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Title	Pedestrianised streets in the global neoliberal city: A battleground between hegemonic strategies of commodification and informal tactics of commoning
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Publication date	2021-01
Publication information	Villani, Caterina, and Gianni Talamini. "Pedestrianised Streets in the Global Neoliberal City: A Battleground between Hegemonic Strategies of Commodification and Informal Tactics of Commoning." Elsevier, January 2021. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102983.
Publisher	Elsevier
Item record/more information	http://hdl.handle.net/10197/25464
Publisher's statement	This is the author's version of a work that was accepted for publication in Cities. Changes resulting from the publishing process, such as peer review, editing, corrections, structural formatting, and other quality control mechanisms may not be reflected in this document. Changes may have been made to this work since it was submitted for publication. A definitive version was subsequently published in Cities (VOL 108, (January 2021)) DOI: https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cities.2020.102983.
Publisher's version (DOI)	10.1016/j.cities.2020.102983

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Pedestrianised Streets in the Global Neoliberal City: A Battleground Between Hegemonic Strategies of Commodification and Informal Tactics of Commonisation

Abstract

Pedestrianisation, the conversion of a vehicular street for pedestrian use, is increasingly being proposed worldwide as a sustainable measure by hegemonic powers. Pedestrianisation can bolster uneven urban development patterns, however social tensions can magnify on the pedestrianised street, where deprived social groups claim the right to the city. This study employs a mixed method approach to examine, within a de Certeausian theoretical framework, the relationship between the governmental strategies promoting pedestrianisation and the tactics of pedestrianised space informal appropriation. Within this context Hong Kong emerges as a revelatory case, it is a city where the extreme scarcity of public open space exacerbates the conflict between social groups interested in this resource. The analysis provides evidence of a discrepancy between expected and actual uses of the pedestrianised streets. Furthermore, this study highlights the need in the context of the global neoliberal city for discussing the theoretical dichotomy of strategies and tactics. This paper argues for pedestrian planning which includes stationary use as a main pedestrianisation objective, as well as for responsive urban design that carefully considers the association between behavioural patterns and spatial features of the pedestrianised street.

Keywords: pedestrianisation; informal urbanism; global neoliberal city; de Certeau; behavioural mapping; Hong Kong.

1. Introduction

The global neoliberal city concurrently presents the characters of the "global city" as defined by Saskia Sassen and the "neoliberal city" as defined by, among others, David Harvey, Neil Brenner and Nik

Theodore (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 2005; Harvey, 2007). In this city pedestrianisation arises as an attempt to create new kinds of urban commons that can be capitalised upon by the hegemonic agendas of foreign and domestic investment in luxury commercial real estate, city branding, and healthy cities (Harvey, 2012; Sassen, 1991). Nevertheless, it can also trigger epiphanies of reclamation of the right to the city by a variety of social groups, among them a growing numbers of migrant workers, who are an essential part of the global city's socio-economic system (Harvey, 2007, 2012; Sassen, 1991). This paper employs the conceptual model proposed by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life* (de Certeau, 1984) for analysis of the production and use of the pedestrianised street in the global neoliberal city. The notions of "strategies" and "tactics" are used as theoretical prisms to examine the dichotomy between governmental policies promoting pedestrianisation and stationary activities of informal occupation of the pedestrianised street. The attempt is to conceptualise the evidence of a gap between expected and actual uses of the pedestrianised street, in favour of a more inclusive and responsive production of space.

This paper studies pedestrianisation in Hong Kong, which is a global trans-territorial hub driven by information technology and intense economic transactions (Sassen, 2005). A global city *par excellence*, Hong Kong is dominated by a neoliberal ethos that prioritises high levels of economic development and dynamism over engaging with questions of inequality (Harvey, 2007; Sassen, 2005; Wissink, Koh, & Forrest, 2017). Furthermore, by disrupting the normative meaning of public space through transnational practices, the gathering and political activism of migrant domestic workers (MDWs) in the pedestrian realm highlights that public space is contested (Law, 2002). Within such a context, this research aims at: (1) understanding the background of the pedestrianisation conception by scrutinising the related policy development, and, (2) focusing on the first and longest lasting pedestrianised street in Hong Kong, to analyse the use of this kind of an urban common for improving its future provision.

Specifically, this paper seeks answers to the following questions:

(1) What has been the historical development of the pedestrianisation-related policies in Hong Kong? What kind of changes in the planning approach to pedestrianisation can be observed? What kind of hegemonic forces are triggering pedestrianisation? What are their goals in pursuing it?

(2) Who are the users of the pedestrianised street? Is there a particular social group who gathers in the pedestrianised street? What patterns of stationary uses are observable?

(3) To what extent does the plasticity of space impact the freedom of use of the pedestrianised street? Is it possible to observe an association between design features and specific activities?

(4) What lessons can be drawn from the case of Hong Kong pedestrianisation-related planning policies and the patterns of behaviour observed in Chater Road? How do these contribute to urban theory?

2. Literature review

2.1. Hegemonic agendas of pedestrianisation

Pedestrianisation is a traffic restriction for the temporary or permanent conversion of a vehicular street to exclusive pedestrian uses, it was implemented from the late 1950s in North American and European cities as a countermeasure to the increasing extension of automotive facilities (Hass-Klau, 2015). It developed in different forms according to historical, cultural and political backgrounds, from one street to an entire precinct, as permanent or temporary, with a more or less developed design intervention in the streetscape and a connection to transport networks (Hass-Klau, 2015; Yuen & Chor, 1998).

Over the years pedestrianisation has been initiated as a measure that allegedly benefits society, the environment, as well as the economy. This regulation has been devised to reallocate space for non-motorised vehicles and pedestrians, reducing the health and environmental drawbacks of motorised vehicles (Nieuwenhuijsen & Khreis, 2016), to upgrade the urban environment as a place in which to stay (Brambilla & Longo, 1977; Soni & Soni, 2016; Yuen & Chor, 1998), to bolster the commercial sector

and to contribute to heritage preservation (Hass-Klau, 2015; Yuen & Chor, 1998). Research on its impacts shows that pedestrianisation is associated with a decrease in car trips (Parkhurst, 2003), a significant increase in pedestrian flow (Hass-Klau, 1993), stationary activities (sitting, strolling, socialising) (Gehl, 1987), structural changes in the commercial sector (Hass-Klau, 1993), as well as demonstrated retail rent increases (Yiu, 2009).

Although enjoying wide academic, planning and institutional popularity, this measure is questioned as being non-inclusive, applied to a fragmented patchwork, and as amplifying the inequity of uneven urban developments (Kębłowski, Van Criekingen, & Bassens, 2019). Recent research suggests that the current assessments of pedestrianisation might represent a narrow focus on its wider impacts (Boonjubun, 2017; Kębłowski & Bassens, 2018), overlooking how this traffic restriction might embed a "hierarchisation of urban classes, behaviours and territories" (Kębłowski et al., 2019) and favour a neoliberalist political agenda (Harvey, 1989; Reigner & Brenac, 2019) that further contributes to the uneven socio-spatial landscape of urban areas (Henderson, 2004). Measures that are considered sustainable from a transport perspective may contribute to real estate speculation, low-income resident displacement (Lin & Chung, 2017; Sandoval, 2018) and, more widely, to gentrification (Zukin, 2009). Specifically, pedestrianisation has been suggested as increasing the pressure on downtown working-class neighbourhoods in the case of Bruxelles (Kębłowski et al., 2019), and has been associated with the phenomenon of commercial displacement in the case of Istanbul (Özdemir & Selçuk, 2017). Recent research suggests that pedestrianisation projects in Asian cities, such as Shanghai and Taipei, mostly implemented as part of wider renewal projects, constitute means for real estate value increases (H.-C. Cheng & Shih, 2005), city branding and place promotion (Barber, 2020; He & Wu, 2005; Parajuli & Pojani, 2018). This may contribute to the marginalisation of poorer segments of the population (Caprotti, 2014; Parajuli & Pojani, 2018; Wai, 2006). In addition the observed displacement of existing commercial activities (Boonjubun,

2017; H.-C. Cheng & Shih, 2005) may turn the pedestrianised streets into a less-safe environments (Boonjubun, 2017).

The review of the literature highlights how, despite the wealth of research focusing on pedestrianisation and the critical approach adopted by many recent studies, there is still a lack of understanding about: (1) the historical development of pedestrianisation policies, (2) the social and political advantages of pedestrianisation, particularly regarding deprived social groups (Marcuse, 2009), (3) how to maximise the benefits of pedestrianisation via a responsive urban design grounded on empirical evidence.

2.2. Plasticity of space and informal urbanism

This research draws upon the notion of "the right to the city" as conceived and articulated by, among others, Henri Lefebvre (1968) and David Harvey (2008). The extent to which space is contested, claimed, transformed and modified by social processes implies the notion of *habiter*, and is associated with the "plasticity" of space and the amount of freedom of action within (Lefebvre, 1996). Insurgent, informal, and temporary practices are discussed as contemporary expressions of the collective realms that challenge the conventional approach to the provision of public space (Hou, 2010) and are described by notions such as "insurgent public space" (Hou, 2010), "loose space" (Franck & Stevens, 2007), "temporary city" (Bishop & Williams, 2012) and "everyday urbanism" (Chase, Crawford, & Kaliski, 2008). Practices of appropriation are observed in vacant lands (Németh & Langhorst, 2014), urban street sidewalks (Kim, 2012; Loukaitou-Sideris & Ehrenfeucht, 2009), street corners (Elsheshtawy, 2013), station exits (Talamini & Pires Ferreira, 2019), skywalks (Villani & Talamini, 2020), urban parks, under-used public spaces (Rossini, 2019), and pedestrianised streets.

This paper focuses on the last category, namely, on streets that are temporarily or permanently converted from vehicular to exclusive pedestrian use. The pedestrianised street is negotiated between mobility (bicycles, skateboards) and stationary uses (Von Schönfeld & Bertolini, 2017). It is a space for reclaiming cycling as a legitimate means of urban transport (Montero, 2017), and can also be occupied

for political expression and bottom-up activism (Bertolini, 2015; E. W. Cheng & Chan, 2017). Furthermore, this study aims to assume a critical stance that can provide a larger horizon for the framing of the growing body of studies focusing on informal practices of space appropriation. The attempt is to move beyond the celebrative descriptions of the soft everyday resymbolisation of generic spaces, in order to gain an understanding of the relationship between these phenomena and the production of space within increasingly deregulated urban planning.

2.3. The right of migrant workers to the global city

Recently, a growing body of studies has focused on the idea of open public spaces as settings for actions of reclamation and appropriation by predominantly deprived groups (Marcuse, 2009), such as migrant workers (Chen et al., 2018; Vacchelli & Kofman, 2018). The vulnerable and exploited condition of low-skilled, low-payed, and low-status migrant workers in the global city is produced by policies and legal frameworks which grant different sets of rights to individuals within their territorial jurisdiction in order to enable the exploitation of labour (Sassen, 1991), in some cases as a temporary answer to social reproduction crisis (Constable, 2009; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). Commonly, migrant workers are legally employed in a condition of "commodified labour" (Yeoh & Huang, 1998), or in more extreme cases, in a condition of "contract slavery" (Bales, 1999; Jureidini & Moukarbel, 2004). Moreover, as elucidated by Sassen (1991), restrictive migration laws can force migrants into a condition of illegality and, in extreme cases, of "bare life*"* (Agamben, 1998; Sassen, 1991).

Although the appropriation of public space by migrant workers is a worldwide phenomenon that can be found in global neoliberal cities such as New York (Vertovec, 2011), London (Hall, 2015; Vacchelli & Peyrefitte, 2018) and Los Angeles (Crawford, 1995), one of the most significant, increasing and less researched legal migration flows is that of temporary migrant workers within Asia, this is emphasised by Oishi (2005). Asian global neoliberal cities, such as Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Dubai, have been attracting significant flows of trans-national and transient migrant workers since the

1970s (Hong Kong and Singapore) and 1980s (Kuala Lumpur and Dubai) (Castles, Haas, & Miller, 2003; Goh, 2014b; Oishi, 2005). Migrants in low-skilled occupations come from South and Southeast Asia to Asian neoliberal global cities on temporary migration schemes which allow them limited rights, define their living locations, and restrict them from obtaining full citizenship or permanent residency (Caprotti & Yu, 2017; Goh, 2014a; Wickramasekara, 2008). Due to particularly restrictive living conditions which do not allow meetings with peers and intrinsic cultural factors, the public space of the receiving cities often become the realm of migrants' spare time enjoyment. For migrant workers in Hong Kong, Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Dubai, public spaces allow a home feeling with compatriots and a higher degree of freedom, without the constant surveillance of their employers (Constable, 1997; Elsheshtawy, 2013; Law, 2002; Muniandy, 2015; Yeoh & Huang, 1998).

In all these cities temporary migrants disrupt the local normative and institutional definitions of social life and public space, as well as its legal codes (Elsheshtawy, 2008, 2013; Law, 2001; Muniandy, 2015). In some circumstances migrants succeed in creating "counterspaces" which challenge dominant social practices in public (Martinez, 2015; Schmiz & Kitzmann, 2017; Yeoh & Huang, 1998). A significant case, although exceptional in the context of Malaysia, can be found in the heart of Kuala Lumpur where temporary migrant workers gather for collective prayers by appropriating a public road (Muniandy, 2015). Similarly, the weekly meeting of large crowds of migrants workers establishes a *de facto* pedestrianised street in Singapore "Little India", thus initiating urban transformation processes (Ostertag, 2016). In Hong Kong, the regular Sunday gathering of MDWs in open public spaces constitutes a consolidated trans-national practice which may be interpreted as cosmopolitan space (Law, 2002). Such a coherent and growing body of literature reveals some deficiencies in discussing the importance of public gatherings in the emancipatory process of migrants in the global neoliberal city, that of moving from "commodified labour" to political subjects (Bunnell & Harris, 2012).

3. **Theoretical Framework**

168 This study proposes the application of the theory advanced by Michel de Certeau in *The Practice of*
169 *Everyday Life* to the analysis of the relationship between the production and the appropriation of space
170 within the global neoliberal city. In de Certeau's definition, the notion of strategy assumes the possibility
171 of isolating "a subject of will and power" from an "environment" and implies a "proper place" from
172 which the subject generates relations with other entities (de Certeau, 1984). Contrarily, the notion of
173 tactic assumes the impossibility of defining both a distinct entity and a 'proper' institutional or physical
174 place of belonging where the tactic "can capitalize on its advantages, prepare its expansions, and secure
175 independence with respect to circumstances" (idem). While strategies use space to control time, tactics
176 depend on time to infiltrate into others' space. The relation between strategies and tactics is in military
177 terms an asymmetric engagement (Figure 1). In de Certeau's conception the strategy capitalizes a
178 positional and resource advantage to expand a dominance; it is capable of panoptic sight which enables
179 the control of forces through the mastery of space, and it is built upon and constitutes a specific
180 knowledge. Conversely, the tactic is "an art of the weak", which lacking a holistic view performs
181 contingent reinterpretation of strategically-produced spatial settings (idem) (Figure 1). By looking at this
182 asymmetrical engagement, this study enquires into the growing incapacity of global hegemonic powers
183 to discipline urban subjects through the mastery of space within a neoliberal socioeconomic structure.
184 Moreover, despite not engaging in ethnographic discourses, the aim is "to make visible and elucidate the
185 tactics marginalized by the Western form of rationality", which authorizes the symbolisation of "[a]
186 *migrational*, or metaphorical, city [that] slips into the clear text of the planned and readable city" (idem).

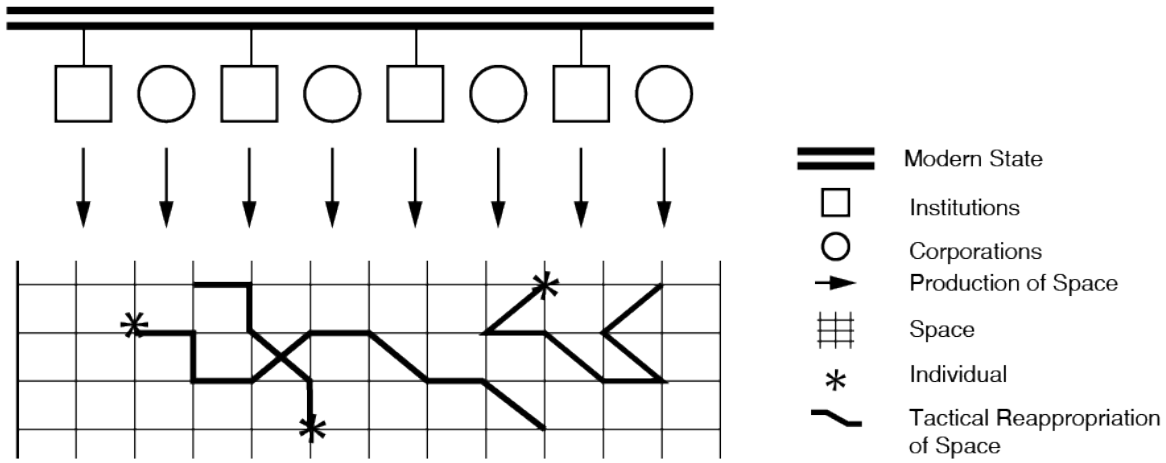


Figure 1. De Certeau's *Strategies/Tactics* model.

In the field of urban studies the theoretical proposition of de Certeau has recently found renewed attention (Collie, 2011; Cvetičanin, Spasić, & Gavrilovic', 2014; Gill, Conlon, Tyler, & Oeppen, 2014; Harrison, Moyo, & Yang, 2012; Round, Williams, & Rodgers, 2008). However, there is a lack of discussion regarding the validity of this conceptual model — which was developed inside a European post-war industrial milieu — within the contemporary service-oriented global neoliberal city. De Certeau developed his theory at the early beginning of a systemic crisis that led to the restructuring and re-scaling of the world-system via neoliberal policies that produced higher mobility of capital, labour, goods, materials and tourism (Sassen, 2005). This process brought forth a number of global hubs within the dynamics of the globalisation of economic activity (Sassen, 1991). Yet, not all the emerging global cities are founded on a fully neoliberal model: in some cases, the opening of the economy may be still strictly regulated by the nation state. Thus, the global neoliberal city is here defined as the utmost product of a process of deregulation, on the grounds of liberalism, that has gone along with the financialisaton of the economy and increased market liquidity under the condition of free-market capitalism. In this city the consequent mobility of capital undermines the positional advantages of the hegemonic forces, compromised by a tactical capitalism no longer tied to a nation state dependency. This study seeks to validate de Certeau's theoretical proposition in the current context of an extreme urban condition for the ultimate purpose of its advancement.

4. Material and methods

4.1. Research design

This study employs a mixed method approach to operationalise de Certeau's conceptual model, combining: 1) qualitative analysis of the governmental strategies concerning pedestrianisation in Hong Kong, and 2) quantitative analysis of the tactics of space appropriation. Chater Road pedestrianised area is here chosen as a "revelatory case" (Yin, 1984) (see Figure 2). Thematic content analysis, a qualitative research method applied to textual analysis (Bernard & Ryan, 1998; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Lacity & Janson, 1994), is adopted to achieve this first objective. Behavioural mapping, an environment-behaviour research method (Bechtel & Zeisel, 1987), is adopted for the second objective. The collection of five semi-structured in-depth interviews with key stakeholders supplements additional information on both the process of pedestrianisation and the "tactics of consumption."

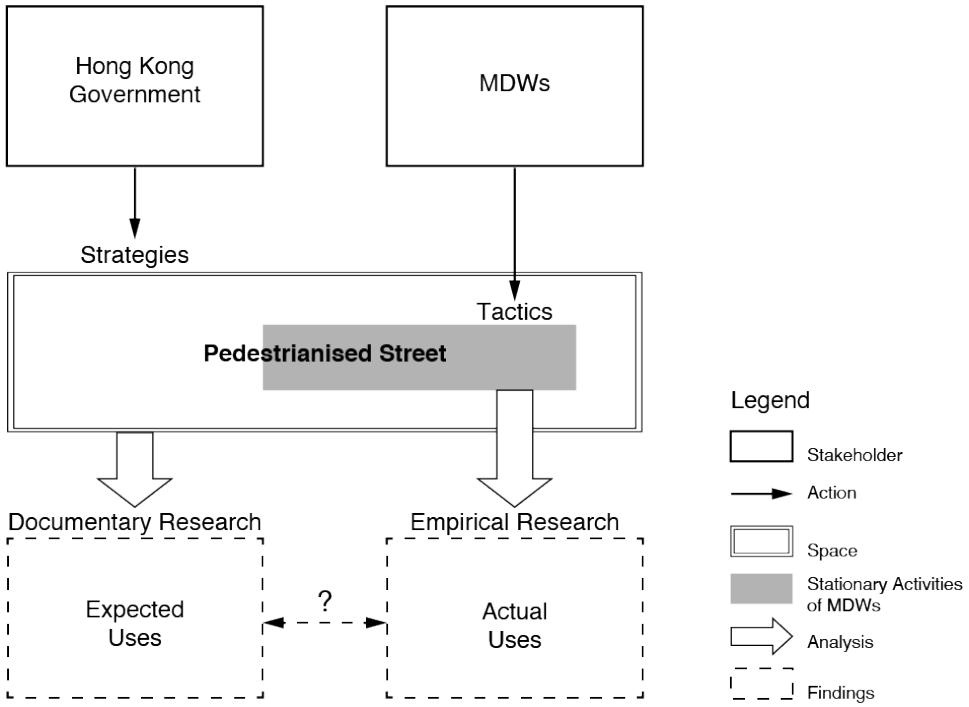


Figure 2: Analytical framework.

4.2. Content analysis method

Aiming at providing an in-depth review of the policies promoting pedestrianisation, this study examines the purposes, objectives, and criteria of the implementation of these policies through thematic content analysis (Gaber, 2018). This method is based on the identification of units of analysis within a textual *corpus* (Bernard & Ryan, 1998). Subsequently, textual data is classified into categories of meaning for the systematic identification of themes (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). A reference for the employment of this method for policy analysis is the evaluation of Copenhagen's transport policy by Stefan Gössling (2013).

4.3. Behavioural mapping method

Behavioural mapping has been used as the main research method to analyse the patterns of stationary uses of Chater Road pedestrianised area. Behavioural mapping is an unobtrusive direct observational method which compares the physical characteristics of the environment with the behaviour information of the occupants via recording their locational and temporal attributes (Bechtel & Zeisel, 1987; Cosco, Moore, & Islam, 2010; Elsheshtawy, 2013; Gehl, 1987; Goličnik Marušic, 2016; Mehta, 2009; Whyte, 1980). The preliminary phase comprises extensive observation of the designed setting, the creation of an accurate base map of it, and the definition of the types of activities to be observed (Golicnik & Marusic, 2012). The observed activities are subsequently georeferenced, captured in a GIS environment and rendered through different types of maps, in this study *Dot Distribution Map* and *Kernel Density Map*, to show the occurrence of clustering and the density patterns. The choice of this method was influenced by the seminal work of William H. Whyte and Jan Gehl (Gehl, 1987; Whyte, 1980), as well as the recent works of Vikas Mehta (Mehta, 2009) and Yasser Elsheshtawy (Elsheshtawy, 2013), which have focused respectively on commercial streets in the Boston metropolitan area and a street in one of Dubai's low-income districts.

5. Case study: The pedestrianised street in Hong Kong

5.1. Pedestrianisation in Hong Kong

In the high-density context of Hong Kong, where the roadway system is one of the most heavily used in the world (Murakami & He, 2018) and where urban space is characterised by a modernist design, rational planning (Siu & Huang, 2015) and by a scarcity of open public space (Bo-sin Tang, 2017; Bo sin Tang & Wong, 2008), city-level pedestrianisation planning was initiated later than in European and North American cities. In Hong Kong pedestrianisation falls within the jurisdiction of the Planning Department and the Transport Department (HKSAR Planning Department, 2001). Its implementation is carried out by the Transport Department and the Highways Department. Most of the pedestrianisation projects were completed in the second half of the 2000s. These projects were of three types (HKSAR Transport Department, 2019b): (1) full-time pedestrianisation: pedestrians have absolute priority; vehicular access is restricted to emergency services only, but service vehicles may be allowed during specific periods in selected locations. (2) Part-time pedestrianisation: vehicular access is only allowed during specific periods; there is no on-street parking space. (3) Traffic calming: there are no restrictions on vehicular access, but vehicles are slowed down, and sidewalks are usually widened.

5.2. MDWs in Hong Kong

In the city under investigation, Hong Kong with a population of 7.51 million (HKSAR Census and Statistics Department, 2019), there are 369,651 legally registered MDWs (as of 2017). These are mainly young women from Southeast Asia (Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand) (HKSAR Census and Statistics Department, 2017). They are required to "work and reside in the employer's residence" by the *Employment Contract (ID 407)*, which is regulated by the Employment Ordinance (Chapter 57), the Immigration Ordinance (Chapter 115) and the Employees' Compensation Ordinance (Chapter 282) (HKSAR Immigration Department, 2015). These migrant workers, employed full-time in domestic services, are temporary migrants whose right to remain in Hong Kong is bound to a contracted two-year

period of employment. Moreover, they are denied the opportunity to become permanent residents in Hong Kong (Constable, 2009).

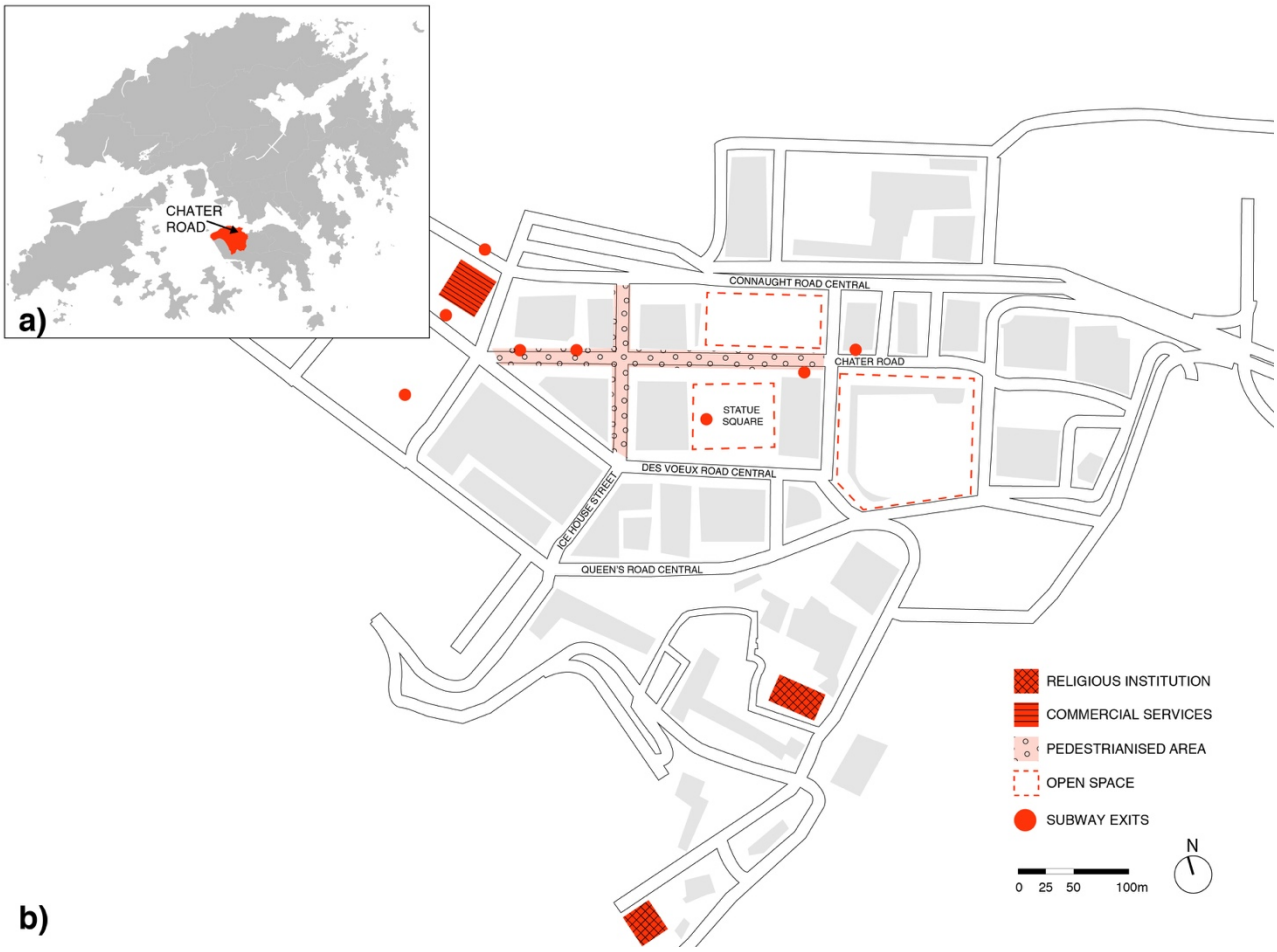
On days off, ordinarily on weekends, MDWs gather in spaces outside their employer's home, where they may find a higher degree of privacy and freedom of speech and behaviour (Yeoh & Huang, 1998). In the case of the Sunday gathering of Filipino domestic workers in the Central and Western District of Hong Kong, the informal placemaking process contributes to shape temporary places which are described by Law (2002) as "home away from home" or "Little Manila". With the iconic skyscrapers of the financial district as background, domestic workers engage in activities such as sitting on cardboard, providing reciprocal personal beauty services, and sharing food (Constable, 1997). In the same locations MDWs demonstrate in favour of global, transnational, and human rights (Constable, 2009), and carry out grassroots activism through cultural performances (M. Lai, 2010).

The size and nature of these massive gatherings is not always well received by the larger public and local tenants. The activities in which MDWs are engaged are sometimes considered "undesirable" and increasingly in conflict with other competing uses, users, and understandings of a space's function (Law, 2002). As an example, at the end of the 2000s only one complaint was filed against MDWs (HKSAR Legislative Council, 2008), however between 2015 and 2017, almost 6500 among complaints, verbal warnings, penalty tickets, summonses and convictions were received, mostly related to the obstruction of public spaces and hawking (HKSAR Legislative Council, 2018). Over time public authorities dealt with these complaints initially through monitoring the gathering situation, then an attempt to formalise and control gatherings by dedicating a venue away from Central (1994) and finally through an educational approach via distributing leaflets in gathering places (HKSAR Legislative Council, 2008, 2018).

5.3. Study area

The Chater Road pedestrianised area consists of Chater Road street (between Pedder Street and Jackson Road) and the perpendicular Ice House Street (between Des Voeux Road Central and Connaught Road Central) (Figure 3). The area is located in the Hong Kong central business district (CBD), also known as Central, which is part of the Central and Western District administrative area (Figure 3). With an average open public space area per person of 2.1 m^2, which is lower than the average city level of 2.7 m^2 (C. Lai, 2017), the Central and Western District is one of the high-density areas of Hong Kong. The area is highly accessible by public transportation and is linked to a network of roads, parks, squares and elevated walkways (Figure 3). Part-time pedestrianisation was implemented as a trial between 24 January and 27 January 1982 and was permanently implemented from 7:00 a.m. to 12:00 a.m. on every Sunday and public holiday starting from 31 January 1982 (HKSAR Transport Department 2019, personal communication, 30 April). During the weekdays, while offices are open, the streets are busy thoroughfares full of office workers and tourists reaching the international offices, luxury brands, boutiques and shopping malls that overlook the streets and are directly accessible from street level. On Sunday, the pedestrianised street is occupied by MDWs who have been gathering in the CBD since the 1980s and have consistently used Chater Road for stationary activities during the part-time pedestrianisation periods (Constable, 1997). The social practices carried out by MDWs in Chater Road co-occur with other minor non-stationary practices, such as the extra-legal selling of cardboards and counterfeit products, as well as the movements and interactions of tourists and local consumers.

The selection of this case study for empirical analysis is based on the following considerations: it is the first implemented temporary pedestrianisation project in Hong Kong and it represents a widely recognised cultural meeting space for MDWs (Constable, 1997; Law, 2002; Lorenz, 2009). The study area comprises of a 300 m long by 22 m wide street (Chater Road) and a 140 m long by 15 m wide street (Ice House Street), extending over a total area of 8,907 m^2.



310 Figure 3. a) Location of Chater Road in Central and Western District. b) Map of Chater Road area.

311 *5.4. Data sources and collection*

312 Thematic content analysis was performed on the data sample, which consists of pedestrianisation policy
313 papers, planning strategies, and legislative council papers made available online by the Hong Kong
314 government. The period considered for the selection of the relevant policy documents covers the entire
315 phase of pedestrianisation planning at the city level. The *corpus* consists of a total of 5 documents,
316 released by the government from 1999 to 2016. Additional data was collected from the Transport
317 Department and from two publications (Constable, 1997; Law, 2002) concerning the case study.
318 The behavioural mapping comprised of two data sets: (1) base map (integrating primary and secondary
319 data) and (2) stationary activities (primary data). The first data set concerns the spatial conditions of the
320 Chater Road pedestrianised area, the latter consists of recorded stationary activities data. Data on the

spatial features, design, land uses and the establishments fronting the streets of the pedestrianised area were collected on-site and integrated in a GIS data set which was elaborated based on the Outline Zoning Plan (OZP) of Hong Kong. The OZP, one of the two kinds of statutory plans prepared by the Town Planning Board, illustrates the designated land-use, the development restrictions, and the transportation patterns in every planning area (Chapter 131, Laws of Hong Kong). Stationary activity data is information on the location and type of stationary activities performed by space occupants. The collection was limited to the stationary activities performed by MDWs based on the following considerations: (1) MDWs' tactics of space appropriation are the main focus of this study. (2) Other stationary users, mainly peddlers, are very small in number. (3) Pedestrian movements are both unfitting for the selected data collection method and out of the scope of the present study. Data were collected between January and February 2019; this period was chosen based on considerations regarding local climatic conditions: in the humid subtropical climate of Hong Kong this period is characterized by mild temperatures and scarce precipitation. The observations were made for three moderate temperature days on a Sunday (the day when pedestrianisation is in place) for three periods: 10 a.m., 1 p.m., and 4 p.m. The periods were chosen to detect possible different patterns of use during the day. The walkthrough method (Elsheshtawy, 2013; Mehta, 2009; Zordan, Talamini, & Villani, 2019) was applied and captured through videos recording the stationary activities in a pre-defined clockwise walking itinerary that covered the whole pedestrianised area. A video recording tool, instead of recording on-site activities on a sheet, was chosen to achieve observational trustworthiness, reliability, and data consistency. There was a total of 8,032 recorded MDWs' stationary activities.

5.5. Data preparation and analysis

For the content analysis, the planning policies *corpus* was divided into three components: (1) purpose, (2) objectives, and (3) implementation guidelines. The analysis was performed by screening all documents available and by identifying the content related to pedestrianisation for each of the three

components. From the available documents, the three components were then evaluated to identify the main intended function and use of pedestrianisation.

For behavioural mapping, the stationary activity information was coded into GIS as data points and added to the spatial feature base map described in the previous section. Pedestrian movements through the area were not included in the data set. The attributes of each data point included information on the type of stationary activity (i.e. individual or social) and specific information regarding the category of the activity, although the latter was not the primary focus of the study. The stationary activities were distinguished as individual (e.g. sleeping and reading) or social activities (Gehl, 1987). Further classification of the individual category (i.e. sleeping, reading, using a smartphone, crafting, eating) or the social activity (i.e. chatting, sharing food, playing board games, talking on phone, taking a selfie, dancing) was established by assigning a code to every activity that was recorded. This categorisation was informed by relevant literature on MDWs' activities in their cultural space in Hong Kong (Constable, 1997; Law, 2002; Lorenz, 2009; Tillu, 2011) (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of activities observed.

Social Activities	Reference	Individual Activities	Reference
Chatting	(Constable, 1997; Law, 2002; Tillu, 2011)	Sleeping	(Tillu, 2011)
Sharing food	(Law, 2001; Tillu, 2011)	Reading	(Constable, 1997; Tillu, 2011)
Playing board games	(Constable, 1997; Tillu, 2011)	Using phone	(Constable, 2009; Tillu, 2011)
Talking at the phone	(Tillu, 2011)	Crafting	(Tillu, 2011)
Dancing	(M. Lai, 2010)	Eating (alone)	(Tillu, 2011)
Taking selfie			

5.6. Findings presentation

The content analysis findings are discussed and summarised in a table that presents the information of each relevant policy divided by: phase and function, year, title, type, purposes, objectives and criteria. The 8032 recorded stationary activities for the three observation days were aggregated and reported

through the Dot Distribution Map and *Kernel Density Map* to visualise activity density across the analysed area for one exemplary observation day. The stationary activities were further analysed in relation to different spatial attributes of the pedestrianised area as design features and climatic elements. Findings are presented through 20 maps: 8 maps illustrating the spatial features of the pedestrianised area and 12 (*Dot Distribution Maps*) illustrating the activities divided by category. Findings are also summarized in 3 tables categorising activities per observation period, activities' density per spatial feature, and type of activity per spatial feature.

6. Findings

6.1. Content analysis findings

The analysis of two decades of pedestrianisation policies allowed to identify four distinct phases of pedestrianisation planning functions, purposes, objectives and criteria (see Table 2). For the first phase (1997-2000) the main intended functions of pedestrianisation are mobility and safety of pedestrians. The second phase (2001) is characterised by the integration of mobility and commercial functions in the planning of pedestrianised space. For the third phase (2016), mobility is combined with accessibility in the planning of streets located in proximity to transportation hubs. The fourth phase (2017) consists of ongoing interdisciplinary studies related to pedestrianisation planning.

Phase one

In 1999, the *Third Comprehensive Transport Study* (CTS-3) commissioned by the Transport Department (TD) was the first planning resolution to put forward the concept of pedestrianisation at the city level (HKSAR Transport Department, 1999). The CTS-3 was primarily a traffic control resolution, aiming at the improvement of road safety by minimising conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians (see Table 2). The criteria for the selection of potential sites for pedestrianisation comprised high pedestrian flows and excessive air pollution levels. The implementation of a specific type of pedestrian scheme (permanent, partial and traffic calming) was linked to traffic management requirements, assessed by a study on the

387 impact on local district traffic. The support for partial (or temporary) pedestrianisation was motivated
388 by the unavailability of loading and unloading alternative access routes. The minimisation of conflicts
389 between pedestrians and vehicles and the access of particular vehicles during specific time periods
390 emerged as main issues to be addressed in the production of pedestrianised space. These directions were
391 confirmed in the 1999 *Chief Executive Policy Address*, where three streets in high priority urban areas
392 (Causeway Bay, Mongkok and Tsim Sha Tsui) were selected for pedestrianisation based on the
393 assessment of pedestrian flow and air pollution (HKSAR, 1999) (see Table 2). Russell Street, one of the
394 most crowded streets in Hong Kong, was also set for pedestrianisation implementation in the same year.
395 The 2000 *Legislative Council panel on transport* further developed the pedestrianisation implementation
396 plan in three phases: trial, traffic impact assessment and, eventually, in the case of positive results,
397 permanent implementation (HKSAR Legislative Council, 2000) (see Table 2). From 2000 to 2005, the
398 TD extended pedestrian schemes to seven additional urban locations (Central, Wan Chai, Jordan, Sham
399 Shui Po, Stanley, Yuen Long and Shek Wu Hui). The mobility function being the main objective of
400 pedestrianised streets can be observed in the fact that traffic impact assessment was the only evaluation
401 criterion before implementation.

402 *Phase two*

403 In 2001, *The Study on Planning for Pedestrians* was commissioned by the Planning Department (PD)
404 and marked a shift in the approach to pedestrianisation planning (HKSAR Planning Department, 2001).
405 The study adopted a more comprehensive approach promoting pedestrianisation not only for pedestrian
406 mobility and safety (linkage, safety, accessibility) but also for social gathering and leisure activities
407 (stationary activities), stressing the opportunity for commercialism and private sector involvement (see
408 Table 2). Pedestrianisation was envisioned as a strategy to provide congested urban areas with new open
409 public spaces, which by definition explicitly includes streets, footpaths, and pedestrianised streets.
410 Although the document envisioned pedestrianisation for stationary uses, the main purpose of

411 pedestrianisation planning was related to the commercial opportunities and retail viability afforded by
412 pedestrianisation.

413 *Phase three*

414 These directions are embraced and updated in the *2016 Hong Kong 2030+: Planning and Urban Design*
415 *for a Liveable High-Density City*, whose declared goal is to enhance the "quality of living" and the
416 sustainability of Hong Kong (HKSAR, 2016). In this strategic study jointly developed by the
417 Development Bureau and the PD, the purpose of pedestrianisation shifts to the accessibility of the
418 walking environment (see Table 2). The location of pedestrianisation projects should be explored in
419 station precincts and walking environment enhancement projects should be part of a broader district-
420 wide urban design plan. Drawing on Singapore's covered passageways near transportation nodes, a
421 further objective is to emphasise the provision of shade facilities and public seating near transportation
422 hubs. The focus shift to the accessibility of the walking environment through traffic calming streets
423 (instead of full-time or part-time pedestrianisation) led to the implementation of a high number of traffic
424 calming projects from 2005 to 2011 (HKSAR Transport Department, 2019b).

425 *Phase four*

426 The most recent policy concerning pedestrianisation is the "Walk in HK" initiative (HKSAR, 2017).
427 Within the scopes of this new proposition the Transport Department initiated the "Consultancy Study on
428 Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong" in December 2017 (HKSAR Transport Department, 2017). The
429 aim of the 30 month study is to "formulate a planning and design principle that puts priority on
430 pedestrians, and a strategy to develop Hong Kong into a world-class walkable city" (HKSAR Transport
431 Department, 2019a). The study is to be conducted by a team of consultants composed of international
432 firms providing services in the fields of, among others, engineering, architecture, public engagement,
433 and walkability. The commissioning of a team of external consultants marks a shift in the context of
434 Hong Kong planning. Previous pedestrianisation projects saw the TD directly responsible for

formulating traffic management measures with regard to the pedestrian and vehicular traffic of the relevant streets (HKSAR, 2018). The proposed strategic framework comprises long-term, medium-term and short-term measures to prioritise pedestrian needs in planning and street design. Short-term measures, for example the decluttering of traffic signs and the removal of unnecessary street furniture, can be directly implemented by the transport department (HKSAR Transport Department, 2019, personal communication, August 22). These measures are deemed necessary to appease and gain more public support (HKSAR Transport Department, 2019, personal communication, August 22). Medium to long term measures, such as the change of planning standards, will be carried out by other relevant departments.

Table 2. Summary of the four phases of pedestrianisation planning in Hong Kong.

Phase and Function	Year	Title	Type	Purposes of Pedestrianisation	Objectives of Pedestrianisation	Criteria
Phase one: Mobility and safety	1997-1999	Third Comprehensive Transport Study (CTS-3)	Planning Strategy	1. To promote walking as a short-distance mode of travel. 2. To enhance road safety. 3. To reduce vehicle emissions pollution.	1. To consider the needs of pedestrians in transport and land use planning. 2. To recommend planning for pedestrians' guidelines. 3. To designate high priority pedestrian streets based on heavy pedestrian flow. 4. To enhance road safety through traffic diversion and by minimising conflict between pedestrians and traffic.	1. Part-time type is suggested as compatible with loading-unloading requirements. 2. District traffic studies are required to assess the feasibility of full-time or part-time type. 3. The plan for implementation is suggested to be developed in phases: trial, impact assessment and permanent. 4. Consultation with District Councils, shop owners and public transport operators is suggested. 5. Priority areas (Causeway Bay Tsim Sha Tsui) are identified based on high pedestrian flows.
	1999	The 1999 Policy Address: "Quality People Quality Home"	Chief Executive Policy Address			
	2000	Legislative Council Panel on Transport "Pedestrian Schemes"	Legislative Council Paper			
Phase two: Mobility and commercial	2001	Study on Planning for Pedestrians	Planning Strategy	To provide pedestrians with a safer, healthier and more convenient street environment.	1. To minimise conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles. 2. To provide a better environment for pedestrians. 3. To increase pedestrian flow and provide a more favourable shopping environment. 4. To increase open space provision and upgrade the quality of the environment in congested urban areas.	1. Private sector involvement and community participation in planning is encouraged. 2. Planning should follow the principles of linkage, safety, accessibility, comfort, attractiveness and vibrancy.

Phase three: Mobility and accessibility	2016	Hong Kong 2030+: Planning and Urban Design for a Liveable High-Density City	Planning Strategy	To create a safe, inviting and accessible walking environment.	This refers to the Study on Planning for Pedestrians (2001): 1. To explore pedestrianisation locations in station precincts. 2. To incorporate walkable street plans as part of a district-wide urban design plan. 3. To emphasise the provision of facilities and shading and public seating.	This refers to the Study on Planning for Pedestrians (2001)
Phase four: Mobility and accessibility	2017	The 2017 Policy Address: "We Connect for Hope and Happiness"	Chief Executive Policy Address	To walk more for short-distance commuting.	1. To promote the "Walk in HK" initiative. 2. To formulate a planning and design principle that prioritises pedestrians. 3. To formulate a strategy to develop Hong Kong into a world-class walkable city.	The pedestrian needs in planning and design of streets should be considered through long-term, medium-term and short-term measures.
	2017 - Ongoing	Consultancy Study on Enhancing Walkability in Hong Kong	Consultancy Study			

6.2. Behavioural mapping findings

The behavioural mapping allowed the identification of general patterns of space use. The total data on the observed stationary activities, reported in Table 3, does not show a striking variation during the observation days and time periods, although it is observed that the level of activities was consistently lower in the morning and higher in the afternoon. In addition, the mean percentage of observed social activities, at 86%, is six times higher than the percentage of observed individual activities, at just 14%.

Table 3. Activities per observation period.

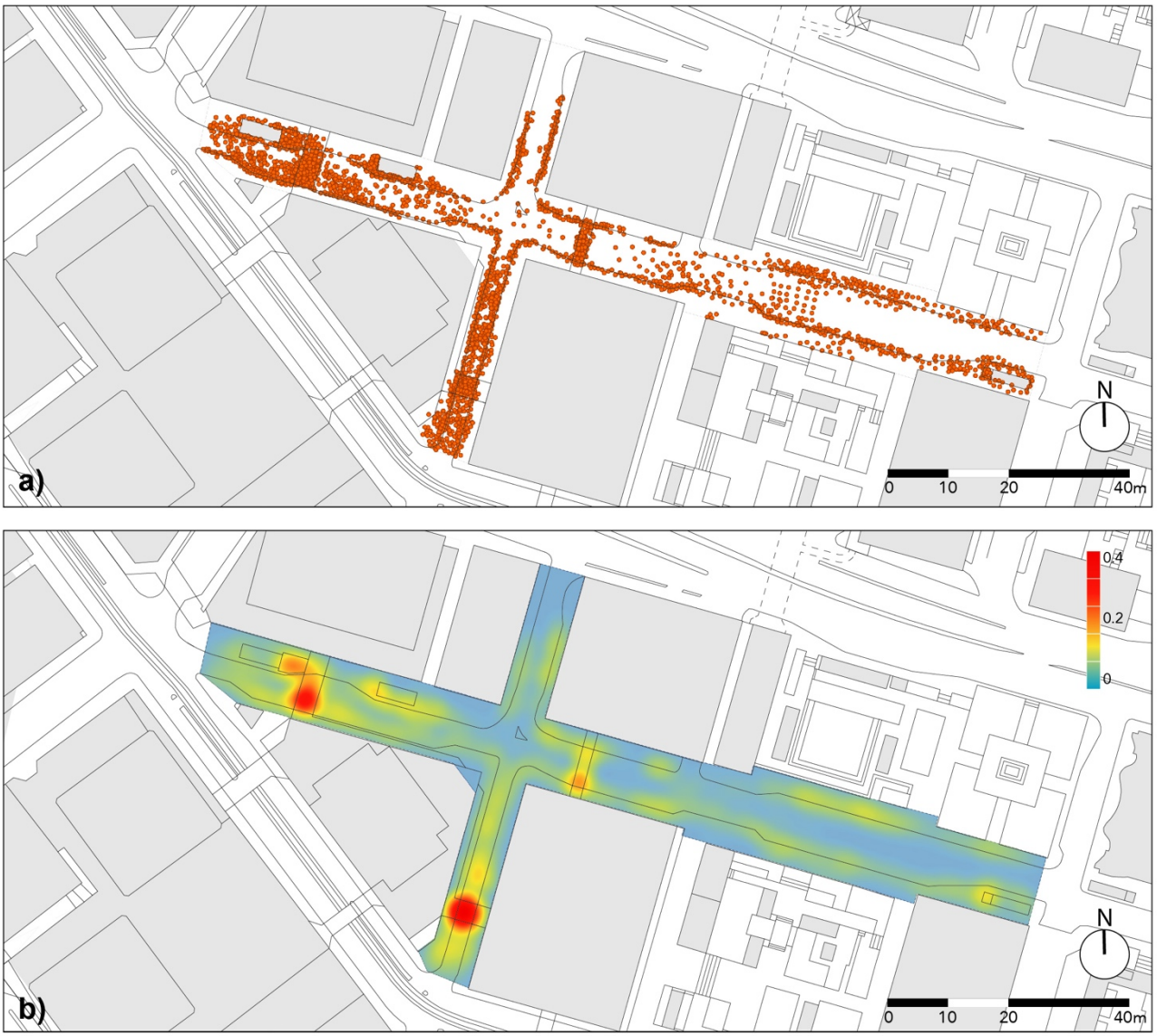
	Period	Observations		Social Activities	Individual Activities
Day 1	10:00 am	886		84%	16%
	1:00 pm	926		84%	16%
	4:00 pm	997		90%	10%
	10:00 am	752		89%	11%
Day 2	1:00 pm	918		87%	13%
	4:00 pm	982		85%	15%
	10:00 am	733		84%	16%
Day 3	1:00 pm	822		82%	18%
	4:00 pm	1016		85%	15%
Total		**8032**	Average	**86%**	**14%**

The average occupancy rate of the whole space is 0.10 person/m^2, or 10 m^2/person (see Table 4). It is observed that the stationary activity density of certain zones of the pedestrianised streets is significantly

454 higher than the stationary activity density of the whole area (see Table 4 and Figure 4). The results show
455 that stationary activities cluster near specific features of streets. The association between activity types
456 and spatial features was analysed by dividing the area into: roadway space, sidewalk space, railing space,
457 curb space, shaded space, tree coverage space, and Mass Transit Railway (MTR) space (Figure 5).

458 Table 4. Activity density per spatial feature [person/m2].

	Period	Roadway space	Sidewalk spac	Curb spac	Railing spac	Skywalk spac	Tree cov... spa	MTR spac	Total Area
Day 1	10:00 am	0.11	0.09	0.26	0.35	0.35	0.14	0.11	0.10
	1:00 pm	0.13	0.08	0.25	0.33	0.45	0.17	0.10	0.10
	4:00 pm	0.13	0.09	0.27	0.37	0.49	0.14	0.14	0.11
Day 2	10:00 am	0.09	0.08	0.25	0.30	0.39	0.12	0.12	0.08
	1:00 pm	0.11	0.10	0.29	0.38	0.41	0.16	0.13	0.10
	4:00 pm	0.12	0.10	0.32	0.42	0.43	0.16	0.14	0.11
Day 3	10:00 am	0.09	0.08	0.23	0.30	0.33	0.13	0.11	0.08
	1:00 pm	0.09	0.09	0.26	0.33	0.36	0.16	0.12	0.09
	4:00 pm	0.12	0.11	0.32	0.45	0.44	0.17	0.13	0.11
	Mean	**0.11**	**0.09**	**0.27**	**0.36**	**0.41**	**0.15**	**0.12**	**0.10**



459 Figure 4. a) Dot distribution map showing activities' locations for one Sunday. b) Kernel Density
460 Map showing clustering of activities for one Sunday.

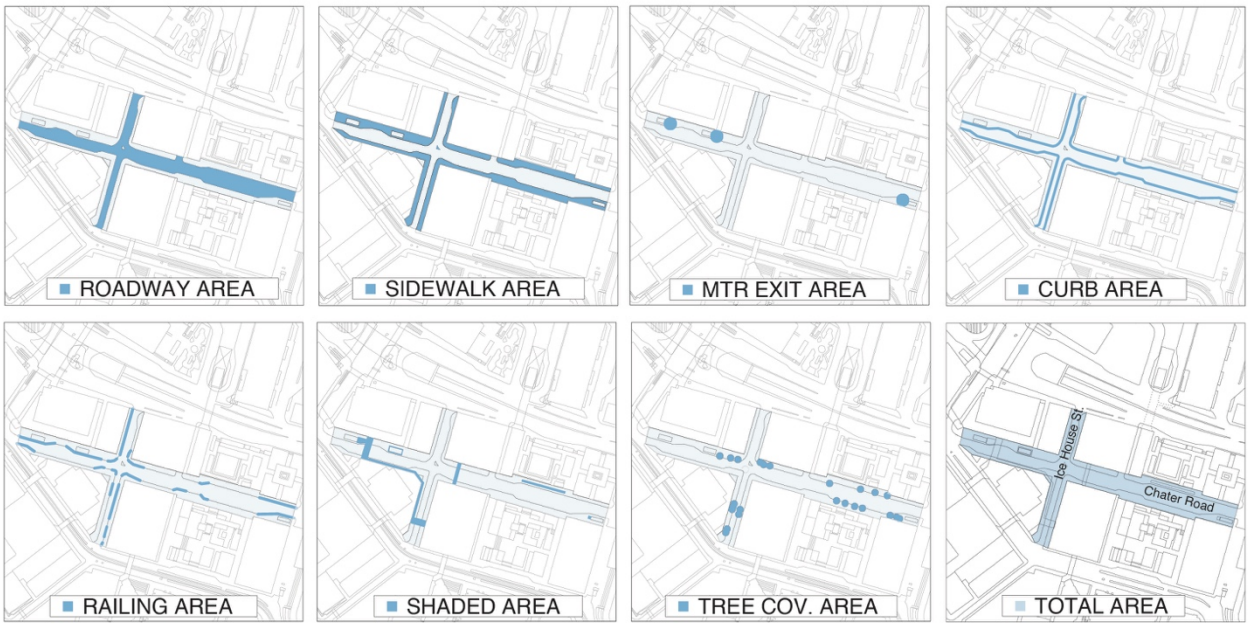


Figure 5. The Chater Road pedestrianised area spatial features.

Converted space: Roadway for active behaviours

Some 51% (4,547 m^2) of the pedestrian area is concrete surface. During working days, it is allocated to motorised vehicle mobility as roadway. During periods of implementation of the pedestrianisation scheme, it is the only area that changes its function — from motorised vehicle mobility to pedestrian mobility. The average stationary activity density recorded in this area, 0.11 person/m^2, is consistent with the one of the whole space, 0.10 person/m^2 (see Table 4). It is observed that this wide area is mostly dedicated to activities which require a larger amount of space per person, such as dancing and parading, which usually take place in the afternoon (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

Sidewalk space: Curb and railing space as incidental seating space

The remaining 49% of the Chater Road area (4,341 m^2) is a sidewalk area for pedestrian mobility with a paved surface. The spatial occupancy rate of the total sidewalk area is the lowest (0.09 person/m^2) (see Table 4). The entrances to the commercial buildings and the luxury retail shops fronting the streets are connected to the sidewalks and generate a pedestrian flow impeding other uses, consequently impacting the stationary activity density. Similarly, temporary pedestrianisation does not modify the primary

function of the pedestrian space adjacent to the MTR exits. The functioning of this space is characterised by a pedestrian flow generated by and from the three mass-rapid-transport exits. The space pertaining to MTR exits, calculated as enclosed within a 10m buffer from each of the three exits located in the area, extends over a surface of 927.1 m^2. In this space the average stationary activity density is 0.12 person/m^2 (see Table 4). It is observed that the individual activity of using a smartphone is more recurrent in this space (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

Within the sidewalk areas, the curb space (the space within the 1 m buffer from the curb line, 1,661.8 m^2), as well as the railing area (the space within the 1 m buffer from the railing line, 818.3 m^2) are mostly occupied for stationary uses. It is observed that the curb is used as an incidental seating space, with a relatively high average spatial occupancy of 0.27 person/m^2 (see Table 4). Similarly, the area near the railing is used as seatback, with a spatial occupancy of 0.36 person/m^2 — more than three times higher than the average total occupancy density (see Table 4). Although occupants of the curb and railing areas mostly perform face-to-face interactions, talking on the phone is observed as a highly recurrent activity here, when compared to other zones of the streets (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

During the pedestrianisation implementation periods, curbs and railings become redundant elements, losing the primary function of directing or separating pedestrian and vehicle traffic flow. Nevertheless, they still define the space, dividing it into several rooms and obstructing pedestrian movement. Subsequently, the clustering of activities near these elements may be interpreted as a consequence of their changed operational mode.

Shaded space

As it emerges from the *Kernel Density Map*, stationary activities clearly cluster in a few main areas of the streets (see Figure 4). These correspond to the shaded areas created by the three skywalks and the canopies pertaining to the public transport facilities (624.3 m^2). In such locations the highest density of activities of the whole pedestrianised area is recorded: 0.41 person/m^2 (see Table 4). In addition, it is observed that, relative to the entire Chater Road area, a higher number of individual activities (taking

naps, using a smartphone and eating) take place in shaded spaces (see Table 5 and Figure 6). In contrast, the area in the proximity of trees and plants, within a 3 m buffer from the centre of the tree, does not provide a completely shaded space, and the related stationary activity density, 0.15 person/m^2, is slightly higher than the overall average. It is also observed that playing cards and individual activities, such as crafting and reading, are more recurrent under tree canopies (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

The analysis suggests that when an area is not accessible to motorised vehicles, shaded space is preferred for accommodating stationary uses. Elements planned with the aim of facilitating mobility functions over the street level (skywalks) become crucial for performing stationary activities at ground level due to their provision of shade and protection in adverse weather. Similarly, trees and landscaped areas produce favourable settings for specific activities, such as crafting, which require specific lighting conditions (see Table 5 and Figure 6).

Stationary activities: Frequencies and distribution

As highlighted by the *Dot Distribution Maps* (see Figure 6 and Table 5), in the total pedestrianised area the preferred social and individual activities were chatting (77 %) and using a smartphone (10%). The railing area registers the highest spatial occupancy (78%) of MDWs who chat, on the contrary, in the shaded area under the skywalks significantly less MDWs (66%) are involved in chatting, preferring different activities. Other social activities (sharing food, playing board games, talking on the phone, dancing and taking selfies) are generally less present (between 0% and 5% in the total area). MDWs sharing food (3%) and playing board games (6%) are observed to gather under the tree coverage area. The activity of talking on the phone is more frequently observed in the curb (7%) and railing (7%) areas, which are turned into incidental seating spaces for MDWs involved in such activity. Migrants dancing or parading constitute only 1% of the total observed stationary activities. It is significant to see that these activities only takes place in the roadway that is converted for pedestrian uses. The activity of talking a selfie is rarely observed.

526 Among the individual activities in which MDWs are involved, using a smartphone is highly observed in
527 the MTR exits premises (16%). The other individual activities (sleeping, reading, crafting and eating
528 alone) are less recorded (0% to 1% in the total area). MDWs who sleep or eat alone are observed to
529 occupy the shaded areas under the skywalks (6% and 5 % respectively).

530 Table 5. Types of activities per spatial feature.

		Social activities						Individual activities				
	m^2	**Chatting**	**Sharing food**	**Playing board games**	**Talking on the phone**	**Dancing**	**Taking a selfie**	**Sleeping**	**Reading**	**Using phone**	**Crafting**	**Eating (alone)**
Roadway area	4546.7	77%	1%	2%	5%	1%	0%	1%	0%	10%	0%	1%
Sidewalk area	4341.3	77%	2%	2%	4%	0%	1%	1%	0%	10%	1%	1%
MTR exits area	927.1	70%	2%	3%	4%	0%	0%	3%	0%	16%	0%	1%
Curb area	1661.8	76%	2%	2%	7%	0%	1%	1%	0%	10%	1%	1%
Railing area	818.3	78%	1%	2%	7%	0%	1%	1%	1%	8%	0%	1%
Shaded area	624.3	66%	1%	3%	2%	0%	0%	6%	0%	15%	1%	5%
Tree coverage area	722.5	73%	3%	6%	2%	0%	1%	1%	1%	10%	2%	1%
Total pedestrianised area	8858.6	77%	2%	2%	5%	1%	0%	1%	0%	10%	1%	1%

Figure 6. Dot distribution maps of the activities divided by category.

7. Discussion

533 This paper has analysed the planning and use of the pedestrianised street through the theoretical prism
534 of de Certeau's notions of strategies, defined here as the pedestrianisation policies formulated and
535 adopted by the government, and tactics, defined here as modes of appropriation of the pedestrianised
536 street by migrant workers. Within the process of controlling time through the mastery of space, strategies
537 are promulgated by legitimised structures of power, such as institutional bodies (de Certeau, 1984). Hong
538 Kong's pedestrianisation policies are strategic principles set by the government with intentions that are
539 clearly consistent with the goals of the global city's hegemonic neoliberal powers. Conversely, through
540 tactical actions of pedestrianised space appropriation, individuals claim the right to perform stationary
541 activities which, due to a lack of public open space, may not find space elsewhere.
542 The turning of Chater Road into a pedestrianised area where MDWs gather has happened incidentally
543 (Former Director of HKSAR Planning Department 2019, personal communication, 28 September).
544 Specifically, the Hong Kong Land Group triggered the original petition to the Traffic Department to
545 close the roadway to vehicular traffic, aiming at converting a business district road into a shopping street
546 on Sundays, in order to increase real estate value through commercialism (Constable, 1997; Goh, 2014b;
547 Law, 2002). In doing so, the corporation pursued profit-oriented goals, naturally in line with its service
548 areas of real estate development and property management. Governmental policies promoting
549 pedestrianisation were only introduced in the late 1990s, with the initial aims of traffic safety and tailpipe
550 emissions reductions. It followed a gradual movement towards more comprehensive strategies of urban
551 development that use pedestrianisation to target a variety of purposes and ultimately to enhance "quality
552 of living" (HKSAR, 2016). Changes in the strategic goals of pedestrianisation, from mobility purposes
553 to commercialism, has occurred in parallel with the gradual involvement of three governmental
554 departments, namely, the TD, the PD and the Development Bureau. This progressive enlargement of the
555 scopes of pedestrianisation can be interpreted as the outcome of the direct interaction between property
556 investment, development groups, and policymakers, as demonstrated by a wealth of studies (Constable,

1997; Goh, 2014b; Law, 2002). Officially, the public authorities state that the pedestrian environment, as well as the vehicular circulation, have been improved, thus the "objectives of pedestrianisation have been met" in Chater Road (HKSAR Legislative Council, 2008). Furthermore, the interview with a highly knowledgeable informant, former Director of the Planning Department, has clarified that, despite some problems of cleanliness, the informal gatherings are tolerated by the public authorities because they do not conflict with the normal office-hours activities in Central (Former Director of HKSAR Planning Department 2019, personal communication, 28 September). Nevertheless, the additional provision of pedestrianised streets for the MDWs social practices is not envisaged, at least in the short term. The high-end hotels bordering the streets often complain about the noise created by these gatherings. In addition, the planning consultant responsible for the ongoing pedestrianisation study in Central asserts that any pedestrianisation proposal in areas that have already been appropriated by "minority groups" would be conflicting with locals' use of the space, and it is thus avoided (Transport Planner consultant 2019, personal communication, 23 September). In summary, the administrative bodies and the capitalistic forces are not interested in controlling or exploiting the MDWs' gatherings, tolerating them as long as they do not affect or damage their interests – primarily the need to assure urban mobility and to boost consumption.

The analysis of the tactics of space appropriation highlights that behavioural patterns are related to specific spatial features of the pedestrianised streets. Active behaviours, such as dancing and parading, are more recurrent in the road spaces, as they require larger room for movement, which is scarce in the urban areas of Hong Kong. These behaviours are associated with cultural performances and political activism (Constable, 2009; M. Lai, 2010). Higher stationary activity density characterises the curb area, the railing area, and the shaded region under the skywalks. These spaces were primarily designed for mobility purposes, and were eventually converted to incidental seating space. It is important to notice that the current guidelines for the design of pedestrian areas (HKSAR, 2016) promote shading facilities,

581 therefore being somewhat aligned with the demand that emerges from the empirical analysis. Regarding
582 the plasticity of space, redundant elements, whose primary function becomes superfluous during the
583 pedestrianisation periods, play an important role in defining different parts of the space and in serving
584 new functions such as seats and seatbacks in the cases of curbs and railing respectively. It may be
585 appropriate to suggest that a discreet degree of diversity in the design of the space can offer a range of
586 use possibilities. Moreover, the design of the elements which are conceived for a specific function shall
587 allow the possibility of other uses or their temporary transformation. It has emerged from this study that
588 the pedestrianised space is ephemerally modified by users, with the use of cardboard or other materials,
589 in order to meet basic needs for social and individual activities (chatting, sharing a meal, dancing,
590 sleeping, or reading) that cannot find space elsewhere in the city (Mandeli, 2019), suggesting the
591 characteristics of the street as an "open system" (Sennett, 2006). These findings are in line with the cases
592 of Singapore, Kuala Lumpur, and Dubai, although some of the practices may be informed by different
593 socialisation patterns, traditions and spatial settings, subsequently producing diverse cultural landscapes.
594 In the case of Singapore's Little India, meeting in the appropriation of public space is part of a wider
595 place-making process that involves the retail offer (Ostertag, 2016). Comparatively, in the case of Hong
596 Kong the modification of the place is limited to the street realm, producing a vivid visible conflict. In
597 contrast to Kuala Lumpur (Muniandy, 2015), religious oriented activities are not predominant in Hong
598 Kong. Similarly to the case of Hor Al Anz (Dubai) (Elsheshtawy, 2013), the MDWs gathering in Hong
599 Kong mostly belong to one gender, which is masculine in the first case, feminine in the latter. In addition,
600 as on street corners in Dubai (Elsheshtawy, 2013), the shaded space of the pedestrianised streets reveal
601 important to MDWs' public interactions. With regards to the analysis of the practices of spatial
602 occupation presented in the aforementioned studies, the main focus of this paper is spatial rather than
603 purely ethnographic and the novelty of the analysis here proposed lies in the association between spatial
604 features and patterns of behaviours, widening and deepening the line of research inaugurated by

Elsheshtawy (2013). Whilst current policies seem to engage with questions pertaining to the global positioning of Hong Kong as a state-of-the-art urban environment, planning policies aimed at upgrading the pedestrian environment and comprehensively responding to the empirical evidence offered by this study must propose inclusive urban design measures that consider stationary use as a primary objective. This paper advocates for responsive urban design, with site-specific considerations based on empirical evidence and the direct participation of all stakeholders in the policy-making process. In general, priority should be given to the production of a "plastic" space, which enables a large variety of uses as well as to the mitigating against adverse climatic factors.

Besides, the gathering in Chater Road pedestrianised area is associated with meanings that go beyond the spatial characteristics and amenities. Extending and connecting the space between Statue Square Chater Garden and World-wide Plaza mall, where most of the migrants were already gathering before 1982, the pedestrianisation incidentally provided more space for MDWs gathering. Two in-depth interviews with MDWs' activists have revealed how pedestrianisation in Chater Road caters for their need of wide space to take rest, socialise and eventually develop different activities with less noise restrictions after restless working weeks ("Mission for Migrant Workers" general manager 2020, personal communication, 29 April). A significant number of MDWs visit Chater Road and consider this space necessary for their day-off: "Even if they seat on the pavement, […] Chater Road gives them some level of independence and freedom. They can laugh to their heart's desire, tell stories and cry. They think their day-off is not complete if they don't go there and if they see a space, they will occupy that as long as they can" ("Mission for Migrant Workers" general manager 2020, personal communication, 29 April). This conviviality and positive experience call for more cases of pedestrianisation to decrease the congestion of this mass-gathering that is so meaningful to all MDWs in Hong Kong ("Gabriela Hong Kong" chairperson 2020, personal communication, 14 May). Certainly, the drawbacks of outdoor

628 unshaded gathering appear in case of adverse weather and during hot, humid days ("Gabriela Hong
629 Kong" chairperson 2020, personal communication, 14 May).

630 The model proposed by de Certeau reveals a relevant theoretical tool in discussing the value of these
631 findings. What clearly emerges from this study is the discrepancy between governmental strategies of
632 production and the tactics of informal appropriation of pedestrianised spaces. A pedestrianised space
633 produced by hegemonic strategies with mobility and commercialism-related objectives is consistently
634 used by MDWs with stationary and non-commercial purposes. In other terms, the pedestrianisation of
635 Chater Road, aiming at attracting consumers by establishing the zone as a weekend consumption
636 destination, eventually enabled the creation of "Little Manila" (Law, 2002). Nevertheless, despite a
637 gradual evolution towards a more comprehensive range of objectives of pedestrianisation, over time, the
638 policies have overlooked stationary activities as the main purpose of pedestrianisation. This study reveals
639 the shifting relation between strategies and tactics, concomitant with the rise of Hong Kong as a global
640 neoliberal city, which results in aleatory strategies and assiduous tactics. In other terms, the
641 governmental strategies, in line with the neoliberal ethos of the city, tends towards a more laissez-faire
642 approach, adopting wider frameworks that can accommodate a variety of interests through the rhetoric
643 of "quality of life" enhancement. Conversely, the ritual appropriation of the pedestrianised space by the
644 MDWs over four decades constitutes a shared tradition for a particular social group and a publicly
645 recognised practice that cannot be denied. Thus, time has become the arena for conquering space. On
646 one side, the ruling power in the mercy of an increasing global economic uncertainty lost its panoptic
647 vision, in favour of the tactical movement of the capital. On the other side, a deprived social group
648 regularly occupies a temporarily vacant space, strategically positioning itself as a recognisable
649 component of the local culture (Figure 7). While in other socio-economic contexts, pedestrianisation
650 may produce uneven urban development patterns (Kębłowski et al., 2019), in the case of the global

neoliberal city, it gives the space to deprived social groups not only to socialise, but also to spot the weaknesses of the ruling power.

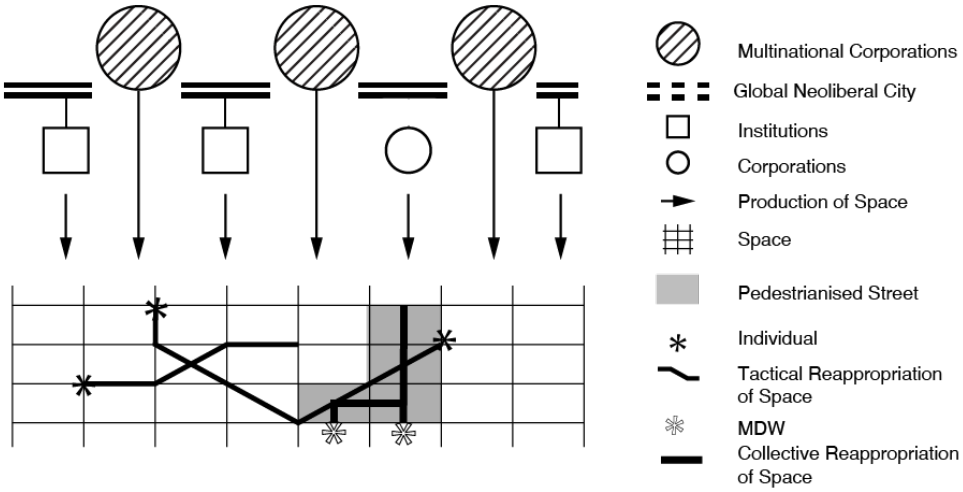


Figure 7. De Certeau's *Strategies/Tactics* model adapted to the global neoliberal city.

This study has some limitations. Further studies may extend the empirical analysis to other pedestrianised areas of the global neoliberal city for more robust results. Questions pertaining to the reasons behind users' location selection, the decision-making process at the tactical level, and the satisfaction of users go beyond the scope of this study and remain unanswered.

8. Conclusion

> *"Today, whatever the avatars of this concept may have been, we have to acknowledge that if in discourse the city serves as a totalizing and almost mythical landmark for socioeconomic and political strategies, urban life increasingly permits the re-emergence of the element that the urbanistic project excluded. The language of power is in itself 'urbanizing,' but the city is left prey to contradictory movements that counterbalance and combine themselves outside the reach of panoptic power. The city becomes the dominant theme in political legends, but it is no longer a field of programmed and regulated operations. Beneath the discourses that ideologize the city, the ruses and combinations of powers that have no readable identity proliferate; without points*

667 *where one can a take hold of them, without rational transparency, they are impossible to*
668 *administer."*
669 de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life

670 Although focusing on the case of the production and appropriation of the pedestrianised street in Hong
671 Kong, this study seeks to contribute to a much wider geographical and academic debate. The overarching
672 questions are: (1) whether the Lefebvrian *Right to the City* exercised by the growing number of
673 temporary migrants within the global neoliberal city lays bare the inability of hegemonic powers to
674 propose a shared project of urban development. And, (2) whether the asymmetric engagement between
675 strategies and tactics is still a valid conceptual model for the analysis of the current condition of the
676 global neoliberal city.

677 While the systematic enquiry into governmental pedestrianisation-related policies and the analysis of
678 the practices of occupation of the pedestrianised street may not, when undertaken separately, offer
679 ground-breaking knowledge, it is in the relationship between strategies and tactics that the schizophrenia
680 of the hegemonic discourses of the global neoliberal city is finally unveiled. In two decades
681 pedestrianisation has been proposed as a solution to a variety of problems as well as a Foucauldian
682 apparatus to discipline behaviours. Contrarily, confirming findings of previous studies, the case analysed
683 here provides empirical evidence that stationary activities are being consistently performed on a
684 timespan that is much longer than the timeframe of the governmental policies.

685 On one hand, the contemporary hegemonic powers seem no longer capable of a panoptic sight and a
686 long-term vision which authorises the formulation of a shared urbanistic discourse. The production of
687 the pedestrianised street in Hong Kong is proposed as a way to reach broad-gauged higher standards of
688 "quality of life" while being concurrently triggered by neoliberal forces interested in the
689 commodification of space and people. Moreover, the inability to offer a consistent and long-term vision
690 of urban development, becomes evident in the delegation of this responsibility to international

consultancy firms, which operate within a global context and promote the restructuring of the city in a "'neoliberalized' urban order" (Brenner & Theodore, 2002, 2005). Subsequently the notion of strategy could be argued to be no longer suitable in elucidating the hegemonic production of the pedestrianised street: in this case "ruse" appears to be a more proper concept which captures the lack of a long-term vision. On the other hand, a well-known deprived social group has constantly appropriated the pedestrianised space over decades, showing specific patterns of behaviour, whose association with design features has been analysed and illustrated by this study. With regard to the practices of spatial occupation, this study reiterates the de Certeau's postulation that "[f]rom the depths of the ocean to the streets of modern megalopolises, there is a continuity and permanence in these tactics" (de Certeau, 1984). Moreover, it highlights their continuity and permanence over a large timespan and a wide geographic area, eventually and consistently performing the commonisation of pedestrianised spaces. Namely, MDWs are consistently reclaiming the pedestrianised street as an urban common, strategically safeguarding it from tactical attempts of its capitalisation. By doing so, they sabotage hegemonic endeavours of commodification and they authorise the symbolisation of a transnational city — infiltrating into the fragmented fabric of a neoliberal urban discourse conceptualised and restructured on the base of Western forms of rationality. Subsequently, de Certeau's theory falls short when applied in the context of the global neoliberal city. In fact, the mobility of capital, owing to the crisis of the word-system, hampers the panoptic sight of hegemonic urban powers, which seems no longer interested in controlling the whole population, leaving space for the constitution of a rite that celebrates the elevation of a quasi-bare life (*zoē*) to a visible political dimension (*bios*) (Agamben, 1998). Via the regular occupation of the pedestrianised street the MDWs move from labour to action, reclaiming pedestrianised space as a public realm (Arendt, 1958).

To conclude, the pedestrianised street is not only the battlefield in which the contrast between hegemonic strategies and grassroots tactics spotlights growing inequalities in the contemporary global neoliberal

city; it is also the place in which the asymmetric engagement between global capitalism and the transnational migrant-working class reveals the need for revision of de Certeau's theoretical proposition.

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