hong Kong," *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 13, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/13/from-street-side-slaughter-to-hipster-haven-re-making-the-oldest-wet-market-in-hong-kong/

26 "Peel Street / Graham Street Development Scheme (H18) (Site A, Site B, Site C)," Redevelopment, Urban Renewal Authority, last modified September 9, 2020, https://www.ura.org.hk/en/project/redevelopment/peel-street-graham-street-development-scheme

for sleeping." [27]

The same can be said for many of the newly constructed indoor markets that aim to eliminate the noisy, dirty, and chaotic nature of street markets and replace them with clean, hygienic and well maintained centers. But this is contrary to the dynamic, interactive, and vibrant culture of the Hong Kong spirit. The ability to interact with the vendors who are knowledgeable in the produce they sell, along with the convenience to access fresh foods without having to travel far, are factors that customers enjoy about the street markets as it makes them feel more at home in Hong Kong.

27 Adam Wright, "From street-side slaughter to hipster haven: Remaking the oldest wet market in Hong Kong," *Hong Kong Free Press*, June 13, 2021, https://hongkongfp.com/2021/06/13/from-street-side-slaughter-to-hipster-haven-re-making-the-oldest-wet-market-in-hong-kong/

5.3 Dai Pai Dong: Stanley Street and Gutzlaff Street

"For the older generation it gives a sense of nostalgia as they've grown up eating at dai pai dongs. For the younger generation, it's a bit of a novelty because they rarely had the chance to do this growing up". Irene, current owner of Sing Heung Yuen Dai Pai Dong. [28]

The third case investigates two of the few remaining Dai Pai Dongs in the city, focusing on the area of Stanley Street and Gutzlaff Street where one can find the most stalls still operating in Central. The once overcrowded open-air food stalls on the streets are now rare to find in Hong Kong, yet are widely popular among locals and tourists of all ages. Whether for breakfast, lunch, afternoon tea, dinner, or late-night snacking, dai pai dongs in the area are packed with business (fig 5.21, 5.22). Sing Kee (盛記) located on Stanley Street, Central, Hong Kong, along with a few other stalls, create a unique food urbanism that embodies the alive and active Hong Kong spirit. Shui Kee (勝香園) located just around the corner is a neighborhood go-to dining spot for quick and affordable eats. Without an official name to the collection of Dai Pai Dongs on this street, these hidden gems have little to no written documentation, yet the history of individual stalls are known by many customers through verbal interaction with stall owners and chefs[29]. Although many are nearing the end due to the limits around licensing and the

28 Hong Kong 'Hoods, "HONG KONG STREET FOOD | The Story of HK's Dai Pai Dong Stalls," Youtube, March 19, 2021, 9:54 to 10:05, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAkVd2oJZ_0&ab_channel=HongKong%27Hoods

29 Lee Kiu Sim, "Assessment of Neighborhood's Perception to Qualify the Social Significance of Dai Pai Dongs at Stanley Street," (Thesis, University of Hong Kong, 2010): 40-42

Fig.5.21 Image of several Dai Pai Dongs lined up against the side of the street offering a variety of foods for the community to dine at.

Fig.5.22 A Dai Pai Dong in the 1960s using sheet metal as roofing and an extended dining area towards the sides.

construction closing in on either end of the street, each stall carries its own unique character and continues to live in the memory of the people. The variety of foods served at each stall are specific to the owner/chef's history and represent the multicultural cuisines that make up the Hong Kong identity. Each stall with their own history and development being unique to each other in construction and operation, captures the dynamic and diverse culture of Hong Kong's food urbanism.

The Stories of the Dai Pai Dongs - A humble treasure chest in a city of glass

Situated in a pedestrian alleyway between two buildings within the core of the busy city is a neighborhood dining ground home to dai pai dongs with many years of history. The small, condensed, and lively alleyway transports the people into a realm outside of the forest-like city. The current owner and head chef of Sing Kee goes by the name of Mr. Lam. As a second-generation owner working for over 20 years[30], Mr. Lam is familiar with all the processes and is skillful in his cooking. He has taken over running the shop in place of his mother who is the license holder as she gets too old to manage the stall[31]. Although the license is unable to transfer to Mr. Lam himself, he treats the stall as his own and pours his heart into cooking for the neighbors (fig 5.23).

The stall sees its first customers at 11:30am when it opens, running until 11:30pm at night. With peak times in the afternoon and evening, the stall is most popular among office workers and young adults. Due to its proximity to commercial buildings and other retail spaces, the street is a go-to lunch place for working adults in the area as it carries affordable and convenient meal options. It continues to have frequent customers late into the night as office workers finish their overtime work and are in need of a quick and hearty meal. The bustling atmosphere is filled with "an orchestra of roaring gas burners, sizzling food and clanking of ladles on woks"[32]. The laughter and chatter from the dining tables resonate behind the cooking, masking the traffic noise into the

30 Lee, "Assessment of Neighborhood's Perception," 44

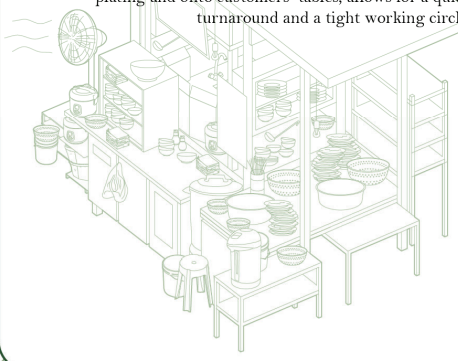
31 Lee, "Assessment of Neighborhood's Perception," 47

32 Jenny Wang, "Why Hong Kong's surviving dai pai dongs are still loved, and the owners who just won't quit," *South China Morning Post*, December 19, 2019, https://www.scmp.com/lifestyle/food-drink/article/3042554/why-hong-kongs-surviving-dai-pai-dongs-are-still-loved-and

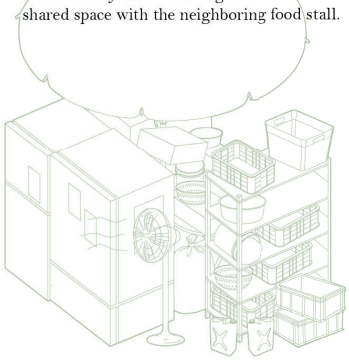
Fig.5.23 Illustrative diagram of Sing Kee Dai Pai Dong highlighting the unique organization of the stall, the storage area, and the dining area.

Dai Pai Dong: Sing Kee (盛記)

1 The main structure is constructed of metal posts and bars finished off with metal sheets. Configured to allow for a small cooking station towards the back and a front facing food prep station, the stall becomes a compact yet highly functional space. Using scrap material, additional storage racks are added to the structure to allow for easy access to extra utensils and dishes. Next to the food preparation station is the dishwashing station. The close proximity of clean dishes to the kitchen, from kitchen to plating and onto customers' tables, allows for a quick turnaround and a tight working circle.



2 Two large refrigerators sit further away from the main stall and mask the larger storage area behind. The storage nook framed in by other shelving units becomes a shared space with the neighboring food stall.



"For the older generation it gives a sense of nostalgia as they've grown up eating at dai pai dongs. For the younger generation, it's a bit of a novelty because they rarely had the chance to do this growing up"
CITE: Youtube

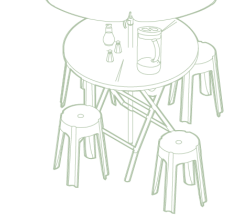
""The beef is very tender, we only use fresh beef and do not keep leftovers. That is why it is so fresh and its texture is so soft.""
CITE: Thesis

1

2

3

3 A green fabric tarp extends from the stall creating an awning to shade customers from the sun and rain, and any missing areas are shaded by additional umbrellas standing through the middle of the tables.



background. The tables filled with young people in neat suits and clean professional styling against the backdrop of a humble and colorful food stand may surprise a standard onlooker, but is quite common on the streets of Hong Kong as many young adults spend too many hours working therefore resorting to quick, affordable, and convenient foods like at Dai Pai Dongs.

With a 70-year-old history of providing affordable meals to the working class in the area, the history is evident in the worn out cookware and rusting metal[33]. The main structure is constructed of metal posts and bars finished off with metal sheets. Configured to allow for a small cooking station towards the back and a front facing food prep station, the stall becomes a compact yet highly functional space (fig 5.24). Using scrap material, additional storage racks are added to the structure to allow for easy access to extra utensils and dishes. Next to the food preparation station is the dishwashing station. The close proximity of clean dishes to the kitchen, from kitchen to plating and onto customers' tables, allows for a quick turnaround and a tight working circle. Two large refrigerators sit further away from the main stall and mask the larger storage area behind. The storage nook framed in by other shelving units becomes a shared space with the neighboring food stall. Overhead, a green fabric tarp extends from the stall creating an awning to shade customers from the sun and rain, and any missing areas are shaded by additional umbrellas standing through the middle of the tables. Affordability and easy maintenance are important in running a street stand. Plastic stools and foldable tables are most common on the street, and are used by most Dai Pai Dongs including Sing Kee. The tables are set with a plastic jug of water and sets of chopsticks ready for customers, ultimately providing a quick and convenient space for dining.

Mr. Lam's efforts go beyond maintaining the stall and creating an efficient working space. He puts particular care and dedication into his cooking, attracting many customers who are eager to taste a dish that feels like home. With years of practice, he is able to

33 Wang, "Why Hong Kong's surviving dai pai dongs are still loved."

Fig.5.24 The kitchen area of Sing Kee where Mr. Lam is mostly seen as he cooks all the meals while also being able to manage the flow of traffic at his stall.

maintain quality and affordability in the dishes he creates, at the speed necessary to keep the business alive. As the lunch hour approaches, Mr. Lam is already busily working away at preparing the ingredients. Two other workers are assisting in setting the tables and opening the umbrellas as customers start to fill the seats. The first group of customers are office workers from a building down the street. Holding just their keys and wallets, the customers promptly choose a table and get the attention of the waiter to take their order. Familiar with the menu, the group immediately calls out:

"We'll take an order of stir-fried beef noodles, sweet & sour ribs, and salt & pepper squid", ordering some of the most popular items at Sing Kee[34].

Mr. Lam gets to work preparing the plates, tossing a mixture of aromatics into a seasoned wok followed by tender pork ribs before coating the meat in a tarte and flavourful sauce (fig 5.25). At the same time, he prepares the springy noodles to be tossed with the

34 Wang, "Why Hong Kong's surviving dai pai dongs are still loved."

Fig.5.25 Mr. Lam, owner of Sing Kee, skillfully tosses the iron wok and cooks up delicious plates of beef and shrimp.

sizzling beef and a mixture of rich seasonings. As Mr. Lam flips the wok and plates the dishes, the air gets filled with a sweet and comforting aroma. The smell of the fragrant sauce and flavourful seasoning lure curious pedestrians from a block away to take a seat at the humble food stand.

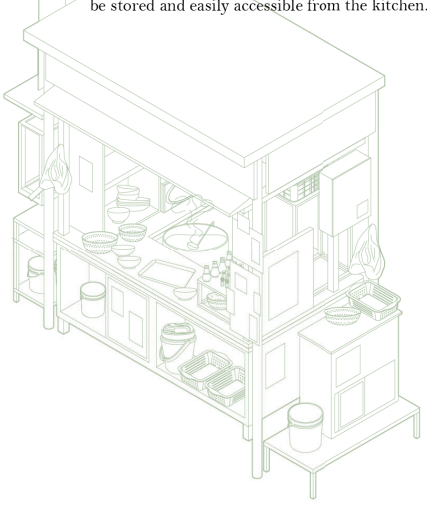
Just around the corner is Shui Kee, run by a kind-hearted and generous gentleman named Lam Kin Wing. He is a third-generation owner and chef who has taken over the shop from his father for about 20 years[35]. His grandfather first opened the shop after the Japanese occupation in the 1940s and was said to have started out selling rice dishes but switched to noodles as it was more in tune with their Chiu Chow background[36]. Situated on a narrow sloped road between two buildings, Shui Kee has 3 general sections: back-of-house area, the main kitchen, and the main dining area, all of which sit against the one side of the building (fig 5.26). The back-of-house food preparation station occupies the left side of the stall towards the entrance of the street, allowing the dining area to face the rest of the dining seats of other neighboring food stalls. Within the food preparation station, repurposed storage shelving units and large refrigerators set the boundary of the food stall, extra propane cylinders for the gas stoves are stored here as well. Every horizontal surface available is used for storage, including above the refrigerators, to maximize the space available. Larger containers for oils and soups are placed next to the main kitchen to easily plate and finish menu items. The main structure consists of a central kitchen with a cutting board in the middle and large pots of soup around the sides (fig 5.27). The kitchen also includes extra storage cabinets on the sides allowing clean dishes to be stored and easily accessible from the kitchen. The foldable tables and plastic stools are placed on the other side of the stall, each with

35 Blue Lapis Road, "Culture of Disappearance: Dai Pai Dong (大排檔), Central (中環), Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, March 4, 2021, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/03/04/culture-of-disappearance-dai-pai-dong-%e5%a4%a7%e6%8e%92%e6%aa%94-central-%e4%b8%ad%e7%92%b0-hong-kong/

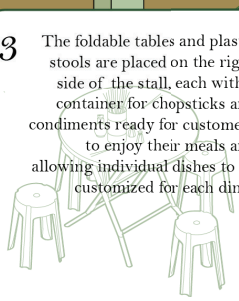
36 Janice Leung Hayes, "Classic Hong Kong restaurants: Shui Kee, Central," *South China Morning Post*, May 28, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/magazines/48hrs/article/1520255/25-restaurants-shui-kee-sells-beef-brisket-noodles-supply-offal-may

Dai Pai Dong: Shui Kee (水記)

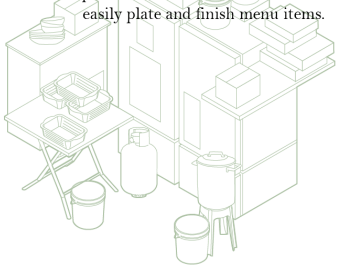
2 The main structure consists of a central kitchen with a cutting board in the middle and large pots of soup around the sides. The kitchen also includes extra storage cabinets on the sides allowing clean dishes to be stored and easily accessible from the kitchen.



3 The foldable tables and plastic stools are placed on the right side of the stall, each with a container for chopsticks and condiments ready for customers to enjoy their meals and allowing individual dishes to be customized for each diner



1 Repurposed storage shelving units and large refrigerators set the boundary of the food stall, extra propane cylinders for the gas stoves are stored here. Larger containers for oils and soups are placed next to the main kitchen to easily plate and finish menu items.



"Here customers may find that they can get an experience that is exclusively and quintessentially Hong Kong. With the true street-style dai pai dong, if one closes, its gone forever."
CITE: Youtube

"My grandfather and my father both used to make their own fish balls from conger-pike eels. They were completely handmade."
CITE: SCMP

a container for chopsticks and condiments ready for customers to enjoy their meals and allowing individual dishes to be customized for each diner.

Shui Kee's menu is different from the neighboring food stalls, making them stand out among the competition. As the area starts to fill up with people for the lunch break, a young woman with her grandmother takes a seat at a table, looking at the menu posted on the side of the stall. The grandmother specifically asks for beef entrails on egg noodles, recalling the many years of dining with Shui Kee and their reputation for quality. Unsure of what else to order for the young woman as she is hesitant about the entrails, the grandmother asks Lam for recommendations.

"The fish balls are good for the young ones who are not too familiar with the entrails. You can have them on any noodle of your choice: rice noodles, udon noodles, vermicelli noodles, but I recommend Ho Fan (flat rice noodles)," Lam answers.

Content with the recommendation, the grandmother adds an order of fish balls on Ho Fan for the young woman and Lam proceeds to prepare the dishes. Lam has seen many customers during his time with Shui Kee and is familiar with the situation. Beef entrails may be the most popular item as not many stalls can make them as rich in flavor and tender in texture as he does at Shui Kee, but not everyone is accepting of this dish. An item he will always recommend are the fish balls, as it was developed as a core menu item by his grandfather based on their Chiu Chow background. Although the fish balls themselves are no longer handmade, Lam still tries to maintain the quality and authenticity of the ingredients so as to not tarnish the reputation. In an 2014 interview with Janice Leung Hayes for South China Morning Post, Lam states:

"My grandfather and my father both used to make their own fish balls

Fig.5.26 Illustrative diagram of Shui Kee Dai Pai Dong highlighting the organization of the storage area and dining area to the sides of the main kitchen area.

from conger-pike eels. They were completely handmade. I helped out when I was younger, skinning and deboning the eel, but never learned the complete process, so now I have to buy the fish balls from a supplier. We still need to control the quality, or we'd be no different from a fast food cha chaan teng."[37].

In the kitchen, Lam prepares the two bowls of noodles for his customers; first by boiling the requested type of noodles in the large pot of water until it is just cooked through, followed by scooping a large ladle into the beef entrails and fish balls into each bowl, before topping them off with another scoop of the rich marinade for the soup base. The steaming hot bowls of noodles are brought over to the table as it fills the air with the beefy aroma. The young woman and grandmother proceed to eat the rich and savory hot noodles by adding a spoonful of chili oil to enhance the flavors of the broth. As they eat, the two converse, reminiscent of the food stalls in the past. The grandmother recalls dining in this district as a newly young mother, bringing her daughter to the street hawkers that occupied a large portion of the streets. One could find a full day meals' worth of food in this small area, from breakfast options in the early mornings to late night dessert shops. Her excitement and enthusiasm shined as she mentioned the neighborhood roasted chestnut lady and remembered buying a bag of freshly roasted chestnuts whenever she came across the humble mobile cart (fig 5.28). The smell of freshly roasted nuts in the large iron wok, the sound of the ladle tossing the hard-coated chestnuts together, together with the light and airy smoke coming from the fire beneath, was an experience in itself.

"We don't always see her in the same spot, she is always moving around. When you do catch her, it's like your lucky day!" the grandmother exclaimed.

The grandmother goes on to tell the young woman that it has been

37 Janice Leung Hayes, "Classic Hong Kong restaurants: Shui Kee, Central," *South China Morning Post*, May 28, 2014, https://www.scmp.com/magazines/48hrs/article/1520255/25-restaurants-shui-kee-sells-beef-brisket-noodles-supply-offal-may

Fig.5.27 Looking into the kitchen area of Shui Kee where Lam monitors the large boiling pot of beef soup and cooks the noodles to perfection.

a while since she has seen them, most of the mobile cart businesses have been shut down or moved to a more formal system. She recalls the variety of foods available, and the emotional connection each chef had to their cuisines. The unique dishes that each stall offered was personalized to the owner as they managed everything down to sourcing ingredients. The street they are on was once longer and had many more dining options and street eateries, but with the construction closing in on either ends of the street, the market area has condensed to just a few shops remaining and replaced with tall high-rise buildings[38]. What was once a vibrant and animated neighborhood has become a static and dispirited forest of glass. The remaining dai pai dongs are still very much popular among the community as people start to appreciate the warmth of the home-cooked meal dining and recognize the spirit of the Hong Kong food culture that closes in on its expiry date. In an interview on the YouTube channel Hong Kong 'Hoods, second-generation owner of Sing Heung Yuen's Irene discusses the heartache facing the fate of

38 Blue Lapis Road, "Culture of Disappearance: Dai Pai Dong (大排檔), Central (中環), Hong Kong," *Blue Lapis Road*, March 4, 2021, https://bluelapisroad.wordpress.com/2021/03/04/culture-of-disappearance-dai-pai-dong-%e5%a4%a7%e6%8e%92%e6%aa%94-central-%e4%b8%ad%e7%92%b0-hong-kong/

the authentic dai pai dongs:

"Here customers may find that they can get an experience that is exclusively and quintessentially Hong Kong. With the true street-style dai pai dong, if one closes, its gone forever."[39]

As many of the dai pai dong owners are getting closer to retirement age and their children prefer office jobs for better security, the life of these modest yet culturally flavourful food stalls is coming to an end. Although owners have compromised and changed their businesses to survive the rapid development of Hong Kong, the fate of the street eateries is inevitable. From the locally sourced ingredients to the home-style cooking, and the secret family recipes to the welcoming family-like service, the spirited and dynamic nature of the dai pai dongs will continue to exist as authentic Hong Kong food urbanism in the memory of the people.

39 Hong Kong 'Hoods, "HONG KONG STREET FOOD | The Story of HK's Dai Pai Dong Stalls," Youtube, March 19, 2021, 10:40 to 10:47, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAkVd2oJZ_0&ab_channel=HongKong%27Hoods

Conclusion

Reflections on Food Urbanism and the Hong Kong Identity

The region of Hong Kong is known to be an international hub, with its intimidatingly tall residential towers juxtaposed against its brightly lit glass skyscraper skyline. Beyond these dominating architectural landmarks are the smaller, more grounded food systems that are rooted in the cultural and social identity of Hong Kong. This hybrid Hong Kong identity can be visualized and understood through the conversations in food urbanism, especially looking at the distribution and accessibility of the food spaces for the working class. These unique food spaces demonstrate an identity exclusive to the people of various cultural backgrounds that have landed in this coastal region and defined a new home together. With the region largely focusing on its financial status and global influence, the food industry turns towards mass production and industrialization to accommodate the large population within the small region.

With current discussions on food urbanism centered around urban agriculture and the incorporation of food into the urban landscape, previous scholars have proposed methods of approach to reviving a city through sustainability and equity mechanisms. Propositions including urban gardens and food production within a city focus on bringing the start of the system closer to the city center to eliminate the need for transportation. Inclusion of more cultivation spaces and local farmer markets generate larger amounts of local foods in attempt to minimize the need for mass production. The need to prioritize the discussions of food urbanism in current urban planning strategies within the western countries currently focuses on the start of the system and emphasis on the other end are starting to emerge. Considerations around spatial planning of food delivery and consumption are just as important as the production and distribution of food within the urban environment. The spaces of accessing nutritious foods and consuming healthy meals are important factors of food security that are not discussed

Fig.6.01 Photograph titled 'Market Promenade' by Fan Ho showcases the social and cultural values of food spaces and thier contribution to urbanism (1950-1960)

enough. The importance of food security within the discourse of food urbanism is not unknown, but the emphasis remains on production and transportation impacts on the environment. Instead, the impacts on social and cultural constructs of food spaces within the urban environment should be considered alongside the environmental impacts and its influence on city planning should be seen as equally important as the economic factors.

The importance of social and cultural values become more evident in a highly developed cityscape with an undefined and constantly evolving cultural identity (fig 6.01). In Hong Kong, the financial status and influence of the economy not only encourages industrialized developments such as supermarkets and commercialized agriculture, but it also discourages the slower, bottom-up infrastructures at the human scale. The convenience of supermarkets in air-conditioned buildings and mass inventory of produce is attractive to many of those who live in a fast-paced city like Hong Kong, but the consequences are evident in its impact on the quality of goods. The long working hours and the limited kitchen space in homes also contribute to the need for more convenient and industrialized food spaces within the region. Within urban planning strategies in Hong Kong, this has taken away from recognizing the social and cultural productivity of the more informal and locally run street markets. The slower and more intimate street markets offer deeper connections between vendor and customer, but also a richer connection between people and food as a whole. They allow for a better understanding of the foods available and generate access to better ingredients and more nutritious meals. Overall, the street markets improve the food security of the region while also contributing to the social and cultural construct of the city.

The creation of the food culture in Hong Kong starts with the people and their actions towards creating a "place of refuge" in a new region. These communities that are created through connecting to nostalgic foods and cuisines while also adapting to the new environments become the driving factor in navigating

the busy city in Hong Kong. As the discourse of food urbanism makes its way to the urban planning strategies and considerations, connections to social and cultural values cannot be overlooked. Taking Hong Kong as an example of an urban environment that has almost no consideration for discussions of food urbanism within urban planning, the discourse can start to recognize the social and cultural values of the informal street markets that were made by the people and for the people of Hong Kong.

Reflections on the Future of the Street Markets

Specifically focusing on the street markets, more and more of the local street markets that are reflective of the Hong Kong culture are being demolished and replaced by easily manageable and controllable infrastructure, while smaller locally own businesses are slowly being driven out with the intense competition of international businesses and development. The end to this part of Hong Kong's unique food urbanism is nearing, but communities continue to advocate for their social and cultural importance beyond its economic productivity. This thesis is also one that brings awareness to the loss of cultural identity and social placemaking strategies that stem from an organically developing urban environment by capturing the personal connections and stories of those who are the foundation of the Hong Kong identity.

The unfortunate fate of the street markets is difficult to face, as many memories and communities were built around the informal food spaces. The need to improve and provide more hygienic and sanitary environments has eliminated much of the street markets, either replacing them with large multi-use developments or completely demolishing the establishments. Changes to policy and regulations have played a major role in not only limiting the number of street vendors but also preventing the legacy to continue in the future. Owners of the stalls have frequently commented that

they would not want their children to take over, as the work is difficult to maintain, and the world is favouring office occupations[1]. Other factors such as globalization and gentrification has favored skyscraper residential, commercial, retail and hotel towers, further pushing out the local street vendors. Through all these changes, the markets and vendors continue to play an important role in the social and cultural economies of the working class even through the never-ending external threats. Although they are disappearing and may not live for much longer, there is still hope for this urban foodscape to live one through other means of exposure.

Within Hong Kong media, many individuals and production companies have focused on the cultural and social aspects of the urban food spaces including the various street markets. A recent series by broadcasting station TVB called "大牌筵席 (Big Banquet): Dai Pai Dong" follows 3 celebrity hosts as they explore the remaining Dai Pai Dongs within the city (fig 6.02). Celebrities Lee Ka Ding (李家鼎), Yi Lai Lok (黎諾懿), and Bob Lam (林盛斌) travel across the city to eat at the unique food stalls, interviewing the owners and neighbors on their interaction and engagement around the Dai Pai Dongs[2]. The series features 6 episodes on various stalls in attempt to bring forward the cultural significance and social value of the stalls, including segments focusing on the quality and beauty of the Dai Pai Dongs, the development and difficulties the owners have faced, and their predictions for the future of this food space. Not only does it explore the almost personalized foods available on the streets of Hong Kong, it has also become an opportunity for the owners to express their love and gratitude towards cooking for the community it has brought together. This

1 Hong Kong 'Hoods, "HONG KONG STREET FOOD | The Story of HK's Dai Pai Dong Stalls," Youtube, March 19, 2021, 10:20 to 10:39, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IAkVd2oJZ_0&ab_channel=HongKong%27Hoods

2 "Big Banquet: Dai Pai Dong," TVB Anywhere North America, accessed December 13, 2022, https://tvbanywherena.com/cantonese/series/2628-DaiPaiDong

Fig.6.02 TVB "大牌筵席 (Big Banquet): Dai Pai Dong" promotional poster shows the hosts and their mission to explore and learn about the remaining Dai Pai Dongs.

tv series becomes another method of showing appreciation to the Hong Kong culture and protecting the importance of the food urbanisms, bringing awareness to the now rare urban phenomenon before it fully becomes existent only in history.

Outside of Hong Kong, many people are celebrating the vibrant and engaging environment of the food urbanisms. Specifically looking at the unique architecture of the Dai Pai Dongs, cafes and restaurants are turning to iconic symbolism and ornamentation to mimic the original stalls and nostalgic settings of the local street eats. A newly opened Hong Kong style café restaurant in Scarborough is attracting customers of all ages through its social media as it highlights the carefully decorated interior that resembles the classic Dai Pai Dongs. Café Le Majestik is marketed as an authentic Hong Kong Style Cage that opened up in 2022[3].

3 慶豐冰室Cafe le Majestik, "Authentic Hong Kong style Café, Scarborough, Established in 2022," Facebook, May 27, 2022, https://www.facebook.com/CafeleMajestik/.

Fig.6.03 Interior of Cafe Le Majestik replicating the nostalgic Dai Pai Dongs using plastic foldable tables and plastic stools with a fabric awning attached to the ceiling.

The plastic stools and the square foldable tables are set out for guests to dine while string lights and a fabric tarp are decorating the ceiling above (fig 6.03). Behind the counter is a barista brewing the traditional milk tea using the mesh sock method, while other chefs are preparing the other traditional foods found at the café. The partition walls are constructed of metal screens, reminiscent of the metal gates that residents would put on their door for extra security. In another section, the glass windows are painted in the army green color that many stalls would have used and seating is arranged in a booth style similar to that of the early Cha Chaan Tengs. Miniature figures and collectables of iconic Hong Kong items are displayed against the wall completed with neon signage to represent the streets of Hong Kong. Appreciation for the vibrant culture of the Hong Kong food urbanism is visible all over the world, sparking possibility for the urban infrastructure to continue to exist outside of Hong Kong.

Although the authentic and historic stalls are disappearing, their influence on food and culture and its translation to social space

and placemaking is still very much present in the lives of the people. As the generations get older and newer generations start to redefine the existing identity and city with the new upcoming developments, many of the traditions evolved rather get lost in history. Traditional foods are adapted in creative ways to incorporate a more contemporary immigration and fusion culture while paying tribute to the multicultural background and history. Historically important food spaces are upgrading to safer and cleaner environments allowing to improve quality of life within the city. The change is inevitable as the world continues to develop, but what remains important is acknowledging and paying tribute to the urban foodscapes that have once defined the Hong Kong identity.

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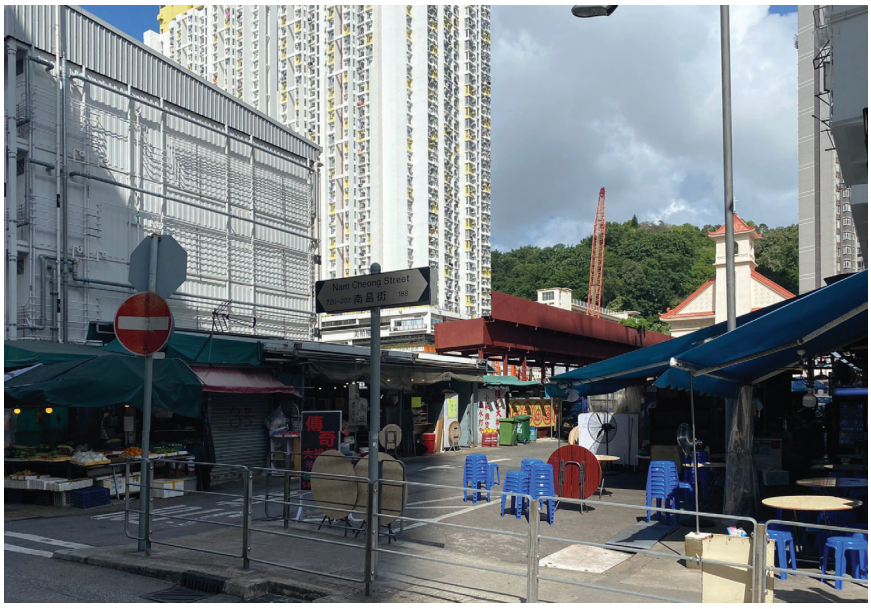
Appendix

At the beginning of my thesis research, I had aimed to deeply study the remaining Dai Pai Dongs by documenting the stalls through photographs and impromptu sketches, illustrating the lively neighborhoods and the chaotic yet interesting nature of the communities around these unique food spaces in the region of Hong Kong. I had wanted to design a walking tour guide to allow readers to experience the street markets using the data collected in person along with personal stories of the vendors. Due to the many flying restrictions and endless quarantine regulations in both Canada and Hong Kong, I was unable to travel to Hong Kong in person to explore first-hand the colorful environments that are the street markets. Thankfully, I was able to pull from previous visits and task cousins and friends to assist on the ground in Hong Kong.

The following is a collection of photographs taken on site of the various remaining Dai Pai Dong stalls, as well as further documentation of the three markets elaborated on in Chapter 5 of this thesis.

On-Site Documentation - Photographs by Meg Ng



Sham Shui Po Dai Pai Dongs entrance on Nam Cheong Street.

View within the Sham Shui Po Dai Pai Dongs.

So Kee (蘇記茶檔) in Sham Shui Po front view.

*So Kee (*蘇記茶檔*) in Sham Shui Po back view.*

*Detail view of So Kee (*蘇記茶檔*) kitchen area.*

*Cheung Fat Noodles (*長發麵家*) in Sham Shui Po front view.*

*Cheung Fat Noodles (*長發麵家*) in Sham Shui Po back view.*

*Cheung Fat Noodles (*長發麵家*) in Sham Shui Po dining area.*

*Cheung Fat Noodles (*長發麵家*) in Sham Shui Po storage area.*

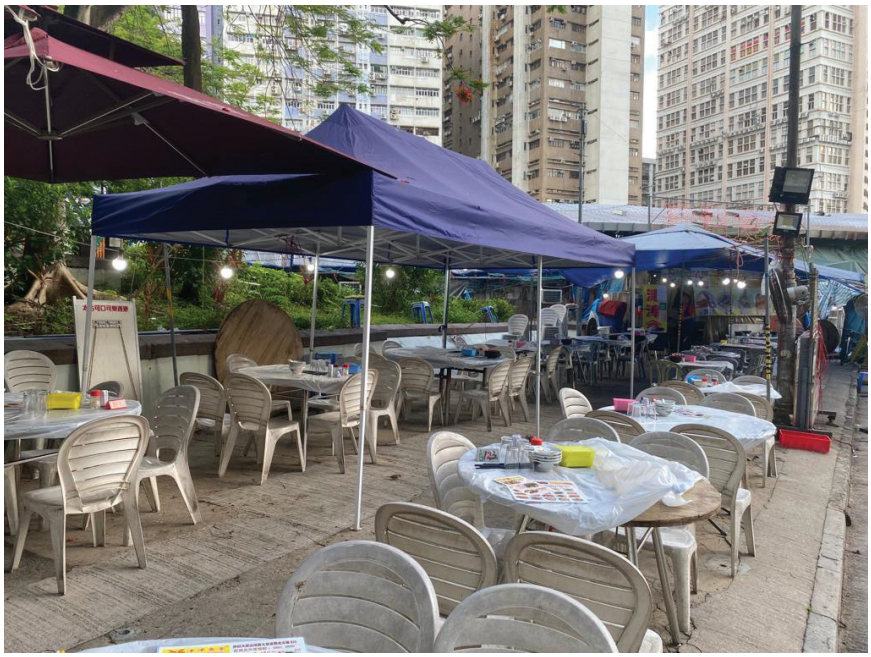
View of the perimeter stalls at Yao Ma Tei Fruit Market.

Inside Yao Ma Tei Fruit Market central structure.

View of perimeter stalls at Yao Ma Tei Fruit Market.

Extension of Yao Ma Tei Fruit Market towards the construction closing in.

View of Chun Chun Restaurant (津津食家) in Fo Tan.



Dining area of Chun Chun Restaurant with patio umbrellas and event tents as shelter.

View of Ki Kee (岐記) next to Chun Chun Restaurant in Fo Tan.

Dining area of Ki Kee using plastic tarps to shield from elements.

View down Yau San St. in Yuen Long of the Dai Pai Dongs dining area extensions.

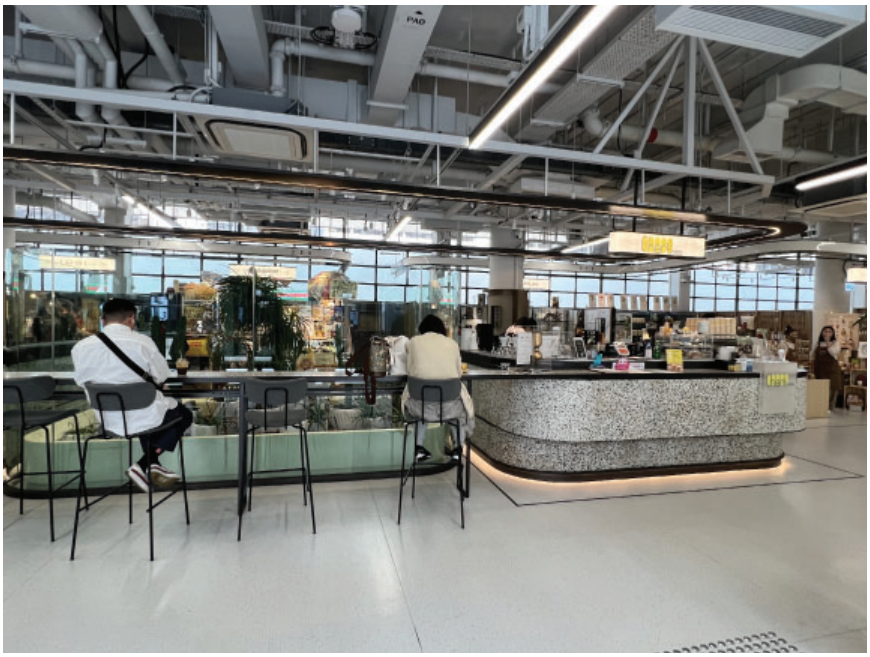
Yau San St. plastic tarp overhead awning extension from main structure.

Central Market Documentation - Photographs by Sally Huang


茶
TEA BRINGS PEOPLE TOGETHER

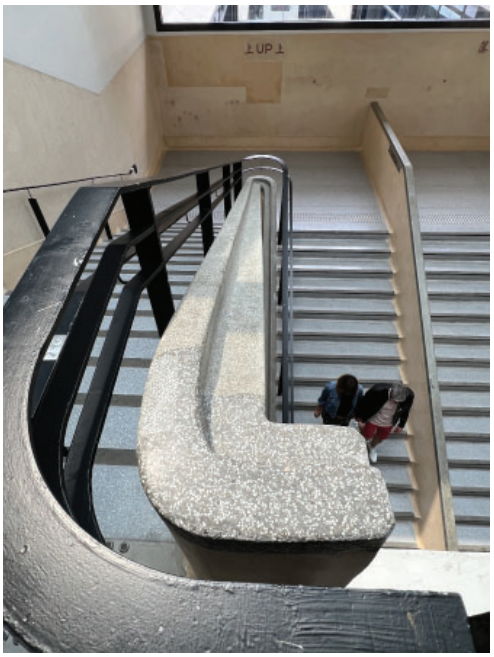

J&G


中環
STREET FOOD
CENTRAL
食街




FIGAROPPE
Souper Authentic


FLOOR
小心
上

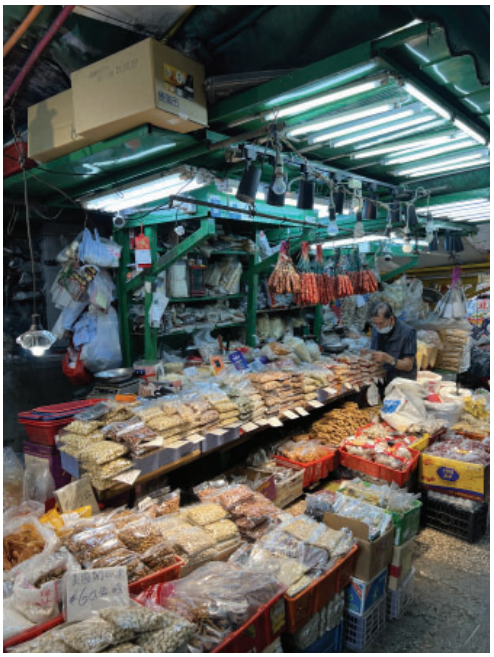

上UP上

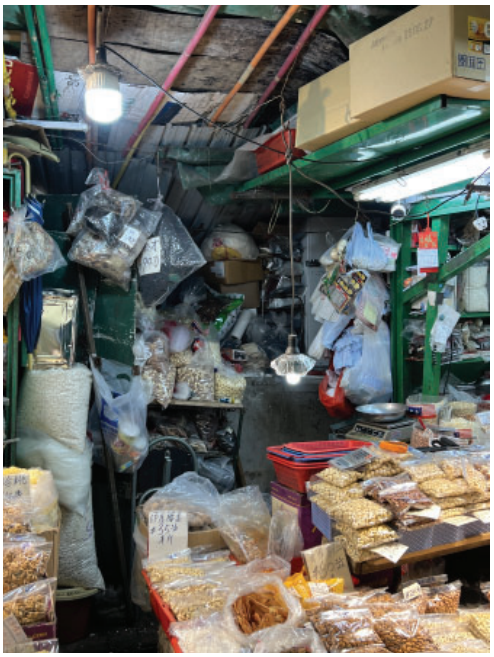

中環
街市
CENTRAL
MARKET

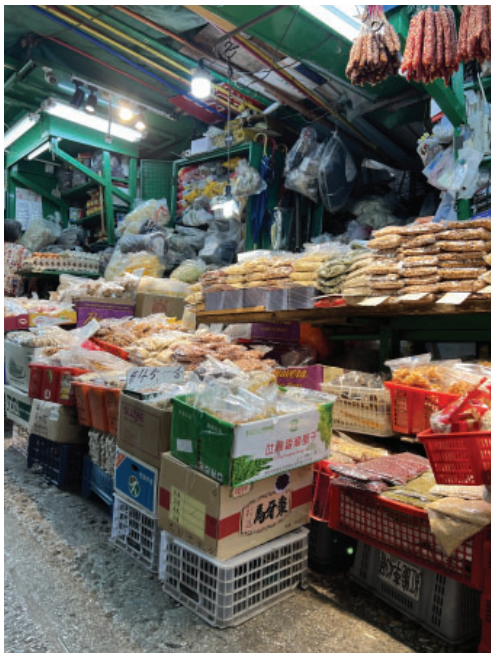

上UP上
DOWN


SO COCO
PICKUP HERE

Wet Market Documentation - Photographs by Sally Huang








Graham Street
嘉咸街


米兰红枣
顶 级
一 级
超特级
二 级
特 级
三 级
健康岁
净重：10公斤
保质期：12个月
储存方法：阴凉干燥处
产地：新疆

Dai Pai Dong Documentation - Photographs by Sally Huang


盛記


忠記


合記


水記