COUNTER-SPACE:
Mapping Strategies of Power by the State and Counter-Strategies by the People in Urban Localities of Hong Kong

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Abstract
"Counter-Space" departs from normative urban theories that attribute the production of urban space to the capacities of dominant forces such as business strategies and State policies. Instead, it attempts to realise the urban phenomena as a dialectic process between the dominant mode of production and the everyday practices of the common people.

For this purpose, the thesis situates itself in the space of urban localities in Hong Kong to uncover the production of a "counter-space". In the context of this thesis, it signifies the non-physical space that is inaugurated when the common people resist any act of domination by the State. Strategies of power mean the strategies of control devised by the institutional structures of the society such as the urban planning and environmental control divisions.

This paper investigates the possibility of locating such a space in contemporary urban spaces. To locate this "counter-space", Foucault's conception of power relations is used as an interpretative framework for the investigation. The urban space of Hong Kong is chosen as the subject of study.

As a strategy of study, the paper first assembles the dominant forms of urban control and their strategies of power employed by the State, then unveils the counter-strategies that specific social groups use to challenge these strategies of control. For the purpose of uncovering counter-strategies, the thesis intends to investigate into the contestation in the use of public space by the street hawkers and the breach of building control regulations by the people.

In trying to locate a "counter-space", this thesis hopes to demonstrate that the reading of an urban space can move beyond its physical space (which is largely determined by the dominant productive forces) to include (an)other space - that of a "counter-space". The ultimate purpose of the thesis then, is to be able to establish a framework in reading urban space, beyond its visual content, via the interconnection between the collective actions in urban politics and the individual experience.

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1 The term "counter-space", is used by Henri Lefebvre to mean the space which is produced when a body puts up an act of resistance against a dominating project.