



Fig. 117. Potomac Cruise, floating restaurant at Tây Hồ lake, Hanoi. Source: author, 2016.

## 4.2 Hanoi

The footprints of the many ideologies that government its territory are still visible in its urban fabric. Traces of the old citadels, Vauban-style fortresses, colonial boulevards and *microrayon* neighbourhoods are fully recognizable. The visual cacophony that has characterized Vietnamese cities since the beginning of the economic reforms in 1991, and which has transformed the streets into a collage of programmatic uses and architectural pastiches, occasionally crowned by government proclamations, has become one of their most defining features.

William Logan's book *Hanoi, Biography of a City* is the reference work for the history of Hanoi as a city. Thanks to Logan's review of the journals of the time in both Vietnam and the Soviet Union, his work reflects the role of Soviet urban planners and architects and their relationship with their Vietnamese counterparts, as well as the contemporary critical re-evaluation of their works.

In *The Self-Organizing City in Vietnam: Processes of Change and Transformation in Housing in Hanoi*<sup>1</sup> Stephanie Geertman recounts the persistence of rural uses in contemporary life. The pre-colonial Vietnamese society is described in *Economic History of Hanoi in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries* by Thừa Hỷ Nguyễn.<sup>2</sup> Studies on the survival of rural spaces in the urban fabric of the city in *Expansion of the city through integration of urban villages*,<sup>3</sup> attend to the successive disruptions caused by French colonial administration, Soviet urban planners and new models of mod-

1 Stephanie Geertman, 'The Self-Organizing City in Vietnam; Processes of Change and Transformation in Housing in Hanoi' (Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, 2007).

2 Thừa Hỷ Nguyễn, *Economic History of Hanoi in the 17th, 18th and 19th Centuries* (Hanoi: National Political Publishing House, 2002).

3 E. Cerise and others, 'Chapter 3. Expansion of the City through Integration of Urban Villages.', in *Hà Nội, a Metropolis in the Making : The Breakdown in Urban Integration of Villages*, ed. by Sylvie Fanchette (IRD Éditions, 2016).

ern development. An overview of the issues faced by colonialism, compared with experiences in other territories under French administration, was presented by Gwendolyn Wright in *The politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism*.<sup>4</sup> Wright's analysis is particularly useful because it contextualizes the French colonial urban legacy through some of its main settings: Madagascar, Algeria and Indochina, providing a unifying view of the implementation of its transcontinental civilizatory vision.<sup>5</sup> Decision-making at the municipal level revealing the mutual dependence between the informal sectors and the different levels of socialist administration has been studied by David Koh in *Wards of Hanoi*.<sup>6</sup> Assumptions on the current state of urban planning in Vietnam are primarily based on '*KDTM by Fabrication du logement planifié sous forme de 'KDTM' (Khu Đô Thị Mới) à Hanoi: la ville de quartiers ou/et la ville de projets?*' by Minh Tùng Trần.<sup>7</sup>

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4 Gwendolyn Wright, *The Politics of Design in French Colonial Urbanism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991).

5 Wright.

6 David Koh, *Wards of Hanoi* (Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2006).

7 Minh Tung Tran, 'Fabrication Du Logement Planifié Sous Forme de "KDTM" (Ku Do Ti Moi) a Hanoi: La Ville de Quartiers Ou/et La Ville de Projets ?' (Université Toulouse, 2016) <<https://tel.archives-ouvertes.fr/tel-01260358>>.



Fig. 118. Map of Hanoi in 1873. Excerpted from Romanet du Caillaud, Frederic, *La conquete du delta du Tong King* (Ithaca: Cornell University Library, 1877), p. 334.

## 4.2.1 The Dragon Takes Flight

Hanoi was born as the capital of the Lý dynasty in the eleventh century. In 1010 Emperor Lý Thái Tổ (974-1028) moved the capital from Hoa Lư to Đại La, located in modern-day Hanoi. According to the myth, the emperor dreamed of a golden dragon and, taking it as a good omen, the city was named *Thăng Long* or 'Dragon Taking Flight'. It would be located between the Tô Lịch River and the Long Do Mountains, both acting as guardian spirits according to the principles of *phong thủy* (Vietnamese *feng-shui*). The future name of *Hà Nội* ('Between the Rivers') will refer to the confluence of the rivers Sông Tô Lịch, Sông Kim Ngưu (now channelled in a straight line through the city) and the largest, Sông Hồng ('the Red River'). The irrigation networks linked to this complex river system were governed by a series of dykes and canals that served to maintain irrigation during the dry season and alleviate floodings during the rainy months. As Emmanuel Cerise details, the imprint of this semi-aquatic territory dotted with lakes, canals and scattered villages persisted until today. Every foreign urbanization models implemented in Hanoi encountered difficulties to adapt to its underlying water landscape.<sup>8</sup> Even in 1929, at the height of the French administration, André Masson complained that 'marshes were springing up everywhere' when walking through the city.<sup>9</sup>

Since the foundation of Thăng Long, the city was divided into two parts: the *Hoàng Thành* ('Royal City') and the *Kinh Thành* ('Capital').<sup>10</sup> This duality is reflected in the reticular urban grid of the *Thành* ('Citadel') serving the bureaucrats and the upper classes and the *Thị* ('Market') where 'ordinary people' lived in the manner of a medieval European burg: merchants, artesans, servants and labourers (fig. 121).

<sup>8</sup> Cerise and others.

<sup>9</sup> Geertman.

<sup>10</sup> The term *Kinh* denoted the sophistication of urban life as opposed to that of the ethnic minorities who inhabited the northern mountains, although, by metonymy, its use has spread to designate all Vietnamese citizens.

This social stratification is still legible today in the spatial fabric of the old area. The quarter is known as *Hà Nội 36 phố phường* ('The Thirty-Six Streets of Hanoi') because of the grouping of its industries into thirty-six guilds, each specialized in a specific craft. The district created from the gradual consolidation of buildings on the flanks of the roads linking the citadel to the Song Hong River and is the oldest inhabited area of the city.

According to Geertman, Hanoi's feudal period gave way to a pre-colonial period between 1802 and 1883 when the capital moved to Hué. The first Nguyễn emperor, Gia Long (1762-1820) demolished the walls of the original Citadel causing the expansion of plebeian and guild trading activities. However, due to Confucian restrictions, the industrialization that occurred in other cities did not occur here. Agriculture was emphasized over trade while the bureaucracy remained co-opted by mandarins with little technical knowledge.<sup>11</sup>

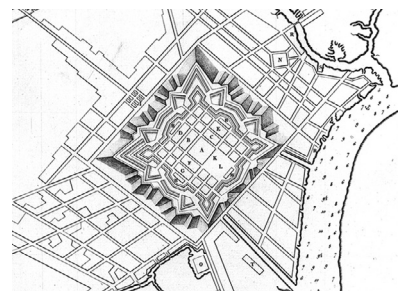
During the war with the rival Tây Sơn dynasty, the Citadel was protected with Vauban fortifications (fig. 121, 122), a technique imported into Vietnam by the priest Pigneau de Behaine to aid the new Nguyễn dynasty.<sup>12</sup> In the case of Hanoi, the result was a fortress with square bastions aligned facing the four cardinal points while the street grid within city walls remained oriented according to its own geomantic criteria. Although the citadel was declared a Unesco World Heritage Site in 2010, the area has not yet been fully excavated; remains of roofs and foundations from the Sino-Vietnamese forbidden city of Lý Thái Tổ have been found very recently, as well as in excavation works for the new ministerial buildings. The fact that Hanoi has been uninterruptedly inhabited for over a thousand years, and antique buildings were preeminently made of wood and ceramic materials which are difficult to preserve, difficults the collection of historical artifacts difficult. The spatial traces, however, remain there as voids and lanes carved out of the built blocks.

Although the walled citadel model was partly shared with imperial China, Thăng Long developed differently. The social barriers between mandarins and commoners were more lax in Vietnam, allowing the citadel to be less hermetic and socially impermeable. This relative openness extended to the spatiality of the city itself which was connected to the territory by a network of roads, canals and villages. Thăng Long could thus have been considered as a network of villages, a 'super-village' or a kind of agricultural conurbation that extended as far as Guangzhou and articulated by waterways.

The Thirty-Six Streets, the plebeian city, was never mapped; mundane and commercial life was outside the cosmological vision of the Mandarin aristocrats, nor were the surrounding settlements. Its earliest cartographic representation is that of a French map by Frederic Romanet du Caillaud dated 1873. Here the grid of the medieval citadel with its bastions can be seen, as well as the triangular area of the

11 Nguyễn.

12 The most obvious examples of Vauban fortifications built by the Nguyen Dynasty are found today in the ancient capital of Hue, although examples are preserved throughout Vietnam. William S. Logan, *Hanoi, Biography of a City* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2000).



**Fig. 119.**  
Citadel of Saigon, fortified in 1795.  
Source: US Library of Congress,



**Fig. 120.**  
Citadel of Hue, 1945. OSS. Source: US  
Library of Congress.

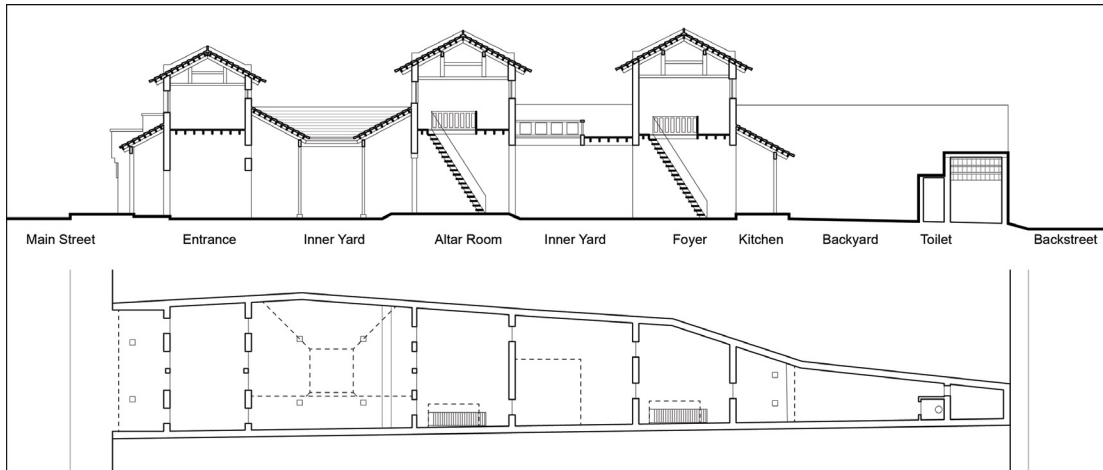
**Fig. 121.**  
Plan annamite 1876-1883. Source:  
National Library of France

Thirty-Six Streets that lies between the fortifications and the Red River. However, when compared with the contemporary map of Bangkok (p. 126), we see that the French administration did not make it a top priority to record the status of the Vietnamese settlements reliably, beyond merely indicating their existence insofar as it might affect the development of the colonial administration.

Commoner housing was built around spatial clusters: one always belongs to a *làng* ('village'), a *ngo* ('entrance to an alley'), a *xóm* ('village') and a *họ* ('family'). The postal addresses of contemporary Hanoi remain based on this system. As in China, each neighbourhood has its own elected representative who acts as an intermediary between the community and the authorities; activities and announcements are advertised on the *thông báo* ('notice board') which still exists today and occupies, especially in collective housing blocks, a pre-eminent place in the residential community space. The *ngo* alleys, which connect the inner world of the villages with the main road arteries, may have entrance arches as symbolic access elements.

Meanwhile, in the district of the Thirty-Six Streets, commercial buildings crowded along the sideways. The height regulation was strict because commoners were not allowed to rise over the houses of the mandarins.<sup>13</sup> As a result of the competition to open commercial spaces towards the public road and the subdivision of properties over generations, the *shophouses* reached to have depths of up to eighty

<sup>13</sup> Nguyễn.



**Fig. 122.** Typical section of a 'tube' house, taken from Thao, Nguyen Phuong, and Bart Julien Dewancker, "A comparative study on the visibility relation of Vietnam traditional and contemporary tube house plans", *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, 226 (2017), 207-18 (p. 211).

meters with widths of two and a half meters, configured by a linear succession of buildings and courtyards that served to illuminate and ventilate. The result was consolidated blocks with extremely elongated plots and very narrow street fronts; in order to facilitate ventilation in the subtropical climate it was necessary to have lightwells which, given the narrowness of the plots, turned the visit to a house into a linear succession of covered and open spaces (fig. 122). The ambience of these courtyards varied as one moved further into the building; the further inland, the more domestic their character became until they ended in the spaces used for kitchens and latrines. This created plots with a high degree of porosity, understood as a high density of openings and semi-open corridors within the urban block across the urban fabric.



Fig. 123. Aerial view of the Hanoi Opera House, c.1933 Date and author unknown. Source: The Urbanist Hanoi

## 4.2.2 The Civilizing Mission

The French seized the Hanoi Citadel in 1873, obtaining the first two concessions in the city, and they settled permanently in 1883. Hanoi became a French protectorate in 1885 and, just three years later, Hanoi, Haiphong and Tourane (the French name for Danang) were ceded as concessions, adding them as territories under full foreign jurisdiction to the military bases over which France already had full control. In 1902, the city would become the capital of Indochina, although the throne of the Nguyễn dynasty would remain in Huế and, for a brief period, in Saigon.

The bustling Thirty-Six Streets would become the most immediate point of contact between Vietnamese spatiality and the French city. The generic Vietnamese term for the Anglo-Chinese *shophouse* is *cửa hàng buôn bán* ('commercial premises'). Today, the oldest standing tube-houses are about 160 years old and consist of very elongated and narrow two-storeys, articulated according to a sequence of enclosed and open spaces.<sup>14</sup> If the owner prospered economically, the number of floors would increase and they would align with the main façade. In this way, two- or three-storey street fronts were created, which were presented by a unitary design that could be either European or Sino-vietnamese. In what Nguyễn Phương Thảo and Bart Julien Dewancker call 'semi-traditional houses' these courtyards were closed off to increase the living space, usually with a serious decrease of lighting and ventilation conditions.<sup>15</sup>

Despite having recorded the demolition of major Vietnamese landmarks, such as the royal palace Kính Thiên in the heart of the Citadel, which was ominously replaced by a complex of artillery barracks, André Masson defined the pre-World War I period as 'heroic', praising the civilizing achievements of the French presence.<sup>16</sup> Two master plans were elaborated by the French administration: Ernest Hébrard's in 1924 and Henri Cerutti's in 1942, although none of them was fully implemented. Hébrard's plan proposed a large Haussmann-style expansion built

14 Nguyen Phuong Thao and Bart Julien Dewancker, 'A Comparative Study on the Visibility Relation of Vietnam Traditional and Contemporary Tube House Plans', *WIT Transactions on Ecology and the Environment*, 226.1 (2017), 207–18 (p. 209).

15 Thao and Dewancker, p. 210.

16 First edition published in 1949. 126. Maps. (paper)», *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2.1 (1960), 115-16. Masson's work today would be considered a naïve and apologetic account of the French occupation. John Cady, «Histoire Du Vietnam. By Andre Masson. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1960. First edition published in 1949. 126. Maps. (paper)», *The Journal of Asian Studies*, 2.1 (1960), 115-16.



**Fig. 124.**  
The Hanoi Opera House in a postal card of 1910.  
Unknown photographer. Source: Hanoist.

with little attention to the existing urban fabric. The western part of the Citadel would house the governmental center of a future Union of French Indochina. The French Quarter, structured in a grid of avenues and colonial-style villas, is the only element of this plan that has been executed.

Logan described the colonial presence as ‘crude steps to tame and effectively control the territory they have acquired, to dominate the indigenous population and to solve the most pressing problems of Hanoi’ and warned of the limits of colonial policy in carrying out its declared civilising programme. The second half of the nineteenth century was characterised by the construction of official buildings that responded to the self-representation needs of the French military officers. The ideological discourse and the visual language deployed in the colonies were mainly intended to influence decision-making in the metropolis in a never-ending cycle that would justify new actions of conquest. Great and monuments such as the famous Long Bien Bridge, designed by Gustave Eiffel’s studio, the Ga Hà Nội railway station, or the mammoth Hanoi Opera House (fig. 124) would emerge. Wright picks up on the criticism of many of these works by members of the later generation of intellectuals such as Eugène Brioux, Ernest Hébrard, and Eugène Jung who described them as pretentious, oversized, and disconnected from the real needs of the colony.<sup>17</sup> Other interventions consisted of improving the canal system to alleviate the problems of malaria and dysentery by draining many of the nearby lakes.

Since 1890, as a consequence of political developments in France, there would be a shift towards more comprehensive policies with the aim of consolidating the rule over overseas territories. Walter Mignolo interpreted the ‘Law of Nations’ originally formulated by Francisco Vitoria and reflected in the ‘Laws of the Indies’ promulgated in 1542 in a similar way: the Indians were free and rational men, and therefore deserving of rights.<sup>18</sup> However, according to Mignolo, it was understood that they were rational ‘in a lesser way’ and therefore needed to be protected and tutored. The European monopoly of reason, which since the early days of Western philosophy had been considered the originating quality of civic rights, thus legit-

<sup>17</sup> Wright.

<sup>18</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity* (Duke University Press, 2011), p. 87.



**Fig. 125.** Gates of the Indochinese University in Hanoi, founded in 1905 (today, an organism depending of the Ministry of Education) designed by Ernest Hébrard. Source: author, 2019.

imized the colonial project. This argument served to legitimize the conquest of people and territories from the point of view of European domestic politics. It was not intended to convince or win the hearts of the locals, who would remain passive subjects of colonial policy. The speech of the politician and prime minister Jules Ferry, who also is credited with creating the French free public education system, was openly racist in terms of colonial policy, proclaiming the duty of the French people as the ‘superior race’ to help the ‘inferior races’.<sup>19</sup>

The colonial administration never fully controlled the urban development of Hanoi as the Vietnamese continued to inhabit the city in pre-colonial ways: villages grew up within the cities and tube-houses along the transport routes. The early colonial Hanoi, despite being the administrative capital of the Tonkin Protectorate, was itself excluded from the protectorate as a cession from the Emperor in 1888. While the rest of the Protectorate was under the authority of Nguyễn, the city was under the law of France. Consequently, activities persecuted by the colonial government such as brothels or opium dens proliferated on the periphery of the French city, immediately beyond the Protectorate boundaries, a situation that persisted until 1943 with the creation of the Hanoi Special Division. Logan says, and perhaps Cerise could corroborate, that the ‘enforced imposture of the *Petit Paris* bothered both Vietnamese and French’ creating a spatial segregation that gave ample scope the socioespacial segregation. Not surprisingly, this ghettoisation facilitated the city to serve, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, as a logistical and material centre for nationalist movements in opposition to colonial rule.

<sup>19</sup> This is what Ferry told the Chamber of Deputies on 28 July 1885, months after leaving office as Prime Minister of the Third Republic.

The informal sector intensified enormously during the colonial period; the Great Plague of 1906 highlighted the tensions between the authoritarian imposition of hygienist policies and cultural forms of cleanliness and decorum among the 'uneducated' Vietnamese, who reacted with all sorts of deceptive tactics.<sup>20</sup>

As a result of the compartmentalization of the territory into different jurisdictions, the sex trade serving wealthy Europeans and Asians, which remained regulated in the colonial concessions, flourished freely in the slums of the concessions. The functional relationship between the European concessions and the *slums* was notorious and bidirectional, since the Vietnamese side depended on the economic flows coming from the consumers, and the latter demanded places away from their social circle where they could give free rein to their debauchery. Within the colonial concession, the Thirty-Six Streets assumed the role of a stigmatized 'Chinatown': the neighborhood of sordid reputation, winding streets and secret alleys.<sup>21</sup> There, the so-called 'singing houses' would proliferate.<sup>22</sup>

Wright states that 'each of the advances [reduction of diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and reforms in education and public administration] created fundamental inequalities. Urban reforms divided cities as never before. The French resisted admitting that many of the unprecedented health and social problems had come through contact with Europeans themselves.<sup>23</sup> The social reforms, in practice, were applied on a socially privileged indigenous population, very small in number, urbanite and of unquestionably philo-French inclinations.

Universal rules were sought, such as principles of urban design, education and governance that could be successfully implemented in the different contexts of the empire according to the fundamental principles of the French state, for which an effort of adaptation to the unique idiosyncrasies of each location would suffice.<sup>24</sup> Each of the colonial territories (Madagascar, Algeria, Vietnam) was understood as a testing ground, a blank canvas where the implementation of development policies could be experimented. This vernacularization of development policies thus led to an aesthetic and stylistic mimicry, with which the colonial power aspired to win the hearts of the people by clothing itself in a semblance of continuity with traditional cultural practices.

Despite continued European military successes throughout Asia, Jules Ferry and subsequent French strategists were aware that France could not rule directly over the indigenous peoples through military supremacy alone, needing the collaboration of local elites as well as a loyal corps of bureaucrats. Once the Indochine Union

20 The vicissitudes of controlling the epidemic have been chronicled in comics by Michael G. Vann and Liz Clarke, *The Great Hanoi Rat Hunt: Empire, Disease, and Modernity in French Colonial Vietnam* (Oxford University Press, 2018).

21 Debora A. Lui, 'Neon Signs, Underground Tunnels and Chinese American Identity: The Many Dimensions of Visual Chinatown' (Massachusetts Institute Of Technology, 2003).

22 Christina Elizabeth Firpo details successive attempts to create precincts where these activities would be permitted and regulated in 1934, 1931 and 1943 and which would follow the Casablanca and Saigon models. Firpo, Christina Elizabeth, *Black Market Business. Selling Sex in Northern Vietnam, 1920-1945* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2020).

23 Wright, p. 171.

24 Wright, p. 12.



Fig. 126. Academic Teaching at the School of Fine Arts at the University of Indochina Un coin de musée, 1920-1929 [now Hanoi University]. Source: Hanoist.

was formed in 1897, unifying the territory's various protectorates and colonies, and the doctrine of 'Free Association with Indochina' had been formulated to fit colonial rule into the republican narrative of the French state, education proved to be an absolutely necessary pillar for consolidating the *mission civilisatrice*. However, the educational system did not provide sufficient value: French education was not homologated by the educational system of the metropolis and the training of middle management for the Vietnamese bureaucracy did not offer great salary or professional opportunities.<sup>25</sup>

The penetration of French art and culture, whose greatest exponent was the creation of the 'École des Beaux-Arts d'Indochine' (fig. 126), founded by the painter Victor Tardieu (1870-1937) was enthusiastically accepted, including the anti-colonial resistance, as a mean to encourage the development and prosperity of the country.<sup>26</sup> Gwendolyn Wright states:

Whether ornate or austere, nineteenth-century public buildings were architectural expressions of the politics of assimilation, enshrining the universality of French concepts of formal beauty in the same way that the universality of the French economic and social model was enshrined.<sup>27</sup>

However, in spite of Wright's skepticism, the Fine Arts School and French education systems left a lasting legacy: for one side, the birth of the conception of the modern artist – in an analogous fashion to Feroci's career in Siam – and, on the other, the creation of a national sentiment that would later play a key role in the pro-independence movements. The arrival of the Western academic art gave place to a 'period of "awakening" to the West' but also the assumption of 'nationalist views or art'.<sup>28</sup>

Ernest Hébrard's work, because of its progressive and advanced character, most clearly reflects the complexities of the French colonial experience. After his successful experience in Thessaloniki and Athens, Hébrard was already familiar with

25 Wright, p. 193.

26 Boitran Huynh-Beattie, 'Vietnamese Modern Art: An Unfinished Journey', in *Modern and Contemporary Southeast Asian Art*, ed. by Nora A. Taylor and Boreth Ly (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2012), p. 280.

27 Wright, p. 179.

28 Nora A. Taylor, *Painters of Hanoi: An Ethnography of Vietnamese Art* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2004), p. 7.



**Fig. 127.** Sino-Vietnamese motifs in French colonial architecture by Hébrard. Left: Vietnam History Museum (1926), Ho Chi Minh City. Center and right: Museum of History (1926-32), Hanoi. 2017. Source:

adapting Beaux-Arts to vernacular styles, as he did for the neo-Hellenistic Aristotelous square in Thessaloniki. Having landed in Hanoi to draft a master plan for Governor-General Maurice Long in 1921, Hébrard was particularly aware of the uncritical reproduction of classicist motifs as well as of the unapropriate use of Vietnamese religious motifs (nagas, dragons) which denatured their original meanings in what today could be read as an early denunciation of cultural appropriations).

However, at no point does Hébrard question the legitimacy of French colonial power. Hébrard made the general plan of Dalat as a beautiful landscape study where no attention was paid to the existence of poverty or human condition beyond the economic aspirations of the European settlers. His pioneering introduction of the North American *zoning*, compartmentalizing the land according to monocolour uses, would further aggravate the problems of racial-spatial segregation. In Hébrard's urban plans, nor in his vision of urbanity for Hanoi, there was no critical adoption of Vietnamese ways of life, no will to integrate them in the decision making process and not even to allow them to enjoy the new imported spatialities. The mimicry of traditional constructive forms was destined to contribute to the legitimisation of French power, portraying it in harmony and continuity with the country's past (fig. 127). His vision for a capitol of a future Indochinese Confederation, which would be located in Ba Đình, where the Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh stands today, would constitute a centre for the cosmopolitan melting pot of Khmer, Sino-descendant, Buddhist and Catholic cultures but which in practice would have no more substance than the fantasy represented at the Colonial Exposition in Paris in 1931. However, Hébrard's vision never developed on the scale he had hoped for due to the repercussions of the Great Depression that severely affected Indochina



**Fig. 128.**  
Harrison Forman, Vietnam, military officers sitting at outdoor café in Hà Nội, 1950, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries



**Fig. 129.**  
Left: Crowd listening to a speaker during Communist takeover of Hanoi. Top: empty roads at the 36 Streets. From *Last Days of Hanoi*. Howard Sochurek 1953. Source: Life Magazine.



**Fig. 130.**  
Barricades in the French quarter during the First Indochina War in 1946. Source: Hanoist.

between 1931 and 1935. When the construction activity became active again, a new world had appeared where stylistic heterogeneity no longer had a place in the face of the rapid expansion of the Modern Movement.<sup>29</sup>

The photojournalist Harrison Forman (1904-1978) -who extensively documented major developments in Southeast Asia in the middle of the last century- bore witness to these inequalities in this snapshot (fig. 128) taken in a café, presumably near Hoa Kiếm Lake. Colonial mechanisms of spatial segregation were reproduced here in everyday architecture: flowerbeds and street furniture. The socializing ritual of coffee (a habit that the Hanoinese would resolutely appropriate and metabolize within their own identity) was not only the expression of political-military

<sup>29</sup> Logan, p. 108.

domination, but self-representation in relation to the vastness of Asia protected within the fiction of an insular civilization.

In short, colonial urban designers and urban planners and social scientists believed that they had formulated the general principles of design and social order.<sup>30</sup> They chose not to acknowledge the particular circumstances under which they worked and, as a result, rather than a laboratory, the colonies offered a 'mirror' for the self-representation of the metropolis, a theatre for the representation of its work that responded to the tensions (fears, conflicts and ambitions) of its domestic politics. It may be little surprise that the pro-independence discontent and urban warfare in 1946, during the First Indochina War (followed by the 1954's independence), found fertile ground in the convoluted lanes and patios of Old Hanoi (fig. 129, 130).

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30 Wright, p. 306.



Fig. 131. Ngo Quyen-Trang Tien intersection in 1973 by an unknown photographer working for the US Department of Defense. Source: The Hanoist.

### 4.2.3 Independence and Socialism

Hanoi was the scene of urban fighting between French expeditionary troops and the Viet Minh in 1946, which was considerably devastating.<sup>31</sup> In 1954, immediately after independence, Hanoi saw its population dwindle, mainly due to the exodus of Vietnamese Catholics to the Republic of Vietnam (South Vietnam). However, this trend was quickly reversed by an influx of rural migrants to the capital, which tripled the population to nearly half a million by 1961.<sup>32</sup>

In May 1955 Vietnam signed the *Agreement on Technical and Economic Cooperation* with the Soviet Union and the Soviet Union was allowed to lead about three hundred industrialization projects in Vietnam. New intellectual and technical cadres were given the opportunity to be trained in the Soviet Union and Russian replaced French as the language of education and industry. Except for a few neighborhoods dedicated to the ruling elite, Hanoi was at that time little more than a shantytown; however, with the establishment of socialism, the government would adopt the principles enunciated by Ho Chi Minh in order to turn Hanoi into a true 'socialist capital'.

According to the socialist project, it was necessary to transform the cities into productive centers, especially the rural settlements that remained in a semi-feudal state, encouraging the creation of small or medium-sized towns of between fifty thousand and one hundred thousand inhabitants that would host light industries of consumer goods.

<sup>31</sup> Logan, p. 171.

<sup>32</sup> Lisa Drummond and Thanh Binh Nguyen, 'The Rise and Fall of Collective Housing: Hanoi between Vision and Decision', in *Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanisms: Critical Reflections from a Global Perspective*, ed. by Lisa B.W. Drummond and Douglas Young (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020), p. 70.



**Fig. 132.**  
Mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh's in Hanoi, 2016.  
Source: author.

However, relations between the teams of technicians and advisors from the various regions within the communist orb were sometimes difficult. In the case of the 1949 Beijing General Plan, there had been intense discussions and disagreements between the Chinese architects, headed by the prestigious Liang Sichuang, and the Soviet 'advisors' Abramoff and Barannukoven.<sup>33</sup> The accounts by Leon Hoa and Liang Sicheng give us a detailed insight into these negotiations, where the opposing positions were usually diluted in the compromise solutions adopted by the designers' committees. The question of the preservation of the old city of Beijing and the gates of the perimeter wall, as well as the location of the new socialist government buildings, was not easily resolved by a simple read of the CIAM postulates or by importing the radial road scheme of the Moscow masterplans of 1935 and 1951.

In the case of Hanoi, it could be ventured that the Vietnamese counterpart was in an even weaker position than the Chinese when it came to asserting its views against the Soviet technicians. Although the first urban studies of the new era were carried out by the P. Zaremba, the first General Plan for Hanoi would be drafted by the architect I. A. Antyonov in 1962 and would consist of five radial avenues and three ring avenues, which could be understood, due to their concentric disposition, as echoes of the Moscow model. The central area consisted of Ba Đình in the former Citadel, the Thirty-Six Streets and the French Quarter. The city would expand along the clear areas to the south and west, locating the first industrial areas and their attached housing complexes along the first ring road south of the French Quarter.

In the face of the perceived arrogance of the Soviet technicians, whom the Vietnamese jokingly referred to as 'Americans without dollars',<sup>34</sup> differences of opinion were not verbalized up front in order to 'save face'. It was therefore common for elements of discord to go unnoticed by the Soviet side, which tended to interpret the absence of protests as a consensus. It was during the implementation of the project, however, that the foreigners, unfamiliar with the local language, lost any capacity for effective oversight. Changes considered by the Vietnamese team then

<sup>33</sup> Zhi Luo, 'An Alternative Path. Architect Leon Hoa and His 1950's' (The University of Hong Kong, 2018) .

<sup>34</sup> Logan, p. 192.



**Fig. 133.** Aerial view of the public housing complex in Thành Công in Hanoi by photographer Ảnh Triệu Chiến. Source: Handhome / Ảnh Triệu Chiến.

appeared unexpectedly in the constructed work. The arduous negotiations within the creative committee of the Ho Chi Minh Mausoleum (fig. 132) were recorded by Nguyễn Ngọc Chấn and reveal the creative process in a socialist and multicultural creative committee consisting on Vương Quốc Mỹ and Nguyễn Ngọc Chấn in the Vietnamese team and of Boris Mezentsev and Garold Isakovch in the Soviet one. After arduous demonstrations, the local succeeded in imposing the design of the Mausoleum Ho's principles of 'Modern, Cultured, Dignified and Simple' to the majesty and solemnity pursued by the Soviets.<sup>35</sup>

Some Soviet architects came to spend many years in Vietnam. Garold Grigorievich Isakovich (b. 1931, d. 1992) was co-author of many of the monuments such as the Ho Chi Minh Museum together with Boris Mezentsev (b, 1911, d. 1970) and, probably, the only Soviet project erected in Hanoi that did not respond to any model previously tested in another socialist country.<sup>36</sup> Years later, Alexander Alexandrovich Kanyghin, an employee of the *Technostroiexport*, a Soviet foreign trade organization, would push for the importation of Soviet prestressed concrete facade technology in the 1980s.<sup>37</sup>

The next master plan was informally known as the *Leningrad Plan* because it was drafted by a team of the Leningrad Urban Research and Planning Institute headed

35 Logan, p. 200. He picks up Nguyen Ngoc Chan's account in 'The process of Designeing the Ho Chi Minh mausoleum', *Kien Truc*, vol. 27, no. 1, 1990 pp.13-23.

36 Logan, p. 196. Their assistant Natalia Dmitrievna Sulimova would stay during their stay in Kim Liên, one of the neighborhoods they designed.

37 Nguyen The Ba, 'Urban residential quarters', *Kien Truc*, nos. 3-4, 1988, pp. 21-24.



**Fig. 134.** Post stamp featuring the new neighbourhood of Kim Liên in Hanoi next to prefabricated public housing apartments in North Korea. Source: Nguyen The Son.

by S.I. Sokolov (fig. 133); it envisioned the construction of semi-autonomous neighborhoods with *microrayon* blocks. This plan envisioned five specialized industrial districts where, according to CIAM principles, residential neighborhoods would be located in close proximity to workplaces. As Sokolov later recounted in an interview in *Leningrad Pravda*, Hanoi was his first experience of tropical urbanism and raised issues that were new to a team of urban planners coming from regions such as Kazakhstan and Siberia, such as storm water drainage and transportation systems.<sup>38</sup> This plan was approved in 1984 but it was, according to Logan, too ambitious and lacked solid foundations in terms of growth and industrialization forecasts, so it was only partially implemented. However, from 1955 until the collapse of the Soviet Union a large number of Vietnamese students were educated abroad and they would gradually take the leading role in urban design issues.<sup>39</sup>

38 Collected by Logan, p 202.

39 Just as the French had demolished the imperial palace a hundred years earlier, the communist regime demolished the Maurice Long Museum, built to house the 1902 Hanoi Exhibition by André Bussy, and replaced it with the new Palace of Culture, designed by a committee of Vietnamese architects who had graduated from the Moscow Institute of Architecture.



Fig. 135. William E. Crawford, *Communal Residence*, 1986. Source: Crawford, W, *Hanoi Streets 1985-2015: In the Years of Forgetting* (Images Publishing Group, 2018).

#### 4.2.3.1 The Khu Tập Thể

After the proclamation of independence, the Vietnamese faced a significant disruption of their former way of life. Shared housing became one of the facets of a collectivization of society: the existing former French mansions were subdivided to accommodate several families. Thus began the practice of precariously reconfiguring pre-socialist residential buildings in a manner similar to that of the Soviet *Kommunalka*. The villas located in Ba Đình, the administrative heart of the capital, were allocated to senior officials of the central and municipal authorities and are the best preserved today. Others were converted into headquarters of state agencies, and a third group was transformed into multi-family dwellings under co-ownership and are the buildings that have undergone the most intense transformations to this day.<sup>40</sup>

However, occupying the French villas was by no means enough to meet the demand for housing in the capital. A period of assimilation would begin that would not only import foreign productive or technological models, but also a specific form of city, according to the French-Chinese architect Leon Hoa, that would transform 'consumerist cities into productive cities'. Leon Hoa's thought is particularly interesting not only for having been formed in France, enthusiastically assuming the European avant-garde, but also for his later, and also fervent, conversion to Maoism. His book *Reconstruire la Chine: trente ans d'urbanisme, 1949-1979* narrates his endorsement of the Revolution of 1949 and the search for 'socialist ways of living' in an Asian context responding to the severe material and technological limitations of the time. His projects in China went beyond the creation of functional cities under the principles of CIAM, aspiring to a total remodelling of society. His designs would take on the difficult challenge of combining Western rationalism with Asian ways of living, all using construction techniques as precarious as those of China in the 1950s.<sup>41</sup> These apartment blocks would have as main Chinese char-

<sup>40</sup> Tran.

<sup>41</sup> Leon Hoa, *Reconstruire La Chine - Trente Ans d'urbanisme - 1949-1979* (Paris: Editions du Moniteur, 1981).

acteristics their disposition in semi-enclosed courtyards looking for the formation of communal spaces, of clan, typical of the traditional *hutong* and certainly similar to the *ngo* hanoienses.<sup>42</sup>

From 1954 onwards, the government had assumed full ownership of land and housing and began to build the new collective neighborhoods whose mass implementation in the Soviet Union was beginning almost simultaneously through the *microrayon* blocks.<sup>43</sup> These new dormitory neighborhoods in Hanoi would be called *Khu Tập Thể* ('collective housing building'), generally referred to by their acronym KTT, and would be located in close proximity to the new industrial zones. The *microrayon* housing blocks thus featured a hierarchical provision of basic services, separation between road and pedestrian traffic and close proximity to the production centres.

The earliest KTTs would consist of single-storey brick-built rows of dwellings provided with common spaces and nurseries, as at Mai Động (1954-60). Toilet rooms and kitchens were located in adjoining rooms, in keeping with the usual practice of keeping these uses outside the main living volume. The first high-rise development, and one of the most significant because of its proximity to the urban center, was Nguyễn Công Trứ (1963); it consisted of a *microrayon* neighborhood of three- to five-story brick blocks built with North Korean prefabricated module technology. Even though transportation in post-independence socialist Vietnam consisted basically of bicycles with some Soviet-made wheeled vehicles and exclusively industrial or military use, the urban planning of these neighborhoods faithfully followed CIAM principles in terms of connectivity, open space layout, and segregation of vehicular and pedestrian traffic. Each housing block enjoyed running water and had green spaces attached to it, so Nguyễn Công Trứ became the most desirable location in the city and would thus house the most influential members of the Party and the military.<sup>44</sup>

Between 1954 and the economic reforms of the 1980s, according to Tran, almost half of the new housing in Hanoi was built according to the KTT model, totalling thirty new neighbourhoods.<sup>45</sup> Some of the most significant neighbourhoods, apart from Nguyễn Công Trứ, are Nghĩa Đô, Ngọc Khánh, Giảng Võ, Thanh Xuân, Thành Công, Thịnh Hào, Yên Lãng, Vĩnh Hồ, Văn Chương, Trung Tự, Khương Thượng, Kim Liên, Phương Mai, Bách khoa, Quỳnh Lôi, Phúc Xá, Lương Yên, Thọ Lão, Trương Định, Mai Hương, Tổng hợp, Mai Động and Tân Mai. The Kim Liên neighborhood has achieved a relevant role in the local collective memory because of its advantageous location, which allowed it to be the scene of post-war life in Hanoi. It was built on a rice field in two phases (1960-65 and 1965-70). In one decade the neighbourhood went from having five five-storey blocks, where each kitchen and bath-

42 Luo.

43 According to Hung, Tran and Thog, Nguyen Quoc. Thang Long- Hanoi: Ten Centuries of Urbanization, Hanoi: Construction Publishing House, 1995. (in Vietnamese) cited by Dinh Quoc Phuong, "The Impact of "Informal" Building Additions on Interior/Exterior Space in Hanoi's Old Apartment Blocks (KTT)," *Architecture in the Fourth Dimension*, Nov (2011), 131-38.

44 Drumond and Nguyen, p. 74.

45 Tran, p. 216.

room was shared between six households, to twenty-two blocks with one bathroom for every two apartments. The blocks were named using an alphanumeric postal nomenclature from A1 to G7 which is still in use today.<sup>46</sup> The blocks in Area A, the first to be erected, were also built by North Korean advisors (fig. 134). In all, between the 1960s and the economic reforms, thirty KTT self-sufficient neighbourhoods were built, covering an area of 450 hectares.<sup>47</sup>

Meanwhile, from the 1960s onwards and in parallel with the expansion of the capital's administrative boundaries, the process of industrialisation accelerated, with a series of industrial parks being set up in peri-urban areas such as Thượng Đình in Thanh Xuân, Minh Khai in Hai Bà Trưng District, Vĩnh Tuy in Hoàng Mai and Đông Anh. Since the state-owned enterprises managed the accommodation of their employees, it was administratively simple to locate the new dormitory districts close to the factories, thus minimizing commuting times for their workers. Each of these industrial parks would have a nearby KTT assigned to it.

During the war with the United States (1961-1975), the city remained relatively distant from the main theatres of war. All this despite the intensity of the 'Rolling Thunder' and 'Linebacker' bombing campaigns that culminated in the brutal bombing of Khâm Thiên Street in 1972 that killed 278 civilians. The main problem for the Hanoi City Council after the war would be to manage the influx of rural refugees in a context of extreme scarcity. Informal building activity became an indispensable adjunct to state policy and most of the rebuilding of the immediate post-war residential stock was technically illegal.<sup>48</sup> The following wars in which Vietnam got involved (China, Cambodia and Laos) implied high human and financial losses, but they would not affect too much the urban configuration of Hanoi, which would remain in a semi-lethargic state.

As in China, the communist regime discouraged rural-urban migration by creating a compulsory registration system, the *Hộ Khẩu*, necessary to access public services. Municipal governance in the five major cities - Hanoi, Ho Chi Minh, Can Tho, Haiphong, and Da Nang - was structured at three administrative levels: *Thành phố trực thuộc trung ương* (the upper municipal level), and *Thành phố trực thuộc trung ương* (the municipalities): an intermediate administration level exclusive of these particular cities, the *quận* ('district') and the *phường* ('sub-district'), which is the administrative body that must deal with the day-to-day conflicts generated by informal structures.

The structure of the state in communist countries is usually left in a shadow zone in Western texts, which consider it as a kind of amorphous and indiscernible bureaucratic mass. Nevertheless, the way its different organs are articulated will be of vital importance on how urban governance is conducted. Decisions are taken

46 Simon Pennec and Henry Ng, 'Mass Housing Guide', *Volume Project*, 2009 <<http://volumeproject.org/mass-housing-guide/>> [accessed 22 May 2021].

47 Tran.

48 The only existing cadastral management system, known as the 'Service du Cadastre et des Domaines de Hanoi' collapsed after the French withdrawal in 1954.



Fig. 136. Abbas Attar, Meeting of the committees of a cooperative in Thai Binh, a city located in the Red River delta forty kilometers south of Hanoi, 1975. Source: urbanisthanoi.com

by an executive body with a technical profile; it is composed of members who are assumed to have expertise and knowledge. However, according to socialist theory, this technocratic body would not be sufficient to ensure the common good because its members will tend to favour their own class interests, acting to the detriment of the 'people'. An extra body is therefore needed to ensure that these decisions are in line with communist ideology: a committee of the Communist Party. The decisions of the technical committee must be endorsed by the Party's officials, and, professedly in order to ensure its independence, its members will answer only to the higher echelons of the Party. The third body is an assembly that represents, in theory, the will of the people; a formally elected body that serves to maintain the fiction of a qualified democracy in which the opinion of the technicians, the mandate of the people and the ideological orientation of the policy are equally taken into account. This structure is repeated at all levels of administration down to the *phường* (sub-districts), the basic unit of Hanoi's municipal governance and the one that must deal daily with the question of its urban appropriations.

Each *phường* has three administrative bodies: the People's Council, the People's Committee, and a delegation of the Communist Party of Vietnam. The first two correspond to the state apparatus, with the People's Council being elected by ballot from among the residents. Below the *phường* there would be still two other levels: party cells and residential clusters or *cụm dân cư* and, finally, state agents who serve as janitors and watchmen at meetings and *tổ dân phố* ('neighborhood associations'), each representing some 25 to 30 households.<sup>49</sup> (fig. 136). This organization makes up for the technological and budgetary shortcomings of the state

49 Koh.

by ensuring a high social capillarity of the Party's means of information and supervision.



Fig. 137. Uncontrolled verticalization of the Thirty Six Streets area. Source: author, 2016.

#### 4.2.4 Đổi Mới and Contemporaneity

In the 1980s Vietnam's economy was exhausted due to the US blockade and the endless wars with its neighbours. In 1986 the Government launched a program of economic reforms called *Đổi Mới* ('Renovation'), ending with the state monopoly on housing construction. Prior to 1993, the private residential market was prohibited, but housing, including public dwellings, was transacted for a 'purchase and sale cost' fee, which was a market price in disguise. This price did not include the value of construction - usually negligible - or land, but since the value of a house depended on its location, this was, at some extend, indirectly weighted in the 'transfer fee'. Dr. Hoang Huu Phe, director of the state-owned Vinnaconex, argued that transfer prices prior to 1993 were much more volatile than in a market economy because of the scarcity of verifiable information and the incidence of rumours, as well as expectations about the decisions of opaque bureaucratic bodies that were difficult to predict.<sup>50</sup> The privatization of housing officially began with the 1991 'Housing Ordinances', which granted private entities the private right to own housing; this was followed by a series of legislative changes that opened the doors of the housing market to private investment: the 1992 Constitution ensured in its Article 18 the right to 'stable and long-term' land use, the right to own a home and, in theory, the right to choose one's place of residence.<sup>51</sup> The edict No.118/TTg of 1992 ended widespread subsidies for housing and especially for civil servants. Also, the land market was officially established with the Land Law of 1993 and its amendments of 1998 and 2001.<sup>52</sup> This law granted the rights to develop, rent, inherit and exchange land through the 'Land Use Rights Certificates' (LURC), as well

50 According to Geertman in "The self-organizing city in Vietnam; processes of change and transformation in housing in Hanoi" (Technische Universiteit Eindhoven, 2007).

51 '1992 Constitution of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (As Amended 25 December 2001)', *Vietnam Laws*, 2001 <[https://www.vietnamlaws.com/freelaws/Constitution92\(aa01\).pdf](https://www.vietnamlaws.com/freelaws/Constitution92(aa01).pdf)> [accessed 16 February 2019].

52 Quang Tuyen Nguyen, *Land Law Reforms in Vietnam – Past & Present* (Singapore, 2010), p. 2.



Fig. 138. Details of Artdecó and Beaux Art buildings in Hanoi, 2016. Source: author.

as to use it as collateral for mortgages. Finally, Decree No.61/CP of 1994 would allow legal entities to obtain such certificates in order to invest in housing and anticipated the right of tenants to transfer housing previously owned by the State.

The reforms of the *Đổi Mới* era set the guidelines for the establishment of a non-agricultural society, consolidating Hanoi as one of Vietnam's three global metropolitan centers.<sup>53</sup> The *Hanoi 2020 Plan* was approved in 1998,<sup>54</sup> ushering in an era of economic liberalization and a real estate frenzy that has not yet faded. Hanoi's growing urban sprawl moved the National Assembly to expand its administrative boundaries in 2008, taking the new wave of large urban developments further beyond in the periphery.<sup>55</sup>

This urban growth was based on the unique combination of extreme supervision by the communist state and a great deal of tacit permissiveness of private activities in order not to strangle economic growth. State-private cooperation indicated a significant change in the authorities' views on housing production as the state recognized, for the first time since 1954, the role of non-state resources in the field of housing provision. This cooperation could take several forms: first, the state and the private sector could co-finance the infrastructure and construction of new housing; second, the state could prepare the land to be built on and the inhabitants could build the housing themselves through the self-construction companies already mentioned; third, the state and private individuals could jointly co-finance the extension of existing housing.

Hanoi's built environment had been carefully monitored until the *Đổi Mới* reforms in 1986, and the lack of resources was made up for by the social capillarity of the Party's control agents. Once economic reforms were introduced, Hanoi was rapidly transformed and the terms of the relationship between inhabitants and urban space changed rapidly. According to Emmanuel Cerise,<sup>56</sup> the government's actual strategy, beyond the official declarations, consisted in prioritizing the creation

53 Order Number 10/1998/QDJTg of 23 January 1998.

54 According to Order number 10/1998/QDJTg of 23 January 1998.

55 Decree No. 15/2008/QH12 of 29 May 2008.

56 Emmanuel Cerise, 'Comunicación Personal' (Hanoi, 2016).



Fig. 139. Uncontrolled verticalization of the Thirty Six Streets area, 2016. Source: author.

and consolidation of privately owned enterprises to satisfy the demand caused by the economic opening. Issues that, on paper, were vital to the legitimacy of a socialist state, such as the collective enjoyment of common spaces, were relegated to the background so as not to hinder economic growth. A blind eye was turned to occupations of public space by restaurants, beauty salons, bazaars, or parking lots, as long as these constructions did not constitute an open challenge to the authority of the *phường*. A principle of mediocrity was thus imposed whereby no single intervention was to stand out from the rest in order to avoid becoming an exemplary object of sanction. Government and private sector were fully aware of the limitations of the regulatory apparatus to respond with the necessary efficiency and speed to the new economic scenario; both actors also shared an interest in avoiding conflicts that would trigger political reprisals and discourage investment.

While state investment in housing production was minimized, the early years of the *Đổi Mới* witnessed the emergence of the private sector. The Thirty-Six Streets were spurred by the arrival of mass tourism. Antique dwellings were dramatically verticalized (fig. 139) and upgraded through a myriad of Europeanizing pastiches to the tastes of their owners, 'turning Hanoi's architecture into a chaotic and uncontrollable state'.<sup>57</sup> Decorative elements of French and Sino-Vietnamese row houses, such as capitals, trellises, doorways, or cornices, which had remained in a state of semi-oblivion during the socialist era, began to degrade rapidly under the impact of the new structures (fig. 140).

The proliferation and atomization of small construction companies was followed by the transience of construction/demolition cycles. Michael Di Gregorio, director of the Asia Foundation, claimed in an interview for *The Guardian* that 'anyone could build a house on a minimum plot of twenty square meters' in a matter of a few days.<sup>58</sup> Government oversight was very limited and a grey economy of illegal

57 Tran.

58 Lauren Quinn, 'Hanoi: Is It Possible to Grow a City without Slums?', *The Guardian*, 2014 <<https://www.>



Fig. 140. Colonial buildings in the Old Quarter of Hanoi, 2016. Source: author.

and semi-legal construction flourished and is evident in the anarchy and formal exuberance of the city. Services such as *khoan cắt bê tông* ('concrete cutting and drilling') provided affordable demolition and reconstruction services. According to Lauren Quinn, a typical one-storey house in Hanoi could, in 2014, be demolished for about ten million đồng (about three hundred and twenty euros) in about three days. Since obtaining legal permits was the responsibility of the owner, the demolition company did not require any formalities in order to send a crew of workers to get the job done. However, in parallel to the flourishing of self-construction, the decrepit state of the socialist apartments was facing an increasingly pressing problem that could not be ignored for much longer.

The incorporation of the KTTs into the private housing market granted their inhabitants, usually public enterprise workers, the option of buying or renting their own apartments. However, the frenzy of apartment extensions, the joining and re-configuration of existing units, and the resale, re-letting and bartering of the resulting units made it extremely difficult to delineate the precise ownership structure of each housing block. Occasionally, official contracts detailed prices per area in 'original' or 'enlarged' square metres, implying some level of legitimacy of the new structures, but the ultimate conclusion of legal compliance was often lost in the complexity of endless negotiations. The rules and procedures of the municipality were manifestly insufficient to respond to the complexity of the operations and tenants and landlords had no choice but to embark on lengthy negotiation processes that were often accompanied by *fait accompli* tactics regarding the oc-

[theguardian.com/cities/2014/aug/11/hanoi-slums-vietnam-urban-planning-construction](http://theguardian.com/cities/2014/aug/11/hanoi-slums-vietnam-urban-planning-construction) [accessed 21 March 2022].



**Fig. 141.** Two examples of new KDTM developments built on former industrial parks. Left: Khu đô thị Times City built on the land of Vinh Tuy industrial Park. Right: Royal City built on the former Thượng Đình Industrial Park, in Thanh Xuân District. Source: author, 2019.

cupation and reconfiguration of the dwellings. External modifications to the domestic space were based on extra-legal agreements between neighbours in the expectation. In the absence of complaints by third parties, district officials would turn a blind eye.

The figure of the *Khu đô thị Mới* ('New Urban Areas' or KDTM) would provide an appropriate legal vehicle for new private investment, facilitating the construction of large housing developments. The KDTMs thus responded to the aspirations of the new Vietnamese middle class for modernity and welfare. The quality of the built KDTMs could, however, vary substantially. It is common practice for developers to fail to build the public amenities they promised when applying for licenses; in general, the new colossal KDTMs suffered from a lack of public amenities like those provided by the Khu Tập Thể.<sup>59</sup> This has resulted in the new KDTM developments being sterile and dreary landscapes, with poorly maintained common areas, imbued with a clumsy Europeanising aesthetic intended to disguise the poor quality of their finishes (fig. 141).

In 2011, the *Hanoi 2030 Plan*, drafted by the Perkins-Eastman consultancy, was approved.<sup>60</sup> In opposition to previous visions based on prioritizing industrial development over any other social or environmental consideration, this plan would protect up to 70% of Hanoi's land as unbuildable, setting high preservation standards for historic areas. The *Hanoi 2030 Plan* illustrates the government's change of priorities from encouraging uncontrolled growth to the search for a more balanced development that combines the growth of higher value-added industries with the preservation of the environment and historical heritage. The government's challenge is precisely to put the genie back in its bottle and curb informal practices once they have become consolidated as socially accepted practices.

59 Duy Luan, 'Living in "New Urban Areas": Towards Sustainable Urban Communities in Hanoi, Vietnam', *WIT Transactions on Ecology and The Environment*, 181 (2004), 333–44.

60 Perkins - Eastman, 'Hanoi Masterplan 2030', 2011 <[http://www.perkinseastman.com/project\\_3407114\\_hanoi\\_capital\\_master\\_plan\\_to\\_2030](http://www.perkinseastman.com/project_3407114_hanoi_capital_master_plan_to_2030)> [accessed 4 April 2019].

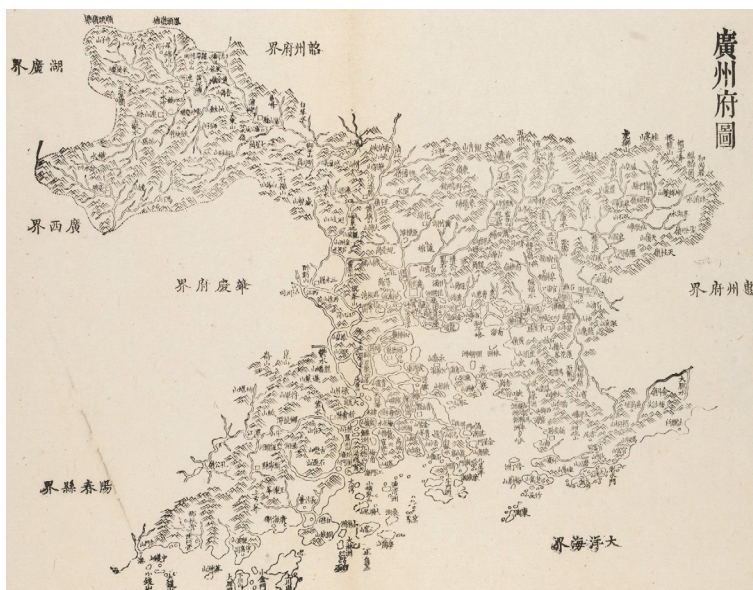


Fig. 142. Illegal cages in residential buildings in the North of Macau, 2016. Source: author.

## 4.3 Hong Kong and Macao

With more than 81 million inhabitants and almost a third of China's gross domestic product, the Pearl River Delta is the most populous metropolitan region in the world.<sup>1</sup> Counting Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Macao, Fushan, Dongguan, Foshan, Huizhou or Jiangmen among its major centres, the area is in the final stages of a process of territorial integration that will reverse the last vestiges of five hundred years of European presence. Intense investment in infrastructure (rail links, high-speed trains, motorways) has allowed the vast majority of the region's population to live at less than an hour away by public transport. China's economic strength, where the weight of Hong Kong's economy has gone from a third of the national total to a meagre three percent, has gradually reduced the content of Deng Xiaoping's famous slogan 'One Country, Two Systems' to a formalism without content under which jurisdictional delimitations such as those of Hong Kong and Macao will be inexorably diluted in Chinese territory. However, even before the establishment of the first European enclaves and before the region was divided into a mosaic of different political systems and spatialities, there was a socio-spatial continuum woven by a network of villages, river communications and farms outside the territorial conception of the European nation-state and only loosely subject to Chinese imperial authority. This territorial substratum thus forms a common basis for the distinctive urbanities of Shenzhen and Hong Kong, having evolved in each in a particular way.

<sup>1</sup> According to CBRE estimates for 2020. "Greater Pearl River Delta Infrastructure Outlook" (CBRE Research, 2019).



**Fig. 144.** Map of Guangdong province by Jiang Tingxi, Kāngxī nèi fǔ fēn shěng fēn fū fū yǒu. [China: Nèi fǔ, qīng kāngxī jiān, between 1662 and 1722][‘Map of the domains of the Kangxi kingdom divided into provinces. Cabinet of the Kangxi king, between 1662 and 1722’] (seq. 199) 1939, Harvard College Library Harvard-Yenching Library

The map of Guangdong province made for the Kanxi emperor between 1662 and 1722 (fig. 144) shows the scattered arrangement of villages and cultivated areas extending westwards towards Yunan and Vietnam in a sort of anthropized continuum punctuated by rice plantations and small settlements. In *An Historical Geography of the Walled Villages of Hong Kong* researcher Ip Hing Fong studies the traces of more than sixty walled urban villages, grouped in clusters such as Fanling, Kam Tin, Yuen Long, Ping Shan, Ha Tsuen and Tuen Mun in Hong Kong<sup>2</sup> and classifies the spatial morphology of these pre-colonial settlements in the light of the clan structures of Canton and their relationship to imperial China, whose power was more diffuse and peripheral than in the central areas of the empire. This allows us to understand the territorial structure of the delta and the diffuse nature of its boundaries, where only geographical features such as the Shenzhen River or the delta coastline itself remained relatively immutable landmarks before being divided into colonial demarcations. We will also see an underlying tension between the concept of the ‘natural village’ that has emerged organically throughout history and is thus linked to the coexistence between the various clans and the overlapping administrative figures, which in the case of Hanoi and Hong Kong would consist of colonial and, in the case of China, technocratic legal artifacts. Pu Hao’s research<sup>3</sup> on the urbanization and densification of villages that were absorbed by the explosive urbanization of Shenzhen will serve as a guide to understanding decision-making within the Chinese context or the spontaneous emergence of neighborhoods specializing in semi-informal industries such as the art district of Dafen.

2 Hing-Fong Ip, ‘An Historical Geography of the Walled Villages of Hong Kong’ (The University of Hong Kong, 1995).

3 Pu Hao and others, ‘14th AGILE Conference on Geographic Information Science’, in *Measuring the Development Patterns of Urban Villages in Shenzhen* (Department of Urban and Regional Planning and Geo-Information Management, Faculty of Geo-Information Science and Earth Observation, UT-I-ITC-PLUS, 2011); Pu Hao, ‘The Effects of Residential Patterns and Chengzhongcun Housing on Segregation in Shenzhen’, *Eurasian Geography and Economics*, 56.3 (2015), 308–30; Pu Hao and others, ‘The Land-Use Diversity in Urban Villages in Shenzhen’, *Environment and Planning A*, 44 (2012), 2742–64; Pu Hao, ‘Spatial Evolution of Urban Villages in Shenzhen’ (Utrecht University, 2012).

### 4.3.1 The Great Evacuation

It is generally assumed that the first settlers of the Pearl River Delta were ethnic *Man*, a nomadic people who lived in houseboats. The Han ethnic group would begin to immigrate towards the end of the Tang Dynasty (618-907)<sup>4</sup> until the region would eventually be identified with Dongguan prefecture, which had its capital at Nam Tau. The prefecture of Xinan would be segregated from Dongguan and would include part of Bao'an (today Shenzhen) and the island of Hong Kong, remaining so until the territory was indelibly marked by the European presence and, especially, the Opium Wars (1839-1842 and 1856-1860).

During the Song dynasty (960-1279) at least 13 clans moved into Xinan prefecture from Fujian and Guangxi, settling first in modern Shenzhen and later in Hong Kong. This migratory flow would continue in parallel with periodic episodes of instability in China. By the end of the Yuan dynasty (1271-1368) the most powerful clans had taken over all the good agricultural land, creating extensive clusters of interconnected villages. The five most powerful families consolidated during this period would become known to the British as the 'Five Great Clans': the Tang, the Hau, the Pang, the Liu and the Man.

At the same time, new migrants began to penetrate through the east of what is now called the New Territories, and by the beginning of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1912) there would be at least 30 surnames covering 500 villages in Xinan Prefecture. These areas comprised the eastern areas of Sha Tin, Tai Po, Fanling and Shueng Shui, the central arable area of Shek Kong, Pat Heung and Kam Tin and the western alluvial areas of Yuen Long, Ping Shan and Ha Tsuen.

However, due to constant attacks by the pirate Koxinga, a rebellious enemy of the Manchus, the Qing administration took an unprecedented action in 1662: the Great Coastal Evacuation. As the coastal settlements proved indefensible against pirate attacks, the population of all villages within 25 kilometres of the coast in Zhejiang, Fujian, and Canton provinces were forcibly evacuated. However, this action only strengthened Koxinga while causing considerable suffering to the population. After much pleading by local leaders, the Evacuation ended in 1669, although the evacuated area was not repopulated until twenty years later: human geography would have changed forever. Quotas were created by ethnic groups: the new immigrants were called *Hakka* ('guest') and the old ones, *Punti* ('original') adding at least 35 new clans to the previously existing ones. Some - very few - remnants of these villages still survive, such as the Chou Wong Yi Kung study pavilion (fig. XXX) in the Old Village of Shui Tau Tsu in the New Territories of Hong Kong. Built in 1685 by the Tang Clan in honour of Wang Lairen and Zhou Youde, who mediated an end to the Great Evacuation.

The Hakka settled in present-day Sai Kung, Tai Long Bay, Kat O, Luk Keng, Tsuen Wan, Tai Lam and part of Tuen Mun. It was assumed that the *strong* surnames

<sup>4</sup> Not to be confused with the similarly pronounced term *Man* which referred pejoratively to foreigners from outside the Han area of influence.

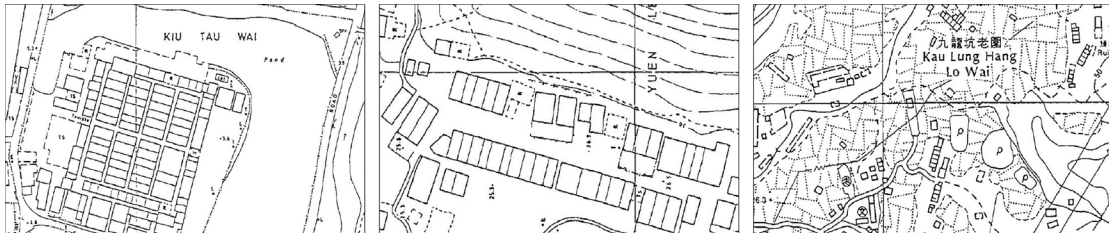


Fig. 145. A Villages of compact, elongated and dispersed typology, from Ip, Hing-fong, "An Historical Geography of the Walled Villages of Hong Kong" (The University of Hong Kong, 1995), p. 21.

had their strong areas of influence, while the *weak* surnames were forced to share space.<sup>5</sup> The wealthier clans could afford to gain land to the sea, building wooden dams and sluices to the northeast of the New Territories. Where the terrain demanded it, as in Tsuen Wan, terraced farming was intensively practised until the wave of urbanization in the 1960s.

Three village typologies could be discerned according to their adaptation to the orography, reflecting, therefore, the preminence of its clan. The compact village (Kiu Tau Wai, Ping Shan) corresponded to those settled with resources to plan a grid development. They often enjoyed moats and walls. Then there were the elongated villages (Yuen Leng, Tai Po) whose shape was adapted to the slopes of the terrain and, finally, the scattered villages (Kau Lung Hang Lo Wai, Tai Po) which were a social *entity* with gentry but no clear geographical demarcation and which offered the least protection against looting and inclement weather (fig. 145).

These settlements consisted of grids of approximately five by ten meters, where the roads were hierarchical depending on whether they were used to access the houses or as street frontage and where the altars of the ancestors were located presiding over the main axes. While villages in central and northern China, more exposed to imperial control, were oriented according to the cardinal axes, villages in the south were oriented towards bodies of water. There was a twofold reason for this: the first was the geomantic requirement of locating the cities facing bodies of water while keeping a hill or mountain in the background - this layout has also been presented in Hanoi - and the second was to facilitate food security in a climate very different from Beijing's. The second was to facilitate food security in a climate very different from that of Beijing. It will be seen how the remains of Hakka villages and settlements of various hostile factions located on the margins of the Ming and Qing territories will leave a marked imprint on the human and social fabric of the city. We find a superimposition of historical rural agglomerations erected in a no-man's land on the blurred boundaries of imperial China and the new urban fabrics that would be built after the reforms of the 1980s. Zacharias and Blik's morphological study of the current configuration of the original villages and their interweaving within the modern urban fabrics shows the expansion of the original villages in relation to their historical centres, as well as the extension of the industrial land that would be generated from the expropriation by the state of the surrounding collective agricultural lands.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Single-surname villages are especially common in Southeast China.

<sup>6</sup> John Zacharias and Desmond Blik, 'The Role of Urban Planning in the Spontaneous Redevelopment of Huaqianbei, Shenzhen', *Journal of Urban Design*, 13.3 (2008), 345-60.



Fig. 146. Fanning Wan walled village, New Territories, Hong Kong. Source: author, 2017.



Fig. 147. Kat Hing Wai's walled village in Hong Kong, New Territories, Hong Kong. Source: author, 2017.

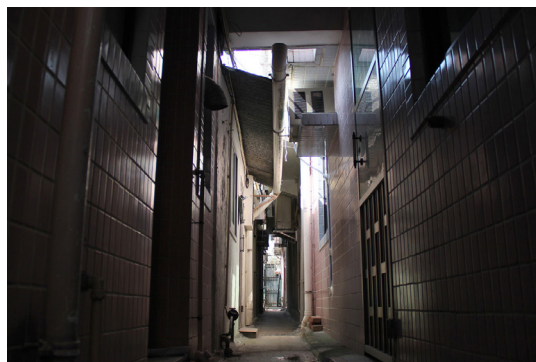


Fig. 148. Tsang Tai Uk walled village, New Territories, Hong Kong. Source: author, 2019.



It will be from the uneven coexistence of different governance regimes within the People's Republic of China that the characteristic Shenzhen Urban Villages will emerge. Paradoxically, at the time Ip Hing Fong wrote his work in 1995, Shenzhen's economic take-off had barely begun, so it was the villages north of the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong that were the best preserved. Those within Hong Kong territory had been exposed to modern urban development for more than a century and were comparatively much more degraded.

Today, despite the intense pressure, the original urban layout of the older villages is still visible in many of these developments. Zacharias, Hu and Huang proved that, on the Hong Kong side, these primordial urban arteries today concentrate the main roads, the highest prices and the most traffic, as they should as the 'historic centres' of these new cities.<sup>7</sup> One of the best preserved is Fanling Wan (fig. 146), belonging to the Pang clan and still preserving its moat and watchtowers. The perimeter wall has gradually been replaced by private buildings, with some

7 Zacharias and Bliet.

fragments still visible in the interiors of the houses. Despite these changes, the original layout is still visible in the present configuration of the ensemble. Other villages such as Kat Hing Wai (fig. 147) and Tsang Tai Uk (fig. 148) also retain much of their original character and spatial layout. Their community management preserves many of the traditional rites, as well as hosting religio-cultural festivals in commemoration of clan ephemeris.



Fig. 149. Judge Edwin Haydon with unidentified Chinese clan authorities (probably the Pang clan) at the opening ceremony of the Fanling village magistracy in September 1961, excerpted from Haydon, Edwin, "Chinese Customary Law in Hong Kong's New Territories. Some Legal Premises", *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 35 (1995), 1-41 (p. 40).

### 4.3.2 Colonial Administration

Hong Kong's history is a long and well-documented series of encounters and conflicts between norm and practice, which can be understood as clashes between ritual and reason, or between central planning and local action.<sup>8</sup> It is precisely the colony's renowned rule of law and legal security that makes the underlying tensions of these conflicts so vivid. In 1843 Hong Kong Island was the first stretch of empire ceded by the Qing dynasty to the United Kingdom. Barely fifty years later and, after the annexation of the Kowloon peninsula, a Council Order on 20 October 1898 extended, by mutual agreement with Beijing, this status to a new strip on the mainland, called the 'New Territories'.<sup>9</sup> In this portion of land, existing villages were allowed to continue to be governed by so-called 'Chinese Customary Law', which was to be applied in civil litigation (mainly land disputes, inheritance and family law) under the primacy of British law. In practice, Chinese law would rarely be invoked in Hong Kong courts because of the preference for resolving non-criminal disputes through out-of-court settlements, where the moral authority of clan leaders came into play as a mediating trump card; only the most irreconcilable cases would be arbitrated by colonial district officials.<sup>10</sup>

8 The content of this section is, at large extend, based on the article by Francisco Garcia Moro in "The Death and Life of Hong Kong Illegal Facades", *Arena Journal of Architecture Research*, 5.1 (2020), p.2.

9 D. J. Lewis, 'A Requiem for Chinese Customary Law in Hong Kong', *The International and Comparative Law Quarterly*, 32.2 (1983), 347-79.

10 Edwin Haydon, 'Chinese Customary Law in Hong Kong's New Territories. Some Legal Premises', *Journal of the Hong Kong Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 35 (1995), 1-41.

This form of government in fact involved the superimposition of two autonomous legitimacies that led to the creation of an ‘enclave of society’ that would be governed by British law, while a subordinate ‘native’ population would apply its own rules, thus avoiding the need for the magistracy to become involved in local conflicts that were outside its colonial interests.

The rules of this ‘Chinese Customary Law’ differed from clan to clan, fusing regimented legal acts with manifestations of religious faith, ritual gestures and displays of prestige in a manner baffling to the colonial magistracy. Although<sup>11</sup> district inspectors strove to record these informal practices, most of the records were destroyed during the Japanese occupation between December 1941 and August 1945.<sup>12</sup>

The British authorities in the New Territories found themselves having to refer to informal rules that harked back to the practices of a now defunct monarchy, the Qing dynasty that had been expelled from China in 1912. By the twentieth century these rules had metabolised into local customs with their own ‘Hong Kong flavour’. The photograph that Judge Edwin Haydon himself took with the authorities of a Chinese clan, probably the Pang surname, which owned the village of Fanling, (fig. 149) is illustrative of the practice of these relationships in which both sides had successfully grounded their legitimacy in mutual interdependence, united as they were in the face of Communist danger.

Further south, located on Hong Kong Island and thus fully subject to colonial ordinance, the Anglo-Cantonese shophouses known as *Tong Lau*, another colonial adaptation of southern Chinese practices, became the most characteristic building typology in the colony.<sup>13</sup> Prompted by a major outbreak of bubonic plague in 1884, the *Public Health and Buildings Ordinance* of 1903 imposed restrictions on the volume of buildings to ensure sufficient natural light and ventilation. These regulations, together with the system of service back alleys, gave rise to the *Tong Lau*, three- or four-storey residential buildings in which the commercial area occupied the entire ground floor and the domestic quarters were located on the upper floors. This would be the local reincarnation of the *shophouse* and would be the most prominent urban building type until the socio-economic transformations that would come after World War II.<sup>14</sup>

In the *Tong Lau*, individual privacy is beyond the priorities of its inhabitants, and independent access to the upper domestic rooms was rarely provided, as this would diminish valuable space for front-facing commercial activity. Living and trading thus remained inseparable for the occupants of the *Tong Lau*, and from the outside, signs and advertisements would cover most of their façades, merging with other accessory artefacts such as railings or clotheslines. Commercial signs

11 Lewis.

12 Haydon.

13 H Y Lee and L D DiStefano, ‘Tong Lau: Hong Kong’s Anglo-Cantonese Shophouse Typology’, in *Shophouse / Townhouse: Asian Perspectives* (Singapore: National University of Singapore, 2016), p. 200.

14 *Nanyang* literally means ‘South Sea’ and refers to the area of influence of the Chinese diaspora on the southern coast of China and Southeast Asia.



**Fig. 150.**  
Chan Chik, *All for One (Inferno)*,  
1953. Source: Hong Kong Art  
Archive.

were carefully adapted to the architectural elements of the facades, such as pillars, lintels and terraces to optimize the area available for advertising and thus giving rise to a rich variety of types and formats of advertising. During this period, Hong Kong lacked a comprehensive housing policy, although the morphology of buildings would continue to be restricted by subsequent ordinances such as the 1935 'Building Ordinance'.<sup>15</sup> After the war had passed, it was only with the tragic Shek Kip Mei fire in Kowloon in December 1953 (fig. 150) that the Hong Kong government truly realized the risk that poor residential conditions posed to the political stability of the colony.<sup>16</sup> About fifty thousand immigrant residents were made homeless by the fire. The 'Resettlement Department' was immediately formed to help the victims of the catastrophe and soon after, in 1954, the newly founded 'Hong Kong Housing Authority' (HKHA) went on to implement long-term housing policies that would become very significant. Its 'Mark I' housing blocks were the first of a still ongoing series of multi-family housing designs that have been crucial in materializing Hong Kong's contemporary identity and visual imaginary, constituting a very relevant part of the collective memories of millions of citizens. Nothing on this scale had ever been tried before in the colony. Initially, since there were no mechanisms for dealing with individual families, the method considered most efficient and equitable was to set a ratio of 2.4 square meters per adult, less than the minimum 3.5. Once this system was in place in Mark I, a precedent was set for subsequent Hong Kong blocks.

Domestic space was characterized in terms of built area and not through its spatial qualities. It was a utilitarian design strategy: a simple space that would present minimal construction problems, satisfy the required density levels and provide a regular and compact form that would maximise its utilisation. Once the re-housing blocks were occupied, they became an image of Hong Kong against which other

15 'Public Health and Buildings Ordinance', *Historical Laws of Hong Kong Online*, 1903 <<https://oelawhk.lib.hku.hk/archive/files/b70d961206f4fa4e7e9591a66d8ef544.pdf>> [accessed 28 April 2021], p. 1473.

16 Manuel Castells, L Goh, and Reginald Yin-Wang Kwok, *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome : Economic Development and Public Housing in Hong Kong and Singapore* (London: Pion, 1990).



**Fig. 151.**  
Chan Chik, *Rebirth From Fire, Trying Desperately to Recover Belongings*, 1970, Hong Kong Art Archive.



**Fig. 152.**  
Chan Chik, *Rebirth From Fire, Village on the Shore*, 1970, Hong Kong Art Archive.

forms of accommodation would be measured in terms of rental prices, facilities, location and quality of interior spaces. A room in a re-housing block was relatively affordable, well located, secure and probably better managed than if it were a private establishment. Certainly, the indoor quality was no worse than what you would find in any other neighbourhood in Hong Kong. Residents of the Mark I block had the disadvantage of outdoor kitchens, communal latrines and exposed plumbing but, ironically, this lack of individual amenities facilitated interaction between neighbours.

In those years Hong Kong would find itself at the crossroads of major conflicts: the Chinese Civil War (1945-49), the first Indochina War (1946-54), the 'Great Leap Forward' (1958-62), the Cultural Revolution (1966-76), as well as the Korean War (1950-53) and the Vietnam War (1955-75). The border between China and Hong Kong was always relatively easy to cross, so it is difficult to determine an exact number of migrants who crossed it. According to Canton's historical archives, more than half a million Chinese residents escaped to Hong Kong between 1949 and 1974, although Chen Bingan estimates that the actual numbers were much higher.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, as Carina Hoang documents in her online *Vietnamese Boat People* project, the influx of refugees from Vietnam peaked in 1979, due to the Sino-Vietnamese crisis, with more than 68,700 refugees arriving that year. Although most of the new arrivals were subsequently resettled in Western countries, a number of informal settlements and government-installed refugee camps sprang up on the periphery of Hong Kong, generally in areas of unsanitary and dangerous conditions (figs. 151 and 152) that were unattractive to private developers.<sup>18</sup>

According to Alan Smart, in 1984 there were still 750,000 people living illegally in these informal settlements.<sup>19</sup> The Hong Kong government was faced with the dilemma of choosing between regularizing these settlements and thereby encouraging new occupations, or taking a high political risk in clearing unautho-

17 Michelle Fei, 'The Great Exodus', *China Daily*, 2011 <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2011-04/20/content\\_12358785.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2011-04/20/content_12358785.htm)> [accessed 14 August 2020].

18 Alan Smart, 'Impeded Self-Help: Toleration and the Proscription of Housing Consolidation in Hong Kong's Squatter Areas', *Habitat International*, 27.2 (2003), 205-25 (p. 210).

19 Smart, p. 210.



**Fig. 154.** Military checkpoint at the basement of Kiu Kwan Mansion during the riots of July 1967, Hong Kong. Source: Singtao.com

**Fig. 153.** Kiu Kwan Mansion (1965), North Point, 2019, Hong Kong. Source: author.

rized housing. The hybrid term ‘temporary housing areas’ was introduced as a short-term palliative to describe illegal settlements, although neither this nor later terms such as ‘permitted areas’ or ‘shack areas’ really conferred on them, even implicitly, any legitimacy. Instead, they were tolerated as quasi-legalised settlements that remained expressly unauthorised, so that any further consolidation of existing buildings was strictly forbidden, as was any further improvement or provision of urban services.<sup>20</sup> The key to the success of this policy was to combine accurate surveys to detail the current status of each building with severe punitive measures to reduce the perverse incentives for the consolidation of unauthorized communities and structures. Unlike other shantytown programmes abroad, Hong Kong’s policies never aimed to transform these areas into liveable neighbourhoods, but to keep them under control until the occupants could be evicted.

Meanwhile, in the private sector, the enclave would continue its verticalization process. In 1955, the new ordinance dramatically increased the maximum dimensions of private developments as a consequence of the explosive post-war economic growth. This new building typology would be subject to volumetric restrictions depending on the width and category of adjacent streets.<sup>21</sup> The maximum permitted volumes were defined by projecting angles from the central axis of the streets above a certain height, creating the characteristic ‘composite buildings’ (i.e. mixed-use buildings) predominantly in the Central and Kowloon districts (fig. 153). Some of the most notable for their bulkiness and imposing presence are Wanchai House (1959), 475A Fuk Wa Street (1959), Peony House (1961), Chunking Mansions (1961), Mirador Mansion (1962), Mei Wah (1963), Kam Wa (1964),

<sup>20</sup> Smart, p. 216.

<sup>21</sup> Sang Wah Wong, ‘The 3rd International Conference on Industrial Engineering and Applications’, in *Effects of the Building Code on Construction and Design of Hong Kong Residential Buildings in the Colony* (Hong Kong: IEEE, 2016), p. 5.



**Fig. 155.**  
1967 Wan Chai riots: 1st Battalion, The Welsh Regiment cordon in Hennessy Road, 12 July 1967. Source: Ming Pao Daily News, (Hong Kong: Sing Tao Micro-file Centre, 1980).

and Metropole (1967). Their mixed-use programs combined apartments with light manufacturing, retail and a host of services. Composite buildings would give many households their first opportunity to own a modern home as Eunice Seng will recount in her essay *The City in a Building* (2017).<sup>22</sup>

Despite the crude pragmatism of these buildings and their lack of -in most cases- consideration for aesthetics, one particular case of the implementation of this ordinance led to the fortuitous appearance of a new building type: the 'Corner Buildings'. When *Tong Lau* were built on a corner, the corner was rounded so that the ground floor colonnade followed the flow of pedestrian traffic. Once demolished, buildings constructed under the new ordinance would have to adhere to the curvature of the original boundary. The result was a variety of blocks with forms reminiscent of European functionalism that were no more than the product of the verticalization of the plot (although, on occasion, the design did exploit this privileged condition). As the 'Corner Buildings' were gradually taken over by illegal structures - particularly on the roofs - and other modifications such as reinforced window glazing, visually rich volumes were generated that have been documented by photographers such as Michael Wolf and Mak Fung.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Eunice Seng, 'The City in a Building: A Brief Social History of Urban Hong Kong', *SITA – Studies in History and Theory of Architecture*, 5 (2017), 91–98 <[https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/06\\_Seng.pdf](https://sita.uauim.ro/f/sita/art/06_Seng.pdf)>.

<sup>23</sup> Michael Wolf, *Hong Kong Corner Houses* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2011).



Fig. 156. Kevin Mak, *Light of Mercy*, 2021, Hong Kong. Source: Kevin Mak.

The intricate interior spatiality of the compound buildings, made even more convoluted by the constant modification, subdivision and reorganization of their interior spaces due to the dynamism of these small merchants, extended its ramifications to the surrounding streets through the multiple entrances and exits located around the perimeter. These labyrinths proved particularly well suited to escape surveillance, fortunately both from the variety of illegal businesses they could house and from political dissidence. During the student riots of 1967, several compound buildings became strongholds for leftist groups and pro-communist factions protesting against the colonial government (fig. 153 and 154). The case that received the most media coverage was the helicopter assault on the rooftop of the Kiu Kwan Mansion, newly opened a year earlier and, at the time, the tallest tower



**Fig. 157.** 'Composite Buildings' with setbacks, 2019 and Unauthorized Building Works, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong. Source: author.

in the entire region. Labelled as 'leftist buildings' or 'communist strongholds' by the media, the composite buildings were clearly seen as a sinister phenomenon. In the following years, the press would find its sensationalist groove in chronicles of fires, murders, drugs and other gruesome events that helped identify the composite buildings with, in Seng's words, 'a "jungle" where bodies and things collide and hide' thus fascinating filmmakers, sociologists, anthropologists and those seeking alternative narratives to the official slogan of 'where East meets West'.<sup>24</sup>

However, and in parallel to the continuous reconfiguration of their interior habitations and circulations, the large and generally extremely austere facades of the composite buildings were also constantly subject to unregulated interventions, including cantilevered projecting volumes, storage containers, satellite dishes, commercial signage and, following the widespread adoption of air conditioning, condensers, bird cages and sunscreens.<sup>25</sup> Changes to their internal layouts required the reconfiguration of the building's networks, in particular the water and sewage, adding another layer to the intricate network of arrangements and additions.

An unexpected consequence of the 1955 ordinance was that the setbacks on the upper floors were ideal for illegal structures, saving the inconvenience of bulky cantilevered structures that remained invisible to observation at street level (fig. 157).<sup>26</sup> The result was a cacophony of anarchic, precarious and poorly construct-

<sup>24</sup> Seng, p. 97.

<sup>25</sup> Chan Siu Sin, 'Illegal Structures. Time Bombs Overhead', *Varsity*, 1999 <<http://varsity.com.cuhk.edu.hk/varsity/9912/social02.html>> [accessed 14 February 2020].

<sup>26</sup> Alina Tanasescu, Wing-tak Ernest Chui, and Alan Smart, 'Tops and Bottoms: State Tolerance of Illegal Housing in Hong Kong and Calgary', *Habitat International*, 34.4 (2010), 478–84 (p. 480).



Fig. 158. Podium towers with prefabricated facades, 2016, Hong Kong. Source: author.

ed interventions that obstructed ventilation and blocked natural lighting at street level. Among many other hazards, Campbell lists the obstruction of escape routes, the danger of landslides, windblown debris in the event of a typhoon, water runoff, and the accumulation of dirt and debris thrown from upper levels.<sup>27</sup> Rooftops were also systematically encroached upon through the construction of unauthorized housing for low-income workers, blocking escape in the event of fire.<sup>28</sup>

In general, composite buildings blocked natural light and ventilation at street level, creating an uncomfortable ‘canyon effect’ for pedestrians. As a result of these dangers and drawbacks, further legislative changes were considered in 1962, although they would not be implemented until four years later. As a result, another idiosyncratically Hong Kong typology emerged: the ‘tower-podium’.<sup>29</sup> Buildability was now set at 8:1 and full plot coverage for non-residential uses was permitted. Retail and parking were thus encouraged to occupy the entire ground floor area while apartments were erected in tall, slender towers (fig. 158), as in the Tung Fai building at the eastern end of Hong Kong Island (1975).

This new typology made high density compatible with acceptable ventilation and lighting conditions on the lower floors. In practice, however, the podiums would be almost entirely devoted to parking, creating what has been described as a ‘pedestrian wasteland’ composed of ‘decorated garages’ in which most of the visual and semiotic richness of Hong Kong’s old streets had disappeared.<sup>30</sup> As the apartments had moved away from the podiums, there was little or no interaction between domestic space and street life. The absence of retail meant that small signs were rendered meaningless in favour of billboards designed to be seen from a great dis-

27 Stuart Campbell, *The History of Wind Damage in Hong Kong* (Kanagawa, 2005).

28 Tanasescu, Chui, and Smart, p. 481.

29 Sang Wah Wong, p. 6.

30 Nancy Margaret Sanders, ‘Conference on Sustainable Building South East Asia’, in *Super-Podium: Hong Kong’s New Multi-Functional Housing Base* (Kuala Lumpur, 2005), pp. 158–66.



Fig. 159. Shanghai Street, Mongkok-Hong Kong. Stefan Irvine & Jörg Dietrich, 2016. Source: Blue Lotus Gallery.

tance; the only spaces still available for self-generated interventions by the small user were left for street-level retail shops.

The Hong Kong Housing Authority (HKHA) today produces internationally award-winning designs and is widely recognised for the pressing budgetary and design needs it has responded to. It was required to efficiently build high-density environments while keeping construction costs as low as possible. Over the past forty years and since its founding in 1973, HKHA's architecture division has built up considerable and irreplaceable expertise in this field, making it possible over the years to raise the standards of habitability, especially with regard to faceting facades to increase lighting and ventilation, facilitating the subsequent compartmentalization of the interiors at the user's convenience or in the progressive improvement of bathrooms, which initially consisted of basic cubicles without even tiling, as well as the increase in electrical capacity resulting from the availability of more and more powerful appliances. However, Rooney criticized that housing estates have always been conceived as housing developments without attention to interior design, which is considered subsidiary. In Rooney's view, the main problem with HKHA homes was that their conception was hopelessly tied to architectural and engineering design. Any question linked to the decoration of the home, even if it was left to customization by the user, entailed decisions regarding tectonics, materials and spatiality that were not incorporated as a relevant part of the design and were, generally, relegated to be solved by non-professional individuals who would work under very limited budgets.<sup>31</sup>

In 1989, the HKHA began to use precast concrete facades in its projects.<sup>32</sup> In view of the profusion of illegal interventions, both in private and public housing, the adoption of precast façade techniques by the construction industry was used to hinder the installation of informal structures on the exterior of dwellings. All the façade elements, which incorporated accessory elements such as piping, joinery, condenser receptacles, were manufactured in industrial plants. The openings in the walls were designed in such a way that no external devices could be accessed

31 Nuala Rooney, 'At Home with Density. Spatial Representation in Hong Kong Public Housing' (Napier University, 1997), p. 54.

32 Chu Pui Kwan and Wong Wai Hing, 'The First Shanghai Hong Kong Symposium for Sustainable Building', in *Precast Concrete Construction for Buildings in Hong Kong* (Shanghai, 2004), pp. 1–10 (p. 3).

or manipulated from the inside. Given its constructional and economic advantages, this building system quickly became the standard for all public and private residential buildings in Hong Kong to this day.



Fig. 160.  
Stella So, *Wedding Street*, 2005, Hong Kong. Source: Stella So.

### 4.3.3 Asia's Global City

On the night of June 30, 1997, when the British government handed Hong Kong back to China, recognizing it as a Special Administrative Region, the colony had already evolved from a colonial industrial port to an advanced global service economy. 'Asia's Global City' was the slogan adopted by the new Hong Kong government in 2001 promoting the region as 'one of Asia's most cosmopolitan and vibrant cities'.<sup>33</sup> The redevelopment of the city to meet the needs of an international financial centre took place on two fronts: on the one hand, 'urban renewal operations' were carried out and, on the other, a series of policies to deal with what were termed 'unauthorized building works' or UWBs. The conflicts and contradictions raised by these two lines of action are revealing of the tacit agreements and social customs under which informal building practices had previously flourished.

In 2020, there were 7,680 buildings in Hong Kong older than 50 years, of which 3,556 were more than six storeys high, posing a serious challenge in terms of management and maintenance.<sup>34</sup> To manage the redevelopment of dilapidated neighbourhoods, the Urban Renewal Authority (URA) was established in 2001. Unlike its predecessor, the Land Development Corporation, the URA had the legal right to expropriate land directly, a power that would streamline and simplify new redevelopment programmes under the umbrella of 'Urban Renewal Operations'. These

33 'Brand Hong Kong' (Hong Kong: Brand Hong Kong Management Unit. Information Services Department. Government of HKSAR, 2019).

34 Home Affairs Department, 'Database of Private Buildings in Hong Kong', *Government Of SAR Hong Kong*, 2020 <[https://bmis2.buildingmgt.gov.hk/bd\\_hadbiex/home.jsf](https://bmis2.buildingmgt.gov.hk/bd_hadbiex/home.jsf)> [accessed 1 April 2020].



**Fig. 161.**  
Cluster of Tong Lau houses on Johnson Road before restoration. Source: author, 2008.



**Fig. 162.**  
The former Tong Lau after their restoration and development by the URA in 2011. Source: CNN.

consisted primarily of the demolition of clusters of post-war apartment buildings, and the construction of contemporary mixed-use developments that fused the residential tower typology of the podium with high-end commercial spaces. However, despite proclaiming a ‘public participatory, district-based approach’, the URA received strong criticism due to two projects in particular: ‘Wedding City’ and ‘Graham Market’.<sup>35</sup> The demolition of Lee Tung Street in Hong Kong’s Wan Chai district, which had been popularly known as ‘Wedding Card Street’ (fig. 144), was promoted by the then Secretary for Development (and now Chief Executive), Carrie Lam. Arguing that the apartment buildings on the street had ‘little historical value’ and ignoring the intangible heritage value of the neighbourhood despite an intense reaction in the mass media and academic circles,<sup>36</sup> the buildings and associated market on Lee Tung Street were eventually demolished to allow for new development.

Similarly, the URA’s counter-proposal for the functionalist-style Graham Street Market consisted of a historicist pastiche stripped of its social fabric, lacking the complexity of local spatial patterns and the granularity of small businesses and bustling street markets. However, the consequent demolition of Graham Market, only partially achieved due to various scandals and legal difficulties, has nevertheless contributed to Hong Kong’s awareness of built and intangible heritage as a collective wealth that transcends the mere preservation of ancient monuments. The case of the restoration of the *Tong Lau* at the junction of Hennessy Road and Johnson Road in the Wan Chai neighbourhood is paradigmatic of the contradictions that the URA has often incurred (fig. 145, 146). The large impact of the new development of a twenty-plus-storey tower with a podium for commercial use was camouflaged in the visualizations provided by the URA, which showed exclusively the restoration of the three historic *Tong Lau*, which was of a very small scale in relation to the volume of the operation. Not only was the operation concluded with a massive speculative operation at the cost of erasing the original urban fabric, but

35 ‘Residents Reject “Wedding City”, Partial Preservation of Market’, *The South China Morning Post*, 2007 <<https://www.scmp.com/article/620669/residents-reject-wedding-city-partial-preservation-market>> [accessed 22 May 2021].

36 ‘Urban Renewal Strategy Ruining Communities’, *The South China Morning Post*, 2008 <<https://www.scmp.com/article/630733/letters>> [accessed 12 May 2021].

the supposed restoration of the *Tong Lau* and their reuse as luxury shops erased any trace of authenticity and character they may have retained.

Hong Kong's other strategy for adapting Hong Kong's appearance, complementary to the URAs, was the development of the concept of *Unauthorized Building Works* (UBW), referring to informal building alterations as defined by the Hong Kong Building Department.<sup>37</sup> The first legislative efforts to tackle UBWs date back to 1975. At a time when the Vietnam War was coming to an end and immigration from China was reaching new highs, the most urgent task for the colonial government of the time was to prevent further squatting.<sup>38</sup> Thus, municipal officials were instructed to report and order the demolition of any UBW found in newly constructed buildings,<sup>39</sup> but in practice, due to chronic understaffing, they only acted in the most urgent and flagrant cases.<sup>40</sup> The authorities detailed strict guidelines on what tenants could and could not do to apartments: tenants were allowed to plaster or paint walls, but not to enclose balconies with bay windows, as this would obstruct ventilation, nor to tile interior floors. In 1970 the Relocation Commissioner became aware that these informal decorating tasks created conflicts with common area managers, leading to the creation of a register of licensed decorators who could work on behalf of tenants.<sup>41</sup> The rules defined that tenants had to seek permission if they wanted to make any alterations and were generally allowed to create interior partitions as long as these did not touch the ceiling and floor so as not to obstruct ventilation. Consideration was also given to increasing the standards of the re-housing blocks: metal railings on balconies, folding metal doors, tiling in toilets and rendering on walls.<sup>42</sup>

In 1988, illegal structures in Hong Kong began to be categorized into cases requiring immediate action that should be immediately demolished and 'non-actionable' ones that could be tolerated indefinitely as long as their existence did not pose an imminent danger. A similar strategy was applied to informal street signs and neon lighting in the city.

In 2001, there were some 800,000 UBWs and over 200,000 non-statutory commercial signs scattered throughout Hong Kong.<sup>43</sup> In 2011, after lengthy parliamentary deliberations and audits, and particularly after the collapse of an illegal building under renovation on Ma Tau Wai Road in Kowloon in 2010 that resulted in four deaths, stricter control of illegal practices was implemented. The Building Department was given powers to apply for court orders to access contentious properties. These new policies combined a tiered system of notices, warnings and

37 Howard Husock, *Law Enforcement and Unauthorized Building Works: Illegal Structures and the Hong Kong Buildings Department The Hong Kong Building Permit and Inspection System* (Boston, 2001), p. 1.

38 Smart, p. 215.

39 Legislative Council, 'People First: A District-Based And Public Participatory Approach To Urban Renewal Urban Renewal Strategy Review' (Hong Kong, 2010) <<https://www.legco.gov.hk/yr10-11/english/panels/dev/papers/dev1026-devbplcr115077-e.pdf>>.

40 Smart, p. 216.

41 So it appears in the 1971 Annual Report of the Commissioner for Resettlement, collected by Rooney in his Doctoral Thesis, as well as the proposed improvements as requested by I. M. Lightbody to Commissioner Donald Liao in 1972 in RD 2/271/69 of February 28, 1972. Rooney, p. 138.

42 Rooney, p. 138.

43 Legislative Council.

penalties with an instructional approach aimed at providing assistance and education to property owners. As a result, the Mandatory Building Inspection Regime was launched in 2012: this introduced mandatory periodic inspections of older buildings in Hong Kong, to be carried out by certified inspectors.

The Minor Works Control Scheme had already been implemented in 2010, including the 'Unauthorised Signs Validation Scheme', which set out strict guidelines for the erection of new commercial signs. Detailed written and graphic descriptions (fig. XXX) are now required to be submitted for any sign projecting beyond the façade line, including detailed information on its exact location, its supporting structure and its dimensions.<sup>44</sup> In parallel, voluntary self-reporting procedures were put in place in 2012 and 2017 for so-called 'Exempt Houses' in the New Territories, referring to dwellings exempt from regulation that male residents, by virtue of certain inheritances from colonial laws, are privileged to erect in older towns.<sup>45</sup> Again, the strategy was intended to formally note the illegality of the structures, without necessarily punishing a customary practice. By requiring the engineers involved to meet strict certification and licensing standards, responsibility was shifted from the occupants to the building contractors, a group easier to monitor and, where appropriate, punish. Using this approach, some UBWs can be removed once they have gone beyond their 'safe life' as a consequence of the absence of any qualified and licensed contractor willing to repair or upgrade them.<sup>46</sup>

Following this approach that prioritized the forced removal of the most dangerous structures, today around 27,000 UBW are removed per year, according to the detailed statistics that the BD compiles on the number of information notices, demolition orders and penalties.<sup>47</sup> However, a more direct and intuitive understanding of the long-term impact of Hong Kong's policy on UBWs and urban signage/neon lighting can be gained by comparing the situation seen today with the historical photographs that have been collected by the city-lovers group 'Street Sign Hong Kong', whose founders sadly note that 'we are in (or perhaps near the end of) the painful period when most of the old signs accumulated over the past decades are disappearing'.<sup>48</sup>

This strategy of controlled tolerance has been criticised for undermining the rule of law, although others praise it for its sensitivity and humanity.<sup>49</sup> Concerns about alleged privilege in terms of the application of UBW regulations have been raised in the wake of scandals involving high-profile politicians such as Teresa Cheng, Henry

44 Buildings Department, 'Minor Works Items. Projecting Signboard', 2018 <[https://www.bd.gov.hk/en/building-works/minor-works/minor-works-items/index\\_mwcs\\_items\\_c6b.html](https://www.bd.gov.hk/en/building-works/minor-works/minor-works-items/index_mwcs_items_c6b.html)> [accessed 28 March 2020].

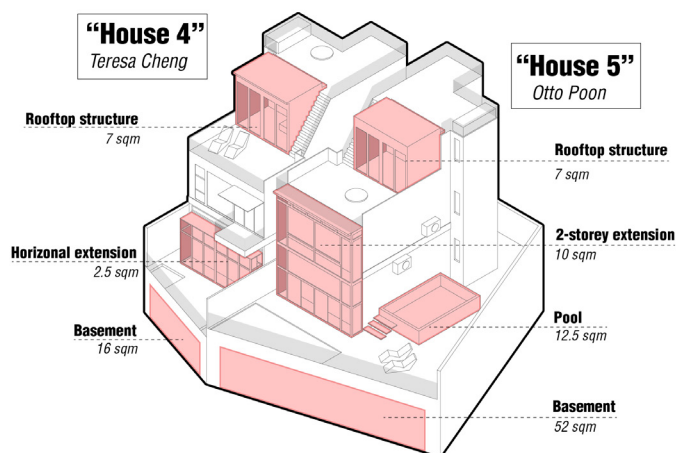
45 Michael Wong, 'Handling of Unauthorised Building Works' (Hong Kong: Legislative Council, 2018) <<https://www.info.gov.hk/gia/general/201801/24/P2018012400615.htm>>.

46 Andrew Y. T. Leung, Michael C. P. Sing, and Ken H. C. Chan, *Mandatory Building Inspection, An Independent Study on Aged Private Buildings and Professional Workforce in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: CityU HK Press, 2014), p. 24.

47 Buildings Department, 'Monthly Digests', 2019 <<https://www.bd.gov.hk/en/whats-new/monthly-digests/index.html>> [accessed 14 February 2020].

48 Kevin Mak and Ken Fung, '[Personal Communication]' (Hong Kong, 2020).

49 Lok-sang Ho, 'Legalization for Some Unauthorized Building Work Worth Considering', *China Daily*, 2018 <[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2018-01/16/content\\_35510135.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/hkedition/2018-01/16/content_35510135.htm)> [accessed 4 December 2019].



**Fig. 163.** Diagram of illegal structures reported at the residences of Teresa Cheng and her husband in 2018. Source: author, 2020, based on an infographic by the South China Morning Post, 21 December 2018

Tang Ying-Yen, and Donald Tsang Yam-Kuen. These investigations also challenged the widespread assumption that informal building alterations in Hong Kong were associated with marginal and squalid environments; instead, they reveal that the illegal transformation of buildings is a widespread practice not restricted to any particular social class. Denouncing someone for erecting a UBW on their property became an effective political tactic to cast doubt on the honesty and integrity of a public person. For example, the extensions to urban rights activist Paul Zimmerman's house, despite being under demolition order since 2008, remained in place until at least 2018 and only acted upon once the case was publicly aired during the 2019 Legislative Council elections.<sup>50</sup>

More recently, in the wake of the 2019-20 pro-democracy protests and immediately after the arrest of activist Jimmy Lai, local progressive newspaper *Apple Daily* exposed the fact that police commissioner Chris Tang Ping-Keung enjoyed the benefits of a 40-square-meter rooftop extension, scornfully known as 'Feng-Shui House', in the apartment he rented from 2016 to 2019; Similarly, some expatriate Hong Kong police officers who openly supported the Hong Kong government's harsh response to protesters, such as Vasco Gareth Llewellyn Williams, David John Jordan and Rupert Dover, were also exposed for erecting UBW and related offences.

50 Kris Cheng, 'Legislative By-Election Candidate Paul Zimmerman Apologises for Illegal Structures at Sai Kung Home', *Hong Kong Free Press*, 2018 <<https://hongkongfp.com/2018/01/31/legislative-election-candidate-paul-zimmerman-apologises-illegal-structures-sai-kung-home/>> [accessed 28 February 2020].



**Fig. 164.**  
Seaview Garden Building as seen from  
Ignacio Batista Street, Macao, 2016.  
Source: author.

#### 4.3.4 Macao: a Mystical Territory

The historic centre of Macao, founded in the 16th century as a Portuguese trading enclave in the Pearl River Delta, has suffered the disappearance of most of its non-monumental historic architecture, with the exception of a few clusters of Chinese and Portuguese buildings in Weng Fook Yuan or São Lourenço. However, the historic fabric is still rich in historic pre-existences as can be deduced from a comparison of the current map with the one made by Antonio Heitor in 1889. New apartment buildings in the Inner Harbour and in the Southwest of the peninsula have been built within the existing urban fabric, preserving the pre-industrial layout of the streets and their corresponding toponymics. However, especially in these buildings developed before the turn of the century and therefore lacking the now ubiquitous *bay-window* with integrated air-conditioning unit receptacles, the presence of illegal construction on the facades is very visually impactful. Although Macao is considered one of most crowded cities in the world, we must warn about certain statistical biases. Macao lacks the large natural, protected reservoirs that exist in Hong Kong and Singapore. As a consequence, its inhabitant per square metre ratio goes much higher than in those cities. However, if we attend to consolidated built residential areas (Patane in Macao versus Mong Kong, for example), the density ratios may swing considerably. Delimitating which urban zones are comparable is ultimately a largely arbitrary action (Should vicinity parks be computed? How big should the open spaces to be included within the measurement of

'built residential fabric'). For that purpose, we should warn against the indiscriminate use of density 'rankings' since they misrepresent the actual living conditions of cities, focusing instead on their qualitative properties.

History can be read through catastrical maps. Even when most of the original buildings have vanished, the shapes of roads, land divisions and land plots form a system of masses, voids and property rights that preserve the footprints of vanished worlds. This mechanism may somehow be similar to when sediments replace living tissues, creating fossils that bring the shapes of extinct animals into the present days. Macau is the only standing example of European medieval city in Asia, a settlement where lanes, *largos* and plazas were built up organically through the course of centuries. Road bifurcations gave place to informal gathering areas, creating *largos* ('triangular public spaces') that were eventually encircled by churches and important buildings (fig. 149). Unlike other colonial settlements in Asia, from Georgetown to Vigan, Guangzhou or Hanoi, these public places were not created based on colonial templates but through the slow progression of history.

However, the Chinese urban fabric grew in symbiosis with the Portuguese settlement, at least until the shift in the power balance caused by the Opium Wars. The urban fabric linking the higher posts of the Peninsula and the Inner Harbour -the economic hub of the time- was shaped by the aggregation of clan settlements organized in gated communities in the Cantonese way. Clans and trading associations gave place to a myriad of hierarchized roads and lanes that kept extending as the jetties reclaimed more land from the harbour.

Although most of original structures have been replaced by mid-rise apartment buildings, some urban artefacts still remind of the old city underneath. The Tou Tei Kung Shrines are tiny altars placed at the entrance of homes. Tou Tei Kung, a down to earth god, is an old barbed man that sits next to his wife. Together, they guard peoples' domestic affairs and mediate with other deities who enjoy a higher, more heavenly, status. Clan alleys usually counted with larger altars dedicated to these prestigious gods, such as Kum Yan or Guan Yu. However, with the arrival of modernity, when most of gated clan communities were torn down and replaced by cramped apartment towers, the Tou Tei Shrines did not went extinct. They multiplied their number in order to guard each individual dwelling. The common alleys, traditionally guarded by gates, turned into narrow public spaces where main altars are still maintained, which is undoubtedly one of the many intangible heritage traits that survive in the streets of Macao.

The variety of architectural types makes Macao a very remarkable enclave. Like those collages of historic types built by postmodern theorists, the streets of Macao offer a catalogue of almost any possible style and architectural ideology, either Western or Chinese (although represented at a relatively small scale), that has reached any predicament during the 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> centuries. The growth of the enclave had been driven on land reclamations short since the first Portuguese settlers arrived. The first formal, engineered reclamation was instructed by engi-



**Fig. 166.** Buffer area and World Heritage Sites in Macau Peninsula as marked by UNESCO. Source: author, based on 'Nominated Core Zones and Buffer Zones'. UNESCO, 2002. <https://whc.unesco.org/en/list/1110/documents/>.

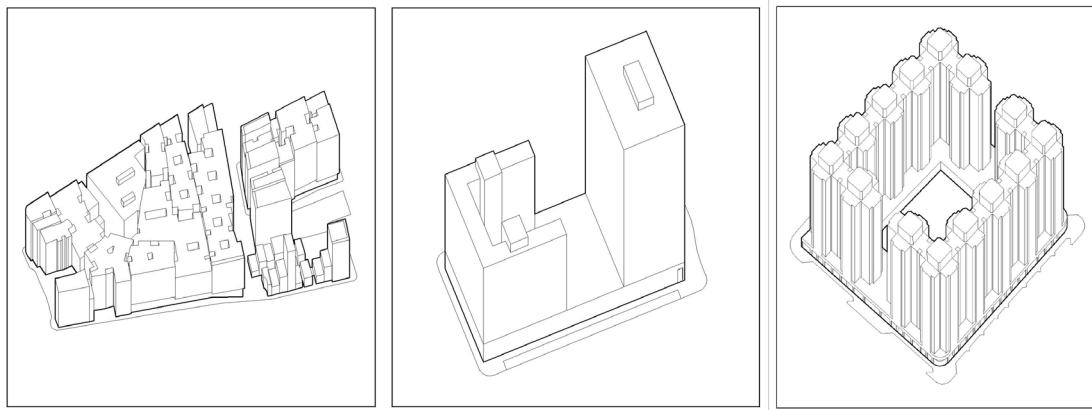


**Fig. 165.** Three examples of *Largo* squares in Macau's heritage area. Public spaces born from road bicurcations and typical or urban fabrics that have grown organically. Source: author, based on 2008's cartography.

near Miguel Ayres in 1842 in the inner harbour, following the hygienist principles of the time that would also lead to the opening of Almedia Ribeiro Avenue in order to connect both sides of the peninsula in spite of the opposition of the Chinese merchants.

Events such as the liberalization of the gambling industry in 2002 and the construction of the gargantuan Hong Kong/Shenzhen/Macao/Zuhai Bridge, have more than doubled the buildable land area in very few years.<sup>51</sup> Ultra-luxury housing developments, although they arrived a few years after been a common sight in Hong Kong, still emerged around taking advantage of the new shores and infrastructure. However, for our purpose we will focus on the housing built until the 2000s, roughly overlapping with the shockwave of 1996 Asian Crisis, which, because of their formal configuration and human landscape, were more prone to host illegal structures. In this regard, we may classify the formal structures in three types (fig. 150). The second and third schemes correspond, respectively, to mixed-used private developments (NAPE area) and public housing complexes built for the working classes in the North of the peninsula; they both were built under Portuguese administration. In these towers (particularly in the ones in the North), the

<sup>51</sup> Its latest Masterplan was approved in 2022. It covers until year 2040 and aims for a population of 800,000, from the current 680,000 and an approximate 10% increase in land area.



**Fig. 167.** Urban block typologies in Macau Peninsula. Left: old town; center: NAPE; right: public housing complex at the North. Source: author, 2008.

construction of illegal window cages has reached a level of industrialization and standardization that almost equals that of the apartments themselves.

On the other side, the first type correspond to those apartment buildings raising over the historic fabric, whether they fall into the buffer protection area or not. They are informed by the land property structure of the pre-industrial era: small, narrow plots in convoluted streets, likely imbricated into the spatial networks of cults and rites described above. In the exceptional cases when the original structures still stand, high ceilings, wide windows, ornate verandas still respond to the 'old world' living and thus are particular prone to have been encroached by all sorts of illegal modifications. The coexistence of historic styles (art deco, Chinese, bauhaus) and self-made structures create estrange creatures of highly evocative forms. However, even if the original house is long gone and replaced by a mid-rise building, the convoluted plots and urban ordinances, as explained before, will still reflect on the particularities of the final form. Such trait is a nightmare for developers who do prefer to do *tabula rasa* and raze entire urban blocks at once.

The main regulations to face the proliferation of illegal structures are the *Regulamento Geral da Construção Urbana* ('General Urban Building Code') and the *Regulamento de Segurança contra Incêndios* ('Fire Safety Code'), these new buildings, located either on Macao Peninsula or in the surviving villages circles by the new Casino developments in the former islands of Taipa and Coloanne, same as in Hong Kong remain subject to height regulations based on the width of the streets and a seventy-six degrees angle setback in the upper floors, the commonly known as *Lei de Sombras* ('Shadows Law').<sup>52</sup> This norm was an update from the former construction code passed in 1963,<sup>53</sup> short time after the composite buildings ordinance passed in Hong Kong and at the same time its first effects started to become visible across the Delta. Air wells were also compulsory in order to provide sun light and ventilation to the apartments deep into the urban blocks. However, the apartments are often clustered and sublet to, generally, Mainland or Southeast Asian immigrants (fig. 152).

<sup>52</sup> *Decreto-Lei n.º42/80/M de 15 de Novembro* (Macao: Government of the Special Administrative Region of Macao, 1980) <<https://bo.io.gov.mo/bo/i/80/46/decllei42.asp>>.

<sup>53</sup> *Regulamento Geral Da Construção Urbana* (Macao, 1963), p. 1964.



**Fig. 168.** Examples of non-compliant enclosures of balconies in old buildings (most of them built pre-war) in the Macau Peninsula. Some of them form structures of remarkable aesthetic value. Source: author, 2008.

From the stylistic point of view, there is one more difference between Macao illegal cages and the Illegal Building Works seen in Hong Kong. Most of these modern buildings, present a playfulness and joy in their forms and architectural features that is missing in their coetaneous sisters in the Scented Bay. Since architecture in the colonies was centralized in Portugal. The diaspora of Portuguese architects, particularly those arriving in the 1960s ascribed to the Overseas Ministry, created certain interconnection through the Lusophony spheres leaving a built footprint in the architecture in the city.

Even if the scale and budget of the constructions could not match the awe of the Hong Kong skyscrapers, the architectural designs in Macao, during the years before its return to China, enjoyed cheerful displays of colours, forms and details (balconies, canopies, urban corners, windows) that made them distinctive. While Postmodernism in Hong Kong had focused on its Anglo-American variant (Johnson, Stirling, Graves), architects in Macao found in the Sino-Portuguese heritage a creative resource similar to what they would find in their native Europe, being able to use History a toolbox, that allowed them to understand their own practice within the historic realm of the enclave.<sup>54</sup> Such ludic understanding of the architectural form, fully aware of the scientific principles of rationalism but refusing to submit to its dehumanization impulses, has translated into an endless catalogue of rounded, twisted cages, with accidental curves and round sunscreens, which reveals the comparatively formal richness and playful spirit of the architecture beneath.

Being Macao a 'high income' region according to the World Bank classification,<sup>55</sup> the informal façade modifications are very striking for the comparatively high quality of the materials used and the high levels of comfort achieved by many of these interventions, which retrace more to a socially established home refurbishment practice than a mere survival strategy. According to Stephen Chan, advisor to the Macao Archives, there is an accepted social perception regarding the informal occupation of the façade that may be linked to the high population density in the enclave.<sup>56</sup> There is a widespread misunderstanding among residents about the nature of ownership of common areas of buildings such as stair landings, facades and rooftops, leading many owners to think that they can use and modify these elements at will if they enjoy privileged access to them, such as living on the top floors. These areas get invariably caged by the self-proclaimed owners; first, probably as a psychological need to assert its domain, then to use them as laundry, playground or building even more illegal rooms for rent.

The problem is particularly severe on rooftops because homeowners generally enclose the entire deck by installing trellises. However, these structures are considered by the Fire Department as 'evacuation areas' and should be kept accessible and unobstructed in case of an emergency. Article 51 of the *Macao Cultural Heri-*

54 Their Chinese colleagues, however, were in a difficult situation until the handover.

55 World Bank, 'World Bank Country and Lending Groups', 2019 <<https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups>> [accessed 22 May 2021].

56 In 2016, there were 21,352 inhabitants per square kilometer in Macao, according to the census bureau.



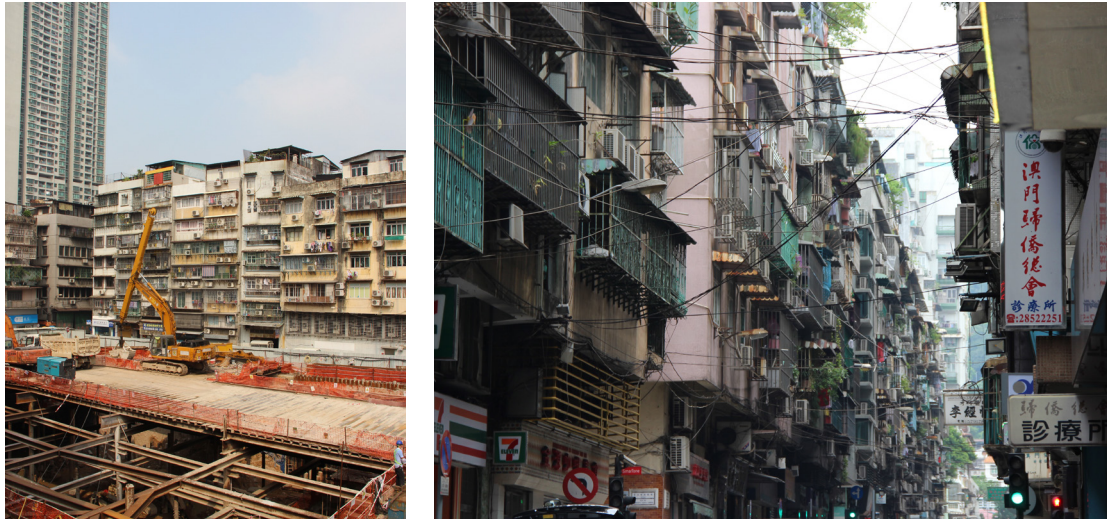
**Fig. 169.** Illegal cages in mid-rise apartment buildings in Macao peninsula, sublet to filipino workers. Source: author, 2008.



**Fig. 170.** (Right) Illegal cages in mid-rise apartment buildings in Bairro da Penha, Macao. New prefabricated high-rise towers are visible in the background. There, add-ons have almost dissappeared but a few can still be spot. Source: author, 2017.



**Fig. 171.** Illegal cages and shades in mid-rise apartment buildings in Bairro da Penha, Macao. Source: author, 2017.



**Fig. 172.**  
(Left) Large construction works near the UNESCO-listed Mandarin House in Macao Peninsula, with mid-rise apartments with illegal cages in the background. Modern condominium developments in the background (Right) Streetscape in the old town. Source: author, 2017.

*tage Preservation Law* compelled the elaboration of a Preservation and Management Plan for the Unesco World Heritage protected area and its buffer zone that would give the urban planning government area the appropriate tools to deal, at least in the areas subject to protection, with informal appropriations of residential buildings.<sup>57</sup> This plan aimed at provide an appropriate negotiation framework between tenants, users, architects and municipal government under appropriate legal security, either financed by one of the existing co-financing tools or by new ways.

Furthermore, due to the widespread presence of these illegal facades, a strict implementation of the existing regulation would not be politically feasible; it is therefore mandatory to find a minimum common understanding with apartment owners and tenants. The recognition of this need to set a collaborative framework is exemplified by the *Regulation for the Financial Support for the Voluntary Demolition of Illegal Constructions* passed by the Macao government in 2013. Façade additions are explicitly named as items that can be removed with grants to a party by the *Building Repair Provision Fund* (2007). Stephen Chan also suggests a set of measures aimed at defining the conflict between security and use: the government should make additional efforts to explain to owners the scope and limitations of property rights, ensuring that these factors are clearly defined at the time an apartment is transferred. In addition, architects and urban planners should play an important role in designing façade solutions that could offer the functionality demanded by tenants while maintaining the homogeneity and harmony needed in historic heritage cityscapes (fig. 156).

57 Região Administrativa Especial De Macau, 'Lei n.º 11/2013 de Salvaguarda Do Património Cultural.', *Imprensa Oficial*, 2013 <<https://bo.io.gov.mo/bo/i/2013/36/lei11.asp>> [accessed 16 May 2021].



**Fig. 173.**  
(Top) Illegal cages in a private residential development in Patane district, Macao. Source: author, 2017.



**Fig. 174.**  
Illegal cages in a Public Housing complex in Patane district, Macao. Source: author, 2017.





## **5. CROSS ANALYSIS**

**Fig. 175.**  
(Previous page) Illegal façade modifications in Bong Kai public housing complex in central Bangkok. Source: author, 2019.

## 5.1 Who Tells the Story

The previous chapter analysed the historical formation of the case study cities regarding the production of ‘conceived’ spaces. In the case of Bangkok, we have described the emergence of a modern city built over an aquatic civilization. Likewise, in the case of Hanoi, we have detailed how its fortified citadel modulated the socio-spatial segregation between mandarins and commoners and how later French colonization needed to erect a simulacrum of a European metropolis to justify its *Mission Civilisatrice*. We have shown, mainly through the work of Gwendolin Wright, how the indigenous population was left out of the conception and design of these policies even though it was their primary target. During the socialist stage, the arrival of foreign socialist advisors translated into the establishment of new values to be instilled through new aesthetics and a renewed visual universe; as opposed to imperial feudalism and European colonialism, the narrative of the socialist Vietnam would emphasize the integral collectivization of all aspects of life. Once economic reforms began in the 1980s, a phase of economic and social experimentation crystallized in the widespread encroachment of public and private spaces by all sorts of informal structures. The new speculative developments with Europeanizing *kitsch* aesthetics have created new tensions with the everyday uses of its inhabitants, especially given the tremendous increase in inequality. We find today a triangle of hidden frictions in whose first vertex we find the visual universe and the consumerist aspirations of a prosperous middle class. At the second vertex lie the values of restraint, modesty and subordination to the common good that legitimize the Communist Party as the sole expression of the popular will. At the third vertex would be the various castes of the urban proletariat, either those fortunate enough to work in state-owned enterprises and thus enjoy relative comfort, or the rural immigrants scattered throughout the vast granularity of Hanoi’s productive fabric.

Hong Kong is currently a city under strong political pressures where the question of national identity has serious implications for the global geostrategic balance. Its built heritage and the literary significance of its spaces have been reworked as consumer products, brands and spaces of consumption that respond to the demand of *millennial nostalgia*. *Vintage* items referencing the incipient consumer society of the seventies and eighties; on a similar fashion, buildings born as speculative instruments are used today to communicate the particularism of Hong Kong.

The narrative terms of a social system construct the optics through which good is distinguished from evil. Space and urbanity, visual universes and physical artefacts thus constitute a primordial genre of propaganda, where it is through the manual manipulation of the object, the lexicon and the routine exercise of a lifestyle that the corresponding moral option is consolidated by way of use. The *Antecedents* chapter discussed how the capability to put a name on things, proposing forms through which others are invited to refer to them (or even to think of them), constitutes a primigenius and subtle form of domination. These urban spaces, from

wide tree-lined avenues to small improvised kitchens in attics, are spaces conducive to the untold conflicts between name and use, where various grammars compete to use the same vocabulary.

Non-hegemonic spaces and uses, which cannot express themselves openly in relation to the dominant discourse because they would be banned, censored or condemned, must thus retreat into short-term tacticism, relying on surprise, illusion, the simulacrum of forces or mimicry under other facades. These dynamics, although initially disruptive, may eventually be assimilated by the market, which commodifies and co-opts their formal codes, thus neutralizing the most transgressive derivations of their aesthetics.

Such dichotomy is not a univocal Manichean relationship. This spatial production is situated in a multi-ethnic and polyhedral context where the semiotic structure of the message adapts, metamorphoses, and disguises itself at the speed of light. Considering who the hegemonic party is and who the tactical player is may thus depend on the coordinate axes at any given moment. The first section of this transversal analysis will thus focus on the critical role of artistic creation for the renegotiation of the narratives that articulate informality, city and culture.



**Fig. 176.**  
Robert Larimore Pendleton, *Stone Spirit House*, 1950.  
Source: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Libraries.

**Fig. 177.**  
Domestic Thai-Chinese altar placed under a portrait of king Rama V, in Nakhorn Sawan. Source: author, 2022.

## 5.1.1 Spectres in Venice

### 5.1.1.1 Animist Remnants in the Urban Realm

Benedict Anderson argues in *Imagined Communities* that the shared sense of permanence to a nation-state is generally fabricated through the delineation of geographical boundaries, the telling of a unitary history and the construction of identity symbols.<sup>1</sup> The educational system and the media would serve as the main tools for this task. While, in previous sections, it was described how the colonial presence disrupted the power relations within the local populations, this chapter examines how local idiosyncrasies stealthily developed under an epidermal layer of westernization. In Siam, the ‘reaffirmation of Buddhism as the state religion vis-a-vis the adoption of Western science’ illustrated the ‘selected modernization’ endowed by certain nationalist and identity narratives.<sup>2</sup> The *Tamnan Phuttachedi Siam* (‘Chronicle of Buddha Monuments in Siam’) is a treatise on Thai art and architecture that is considered, through its latest edition of 1960, a canonical reference for the artistic styles and periods of pre-modern Siamese art.<sup>3</sup> Historian Chatri Prakitnonthakan questioned its purported objectivity on the basis of Anderson’s ideas,<sup>4</sup> arguing that the treatise was designed to play an instrumental

1 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991).

2 Tongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped. A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 1994), p. 3.

3 The treatise was first published in 1926 on the occasion of the cremation of Prince Damrong Rajanubhab’s mother, Chao Chom Manda Chum.

4 Chatri Prakitnonthakan, ‘Rethinking Tamnan Phuttachedi Siam: The Rise of New Plot within Thai Art History’, in *12th International Conference on Thai Studies* (Sydney, 2014).

role in the construction of the identity pillars of the absolutist Siamese state. Its primary purpose was, in Prakritnothakan's opinion, to contribute to the construction of the ideological apparels necessary for the assimilation of the vassal states of the Siamese state, whose ties had historically consisted of family relations. The construction of a common legacy based on the historiography of religious art was conditioned by coetaneous political agendas rather than by consideration of the 'objective' circumstances of the past.

During pre-colonial times, dominance of geographical territory was not as important as loyalty between clans and to the *Phraya Chakraphatdirat* ('imperial lord'). This organization had proved effective in the past, but the growing aggressiveness of European nations suggested that it would not be sufficient to protect the territorial aspirations of the Chakri dynasty against colonialist penetration. In 1893 the 'Paknam Incident' took place on the Chao Phraya River (another example of 'gunboat diplomacy') that consisted in two French gunboats and a mail boat showed up in front of the Royal Palace in Bangkok in retaliation for the ongoing hostilities on the Mekong. The skirmish resulted in the cession of the vassal kingdom of Laos to France, further motivating King Chulalongkorn to precisely define the boundaries of a modern, centralized Siamese state comprehending vassal kingdoms such as Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Pattani or Nakhon Phanom in an unequivocal and unarguably manner. One component of this assimilation, in parallel to the precise outline of administrative areas over the territory, was the construction of a national aesthetic narrative.

Thus, Prakritnonthakan states that Prince Damrong Rajanubhab's description of the artistic style of the Dvaravati kingdom identified Thailand as the first recipient of Buddhism outside India by emissaries of Asoka; its capital would therefore be located in Nakhon Pathom, the spiritual centre of the absolutist monarchy and the location of the largest pagoda in the region, the Pathom Chedi. Likewise, the conceptualization of the Lopburi style as an autonomous entity within Khmer art responded to the desire to support the territorial ambitions of King Chulalongkorn over Cambodia and the region now known as the Isaan basin (Buriram, Surin, Korat), which has a profusion of archaeological remains in the Angkorian style. Similar arguments were made in relation to the art of the Lanna and Sukhotai kingdoms.

The consecration of Theravada Buddhism as the articulating religion of the State included the consolidation of a collegiate hierarchy and a regulated doctrinal body that rejected the superstitions, animist practices and syncretic cults, particularly Chinese but also Islamic and Christian. However, a large part of the population has maintained these beliefs, fundamentally based on the mundane coexistence with spirits, through countless rituals, objects and amulets, even if they are sometimes camouflaged as Buddhist rites or civic-nationalist proclamations. This underground spiritual life of objects is nevertheless a crucial element in understanding the relationship between user and object, as well as the designer's agenda. Animistic cults remain active, overtly or covertly, throughout Southeast Asia.

Sometimes these rituals have been replaced by civic acknowledgements that may mimic religious rites to some extent. This makes them compatible with the official positions of governments, such as the communist regime in Vietnam or the Thai monarchy itself. However, these beliefs survive at 'lower levels' of daily practice.<sup>5</sup> It is common to find effigies of King Chulalongkorn placed next to Buddhist or Chinese divinities, to whom wealth and fortune in business are requested in a more or less surreptitious manner.<sup>6</sup> Statues and portraits act as *mediums* or recipients of *barami* royal charisma, a form of Buddhist merit that accumulates in the royal person's good deeds.<sup>7</sup>

It is not without irony that the monarch who modernised the Thai state and brought it on a par with European nations is the object of animistic veneration by the nationalist middle classes. Partha Chatterjee had described the political life of post-colonial India as the cohabitation of two autonomous spheres: the spiritual (ethnicity, clan, family, religion) and the material (state, science and law), subject to the positivist logic of state administration and informed on foreign models.<sup>8</sup> The two coexist in everyday life without apparent friction. The *Sangha Act* of 1902 regulating the doctrine of Theravada Buddhism brought it under the supervision of a collegiate clergy but did not, however, eliminate beliefs in departed spirits, animals and natural means that were rooted in traditions as solid as the Siamese state itself. These have thrived through history under the ambiguity of civic rites and the ability to fluidly reinterpret and mould the meanings of urban symbols, heraldry and storytelling. Spirits can be invoked for help 'by anyone, at any time'<sup>9</sup> and do not respond to the bureaucratic barriers that citizens, especially the humblest, encounter in public administration. A parallel government in the spirit world that does not question the legitimacy of the nation, but rather enhances it by appealing to it from the aforementioned 'spirit sphere', supposedly the purest as opposed to the soulless formalism of the Western bureaucratic apparatus (fig. 177). Traditional ritual practices are transmitted through contemporaneity, justified under the cover of civic-nationalistic recognition.

A medium is a person or object that serves as a receptacle for an otherworldly entity. *Luk Thep* ('angel-child') practices consisted of the veneration of porcelain dolls in the belief that they housed the spirits of deceased infants. They were treated in the same way as the spirits of the *San Phra Phum* altars or minor deities in the temples, who receive daily offerings of food and drink and floral decorations (fig. 176). Some owners could take them with them wherever they went to ensure good luck. Although during 2015 and 2016 there was a spike in the popularity of these practices spoiled by media sensationalism, other older cults such as the

5 Bräunlein reveals the fine line between the socialist cult of personality and the survival of animist rituals around the figure of Ho Chi Minh. Peter J. Bräunlein, *Spirits in and of Southeast Asia's Modernity. An Overview*, 2013.

6 Irene Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class* (University of Washington Press, 2009), p. 78.

7 Stengs, *Worshipping the Great Moderniser: King Chulalongkorn, Patron Saint of the Thai Middle Class*, p. 88.

8 Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Postcolonial Histories*, Princeton Studies in Culture/Power/History (Princeton University Press, 2020).

9 Irene Stengs, 'A Kingly Cult: Thailand's Guiding Lights in a Dark Era', *Etnofoor*, 12.2 (1999), 41–71 (p. 69).



Fig. 178. St. Phra Phum domestic altars of variety of styles: ratthanakhosin, Khmer, classicist, Chinese, Postmodern and Contemporary, 2018-2021. Source: author.

worship of the *Kuman Thong* ('magical golden child') remain active and perfectly visible in many numbers of homes and business premises in Thailand. In the face of the pervasiveness of these cults, modern and western artefacts such as porcelain dolls or the 'Fanta' drink traditionally presented as a religious offering.<sup>10</sup>

This appropriation of contemporary artefacts as mediums for past rituals extends across all human scales, from amulets to large buildings. The introduction of foreign objects into these animist cults, generally of an unabashedly kitsch version European classicism, makes evident the status and decorum aspirations of the worshipers, as well as reinforcing the adaptability of these belief systems in the face of rationalist discourse (fig. 178). This urban animism, expressed through Buddhist or Hinduist syncretic cults stands as a silent force, by no means exclusive to the lower or rural classes, which runs parallel to formal social statements. Its symbols

10 The sweet-tasting red 'Fanta' is a modern substitute for *Nam Daeng* ('red water'), made from fruits and sweeteners and traditionally used as an offering. It has been speculated that this in turn was adopted to replace the use of human blood in rituals.



**Fig. 179.**  
Statue of King Thaksin at Wongwai Yai roundabout, 2009, Bangkok. Executed by Corrado Feroci in 1953. Source: Wikipedia Commons



**Fig. 180.**  
*Feng-shui* elephant metal souvenir. Source: Outstock.

and rituals can be read simultaneously from a legalistic or a supernatural cryptic point of view. During the Chulalongkorn years, these frictions were reflected in the official imaginary as mere intercultural misunderstandings, such as the erroneous hierarchical arrangement between monks and king in the frescoes of the Ananta Samakhon throne room, painted by the Italian artist Galileo Chini in 1917. It was a time when sumptuary goods were either imported or made to order. However, once a solid Thai creative class was established, this decoupling of use and state would lead to more eye-catching results. Feroci's 1953 statue of King Thaksin at Wongwangyai is a clear example: although the horse poses statically on all four legs, its tail remains completely horizontal, creating a mismatched, discomforting effect (fig. 179, 180). This is because in the Siamese tradition, elephants were represented with their trunks upwards as a symbol of vitality and courage.<sup>11</sup> A downward trunk or tail would have implied submission and servitude, which was not appropriate for a royal mount. Such flabbiness would have been clamorous to the Thai eye and, so, preserving the horse's virility was more important than the academic appropriateness of the sculpture, for which the local public had little appreciation. Feroci, who, unlike his French colleagues in Indochina, worked under direct orders from the indigenous royalty, was thus forced to raise the horse's tail when the monument was almost finished. Similar issues occurred in many other projects of the period, such as the sculptural groups of the Victory Monument (1941) and the pinnacle of Thammasat University (1934).<sup>12</sup>

An 'alternative modernity' is thus conceived that should not be narrated in relation to the centrality of positivism where pre-colonial usages are represented as autonomous collectives generating their own development. All this is accompanied, after one hundred and fifty years of Western influence, by 'an enlightened critique of the traditional belief systems preached by the royal family and official Buddhist organizations' to which the media is added.<sup>13</sup>

11 Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

12 Lawrence Chua, 'The Aesthetic Citizen: Translating Modernism and Fascism in Mid Twentieth-Century Thailand', in *Southeast Asia's Modern Architecture*, ed. by Jiat-Hwee Chang and Imran bin Tajudeen (Singapore: NUS Press, 2019), pp. 58–84.

13 Bräunlein, p. 6.

The coexistence of animist rites and customs with official Theravada Buddhism is today considered one of the most particular features of contemporary Thai society. Neither the domestic altars of *San Phra Phum*, nor the semi-religious cults to the kings, nor the rituals of liberation of caged animals are practices endorsed by the official Theravada doctrine. These pre-Buddhist beliefs find their way easily into modern society, taking rabidly contemporary artefacts as containers or 'signifiers' of beliefs. Objects, furniture and architecture may superficially respond to 'rationalist' narratives so that their very naming or mechanical functioning can be plainly described in English; however, these objects may have a second life, a second set of concealed meanings that refuse to be named in a lingua franca. We may advert, in Pattana Kitiarsa's words, the 'hybridization' of the politico-religious complex of Theravada Buddhism with rural syncretism.

From the 1990s onwards there has been an unprecedented marriage between international capitalism and a religious urban syncretism. Rural rites and beliefs merged with the aspirational symbols of the new middle class. In a sort of semiotic *trompe l'oeil*, Mizoguchi's 'outer shell of the pre-modern' is disrupted.<sup>14</sup> They are uses, rites and beliefs that predate not only the westernizing project of the kings of Siam, but also the very establishment of Theravada Buddhism. The reappropriation and re-elaboration of contemporary artefacts as modern status symbols leads us to what Kasian Tejapira will denominate the 'postmodernization of *Thainess*'.

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14 Yuzo Mizoguchi, 'China as a Method', *Inter-Asia Cultural Studies*, 17.4 (2016), 513–18.



Fig. 181. Navin Rawanchaikul, fragment of *Lost in the City*, 2007, oil painting, 200 x 1624, exhibition *The Tropics*, 2008, Berlin. Source: Monwic.

#### 5.1.1.2 *Siwilai*: Decorum and Identity

Apinan Poshyananda asked himself in 1992 how could Thai post-modernity be narrated in the context of ‘other voices’ and ‘other worlds’.<sup>1</sup> Similar questions still remain in force: is it possible to speak of post-modernism in terms of Southeast Asia or Thailand? Is there any modernity in relation to which it can be positioned? Is it appropriate to use ‘Euro-American’ concepts to the existing spheres of art creation? However, at that time the best of Thai post-modernity was yet to be written: the 1997 debt crisis was about to come and shake the productive and social foundations of society.<sup>2</sup> The years preceding the real estate bust give rise to a plethora of classicist pastiches, commonly called ‘Lui’, a vernacular assimilation of a phantasmagorical French *Louis* style. Architects like the MIT graduated Rangsan Torsuwan (b. 1939), who had developed their career influenced by the New Formalism, embraced enthusiastically the new historicist wave with great success. Buildings like the mixed-use complex *Amarin Plaza* (1985) was allegedly Thailand’s first commercial building to be sold entirely off-plan. Its uncomplicated mix of Ionic orders, flamboyant vaults and curtain walls was an immediate hit for investors and the public alike. Other sumptuous developments such as ‘River Park Condominium’ (1994) and ‘State Tower’ (2001) followed along the riverside (fig. 182). These architectures, however, were accompanied by declarations of Thai virtue and essence, all the more passionate the greater the pretentiousness of the pastiche.

The intervention of the International Monetary Fund unleashed a wave of nationalist sentiment that was expressed through the ‘liquid modernity’ of modern media: television, cinema and advertising. These media would assume a role in the

1 Apinan Poshyananda, *Modern Art in Thailand: Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p. 195.

2 Known as ‘Tom Yam Kung Crisis’ due to the spicy soup typical of several countries that suffered it.



Fig. 182. Vanicha Park Langsuan (1982), interior of Amarin Plaza (1985) and Royal Park Condominium (1994) by Rangsan Torsuwan. Source: author, 2020.

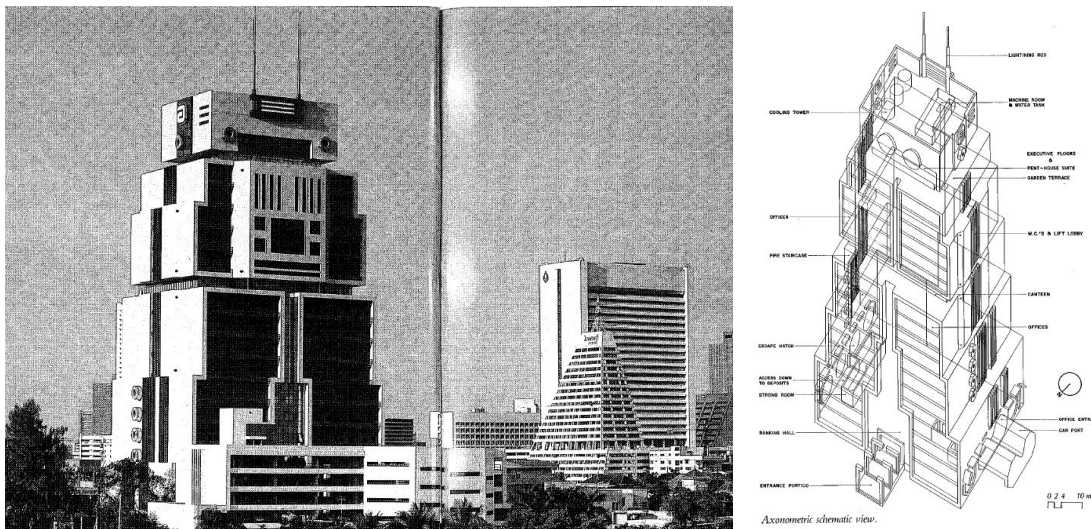


Fig. 183. Photography and isometric of the Bangkok HQ's of Bank of Asia (1985), commonly known as 'Robot Building', by Sumet Jumsai. Source: Jumsai, Sumet. 'Bank of Asia, Bangkok'. *Mimar: Architecture in Development*. Singapore, 1986, p. 75.

re-definition of Thai 'national identity'<sup>3</sup> analogous to that of movie theatres under Khana Ratsadon fifty years earlier. However, the Thai consumer found himself in the puzzling paradox that domestic goods were in fact mimicking the aesthetics of foreign products, so, according to Tejapira, it was necessary to appeal to some supposed underlying essential values that lay beneath the external form. Thai advertisers and media turned to alluding to the authentic, virtuous and timeless *khwampenthai* ('Thainess') that transcended its Europeanizing epidermis. The essentialist quality of such identitarian vessel of alleged national virtues accompanied the nationalistic backlash that followed the IMF intervention in 1997.

However, Tejapira also points to the frequency and malleability with which the term was appropriated by all sorts of socio-economic and ethno-cultural groups and political factions with the intention of consolidating their moral capital, resulting in a 'palpably rapid and drastic change in the meaning and enunciation of

3 Kasian Tejapira, 'The Post-Modernization of Thainess', in *House of Glass: Culture, Modernity, and the State in Southeast Asia* (Institute of South East Asian Studies, 2001), pp. 150–70.

Thai national identity'. On the other hand, David Teh argues that Thailand had never looked to the surrounding nations for identity references because this would expose the lack of 'purity' of their own social and political traditions as being understood as 'borrowed' from those neighbours.<sup>4</sup> The mixed feelings about the disappearance of the moral compass of modernity would be narrated by Bourriaud years later: the 'thawing of ideological poles, the breaking of continental platforms that restricted thought' had been celebrated as a liberation from the shackles that constrained creativity and thought. However, this change would bring, in a silent but inexorable way, a 'process of political liquidation': the disappearance of these barriers generated a 'flood', a 'breaking of dykes' that generated a sentiment of 'amnesia, resignation and helplessness'.<sup>5</sup>

The abuse of the term *Thainess* due to its political utility resulted in a disorganized mix of divergent meanings, which turned it into a 'true postmodern entity'.<sup>6</sup> The advertising industry performed countless contortions to praise the Thainess of products that presented blatantly Western aesthetics. Actors and celebrities depicted cosmopolitan and glamorous lifestyles while emphasizing at every turn the 'Thai essence', which remained untainted beneath this epidermal Westernness. Tejapira described it as a 'liberalization' of 'symbols of national identity', opening up 'ethno-ideological space' while 'linguistic barriers' crumbled and resulted in a 'semiotic chaos' that would create a creative landscape that, regardless of official policies, would prove to be very inspiring in terms of art.<sup>7</sup>

The event that opened Thai Art to the world was promoted by 'Contemporary Art in Asia: Traditions/Tensions' at the Asia Society in New York City 1996, curated by Apinan and directed by art critic Vishakha Desai (b. 1949), a pioneer in shifting the Society's focus from the antiquity collections to contemporary art.<sup>8</sup> The exhibition emphasized lux and transition, noting the very invention of 'tradition' itself as a product of national politics and, further, avowing complexities and differences across the regions of Asia. 'Explored how their work employs aesthetics in a counter-hegemonic fashion'.<sup>9</sup> In the midst of the economic crisis, an edition of *Cities on the Move*, initiated in 1997 by Hans Ulright and Hou Hanru and directed by Ole Scheeren (b. 1971), was held in Bangkok in 1999. Due to the lack of suitable exhibition spaces, the event did not want to settle in a specific location, taking the urban space as an exhibition venue. Foreign artists attended Daniel Burén (b. 1938), Félix González-Torres (b. 1957), Huang Yong Ping (b. 1954), Superflex, Zhang Peili (b. 1957) and Cai Guo Qiang (b. 1957), Rem Koolhaas (b. 1948).<sup>10</sup> *Cities on the Move* served as a platform for a number of Thai contemporary artists such as Rirkrit Tiravanija (b. 1961), Navin Rawanchaikul (b. 1971), Surasi Kusolwong

4 Tejapira, p. 219; David Teh, *Thai Art: Currencies of the Contemporary* (London: The MIT Press, 2017), p. 151.

5 Nicolas Bourriaud and E Butler, *Exform, Futures* (London: Verso Books, 2016).

6 Tejapira, p. 163.

7 Tejapira, p. 220.

8 Gregory Galligan, 'Curating the Contemporary in Decolonial Spaces. Observations from Thailand on Curatorial Practice in Southeast Asia', in *A Companion to Curation*, ed. by Brad Buckley and John Conomos. (John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 2020), p. 208.

9 Brian Curtin, *Essential Desires: Contemporary Art in Thailand* (London: Reaktion Books, 2021), p. 61.

10 Teh, p. 35.



**Fig. 184.** Logotype and ticket of the 6th edition of 'Cities on the Move' designed by Navin Rawanchaikul. Note the 'Happy New Year 3085' note, which corresponds to the next 543 years cycle (the last between Bhuddist and Gregorian calendars) Bangkok, 1999. Source: Asian Art Archive.

**Fig. 185.** Promotional poster of the 6th edition of 'Cities on the Move' designed by Navin Rawanchaikul. Apart from the artists, several architectural landmarks are featured, including Robot Building, the Hilton Hotel, the Theatre Sala Chalemkrung and Dusit Thani Hotel, Bangkok, 1999. Source: Asian Art Archive.

(b. 1965), Chitti Kasemkitvatana (b. 1969) and Manit Sriwanichpoom (b. 1961) while also attracting other artists from the region such as Malaysia's Wong Hoy Cheong (b. 1960), Indonesia's Arahmaiani (b. 1961) and Heri Dono (b. 1960) and Singapore's Simryn Gill (b. 1959) and Matthew Ng (b. 1962). The event took place in the shadow of the fallen giants of the Asian Tiger Crisis. The exhibition was firmly rooted in a fascination with the rapid economic development of Southeast Asia during the 1990s and the resulting contrasts between a marked localism and the more advanced avant-garde of the time. *Cities on the Move* could also be framed within other projects that emerged when Asia's economic boom began to take off at the end of the 20th century. The works collected by Rem Koolhaas in *The Great Leap Forward* explored the blurred division between authorship, copying and spontaneity within the overwhelming productive capacity of post-Maoist China.<sup>11</sup> The *Hyperbuilding*, a mixed-use skyscraper to be erected in Bang Krachao, the last green, natural area within Bangkok, was presented by Koolhaas and exposed in street billboards (fig. 186). The building was in accordance with the design principles of many of the firm's coetaneous projects (programmatic hybridity, stacked volumes), many of which would rise soon in China (coincidentally, Ole Sheeren, co-director of the event, was at that time the firm's manager for Asia). The juxtaposition of urban situations, some of them 'curated', others genuinely sponta-

11 *Project on the City I: Great Leap Forward*, ed. by Chuihua Judy Chung and others (Taschen, 2001).



Fig. 187. Tuk-tuk performance by Navin Rawanchaikul and Rirkrit Tiravanija. Bangkok, 1999. Source: Asian Art Archive.

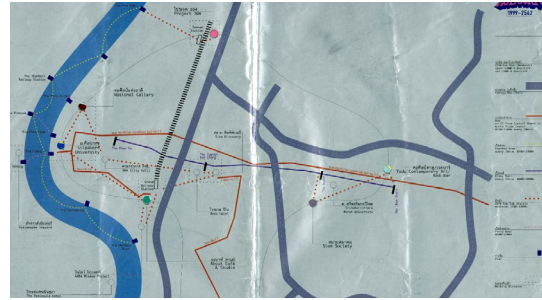


Fig. 189. Map of events and partnering venues of *Cities on the Move*. Bangkok, 1999. Source: Asian Art Archive.



Fig. 186. Poster project of Hyperbuilding (1998) placed in front of a failed high-rise development, by Rem Koolhaas, at the festival *Cities on the Move*, Bangkok, 1999. Source: Asian Art Archive.



Fig. 188. Performance of Liew Kungyu, disguised as a Chinese fortune teller in a consumerism brands at Siam Discovery Mall during the festival *Cities on the Move*, 1999. Source: Asian Art Society

neous, produced a tension that, in effect, contributed to blurring the boundaries between artwork and context, in a manner analogous to the separation between artistic creation and folk production, or between signature architecture and kitsch or speculative constructions. This situation also produced, as Wong Hoy recounts, disparate reactions among many of the artists<sup>12</sup> whose testimonies are now documented in the Asia Art Archive in Hong Kong.<sup>13</sup>

12 Wong Hoy Cheong, 'Cities on the Move: Twenty Years On', *M+ Stories*, 2015 <<https://stories.mplus.org.hk/en/podium/issue-1-visual-culture/cities-on-the-move-twenty-years-on/>> [accessed 22 May 2021].

13 Asia Art Archive, 'Cities on the Move. Archive' <<https://aaa.org.hk/en/resources/datasets/cities-on-the->

*Kitsch* classicism, everyday street life and the skeletons of unfinished mega-structures were incorporated into a future that blurred the boundaries between religion, technology and humanism. Ole Sheeren introduced the exhibition with this vivid description:<sup>14</sup>

543 years later... the city of Bangkok is full of Robot-Buildings, Louis-XIV Towers and Skeletons of unfinished constructions. They seem to be the dominant typologies, vertical characters, the ones to survive the battle of urban growth and mutation. In-between: The city is floating again, rivers, flows everywhere, brutally-carefully carving out and filling in what is left around the buildings. Concrete substitutes of what was previously streams of water now lifted above the ground. A fluidum of vehicles - boats are cars are moving points are continuous lines. Gravity is finally overcome: elevated highways. Skytrains. Express and walkways. Pipes and tubes. Never sure who dominates, the forces the snake to twist in curves and curls at his appearance. Endless competition. Shapes - formal puritanism ultimately abandoned: Stepping and sliding, shifting and twisting, the rectangle and cube left only as component of complexifying geometries. In the middle: Skylobbies, promise of a better life, free of smoke and dust. On top: If not the dome then the temple, re-occurrence in the shape of arts, eyes and horns overlooking the city. Historical reminiscence or technological personification. Unidentified Flying Objects just landed. Saucers and dishes of urban comfort hovering above the ground. Ready for take-off: The city of the future...<sup>15</sup>

The aim of engaging with the dynamism of a contemporary Bangkok was definitely accomplished by the exhibition.<sup>16</sup> The merging of the heterogeneous, fragmented and contradictory experiences of the daily life in the urbanity in Asia would be acknowledged as a determinant creative force in times to come.

Art Critic Brian Curtin affirmed that 'the assertion of critical ideas about 'no-western' art and what it means to pursue knowledge of it from a contemporary view point that simultaneously looks backwards and forward'.<sup>17</sup> The logotype of the event was designed by Navin Rawanchaikul, evocating the style of Siamese pop cinematographic industry (fig. 184, 185). The emblem played with the cohabitation of the Gregorian calendar year of 1999 and that of 2542 in the Buddhist Era, the system officially used in Thailand. Such time lap created a vague feeling of strangeness (particularly the Western audiences) that located Bangkok more than five hundred years ahead, a faraway future that allowed for eventful literary journeys. This perception was reflected by Sheeren's colourful description of a city that was, by the late 90s, at the peak of its postmodernist craze. Twenty-two years later, architectural historian Lawrence Chua also resorted to this time misalign-

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move-exhibition-archive> [accessed 22 May 2021]. Unfortunately, due to travel restrictions imposed since 2020, only the contents of the archive available online at Archive.

14 Probably, little could Ole Sheeren anticipate at that time that he would sign one of most extravagant skyscrapers in Bangkok until date, the Mahanakorn Tower (2016), which had been started before his departure from OMA.

15 Ole Sheeren, 'Cities on the Move, Bangkok', *Büro Ole Sheeren* <<https://buro-os.com/projects/cities-on-the-move--bangkok>> [accessed 12 March 2020].

16 Curtin, p. 62.

17 Curtin, p. 61.





Fig. 191.  
Aniporn Chalermburanawong wearing her 'tuk-tuk' dress  
in 2015. Source: Miss Universe/facebook.



Fig. 192.  
Chalita Suansane wearing a dress inspired y Queen  
Sikitrit in 2017. Source: Miss Universe/facebook.

same way that Scott-Brown and Venturi dignified the casinos of Las Vegas, Thai urban life was revalued by high culture, placing it halfway between *Art Brut*, ethnographic exploration and an uncomplicated taste for *kitsch* aesthetics. The representation of Thailand in international beauty pageants, events that are carefully prepared as a matter of national pride, is the subject of recurrent identity controversies. During the Miss Universe pageant in Mexico in 2007, the Thai candidate Fahroon Yutitham posed in the traditional dress of the Hmong ethnic group; the director of the Cultural Surveillance Centre of the Ministry of Culture Ladda Tangsupachai denounced that this dress was not representative of 'Thai culture' and could 'lead to confusion about the true nature of Thais' as it did not conform to the aesthetic codes of the so-called Rattanakosin culture, identified as the national style.<sup>22</sup> The presentation of the musical *Ramakien: A Rak Opera* (whose title puns on rock music and the *Rak*, or Thai national epic) at New York's Lincoln Centre under the artistic direction of Rirkrit Tiravanija in 2006 encountered similar controversy, again raising the uncomfortable question of 'who represents Thai art'.<sup>23</sup>

A new controversy has arisen over the *tuk-tuk-shaped* dress worn by Miss Universe candidate Aniporn Chalermburanawong, designed by Hiranakrit Pattaraboriboonkul,<sup>24</sup> which was awarded by the festival organisers in Las Vegas (fig. 191, 192).<sup>25</sup> However, the more conservative members of the Fine Arts Department, to which Pattaraboriboonkul was affiliated as a designer, vehemently criticized it.

22 Sanitsuda Ekachai, 'Spot the Thai National Dress', *The New Mandala*, 2007 <<https://www.newmandala.org/spot-the-thai-national-dress/>> [accessed 28 April 2021].

23 Teh, p. 44.

24 The design was, however, a 'borrowing' from the 'Motorcycle corset' authored by French fashion designer Manfred Thierry Mugler (1945-2022) in 1992.

25 Terry Fredrickson, 'Tuk-Tuk Dress a Winner as Miss Universe Context Ends in Mix-Up', *The Bangkok Post*, 2015 <<https://www.bangkokpost.com/learning/easy/801552/tuk-tuk-dress-a-winner-as-miss-universe-context-ends-in-mix-up>> [accessed 31 January 2019].



Fig. 193. Keng Kachaya, stills from the advertising spot Tiew Thai Me Hey (Thailand: Tourism Authority of Thailand, 2016). Source: TAT/YouTube.

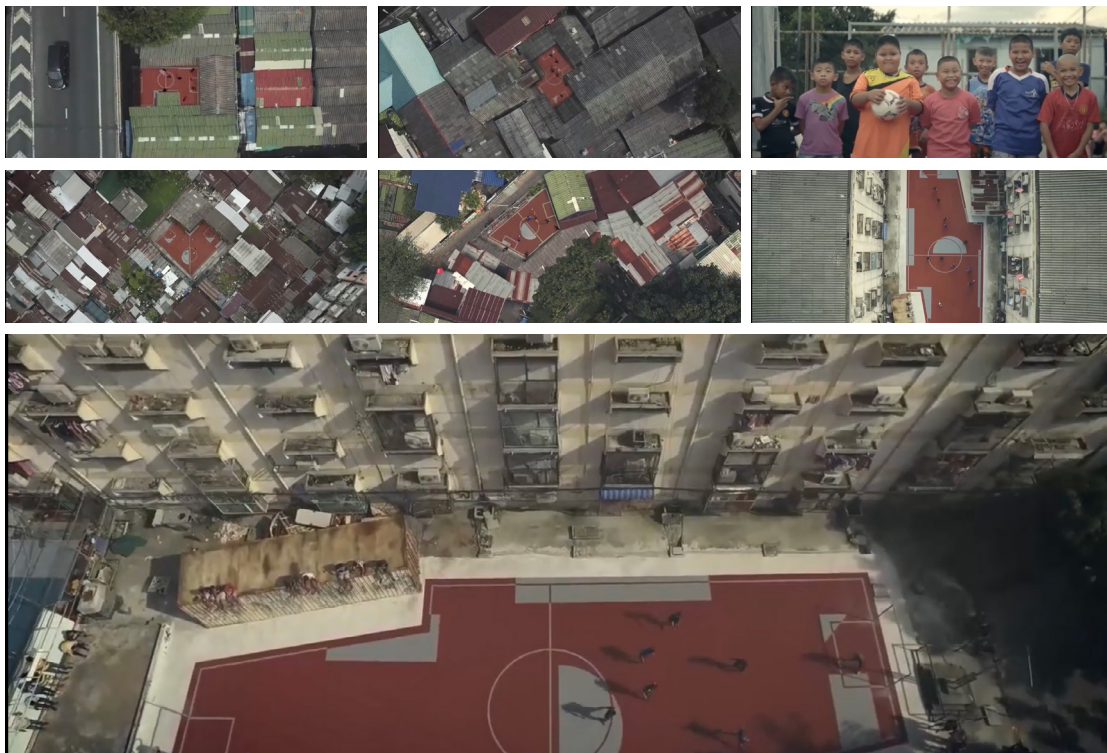


Fig. 194. Photograms from The Unusual Football Field advertising spot. 'Formless space becomes what was thought impossible' (Thailand: AP Thai, 2016). Source: AP Thai/YouTube.



Fig. 195. Stills from Thailand's Floating Football Pitch | VICE Modern Football Stories (USA: Budweiser, 2014). Source: Budweisser/YouTube.

The *tuk-tuk* was considered an artifact of the lower classes, mostly used by northern immigrants who had moved to Bangkok, and therefore unsuitable for conveying the supposedly essential virtues of the Thai people. Despite the international success, the following year Pattraboriboonkul would opt for a more conservative option: the recovery of one of the costumes worn by Queen Sirikit (b. 1950) in line with the wave of monarchist exaltation driven from the coup of 2014. The appearance in Balenciaga's collection of a bag designed by Demna Gvasalia with a too suspicious resemblance to a simple *sampeng* bag used in the street markets of

Thailand are probably two eloquent examples of the appropriation of these visuals and their assimilation by the market economy.<sup>26</sup>

Another case of public impact, in which Miss Tangsupachai took part as a guardian of the cultural purity of essences, was the release of *Tiew Thai Me Hey* (fig. 193), a promotional video by the Tourism Authority of Thailand to promote domestic tourism among the country's youth, directed by renowned director Bhandit Thongdee.<sup>27</sup> The video features the giant Tossakan enjoying the country's wonders in a relaxed attitude: driving *go-karts*, taking selfies and riding on the beach. Some passages were deemed inappropriate by Fine Arts Department officials and censored. Although the government felt there was no intention to harm Thai culture, it argued that the creative team was not fully aware of 'how art and culture should be applied to advertising'.<sup>28</sup>

The *Irregular Football Pitch* project (2016) developed by the philanthropy division of real estate developer APThai and led by Pattaraphurit Rungjaturapat was a successful viral marketing campaign executed by advertising agency 'CJ Worx' and located in Khlong Toei, an informal settlement famous for having the highest concentration of slums in Bangkok and also being easily accessible by public transport.<sup>29</sup> Several land plots of irregular forms were selected in order to build football playgrounds, common amenities that aimed to create healthy leisure spaces for the personal development of the youth (fig. 194). The rationality of sports playgrounds are, as in public policy, legitimated by the demand of a fair game for all players. By putting community-building over the court's *correct* shape and extracting spatial artefacts out of useless, rejected urban interstices, the architects (the script-writers in reality, since the whole project was a media stunt)<sup>30</sup> played the same operation that Atelier Bow-wow had performed in *Made in Tokyo*. By extracting from street in-betweens as if was a project by Gordon Matta-Clark, 'not-good' architecture was legitimized by its social goodness. Wang Shu's declared 'structural humanity' (pag. 72) was again contrasted to the alienation of functionalism. As the APThai fake documentary states: 'If we give importance to any unused space, in any area of our life, the concept of 'useless' will lose all meaning'.<sup>31</sup>

26 Scarlett Conlon, 'Balenciaga's Market Bags Approved', *Vogue*, 2016 <<http://www.vogue.co.uk/article/balenciaga-not-copying-thai-market-bags>> [accessed 2 November 2017].

27 Keng Tachaya, 'Tiew Thai Me Hey - Keng Feat. Film [Official MV]', 2016 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8VO9PzDDX-M>> [accessed 27 February 2017].

28 Kaewta Ketbungkan, 'Khon Can't Kart: Tourism Video Latest Front in Culture Wars', *Khaosod*, 2016 <<http://www.khaosodenglish.com/life/arts/2016/09/22/khon-cant-kart-tourism-video-latest-front-culture-wars/>> [accessed 18 December 2016].

29 Asaree Thairakulpanich, 'Pitch Imperfect: Khlong Toei Slums Get Funky Football Fields', 2016 <<http://www.khaosodenglish.com/featured/2016/10/09/pitch-imperfect-khlong-toei-kids-get-weird-football-fields/>> [accessed 31 January 2019].

30 As it was checked by our students at Chulalongkorn University, as of January 2017, only one of the five playgrounds in the promotional video had actually been built and the rest had just been recreated in CGI for the advertisement.

31 AP Thai, 'The Unusual Football Field', 2016 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OonCSSNe-kw>> [accessed 31 January 2019].

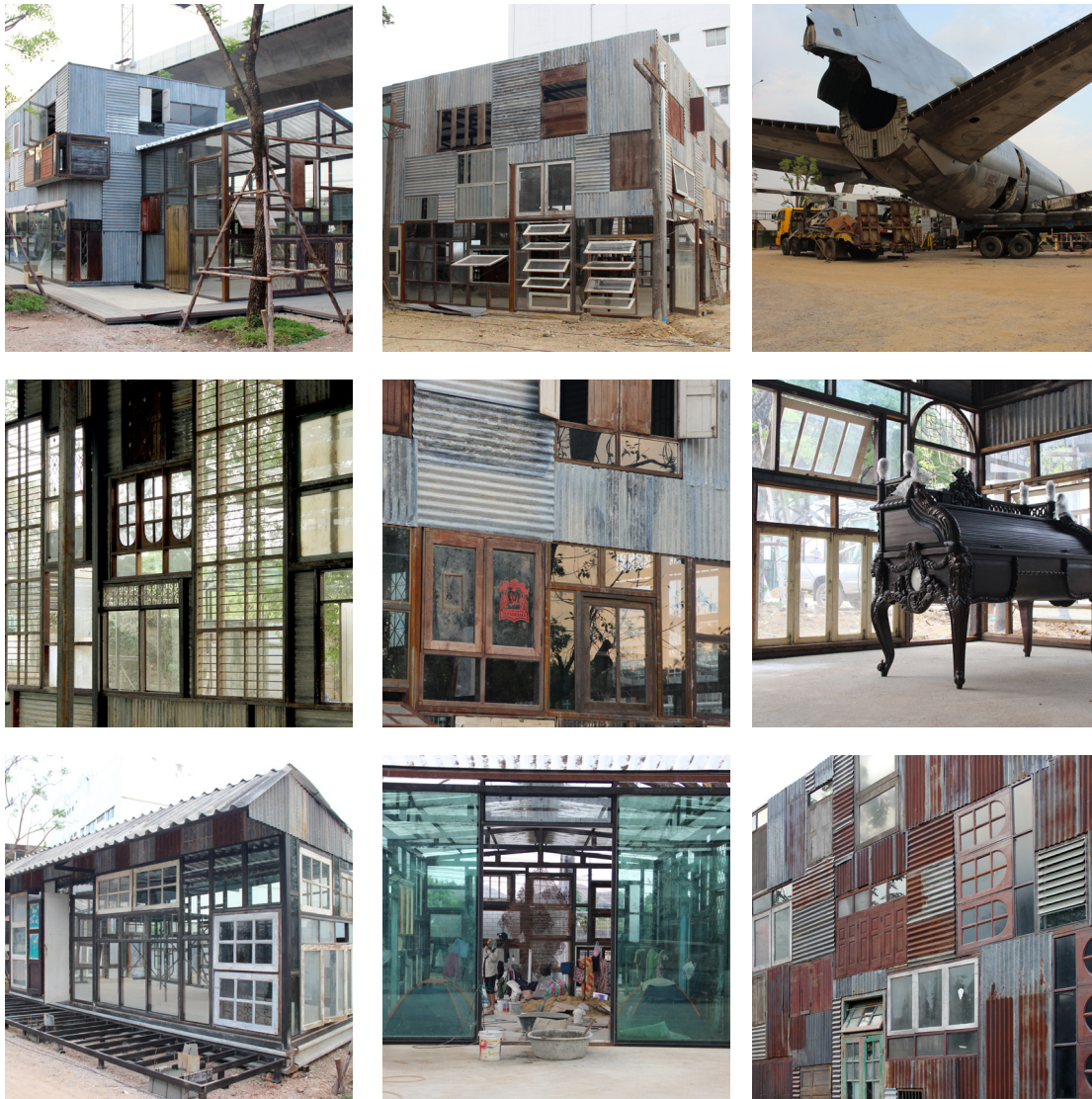


Fig. 196. Pavillions in Changchui in Bangkok. Source: author, 2017.

### 5.1.1.3 Chang Chui

The *hipster* movement and the tensions and contradictions derived from the commercial exploitation of *vintage* aesthetics assume a catalytic role in gentrified neighbourhoods. The areas of Tiong Bahru in Singapore or Georgetwon in Penang,<sup>32</sup> are two examples where the hipster economy and architectural heritage converged into gentrification processes. However, little attention has been paid to the emergence of these trends in Thailand's urbanity, which reflects in the emergence of restaurants, fairs, festivals and markets in the holiday destinations of the urban middle classes: 'Rod Fad Thalad', 'Union Camp', 'Neon Thalad' and 'Gypsy Market' in the capital, the 'Wonderfruit' music festival in Chon Buri, the 'Mountain Festival' in Chiang Mai or the 'Paawwan' flea market in Hua Hin. Informal conversations with antique dealers in *vintage* markets in Bangkok reveal how an aesthetic universe is constructed from scratch, based both on the recovery of vernacular movements such as *luk krung* music, posters and graphic design of Khana Ratsadon and on the importation of the American hipster movement, characterized by

32 Jonathan Y, Chuai, Sherman Tan Jun Hao, and Laura Tan Su Ying, 'The Rise of "Hipster" Culture in Singapore: Spatial Transformation in Tiong Bahru' (Singapore, 2014).

the nostalgic reinterpretation of post-war consumer society, whose emblematic artist would probably be Lana del Rey.<sup>33</sup> Scraps of extravagant objects such as jet engines, typewriters, fire engines were disassembled in the United States to be imported to Thailand as 'scrap'; once in Thailand they were reassembled and sold as antiques to decorate private homes, hotels or restaurants.

Framed within this visual current, *ChangChui* Park (its translation as 'Thailand's Tomorrow' explicitly declares its American inspiration) could be understood as the latest and most ambitious incarnation of this type of street markets and commercial events aimed at the capital's *millennial* public. Its founder Somchai (Lim) Songwattana rose to fame with the fashion brand *Flynnow* and was an active campaigner for progressive cultural politics prior to the 2014 coup, actively participating in the creation of the Thailand Culture and Design Center.<sup>34</sup>

*ChangChui* is a hybrid between a flea market where traders rent individual stalls, a *coworking* space and a baroque gallery of extravagance composed of several pavilions, kiosks and multipurpose spaces conceived as a meeting point for the creative classes of Bangkok. The space is conceived as a grand stage for *photo opportunities* to spread through social networks, which is in fact the means by which visitors can become part of the creative forces that give meaning to the place through the so-called 'closed circle of representation'.<sup>35</sup> The ensemble is presided over by a Lockheed L-1011 TriStar aircraft converted into a luxury restaurant where a collection of stuffed animals is on display (fig. 176). A series of modified trucks serve as studios for artisans oriented towards the hipster revival of analogue arts: film photography development, watchmaking workshops, doll making, tattooing, flower arranging, etc.... According to Lim, the design of the space is overtly inspired by the informal architecture of old Bangkok, as a way of 'preserving memories once they are no longer there', accepting that they will be inexorably demolished and replaced by alienating and unoriginal architecture. Reclaiming architectural objects from demolition and including them in new projects is a tactic that will be further explored. 'The people who visit us, I don't know how to explain it, will feel at ease. Their parents will tell their children about the memories awakened by this environment. Old customs and ideas will be recaptured'. The 'accidental beauty' of the haphazard aggregation of reclaimed architectural elements brings back memories of their childhood home in Nakhon Sawan.<sup>36</sup> A meeting point for new generations, spurred by the appreciation of generally ignored or forgotten items which is, in his view, the motivation for collecting *vintage* objects. Lim's statement 'Nothing is useless' was perfectly consistent with the ease with which the *hipster* movement adapts to the market economy, but which could still convey a sense of rebellion or

33 Mark Greif, 'The Hipster in the Mirror', *The New York Times* (New York, 12 November 2010) <<https://www.nytimes.com/2010/11/14/books/review/Greif-t.html>>.

34 Our conversation took place on the occasion of the imminent opening of 'ChangChui Creative Space' in Thonburi which had been scheduled for April 2017.

35 Marjorie Diane Kibby, 'Monument Valley, Instagram, and the Closed Circle of Representation', *M/C - Media and Culture*, 19.5 (2016).

36 ADay Magazine, "Chāng Chūy" Xāñāçakr Šilpa Šud Mañ Kñnād 11 Rì Thì Mī Thạng Khwām Kĩā Bābin Læa Kherūxngbin Là Fīy [Chang Chui' Un Emporio de 11 Rais Con Audaces Aeronaves], 2017 <<http://www.adaymagazine.com/articles/draft-22>> [accessed 31 January 2019].

reaction against the burdensome requirements of functionalism. A similar reaction could be found in the *Analog Crafts* movement, also on the rise among the urban classes in Thailand, whose attraction responds to what Susan Luckman would denominate 'the aura of the analogue'.<sup>37</sup> Its deliberate inefficiency makes it a novel activity for the digital native.<sup>38</sup> Wattana claimed that this imperfection, linked to the spontaneity of manual activity, is 'the most beautiful thing. The sense of touch is vital in human interaction'.<sup>39</sup> The fashion cycle is driven by the digital representational space but, as in the maker community, it is based on the attraction to what Luckman called the 'fetish of the analogue and the tactile'.<sup>40</sup>

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37 Susan Luckman, 'The Aura of the Analogue in a Digital Age: Women's Crafts, Creative Markets and Home-Based Labour After Etsy', *Cultural Studies Review*, 19.1 (2013).

38 Luckman, p. 250.

39 Lim Wattana, 'ChangChui' (Bangkok, 2016).

40 Luckman, p. 251.



Fig. 197. Tawewit Kijtanasonthorn, stills from the video of the installation *Karaoke Twilight*, 2016, Bangkok Art & Culture Center. Source: Tawewit Kijtanasonthorn.

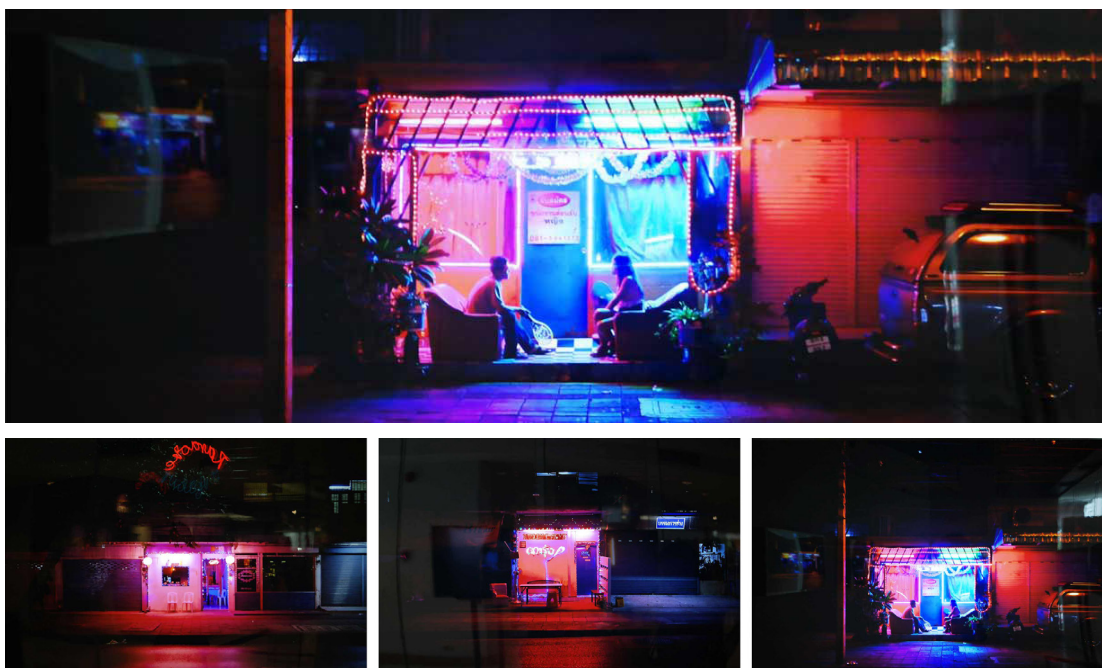


Fig. 198. Tawewit Kijtanasonthorn, *Karaoke Twilight*: 995 Karaoke, 2016, Bangkok Art & Culture Center. Source: Tawewit Kijtanasonthorn.

#### 5.1.1.4 The Devourer of Souls

Immigration from the countryside to the city, sexual exploitation, the aggressiveness awakened by the irruption of modernity would give rise to art as a form of protest. The sculpture *Venus of Bangkok* (1991) by Montien Boonma (1953-2000) portrayed the hardships and stigmatization of immigration from northern Thailand: drug addiction, prostitution, crime, marginality. Boonma took up the contemporary theme of the girl leaving her farm to seek her fortune in the city and falling victim to its merciless voracity; in line with Boonma's symbolic language, which would make him the most renowned contemporary Thai artist, the young girl's sexual organ was depicted as a cement cube painted in red. Bangkok was depicted as 'a devourer of souls', a place of 'faceless people', where the human body became 'a vehicle for expressing lament, loneliness, anger and lack'. The painter Sriwan Janhuttakarnkit reflected this in *City Life* (1983), *Lonely People* (1984). In a male-dominated artistic universe, the use of sensual and decorative imagery was considered 'weak' and 'feminine' and until a few years ago it was rare to find representations of the female body that went beyond hypersexualized *apsaras*.<sup>41</sup> Vasan Chatakam *Khong Khon Muang's* 1984 poem *Fate of Multiple Urbanities* would de-

41 Creatures of Siamese Buddhist mythology of feminine appearance.

scribe the sense of disalienation and dislocation in 1980s Bangkok:

*A city of many festivals*  
*A city where monks speak Pali*  
*A city where the Dharma is recited from memory*  
*A city guided by Brahmins*  
*A city where the law is written by criminals*  
*A city full of beggars*  
*A city where people only work to survive*  
*A city that is full of beautiful people*  
*A city that is full of skyscrapers*  
*A city where women show their thighs*  
*A city where the elderly are forgotten*  
*A city where art belongs to genius*  
*A city where garbage covers the sidewalks*  
*A city full of impossible dreams*  
*A city where disappointments flourish*  
*A city where truth is a lie.<sup>42</sup>*

In Thailand, the *nga-wat* ('temple carnival') festivals were born to celebrate the harvests, periodically bringing together a variety of attractions and entertainment for the farming population. Their origins can be traced back to the royal cremations that took place on the Sanam Luang esplanade in front of the royal palace in Bangkok, also offering festivals with performances by magicians, jugglers and puppeteers to ease the people's grief at the loss of a member of the royal lineage. For many rural villages, these celebrations are the only opportunity to gain access, for a few hours at night, to the world depicted on television and social media. The elaborate neon structures that are displayed at these events are characteristic. Some are driven by rotating movements like waterwheels, resembling the rotating *dharmachakra* wheel that symbolises the Buddhist religion. Grinders of neon lights are given suggestive names such as *Fai-sum pratu-fai* ('portal of light') or *fai-tin* ('trees of light'). The decorative illuminations of the *nga-wat* thus constitute instant paradises qualified by the chromaticism of the neon, spatially confined to the illuminated regions and where the impoverished urban environment fades into a black background as if it were the stage machinery of a theatrical stage.

This quality of neon lighting to generate virtual spaces has been explored by Taweewit Kijtanasonthorn (b. 1983), an artist who has dedicated himself to narrating those stories of Thai society that are left out of informal narratives. His installation *Karaoke Twilight*, exhibited at 'People's Gallery' at the Bangkok Art and Culture Centre in 2016, depicted life after sundown in karaoke bars popular with lower-class males. A series of photographs in light boxes and a video installation with two monitors arranged in parallel showed synchronised scenes inside these bars, which were a far cry from the posh gentlemen's clubs in the more affluent parts of the city.

42 English translation by the author, based on the English version of Poshyananda, p. 225.

Taweewit narrated in an interview for the daily Khaosod that 'when I moved to Bangkok, my feelings changed as the place became more mysterious to me. Hidden under the daylight, these bars relieved themselves after dark to liberate the marginalised'.<sup>43</sup> The visual universe of karaoke bars and motels by the hour is characterised by the hybridisation between the promise of paradise and the precariousness of its physical materialisation (pag. 177, 178). Neon lighting is characterised by its ability to imbue the atmosphere with certain emotional states. Objects are animated by the 'spirit' of the night as vehicles of desire and commerce. Karaoke bars, like their lower-class patrons, are virtually invisible during the day due to the absence of signage or any other form of indication; they are physically there, but remain outside the capitalist city's celebration of prestige, beauty and financial success. It is only under the nocturnal influx of neon that these places come to life, attracting customers under the promise of a utopia, an unreal paradise built for the consolidation of self-affirmation and self-realisation.

Taweewit produced a series of diagrams detailing the narrative codes used for this video installation. Drawings that, in spite of their informal nature, are highly illustrative of the human relations constructed in these spaces, mapping silenced heterotopias that, in the manner of Buddhist mandalas, are presented as materialisations of paradise. They consist of a series of analytical studies on the suggestive names of the karaokes and the reciprocal needs between clients and call girls and the relationship between the intimate interior and the exterior façade. A façade reduced to the minimum required to signal the place: an arrow, a sign, a light, the closed box where the action takes place becomes simultaneously an object of shame and desire. The extremely precarious state of the interiors, plagued by damp, broken wires, decrepit plaster mouldings, is softened by the dim lighting; the background music serves as an analgesic for the awkward silences between patrons and girls, forced to maintain throughout the night the illusion of *sanook* ('joy').

The economic exchange through which migrant workers - from northern and eastern Thailand - and young women - also migrants, from Myanmar and Laos - interact is also reflected in the diagrams. There is, in this depiction of working-class psychology in the construction of paradise, no revolutionary confrontation against the market economy, but a tactical adaptation to the imposed structures, looking for the narrow cracks in the system through which each of the players can achieve a small slice of well-being. A fiction ultimately designed to make it easier for the urban proletariat - on a minimum wage of around 375 euros - to feel, for a brief moment, like playboys.

#### 5.1.1.5 The Pulled Curtain

The film *Motel Myst*, (2016) directed and written by Prabda Yoon (1973) and under the artistic direction of Rasiguet Sookkarn takes place in a love motel, charac-

43 Kaewta Ketbungkan, 'Mysterious Charm of Karaoke Bars Captured in Photos', *Khaosod English*, 2016 <<http://www.khaosodenglish.com/life/arts/2016/06/29/mysterious-charm-karaoke-bars-captured-photos-saturday/>> [accessed 11 January 2017].



Fig. 199. Stills from Prabda Yoon's film Motel Mist (Thailand: 2017).



Fig. 200. Stills from Prabda Yoon's film Motel Mist (Thailand: 2017).

terised as a non-place of anonymous rationalist architecture whose geometry is as geometrically emphatic as it is meaningless. *Motel Myst* narrates the encounter between two students and a respectable middle-aged man who, sheltered by the motel walls, seeks to subject them to his personal perversions. The reversal of roles criticises the patriarchal society which, in the case of Thailand, is particularly harsh due to the survival of colonial practices such as *sakdina* and its bending of social conventions, what Philipp Cornwel-Smith described as 'a missionary puritanism freed from foreign interference'.<sup>44</sup> Known in Thailand as *rong raem man*

44 Cornwel-Smith.

*rud* ('pulled curtain hotels')<sup>45</sup> these establishments constitute segregated spaces where one can indiscriminately abuse or be abused and within which conventional norms are suspended (fig. 179, 180).

The old city of languid canals was profoundly disrupted by the massive construction of motorways on the model that Robert Moses had conceived for New York since the previous decade.<sup>46</sup> Udomporn Teeraviriyakul had described this city as 'divine and aquatic' as it functioned around its waterways and where the only spatial references were the white stupas of the temples.<sup>47</sup> In his book *Bangkok Utopia*, historian Lawrence Chua draws on a story by Chusan Rasijan that narrates a literary journey to a floating brothel through the canals of Bangkok. The protagonists in search of queer pleasure in the playground of the West slipped through the interstices of the infrastructures created by automobile civilisation. Chua turns to the *Viamana*, a sort of ceremonial and battle chariot used by the heroes of the epic poem *Mahabharata*, 'both a vehicle and a celestial abode' to construct his metaphor of the search for paradise through car culture.<sup>48</sup> A universe segregated into social castes and a floating population on the edge of precariousness in search of the riches of the big city and subsisting in the nooks and crannies of planning. In his doctoral thesis entitled *La Casa de Don Gionvanni*, Josep Quetglás postulated the peep-show as an inversion of Foucaultian Heterotopia: a singular point that acted subordinated to the collective gaze<sup>49</sup> where the unproductivity of the intimate act, its defiance of his productive conception of sexuality was an essential part of this subjugation. Thus, the acts deployed within this shell should functionally and symbolically stand in violation of the same order on which the dominant party based its authority. The spatial variability of boat agglomerations, the primary mode of life for many Southeast Asian ethnicities, allowed for the circumvention of state control over land-based settlements. Love-hotels and peep-shows thus represent places that could not exist without the hypocrisy of the society from which they hide.<sup>50</sup> Prabda Yoon, in an interview with the independent film platform *Roffa Mon Amour*, wondered why these 'love hotels' exist: 'We are ashamed to talk about them in our everyday lives. But still, they exist. They have been there forever and are evidently still in service'. Fascinating artefacts in both functional and formal terms. For me, they represent the functioning of Thai society. There are some superficial rules that everyone knows and follows on the surface, while there is something underground that is more twisted and absurd'.<sup>51</sup>

In 2015 Kuo, Yamnill and McLean estimated that there were 450,000 prostitution services per day in Thailand (Kuo, Christine, and McLean 2008). Thailand was

45 Lawrence Chua, *Bangkok Utopia: Modern Architecture and Buddhist Felicities, 1910–1973 (Spatial Habitus: Making and Meaning in Asia's Architecture)* (University of Hawaii Press [Kindle Android version], 2021), l. 4957.

46 Edmund J Whiting, *Greater Bangkok Plan 2533 / Edmund J. Whiting, Frederick J. Adams* (Bangkok: Ministry of Interior, 1960).

47 Udomporn Teeraviriyakul, *Bangkok Modern. The Transformation of Bangkok with Singapore and Batavia as Models (1861-1897)* (Bangkok: Institute of Asian Studies, Chulalongkorn University, 2014), p. 74.

48 Chua, l. 4564.

49 Josep Quetglas i Riusech, 'La Casa de Don Giovanni' (Universitat Politècnica de Catalunya, 1980).

50 Prabda Yoon, *Motel Mist* (Thailand, 2016).

51 Roffa Mon Amour, 'RMA 2016 Interview Prabda Yoon on Motel Mist', *Roffa Mon Amour*, 2016 <<https://roffamonamour.com/rma-2016-interview-prabda-yoon-on-motel-mist/>> [accessed 22 May 2021].



Fig. 201. Chat Architects, *Samsen Hotel*, Bangkok, 2019. Source: author, 2019.



Fig. 202. 'Short time' hotels in Bangkok. Left: *PB Hotel*. Right, *Ping An Hotel* in *Samsen Street*, in front of the hotel by Chat Architects. Source: Author, 2019.

home to Asia's largest methamphetamine seizure in the period 2018 to 2019, totalling 116 tons of narcotics.<sup>52</sup> Trafficking is directly linked to the Golden Triangle, a border territory straddling Myanmar, Laos and Thailand that has historically served as an international narcotics hub. It is the privacy of hotels and, more recently, villas for rent through websites or mobile apps that provide safe spaces for the confluence of narcotics and sexual exploitation.

52 Justice Tetley and Jeremy Douglas, *Synthetic Drugs in East and Southeast Asia Latest Developments and Challenges*, 2020, p. 85.

Samsen Street is a commercial artery in Bangkok's Old City. During its heyday it was home to one of Asia's first tram lines, opened in 1901, connecting Hua Lampong railway station to Sampheng Market. The track was home to Vietnamese and ethnic Mon immigrant communities, and elegant two- and three-storey commercial buildings developed along its pavements. Today, around six o'clock in the evening, the two and a half metres of pavement are crowded with food stalls, tables and folding chairs that gradually colonise the road space as dusk falls and the intensity of traffic subsides.<sup>53</sup> The bustle of a street of popular commerce and the decay of much of its building stock combine with the proliferation of low-budget hotels that stand like anonymous black boxes. Late at night, the food stalls remain illuminated beacons; their architecture becomes entangled in a continuum of sub-structures and informal artefacts where it is not possible to differentiate clearly which elements are a permanent part of the buildings and which are mobile, replaceable or temporary artefacts.

It is in this context that the Samsen Street Hotel rises, a former motel by the hour converted into a boutique experience by Chat Chuenrudeemol, founder of Chat Architects. Chat Chuenrudeemol had developed an intense research and creative activity around his concept of the *Bangkok Bastards*: the architectures and urban manufactures that defied formal rationalism and developed on the margins of typological and formal distinctions (fig. 181). Their very taxonomies, straddling historical and contemporary migratory flows, called into question the identity-based value system attributed to national architecture, earning them the appellation of *bastards*, again tracing back, although with notably less diplomacy to the *A-Ma* ('Not-Good architecture') of Bow-wow.

*Samsen Street Hotel* materialises his thinking.<sup>54</sup> The opacity of these stigmatised architectures, containers of relations of desire and exploitation, have already been addressed in the works Tawewiit and Prabda Yoon. Directly opposite Samsen Street is still the *Nakorn Ping Hotel*, whose defensive configuration is perfectly in keeping with the taboo of its interior life (fig. 182). Samsen Street has been converted into a boutique hotel, a type of hotel establishment that offers themed aesthetic experiences. Despite contributing to the rampant gentrification of Bangkok's historic district, as has been done by so many other recent projects such as the reform of the Khlong Ong Ang canal or Khaosan Street (popularly known as 'the white ghetto' due to the high concentration of backpacker tourists) the hotel alludes openly -but never explicitly- to its past as a love-hotel, standing shoulder to shoulder with other contemporary experiences such as Plantea Estudio's transformation of the *Duque de Alba in Madrid* (2017) into an auteur cinema studio. The amalgam of illegal structures typical of this region of old Bangkok, where the line between private property and private space is blurred, is transformed in Chat's design into a second skin of façade. Aware that this is an aestheticisation of the unruly informality of the city centre, a formalist elaboration of pre-existing sponta-

53 Kim Dovey and Kasama Polakit, 'Urban Slippage', in *Loose Space: Possibility and Diversity in Urban Life*, ed. by Karen Franck and Quentin Stevens (Routledge, 2006), p. 121.

54 We will refer again to Samsen Street Hotel when addressing the reinterpretation of the Bangkok tuekthaew as a contemporary, urban vernacular.



Fig. 203. Installation 'Abandoned One' in the façade of former Cleopatra Hotel by PHKA STUDIO, 2018, Bangkok. Source: Phka Studio.

neous architectures, Chat Architects opts to 'spatially activate' it by turning it into a kind of stage set and urban stage for the nightly projection of films and, as if we were in the version of the Chicago musical directed by Rob Marshall (2002), it can be inhabited by entertainers, actors or even the guests themselves. The ground floor is conceived as an area for events and street food festivals, designed as a continuation of the amalgam of temporary roofs and street food carts. One need only move a few metres to find these situations in their raw, genuine form, merging at street level in a fluid experience that transitions from the informal and illegal to the sanitised representation of the boutique experience.<sup>55</sup>

Another establishment, the Cleopatra Hotel, whose art deco façade stood decrepit in Bangkok's Chinatown, was the subject of an intriguing and art polysemy (fig. 183). Floral design studio PHKA created a floral installation on its façade for Bangkok Design Week 2018 entitled 'Abandoned One'. The ground floor was covered with *red anthurium*, a tropical flower with phallic evocations, and a red acrylic envelope to 'symbolise the dark transparency of the architecture',<sup>56</sup> a further reference to the arcane and opaque character of this urban type. Chairs were arranged

55 Chatpong Chuenrudeemol, 'Personal Communication' (Bangkok, 2016).

56 PHKA Studio, 'Abandoned One', *Phkastudio.Com*, 2018 <<https://phkastudio.com/Abandoned-One>> [accessed 25 February 2022].

around the building to welcome visitors, with the ironic intention that visitors would inadvertently adopt the same body posture as sex workers when waiting for clients. However, the most significant relationship that the public - artists, students, tourists - established with the artwork was, when attempting to enter the building to continue the visit, the *mama-san* warned that the art was finished inside and that, 'unless that's what we wanted', there was another kind of *khannika* ('jasmine flower', a common euphemism). In few artistic actions is there such a contrast between the representation of a sordid reality and its direct and raw confrontation, without the mediation of media.

#### 5.1.1.6 A New Sense of Spirituality

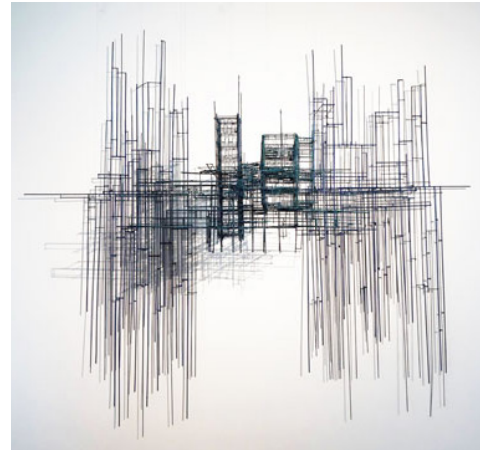
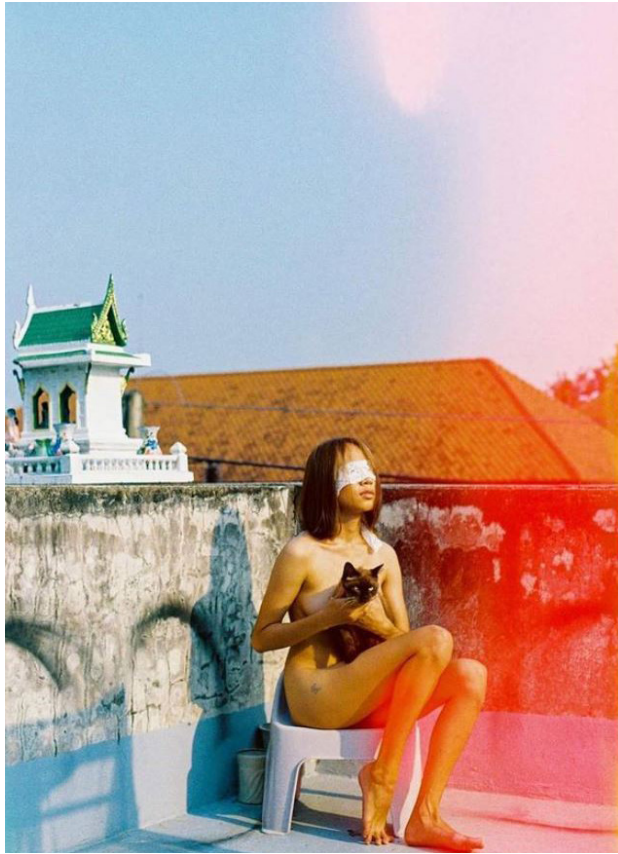
Ohm Phanphiroj's (1970) disturbing documentary photographs from the series *Underage* (2009) were considered a necessary denunciation by international critics, but aroused bitter controversy in Thailand.<sup>57</sup> For Brian Curtin, the value of Phanphiroj's images was the 'resistance to categorisation', posing disjunctions about the representation and visibilization of certain life universes.<sup>58</sup> Together with Maitree Siribon's camp aesthetic canvases depicting young male sex workers and their Western patrons in ironic baroque allegories, they develop into a 'moral ambiguity', critically questioning the ways in which Thailand 'could be portrayed'. It is within this moral ambiguity that pimp turned media politician and anti-corruption activist Chuvit Kamolvisit, nicknamed 'the king of the massage parlours', is framed. On the occasion of the sale of a well-known macro brothel for 400 million baht, Kamolvisit appeared on television in December 2021 claiming that such a price was 'not justified by the real business' as the sex trade had moved massively into the digital world. For him, such a sum should therefore be due to either money laundering operations or hypothetical real estate developments.<sup>59</sup> Although Chuvit's statement was received as nothing more than gossip, it points to the transformation of spatial uses and exchanges of flesh and capital compared to the old R&R days. Digital space eliminates indirect beneficiaries, such as the police and real estate - the land that houses bars, hotels - opening up a direct connection between the performer and digital platforms, based in those jurisdictions with more favourable laws and taxation. The pimp's work is then redirected to online positioning, using popular social networks as a hook for paid content.

Once relocated in the liquid space of social networks and free of any real estate servitude, the streaming economy drifts into deeper transformations. While the extent to which exploitative networks have co-opted reel-based and streaming services remains to be assessed, it can be agreed that these technologies potentially allow performers to reduce access barriers and information asymmetries. Moreover, the international demands of LGTBI collectives will be taken up by the digital native generations, who will find in transgender identities an alternative es-

57 Curtin, p. 117.

58 Curtin, p. 117.

59 Sanook, 'Xdit Ceaphx Xang "Chuwit" Wikheraah Hkum Him Thum Sux Xab Xo Nod Phost Khay 470 [El Padrino "Chuvit" Evalúa Si La Venta de Un Salón de Masaje Vale 470 Millones]', *Sanook.Com*, 2021 <<https://www.sanook.com/news/8485922/>> [accessed 7 July 2022].



**Fig. 204.**  
Rattana Salee, *Vanishing Point*, 2018, stainless steel and paint, 200 × 200 × 50 cm. Source: La Lanta Fine Art, Bangkok

**Fig. 205.**  
Sophirat Muangkum, *A Sense Of Spirituality Without Religion*, 2021, Bangkok.

cape valve to the disjunctions between tradition and modernity that had gripped previous generations. Political conflicts, such as the anti-military junta protests of 2019 and 2020 and the echo of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protests have given rise to a generation strongly sceptical of traditional identity pillars such as monarchy and religion.<sup>60</sup> Thai photographer Sophirat Muangkum's work can be read from this agnostic and feminist perspective, seeking to engage the female body as an active agent of erotic imagery. In *A Sense Of Spirituality Without Religion* (2021) a Saint Phra Phum altar is contrasted with the nude of a woman immersed in her personal quest for transcendence (fig. 185).

The transition from the economy of need to what Daniel Bell would call the 'economy of desire' occurred in Thailand as intensely as its economic development accelerated.<sup>61</sup> This speed facilitated the unusual coexistence in the same physical and symbolic space of asynchronous drives such as Buddhist religion, capitalism, human trafficking and Western sexual liberation.

60 Anonymous, 'Anti-Royalism in Thailand Since 2006: Ideological Shifts and Resistance', *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 48.3 (2018), 363–94.

61 Daniel Bell, *The Economy of Desire: Christianity and Capitalism in a Postmodern World* (Baker Academic, 2012).

