

Memory and Modernity

The Symbolic Cityscape of Hong Kong



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Hong Kong, a view from Victoria Peak.

Preface

Flying into the massive new airport at Chek Lap Kok, the passengers landed in Hong Kong with their eyes wide open. Sir Norman Foster's elegant glass terminal comes into sight. The new airport locates far away from the urban areas, in the midst of sea and mountains. The scene is greatly different from that of few years ago, when the old beloved Kai Tak Airport was still in used. Those who had been to the city by then would never forget the spectacular night landings into the riotous landscape of harbour and light, like rich jewels scattered out on a black velvet, that made up Hong Kong. Jumbo jets roared into the heart of one of the most densely populated cities in the world. When approaching Kai Tak Airport, the aeroplanes skimmed over rooftops and a jungle of television aerials. Passengers on board would be able to glimpse families, seemingly immune to the deafening blare of the aviation engines, having dinner or watching television. The images on their television screens were almost visible from the aircraft's window seats. Although the distance between the aircraft and the high-rise buildings was unbelievably close, there were few accidents. Landing at Hong Kong Kai Tak Airport was the most memorable experience among tourists. Nevertheless, it is history. The city has already moved on.

The new futuristic airport complex stands proudly as a defining statement for the stability of Hong Kong in a flux of changes. The city has just experienced a change of sovereignty - from a British colony to a regional city of Mainland China. Then it was struck by the worst economic slump in more than four decades. A doom-and-gloom picture of the city was painted. There were widespread concerns about the changes ^{which} took place in Hong Kong after the city reverted to Chinese sovereignty.

Chris Patten, the last British Governor in Hong Kong, commented that: "Hong Kong is a Chinese city with British characteristics."¹ When July 1, 1997 was in the history books, the British characteristics in Hong Kong also faded, on a

superficial level at least. The large red PRC flags flying in all entry points into the city remind everyone that Hong Kong is a part of China. Many visitors and citizens took a few months to get used to not seeing the Union Jack flying on top of civic buildings, or the Royal title in front of various public organisations. The Royal Hong Kong Police became The Hong Kong SAR (Special Administrative Region) Police; the Royal Hong Kong Jockey Club became the Hong Kong Jockey Club. Some still forget. The weather girls occasionally referred to the “Royal” Observatory. Now four years on, the response of the Beijing Government is clear - it has not done much, as promised. Hong Kong has largely been left to manage its own affairs for better or worse. To that extent the basic system remains substantially unchanged. The British legacy with respect to many fundamental and infrastructure matters, such as the education and legal systems, remains intact. More emphasis has been put on the use of the Chinese language, instead of English during the colonial time. In street scene, the city is still very much multi-national, as it was. The Chinese troops mostly keep themselves to themselves. Citizens do not see them on streets, as they cannot afford to go out to the entertainment areas to get drunk and disturb the locals. Unavoidably, some laws have been changed in a manner that appears to restrain civil liberty. However, in practice, political protestors and demonstrators continue to carry out their activities. Ironically, there are more demonstrations going on in the city than ever, according to the citizens. Few had anticipated the confidence of the Beijing leadership in overcoming its fear that Hong Kong would become a launching pad for an anti-party revolution this soon. Although it is still too early to predict a rosy future for Hong Kong, the Chinese government does seem to be making an effort to maintain a balance between governing and the autonomy of the city. For instance, the media continue to operate freely, the judiciary and the tax system continue to operate independently, the religious group Falun Gong continues to propagate actively, the citizens continue to retain their Hong Kong passport, currency, and native dialect. Although there is limited explicit Chinese interference in Hong Kong affairs, the main differences that are going to affect the daily lives of the citizens have yet to show. For in everything happening in Hong Kong, the

¹ Pattern interviewed by the BBC on June 1998.
http://news.bbc.co.uk/hi/english/speci...r_anniversary/newsid_122000/122560.stm

relationship between the smaller Asian economies to Mainland China is lurking in the background.

The Chinese state officials revere Hong Kong as an icon of modernity². Many Chinese cities regard Hong Kong as a competitor rather than a location for investment, and they are catching up fast. The evolution of China is so fast that many aspects of life are dramatically transformed. In China nowadays, politics have become increasingly irrelevant to the livelihood of people. The Mainland Chinese, like Hong Kong people, are pre-occupied with more everyday concerns, such as housing, career, pension, investment, health, education, even fashion and entertainment. A new middle class emerges in every big city, such as Beijing and Shanghai. They are young or middle-aged professionals, often managers, entrepreneurs, or intellectuals. They are well travelled and often western-educated. These quintessentially bourgeois figures become opinion formers on issues of public concern, and set trends in civic and cultural life. Auction houses have flourished, museum visiting has become fashionable, and self-improvement books are bestsellers. Nevertheless, this social and economic evolution of China has its limitation. It widens the gaps among different social classes, between town and country, and generates more social tensions.

Since the economic crisis in South-east Asia in 1998, the economic growth of Hong Kong has veered between -5% and +11% in the last three years. Prices there do not go up every year; they have been going down. For instance, the land value in Hong Kong has dropped an astonishing 65 per cent. A lower land price means lower cost of production and development. Hong Kong is dealing with an economic rebound of more than 10.5 per cent growth in 2000. The city has a small, open, and service-oriented economy. It can be easily influenced by external economic changes. Nevertheless, as Chris Pattern puts it, with massive reserves, no public debt, a budget in surplus, low tax, a strong legal system, and an anti-corruption regime, Hong Kong is comparatively in a better situation than the surrounding countries to recover quickly from crisis. Yet the hard time is still not over; the global economy is still

² Crane, G. T. "Special Things in Special Ways: National Economic Identity and China's Special Economic Zones," *Australian Journal of Chinese Affairs*, No. 32, July 1994, pp. 71- 92.

depressing. During the very difficult time of economic malaise, the Hong Kong Government committed itself to anchor an image of continuity through physical constructions. This environmental image aims at “open-ended change” as being “tough and yet elastic in the face of the inevitable stresses.”³ The symbolic meanings of this image are embodied in the city landscape. From a personal perspective, Hong Kong is both near and far. It is my home yet after staying away from it for eight years, it seems so distant. Here I write about the city, through the gaze of a native citizen and that of a foreigner.

³ Lynch, Kelvin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960, p. 158.

Summary

Memory and Modernity The Symbolic Cityscape of Hong Kong

Erica Liu

This thesis proposes five conceptual headings through which to perceive the city. They are: *City as History, Spectacle, A Work of Art, Corporate Image, and Home*. Each heading is a complete concept on one level and the part of a greater concept on another. A number of celebrity cities (e.g. London, Paris, New York, Los Angeles, Las Vegas, etc.) are considered at each of the headings in turn.

A city is the spatial embodiment of memory and modernity. Memory and modernity are multi-facaded within a totality. Each of the five conceptions reflects one façade and their juxtaposition provides meanings to each other. A good city can embrace parts of the five conceptions; whereas an ideal city must achieve an equilibrium of them all. The second part of the thesis, *The Phenomenology of A City*, examines the urban experience and consciousness of citizens, through the gaze of four representational figures of the modern city (the shopper, flâneur, stranger, and transgressor). Finally, the theories were applied to an exceptional modern city, Hong Kong, in which the identity and image of the city is evaluated and explored. It is worth noting that this thesis, if not the first, will be one of the few to analyse the city of Hong Kong from an aesthetic and historical dimension.

The modern city is too gigantic and erratic to grasp completely. This thesis, however, approaches it from these several historical and aesthetic viewpoints. It seeks to capture the urban experience of ordinary people with a poetic lens, and through which one glimpses what is it to experience (a very problematic word in this thesis) the modern city.

1

Introduction - The City As Embodied Meanings

Images are units of perception that people employ when thinking and perceiving. In the process of thinking, understanding and feeling, people use these images as mental templates against which they match their experience. As time passes and conditions change, new images and symbols are added to a culture, while old ones fade out through loss of adequacy and subsequent abandonment. All this is to say, such images *metonymize* and *metaphorize* experiences. New images may be proposed by a person (an artist, an author or anyone), an object (a monument, a movie, or anything) and a group (a corporation, a specialty institution). For instance, a new architectural style or a new fashion trend serve as new templates created for testing the experience of people in a society. If they fit the experience of people or the social circumstances of a place, this new set of images and symbols will be included as part of the local culture. Otherwise, they will languish and fail. Geertz says,

Culture patterns - religious, philosophical, aesthetic, scientific, ideological - are “programs”; they provide a template or blueprint for the organization of social and psychological processes, much as genetic systems provide such a template for the organization of organic processes.¹

In a modern society, there are multiple images and symbols in its culture. That is, a *modern* culture is multi-coded. For Geertz, culture consists of socially established structures of meaning². And these structures of meanings are interrelated in some ways. Ideology manages these multiple images and meanings by incorporating them into a coherent picture of the contemporary world. Geertz says, “it is, ...the attempt of ideologies to render otherwise incomprehensible social situations meaningful, to so construe them as to make it possible to act purposefully within them, that accounts both for the ideologies’ highly figurative nature and for

¹ Geertz, Clifford. “Ideology as a Cultural System”, *Interpretation of Cultures*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

² Geertz, Clifford. “Thick Description: Toward an Interpretive Theory of Culture”, *The Interpretation of Culture*, London: Fontana Press, 1993, p. 12.

the intensity with which, once accepted, they are held.³ This integrating process is carried out in two ways. Firstly, ideology integrates the symbolic meaning of urban objects with their time of existence and active functions in the society (paradigmatic). Secondly, ideology incorporates this symbolic meaning with other contemporary symbols found within the same social structure (syntagmatic). We may redefine ideology as *symbolic structure in action*.

The cityscape embodies the meaning and experience of its inhabitants. In the urban landscape, there are hundreds of objects, such as panoramas, piazzas, thoroughfares, buildings, vehicles, bus stops, traffic lights, road signs, telephone boxes, mail boxes, lamp posts, fences, road partitions, advertising banners, garbage bins, etc. They are individually different objects with different functions. However, these hundreds of objects come together in the same spatial settlement, and form a system of signs. This system of signs constitutes a general image for the culture as a whole. For example, the streets of London are certainly different from that of Los Angeles. It is because the two cities have two completely different systems of signs on their streets.

Urban semiology is the study of the system of signs, and its role in the urban society. A sign is an image or an object produced in order to “stand for” something else. In a society, the basis of semiotics is the social elements that unify object and meaning; this is “signification”. In other words, signification is a process of having or conveying a meaning, especially an important or noteworthy one. The process of signification involves the coupling of a “signifier” with a “signified”⁴. In semiology, a signifier is the object itself or its representation; and a signified refers to the meaning or mental image that the signifier stands for. For example, the objects on a cityscape: panoramas, piazzas, thoroughfares, buildings, vehicles, bus stops, traffic lights, road signs, telephone boxes, mail boxes, lamp posts, fences, road partitions, advertising banners, garbage bins, and so on are signifiers. The ideas and mental images corresponding to them are the signified, and this is what forms the image of the city of London or Los Angeles.

³ Geertz, Clifford. *The Religion of Java*, New York: Free Press of Glencoe; London: Collier-Macmillan, 1964, p. 64.

A code is a system of signification, insofar as it couples present entities with absent units. When - on the basis of an underlying rule - something actually presented to the perception of the addressee *stands for* something else, there is *signification*. In this sense the addressee's actual perception and interpretive behavior are not necessary for the definition of a significant relationship as such: it is enough that the code should foresee an established correspondence between that which 'stand for' and its correlate, valid for every possible addressee even if no addressee exists or ever will exist.⁵

In the scope of culture, according to Umberto Eco, signification extends to a variety of objects and experiences all related to each other by a "combinational rule" or "code". For instance, in the fashion industry, the combinational rule that determines what is *trendy* or *in fashion*, is called the fashion code.⁶ Similarly, there is an architectural code in the construction industry, and cultural codes in regional ethnic groups. Some codes have a shorter duration than others - the fashion code changes a few times every year, and the architectural and cultural codes simply last for centuries with few changes. Culture, on one definition, consists of numerous systems of signification each with individual codes⁷. These systems of semiotic codes may be used to regulate the behaviour of people, for example, the use of traffic sign system to control the behaviour of drivers, and the use of fashion code system to control the fashion market. Hence, culture can be interpreted by semiotics, because the systems of signification link human activity with symbolic communication. In this sense, any cultural object can be analysed, by referring to the numerous codes under the systems of signification that constitute culture.⁸ Then, a collection of cultural objects within the same urban space can be interpreted semiotically. This is called the semiotics of "settlement space"⁹ or the urban semiology.

⁴ Eco, Umberto. *A Theory of Semiotics*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976, p. 8.

⁵ Eco, *ibid.*, p. 8, also pp. 36- 38.

⁶ Roland Barthes. 1967, *The Fashion System*, trans. Matthew Ward and Richard Howard, New York: Hill, 1983. In the book, Barthes discovered the possibility of an immanent analysis of sign in fashion system other than that of language. He writes with two purposes - to explicate the code of fashion system, and to refine an extra-linguistic system of analysis.

⁷ Schwimmer, K. "Semiotics and Culture", *A Profusion of Signs*, ed., T. Sebeok, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1975.

⁸ Baudrillard, Jean. *Système des Objets*, Paris: Allimard, 1968.

⁹ Lagopoulos, A. Ph. "L'image mentale de l' agglomération", *Communications*, 1977, No. 27, pp. 55-78.

There is an interpretive axis with which to process the system of signification (on the analogy of syntax) - the *syntagmatic* (as a metonymy), e.g. the Big Ben stands for London, and the *paradigmatic* (as a metaphor). Syntagmatic elements are related by *contiguity*.¹⁰ The juxtaposition of these elements provides each other with meaning. For example, in a regional culture, the syntagmatic elements include language, fashion, custom, architecture, history, etc. The juxtaposition of all these syntagmatic elements constitutes the unique image of the culture. Therefore, applying this syntagmatic reading to the *city* enables us to understand how different *metonymies of city* relate to, and affects its larger spatial context (a metropolistic totality). In the following chapters, five contiguities of city will be analysed by this semiotic method. They include: the city as history; as spectacle; as a work of art; as corporate image; and as home. At the same time, these metonymical elements will be applied to the city of Hong Kong. The aim is to achieve a better understanding of the larger spatial context of the city.

The paradigmatic method refers to an *associative plane*, which consists of numerous interrelated elements. Each element within the same category can substitute the other in use but not in meaning.¹¹ For instance, in the fashion industry, the paradigmatic plane is composed of various interrelated categories, such as the category of hats, shirts, pants, skirts, shoes, gloves, and so on. To use this paradigmatic method of semiology in a city, thus allows us to analyse the city in its parts as metaphor. Lynch interprets the city the same way the consciousness perceives it. In his book, *The Image of the City*, he provides a whole vocabulary of signification. He tries to identify in a city the discontinuous but associative units: paths, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks¹². These are semiotic units in the study of city. In this thesis, the *meaning* of the city of Hong Kong will be interpreted by this paradigmatic method. The associative planes found within this city will be analysed separately. They are the *phenomenology of a city*.

Moreover, the object of analysis in semiology is the system of signification, and people are the bearers of the meanings or ideology of these systems in a society.

¹⁰ Barthes, Roland. *Elements of Semiology*, Boston: Beacon, 1964, p. 62.

¹¹ Barthes, *ibid.*, p. 63.

Hence, it is imperative to distinguish the two levels of signification - *production* and *perception*. The production of signification in a city refers to the producing of meanings through spatial elements. The producer may be an individual or an institution with or without intention to communicate a message. The perception of signification refers to the *reading* of the image of a city. The addressee may be an individual or the “collective synchronic or diachronic subject either known or unknown to the sender.”¹³ The city is like a book; there are authors who write it, and readers to read it. There is a qualitative difference between the two levels of signification, which corresponds to the *author* and the *reader*.

This thesis is emphasis on the perception levels of signification. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that the perception level contains analytical shortcomings when applying to the study of urban semiology. First, in a modern society, semiotic system is overburdened with meanings. It is multi-coded, because of the variability of perception among people. People tend to have different interpretation or multi-perception for the same object. Hence, this analysis is unable to include all the possible perceptions of people.¹⁴ Second, the perception level of signification is temporal in nature. The addressee perceives a spatial meaning through encountering the spatial object, but his or her experience tends to change with time. Also, it is worth noting that this thesis is not a pure semiotic reading of a city. It also contains non-semiotic systems such as politics and economics, because urban studies, in practice, involve sociological interpretation with semiological analysis. Roland Barthes says,

For the city is a poem, ...but it is not a classical poem, a poem tidily centred on a subject. It is a poem which unfolds the signifier and it is this unfolding that ultimately the semiology of the city should try to grasp and make sing.¹⁵

¹² Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960.

¹³ Lagopoulous, A. Ph. “The Semiotics of Settlement Space”, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, ed., T. Sebeok, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

¹⁴ Gottdiener, M. “The Semiotics of Urban Culture”, *Encyclopaedic Dictionary of Semiotics*, ed., T. Sebeok, Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

¹⁵ Barthes, Roland. “Semiology and the Urban”, *The City and the Sign*, eds., Gottdiener, M. and A. Lagopoulous, New York: Columbia University Press, 1986, p. 98.

It is not the *functionalist studies* of the city that we should pay attention to, but the *reading* of its context.

The City of Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a vibrant city, full of excitement, dreams, and money. Foreign visitors may need a few days adapting to its whirlwind pace and condensed urban space. Geographically, Hong Kong is located on the southern tip of China, along the coast of the South China Sea. It lies in the busiest area of the Asian Pacific – China on the north, Korea and Japan northeast, Taiwan on the east, Philippines southeast, Indonesia on the south, Malaysia southwest, Vietnam and Thailand on the west. These countries all have very close economic ties with Hong Kong. The city has the role as one of the hubs of Pacific Asia, which pumps the vital information and financial resources throughout every part of the region, and bridges it with global markets. The cityscape of Hong Kong is divided into three parts: the Hong Kong Island, the Kowloon Peninsula, and the New Territories. The sea channel between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula is the Victoria Harbour. The city is relatively small with just over 1,000 square kilometres of total area, but with a staggering population of 7.2 million.¹⁶ It has an over-powerful urban area, but as a matter of fact, only 17 percent of the land is developed as urban area, and 40 percent is devoted to natural habitats – sandy beaches, fish and vegetable farms, woodlands, empty stretches of hillsides, and mountains. Few people (including locals) realise that the city has 260 islands, many home to thriving communities - Lantau, Lamma, Cheung Chau are the few noticed islands. They have fishing or farm villages, and ancient temples. There is much contrast between the countryside and the city. The city life is so condensed and powerful that it overshadows the countryside. As a result of its limited urban space, Hong Kong is a skyscraper city. It has high-rise towers over much of the island, beautiful and unique architecture abounds. They surround the busiest deepwater port, the Victoria Harbour, in the world. Continued land reclamation on both sides of the Harbour narrows the sea channel. Before the day on which citizens could physically walk over to the other side of the Harbour, the ferry operators had already complained about the higher risk of jostling for room in

¹⁶ Hong Kong Government Statistics,
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/hk.html#People> (29-01-02)

the narrowing channel. The sea has always played a central role in the history of Hong Kong. Fisher folks were the first inhabitants of the territory, and the proud maritime heritage is reflected in its magnificent Harbour. Viewing from the vantage point of the Victoria Peak, one would be awed with a blitz of impressions. During daytime, a flotilla of container vessels, ferries, pleasure crafts, junks, barges, and sampans are everywhere plying in the waters around Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula. Dramatic peaks frame the spectacular backdrop of the skyscraper skyline on the Hong Kong Island. The city panorama would fire the imagination of any viewer when darkness falls, and the dazzling neon cityscape takes shape. After dusk, like many colourful stars shining in the night sky over the Victoria Harbour, Hong Kong appears to be a sparkling gem, as its myriad of lights flicker brightly through the night. It is like looking down into an active volcano.

To many locals, the city is known as a desert of art and culture – there is a lack of appreciation of genuine and high arts, such as classical literature, artful drama, dance, music, painting, sculpture, and other forms, while sub-cultures proliferate, such as gossip tabloids and television programmes, sexual and violent comics and magazines, self-improvement and moneymaking guidebooks. Like many developed big cities, Hong Kong is beset by the urban problems of ubiquitous kitsch, materialism, and exploitation. Obviously, it is a city geared not only to make money but actually to feel good about it. Shopping, shopping everywhere! Hong Kong is a huge duty free zone that offers shoppers the opportunity to buy almost everything they can think of. Shopping and eating out are favourite pastimes in Hong Kong, and they can be done around the clock, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, even public holidays. Whether in exclusive designer boutiques, modern mega-malls, gleaming shopping complexes, busy street stalls, or open-air markets, shoppers get what they pay for and a warranty that can be counted on. Speciality arcades such as one with at least three floors of small computer stores, selling everything from computer chips, cables, and boards, to peripherals and software at a reasonable price. If they do not have a product there, likely it is not made yet. Speciality streets, selling jade, clothes, pet birds, and fishes, are also a unique feature of the city that cannot be found anywhere else. Culinary treats can be enjoyed in every corner of the city, the most fashionable restaurants, clubs, and bars, where the action carries on

until dawn. In short, commercialism is so powerful that people would have a chance to spend their money in almost every corner and every hour in the city. Notwithstanding, Hong Kong is much more than skyscrapers, teeming shopping streets, and Jackie Chan. The symbolic meaning of Hong Kong cityscape is, ironically, built upon contrasts and conflicts - East and West, dynasty and colony, capitalism and communism. The city is highly compact and contrastive. Contrasting features can be found on various aspects of the city. It is like a movie setting in which different elements are juxtaposed against each other. The city blends not just of East and West, but old and new - wooden boats bobbing up and down in the Harbour beside huge ocean liners; narrow winding streets and old crumbling buildings next to monstrous modern skyscrapers; elderly manual workers pushing wheelbarrows as Rolls-Royces glide by; market vendors selling traditional herbs and food while talking on cellular phones; material life mixes with spiritual one: banks and financial centres are full of dealers, temples are flooded with worshipers. Hong Kong people love their modern lifestyle and are proud of their financial ability, but they still cling to the traditional beliefs, customs, and religions. There are more than 600 old and new temples, shrines, and monasteries scattered across the territory, in which citizens continue to pray and make offerings throughout the year.

Historically speaking, Hong Kong (officially the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China) is a blend and contrast of Chinese traditionalism, British colonialism, and modern capitalism. In the city, much of the Western features come from the legacy left by the British, who ruled the colony for 155 years until July 1, 1997 when it was handed back to China as a Special Administrative Region. The British took control of Hong Kong in 1841 following the Opium Wars. Since the 16th century, European trade with China, Europe paid silver in exchange for Chinese tea and silk. However, in 1773, the British unloaded 70,000 kg of Bengal opium and introduced it to the Chinese. Alarmed by the social and financial problems caused by the drug, the Chinese emperor banned the trade. The British then invaded China in 1839. After many military conflicts and forced treaties, Hong Kong Island was ceded to the British. In 1859, British invaded China again with the support of French, Russian and American. A further treaty was signed under coercion at the Convention of Peking,

which ceded the Kowloon Peninsula and nearby Stonecutters Island to the British. A similar event happened in 1898 when the British gained a 99-year lease on the New Territories, located between the Kowloon Peninsula and China mainland.

In its economic development before the Second World War, Hong Kong began a gradual shift away from trade to manufacturing. This economic transformation was hastened by the civil war in China during the 1920's and by the Japanese invasion in the 1930's, when Chinese capitalists fled to the safer confines of the colony. Also, during the Korean War, an American embargo on Chinese goods forced the colony to increase its manufacturing capacity and develop service industries, such as banking and insurance. Furthermore, more industrialists and entrepreneurs from China fled to Hong Kong with their financial knowledge, when the Communists came to power in 1949 and during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960's and 70's. The economy of the territory took off.

In retrospect, imperialism and colonialism have done injustices. However, lessons have been learned, and it is difficult to judge historical events against modern day values. The British, indeed, have provided a safe and free environment for the Chinese entrepreneurs in Hong Kong to build up the prosperous city - the city is a joint achievement of the British and the Chinese. In its economic aspect, China is as reliant on Hong Kong as Hong Kong is on China. In December 1984, instead of hanging onto a truncated colony consisting of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island, the British agreed to hand over the entire colony when the lease on the New Territories ran out in 1997. Theoretically, the agreement allows Hong Kong to retain its present social, economic, and legal systems for at least 50 years after 1997. Nevertheless, the downfall of socialism in the past decade (the USSR in 1991 and Eastern Germany in 1990) generated much pessimism about the future of Hong Kong as the economies of cities do not seem to do well under socialist rule.

Since the sovereignty change of Hong Kong in 1997, little seems to change on the surface. The city is very much "moulded" by the British. British influence, although fading, is still evident - from its few traditional architectures to the numerous modern constructions built by the British experts, from its legal system to

education, from its language to its laissez faire economy, from its public holidays to British pubs, from its rugby and cricket teams to the local British community, and from its double-decker buses to orderly queues. Nevertheless, Hong Kong has always retained its essential character as traditional southern Chinese (Cantonese) - with Chinese herbal medicine shops, street vendors, dim sum restaurants, regional customs and festivals, old men who take their caged birds for walks or play chess in parks. Perhaps the most visible change in the city is the Union Jack and old flag of the Crown Colony of Hong Kong being replaced by flags of China and the new Hong Kong flag with its emblem of the bauhinia flower. Ironically, to survive under a socialist system, Hong Kong must continue to be an absolutely capitalist city. Market forces and corporate capital are still the ultimate motivation behind its urban development.

More than seven million people and many others resettled in overseas countries still have their destinies strongly tied to this small place. The living experience of Hong Kong is a “love and hate” one – people either love it or hate it with very few in between. According to the citizens, it is unforgettable and hard to find a substitute. That is the reason many former residents who relocated in other countries often move back to live there. It is a city that seizes the day and lives every day to the fullest. The citizens are bursting with energy. They work and play around the clock, encounter new people or events everyday. On the urban landscape, Hong Kong seems to change almost daily, with new construction projects altering the skyline, new shops, restaurants, and bars constantly opening. There is so much, too much of everything in the city, too much to see and to do but too little time. Stability is the most important factor to Hong Kong and its people. To anchor an image of stability within a flux of change is difficult, but vital when a city is experiencing constant social, political, and economic mobility. As Lynch says,

(It) becomes critical to know how to maintain image continuity through these upheavals. How does an image adjust to change, and what are the limits with which this is possible? ... When does the image break down, and at what cost? How can this breakdown be avoided by physical continuities, or how can the formation of new images be facilitated, once breakdown has occurred? The construction of environmental images which are open-ended to change is a special

problem: images which are tough and yet elastic in the face of the inevitable stresses.¹⁷

An enduring image that can withstand changes, may be implemented by monumental construction on the city landscape. Aldo Rossi agrees that, “destruction and demolition, expropriation and rapid changes in use as a result of speculation and obsolescence, are the most recognizable signs of urban dynamics. ...This vision in its entirety seems to be reflected with a quality of permanence in urban monuments. Monuments, signs of the collective will as expressed through the principles of architecture, offer themselves as primary elements, fixed points in the urban dynamic.”¹⁸ The urban planners believe that this quality of permanence in monumental construction could help Hong Kong to sustain its symbolic status and economic growth during political transformations and social difficulties. However, in the case of Hong Kong, monumental construction is built up in an *utterly novel* way, intended to present the city as the newest and the most dynamic in the world, rather than monumental construction in a historical sense. To build up a city with a vision of entirety and to express the collective will of its people, mega-narratives are deployed in architecture and urban planning. Large-scale projects of geographic transposition (levelling of whole hills and land reclamation from the sea) and individual land development projects on a massive scale are carried out. These architectures are produced to impress and to market. Ambitious architects and planners certainly adopt the precept “Make no little plans” by Burnham.¹⁹ They aim to achieve a *metropolistic totality*, to seem like a modernist utopia. However, it is worth noting that post-modernist views on preserving or re-creating historical and regional characters also exist in the city, even though they serve more or less for commercial purposes. After all, Hong Kong, as mentioned earlier, is a contrastive space mixing old and new, tradition with modernity.

From a macroscopic point of view, the governmental measures undertaken to re-construct the Hong Kong cityscape contain many problems. For one thing, the

¹⁷ Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960, p. 158.

¹⁸ Rossi, Aldo. *Architecture and the City*, Cambridge, Mass. 1982, p.22.

¹⁹ Daniel Burnham quoted in Harvey, David. “The Passage from Modernity to Postmodernity”, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 40.

mono-functional zoning system in city planning tends to sacrifice individual needs to collective ideals. The underlying driving force is a shamelessly market-oriented construction industry, which carries the danger of pandering to the rich and the private interests rather than to the poor and to public needs. This is, nonetheless, a situation the planners are powerless to change. After all, land use in Hong Kong is exclusively market-driven and is based on the ability of people to pay. Allocation of land is based on “the principles of land rent”.²⁰ Speculative land and property development are the dominant forces in capital accumulation. Corporate capital is powerful even when restricted by governmental regulations and public interests such as investment in infrastructure. The Modernist approach of building monumental skyscrapers would continue to be practiced, high towers soar ever higher as a symbol of money power. The construction industry aims to maximize land rents and to build profitably, quickly, and impressively. Corporate architecture must be built to impress, to draw attention. However, it has the potential problems of “*functionalist monotony*” in the planning aspect, and “*symbolic poverty*”²¹ in the aesthetical context. Corporations such as banking, finance, or computing services usually share the same information and technological facilities, as well as the same markets. Therefore, they tend physically to cluster together. Their presence eventually dominates the district, and turns it into an exclusive single-functional zone. Functionalist monotony in zoning practices unavoidably leads to the symbolic poverty of buildings and cityscape. The expression of the skyscraper, the Central Business District, the commercial strip, the technology and industry parks, the residential area, etc., is either horizontal or vertical concentration of singular uses in an urban zone, a construction project, or a building complex.

In a famous paper, Alexander presents two mathematical theories of the planning conceptual tendency nowadays - the “tree diagram” and “semi-lattice diagram”.²² The tree diagram allocates single functioning zones, such as the industrial, commercial, and residential zones, which are connected and separated by a

²⁰Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 77.

²¹ Krier, R. “Tradition-Modernity-Modernism: Some Necessary Explanations,” *Architectural Design Profile*, London, No. 65, 1987.

²² Alexander, Christopher. “A City is Not A Tree,” *Human Identity in the Urban Environment*, eds., Gwen Bell and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, New York: Harmondsworth Penguin, 1972, pp. 401 -432.

grid system of roads. They are mutually exclusive. The diagram is widely used by the modernist in planning new towns especially during the post-war and post-industrial periods. The semi-lattice diagram, on the contrary, embraces the mishmash and overlapping of land use functions that the tree diagram excludes.

The semi-lattice axiom goes like this: A collection of sets forms a semi-lattice if and only if, when two overlapping sets belong to the collection, then the set of elements common to both also belongs to the collection ... We are concerned with the difference between structures in which no overlap occurs, and those structures in which overlap does occur.²³

The semi-lattice diagram encompasses different functioning zones into the same space, while their characteristic stays identifiable. It is a complicated but beautiful collection of diversity – for instance, a set of functioning zone with twenty elements may contain a million subsets. The spatial organization of the streets, in accordance with the semi-lattice diagram, upholds the colourful multiplicity of urban living, like many “cities within a city”. People can hustle and bustle, wander and ponder, to see and be seen, multitude or solitude, passive or active within the same space. In short, the tree diagram is arbitrary and bureaucratic, but it is also efficient and orderly. The semi-lattice diagram is kaleidoscopic and creative, but can appear to be messy and hashy sometimes.

The Modernist’s mono-functional zone planning method is a “tree pattern”. Alexander condemns this planning method a waste of time, energy, money, and deadly dull. This is because a city is a complicated agglomeration with hundreds of thousands of overlapping and conflicting interests. Its contemporary demands and future developments are too complex to be handled by the tree planning system. To plan a small city like Hong Kong with an overwhelmingly high population density is a bewildering task. Planners, administrators, and land developers intuitively reach for simplicity - to reduce the ambiguities and overlaps of a confusing situation, and to segregate the different events that they encounter to prevent yet further complications. This conceptual simplicity in city planning replaces the symbolic richness and complexity of a city with an organic structure; the planners want

²³ Alexander, *ibid.*, p. 405.

everything to be based on numerical calculations, and to be efficient to manage and to control. They systematically remove the original “semi-lattices” and replace it with “trees”. Alexander comments,

For the human mind, the tree is the easiest vehicle for complex thoughts. But the city is not, cannot, and must not be a tree. The city is a receptacle for life. If the receptacle severs the overlap of the strands of life within it, because it is a tree, it will be like a bowl full of razor blades on edge, ready to cut up whatever is entrusted to it. In such a receptacle life will be cut to pieces. If we make cities which are trees, they will cut our life within to pieces.²⁴

He points out that the tree-like approach in city planning would lead to the compartmentalization of urban space, and the dissociation of its internal elements. Tree planning trades the humanity and colourfulness of the living city for the interests of planners, authorities, and land developers. It generates dissociation within the city, not only dissociation in the urban structure, but also of the lives within it. In the case of Hong Kong, the tree planning creates segregation and estrangement in the society. For instance, certain areas in the city serve extensively but exclusively for a small group of new urban elites – high-paid international business people, expatriates, managers, and other professionals. Although a lot of resources have been invested into these areas, the majority of the population seldom venture in there because they cannot afford them. Unavoidably, a market-oriented economy would satisfy the needs of those who can pay. However, a city is more than a corporate image of financial prowess, no matter how dominant it is. A good city planning ought to include a well balance of the tree and semi-lattice diagrams. It needs to blend the systematic order and the artful vitality of urban life that is essential to the citizens.

A humane cityscape is an urban montage or a collage city. Collage is physically expressed through “the propinquity and dialogue of the greatest possible variety and hence on the expression of true variety as evidenced by the meaningful and truthful articulation of public spaces, urban fabric, and skyline.”²⁵ A collage city

²⁴ Alexander, Christopher. “A City is Not A Tree”, *Human Identity in the Urban Environment*, eds., Gwen Bell and Jacqueline Tyrwhitt, New York: Harmondsworth Penguin, 1972, pp. 427 -428.

²⁵ Krier, R. “Tradition-Modernity-Modernism: Some Necessary Explanations.” *Architectural Design Profile*, London, No. 65, 1987.

should consist of a *hard structure* and *soft contexts*. The hard structure of a collage city is like the load-bearing columns and beams of a building - it is permanent but permeable. That is, it allows every variable and element to pass through without altering its fundamental structures. On a cityscape, this hard structure is a collection of permanent reminders edifying both citizens and visitors, such as monuments, civic buildings, and open public spaces. It is the timeless physical expression and the mental anchors of a regional culture. The soft contexts, on the opposite side, contain an unlimited number of the variables and elements that conceive the ideas and spirits of a particular period. They are transient and creative in nature - responsive to changes and the contemporary requirements of a society. They are suggestive and seductive – they do not limit by being too defined and too concrete, fluctuate in accordance with the imagination, desires, fashions, styles, and general social conditions.²⁶ The soft contexts of a city include streets, houses, constructions, little squares, winding alleys, dark corners, small parks, neighbourhood units, and local events. Lynch categorises them as path, edges, districts, nodes, and landmarks.²⁷ Bachelard poetically interprets them as drawers, chests, wardrobes, nests, shells, corners, miniature, and intimate immensity.²⁸ These elements are eventful and colourful, seem to be fragmented but orchestrate a larger unity. Walter Benjamin called these images “dialectical” – such images are the fragmented, small, particular moments, and urban experiences, in which the “total historical event” is to be found, the “perceptible ur-phenomenon (Urphänomen)”.²⁹ The soft contexts of a collage city provide each other with meanings by juxtaposition and contradiction.

Since the forms and contents of cities are as diverse and complex as the language system, we may further understand cities through the analogy of syntax. As mentioned earlier, the hard structure of a collage city may be interpreted as the syntagm or metonymy of the city, and the soft contexts the paradigm or metaphor. Wittgenstein said that, “Our language can be seen as an ancient city: a maze of little streets and squares, of old and new houses, and of houses with additions from

²⁶ See Raban, Jonathan. *Soft City*, Britain: Fontana/Collins, 1974.

²⁷ Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960.

²⁸ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetic of Space*, trans., Maria Jolas, Boston: Beacon Press, 1969.

²⁹ Buck-Morss, Susan. *The Dialectics of Seeing, Walter Benjamin and the Arcade Project*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991, p. 71.

different periods; and this surrounded by a multitude of new boroughs with straight regular streets and uniform houses.”³⁰ Roland Barthes too states that, “the city is a discourse and this discourse is truly a language.”³¹ Our language is a complex matter - there are hundreds of languages and thousands of regional dialects, and within one language, there are high and low pitches, fast and slow speeds, verbs, adjectives, adverbs, subjects and objects, singular and plural, idioms and slang, infinite expression and meanings, endless ways of usage: to write, read, speak, listen, sing, shout, whisper, pray, swear, etc., and it changes with times: new words and phrases appear in different epochs. Similarly, a good city ought to be like a language that is full of varieties and options for the users to choose, to perceive, and to express.

The modern city means more than the possibility of fame, money, and power. It is the spatial embodiment of memory and modernity; as well as a social space that contains the experience and consciousness of people. Here I propose five syntagmatic contiguities – the city as history, as spectacle, as a work of art, as corporate image, and as home. They are interrelated and indivisible. They suggest an aesthetic way of perceiving as well as producing the image of a modern city. Their symbolic richness allows the selective juxtaposition of a great number of both harmonious and contradictory urban elements. A *balance* of the five will induce a metropolistic totality, nonetheless, it is a “*difficult unity of inclusion*”, not an “*easy unity of exclusion*”.³²

³⁰ Wittenstein cited by Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 46.

³¹ Barthes, Roland. *The Pleasure of the Text*, New York, 1975, p. 92.

³² Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1966, p. 102.

2

City As History

What has gone? How it Ends!
Begin to forget it. It will remember itself from
every sides, with all gestures, in each our word.
Today's truth, tomorrow's trend.
Forget, remember!!

- James Joyce, *Finnegan's Wake*.¹

City landscape is an embodiment of power and collective memory, and history is its powerful ally in the development of individual and society. It gives strength to present exertion and patience to endurance. Bacon commented, "It is the true office of history to represent the events themselves, together with the counsels, and to leave the observations and conclusions thereupon to the liberty and faculty of every man's judgement."² History provides exemplary actions and records timeless moments that are important references for the present actions and the future decisions. Historical facts contain intrinsic values³ that are worthy of study, because they carry valuable theories that, though imperfectly, explain society. As "Hegelian intuition (suggests) that nothing in life is ever isolated, that any event and any creation of a period is connected by a thousand threads with the culture in which it is embedded."⁴ Hegel believed the moving spirit of the world is a historical process. The meaning of every object is related to the context of its time and place. Similarly, each building, street, and neighbourhood is conceived, not in isolation, but in its spatial and temporal context. A city is viewed as not only existing in space but also in time. A regional culture is not as an isolated group action or event, but as something that would endure into the future, just as it had from the past.

¹ Joyce, James. *Finnegan's Wake*, London: Faber & Faber, 1930.

² Bacon, Francis, Viscount St. Albans, 1605, *The Advancement of Learning*, ed., William Aldis Wright, Oxford: Clarendon, 1869, bk. 2.

³ See Russell, Bertrand. "On History," *Basic Writings of Bertrand Russell*, Ch. 56, The Independent Review, 1904.

⁴ Gombrich, Ernst. "In Search of Cultural History," *Ideals and Idols*, Oxford: Phaidon, 1979, p. 46.

Nietzsche said, "Only strong personalities can endure history, the weak ones are extinguished by it."⁵ A city^{which} tries to ignore or erase its past is like a man without memory. He is like a newborn baby, unaware of anything that has happened before his birth. He has no reference, no standpoint for his thoughts and actions, and can be easily manipulated. T. S. Eliot said, "A people without history is not redeemed from time, for history is a pattern of timeless moments."⁶ To deprive a nation of its history is to take away^{from} it the strength and wisdom of the past. Cities with historical amnesia fall into dislocation and fragmentation. An independence from the past disrupts the continuation between traditional values and present activities, in other words, between conceptions and actions.

After all, the past should not and cannot be ignored because it is part of what we are, "man ... cannot learn to forget, but hangs on the past: however far or fast he runs, that chain runs with him."⁷ There is no escape from history. Benjamin saw "the past has left behind ... images of itself that are comparable to the image which light imprints on a photosensitive plate."⁸ When sensitized plate is exposed to light, an image is formed on it. This image is made visible by developing, made permanent by fixing and printing on paper. It is possible to alter the picture but not completely to erase it from the plate. History somehow does the same. It leaves images on city and society, physically expresses through the collective memory of people, urban landscape, and architecture. With careful preservation and maintenance, it endures time. Modern society may try to add or deduct meanings from history for various reasons, but not completely eliminate it. Carl Jung agrees that, "history is not contained in thick books but lives in our very blood."⁹ What we see is not with our eyes, but with our perceptions, which result from experiences and what we learn from the past. Therefore, history is indispensable; it is important to salvage the traces of history that are being lost in an accelerated world.

⁵ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. 1874, "Thoughts Out of Season", Part 2, Section 5, tran., A. Collins, *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, ed., Oscar Levy, Vol. 5, Allen & Unwin, 1910.

⁶ Eliot, Thomas Stearns. "Little Gidding", Part 5, *Four Quartets*. London: Faber & Faber, 1944.

⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich Wilhelm. 1874, *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans., Adrian Collins, New York: Macmillan, 1957, Section 1.

⁸ Benjamin, Walter. *Illuminations*, trans., Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books, 1969, p. 83.

⁹ Jung, Carl. 1927, "Woman in Europe", *Collected Works*, Vol. 10, Para. 26, ed., William McGuire, 1964.

Every city needs the poetic content and the aesthetic quality of space embedded in historical constructions.¹⁰ The urban constructions of various historical periods accumulated and layered upon the previous ones. From this perspective, a city as history is like a slice cutting across the multiple layers of historical spaces, and displays all the previous styles simultaneously. The aesthetic spatial practice of historical preservation and restoration in modern cities helps to maintain a sense of continuity, between the past and the present in the configuration of global space. To preserve the past is to preserve the self. Without knowing where we have been, it is difficult to know where we are going. The past constitutes individual and collective identity. Objects from the past are important evidence of cultural symbols. Continuity between past and present produces a sense of stability out of immense social change. Since change is unavoidable, a stable system of ordered meanings allows us to deal with both development and decay. This cognitive impulse is an important agency in the adjustment to changes. It is a social emollient and reinforces national identity when confidence is weakened or threatened.¹¹

History and Memory

History has the power to seduce. In the city of history, there is an increasing interest to preserve history in an era of intensive and rapid change. People sometimes desire things that they do not and cannot have. “The desire and longing that nostalgia evoked could not be stilled by the restoration of material objects or the retelling of mythical stories, for it was the very loss of this mythical past or the absence of this imaginary place that generated and sustained both the longing and the desire.”¹² Nostalgia is an extremely powerful emotion in public feeling. Although academic groups often use it in a pejorative way, it provides comfort and a sense of stability that are an essential part of modern living.¹³ The images of nostalgia originate from the collective and private memories of people. They are

¹⁰ Krier, Robert. *Urban Space*, New York, London, 1979. Rowe, Colin & Fred Koetter. *Collage City*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978.

¹¹ Hewison, R. *The Heritage Industry*, London, 1987.

¹² Steward, Susan. *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection*, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1984, pp. 23, 140- 145.

¹³ On nostalgia, see Chapter Six: City As Home, pp. 105- 112.

phantasmagorical, illusive, and unattainable. People sometimes look backward and inward, rather than outward and toward the future, for inspirations. They are fascinated by the infinite imageability of the symbolic images of history. One may perceive historical objects as a narrative of the imagination. For example, when surrounded by historical constructions, one can physically touch and dream about the social context behind one – who had lived in this house, what was life like at that time, etc. Artists as painters and poets create their historical *fictions* out of an aesthetic combination of historical facts and infinite imaginations. Boyer explains, “The image of a past preserved internally within our collective memory and connected with certain stylized images and legendary visions is an alluring ideal: it keeps alive our native myths, our quest for origins, and offers us assurance that we control our patrimony.”¹⁴ Historical objects or events may be experienced collectively, but individuals somehow like to capture a general memory and turn it into a private one. They feel the necessity to remember traces left by the past through memory. When the authentic traces of the past are eradicated by modernity, the search for personal identity through historical preservation and restoration is vital.

It is necessary to distinguish history from memory. Memory, according to De Certeau is, “Like those birds that lay their eggs only in other species’ nest, memory produces in a place that does not belong to it”, and he continues, “A memory is only a Prince Charming who stays just long enough to awaken the Sleeping Beauties of our wordless stories.”¹⁵ When the Beauty wakes up, the Prince is already gone. Memory poses the practice of imagination and the ability to alter with different situations. It takes shape from external circumstances and furnishes its content (the missing detail) with imaginations and feelings. Raphael Samuel says,

Memory is historically conditioned, changing colour and shape according to the emergencies of the moment; that so far from being handed down in the timeless form of ‘tradition’ it is progressively altered from generation to generation. It bears the impress of experience, in however a mediated way. It is stamped with the ruling

¹⁴ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, p. 305.

¹⁵ De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, pp. 86, 108.

passions of its time. Like history, memory is inherently revisionist and never more chameleon than when it appears to stay the same.¹⁶

Memory is our inter-subjective interpretation of collective values and stories. Although it is no more than memory, it derives power from its very capacity to change - it is mobile and has no fix position. A question arises here - can life truly be remembered? Since life is ceaseless changing and death is the end of that change, memory has the power to keep history alive beyond death. In this sense, memory gives us immortality. Past, present, and future is an axle on which history moves. Memory resurrects things that happened in the past to the present - the past can only become known from the present and history is thus always contemporary.

History is a distillation of memory, controlled, and linked together traces. It is a systemized knowledge of the past, by way of record-keeping and modern techniques of information collection, storage, and access. It is a continuous and connected process; the process includes past, present, and future. History includes a sense of progress and destiny. The two giants of historiography, Hegel and Marx saw the world as a historical process that represents the progress and development of civilization; each regarded history as a process of the past that is active in the present and will shape the future in certain predetermined ways.

Nevertheless, the distinction between memory and history becomes blurred in the cityscape. A city as history is a city of collective memory. Collective memory is an aesthetic process - the privatization of public space and the publicization of private space. It embodies the necessary idea of a society or a collective idea that binds the community together. In the city seen as history, historical constructions and reconstructions are juxtaposed against our collective memory of public spaces. It is no easy task to present the beauty of past architecture and its social context simultaneously with the present technical needs and social realities. Boyer suggests a colourful mosaic pattern on the urban forms – it is “a matrix of well-designed fragments” in which historical or local and regional traditions are specified through

¹⁶ Samuel, Raphael. *Theatres of Memory*, London: Verso, 1994, p. 10.

design codes.¹⁷ Jencks claims that modern cities need “a set of hypotheses which attempt to redefine our past in order to make our present and future intelligible.”¹⁸ These design codes and the set of hypotheses are not simple imitation - a mere contemporary creation or re-enactment of traditions. They must represent the collective memory rooted in concrete social experiences and associated with temporal and spatial frameworks.¹⁹ Historical architecture and spaces may be perceived as a *code* that represents the contemporary social experiences, which are constantly restoring and renewing from epoch to epoch. Metz says,

Every code is a collection of reworkings; of double repercussions. ...And this set of reworkings is itself, over time, constantly reworked, like a monument - Monumentum: memory, trace, relic - a monument which is being restored but which must have been restored in every phase of its history.”²⁰

The composition and the meanings of historical constructions in their original spatial and temporal contexts are detached from the contemporary urban landscape. Their symbolic meanings may be adjusted in respect to the changes of the social and political environment. They need to be constantly revised, reworked, reread, reanalysed, and yet, respect the truth and principle they have been designed to stand for.

For cities, according to Hume, “the advantages found in history seem to be of three kinds, as it amuses the fancy, as it improves the understanding, and as it strengthens virtue.”²¹ True, but history certainly has more functions than that. For cities contain a “constellation of enshrined ideas”,²² and these ideas are the experiences, the collective memories, or even the myths of people. Together they

¹⁷ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, p. 2.

¹⁸ Taylor, Charles. “Interpretation and the Sciences of Man,” *Philosophy and the Human Sciences, Philosophical Papers 2*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985 p. 50.

¹⁹ Halbwachs, Maurice. *The Collective Memory*, trans., Francis J. Ditter, Jr., and Vida Yazdi Ditter, New York: Harper Colophon Books, 1980, pp. 1-21.

²⁰ Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier*, trans., Celia Britton, Annwyl Williams, Ben Brewster, and Alfred Guzzetti, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1982, p. 159.

²¹ Hume, David. “Of the Study of History”, *Essays, Moral, Political, and Literary*, ed., Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed., Indianapolis: Liberty Classics, 1987, Essay VI, p. 565.

²² Geertz, Clifford. *Negara. The Theatre State in Nineteenth-Century Bali*, Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1980, p. 19.

constitute a large pattern that represents a regional culture. When these enshrined ideas are physically expressed on a cityscape, the values and virtues of a society are emphasized. They relate to a need for an organized social environment, provide theories that help to create a social structure, and bring order into events. They mould the points of view of the citizens, and set the agendas for the future generations. In city planning, there is a close relationship between the history of urban forms and the resultant theories of urban design. Kostof points out,

Form, in itself, is very lamely informative of intention. We “read” form correctly only to the extent that we are familiar with the precise cultural conditions that generated it. Rather than presume, in other words, as practically everybody in the architectural world wants to presume, that buildings and city-forms are a transparent medium of cultural expression, I am convinced that the relationship only works the other way around. The more we know about cultures, about the structure of society in various periods of history in different parts of the world, the better we are able to read their built environment.²³

It is impossible to read urban forms correctly unless one acquaints oneself with the historical and cultural intents behind them. For instance, one may find similarities between the grand planning of Washington D.C. and that of Versailles or Karlsruhe, or between the street patterns of medieval Nördlingen and Olmsted’s Riverside. However, the content housed within each urban form and the social condition that surrounded the planners were very different, and must be taken in consideration when conducting a serious study on the cities.

The Utopian City

Indeed, most cities retain the basic shapes of their former selves mostly at their centres. Traces of the past can still be found in some of the names of its streets and squares, in the topography, in monuments and some civic buildings. Generally speaking, a city of history may be categorized into three urban forms, which deal with the most important motivation of designing the city or its self-perception through history. I shall call them the “utopian model”, the “humanist model”, and the “functionalist model”.²⁴ The utopian model is the vision of an ideal city form. It

²³ Kostof, Spiro. “*Do Buildings Lie? Hegel's Wheel and Other Fables*”, The John William Lawrence Memorial Lectures, 9, New Orleans, 1980.

²⁴ The ideas are inspired by Lynch, Kevin. *Good City Form*, Cambridge, Mass. : MIT Press, 1984.

is the form of a holy city, whose plan is an interpretation of the universe and of the gods. Its urban forms are an articulated expression of sacred power. The city is full of symbolic patterns²⁵ that are inspired by mythical and ritual events. Characteristic design features are the planned picturesque, geometrical regularity, bilateral symmetry, monumental axis, huge squares with historical monuments, grand vistas with obelisks and equestrian statues, the enclosure and its protected gates, dominant landmarks, a reliance on the regular grid, and spatial organization by hierarchical functions. The urban forms are inspired by the Renaissance and Baroque styles. Cities of this category perceive history as a symbolic image, which provides a tool to organize social environment in a way that power and order can be asserted effectively. However, the existing urban fabric that resulted from earlier economic developments has to be destroyed in order to achieve expansive and majestic urban spaces. Massive demolition of old urban areas began when straight thoroughfares, grand vistas, and boulevards were built to cut through the compact traditional urban cores.

When Haussmann redesigned Second Empire Paris, he opted for the mechanical efficiency of traffic circulation and visual grandeur. Old urban cores were gutted, noteworthy buildings and monuments were isolated in large open spaces at the ends of vistas. The clearances required for the metropolitan improvements of Paris swept away much of the historic fabric of the city. Yet, paradoxically they reflected a kind of historical awareness - by clearing surrounded constructions away to expose and make prominent selected monuments. Haussmann called the process “*dégagement*” - made monuments more visible, better available for study, better able to dominate the townscape.²⁶ Similar urban patterning happened in Beijing City after the Communist Party took over China. The old urban cores that housed thousands of hundreds of residents were cleaned away to build the huge Tienanmen Square. The Square was built in the middle of the grand vista linking the Forbidden City that is

²⁵ See Rykwert, Joseph. *The Idea of A Town: the Anthropology of Urban Form in Rome, Italy and the Ancient World*, London: Faber, 1976.

²⁶ See Jordan, David P. *Transforming Paris, the Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*, New York, London: Free Press, 1995. Weeks, Willet and Jean-Claude Martin. *The Man Who Made Paris, the Illustrated Biography of Georges-Eugène Haussmann*, London: London House, 1999.

the ancient Chinese Palace in the north with the Temple of Heaven in the south. The whole city is built in a grid layout surrounding the Palace and the Temples.

The Humanist City

The humanist model perceives cities as biological forms with an organic growth pattern – the branch of trees, the structure of leave, or the pattern of human lungs. According to the model, a city is a living being that requires light, air, and food. That means, the structure of its urban forms is a cohesive and indivisible one. The city must be maintained in a healthy and balanced state. It should have a definite boundary and an optimum size of population. The citizens can enjoy open spaces, fresh air, greenery, and intact neighbourhood units. The various functions of the city should remain in an accessible distance. The humanist city does not use history as a symbolic image to consolidate power and social order. Instead, it adopts a pathological attitude towards history – it analyses history as the way a pathologist studies arteries and bone structures. It respects history as a knowledge to improve the living spaces. Anything done to the city landscape is a type of surgery to remove illness and to maintain good health. The humanist city aims not to function efficiently, but homeopathically.

There are two types of humanist city - the organic or non-geometric urban patterns and the garden cities. Camillo Sitte praised the urban forms of medieval towns and suggested minor adjustments in historical cores instead of massive demolition.²⁷ He argued against Haussmann's grand scale and associated the organic urban landscape with visual interests and social relations. According to Sitte, historical cities have a peculiar charm, they may not be called beautiful, but they are attractive. They please by the beautiful disorder that results from art and chance. Modern planning should be more creative than profit-minded, by employing the small incidents, the twisted streets, the rounded corners, the little planted squares unexpectedly come upon, the long unbroken street, without being dissected by

²⁷ Sitte, Camillo. 1889, *The Art of Building Cities: City Building According to its Artistic Fundamentals*, trans., Charles T. Stewart, Westport, Conn: Hyperion Press, 1979. Collins, George Roseborough. *Camillo Sitte and the Birth of Modern City Planning*, London: Phaidon, 1965.

geometrical blocks. The garden cities²⁸ refer to the American “Greenbelt towns” and the works of Howard, Geddes, and Mumford in Britain. Historical centres are preserved and rejuvenated – not a few monuments, but the *whole area* is protected as an historical monument. The destruction of traditional urban fabric would erase the cultural identity of a city. As Geddes wrote, “We must not too simply begin, as do too many, with fundamentals as of communications, and thereafter give these such esthetic qualities of perspective and the rest as may be, but, above all things, seek to enter into the spirit of our city, its historical essence and continuous life. ... Its civic character, its collective soul, thus in some measure discerned and entered into, its daily life may then be more fully touched.”²⁹ Cullen, his pupil, also focused on the relationships between urban forms and society, he analysed historical cityscape and its human scale.³⁰

The humanist city with its organic urban forms gains much popularity, but as a matter of fact, few modern cities could imitate the historical city with little squares surrounded by fine architecture. It is impossible to resurrect the pre-industrial world, but the city as history saves as much as it can. By doing so, the city acknowledges what it once had, and builds in sympathy with the past artefacts, and does so with respect not to a single monument but to the area as a whole. Style and function may change, but the poetic content and the aesthetic quality in the symbolic space of historical constructions suggest eternity.

The Functionalist City

Finally, the functionalist model constructs cities as a machine. A functionalist city must be factual and straightforward - all urban forms must follow their functions. A city must function as efficiently as a machine (Le Corbusier’s dictum); it requires constant maintenance and improvement in order to avoid obsolescence. Any urban development projects are a kind of mechanical adjustment to make the city function and produce better, faster, and cheaper. The urban forms serve mainly present purposes. The functionalist model is the concept that motivates

²⁸ On the Garden City, see Chapter Five, the City as Home, pp. 99- 101.

²⁹ Geddes, 1914, cited in Tyrwhitt, J. ed., *Patrick Geddes in India*, London, 1947, p. 17.

to build the industrial and commercial towns. The city forms are made up of autonomous function zones that are linked up by thoroughfares. Architecture and city planning are standardized as a combination of glass and grid. It is flexible and limitlessly extendable in any direction. It is anonymous and non-specific to place or function. It is perfectly toneless, formless, textureless, and odourless. The model is a simple (in most cases, failed) solution to the complicated problems of urban planning. Examples are the grid towns in America and the Radiant City of Le Corbusier. A functionalist city regards history as an object that should either be avoided or exploited for commercial reasons. In the latter case, the functionalist city emphasizes the appearance of the city façade as branded images, and history is promoted as cultural attractions with little social context.

Panoramas and Monuments

Cities as history may take shape in different urban forms, but they all aim at a “totality” in spatial organization. Totality here refers to a concept of not only the historical background, but also the contemporary ideas of late capitalism (global reach and administrative rationalization). It helps people to experience the city in a coherent manner. Historical constructions serve to unify the city totality by suggesting a social order or structure. They provide the most direct way to demonstrate what the order and the organization of a well-governed state or society should be. There are two vital elements to achieve such effect – urban panoramas and monuments. Urban panoramas define and outline only the significant sites of the city. Through the contemplation of the sublimity and the grandeur of panoramas, rationality and order in the public affairs may be “enshrined as a constellation of ideas”. The picturesquely comforting urban panoramas can reawaken memories of the past. Their spatial dramas encourage and inspire the present to create a better future. Monuments are markers of the collective memory in a society. They are imbued with appropriate symbolic meanings that constitute the nation, its history, art, spirit, and civic legacy.

³⁰ Cullen, Gordon. *Townscape*, London: Architectural Press, 1961.

Monuments display the past in the present, and carry it through time. They aim not to provide a comprehensive portrait of historical personalities or events, but to produce symbolic and distilled meanings that remind, warn, and suture, as well as to provide public places for recognizing, gathering, and mourning. Monuments tend to be stylistically conservative. They employ earlier models that have evolved over a long period, because the models present a symbolic image - harmony and definiteness. Monuments convey meanings with direct statements of deference and adoration, which interpret events and provide a framework for understanding and remembering. At the same time, they serve to address the capital of a nation; their forms thus require the consideration of changing circumstances and existing urban designs. As Mumford says, "The monument is a declaration of love and admiration attached to higher purposes (people) hold in common ... An age that has deflated ... values and lost sight of its purposes will not produce convincing monuments."³¹ Both panoramas and monuments transform the relationship of individual to time, memory, and place. Their ritual layers are filled with symbolic meanings and enigmas. They bring people together; help to overcome and integrate the oppositions of past and present, and affirm a kind of social unity beneath the manifold diversities of contemporary communities.

Notwithstanding, a city as history contains problems. Modern cities, especially of the developing countries, tend to locate their resources in areas that generate a higher and immediate financial return. They prefer the functionalist model in city planning for its convenience, efficiency, and technological advancement. A lot of historical constructions are destroyed during rapid economic development, and rebuilt later when tourism flourishes. In this process of modernization, local neighbourhoods and streets tend to be regarded as less important. Le Corbusier announces, "We must kill the street!"³² He proposed to eliminate the traditional irregular hive of streets, lanes, and buildings in order to make way for high-rise towers in vast urban parks, elevated motorways, and separate zones for living, work, and recreation. He insisted that people would learn to love it but they do not. Jacobs

³¹ Mumford, Lewis. "Monumentalism, Symbolism and Style", *Architectural Review*, April 1949.

³² Le Corbusier. 1929, *The Radiant City*, trans., B. P. Knight, New York, 1964.

and Lynch argue eloquently that cities are complex and highly interdependent organisms.³³ Modern cities suffer huge loss of vitality when the diversity, intensity, mixed use, locality, and linkages of the traditional urban space and neighbourhood are destroyed. Venturi stresses that humanity is complex and architecture therefore needs to encompass the diverse and perverse nature of life. To Mies van der Rohe's famous "Less is more", he counters, "Less is a bore".³⁴ Berman urges that "the expressway world (of modernization which is expansion and destruction) gear(s) itself up for ever more gigantic expansion and growth, but finding itself attacked by a multitude of passionate shouts from the street, individual shouts that could become a collective call, erupting into the heart of the traffic, bringing the gigantic engines to a stop, or at least radically slowing them down."³⁵ History and economic development are in a way opposing forces. In reality, the "shouts" of preserving tradition is less heard than the crashing engine of modernization, because "the power of pace is outstripping the power of place".³⁶ History and tradition still risk being exploited and ripped to pieces by modern aims.

The Parody of Catharsis

Both memory and history contain a narrative that creates myths related to their origins. This narrative may be manipulated to a point that displaces the authenticity of memory and history, as the narrative itself becomes the origin of more supplementary narratives. Memory, as a popular culture of glorifying the past and focusing on the accumulation of traces, has almost become history. In the epoch of commercialism, modern cities have to preserve history without slowing down the pace of modernization, and do so, under capitalism, by commodifying history. Consumer culture takes advantage of the lack of awareness of the population. Modern society has a collective quest for the redemption and the renewal of its past. Fictionalising the past or adding positive values can bring history to life when bald

³³ Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1994. Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960.

³⁴ Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, London: Architectural Press, 1977.

³⁵ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983, pp. 328-9.

³⁶ A sentence used by Luke, T. W. and G. Ó Tuathail, 1998, "Global Flowmations, Local Fundamentalisms, and Fast Geopolitics: America in an Accelerating World Order," *An Unruly World? Globalization, Governance and Geography*, eds., A. Herod, G. Ó Tuathail and S. M. Roberts, London, New York: Routledge, 1998, p. 72.

facts fail to do so. The practices make history more convincing and attractive. The collective fetishes for an anonymous past become a commercial target for exploitation, through stylistic connotation and glossy representation of its “pastness”.³⁷ In an era of the “late consumer or multinational capitalism”, contemporary culture constructs narratives of the past that represent ideas or stereotypical renderings of the past. Although these representations are not realistic, their attraction is marketable. The marketability of history sustains various industries, such as the promotions of heritage, art-and-craft movements, restorations, and preservation activities. Boyer writes about the South Street Seaport in lower Manhattan. She finds it to be a spectacle of history, a commodified space, a stage set, and city tableaux constructed to stimulate consumption. “By targeting the spectator with narrative style-of-life advertising, ... the Seaport and other such compositions speak directly to private fantasies, colluding in the privatisation of public space.”³⁸ Another example is the Old Pasadena in Los Angeles, its simulated historical landscapes offer consumers an attractive lifestyle as well as markers for identity.³⁹ Their images are, in Herron’s words, “a perpetual carnival”, in which the past may be experienced collectively. However, they are “purely recreational: a holiday interruption, a freak.”⁴⁰

Marx claims that ideology projects a phantasmagorical image on both the mind and the object. Capitalism as an ideology produces images through commodity.⁴¹ And the image is in fact itself a commodity. Images are produced to substitute and to sublimate the real. Baudrillard says, “the seduction of the signs

³⁷ Lasch, Christopher. 1979, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectation*, New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1991, preface. Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 18- 19. Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories: Marking Time in A Culture of Amnesia*, New York, London: Routledge, 1995, p. 253.

³⁸ Boyer, M. C. “Cities For Sale: Merchandising History at South Seaport”, *Variations on A Theme Park: The New American City and the End of Public Space*, ed., M. Sorkin, New York: The Noonday Press, 1992, p. 204.

³⁹ Dickinson, Greg. “Memories for Sale: Nostalgia and the Construction of Identity in Old Pasadena”, *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, No. 83, February 1997, pp. 1-27.

⁴⁰ Herron, Jerry. “The Sign in Niki’s Window”, *After Culture: Detroit and the Humiliation of History*, Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1993, p. 23.

⁴¹ Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: Zone Books, 1994.

themselves (is) more important than the emergence of any truth.”⁴² People who hopelessly use these images as substitutes for the real are in addiction of spectacle. The same theory may also apply to the historical forms in modern cities, “the preservation of (historical) forms of architecture or the reproduction of stereotypical urban scenes in illustrated views, album cards, stereopticon photographs, and picture postcards - all commercial exploits of (history) - offered the spectator a packageable and consumable manner of looking at cities.”⁴³ The images these products suggest are so fantastic that many people believe that they are better than the real object they simulated. The signifier stands in for the signified. Take the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas as an example. (Illustrations 1) The Hotel duplicates all the elements of Venetian historical urban forms - a miniature St. Mark’s Square surrounded by full size models of the Campanile and the Doge’s Palace, the Rialto Bridge, an indoor mini Grand Canal, singing gondoliers act by American staff faking an Italian accent, the Venetian arts, paintings, glass, mosaic, lace, costumed musicians and opera singers in the hotel lobby and shopping mall. They are perfectly arranged and organized; some visitors are so impressed that they actually identify their simulated experience in the Hotel with that of the city of Venice. The simulated historical cityscape of the Hotel is a landmark of populist kitsch, which of course has no historical connection to the real Venice.

Capitalism is capable of linking images and objects, politics and economics, ideologies and the desires of people,⁴⁴ as well as history and modernity. In modern cities, history is re-packed and re-introduced to the society in an aestheticized manner. Harvey calls the infusion of history and modernity “a constructed vision of historical continuity and collective memory.”⁴⁵ It is a staged array of history in a world of ephemerality and fragmentation. Since men tend to respect and be impressed by things that were established long ago and have developed slowly over

⁴² Baudrillard, Jean. *Seduction*, trans., Brian Singer, New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1990, p. 53.

⁴³ Chanan, Michael. *The Dream that Kicks*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1980, p.88. See also Fraser, W. Hamish. *The Coming of the Mass Market, 1850- 1914*, Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1981.

⁴⁴ Mitchell, W. J. T. *Iconology Image, Text, Ideology*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986, p. 160- 208.

⁴⁵ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 83.

time, modern societies sometimes not only preserve the past, they even celebrate it in full-scale simulated copy - immortality with duplication.⁴⁶ The modern city selectively accepts the elements of its earlier pasts. It even inspires us to build representational forms out of these elements. At the same time, the contradictions and interests of the present are adjusted to absorb these forms. On urban landscapes, the physical celebration of the past is explicit. Historical simulacra may appeal to the admiring eyes as a form of art, but illusion is crafted onto reality. The interweaving of historical simulacra in modern cityscapes brings together different worlds in the same space and time. Here I borrow the phrase of Harvey (originally Giddens's) – “Time-space compression”:

The experience of time and space has changed, the confidence in the association between scientific and moral judgements has collapsed, aesthetics has triumphed over ethics as a prime focus of social and intellectual concern, images dominate narratives, ephemerality and fragmentation take precedence over eternal truths...⁴⁷

The spatial practice of contemporary cityscapes is an aestheticized absorption of over-accumulated forms, through temporal and spatial displacement. The simultaneous juxtaposition of architectural forms from different historical periods contains the risk of a perpetual disruption of temporal and spatial rhythms. In the light of this epistemic shift in the experience and representation of space, new meanings for space and time are produced. Fixed territorial spaces are filled with kaleidoscopic historical images, which question the established geo-political representations and the material conditions they rely upon. Adorno calls this aesthetic practice the “parody of catharsis”,⁴⁸ and Jameson names it the “pastiche”, – the imitation of a peculiar or idiosyncratic style, the wearing of a mask, the speech in a dead language, and the aesthetic overkill of a random “cannibalization” of all the past styles.⁴⁹ Historical objects and events are transformed into sheer images for consumption, pseudo-events, and urban spectacles. Traditions are *invented* and blend

⁴⁶ Eco, Umberto. “The Fortresses of Solitude,” *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans., William Weaver, London: Pan; Secker & Warburg, 1987, p. 89.

⁴⁷ Originally, Harvey used the phrase “Time Space Compression” in explaining a postmodern phenomenon, globalization – international capital and technology redefine the meaning of time and space. See Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 328.

⁴⁸ Adorno, Theodore W. “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, 1944.

into the existing urban fabric. When history is marketed or commodified, it may be misrepresented or rendered invisible. Marx says in a famous dictum,

The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when men seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something entirely new ...they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past and borrow from them names, battle slogans and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honoured disguise and this borrowed language.⁵⁰

Architects and planning professionals are obviously concerned more about the competitive ability of a city in the global structures of capital. Therefore, they concentrate on enhancing the marketability of the city through improvements in its imageability, livability, and desirability. Architecture, in a way, becomes a commodity and a form of publicity. For instance, many buildings in Hong Kong are restored or built in a manner that returns to and quotes their colonial or Chinese background. In many cases, the meaning of history is misinterpreted. It is because the architects and the clients want to include historical elements in their projects, but care little whether the combinations are appropriate. The resulted urban space is something Victorian here, something Chinese there. The contemporary city landscape is characteristically disarrayed and fragmented; the historical compositions of these constructions thus appear to be exaggeratedly detached. Architects and land developers would deploy any elements that may glorify their projects. History and tradition are perceived “as an endless reserve of equal events” – from which a seemingly vast archive “instantly retrievable and capable of being consumed over and over again at the push of a button.”⁵¹ Consequently, the obsession with external appearances in the urban landscape may reduce its building styles to be illusory without social context. That is, they fail to represent the regional culture. Jameson complains that, “(we are) condemned to seek History by way of our own pop images and simulacra of that history which itself remains for ever out of reach.”⁵² The architects employ historical details not for their sacerdotal significance, but simply

⁴⁹ Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991.

⁵⁰ Marx, Karl. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte, 1851- 52, MER*, p. 595.

⁵¹ Taylor, B. *Modernism, Post-Modernism, Realism: A Critical Perspective for Art*, Winchester, 1987, p. 105.

⁵² Fredric Jameson quoted in Hewison, R. *The heritage industry*, London, 1987, p. 135.

for their formal appeal. It becomes an indulgent, almost hedonistic kind of an attitude.⁵³ These urban forms suggest an edited perception of reality to the spectators, which is in fact different from what may be reality. Simulated historical forms are supplements or substitutes standing in for the authentic one. They may appeal a public awareness of their history and tradition, but can hardly establish any factual relationship between the two.

We look backward at history and tradition in order to go forward, and withhold judgment that may be used as a tool to make later judgment more appropriate. Jarzombek observes that, "It is in the city that one learns to be a citizen. There are people who acquire valuable knowledge (from history), see many models to teach them the avoidance of evil. As they look around, they notice how handsome is honour, how lovely is fame, how divine a thing is glory."⁵⁴ Historical urban forms help to create a sense of continuity in the cityscape, because they provide what Sitte sought, a "community-life outlook". They overcome fragmentation in the cityscape by suggesting coherent values.⁵⁵ These values are a kind of social unity, a "wholeness". We may define the city of history as the middle of this wholeness. Even when it elaborates itself into new, delicate, and intelligible structures with new functions and meanings, we may suddenly recognize its cultural past - a temple, a bower, or a tomb - from its urban forms. There are times when the present breaks the chains of the past in order to create the future; there are also times that the past creates the future by breaking the chains of the present.

Every contemporary cityscape consists of conflicting fragments, each fragment represents different points of view. Each view is made more potent by juxtaposition against each other - honorific and humble monuments, permanent and ephemeral forms. It may include places for public assemblage and debate, as well as

⁵³ See Goldberger, Paul. *The City Observed: New York, A Guide to the Architecture of Manhattan*, New York: Vintage Books, 1979, xiv- xv.

⁵⁴ Jarzombek, Mark. *On Leon Baptista Alberti*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1989, p. 117.

⁵⁵ Camillo Sitte quoted in David Harvey. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 276- 7.

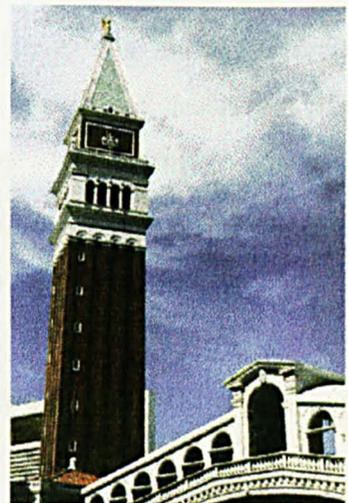
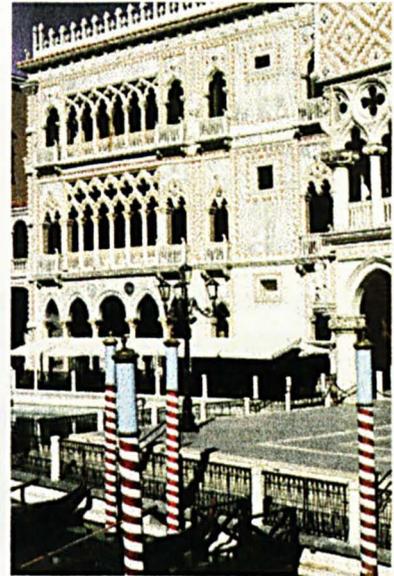
private memory walks and retreats.⁵⁶ The harmony of the past elements and the modern society is maintained by the humanistic nature of our society. This humanistic nature is our collective memory that we love and hate regardless of time and space. As Baudelaire, a supreme essayist of the city, says:

“(like) the palimpsest manuscript that superposes, one upon the other; ... our incommensurable memory: in the first there is something like a fantastic, grotesque randomness, a collision between heterogeneous elements; whereas in the second the inevitability of temperament necessarily establishes a harmony among the most disparate elements. However incoherent a given existence may be, its human unity is not upset. All the echoes of memory, if one could awaken them simultaneously, would form a concert - pleasant or painful, but logical and without dissonance.”⁵⁷

Both the past and the present should be conceived as a transient process that orchestrates a greater whole. The past culminates in the present, and the present judges the traditional values as a restoration or re-birth of those principles. For the moderns who look forward to the future, the forge of history is a continued metamorphosis and a permanent spiritual revolution that builds up the matrix of future. Every age is judged to attain the fullness of its time. What ^{is} important is to acknowledge that we are living in an age which is *becoming rather than being*. To explore the global meanings and the prospects of *becoming*, we have to look into the discourse of *being*. It is a search for unity within differences.

⁵⁶ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, pp. 10- 11.

⁵⁷ Baudelaire, Charles. “Paradis Artificiels,” cited by Terdiman, Richard. trans., ed., *Community at Loose Ends*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1991, p. 118.



1. Venetian Hotel, Las Vegas, 2000.

3

City As Spectacle

The modern urban scene, specially that of a large city at night, is clearly the plastic equivalent of jazz. ...The nocturnal sea of electric advertising knock out all sense of perspective, of realistic depth. ...these lights tend to abolish all sense of real space, finally melting into a single plane of colored light points and neon lines moving over a surface of black velvet sky.

Headlights on speeding cars, highlights on receding rails, shimmering reflections on the wet pavements - all mirrored in puddles that destroy our sense of direction (which is top? which is bottom?), supplementing the mirage above with a mirage beneath us, and rushing between these two worlds of electric signs, we see them no longer on a single plane, but as a system of theater wings, suspended in the air, through which the night flood of traffic lights is streaming.¹

This is a typical night scene of a modern city. It introduces a specific manner of looking. In the scene, there are separate elements - the lights of street advertisements, cars, traffic signs, reflections on the wet roads, black sky, the air and sound of the streets, etc. These elements are characteristically fragmentary and temporal. They signify multiple perspectives - imaginary different places and other times. Looking at these elements, the spectator experiences the fusion of these separate elements into a single spontaneous view. This manner of looking is like watching a play within the play, or the image of a montage. The complex montage image of modern cityscapes juxtaposes the superimposed and inserted scenery and pictorial tableaux with reality. Modern urban landscape is full of the play of pure signs and representational images that are constantly changing their forms and contents. Thus, it may be perceived as the aesthetic of temporality.

This *pleasure of looking* or the *spectacle* is what Freud called “scopophilia” - the desire to see. The mechanics of looking emphasizes the consumption rather than the production of images. By focusing on the compulsive character of seeing, it

¹ Eisenstein, Sergei. *The Film Sense*, trans., Jay Leyda, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1942, 14-15, 98-99.

opens up inquiry into the nature of visual sensation.² In a modern city, the deliberate posing of pictorialized views and constructed tableaux lures the *gaze* of the spectator by the pure visibility of their shows. Gaze here is a technical term coined by Foucault. He calls it the “clinical gaze” or “observing gaze” - the gaze of a physician that can see through the surface phenomenon and find the hidden but technical truth. The clinical gaze looks for nothing but diagnostic reality, purposive fact. Foucault explains, “The clinical gaze ... implies an open field, and its essential activity is of the successive order of reading; it records and totalizes; it gradually reconstitutes immanent organizations.”³ With the clinical gaze, the doctor can diagnose problems and design solutions. The wisdom of the clinical gaze lies in its objectivity and its truthfulness. There is also another different kind of gaze – the lovers’ gaze. The lovers’ gaze is rose-lined. “Beauty is in the eye of the beholder.” Lovers see something they enjoy looking at, they may lose themselves in the moment, and just enjoy the visual pleasure. Their gaze is non-judgmental and non-analytical. It does not set out to find any hidden truth or solve any problem. In fact, lovers’ gaze overlooks and embraces flaws and impurities. They simply indulge in the beauty in front of their eyes.

With cities, it is as with dreams: everything imaginable can be dreamed, but even the most unexpected dream is a rebus that conceals a desire or, its reverse, a fear. Cities, like dreams, are made of desires and fears, even if the thread of their discourse is secret, their rules are absurd, their perspectives deceitful, and everything conceals something else.⁴

In a city, the pleasure of scopophilia is released in spectacular places. A spectacle is, according to the *Complete Oxford Dictionary*, a specially prepared or arranged display of a more or less public nature (especially one on a large scale), forming an impressive or interesting show or entertainment for those viewing it. The spectacle is empowered by its visual seduction and mesmerizing ability. It lures us like a dream. As Calvino suggests, people learn to adore spectacular urban spaces because of the desires and fears they lure us. The city of spectacle gives us much

² Malanga, G. ed., *Scopophilia: The Love of Looking*, New York, 1985. and Mulvey, Laura. “Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema,” *Visual and other Pleasures: Collected Writings*, London: 1989.

³ Foucault, Michel. *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans., A. M. Sheridan, London: Tavistock, 1973, pp. 120- 121.

⁴ Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, trans. William Weaver, London: Pan Books, 1979, p. 36.

pleasure with little detraction and mischief. Instead, it praises the nostalgia, the beauty, the luxury, the success, and the power. Raphael Samuel observes, “(a city of spectacle is) dazzled by surface appearances; ... it is more interested in style than in substance, and ... it is obsessed with the language of looks.”⁵

The city of spectacle is the manifestation of what Martin Jay calls the many “scopic regimes of modernity”.⁶ Modernity has the power to generate forms of fantastic designs, glamorous spectacles, and radiance shows. They are so dazzling they can blind every viewer. The cityscape is rich in beautiful and alluring subjects. These allurements are physically manifested in the prime condition of its urban landscape, which includes its urban frontality⁷ (panorama) and spatial eclecticism (kaleidoscope). The frontality, or the façade of a city and architecture, turns the urban scenes into unforgettable two-dimensional monuments. The frontality of a spectacular space needs to be viewed in a respectful distance, or it may be approached across an open space. This is a confrontation between this spectacular space or architecture and its viewers. The viewers are made to feel vulnerable. Le Corbusier calls this spectacle “the great primary plane of perfect form,” which is distinct ... and without ambiguity.”⁸ Boyer describes the sensation of looking at this spectacle, “When the eye took in the urban panorama, optimism reigned and there the imagination conceived of vast new arrangements of space.”⁹ The flat frontality of the urban panorama is the most important element in the city of spectacle. It is a heuristic device that brings the urban landscape into knowledge in a way that, through the visual mastery of the land, the viewers are in clear relation to the landscape they view.

The Boulevards are blazing, ...Half closing the eyes it seems as if one saw on the right and left two rows of flaming furnaces. The shops cast floods of brilliant light half across the street, and encircle the crowd in a golden dust. The kiosks, which extend in two interminable rows, lighted from within, with their many coloured panes, resembling

⁵ Samuel, Raphael. *Theatres of Memory*, London: Verso, 1994, p. 113.

⁶ Martin Jay cited in Richard, T. *The Commodity Culture of Victorian Britain*, London: Verso, 1990, p. 258.

⁷ Wilson, Colin St John. *Architectural Reflections, Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture*, Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1992, p. 14-5.

⁸ Le Corbusier. *Towards A New Architecture*, London: Architectural Press, 1927, p. 31.

⁹ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, p. 43.

enormous Chinese lanterns placed on the ground, or the little transparent theatres of the marionettes, give to the street the fantastic and childlike aspect of an Oriental fete. The numberless reflections of the glasses, the thousand luminous points shining through the branches of the trees, the inscriptions in gas gleaming on the theatre fronts, the rapid motion of the innumerable carriage lights, that seem like myriads of fireflies set in motion by the wind, the purple lamps of the omnibuses, the great flaming halls opening into the street, the shops which resemble caves of incandescent gold and silver, the hundred thousand illuminated windows, the trees that seem to be lighted, all these theatrical splendours, half-concealed by the verdure, which now and then allows one to see the distant illuminations, and presents the spectacle in successive scenes - all this broken light, refracted, variegated, and mobile, falling in showers, gathered in torrents, and scattered in stars and diamonds, produces the first time an impression of which no idea can possibly be given.¹⁰

This is a fantastic description of Paris as a city of spectacle at night. The scene is a visual kaleidoscope composed by a great variety of elements – streets, trees, crowds, shops, windows, the lights, the colours, the textures, the shapes, the movements, etc. Indeed, the eclectic mix of visual effect is essential in the composition of such a spectacular cityscape. It includes diversities and contrasts - not only the panoramic grandeur, but also the expression of contemporary culture and everyday life.

The analysis of contemporary culture provides architects and planners design vocabulary relevant to the diverse needs and tastes in a modern society. Venturi argues that the forms of popular cityscape and mass media are as important as the structure of Imperial Rome to the Ecole des Beaux-Arts, and the shapes of Cubism and machine technology to early Modernism.¹¹ This contemporary culture is a decorative style that inserts itself at random points into the city of spectacle. Popular culture, after all, includes commercial signs, billboards, roadside advertisements, movies, television imagery, illustrated tourist guidebooks, etc. That is, anything that is dramatized enough to convince and excite the taste of the consumer. Businesses and industries display their alluring qualities in a manner suitable for the stage. Even small shops displaying the art of window dressing turn the city streets into a spectacle

¹⁰ Amicis, E. de. *Studies of Paris*, New York, 1882, pp. 29- 30.

¹¹ Brown, Denise Scott. "Learning from Pop," Robert Venturi and Denise Scott Brown, *A View from the Campidoglio*, New York: Harper and Row, 1984, p. 28.

of endless variety,¹² like a kaleidoscope. Consequently, the city landscape is full of everyday objects displaying their theatrical potential. As Glover says, “To talk about spectacle is to imagine the world in all its daily visual manifestations.”¹³

Light and Colour

The *daily visual manifestation* of the city of spectacle involves a special quality of imagination. Léger was the first to declare that the theatre of spectacle is formed out of light, colour, and moving images.¹⁴ Light is vital for the visual display of spectacle. It makes possible a new kind of visual composition. It gives expressions by suppressing some features of a place and emphasizing others.¹⁵ Light underlines significant landmarks and highlights important sites. Hence, the spectators can grasp the city as a simplified pattern. Major streets, bridges, architectures, and advertising signs blaze the city centre and proclaim their importance. Caton describes, “With light, architecture itself can be changed. With light one may pull together walls and windows or break them down into small units. With neon or other lights a completely different building outline can be created overnight in place of the actual structure. In the future, light ... will play an essential part in architecture.”¹⁶

Speed and Movement

Besides light, speed is also the essence of a modern city. It compresses all the objects of a city into a rapid series of images colliding with one another, asserting themselves for a moment before being replaced by a contrasting view. Le Corbusier says, “Architecture (and cityscape are) judged by eyes that see, by the head that turns, and the legs that walk. Architecture (and city are) not a synchronic phenomenon but a successive one, made up of pictures adding themselves one to another following each other in time and space, like music.”¹⁷ Seeing a city in a travel mode is what

¹² Lawder, Standish D. *The Cubist Cinema*, New York: New York University Press, 1975, pp. 94- 95, 161.

¹³ Glover, J. Garret. *The Cubist Theatre*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1983, p. 93.

¹⁴ Glover, *ibid.*, p. 95.

¹⁵ Nye, D. *Electrifying America. Social Meanings of New Technology*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, p. 60.

¹⁶ Caton, Joseph Harris. *The Utopian Vision of Moholy-Nagy Technology, Society, and the Avant-Garde*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980, p. 70.

¹⁷ Le Corbusier quoted in Tyrwhitt, J., J. L. Sert, and E. N. Rogers. *The Heart of the City: Towards the Humanisation of Urban Life*, London: Lund Humphries, 1952, p. 73.

Boyer calls the “spatialization of time”.¹⁸ The city becomes an open and expansive panorama. Modern modes of rapid travel change our concept of space and time. Traditionally, we admire the city for its pictorial stillness. The experience of moving through the city now enables spectators to view the cityscape as a series of fleeting impressions and momentary encounters. Mobility encourages the juxtaposition and the collision of varied and sequential images, which result in a kaleidoscopic and abstract arrangement of colours, images, and forms. Now one may see a city from this mobile (but sedentary) perspective as a composed picture, or as a multi-dimensional view of movements. For example, the view from the train provides such changing vistas and a movement through them. The train offers views of “an evanescent landscape whose rapid motion makes it possible to grasp the whole, to get an *overview*.”¹⁹ This visual experience of railway travelling and highway driving is similar to that of watching television or movie.²⁰

Angles of Visuality

In addition to the light, colour, and movement of a modern city, angles of visuality also play a major role in the viewers’ perception. Le Corbusier suggests a horizontal view, “axes are seen ...from the ground, the beholder standing up and looking in front of him. The eye can reach a considerable distance and, like a clear lens, sees everything even beyond what was intended or wished. ...In the horizontal, at right angles to the direction that the architectural arrangement has impressed on you from where you stand, it is the rectangular impression which tells. This is architecture of a high order ...you are enabled to get a three-quarter view of them, in their full aspects.”²¹ To appreciate architectures, the horizontal view may provide a more accurate visual proportion. To adore a city, however, there is no other view to compare with the bird’s-eye view provided by the aeroplane or a standing point high up. From a bird’s-eye view, we see the beautiful great horizon, landscapes, and perspectives more than one’s eye can seize. This breathtaking spectacle stirs one’s

¹⁸ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, pp. 40- 41.

¹⁹ Schivelbusch, Wolfgang. *The Railway Journey, The Industrialisation of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979, p. 63.

²⁰ Baudrillard, Jean. *America*, New York: Verso, 1988.

²¹ Le Corbusier. *Towards a New Architecture*, trans., Frederick Etchells, New York: Praeger, 1960, p. 173- 5.

heart and seduces one's imagination. Daly said, "It is only from on high that one apprehends the masses of great monuments, reads their true dispositions and real character, and recognizes the general arrangement of their parts."²² A bird's-eye view infallibly encourages the mind to dream the mutation of the panorama that one is seeing. Through the astonishment of urban space, one's mind plunges into the mystery of time and nature. The spectators are overwhelmed by a kind of spontaneous imagination. Barthes explains this sensation when one sees the Paris city from the top of the Eiffel Tower,

Habitually, belvederes are outlooks upon nature, whose elements - waters, valleys, forests - they assemble beneath them, so that the tourism of the 'fine view' infallibly implies a naturist mythology. Whereas the Tower overlooks not nature but the city; and yet, by its very position of a visited outlook, the Tower makes the city into a kind of nature; it constitutes the swarming of men into a landscape, it adds to the frequently grim urban myth a romantic dimension, a harmony, a mitigation; by it, starting from it, the city joins up with the great natural themes which are offered to the curiosity of men: the ocean, the storm, the mountain, the snow, the rivers.²³

The bird's-eye view encourages us to study the landscape and not only to perceive it. It relates to a specific sensibility of vision. Like travelling, our mind thrusts into the midst of sensation and sees things in their structure. Through the bird's-eye vision, intelligible objects are marked out in their abstract forms. A panorama is an image we try to decipher. When adoring a panorama, we try to recognize known sites and to identify landmarks. This is the intellection of seeing - to reconstitute, memorise, and sense in order to produce a simulacrum in our mind. The elements of a cityscape are solidly presented in front of us, but at the same time, they are disoriented by the total space of this panorama. Therefore, a spectacular or a panoramic vision induces two completely different processes in the viewers' mind. On the one hand, it provides a euphoric vision; spectator's eyes may slide slowly, lightly the entire length of a continuous image of the cityscape. On the other hand, this continuous image engages the mind in a certain struggle. It seeks to be deciphered, the spectators try to find signs within it, a familiarity proceeding from

²² César Daly, "De la Locomotion Aérienne," RGA IV, 1843, p. 17, quoted in Becherer, Richard. *Science Plus Sentiments, César Daly's Formula for Modern Architecture*, Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1975, p. 176.

history and from myth. The euphoria of aerial vision allows the viewers to perceive a nicely connected space; but it also encourages an intellectual effort of the eye and the mind to divide, identify, and memorize the elements of a cityscape. Moreover, the bird's-eye view creates an illusion in the viewers of raising an enormous lid that covers the private life of millions of human beings. The city then becomes an intimacy to the observers while they imagine possessing a dominant power over it. It is like the pleasure of the nineteenth century diorama toy. Watching a cityscape from a bird's-eye view, "one can feel oneself cut off from the world and yet the owner of a world."²⁴

The Consumer Gaze

Apart from its physical features, a city of spectacle is characterized by its social activities – commercialism, tourism, and flâneurism. These characteristics shape the perception of people towards the city. A city of spectacle is a city of consumption. The commercially contrived and theatricalized stage sets on the urban landscape suggest the domination of a consumer culture. People fetishize fashionable commodity,²⁵ but what people are consuming is not the commodity itself, but the images it conceives. Debord says, "The spectacle is capital accumulated to the point where it becomes image."²⁶ The spectacle is the abstract equivalence of money and commodities. It is because corporations – the dominant organization of production in modern cities – provide not only products and services, but also create the most important signs or images of their products, services, and the corporations themselves. What they aim for is not the production of images, but *a social relationship* in which people relate themselves to the images produced. In other words, the means and the ends are identical. People consume the ever-growing mass of image-objects (the commodities) for the sake of the images they suggest, rather than the objects themselves.

²³ Barthes, Roland. "The Eiffel Tower", *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed., Neil Leach, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 175.

²⁴ Barthes, Roland. *ibid.*, p. 180.

²⁵ The phrase "the fetishization of fashionable commodity" originates from Marx, Karl. *Capital. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production, (Das Kapital)*, ed., Frederick Engels, Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1954, pp. 62- 63.

²⁶ Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: Zone Books, 1994, p. 24.

The city as spectacle aims to build up a social relation between the city spaces and its viewers through the production of images. These images may be expressed through the play of consumer choices, the power of pure entertainment, and the very act of showing. The consumer gaze, which is similar to that of a lover's gaze, is obsessed with the surface appearances and the constructed sets of images. Television commercials, billboards, shop windows, packaged products, architecture, historical preservation, and restoration thrive in the theatricalized city of spectacle. Harvey says, "Imaging a city through the organization of spectacular urban spaces became a means to attract capital and people (of the right sort) in a period of intensified inter-urban competition and urban entrepreneurialism."²⁷ In this sense, the city as spectacle may be understood as a peculiar process of capitalism. Berman points out that every economic formation or structure engenders a cultural form or an aesthetic convention.²⁸ As the consumer market developed, new urban forms and building types are produced. The traditional cityscape is changed. As cities lose their traditional industries, they must rely on other merits to attract and develop new economic bases. Apart from the economic benefits (low tax and production cost, mature legal and banking systems), business investors and individuals select cities for their finest features: history, culture, natural environment, infrastructure, safe neighbourhoods, good housing, shops, education, and supportive local governments. These features are supremely important in their production of images (as we shall see in Hong Kong).

Cities compete with their desirability and marketability. Their architecture and urban space show whether the city is an obsolete or invigorated place. The ever-expanding competition among cities reinforces the necessity for iconic symbols of centrality and urban identity to define their uniqueness. Debord asserts that, the "society eliminates geographical distance only to ...[create] distance internally in the form of spectacular separation."²⁹ A city has to appear seductive, upbeat, exciting, innovative, strange, familiar, but at the same time, historical, dignified, secure, polite,

²⁷ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 92.

²⁸ Berman, Russell A. "The Routinization of Charismatic Modernism and the Problem of Post-Modernism," *Cultural Critique*, No. 5, Winter 1986/7, p. 49- 68.

etc., if it is to compete successfully against other cities in attracting capital investment.³⁰ As a result, cities compete to construct “an institutionalized commercialization of a more or less permanent spectacle.” Harvey suggests that they must include, “The projection of a definite image of place blessed with certain qualities, the organization of spectacle and theatricality, have been achieved through an eclectic mix of styles, historical quotation, ornamentation, and the diversification of surfaces.”³¹ The modern city of capital selectively programmes and projects simulated environments. Branded skylines, theatrically staged compositions, the blown-up chromolithographs of billboards, and mesmerizing advertisements dazzle our eyes. They are pure displays.

The city of spectacle is a great show in which people unconsciously become actors, who try to be what they are not and lose themselves in the game. Modern city life is routinized and depersonalized. Pleasure is envisioned as an imaginary escape from repetition and boredom into a world of pure play and artifice. However, a city of spectacle is also characterized by its concentration of capital (money). The very concentration of money means only a small proportion of the population can afford a genuine leisure lifestyle. As a result, rich people enjoy their fortunes through leisure activities, and the not-so-rich people envy and, briefly, imitate them. For the sake of having a leisure lifestyle, the interiors and exterior façades with their glamorous and superficial coverings simulating various architectures become part of the staged spectacle in a city. Although far from the real thing, these aesthetic appearances enable everyone to experience momentarily the feeling that they are indeed rich and famous.³² Perry Anderson says, “The spectacle is by definition what mesmerizes the social maximum. ... (there is) a drive to throw oneself headlong into the new seductive world of celebrity, commercialism and sensation.”³³

²⁹ Debord, Guy 1994, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, London: Zone, 1994, p. 167.

³⁰ noted from a brochure advertising the “Remaking Cities Conference” convened by the American Institute of Architects and the Royal Institute of British Architects in Pittsburgh, March 2- 5, 1988.

³¹ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 90, 93.

³² White, Karsten. ed., *Siegfried Kracauer, Schriften*, 1, Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970, pp. 286- 287.

³³ Anderson, Perry. *The Origins of Postmodernity*, London New York: Verso, 1998, pp. 106- 7.

An outrageous example is Las Vegas. It is a place of “hyperreality” staged to produce very attractive but illusory images. Its physical setting is less important than the seductive imaginary space that it signifies. The use of seduction in architectural and urban spaces often relates to a dramatized or idealized form of culture. Every element in the city scene is dramatized as kitsch – the hotel buildings, the fountains, the volcano, the staged pirates’ fight, the gondolas, the Eiffel Tower, the castles, the Manhattan skyscrapers, the people, the limousines, the neon lights, all look like a big movie setting. Walking on the Las Vegas Strip is like touring the world; everything happens spontaneously within a reachable distance and reduced to a quarter of its size. Every object and every person is absorbed into the surface and plunged into a hyperreal euphoria. The image these scenarios suggest is money, money, and money! People go to Las Vegas to dream themselves as rich and famous. However, the fact is that Las Vegas is a city of unreachable dreams. It is an empty outward show that can only happen during holidays.

The Tourist Gaze

Travelling, you realize that differences are lost: each city takes to resembling all cities, places exchange their form, order, distances, a shapeless dust cloud invades the continents. Your atlas preserves the differences intact: that assortment of qualities which are like the letters in a name.³⁴

The city of spectacle is inseparable from tourism. The tourist industry has been developed substantially throughout the twentieth century. The access to mass travel by the public is hugely increased. Much of the population will travel anywhere to get away from the daily routine of work and home. Tourism has become the fourth main business of the post-industrial economy. Tourism is a systematized and socially constructed experience. The visual and mental images produced by the mass media, such as movies and travel brochures, direct how people should perceive the places and cultures they sell. For instance, the television and movie dramas of discovery and colonization provide people a way of narrativizing the visit and their impressions of places. They provide modes of visibility that teach what to see, and how it should be seen. In a way, these technologies of visualization manipulate what

³⁴ Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, trans., William Weaver, London: Pan Books, 1979, p. 108.

it means to look with modern eyes.³⁵ Acland comments on this constructed perception of the world by modern technologies, “The orchestration of the all-engulfing image places viewers in a central location as a source for the unfolding of a known and organized world; the panoramic overview is equally an educational technique to present that vision of the world to an as-yet uninitiated audience or public.”³⁶

Acknowledging the tourists’ expectations, the tourist industry constructs different elements in places in terms of these anticipations and produces a standard experience of encountering places. Going on a holiday and taking time off from everyday life, tourists always expect shows, something dramatically different from home. They hope to see a festival of lights and glittering display, to sample other cultures, as well as to enjoy exotic versions of nature. Through mass media, the experience of geography is produced as a form of simulacrum. That is, people use modern technologies to experience the world in a virtual dimension, such as television travel programmes and movies. Potential tourists can anticipate virtually anywhere. This trend of the postmodern condition challenges the sense of geography that provides us with proximity to the globe. It suggests the simplicity access to any part of the world, either through travel or images of travel.³⁷ However, this postmodern condition also implies that some people have the means to travel, and those who do not can only daydream through a mediated virtual encounter of places. Travelling moreover links up with social status – people who do not travel may feel they are losing status in their social circle. There is a belief in the modern epoch that travel and holidays are necessary to good living and good health; people believe also that their body and mental health will be restored if they can get away from time to time.

In a way, the image of spectatorial centrality relates to the manipulation of certain forms of epistemological power. Urry says, “Photographic images organize

³⁵ Charney, Leo and Vanessa R. Schwartz. eds., *Cinema and the Invention of Modern Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995.

³⁶ Acland, Charles R. “IMAX Technology and the Tourist Gaze”, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1998, p. 434.

our anticipation or day-dreaming about the places we might gaze upon.”³⁸ Basing himself on Foucault’s clinical gaze, Urry suggests the term, “tourist gaze” to describe the manner of the tourist experiencing places. He believes that the tourist gaze is similar to the clinical gaze; both are socially organised and systematized. According to Urry, tourists choose to visit a place with anticipation. Usually, their intention is constructed by magazines, television, travel brochures, photos, and stories of friends and relatives, as well as paintings, poems, literatures, songs, etc.³⁹ They look for particular signs in places such as typical English villages, typical American skyscrapers, or typical French castles. They desire *authentic* experiences. Moreover, the tourist gaze resembles the lovers’ gaze. The tourists enjoy what they see like lovers looking at each other. They indulge in the moment and care less if it is a constructed vision.

There are two types of tourist - one type struggles to search for authentic regional cultures and locations that are free from commercial tourism. They are like the religious pilgrimage that quests for authentic experiences. They will be less satisfied by the constructed tourist gaze, and demand the freedom to choose what they want to see and how to see. The other type of tourist is simply happy with what is prepared by the guide. They want to see as many spectacular scenes as possible and care less about their authenticity and social reality – the problems produced by tourism on local society. Modern societies are making an effort on the “democratisation of the tourist gaze” and the “spectacle-isation of place”,⁴⁰ in order to satisfy all types of tourist. That is, to increase the accessibility of regional knowledge that is beyond what is constructed by the tourist industry, and to organize more spectacles in their own countries in order to attract tourism. The industry tends to exploit virtually any realm of social life. Every place and event has the potential, with the right development, promotion, and merchandizing, to be transformed into a

³⁷ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

³⁸ Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze, Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London: Sage, 1990, p. 140.

³⁹ Acland, Charles R. “IMAX Technology and the Tourist Gaze”, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1998, p. 439.

⁴⁰ Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze, Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London: Sage, 1990, p. 156.

cash cow tourist attraction.⁴¹ The tourist gaze is thus no longer a specialized relation; rather, that it is a model for cultural relations for a broad spectrum of social activity.

The Flâneurie Gaze

Besides tourism, flâneurism (window-shopping) is also a characteristic of the city of spectacle. To Benjamin, the metropolis is a form of dream world. It is the place of “the phantasmagoric, the kaleidoscopic and the cacophonous.”⁴² The flâneurs possess the *principles of the art of seeing*. They enjoy the colourful world of commodity while remaining aloof from the crowd, and observe it from afar. The *principle of the art of seeing* contains an ability to enjoy tableaux vivants - the changing play of the colours of the crowd and the commodity. This technique of seeing is similar to that of looking at an impressionist painting.⁴³ (Illustration 2) One’s eyes enjoy swimming among a riot of dabs of colour. It is also similar to Friedberg’s “mobile virtual gaze” - a visual experience of window-shopping that is similar to that of watching a movie.⁴⁴ Modern mass society is represented by its advertisements, illustrated journals, fashion magazines, and so on. All of them consist of the flâneurie principle of “look, but don’t touch.”

The city of spectacle may be glamorous, glittering, and unforgettable, or grand, important, and heroic.⁴⁵ Spectacle both affirms and conceals power and its ways. Behind the grandiloquent urban spaces and spectacular architectural arrangements stands a centrist power whose resources and undiluted authority make possible these extravagant constructions. The dominant power is physically manifested among all these spatial dramas, whether the power is a governmental or a corporate one. The fantastic images may easily be manipulated to cover many hideously negative aspects of the city. When the cityscape is filled with civic gestures and grand discourses on history, the gaze of the spectator is drawn away from the seamier underside of this city. These are the disjunction and desolation (or

⁴¹ Acland, Charles R. “IMAX Technology and the Tourist Gaze”, *Cultural Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 1998, p. 438.

⁴² Benjamin, Walter. *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, London: Fontana, 1973, p. 23.

⁴³ Monet’s “La Cathedrale de Rouen, 1894,” would be an illustration of this hypothesis.

⁴⁴ Friedberg, Anne. *Window Shopping: Cinema and the Postmodern*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993.

⁴⁵ Monaco, Paul. *Ribbons in Time: Movies and Society since 1945*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985, pp. 78- 94.

lostness), diminution, fragmentation, confusion, falsehood, inequality, and the intrusion of privacy.

Lostness

Firstly, *lostness*, or disjunction and desolation, is an associated social attitude with the obsession of appearance in the society. Rousseau criticized the great city in these terms, "Now enters the capital, cosmopolitan city (with) its public culture is the realm where this loss of self occurs."⁴⁶ This lostness can be manifested in an extreme form of blasé social attitude – ignoring the spectacle completely. This social perception is a by-product of the fragmentary and alienating nature of modernity. Living in an overcrowded modern metropolis, which is stressful, noisy, and polluted,⁴⁷ the nerves of the individuals are constantly being bombarded with stimuli. Their consciousness thus induces an anaesthetizing defence against this over-exposure of stimuli. Simmel explains that the psychic phenomenon of the blasé is reserved to the modern city. It is a result of the rapidly shifting stimulations of the nerves. The nerves of the individual are exposed to all the contrast and intense images of the metropolitan. It is not that stupid persons who are intellectually dead will be blasé. Any immoderate lifestyle may make one blasé because it stimulates the nerves to their utmost activity until they cannot react at all. This incapacity to react to new stimulations causes a blasé attitude among many large city dwellers.⁴⁸

The social phenomenon of the acceptance of non-involvement, impersonality, and aloofness as normality deforms urban life. Metropolitan dwellers are unable to identify most of the people they see daily. In responding to others or their own demands, they adopt a selective approach. Cullen points out that in modern big cities there are people all studiously avoiding each other and pretending that they are alone.⁴⁹ The result is a paradox, the paradox of individualism among a society of collectivism. The isolated condition is what Sennett called the "urban

⁴⁶ Rousseau cited in Sennett, Richard. 1943, *The Fall of Public Man*, London: Faber & Faber, 1986, p. 117.

⁴⁷ see Rapoport, A. and R. Hawkes. "The Perception of Urban Complexity," *Journal of American Institute of Planners*, No. 36, March, 1970, pp. 106- 111. Wohlwill, J. F. "The Physical Environment: A Problem for a Psychology of Stimulation," *Journal of Social Issues*, No. 22, 1966, pp. 29- 34.

⁴⁸ Simmel, George. "The Metropolis and Mental Life", *Individuality & Social Forms*, ed., Donald Levine, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 324- 339.

⁴⁹ Cullen, Gordon. *Townscape*, London: Architectural Press, 1961, p.135

individualism”.⁵⁰ The technological advancement of modernity, while facilitates communications and connections among individuals and groups worldwide, also further isolates people. It is because people shift away from family and community-centred life, and become increasingly self-directed, even narcissistic in pursuing their own goals.⁵¹ Riesman explains this individualism as “inner-directedness”.⁵² In his paradigm of “other-directedness” and “inner-directedness”, an inner-directed social attitude emphasises on internal element such as the highly principled self or family. The other-directed character type pays attention to external element such as rules, laws, customs, and etiquette. The society, according to Riesman, transits from tradition-directed to inner-directed and finally to other-directed character. Inner-directedness, at its best, may flourish. Nevertheless, it may become a futile pursuit of social status and individual eccentricity. Where quantitative value has reached its limits, the individuals may seize on qualitative distinctions. Through the awareness of the existing sensitivity to differences, individuality may win the attention of the society. In some cases, consequently, extremities, peculiarities, deviant and bizarre behaviours are adopted and exaggerated.

Diminution

Secondly, the city as spectacle creates *diminution* or the passivity of the dweller. This effect is in a way associated with the blasé attitude. The aesthetic expressions of the city as spectacle overwhelm the spectator with fantastic environments; at the same time, it is not open to dialogue and questioning. It is important for any aesthetic practice to be reciprocal. John Peter says, “Art of any kind is ... the creation of other worlds with which we can have a dialogue. And if we are engaged in a dialogue we can neither suspend judgment nor simply submit, not even in delighted recognition or a feeling of identity.”⁵³ In the city as spectacle, however, there is little chance to enhance our perceptual sensibilities or to create new associations. Instead, contemporary surface ornamentations bind the spectator to a

⁵⁰ Sennett, Richard. 1943, *Flesh and Stone, The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, London: Faber, 1994.

⁵¹ Lasch, Christopher. 1979, *The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in An Age of Diminishing Expectation*, New York, London: W.W. Norton, 1991.

⁵² Riesman, David, Nathan Glazer and Ruel Denney. *The Lonely Crowd: A Study of the Changing American Character*, abridged ed., Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday Anchor Books, 1953.

⁵³ Peter, John. *Vladimir's Carrot: Modern Drama and the Modern Imagination*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987, p. 19.

world of passive visual entertainment. The city of spectacle is a scenographic composition arranged for silent and unquestioning spectators.⁵⁴ Modern society is full of visual forms structured by a rapid flow of discrete fragments and short-term events. These mass ornaments or collective institutionalized forms discourage the viewers from any thinking activity. They are both alienated from and submissive to the image-objects (the spectacle). The more they subscribe to the spectacle, the more they identify their desires with the image of desire proposed by the image-objects, and consequently, the less they comprehend their own true needs and meanings. This passivity demands the viewers to accept the appearance of objects and to forget about their social contexts.

Fragmentation

Thirdly, in the city of spectacle, some architecture and spatial constructions appear to be *fragmented*. Spectacular modern architecture is sweetened by the haze of fashionable styles and images. It becomes a form of merchandise. The influence of popular taste turns architecture into a mere commentary. Architects and planners use “amalgamation, ornamentation, pastiche - flattering the “taste” of a public that can have no taste.”⁵⁵ Fragmented ideas taken from historical architectural books, from American road patterns, from the mass media, and so on, are re-assembled and transposed in overlapping and interlacing forms. Each of them is independent of the whole, and each part falls into segregated parts. The problem of this trend in architecture is that the art of architecture may be reduced to form without content. Architecture then becomes a hermetically sealed pattern language or a syntactic play of images devoid of semantic content. In the whirl of infinite development, modern planning and design transform the urban landscape into a thriving physical and social space, but they somehow recreate a wasteland inside, which is fragmented, cold, and impersonal.

⁵⁴ Venturi, Robert and Denise Scott Brown. *A View from the Campidoglio*, New York: Harper & Row, 1984, pp. 32- 33.

⁵⁵ Jencks, Charles. “Le sublime et l’avant-garde”, Berlin lecture 1983, *L’Inhumain, Causeries sur le Temps*, Paris, 1988, p. 117.

Confusion

Fourthly, some urban spaces in the city are characteristically less identifiable and lead to *confusion*. The realms of social and cultural activity and the spaces of public and private life remain blurred in the city as spectacle. The postmodern collapse of the high and low culture dichotomy and of the social spheres, according to Urry, includes “tourism, art, education, photography, television, music, sport, shopping and architecture.”⁵⁶ Nowadays the differences between museum and amusement park, between institutions of public education and entertainment, between shopping and tourism, are increasingly muddled. For example, there is the growth of destination complexes that are upscale, high-concept shopping malls. They are created to revitalize urban spaces that are formerly devoid of economic activity. A destination complex is a shopping theme park.⁵⁷ It offers a unique or special shopping experience. The idea is to provide exclusivity in an everyday activity. It contrasts with the conventional warehouse-style shopping that attracts shoppers by the idea of buying as much as possible for as little as possible. In the destination complexes, the normal activity of shopping becomes a memorable experience. In this sense, the city as spectacle becomes a form of capitalist tool. Lefebvre condemns the market economy because its city space becomes itself a product, marked, measured, marketed, and transacted; like any capitalist tool the efficiency and functionality of its performance is studied and perfected, and as a commodity its representational form is re-stylized and reformed.⁵⁸

Falsehood

Fifthly, *falsehood* or “staged authenticity”⁵⁹ becomes a normal practice in the city of spectacle. Staged authenticity is an urban phenomenon resulting from the growth of tourism. Regional customs and arts are commodified and adapted to tourists’ expectations in order to encourage tourism. Tourists and audiences expect

⁵⁶ Urry, John. *The Tourist Gaze, Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies*, London: Sage, 1990, p. 82.

⁵⁷ McDowell, Edwin. “America’s Hot Tourist Spot: the Outlet Mall,” *The New York Times*, 26 May, 1996, p. 1 ff.

⁵⁸ see Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991. and Gottdiener, M. *The Social Production of Urban Space*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1985.

⁵⁹ Cohen, Erik. “The Sociology of Tourism: Approaches, Issues, and Findings”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 1984, pp. 373- 392.

dramatic differences in foreign cultures; they demand authentic experience of other customs, traditions, and places. The staged authenticity of a regional culture may rarely be expressions of the real thing. Their authenticity is often staged by the host country. Stage authenticity does not necessarily change the customs and arts, but it leads to the emergence of a “phony-folk-culture”⁶⁰ and the mass production of cheap, artless souvenirs and fake “airport art”.⁶¹ The city uses its hyperreality to camouflage the absence of the real. The “completely real” becomes identified with the “completely fake.” Absolute fake is not merely a substitute but something even better than the real. The sign is programmed to be the thing, to demolish the distinction of the reference, the mechanism of replacement. The completely fake is not the image of the real thing, but its double. As a result, the boundaries between real and illusion are blurred. As Umberto Eco says,

The pleasure of imitation, as the ancients knew, is one of the most innate in the human spirit; but here we not only enjoy a perfect imitation, we also enjoy the conviction that imitation has reached its apex and afterwards reality will always be inferior to it.⁶²

During modernization, many regional customs and traditions are abolished in frenzied economic development. Later on, when tourism flourishes and regional culture becomes attractive, historical sites, customs, and traditions are then restored. Although they still contain academic values, these customs and traditions are somehow considered as a form of commodity, which can be instrumentalized for the purposes of monetary gain. Regional cultures are restored and celebrated in full-scale authentic copies – authentic in terms of the appearance, the visual *not* the historical aspect. For instance, there are the “Long Neck” and the “Long Ears” villages in northern Thailand. Traditionally, in the Karen tribe, women of the Long Neck village wore brass rings around the neck, the arms, and the legs, which are regarded as the most prominent sign of female beauty and status. The neck rings reach from the clavicle up to beneath the chin. As a result, the necks of these women are unnaturally stretched. Young girls have to start the neck ring adornment at the

⁶⁰ Forster, J. “The Sociological Consequences of Tourism”, *Internation Journal of Sociology*, 1964, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 226.

⁶¹ Schadler, K. F. “African Arts and Crafts in a World of Changing Values,” *Tourism - Passport to Development?*, ed., De Kadt, E., New York: Oxford University Press, 1979, pp. 147- 8.

⁶² Eco, Umberto. *Travels in Hyperreality*, trans., William Weaver, London: Pan; Secker & Warburg, 1987, p. 46.

age of five or six. When their necks grow longer, additional rings are added each year until it is impossible to add anymore ring. Another village of the same tribe, the Long Ears village, women pierced their earlobes and inserted an elephant tusk of one to four centimetres in length in each earlobes. The weight of the tusks gradually weighs down on the earlobe and the ear gets larger and longer. Then larger tusks are inserted and the process repeats until the woman's ears become extremely elongated and floppy. In reality, these traditions vanished because most people of the villages had moved to the cities. The few people left in the villages are paid by the tourist authorities as actors and actresses to stage their customs and traditions for tourists. The authorities built huts in the villages and hired those women who retain their traditional body features (long necks and long ears) to work there as models for taking pictures, doing demonstrations, answering questions, and selling souvenirs. Even the children of these women have to be part of the show, they are expected to continue the traditions. Many tourists believe that they see the real thing, but all these villages are synthetic arrangements for tourism only.

Inequality

Sixthly, behind the spectacular cityscape, especially the tourist destinations, there exists *inequality* among the disadvantaged groups. Modernity generates dialectic between the global versus local, which involves a contradiction and conflict between different socio-cultural organizations. The concentration of capital, as a result of the tourist industry, means a new form of power struggle – between the ones who are directly involved in the industry and the ones who are not. Tourism drastically alters the regional development pattern (social and geographical). It creates new employment opportunities and thus helps to retain local community members who would otherwise move away. In some mature tourist destinations, the industry may attract people from other places to seek jobs there. Henceforth, it encourages urban sprawl and city rejuvenation. However, the industry also puts pressure upon resources that supply is limited, such as land. This may cause hardship on the local population who are not involved in the tourist industry. Beside, the new economic mobility and employment opportunities mean that the local community is increasingly engaged with a wider national or international capitalist system. Local autonomy is undermined and the regional economy becomes dependant on external

factors, such as popular taste, worldwide prosperity, recession, which the regional community is powerless to control.⁶³

All Seeing Power

Finally, the realm of private life and space are subjected to intrusion in a society that is obsessed with the power of visibility, but this visibility can be a trap - the *panopticon*.⁶⁴ When viewers admire the urban scene, they also gaze, observe, classify, categorize, and judge the phantasmagorical projected image of the urbanscape – the panoptical gaze. Panopticon combines this visual power with disciplined documentation, which captures the minutiae and facts of everyday life. Modern society can be a civilization of spectacle, and the spectacle here refers to the power of complete visibility. It is a spectacle in which a small number, or even a single individual, procuring the instantaneous view of a great multitude. Modern society has the tendency to rely on this all-seeing power to regulate both public and private spheres of urban life. Modern city is, in a way, like a prison with complete visibility, there is little privacy. People constantly watch each other. The principle is, power should be visible and unverifiable - people constantly acknowledge that they are likely being watched, but they never know which moment that they are being looked at. Physically, some people are “totally seen, without ever seeing”, while some “see everything without ever being seen.”⁶⁵ Therefore, it is not necessary to use force to guarantee good behaviours in work places, schools, and other institutions, where discipline is required. In a space with total visibility, people assume responsibility for the constraints of power. They play spontaneously upon themselves, they are the watcher and the watched. The panopticon acts directly on individuals; it gives power of mind over mind. The city is like “a transparent

⁶³ MacCannell, Dean. *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*, New York: Schocken, 1976. MacCannell, Dean. *Empty Meeting Grounds, The Tourist Papers*, London: Routledge, 1992. Wahnschafft, R. “Formal and Informal Tourism Sectors: A Case Study of Pattaya, Thailand”, *Annual Tourism Research*, 1982, Vol. 9, No. 3, pp. 429- 452. Greenwood, D. J. “Tourism as An Agent of Change: A Spanish Basque Case”, *Ethnology*, 1972, Vol. 11, No. 1, pp. 80- 91.

⁶⁴ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of the Prison*, trans., Alan Sheridan, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979. His “panopticon” originates from Bentham, Jeremy. *Works*, ed., Bowring, IV, 1843.

⁶⁵ Crary, J. *Techniques of the Observer, On Vision and Modernity in the Nineteenth Century*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990, p. 19.

building in which the exercise of power may be supervised by society as a whole.”⁶⁶ Individuals may find themselves trapped within a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert. There is no escape and the realm of private life is undermined.

There is a mode of vital experience - experience of space and time, of the self and others, of life's possibilities and perils - that is shared by men and women all over the world today. I will call this body of experience 'modernity'. To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world - and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are. Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology; in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity; it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. To be modern is to be part of a universe in which, as Marx said, "all that is solid melts into air."⁶⁷

Every age and place has its own "gait, glance and gesture."⁶⁸ Modernity tends to dissolve these individual characteristics. Modernity is an overwhelming sense of fragmentation, ephemerality, and chaotic change. The immediacy of events and the sensationalism of modernity (entertainment, cultural, economic, political, etc.) are the main characteristics of the city as spectacle. We are living in a society with an obsession with spectacle. The spectacle is a system of representation of capitalism. Nevertheless, this system raises a problem – "the world thereby momentarily loses its depth and threatens to become a glossy skin, a stereoscopic illusion, a rush of filmic images without density."⁶⁹ Is modernity necessarily a beauty without depth, a glossy yet ephemeral surface? Baudelaire said, "By 'modernity' I mean the ephemeral, the fugitive, the contingent, the half of art whose other half is the eternal and the

⁶⁶ De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, 45.

⁶⁷ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 15.

⁶⁸ Baudelaire, Charles. "The Painter of Modern Life", *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed., Lawrence E. Cahoone, Cambridge, Mass, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 143.

⁶⁹ Jameson, Fredric. "Postmodernism: or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism," *New Left Review*, No. 146, 1984, pp. 53- 92.

immutable.”⁷⁰ The city of spectacle is a modern art, with a sense of surface glitter and transitory participatory pleasure, of display and ephemerality. Artists need to search for the universal and the eternal in the midst of the ephemeral fleeting forms of beauty in our modern epoch.

⁷⁰ Baudelair, Charles. “The Painter of Modern Life”, *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed., Lawrance E. Cahoon, Cambridge, Mass, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 142.



2. Claude Monet, *La Cathedrale de Rouen*, 1894, Musee d'Orsay, Paris.

4

City as A Work of Art

Art is a lie which makes us realize the truth, at least the truth it is given us to understand. ...The artist must know the manner of convincing others of the truthfulness of his lies.¹

- Picasso

If we presume art the most truthful lie that reflects reality, then the central problem is no more whether a work of art is real or unreal. The argument may be how truthful is this lie? Or ought this lie to be truthful at all? The answer of these questions remains an open debate. Yet what we may agree is that the more truthful a work of art, the more influence it has in a society. It is because a truthful work of art *communicates* with the society (on a sublime level). For art that reflects less or detaches from reality, we may regard it as *art for art's sake*, an example of this is modernism.

Collingwood points out a general misconception of art in modern society, especially that of the economist and of the psychologist. "To the economist, art presents the appearance of a specialized group of industries; the artist is a producer, his audience consumers who pay him for benefits ultimately definable in terms of the states of mind which his productivity enables them to enjoy. To the psychologist, the audience consists of persons reacting in certain ways to stimuli provided by the artist; and the artist's business is to know what reactions are desired or desirable, and to provide the stimuli which will elicit them."² This is simply a *vulgar error*. The danger of this misconception is that art may be reduced to a product of consumerism or a tool of entertainment. People may underestimate the value of a fine art, and confuse it with a work of craft. Nietzsche said,

¹ Picasso quoted in Barr, Alfred. *Picasso: Fifty Years of His Art*, New York, 1946, pp. 270- 1.

² Collingwood, Robin George. *The Principles of Art*, London New York: Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 35.

We all think that the quality of a work of art, or an artist, is proved if it seizes and deeply affects us. But *our own quality* of judgment and feeling would first have to be proved: which is not the case.³

It is true that the quality of aesthetic judgment and feeling in our modern society is in question. In some cases, crafts are valued as pure art, while works of fine art are used as craft. Kraus said, "I have ever meant to say is that there is a difference between an urn and a chamberpot. But the people of today can be divided into those who use the chamberpot as an urn and those who use the urn as a chamberpot."⁴ The confusion between a work of art and a product of craft is similar to the confusion of the use of a chamberpot and an urn. A chamberpot is designed to be an object of display and admiration. An urn is produced for its practical function. However, sometimes people may see the art form in an urn, especially when it has emotional or historical value, it may be valued as a work of art. On the contrary, a chamberpot would have no difference to an urn if nobody appreciates its beauty. In most cases, the confusion between a work of art and a product of craft arises from the lack of "a quality aesthetic judgment" of people. Academic art critics suggest that art divides into two categories - fine or pure art and useful art. Fine art means not necessarily the delicate or high-skilled art, but *beautiful* art which embodies meanings or a moral statement. Kant described this character of fine art as "purposiveness without a purpose." To Kant, this is the condition of aesthetic enjoyment. He referred to artful objects that detach from reality, yet look "as if" they have a purpose. In other words, fine art detaches from the real world and yet relates to it on a higher and subconscious level. Maybe this is what Picasso meant by "a lie which makes us realize truth." It is in this imagineability and intelligibility of fine art that we find pleasure. We then consider fine art as *beautiful* or *sublime*.⁵ Nietzsche said, "Art is with us in order that we may not perish through truth." Pure art has the durability to survive the test of time. It is this sense of continuity that keeps us from "perishing through truth."

³ Nietzsche, Friedrich. "Human, All Too Human: A Book for Free Spirits," *The Complete Works of Friedrich Nietzsche*, trans., ed., Oscar Levy, Edinburgh: Foulis, 1909, Vol. 7, I, p. 161.

⁴ Kraus, Karl. "Nachts," *Bei*, 1918.

⁵ According to Kant, an art cannot be beautiful and sublime at the same time. See Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Judgement*, Part 1, Second Moment, 10, trans., J. H. Bernard, New York: Hafner, 1972.

A question arises here - how can we define the features that distinguish the works of art from craft or forms produced for other purposes? Collingwood has a clear explanation, "Craft... (as) the power to produce a preconceived result by means of consciously controlled and directed action."⁶ Craft is a skill that devotes to make useful objects. Art produces objects that are not necessary and cannot be foreseen. There is a distinction between *means* and *end* in craft, but not in art. In a work of craft, the *end* is planned prior to the *means*. In the production of craft, the resulted effect of the end product is always planned before the way to achieve it. Art does not have a planned result. A craft always exercises upon something, and aims at the transformation of it into something different. Its work begins as raw material and ends as finished product. A craft changes the *form* but not the *matter*. A *matter* is the content of an object; it is identical in the raw material and the end product. This also does not happen in art. Besides, there is a *hierarchical relation* in craft - the hierarchy of materials, of means, and of parts. The hierarchy of material means the raw material of one craft is the end product of another craft. The hierarchy of means refers to one craft as a means of production in another craft. And the hierarchy of parts is an end product that is made up of different parts. This hierarchical relation does not exist in art.

Theoretically, there is a set of criteria that helps to distinguish art from craft. Nevertheless, this set of criteria does not seem to fit well in the case of cityscape and architecture. It is because cityscape and architecture have the characteristics of both art and craft. They are a product of craft for the followed reasons. Firstly, both cityscape and architecture come into being to serve a set of needs in the society. Alberti said, "All building owes its birth to necessity, was nurtured by convenience and embellished by use."⁷ Secondly, all kinds of spatial construction involve the design of "a preconceived result by means of consciously controlled and directed action." The end product is a purposively planned result. Thus, Kant's "purposiveness without a purpose" as a character of art is, it seems, inapplicable here. Finally, according to Collingwood, a craft contains the distinctions between *mean*

⁶ Collingwood, Robin George. *The Principles of Art*, London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1938.

and *end*; *form* and *matter*; and *hierarchical relations*. Based on the above criteria, architecture and cityscape seem to be products of craft. Modernist architects and planners have their design theory based on this presumption - all construction forms exist for functional purpose only. In the extreme period of modernism, Hannes Meyer says, "building is a biological process ... not an aesthetic process. Composition or function? The idea of the 'composition of a dock' is enough to make a cat laugh!" He stresses that buildings are for functional purpose only (functionalism). Therefore, every aspect of a building should stick to this basic purpose. He then points out, "All things in this world are a product of the formula - function x economics - so none of these things are works of art."⁸ Thus, architects and planners should focus on the needs of urban reality. He says, "I taught my students at the Bauhaus to be critical of the diffuseness of 'ideal reality' and together we tried to come to grips with the only reality that can be mastered - that of the measurable, the visible, the weighable."⁹ Under the most famous axiom of the Bauhaus, "Form follows Function", architecture and town planning are no more than a craft of construction. They "become a science... social, technical, economic and psychic organization."¹⁰ Meyer is outrageously reductive. Architecture has always consisted of objects without function such as the ornaments of a Gothic Cathedral; even a dock can have artful composition, such as the Albert Dock at Liverpool. These constructions are widely considered as works of art but with functions. Associated modernists such as Adolf Loos declares that building is not an art, "The work of art is brought into the world without there being any need for it. The house on the other hand satisfies a need ...Only a very small part of architecture belongs to art: the Tomb and the Monument. The rest, everything that serves an end, should be excluded from the realm of art ...the house has nothing in common with art."¹¹ He insists, "I maintain that use determines the forms of civilised life, the shape of objects. ...We do not sit in such-and-such a way because a craftsman has built a chair

⁷ Alberti, Leon Battista. *Ten Books on Architecture*, trans., James Leoni, ed., Joseph Rykwert, London: Tiranti, 1955, Book I, Chapter IX.

⁸ Hannes Meyer, the Director of the Bauhaus after Walter Gropius, quoted in Schnaidt, Claude. ed., "Building: 1928," *Hannes Meyer: Buildings, Projects and Writings*, Tiranti, 1965.

⁹ Hannes Meyer quoted in Schnaidt, Claude. ed., "My dismissal from the Bauhaus," 1930, *Hannes Meyer: Buildings, Projects and Writings*, Tiranti, 1965.

¹⁰ Hannes Meyer quoted in Schnaidt, Claude. ed., "Marxist Architecture," 1931, *Hannes Meyer: Buildings, Projects and Writings*, Tiranti, 1965.

¹¹ Loos, Adolf. *Architecture*, 1909.

in such-and-such a way: rather the craftsman makes the chair as he does because someone wants to sit that way.”¹² A chair is designed for the purpose of sitting only; similarly, a building should be designed solely for habitation or shelter purpose. Modernism suggests that city and buildings should be designed in accordance with the needs and functions of the contemporary society, any ornament or functionless space is unnecessary and should therefore be avoided. Adolf Loos says, “the building should be dumb on the outside and reveal its wealth only on the inside.”¹³ The statements made by the modernists seem to be - it is the needs of the society shaped the cityscape and architecture, not vice versa. Many critics would argue with them, however, to a certain extent, they have their truths.

When analysing cityscape and architecture, it is very tempting to overrule the all-too-functionalist view of the modernist. However, we must carefully include the regional aspect in our argument. Wittgenstein said, “In order to get clear about aesthetic words you have to describe ways of living ...connected with all sorts of other gestures and actions and a whole situation and a culture.”¹⁴ When we describe architecture and cityscape, we also have to include many different aspects related to them. He explained, “Architecture is a *gesture*. Not every purposive movement of the human body is a gesture. And no more is every building designed for a purpose architecture.”¹⁵ Take Adolf Loos’s “chair argument” as an example, it is widely accepted that most of the chairs are designed for function only, but there are the cases where surplus meanings are added to function. As Louis Kahn suggested, “some functions suggest forms and some forms suggest functions.” For example, there are chairs that serve different purposes and conceive meanings beyond their function - the throne of a king may suggest the status of the person who sits on it. Besides, we may find chairs that do not look like a chair, yet suggest the function of sitting. For example, a traditional Chinese garden chair may look like a porcelain pot; a traditional Japanese chair is made up of simply two pillows. This kind of chair suggests a unique regional culture. The argument may be applied to the modernist

¹² Loos, Adolf. *Kulturenartung*, 1908.

¹³ Loos, Adolf. *Heimakunst*, 1914.

¹⁴ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief*, ed., Cyril Barrett, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1966, p. 11.

¹⁵ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*, 1930, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 22.

architecture and planning – it is necessary to take the social circumstances and cultural conditions into consideration before making any judgment on a particular design approach. When resources are limited, the Modernist's formula of "function x economics" for production is somehow ideal in such situations. Wittgenstein admitted that there are architectures which suggesting a meaning (the throne of a king), as well as which simply exist for the sake of function (chairs). Whether a particular architecture should be designed as a work of art or a product of craft depends on "all sort of other gestures and actions and a whole situation and a culture." Such are the various aesthetic origins of a city.

Apart from the characteristics of craft, architecture and cityscape also have the features of art. They have moral and aesthetic aspects. Firstly, art conceives meanings. These meanings have a profound impact on both the psychology and behaviour of people. In the case of architecture and cityscape, they are often used as signifiers to signify other meanings. Olsen says: "city... as a work of art, ...(is) a symbol of prestige, ...The city, as the largest work of art possible, was seen as necessarily making a moral statement."¹⁶ Olsen suggests that city and buildings are more than organized spatial structures. They symbolise a "prestige" image and a "moral statement". The prestige image of the city refers to the civic pride of different sorts - as a centre of specialized consumption, a place to indulge in luxurious vice, a centre of knowledge, a place to display history and culture. For instance, Florence is a display of nationalism to Italy, and Hong Kong is an exhibit of capitalism to China. The morality of art lies in its purity - it is innocent, chaste, and pure. In architecture and urban space, it reflects the spirit and characteristic of the society - its viewpoint of the past and the present, its ideas of relationship to the world, and its objectives and problem. This "moral statement" suggests what a good society ought to look like. It has a psychological impact on the perception and the behaviour of people by suggesting a sense of social order, stability, historical continuum, and eternal beauty. Therefore, the city and its architecture can be regarded as a kind of art that seriously attemptsto seek and to express aesthetically and symbolically the most profound ideas and beliefs of the society at different periods of time.

¹⁶ Olsen, Donald J. *The City as a Work of Art*, *The Pursuit of Urban History*, eds., Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe, London: Edward Arnold, 1983, pp. 266, 271.

Secondly, art embodies the collective memory of a particular time and place. Walter Benjamin believes that all art possesses *intentionality*, transparently expressing the collective will of a period and a culture.¹⁷ Urban landscape and architecture are partly the collective experience of the bourgeois, and partly the collective memory and fantasy of the people, and partly the collective will of the authorities. These are expressed in the city forms. For example, there are impressively detailed images of the public spaces and the private corporate places – the White House, the Empire State Building. There are also the less-attended fragments and discarded ruins that contain and nourish the imagination and memory of people – urban slums, an old little park in a corner of a modern city.

Thirdly, a work of art promotes imagination among its viewers. It encourages the viewers to *see beyond* its physical form. This sensuous experience of the viewers sometimes is a subjective one. Collingwood says, “the value of any given work of art to a person properly qualified to appreciate its value is not the delightfulness of the sensuous elements in which as a work of art it actually consists, but the delightfulness of the imaginative experience which those sensuous elements awake in him. Works of art are only means to an end; the end is this total imaginative experience which they enable us to enjoy.”¹⁸ Architecture and cityscape certainly have the ability to provide an “imaginative experience” to people. And these “sensuous elements” are mainly personal. For example, a little park in New York City may remind a foreign resident his hometown or other places in his daydreams. He explains: “I could never understand or appreciate New York unless I could make it the mirror - call it the mnemonic correlate - of other cities I’ve known or imagined.”¹⁹ This park is more than a leisure object. It becomes a sanctuary and a dream place for some people. Hence, spatial forms serve not only their immediate functional needs, but also the psychological and aesthetic needs of people. This is the role of a work of art in our society.

¹⁷ see Jennings, Michael W. *Dialectical Images - Walter Benjamin's Theory of Literary Criticism*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1987, pp. 151- 163. and Levin, Thomas. “Walter Benjamin and the Theory of Art History,” *October*, No. 47, Winter 1988, pp. 77- 83.

¹⁸ Collingwood, Robin George. *The Principles of Art*, London, New York: Oxford University Press, 1938, p. 148.

Conclusively, architecture and cityscape may be perceived as a combination of art and craft. Scruton comments, “The utility of a building is not an accidental property; it defines the architect’s endeavour ... [We should] maintain this architecture - not because architecture is a *mixture* of art and craft but because architecture represents an almost indescribable *synthesis* of the two.”²⁰ Architecture and cityscape originate to build for the need of their functions, but people also build for fun, as well as for beauty, neatness, order, etc. By this we mean two things. Firstly, the society establishes a spatial order that allows various operations to be carried out in an *effective way*. Secondly, on a superstructural level, the society demands symbolic representations that embody social, political, or other kind of meanings. And these meanings should be recognized in an *intelligible way*. This is maybe what Wittgenstein called “architecture (as) gesture”; he said, “Remember the impression one gets from good architecture, that it expresses a thought. ...Architecture immortalises and glorifies something: hence there can be no architecture where there is nothing to glorify.”²¹ Good architecture and urban design are a *gesture* to honour or to celebrate something important, something worthy to note down, something higher than the contemporary society – Gods, nature, an ideology, a principle, a vision, a myth, etc.²² They express a *statement* which the society sets out to achieve and to protect, like the Constitutions of America. Society may change, functions and demands would change, but this statement of a society, even if it is altered slightly to suit the contemporary needs, endures over time. Architecture and cityscape not only represent and complement the culture of a certain place and period, but also glorify its higher ideals. Therefore, spatial design is a “synthesis” of art and craft. With careful planning and sophisticated organization, both the urn and the chamberpot may have their rightful use.

A city can be a work of art, for it has most of the conventional qualities of art, which may be expressed in its urban forms, panoramas, key buildings, and

¹⁹ Aciman, André. “Shadow Cities,” *The New York Review*, December 18, 1997, pp. 35-37.

²⁰ Scruton, Roger. *The Aesthetic of Architecture*, London: Methuen, 1979, p. 6.

²¹ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. *Culture and Value*, 1930, Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 22, 69.

²² See Prince, F. T. “An Epistle To A Patron”, *Collected Poems 1935-1992*, Manchester: Carcanet Press, 1993, pp.13-16.

thoroughfares, as well as its imaginative power, singular beauty, compelling vision and composition, etc. On this argument, a city is a work of art; what kind of art is a city? To begin with, the city is a *unique* art, different from any other arts. It involves countless numbers of people and develops over an extraordinarily long period of time. Besides, the city is a *systematic* art. Like poetry, music, dance, play, etc, the city as a work of art has a “system”. Le Corbusier comments, “An aesthetic and a work of art are, above all, systems. An attitude is not a system. Genius is personal, decided by fate, but it expresses itself by means of system. There is no work of art without system.”²³ Forms of art do have their systems. They are not closed systems; they are flexible and contain unlimited possibility of transformation. For instance, in poetry, there is a system of line, length, rhymes, and syllables. Also in dance, there is a system of steps. Aristotle had said, “The virtue of a thing is related to its proper function. ...Building is essentially a form of production that is truly reasoned.”²⁴ Buildings and cityscapes contain more complicated systems: systems of construction procedures, of engineering calculations, of material used, of transportation, of resources allocation, and many more. The system in art is basically a set of rules formulated by our *common conception*. This common conception helps us to determine if an object is acceptable or beautiful. For instance, our sense of the beauty of human body depends on our common conception of the body’s proportions, how the body moves, etc. Features that are considered as beautiful in an animal are considered as unacceptable in the human. Of course, in architecture and cityscape, the conception of beauty is more complex and random. It varies according to different historical periods and cultures. Nevertheless, our sense of beauty in architecture and cityscape is, more or less, determined by our established conceptions of them and the functions that they fulfil.²⁵ Base on this “system”, artists may liberally express their creativity. In the case of architecture, there is a wide range of systems for different purposes. Architects may follow but not strictly abide by them. “Architecture ...was fit for one purpose as for another - church, house, aqueduct, market-place, or castle; ...the style of one country or climate; it would fit itself to north or south, snow-storm or sand-storm alike. Though pedants might make

²³ Le Corbusier. ed. *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Dermée: Ozentant, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1918.

²⁴ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, Book VI: 1139a, 16b2, 1140a, 1- 23.

²⁵ Scruton, Roger. *The Aesthetic of Architecture*, London: Methuen, 1979, p. 9- 11.

inflexible rules for its practice when it was dead or dying, when it was alive it did not bind itself too strictly to rule, but followed, in its constructive part at least.”²⁶ Different needs and purposes require different systems in architecture. Architects and planners are expected to create their designs within the system. The basic rule is to follow the system in its constructive part, while the other parts maybe more flexible. The system of a Greek column includes a capital, a column, and an entablature. An artist who chooses to deploy this style of column follows its system. He may alter each category in the system to suit a particular expression. However, if he omits one category and violates the “system”, his design maybe considered as outrageous.

Finally, architecture and cityscape are *public* arts. They impose themselves regardless of the viewers’ desires and perceptions. Architecture and city planning, as Ruskin points out, are the most political of all arts. Every person, whatever their taste and preference, are forced to confront the architecture and cityscape that surround them. Architecture and urban planning are of their nature assertive. They are deeply rooted in our everyday experience. We do not have the choice to avoid them as we do other kinds of art. There is an “absence of detachment” in their nature, which makes them differ from other arts. Besides, spatial experience suggests a certain way of doing things, of bringing together, or separating activities. Other forms of art make no such demand on us. It is because as Kant said, “all our awareness is grounded in spatial experience.”²⁷ With or without our awareness, spatial experience has a dominating effect on our psychological responses. Auden famously puts it: “a new style of architecture, a change of heart.”²⁸ Architecture and city planning influence the perception and behaviour of people. To change the façade of a city or a house, is to change the way its inhabitants see it and understand it. It also questions the cultural assumptions that have been used to seeing and understanding the urban environment. Wilson said: “The form of our buildings is the

²⁶ Bosanquet, Bernard. *A History of Aesthetic*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1956, p. 96.

²⁷ Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason: Transcendental Aesthetic*, trans., J M D. Meiklejohn, London, 1881, first section.

²⁸ Auden, Wystan Hugh. “Petition,” *The Collected Poetry of W. H. Auden*, New York, 1945.

form of our life.”²⁹ The architects may influence public taste, but they can do so only by addressing their work to the whole public and not merely to some educated or half-educated part of it. William Morris once asked: What is the use of art if it is not art for all? Aalto urges architects and planners to “democratiz(e) his production and bring it ...to a wider public.”³⁰

Art is essentially a form of communication. The artists create a work of art with the intention to express something. They hope that somebody will experience their works and understand their messages. To achieve this, when producing a work of art, the artists must assume the role of the spectator and judge their works from the point of view of their suitability to communicate the message they contains.³¹ After all, architecture and town planning are vernacular arts. Every person may participate; they build, decorate, and arrange their home and workspaces. It is a natural extension of common human activities. Baudelaire suggests that modern artist should “set up his house in the heart of the multitude, amid the ebb and flow of motion, in the midst of the fugitive and the infinite,” in the midst of the metropolitan crowd. “His passion and his profession are *to become one flesh with the crowd.*” This “lover of universal life” must “enter into the crowd as though it were an immense reservoir of electrical energy. ...Or we might compare him to a kaleidoscope gifted with consciousness.” He must “express at once the attitude and the gesture of living beings, whether solemn or grotesque, and their luminous *explosion* in space.”³² This is particularly important for architects and planners. It is because their arts originate from the needs of the crowd. Sennett says, “A city isn’t just a place to live, to shop, to go out and have kids play. It’s a place that implicates how one derives one’s ethics, how one develops a sense of justice, how one learns to talk with and learn from people who are unlike oneself, which is how a human being becomes human.”³³ The city is the place that shows different ways of life, and where interactions as well as

²⁹ Wilson, Colin St John. *Architectural Reflections, Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture*, Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1992, p. 25.

³⁰ Aalto, Alvar. ed., *Sketches*, MIT Press, 1978, p. 116.

³¹ Budd, Malcolm. *Values of Art: Pictures, Poetry and Music*, London: Penguin, 1996, pp. 175- 6.

³² Baudelaire, Charles. 1859, “The Painter of Modern Life,” *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, New York: Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 400- 403.

³³ Sennett, Richard. “The Civitas of Seeing,” *Places*, Vol. 5, No 4, 1989. On relation of body and space, see also Sennett, Richard. 1943, *Flesh and Stone, The Body and the City in Western Civilization*, London: Faber, 1994.

confrontations occur. Architects and planners must learn the relationship between the body and the urban space. They must use their arts to support this “immense reservoir of electrical energy” of modern living, rather than suppress it.

Notwithstanding, the city as a work of art has to overcome many obstacles in the modern epoch. Firstly, there is the problem of *unity*. All serious architecture and spatial planning aim at achieving a *unity*. This unity refers not to the visual effect of a style. It is a unity of different elements in a modern society. As the chapter on the City as History mentioned, this is not an easy unity of exclusion, but a difficult unity of inclusion. Stokes points out that a good work of art should possess,

A pervasive theme embodies more than one unity: each formal quality has further function in the pulsation of the whole. A doubling of roles characterizes the masterpiece by which we experience the sensation of having the cake and yet of eating it. *Form harmonizes the contradiction*: it is the setting for the evocative ambiguities, for the associative collusion, of imaginery.³⁴

In a great work of art, form takes on the property of a code; thus, in a way, it becomes content. This is the double coding of an art form. It signifies the sensation of holding a cake physically (form), and at the same time eating it (chewing its content). The contradiction of an objective form and a subjective content is resolved in a unity. They are presented as one thing. At the same time, each individual form contributes to a large whole, a bigger and higher content. That is, different forms in a city, such as architecture, road, and streets, come together as a system of codes representing its particular culture. In urban semiology, the system of cultural code is both the syntax – the syntagm or metonymy, and the paradigm or metaphor – and the rhetoric. They together formulate the identity of a city. Besides, a great work of art plays a major role in securing the stability of a culture. It does so by providing a sense of continuity and identity. This sense can be achieved by permitting individual elements to have their own space and representation in an art form. In architecture and town planning, ideally, the city as a work of art fuses what Cullen called the “two polar experiences” and presents them simultaneously. These experiences include outdoor and indoor, public and private, here and there, envelopment and detachment,

³⁴ Stokes, Adrian. *The Image in Form: Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes*, ed., Richard Wollheim, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 68.

oneness and separateness, etc.³⁵ There is a double cipher in contemporary cities - the public façade and the private interior. Beyond the public façade, most of the contemporary cityscapes still appear to be fragmented. The irrational juxtaposition of different elements may place a public façade where viewers may expect a private interior. Gordon Cullen proposes a compromise solution of the problem - indoor landscape and outdoor room. To Cullen, there is little difference between the public façade and the private interior. It is because people all intend to “humanize” the space they use. The private quality of an interior space is inserted into a public one, and vice versa. The “Indoor landscape” uses different levels, materials, patterns, lights, textures, etc., to create the spatial quality of a landscape within an interior. “Outdoor room” recomposes all the physical surroundings such as sky, floor, buildings, trees, roads, sight, sound, smell, and so on, to house the identity of the users. People possess outdoor space by movement or stillness, and provides the space with meanings. The city as a work of art aims at this broader integrating process,³⁶ in order to reconcile different and conflicting elements in the modern urban landscape.

Secondly, the city as a work of art has the problem of confusion in architectural styles. Some artists such as the post-modernists see historical forms as *fun*. They use a bit of Baroque here, a bit of Surrealist there. Their play of mix-and-match in building forms sometimes results in a lack of identity and character. How could our hearts bless when the meanings of truth and treasure are taken away? The meaning or content is somehow drained away from the form, leaving only a museum piece or tourist attraction. This trend of duplicating historical styles raises another problem. It is a problem of *originality* in designing architectural form. Originality in art means without resemblance to another art that has done such things before. The production of something intentionally to look like another work of art is regarded as imitative art or mere craft. Take the city of Paris as an example. It is a beautiful work of art that evolved over a long period of time. However, its miniature double, the French-themed Hotel Paris in Las Vegas is criticized as non-art, even though it is furnished with a half-scaled replica of the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe, a

³⁵ Cullen, Gordon. *Townscape*, London: Architectural Press, 1961.

³⁶ Stokes, Adrian. *Three Essays, The Luxury and Necessity of Painting*, Tavistock Press, 1961, p. 14.

facade of L'Opera du Paris, and cost around \$800 million to build. (Illustrations 3) The concept is to take a scenic city or country - Rome, New York, Venice, Egypt, New Orleans, and so on - and duplicates it in the Nevada desert. They can hardly compare with the authentic places, yet they are packed with nice touches and awesome details. In this sense, we may argue that every genuine work of art contains a sense of originality. Originality in that sense does not mean unlike other works of art. It refers to the unique expression by the artist. A work of art can be original in its *content*, not necessarily in its *form*. Las Vegas balances on the line between art and kitsch.

Any objects that non-artists regard as form, an artist may regard as the content of his art. This is where he may find his original expression. Oldenburg suggests that artist may "look for beauty where it is not supposed to be found."³⁷ Berman also agrees that, "They (artists) experimented with a fascinating array of art forms: forms that incorporated and transformed non-art materials, junk, debris, and objects picked up in the street; three-dimensional environments that combined painting, architecture and sculpture - and sometimes theatre and dance as well - and that created distorted (usually in an expressionistic way) but vividly recognizable evocations of real life; "happenings" that reached out of the studios and galleries directly into the streets, to assert their presence and undertake actions that would both incorporate and enrich the streets' own spontaneous and open life."³⁸ Architects may find their originality of art in other forms of art, as well as in non-art forms. Nevertheless, as already declared, architecture is a public art. It should more or less reflect real life and shape it, give it order and direction. The building may have an original expression on the one hand, and incorporate and enrich the existing street life on the other. For instance, when architects and planners design their projects, they may be inspired by a culture, a sculpture, another building, or another city. This may be expressed in the form of their projects. At the same time, they may also plan the *impacts* of their projects on the local community or environment. They may design their projects in such a way and thus, for example, attract such a kind of people to visit there, or not to visit there.

³⁷ Oldenburg quoted in Rose, Barbara. "Claes Oldenburg", *MOMA*, New York Graphic Society, 1970, p. 46.

The impact of their projects has not been done before in that community. Hence, their designs are original art. This is what we mean by saying a genuine work of art may contain originality in its content but not its form.

Lastly, the city as a work of art is threatened by the idolization of machine technology. The idolization of technology in the modern age deflates the position of art. It is because technology drains attention from the objects it is created to serve. The attention of people or even some artists are focused more upon the technology itself, rather than the end product or service that the technology produced for. A means becomes an end. Technology exists for the sake of technology. It is undeniable that modern technology improves the daily life of people in many ways. However, if the preference of technology turns into a fetish, the society may lose its balance. People may eventually become materialistic and care less about the aesthetic aspects of modern living. In modern society, technology becomes a competition among various specialized groups. The more advanced is their technology, the better they can survive the market competition. There is a trend of increasing dependence on technology in many aspects of a society. In architecture and planning, it may refer to advance building technology, modern materials, modern management, efficiency, low cost, and so on. In many cases, some other aspects of a building, such as the humane aspects of sunlight, fresh air, privacy, social interaction, etc., have to give way in order to achieve a technical-advanced structure. In modern cities, people tend to indulge in the comfort and efficiency that technology provides, everything must be fast, easy, and economical. It is the role of the artist to resume the humane aspect that is vanishing in the face of modernization. Van Gogh urges, "Give back to ordinary men that something of the eternal that the halo used to represent."³⁹ Facing all these problems and challenges, artists are finding it more difficult to be good. The city as a work of art is also less able to maintain a balance between the love of beauty and sublimity of art and the obsessions of technological advancement.

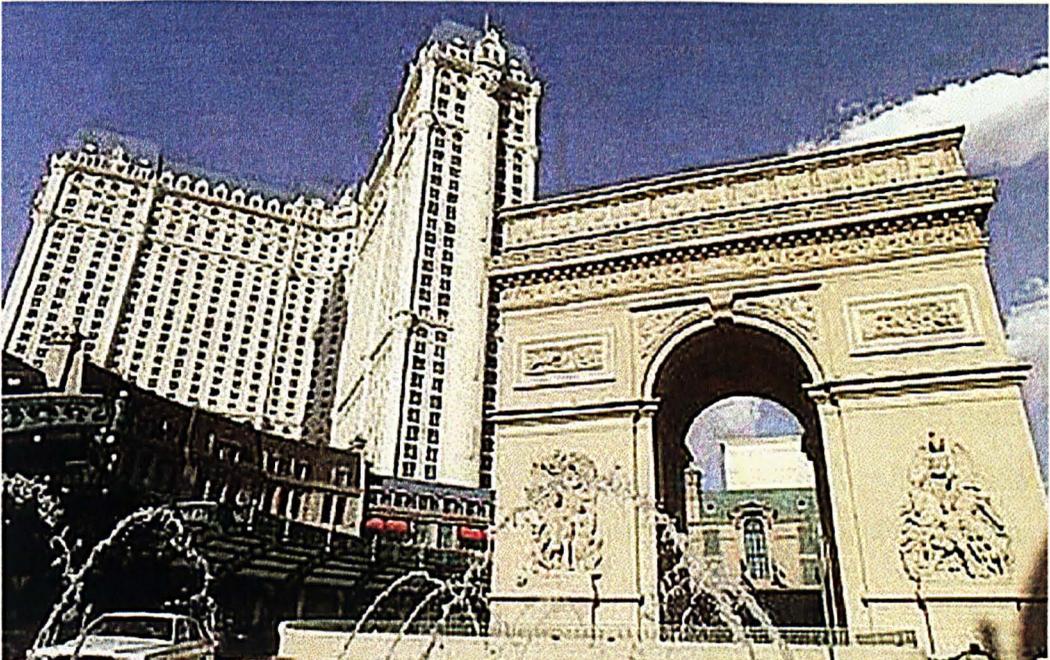
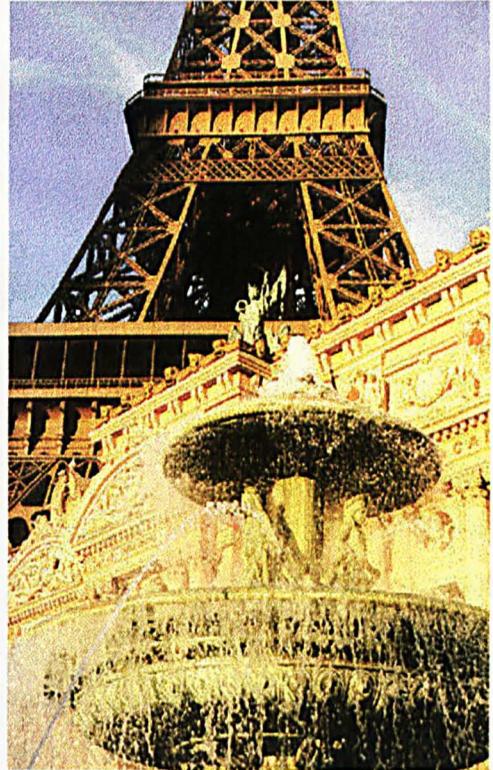
³⁸ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 319.

Victor Hugo said, “The aim of art is almost divine: to bring to life again if it is writing history, to create if it is writing poetry.”⁴⁰ Art sets out to record and remind societies of something they once had but lost (ideologies), and to create and suggest something they could and might have in the future (ideals). If that is the case, then the city as a work of art is like a habitable museum, which exhibits a compassionate source of random but carefully selected information. It has the power to change both the citizens and the visitors, by remembering and reminding, by creating and inspiring. In the epoch of modernity, however, the city as a work of art “often wilfully reveals its own reality as a construction or an artifice,” and becomes a “self-referential construct rather than a mirror of society.”⁴¹ Would the exhibits overwhelm the museum, or the museum overlooks the exhibits?

³⁹ Vincent van Gogh quoted in Wilson, Colin St John. *Architectural Reflections, Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture*, Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1992, p. 98.

⁴⁰ Hugo, Victor. 1827, *Preface to Cromwell*, trans., William G. Allen, the Harvard Classics, Vol. XXXIX.

⁴¹ Lunn, E. *Marxism and Modernism*, London, 1985, p. 41.



3. Paris Hotel, Las Vegas, 2000.

5

City as A Corporate Image

“She’s got an indiscreet voice”, I remarked.
 “It’s full of - ” I hesitated.
 “Her voice is full of money”, he said suddenly.
 That was it. I’d never understood before.
 It was full of money - that was the inexhaustible charm that rose and
 fell in it, the jingle of it, the cymbals’ song of it.
 - F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*.

What is money? If money is a symbol, what does it symbolize? If money is a form of social coordination, whom does it bring together? Bacon said, “Money is like muck, not good except it be spread.”¹ Shakespeare regarded money as a good soldier who will open all ways.² Hume commented, “Riches are valuable at all times, and to all men; because they always purchase pleasures, such as men are accustomed to, and desire: Nor can any thing restrain or regulate the love of money, but a sense of honour and virtue; which, if it be not nearly equal at all times, will naturally abound most in ages of knowledge and refinement.”³ In the age of money, half the world worships money and the other half disgusts it as the root of evils. Money is the problem, but it is also the solution. Either way, money makes the world go round. In the modern economy, money increasingly becomes abstract. It portrays movement, circulation, transactions, and exchange relationships in pure abstraction, and this increasing abstractness of the money form is expressed in electronic money, credit money, the global money market, etc. Besides, money when conceptualised as *capital* has an inherent value that is capable of multiplying itself, as Marx said, “Capital is money By virtue of it being value, it has acquired the occult ability to add value to itself. It brings forth living offspring, or, at the least, lays golden eggs.”⁴ However, it is not this capital value that empowers money, but its symbolic value.

¹ Bacon, Francis. “Of Seditions and Troubles,” *Essays*, 1597-1625.

² The original script is - Ford: “If money go before, all ways do lie open.” Falstaff: “Money is a good soldier, sir, and will on.” Shakespeare, William. “Ford and Falstaff”, *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, Act 2, Sc. 2, l. pp. 168-70.

³ Hume, David. “Of Refinement in the Arts,” *Moral, Political, and Literary*, Part II, Essay II, ed., Eugene F. Miller, rev. ed., Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1987, p. 276.

⁴ Marx, Karl. 1867, *Capital. A Critical Analysis of Capitalist Production*, (*Das Kapital*), ed., Frederick Engels, Foreign Languages Publishing House: Moscow, 1959, Vol. 1, Ch. 4.

Simmel says, "Money performs its services best when it is not simply money."⁵ Under most conditions, money works not simply as a mere expression of the value of goods and services. Take gold as an example. It is a commodity of recognized standard value. When it is used as money, it somehow loses its intrinsic value and becomes symbolic. In other words, money is more than a *substance*; it becomes a *function* in the modern society. Money is a symbolic expression of contemporary values. For instance, it signified national triumph and military advancement during wars, and it assumes great significance as a symbol of modernisation and capitalism during the industrial and post-industrial periods. In modern epoch, it becomes a primary tool of communication; it is like a common language that everybody uses in the money market. Keynes observed that money is a promise that all will be well with us in the future.⁶

Cities are the space of money economy. They have an irresolvable connection with international money - capital investments and financial markets. Societies are moving faster and faster towards a state of global capitalism. Cities have few options but to compete with each other, mainly as finance, commerce, and entertainment centres. There are two powerful motivations behind this market competition - the desire to be recognized as an important player, whose actions and opinions assert influence on others, and the desire to build an efficient, dynamic, and modern economy. The one motive searches for an identity that is acknowledged publicly. It is a social assertion of being somebody in the world, who plays "a part in the larger arena of world politics", and exercises "influence among the nations."⁷ The other aim is practical; it desires progress, an improving living standard, effective political order, and greater social justice. The two motives are intimately related. Yet, they originate from different sources and respond to different pressures. The tension between them is on the one hand, a driving force in the market competition, and an obstacle on the other. Cities and places carefully create a positive and high quality image of place, in which power and status (confidence) are displayed

⁵ Simmel, George. *The Philosophy of Money*, London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978, p. 165.

⁶ Keynes, John Maynard. *A Treatise on Money*, Cambridge, 1921, p. 14.

⁷ Geertz, Clifford. "The Integrative Revolution", *Old Societies and New States - The Quest for Modernity in Asia and Africa*, ed., Clifford Geertz, New York: The Free Press, 1963, pp. 105- 157.

explicitly. The urban forms and architecture respond to such needs. Successful models will be copied elsewhere. The organization of spectacular urban spaces is a means to attract capital and people (of the right sort) in an era of intensified inter-urban competition and urban entrepreneurialism.⁸

Capitalism spawns itself across the globe mainly through international corporations. Corporations are forced into an ever more competitive market, where even the slightest changes in approach, can make a big difference to their turnover. Weber says, "capitalism is identical with the pursuit of profit, and forever renewed profit, by means of continuous, rational, capitalistic enterprise. For it must be so: in a wholly capitalistic order of society, an individual capitalistic enterprise which did not take advantage of its opportunities for profit-making would be doomed to extinction."⁹ Hence, corporations adopt an approach of specialization and innovation. For example, highly specific methods of research are developed to target trends within population and to monitor their habits. Information of every minute detail of life is recorded and analysed in order to help business and government to predict and to plan accordingly. Data collection includes not only the spending habits of people but also their response patterns to spatial arrangement and image construction. People become units to be directed and physically moved around spaces. The authorities and corporations adopt a system within which people move and live; and construct an urban image through the spatial practice of architecture and city planning.

The image of money on the cityscape is in actuality a valuable currency in market competition. It implies a mythic power but is read as effective power. Henceforth, a vocabulary of signs in the spatial practice must be established in order to communicate effectively. Planners and architects have been professionally trained to comprehend the subtleties of space, it is difficult for them to look at it with innocent eyes. Viewers and users of space, however, respond randomly to their

⁸ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989, pp. 91-2.

⁹ Weber, Max. "The protestant Ethic and the Spirit of capitalism", *From Modernism to Postmodernism: An Anthology*, ed., Lawrence E. Cahoon, Cambridge, Mass, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 160.

designs. To compensate for this, space is designed to control and guide its viewers and users into harmony with its designed purposes and functions. Through spatial practice, the viewers are taught the way to look at it and the users are guided around it. If the practice is successful, people will believe in the myths of the city, and try to live up to the image it proposed. Take Times Square in New York as an example. Images of money dominate its spatial practice. Its myth is an upscale intelligent financial one. The site is mainly occupied by companies who derive their profits from the financial markets, from the people who buy their products, and from the people who make them. The image of money is so explicit that both the users and visitors of the site have a clear comprehension of it. Corporations use the prestige image of Times Square to enhance their companies' image. Visitors of the site admire its imagery of corporate power and success.

Spatial practice is an essential part of contemporary business, where corporate image and reputation can make or break a company in the world market. The construction of the right environment, for work and retail space, can greatly affect the productivity and image of the corporations. Confidence is vital in the business world. Companies and business people constantly project an impressive and competent image. Corporate space, through a process of mystification, claims dominance over the users and visitors. Architecture is a tool of communication. Buildings, their layouts, components, and ambience instruct users and viewers on how they are intended to be used and perceived. Corporate architecture is a physical expression and public façade of the corporations. It signifies their images of internationalism (far-reaching), efficient, competent, prestigious, and flush with monetary success. And skyscrapers are the ideal forms to represent the images. Henry James comments:

One story is good until another is told, and skyscrapers are the last word of economic ingenuity only till another word be written. This shall be possibly a word of still uglier meaning, but the vocabulary of thrift at any price shows boundless resources, and the consciousness of that truth, the consciousness of the finite, the menaced, the essentially invented state, twinkles ever, to my perception, in the thousand glassy eyes of these giants of the mere market.¹⁰

¹⁰ James, Henry. *The American Scene*, New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1907, p. 75.

Skyscrapers and Urban Skyline

The skyscraper is the representational form of the modern city as corporate image. Representational form indicates a metonymic element: one part is taken for the whole. Through a process of mystification and aestheticization, this element becomes an accepted way of seeing, knowing, and representing the city.

“(W)hat brownstone has ever been the symbol of New York that the Empire State Building is, what lake-front park the icon of Chicago that the Sears Tower has become? To visitors and natives alike, these buildings are these cities; as Notre Dame does in Paris or the Houses of Parliament do in London, these skyscrapers seem not merely to suggest the personalities of the cities of which they are a part, but to have made these personalities - to have made these cities’ characters reflections of their own qualities as objects. ...The city was growing, it was prospering; it was becoming to capitalism what Rome was to the Church, and the more the city’s role as a vital commercial center could be expressed through huge buildings, the stronger would be its position.”¹¹

Soaring skyscrapers are no doubt the representative form of capitalist power. Skyscrapers have only one semiotic value – monosemic¹² – that signifies money in action. Business and commercial establishments are housed in functionally designed spaces, in which commercial activities of production and consumption are carried out around the clock. Cadman compliments the skyscrapers, as the “Cathedral of Commerce”¹³ – a building in which, through means of exchange and barter, the spirit of peoples are, in a way, bound into unity and peace. If human societies ever have a unity, the closest form would be the money market. Skyscrapers are adored as an icon of modernity. Sullivan said, “It (the skyscraper) must be every inch a proud and soaring thing, rising, in sheer exultation that from bottom to top it is a unit without a single dissenting line.”¹⁴ Modern urbanity is defined by how many tall buildings a city has, how massive they are, how many people are in it, and how big these buildings can be built. It is a fact that the modern city is a place of growing corporate

¹¹ Goldberger, Paul. *The Skyscraper*, London: Allen Lane, 1982, pp. 3, 8.

¹² Choay, F. “Urbanism and Semiology”, *Meaning in Architecture*, eds., Charles Jencks and G. Baird, New York: George Braziller, 1968, pp. 27- 38.

¹³ S. Parkes Cadman quoted in Kostof, Spiro. “The Skyscraper City,” *Design Quarterly*, No. 140, 1988, p. 38.

¹⁴ Sullivan, Louis. *Tall Office Buildings Artistically Considered*, 1896, quoted in Pastier, John. “Skyscraper Revolution and Evolution,” *Design Quarterly*, No. 140, 1988, pp. 12- 23.

power. It is brutal and shamelessly market-oriented, but at the same time, it is also strikingly beautiful.

These buildings are beings, and they move. The Chrysler glides northward and the Empire State moves graciously south and soon all are changing places in a millionaire's waltz, slow and silent, male and female, exchanging the light in their eyes, the touch of roof and penthouse like the touch of passing hands. All cities move, but none so strangely as the steel figures of the New York ball.¹⁵

With these romantic and abstract images, Manhattan towers give life to the city of New York. Pritchett suggests an aesthetic way of looking at them. These tall buildings all dress up in beautiful and elegant forms. Their gracious appearances make the whole area look rich. They are not lifeless still objects; they are full of life and boundless energy. They signify the intense money movement of the business world. Skyscrapers can be viewed as an individual architectural form or, in groups as silhouettes and planes in the city landscape. In either way, they are ready for wider diffusion and appreciated by larger audiences. Individually, the skyscraper functions visually as a monumental terminus of an urban vista. It is a focal point that defines urban space by its height and unique architectural form. When skyscrapers are viewed as a group, they work as the framer of an urban perspective. They define the horizon and blend into the urban skyline. They are the signifier of urbanity and modernity. An example is the World Trade Centre in Manhattan, New York. The twin towers of the Centre have been the icons of New York for nearly three decades. They signified the capitalist and financial power of the city. Once the tallest buildings in the world, they towered over other skyscrapers and dominated the Manhattan skyline, until their collapse in September 2001. The absence of the World Trade Centre completely alters and leaves a void in the Manhattan skyline, and in the mind of New Yorkers. In March 2002, two powerful laser illuminators were installed in where once the towers located. At night, they are like, in the words of *The New York Times Magazine*, the "Phantom Towers" of the World Trade Centre.

The terms "urban skyline" and the "dependable excitement of horizon" are accompanying by specific visual and mental images. Urban skyline refers to the

¹⁵ V. S. Pritchett, *New York Proclaimed*, 1964, cited in Pastier, John. "Skyscraper Revolution and Evolution," *Design Quarterly*, No. 140, 1988, pp. 12- 23.

place where the sky meets the urban landform. It appears at a particular time in the development of cities, and is a metaphor representing part of our modern city in a special way. It displays the mass and glitter of capitalist power. The urban skyline acts as a brand image of a city, which signs itself with the eponym of wealth. It suggests a range of social actions, for example, the concentration of capital and power, economic boom and job opportunities, nightlife and tourism, changes in local culture, public adornment, and civic pride. The urban skyline provides one of the most valuable images of the city as corporate image (especially at night). Hence, in cities such as Hong Kong and San Francisco, the panorama of urban skyline are carefully arranged and protected by height control regulations.¹⁶ The construction of skyscrapers is regulated in such a way that the integrity of visual relationships between skyscrapers and the rest of the city, or with surrounding nature are conserved.

One could believe that giants had built this city for giants, and if you walk in lower Broadway among these monsters, you get the impression of being in a deep mountain canon. In this instance, however, the cliffs, which rise to such dizzy heights, have windows and doors, and ... elevators which lift you as quick as lightning to the top. Sometimes more than a dozen ... are in operation so that one might compare them with a vertical railroad system. There are 'slow train' which stop at every floor, and 'express trains' which always skip some stations, and other fast trains which fly in a quarter of a minute from the basement to the roof ...¹⁷

Looked at from the exterior, the building proportion of skyscrapers overwhelms the pedestrians and adjacent streets. The interior of these towers are equally impressive, shooting elevators, countless floor levels, the sheer height they soar to are unbelievable.

The overpowering proportion of skyscrapers and their relation to the surrounding streets and the whole area must be considered carefully. Structurally speaking, the bases of skyscraper are more critical to the operation of the city than their fancy tops. Skyscraper tops are a favoured expressive device. They account for little of a building's cost while providing much of its identity. They can be designed

¹⁶ *Hong Kong - City of Vision*, Hong Kong: Hinge Marketing, 1996, p 140.

¹⁷ Ludwig Fulda, *Amerikanische Eindrücke*, 1914, cited in Pastier, John. "Skyscraper Revolution and Evolution," *Design Quarterly*, No. 140, 1988, pp. 12-23.

with great freedom without affecting the functional space on lower floors. For the bases of skyscrapers, they define the relationship between the tower to its occupants and visitors, the streets and pedestrians, and house the main public spaces in what are otherwise private buildings. In some cases, they harmoniously integrate with the streets and support urban activities. For example, the ground level of the tower may be occupied by a stylish roadside café that invites people to stay longer. In other cases, the height, volume, and shadow of the skyscrapers cast on adjacent streets and make the whole area look like an “architectural rain forests”.¹⁸ They impose a “canyonizing effect”¹⁹ - air and noise pollution, congestion, trapped heat and shadows - on the surrounded areas. In some extreme cases, the connection between the tower and streets is totally avoided by constructing the whole building on stilts. The towers are alienated from the streets and public spaces below. Ideally, good skyscrapers should have the *postmodernist's* respect for the streets and the sky, pay attention to context, identity, history, and express them in a diverse and creative way. At the same time, they should have the modernist's practical approach to the structure, construction, functional problem solving, and the properties of materials. With careful design and management, the combination should lead to architecture of style and substance.

Skyscrapers are capable of constituting the image of a city by their exterior material, volume, height, architectural form, and styles. For instance, some skyscrapers in the Manhattan, such as the Empire State Building, are sophisticatedly finished with marble or granite with decorative motifs. They are shorter in building height, their colour and texture are warm and solid. They give the city a self-assured, competent, and reliable image. Sometimes, excessively tall skyscrapers are built as the monument of a futuristic city. Take the skyscrapers in Hong Kong as an example. They are so tall that they dwarf surrounded older buildings and the pedestrians. They employ simple geometrical forms, metal, and glass exterior walls. Their colour and texture are cold and hard. They look unstable, sometimes aggressive, and monstrous. Some of them summon up the surrealist images of the arts of H. R. Giger, such as the Foster's HSBC Bank Building. These skyscrapers

¹⁸ Pastier, John. “Skyscraper Revolution and Evolution,” *Design Quarterly*, No. 140, 1988, pp. 12- 23.

orchestrate a straightforward, technological advanced, and futuristic image of the city.

Glass in Architecture

In the city of corporate image, the predominant feature of its modern architecture is the use of glass in external walls. Glass as a building material has always been popular in modern architecture since the days of Sullivan in Chicago. Le Corbusier praises, "Their outlines softened by distance, the sky-scrapers raise their geometrical facades all of glass... an overwhelming sensation. Immense but radiant prisms.... As twilight falls the glass sky-scrapers seem to flame."²⁰ Glass is a unique material. It is transparent and allows complete visibility. However, when obsidian glass is used on the façades of a building, it is like a great mirror standing against the sky reflecting its surrounding, the sky, and the clouds. The building loses its mass and vanishes into the background. The use of glass in exterior wall also blocks all the visibility when looking from outside. Like people wearing reflector sunglasses, they can see others clearly, but others cannot see their eyes, and see only their own reflection.²¹ Visibility is one way and thereby asserts a certain power over and indifference towards others. Similarly, the glass exterior walls of a skyscraper repel and dissociate the building from its neighbourhood. They generate a peculiar placeless space in which everything disappears into the background – when glassy skyscrapers are standing next to each other, they reflect images of each other, the sky, and streets; consequently, the space is full of infinite distorted reflections, they create an abstracted space. Besides, the interface of the interior and the exterior becomes blurred. It is impossible to know if there is someone behind the glassy façades of the buildings. This makes glass walls much more formidable than any wall of stone. Glass is thin, brittle, mysterious, cold, and impersonal, whereas stone and brick are solid, self-assured, warm, and welcoming. Glass is not an easy material to work with, as Mies van der Rohe comments, "Skyscrapers reveal their bold structural pattern during construction. Only then does the gigantic steel web seem impressive.

¹⁹ Boyd, David K. "The Skyscraper and The Street", *American Architecture and Building News*, November 18, 1908.

²⁰ Le Corbusier. *The City of Tomorrow*, trans., Frederick Etchells, New York: Payson & Clark, 1929, p. 177- 8.

When the outer walls are put in place, the structural system that is the basis of all artistic design is hidden by the chaos of meaningless and trivial forms. When finished, these buildings are impressive only because of their size. ...Instead of trying to solve the new problems with old forms, we should develop the new forms from the very nature of the new problems.”²² He suggests that it is important to play with reflections and not with the effect of light and shadows as in ordinary buildings. The surface finish of glass is so smooth and flawless that it lacks of a sense of human frailty. As Goldberger says, “the glass tower is a technological object, depending for its value not on a sense of the presence of human effort but on a sense of its absence.”²³

Apocalyptic Futurist City

Despite their popularity, skyscrapers are widely criticized among academic groups. Sant’ Elia prophesies the scene of what he calls the “apocalyptic skyscraper city”, which worships mechanical motion and machine. He describes, “the modern building like a gigantic machine ... as big as need dictates, not merely as zoning rules permit, must rise from the brink of a tumultuous abyss; the street ... will no longer lie like a doormat at the level of the thresholds, but plunge storeys deep into the earth, gathering up the traffic of the metropolis.”²⁴ Skyscrapers appeared to be tasteless forms to Frank Lloyd Wright. He calls skyscrapers as “extended telescopes, uplifted elephant trunks, Bedford stone rockets, Gothic toothpicks, modern fountain pens, shrieking verticality, selling perpendicularity to the earthworms in the village lane below ... The skyscraper of today is only the prostitute semblance of the architecture it professes to be.”²⁵ Some of the skyscrapers employ an architectural style that is indeed impersonal, uninviting, and fragmented. Mumford denounces skyscrapers as “the mask of American architecture was frozen; the face was dead, the very

²¹ See Jameson, Fredric. “Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism”, *New Left Review*, No. 146, Jul/ Aug, 1984, pp. 53- 92. and Baudrillard, Jean. “America”, *Rethinking Architecture - A Cultural Theory*, ed., Neil Leach, London, New York: Routledge, 1997, pp. 209- 224.

²² Mies van der Rohe. 1922, “Two Glass Skyscrapers”, *Mies van der Rohe*, ed., Philip Johnson, New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1947, p. 187.

²³ Goldberger, Paul. *The Skyscraper*, London: Allen Lane. 1982, p. 120.

²⁴ Sant’ Elia cited in Banham, Reyner. *Theory and Design in the First Machine Age*, London: Architectural Press, 1980.

²⁵ Wright, Frank Lloyd. *The Future of Architecture*, London: Architectural Press, 1955.

skyscrapers were born old.”²⁶ The giant skyscrapers dominate the citizen with its massive scale and intimidating proportion, as in the words of Warner, “the giant building and the dwarfed man.”²⁷ When the development and construction of skyscrapers are not planned and organised carefully, they may create, as Sartre himself points out, a “vertical disorder”²⁸ in cities. Van Leeuwen uses Chicago city as an example. He says, “the chaotic primeval city with its irregular skyline is razed as if by a gigantic lawnmower.”²⁹ The possibility for building height and for the growing number of skyscrapers seems to have no limit.

On the influence of regional culture, Olsen points out that the modern skyscrapers tend to ignore regional identity, he complains, “Since the death of Stalin, even Soviet architecture has become indistinguishable from that of the capitalist West.”³⁰ Traditionally, architectures are used to express national identity, ethnic, and regional culture, through the unique design of columns, pediments, cornices, paintings, mosaics, incised ornaments, sculptures, inscriptions, and even colours. Corporate architecture in modern cities is built in a way that does not address the local culture, local building tradition, local construction material, local climate condition, etc. They are usually keen to achieve an international and abstract architectural style that is part of their companies’ images, which are far-reaching and multi-national, they are not limited by any place or period.

These innumerable critics, however, are not doing skyscrapers justice. Clearly, skyscrapers neither destroy cities, nor wipe out the urban communities. They make them look different, and suggest another form of aesthetic. The city is a complicated organism, constantly growing and changing its shape. The problems are more a matter of how to integrate these super towers into the local environment and existing cityscapes, and how to align economic development with its associated transportation and environmental issue (sustainable development).

²⁶ Mumford, Lewis. “The Search for Something More”, 1928, *Architecture as A Home for Man*, New York: Architectural Record Books, 1975.

²⁷ Warner, Sam Bass Jr. “The Management of Multiple Urban Image,” *The Pursuit of Urban History*, ed. Derek Fraser and Anthony Sutcliffe, London: Edward Arnold, 1983, p. 392.

²⁸ Sartre, Jean-Paul. *Literary and Philosophical Essays*, London: Rider, 1955.

²⁹ Van Leeuwen cited in Kostof, Spiro. “The Skyscraper City”, *Design Quarterly*, No. 140, 1988, p. 39.

In fact, the problems of skyscrapers are more than a simple debate of architectural aesthetic and spatial integrity. They are social and ideological arguments. The Soviet Encyclopaedia of 1954 rejects skyscrapers as a symbol of capitalist greed, whose disorderly clusters destroy community values and urban quality.³¹ Yet on the one hand, skyscrapers induce civic pride among the citizens because they signify the economic power and possibility of a nation. On the other hand, they appear at a time of growing prominence of capitalist corporations, and of modernism in aesthetics as well as technology. They are part of a cluster of images of banks, corporate offices, hotels, stock market, etc. Skyscrapers as an architectural expression reflect the changing nature of the corporate bureaucracy that occupies them. They constitute an urban skyline, which of course, elaborates a monetary or commercial image. This image is accompanied by the negative side of capitalist modernity - the unequal distribution of social power, the struggle between private and public interests, the suppression of particular social and cultural practices, commercial exploitations, and consumerism.

In the city as corporate image, international corporations and institutions play an ever-increasing and more important role in the society and the daily life of people. Powerful developers and corporations carry out most of the construction projects in the city. However, their interests are not the same with that of the community. They construct giant skyscrapers and the community has to deal with the associated consequences.³² There always exist some kinds of conflict between the public and the private interests. Sennett warns, "Cities can't tap into the wealth of these corporations, and the corporations take little responsibility for their own presence in the city. The threat of absence, of leaving, makes possible this avoidance of responsibility."³³ He believes that behind these international corporations are

³⁰ Olsen, Donald. *The City as a Work of Art*, New Heaven: Yale University Press, 1986, p. 284.

³¹ See Ling, Arthur. "Skyscrapers and Their Siting in Cities", *Town Planning Review*, No. 34, April, 1963, pp. 7- 18. and Gottmann, Jean. "Why The Skyscraper?", *Geographical Review*, No. 56, April, 1966, pp. 190- 212.

³² The President of the American Civic Association quoted in Delano, Frederic A. *The American City Magazine*, January, 1926, p. 8. See also the argument of Van Leeuwen, T. A. P. *The Skyward Trend of Thought*, Cambridge, Mass., 1988, p. 79.

³³ Sennett, Richard. *Capitalism and the City*, [http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader\\$1513](http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$1513) (28/2/02)

faceless capitalist elites, who have neither national identity nor cultural reference. Their capital is flexible and mobile; there is the threat, and the fact that they can pull out of the city at any difficult time such as a recession. Hence, they are not suitable to participate in building up the image of the city in the long run. But they are all we have to work with as citizens.

Furthermore, corporatism asserts substantial influence on the personality and daily life of urban dwellers. In modern cities, money is regarded as an objectified measurement of values. This implies an impersonal and rational relationship among people, which is institutionalized in the form of money. Corporatism suggests a relationship of domination and subordination. It is a quantitative relationship between the ones who have and who have not (money and the knowledge to manage money). Fordism in the shape of R. W. Taylor believed that modern society could be built through the proper application of corporate power – reasonable wages and working hours. Harvey objects that this is only a capitalist mystique to secure the discipline of workers and the productivity of the companies. Corporations provide their employees with sufficient income and leisure time to consume the mass-produced products and services that the corporations produced. In terms of urban relationships, the money culture suggested by corporatism brings people together and segregates them at the same time. In the process of circulation, transactions, and exchange, people interact, communicate, conflict, and compromise. There is a remarkable degree of cooperation and agreement achieved, in spite of the precariousness of such a system. However, money culture also implies alienation and segregation among individuals. Money, by its very nature, is a purely instrumental commodity – a pure means to acquire something else. The influences of money on the personality of individuals can be harmful, especially when it is perceived as a substitution of means for ends. That is, money becomes the ends for action and decision.³⁴ According to Simmel, money and its abstract image contain a powerful internal contradiction - by replacing the core identity of objects with a money identity, money provides objects with value (a price) but at the same time,

³⁴ See Sigmund Freud, "Character and Anal Eroticism", in Simmel, George. *The Philosophy of Money*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978.

robs their innate value (money cheapens things).³⁵ The theory may be applied to urban relations. The material culture of business, commerce, and commodity threatens to disvalue, dispense, and dry up certain areas of urban life. It may replace the central value of genuine personal interactions with a monetary one, and urban relations are thereby degraded to something alienated, dissatisfied, and frustrated. Hence, urban dwellers tend to retreat behind a protective mask, scarcely displaying emotion, or expressing themselves honestly to others. There is an apparent disruption between the private, inner life and the public, outward behaviour. Urban relationships become blasé and indifferent; people pursue pleasure through commercial entertainment instead, which is even more impersonal. Simmel says, "The lack of something definite at the centre of the soul impels us to search for momentary satisfaction in ever new stimulations, sensations and external activities."³⁶

The city of the corporate image cannot overcome but must acknowledge the ideological conflicts within its monetary culture. The critics are right about the negative impact of capitalist culture on the community and humanity in general, but by no means absolutely. The subject of money and corporate culture is a complex matter, but interesting to muse on. In modern cities, corporatism encourages the division of labour, which requires education and professional training, and promotes the accumulation of capital, that is saving, investment, and finance management. The possession of professional knowledge and money by individuals means that they have greater flexibility and mobility in modern societies. Modern societies may be alienating and over-stimulating, but they also provide a great variety of opportunities for individuals to lead a vital, energetic, and colourful life. In this sense, within the monetary and corporate culture, individuals may still enjoy freedom by exercising their creativity and other personal skills.

The enormous scale of the city as corporate image sits on the gigantic power of the capital. It is defined by the silhouette of the urban skyline. Monstrously huge

³⁵ Simmel takes prostitution as an example, the monetization of sex leads to a terrible degradation of personal value, *ibid.*

³⁶ Simmel, *ibid.*, p. 114. See also his "The Metropolis and Mental Life," *Individuality & Social Forms*, ed. Donald Levine, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 324- 339.

skyscrapers constitute and command the skyline. In modern commercial cities such as Hong Kong, skyscrapers are largely built in glass. In contrast to the traditional merchant city such as Venice, which is built in stone and brick, the city of glass is a light and magical city. The use of glass etherealises the power of money, and projects a futuristic image. The corporate city is contradictory because even as it insists on the smallness of the individuals, it can fill them with an unprecedented thrill.

6

City as Home

The city is a big house, the house is a small city.¹

- Leon Battista Alberti, 1486.

Aldo van Eyck also says that, “A house must be like a small city if it’s to be a real home, a city like a small house if it’s to be a real home.”² A real home must be like a small city, El Lissitsky explains, “cupboards, sofa-beds and tables are arranged like houses in a town in such a way that there are areas for movement and use as if they were streets and squares.”³ People arrange their home furniture in a way to provide maximum comfort and minimum obstruction. As in city planning, different areas of a house are specialized for different purposes. For example, the entrance foyer is similar to the landmarks or the staged panorama of a city, which presents the personal identity of the house owners. It must be meaningful and presentable. The kitchen and bedrooms are practical areas where space is utilized, just like the industrial and some residential districts. The dining and living areas resemble the open public spaces such as squares and parks. They host social and entertaining functions, and are therefore comparatively more spacious.

Comfort

If a real home ought to be like a small city, similarly, a city must be like a small house if it is to be a real home for the citizen. In the city as home, its qualities of *homeness* include comfort, security, safety, endurance, variety, beauty, and a certain important sort of unit with nature. Firstly, if a city is to be a home, its essential quality is *comfort*. What is comfort? The simplest answer would be that comfort concerns only human bodily need - feeling good. Comfort is a pleasure sought by everyone, “man always seems disposed - if no constraints appear to stand

¹ Alberti, Leon Battista. *De Re Aedificatoria*, 1486, eds., G. Orlandi and P. Portoghesi, Milan, 1966, V.i., ii, pp. 337f.

² Aldo van Eyck quoted in Glancey, J. and Brandolini, S. “The Urban Space Man”, *The Guardian Newspaper*, January, 28, 1999.

³ El Lissitsky quoted in Brown, Theodore. *The Work of G. Rietveld Architect*, Utrecht: Bruna & Zoon, 1958, p. 58.

in his way - to seek out a kind of counterpoint in his pleasures: this is what is called comfort.”⁴

There are many definitions of the idea of comfort. Comfort is both something simple and complicated. It incorporates many meanings, such as privacy, ease, convenience, etc. The idea of comfort has developed historically. It is an idea that new meanings are added to at different times. In the seventeenth century, comfort meant privacy; it indicated intimacy and domesticity. The eighteenth century shifted the emphasis to leisure and ease. In the nineteenth century, comfort meant mechanically aided comforts - light, heat, and ventilation. Twentieth-century people found comfort in efficiency and convenience. Various social, economic, and technological forces suggest new criteria to the idea of comfort. New ideas about how to achieve comfort do not displace the basic notion of “feeling good”, both physically and psychologically. In most cases, comfort consists of *all* the meanings of the various periods.

The idea of comfort is more than a subjective experience of satisfaction. If comfort were subjective, one would expect a greater variety of attitudes toward it. Instead, there has always been a demonstrable consensus about what is comfortable and what is not. Although comfort is a personal experience, there are broader norms to judge it. This indicates that comfort may be an objective experience. Presumably, if comfort is objective, it would be possible to measure it. The range of comfort may be obtained by measuring the limits at which people begin to experience discomfort. For instance, to establish a “comfort zone” of room temperature, one needs to find out at which temperatures most people are either too cold or too hot. Then whatever is in between would be considered as generally comfortable. Or, to identify the comfortable angle for the back of a chair, one may subject people to angles that are too steep and too flat. And the angle between where people regard discomfort are the correct and comfortable angles. Another example is the design of the interior of a space shuttle. Before constructing the real thing, engineers would set up a life-sized cardboard model of a cabin. Then astronauts are required to pretend to be

⁴ Barthes, Roland. “The Eiffel Tower”, *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed., Neil Leach, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 179.

performing their daily activities in the cabin during their space mission. Every time when they knock against a corner or any built-in object, the technician would cut away the obstructing piece. At the end of the process, when there is no more obstruction left, the cabin would be judged “comfortable”. The scientific definition of comfort would be something like “Comfort is that condition in which discomfort has been avoided.”⁵

Security

Secondly, the city as home ought to be *secure* and *safe*. Lynch explains, “A good environmental image gives its possessor an important sense of emotional security. He can establish a harmonious relationship between himself and the outside world. This is the obverse of the fear that comes with disorientation; it means that the sweet sense of home is strongest when home is not only familiar but distinctive as well.”⁶ Nowadays, people enjoy a great mobility between places. A good “imageability” in the environment helps them to adapt to the new place quickly. In lonely and frightening situations, people associate safe with the sense of familiarity in a recognized landscape - “to be surrounded by the smell of one’s own things.”⁷ The city environment changes rapidly. Sometimes these changes leave scars in the mind and emotion of the citizens, and confuse their perceptual images of the home city. Visible structures with a sense of security and continuity are therefore important to the city as home. This may be achieved by, for example, constructing social space, and preserving the streets and neighbourhoods.

Endurance

Thirdly, it is important for the city as home to be *enduring*. Ruskin says, “If men lived like men indeed, their houses would be temples - temples which we should hardly dare to injure, and in which it would make us holy to be permitted to live.”⁸ Home is a space that combines a natural affection for our dwelling, a thankfulness for our parent, and a sanctuary for our children. It is more than a building to live in for the moment. Instead, it is an honour to our past and an inspiration to the many

⁵ Rybczynski, Witold. *Home - A Short History of An Idea*, London: Heinemann, 1988, p. 225-6.

⁶ Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960, pp. 4-5.

⁷ Netsilik Eskimo quoted in Lynch, Kevin. *The Image of the City*, USA: MIT Press, 1960, p. 127.

⁸ Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, London: George Allen, 1901, p. 327.

generations to come. In the modern age, home is rarely a sacred shelter for its dwellers. Those discomfort and ugly dwellings are the sign of a spreading public suffering and discontent. This public discontent is shown at the time when people desire to be in some more elevated environment than their usual one; when men build in the hope of leaving the places they have built; and when the comfort and the peace of home have ceased to be felt. To tackle the problem, the city as home should plan not for only one, but for the many generations in future. Ruskin explains,

For indeed, the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity. It is in their lasting witness against men, in their quiet contrast with the transitional character of all things, in the strength which, through the lapse of seasons and times, and the decline and birth of dynasties, and the changing of the face of the earth, and of the limits of the sea, maintains its sculptured shapeliness for a time insuperable, connects forgotten and following ages with each other, and half constitutes the identity, as it concentrates the sympathy, of nations: it is in that golden stain of time, that we are to look for the real light, and colour, and preciousness of architecture.⁹

Architecture conceives the spirit and stories of the past; it witnesses history. It bridges the past and the future. By the virtue of endurance, it quietly pacifies the ideological crash of different periods. Only an enduring and honourable architecture is a true architecture. It ought to be invested with the dignity of a contented adulthood. Similarly, the city as home ought to be treated with respect and thoughtfulness in the small details as well as the large panoramas. Ruskin said, "The idea that a house must be large in order to be well built, is altogether of modern growth, and is parallel with the idea, that no picture can be historical, except of a size admitting figures larger than life."¹⁰ A house does not need to be huge in size in order to be a home. The city as home is valued for not only its planning in a grand manner, but more important is in the tiny details that are encountered by the citizens everyday. Take the architecture of old Venice and Florence as an example. These cities depend not only on the elaborated luxurious palaces, but also on the cherished and exquisite decoration of even the smallest homes of their proud periods. This

⁹ Ruskin, *ibid.*, p. 339- 340.

¹⁰ Ruskin, *ibid.*, p. 331.

spirit of honour, pride, peaceful self-possession, and this abiding wisdom of a contented life are the essences of endurance in the city as home.

Variety

Fourthly, the city as home needs some forms of excitement and stimulation. Although people feel comfortable and secure with familiarity, it can also be dull. There is a fragile line between boredom and comfort. Hence, the city should provide a multiplicity of stimulus to its inhabitants. This multiplicity of stimulus may be expressed in the *variety* of the city scenes. Laugier said four centuries ago, “the diversity of form will impart to the city as a whole a new beauty: some rectangular, others circular or elliptical, others still of three, six or eight angles, they will provoke enchantment and surprise in the eyes of the inhabitants themselves, and will arouse much admiration among strangers.”¹¹ An interesting city is full of structurally discontinuous elements. The accumulation of these different elements in collision would encourage excitements and unexpectedness. Citizens and foreigners are amused and enjoy to explore the cityscape. A colourful city is a matter of balancing “between structure and event, necessity and contingency, the internal and the external - constantly (adjusts its content in response to the) ... forces which act in one direction or the other according to fluctuation in fashion, style and general social conditions.”¹² This flexibility and adaptability are the technique and the state of mind that should exist in the conscience of planners and architects. To design an interesting and stimulating environment, they ought to think like Isaiah Berlin’s fox rather than hedgehog. In *The Hedgehog and the Fox*, the fox knows many little things while the hedgehog knows only one big thing. Each represents a type of psychological orientation and temperament. The hedgehog concerns with the primacy of a single idea, while the fox preoccupies with the multiplicity of stimulus. Berlin goes on,

there exists a great chasm between those, on one side, who relate everything to a single central vision, one system less or more coherent or articulate, in terms of which they understand, think and feel - a single, universal, organizing principle in terms of which all that they are and say has significance - and, on the other side, those who pursue

¹¹ Abbé Laugier cited in Correa, A. B. *Forum et Plaza Mayor dans le monde hispanique*, Madrid, Paris, 1978, p. 94.

¹² Lévi-Strauss, Claude. *The Savage Mind*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966, p. 30.

many ends, often unrelated and even contradictory, connected, if at all, only in some *de facto* way, for some psychological or physiological cause, related by no moral or aesthetic principle; these last lead lives, perform acts, and entertain ideas that are centrifugal rather than centripetal, their thought is scattered or diffused, moving on many levels, seizing upon the essence of a vast variety of experiences and objects, for what they are in themselves, without consciously or unconsciously seeking to fit them into or exclude them from any one unchanging... at times fanatical, unitary inner vision.¹³

A hedgehog is a monist, he has only one big vision. (He is a tree-diagram planner.) A fox is, on the contrary, a pluralist whose vision is of many, and compounded of heterogeneous elements. Hawksmoor, Soane, Philip Webb are probably hedgehogs, Wren, Nash, and Norman Shaw, needless to say, foxes. Lloyd Wright is a hedgehog; and Lutyens is obviously a fox. Gropius, Mies van der Rohe, Hannes Meyer, and Buckminster Fuller are eminent hedgehogs. Clearly, there is a sharp difference between the states of mind of the hedgehog and the fox. When planning a city or a building, the “hedgehog” planner aims to build majestic architecture and grand design (that may convey political ideas); whereas the “fox” planner concentrates on the creativity and variety of designs (that is a play of aesthetics).

The city as home should include a vast collection of images that constantly generates excitement for the citizens. Cullen assembles a box of concepts with which he analyses the fabric of cities - colour, texture, scale, style, character, personality and uniqueness.¹⁴ These concepts display a mixture of styles, materials, and proportions. They may be something very evocative; something that does not limited by being too defined and too concrete. The diverse images are juxtaposed in a meaningful way, which Johnson defines as “a kind of *discordia concors*; a combination of dissimilar images, or discovery of occult resemblances in things apparently unlike.”¹⁵ On this definition, the city as home is utterly unlike a monist vision. It contains a variety of heterogeneous elements that compress into a beautiful urban montage. It is a Fox City.

¹³ Berlin, Isaiah, *The Hedgehog and the Fox: An Essay on Tolstoy's View of History*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1953, p. 11.

¹⁴ Cullen, Gordon. *Townscape*, London: Architectural Press, 1961.

Beauty

Fifthly, home must be beautiful. The perception of *beauty*, according to Plato, induces *anamnesis*, a recollection of previous acquaintance with the highest manifestation of forms. It brings *Eros*, the passion that lifts the soul, a journey of knowledge combined with love.¹⁶ Plato associated beauty with value and goodness, with the revelation of something deep within human nature. A beautiful form is an object as it should be in the highest degree, it radiates in its fullness. In the modern era, beauty becomes a concept in *aesthetics*. It remains the central, unifying concept appropriating pleasure derived from the senses or from intellectual contemplation.

For Ruskin, the concept of beauty involves something frequently encountered by the eyes or a “habitual gaze”. He says,

we may reason from Frequency to Beauty, and *vice versa*; that, knowing a thing to be frequent, we may assume it to be beautiful; and assume that which is most frequent to the most beautiful: I mean, of course, *visibly* frequent; for the forms of things which are ... evidently not intended by their Maker to bear the habitual gaze of man ... by frequency I mean that limited and isolated frequency which is characteristic of all perfection; not mere multitude: as a rose is a common flower, but yet there are not so many roses on the tree as there are leaves. In this respect, Nature is sparing of her highest, and lavish of her less, (in) beauty.¹⁷

Individuals may develop this habitual gaze in the judgement of beauty. Nevertheless, beauty is not only in the eye of the beholder. It is not a subjective, idiosyncratic observation unique to the individual. Although the judgement of beauty may be varied in respect with different periods and cultures, most people share some criteria of the idea of beauty.

Beauty is essential in the city as home. William Morris points out it is one of the essential elements that contribute to a decent life. The elements include - health, education (an active mind in sympathy with the past, the present, and the future), a

¹⁵ Samuel Johnson quoted in Cowley, Abraham. *Lives of English Poets, Works of Sammuell Johnson*, London, 1823, Vol. 9, p. 20.

¹⁶ Plato explained beauty in the dialogue between Phaedrus and Symposium, *Symposium*, 210A.

¹⁷ Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, London: George Allen, 1901, p. 193.

pleasant work place, and a pleasant home (a beautiful world to live in).¹⁸ A cornucopia of beauty may be found in the daily surrounding such as nature and home. Perceiving beauty is more than a sensory gaze or a visual pleasure. If home is a place of love, its inhabitants should possess the ability to see the value and the beauty in it with a “spirit of loving wonderment.”¹⁹ The material surroundings of home should be pleasant, generous, and beautiful - “unsparing of materials, generous in worthy ornament, alive with the noblest thoughts of our time, and the past, embodied in the best art which a free and manly people could produce.”²⁰ Nevertheless, this noblest attitude in building the city as home is difficult to achieve. Poverty and ugliness did and still prevails in parts of many cities. For example, in the nineteenth century, Charles Dickens described in his *The Old Curiosity Shop*,

Oh! If those who rule the destinies of nations would but remember this - if they would but think how hard it is for the very poor to have engendered in their hearts that love of home from which all domestic virtues spring, when they live in dense and squalid masses, where social decency is lost, or rather never found - if they would but turn aside from the wide thoroughfares and great houses, and strive to improve the wretched dwellings in bye-ways, where only Poverty may walk, many low roofs would point more truly to the sky, than the loftiest steeple that now rears proudly up from the midst of guilt, and crime, and horrible disease, to mock them by its contrast. In hollow voices from Workhouse, Hospital, and Jail, this truth is preached from day to day, and has been proclaimed for years. It is no light matter - no outcry from the working vulgar - no mere question of the people's health and comforts that may be whistled down on Wednesday nights. In love of home, the love of country has its rise; and who are the truer patriots or the better in time of need - those who venerate the land, owning its wood, and stream, and earth, and all that they produce, or those who love their country, boasting not a foot of ground in all its wide domain?²¹

The same dense and squalid masses of house remain as a part of most modern day cities. Ugliness is a threat to home. It makes people sad and ashamed. D. H. Lawrence points out, “The human soul needs actual beauty even more than bread.”

¹⁸ William Morris in Morton, A. L. ed., *Political Writings of William Morris*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973, p. 155.

¹⁹ Robert Romanyshyn discusses the way to adore a painting in *Temenos Academy Review*, No. 3, Spring 2000, London: St. Edmundsbury, 2000, p. 172.

²⁰ William Morris in Morton, A. L. ed., *Political Writings of William Morris*, London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1973, p. 155.

²¹ Dickens, Charles. *The Old Curiosity Shop*, 1841, ed., Elizabeth M. Brennan, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997.

He urges the planners to, “Plan a nucleus. Fix the focus. Make a handsome gesture of radiation from the focus. And then put up big buildings, handsome, that sweep to a civic centre. And furnish them with beauty.”²² The urban forms ought to be great variety in details while unity in a whole. Continuity and completeness are important in the structural development of the city. The garden-city planner Howard said in 1900, “A town, like a flower, or a tree, or an animal, should, at each stage of its growth, possess unity, symmetry, completeness, and the effect of growth should never be to destroy that unity, but to give it greater purpose, nor to mar that symmetry, but to make it more symmetrical; while the completeness of the early structure should be merged in the yet greater completeness of the later development.”²³

Nature

Sixthly, greenery is believed to be vital in maintaining the good appearance of a city. Even such a modernist as Le Corbusier includes trees as a natural setting in modern architecture. He says, “Sun, space, verdure; essential joys, through the four seasons stand the trees, friends of man. Great blocks of dwellings run through the town. What does it matter? They are behind the screen of trees. Nature is entered into the lease.”²⁴ Humans are inseparable from nature. It is because we are part of nature, even a modern citizen. There is an undividable link between culture and nature, as Raymond Williams points out, “The ideal of nature contains, through often unnoticed, an extraordinary amount of human history.”²⁵ When one lives in a polluted city, jaded by its artificial vanity, one finds pleasure by simply sauntering in a garden. The pleasant feeling of being in harmony with nature uplifts our spirit. It makes us feel at home. At the same time, people desire the vitality and stimulations of city living. Hence, they dream to build their home in a way that has the advantages of both city and country. Including nature in our living environment is a

²² D. H. Lawrence. “Nottingham and the Mining Countryside,” *The Scene, An Anthology About City and Country*, ed., Fred Inglis, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972, p. 151- 4.

²³ Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, London: Faber & Faber, 1946, pp. 76- 77.

²⁴ Le Corbusier, *The Home of Man*, London: Architectural Press, 1948. pp. 91, 96.

²⁵ Williams, Raymond, “Ideas of Nature”, *Ecology, The Shaping Enquiry*, ed., Jonathan Benthall, London: Longman, 1972, pp. 146- 164. in which he discussed how nature related to human history since ancient time to present day.

way of getting the best of both.²⁶ Ruskin has a vision of this ideal environment. In his *Sesame and Lilies*, he describes,

Thorough sanitary and remedial action in the houses that we have; and then the building of more, strongly, beautifully, and in groups of limited extent, kept in proportion to their streams and walled round, so that there may be no festering and wretched suburb anywhere, but clean and busy street within and the open country without, with a belt of beautiful garden and orchard round the walls, so that from any part of the city perfectly fresh air and grass and sight of far horizon might be reachable in a few minutes' walk. This the final aim.²⁷

The urban forms of the city as home should combine the characteristics of city and country. In 1898, Ebenezer Howard pioneered the influential idea of the Garden City of Tomorrow. The Garden City is a marriage between city and country. Its ideas consist of rustic health, sanity, activity, urban knowledge, urban technical facility, and urban political co-operation. Howard expressed this idea through his famous tri-polar diagram of the "Town-country magnet." He writes,

There are in reality not only, as is so constantly assumed, two alternatives - town life and country life - but a third alternative, in which all the advantages of the most energetic and active city life, with all the beauty and delight of the country, may be secured in perfect combination; and the certainty of being able to live this life will be the magnet which will produce the effect for which we are all striving - the spontaneous movement of the people from our crowded cities to the bosom of our kindly mother earth, at once the source of life, of happiness, of wealth, and of power. The city and the country may, therefore, be regarded as two magnets, each striving to draw the people to itself - a rivalry which a new form of life, partaking of the nature of both, comes to take part in.²⁸

Like Fourier and Owen, Howard has a passion to replace the deteriorating old cities with a system of fresh implants, small, sanitary, and equitable, where different social classes would live in harmony and the bond of nature would be reaffirmed. Eventually, there were two garden cities developed to demonstrate his ideas: Letchworth 1903, and Welwyn 1920.²⁹ The idea of the Garden City is to provide space, light, and sanitation in industrial cities. Mumford says, "The Garden City, ...is

²⁶ Girouard, Mark. *Cities & People: A Social and Architectural History*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1985, p. 284.

²⁷ Ruskin, John. *Sesame and Lilies*, London: George Allen, 1904.

²⁸ Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, London: Faber & Faber, 1946, pp. 45- 46.

²⁹ See Miller, Mervyn. *Letchworth: The First Garden City*, Chichester: Phillimore, 1989.

not a suburb but the antithesis of a suburb: not a more rural retreat, but a more integrated foundation for an effective urban life.”³⁰ It is encouraged by a social concern for general health in densely populated cities, and the psychological and recreational value of public open spaces.

A Garden City has a population size (32,000) that makes possible a full measure of social life, and a rural belt surrounding it. The whole land is in public ownership or held in trust for the community. Inside the city, there are concentric rings of industrials, residential, commercial areas, plaza, city hall, museum, gallery, hospital, library, theatre, concert hall, shopping mall, park, and boulevards. The city is linked with a constellation of similar cities and a slightly bigger central city (58,000 persons) by roads and rapid transit linkages. The bigger city would provide a higher degree of specialization in both employment and commercial and industrial functions. And the surrounding cities can be either functionally specialized or diverse.

A good homely city ought to have, in Kevin Lynch’s word, an “edge”, such as a seafront or some other boundary. However, modern cities seldom have an edge. Howard’s Garden City proposed a solution by planning an accessible nature within or near the city. It provides open spaces where citizens can breath and take a break from the busy city living, as well as stroll and stay to enjoy nature.

The idea of the Garden Cities did not wholly originate with Howard. They had been conceived at some point earlier in history. For instance, Robert Owen has utilized the fundamental idea of a limited population living in an agricultural greenbelt.³¹ Fourier also has conceived of cities as elements in a regional complex.³² Nevertheless, the major contribution of Howard is his unerring attention to the financial and administrative details of his proposal. Howard demonstrates how the costs and revenues finance the construction and operation of a garden city, and makes

³⁰ Lewis Mumford quoted in Howard, Ebenezer. *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*, London: Faber & Faber, 1946, p. 34- 35.

³¹ Owen, Robert. *A New View of Society; Report to the County of Lanark*, ed., intro. V. A. C. Gatrell, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1970.

the garden city project a reality to the business world. Howard's Garden Cities idea influences many major city plannings in the following twenty-five years. From England to Germany, from Russia to America, his idea is widely adopted. For example, Parker and Unwin,³³ who applies the concept to the Greater London; Le Corbusier³⁴ describes his Unités d'Habitations as the "vertical garden cities". In America, Lapp is inspired to propose the famous two models - the "satellite city" and the "doughnut city",³⁵ which become a classic radial-concentric ideal city diagram for the coming ages.

Designed parks and gardens have always been part of architecture and the constructed environment. They are the tonic of urban enervation. At their best, they may be a therapy for the sickness, chaos, dirt, and violence of the modern metropolis.³⁶ Designed country parks often situate in the middle of the city. They satisfy the need for remoteness of the modern city dwellers. Take New York in the 1970s' as an example. Without Central Park, the island of New York would be occupied by buildings and paved streets. Millions of people were to live on this island, or its immediate densely populated suburbs. Apart from Greenwich Village, the island would be full of rows of monotonous straight streets, and piles of tall buildings. All its inhabitants would suffer, in greater or lesser degree, according to their occupations and the degree of their confinement to it, from influences engendered by these conditions. However, the few acres contained in the Central Park provide a *lung* for the inhabitants. The Park has easy, undulating outlines, and picturesque, rocky scenery. The priceless value of the present picturesque outlines of

³² Fourier, Charles. *Selections from the Works of Fourier*, tran., Julia Franklin, London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1901.

³³ See Unwin, Raymond and Barry Parker. *The Art of Building A Home: A Collection of Lectures and Illustrations*, London: Longmans, Green, 1901. Unwin, Raymond. *Town Planning in Practice: An Introduction to the Art of Designing Cities and Suburbs*, New York: B. Blom, 1971.

³⁴ On the Garden City legacy, see *Architectural Review*, June 1978, ed., Simon Pepper, the whole issue was dedicated to this subject.

³⁵ Lapp, Ralph Eugene. *Must We Hide?* Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 1981.

³⁶ For an alternative view, see Williams, Raymond, "Ideas of Nature", *Ecology, The Shaping Enquiry*, ed. Jonathan Benthall, London: Longman, 1972, pp. 146- 164. He suggested that men regard parks and gardens as part of the production and consumption process. He even compared the landscape gardener with the industrial entrepreneur. For they both alter nature to a consumable form for their client.

the island is thereby more distinctly perceived.³⁷ Furthermore, these designed landscapes are a mixture of modern entertainment and pastoral sentimentality. They encourage the imagination of the visitors. For instance, Schama summarizes Olmsted's romantic view of the Central Park in New York.

Central Park was always supposed to answer to both arcadian myths that have survived in the modern memory: the wild and the cultivated; the place of unpredictable exhilaration and the place of bucolic rest. ...The woods and trails of Upper Manhattan are certainly not the only lair where ancient myths and demons, best forgotten, or left to academic seminars, have returned to haunt the modern polis. In fact Central Park divides its arcadian life by the hours of the clock. By day it is all nymphs and shepherds, cupids and *fêtes champêtres*. But at night it reverts to a more archaic place, the realm of Pelasgus where the wolf-men of Lykaon prowl, satyrs bide their time unsmiling, and feral men, hungry for wilding, postpone their music.³⁸

The park suggests an illusion of remoteness and wilderness. Visitors may picture themselves in wild nature without the threat of beasts and lost in direction. The calculated exertion and protected exposure prevent any feeling of real disorientation until darkness falls. An empty park at night arouses a sense of danger, which is part of the excitements and stimulations in a city as home. Nature completes the space of home, of adding a final base of simplicity, as well as a glowing enrichment. The relationship of nature and city is like a garden and a house - they grow, change, and age together. They are perceived as permanently related parts of a larger artistic unity.

The Ideology of Home

Philosophy is really homesickness, an urge to be at home everywhere.
Where, then, are we going? Always to our home.³⁹

- Novalis, *Fragments*.

With all these qualities of homeness, nonetheless, a question arises: can the city as home be planned? The answer can be yes or no. Howard was a pioneer who

³⁷ Olmsted, Frederick Law and Theodora Kimball. eds., *Forty Years of Landscape Architecture: Central Park*, Cambridge, Mass., 1973, p. 27. Also Olmsted, Frederick Law. *Frederick Law Olmsted, Landscape Architect, 1822- 1903*, eds., Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., Theodora Kimball, Vol. 2: *Central Park as A Work of Art and as A Great Municipal Enterprise 1853-1895*, New York, London: Putnam: Knickerbocker, 1928.

³⁸ Schama, Simon. *Landscape and Memory*, London: HarperCollins, 1995, p. 570.

believed that a modern city needs long-term planning in its development. If a homely city can be planned, then what type of plan is appropriate? Modernism believes in planning for purely functional purposes; Communism and Fascism impose absolute planning – everything must be planned, even future can be planned; Post-modernism encourages limited planning and develops bits and pieces of regional culture and history here and there on the city landscape. In retrospect, big plan does not work and no plan makes space hellish. Where should the line be drawn? Which direction should the city as home be heading towards?

Identity

The city as home ought to focus on three areas: *identity, local culture, and nostalgia*. The three realms coordinate the meanings of the city, and therefore must be supported and strengthened. Identity is important to the inhabitant of a city. Modern people desperately search for their meaning and identity in modern society. The answer in fact lies surprisingly close to the home of people, close to the surface and immediacy of their everyday living.⁴⁰ Home is a place that people love. The city as home is a city loved by its citizen. “The inculcation of love for the city in which one lives, (is) an enlarging of the love for home.”⁴¹ The sense of the *rootedness* of the citizens refers to their ideas of home and belonging, of locality and identity. Urban design, or the art of building cities, is the method by which people create a built environment that fulfils their aspirations and represents their values.⁴² The city as home ought to represent the history and the contemporary living of its citizens. Some architects try to make the city a bit of home. Harvey says, “the architect tries to recuperate through construction of a place where identity might be reclaimed even in the midst of commercialism, pop art, and all the accoutrements of modern life.”⁴³ Urban landscape, on the one hand, is a setting to elaborate the pride and glory of the inhabitants. On the other hand, it is a curtain behind which their struggles,

³⁹ Novalis quoted in Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 329.

⁴⁰ Jacob, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, Random House and Vintage, 1961, pp. 50- 54.

⁴¹ “Report of the Committee on Civic Centers,” Bulletin No. 15, *Municipal Art Society*, New York: 1905, p. 8.

⁴² see Rapoport, A. *House Form and Culture*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1969.

⁴³ Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 97.

achievements, and accidents take place. One of the most effective ways to express the both sides of urban life is the construction of landmarks and urban mega-structures. Landmarks represent the collective identity of the citizens. People yearn for “a structure that would be a symbol of communal life, a focal building that would make people noble, brotherly and good.”⁴⁴ A good example is the Eiffel Tower of Paris. To the citizens, landmarks are not only geographic but also biographical and personal objects.⁴⁵ They function like the captions in a photo album. They have rhetoric and a motto, telling us what we are to see and how we are to see the city. However, landmarks are never purely referential and descriptive. They set out to tell stories, stories of the inhabitants and their beloved home. And these stories present a specific regional culture. The urban mega structures are groups of composite buildings. Their styles may be traditional or modern, and their shapes may be regular or irregular. They oscillate between a passive and active manner. Each of the structures strenuously asserts its individual content. Yet, they quietly collaborate to express a metropolistic totality.

Culture

Culture is a vital element in the understanding of the meanings of the city as home. To some extent, even urban growth is culturally specific regardless of its rate of growth and modernization. For instance, one can compare the urban growth of an Islamic city such as Sefrou in Morocco with that of a Chinese city such as Singapore or Hong Kong. In Sefrou, new city forms tend to grow around the old ones. The city grows with a self-conscious effort to recreate the institutions and appearance of a proper Islamic City.⁴⁶ In the cases of Singapore and Hong Kong, the pattern of urban growth is completely opposite to that of Sefrou. The cities are financial and economic oriented by nature. New city forms replace and swallow up the old ones. There is a strong drive for novelty, that is, to search for the newest and the most original image of a capitalist city. Presumably, if cultural conditions generate city forms, then buildings and urban forms will be the transparent medium of cultural expression. In other words, culture and city landscape are interrelated - the more we

⁴⁴ Kostof, Spiro. *The City Shaped: Urban Patterns and Meanings through History*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1999, p. 321.

⁴⁵ Berger, J. *A Fortunate Man*, London: Writers & Readers, 1976, p. 15.

know about the history, culture, and society structure of a city, the better we are able to read its forms.⁴⁷

Nostalgia

In the understanding of the environment, people start from their own cultural framework and a personal frame of reference. By doing so, these references function as a filter between the outside world and the receiver.⁴⁸ They include “the image of our own inalienable experience of home, of life and of the rhythms of diurnal and seasonal life.”⁴⁹ That is, the “hum and buzz” of the city, the little details that differentiate familiarity and unfamiliarity. This personal frame of reference often relates to the notion of nostalgia.

The word *nostalgia* is derived from the Greek words - *nostos*, means, “to return home” and *algos*, means “pain or grief”. In dictionaries, it is described as “a longing for familiar or beloved circumstances that are now remote or irrecoverable... Severe homesickness”, and “regretful or sorrowful longing for the conditions of a past age”.⁵⁰ The absence of home is always associated with emotional suffering. The sense of home which nostalgic yearning is for is a time, rather than a space. Immanuel Kant had noted that people who did return home were usually disappointed because, in fact, they did not want to return to a place, but to a time, a time of youth. Time, unlike space, cannot be returned to ever, time is irreversible. And nostalgia becomes the reaction to that sad fact.⁵¹

Home is a name, a word, it is a strong one; stronger than magician ever spoke, or spirit ever answered to, in the strongest conjuration.

- Charles Dickens, *Martin Chuzzlewit*.⁵²

⁴⁶ On Sefrou, see Geertz, Clifford. *After The Fact*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995, pp. 150- 165.

⁴⁷ Kostof, Spiro. *Do Buildings Lie? Hegel's Wheel and Other Fables*, The John William Lawrence Memorial Lectures, 9, New Orleans, 1980.

⁴⁸ Moughtin, Cliff. *Urban Design: Street and Square*, Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1992, pp. 12- 13. see also Rapaport, A. *Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*, New York: Pergamon, 1977.

⁴⁹ Cosgrove, Denis E. *Social Formation and Symbolic Landscape*, Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998, p. 270.

⁵⁰ Funk & Wagnalls Canadian College Dictionary, and Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd Edition.

⁵¹ Kant 1798 cited in Jankélévitch, Vladimir. *Irreversible et la nostalgie*, Paris: Flammarion, 1974.

⁵² Dickens, Charles. *Martin Chuzzlewit*, London : Chapman and Hall, 1844, ch. 35.

Nostalgia is essential in the study of modern urban culture. It is very influential to the society because of its seductively rich construction and surprising theoretical power. Nostalgia is a universal experience, a complicated but inevitable part of the human condition. Psychologists assert that, “we all tend to paint for ourselves a picture of the “good old days” that does not accord with the facts.” A predisposition to nostalgia, “is always latent in the human psyche,” “universal and ubiquitous.”⁵³ Some psychologists see nostalgia as a homing instinct and more fundamental even than human nature itself.⁵⁴ The emotional impact and appeal of nostalgia is its irrecoverable nature of pastness, its inaccessibility. The rosy-hued images of a past we know never existed are a comfortable version of the past with all pain irrationally removed. It is neither possible, nor important for the picture to be complete or completely true. It could be the blend of fact and fancy - a psychological adaptation. As long as it is useful to most people in the society, they feel related with some reasonable degree of relevance, and harmony to their idea of themselves, what they are doing in the world, and their plan for the future. People prefer an imaginatively recreated flattened version of history in order to justify their personal experience and meanings. The past or rather the sense of the past is then a hybrid of personal experiences, present conditions, and anxieties of the future.

Nostalgia and memory are similar in many ways. To begin with, they both contain the elements of imagination and fantasy; and both portray the past as timeless perfect. Spigel and Jenkins write, “Memory mediates our present-day desires, ... and gives the past an imaginary status that strips away closure, opening it to personal fantasies.”⁵⁵ People remember things selectively. They connect events, people, places, and objects that seems related because of the emotion they provoke. Nostalgia is a composition of disjointed memories “touched by a bit of moonlight and summer madness.”⁵⁶ It perceives the past with a rose-tinted gaze. The reason

⁵³ Jacoby, Mario. *The Longing for Paradise*, Boston: Sigo Press, 1985, pp. 4, 12. Howland, Elihu S. “Nostalgia,” *Journal of Existential Psychiatry*, No. 3, 1962, p. 198.

⁵⁴ Martin, Alexander R. “Nostalgia,” *American Journal of Psychoanalysis*, No. 14, 1954, pp. 99- 100.

⁵⁵ Spigel, L., & Jenkins, H. “Same Bat Channel, Different Bat Times: Mass Culture and Popular Memory” *The Many Lives of Batman: Critical Approaches to A Superhero and His Media*, eds., R. Pearson and W. Uricchio, New York: Routledge, 1991, p. 142.

⁵⁶ Ruml, Beardsley. “Some Notes on Nostalgia,” *Saturday Review of Literature*, No. 29, June 22, 1946, p. 8. See also Becker, Carl. *Everyman His Own Historian*, American Historical Association, 1931. (http://www.theaha.org/info/AHA_History/clbecker.htm).

for that is people desire nostalgia for both its familiarity and strangeness. The “past can be manipulated in direction of, and molded to fit, the (subject’s) wish-image.”⁵⁷ As often as not, we are homesick most for the places we have never known. From the nostalgic point of view, the image of home is its distance, its place in a previous or future time, its quality of being yearned for, rather than being experienced. Nostalgia concerns less the past as actually happened. It emphasizes the past as imagined, as idealized through memory and desire.

Nostalgia and memory are also place-oriented or at least place-supported.⁵⁸ Although nostalgia, as mentioned earlier, concerns more a time rather than a space, places still play a vital role in embodying nostalgic experience. De Certeau suggests that space is important for private (and collective) memory, because “places are fragmentary and inward-turning histories. (And they embody) pasts that others are not allowed to read.”⁵⁹ The emotion of homesickness connects spontaneously with places. The need for home stretches beyond the bodily subsistence to the psychological values, and are projected onto the outward control of places. Objects, buildings, artefacts, images from the past, physical mementos of things lost are the embodiment of “at-homeness” inside oneself, carried into space.

However, nostalgia is different from memory. Henri Bergson states that memory is not nostalgia because it does not dwell sadly and ineffectively on the differences between the past and present. And the purpose of memory is to facilitate action in the present as well as the future.⁶⁰ Memory is an emotional appeal of earlier happy times, but unlike nostalgia, it does not involve a criticism of the present. Memory may idealize the past, but not in order to escape the present. Hofstadter describes memory as a “quest ... carried on in a spirit of sentimental appreciation

⁵⁷ Zwingmann, Charles. *"Heimweh" or "Nostalgic Reaction": A Conceptual Analysis and Interpretation of A Medico-Psychological Phenomenon*, Ann Arbor, Mich.: University Microfilms, 1959, pp. 203, 210.

⁵⁸ Casey, E. *Remembering: A Phenomenological Study*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, pp. 186- 187. For example, see Mark Neumann’s writing on the Grand Canyon, Neumann, Mark. *On the rim: Looking for the Grand Canyon*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.

⁵⁹ de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 108.

⁶⁰ Bergson, Henri. 1896, *Matter and Memory*, New York, London: MIT Press, 1988, p. 154.

rather than of critical analysis.”⁶¹ In fact, memory draws strength, hope, and comfort from the past in order to enrich the present, and prepare for the future. It conceives past, present, and future as a continuation. It sees the past as an influence on our basic disposition toward the present world. People make sense of the present often by constructing narratives of the past. Virginia Woolf says, “Strong emotions leave a trace, ... and it is only a question of how we can get ourselves again attached to it, so that we shall be able to live our lives through from the start.”⁶² Memories are not simply concerning people and events of the past. They are the resource that people used to understand the world and their position within it.

Good-bye, proud world! I'm Going home;
Thou art not my friend, and I'm not thine.
Long through thy weary crowds I roam;
A river-ark on the ocean brine.

- Ralph Waldo Emerson, *Good-bye*.⁶³

On the contrary, nostalgia depends on the denigration of the present, whereas memory serves to connect the past with present. Nostalgia, in the words of Baudrillard is the “melancholy for societies without power”, and the “phantasmal parodic rehabilitation of all lost referentials”.⁶⁴ It always associates with present fears, discontents, anxieties, and uncertainties. Simultaneously nostalgia distances people from the present as it brings the imagined past near. A simple, safe, stable, easy, beautiful, coherent, and harmonious past is constructed in conjunction with the present, which is, by contrast, portrait as complicated, dangerous, chaotic, difficult, ugly, fragmented, and confrontational. In short, nostalgia is a mental escape from the present to the past.⁶⁵

⁶¹ There are also the odd yearnings for an undesirable past. Fodor, Nandor. “Varieties of Nostalgia,” *Psychoanalytic Review*, No. 37, 1950, p. 25. The point is that the concept of nostalgia is bounded by a loose consensus as to what constitutes the proper content of nostalgic longing.

⁶² Woolf cited in Schulkind, J. ed., *Moments of Being: Unpublished Autobiographical Writings*, London: Sussex University Press, 1976, p. 74.

⁶³ Emerson, Ralph Waldo. “Good-bye”, 1. 1-4, *Anthology of American Poetry*, ed., George Gesner, Avenel Books, 1983.

⁶⁴ Baudrillard, “The Procession of Simulacra,” in Natoli, Joseph and Linda Hutcheon. eds., *A Postmodern Reader*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1993, pp. 361- 372.

⁶⁵ See Davis, Fred. “Nostalgia, Identity and the Current Nostalgia Wave,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, No. 2, 1977, p. 420. Lowenthal, David. *The Past is a Foreign Country*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985. Chase, Malcolm and Christopher Shaw. eds., *The Imagined Past: History and Nostalgia*, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1989.

It is because of *différance* that the movement of signification is possible only if each so-called “present” element, each element appearing on the scene of presence, is related to something other than itself, thereby keeping within itself the mark of the past element. And already letting itself be vitiated by the mark of its relation to the future element, this trace being related no less to what is called the future than to what is called the past, and constituting what is called the present by means of this very relation to what it is not: what it absolutely is not, not even a past or a future as a modified present.

- Jacques Derrida, *Différance*.⁶⁶

When we remake the past, the past also remakes us. If we presume the past, present, and future as a linear continuation of events, then it is possible to manipulate the relation. Since the elements of the present always contain traces of the past, by adding or omitting meanings to the past, the perception of the present and even future would, in a way, be modified. Regardless of empirical accuracy, the past may be used as a means to influence our present thinking and action through justification and juxtaposition. Nietzsche said, “The things of the past are never viewed in their true perspective or receive their just value; but value and perspective change with the individual or the nation that is looking back on its past.”⁶⁷ The authorities may carefully select the version of a safe gentrification of history, which is a dubious vision of the past, and present it to the public. History is then imagined, concocted collaboratively, and constantly being redefined. Moreover, the process invokes a deeper enchantment - it represents a universal longing for “a far-away fairy land where all strife ceases and life rolls smoothly in a state of perfection and bliss.”⁶⁸

By creating a shared past, members of a society are reassured of their collective identity, and aware of their unity and singularity in time and space. The process is not about giving testimony of past events as accurately as possible, it is about making meaningful statements about the past in a given cultural context of the present.⁶⁹ It is a means of connecting the past and the present. Ideally, the society

⁶⁶ Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of philosophy*, trans., Alan Bass, Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982.

⁶⁷ Nietzsche, Friedrich. *The Use and Abuse of History*, trans., Adrian Collins, New York: Macmillan, 1957, p. 19.

⁶⁸ Fodor, Nandor. “Varieties of Nostalgia,” *Psychoanalytic Review*, No. 37, 1950, p. 26.

⁶⁹ For relation between the past and the cultural context of the present, see Borofsky, Robert. *Making History. Pukapukan and Anthropological Construction of Knowledge*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987, p. 144f. Friedman, Jonathan. “The Past in the Future: History and the Politics

would ensure cultural continuity by preserving its collective knowledge from one generation to the next, rendering it possible for later generations to reconstruct their cultural identity. The articulation of nostalgic emotion may serve this purpose, and lead to a confirmation of individual and collective identity across generations, as well as establish a sense of continuity and stability over time.

Modernity entails the concentration of capital in certain cities and an increasingly mobile population. The massive displacement of population is made up of people who move to other cities for work opportunities, better lifestyles, freedom, and refuge. "Living in a new country is not an eccentricity; it is the contemporary condition."⁷⁰ Migration becomes normality; it is a fact of modern society. The new city, to many immigrants, is also a home away from home. There strangers find provisional sanctuary in the city; but it is also a scary, lonely, and alienated place, it is *not* like home. Through the aesthetic practice of nostalgia, they find comfort and a new way to engage with the host city.

Aciman is an immigrant living in New York for fifteen years.⁷¹ He feels kind of at home in New York, but at the same time, he believes that home is elsewhere. He would frequently visit and stop by a small park to which he is emotionally attached. It is the Straus Park on Broadway and West End Avenue at W106th Street. It has been an unkempt grimy park, and is about to be reconstructed. The statue of a reclining Mnemosyne, the goddess of memory, has gone; construction workers and machines are in action; and part of the park is blocked. Aciman resists the change, he says,

I wanted everything to remain the same ... It is precisely because you have no roots that you don't budge, that you fear change, that you'll build on anything rather than look for land. An exile is not just someone who has lost his home; it is someone who can't find another, who can't think of another. Some no longer even know what home means. They reinvent the concept with what they've got, the way we reinvent love with what's left of it each time.

of Identity", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 94, No. 4, 1992, pp. 853-856. Halbwachs, Maurice. 1941, *On Collective Memory*, trans., Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992.

⁷⁰ Carter, P. *Living in A New Country, History, Travelling and Language*, London: Faber & Faber, 1992, p.3.

⁷¹ Aciman, André. "Shadow Cities," *The New York Review*, December 18, 1997, pp. 35-37.

For someone away from home, not for vacation but who in fact has lost a home, needs to clutch onto something fixed and stable. The image of home may be collected through assembling bits and pieces from the strange environment and pasting them together to create something ideal, something familiar but remote, *something like home*. The Straus Park is to Aciman an invented home, in which he makes out of it the sort of love he yearns for. It is a little park but also everywhere. The park is located at the centre of uptown Manhattan, W106th, between Riverside Park and Central Park. For Aciman, it is the reminiscent of at least four locations - West End reminds him of London; towards the Riverside he glances Paris; 107th is quiet, narrow, and hide around the corner, it summons up the stately homes along the canals in Amsterdam; 106th leading to the Central Park looks,

like the main alley of small towns on the Italian Riviera where, after much trundling in the blinding light at noon and the stagnant odor of fuel from the train station where you just got off, you finally approach a sort of cove, which you can't make out yet, but which you know is there, hidden behind a thick row of Mediterranean pines, over which, if you really strain your eyes, you'll catch the tops of striped beach umbrellas jutting beyond the trees, and beyond these, if you could just take a few steps closer, the sudden, spectacular blue of the sea.

These places are the invisible cities in his dreams, so close to his heart and daring to his emotions. Perhaps, there may be "the beginnings of another, unknown city, the real city, the one that always beckons, the one we invent each time and may never see and fear we've begun to forget." This is the nostalgic yearning of a displaced man. In the delightful memory or imagination, however, nostalgic practice involves an invented home that is perfect only because we are *not* there. It is like fancying someone, but not necessary wanting to be with the person physically. We do not want to be disappointed by any flaws found in the perfection of memory and dream.

Through aestheticizing Straus Park, New York is made to be a mirror, an ersatz, a "mnemonic correlate" of other places known or imagined. For Aciman, Straus Park bridges his home and the host city, and is a way to redefine his relationship with New York. He says, "New York is my home precisely because it is a place where I can begin to be elsewhere - an analogue city, a surrogate city, a shadow city that allows me to naturalize and neutralize this terrifying, devastating,

unlivable megalopolis by letting me think it is something else, somewhere else, that it is indeed far smaller, quainter than I feared.” The more one feels lost in an unfamiliar quarter in a distant city, the more one understands the other cities one came across to discover there. When one retraces the stages of one’s journeys, one comes to know the place from which one had set out, and the familiar places of one’s youth, and the surroundings of home.⁷² In the alienated metropolis, Aciman finds the past of his that he did not know he had. The *foreignness* of what he no longer is or no longer possesses exists in this foreign place. There is a possible future of him in the new place. In the little park, Aciman relives his past, as well as recovers his future. He recognizes the little that is his, and discovers the much he has not had and will never have.

Rushdie says, “The past is a foreign country, they do things differently there. ...(But) it is my present that is foreign and the past is home, albeit a home in a lost city in the mists of time.”⁷³ In the city as home, there should be a vast pool of nostalgia producing instruments, which addresses social memory through their symbolic images. They are objects that contain the quality of memory and inspiration. Through the aesthetic practice of remembering and imagining, these objects take the viewers to another space and time. Their forms may be scientific and futuristic, or romantic and historic, or simply elegant, vernacular, or kitschy. The inhabitants take delight “not in the city’s seven or seventy wonders, but in the answer it gives to a question of (them).”⁷⁴

On the city landscape, postmodern architecture and contemporary revivalist architecture are naturally the most visible, and maybe the most affective nostalgic element. Under the condition of postmodernism, nostalgia is recalled, idolized, and exploited. Artefacts may be preserved, and narratives of part of the past may be recreated. However, they should not be confused with history. They are simulated masks and voices of the past styles. In other words, the *mise-en-scène* of the preserved public space may imply that the pseudo-nostalgic places are, in fact a

⁷² Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, trans., William Weaver, London: Pan Books, 1979, p. 37.

⁷³ Rushdie, Salman. *Imagined Homelands, Essays and Criticism 1981- 91*, London, 1991.

⁷⁴ Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, trans., William Weaver, London: Pan Books, 1979, p. 37.

reconstruction of a generally agreed-upon past. In this sense, the nostalgic experience brought about by pseudo places is transient. Viewers may temporarily imagine the past while living in the present, but they clearly know the fascinated experience is ultimately unattainable. Conclusively, a nostalgic space is culturally poetical. It is the result of overcoming social conflicts of meanings and ambitions. It is the fragmented display of private history in a public setting. Beside the collective memory of society sit the particular nostalgia of individuals; together they form a space of and for contingencies.

The Social Space of Home: Memorable Streets

In the cityscape, besides postmodern architecture, the sense of homeness is physically interpreted through memorable streets and magical squares. Memorable streets are part of urban forms in their physical sense but, as any motorway, they are also a kind of institution. The streets, in Rykwert's phrase, are "human movement institutionalized."⁷⁵ It is because streets have an economic function as well as social significance. Streets and quays are primarily places of transit, capturing public life in momentary pauses from a river of people in motion. However, they are more than a mere traffic channel connecting different parts of the city. The streets are a complicated civic institution. They are culturally specific and full of colourful variations and subtle differences. For example, Islamic streets are highly intimate. They consist of recondite twists and neighbourhood cul-de-sac. The Venetian and Dutch emphasize footpaths and waterways as interdependent systems of communication. The Italian and French elaborate their grand manner in the construction of boulevards, broad avenues, and arrow-straight vistas. They are widely praised as the *sine qua non* of elegant urbanity. Above all, streets are part of the people's conceptions of *home*. Benjamin identifies the open public space of streets with the private domain of home; he writes,

the shining enameled signs of a store or company are just as good as or better than the decorative oil paintings on the wall of the bourgeois salon. Walls with the sign *Défense d'Afficher* are the collective's (people's) writing desk, newspapers stands its libraries, mailboxes its bronze sculptures, benches its bedroom furnishings, and the cafe terraces are the alcoves from which it looks down at its home. Where

⁷⁵ Rykwert, Joseph. *The Necessity of Artifice*, London, New York, 1982, p. 105.

the asphalt worker lets his coat hang on the railing, that is the vestibule. And the gateway, leading out into the open from multiple courtyards, ... (is) the entrance into the chambers of the city.⁷⁶

Streets are, in a sense, the extension of home. They bridge the private domain of home and the public domain of city life. People in a neighbourhood, especially children, teenagers, housewives, and old people treat the local streets as their playground and social space. The meandering activities sought by street users are social rather than functional.⁷⁷ People buy, sell, play, exercise, read, eat, drink, chat, flirt, rest, and even snooze on the streets. The street structures community. It provides a backdrop for the everyday plays and displays of a city. Street activities are the art of living in the city as home. As Jacobs describes, “(The) intricacy of sidewalk use ... is all composed of movement and change, and although it is life, not art, we may fancifully call it the art form of the city, and liken it to the dance.”⁷⁸

The nature of the street is to be a public space, an agora; without it, there is no city. Nevertheless, in some cases, the street users may identify some of their activities with a particular street space. They may thereby personalize that space in a manner similar to the way they personalize their dwellings. Boyer calls this challenge the privatization of public space.⁷⁹ As all public spaces, streets are political. They remain the stage of a constant struggle between private and public interests. When public control stumbles, private abuse becomes prevalent. On the one side, the private motivation is to adopt the open street space, through encroachments, blockages, or privatization, for the individual's own purposes. On the other side, public interests depend that the street space be kept open, accessible to all, and equipped for their functions. Obviously, the immediate functions of streets are to provide access to adjacent property, passage of through traffic, and so on. Streets set out to designate a public domain that would take precedence over private

⁷⁶ Walter Benjamin, *Passagenwerk* 533, 1051, quoted in Lindner, Burkhardt. “The Passagen-Werk, the Berliner Kindheit, and the Archaeology of the ‘Recent Past’,” *NGC*, No. 39, Fall, 1986, p. 45.

⁷⁷ Peter Self, “The City and its Environment”, *Ecology, The Shaping Enquiry*, ed., Jonathan Benthall, London: Longman, 1972, pp. 81- 100.

⁷⁸ Jacobs, Jane. *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, New York: Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1994, p. 54.

⁷⁹ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge, London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, p. 3.

interests. Hence, the city only works efficiently when its streets and other open public spaces are accessible to all.

After all, streets are not necessarily harmful by serving both public and private interests at the same time. A carefully planned mixed functions in open public spaces without abuse would benefit an active street life. Both public service and commercial activities may coexist within the same streets. These activities bridge continuity between the private domain (inside the buildings) and the public domain (on streets). This may be achieved by the enclosure of street space as an outdoor room or a corridor. The ambiguity of spatial reading in terms of form and land use encourages the development of activity settings. For instance, cafés and stalls may be located on a wide sidewalk outside an arcade. The sitting area of the cafés is on the sidewalk and under the arcade proper. By doing so, the spaces of both the arcade and the street are shared by two activities. In other words, an ambiguity of use is attached to forms.⁸⁰ The flexibility of form and usage (Alexander's "semi-lattice" planning diagram) is one of the most effective street life-enhancers. With this flexibility, pedestrians have access to all the public domain, indoors and outdoors, without ownership or invitation to that space.

Another challenge to streets is automobile. Modern city planning tends to separate streets from automobile zones. For instance, in Hong Kong, all streets are fenced off from the vehicle driveways. The high Modernist's approach on streets is to convert them into automobile driveways and keep the pedestrians off from them. Streets, to Le Corbusier, take only automotive velocities to bring to life. The old city's hindrance of fast traffic on streets was an obscenity to him. He declares, "A city made for speed is made for success."⁸¹ This planning approach aims at the efficient management of public spaces. However, it sacrifices something more important – the sense of homeness. In the city as home, streets play the role of a social coordinator - it brings people together and suggests a sense of belonging. Extreme segregation is often harmful. Therefore, city planning needs a cautious and

⁸⁰ On the ambiguity in space planning, see Venturi, Robert. *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture*, New York: The Museum of Modern Art, 1967, Chapters 3, 4, 5, pp. 27- 45.

balanced attitude towards pedestrian and vehicular interaction. It is possible to remove any conflict where it occurs, without completely removing the vehicles.

In short, the nature of streets is as a place where social classes and social uses interact. They host solemn ceremony and public activity. They produce spectacles of commerce and recreation. They shift and adjust to changing architecture. They register the culture and history of the city. Some streets are physically and morally tidy, some streets are messy and grotesque. Streets are homely and scary at the same time. The differences depend on regional culture and how the people there want to live. Culot and Krier write, "A street is a street, and one lives there in a certain way not because architects have imagined streets in certain ways."⁸² Whatever they may be, streets encourage people to live together in proximity and interdependence. Kostof comments,

I cannot see the point in reviving the container without a solemn commitment to reinvest it (the street) with true urban vigor, with urbanity. As long as we would rather keep our own counsel, avoid social tension by escaping, *schedule* encounters with our friends, and happily travel alone in climate-controlled and music-injected glossy metal boxes, the resurrected street will be a place we like to visit every so often but not inhabit - a fun place, a museum. But it will also stand as the burial place of our hopes to exorcise poverty and prejudice by confronting them daily; the burial place of our chances to learn from one another, child from bagwoman and street vendor from jock; the burial place of unrehearsed excitement, of the cumulative knowledge of human ways, and the residual benefits of a public life.⁸³

Streets have so much to offer, they become the educators of the population.⁸⁴ They are both the school and the stage of urbanity.

Magical Squares

Squares and piazzas are the "magical stabilizer"⁸⁵ in the city. City squares essentially exhibit a coherent geometry and are accompanied by buildings entirely

⁸¹ Le Corbusier. *The City of Tomorrow*, trans., Frederick Etchells, New York: Paysen & Clark, 1929, p. 179.

⁸² Culot, M. and Léon Krier. "The Only Path for Architecture," *Oppositions*, No. 14, Fall, 1978, p. 42.

⁸³ Kostof, Spiro. *The City Assembled: the Elements of Urban Form through History*, London: Thames & Hudson, 1992, p. 243.

⁸⁴ Rue Mallet-Steven quoted in Becherer, Richard. "Monumentality and the Rue Mallet-Stevens," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, Vol. 40, No. 1, Mar, 1981, p. 46.

detached from any immediate closure. Together the square and the buildings display a coherent planning pattern. Although both streets and squares are open public space, squares are themselves a destination, a purpose-built stage for ritual and interaction. The open frame of square space is politically charged. Traditionally, squares are the site of protest or the assertion of power in cities such as Paris, Prague, Milan, Moscow, Beijing, and Berlin. Squares are like a stage, which always invite audiences. A representative portion of the populace is able to make its mood known at a glance in them. Citizenship and collective passion are made visible. The presence of a public realm is important in the city as home. It is because of the need of citizens periodically to rediscover the physical fact of their community. From civic protest or regimented ceremonies of consensus, to leisure pursuit in an arcadian idyll, or through the ritualized consumption of products and aestheticized environments, city squares provide both the venue and the participants. The fundamental purposes of squares are to ensconce community and to arbitrate social conflict. The public space is where people exercise their sense of belonging. It is where meeting people, chatting, sitting around shrubs, and trees and sculpture, for public meetings, exhibitions, Christmas carols, and so on all happens. People may come and go as they please, without the consent of authorities and no need to justify their purpose to be there. This is what Le Corbusier calls, the “bestiaire fraternel.”⁸⁶

The social space of the city as home should be interpreted, admired, and enjoyed as a status-laden art environment and the site of “conspicuous consumption”⁸⁷ – the city is a place to look at people, people go to squares to see and to be seen. To design a good city square, planners may employ a “grand manner”. Alternatively, the square may be designed by artists, architects, or landscape designers who would fill the space with artistic inspiration. Efforts should be made to reinvest the urban plazas with purpose and theme. Each city square needs a unique and special creative vision. Designed squares provide citizens a chance to consume an aesthetic experience, in addition to the social experience of the free interaction with

⁸⁵ Rowe, Colin and Fred Koetter. *Collage City*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978, pp. 155- 177.

⁸⁶ Le Corbusier cited by C. Dardi, *Agora I*, July-Aug., 1988, p. 10.

⁸⁷ A term originated from Veblen, Thorstein. 1899, *Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1925.

strangers. Furthermore, furnishing the squares with trees, kiosks, seating, and other amenities would create outdoor public rooms that attract people to stay longer.⁸⁸

The potential problem of city squares is the lack of entity and identity. In such cases, open public space is used as a means to assert the desirability of the volumetric and sculptural expression of surrounded building mass. Open public space then loses its meaning, and serves as a mere expression of pieces of a private environment. For example, some plazas in the central business district are set out to support the image-making function of large corporations. The purpose of this kind of plaza is to enhance a building economically and aesthetically by providing a margin of greenery and air around it. Nevertheless, it fails to realize their social potential of supporting the artful display of architecture, people, and civic activities.

The Homeless Space of Modernity

Modern cities tend to elicit the social context of open public spaces for the sake of efficient management. To do so the city landscape would be in danger of creating homeless spaces, which is even more empty and unbearable. The glittering image of modernity endangered the traditional space of home. Berman says, "To live well meant to move up socially, and this in turn meant to move out physically; to live one's life close to home was not to be alive at all. ...when you see life this way, no neighborhood or environment can be anything more than a stage along life's way, a launching pad for higher flights and wider orbits than your own. Thus we had no way to resist the wheels that drove the American dream, because it was driving us ourselves."⁸⁹ Even though people know the wheels of modernity might break them, people learn to live and love the high life suggested by modernity. Notwithstanding, how can people live well when their city is no long a home? How can their bodies feel love and comfort when their city is full of troubled bodies, uncomfortable bodies, bodies aroused by disturbance, dissonance, and unease?

⁸⁸ On treating public spaces, see Ramati, R. "The Plaza as Amenity," *Urban Land*, No. 38, Vol. 2, Feb. 1979, pp. 9- 12. And Spring, B. P. "Evaluation: Rockefeller Center's Two Constrasting Generations of Space," *AIA Journal*, No. 67, Vol. 2, February, 1978, pp. 26- 31.

⁸⁹ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 326.

The city as home is still suffered from discomfort, insecurity, monotonousness, ugliness, and most of all, modernity. Modernity may be threatening, yet it is not necessary that modernity means throwing people against a state and a social system which completely seems to be pulling up the root of tradition. If modernity is a discourse of capitalism or private economic interests, it ought to be supervised by the citizenry. The authorities and the professionals always supply the vision of how our cities will look and function. Nevertheless, it is perfectly appropriate, indeed imperative, for the citizens to control the limits of their vision. Modernity entitles private interests to seek their advantage in the urban fabric. At the same time, city authorities and their experts are required to find whole-scale planning solutions to the problems of unfettered growth. And, it is the freedom of the citizen to give voice collectively on the decision of the various issues of their city. Cities are the most complicated artefacts people have ever created. They are cumulative and generational artefacts that harbour the values of people as a community. They provide people with the setting where they can learn to live together in harmony. Hence, it is the collective responsibility of citizenry to guide the future of their city.

Home is so sad. It stays as it was left,
 Shaped to the comfort of the last to go
 As if to win them back. Instead, bereft
 Of anyone to please, it withers so,
 Having no heart to put aside the theft

And turn again to what it started as,
 A joyous shot at how things ought to be,
 Long fallen wide. You can see how it was:
 Look at the pictures and the cutlery.
 The music in the piano stool. That vase.

- Philip Larkin, *Home is so sad*.⁹⁰

Home is so sad if it becomes a prison to its inhabitants. The principle of freedom is vital in the city as home. Home can be the space of freedom or prison. And in the city of freedom, there will be constant juggling acts between the private interests and the public good. Only by encouraging the existence of this balancing act, with something more precious be preserved - freedom of choice. In the city as

⁹⁰ Larkin, Philip. 1958, "Home Is So Sad," *Collected Poems*, ed., Anthony Thwaite, London, Boston: Faber & Faber, 1988.

home, rigid and absolute monopoly should be minimized. Municipal and corporate actions may become greatly enlarged. Nevertheless, if it is the case, it will be because the people have faith in such action. And that faith may be encouraged by a wide extension of the area of freedom. The point is, it is not the area of rights that should be contracted, but the area of choice that should be enlarged. Home will not be sad if we are zealous in its protection.

Phenomenology of A City

‘The city’ does not just refer to a set of buildings in a particular place. To put it polemically, there is no such *thing* as a city. Rather, *the city* designates the space produced by the interaction of historically and geographically specific institutions, social relations of production and reproduction, practices of government, forms and media of communication and so forth. ... *The city*, then, is above all a representation. ... I would argue that the city constitutes an *imagined environment*.¹

Theoretical studies in city landscape put into question the sociological assumption that the spatial structure of a city, though itself the product of earlier social discourse, confronts the citizens and influences their thoughts and actions. According to Donald, on the level of discourse, there is no such thing as the city as a single and monolithic entity. On the level of experience, the ways in which the citizens negotiate and read the city space reveal how the same physical place can be perceived quite differently. Therefore, emphasis should be placed upon the *meanings* of a city in terms of its conceptualised social discourses. The phenomenology of the city provides a different view of urban experience from a structural perception, which concentrates on the relations between the bodies and the physical structure of the city. Lefebvre says,

Every space is already in place before the appearance in it of actors; these actors are collective as well as individual subjects inasmuch as the individuals are always members of groups or classes seeking to appropriate the space in question. This pre-existence of space conditions the subject’s presence, action and discourse, is competence and performance; yet the subject’s presence, action and discourse, at the same time as they presuppose this space, also negate it.²

Phenomenology is the philosophy of the consciousness of experience. It explains personal experiences without seeking to arrive at the metaphysical explanation of them. It is the study of the ways that people think and feel about, and

¹ Donald, James. “Metropolis: the City as Text,” *Social and Cultural Forms of Modernity*, eds., Robert Bocock and Kenneth Thompson, Cambridge: Polity Press/ Open University, 1992, p. 422.

interpret the world around them. The phenomena of life, it may be, individually and collectively derived from our everyday mediation with other people, objects, and the environment around us.

The way that consciousness functions in our perceptual world may be illustrated by Merleau-Ponty. He takes the example of himself consciously observing a man sleeping in the sun; he then realizes that they both share the same space, and experience the same environment.

If he perceives something, that something must be my own world, since it is there that he comes into being. But why should he perceive it, how am I able even to conceive that he may do so? If what he is going to see inevitably is the very same as what is perceived by me, at least his own perception of the world which I am just supposing has no place in my world.

The man becomes interchangeable with the writer's own perception. Similarly, this man also has a comparable set of perceptions. Thus, the writer is also inter-subjectively constituted by of this man's perception. He then further explores this consciousness in action:

From the first time I relied on my body to explore the world, I knew that this corporeal relation to the world could be generalized. A shifting distance was established between me and the being which reserved the rights of another perception of the same being. The other is nowhere in being. He slips into my perception from behind. The experience that I make out of my hold on the world is what makes me capable of perceiving another myself, provided that in the interior of my world there opens up a gesture resembling my own.

People relate to the outer world through their physical being and consciousness. The consciousness, on the one hand, provides the stage on which experiences, thoughts, desires, and intentions form and operate. On the other hand, consciousness is the self that observes this stage, it is like an inner audience. Consciousness relies on the physical body to experience the world. And the body relies on consciousness to make sense and plan its behaviour. The coordination of the two opens up another dimension that benefits both. Merleau-Ponty goes on:

² Lefebvre, Henri. 1974, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 26.

There is a universality of feeling - and it is upon this that our identification rests, the generalization of my body, the perception of the other. I perceive behavior immersed in the same world as I because the world I perceive still trails with it my corporeality. My perception is the impact of the world upon me and the catch of my gestures toward it ... insofar as they each make up part of my field, there is not only the external relation of one object to another but, as though from the world to me, an impact, and from me to the world, a catch.³

The experience that Merleau-Ponty describes here is a coordination of the consciousness and the outside world. He extends his consciousness outward farther until he perceives everything as somehow part of himself. The physical body was only the head of a much larger body consisting of everything else that he could see. In such a state of mind, he experiences the entire world looking out on itself through his eyes. Similarly, the complete coordination of the consciousness and the body enables one to experience a cityscape in an intelligible way. The consciousness simplifies, categorizes, identifies, organizes, and compares objects. And the body sees, hears, smells, and feels the objects simultaneously. That is, the objects are charged with subject. The brain, the senses, and the whole body engage with the physical environment. In this completely conscious state of mind, a stroll down the street may become an aesthetic experience; a visit to a place may turn into a self-shaping event.

The Experience as Idea

There are two types of experience – experience as the bodily, physical phenomena, and as idea. Experience as idea requires some forms of intellectual practice. To make experience intelligible involves a kind of intellectual organization. Oakeshott calls it an “arrest” of experience. An arrest of experience implies thoughts and judgments. The experiencee takes a jumble of ideas and organizes it into coherent and self-contained “world of ideas”. In such a manner, nevertheless, the “reality” is not given explicitly and as a whole in experience. It is mutable in nature and can be changed.

³ Merleau-Ponty, Maurice. *The Prose of the World*, Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1973, pp. 136- 7.

The world presupposed in practical experience is a mortal world, because it is the world of what is here and now, of what is present as much; and the actual content of this world is determined by practical judgment. This practical judgment, which constitutes a world of here and now, is however, never in practice conceived to be an end in itself; it is always preliminary to the activity which belongs to practical experience. Practice is never the mere assertion of the present; it is essentially action, the alteration of 'what is' so as to make it agree with 'what ought to be'.⁴

The experience of the city is a rich potential subject to be "arrested". People experience an urban landscape through the filters of thought and judgment. In other words, the reality that people experience in a city is subjected to a *practical* judgment. In the practice of urban study, the world of ideas obtained from the arrest of experience is particularly useful in the planning process. It provides an insight into the differences between the reality of users and that of planners. Hence, urban experience with practical judgment makes possible for actions bringing *what is* closer to *what ought to be*.

An example of the practical judgment in urban experience may be demonstrated by a survey conducted by Lynch and Rivkin.⁵ The survey systematically analyses the perception of citizens towards their city. In the survey, twenty seven subjects are required to walk through a street in Boston. The subjects include both inhabitants and visitors to the city. They are asked to describe their experiences while moving through the street, and after a period of time (from one or two hours to one or two days). The survey finds out that people tend to memorize major city elements such as open public spaces, architecture, thoroughfares, and other pedestrians. Then they remember minor elements selectively, which are mostly personal and subjective – something they are interested in or emotionally attached, such as landmarks, street furniture, fences, mail boxes, subway entrances, and statues. The most remembered spaces are those with clearly defined forms, or which make evident breaks in the general visual and physical continuity, such as squares and parks. However, people tend to ignore the spatial relations among these elements, as well as the sensory dimension of streets such as their colour, sound,

⁴ Oakeshott, Michael. *Experience and Its Modes*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1933, p. 274.

smell, and temperature. Surprisingly, street advertisements seem to make only a scattered and transitory impression. All these contribute to the perception of the city among its citizens. The perception may be apparently loose, ambiguous, and sometimes contradictory, but is clung to firmly. People take clusters of images and organize them into a coherent perception, which is their *arrested* urban experience. Their perception is somehow different from that of the planners - the planner may concern mainly the spatial relation, regional character, and traffic circulation.

To Read or Misread A City

Indeed, the urban perception of the citizens may be a map of misreading. Gregory suggests that, "By looking at a machine, or a process, we can sometimes *see* how it works. We are able to read function from structure."⁶ Sometimes it is possible to read function from form by using object-hypotheses. The object-hypotheses are obtained by the learning of various physical properties of objects, and the correlation of the images of these objects and their function. By reversing this learning process, it is possible to understand the function of an object from its physical structure. For example, by looking at the facilities of an automatic car wash, we roughly know how it works. Similarly, it is also possible to *read* a city - its function, vitality, livability, etc. - through its physical forms. Bachelard believes that space can be read in the same way as reading a text. Space, for Bachelard, is not only a container of three-dimensional objects. For this reason the phenomenology of urban space has little to do with the analysis of building or design as such, "it is not a question of describing houses, or enumerating their picturesque features and analysing for which reasons they are comfortable."⁷ Instead, space accommodates human consciousness or the half-dreaming consciousness that Bachelard calls *reverie*. Urban information may have various degrees of validity, reliability, utility, and flexibility. People may either *read* or *misread* a city, for instance, the intimate space of Bachelard (nests, shells, corners, etc.) may be misread as *other spaces* - spaces of exclusion and illusion. When people read a text, they are often influenced by passing-on images and ideas. "Influence" here refers not to the contexts of a city,

⁵ Lynch, Kevin., Malcolm Rivkin. "A Walk Around the Block", *Landscape*, No. 8, 1959, pp. 24- 34.

⁶ Gregory, Richard. *The Intelligent Eye*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1971, p. 155.

⁷ Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetic of Space*, trans., Maria Jolas, Boston: Beacon, 1969, p. 4.

but the relationships between contexts. Since this influence governs reading (the urban perception of the citizen), as well as “writing” (the urban perception of the planner), reading in some cases is possibly a miswriting, and writing is a misreading. Hence, a strong reader (could be both the user and the planner) would strive to close up the gap between the perception of the user and that of the planner. By looking again and re-aiming, he or she sets out to esteem and to estimate differently, in order to aim correctly.

Bloom comments that, “re-seeing is a *limitation*, re-estimating is a *substitution*, and re-aiming is a *representation*.”⁸ According to Bloom, misreading is inevitable and exhilarating. It is a matter of accepting it and enjoying the delight of coincidence. It is then useful to understand how citizens recall the urban environment. Many aspects of a city are memorized as *movement*. Physically movements are repeatedly recalled in a trip of featureless roads. Stops, congestion, change in direction, and other action events are recorded on subjective maps,⁹ and transformed into spatial images.¹⁰ Besides, some elements of a city are recalled as *images*. Buildings are remembered by their colour, style, unique feature, composition, texture, size, shape, material, and other imaginable quality. Moreover, some elements are represented by *symbols*; for example, large districts that may not have a unified image are memorized by name, number, graphic, map, and sign. In recalling large cities, dominant reference points, group of districts, or a line of movement is extracted. Sometimes events possess special value and become sharpened in memory.¹¹ In such cases, the rest of the experience may be screened out, but many linger on the edge of memory, to be grasped only with effort. Furthermore, people tend to exaggerate their home city. People know more about the areas close to them, and they tend to become more important. The emotional involvement of people with places changes drastically according to their subjective estimation of their distances. The farther the distance, the less emotionally involved

⁸ Bloom, Harold. *A Map of Misreading*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1975, p. 4.

⁹ see Appleyard, Donald. “Styles and Methods of Structuring A City,” *Environment and Behavior*, No. 2, 1970, pp. 100- 118.

¹⁰ see Mandler, G. “From Association to Structure,” *Psychological Review*, No. 69, 1962, pp. 415- 427.

¹¹ see Allport, G. W. and Postman, L. J. “The Basic Psychology of Rumor,” *Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences*, No. 8, 1945, pp. 61- 81.

people are to the place. It is normal that the mental map projects centred on our home, in which places close to us is bigger, and shrink increasingly as the distance moves farther away.¹² Conclusively, the structure of urban knowledge may be concrete and abstract, systematic and disjointed, conventional and imaginative. It contains attributes that are organized in concepts and categories, and structured in spatial and meaning systems. Yet, it is also abstract in form, and complex in meaning (because the city is itself a complex matter). It is fragmentary, partial, inaccurate, evolutionary, and adaptive in nature.

The phenomenology of the city is mainly composed of three elements – *spatial correlation, epistemological perception, and urban experience*. The three elements are interdependent and overlapping in nature. Spatial correlation means the physical form and space of a cityscape, and the relation of people to them. Epistemological perception refers to the components in the city that constitute the perception of citizens. These components allow individuals to make their urban experience intelligible. They include epistemological process, environmental perception, cognitive mapping, past experience, familiarity, expectation, and socio-cultural background. Finally, urban experience is the interpretation of social situations from the environment, and the adoption of appropriate behaviour accordingly.

Spatial Correlation

To begin with, the physical form and space of a cityscape and the associated physical relation of people provide the basis of the urban phenomenon. Colvin says, “Humanity cannot exist independently and must cherish the relationships binding us to the rest of life. That relationship is expressed usually by the landscape in which we live.”¹³ There is a sense of relatedness to the environment within the individual. This is a given and transcendently important *episteme* of life. In modern culture, there exists a conscious ignoring of the psychological importance of the physical

¹² Dornič, Stanislav. *Subjective Distance and Emotional Involvement: A Verification of the Exponent Invariance*, Reports from the Psychological Laboratories, No. 237, Stockholm: University of Stockholm, 1967. and Ekman, Gösta. and Oswald Bratfisch. “Subjective Distance and Emotional Involvement: A Psychological Mechanism”, *Acta Psychologica*, No. 24, 1965, pp. 446- 453.

¹³ Colvin, Brenda. *Land and Landscape*, London: Murray, 1948, p. 108.

environment simultaneously with a largely unconscious over-dependence upon that environment.¹⁴ Man actually constantly refreshes his association with his environs, through recreational activities such as gardening, and his interest in landscape in movies, painting, literature, and dreams. And the urban environment, in the course of time, every section and quarter of the city takes on something of the characteristics and qualities of its inhabitants. Each separate part of the city is inevitably stained with the peculiar sentiments of its population.¹⁵

Building form concerns size, shape, and surface.¹⁶ In its widest sense of all, physical form in space is an organization that facilitates our spatial experience. Besides, it gives rise to a strong and compelling imagery and feeling. Similarly, the space that contains the physical form also plays an important role in our urban experience. The visual quality of space includes the construction of volume, distance, plane of vision, and the space between them. The architectonic process, as Hildebrand conceives it, is the construction and ordering of forms in space in such a way that they define and organize that space. He compares space as “a body of water into which we may sink certain vessels, and thus be able to define individual volumes of the water without, however, destroying the idea of a continuous mass of water enveloping all.”¹⁷

An intelligible space may be achieved through the awareness of related forms in the continuum of a total perceptual space. In other words, space is made intelligible by experiencing forms and relating them to the totality of space as a whole. The purpose of this awareness is to make space visible (intelligible) and its continuity sensible. The space itself is a projected image, and every form the space contained serves to define and to organize it. Langer explains,

Space itself is amorphous in our active lives and purely abstract in scientific thought. It is a substrate of all our experience, gradually discovered by the collaboration of our several senses - now seen, now

¹⁴ Searles, Harold F. “The Role of Nonhuman Environment”, *Landscape*, Vol. 11, No. 2, 1961/2, pp. 31- 34.

¹⁵ Park, Robert. *The City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1925.

¹⁶ Appleyard, Donald. “Why Buildings are Known,” *Environment and Behavior*, No. 1, December, 1969, pp. 131- 156.

¹⁷ Hildebrand, Adolf von. *The Problem of Form in Painting and Sculpture*, trans., Max Meyer and R. M. Ogden, New York: G. E. Stechert, 1907, p. 53.

felt, now realized as a factor in our moving and doing ... The tangible form has a complement of empty space that it absolutely commands, that is given with it and only with it, and is, in fact, part of the sculptural volume. The figure itself seems to have a sort of continuity with the emptiness around it, however much its solid masses may assert themselves as such. The void enfolds it, and the enfolding space has vital form as continuation of the figure.¹⁸

Space may be experienced by sight, touch, a penetration into the distance, free motion and restraint, far and near sounds, memory lost or re-echoed. In practical everyday life, people employ other faculties as well as sight to complete their fragmentary visual experiences, such as memory, recorded measurements, beliefs about the physical constitution of things, knowledge of their relationships in space even when they are blocked and out of sight. Building form coordinates the urban space and integrates urban experience. It is because no experience is completely isolated. The phenomenological perceiver tends to compare among various experiences. That is, in perceiving a building form, people tend to base themselves on a common aspect of visual experience in the first place, and then evaluate it in relation to other experiences, such as sound, smell, and texture. However, there are cases in which visual experience is so powerful that it rules out all other sensory modalities. Take the building of a massive effect as an example. Building mass is a purely visual synthesis. It appeals to the quickness of the eyes; it has the power to captivate in one second or less. The eye with one flash discovers coherence. The length, height, or density of the building mass projects an aesthetic of succession. Viewers have a feeling that in witnessing a concatenation, a simultaneity, the object is exposed to them, all of it all at once. The visual mass stands expressed, exposed, and unaltered. It reveals spatial dimension and entirety. The building mass gains a rhythm, and what is actually an immovable object in space expresses movement or succession. Since mass effect is so dramatic to the eye, it has an immediacy that only the eye can perform. The visual synthesis temporarily dissociates with other senses such as sound and smell, and from past, present, and future.¹⁹

¹⁸ Langer, Susanne Katherina. *Feeling and Form: A Theory of Art Developed from "Philosophy in A New Key"*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1953, pp. 71- 2, 88.

¹⁹ Stokes, Adrian. *The Image in Form: Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes*, ed., Richard Wollheim, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 38.

In forming our image of a city, we use all our senses to experience it. The most dominant of all is the act of seeing. In the act of looking, people record and analyse the object seen, then transform it into the elements of their perception. The artist Cézanne earnestly believes that he paints exactly what he saw.

Nature reveals herself to me in very complex forms. ... One must see one's model correctly and experience it in the right way. ... To achieve progress nature alone counts, and the eye is trained through contact with her. It becomes concentric by looking and working. I mean to say that in an orange, an apple, a bowl, a head, there is a culminating point; and this point is always - in spite of the tremendous effect of light and shade and colorful sensations - the closest to our eye; the edges of the object recede to a center on our horizon.²⁰

In the reflections of Cézanne, he transforms the objects in nature into pictorial elements, in the act of his seeing, not the act of painting. It is possible to train the eyes as the vision of an artist. The vision of an artist attends both objects and spatial composition. It is a selective vision that interprets information, data, half-seen symbols, and function of the physical surrounding. The trained vision may even see forms as abstracted ideas which feeling, sense, and atmosphere are visibly articulated. Similarly, in urban experience, the trained eyes transform space and objects in space into the urban perception of the viewer. And the viewer sees not only the forms but also the context of forms. For instance, he or she may see, like Mondrian, a gridiron pattern of streets and notices an atmosphere of rationality, orderliness, neatness, predictability, and sometimes, monotony. He or she may also look at winding streets and lanes branching off towards different directions, and detects feelings of surprise and consequent aesthetic pleasure, like Klee.²¹

Colour is another element in the city that only the eyes can experience. Every city has its colour. For instance, San Francisco is white and London is grey. Similarly, in Venice as a whole, tone so easily acquires these values ascribed to colour.

Thus blackness, as well as whiteness, obtains a meaning over and above its tone value, more especially that value fundamental to

²⁰ Cézanne, from two letters to Émile Bernard, 1904, cited in Stokes, *ibid.*, p. 78.

²¹ on how physical layout affects city atmosphere, see Hall, E. T. *The Hidden Dimension*, New York: Doubleday, 1966.

profound colour relationship, identity-in-difference. The gondolier's seaworthy serpent, we have seen, is black between water and sky, but rather than as a silhouette whose character is to stand out, and the character of whose background is thus to be a contrasting background, the black gondola appears in organic connection with its light surroundings, an organic connection, suggestive of circulation, which belongs to colour rather than to tone. This solid blackness seems to have been extracted from the dark places of water which therefore now appear lighter.²²

Generally speaking, the act of looking equips the viewer with vast amount of urban information, such as the shape, size, scale, height, colour, materials, textures, details, decorations, graffiti, furniture, furnishings, age, level of maintenance, and so on of the objects. Vision also provides spatial information in terms of quality, size, shape, enclosing elements, paving, barriers, links, order, density, light and shade, topography and location, etc. Le Corbusier, himself a practitioner of the aesthetics of violence, says,

Architecture ... should use those elements which are capable of affecting our senses, and of rewarding the desire of our eyes, and should dispose them in such a way that the sight of them affects us immediately by their delicacy or their brutality, their riot or their serenity, their indifference or their interest; those elements are plastic elements, forms which our eyes can see and our minds can measure.²³

Spatial information is acquired through various sensory modalities - visual, tactile, olfactory, and kinesthetic senses. Although most people believe that visual information is predominant, other sensory modalities also play a main role in the experience of a city. For example, the dock areas, the industrial districts, and the central business district of a city all emit distinctive smells and sounds. Sound and smell are equally significant as sight in forming our image of the city.²⁴ Sound perceived refers to the quality of sound, including dead and reverberant, noisy and quiet, man-made sounds such as industry, traffic, music, talk, laughter, etc., and natural sounds such as wind, trees, birds, water, etc. Smells in an urban environment contain man-made smells such as industry, traffic, food, etc., and natural smells such as plants, flowers, the sea, etc. And these smells may be pleasant or unpleasant.

²² Stokes, Adrian. *The Image in Form: Selected Writings of Adrian Stokes*, ed., Richard Wollheim, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1972, p. 273.

²³ Le Corbusier. ed., *L'Esprit Nouveau*, Dermée: Ozentant, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1918.

Furthermore, some streets with cobblestone flooring and tracks of rail or tram have a specific texture. And some buildings, walls, fences, and street furniture also have different shapes and textures. Some people may enjoy to explore them by immediate contact, either walking on or touching them. People touch things according to their shape. By immediate bodily contact, shapes are made magnificent. The body explores to reveal and to magnify forms. The hands communicate some pulse and warmth, and enhance the subtleties unnoticed by the eyes. An accurate perception of a city may be achieved by experiencing the world as it really is. Therefore, it is necessary to include the sensory-motor interaction with the environment.²⁵ The quality of distinctiveness and memorableness of a city relies on an integrated representation of a spatial environment, that is, a combination of sensory modalities.

Epistemological Perception

In addition, epistemological perception determines how people organize the vast information they acquire from the physical surrounding in the city. It coordinates the information into a pool of ideas that allow the urban experience intelligibility. Firstly, the human mind basically functions by attempting to impose meaning on the world through the use of *epistemological process*, such as categories, schemata, sensation, etc. According to Kuntz, people are driven by a “rage to order”.²⁶ They seek to make sense out of their surroundings. They try to organize their surroundings, to endow them with significance, to define and to locate themselves in respect to the environment. Humankind looks at objects and surrounding spaces as potential instruments for the satisfaction of their motives, projects, and plans. This attitude guides the way in which people structure their environment. Besides, there are rules and expectations in the process of structuration of the environment, as how things are to be used, what it is that they want to have or avoid in the city.²⁷ In many cases, people endow spaces and objects in space with certain significance. This significance may be fixed through actions permitted or enjoined within them. However, this significance may be changed when confronted

²⁴ see Southworth, M. “The Sonic Environment of Cities,” *Environment and Behavior*, No. 1, June, 1969, pp. 49- 70.

²⁵ Held, R. and Rekosh, J. “Motor-sensory Feedback and the Geometry of Visual Space,” *Science*, No. 141, 1963, pp. 722- 723.

²⁶ Kuntz, P. G. *The Concept of Order*, Seattle, University of Washington Press, 1968, p. 10.

by people who do not accept the conventional rules. For instance, a governmental building invites certain kinds of people and action. And it gestures, “keep out unless invited in”. Nevertheless, it may be suddenly regarded as a place to be seized or invaded during a riot.

Since the urban environment is full of contexts and meanings imposed by people, the experience of urban landscape will be a symbolic one. We see the objects that comprise our environment as symbols suggest by association properties that are not necessarily inherent in the objects themselves. Symbols and cues are used in the cityscape to convey ideas. When they are legible, their meanings are communicated clearly and understood. Under these circumstances, the symbolic impact of this environmental phenomenon may induce in people a sense either of ease and satisfaction or of unease and disturbance.²⁸ Every day, people enter settings and places, pick up the cues encoded in them, decode the meanings, match them to the relevant and congruent schemata and cultural knowledge, and act appropriately. These environmental codes and cues are capable of predicting spatial behaviour. People prepare in advance and adjust their behaviour in respect to cues in the environment, which define the situation and context for them, and guide their behaviour. For instance, people prepare and behave in different ways when going to a lecture hall, a theatre, a pub, or an elegant restaurant. In short, human behaviour, including interaction and communication, is determined and made predictable by roles, contexts, and situations that are expressed by cues in the settings which making up the environment.

Environmental Perception

Secondly, spatial behaviour varies according to the *environmental perception* of individuals. Let us say that there are three types of urban perception: operational, referential, and inferential. People use the city to perform various tasks; they choose particular aspects of the urban environment for carrying out these tasks. Their urban perception is then operational in nature. Take a goal-seeking activity such as driving. The driver selects details like road signs, buildings, traffic islands, and so on as his

²⁷ De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

²⁸ see Appleton, Jay. *The Experience of Landscape*, London: Wiley, 1975.

subjective map in navigating the city. In other words, the driver chooses these elements for his urban perception because of their operational value. Chein suggests that there are also goals, barriers, and other elements in relation to any goal-seeking activity in an operational environment.²⁹ The referential urban perception involves *imageable* elements of the environment, such as bright, isolated, singular, distinctive, and eye-catching elements, which people encounter within the city. The imageability of urban elements depends on the intensity of certain characteristics and their relative singularity or uniqueness in a particular context.³⁰ Finally, the inferential urban perception is a personalized and generalized system of categories, concepts, and relationships among the objects and their cues in the city.³¹ People establish their inferential urban perception over time. The three types of urban perception each have their attributes. That is, the physical movement and visibility are the attributes of operational perception; imageability, of responsive perception; and socio-functional factors, of inferential perception. The referential perception is environmental-oriented (objective), and the operational and inferential perceptions are people-oriented (subjective). The urban experience of people is continually shifting between the two. The swing between the objective and the subjective perception depends on individual's familiarity, experience, mood, task, and the configuration of the environment.

Bruner claims that perception relies upon the construction of a set of organized categories in terms of which stimulus inputs may be sorted, given identity, and given more elaborated, connotative meaning. For instance, people may handle new information by building a model of the likelihood of events for comparison, and treat the whole organizing process as a form of probability learning.³² Information obtained from the environment through physical interaction is processed by grouping into categories, predicting possibilities, forming, and testing hypotheses. The wider the urban experience, the quicker the cognitive process, and the more accurate is the

²⁹ On operational urban perception, see Chein, Isidor. "The Environment As A Determinant of Behavior," *Journal of Social Psychology*, No. 39, 1954, pp. 115- 127.

³⁰ On responsive urban perception, see Appleyard, Donald. "Why Buildings are Known," *Environment and Behavior*, No. 1, 1969, pp. 131- 156.

³¹ On inferential urban perception, see Tolman, E. C. "A Psychological Model," *Towards A General Theory of Action*, eds., T. Parson and E. Shils, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1951, pp. 279- 361.

acquisition of new knowledge. Moreover, elements that appear more frequently are more accessible in the perceptual system of people, and are more likely to be identified.³³ Furthermore, the information that goes into building the mental image of any area in a city may reflect more than just the knowledge of landmarks and paths. It reflects many other aspects of the citizen and their lives. For example, there are places that invisibly contain atmosphere, which are highly stressful, even dangerous. This invisible and psychological stress all goes into the mental topography of the citizens. People may rely on this information to navigate an unfamiliar environment.³⁴

The information of the city acquired by the individuals may be a direct or an indirect one. Either way has a potential problem of misjudgement. The individuals acquire direct urban information via all their sensory modes. They select, attend, and repeat certain experiences with variations, such as making the same trip in a different route and time of day. They constantly reinforce and check their cognitive map of the city by trial and error. There is also an indirect and passive way to acquire urban information. The indirect information is given by second-hand information available from verbal descriptions, written texts, photos, paintings, street maps, television programmes, movies or the diagrammatic map of the subway system.³⁵ Individuals then translate and organize the information into a coherent network of knowledge, action sequences, related images, and symbolic structures. Nevertheless, the information is sometimes fragmented. This is because the indirect information is selected by and transmitted through a set of filters, which somehow distorts the information. The set of filters is mainly the presumption of individuals. And this presumption originates from the comparison of the information with past experience and the expectations of individuals. In most cases, the processing strategies of both direct and indirect information operate simultaneously and continuously.³⁶

³² Bruner, Jerome S. "On Perceptual Readiness," *Psychological Review*, No. 64, 1957, pp. 123- 152.

³³ Bruner, Jerome S. "On Going Beyond the Information Given," *Contemporary Approaches to Cognition*, Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1957.

³⁴ Ley, David. *The Black Inner City as A Frontier Outpost: Images and Behaviour of A North Philadelphia Neighbourhood*, PhD thesis, Pennsylvania: University Park, 1972.

³⁵ Many Hong Kong people connect their cognitive map with the subway diagrammatic map, see Appendix 1.

³⁶ Steinitz, C. "Meaning and the Congruence of Urban Form and Activity," *Journal of the American Institute of Planners*, No. 34, 1968, pp. 233- 248.

Nonetheless, since urban perception is derived from both subjective and objective sources, it has the limitations of misinterpretation and misunderstanding. Perception is a matter of building up and testing hypotheses. When expectations are violated by the environment, the perceiver may refuse to recognize the unexpected incongruousness.

Take the cityscape of Los Angeles as an example. A first-time visitor may find the urban form of Los Angeles contradicts the usual perception of a modern city. People tend to expect blocks of skyscrapers tightly packed with lots of busy roads, flyovers, and tunnels netting in between spaces in a typical big city like that of Tokyo or Hong Kong. However, this is far from the scene of Los Angeles. In Los Angeles, highrisers can only be found in downtown area, which is a mere fraction of the whole big city. The city is full of one and two-storey high building blocks with a lot of parking and open spaces. To the shock of many first time visitors, Los Angeles is more like a suburban town than a modern big city. In this sense, the city of Los Angeles violates the perceiver's expectation of an urban form. Visitors have to adjust and respond to this new urban form, and accept it as part of their perception of the city. Briefly, there are two ways to overcome the unexpected incongruousness. First, a dominant principle of organization may be employed to prevent the appearance of incongruity, such as building up a link between downtown Los Angeles and any typical city centre in the world. This response is a form of partial assimilation to expectancy, which we have called compromise. Second, the individuals may extend their object-hypothesis to include the deserted landscape of Los Angeles as part of their urban perception.

Cognitive Mapping

Thirdly, *cognitive mapping* affects the epistemological perceptions of people. The world is full of complex, uncertain, changing, and unpredictable information. Individuals are exposed to this information through a series of imperfect sensory modalities operating over varying time spans and intervals between time spans. Eventually, the individuals aggregate a private version of sets of information, which form a comprehensive representation of the world surrounding them. This mental

process of acquisition, amalgamation, and storage is cognitive mapping. And the product of this mental process at any point in time may be called a cognitive map.

A survey study carried out by the author in Hong Kong shows that most people have a mental map of their city.³⁷ Both group similarities and idiosyncratic individual differences exist in cognitive maps. The findings of the survey reveal that the cognitive map of the city is largely related to certain landmarks and their associated paths, while vast undefined areas of the city are simply unknown to the citizens. Therefore, a good city should be highly imageable. It should have many known symbols joined by widely known paths. And dull cities are grey and non-descript.

There is another type of cognitive map suggested by Blumenfeld. He suggests that the perceptual structure of a modern city may be represented by the *silhouette* of a group of skyscrapers at its centre, and that of smaller groups of office buildings at its sub-centres.³⁸ The urban areas are too vast to be conceived as fully articulated sets of streets, squares, and space. The psychological map of a city appears to have a dense core of well-known landmarks, surrounded by the vast unknown reaches of land. And outside the mid-town area, only scattered landmarks are recognized. Generally speaking, cognitive mapping is a basic coping mechanism in the human adaptation to environment. It forms the basis of the everyday environmental behaviour of people. For example, when people formulate a strategy while moving around, or acquiring certain things from a city, a cognitive map is essential to them. Perception of the urban environment is given meaning by the images that they have of their physical surroundings, such as certain landmarks, routes, boundaries, and neighbourhoods. Some people have informal, imaginary maps in their heads centred upon the locations of their homes. Others appear to be egocentric, and see directions in relation to their own position at that moment.³⁹ What is needed is a quick, unaided impression to give the basic pieces of information that people have in their heads, and which they use in moving around the city. To

³⁷ Appendix 1.

³⁸ Blumenfeld, Hans. "Criteria for Judging the Quality of the Urban Environment", *The Quality of Urban Life*, ed., H. Schmandt and W. Bloomberg, Jr. California: Sage, 1969.

produce a legible environment, factors such as regularity and simplicity are needed.⁴⁰ The reason is that individuals tend mentally to reduce complex environments to more simple and manageable structures.⁴¹

Cognitive mapping is a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which the individuals acquire, code, store, recall, and decode information⁴² about the relative locations and attributes of phenomena in their everyday spatial environment. Cognitive maps are complex, selective, abstract, generalized, and represented forms. The individuals do not passively react or adapt to the environmental forces impinging on them, but bring a variety of cognitive activities⁴³ to bear. People need these cognitive activities to mediate and modulate the impact of the environment on them. The urban environment may change the spatial behaviour of citizens by setting off a chain of inferential information, which may be elaborated and augmented. An urban experience is indicated by a combination of certain attributes. Attributes are derived from a characteristic pattern of stimulation regularly associated with that experience. Simplifying, one could say there are two types of attribute to an experience - the descriptive and the evaluative attributes. The building blocks and the littered streets are the descriptive attributes of the experience of driving through a poor district; and the comments such as dangerous, and unease are evaluative attributes. The distinction between the descriptive and the evaluative meanings of an experience may lead to the incompleteness or discontinuity of cognitive maps.

After all, cognitive maps may be incomplete, distorted, schematized, and augmented. They are convenient sets of symbols that we all subscribe to, recognize, and employ. Stea calls this symbolic image in cognitive maps "invisible landscape".⁴⁴ It is a purely symbolic image that people developed from a very

³⁹ Gould, Peter and Rodney White. *Mental Maps*, Boston: Allen & Unwin, 1986.

⁴⁰ De Jonge, Derk. "Images of Urban Areas: Their Structure and Psychological Foundations," *Journal of American Institute of Planners*, No. 28, November, 1962, pp. 266- 276.

⁴¹ Katz, D. *Gestalt Psychology: Its Nature and Significance*, London: Methuen, 1951.

⁴² Downs, Roger M. and David Stea. eds., *Image and Environment, Cognitive Mapping and Spatial Behavior*, Chicago: Aldine, 1973, p. 9.

⁴³ Kates, R. W. and Wohlwill, J. F. "Man's Response to the Physical Environment: Introduction," *Journal of Social Issues*, No. 22, 1966, pp. 15- 20.

⁴⁴ Stea, David. "Reasons for Our Moving," *Landscape*, No. 17, 1967, pp. 27- 28.

limited set of cognitive categories or concepts. Its purpose is to assist individuals to cope with the complex and diverse information derived from the urban environment. These symbols vary from group to group, and individual to individual. Koffka says, “Our difference between the geographical and the behavioral environments coincides with the difference between things as they “really” are and things as they look to us, between reality and appearance. And we see also that appearances may deceive.”⁴⁵ People behave in a world as if they see it. Whatever the flaws and imperfections of cognitive maps, they must of necessity be firmly clung to and act as the basis for all spatial behaviours.

Past Experience

Fourthly, *past experience* (including the historical experiences of others) also has a strong impact on our epistemological perceptions. Urban perception and knowledge are obtained by simplifying, structuring, and stabilizing experiences. People learn from an early age to develop generalized concepts for classes of events and objects. They process visual information by methods such as identifying regularities, grouping similar or contiguous events, and emphasizing separation, continuity, closure, parallelism, and symmetry. In a situation of changing stimulus, rhythm and cycles are identified.⁴⁶ Each experience absorbed by a person is interpreted in the light of previous experiences, expectancies, and anticipations until it makes sense.⁴⁷ When Calvino’s Marco Polo describes the imaginary city of Zaira to the Kublai Khan, he says,

A description of Zaira as it is today ... should contain all Zaira’s past. The city, however, does not tell its past, but contains it like the lines of a hand, written in the corners of the streets, the gratings of the windows, the banisters of the steps, the antennae of the lightning rods, the poles of the flags, every segment marked in turn with scratches, indentations, scrolls.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Koffka, K. *Principles of Gestalt Psychology*, New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1935, p. 28, 33.

⁴⁶ Johanssen, G. *Configurations in Event Perception*, Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1950.

⁴⁷ see Bannister, D. “A Psychology of Persons,” *New Society*, April 1969, No. 12. and Kelly, G. A. *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*, New York: Norton, 1955.

⁴⁸ Calvino, Italo. *Invisible Cities*, trans., William Weaver, London: Pan Books, 1979, p. 36.

From the signs and rough hints found on the urban landscape, the observers may comprehend the history of a city. The Khan asks occasionally, “Does your journey take place only in the past?” Marco Polo explains that when he travels in each new city, he finds a new past. He does not want to stop; he must carry on to another new city for another new past that waits for him. He says, “something perhaps that had been a possible future of his and is now someone else’s present ... futures not achieved are only branches of the past: dead branches.” Calvino’s imaginary cities of the past are perhaps some of the real cities in the present. Some cities construct part of their urban forms in the inspiration of the past of other cities. For instance, the place Royale of Paris inspires the design of some piazzas in northern Italy; the Georgian houses in London were initiated by the town houses of Bruges and Amsterdam. By exploring the past, one finds, even only very little, a glimpse of one’s future. Hodgson writes, “What do you do when you are a young person in Europe? ... You go around and look at buildings.” It is because the past experience is crucial in “exploring and meeting new ideas, new ways of doing things, and new friends.”⁴⁹ Nevertheless, the diversity in the experiences of individuals makes communication and consensus necessary. The individuals think and act in terms of their unique experiences. The demand for knowledge arises from the very necessity of checking up and regulating these divergent individual experiences, and of reducing them to terms that make them intelligible to all.⁵⁰

Familiarity

Fifthly, the epistemological perceptions of a person may be altered by his *familiarity* with a cityscape. The experiences of the native citizen and the newcomer to a city are different in terms of their mental organization of the space. The more familiar observer tends to establish more connections, and not to break his environment down into many isolated parts. Hence, all the relevant perceptions are connected. Some spatial forms facilitate this structure and are seen as ordered wholes by the native citizen and the newcomer alike. Familiarity with the space

⁴⁹ Godfrey Hodgson, http://www.metropolismag.com/html/content_1200/moy.htm (10/03/2002). See also Hodgson, Godfrey. *A New Grand Tour*, Penguin, 1995.

⁵⁰ Robert E. Park. “The Urban Community as a Spatial Pattern and a Moral Order”, *The Urban Community*, ed., Burgess, Ernest W., Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1971, pp. 3-18.

would strengthen this structure. Some spatial forms do not appear as coherent. The newcomer would consider they are fundamentally disordered. However, physical confusion may be overcome by repeated and intensive use and association. For the native citizen, habitual use and perception enable him to put the collection together by means of associated meaning, selection, simplification, distortion, or even suppression of his perception.

The Bronx ... He had been born and raised in New York and took a manly pride in knowing the city. *I know the city*. But in fact his familiarity with the Bronx, over the course of his thirty-eight years, was derived from five or six trips into the Bronx Zoo, two to the Botanical Gardens, and perhaps a dozen trips to Yankee Stadium, the last one in 1977 for a World Series game. He did know that the Bronx had numbered streets, which were a continuation of Manhattan's.⁵¹

This is a description of New York by a native citizen. The native citizen may be comparatively more able to handle and to manage intricate and complexly organized environment. Whether the physical structure of the city landscape or the mental map of the native citizen, they have a way to organize the information selectively. This New Yorker clearly identified some features of the city through the practices of cognitive mapping and recalling past experience. No matter how fragmented and discontinued are his epistemological perceptions of the home city, he believes in them.

Expectation and Sociocultural Background

Expectation and sociocultural background, finally, constitute our urban perceptions, and their phenomenology. The preconceptions about a city of the visitors often reinforce its myths and stereotypes.⁵² Visitors often compare the actual city with that of their expectations. Their preconceptions have a filtering effect on their perceptions towards the host city. Besides, sometimes the way people conceptualize their environment is related to their position within a social structure, their education, race, and other individual backgrounds.⁵³ Studies⁵⁴ based on the

⁵¹ Wolfe, Tom. *The Bonfire of Vanities*, London: Cape, 1988, p. 78.

⁵² Strauss, A. L. ed., *The American City: A Source Book of Urban Imagery*, Chicago: Aldine, 1968.

⁵³ see Kelly, S. "Social Class in Physical Planning," *International Social Science Journal*, Vol. 18, No. 4, 1966, pp. 494- 512. Mead, G. H. *Mind, Self and Society*, University of Chicago Press, 1934. and Webber, M. and C. Webber. "Culture, Territoriality, and the Elastic Mile," *Taming Megalopolis*, ed., H. W. Eldredge, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967, pp. 35- 46.

techniques of Lynch that suggest socio-cultural associations and visual cues are important in building up the urban image of individuals. Moreover, urban image formation varies among different social groups. For example, the space related behaviour of the intellectual class is opposed to that of the working class.⁵⁵ Fried⁵⁶ finds that the poor population experience more psychological distress than their richer counterpart when forced to move or leave their familiar area. He relates this to a strong “sense of spatial identity” among the poor. This may be explained by the inseparable link between the social space and physical space in the perception of people.⁵⁷ Take the concept of neighbourhood as an example; neighbourhood has an important mental image among the citizen. The breaking up of a cohesive neighbourhood can have many detrimental social and psychological effects. It is because the breaking up of neighbourhood is the breaking of familiarity and continuity in the mental and physical map.⁵⁸

The urban environment holds meanings that are part of a system of signs and symbols. These signs and symbols guide behaviour, elicit feelings, and influence thought.⁵⁹ Consequently, the way we retrospectively see the world is in many respects not the way we immediately see it. In *The Image of A City*, Lynch suggests that there are three components in analyzing urban image - identity, structure, and meaning. Our epistemological perception is the interpretation of these urban meanings. It consists of various attributes. These attributes include epistemological process, urban perception, cognitive mapping, previous experience, familiarity, expectation, and socio-cultural background of the individuals. They made up a world of ideas and have vital influence on our experience in the city.

⁵⁴ on studies based on Lynch techniques, see Appleyard, Donald. “City Designers and the Pluralistic City”, *Planning Urban Growth and Regional Development: The Experience of the Guayana Program of Venezuela*, Cambridge: MIT Press, 1969. Hall, E. T. *The Hidden Dimension*, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966.

⁵⁵ Webber, M. and C. Webber. “Culture, Territoriality, and the Elastic Mile,” *Taming Megalopolis*, ed., H. W. Eldredge, Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1967, pp. 35- 46.

⁵⁶ Fried, M. “Grieving For A Lost Home: Psychological Costs of Relocation,” *Urban Renewal: The Record and The Controversy*, ed., J. Q. Wilson, Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1966, pp. 359- 379.

⁵⁷ Lee, Terence. “Psychology and Living Space”, *Trans. Bartlett Soc*, Vol. 2, 1963, pp. 9- 36.

⁵⁸ see Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983.

⁵⁹ On human behaviour in relation to space, see Rapaport, Amos. *Human Aspects of Urban Form: Towards a Man Environment Approach to Urban Form and Design*, New York: Pergamon Press,

Urban Experience

Let us therefore take four different social roles: the shopper, the flâneur, the stranger, and the transgressor as examples with which to follow an urban phenomenology, which is to say how bodies relate to the city. These roles serve to destabilize the physical and geographical spaces of the city. They emphasise the social meanings of space and discover a hermeneutics of the phenomenology of the city.

The Shopper

The urban experience of shopping is a sensual and pleasant one. The retail shopping centre becomes the focal point of activity in a city. The market place or shopping mall where the buyers and the sellers meet provides economic contacts. Economic contacts are more frequent and impersonal than other kinds of contacts, such as contacts through school, church, club, society, theatre, and so on. Economic contacts encourage a maximum satisfaction and a minimum personal obligation on both parties in the transaction. This quick and easy win-win situation is in a way a more attractive way of connecting people. The relationship among people in these high variety centres is, most of the time, a once-off one. This quick relationship with potentially many different people may be an emotionally erotic experience. Consumptions and purchases are really erotic activities in this materialistic society. Spending out has strong metaphorical connections with the realm of sensual experience.⁶⁰ The experience is exhilarating, exhausting, and relaxing. Many women regard window-shopping as building up pressure, and spending as a powerful urge to ease the tension. The concentration of retailers intensifies this building up of pressure. They intend to confuse the shoppers and encourage them to release the tension and enjoy the sensual experience by spending on goods that they may not need. Some shoppers unconsciously see purchasing as investment in a gradual accumulation of possessions rather than just spending. The storage of goods is a goal

1977. On environmental impact on human thought, see Tuan, Y. F. *Topophilia*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1974.

⁶⁰ Daniel Miller. "Could Shopping Ever Really Matter?" *The Shopping Experience*, eds., Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell, London: Sage, 1997.

rather than a threat. A research study carried out in central Trinidad⁶¹ shows that the local people experience modern shopping as the antithesis of their recent experience of sugar-cane estates and village life. Farm life in the past to these people is a kind of repetitive mundane daily task with few opportunities and rewards. However, modern shopping is probably the most delightful experience available to most people in town. What shopping provides above all is an excuse to encounter other people. Shoppers go to the shopping centres to see and to be seen. They enjoy the short attention and the brief encounter with others. Some shoppers simply hang around window-shopping, they just look but do not purchase. Occasionally, they will comment on the appearance of other passer-by shoppers. Perhaps, they are in Sennett's terms, the public man,⁶² who is not fallen but finds public appraisal and even insult as a highly developed form of sociability. For example, there is a cliché in some societies about dressing up to go to a dress shop, getting in shape to go to keep-fit gym.⁶³ The sensual and erotic experience of encountering many commodities and people in the city centre is like having many "one-night-stands". Barthes says,

the city centre is always felt as the space where subversive forces, forces of rupture, ludic forces act and meet. ...(The city centre is) the privileged place where the other is and where we ourselves are other, as the place where we play the other. In contrast, all that is not the centre is precisely that which is not ludic space, everything which is not otherness: family, residence, identity. Naturally, especially for the city, we would have to discover the metaphorical chain, the chain substituted for Eros. We must search more particularly in the direction of the large categories, of the major habits of man, for example nourishment, purchases, which are really erotic activities in this consumer society.⁶⁴

Shoppers themselves become a key display item in the shopping districts. Retailing areas and shopping malls become a new form of public space, which is quickly appropriated for various forms of social interaction. Consequently, shopping is regarded as a social activity, an escape from the confinement of home and work.

⁶¹ Miller, Daniel. *Material Culture and Mass Consumption*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987. and Miller, Daniel. "Christmas against Materialism in Trinidad", *Unwrapping Christmas*, ed., Daniel Miller, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993, pp. 134- 153.

⁶² Sennett, Richard. *The Fall of Public Man*, Faber & Faber, 1986.

⁶³ Keens-Douglas, Paul. *Lal Shop*, Port of Spain: College, 1984, p. 87.

⁶⁴ Barthes, Roland. "Semiology and the Urban", *Rethinking Architecture: A Reader in Cultural Theory*, ed., Leach, Neil, London: Routledge, 1997, pp. 171.

The shoppers relate to the city in a reciprocal way. They are dazzled by the city, and intensely engaged with the urban scene and the market. No shoppers, it would seem, can disconnect themselves from the city and its enchantments. They desire the objects spread before them and act upon that desire. The city, in return, fulfils their desires in many imaginable ways. Theatres, opera houses, pleasure gardens, racecourses, coffeehouses, shops, red light districts, entire neighbourhoods, and ultimately the entire city are all redesigned to cater for them. Without cities, the shoppers would be unhappy; without shoppers, the city would not exist.

The Flâneur

If shoppers are one of the main performers of urban dramas, the *flâneur* would be their audience. He was introduced to us by Baudelaire, and then theorized by Benjamin. A dictionary defines the flâneur as “a lazybones, a loafer, a man of insufferable idleness, who doesn’t know where to carry his trouble and his boredom,”⁶⁵ but only up to a point. The flâneurs are more than mere idlers; they are philosophical strollers or pedestrian connoisseurs who possess the sovereignty that based on anonymity and observation. They long for beauty and leisure, belong to no specific group or class. They always maintain a requisite distance and neutrality from the subjects that they observe. The flâneurie principle is “look, but don’t touch.”⁶⁶ They cultivate an aesthetic of the sense: *looking* - observing people, social interactions, social contexts, and urban objects; and *reading* - the city, its spatial images, architecture, and human configurations. To look and read the city is to derive more meanings from its original context. They define the meaning and the significance of the metropolitan spaces and the spectacle of the crowd. Lacroix says, “The flâneur ... produces little, but he accumulates a great deal.”

According to Baudelaire, the flâneurs are far from pure idlers or pleasure-seekers. Instead, they are the artists and the heroes of modernity. They search not only for pleasure but also meaning in the transient meeting and fleeting of the

⁶⁵ D’Hautel 1808.

⁶⁶ Buck-Morss, Susan. “The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: the Politics of Loitering”, *New German Critique*, No. 39, Fall, 1986, p. 105.

modern city. Baudelaire says, “Modernity is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immovable”, the flâneurs aim to “distil the eternal from the transitory.” That is “the eternal beauty and the astonishing harmony of life in the capital cities, a harmony so providentially maintained in the tumult of human liberty.”⁶⁷ Through observing the social interaction in public places, the flâneurs transcendently understand the capital, the space, and the people. Perhaps, the flâneurs are looking for an ideal, a possible unity, between the transient and the eternity, among the expression of modernity in the city.

Unlike Simmel’s stressful metropolitans who only take refuge by withdrawing into a blasé mentality of imposed alienation and estrangement, the flâneurs enjoy wallowing in the rush of visual sensation, and savouring the diverse stimuli of the city. They have a frenzied romantic love affair with the crowds. They find immense pleasure “to establish his dwelling in the throng, in the ebb and flow, the bustle, the fleeting and the infinite”⁶⁸ of the crowds. Among the crowds, the flâneurs play the game of I-see-you-you-see-me-not, they pretend there is no observer and they are not looking. They enjoy seeing without being seen and without being caught that they are looking. Benjamin identifies their addiction (to the city and its crowd) as that of “the opium eater, the dreamer, the ecstatic.”⁶⁹ Despite of their love of the crowds, the flâneurs remain solitude and anonymous in the multitude of bustling people. Their loneliness is also their advantage because they are in control: they can retrieve from reality and return to it if they want. Reality to them is oozy, ubiquitous, straggly, and all over the place. They thirst for “the love of masks and masquerading ... and the passion for roaming” with the crowds among the city spaces.⁷⁰ There is nowhere forbidden to the flâneurs because they look like everyone

⁶⁷ Baudelaire, Charles. 1859, “The Painter of Modern Life,” *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, New York: Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 400- 403.

⁶⁸ Baudelaire, *ibid.*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ Benjamin, Walter. “Surrealism”, *One-Way Street and Other Writings*, trans. E. Jephcott and K. Shorter, London: New Left Books, 1979, p. 237.

⁷⁰ Baudelaire, Charles. 1859, “The Painter of Modern Life,” *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, New York: Harmondsworth, 1972, pp. 20, 399- 400. Baudelaire stresses the importance of entering the public domain and avoiding home to achieve pleasure. See also Durkheim, Emile. “The Dualism of Human Nature and Its Social Conditions”, *Emile Durkheim, 1858- 1917*, ed., K. H. Wolff, Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1960. and *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*, trans., C. Brookfield, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957.

else. They can put on any mask that gains them the access to almost every public space in the city.

The experience of *flâneurie* is the sensational phenomenon of urban space. The *flâneurs* reduce the urban diversity to a marvellous show or a spectacle. Sometimes they gaze from a bird's-eye view and are engulfed by the panoramas, the city is "now landscape, now a room".⁷¹ They savour the city as a whole, and dream to territorialize the cityscape.⁷² Sometimes they go onto the streets, the city then becomes a phantasmagoria of "irregularity, change, sliding forward, not keeping in step, collisions of things and affairs, and fathomless points of silence in between, of paved ways and wilderness, of one great rhythmic throb and the perpetual discord and dislocation of all opposing rhythms, and as a whole resembled a seething, bubbling fluid in a vessel consisting of the solid materials of buildings, laws, regulations, and historical traditions."⁷³ At other times, the *flâneurs* are seduced by the extravagant and conspicuous display of the shopping crowds, the merchandise, and are pulled into the fancy interiors of the arcades. For them, the interior space of the arcades is of little difference from the exterior space of streets. They are equally fantastic. Benjamin explains,

If the arcade is the classical form of the *intérieur*, which is how the *flâneur* sees the street, the department store is the form of the *intérieur's* decay. The bazaar is the last hangout of the *flâneur*. If in the beginning the street had become an *intérieur* for him, now this *intérieur* turned into a street, and he roamed through the labyrinth of merchandise as he had once roamed through the labyrinth of the city.⁷⁴

The arcade is, in a sense, simultaneously inside and outside - the *flâneurs* are neither fully outside, as on the street, nor altogether inside, in the shops. The *flâneurs*

⁷¹ Benjamin, Walter. *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, London: Fontana, 1973, p. 170. See also Hugo, Victor. *Notre-Dame of Paris*, trans., John Sturrock, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1978, and *The Hunchback of Notre Dame*, London: New English Library, 1976.

⁷² The *flâneur* gaze is part of a tactic to appropriate the physical spaces of the city as their own territory. See De Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984.

⁷³ Musil, Robert. *The Man Without Qualities*, Vol. 1, trans. E. Wilkins and E. Kaiser, London: Martin Secker & Warburg, 1954, p. 4.

⁷⁴ Benjamin, Walter. *On Some Motifs in Baudelaire*, London: Fontana, 1973, p. 54.

haunt the arcades but they do not buy.⁷⁵ They taste the delights of the shop windows and the shoppers' passionate engagement with commodity. However, even without engaging in the consumer activity, the flâneur as a "participant observer" also become part of the commodity exchange process in the arcades.

The Stranger

Because I, a mestiza,
Continually walk out of one culture
And into another,
Because I am in all cultures at the same time,
Alma entre dos mundos, tres, cuatro,
(Soul between two worlds, three, four,)
Me zumba la cabeza con lo contradictorio.
(My head buzzes with the contradiction)
Estoy norteadada por todas las voces que me hablan
(Of all the voices that speak to me,)
Simultaneamente.
(Simultaneously.)

- Anzaldúa, *Borderlands*.⁷⁶

Both the flâneurs and the strangers are characters of the modern metropolis. Benjamin's flâneurs are natives who treat their city as a foreign land; they are self-imposed foreigners; whereas Simmel's strangers are foreigners who attempt to inhabit a foreign city like a native. Strangeness is a socially constructed attribution obtained through a stigmatising process, a stereotyped classification because of some special traits – colour, origin, language, etc. – that is, a distinction between *normality* and *otherness*. The strangers can appear as fools, innocents, aliens, ghosts, freaks, and "others", to the native citizens. The strangers experience *being different in different places*, yet remember and go back and forth among other places from where they come. They are caught in between cultures, inhabit the margins, the "Borderlands", and wander on the fringe. Simmel defines the strangers as,

the man who comes today and stays tomorrow - the potential wanderer, so to speak, who, although he has gone no further, has not quite got over the freedom of coming and going. He is fixed within a certain spatial circle ... but his position within it is fundamentally

⁷⁵ Zola and Huysmans argue that the flâneur maybe reduced to a shopper in the arcades. See Zola, E'mile. 1883, *Au Bonheur des Dames*, Paris: Garnier-Flammarion, 1971. Huysmans, Joris-Karl. *A Rebours*, Paris: Fasquelle, 1968.

⁷⁶ Anzaldúa, Gloria. *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, San Francisco: Spinsters/Aunt Lute, 1987, p. 1, the later half of the poem is translated by a friend, S. D. Tomlinson.

affected by the fact that he does not belong in it initially and that he brings qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it.⁷⁷

Simmel's stranger is more than a wanderer. He has a specific structural position in a city, which is both near and far. He is culturally different; who settle in as an insider but retains his status as outsider. Geertz states that communities have particular knowledge that is specific to the conditions in which those communities subsist.⁷⁸ The knowledge helps members to establish social rules and standards in order to live successfully in the social circumstances wherever that might be. Nevertheless, the strangers are excluded from the knowledge and thus not bound by its limitation. They are not bound by a specific role because they stay in the city but may leave again. Temporary involvement and non-commitment to the society enables them a flexible movement among ideological and spatial positions. By the virtue of reorganization, reconstruction, and comparison among places, the strangers construct a unique urban experience, and bring in new perception, understanding, and evaluation to the host city.

Cities, at a time and place where there is a significant merging of cultures and people, are dominated by globally mobile corporations and flexible workers. Modern cities are full of strangers. Sennett points out that the mark of civic realm is mutual accommodation through dissociation.⁷⁹ Modern cities accommodate new waves of foreigners but only through isolation and indifference. The strangers are largely ignored and deserted. Benjamin says, "For a stranger, only a strange world can be his."⁸⁰ Modern cities are strange places where the individual's traces among the big-city crowds are obliterated. The strangers' imprint of steps in the city landscape is not noticed and will not last. For them, modern cities are like deserts, "there are no avenues, no boulevards, no blind alleys and no streets. Only - here and there -

⁷⁷ Simmel, Georg. "The Stranger," *The Sociology of Georg Simmel*, trans., Kurt Wolff, New York: Free Press, 1950, pp. 402 - 408.

⁷⁸ Geertz, Clifford. *Local Knowledge - Further Essays in Interpretive Anthropology*, London: Fontana, 1983.

⁷⁹ Sennett, Richard. *Capitalism and the City*, [http://onl.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader\\$1513](http://onl.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$1513) (11-03-2002).

⁸⁰ Benjamin, Walter. *Charles Baudelaire: A Lyric Poet in the Era of High Capitalism*, trans., Harry Zohn, London: New Left Books, 1973, Verso, 1983, p. 43- 44.

fragmentary imprints of steps, quickly effaced and denied.”⁸¹ People on streets are like sand dunes; now here, now disappear; coming from nowhere and a moment later effacing into nothingness. The urban experience of the stranger is transitional. It is a “pure experience ... always other than, but also nothing other than what he is conscious of at the moment.”⁸² He is aware of his assumptions about the new culture, and they are always in the making. Since strangers come with their own reminiscences and presumptions, they deal with the alienated city spaces in a unique way: sometimes they restructure the unknown spaces with known patterns; in other times, they idealize, belittle, or barbarianize the unknown environment; in some cases, they assimilate to the new conditions.

The Transgressor – Prostitute

Dangerous woman-demoralizing days!
 Will I adore your killing frost as much,
 and in that implacable winter, when it comes,
 discover pleasures sharper than iron and ice?

- Charles Baudelaire, *Overcast*.

Sin is always transgression. A transgressor is one who over-steps due bounds, refuses to be limited, lives too close to the edge, a law-breaker, a sinner. The word transgression is often sodden with something else - ecstatic drugs and sex. For most citizens, the transgressors are mysterious and terrifying. They have tactical language and knowledge, queer and dishonest skills, and they territorialize the city. Among the transgressors, the most controversial one is the prostitute. Henriques notes that the French defines prostitution as “the partial or complete specialization of certain women in the satisfaction of the masculine instinct.”⁸³ According to dictionaries, prostitutes are people (men and women) who offer their body to indiscriminate lewdness for hire (especially as a practice or an institution), courtesans, whoredom, and harlotry. They are also called the “streetwalker” because they make a living full-time on the streets.⁸⁴

⁸¹ Jabès, Edmond. *Un Étranger avec, sous le bras, un livre de petit format*, Paris: Gallimard, 1989, p. 34.

⁸² Albert Camus quoted in Solomon, Robert C. “Camus’s L’Étranger and the Truth,” *Philosophy and Literature*, No. 2, 1978, pp.144-5.

⁸³ Henriques, Fernando. “Primitive, Classical and Oriental”, *Prostitution and Society, A Survey*, Volume 1, London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1962, p. 15.

⁸⁴ Roberts, Nickie. *Whores in History*, Harper-Collins, 1993.

Baudelaire is probably the first major literary figure to apprehend the cultural importance of prostitution. He makes prostitution one of the main subjects of the lyrical expression of his poetry.⁸⁵ Benjamin also observes that the prostitutes embody a special image of ambiguity, because they are the subject and object in one, both the seller and commodity that is sold. He explains, "Ambiguity is the pictorial image of dialectics ... Such an image is presented by the pure commodity: as fetish. ... Such an image is the prostitute, who is saleswoman and wares in one."⁸⁶ The prostitutes' bodies are objectified and de-humanized into a commodity bought and sold on the market.

The universal practice of prostitution is most prolific within the public spaces of major cities. For everyone else, there is the imagined possibility of another world within the city - the city as the theatre and the battleground for the prostitutes. The prostitutes must inhabit the city, they use the urban landscape in the way they want to, regardless of any conventional rules. Any place in the city and any time of the day can have a possible business transaction. They acquire many business, social, and survival skills, including a good knowledge of local squares, streets, alleys, and corners. A prostitute says, "On my patch of street, I've got landmarks, things that are familiar to me, that I know: and that, too, is a form of protection for me."⁸⁷ For the prostitutes, the streets are a peculiar space, in which they encounter all possible kinds of irregularity,⁸⁸ brutality, and murder. The winding, dark alleys are particularly appropriate for soliciting and loitering. They also hunt in the open public squares. They lurk under the streets lights. They stroll in front of the portico. They walk up and down the roads. Their cheap high heels click on pavements. Their indecent

⁸⁵ Baudelaire believes prostitution resemble artistic production in modern societies. As Benjamin puts it, "Baudelaire knew how things really stood for the literary man: As flâneur, he goes to the literary marketplace, supposedly to take a look at it, but already in reality to find a buyer." Cited in Buck-Morss, Susan. "The Flâneur, the Sandwichman and the Whore: the Politics of Loitering", *New German Critique*, No. 39, Fall, 1986, pp. 99- 140.

⁸⁶ Benjamin, Walter. *Reflections*, trans. Edmund Jephcott, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1978, p. 157.

⁸⁷ Cited by O'Neill, Maggie. "Prostitution, Feminism and Critical Praxis: Profession Prostitute?" *The Austrian Journal of Sociology*, special edition on Work and Society, eds., Johanna Hofbauer and Jorg Flecker, Winter 1996.

⁸⁸ Freud relates the sexual irregularities of prostitutes with children's polymorphously perverse disposition, which the prostitutes exploited for the purpose of their profession. See Freud, Sigmund. *Theory of Sexuality*, Essay II, trans., J. Strachey, 1949, p. 69.

dresses provoke scandals. Their bodies are of satin colours and angular poses. The scene is a parade of gluttonous seduction, surging and calling out for punters. On the sidewalk, the prostitutes cast a jittery gaze at passing cars. The drivers roll slowly up the street from one prostitute to another. If a car pulls alongside them, they will bob to the open windows of the cars. They stand there for a moment, sometime abruptly turn away, sometimes jump in the passenger seat and be driven off.

The streets are a place of *gaze* swivelling around and being thrown back. The prostitutes exhibit their sexuality in public or semi-public settings, and are scrutinized by the passer-bys. People gaze at them and they gaze back desperately, the near maniacal glint in their eyes could say, “come hither, I could be sexually yours.” In this berserk hunting game, men become the prey. The women’s eyes are weapons gleaming and straining men like a cold serpentine glare. The gaze is not only about sex, but also *power*. The “prostitute gaze” in a way resembles the “male gaze” plus a sense of money greed.

The act of seeing is often characterized in psychoanalytic literature as a vicarious act of possession. But, in addition, sight is connected through memory to the experience of touch. Hence, submission to the gaze may symbolically imply physical appropriation of dominance - the gaze as a projection of actual power.⁸⁹

The act of gaze asserts a certain power over an object, through its symbolic and momentary possession of it. Traditionally, the female is the object of the gaze. The males create sexualised images of women through their masculine eyes.⁹⁰ The woman, as the man fantasized, is preferably oblivious to being watched and thereby unable to look back. The unsuspecting female is objectified by the male gaze. The male voyeur finds titillating excitement in gazing at her sexual surrender. However, the voyeuristic pleasure disappears when the subject stares back.

⁸⁹ Rubin, James H. *Manet's Silence and the Poetics of Bouquets*, Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1994, p. 50.

⁹⁰ Male artists and filmmakers also create this voyeur’s gaze through their camera, see Pollock, Griselda. *Vision and Difference*, 1988. and Mulvey, Laura. *Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema*, Department of Comparative Literature, Penn State, 18 Oct, 2001, http://www.personal.psu.edu/courses/Materials/cmlit453_cps6/mulv.html (01-03-2002), Pollock also wrote many articles on the subject of voyeur’s gaze.

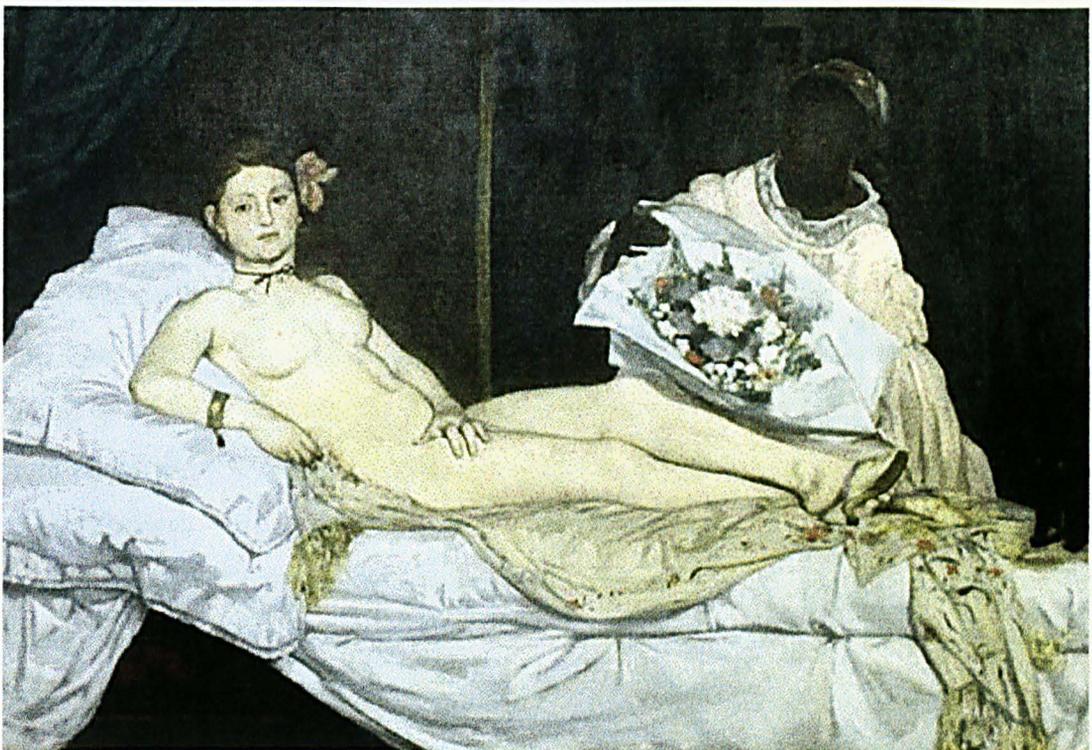
The prostitutes are aware of being looked at and gaze back. For some men, this makes the women intimidating and unapproachable. The prostitute gaze is the harsh stare of the “male gaze”. The prostitutes defy their viewers by matching their gaze with a sense of confrontation and assertion. It is finely illustrated in the great nineteenth century painting by Manet, *The Olympia*, 1863. (Illustration 4) T. J. Clark says, “(The viewers) were offered an outward gaze: a pair of jet-black pupils, a slight asymmetry of the lids, a mouth with a curiously smudged and broken corner, features half adhering to the plain oval face. A look was thus constructed which seemed direct and reserved, in a way which was to close the classic face of the nude.”⁹¹ Manet’s *Olympia* is one of very few painting subjects who look at the viewers, and the first to do so directly and shamelessly. It is a scandalous picture par excellence. It is an outrageous provocation because it puts the client of art and the client of sex in the same place. The subject of the painting, *Olympia*, is a prostitute who receives a gift of a bouquet from a client, reclining on a couch, propping on one elbow, covering her genitals with one hand, and looking straight back at the viewers. *Olympia* has an ambiguous pose and a strong, clear, cold, and exasperatingly detached gaze. The gaze of *Olympia* in the picture and the prostitutes in modern cities challenge their viewers to continue looking at them. They let the viewers feel uncomfortable, by presenting them with a problem they are not accustomed to: the concept of the women being in control of the gaze, and the confrontation of female bodies in the public places.

The concept of the female on display for the male viewers in public place is taken to its height in the Oudezijds Achterburgwal Street in the infamous Red Light District of Amsterdam. The District comes alive at dusk. It locates around four blocks of Oudezijds Voorburgwal, and is on both sides of narrow canals. An unsettling contrast in the District is the Oude Kerk, a church constructed back in the 13th century, with its bells ringing out now and then in contrast to the lustrous sex business below. Visitors tour the area by making several circuits around the blocks, scrutinizing the famous windows, and exploring the side alleys that are dotted with red lights. The famous large plate-glass windows are illuminated by red or pink

⁹¹ Clark, Timothy J. *The Painting of Modern Life*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984, p. 133.

fluorescent light, amidst doors, apartments, and shops. Inside the window, there is a prostitute sitting seductively, or standing close to the glass, and swaying to some unheard music. Their painted lips, eyelids, and lingerie glow under the lights, which makes them look unreal, like some futuristic creatures in adventure movies. Behind the windows are tiny rooms where the sexual duty is performed; curtains will be drawn to keep out the gaze from the streets. Some women sit together in a larger room, but most are alone. The windows objectify the prostitutes, as the sex toys displaying in the window of sex shops. At the same time, they create a semi-public space in which the prostitutes are in control. The prostitutes in a way use the windows as a tool for their power and protection. Some aggressive prostitutes may even occasionally knock on their windows from inside and beckon the men in. Some people on the streets peer at the prostitutes surreptitiously or hypocritically; some swagger with boastful experience; some do “window-shopping” and never buy what is for sale; some muster up the courage to ring the bell; and some just duck away, embarrassed. The whole setting of the Red Light District in Amsterdam is a performance in which the viewers’ desires are surfaced, and their fantasies are exploited. The city is a contradictory space for the prostitutes. For them, it is a hunting ground and hiding place, a place of opportunities and abandonment. On the streets and behind the windows, the prostitutes gaze and being gazed, exploit and being exploited. They are the performers as well as the audiences of street life.

The phenomenology of a city is defined by the urban experience and the consciousness of its people. People read the city through their physical interactions in the cityscape, and their epistemological perception of its space. The urban forms are made intelligible when people impose meanings on spaces and restructure their configurations. Nevertheless, the urban experience and the consciousness of the citizens are influenced by a powerful force – modernity. Modernity shapes the urban phenomena with its seductions and suppressions. In the great metropolis, on the one hand, the familiar crowds of shoppers and their activities represent the glamour and excitement of city life. On the other hand, my little trio of isolated figures, the flâneurs, strangers, and prostitutes reveal the other side of modernity, which is overwhelmingly fragmented and peculiar.



4. Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, Paris, Musée d' Orsay.

Hong Kong

In this chapter, the image construction of Hong Kong through urban landscaping would be evaluated. This study is based on the five theories that established in Part One - city as history, spectacle, a work of art, corporate image, and home. The theories generally embrace the symbolic images of major world cities. They also suggest different viewpoints when studying a particular case. By applying the theories to Hong Kong, and making comparison with other cities, I hope to achieve a more balanced argument that would be the basis for future studies.

Hong Kong is a hub city in the West Pacific Rim. It is renowned for its strenuous commercialism. To put it briefly, Hong Kong is a city of money! People go to the city to make money, to spend money, to play, and to flirt with money. One can almost smell money in the air. For years its citizens have been subscribing to an image of the city produced by the official and the multinational consortia as a free land of possibilities. Polls conducted in the early 1980s found that its residents and many foreigners saw Hong Kong as a land full of opportunities, and most believed it is individual effort that counts in one's success or failure.¹ Therefore, a dictum in Hong Kong says that "there is always gold on the streets, it just depends on whether one has the ability to pick it up." These reveal the city is very much a market-oriented one. Its urban landscape also reflects this tendency of development. When new market functions develop, the use of urban space and the range of architectural forms follow.

Hong Kong – The City as History: *Becoming Rather Than Being*

Few cities change with quite the drastic scale and speed as Hong Kong, where the sleepy colonial backwater of half a century ago has been transformed into one of the most dynamic and affluent cities. (Illustrations 5) Hong Kong is indeed a city of *becoming* rather than *being*. One would be stunned to discover just how much the city has evolved. The Victoria Harbour in the 1950s was a fairly tranquil place, with

¹ Lau, Chi Kuen. *Hong Kong's Colonial Legacy*, Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1997, p. 80.

full-sail junk boats drifting slowly across the water. There were a few steamships and warships at anchor. That was the only real harbour activity in the city. Nowadays, land reclamation has shortened the width of the Harbour. Nevertheless, sea activities are increasingly busy. Any kind of ship that floats would be found in Hong Kong harbour at some point. Huge container ships, hovercraft, ferries, jetfoils, cruise ships, navy ships, police boats, yachts, luxury cruisers, all squeeze through the tiny channel. Besides, the skyline of the city changed dramatically indeed. It was not just the buildings and street facades that have moved, whole mountains have had their peaks lopped off, and land stolen from the sea. (Illustrations 6) Old buildings vanished overnight, new skyscrapers appeared in the blink of an eye. Vantage points that were once mere grassy knolls have been replaced by gleaming 50-storey skyscrapers; narrow winding streets once thick with rickshaws queuing by outdoor markets are now car-clogged thoroughfares flanked by up-market designer shops.

As the ever-changing cityscape continues to evolve, one can see older buildings being replaced by newer ones. Stark contrast is noted when soaring highrises are built adjacent to historical constructions. However, in time, new buildings will replace all older ones. There has always been a struggling experience for Hong Kong to maintain a balance between economic development and historical preservation. Usable land is scarce.² Any possible site for development would be a target for reconstruction or urban expansion; unfortunately, this sometimes includes historical locations. The lack of concern for historical preservation may be rooted in the minds of the citizens - new is simply better. Hong Kong residents prefer the latest fashions, the newest cars, and acquisition of the latest electronic gadgets. Cars older than one year are considered obsolete and mobile telephones are discarded every few months in favour of the latest models. The drive of novelty is the spirit of the city.

In terms of architecture, it is usually considered as recording the history of a city. In most cases, urban landscapes reveal traces of the history of the inhabitants. The older buildings reflect the tastes and values of people of the time when they were

² According to the Planning Department, out of the total land area of 1098 square kilometre, only 16.7% is developed.

constructed. However, this is not entirely true in Hong Kong. There is a lack of historical buildings in the cityscape. And the existing architecture reveals less of its history. The architectural details of yesteryear are difficult to discern. One must scrutinise carefully to detect traces of history that are buried under the modern urban fabric. As a panorama, the skyline of Hong Kong is a huge metropolis of soaring highrises. It is usual to see residential buildings tower up to sixty-five stories. It is a magnificent site indeed. However, lowrises (up to four stories) are left in the shadow of their giant neighbours. These more humble abodes are home to many local residents. As one moves closer in and further examines these lowrises, one is hard pressed to find any well-maintained ones. In a land where property values are so high, it seems unreasonable for these buildings to be in neglect. They are in neglect because it is expected that these buildings will soon be torn down and replaced by highrises. The ever-changing economic and social forces continue to shape the appearance of the city. These forces are more obvious and dynamic in Hong Kong than many cities. The reason for that is simple - history is not and has never been a strong attraction to the city. Most of the citizens simply look forward to the future, instead of backward to history, for inspiration.

No monuments and no history: the exaltation of mobile deserts and simulation. ... a brilliant, mobile, superficial neutrality, a challenge to meaning and profundity, a challenge to nature and culture, an outer hyperspace, with no origin, no reference-points.³

Unlike cities with a long and undisturbed history, such as London and Paris, Hong Kong does not have any built-in advantage from its inheritance. It has a relatively short history, and adopts few cultures from China or Britain. Throughout the somehow interesting history of China, which has a record of more than five thousand years, Hong Kong had never been named. It was a tiny fishing village locating far away from any civilized centres, such as Beijing and Nanjing. There are few physical evidences of Chinese history on the city landscape. Britain also did not leave too many characteristics in the city. During the hundred and fifty five years (1841- 1997) colonial period, the British constructed a few civic buildings here and there in Hong Kong, which resemble the buildings in their homeland. (Illustrations 7) The local authorities are still using some of them, but many were demolished for

³ Baudrillard, Jean. *America*, London: Verso, 1988, pp. 123-5.

the purpose of economic development. The few historical sites are “recycled” for new functions or restored as museums for sake of tourism. To many locals, they are superficial forms with few cultural contexts. Consequently, with a relatively short history and little cultural heritage to refer to, Hong Kong is less historically minded. Historical preservation and restoration have never been a strong emphasis in the city. The Government is making an effort to improve this. However, comparing Hong Kong with traditional historical cities such as London, Paris, and Venice, Hong Kong as a city of history is less impressive.

History entails a sense of continuity and stability. These symbolic values are expressed through physical objects, such as historical monuments and constructions. Through constant exposure in the city landscape over a long time, these physical constructions help to define state power and social order. They are particularly vital in modern cities that need anchors in a flux of modernity. In modern economy, the fast development of capitalism unavoidably leads to the fragmentation of the urban landscape. The juxtaposition of architectures of different periods and styles is commonly found. It is a conglomeration of the past and the present stages of civilization. Moreover, the increasing mobility of people and cultures also creates patches of ethnic minority areas in the city. The resulted cityscape is a bit from now and then, here and there, rags and tatters of urban fabric all patched together without much aesthetic co-ordination. In addition, new functions and demands constantly emerged in the world market; they are powerful forces on the urban landscape. New building forms are required to follow their new functions. And urban sprawl is a result of over-congestion in the urban centre. The farther away from the urban centre, the more discontinuous, more diffuse, and more unfocused the urban sprawl. Shapeless masses of buildings cluster here and there, bulged and ridged, suddenly broken by a patch of green or a construction site. It is difficult to comprehend the complicated and fragmented metropolis at a glance. Unfortunately, these fragmentations and dissonances in the physical appearance of cities dissolved the regularities of harmony. They leave the viewers unsettled and uncertain. To overcome the problem of fragmentation, history suggests ideal (somehow illusory) values and a collective identity for the culture. It is important for cities to preserve and restore their historical and cultural past.

While it may be true that history is vital to the identity of cities, in the case of Hong Kong, few believe in it except the authority in charge of tourism. Hong Kong people believe in *change*. The city blossoms during changes. For instance, during 1940's before the Communist Party took over China, the nation was in Civil War. An influx of immigrants including entrepreneurs, industrialists, the skilled, and unskilled labourers fled the war, and migrated to Hong Kong. Together they provided capital resources, managerial expertise, and labour force, which are the necessities to built up the city. When Deng Xiao Ping adopted open-door policy in 1982, China changed again tremendously. As a European colony by then, Hong Kong became the gateway for many ambitious Western companies to explore the markets in China and Southeast Asia. The economy of the city took off. Again, the city flourished during changes. After being encompassed by the Chinese rule, Hong Kong has almost unlimited access to the market and other resources of (as well as competitions from) China. The city is looking forward to take advantage of the opportunities coming up during the times of change. In addition, Hong Kong thrives on creativity and rapid adaptation to external influences. This may be understood through its urban landscaping in the past decades. The cityscape of Hong Kong responded quickly to changes and external influences, mainly economic but always political ones.

Overall in Hong Kong, there are three stages of land use transformation in response to external changes:

1. 1950s-60s, the urban landscape was mainly devoted to entrepôt trade and its associated functions, (Illustrations 8) until a trade embargo enforced by the Western countries with China. The economic activity of Hong Kong shifted from entrepôt trade to the manufacturing and processing industries (light industry). Middle to small-scale industrial buildings were constructed numerously. Multi-storied industrial estates appeared in many parts of the city. Factory workers and their families would live in close-by low-income residential areas. Hong Kong was generally a typical developing industrial city. The resources of the society were mostly channelled to industrial development rather than city planning and environmental project.

2. Late 1970s-90s, China adopted the open door policy in 1980s. The bulk of manufacturing activities, especially the lower order labour-intensive ones, were relocated to Mainland China for its low labour and land costs. Hong Kong then expanded its service industry and functioned as a financial, trading, and transportation centre in the Asia Pacific region. Most of the former industrial areas of the city were soon redeveloped to accommodate new functions, such as offices, residences, and shopping malls. The newly opened markets in China drew the attention of foreign investors. As a British colony with the advantages of political stability, mature legal and banking systems, plus its geographical location, Hong Kong was the first choice among the foreign investors to locate their Far East businesses. Foreign investments and expatriates helped to transform the city completely. They are highly paid urban elites who demand a glamorous city life style – luxury homes, fancy restaurants, private clubhouses, branded hotels, airport, yacht, cruise, etc. As a result, amazing skyscrapers with glass exterior walls appeared in large numbers. Big finance and banking buildings clustered together in the CBD (Central Business District). Entertainment complexes and giant shopping malls flourished. Designer architectures also found their market in Hong Kong, such as The HSBC Bank building by Norman Foster and The China Bank building by I. M. Pei. (Illustrations 9)

In addition, perhaps the most influential change in the period was the growth of tourism. There were a growing number of tourists who fancied resort destinations in the exotic Far East and oriental China. Hong Kong was keen to make use of its geographical location and infrastructure to expand the tourist industry. City planning became a very important task to improve the appearance of post-industrial cityscape. Laws and regulations were adopted to regulate the skyline surrounding the Victoria Harbour. Greenery and anti-pollution campaigns were launched. The cityscape of Hong Kong was transformed from an industrial appearance to a modern one of finance and commerce. It is also the case, however, that all these economic activities intensified the problem of over-population. Certainly, in some cases, the development of new satellite towns in the suburbs provides one solution of the

problem, but tackling over-dense environment is still an ongoing battle in the land development of the city.

3. Presently, Hong Kong is undergoing the development of innovation and technologically-based, high value-added industries such as finance and telecommunication. The aim is to achieve a knowledge-driven and technology-intensive economy. The recent financial turmoil in the South-east Asia has revealed the vulnerability of an economy based heavily on finance and service activities. In Hong Kong, the crisis had caused the city a decrease of about 5.1% in the GDP in 1998, and a record high unemployment rate of about 6% in February 1999.⁴ As a result, different sectors of the community called for widening the economic base. Other reasons that impel this economic change are the imminent merging of the Chinese economy into the world's market⁵, and the globalisation of economic and technological developments. In such a situation, there would be more intense competition from other cities of the Mainland China. Hong Kong has been strong in "technologizing" the service industry such as the finance and telecommunication areas. To turn challenge into opportunities, the city needs new infrastructure to support the economy transformation, as well as a distinctive regional identity in its city landscape. City planning at the moment is devoting to the infrastructures that facilitate the development of innovative and technological activities. From the perspective of urban planning, however, the development in high value-added service industry may further condense the already overcrowded metro area (CBD). The reason for that is knowledge-based activities tend to stay together technically to interact and to support each other. To ease the problem, the Government adopts a thinning out policy (urban sprawl). Major construction projects like the Cyberport and Science Park⁶ are launched, which resemble Silicon Valley in San José, California.

⁴ The Hong Kong Government Information Centre, http://www.info.gov.hk/hk2030/hk2030content/Inception/introduction_1.htm (July 3, 2001)

⁵ China joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on December 10, 2001. <http://special.scmp.com/chinawtobid/> (January 15, 2002)

⁶ For Cyberport, see http://www.info.gov.hk/itbb/english/cyberport/index_n.htm
For Science Park, see <http://www.techcentre.org/>

It is apparent that the development of Hong Kong cityscape manifests the colossal scale of its economic activities. Unfortunately, most of the historical sites were destroyed during the course of these economic changes. In the frenzy of economic growth, the city systematically destroyed many historic spaces - houses, villages, or civic structures. If advantage or profit is to be found in it, then the old is swept away. The Nga Tsin Wai Village provides a clear example of this - it was built in the 12th century, but its demolition was sanctioned because the Antiquities Advisory Board decided that, "It is not worth preserving."⁷ Later, however, the city discovered the boundless prospects of the tourism and leisure industries. Things that had been demolished before are reconstituted at great expense. Imitation or replication of historical objects is produced. What had been annihilated in the earlier rapid development now becomes an object of admiration.⁸ Examples are the 18th century Tai Fu Tai and Sam Tung Uk. (Illustrations 10) They are reminiscent of traditional Chinese architectural precedents of geometry, arch, solid base, open podium, and floating roof, now restored as museums.

Notwithstanding, it is still possible to locate traces of history in the present day urban landscape of Hong Kong. Here I suggest two geo-morphological methods – analysis of *layered temporal change* (a microscopic point of view) and conspectus upon *layered spatial change* (a macroscopic point of view). In Hong Kong, observers have to learn to look beyond the buildings and the architectures to see its history. One may take one more step back, and look at the larger picture of the city from the sky. One can examine the roads, the mass transit system, and the location of its parks, reservoirs, and terrain. If one investigates the roadways, one finds them narrow and windy. Most of the roads are relatively short. Moreover, the city is not laid out in a grid pattern. This may be because its hilly terrain is not conducive to the construction of city blocks. However, the narrowness of the streets and roads are in large part a reflection of the lack of popularity of automobiles in Hong Kong until the 1950s. These buildings were allowed to be constructed close together across the streets since automobile traffic was not a concern. At the time, nobody could foresee the explosive population growth of the city. Here we witness

⁷ Report from *South China Morning Post*, December 9, 1999.

how history can influence and shape a city. In this case, we can also understand how the past can affect the present in city planning. I designate this concept *layered temporal change*. In this concept, the deeper older layers are just hidden or modified by the placement of newer layers. In the geo-morphology of the city, older layers are always present. Unlike the case of Paris, however, there is no mutual embedding here. With time, one may need to look harder to see these older layers. One can apply this concept to the relative lack of historical buildings in Hong Kong. When one looks closer, one may be thrilled to find a few old buildings that date back to the Qing Dynasty (1644- 1912) among the brand new soaring highrises. The modern skyscrapers are the newer layers, while the old traditional buildings are the older ones hidden in-between. More generally, changes to a cityscape are always permanent. They are like a palimpsest - meaning is inscribed onto a space, which is obliterated as new meanings are inscribed on top of them. Nevertheless, traces of old meanings may yet be found on the same palimpsest. The past pervades the future. It is this understanding that permits us to look at cities as history.

No discussion of change in the cityscape of Hong Kong is complete without discussing *layered spatial change*. We may witness layered spatial change in the case of the harbour reclamation of the Victoria Harbour between the Hong Kong Island and Kowloon Peninsula. If we take a snapshot from above 40 years ago and compare it with that of today, we can see that the geographical line has changed at the waterfront. The landmasses of the Peninsula and the Island are getting bigger and closer towards each other. Lands are reclaimed from the sea, and the Victoria Harbour becomes narrower. (Illustrations 11) As a result of land reclamation, much to the environmentalists' disgust and the real estate developers' delight, more lands are stolen from the Harbour and intensify the pollution problem. Moreover, change is not limited to the waterfront. Buildings and streets well behind the waterfront area have also evolved among some architectural landmarks. As Mies van der Rohe famously put it in the 1920s, "Architecture is the will of the age conceived in spatial terms."⁹ Buildings tell tales. Cities unavoidably reveal their past in their physicality.

⁸ Lefebvre, Henri. *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991.

⁹ Mies van der Rohe, 1920s, quoted in Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990, p. 21.

And years of social endeavour are layered up in the mishmash structures of the urban landscape. In the examples of the Victoria Harbour and its surrounded lands, changes are evident in the spatial dimension throughout the picture. Changes are not limited to the periphery. We can hence understand spatial change as a layered phenomenon from a macroscopic (or panoramic) point of view.

“Great cities are labyrinths of time (past lives, hopes, dreams, despairs), lost in the incomprehensible labyrinths of space.”¹⁰ Compared with older cities such as Paris and Beijing, Hong Kong is relatively young and its history is somehow missing from the labyrinths of city space. Notwithstanding, the history of the city may be comprehensible only from the already mentioned geo-morphological viewpoints. In the modern city of Hong Kong, the city as history is better understood in terms of these two concepts – layered temporal change and layered spatial change. With these two concepts and with snapshots of the city over time, one can then comprehend the historical record contained in these snapshots. One derives the conclusion that, admittedly, Hong Kong is a modern city that survives in terms of *becoming* rather than *being*, and to explore and further develop the aspects of *becoming*, we have to study the discourse of *being*. Cities are searching for a balance between the two – a unity within differences. It is not an easy unity through exclusion but a difficult unity through inclusion. A modern city as Hong Kong has much to learn should it want to achieve this balance.

Hong Kong – The City of Spectacle: A “Scopic Regime of Modernity”

(T)he rocks of the mountain-tops, all crimson and purple with the sunset; and there were bright tongues of fiery cloud burning and quivering about them; and the river, brighter than all, fell in a waving column of pure gold from precipice to precipice, with the double arch of a broad purple rainbow stretched across it, flushing and fading alternately in the wreaths of spray.¹¹

In his children’s story *King of The Golden River*, Ruskin here describes his fantastic view of nature, which educes the images of the panoramic skylines in Hong Kong. (Illustrations 12) The panoramic view of Victoria Harbour embraced by

¹⁰ Ross King quoted in Pile, Steve and Nigel Thrift. eds., *City A-Z*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 134.

¹¹ Ruskin, John. *The King of The Golden River*, London: George Harrap, 1939, p. 25.

glassy skyscrapers and mountain ridgelines is the “frontality” or the façade of Hong Kong. The frontality turns the city scene into an unforgettable monument. It is the most important iconic image of the city. After sunset, the skylines transform into a crystal marsh of shining sights surrounded by a sea of colourful shadows. The city at night is one of the iconic images of modernity, an unashamed display of cinematic spectacles. Zoltán Kósa suggests that, “we have a feeling that the city in daylight is more a pool of traditions, a touch of nostalgia, while its night appearance urges us more towards the goals and wishes of tomorrow.”¹² The Victoria Harbour is a shining symbol of the power of triumphant commercialism. Bright lights display the energy and dynamism of the city. They are markers of progress and development dazzle. A brightly illuminated city at night is a great symbol of civic pride. Lighting and illumination have turned the city into performance stages or film sets.

We may assume that the city spectacle is a representative system of modernity – the emphasis on the immediacy of events and the sensation of spectacles. Modernity connotes an overwhelming sense of fragmentation, ephemerality, and yet glamour. Hong Kong is no doubt a city of spectacle, and that means, it is also a city of modernity, because the city is full of images that are fragmented and transient. The city as spectacle is a pure show. The images of modern city landscape juxtapose pictorial tableaux with urban reality. Looking at a spectacular city is like admiring a montage. The city scene is a play within the play. There are separate elements all fused together into a single spontaneous view. In the study of Hong Kong, the author conducted a questionnaire among the citizens and the foreigners.¹³ The questionnaire aimed to find out these fragmented elements that together accumulated to compose the image of the city. It showed the most spectacular physical elements of the city - well-known urban panoramas staged for spectators, as well as private memoranda. These are summarised and listed as the ten most represented images of Hong Kong.

1. High-rise buildings towering alongside mountainous landscape on the Hong Kong Island - concrete totems built on lush green tropical island, nearly as tall as the

¹² Zoltán Kósa, 1968, quoted by David Gilbert in Pile, Steve and Nigel Thrift, eds., *City A-Z*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 76.

island itself. Evidence shows that skyscrapers are the most spectacular features that people remembered of the city. Towers define the skyline *and* command it. Their size, scale, and density are indeed impressive. Le Corbusier praised the glassy skyscrapers, “Their outlines softened by distance, the sky-scrapers raise immense geometrical facades all of glass, and in them is reflected the blue glory of the sky. An overwhelming sensation. Immense but radiant prisms. ... As twilight falls the glass sky-scrapers seem to flame. This is no dangerous futurism, a sort of literary dynamite flung violently at the spectator. It is a spectacle organized by an Architecture which uses plastic resources for the modulation of forms seen in light.”¹⁴ Skyscrapers symbolize the economic prowess of the city, and are a display of ultimate capitalism. The soaring glassy skyscrapers are the icons of Hong Kong. To visitors and natives alike, these buildings *are* the city, as Notre Dame is in Paris or the Houses of Parliament in London. As Boyer points out, “Representational forms are metonymic figures in which one element is taken for the whole: hence the picture frame stands for traditional society, the panorama for the modern, and the cinema or television screen for the contemporary. Through a process of inversion, these figures of a static order, a totalizing gaze, and a decomposed image become an accepted way of seeing, knowing, and representing the city.”¹⁵ These skyscrapers suggest the identity of the city of which they are a part. Moreover, they make the personalities of the city – they define an urbanity based on the size. The city shows its might by how many buildings it has and how many people are in it, and, more to the point, by how big these buildings can be made to be. The more the role of a city as a vital commercial centre could be expressed through huge buildings, the stronger would be its position. Skyscrapers give Hong Kong an image that is at once familiar and strange. The metropolis is captured by its buildings. It is a montage of fragmented surfaces highlighting a cybernetic intersection of steel, glass, mirror, and concrete, post-industrial and post-modern. Shades of grey and blue surrounded by the harsh tones of white, silver, and black, these surfaces create an alienated space that de-familiarised the viewers. (Illustrations 13)

¹³ Appendix 1.

¹⁴ Le Corbusier. “A Contemporary City”, *The City of Tomorrow*, trans., Frederick Etchells, New York: Paysen and Clark, 1929.

¹⁵ Boyer, M. Christine. *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge London: M. I. T. Press, 1996, p. 33.

2. Victoria Harbour, the busy sea traffic and its stunning night view - the Harbour is a metonymy of the city and an iconic image of modernity. (Illustrations 14)

3. The sheer volume of population – the quintessential frenetic shuffle of people sweltering alongside a bustling, tower-scaped skyline is indeed a spectacular aspect of the city. In *Coriolanus*, Shakespeare said, “What is the city but the people?” Hong Kong has a total population of about 7.2 million people, but only 1,000 square kilometre of total area with a mere 16.7% developed for urban uses. The most crowded district, Mongkok, has a density of more than 66,000 people per square kilometre. Architect Raymond Hood makes the point that: “Congestion is good, ...a man can work within a ten-minute walk of a quarter of a million people. ...Think how this expands the field from which we can choose our friends, our co-workers and contacts, how easy it is to develop a constant interchange of thought.”¹⁶ The city is a marketplace of ideas, a place to which the very idea of congestion is basic - not a barrier to its correct functioning but an enhancement of it. The anarchic city of skyscrapers is not so disturbing: so long as congestion is kept within reason, it can in fact be the catalyst to an enlivened city.

4. Blown-up chromolithographs of billboards and mesmerizing street advertisements – a very dominant feature on the urban landscape of Hong Kong. Commercial advertisement indeed dominates the street façades - from shop window displays to giant neon-light logos on the top of skyscrapers. Every potential space for commercial promotion would fill up with advertising slogans or company labels. The obsession of consumerism is tremendous. In the city, nobody escapes the commercially contrived urban stage sets. (Illustrations 15)

5. The old Kai Tak Airport and its infamous landing – it was once the busiest airport and the challenge of every airline pilot. The old airport was one of the fifteen most difficult landing strips. However, it had the lowest aviation accident rate, and

¹⁶ Raymond Hood quoted in Wright, Henry N. “The Case for the Skyscraper”, *Architectural Forum*, Dec. 1939.

the landing was a great joy ride for daring passengers looking out the windows. Every detail of the city zoomed past at incredible speed and close distance. Planes sank and vanished below the horizon of building tops to far observers, or directly overhead to plane spotters by choice, or residents of poor locations. (Illustration 16)

6. The new Chek Lap Kok International Airport, its associated infrastructures, and Tsing Ma Bridge - they are highly visible and expensive infrastructural monstrosities. The new airport is one of the largest public indoor structures (by floor area) in the world. There are many criticisms that it is way too large to navigate on foot. Some visitors reported having to walk the length of football fields in search of the closest pint-sized dustbin and closet-sized washrooms. The Tsing Ma suspension bridge is an awards-winning structure.¹⁷ It is impressively huge in scale; yet stable enough to carry high-speed trains, and looks as elegant as the Golden Gate Bridge of San Francisco. The Bridge can carry six traffic lanes on top level plus space inside to carry two 135 kilometres per hour high-speed rail tracks and two roadways large enough for double-decker buses. It makes driving to the new airport possible, and provides a scenic route for enthusiastic weekend drivers. Nevertheless, local users also commented that the Bridge leads nowhere but the Airport and a newly built town with hardly anyone in it. (Illustrations 17)

7. The Mass Transit Railway or the Underground, and the Peak Tram experience - the MTR is like any other underground transportation systems but only that of Singapore and Japan can ever get as crowded. It is impressively clean and safe. There are no graffiti or serious crimes, but watch out for suicidal people jumping off the platform because it is a popular method of self-termination. The Peak Tram is a railway that operated since 1888. It carves a steep 373-metre swathe up the mountainside to the Victoria peak. It is one of the steepest rail lines in the world. Passengers feel like being pinned against their seats when the climb is steep. However, the belvedere of the city scenes viewing down from the hill is indeed breathtaking. (Illustrations 18)

¹⁷ The Tsing Ma Bridge was the Supreme Award winner of the British Construction Industry Awards 1997, and other international awards.

8. The new extension of the Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre - witness to the 1997 handover ceremony. It is the second largest convention centre in Southeast Asia. It was specially built as an extension to the existing Convention Centre for hosting the ceremony, and for large local and international exhibitions. Its contemporary architectural style and central harbour front location also turn it into a tourist attraction. The extension juts out a lot into the Harbour because of its sheer size and separately reclaimed island design. Much to the young citizens' delight, its large halls make it one of the few places to be able to return cavernous echoes indoors. (Illustration 19)

9. Narrow roads filled with endless number of double-decker buses - another spectacle scene of the city. Especially in the evening, roads are lit up by street lamps and the head and rear lights of slow moving vehicles. As Baudrillard says, "the extraordinary spectacle of cars moving at the same speed, in both directions, headlights full on in broad daylight, ...coming from nowhere, going nowhere: an immense collective act, rolling along, ceaselessly unrolling, without aggression, without objectives."¹⁸ In the urban centre, the street system in some parts of the city is organized in an orderly way, while crazily woven in the other that hardly serves traffic. Double-decker buses fill up every major street in the small city. Their numbers grow fast and their presence shadows any other type of vehicles on the roads. The franchises tend to overcharge and less well-maintained buses give off fumes of exhaust smoke that account for most of the air pollution. Nevertheless, they provide convenient and much needed public transport for most people, as each bus can move close to one hundred and fifty passengers at a time. Many citizens reported that double-decker journey could be a peculiar experience in the old days. Most drivers are mild now but many of them used to behave like race drivers infamous for their thrill rides. Some buses had their roofs chopped off under a bridge, some flipped over during cornering, and some ran over unsuspected pedestrians waiting at bus stops. If not for the serious accidents, the driving skills of these double-decker bus drivers were actually spectacular - overtaking, turning in narrow winding streets, dodging jaywalkers and cars driven by unpredictable drivers, stopping at bus stops with amazing speed and accuracy. The experience of G-force, bumps, and resulting

nausea because of boarding a wild double-decker was an unforgettable experience of the city. (Illustration 20)

10. Speciality streets nowhere to be found but in Hong Kong - selling ladies fashion, cheap jewellery, antique furniture, computer parts, electrical goods, pet birds and fishes (demolished). These streets are crowded, noisy, chaotic, cluttered but enjoyable and satisfying for keen and undaunted bargain hunters. They are notorious for offering fake designer brands and pirated goods. Moreover, they provide an alternative option for shoppers who are tired of giant indoor shopping malls. (Illustrations 21)

From the survey, it is obvious that Hong Kong is a typical example of a city as spectacle. The play of signs and visual images in the urban landscape are so intense that few people could avoid them. The city may not be historically minded, but this also means that there is little limitation on the style of architecture. Architects may design eclectically, without worrying that their works would aesthetically affect any historical constructions nearby. As Walter Gropius says, "Modern Architecture is not built from some branch of an old tree but is a new plant growing directly from roots."¹⁹ The city became a nest of modern architecture with lots of different styles, some of them are quite experimental but exciting. Most of the interviewees welcome this idea. It is also the case, however, that the city landscape may appear to be overly indulgent in commercialism, and express too much of a monetary ambition. Debord warns that,

(M)oney in its familiar form has dominated society as the representation of universal equivalence, that is, of the exchangeability of diverse goods whose uses are not otherwise compatible; the spectacle in its full development is money's modern aspect; in the spectacle the totality of the commodity world is visible in one piece, as the general equivalent of whatever society as a whole can be and do. The spectacle is money *for contemplation only*, for here the totality of use has already been bartered for the totality of abstract representation.

¹⁸ Baudrillard, Jean. *America*, New York: Verso, 1988, p. 124.

¹⁹ Walter Gropius quoted in Wilson, Colin St John. *Architectural Reflections, Studies in the Philosophy and Practice of Architecture*, Oxford: Butterworth Architecture, 1992, p. 68.

The spectacle is not just the servant of *pseudo-use* - it is already, in itself, the pseudo-use of life.²⁰

The spectacle is by the argument of Debord another facet of money, which is the abstract equivalent of all commodities. A city as spectacle is composed of an eclectic mix of styles, including not only panoramic grandeur but also popular culture and everyday life. Among all, the most dominant feature of the city is commodity consumption. The very act of looking suggests the consumption of images. In the city of spectacle, every image has the potential of a high visibility and a wide market. Hence, the deliberate production of specific images is encouraged. Theatrically staged compositions are selectively programmed and projected into the environment. The resulted cityscape is a thick congealing. As one interviewee puts it, “the people are kind and hardworking, but too many; food is good, but too much; banks are efficient, but too many; shops offer the best kind of designs and bargains, but too many to make a decision.” In Hong Kong, there is a principle of commodity fetishism. The society is obsessed with things whose qualities are “at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses.”²¹ In the society of the spectacle, the perceptible reality is replaced by a set of images that are superior to the reality (because they are idealised or edited for the market demand); yet at the same time impose themselves as *eminently* perceptible. For instance, the products and services promoted by many commercial advertisements in Hong Kong suggest a lifestyle that very few people could afford. However, all these images accumulate to a point that the viewers are alienated from *and* submit to the contemplated object. The more the spectator is exposed to these images, the more readily each identifies personal needs in the images of need proposed by the dominant system. The spectators feel at home nowhere because the spectacle is everywhere. This fetishism of material consumption may undermine other aspects of the society such as cultural and intellectual cultivation. As Georg Simmel maintains, “Whoever has become possessed by the fact that the same amount of money can procure all the possibilities that life has to offer must ... become blasé.”²² The blasé attitude toward other aspects

²⁰ Debord, Guy. *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, New York: Zone Books, 1994, p. 32-3.

²¹ Debord, *ibid.*, p. 26.

²² Georg Simmel, *Philosophy of Money* quoted by Paetzold in Miles, Malcolm., Tim Hall and Iain Borden. eds., *The City Culture Reader*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 213.

of civil life also shows in the city landscape of Hong Kong – lack of museums, galleries, theatres, and other cultural centres.

In short, the city as spectacle shapes the perception of the spectators by visual images. The most obvious benefit of this approach is tourism. Tourism is a characteristic of the city of spectacle. Spectacular urban landscapes, events, and experiences attract tourism. In Hong Kong, tourism is one of the major financial resources.²³ Besides urban panoramas, exciting city life, and shopping experiences, tourists are more interested in rich local characters. Hence, to cater for the interest of tourists in the indigenous and oriental culture, cultural attractions and heritage preservation projects are emphasised. Tourists desire to experience cultural differences. Culture in whatever guise has always sold. To convey cultural meaning for others, cities must search for what has most meaning for them. Some cities would look for the representation of culture and the popularisation of specific pasts. For example, the Flagstaff House Museum of Tea Ware enhances the understanding and interpretation of the colonial life in the territory. Western Market is a place where heritage, art, and merchandise are fused together. The ambience of a colonial architecture but is actually a themed shopping mall. The historical background of the building has little relation to its current function. People visit the Market to sell and to shop but devoid of all social or historical context. (Illustration 22) These examples demonstrate the cultural values and the sense of aesthetic that have constructed the urban environment of Hong Kong. However, they also suggest that the problems faced by the heritage industry are an entrenched disregard for interpreting and conserving the past of Hong Kong, and a narrow focus on rural relics and urban buildings of pre-World War One vintage. And these historical conservation and restoration sites mostly fail to explain the social contexts of that period, which are capable of articulating a diversity of colonial experience.

Although a city of spectacle is enchanting and glamorous, it also comes with its negativity, such as the threat to personal freedom due to the “all-seeing power”. The all-seeing power is a feature that commonly exists in the city as spectacle. In

Paris, the flattening of medieval courts, dark alleys, labyrinthine rookeries, and narrow streets of the nineteenth century, and the construction of open spaces allowed a total visibility that made possible the surveillance logic of Haussmann. In Hong Kong, there are few open spaces, but surveillance is still a part of the everyday lives of the dwellers. Shopping malls, car parks, road junctions, underground stations, gas stations, hotels, and office lobbies are all guarded by surveillance cameras. They are sniper zones of vision, waiting for the *unusual* activities such as crimes, immediately shooting their evidence down on to tapes. The currently popular open-planned office space, glass divided panels and walls used in interior decoration are tactics that undermine privacy. Automated surveillance allows intense electronic scrutiny of cityscapes and city life. It is a way to manage urban spaces similar to that of shopping malls. The surveillance system in modern cityscape satisfies the demand from some people who fear a world of strangers. They have a paranoid demand to be watched over, or at least to feel that they are being watched over. The urban experience is subjected to close scrutiny, investigation, and even exclusion. Looking is a form of expectancy, as a noticing of the unusual, the different. The authorities stipulates who belongs where and when, and treats everything and everyone beyond their *standards* as a suspicious abnormal *other*, who should be disciplined, scrutinised, and controlled. Norris and Armstrong term these standards as “normative ecology”.²⁴ The normative ecology embedded in the operation of city imposes criteria for allocating and withdrawing services or access. Iain Borden comments, “We can be closed to the public but open to the corporate world. Ultimately, we are heading for the disembodiment of the eye, the eye of power, the state as cyborg, the privilege of vision as a technical device.”²⁵ The security systems create a condition in which citizens are imprisoned by their own watchful eyes. In a city of spectacle, every space is probably a “panopticon”²⁶ - people are never sure when or where they are watched. The street itself becomes the watcher, the

²³ There are about 12.5 millions of tourists in the year 2000, who spent about US\$7.7 billion in the city. See Hong Kong Tourism Board statistics: <http://partnernet.hktourismboard.com/dev/hkta.asp> (10/10/01)

²⁴ Norris, C. and G. Armstrong. *The Social Construction of Suspicion*, A report to the ESRC, 1997.

²⁵ Iain Borden quoted in Pile, Steve and Nigel Thrift, eds., *City A-Z*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 36.

²⁶ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish, the Birth of the Prison*, trans., Alan Sheridan, Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1979.

panopticon. Davis calls this all-seeing power the “militarization of city life”.²⁷ People are not sure if a dozen prying eyes behind the screens observe them. The uncertainty becomes a kind of self-surveillance.²⁸ Moreover, in a highly transparent society, there is little space for individual to sustain his or her own privacy. Another discomfort in the city is that people leave digital tracks while moving through and among cities - credit cards, medical records, tax returns, insurance companies all have detail personal information on computer. The use and abuse of our electronic personas subtly redefine our relationships with cities. With all the electronic records and surveillance, it is difficult to tell if people are still enjoying civil liberty and personal freedom. When we look at cities, cities also look back at us.

Another negative aspect of the city of spectacle, as mentioned earlier, is the blasé attitude resulting from over-stimulation and from passivity. In the city, there are countless images piling on top of each other. All these images stimulate the nerves of individuals to their utmost reactivity until they cannot react at all. Berman maintains that, “modernity: its power to generate forms of “outward show,” brilliant designs, glamorous spectacles, so dazzling that they can blind even the most incisive self to the radiance of its own darker life within.”²⁹ The resulted blasé attitude and passivity are psychic phenomena in the metropolitan life. Besides, cities offer “Two forms of invisibility. That which is not seen because it is unknown. And that which is not seen because it is known too well but does not belong. And that rare place, somewhere in between, where vision is possible for a moment.”³⁰ In big cities, the crowd is a familiar scene. People may observe the crowd or melt away within it. It is so unavoidable that many people choose to ignore its existence. Blank faces look past each other in the crowd. There are objects in the city that are seen or half-seen. A skill that big city dwellers are familiar with is *not* to look. People may choose what is visible to them - stealing a glance at a newspaper or a person. At the same time, they do not see a homeless ^{person} asking for money, or a person shouting on the street.

²⁷ Davis, Mike. 1946, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, London: Pimlico, 1998.

²⁸ On surveillance in cities, see Staples, William G. *The Culture of Surveillance, Discipline and Social Control in the United States*, New York: St. Martin's, 1997. Lyon, David. *The Electronic Eye: The Rise of Surveillance Society*, Cambridge: Polity, 1994.

²⁹ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1983, p. 138.

This is the blasé manner of seeing, but not being seen, in the city. Finally, the most important problem faced by Hong Kong as a city of spectacle is the risk of being a beauty without depth, a glossy skin without density. Abbas has critically analysed the cultural space of Hong Kong, suggesting that the fancy architecture upholds the metropolitan space. Architecture, he contends, “has the dangerous potential of turning all of us, locals and visitors alike, into *tourists* gazing at a stable and monumental image.”³¹ The city landscape is full of filmic images, yet is ephemeral. It is a form with little content. To move beyond that, Hong Kong may consider building up the city as a work of art.

Hong Kong – The City of A Work of Art: A Play of Seduction

(L)ying, the telling of beautiful untrue things, is the proper aim of art.
- Oscar Wilde, *The Decay of Lying*.³²

Things are because we see them. What we see and how we see them, our gaze is influenced by arts. To look at a thing is very different from seeing a thing. Looking is a mere physical action. Seeing is an intellectual thing – we do not see anything until we see its content, such as beauty. For instance, when people see fog, it is more than just fog, poets and painters have taught them the romantic and mysterious loveliness of such effects. Art also has an incomparable and unique effect in city landscape. From paintings to postcards, through the eyes of photographers and artists, the banality of daily life in a city - street markets, skyscrapers, and even the sheer volume of people - becomes objects of beauty. These paintings and postcards are always perfectly arranged and dramatically coloured. They may not be truthful to reality but they suggest an ideal image from an aesthetic point of view. And this ideal is a form of *seduction*. There is always a seductive quality in arts. It is the nature of arts to produce very attractive but elusive images. These ideal meanings (the content) suggest that art is more important than its physical reality (the form of arts).

³⁰ John Law and Ivan da Costa Marques quoted in Pile, Steve and Nigel Thrift, eds., *City A-Z*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 121.

³¹ Abbas, Ackbar. *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 65.

³² Wilde, Oscar. “The Decay of Lying”, *Collected Works of Oscar Wilde*, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1997.

The play of seduction is very important in the city as a work of art. The city embodies a very different type of art because it contains non-art.³³ To begin with, city and its architecture, in their complete sense, are economic organisation and institutional process. They seem to fit the Modernist's formula of "function x economics" for production³⁴. Their existence originates from functions and needs. They are the geographic plexus or physical frame for domestic and economic activities. Rowe calls the city and its architecture the "scaffold for exhibition demonstration."³⁵ They are the theatre for social interactions. The city functions in order to communicate, not communicates to function (except the case of Las Vegas). Besides, architecture and township planning are built under the guidelines of plans and established systems. Therefore, their results can be predicted. They thus contrast with the accidental (the unpredictable effect) nature of other forms of art. At the same time, however, the city and its architecture also have the characteristics of art. This is because they foster human culture and express the collective will of a period and a culture. Wittgenstein said: "the city expresses a thought."³⁶ This "thought" may be what Mumford calls "the aesthetic symbol of collective unity".³⁷ Here he means that the city is the artful expression of the more sublimated urges of human culture - the collective experience of the bourgeois, the collective memory and dream of the people, and the collective ambition of the authorities. Mumford has made the point that: "The city fosters art and is art, the city creates the theatre and is the theatre."³⁸ It is in this theatre of city that urban dramas – purposive activities, personalities, events, groups, etc. – are formulated and savoured. Concisely, the city and its architecture are unique forms of art. They are functional settings on the one hand, and contain symbolic expressions on the other. Hence, their nature is systematic, but complex and random at the same time. Moreover, city and architecture are public art – as the collective expression of a society and a culture. However, they are also private art – as they embodied private memories, dreams, and nightmares of individuals. The city as a unique type of art has its unique attraction.

³³ See Chapter Two – City as A Work of Art, on the differentiation between art and craft.

³⁴ Schnaidt, Claude. ed., "Building: 1928," *Hannes Meyer: Buildings, Projects and Writings*, Tiranti, 1965.

³⁵ Colin, Rowe & Fred Koetter. *Collage City*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978, p. 136.

³⁶ Wittgenstein, Ludwig. 1930, *Culture and Value*, Basil Blackwell, 1989, p. 22.

³⁷ Lewis Mumford cited by Paetzold in Miles, Malcolm. Tim Hall and Iain Borden. eds., *The City Culture Reader*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 211.

“Does the scaffold dominate the exhibits? Or do the exhibits overwhelm the scaffold?”³⁹ Rowe asks. The use of *seduction* in the city as a work of art is a way for the city to present the cultural context of its inhabitants without dominating it.

Modern cities are the art of the twentieth century. Ironically, rapid urbanization had long been viewed as an object of shame in the earlier centuries. This was because the movement of rapid urban agglomeration might only be justified by the drive of generating wealth. After all, money is a vulgar thing. Nevertheless, modern metropolitans are now considered worthy of admiration and serious study as the scientific, the economic, and the aesthetic achievement of human effort. Hong Kong is a modern metropolis that attracts the talents and the ambitious. It provides the concentration of ideas and the opportunities of sociability. At the same time, the city as a work of art also manifests its seductive nature. This seduction is a play of modernity: kitsch, fun, dream, and illusion.

Modernity may apply to Hong Kong in terms of its overwhelming sense of ephemerality and change. It suggests a commitment to change and the drive of novelty. There is indeed a strong drive towards novelty in Hong Kong. The city intends to build up an image as the newest city in the world. The city would not allow itself to be seen as decrepit. Any area with dilapidated tenements or squalid neighbourhoods is considered unsuitable to the city image. They are systematically torn down and replaced by skyscrapers, which have colourful external walls and are surrounded by greenery, parks, or water features. Examples are plenty, such as the Jubilee Street Development Scheme, Tsui Ping Estate Redevelopment Project (Illustrations 23)

Modernity is the most powerful form of seduction. The lifestyle it suggests is rich in marvellous subjects, which envelops and soaks citizen like an atmosphere. They are the experience of space and time, of the self and others, of the possibilities and perils of life. Modern environment (big cities) suggests adventure, power, joy, growth, and glamorous lifestyle. These experiences are accessible to everyone since

³⁸ Mumford, *ibid.*, p. 211.

³⁹ Colin, Rowe & Fred Koetter. *Collage City*, Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978, p. 136.

modernity cuts across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology. In this sense, modernism seems to deliver “unity” to us. Nevertheless, modernity has also been criticised as “a paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity,”⁴⁰ because it threatens to undermine what we have, what we know, and who we are. And it pours us all into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish. From the perspective of art, there is the suggestion that the universal and the eternal also present within the ephemeral and the fleeting forms of beauty in modernity.⁴¹ In addition, the excitement and fascination resulting from its contradiction and fragmentation is also seductive. Cities have contradictory and incommensurable logics exactly because they embody paradoxical and ambivalent elements. Bradbury agreed that modernism is “an extraordinary compound of the futurist and the nihilistic, the revolutionary and the conservative, the naturalistic and the symbolic, the romantic and the classical.”⁴² Modernity is a celebration of the technological age, and at the same time, a condemnation of it. Modernity escapes the old regime of culture (historicism), but also expresses the fear and despair of lacking it. “The absolute rejection of style”, Adorno states famously, “becomes itself a form of style.”⁴³ The modern city has never been a linear progression. There is always the contradiction, conflicts, and ambiguities from which co-operation and unity arise. Modernity is unity within disunity. Baudrillard said: “The whole aesthetic and rhetorical system of seduction, of taste, of charm, of theatre, but also of contradictions, of violence always re-appropriated by speech, by play, by distance, by artifice.”⁴⁴ Modern cities are always theatrical and ambiguous. Their hereditary cultures are always faintly contradict and ridiculous. However, modernity has the ability to justify itself by the play of seduction.

From another perspective, modernity also implies *kitsch*. Kitsch is a concept about deception and self-deception. Rosenberg defines kitsch as “a) art that has

⁴⁰ Berman, Marshall. *All that is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity*, London: Verso, 1982, p. 15.

⁴¹ Baudelaire, Charles. “The Painter of Modern Life,” *Selected Writings on Art and Artists*, New York: Harmondsworth, 1972.

⁴² Bradbury, M. and McFarlane, J. *Modernism, 1890- 1930*, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 46.

⁴³ Adorno, Theodore W. “Functionalism Today”, trans., Jane Newman and John Smith, *Oppositions*, No. 17, Summer 1979, pp. 30- 41.

established rules; b) art that has a predictable audience, predictable effects, predictable rewards.”⁴⁵ A good example is tourist art. The seduction in the city as a work of art often relates to a dramatized or idealized forms of a culture. By doing so, it deploys the technique of kitsch. During economic expansion, cities may take the presence of kitsch as a sign of modernization. When the market is profitable and the technology is possible, pseudo-art and pseudo-culture blossom. Regional art and culture are reproduced and marketed to the tourists. Kitsch suggests commercial availability. Not only cultural monuments but also landscape can be *kitschified* and advertised to attract tourism. Eye-pleasing landscapes and objects are accessible to anyone who can afford and is ready to pay for it. Beauty may be bought and sold. Art becomes objects of recreation and entertainment that are accessible with fast and predictable effects. In modern cities, the number of consumer increases quickly but opulent and fastidious consumers are scarce. Therefore, production is devoted to a large quantity of superficial art objects of high rapidity. Artists produce numerous but the merit of each production is diminished. The artists cultivate pretty and elegant objects that are considered suitable for the market. In short, appearance is more attended to than reality.⁴⁶ Notwithstanding, the aesthetic based on appearances may lead to the deterioration in artistic standards, because of the lack of content in form. For instance, the eclecticism of architecture in a city such as Las Vegas may be a form of aesthetic overkill. The dizzying cityscape is a futile display and a perfect kitsch.⁴⁷ Las Vegas may be the exemplary city of kitsch, but it is also an outstanding model of seduction. At dusk, Las Vegas rises from the desert with its radiance of commercialism, and returns to the desert when dawn breaks. The commercial display may brighten and decorate the exterior of hotel buildings. Notwithstanding, it also reduces everything into a glittering surface constructed upon illusions. All the streets, the facades, the architectures, the money, are absorbed into a euphoria⁴⁸ that visitors would not exchange for anything else. The city is an empty but inescapable

⁴⁴ Baudrillard, Jean. *America*, London: Verso, 1988, p. 123.

⁴⁵ Rosenberg, Harold. “Pop Culture: Kitsch Criticism”, *The Tradition of the New*, 2nd ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965, p. 266.

⁴⁶ Tocqueville, Alexis de. *Democracy in America*, trans., Henry Reeve, New York: Schocken, 1961, p. 59- 60.

⁴⁷ Fry, Roger. “Art and Socialism”, *Vision and Design*, London: Chatto & Windus, 1920, pp. 36- 55.

⁴⁸ The liquidation of all objects in an environ into an ideal, reminds us of Marx’s “all that is solid melts into air.”

form of seduction. People can dream of themselves as indeed rich and famous even for just a moment. Sontag comments on kitsch: "It is beautiful *because* it is awful."⁴⁹

Kitsch is also one of the hottest pursuits in Hong Kong. It implies a sociological and psychological expression of a particular lifestyle. It is the lifestyle of the middle class - promising career, business trips, holidays, exciting social life, endless entertainment, nice house, nice garden, modern household electrical appliances, and nice car – all of which appeals to both the upper and the working classes. It is an ideal lifestyle for that society. All the commercial ^{ert}advertisements promote it. People are seduced into the pursuance of the lifestyle. Sometimes people hope to appear what they are not, and make great exertions to succeed in this object. Many people look for the prestige suggested by kitsch. They enjoy the illusion of prestige and their pleasure does not stop there. Calinescu claims that, "What constitutes the essence of kitsch is probably its open-ended indeterminacy, its vague "hallucinatory" power, its spurious dreaminess, its promise of an easy "catharsis."⁵⁰ In a sense, it is as if kitsch, consciously acknowledged and pursued, would outdo itself and become rather tasteful. Kitsch satisfies the easiest and most popular taste. Under the guise of a celebrity kind of lifestyle, even the middle class themselves are attracted by the pleasures provided by the most awful kitsch. Veblen famously called this attitude "conspicuous leisure" and "conspicuous consumption".⁵¹ He meant one consumes for the sake of ostentation. This attitude may lead to a widespread corruption of taste into prestige seeking and display. Kitsch reduces art to a signifier of wealth, and invests fake art with aesthetic prestige.

Furthermore, kitsch is a pleasurable escape from the drabness of modern quotidian life. Kitsch objects promote themselves by inviting possession and suggesting ready pleasure. Kitsch provides instant pleasure. In a fast growing modern economy like Hong Kong, people and events change frequently. This

⁴⁹ Sontag, Susan. "Notes on Camp", *Against Interpretation*, New York: Dell, Laurel Edition, 1969, pp. 277- 293.

⁵⁰ Calinescu, Matei. *Five Faces of Modernity - Modernism, Avant-Garde, Decadence, Kitsch, Postmodernism*, USA: Duke University Press, 1987, p. 228. Theodore Adorno also called kitsch the "parody of catharsis" that is the parody of aesthetic consciousness.

widespread sense of short encounters makes immediate enjoyment a reasonable thing to strive for. People want to have fun. In their spare time, they want relief from both boredom and effort simultaneously. A fully conscious experience of art is possible only to those who can afford the time, money, and energy. The cheap commercial entertainment provided by kitsch may satisfy dual desires. On the one hand, it induces relaxation because it is patterned and pre-digested. On the other hand, kitsch fulfils the pleasure of enjoying art (even if it is a fake one). The environment of kitsch is flooded with pre-digested superficial images. The viewers passively absorb everything that does not require any effort to understand. A maximum excitement is therefore achieved through minimum effort. This effortless enjoyment is ideal for busy city dwellers. This may be achieved by, for instance, the use of imitation as a deceptive strategy. It is an effortless approach to reach a ready-made market. For example, seeing the success of the Fisherman's Wharf and Cable Car in San Francisco, planners in Hong Kong proposed to build the same tourist attractions,⁵² while simply ignoring the environment and the traffic condition of the city that are not suitable for such projects.

"Kitsch is essentially an aesthetic system of mass communication," said Moles.⁵³ In a bourgeois society, it is normal to go through the passage of kitsch to reach the genuine. The majority members of mass society find kitsch pleasurable. And through the seduction of pleasure, they may reach a higher level of exigency and learn to appreciate art. In this sense, the relationship between art and kitsch is ambiguous. In a way, kitsch promotes art and beauty. It helps them to reach a wide audience. The audience may ultimately become aware that art and beauty, even when exploited and misused, retain their aesthetic truth and value. The fool may finally realize his foolishness and becomes wise. The audiences of kitsch may be more receptive to the experience of coming upon a real art and beauty.

⁵¹ Veblen, Thorstein. 1899, *Theory of the Leisure Class: An Economic Study of Institutions*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1925. see also Adorno, Theodore W. "Veblen's Attack on Culture," *Studies in Philosophy and Social Science*, No. 9, 1941, p. 401.

⁵² For more information on proposed tourist attractions, refer to webpage: http://www.info.gov.hk/planning/p_stud...g_s/harbour/harbour-dig-web/vision.htm

⁵³ Moles, Abraham A. *Le Kitsch: l'art du bonheur*, Paris: Mame, 1971, p. 74.

Hong Kong, the city as a work of art, seduces its audiences by *fun*. Everyone knows that cities are fun. Bright lights, colourful crowds, exciting entertainment, and endless consumption are indeed irresistible. Bhattacharyya says, “when I’ve got worries I can always go - downtown. ... All that strolling, sitting, watching, snacking, flirting, chatting, all that pleasure-leisure hurly-burly of the urban funscape.”⁵⁴ Fun is available in a certain period of the day and a certain location in the city. After a whole day’s work, away from home, fun begins in the city. Fun is possible not only because of the urban landscape, but also because of people, and Hong Kong has a lot of them. City is fun because every time people go out, they may meet somebody. The encounter with strangers is an adventurous experience. In the city centre, every new face that turns to us may be a potential source of excitement. Citizens can go downtown not only to see people, but also to display themselves and be seen by others, which is indeed an exciting and erotic experience. The city becomes an endless playground. Citizens are wrapped up in their make-believe characters – as youth in game centres, as performer in karaokes, as dancer in discos, as rich and famous in hotel lobbies or high-class restaurants, etc. There are endless activities and games available in city. City has always been a site of excitement. Mumford regards the city as a stage-set, which is well designed in order to intensify and underline the people and events take place.⁵⁵ Encountering new people and events contain a certain level of risk. Risk is, after all, also part of the challenge in a city. The possibility of danger and the danger of possibility combine to provide the fun and excitement of modern mega-urbanity. Furthermore, buildings are fun because they tell tales. The city unavoidably reveals its characters in its physical settings. Years of social endeavour are layered up in urban landscape. The mishmash structures of the city are free to look at and fun to explore. Besides, shopping is fun. Consumption requires cash that many, if not most, do not have. However, looking costs nothing and shop windows are plentiful. The city of Hong Kong is a great exhibit of products all around the globe. Almost nobody in the city can escape the seduction of shopping and consumption. The city is an environment

⁵⁴ Bhattacharyya quoted in Pile, Steve and Nigel Thrift. eds., *City A-Z*, London, New York: Routledge, 2000, p. 79.

⁵⁵ Mumford, Lewis. “What is a City?” *Architectural Record*, LXXXII, November 1937. See also Whyte, William. *City: Rediscovering the Center*, New York: Anchor Books, 1988. And Jacobs, Allan and Donald Appleyard. “Toward an Urban Design Manifesto”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 1987. They urged planners to fulfil the desire of people for “fantasy and exoticism”.

that crams with sensual experience intensively. People may find a dozen points of interest in every street of the city centre - the noise, the smell, the colour, the texture, and the taste of a global assembly of creations. What can be more seductive?

Moreover, what is unusual about the city of Hong Kong is that, as a commercially-oriented place, it also has the capacity within which dreams and illusions survive. After Paris and Tokyo, Hong Kong will be the third foreign city to build a Disney theme park.⁵⁶ The Park is to be opened by 2005, including a 1,400-room Disney-themed resort hotel complex and a retail, dining, and entertainment centre at the Penny's Bay on Lantau Island (near the new Hong Kong Chek Lap Kok Airport). Each Disney Park is a fictionalised funscape. In Hong Kong, there is always the love of fiction, fantasy, dream, and illusion. People adore cute, imagined, but unreal images such as cartoon and comic. The aesthetic of Disney Park is entirely subsumed under the category of cute. Cute is mindless, it does not require any mental effort to understand. A visit to the Disney Park is ostensibly for children, or tourists and visitors who then are ascribed the status of children. Since the infantile taste of cute things is not obligated to any aesthetic rules, aesthetic inadequacy simply does not apply to it. Nevertheless, kitsch exploits this taste and Disney Park is a creation of the kitsch culture after all. Macdonald explains that the reason for adults admiring childish taste, the "merging of the child and grown-up audience", is the "(1) infantile regression of the latter, who, unable to cope with the strains and complexities of modern life, escape via *kitsch* (and the) (2) "overstimulation" of the former, who grow up too fast.⁵⁷ Maybe these are the results of growing up in an overcrowded modern city. Childhood often ends very soon, or if there is a real childhood at all. Young children^{ren} are exposed to the grow-up world too much too fast. This deprives the child of developing and exploring the world on their own pace. When they grow up, they often fantasize a revised childhood, an ideal childhood that is blended with adult longings. There is a part in adults that longs to return to childhood. Disney exploits that longing in the use of "psychoanalysis in reverse". Adorno defines the concept as the use of psychoanalysis to understand

⁵⁶ www.info.gov.hk/disneyland/indexe.htm (January 16, 2002)

⁵⁷ Macdonald, Dwight. "A Theory of Mass Culture", *Mass Culture*, eds., Bernard Rosenberg and D. M. White, New York: Free Press, 1964, p. 66.

people – not to help them, but to trap them.⁵⁸ Going to Disney Park and being surrounded by infantile objects is a psychological relief to them. The Park is not a creation aimed specifically at children. It is gauged only to one audience: the Disney audience - the audience is made of parts of people; “of the deathless, precious, ageless, absolutely primitive remnant of something in every world-racked human being which makes us play with children’s toys and laugh without self-consciousness at silly things, and sing in bathtubs, and dream... You know, the Mickey in us.”⁵⁹ Re-living childhood may help people to relax from everyday stress of living in a big city, and indulge in things that do not require any mental effort to understand.

Besides, people go to Disney Park pretending they are young and childlike. Nobody is different or stands out from the crowd. People are often afraid to be different as well as *not* different from others. Disney Park seduces the visitors by the phenomenon of a *homogenized* culture. In this culture, the differences of age, intelligentsia, and social class become irrelevant. It is one mass culture with a mass unified audience, whose tastes and emotional needs are tactfully manipulated. For instance, there is no class distinction. Class distinctions are minimized and ignored, because the poor have been screened out of the Park by the price of admission. There is also no politics. The goal of social control is ambulation. With crowds moving all the time, it matters little that individuals are allowed to make their own choices about what to do there. This participation without social change is like an audience with a powerful religious or a political leader. And it invokes the child’s version of the adult *treat* - visitors are given the honour of a special occasion, whether or not it is satisfying is irrelevant, because the treat is its own reward.⁶⁰ In sum, there is no negative reality in Disney Park. The urban environment of Disneyland offers a *sanitized* environment free from the energy crisis and gas lines, free of pathological forms produced by an inequitable and class society such as slums, ghettos, and crimes. It is a safe place in all dimensions in contrast to the security precautions taken by average citizens even in the privacy of their own homes. Disneyland

⁵⁸ Adorno, Theodore W., *The Popular Arts in America, Television and Patterns of Mass Culture*, eds., Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White, New York: Free Press, 1957.

⁵⁹ Perrault, 1933 cited by Schickel, Richard. *The Disney Version, The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1968, p. 158.

⁶⁰ Gottdiener, M. “Disneyland - A Utopian Urban Space”, *Urban Life: A Journal of Ethnographic Research*, Vol. 11, No. 2, July 1982, p. 152-3.

embraces people in the bosom of a paternal corporate order. It entertains them and stimulates the externalisation of their private fantasy lives. Live action can pop out at passer-by almost anywhere and at any time. Visitors assume the status of a pedestrian wanderer and participate in a festival of self-directed entertainments. This is especially true for children who get to taste this freedom perhaps for the first time. In a way, Disneyland is a utopian environment. It possesses the “illuminating potentiality” of a space occupied by the symbolic and the imaginary, in which something fantastic can be and usually is always happening.⁶¹ The only appropriate attire in the Park is the uniform of play, of being a tourist. Visitors park outside and line up in queues inside, then they are altogether abandoned at the exit. This is a qualitative departure from the work uniforms of everyday life. Disneyland is an imaginary utopian urban space. It invokes no work or worry, and dispels the banality of everyday living.

In a city as a work of art, the beauty of everyday life is expressed on the one hand. A utopian vision emerges as ideal dreams and elusive images on the other, which reality is simply not important. In an imaginary environment such as Disney Park, these images have no obvious referent in reality. It is difficult to locate reality behind the onrush of images. From the perspective of works of art, what is culturally, if not psychologically, hallucinatory is the confusion between copy and original. Jameson calls the situation “a breakdown of the signifying chain,”⁶² in which images become independent from how their meaning relates to reality. They become free-floating signifiers in their own right. Baudrillard refers to the images as “models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal”.⁶³ Models are fabricated to signify a reality but in fact have no referent. These models are simulacra of identical copies for which no original ever existed. Thus, a hyperreality is constructed. It is made of simulacra that stand in for the real thing. “The real is not only what can be reproduced, *but that which is always already reproduced.* The hyperreal.”⁶⁴ The

⁶¹ Lefebvre, Henri. 1974, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 423.

⁶² Jameson, Fredric. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, London: Verso, 1991, p. 18.

⁶³ Baudrillard, Jean. *Simulations*, trans., Paul Foss, Paul Patton and Philip Beitchman, New York: Semiotext, 1983, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Baudrillard, *ibid.*, 1983, p. 146.

distinction of the signifier and the reality is thus dedifferentiated. The fake stands in for the real and the real is increasingly apprehended through simulacra, as hyperreality. For instance, in Disney Park, as in many other theme environments, desirable elements are exaggerated while negative ones are eliminated. Therefore, an ideal environmental model is produced though it has no basis in reality. "Just as the whole of American society is built in Disneyland's image, so the whole of American society is conducting, in real time and in the open air, the same experiment as Biosphere 2, which is therefore a fake experiment, just as Disneyland is a fake imaginary."⁶⁵ The Park, in a way, represents an American way of life, values, and an idealized transposition of a contradictory reality. Although Disney Park represents a fake utopia, it becomes an ideal model for American society. That is, a hyperreal America is constructed on an ideal model city, a simulacrum, a self-referential kitsch, which is the Disneyland. Bryson comments that Euro Disneyland is "the world as it should be."⁶⁶ Visitors to the Park care little that the utopia they find is fakery. They visit Disneyland and know that they are enclosed within an ideal dream, while reality may only disappoint them.

Notwithstanding, it is important to note that Disneyland is a utopian space in the Lefebvrian sense, not a candidate for status as a utopian community. According to historian Robert V. Hine, a true utopian community possesses the long-term commitment of its residents to the realization of its ideals.⁶⁷ In this sense, Disney Park is not a utopian community, but a *temporary* collective illusion of people consuming a utopian space. This is more akin to Lefebvre's "isotopia".⁶⁸ The Park is a staged setting with many contradictions. For example, it is monetarily free despite the fact that visitors have to pay admission. It is existentially free despite sophisticated crowd control and motivational techniques. "It has food without nourishment, shelter without practical function, grassroots politics without social

⁶⁵ Baudrillard, J. "Hyperreal America," *Economy and Society*, No. 22, 1993, pp. 249- 250.

⁶⁶ Bryson, Bill. "Of Mice and Millions," *Observer Magazine*, 28 March, 1993, p. 16.

⁶⁷ Hine, Robert V. 1921, *California's Utopian Colonies*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966.

⁶⁸ Lefebvre, Henri. 1974, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991.

change, and the classless society, but only because the lower strata have been screened out at the ticket booths by the price of admission.”⁶⁹

In Disney Park, it is clear that everything that can be derived from the imaginary has been represented and materialised, then put on display and made accessible. Literally putting it on show for consumption is obviously a radical deterrent to the imaginary. The utopia suggested by Disney Park is a reality in disguise. We may look at Disney Park from a socio-semiological angle. In a general sense, the production process of Disneyland is linked with the larger society that contains it. To build a Disney Park in Hong Kong is a signification of the capitalist development of the city, and an “Americanization” of its contemporary culture. The American, capitalist, social formation, the separate realms may be viewed as corresponding to the various states of capital, or, rather, as linked with the different expression of capital throughout the historical development of capitalism in the United States. This associative link exists at the connotative level of signification, that is, the spaces of the Park connote such meanings *not* by their function, but by their appearance and, thus, become metaphors. These spaces are the metaphor of the fantasy world of bourgeois ideology. The Hong Kong Disney Park is a documentary of the development of the different faces and manifestations of capitalism in the city. Therefore, the Park is produced by the formal representation of this ideology, articulated with the processes of urban construction and real estate development in Hong Kong.

After all, Disneyland is more than just a showplace of capitalist images. It consists of two overlapping but somewhat contradictory semantic fields - one is the ideological representation of the faces of capitalism, and the other, the personalized expression of its creator, Walt Disney. Barthes calls this articulation “a *meta-linguistic* construct”.⁷⁰ He means that space defined by capitalism is articulated by space as interpreted from the personalized referent of an idealized youth. That is, Disneyland is over-determined with meaning and mythical in forms. The two separate semiotic fields are one personal and the other specific to the current social

⁶⁹ Gottdiener, M. “Disneyland - A Utopian Urban Space”, *Urban Life: A Journal of Ethnographic Research*, Vol. 11, No. 2, July 1982, p. 161.

formation, which play themselves out in the constructed space of the Park. The Park is a commercial corporation that connects with other corporations. At the same time, it is also the artistic creation of an exceptional talent. Maybe this explains the reason of the Park being capable of entertaining millions of people.

There is an emancipatory potential in the city as a work of art. Art, through its autonomy, offers a vision of an alternative world, a better world. After romanticism, it proved capable of negating reified consciousness and, sometimes undermining the dominant order. Nevertheless, only autonomous art, that required the participation of the audience, could offer this resistance. Therefore, we may distinguish between a work of art and the production of the culture industry whose aim is mainly that of distraction and entertainment.

Hong Kong – The City of Corporate Image: Post-Industrial Corporatism

There is nothing more difficult to carry out, nor more doubtful of success, nor more dangerous to handle, than to initiate a new order of things.

- Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*.

Hong Kong is much publicized as an arresting global capitalist showcase displaying spectacle and fantasy. Its images of glittering skyline and architectural sign designate the city as “the Oriental Pearl”. Global space, “the level of the system which has the broadest extension - namely the ‘public’ level of temples, palaces and political and administrative buildings”,⁷¹ is constructed to accommodate the demands of the international capital flows. Examples are the magnificent banking buildings in the Central District, the fancy shopping arcades, the international franchised hotels, and the multinational office buildings. Through the visual power of this global space, the image of a global city and its allegedly free, open space are suggested. Notwithstanding, the sense of wealth and freedom derived through such transgression is ephemeral and illusory. They are subjected to external influences and changes. This aspect may be understood through the relationship between economy and city planning.

⁷⁰ Barthes, Roland. *Mythologies*, New York: Hill & Wang, 1972.

⁷¹ Lefebvre, Henri. 1974, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991, p. 155.

Before large corporations arrived in strength, Hong Kong (1950's to 1970's) was an industrial city that relied on light manufacture and *entrepôt*. The industrial city was a "private city"⁷², built by unregulated capitalism. The policy in general was a *laissez faire* one. Industrialists and politicians worked separately. The government provided some basic infrastructures such as roads and sewage systems, but actual interventions were minimal. Land planning was carried out sporadically and with little involvement from the public (citizens) and the economic sectors (businessmen, industrialists). The most pressing needs at this time was factory space and low-cost housing for industrial labourers. Manufacturing production was organized in small to medium scale, which were capable of changing quickly from one product to another in accordance with market demands. Small individual factories required flexible space but small workshop units. The purposely-built multi-storey factory estates were in shortage to accommodate their fast growing number. As a result, some of the small factories were forced to establish in residential buildings or squatter areas. The same squatter areas also became the homes for factory workers who could not afford housing in the private market.

When cities expanded, the economy moved from an industrial to a post-industrial era,⁷³ in which capital is generated through communication, information, and administration, instead of manufacture.⁷⁴ The new economy includes the Asian Pacific headquarters of some multinational corporations, financial services such as banking, securities, trading, and consulting, specialized business services such as legal, accounting, marketing, advertising, insurance, etc. They require sharing a unified communication system, and depending on a few highly sophisticated technologies such as intelligent computing. Therefore, they tend to locate in or very near the CBD, and create a highly centralised and accessible urban core. Their intense demand on high-grade office premises inflates the land prices and rent levels

⁷² Warner, Sam Bass. *The Private City*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1968. See also Salamon, Lester. "Urban Politics, Urban Policy, Case Studies", *Public Administration Review*, No. 37, July/ August 1977, p. 423, in which Salamon presented the idea of the "private" city, the "bureaucratic" city, and the "policy-planning" city.

⁷³ Bell, Daniel. *The Coming of Post-Industrial Society: A Venture in Social Forecasting*, New York: Basic Books, 1973.

in the CBD on Hong Kong Island.⁷⁵ In the aspect of the urban spatial pattern, Hong Kong is like New York City, where the CBD is isolated from the largest populated urban areas by its location on an island. Thus, the transport system commute to and from the CBD is important. Post-industrialism changes urban politics and needs new planning directions. A vastly more complex city is required. Authorised planning direction has to replace *laissez faire* policy. Collaboration between the private and the public sectors, and among the private sectors will substitute for unbridled competition. There is a gradual drift toward *corporatism* in post-industrial cities, and this collaborative policy is part of the characteristic of corporatism. Post-industrialism needs immense private investments whose risk will be mitigated by governmental guarantees. Post-industrial cities represent the aspiration of the whole nation. They epitomize economic prowess and generate competition among cities (both intra-national and international competitions). Therefore, post-industrial cities can no longer adopt a segregated and “build as one might” planning strategy. They need to utilize their internal resources by re-organizing them in a cooperative manner in order to compete effectively. For example, in New York, a policy of collaboration is encouraged. Formerly competitive groups are organized to do their businesses cooperatively. Some groups have privileged access, and the consultation process among these groups and the political-technocratic elite is institutionalised. In European and some Far East cities (e.g. Paris, London, and Hong Kong), similar city planning processes occur. Local governments invite organizations from the private sector to join in the city planning and development. Post-industrialism requires the complexity of building a brand new urban environment. Urban planning may be a short-term, piecemeal one, or a long-term comprehensive strategy. Once a city is given the challenge of post-industrial change, planning is unavoidable. Construction itself is straightforward and technical mastery is emphasized. The challenge is to complete the process smoothly while synchronizing as many monetary transactions as possible. There emerge an enormous number of negotiations among buyers and sellers, property owners and tenants, those about to take possession and those about to be dispossessed. A multitude of interests are thus brought together.

⁷⁴ The economic transformation was more complex in reality. The two economic stages (industrial and post-industrial) overlapped and coexisted for more than 15 years.

⁷⁵ According to the Rating and Valuation Department of Hong Kong, an average commercial office in the CBD cost US\$107 per square foot in 1976, US\$275 in 1987.

Post-industrial change is propelled or circumscribed by politics. In post-industrial cities, it is impossible for any individual company single-handedly to develop tracts of land and to shape the city. It is also unlikely for hundreds of thousands of individual land development projects to gradually shape the cityscape. The path to corporatism means the coming of an age of collectivism.⁷⁶ This collectivism is a mass organization that consists of businesses, labour forces, communities, and governments. They together represent the general interests of the citizens. They convert these interests from raw demands into feasible actions. In short, corporatism rationalizes large-scale interests and makes them consonant with polity. From the perspective of town planning, the government is taking a more responsible role – underwrites the investment, acquires the land, takes care of the dispossessed, supplies public housing, regulates public transport, and provides public services such as education and health. It has to insure all parties against the risk of negative outcomes – providing long-term leases with options to investors, priority housing with affordable rents to tenants, clean, open spaces, and amenities to citizens, etc. Politicians became responsible for business failure, neighbourhood destruction, and even individual dislocations because of the new environment. Issues that seem to be resolvable became pregnant with further issues; involvement begot further involvement and obligations multiplied. For example, many construction projects would require a continuous set of commitments in public leases, park maintenance, and pollution controls.

Nevertheless, despite the government intervenes significantly in the city planning, the metropolitan transformation is based on the primacy of the market economy, and is carried out mainly because of private sector endeavours. The process inevitably brought about conflicts and contradictions in the society. Businesses that are incapable of competing economically or politically are relocated to urban periphery or locations between residential districts. Competition in land use led to conflicts exacerbated by the need of locating sites for new facilities. Besides, the concomitant social and cultural changes bought by economic transformation

further complicated the matters. Land redevelopment projects might increase property value but destroyed neighbourhood units. For neighbourhood, development might be a threat to their way of life, but for the rest of the city, it might be a chance for employment, enhanced city services, or to “clean up” a district. In addition, employment shifts fail to replace the manufacturing sector with a knowledge-based ones completely. Confronted by an increasingly global economy, the city needs to locate the niche of its displaced population in the internationalised labour market. Finally, expanding economy might mean the ruination of the traditional city skyline and the intensification of traffic congestion in local streets.

In any change of the urban landscape, there were benefits – better housing, more jobs; and minuses – breaking up of local community, environmental hazards, etc. Clashes of interest among different groups were, naturally, embedded in all changes. It was a challenge to the government to construct an economic and revenue-producing environment that supported business interests without destroying social and cultural integrity. These conflicts and contradictions were epidemic in the society. However, the settling of them also showed that a great deal of collaboration and mutual accommodation took place. It would be unwise to assume that the gain of the business sector necessarily meant an automatic loss in the non-business sectors. Did the community really benefit by blocking development? In a post-industrial society, corporatism emphasized the collaborative potential of the social structure. Stone calls this cooperative process “situational dependencies”.⁷⁷ To function, survive, and prosper, modern cities must turn to private business. This was because private business provided revenue, employment, and economic vitality. Therefore, politicians often favoured the economically powerful in private sectors.⁷⁸ Situational dependencies were a characteristic of the post-industrial cities. The Government depends on private businesses for revenue and economic development,

⁷⁶ Beer, Samuel. “Group Representation in Britain and the United States”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, No. 319, September 1958, and Beer, Samuel. *British Politics in the Collectivist Age*, New York: Alfred Knopf, 1967.

⁷⁷ Stone, Clarence. “Systemic Power in Community Decision Making: A Restatement of Stratification Theory,” *American Political Science Review*, No. 74, December 1980, pp. 980- 982.

⁷⁸ See Machiavelli’s admonition about “the compulsion of necessity” in Wirt, Frederick. *Power in the City*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973, p. 352. And Savitch, H. V. *Urban Policy and the Exterior City - Federal, State and Corporate Impacts upon Major Cities*, New York, Oxford: Pergamon, 1979, pp. 61- 63.

and private businesses rely on the authorities for infrastructural and other supports. Situational dependencies mean also situational interdependencies. Different interest groups were dependent on each other because they shared the same roof. That is, business and government relied on each other; the livelihood of workers and citizens being also closely linked with that of politicians and businessmen.

On the urban landscape, the effect of economic transformation brought about by post-industrialism was tremendous. The shrinkage of manufacture was a common result of this transformation. Factories were relocated to surrounding areas or suburbs, which brought about economic prosperity in those areas. The former worn-out industrial centres and neglected areas were completely transformed and provided with new functions. Take the Times Square of New York as an example, the area where once airy openness amid bright lights was shrouded by office towers and retail marts. The area was governed by economics and finance. The cost of building up Times Square was enormously expensive, \$2.4 billion. The development certainly brought jobs and commercial gains, but at the expense of social problems such as class imbalance and neighbourhood disruption. Mention of these unavoidably brings a comparison between London and New York. London is comparatively a well-balanced metropolis. Efforts had been made to preserve the old social structure, even under the pressure of post-industrial transformation. For instance, Covent Garden was built with the concern of retaining a balance between white and blue-collar industry. The building up of the Covent Garden cost a modest £22.5 million.⁷⁹ Although Covent Garden did not produce as many jobs and financial returns as Times Square in Manhattan, it salvaged the social structure; at the same time it sorted out commercial activity with reasonable equity. In France, the Parisian appeared to achieve a medium between livable neighbourhood and economic progress. The redevelopment of Les Halles combined the flair for radical reconstruction of New York, with the temperament for a cohesive and civilized environment of London. The extravagant project cost a substantial \$1 billion. Old market places, small factories, and workshops that used to sprinkle the area were replaced by a cultural centre (the Pompidou Centre), retail businesses, hotels, and offices. The new Les

Halles was built with respect for the architectural proportion of the surrounding area.⁸⁰ It was constructed below the neighbourhood skyline, and contained good amounts of open space and park. To preserve open space and respect a humanist architectural proportion, Paris took the trouble to build downward instead of upward to create a subterranean city. Besides, the eighteenth century buildings had been renovated and the streets had been restored. However, the neighbourhood had been dispersed rather than staying intact. Generally speaking, the Parisian achieved economic benefits that were more modest than that of New York, and a social value that was different from that of London. The redevelopment of the Les Halles aimed at environmental beauty, the culture of the society, and the prestige of the city. Conclusively, New York determined to change the city landscape radically for economic vibrancy. London preferred to conserve the city and protect the neighbourhood. And Paris desired to build up an environment dramatically for cultural and aesthetic distinction.

In Hong Kong, politics continued to revolve around the magnetism of the financial market. During the industrial development period from 1950s–70s, the city was transformed by the acceleration of free-flow market forces and the initiatives of private investments. Post-industrial development brought about policy changes. The impetus toward political entrepreneurship was a collaborative approach by the politicians and businessmen (especially multinational corporations) to achieve common interests through collective planning. The Hong Kong Government supports the needs engendered by the new economy, through acquisitions of more land space to expand the CBD and vital commercial areas. This is made possible by the releasing of some important sites formerly occupied by public uses, and land reclamation.⁸¹ Large-scale constructions and older area-rejuvenated projects were carried out by private capital with the government heavily involved, such as the

⁷⁹ *Forty-Second Street Redevelopment Project: Final Environmental Impact Statement*, New York: Urban Development Corporation, August 1984, p. 6. And Wachter, Tim and Alan Flint. "How Covent Garden Became A Specialty Shopping Centre", *The Chartered Surveyor*, July 1980, p. 1.

⁸⁰ For London, see Olsen, Donald. *The Growth of Victorian London*, New York: Holmes & Meier, 1976. For Paris, see Evenson, Norma. *Paris: A Century of Change, 1878- 1978*, New Haven, London: Yale University Press, 1979.

⁸¹ In 1980's, the release of some urban sites, formerly occupied by public uses such as the Victoria Barracks and the Chatham Road Camp, provided approximate 75 acres of land that produces 5 million

general planning of the CBD, and the façade of Victoria Harbour. In short, the role of the government is, firstly, to transform the built environment, institutions, public services, and governance structure of the city in accordance with the growth of the new economy. Secondly, to remove potential barriers to the operation of the new economy without directly involve in the functioning of the economic sectors. When the major infrastructural projects rest squarely on the shoulders of the Government, private sectors take care of other development projects such as hotels. There are also a division of responsibility in the port development and housing projects. Under such intensive collaboration, the dividing line between the public and private sphere of responsibility can sometimes be blurred. Nevertheless, the Government carefully maintain the free market economic system by undertaking major public projects, and when these projects proved to be profitable, they are ly reverted to the private sectors.

The economic transformation brought by post-industrialism also had drastic effects on the relocation of population or homes. In New York, the fast-driving economy has brought an influx of well-heeled middle classes into its city centre. The supply of residential apartments was tight as the wealthy middle class could afford the costs of Midtown living and rushed to the urban core. The urban centre of Manhattan bristled with employment opportunities, office constructions, and neighbourhood re-developments. Office rents were at an all-time high; vacancy rates were low. Similarly, the number of middle and upper class households also rose in the urban centre of Paris. The commercial and cultural sectors responded to the new demand from the increasing population in the centre. However, class settlement was not as lopsided as that of New York and midtown living was still a viable option for many families. The course of growth and change was more moderate. London was also affected by the economic changes. Although some Victorian and Georgian houses were preserved, the city centre prospered with modern architecture, and the urban skyline was drastically altered. In the urban core, there were a large number of rented properties to accommodate an intensely mobile population. Unlike New York

square feet of office and commercial spaces in the urban core areas. Reclaimed land also provides about 115 acres vital urban space.

whereas social classes are more jumble and mixed, the social class boundaries in London are marked out as soon as a neighbourhood changes its membership.

In Hong Kong, the economic transformation resulted in the presence of a large number of foreign expatriates and an expanding middle class in the city. They demanded middle to upper class accommodation. Although many of them left during the 1980s' and after 1997 for political and economic reasons, some of them returned. There are also an increasing number of immigrants from the Mainland China. The population of Hong Kong is increasing fast. In a virtual interview conducted by the author with a spokesman from the Housing Authority, he pointed out that the Authority has anticipated this population changes in 1997 and increased the construction of public housing projects.⁸² About half of the population of the city currently live in these housing. This has tremendous stabilising effect to the Hong Kong society and economy on the whole since 1953. Nevertheless, the government fail^{ure} to respond to the recent economic crisis in its housing policy has^{had} detrimental effects on the private property market. Consequently, many residential apartments are left empty in the city.

In short, it was important for post-industrial cities to generate growth from within. This might be achieved by effectively using their own resources, such as converting old functions into new ones and mixing them in countless permutations, until they had virtually transform themselves. This self-transformation changed the sixteenth and seventeenth century trading cities into the eighteenth and nineteenth century industrial cities. Again, the same process converted the industrial cities into the post-industrial ones for the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. Old industrial enclaves might become modern CBD, obsolete wharfs might be turned into luxury apartments, and street markets or seedy downtowns might be transformed into prestigious cultural centres. New York, London, Paris, and even Hong Kong are still in this transformation process. Cities will never cease changing. Ideally, economic transformation should maximize benefits and minimize costs. In practice, however, cities are limited by their precedent and present circumstances, and social structures as well as by cruelty and privacy. In an imperfect world, even perfect planning

would bring difficulties such as social dissatisfaction, especially when comparing with the achievements of other cities. American may find it easier to be poor in Paris than in New York. In Paris, urban transformation has also changed the social structure - separate social classes that used to be disparate participated in a common order. Most citizens share public services. Both lower and middle classes live in public housing, used public trains, and entertain in public cultural centres. Even old neighbourhoods are presentable, because they are renovated and appear to be contrived quaintness. Although the extensive use of public services does not mean the total harmony of social classes, it eases the worst disparities of classes. In New York, on the contrary, the experience of radical and prodigious changes produces disparate social orders. Although many parties may benefit from the rapid conversion, a whole stratum is left behind, increasingly ill equipped and psychologically incapable of sharing in the urban transformation. In Hong Kong, the class differences are not obvious. Most citizens use public services. Many upper and middle class families live in highrises and drive only during weekends. People from the working class background can still obsess with designer products and the stock market.

Post-industrial Hong Kong has an economy that heavily relies on information and service industries. Money circulation is becoming faster and more abstract. Transactions are conducted through credit cards, cheques, telephones, and computers, at anytime and any location, rather than cash. In this post-industrial city, can money circulation still be visually detected from its cityscape? Harvey believes that urban landscape reveals the capital circulation of a city.⁸³ In an economic sense, cities are the reservoir of capital. Banks, stock exchanges, finance and legal offices, serve as a collection point of the national savings. Finance, insurance, and commerce are the dominated economic activities of the modern metropolis. Cities aggravate themselves through the twists and turns of money capital, as well as the cycle of production and consumption. In global cities such as New York, Tokyo, and London, there is a bewildering array of information about the swirls of money around

⁸² Appendix 2.

⁸³ See Harvey, David. *The Urbanization of Capital*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1985, and *The Limits to Capital*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1982.

the world. The urban landscapes of these global cities signify the prestige and dynamism associated with fast money circulation.

The city form of Hong Kong can be imagined as a mega-giant TV screen with changing images. Each building is one light-dot that forms part of a pattern and is connected to the vast, unknown, complex source of informative signals determining the glowing or diminishing of each particular light dot. This is how the mega-giant TV screen suggests and responds to the ultra high-speed movement and multi-layered programming beneath the superficial 'skin'.⁸⁴

It is almost impossible to study a city like Hong Kong from a single perspective. The city has a complex image like that of television channels when overlapping each other. The ever-changing colourful dots compose a seemingly "random" image. Each skyscraper and construction project is like one of the colourful dots that orchestrate a larger image, which is the image of *money in action*. The experience of space therefore becomes abstract. It is dominated by signs and images that suggest an invisible force of market and money. Hong Kong as a city of corporate image displays its characters in many physical ways. Firstly, the symbolic aspect of a city as corporate image may be expressed through the urban skyline, which is made up of modern skyscrapers. These skyscrapers are normally finished with concrete, granite, glass, or steel exterior. They have modern building methods and architectural design. New building materials and techniques continue to appear in the market. Modern cities compete in the quantity, height, and novel design of their skyscrapers. The images of the skyscrapers are strong, powerful, and glamorous. Nevertheless, they may also appear to be cold and impersonal when compared with traditional architecture, which has a moderate building proportion and the material used such as wood, stone, marble, etc. is thought of as more natural. The skyscrapers dominate the metropolitan scene of Hong Kong. They are the material embodiment of the abstraction of monetary achievement. Skyscrapers signify bureaucratic power and corporate control and the absoluteness of capital. Undeniably, Hong Kong ranks amongst the highest in terms of population density around the world. Buildings rise floor by floor in competition for air and light, and above all, the symbolical prestige of high finance and power.

⁸⁴ Chan, M., "Map to Nowhere", *Journal of Narrative Theory*, Vol. 30, No. 3, Fall, 2000, pp. 385–402.

Secondly, open public spaces are a visible symbiosis of culture, finance, media, entertainment, etc. They are often the *metonymy* of the city. Cities generally define their image around a few internationally recognised tourist icons. In the case of Hong Kong, these metonymies are the Victoria Harbour and the glassy skyscrapers surround it. These icons are significant for business as they express subtle impressions of stability, openness, and reliability. Public spaces reflect the local urban economy of their time. Their visual trope, bright lights, and architectural details represent the hopes and illusions of a metropolitan culture. They show how the global economy is to be displayed on a regional site.

Thirdly, in post-industrial Hong Kong, as money circulation heightens its speed, what goes on around the city intensifies. There are restless constructions and redevelopment projects in the city landscape. Many parts of the city are filled with tower cranes and construction sites. In a way, the tower cranes complement urban skylines because they signify busy urban development and money capital in action.

Fourthly, the city landscape is full of means of mass communication, such as commercial advertisements and neon lights. Electronic billboards make a flashy show in the façade of Hong Kong. Huge trademarks and brand names of multinational corporations fill up the cityscape. They light up the whole city centre like a theatrical show at night. The city dedicates itself to commercialism and strives for capital expansion. In any big city, it is an everyday business consuming the output of manufactured and industrial production, services, and responding to the seduction of commercial indoctrination and advertisement. Commercial displays intensify the desire of shoppers and multiply their numbers. Luxury fashion, food, entertainment, adornment, and designer products, thus emerge as the special industries of the metropolis. The whole city is like a giant shopping mall - the streets are like the corridors of the department store full of services, product displays, and lights.⁸⁵ People look for theatrical performance in every aspect of life, including the shopping experience. Thus, theme shopping mall emerged in almost every district of Hong Kong. A shopping mall operates very much like a self-enclosed city. It has

⁸⁵ Goodman, Percival and Paul Goodman. "A City of Efficient Consumption", *Communities: Means of Livelihood and Ways of Life*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1947.

carefully regulated flow of crowds and spaces, as well as a hierarchy of social groups that operate separately – low-paid labourer working in the back alley and unloading zone, while big spenders stroll in the air-conditioned, flower-decorated interior. A shopping mall is a perfect miniature city with controlled climate, familiar products, and artificially insured safety because everything is recorded on surveillance cameras. At the same time, they are like indoor mazes that disorient shoppers, in which the shoppers forget about direction, time, day, and night.

Fifthly, Hong Kong has an overburdened property market and laissez-faire city planning. Ideally, as mentioned earlier, a post-industrial city is better off to have the authority more involved in the planning process in order to ensure success. However, in practice, it is very difficult when the capital of a city is largely controlled by the private sectors, as in the case of Hong Kong. The planning pattern of the city is basically a market-oriented one. Architects and planners find their own equilibrium in order to survive and to accommodate themselves in the city. Consequently, there are several self-organised and self-adaptive architectural and planning characteristics typical of Hong Kong as the city of corporate image. To begin with, at the urban scale, the city planning is highly adaptable in response to external influence. It is closely linked with the invisible force of international market networks, such as global trends, economic values, political climate, technological advancement, and new living patterns that shape basic human behaviour to global societal movements. Free information flow accelerates urban development both socially and physically. Generally speaking, it is difficult to say that Hong Kong is solely a product of market information, but the city is definitely a soft structured one - any changes of market information alter the city pattern. Hong Kong is a geographically very small city with an unusually high intensity of information and events. Therefore, it is highly sensitive as what meteorologists speak of as the “butterfly effect” - a concept in which small input results in big change.

Sixthly, frequent redevelopment and intensive mixed land-use pattern are adopted in order to cope with the unusually tense competition in land use. Hong Kong is characterised by high population density. The majority of buildings in Hong Kong are hybridised into multi-purposed functions with vertical zoning and

horizontal distribution. Commercial complex buildings with car park in multi-level basements, restaurants on ground floor, shops and health clubs on the first two levels, offices in mid-levels, and another upscale restaurant or club house on the top floor. Recognizing the different needs of the citizen, and integrating work, leisure, and domestic life become one of the prime concerns. In Hong Kong, mixed land use is so intensive that one could perform a surprising number of varied functions within a fifteen-minute radius of home or workplace. However, these mixed-use patterns are basically self-organised and transform in accordance with changing needs and lifestyles. The lack of a central planning system to regulate land use pattern leads to a frequent change in construction program. The program of construction often shifts from what is originally intended - office to hotel, park to shopping mall, cinema to club house, civic building to restaurant, etc. Also, outdoor spaces are transformed in use at different times of the day or of the year. For example, car parks become bazaars and sloping pedestrian streets become stage for performances during festivals. Differing programs collide with each other and compete for space. Other consequences of intensive competition for land use are building extension and demolition. To adapt to growth, new demands, and market trends, additional structures or architectural features are often attached to or between existing buildings as annexes and extensions. In some cases, additional floors are added straight on top of older buildings. Beside, buildings are demolished for reasons other than natural causes such as ageing and poor maintenance, but for commercial needs and economic changes. For instance, the relocation of the airport changes the statutory controls in the areas around the old airport sites – relief height regulations and building plot ratio. As a result, even relatively new buildings are demolished in order to construct higher and bigger skyscrapers. In cases like these, even buildings under construction that are close to completion may be threatened by demolition. The value of the building is compared against time and high land costs. The city landscape constantly transforms itself with the construction and destruction of places and spaces. Finally, Hong Kong as the city of corporate image is obsessed with the physical appearance of buildings. Architectural features such as pyramidal roofs are constructed in order to stand out from the crowds of ultra dense highrises. Buildings originally devoid of a stylish roof are crowned with one and equipped with aggressive lighting. Façades of buildings, particularly those along the waterfronts surround Victoria Harbour, are

often re-clad for upgrading. The reasons for doing so are to accommodate new needs, to stay with the market trends, and to appear as “new” and “fresh”.

The future of the city as corporate image may be summarized by the phenomenon of globalisation and its mirage-like spaces – similar spaces that are repeatedly constructed in cities and redefine their geographical and cultural characters. From a British colony to a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, the urban space of Hong Kong has been continuously reshaped by the discourses of imperialism, Cold War, and globalisation. Improvement in the communication and transportation technologies redefines national borders both culturally and economically. As Sassen and Harvey both point out, one distinctive feature of globalisation is the unprecedented territorial circulation of capital due to liberalization of the market and the accelerating turnover times of capital, made possible by technological development.⁸⁶ Hong Kong is a nexus of global flows that compress time and space to facilitate the agglomeration of capital. Harvey describes this “time-space compression” as a phenomenon “generated out of the pressures of capital accumulation with its perpetual search to annihilate space through time and reduce turnover time”.⁸⁷ Time-space compression means a shrinking world (space compression) and simultaneity (time compression).⁸⁸ New technologies in communication and transportation accelerate the turnover time in both production and consumption. The process demands the disappearance of geographical barriers. In the epoch of globalisation, the intensity of time-space compression thus gives rise to an era of simulacra as such: “it is now possible to experience the world’s geography vicariously, as a simulacrum. The interweaving of simulacra in daily life brings together different worlds in the same space and time.”⁸⁹ The resulted world of simulacrum refers not only to the economic and geographical senses, but also the emotional one. The increasing mobility of global population means a growing numbers of diasporic families and individuals. As a result of their homesickness,

⁸⁶ Sassen, Saskia. “Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims,” *Public Culture*, Vol. 8, No.2, 1996, pp. 205– 223. Harvey, David. *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origin of Cultural Change*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1990.

⁸⁷ Harvey, *ibid*, pp. 306- 7.

⁸⁸ See also Bridge, Gary. “Mapping the Terrain of Time-Space Compression: Power Networks in Everyday Life”, *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, Vol. 15, pp. 611– 626, 1997.

⁸⁹ Harvey, *ibid*, p. 300.

there emerges a world of simulacra, which simulates not only the regional commodities, but also the images of home.

Hong Kong - The City As Home: Sweet and Sour Nostalgia

Home is where one starts from.

- T. S. Eliot, *East Coker*.⁹⁰

The home should be the treasure chest of living.

- Le Corbusier.⁹¹

Globalisation redefines our ideas of home. Home becomes a concept deeply embedded in the mind of people, rather than a physical and geographical location. The accumulation and concentration of international capital and human resources entail significant changes in the social, political, and cultural environments of cities. The trend of globalisation during the last two decades generates new international division of labour. People are enjoying more mobility than ever in history. The accumulation of capital in certain cities, on the one hand, brings in international business people, high-paid managers, and professionals - the expatriates from international corporations and the returned emigrated professionals back to Hong Kong, estimated as at least 12% of the emigrated.⁹² On the other hand, it also attracts a large number of low-paid workers. This relocation of the world population has drastic effect on the urban landscape of global cities - a dichotomised concentration of resources. The new urban geography of global cities reflects the unbridgeable differences between the two types of city user - a small proportion of international business people (the new elites) and a huge population of low-income groups (the underprivileged). For the elites, the ideal city is one "whose space consists of airports, top level business districts, top of the line hotels and restaurants, a sort of urban glamour zone".⁹³ In Hong Kong, their demands in the city is rarely challenged or questioned. Therefore, the urban infrastructure is somehow transformed to satisfy their needs. The high-income elites usually demand luxurious and spacious living space that contrasts sharply with the overcrowded public housing, where the lower

⁹⁰ Eliot, Thomas Stearns. *East Coker*, London: Faber, 1940.

⁹¹ Le Corbusier, On need for spaciouly separated skyscrapers, recalled on his death 27 August 1965, *Simpson's Contemporary Quotations*, compiled by J. B. Simpson, 1988.

⁹² Skeldon, "Immigration", 311.

⁹³ Sassen, Saskia. "Whose City Is It? Globalization and the Formation of New Claims," *Public Culture*, Vol. 8, No.2, 1996, p. 221.

income population occupied. In the lower-income residential blocks, space is extremely limited so that every possible inch of square is utilised. Consequently, matrices of attachments, ranging from verandas to overhangs for planter boxes, are attached to the external walls. They are used to attempt to increase the already crowded spaces, regulate ventilation, provide space for planting as there is no garden or backyard in high-rises, and to serve amenity functions such as clothes-drying beyond the limited space inside. The demand of the urban space by the elites and the influence of global capital influx, ensure escalating prices in the housing market. As a result, half of the local population and other low-income groups are left packed in the public housing. They are jostling for space in a city whose land is already too congested and expensive. (Illustrations 24)

Hong Kong is a dual city under the impact of globalisation. The spatial configurations that reflect the urban development include both the monumental skyscrapers and the slum-like public homes. The high-density anonymous housing projects are an antonym of the corporate monumental buildings. In this polarized global city, there exists the conspicuous global compression (corporate skyscrapers) and the local compression (imported labour and their homes). Far from the clichéd glamorous and dazzling pictures of Hong Kong's urban landscape, there are other, completely different scenes. There are the slum-like anonymous buildings with vertical pipes, protruding iron windows, flying clothes on hangers, decaying storefronts, undistinguished apartments, and cheap fast food joints, which suggest the "pigeonhole" life style of the inhabitants. In many areas, these kinds of slum homes are just standing next to decent buildings with elegant shopping arcades or world famous hotels. Cheap fast food stalls coexist with fashionable bars and posh restaurants. The cramped living conditions in the pigeonhole high-rise residential buildings present the hyper-densities of the locals. The picture-perfect global space lies outside of the everyday reality of those lower class workers. The urban spectacle that attracts international investors and tourists may be physically close to them, but is virtually intangible to their daily experience of living in the city. The locals who patronize the street market eatery may find more comfort in convenience shops than in the franchised department stores. The home of common workers will not be the enclave of fancy hotels or grandiose office buildings. In a sense, the urban spectacle

remains invisible to them on a daily basis. This phenomenon of “not seeing what is there” becomes normal to the citizens living in a modern metropolis. To them, the city is their home rather than a fancy showcase.

In spite of the various hard situations such as overpopulation and pollution, globalisation has yet merits in Hong Kong as a city of home. The urban homes in Hong Kong exemplify how global influence, in complicity with the interests of many parties, decidedly abridges the relatively fixed and limited city space. Both the glamorous zone of the city occupied by the minority of high-paid elites, and the “reality” of urban homes shared by the majority of the marginal class constitute the city characters of Hong Kong. The two polarised spaces interweave with each other, and present a montage of the urban discourse, which manifests the divergence and the intersection between the highly aggrandized official narrative of globalisation, and the private experience of the citizens.

Hong Kong is *home* to millions. Home and the sense of home embody local memories, both personal and collective. They are inseparable with the notion of *nostalgia*. Nostalgia is one of the most powerful emotions in our modern society. It is expressed in different ways.

Take the fast-food chain MacDonald’s in Hong Kong as an example. It is usually a global sign of American imperialism, unvarying from one city to the next. From Hong Kong to Singapore to London to San Francisco, it is the same all over the world. However, it is so popular in Hong Kong that some citizens may emotionally attach to a particular one. This MacDonald’s is different from all others. One may have the memory of belonging and loss in a quintessential little corner set aside for children parties - as the venue of birthday parties with all family and friends, and as a sanctuary where oneself and one’s friends sought refuge from sadness and sorrow. It may be the location for the memories of friendship and family union. Odd as it sounds, this particular MacDonald’s orchestrates part of the sense of home of the local citizens. Moreover, the franchise is trans-national. The global sign of the big ‘M’ is both everywhere (geographically) and nowhere (culturally). Diasporic immigrants, as long as there are MacDonald’s in their hometown, may find the fast-

food shop a place where one can localise, domesticate, and indigenise. Therefore, in an aesthetic sense, MacDonald's as a spatial-temporal ambivalence makes present the feelings of diaspora and nostalgia, where imagined geographies are demystified and transnational cultures are negotiated. Nostalgia has become a universal and ubiquitous phenomenon, common to all times and places, rooted in human nature, and represented in certain social conditions.

Nostalgic emotion in a metropolis carries with it a widespread social problem – it may be understood as the psychological resistance to the forces of modernization and globalisation. Bell explains this literal definition of nostalgia as a “failure of the collective consciousness to deal with the modernising process in contemporary society”.⁹⁴ Today a great deal of time and energy is dedicated looking backwards to recreate a past, which in many ways is considered superior to the chaotic present and the uncertain future. People need a brief pause in the march toward the future. Not everyone accept and benefit from the feverish changes and the fast-pace of modernity. Changes inevitably bring about rude transitions, discontinuities, and dislocation. Therefore, nostalgia as an eternally ideal image, in which the material past remains unchanged, becomes a mental place of refuge. However, the concept of nostalgia may also be articulated to silence the victims of modernization – provide them fake comfort temporarily, but in fact undermine their emotional experiences, question their memories, and weaken their hopes.

An outstanding example of this is the Kowloon Walled City in Hong Kong. It had been a fortress with garrison since the Song Dynasty (960 A.D. – 1279 A.D.) The 2.7 hectares of the Walled City eventually became an urban slum. It was a maze of squalid residential blocks built almost less than three feet apart from each other. Skylight seldom shone down the winding dark alleys. There^{they} were full of dimly lit corridors, staircases, corners, exposed electrical cables, and peeling walls. It was a hotbed to criminals, gangsters, prostitutes, drug dealers, and illegal immigrants; a challenge to the Police and the Fire Departments; as well as an adventure to the tourists, geography and town planning students, scholars, and religion missionaries.

⁹⁴ Bell, Claudia. *Inventing New Zealand: Everyday Myths of Pakeha Identity*, Auckland: Penguin, 1996, p. 181.

To the authorities, the Walled City was despised as having negative influence on the image of Hong Kong, and thus was demolished in the early 1990s. A park was built on the original site featuring a Chinese garden design and some relics of the old Walled City. (Illustrations 25) The Walled City may not exist anymore, but it leaves the citizen a lot of dreams and nightmares. For everyone outside the Walled City, there is the theoretical possibility of another world in there. The city of Hong Kong is a modern and brightly lit place, but for the Walled City, it is not a reality. It is an imagined city personified by the gangsters. It is a dangerous and mysterious city of imagination, which fascinates everyone in the modern metropolis. The redevelopment project is a process of modernization – to replace a squalid area with a city park, to present an image of clean and crime-free society, to market local history through nostalgia. For some citizens, the redevelopment project is a massive clean up of their city – get rid of the shantytown, the underclass, and the contamination. Nevertheless, for many local residents, the project destroys the old neighbourhood. The once-closed neighbourhood and families that had lived there for generations are the victims of modernization. Through constructing a traditional Chinese garden-themed park on the original site, and recreating some of the old features of the Walled City, such as a new wall following the line of the original, the emotion of nostalgia is encouraged. It is the nostalgia of an ancient Chinese lifestyle – adoring nature, sipping tea, writing poems, playing chess, meeting lover, in the garden. The project seems to clean up the urban façade, to improve the district environment, and to provide leisure enjoyment for the local residents. However, the old neighbourhood units are disrupted and leave disoriented; their discontent is undermined.

In Hong Kong as the city as home, the process of modernisation undermines the nostalgia among the local citizens. This may be revealed through the micro or personal experience of living in the city. In Hong Kong, the yearning for an earlier time is age-specific. The older section of the society tends to find it difficult to deal with modernisation and its effects. For them, technology and the influences of capitalism have accelerated at excessive pace, resulting in a sense of ambivalence with regard to the stability of society. This provokes a longing for the supposed stability and order of colonial time. Although there is a potential for injustice and

oppression in colonialism, it is familiar to them, and therefore comparatively better than the alienation of modernity. Consequently, nostalgia is, for them, an attempt to reaffirm the happiness associated with a former time or place. As Bell agrees that, increasing modernisation creates unease in society that in turn causes increased nostalgia for the simplicity of colonial existence.⁹⁵ The colonial-based nostalgia is a constructed idealisation based on a deep desire for stability within contemporary society and the drive for a collective identity.

On the contrary, the younger generation grows into adulthood and anticipates the advent of the new millennium. They cannot recognise and cope with this colonial heritage, which simultaneously sustains and constrains them. They develop a certain alienation from colonialism as a means of identification. The young generation grow up in an epoch of established urbanisation and advanced technology. After all, colonialism seems less relevant to a generation raised on computers and cell phones. For young Hong Kong people today, modern technology is more a part of their identity than colonialism will ever be. There is recognition of colonial heritage; yet the national identity confirmed is very much a Chinese one. Young people are not constrained by nostalgia for colonialism as a way of dealing with the present condition of society. They are very much future-oriented, goal-seeking, opportunist expecting self-creation, and a chance to escape from the constraints of history and tradition. For them, the nostalgic vision is not relevant to their meaning of existence. The preoccupation with the past is considered a burden, which in effect negates their attempts at creating an identity consistent with the current situation. As Bell points out, “mass culture” equates with “urban culture”.⁹⁶ Growing up in a globalized metropolis further alienates young people from indulging in nostalgia for colonial themes. In Hong Kong, although many people recognise colonialism as a part of their collective identity, few believe that it will sustain the future.

Although nostalgia seldom exists among the local population, the emotion is very important among the large number of foreign employers in Hong Kong. In the epoch of globalisation, there emerges a relocation of population – emigration. The

⁹⁵ Bell, *ibid.*, p. 175.

⁹⁶ Bell, *ibid.*, p. 174.

increasing mobility of population, reconstructs the social production of place and the organisation of urban landscapes.⁹⁷ Appadurai suggests that global emigration would lead to the emergence of a new culture of movement, characterised by the disjunctive spaces of finance, people, ideology, technology, and media.⁹⁸ It is a culture that is “nomadic, unsettled, taking place in the travel between cultural sites and in the multi-vocality of heterogeneous and conflicting positions.”⁹⁹ This new culture of movement instigates the epistemological terrain of nostalgia - the idea of home and homesickness.

Migration is more than just a movement among places (of departure, arrival, and resettlement). It is a conceptual and reconstructive process - when people leave one set of social, cultural, and historical conditions and take on another. Lowe suggests that the term “migration” - while evoking a history of actual displacement and economic exploitation - can be a metaphor that moves between fixed cultural sites.¹⁰⁰ As a result, fractured groups are classified into minority positions against a dominant host centre. Immigrants and foreigners often reconfigure their status as minority group, the *others*, which signifies cultural adaptation. However, they would neither leave their old culture nor take on the new one completely. There is always an overlapping space, geographically and culturally, where the migrants and foreigners would encounter a double dilemma of pre and post dislocation. That is, the confluence and conflict between home and host, inside and outside, forward and backward, strange and familiar, same and different. Cultural diaspora implies the changes in the relationship between place and culture. It is a movement of transformation, a journey of recollection and forecast. It is a situation of that need to redelineate identities, the meanings of home, places, and cultures. Through nostalgia, the memory of contingency (though it may be transient) is preserved. One may rebuild a new relationship to the place of belonging (home) in an unfamiliar environ.

⁹⁷ see also Edward Soja's development of postmodern geographies emphasises the critical intermingling of the dialectic of space, time and social being to reveal a transformative relation between history, geography and (colonial) modernity. Soja, Edward. *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London: Verso, 1989. Soja, Edward. *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places*, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 1996.

⁹⁸ Appadurai, Arjun. “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Public Culture* Vol. 2, No. 2, Spring 1990, pp. 1- 24.

⁹⁹ Lowe, Lisa. “Heterogeneity, Hybridity, Multiplicity: Marking Asian American Differences,” *Diaspora*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 1990, p. 39.

In this new perspective, the foreign land is possible to be made as a place for the conditions of attachment, dwelling, and living in the journey of transition.

One never reaches home, but wherever friendly paths intersect the whole world looks like home for a time.

- Hermann Hesse, *Frau Eva*.¹⁰¹

In Hong Kong, migration is a characteristic of colonisation, where the immigrants leaving home and positioning in a marginal representational relationship to a hegemonic centre. And nostalgia is a result of the postcolonial perplexity of living across different cultures, spaces, and times. Within the culture of the city, migration raises not only the issues of the internationalisation of money, but also opens up new perspectives for the meaning of *place* and *home*. For the immigrant, the metropolitan Hong Kong is alienated, with elusive narratives and accelerated images (the fragmented image of modernity). Places are represented and reproduced in such a way that the spaces of nostalgia are, like the spaces constituting heterotopia, no longer anything but transition points in their movements.¹⁰² The nostalgic emotion may be physically expressed through the reassertion of space. The act equates the laying claims upon a territory, even temporarily. Images and objects that produce the criteria for the belonging of location and identity are constructed. When doing so, people imagine, construct, and reconstruct the meaning of “place”. A home away from home is then recreated in Hong Kong. It is a “home” that evokes the comforting, groggy, and funny feeling associated with homesickness. Immigrants and foreigners search in Hong Kong for an “elsewhere” that is obsolete at home in another country.

Who has not felt how sadly sweet,
The dream of home, the dream of home,
Steals o’er the heart, too soon to fleet,
When far o’er sea or land we roam?

- Thomas Moore, *The Dream of Home*.¹⁰³

Homesickness is a distress feeling rise from the disorientation and isolation in a new or strange environment. The idea of home is a familiar framework including

¹⁰⁰ Lowe, Lisa. *ibid.*, 1990.

¹⁰¹ Hesse, Hermann. 1877-1962. “Frau Eva”, *Demian*, trans., W.J. Strachan, London: Owen, 1958, Ch. 5.

¹⁰² Foucault, Michel. “Of Other Spaces,” *Diacritics*, Vol. 16, No. 1, Spring 1986, p. 23.

¹⁰³ Thomas Moore cited in Bartlett, John. *Familiar Quotations*, 10th ed., 1919.

objects, institutions, people, established habits, and sentiments. The isolation and dislocation of a new environment highlight the lost sense of community and regional identity. Nostalgia suggests a time when those missing pieces still were present. Under the influence of the emotion, our unconscious desires rather than a reliable guide to the past render the images of home. Consequently, the individuals, moulded on their own selective vision and experience, create their ideas of home. In the city, the creation of places that emulate a sense of home is a response to change by symbolically returning to the features of another time in life that one valued most. It is an emotional demeanour toward the past determined by a set of beliefs about its significance, desirability, and meaning. To re-experience the elements of home assists the diasporic population in recapturing their memory of home. De Certeau explains that memory is not self-sufficient; it is the art of connecting details and particulars with a trace of an event. “These particulars have the force of demonstratives: *that* fellow who was going by all bent over... *that* odour, which came from some undetermined source... Sharp details, intense particulars, ... already function in the memory as they intervene in the occasion.”¹⁰⁴ Although some fragments or relevant details may help to summon a memory, such a memory is metonymic. The production of this sensorial landscape of a simulated home - geographies of vision, sound, taste, texture, and aroma - is the aestheticization of the urban space. It also generates a contradictory space that may be a potential site of power struggle and class disparity.

In Hong Kong, the most obvious example of such practices is in the Central Business District on Sundays. The quintessential scene of the contradictory urban space shared by the global capitalists and the marginal people, would surprise anybody who visits there. Instead of the flow of well-groomed white-collar professionals, the upscale Central District on Sundays is occupied by thousands of Filipino maids. They gather in small groups at the open spaces among the skyscrapers. From the early hours each Sunday, Central district bustles with women attending church, remitting money and sending packages home, savouring Filipino delicacies with friends and so on. Morris summarizes how these foreign labourers

¹⁰⁴ de Certeau, Michel. *The Practice of Everyday Life*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984, p. 108.

make Central an ethnic enclave. The Filipino maids assemble at Statue Square “in their thousands to meet friends, swap news, cook al fresco meals, sell things to one another, read the Manila newspaper and sometimes dance to the music of transistors. ... The women swarm upon the Square in midmorning (after their mass) pouring out of the subway stations, streaming off the ferries, and settling upon every bench, every patch of ground in a great eddy of shopping bags. If it is wet they occupy arcades, pedestrian bridges and shopping centres for half a mile around.”¹⁰⁵ The Filipinos affectionately name the Central district on Sunday as the “Little Manila”.

Little Manila is a nostalgic landscape that simulates home. The absence of familiar material culture and its subtle evocations of home, are surely one of the most profound dislocations of transnational migration. Perception and memory connect the body with material culture. Hence, images of the Philippines are reconstructed each Sunday through a conscious re-invention of home. Little Manila may be understood through the multi-layered meanings of sensory practices. Through food, ethnic music, photos, letters, artefacts, and other sensory practices as taste, touch, vision, and smell, the “texture” of home is recreated. Ethnic cuisine is particularly important, it articulates both “place and movement – and, through those, identity and identification”.¹⁰⁶ Filipino food evokes familiar senses of taste-texture-aroma and, particularly when consumed in the Little Manila with thousands of people from home. Besides, the aromas of their food create an “olfactory map” in the city, which enable people to “conceptualise their environment by way of smell”.¹⁰⁷ Olfactory geographies “evoke place” and “memories of place”.¹⁰⁸ Together the taste, aromas, sounds, and sights, Filipino women create a “social space”¹⁰⁹ where they feel at home. The process incorporates elements of history and memory, past and present, times and spaces, helping to reconstruct a familiar environment with memories of life

¹⁰⁵ Morris, Jan. *Hong Kong*, New York: Vintage, 1985, p. 104.

¹⁰⁶ Bell, D. and G. Valentine, *Consuming Geographies: We Are Where We Eat*, London, Routledge, 1997, p. 191.

¹⁰⁷ Classen, C., D. Howes and A. Synott, *Aroma: The Cultural History of Smell*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 18.

¹⁰⁸ Rodaway, P. *Sensuous Geographies: Body, Sense and Place*, London, Routledge, 1994, p. 68.

¹⁰⁹ See Lefebvre, Henri. 1974, *The Production of Space*, trans., Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Oxford University Press, 1991.

in the Philippines. Little Manila is a hybrid site where connects Hong Kong and the Philippines. As Appadurai argues:

As groups migrate, regroup in new locations, reconstruct their histories, and reconfigure their ethnic projects, the *ethno* in ethnography takes on a slippery, non-localized quality, to which the descriptive practices of anthropology will have to respond. The landscapes of group identity – the ethnoscapas – around the world are no longer familiar anthropological objects, insofar as groups are no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous.¹¹⁰

“Ethnoscapas” are new maps in a global city – maps integral to embodied cultural geographies. The construction of ethnoscapas by diasporic foreigners reinforces their social relations, and generates a trans-national sense of communal life. Furthermore, ethnoscapas inhabit unique signs and symbols that express their situated resistances. On Sundays at least, the city is unable to construct Filipino women as exploited subjects. Little Manila is the geographies of the Hong Kong-based Filipino’s identities. It becomes a positive signification of cultural difference, and allows domestic workers^{to be} involved in the production of a cosmopolitan culture abroad. The politics of diasporic experience are suffused with new meaning in the diverse spaces of the city. Through the practices of recollection and nostalgia, foreign workers find much needed emotional comfort and strength to deal with the present difficulties.

As a multi-cultural city, Hong Kong as home unavoidably contains the problem of social conflicts - power struggle and class disparity. Central District is a symbolic space that evokes economic prowess. The takeover of it by a unified crowd is an open challenge to the city.¹¹¹ Subtle forms of power struggle are experienced through the aesthetic practices. Little Manila inscribes a cultural context with tactical meaning, which engages with a Foucauldian perspective of visual power that theorizes the relationship between private and public spaces. For some citizens, it becomes a cliché - an unruly crowd of uneducated foreign women creates multi-cultural tensions, and disrupts the hegemonic city space. Central District is turned

¹¹⁰ Appadurai, A. *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalisation*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 48.

into a site of power and resistance. The weekly congregations take place only by permission and everything returns to normal on Monday. In a capitalist society, the symbolic spaces of power exert on those excluded from them.¹¹² The Filipino women are excluded from the glamorous city lifestyle. They are low-paid foreign workers with few legal rights. Surrounded by glassy skyscrapers that signify money power, the powerless groups are left gazing at the monumental images, like looking at so many goods through a shop window, but unable to touch it.¹¹³ The city as home is more complicated in the epoch of globalisation. The alternative perceptual landscapes – the sensory landscape and the ethnoscape - are parts of the symbolic landscapes in the city as home. In a multi-cultural city, the creation of simulated homes is a seemingly absurd way of coping with estrangement. It exposes the ridiculousness of modern city life. In a city of more than seven million people, the foreign workers are unable to find any adequate social groups outside their own ethnic network. The unequal distribution of global capital and the disorientation of marginal population are embedded in a spatial relation.

Nostalgia is the most powerful force in shaping the city as home. It is more than just a name attached to a universal feeling. It is a particular way of handling and interpreting the various ideas, feelings, and associations experience when remembering the past. Bachelard says, “One must always maintain one’s connection to the past and yet ceaselessly pull away from it. To remain in touch with the past requires a love of memory. To remain in touch with the past requires a constant imaginative effort.”¹¹⁴ To experience the past nostalgically is to adopt certain attitudes and feelings towards it. However, one has to understand nostalgia and its associated meanings as a necessary product of the psychological tendency to idealise the past. They may be valued as a way to enrich the present, and as a mean to understand rather than judge against our own modern-day values. On the city

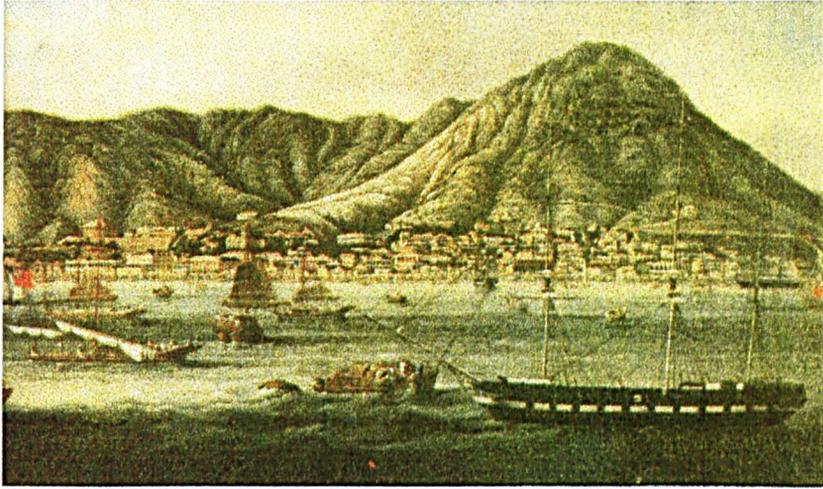
¹¹¹ On the power of crowds, see Canetti, Elias. *Crowds And Power*, trans., Victor Gollancz, England: Penguin, 1962.

¹¹² This is related to the postmodernist’s aestheticization of space, see Harvey, David. *The Urban Experience*, Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1989. Jameson, Fredric. *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as A Socially Symbolic Act*, London: Methuen, 1983. Abbas, Ackbar. *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 87.

¹¹³ Tadiar calls this discontent “the uncommodified activity of dreaming” in “Domestic Bodies of the Philippines”, *Sojourn: Journal of Social Issues in Southeast Asia*, No. 12, 1997, p. 181.

landscape, it is difficult to determine the next possibility of the developing pattern. Accordingly, it is inadequate to approach a city with such a complex web of information through simple “problem and answer” methodologies. Can nostalgia or cultural practice provide the solution to the various social problems arising today? Can proportion, form, and aesthetics transform an atrocious skyscraper to the needs of present day users? Can the study of details, the use of technology, and a response to ecology produce new planning directions for the future?

¹¹⁴ Bachelard, Gaston. 1988, “A Retrospective Glance at the Lifework of A Master of Books”, *Fragments of A Poetics of Fire*, Dallas: Dallas Institute Publications, 1990.



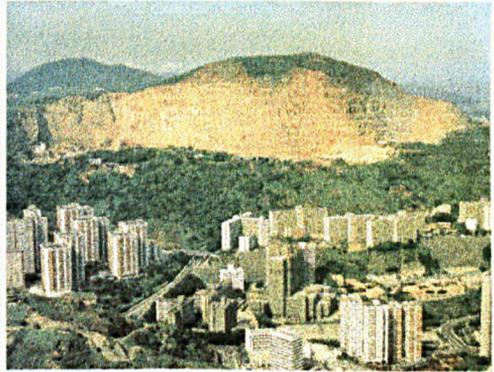
5a. Hong Kong Island 1860.



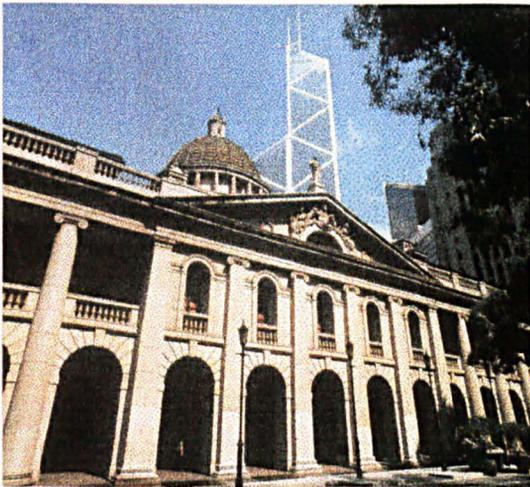
5b. Hong Kong Island 1950's.



5c. The same view taken in 2000.



6. Harbour Reclamation and Anderson Road quarry.



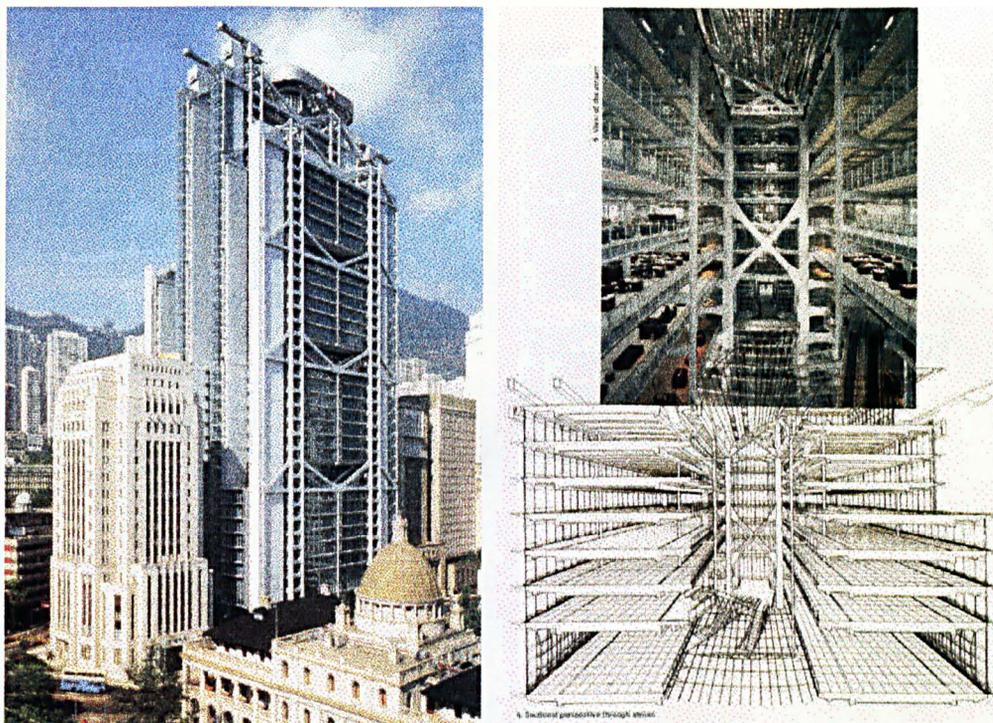
7. The Legislative Council building, built by Aston Webb in 1912 and Hong Kong University Resident Hall, built in 1860.



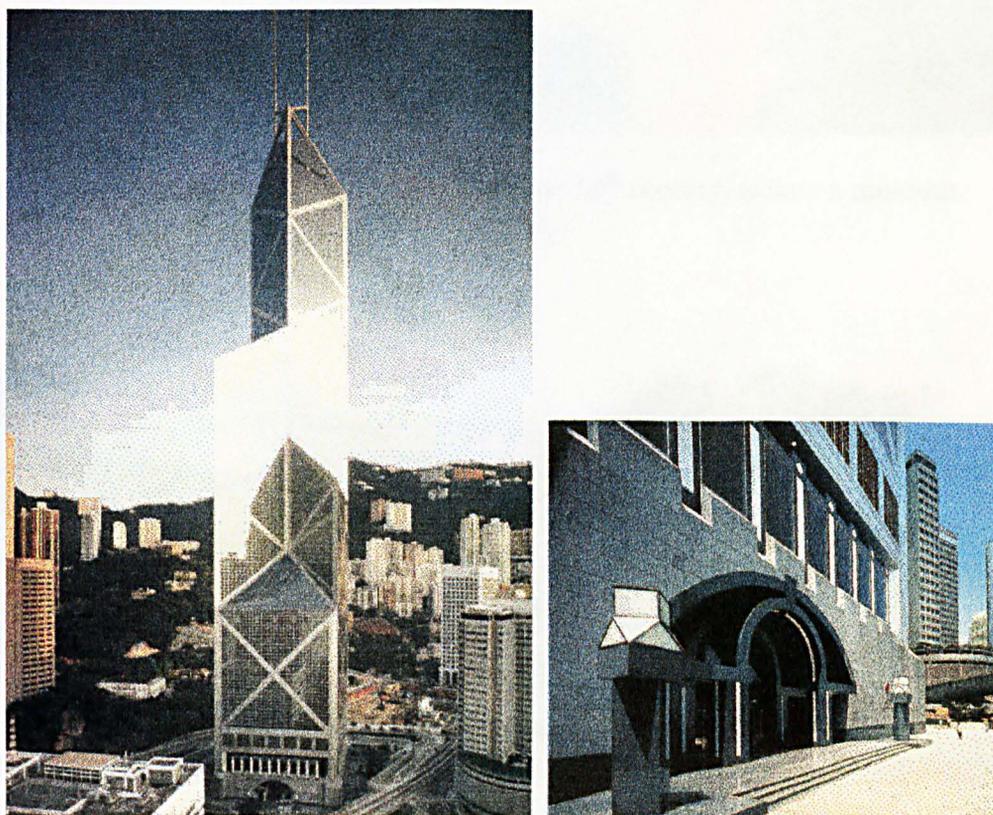
8a. Warehouses along the shipping port in 1950's.



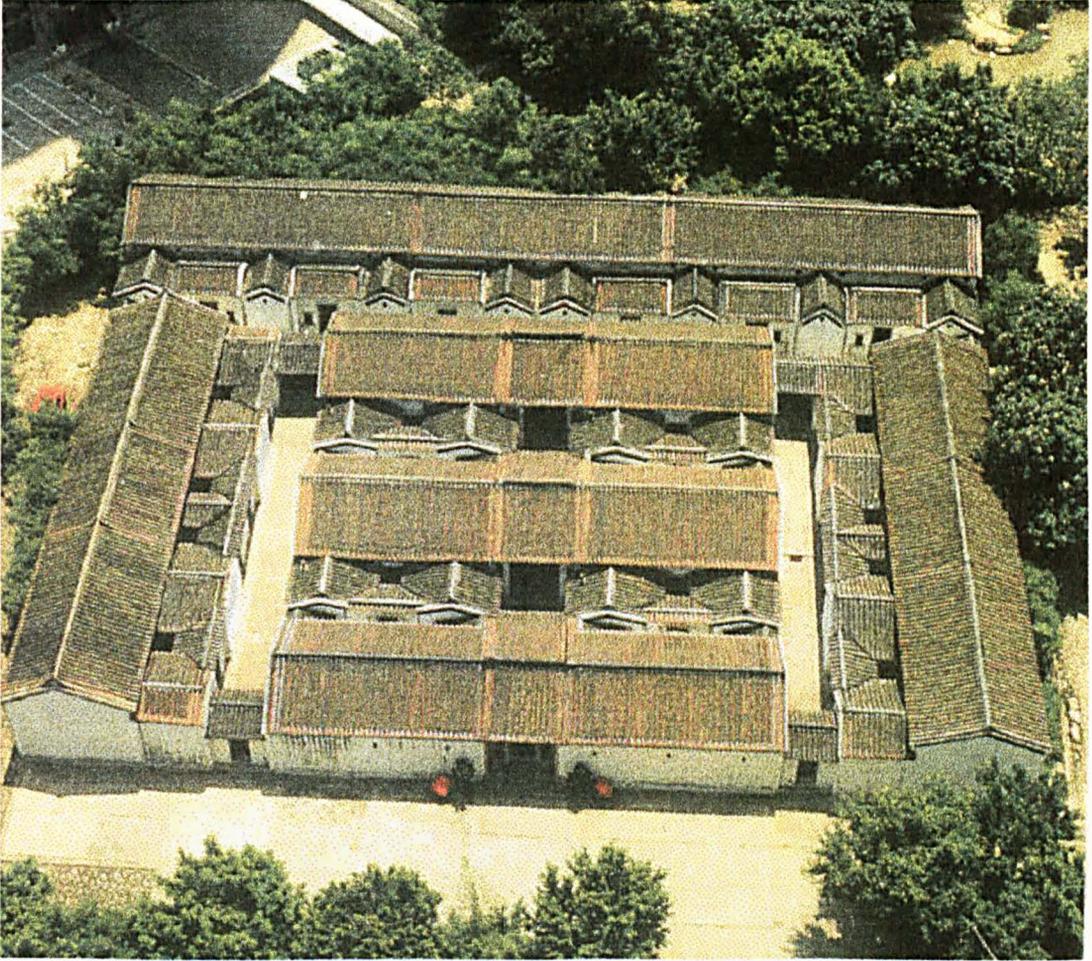
8b. Container terminal in Kwai Chung today.



9a. Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation (HSBC) building by Norman Foster, 2000.



9b. China Bank Tower by I. M. Pei.



10a. Sam Tung Uk, a Hakka village built in the 18th century, is now a museum.



10b. Tai Fu Tai, constructed in the 18th century.



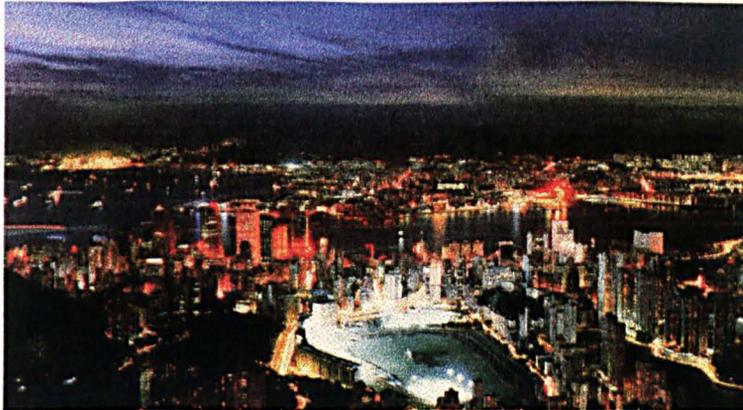
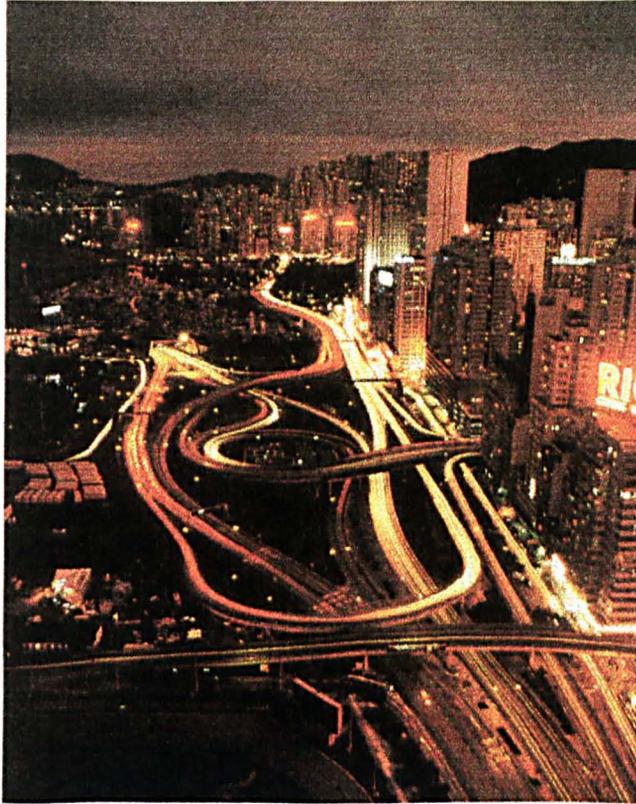
11a. Victoria Harbour 1940's.



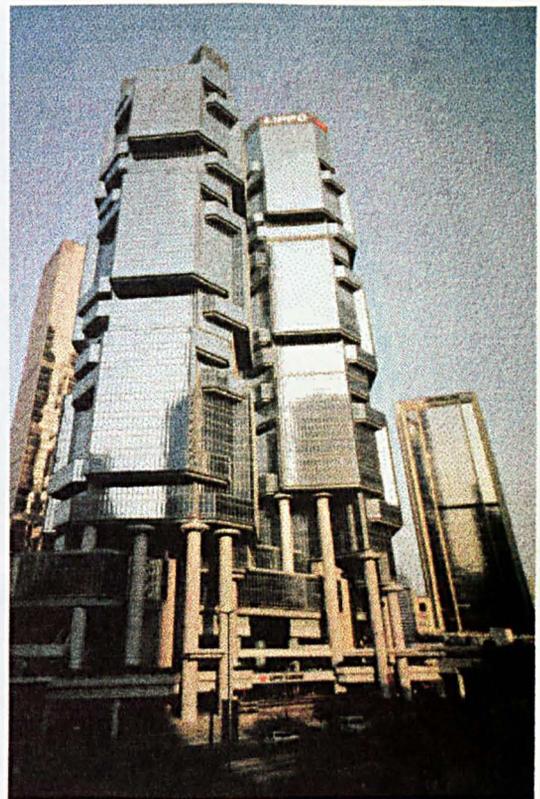
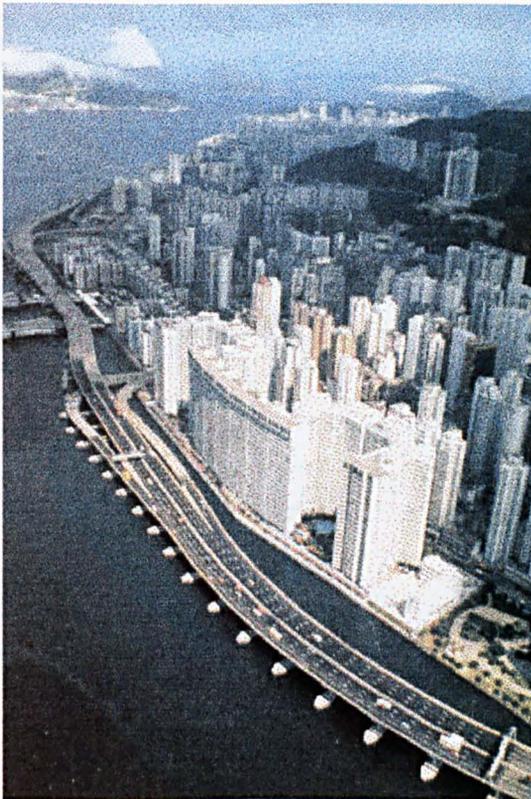
11b. Same view, 1980's.



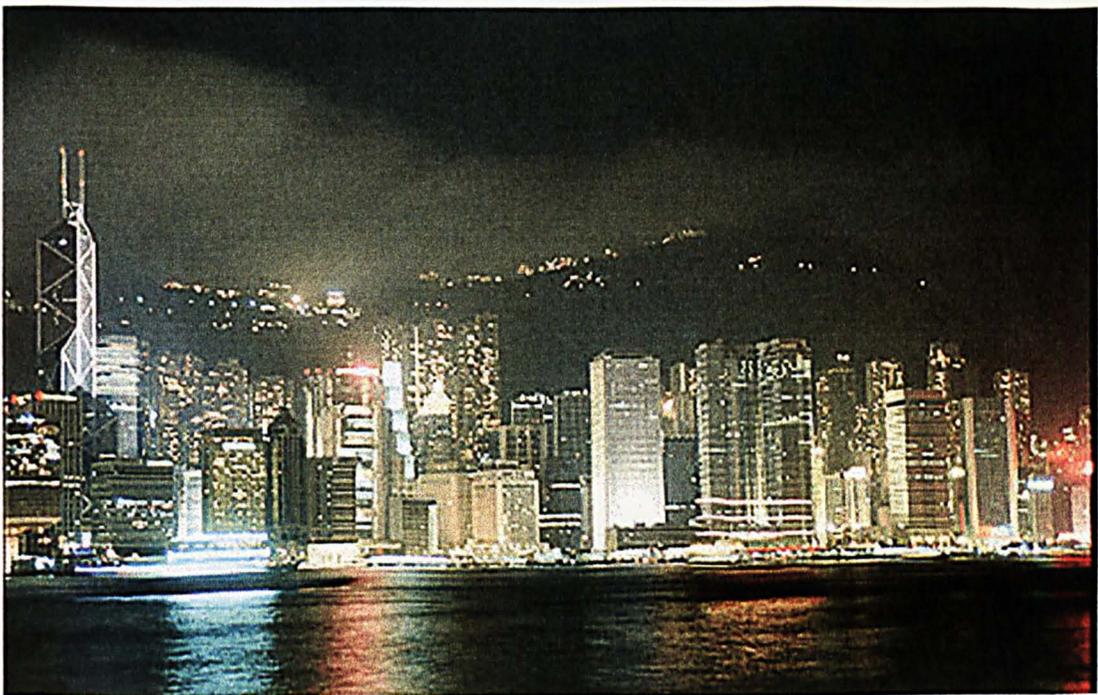
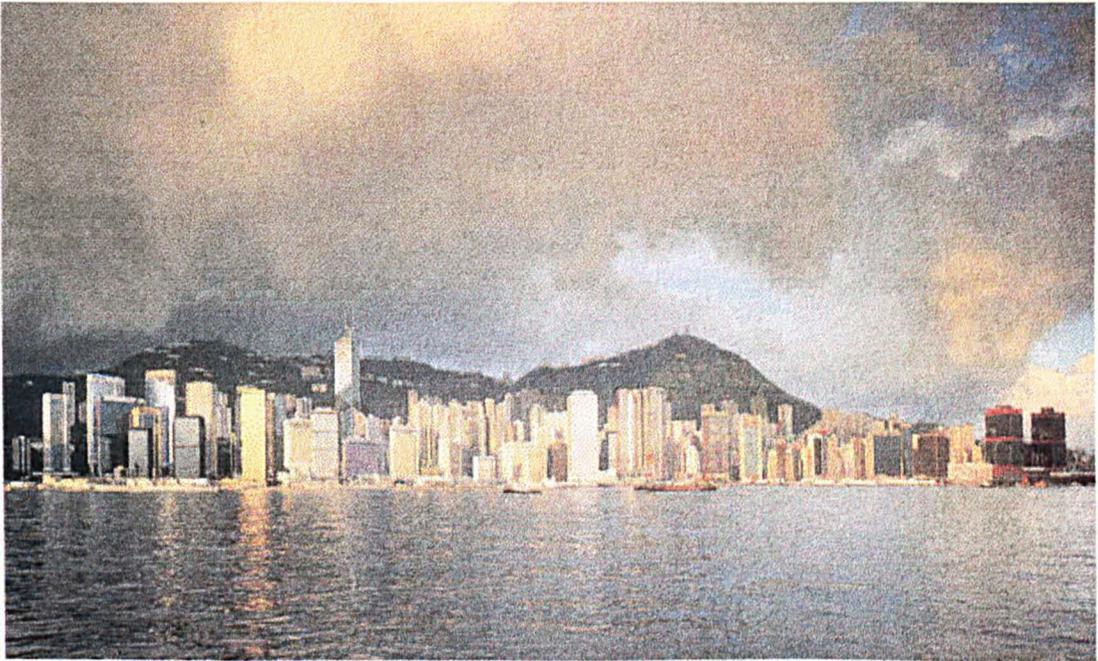
11c. Present day Victoria Harbour.



12. City night view.



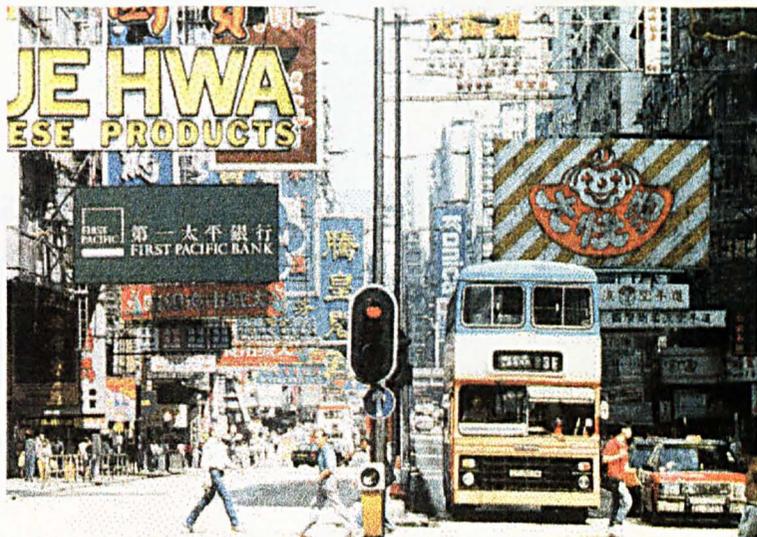
13. Skyscraper city.



14. City panorama.



15a. Street advertisement in Hennessy Road, 1960's.



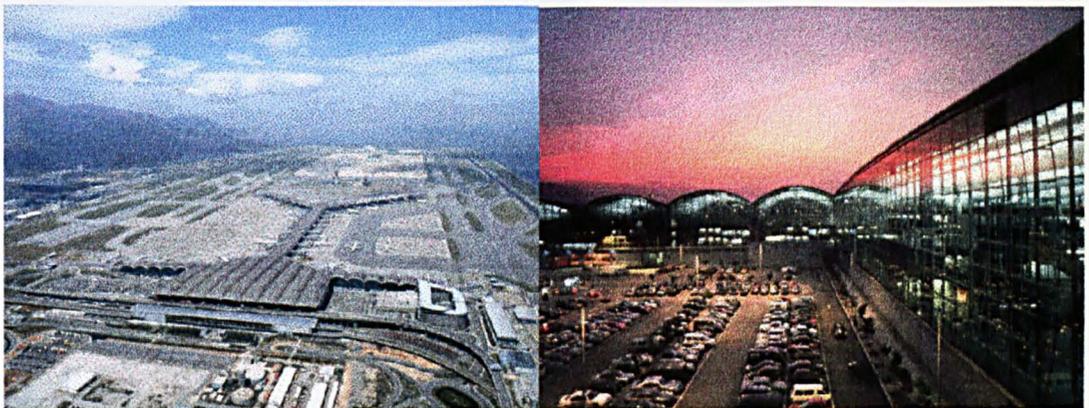
15b. Street advertisements, present.



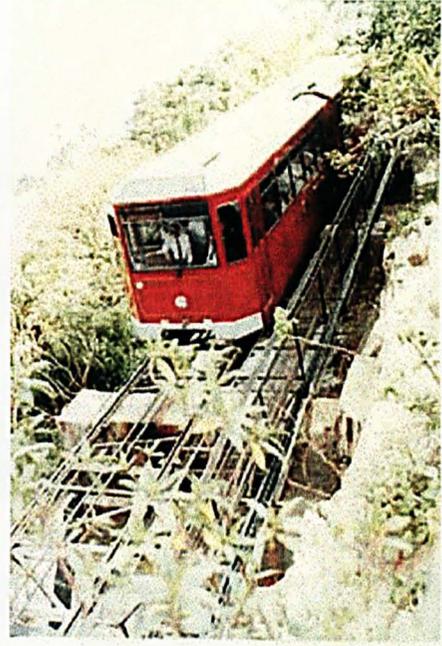
16. Aeroplane jets through the city before landing the old airport.



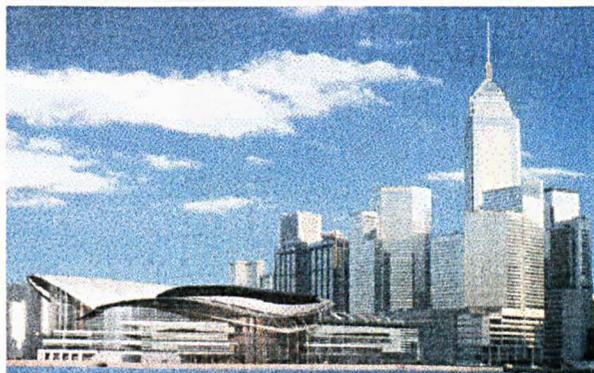
17a. Tsing Ma Bridge.



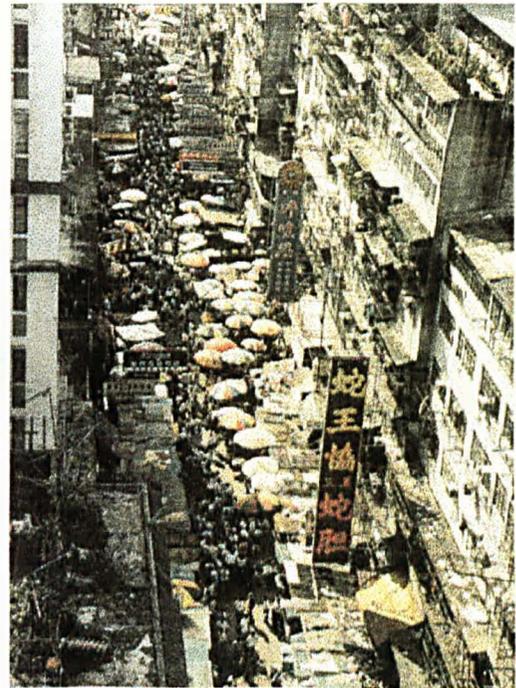
17b. Hong Kong International Airport, 2002.



18. Mass Transit Railway and Peak Tram.



19. Hong Kong Convention & Exhibition Centre. 20. Double-decker Bus.



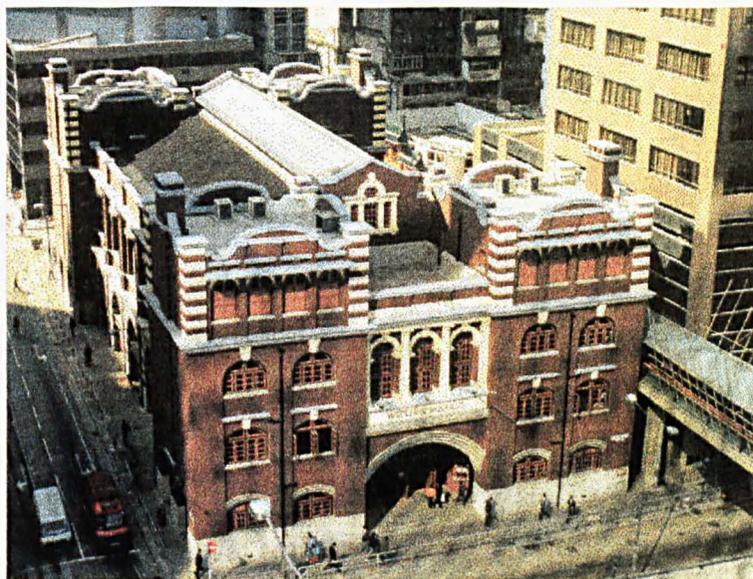
21a. Street Market, past and present.



21b. Jade Market



21c. Speciality street selling pet birds.



22. The Edwardian style Western Market was built in 1906.



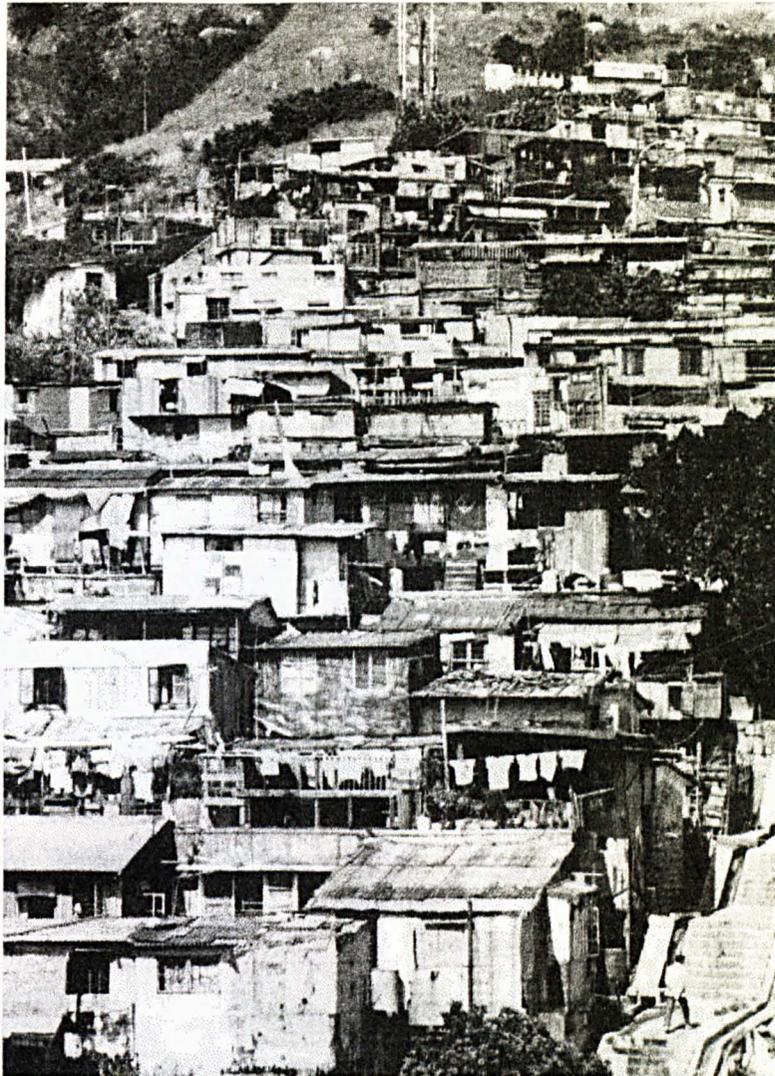
23a. Tsui Ping Housing Estate, 1970's.



23b. Tsing Ping Housing Estate, 2000.



23c. New Housing Estate.



24a. Shanties in Wong Tai Sin, Kowloon 1970's.



24b. Tsz Wan Shan old housing estate, 1970's.



25a. Kowloon Walled City, 1980s'.



25b. Kowloon City Walled Park, 2000.

9

Conclusion

Human perception must have a conceptual framework in order that humans think at all. If one mixes concepts too indiscriminately together, language collapses. This thesis has ordered its inquiry in terms of five conceptual headings, each of which provides us with a lens through which to see the city. They could have been very different headings. It would be possible to see the city as a novel or a film; to see it as a character itself or by following a single person (perhaps all through the thesis as she wanders around the city); it would be possible to see the city in terms of system analysis or as a history of its own technology. All these aspects have been touched in here. And my preferred headings, nonetheless, seems those which would make the readiest and most jargon-free kind of enquiry.

The City as History

The key ideas that have emerged from this thesis are the importance of identity and of history in the development of a city. The two are intertwined; history gives an identity value, because the accumulation of experiences, actions, and decisions makes each city (like each person) unique. Nonetheless, the symbolic and representational elements of history may often be contradictory of the modern urban form. The problem is how to juxtapose contrasting elements in the cityscape without disembodied their meanings? How to present them as memorable, recognizable, and legible individual characters as well as a coordinate group? The challenge is to discover a difficult unity through inclusion, instead of an easy unity through exclusion.

The City as Spectacle

Most modern cities attempt visibly and physically to represent the ideology and activity of their nation. Whatever the expression they adopt, they desire a *coherent* identity. Establishing an identity is a real challenge in the modern epoch because there are so many temptations and confusions. It is therefore important for cities to employ consistent styles that orchestrate a complex totality so that within this greater whole, eclecticism and pluralism flourish. To understand a city as

spectacle involves a unique judgement, because of their selectiveness of content and expression (that is their limitation as well as strength). The attributes that orchestrate the appearance of such a city are constantly changing and their originality may be questioned. They should always stand out as the emblems of a nation.

The City as A Work of Art

One of the interesting things about the city is that it draws on skills and concepts across the academic and technological spectrums; we may suggest it is one half of art and the other of craft. It is both art and science; but where ^{should} the line be drawn? Modern cities often construct images and forms that confuse an authentic work of art with kitsch. In architecture, Venturi calls the practice “a duck”. To replace symbolic and implicit meanings with explicit and mimic expressions is a duck. The city as a successful work of art should contain the quality of unresolvedness - to acknowledge dilemmas without solutions. Michelangelo’s unfinished Pietàs are appreciated for their *suggestive* contents and vibrant meanings. Similarly, good city forms may contain a paradoxical feeling in their spatial arrangements, which allow dissimilar and incongruous elements to exist side by side, for contradiction supports meanings and produces vitality. An artful discord in space allows room for uncertainties, contrast, creativity, and the tensions these produce.

The City as Corporate Image

The dissolving power of money shifts the definitions of space and time – globalization as the consequence of dynamic capital circulation. Modern cities promote corporatism, which concentrates on the expression of structure and function. Through the image of skyscrapers and glass in architecture, the corporate city suggests progressive social and economic ideals that it could seldom achieve in reality. The central problem here is that the corporate constructions tend toward short-term visions of the idealization and generalization of capitalist expediency. This is the distant truth about capitalism, and we see it in the city. It promises so much: wealth, beauty, and shimmering horizons. But its own ruthlessness is always prepared to destroy these achievements for new profits.

The City as Home

My emphasis is on the close relationship between building and inhabiting and *dwelling*. To inhabit a city is a process of adapting it and adding meanings to it, of constructing the key relations between bodies and spaces. A home city must incorporate spectacular public spaces with intimate private corners loved by its citizens. Nostalgia is the central theme of this section; but is nostalgic practice in space a solution to the social problems faced by modern cities? Can a city as corporate image or as spectacle at the same time provide a sense of homeness for its citizens?

The five headings are both denotative and connotative in meanings. Denotation indicates specific meaning; connotation suggests many meanings. An element is denotative in its meaning when it depends on expressive characteristics; it is connotative when it depends on symbolic qualities. The same element can have both denotative and connotative meanings; sometimes they are contradictory. Ideally, cities should contain an equilibrium of the both; but in reality, most cities shun one and exaggerate the other, to such an extent that a denotative city, such as Los Angeles, suggests more or less concrete meanings that can be bluntly recognized through its physical construction. Its automobiles, highway networks, mall outlets, gridiron urban forms indicate that it is mainly a city of corporate image. On the opposite side, a connotative city, such as San Francisco, derives dramatic expression from its original elements. These elements give off layers of abstract meanings beyond the immediate messages derived from their physical forms. The Golden Gate Bridge, the undulated streets, the piers, the great selective variety of forms constitute this city as a work of art, and a spectacle, as well as a home. To make urban space intelligible, the straightforwardness of denotation is needed as much as the suggestiveness of connotation.

Modernity aspires to plurality within a totality. A good city can embrace all the five conceptions or parts of them, in which one concept is itself a complete whole on one level and the part of a greater whole on another level. This study has gone some way towards understanding and conceptualising something as gigantic and protean as a modern city. Some problem areas in existing urban theory have been

highlighted. My criticism of this theory is that it has so much lacked the domestic experience of ordinary people, shaped as that is by such key terms as history, vista, art, home, and the power of money. This thesis offers a way of talking about these everyday values.

Appendix 1

A survey was carried out in the form of questionnaires in Hong Kong. The questionnaires were distributed through two channels: an advertisement placed in a local newspaper through the internet, and the assistance of a few people I know in Hong Kong, who helped to distribute, collect, and conduct the interviews. The questions were inspired by Kevin Lynch, *The Image of The City*, 1960. The languages used in the questionnaires were Chinese (Cantonese) and English in accordance with the native language of the subjects. A total of 66 responses were received, two of which are enclosed for reference here.

Aims:

1. To examine the imageability of Hong Kong, or if the city has a general image at all.
2. To analyse the cognitive mapping of the citizens and its relationship with signs and visual images.

The image of the city is not only created from external factors such as its physical environment, but also the perception of its people. How to communicate this image effectively? How does a foreigner build an image of a new city? What elements do most citizens use to navigate the urban landscape? Modern cities constantly change their forms and functions; therefore, they must have a clear structure to be grasped immediately and a suggestive structure to allow people to build up a more complete and complex urban image.

The Sample Group and Its Limitations:

The interviewees included a wide spectrum of Hong Kong population: from doctor to student, from company executive to housewife, from tourist to immigrant, from retired pensioner to teenager. Nevertheless, the cultural background of individuals was not explored in depth. Also, the size of the sample group was not representative the general population of the city.

Findings:

1. The most represented images of Hong Kong are summarized in Part III, *Hong Kong As The City of Spectacle*, pp. 165- 170.
2. The survey shows that most citizens have a cognitive mental map of their city. See *Phenomenology of A City*, pp.136- 139. Most interviewees' cognitive maps of the city are closely linked with the diagrammatic map of the Mass Transit Railway, which is based on the design of the famous map of the London subway system. Hence, we may suggest that well-organized visual signs and symbolic diagrams are effective in clarifying a seemingly disordered cityscape.

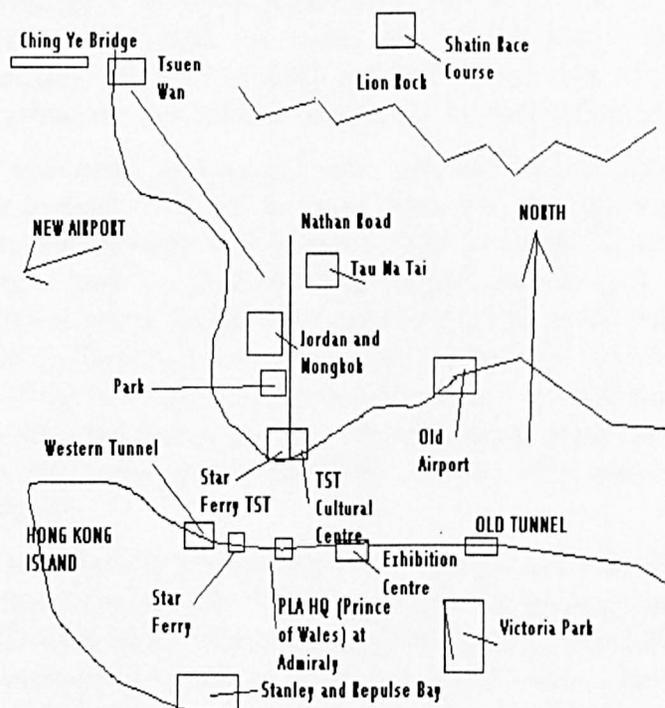
Survey Study – Sample One

Subject: Male, age between 35- 45, British, foreign expatriate, has been working in the city for more than five years.

Q1. What first comes to your mind, what symbolises the word “Hong Kong” for you? How would you broadly describe Hong Kong in a physical sense?

A1. FOOD! Hong Kong harbour at night symbolizes Hong Kong for me. Hong Kong is a dynamic, (perhaps too dynamic) fast paced city, very cut throat, not very high quality of life because everyone is working too much to really enjoy themselves. Hong Kong is never really a dull place, too much happens. Hong Kong is stressful.

Q2. Would you make a quick map of central Hong Kong, outward from the Victoria harbour. Make it just as if you were making a rapid description of the city to a stranger, covering all the main features. You are not expected to give an accurate drawing, just a rough sketch will do. (Please draw it from your own memory, do NOT refer to other source of information.)



Q3. Please indicate the means of transport that you normally used for the trip you take going from home to where you work. Why do you choose this /these particular means of transport rather than other alternatives?

A3. Taxi, MTR, sometimes minibus. Taxi when I am tired and cannot be bothered. MTR when I am going to meet someone and need to get there fast. Minibus when I have lots of time and just want to think about what I am going to say and do when I get to wherever I am going to.

Q4. Please give complete and explicit directions for the trip that you normally take going from home to where you work. Picture yourself actually making the trip, and describe the sequence of things you would see, hear, or smell along the way, including the pathmarkers that have become important to you, and the clues that a stranger would need to make the same decisions that you have to make. It is not important if you cannot remember the names of streets and places.

A4. Leaving the house, the green Gate at the front of the apartment block, onto HoManTin Road, lots of cars parked, always people waiting in cars for their wives who are shopping at the Parknshop at the end of the road, walk past the dry cleaners, always get a hello from the girl that works there, nice looking, pity she is married, walk across the road to the bus stop at the corner of Waterloo road and HoManTin street, past the shop selling bathroom accessories, past the bus stop to the newspaper stand, buy chewing gum normally, walk back the 50 feet or so to the bus stop, normally first in line when I start, for some reason people always seem to be in front of me when I actually get on. Normally irritated by the lack of manners of some people. Get on the bus, use my octopus card, go to the back of the bus as always.

There is always one good looking girl who gets on the bus, pity I am a coward sometimes to say anything. Bus leaves, turns to get onto the highway, past Poly U on route to the old tunnel. Always busy at this time of day, wait 10 mins to get past the usual road jam near Poly U. Past the train station. Stop to pick up more people, always people have to stand, luckily I am normally sitting at the back. Old ladies do not like coming to the back so I do not feel guilty, otherwise I would have to give up my seat.. hahah. (Why is it that old ladies in HK always stand in front to Gwailos on buses I wonder). Into the tunnel past the usually boring signs on each side of the tunnel, who is it this week, oh its Motorola...boring, why can I see a picture of Vivian Chow instead?

Of course at this time there is always someone playing a walkman with the music just loud enough so that I can hear the irritating drums but nothing else. Why did I not bring my own MD layer today? People always half asleep, especially the girls, either that or they are pretending so not to make eye contact with anyone. All the men looking at the girls legs (etc), woman not noticing but all the men noticing what the other men are up to.

Gets darker in the tunnel, lots of noise from the other cars, air not so good, then bright sunlight as we come out of the tunnel. Everyone holding on tight as the bus swings hard left and past the Royal Hong Kong Yacht club without the Royal anymore!!!! Nice boats, boat boys up washing the boats, hold on tight again bus makes a sharp right almost U turn on the bridge past Victoria park heading towards Wanchai (Gloucester Road). First bus stop, frenzy as people all rush to get off the

bus, what's the point in all trying to get off at once, the bus is not going anywhere anyway until they get off. Next stop another large mob leaves.

Many seats available now, remaining people all sit, except for the lazy ones who can not be bothered sitting down even though there is a seat beside them empty, they would rather stand instead. Bus comes to Central Plaza, time to get off, turn left up the road and up the stairs to the fly over.. on my right Chinese Emporium on my left Central Plaza. Enter Central Plaza, (one of my favourite buildings). What no silly art display today... oh well up the escalator (Boys secret her, you know why the sides of the escalators are polished?) well it has something to do with the fact that more girl are wearing trousers these days after a news paper article about it !!!!). nice legs, top of escalator turn right, down to the end to get my hot Toc...nice girl works there sometimes, a bit too old for little me but nice anyway.

Around the corner we go, away from the smells of coffee and up to the lift. 18floor... into the office.. normally second person there, turn on the lights and go to sleep for the rest of the day (aha)...

Q5. Do you have any particular emotional feelings about various parts of your trip? How long would it take you? Are there parts of the trip where you feel uncertain of your location?

A5. No I am always aware of where I am at all times, even when travelling in new places I keep a tab on direction and distance and have a mental picture of where I am at and going and came from.

Q6. What physical elements of Hong Kong you think are most distinctive? They may be large or small, but tell me those that for you are the easiest to identify and remember.

A6. Food, Central Plaza (my office), Star Ferry, Nice legs (sometimes) apart from silly shoes (7 inch heels) that some girls wear.

Q7. Would you describe each of these physical elements to me? If you were taken there blindfolded, when the blindfold was taken off what clues would you use to positively identify where you were?

A7. Depends on where, skyline, sun location, high rises, colour of the glass in the building, shops (what kind, upmarket, low end), how busy with people, how busy are the roads, what direction are people walking in, What direction is the traffic flowing. Are people carrying lots of bags or are they wearing suits etc. How long is the road (long straight road?), how many intersections, Signs, etc. Is the road flat, going up hill, down hill etc.

Q8. Are there any particular emotional feelings that you have with regard to any of these physical elements?

Q9. What do you think I am trying to find out?

A9. All emotion and memory come from “triggers”, you are trying to find out what these triggers are. These form part of a comfort base. A portion of how people feel about themselves comes from their comfort base. Therefore surroundings will influence them either in a positive way or a negative way depending on how they feel about these familiar places. Different people have different triggers.

Q10. What importance is orientation and the recognition of city elements to people?

A10. Very. Feeling comfortable is about being surrounded by familiar places/people/objects etc. Being orientated ensures that one is reminded of these places/people/objects. (Comfort Base)

Q11. Do you feel any pleasure from knowing where you are or where you are going? Or displeasure in the reverse?

A11. I always feel comfortable with familiar places and people. If I am obviously going to somewhere I like then I enjoy the trip to get there, if I however do not like what awaits then the trip there will not be a pleasant one.

Q12. Do you find Hong Kong an easy city to find your way in, or to identify its parts?

A12. Yes, HK is so small that its impossible not to if one lives here. Visitors may find things difficult in places like Mongkok since everything does look the same.

Q13. What cities of your acquaintance have good orientation? Why?

A13. Berne, Edinburgh, Montreal, Osaka (city centre only), Bangkok, Seoul, San Francisco, Glasgow, perhaps Sydney (depends on how much it has changed), Shenzhen, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing.

Cities with a distinct city centre and a few landmarks are always easier to remember. Many cities have a logical structure and were designed that way. Perfect example is Berne in Switzerland. Distinct city centre, with all the clutter kept away to the suburban areas.

A city like Taipei is a good example of how not to design a city, it is impossible to remember where you are because there is no city centre and there are no real landmarks. Just one big mess full of bike drivers high on beetle nuts.

Note:

1. This sample questionnaire is presented with original text and language without any translation or edition.
2. Answer of Question 8 is missing.

Survey Study – Sample Two

Subject: Female, age between 25- 35, Chinese, business consultant, Hong Kong citizen.

Q1. What first comes to your mind, what symbolises the word “Hong Kong” for you? How would you broadly describe Hong Kong in a physical sense?

A1. To me Hong Kong is the city of free-wheeling capitalism with its free port and free market practices, a welcoming land of opportunities for any adventurous entrepreneurs. And it is the people who give life and character to the place they live in, so Hong Kong is a living symbol of survival of its adaptive and resourceful citizens, who make-do and bear-it-all with little complaint in face of great social-economic challenges of the times and change of historical fortunes. Against all odds and harshness, most people stayed on and call this place home.

Hong Kong is surrounded by many outlying islands, high hills and deep waters with patches of flat land to spare, once decried by English historian at the turn of last century as the barren rock. Nowadays both sides of Victoria Harbour is dominated by skyscrapers (especially famous for its harbour view from the peak or the Star ferry at night) but soon the harbour will be choked by excessive land reclamation. Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, and the suburbs are all too crowded now with population close to seven million people, mostly living in undersized, overpriced high rise apartments. Personal space and privacy is at a premium here.

Traffic is getting more congested as with other big cities despite massive infrastructure improvements have been made. Cars always manage to fill up the roads as soon as they are built and landfills are running out of capacity; air, water and noise pollution is starting to draw public attention after years of bearing the grunt when living standards have proudly caught up with and exceeded other developed nations. Even endangered dolphins, frogs and migratory birds have caught the attention of environmental action groups in the hope that natural wonders will not be lost as soon as they are discovered. Hong Kong is not barren after all.

Q2. Would you make a quick map of central Hong Kong, outward from the Victoria harbour. Make it just as if you were making a rapid description of the city to a stranger, covering all the main features. You are not expected to give an accurate drawing, just a rough sketch will do. (Please draw it from your own memory, do NOT refer to other source of information.)

Q3. Please indicate the means of transport that you normally used for the trip you take going from home to where you work. Why do you choose this /these particular means of transport rather than other alternatives?

A3. I go to work on foot because it is only a short trip a block away, it takes me about 5 minutes to arrive; unlike most people who travel up to one hour for work.

During rush hours I would probably travel faster than the traffic over the same distance!

Q4. Please give complete and explicit directions for the trip that you normally take going from home to where you work. Picture yourself actually making the trip, and describe the sequence of things you would see, hear, or smell along the way, including the pathmarkers that have become important to you, and the clues that a stranger would need to make the same decisions that you have to make. It is not important if you cannot remember the names of streets and places.

A4. Upon leaving the apartment which I live in, I face a small triangular park with trees and benches for resting. The park is lined with metal fences and paved with concrete except where there are trees so it is greyish rather than a lush green kind of park. It stands there because it is located at the intersection where three major roads meet at an angle (only adjacent roads intersect, leaving a small triangle behind) and the triangular patch is too small to build any building of use. Senior citizens usually occupy the park for stretching, reading newspaper and resting because there is a resident care centre for the old nearby. Occasionally retired or jobless people may rest and sit there for a considerable while watching the traffic go past. Numerous cars, trucks and double decker buses use the road with tiny pavement next to the small park so it offers no refuge to those looking for quietness or fresh air. Luckily traffic is moving most of the time and the exhaust does not accumulate to choking degree.

Keep walking beside the small park (heading south east) in the direction of an ordinary looking downtown hotel leads me quickly towards the corner of the park and bring me to the traffic lights of another major road. After crossing the road, I have to take a right turn (now facing west) to pass some old and low-lying apartments (only a few storeys high) with residential flats upstairs and small shops on the ground level including a photo shop, a pharmacy, a furniture store and a Chinese joss-stick store selling all kinds of offering accessories. A brisk walk past the shops and upon crossing the first small street I make a left turn. This brings me to the right hand side of the small street. I could have turned left without crossing the small street but this side of the street is lined up with metal workshops and hardware stores. The dust and smoke from welding, noise from operating heavy machinery and clanging of metals, and busy people handling strewed goods in and out across the walkway is best to be avoided.

Vehicles double park on both sides in this relatively wide one way street. Trucks and cars belong to the stores occupy most of the space on the east side. On the west side it is courier drivers' territory, they stay in their parked vans reading newspaper, listening to the radio or playing cards while they wait for hiring calls. Sometimes they sit for a whole day and nothing much happens. As I walk further down the road heading south there are taxi drivers washing and polishing their cabs, chatting and gossiping as they rest in between or preparing to start work. Their chatter often fades when kids playing basketball in the ball court right next to the west side of the road bounced the balls and yelled out calling for passing shots. Further down the road past the ball court is a public health care clinic. Queues of aged people or parents with young children very often lined up to see doctors in the morning, sometimes as

early as eight o'clock in the morning so that they will get in front when the centre opens at around nine o'clock. The line is so long that the patients have to wait outside the main gate up to hours for service. Hong Kong is known as the city of queues (queuing up is a part of normal daily activity for getting almost any kind of service) so this come as no surprise to me. After all public clinic costs much cheaper to obtain the same kind of treatment as private practice.

Making a right turn round the corner of the clinic and past its side gate, now facing west, I would be able to see my place of work (on the third floor of an industrial building); the entrance and front windows directly facing the side of the clinic. After crossing the street there are yet more metal and furniture workshops on both side of the office, they bang and cut materials into shape and form for sale, the inconvenience is annoying but tolerable. After passing the front gate and greeting the security guard, I would complete my journey by walking up the stairs or luckily using the lift if not occupied by users from other floor moving loads and loads of rolled fabric.

Q5. Do you have any particular emotional feelings about various parts of your trip? How long would it take you? Are there parts of the trip where you feel uncertain of your location?

A5. The whole trip takes only five minute or so but the traffic, especially the double-decker buses and heavy trucks gave me a choking feeling as the smoke and noise made me uneasy and grasp for breath. The roll of miscellaneous small shops gave me a feeling that buying things is very convenient as a complete range of shops and services are nearby in most neighbourhood within walking distance; for the satirically inclined, every aspect of living (from birth like hospital and kindergarten, to death like funeral home) are within comically close reach.

The heavy workshops gave me an impression that the people work hard and decent for a living, the drivers gave me a thought that people still know how to relax and adapt (or kill time and accepting reality depending on how you see it) despite difficult time of recession and high unemployment. The clinic patients made me thought that the people are quick to queue up for any good bargain in town, no matter how marginal the actual gain maybe. Even if the time spent waiting is not worth it at the end, herd mentality is deeply ingrained in the people and they queued up just in case anyway otherwise they might have felt that they have lost out something important. The public free-for-all (or nearly) systems are now all open up to abuse as usual but even more so now because making the ends meet for the lower income groups becomes very hard and pressing social concern now.

Q6. What physical elements of Hong Kong you think are most distinctive? They may be large or small, but tell me those that for you are the easiest to identify and remember.

A6. It is easy to spot and name quite a few randomly off my mind, most of them are not only distinctive but uniquely Hong Kong (please correct me if they are not):

1. Victoria harbour, the busy sea traffic (junk boats, ocean liners and cargo vessels) and its stunning night view (a “must see” for visitors anyway), plus Peak tram experience of course
2. Yearly fireworks (the other place I know of which holds annual fireworks is Sydney)
3. Ex-HMS Tamar and Jardine’s noon gun in Causeway Bay, witness to the past colonial era
4. Specialty streets nowhere to be found but in Hong Kong, selling ladies fashion, pet birds (now demolished), cheap jewellery, antique furniture, computer parts & electrical goods.

Q7. Would you describe each of these physical elements to me? If you were taken there blindfolded, when the blindfold was taken off what clues would you use to positively identify where you were?

Q8. Are there any particular emotional feelings that you have with regard to any of these physical elements?

1. Factually speaking Victoria harbour is a bit smelly, hence “Hong Kong” meaning “fragrance harbour” literally as an ironical but affectionate name coined in the old days when raw sewage was directly discharged into the waters (it is treated now but smell even worse these days). Blindfolded? Go for the unmistakable aroma of the harbour; don't worry, it smells bad only if you go right up to the shore and take in a deep breath. Trace of salty air confirms that you are sniffing the harbour not the sewage...
2. One of the most spectacular and long-lasting shows I have seen (at least half an hour of fireworks without intermission, minimum three barges in the middle of the harbour firing simultaneously). Thousands of colourful explosions, beaming music and lasers (lots of camera shots & wows too) but it's free entertainment since it is paid out of sponsors' pocket not tax dollars. Shown on second day of every Chinese New Year and other special occasions like the handover. Try to locate the deafening crackling booms if blindfolded.
3. HMS Tamar was British naval headquarters in Hong Kong. In 1997, farewell speech by British royals and departure of HMS Britannia last voyage took place there. The site is now reserved for Hong Kong special administrative region's new headquarters. Facing the harbour, Jardine's noon gun is still firing blank shell at noon, a tourist attraction and a proud historical remnant of the British merchant house or a permanent sting for the Chinese sovereignty because it is irremovable private property. Noon gun's boom could be clearly heard like a small cannon firing its charge.
4. Like most other street hawker's market in Asia, the street stalls offer a wild range of bargains for tourists from all over the world. Crowded, noisy, chaotic, cluttered but enjoyable and satisfying for keen and undaunted bargain hunters. Notorious for offering fake brands and pirate goods. Approaching sellers would offer their goods in Chinese dialects or broken English if you are a western tourist.

Q9. What do you think I am trying to find out?

A9. The general impressions and more in-depth traits of the city.

Q10. What importance is orientation and the recognition of city elements to people?

A10. Directions and landmarks are important for people to find their way and feel comfortable travelling and living in the city.

Q11. Do you feel any pleasure from knowing where you are or where you are going? Or displeasure in the reverse?

A11. Except for unpleasant places (smell, noise or otherwise) which I have no need to be present, I feel secure and comfortable in knowing where I am or where I am going to. It is pleasurable if I am doing what a tourist does like shopping or going to places of interests, but this would be rare since there is not much new to find out about my home anyway, except for good bargains.

Q12. Do you find Hong Kong an easy city to find your way in, or to identify its parts?

A12. I would say so despite the inherent density and lack of wide visual perspective.

Q.13. What cities of your acquaintance have good orientation? Why?

A13. Historical cities with special landmarks or design (London has London Bridge, the Thames, Palace etc. Paris has Eiffel tower, Arc de Triumph and radiating road) or cities that are well planned (like Canberra) with undulating natural features like hills, lakes rivers or harbours like Melbourne, Sydney and Hong Kong. If the land is too flat and large then it is most difficult to find the way, it's like entering a desert with no end in sight, lacking sense of orientation even when fully aware of general direction and location.

Note:

1. This sample questionnaire is presented with original text and language without any translation or edition.
2. Answers of Question 2 and 7 are missing.

Appendix 2

A virtual interview was conducted through the electronic mail with a spokesman of the Hong Kong Housing Department, Mr. David Ng, in June, 2001.

On the change of city landscape:

Q1. In the past decade, Hong Kong experienced many substantial changes. What about the configuration of its population?

Ng: A decade ago, in the minds of most Hong Kong people were about seeking a safe haven somewhere else, and many ended up in countries like Canada and Australia. Most who left were mainly from the middle/ middle-upper class but since 1997, many have returned to Hong Kong with different nationalities. Many expatriates have also left Hong Kong after 1997.

Chinese nationals from Mainland China were given a quota of 50 per day to settle in Hong Kong, increased to 100 per day thereafter and now about 150 per day. This means that about 55,000 additional Chinese nationals can now live and work in Hong Kong every year. These are mainly lower skilled people for family reunion. A new scheme which allows specialists workers with higher education to live in Hong Kong has also recently been established.

In short, it is fair to say that Hong Kong is becoming less international and is under increasing influence from Mainland China.

Q2. How do these changes in the population reflect in the planning strategy of your Department?

Ng: The Housing Authority and its executive arm the Housing Department have anticipated population changes in 1997 and have since planned to increase construction. In years 2000 and 2001 were the peak with close to 90,000 units under construction. These include increased production of Public Rental Housing (PRH) and Home Ownership Scheme (HOS) flats. The goals are to shorten applicants wait time to get a PRH flat from 7 years to 3 years and to allow middle /middle lower class people to own their own homes through the HOS.

Of course, this has detrimental effects on private flat sales and property prices have slumped 60% since 1997.

Q3. What accomplishments of the Housing Department make you most proud?

Ng: About half the population of Hong Kong, that is about 2 million people live in public housing flats built by the Housing Department.

Q4. What did you expect to happen that has not?

Ng: Due to the recent economic slump and social changes, many have voiced the stoppage on the HOS as property prices have gone down a lot. However, the Housing Authority has decided to decrease the number of productions but not total stoppage. I actually expect that both HOS and PRH productions should be contracted out to the private sector as government can be rather bureaucratic and construction works should be left to the private sector. This can be achieved by

entering contracts or clauses during land sale such that private companies will have to build units of public housing when they buy land and develop certain areas. Also rent vouchers should replace application for PRH as this offers potential applicants more choices and speedy rental.

On the city as home:

Q5. How would you describe an ideal home city?

Ng: More greens, more relax places, stable property prices and low crime rates.

Q6. Do you think Hong Kong is successful in providing its citizens with a sense of “homeness”?

Ng: Not quite but people generally do like Hong Kong. Even greenery is less and the city looks like a concrete jungle with worsening population, the city still offers good salary package, low tax business environment and good health care.

Q7. A metropolis with such a small size, it is hard not to have serious misgivings about the future. How do we approach the problem of grotesque, over-developed cities like Hong Kong?

Ng: Hong Kong is a centralised, convenient city with advantages in communications, transport, low crime rates and low tax rate. Apart from this, people are generally at the moment concerned more on unemployment. As long as the Hong Kong government maintains the above advantages, the citizens in general are reasonably contented.

On contemporary culture:

Q5. The Disneyland, as an American kitsch par excellence, is going to be built in Hong Kong. Why Disneyland and not other themed parks?

Ng: The main reason for the Disney project is to make Hong Kong a tourist attraction in the Asia region. This is to benefit Hong Kong’s economy in the long run as tourists money is quite vital to Hong Kong, as it has no manufacturing industries. This will surpassingly present an image that Hong Kong is an international city with American culture. But in general, the main rival to Hong Kong’s tourism business is mainland china which offers a lot more attractions. Hollywood studios and other theme parks are negotiating with mayors of Shanghai and Beijing and it is almost certain that other theme parks will be built in China. Disneyland is the most famous of theme parks and I guess that is why HK government is interested and gave quite a bit of concessions.

Q6. Apart from its monetary potential, do you think it will integrate well with the existing image of Hong Kong?

Ng: Yes, it presents an international image to Hong Kong – not just to foreigners, but also to citizens of Mainland China.

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