The Meanings behind its Changing Use: Instagram Pier in Hong Kong
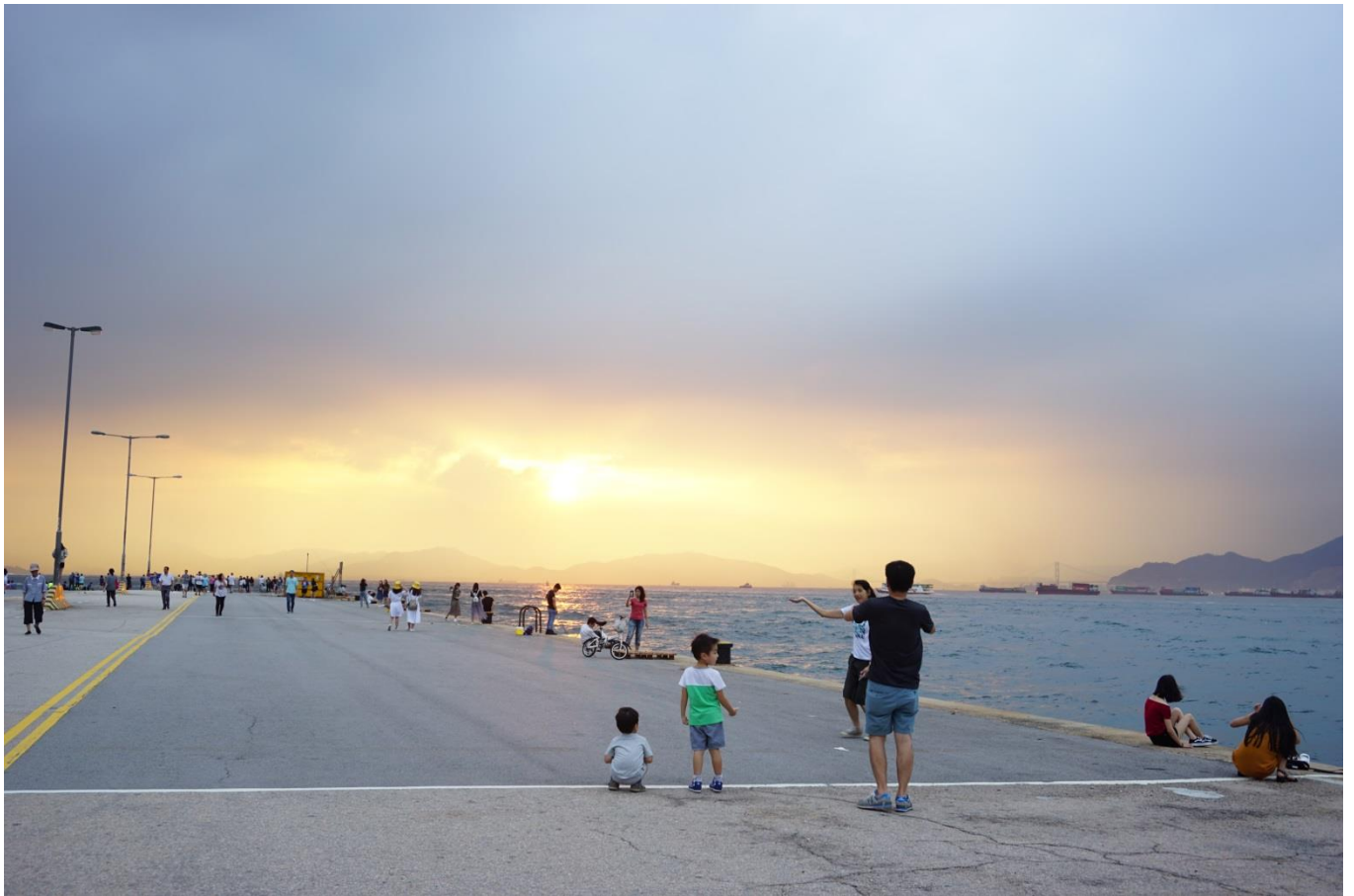
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Abstract

Hong Kong is densely populated and there is always the competition of land that the concept of open space is not being emphasized. The controversy, followed by the redevelopment plans announced by the government, shed light on the Western District Cargo Working Area, also known as "Instagram Pier". This space is rare in Hong Kong in the way for its looseness. It is a private area managed by the Hong Kong Marine Department, but at the same time with a high degree of being public, with all the activities by its users that flood in. This study researches into how the Pier (and its subspaces) is produced and used, that reveals its looseness to a large extent in terms of possibility, diversity and disorder. During the process, the various meanings to the users behind this space with changing use are explored, and specifically their simple hope for freedom and space in this city jungle is discovered. With its production of place, there is the practicability of place-making which eventually bring reflections to the management of not only the Pier, but also to public spaces in Hong Kong as a whole.

Acknowledgement

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Introduction

In the context of Hong Kong as a "land-hungry place" and highly-commercialized society, the urban planning principle is to match with urban investments and the needs of economic interests (Siu, 2001). The "laissez-faire" philosophy is adopted and corporate power has gained control over activities occurring in open spaces. Most of the time, the public is only permitted to pass through the space but any undesirable form of behaviour under the scope of these developers are not allowed (Law, 2002). Together with the rapid development in shopping malls and other mass consumption spaces, urban spaces are hence, increasingly subject to "surveillance and policing", and activities are restricted (Cuthbert & McKinnell, 1997, p. 296).

Hong Kong is densely populated with more than 7 million inhabitants and has a population density of 6,690 persons per square kilometre (HKSARG, 2015). In some street blocks, the population density even reaches 400,000 people per square kilometre (Lai, 2017, p.9). Each Hong Kong resident has only 2.7 metre square of Countable Open Space (COS) in 2012, comparing to other Asian cities such as Tokyo (2013) and Singapore (2015)with the COS of 5.8 and 7.4 respectively (Lai, 2017, p.20, 28). In addition, under the current policy which encourages the private sector to provide a significant amount of urban recreational open space while developing new areas, public spaces produced by the people are next to impossible. The immense pressure of public spaces is vivid. It is therefore not hard to understand the quest and struggle of Hong Kong people for public spaces.

The Western District Public Cargo Working Area, also known as the Instagram Pier ("the Pier") in Hong Kong is seen as a space with its temporal changing use managed by the Hong Kong Marine Department of the government. It is both private and public, where improvisation of public behaviours occurs at certain time periods. During daytime, it is a private area for freighting; when it is around sunset time when the workers finish their work, the area starts to be public where people carry out all forms of activities, namely walking, wandering, sitting, jogging, biking, photography, etc. Nevertheless, the government has announced plans on redeveloping the area since October 2017 with which people fear that they would be restricted to the freedom that they have had at present (Hingun, 2018).

With the changing use of space, the focus of this research is the meanings to various users behind this situation. A space can change its use temporally and switches between private, public and loose. According to Madanipour (2013), "if public open spaces are conceived as enclosed particular places with fixed identities" (p.8), then the spaces are no longer flexible and inclusive. This will lead to the formation of a private space that there is only limited access to certain social groups. In this way, public spaces are the sites of accessibility, sociability and interactions (Carr, 1992). To Franck & Stevens (2007, p.2), loose space means the "rich variety of activities not originally intended for those locations". In other words, no matter it is public or private space, or regardless of the tightness of space, all of them allow certain degree of looseness as long as people are able to perform activities out of the original purpose of those spaces. With this view, the fixed use of a space no longer exists when the space becomes loose through people's activities. Loose space emerges according to accessibility, freedom of choice, physical elements and the recognition of possibilities of the space by the people themselves. It is the people's actions which make a space loose, while the degree of looseness is determined by contestation between people

and the authorities where tolerance, resistance and negotiation occur and even conflicts among the users.

In this master thesis, light will be shed on the looseness of this particular case of the Pier in Hong Kong. Why is there such changing space evolving? How does it produce and how is it used? What does the space mean to its users? Does the meaning behind the space differ among various users? Why do they visit the space and if it no longer maintains as what it is, will they continue to visit the space or go for other alternatives? All of these reveal the degree of looseness of space, even in such high pressure of public spaces in Hong Kong. Its looseness, to some extent, brings indications to the scene of public spaces in Hong Kong. Further, urban management practices in the city are reflected.

Scientific Relevance

Most literature focuses on either planned or unplanned spaces, which provides relevance for the study of the Pier with planned and unplanned use at different time of a day in the same space. Undoubtedly, there are studies which focus on the discussion of counter-space, loose spaces, porous spaces, leftover spaces, otherness of spaces, heterotopias with examples in different countries (Franck & Stevens, 2007; Foucault, 1993; Hudson & Shaw, 2009; Leary, 2009; Stavrides, 2007). These discussions are mostly on describing the forms, functions and situations of the spaces but rarely having an in-depth view of how and why these spaces are produced. Van Duppen (2010) has researched into an unplanned space - a wasteland in Berlin, the Cuvrybrache, which is considered as a leftover and indeterminate space with vague appearance which invites people to be creatively active. The meanings to the site given by the users are stressed, which serves as a good reference for this study with user-oriented perspective. Users were observed and interviewed of their perception, activities and stories to the unplanned wasteland. Through understanding the meaning of the space through the eyes of the people and how it conflicts with the conceived space, visions of urban planners and real estate developers are studied and reflected. Undeniably, Van Duppen has given insights into how meanings among people can be researched. However the Pier as a space, which has its function while being loose, shows its difference with the wasteland and such looseness would be interested to probe into in face of the high pressure of public spaces.

When it comes to Hong Kong, studies are mainly associated with planned public spaces and not user-oriented enough. Siu (2001) discusses how Hong Kong has been focusing on rational planning with which public spaces are often programmed, neglecting the human factor by using an empirical case of Fu Shin Street in Tai Po. Siu looked into the city spaces that the government provided for Hong Kong people and how people react, try and struggle to make them into their ideal open spaces. From a macro view of the general situation in Hong Kong to a micro view of the street in researching the question, it is noted that the targeted street is a planned public space with rules and regulations. In another study, Law (2002) describes much about the history of public spaces in Hong Kong and then talks about how the streets in the Central Business District (CBD) are used by the Filipino domestic workers without actually interviewing those users. The roads are intentionally opened to the public instead of vehicles by urban

planners which encourage people to spend time in the area on Sunday in the CBD. The diverse activities taking place by these domestic workers may have made the public space an alternative with their self-expression. However, the heavy policing of the area with the hawker control teams with preventing people from hawking home cooking or other goods from time to time reflect the space as planned. Both studies merely discuss the users' point of view in brief and from a macro overview to micro analysis.

On the contrary, this study would like to aim at studying into the case of the Instagram Pier, a combination of a planned and unplanned space through time with a micro-to-macro perspective. It is remarked that Siu (2001) has highlighted that more in-depth empirical studies should be conducted in emphasizing on the user-oriented perspective of public spaces in Hong Kong in which this study attempts to fill such gap.

What's more, place-making and the right to the city have not been discussed much in these studies. The in-between feature of the Pier creates predicament itself that the government has the authority to develop plans and change its purpose despite its looseness after the functional use. No matter how temporary the appropriation of space, "the very fact of its existence, the memories and associations it evokes permanently changes the face of the place in which it occurred" (Hershkovitz, 1993, p. 416). The question on the right to the city then comes into place, when the user of the city is in fact "a participant in its creation and interpretation" (Shields, 2013, p.346). Ordinary citizens pass through, use, visit, involve in a place, thus constructing the place into a social and humanized one which forms the process of place-making at the Pier (Lombard, 2014, p.14-15). Discussions on public space management practices as a whole in Hong Kong would be covered in this study.

Societal Relevance

Public spaces are an indispensable part in a living city where people can stimulate each other with interaction, exchange of their experiences and therefore they maintain contact with each other. Public spaces of good quality increase outdoor activities, including necessary, optional and social activities as stated by Gehl (2011). When people spend more time outdoor, they talk to each other more frequently. With frequent social interaction, community cohesion will be enhanced. Consequently, health and social benefits are being brought about, as people can spend their time in third places that can be defined as spaces for public gathering, other than in first and second place, which are their homes and workplaces (Lai, 2017; Oldenburg, 1997). Therefore, the Pier as a public space with looseness is with societal relevance to study into, especially with the development proposals announced by the government.

In the Policy Address 2017 of the Hong Kong government announced in October 2017, it is suggested that the Pier would be made available for non-governmental organizations to operate community facilities or organize community events. Further in proposals announced in January 2018, it is said that former berth 1 to 3 would be developed as community gardens. Restaurants and shops are possible, and fences and lights should be installed by the operating organization; whereas another plan states that the space would be managed by the Cultural and Leisure Department which manages parks and other public spaces in Hong Kong (HKSAR, 2018). This aroused severe criticism among the public that the government

did not carry out public consultation and such plan would limit the freeness of the area and privatize its use to certain members in society. Residents, District Councilors, representatives of community organizations like Sai Wan Community Concern and Hong Kong Public Space Initiative emphasized that the COS in the district is already low with 2.1 metre square (2012) and the area is valuable with its freeness and social interactions, thus a reflection of place-making. There are meanings of the Pier to the public. Hence, this study serves as the mirror which puts various fragments of the self-expression of users into one, attempting to rethink the top-down approach that the government has been adopting in managing public spaces.

As a corollary, there is the societal relevance of the importance of public spaces in a city and that the need to discuss this interesting public Pier among public spaces in Hong Kong. Together with the scientific relevance of the existing inadequacy in academic studies, how the Pier is conceived and lived with the perceptions and experiences of people is probed into. This study aims at discussing the meanings of different users behind such space which reflects the situation of public spaces and the debate of the right to the city in Hong Kong is brought about.

Research Question

With a view to probe into the Instagram Pier, from its production and use, its fluidity between public and private space, to its redevelopment plan which leads to the discussion of place-making and the right to the city, the main research question is brought to light:

To what extent does the Pier reveal its looseness and thereby its meanings?

To answer the question, this study is expected to explore with the following sub-questions:

1. How is the Pier being perceived and conceived?
2. How is the Pier being lived and used? Why do users visit the Pier and what does it and public space mean to them? Does the meaning differ among various users?
3. How do the perceived and the lived Pier make rooms for place-making and what role do users think the authorities should play in the management of the Pier?

Literature Review

(1) Production of Space

"City space is not natural but is constituted by a physical presence and social processes" (Lefebvre, 1974). The Instagram Pier is no other exception that the space, and in fact, its nickname is constituted and produced by social relations in between. However the space in turn does at the same time encourage those social processes. The spatial triad by Lefebvre (1991) can provide a view to study how the Pier as a space is produced and used. Spatial triad refers to spatial practice, representations of space and spaces of representation. Spatial practice is observable and it is the material city and "perceived space" that

encompasses all physical buildings and infrastructure, providing places to link up work, private life and leisure. It embodies both daily and urban reality which suggests the interaction of daily routines of people and the urban routes and networks (Van Duppen, 2010). The people's activities in the space are determined by the physical setting.

Second, representations of space is "conceived space" that activities in the Pier are determined by what the people in power would like to achieve. It is how "scientists, planners, urbanists, social engineers" determine the use and production of space (Lefebvre, 1991, p.24-25). The government department is therefore the one to define the "order" and compose the social relations as they wish. Such use of space is often seen as "rational". Last, the spaces of representation is "lived space" produced by inhabitants. It is the people, the users who determine their own activities, create and convey cultural meaning of the space. It is the society's dominated space and regarded as spaces of artists and philosophers due to its emotional nature that people associate the space with symbols and images. With its contradicting nature to the "conceived", the production of "counter-space" often occurs and the looseness of the space is shown which will be illustrated as follows (Leary, 2009).

With the constant social processes and meanings given in the space, a space is converted to a place. A space is often considered as being more abstract and personal, while a place is interpreted as having meaning and value (Madanipour, 2013). Place is a unique entity, a "special ensemble" (Lukermann, 1964, p. 70) with history and meaning. It has a wide range of meanings that one comes across with the word in daily life in multiple layers and purposes. Despite the generality, ambiguity and looseness of the term, it is for sure that a place is defined when social, political and spatial practices interact with each other. Place is a combination of time and space that is constructed by social processes (Harvey, 2012). Places have been criticized for becoming more and more soulless with reference to the "transition from integrative community to the anonymity and alienation of large modern urban societies" during industrialization and the dominance of service economy nowadays make spaces consumption-driven (Madanipour, 2013). One may say that space is functional with its spatial practice while a lived space with its character is therefore a place with which people derive and have given it meaning from their experiences and aspirations. This study as a result would like to look into how the Pier as a space is produced with the three features of the spatial triad and most importantly, the users' "spatial feelings and ideas in the stream of experience", where experience means sensation, perception and conception (Tuan, 1979).

(2) Public & Private Space with Looseness

A space can be both public and private at the same time but the key feature of being public lies to its accessibility. Without being accessible, a place cannot be public for individuals (Madanipour, 2013). They are "responsive, democratic and meaningful" as stated by Carr (1992) and facilitate community cohesion, sense of attachment, health and well-being which serve as fundamental features of a city. Yet, public spaces are becoming more impersonal and fragmented nowadays, being increasingly produced for, rather than by the people, with dominant interests on privatization and commodification and that the

space is being seen as private (Paddison & Sharp, 2007). The access to public space is thus limited, narrowing those who are able to use the place, often determined by their ability to pay. There is even the "spatial apartheid", a term coined by MacLeod & Ward (2002) with the increasing presence of consumption-oriented spaces.

As Benn and Gaus (1983) have mentioned, the three criteria to determine whether a space is public is its access, interest and agency with which access indicates access to spaces, activities, information and resources. Chan and Heng (2000) also suggest that the success of a public space is in its large number of users, variety of manners and intensity of activities. The way that people can go in and out of the area while freely practising all forms of activities, with the presence of unlocked gates and the non-practising of regulations proves this instrumental interpretation of social relations with the exchange among strangers. Public means impersonal and the relationships between the "non-intimate others", which is opposite to private, referring to the individuals and their personal and intimate relationships (Madanipour, 2013, p.8). The private-public nature of the Pier will be discussed throughout this study and that the redevelopment proposal on the establishment of community gardens at a particular part of the Pier that only certain people, i.e. urban farmers and their families and friends, of personal relationships, are allowed in the gardens can be seen as a form of privatization which further facilitates the discussion between public and private space.

As mentioned, no matter in a private or public space, certain degree of looseness can be found in a space. Loose space refers that there is no longer a fixed use of a space. "Loose space", or "porous space" (Stavrides, 2007), or leftover spaces (Hudson & Shaw, 2009) or heterotopias (Foucault, 1993) means that people are free to access the space, perform activities for personal escapes and interact with each other with their difference being encountered and negotiated even those are not in line with the existing rules, whether explicit or implicit (Cattell, Curtis, Dines & Gesler, 2008, p.544).

(3) Looseness with Possibility, Diversity & Disorder

Franck & Stevens (2007) further explains the virtues of loose space by the qualities of possibility, diversity and disorder which form the benefits and risks of the space. Any possibility, diversity and disorder shown at the Pier can be seen as characteristics of loose space.

a. Possibility

Possibility refers to the indeterminacy, the non-fixed use of the space which gives free access and rooms for unexpected activities, activities evolve due to the lack of choice of specific locations and activities resulted from "a relative lack of control and economic constraints" to grow and develop (Franck & Stevens, 2007, p.17). Such looseness is what Lynch (1990) would suggest as "open" and "free". Being free indicates choices are allowed among the people. People are allowed to interpret and live the space

themselves. With this, public spaces are participatory landscapes and are publically perceived, valued and controlled.

i.   Potentials, Predictability & Possibility

The non-fixed use which drives possibility is also being called as potentials of the public spaces, with which Stevens (2007) referred as the "ludic city". Public spaces allow informal, non-instrumental social interactions or play, with which people sense the urban settings and behave accordingly. This is related to spatial elements like paths, boundaries, image and distance, districts, landmarks, props, thresholds, etc. by Lynch (1981). It is how people react to them and generate their experiences and possibilities for actions, eventually leading to creativity, unpredictability, disorder, spontaneity, risk and change. For example, narrow paths can be stimulating and dangerous, as one does not know what would happen next. Thus, points of interactions give new directions of movements which may open up new experiences, flourishing possibilities. In addition, the image of a space can be unforgettable to people when it contrasts to "the surrounding urban fabric" and that the landmarks are the way-finding elements for people. Props can generate variety of activities, and the low-level use of thresholds like the space outside a store attracts people in performing playful activities, like a man dancing outside of a store can be totally out of expectation. The spatial perception affects diversified bodily actions.

According to Zube (1986), there are three types of public, professionals, interested public and general public involved in public landscapes. Professionals are urban planners and authorities, etc. with which Lefebvfe describes such people in conceiving the space. For example, in the US, the private developers make Americans feel comfortable to spend time in downtown plazas by providing opportunities for food, performers and benches. The interested public is those who are in favour of the plan by the professionals and the general public is the remaining group. For example, people realized the benefits of the farmers' market allowed by the authorities in public spaces like parks where people can buy vegetables, meet friends and exchange news with neighbours and that is the reason why such markets are revived again. An example is the Pike Place Market in Seattle that it is preserved in a historic district; it is a place for informal association that farmers and customers prefer (Tiemann, 2008). Farmers can work side-by-side with their families and can exchange information with other farmers. Customers can shop and converse with others. The markets are authorized by the planners and that the people support such plan. When it comes to general public, "the spectators may at any moment choose to become actors themselves" (Francis, 1989). Basically, all groups participate in forming the landscapes by imposing values through their actions, thus a certain form of control is brought into light. This is what Lofland (1998) refers to as parochialism. If a particular group starts going to a particular space for meeting what they desire, due to fear and lack of understanding of other groups or spaces. This can be seen as claiming the space and even creating their enclaves. This discourages others in using the space. Spierings, van Melik and van Aalst (2016) have illustrated that young Dutch women of Turkish and Moroccan descent avoid visiting Rotterdam's Schouwburgplein, an urban plaza on Friday evening and avoid young men of Turkish and Moroccan descent there. They often visit the plaza together with family

and friends out of social discomfort. Consequently, they are creating their own space without the presence of undesirable elements to their view. The possibility of their space is predictable.

ii. Control & Possibility

Possibility of a space is determined by the presence of the degree of control. While no group is dominant in exerting their control, more possibilities, thus social interactions can be flourished. This is what Jansen, Jeffries, Lipson, Macer, O'Hara and Unger (2004) have come up with in their study of using the Jukola music box that the owner and staff in a café no longer takes control of creating the environment with their choice of music, instead the people are taking control of that. People enjoyed such control as they felt being involved in what music was played and the possibilities for the next song in turn encouraged discussion among the group. This affirmed the bonds and relationships between people in the space. To sum up, with choices allowed, and the space with which all groups are able to impose a certain degree of control, this allows possibility to grow in the space, thus creating looseness in the space.

When it comes to the concept of control, Lynch (1981) proposes that presence, use and action, appropriation, modification and disposition are five forms of spatial control. Presence is the right of access to the space. Use and action is how the actor uses the space. Appropriation allows actors to claim ownership of the space, either symbolic or real. Modification is the right to change a space to facilitate use. Disposition is that the actors are able to transfer the use and ownership of a space to others. To add, attachment of meanings to a space is also a form of spatial control that the direct involvement of the public to the design, building and the use of a space could enhance its meanings. After all, the goal of public control of a space is to create differences in the lives of the public.

Consequently, differences mean the variety of the actions of these people which generate more possibilities, i.e. more activities. These possibilities can be political, commercial or experimental. Political groups are able to promote themselves and express their beliefs, street food vendors are able to seek for commercial opportunities without the authorities' control and activities such as homeless people sleeping in the space, artists and musicians going to a space and find a place to work, etc. are regarded as experimental due to the lack of choice to happen in other places. In this study, whether the users are able to participate, perceive, control and attach meanings to the Pier which encourage possibilities for its looseness, is the focus.

b. Diversity

Diversity refers to the variety of activities grown from possibility, which means people can perform their needs and desire through actions with which identity to the place and culture can be flourished eventually. In public spaces like parks, activities such as "chatting, eating, or reading and not paying much attention to others", greeting each other through eye contact and nodding and socializing with friends and neighbours are commonly found (Peters, 2010; Cohen et al., 2007). Also, parks with large

open spaces facilitate physical activities such as jogging, walking, doing sports, exercising. With such open space, people experience the beauty of the space by breathing in fresh air, and for recreation such as music, art and chess (Cohen et al., 2007).

i.   Activities & Diversity

As mentioned earlier, Gehl (2011) comes up with three types of activities, necessary, optional and social. Necessary activities are compulsory performances like going to work or school, no matter how the physical conditions are like. Optional activities on the other hand, are dependent on the exterior factors. They take place only when the conditions are favourable. Weather can be a condition for such activities, for example going for a walk or sunbathing due to the sunny weather. Environment of public spaces can be another. Peters (2010) researches into parks in Nijmegen. She finds that Goffertpark encourages more active activities such as football, walking, playing with children. It is with a large shade that attracts people picnicking in large groups. What's more, people visit Thiemepark as they treat it as their gardens, without having one at their homes. These activities happen only when time and place invite them. Whereas for social activities, they occur because of the presence of others, they are also being called as resultant activities as they are connected to other activities at the place. Those happen because of the presence of other activities. Conversing and interacting with other people are examples as people perform such activities with the presence of others in public spaces. For the optional and social activities, these are "neither productive (like travelling to work) nor reproductive (like buying necessities)" (Franck & Stevens, 2007, p.2). Instead, they are self-expressions, outside daily routines and can be happened against the accepted norms or laws (Franck & Stevens, 2007, p.4). Urban spaces are interesting when people are being drawn to the public and with such diversity of activities which "gives people pleasure and excitement" (Fainstein, 2005; Young, 1990).

ii.   Social Relationships & Diversity

People encounter others who are similar to themselves, but also those who are much more different than them. It is possible for people to meet their neighbours and co-workers that they maintain contact in this relaxed way (Gehl, 2011). People may find unanticipated, new and different activities. On one hand, they tolerate with one another. On the other hand, various activities in a space means the diversity of users, city streets and public space are where social values are asserted and contested according to Malone (2002). Sandercock (1997) proposes that urban diversity is crucial for a just city that allows people from a variety of ethnic and racial backgrounds equal rights to city space. The multiplicity of people creates "the pleasures of anonymity", with which she even relates it to sexual desire and fantasy. However, with reference to Valentine (2008), city is a site of differences filled with social contacts of strangers, where people talk to one another as "customers and shopkeepers, passengers and cabdrivers, members of a bus queue". Unfamiliar ones can enter and experience each other's' lives, in turn developing their own experience and sense towards the environment. Nevertheless, this kind of social interaction, i.e. urban encounters is shallow and cannot grow respect for each other. An example

is a study in Aylesbury (Holland et al., 2007), which sees that although the urban public spaces are diversified with various groups, one group just practices activities on their own instead of doing that together with other groups. Self-segregation is shown. Another study by Amin (2002) finds that there is actually little connection or exchange between strangers in public spaces like streets. Further study by Phillips (2005) reflects that for the UK communities, people live their "parallel lives". People with similar backgrounds tend to be a group, the white majority sees migrants negatively for that they are stealing their jobs and low-income people are being seen as dependent to the government. Prejudice is therefore produced.

iii. Spaces & Diversity

Spaces of interdependence are needed to improve the social relationships between people (Valentine, 2008). Spaces construct our sense of identity with their classification (Malone, 2002). Strong classified spaces like shopping malls, churches, schools welcome only those who belong and behave. Spaces with a purposive and organized group activity like schools, clinic or gym are examples. For example, a park next to a school may gather parents to talk to each other on the school policy as they share the same interests. Sometimes with the politicization of space with increasing regulation and control, various social groups will feel excluded in different time and space because of "political and moral censure". On the contrary, weakly classified spaces or loose spaces like sporting venues, carnivals and festivals which are not fixedly defined allow variance and diversity. Differences are therefore tolerated and even celebrated. With diversity, it is usually in weakly classified and loose spaces, and spaces without interdependence where social relationships may not be strong and in-depth as imagined.

In this way, meanings to the space differ among various people; no matter it is a fixed or non-fixed space. For example, young people would feel more comfortable in the street for social activity, with almost little or no "parental or adult control". They are able to explore "their sense of belonging, place and self-identity". Undoubtedly, social contact with various people would form certain social values of the space (Banerjee, 2001). All of them refer to the freeness, otherness of the space out of the homogeneity of reality and the existence of differences presented. Such social interaction among the people can increase social cohesion and create sense of acceptance with one another (Peters, 2010). In this study, while exploring the meanings of the Pier to these diversified users, whether they are different among themselves would be placed emphasis upon.

c. Disorder

Disorder refers to a mix of possibility and diversity with spontaneity and play which creates chaos and results in messy appearances of the space. In other words, disorder may come from the physical deterioration of urban landscapes, such as "graffiti on buildings, abandoned cars, broken windows, and garbage in the streets" (Raudenbush & Sampson, 1999). People are invited to imagine and create their own arrangement of space. The danger and risks determine the disorder which makes the space

inefficient and uncomfortable as they may disrupt the "everyday routines and instrumental tasks" (Franck & Stevens, 2007, p.22). The presence of lighting also determines the order of a space, with which disorder is often associated with crime, fear and safety (Painter, 1996). Darkness generates the sense of insecurity as "dark or dimly lit streets create a limitless source of blind spots, shadows and potential places of entrapment" that allows disorderly behaviour. Street lighting increases the intensity of use of the space where the proximity of large number of people can create natural surveillance and public confidence is resulted.

Apart from the environment, some people see the disorder arises from these new activities and social processes as a threat to social order. Jacobs (1961) believes that disorder may threaten neighbourhood civility in the public encounters of strangers with negotiation. Forsyth (2006) also states that the drunken people from nightclubs in the streets create a sense of insecurity to the general public that people feel safer only when there is police nearby. Ranasinghe (2011) also mentions certain behaviour related to public order such as "panhandling, squeegeeing, loitering or public drinking and drunkenness". All of these social disorders would possibly lead to the increasingly intense administration of urban space, which means the rise of a fortress city with enhanced control, surveillance and security efforts as suggested by Smith (2001). To add, with parochialism by Lofland (1998) as mentioned, people are fear of unfamiliar and other social groups, the increasing control, and security of the space are the yearns of people which further shows that social processes create disorder which eventually lead to tighter control.

It is noted that any "privatization, commodification and sanitization of public and quasi-public space in cities" are viewed as homogenization of activities and encroachment to choices (Franck & Stevens, 2007, p.4). All forms of activities at the Pier should therefore be observed and studied that reveal its looseness and accordingly its meaning to the users. The quality of public space simply tells the quality of urban life as the presence of random encounters represents the functioning of a democratic society (Tuters, 2004). Thus, the perceptions and experiences of the users in the space bring reflections to the existing situation of public spaces in a city as a whole.

(4) Place-making as a Place Production Process

When viewing place-making together with spatial triad suggested by Lefebvre (1991), the production of space is a collective social process. "Spatial practice" belongs to the material dimension with which the physical space is used and activities are produced with its setting. "Representations of space" is the semiotic dimension that with maps and urban plans by people in power, the space is imagined. "Spaces of representation" is the social dimension that people associate them with meanings. Place-making is hence a place production process that encompasses all three elements of the spatial triad (Franz, Güles & Prey, 2008). With the dynamic process of people actively using the place as a lived space, users are certainly making it a place with meanings. Place-making indicates "the socio-spatial processes which construct place, and in particular the social and physical construction of places by people" (Lombard, 2014, p.14). To sum up, people transform the places where we are at or in, into places where we live, i.e. create meanings (Schneekloth & Shibley, 1995, p.1). When places are imagined collectively, this can
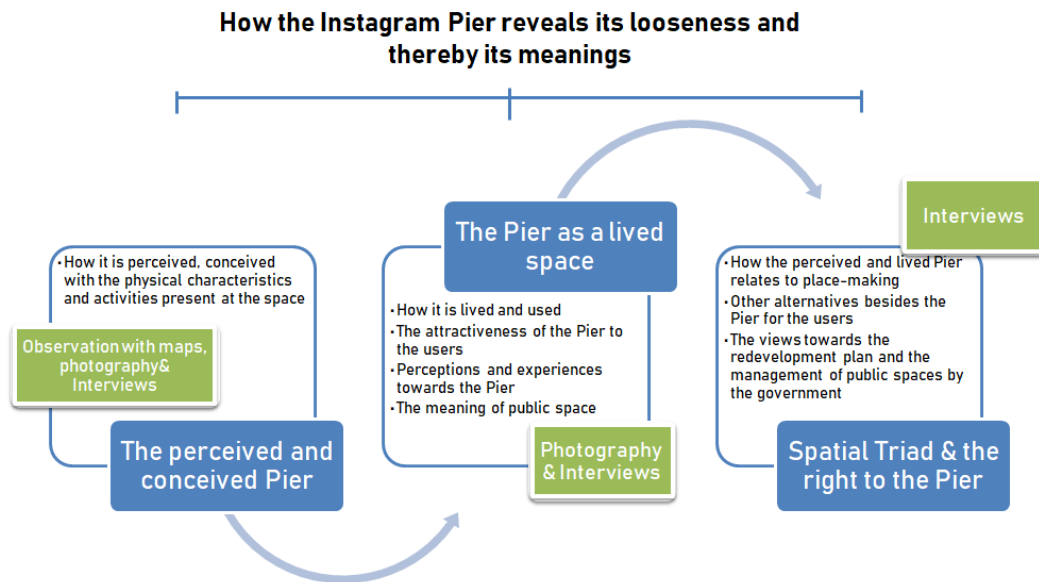
maximize shared value. Place-making is in fact a bottom-up approach in urban design and planning that involves public participation. It is centered on "observing, listening to, and asking questions of the people who use the space in order to understand their needs and aspirations for that space and for their community as a whole" (Project for Public Spaces, 2018). The concept is actually not new with both Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte focusing on designing spaces for the people. "Eyes on the street" by Jacobs has encouraged people to be a part, to take ownership of the city (Jacobs, 1961). This study provides evidence of the possibility of place-making in Hong Kong, which gives implications to urban planners.

As suggested by Lefebvre (1991, p.365), the general public who participates themselves in a specific space are "speaking, moving, and producing space(s)". Nevertheless, at such abstract space, the problem may be that all their voices, movements and productions are not registered and recognized with which this will be looked into in the case of the Pier. The right to the city should be emphasized when the user of the city is in fact "a participant in its creation and interpretation" (Shields, 2013, p.346). Shields (2013) describes the occupy movement at Zuccotti Park in New York's Wall Street financial district that reflects new forms and opportunities for community in the space. Further, the right to the city is basically the radical struggle beyond the state and capitalism (Lefebvre, 1996). The general public would like to "de-alienate" urban space by reintegrating it into the web of social connections. The concepts of appropriation and autogestion arise. The inhabitants would like to appropriate space in the city, meaning to make it their own and to create it in the way that they think proper (Lefebvre, 1996, p.174). Appropriation is a "right" as opposite to property rights of property owners to Lefebvre (1996). Autogestion implies the participation among activated citizens to produce urban space themselves. With their active participation, they begin to realize their own collective power, and specialized professionals in the management of the space become redundant (Purcell, 2013, p.150). The everyday experience of living the city by the citizens entitles them to a right to the city (Purcell, 2013, p.142). As a result, the role that the general public is playing and their perceptions towards the Pier and public spaces in Hong Kong are crucial to bring reflections to the approach in urban management that the government has been adopting. Hence the debate on the management of the Pier with the right to the city is discussed.

Methodology

This research is a case study into the looseness of the Instagram Pier and what it means to the people, by looking first into how the pier is produced with the spatial triad by Lefebvre (1991), which is how it is perceived, conceived and lived; and while exploring the Pier as a lived space with the concept of looseness in terms of possibility, diversity and disorder by Franck & Stevens (2007), the attractiveness of the space and therefore its meaning to the people and their perceptions towards public spaces are discussed. Lastly, the people's view on the redevelopment plan is looked into, which may reveal the importance of such loose space to them. Further, the right to the Pier and the management practice by the government are reflected. In order to get an in-depth and holistic account for the study, qualitative and participatory research methods are adopted to answer each sub-question with various issues as listed in the figure as follows *(Figure 1)*.

Figure 1: The Framework of the Study and How the Research Questions are Discussed

How the Instagram Pier reveals its looseness and thereby its meanings

The perceived and conceived Pier
- How it is perceived, conceived with the physical characteristics and activities present at the space

Observation with maps, photography & Interviews

The Pier as a lived space
- How it is lived and used
- The attractiveness of the Pier to the users
- Perceptions and experiences towards the Pier
- The meaning of public space

Photography & Interviews

Spatial Triad & the right to the Pier
- How the perceived and lived Pier relates to place-making
- Other alternatives besides the Pier for the users
- The views towards the redevelopment plan and the management of public spaces by the government

Interviews

(1) Qualitative & Participatory Research Methods

Qualitative research aims at exploring the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and the subject of study, and situations that raise questions. How social experience is created and given meaning is placed emphasis upon. Whereas quantitative research does not focus on the processes, but simply the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.10). A triggering point for this study would be the proposal of redevelopment announced by the government, the looseness and the meanings to the Pier are thus being studied, leading to the reflections of the public spaces in Hong Kong in general. The qualitative research method is useful in the way that it aims at studying people's experiences in a specific social context which fit to the nature of this study very much (Snape & Spencer, 2003). Additionally, the emic perspective of qualitative research would allow the researcher to know more about the insider's point of view and their perceptions, beliefs and meaning system (Hennink, Hutter & Bailey, 2011). Specifically, with reference to Merriam (1988, p.2, 10), qualitative case study is ideal for "understanding and interpreting observations of social phenomena"; the method is also chosen for "investigating different sites in the ambiguous urban space, such as reclamation area" (Yin, 1993, 1994). With the ambiguity of this Pier of being private and public, using case study is fit here.

For participatory research method, it is to conduct the research process with the people and their world and actions are studied. It allows researchers to step back consciously "from familiar routines, forms of interaction, and power relationships" with a view to question and rethink the situations that they have encountered through the participants (Bergold & Thomas, 2012). As the research is participant-wise, new aspects and knowledge can be discovered with which participants let the researcher experience

how they connect to the environment with their senses, and how they experience the city, places and spaces which produce their own "seescapes, soundscapes, smellscapes, tastescapes, and touchscapes" that meanings evolve (Borer, 2013). As "qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" with a set of interpretive and material practices, observation, photographs and walk-along interviews are used to record and analyze the actual experience of the people at the Pier (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p.3).

a. Naturalistic Observation

For the first sub-question to the spatial triad of the Pier, with which how the Pier is perceived and conceived, naturalistic observation will be conducted to record the temporal and spatial forms of physical characteristics and activities of the space. The flow of behaviour at the Pier would be observed right at the setting which results in greater ecological validity. The general situation of the Pier would be known as well and provide as the base of the research before actual interviews start. Population counts, behavioural and movement maps are produced accordingly for analysis with reference to what Low (2010) has done in attempt to research the design and meaning of plazas in Costa Rica.

b. Photography

Photographs are taken for illustrating how the space is produced and how it is perceived and conceived. As a result, the first sub-question can be discussed with such method as pictures can show the activities present at the Pier. During the interview, participants will be asked to take or provide a picture of what represents the most of the Pier in their mind. This is called auto-photography. This can serve as a way to explore the emotions and memories of participants, that photographs are more than records, but are "thoughts to reproduce the reality in front of the camera's lens", containing meaning to the photographer (Schwartz, 1989, p.120). Thus, the second sub-question for describing how the space is lived can be reacted upon as the pictures from the participants show their perceptions towards the Pier.

c. Interviews

In-depth, semi-structured and even walk-along interviews will be used for all the three sub-questions. Through interviews, the first two sub-questions on how the space is perceived, conceived and lived can be revealed. The participants would guide the researcher to the usual route that they take at the Pier or to describe it or show it on the map provided and to introduce what they usually do at the Pier. The full picture of daily life, experiences and situations encountered by the participants would be understood; and the open-ended and non-fixed questions during the interviews would encourage the participants to express more on their views on the Pier and public spaces in Hong Kong. Purposive and snowball sampling are used for inviting participants. Users of the Pier as participants can be found directly at the Pier or from participants known. Not only users of the Pier will be interviewed, but District Councillors

and members of local community groups such as Sai Wan Community Concern, Protect Kennedy Town, and Island West Dynamic Movement which concern the development of the Pier are also potential participants who have contact with users of the Pier and are representatives of the residents in the district. The third sub-question on place-making as related to the perceived and lived Pier and further, the participants' views towards the scene of public space in Hong Kong can be reflected.

Cantonese or English is used as the interview language in the context of Hong Kong with which the residents are easier to express themselves with their mother tongue that the researcher is able to get the full picture of their experiences. All interviews are recorded and transcribed. Transcripts are translated from Chinese to English when necessary and all of them are analyzed.

(2) Observation Protocol

Observations are carried out both on weekdays and weekends in order to get a view of the possible difference in users and activities *(Appendix I)*.

The primary exploratory observation lasts for two days. The weekday is to have a general picture of the Pier transiting from a space for freighting and cargo facilities to a space that the public starts entering to perform all sorts of activities. And the weekend day aims at looking for points of comparisons. The goal for primary observation is to get the touch of the physical setting of the Pier and the activities carried out at the Pier can be acknowledged. What's more, certain spots for actual observations can be determined. Actual observation lasts for four days, two weekdays and two weekend days with which movement and behaviourial maps are produced.

The observations take place from 2:00pm to 8:00pm; therefore some hours are used to observe the differences before and after cargo use as cargo activities are believed to be active before 5:00pm. Also, it would be interesting to explore the use of the Pier when and after the sun sets, thus the observation is carried out until 8:00pm. As the Pier is spacious that it is impossible to carry out observation at one spot only, two spots for observation are designated to get a better view of the movement and activities of users *(Figure 2)*. A spot is around Berth 13 to 26 and another spot is around Berth 1 to 12. For each hour, 30 minutes are spent at each spot, and within the half an hour, 10 minutes are spent for observing the movements, and 10 minutes are for observing the behaviours. Movement and behaviourial maps are produced accordingly *(Results& Discussion, Appendix II & III)*.

Figure 2: Location Plan of the Pier/ Location of Observation Spots (edited by author)
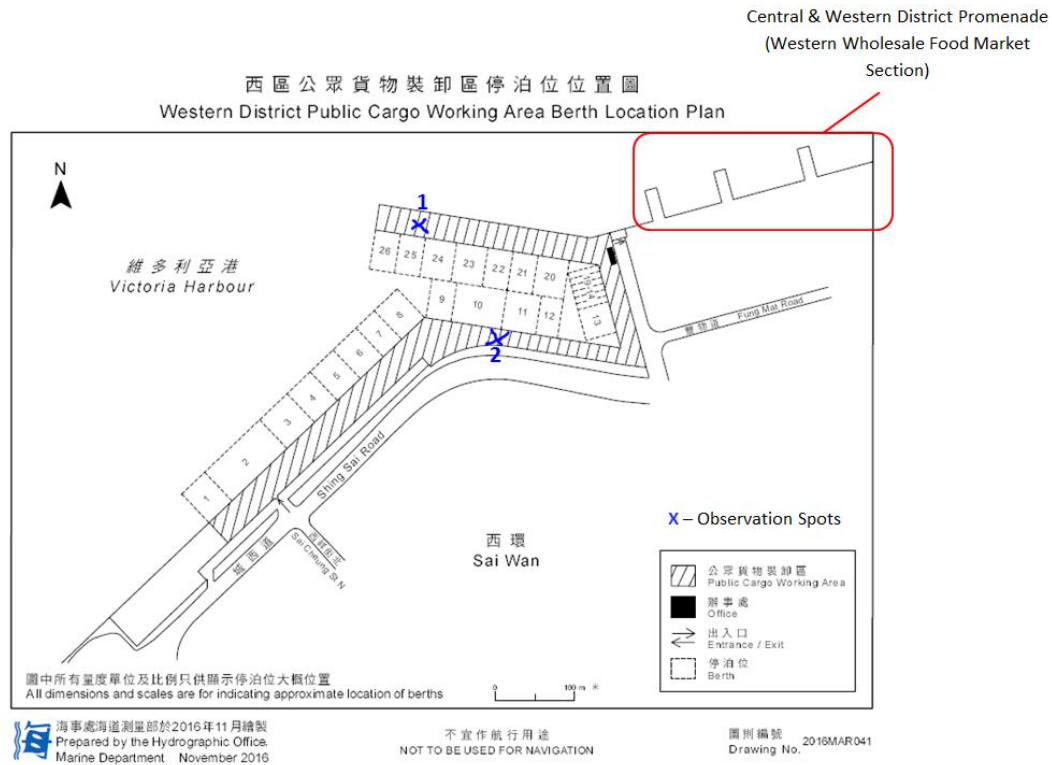
(3) Interview Protocol

Each interview lasts around half an hour and it is to get to know how users experience the Instagram Pier. During the interview, the participant is asked to take or provide a picture of what he/she thinks it represents the Pier the most. To begin with, he/she is asked to guide the researcher about where he/she usually goes or does if he/she is spending time at the Pier.

The topic list *(Appendix V)* for the interview is based on the literature review on the three dimensions of looseness with possibility, diversity and disorder, researching into the routine, meaning and experience of the users. With such structure, how the pier is perceived, conceived, lived and used, the relationship between the perceived and lived and their views on the management of the Pier can be reflected. On this account, the looseness of the Pier and its meanings to the users can be revealed eventually.

15 participants were being interviewed from mid-June to early July. Each interview was around 20 minutes to 45 minutes. The interviews were recorded with the permission from the participants. Recordings were transcribed and to be used as quotations in the analysis. The age of participants ranges from 20 to 75, including 8 female and 7 male, and their education level ranges from primary school to PhD. This enables a general view of the Pier which may differ in age, gender and education level *(Appendix VI)*.

(4) Limitations

A limitation of qualitative research is that it is highly subjective which includes only views of a group of participants. Hence, with observations with which behavioural, movement maps, and statistics are produced, all of these illustrations are able to guarantee and portray the situation of the use of the Pier better.

Yet, for those participatory methods used, limitations are found when they are carried out. For observation, first it is found that as the Pier is open and spacious that it is impossible to observe the Pier at one spot only, therefore two observations spots are included. With the two spots, this can make the counting and recording more representable, the Pier can be reflected all-rounded. Second, it is found that the weather can affect the well-being of the researcher which may affect the observation processes. Whether it is too sunny or raining too heavily, there is basically no shelter to hide. Precautions such as bringing an umbrella or sunglasses, with a small electric fan in hand are musts. Third, as time is needed to walk from one spot to another for observation, therefore any 10 minutes within the half an hour time frame is taken note only. Besides, with the spacious location and few street lamps during the night, once people gather together, the ethnicity of people is hard to be noticed. Though there is some missing data, the intermittent presence of non-Chinese users can still be found.

For the interviews, walk-along methods may be not realistic that first participants who are found at the Pier may be reluctant to move as they are performing certain activities on the spot, let alone requesting them to take pictures of the Pier. Besides, some interviews are not able to be carried out at the Pier due to weather conditions. Therefore, for exploring into how participants experience the Pier clearly, instead of leading the researcher to the usual route they take, it is an alternative to describe the route verbally instead with the map provided. In addition, for the duration of interviews with on-the-spot participants, it usually cannot be as long as those with participants with an appointment made beforehand as they are performing certain activities. To deal with such limitation, some key questions from each section of the topic list are asked, to grasp how they use and experience the Pier.

Results & Discussion

With reference to observation with movement and behavioural maps and interviews, the production of space at the Pier is first discussed. The conceived space shows how the Pier is originally planned and how it is used at present under the preference and policy adopted by the authorities. The spatial practice can show the observable physical setting and the resulted movement and behaviours. Whereas for the lived Pier, that reflects how users give meaning to the Pier which consequently leads to the discussion of the looseness of the Pier in the next section. It is due to its looseness so that it can be lived. In turn, the looseness in terms of possibility, diversity and disorder determines the liveliness of the Pier. In the third section, with the looseness revealed, the implicit meanings of the Pier and whether meanings are differed are illustrated. Lastly, the meanings show the users' stance and opinions towards the conceived Pier and their hope for the future brings reflections on the thought of rights to and

management of the Pier. All sections are closely linked and interconnected, bringing insights to the future use of the space.

(1) Production of the Pier

a. The Conceived Pier

i. Present Management by Marine Department

The conceived Pier reflects what the people in power, the authorities would like to have for the activities happening at the Pier. It is their representations of space (Lefebvre, 1991). The urban planners say it all for the management and the use of the space.

At present, the Pier is managed by the Marine Department of the Hong Kong government for freighting. It is said that "public Cargo Working Areas are seafronts for vessel cargo operations managed by the Cargo Handling Section" (HKSAR, 2009). The berths are leased by cargo operators. It is clear that the Pier is a private space in the sense that it is used solely for cargo working. Besides, the opening hours of 7:00am to 9:00pm every day is stated at the entrances which indicates the area is closed to the public. Warning signs can be found everywhere at the Pier, stating that all persons entering the area are at their own risk and should be aware of the danger *(Figure 3-5)*. The opening hours suggest a temporal change of use of the Pier. Persons who found using the area other than cargo loading and uploading can be subject to a fine of HKD 10,000 and to an imprisonment of 6 months. Even during the exploratory observation on Wednesday, 30th May 2018, there was a security guard walking around the Pier, giving out notices to people who wander at the Pier, notifying them about the potential danger. There should be no other use, except for cargo working in the eyes of the authorities.

Yet, in practice, is it the case that the authorities really stop people from entering the area? It is for sure that they are not welcoming the public to the area due to safety reasons. Those signs are there, the security guards are there, but they are not interfering those activities happening or asking people to leave. The action of distributing the notice is only a gesture that they need to do something with regard to its formal nature as noted by P5.

'The reason for that paper is when the Pier becomes popular, they need to do something and these measures usually last for 2 days only.' – P5

All participants said that they can get access to the Pier every time they get there. When talking to P6, a District Councillor, he admitted that the area was originally a cargo working area and the policy of distributing those notices is to clear out the liability of insurance, as legally people are not allowed.

'The whole area was originally a cargo working area. So how did it transform into the current status? It was started after residents in the neighbourhood expressed their concern if they could enter the area at night and we have communicated with the Marine Department. Legally it is not allowed for people to go into the area as it involves insurance problem. If there is accident, there would be no insurance coverage

as this is a place for cargo working only. Later the Marine Department adopted the policy which issued warning letter to the trespassers, without strictly asking them to leave. So this policy has taken place for a few years.' – P6

This comes to the situation that the Pier is conceived as a cargo working area undoubtedly but in reality, it is loose that the Marine Department tolerates and adopts a "positive non-interventionist" stance towards the users, apart from the cargo handlers. Implicitly, the authorities tolerate the Pier as a public space with all kinds of activities, conceiving the Pier in this way unwritten. The Pier thus appears as an informal public space, which is both private and public that allows improvisation of public behaviours.
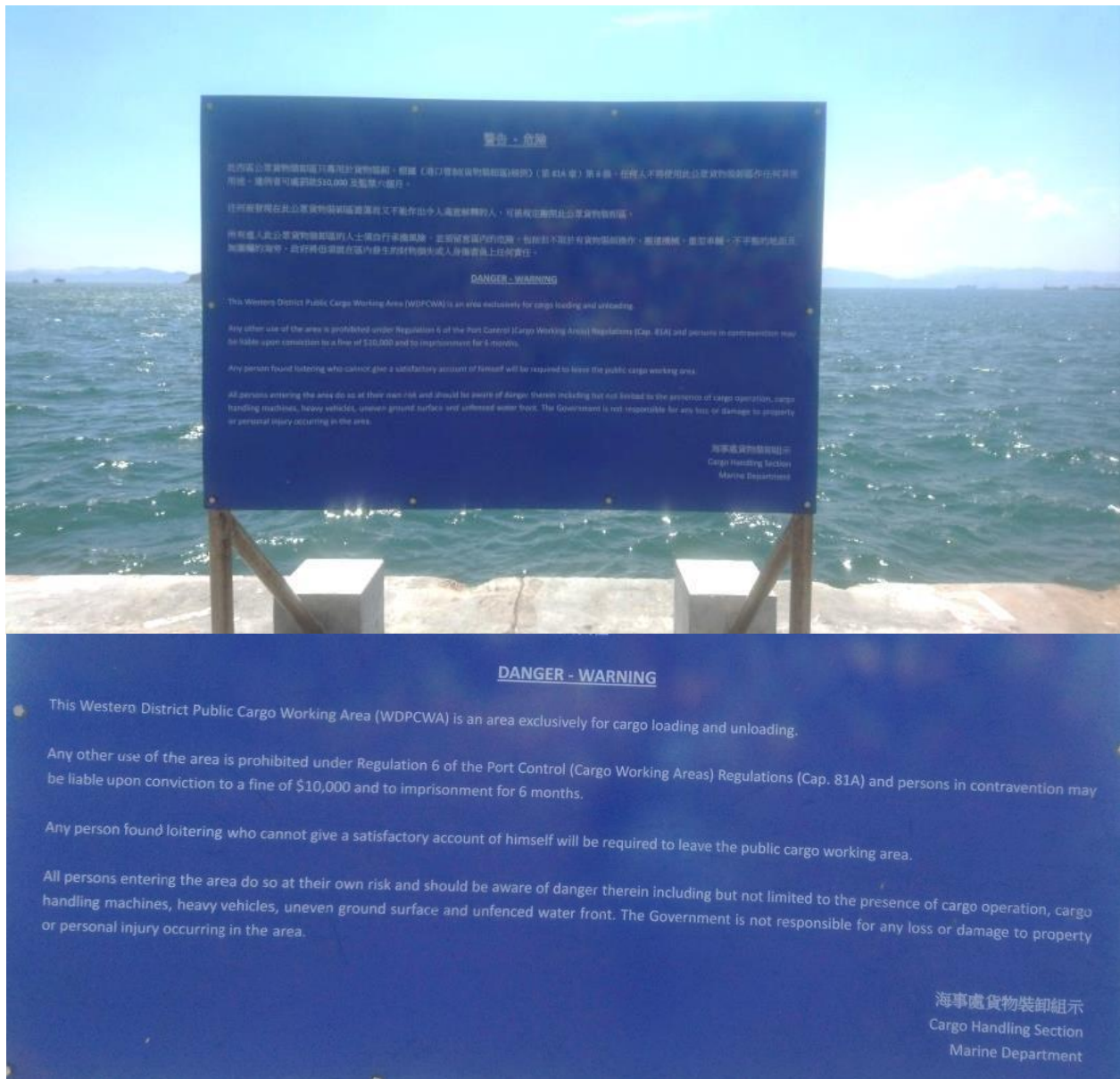
Figure 3: Opening Hours stated near the Entrance of Berth 13-26

Figure 4: Warning Sign at the Entrance at Berth 13-26

Figure 5: Warning Sign at Berth 13-26

DANGER - WARNING

This Western District Public Cargo Working Area (WDPCWA) is an area exclusively for cargo loading and unloading.

Any other use of the area is prohibited under Regulation 6 of the Port Control (Cargo Working Areas) Regulations (Cap. 81A) and persons in contravention may be liable upon conviction to a fine of $10,000 and to imprisonment for 6 months.

Any person found loitering who cannot give a satisfactory account of himself will be required to leave the public cargo working area.

All persons entering the area do so at their own risk and should be aware of danger therein including but not limited to the presence of cargo operation, cargo handling machines, heavy vehicles, uneven ground surface and unfenced water front. The Government is not responsible for any loss or damage to property or personal injury occurring in the area.

海事處貨物裝卸組示
Cargo Handling Section
Marine Department

ii.   Attempts in Formalizing the Space

The government's stance in the ideas of changing and formalizing the use of the Pier has revealed in the Policy Address announced in October 2017. They would like to beautify the harbourfront and the site in Kennedy Town, is identified to make "the running of a community garden and related uses through a short-term tenancy in the first quarter of 2018" available (HKSAR, 2017). In January 2018, it is said that the former berth 1 to 3 would be developed as community gardens. The area is open for bidding, making it possible for the winning organization to open restaurants and shops, and install railings and lights. The

space is also possible to be managed by the Cultural and Leisure Department of the government, which manages other public spaces like parks in Hong Kong. In May 2018, concrete proposals have been made by the Development Bureau that the area will be managed by both the government and other organizations. Community garden, rain shelters, a multi-purpose and a pet garden with railings, lighting and timber decking are to be built *(Figure 6-10)*. It is targeted to open the area in phases starting from the end of 2018 (HKSAR, 2018). Such plans at former Berth 1 to 3 are seen as an initial step in formalizing the whole Pier. The newly opened Central & Western District Promenade (Western Wholesale Food Market Section) on 28th April, 2018 next to the Pier is another sample for how it is going to be for the management of the entire Pier in the future. It is an extension of the Promenade and in long term, the promenade should be connected well that people can walk on the northern shore of Hong Kong Island. The railings that are currently used at the Promenade will be adopted in such redevelopment plan for former Berth 1 to 3.

Even in a community level, urban planners from the Department of Urban Planning and Design of the University of Hong Kong (HKU) have imagined the Western Harbourfront in the Conceptual Master Plan issued by the Central & Western District Council, with the Pier recreational, making it global and international with tourism, food , markets, art and culture (HKSAR, 2014) *(Figure 11)*.

All of these indicate a fixed use of the Pier, and the authorities and urban planners attempt to make it a formal public space in long term. Therefore, the Pier is first conceived to be a cargo working area, then likely to be a formal recreational space in the near future. This can be seen as limiting the choices and thus freeness of the lived Pier with various activities and meanings conveyed by the users.

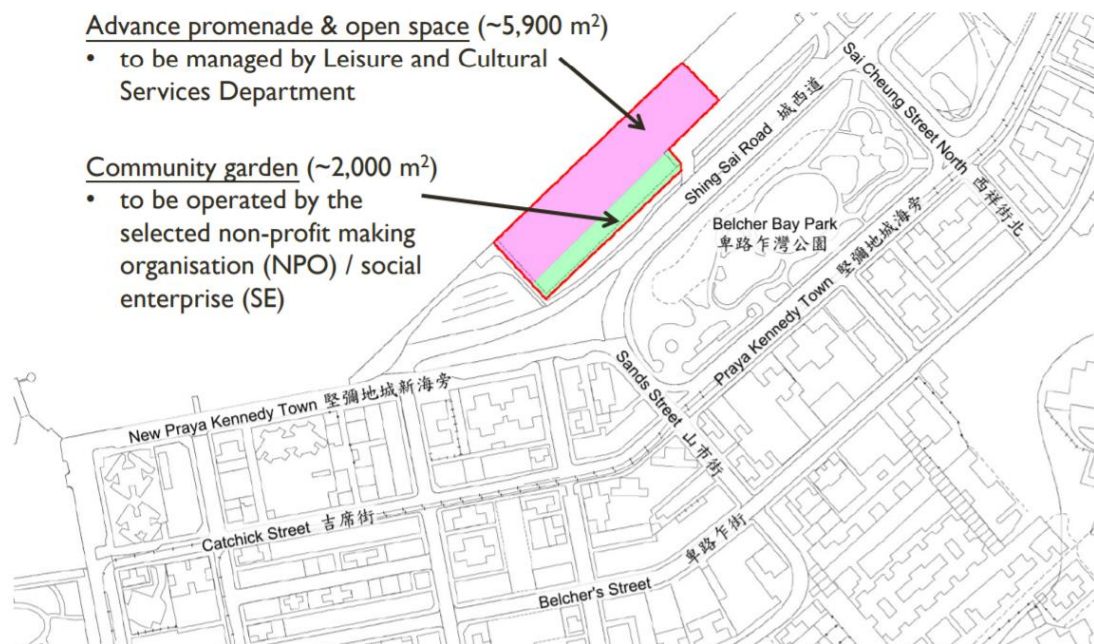Figure 6: Proposed Plan by Development Bureau (Source: HKSAR, 2018)

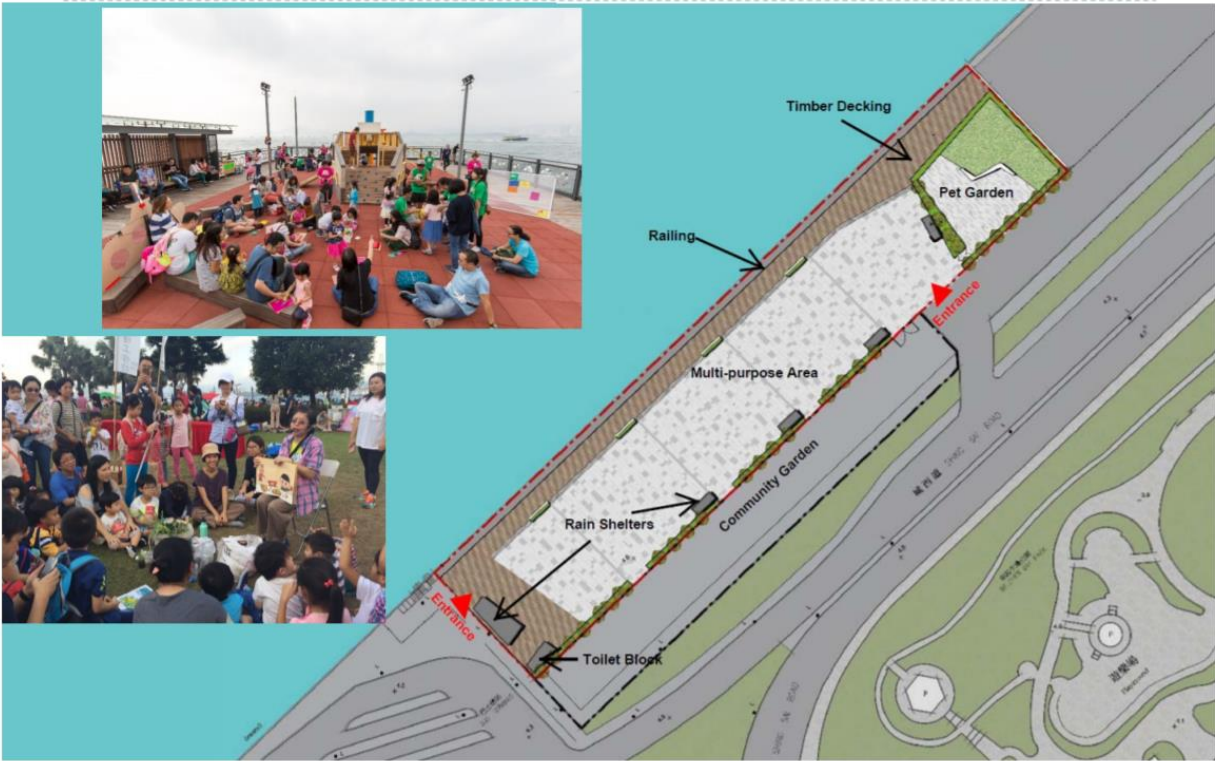Figure 7: Proposed Design by Development Bureau (Source: HKSAR, 2018)

Figure 8: Proposed Pet Garden by Development Bureau (Source: HKSAR, 2018)

Figure 9: Proposed Rain Shelter by Development Bureau (Source: HKSAR, 2018)

Figure 10: The Newly-Opened Promenade Section with Railings

Figure 11: The Imagined Pier by Urban Planners from HKU (Source: HKSAR, 2014)

b. Spatial Practice of the Pier

i. Physical Setting

Spatial practice is observable and the perceived space with all physical surroundings that influence the practice of users at the Pier (Lefebvre, 1991). There were originally 29 berths altogether, but as the government would like to redevelop the part (former Berth 1 to 3) next to the current Berth 1, only 26 berths are seen in the location plan. When it comes to the physical surroundings *(Figure 2)*, there are basically two subspaces, Berth 13 to 26 forms one and Berth 1 to 12 is another. When looking at their characteristics, for Berth 13 to 26, there is an entrance at Berth 14 to 19, where Berth 20 to 26 (refer to as "finger" as follows) is a protruding part to the west, it is not difficult to understand when users enter through that entrance, they are facing towards this extended part, with which they can view the Victoria Harbour directly, from front, left or right *(Figure 12)*. This part is also referred to the "finger" by the participants with its long-rectangular shape.

'If you ask me, we called this area (Berth 13-26) "finger".' – P5

The physical environment of the "finger" includes several street lamps in the middle *(Figure 12)* and the presence of pallets *(Figure 13, 14)*, a few shelters with random containers *(Figure 15, 16)*. It is noted that there are no railings by the sea side. This part is next to Fung Mai Road as shown in the map, which locates at Shek Tong Tsui in the Western District.

Whereas for Berth 1 to 12, it looks like a long corridor at the seaside, or promenade, users can walk from Shek Tong Tsui to Shing Sai Road or Sai Cheung Street (or the other way round), which locates at Kennedy Town in the Western District. It is imagined that users are able to look at the Victoria Harbour while walking on this long passageway to their right or left. Its physical environment not only includes cargo and shelters, but it is also observed that construction materials like bamboo sticks, large piles of tiles, oil cans, etc. and machines like cranes are dispersed throughout the area *(Figure 17-22)*.

Such physical setting at the two subspaces may determine the movement and behaviours of the users. Movement and behavioural maps are made during observations and with the help of the interview transcripts, the general picture of the use of the two subspaces can be shown vividly.

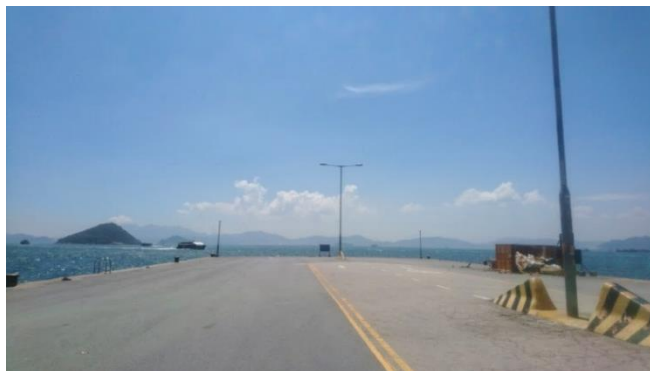Figure 12: View of Berth 13-26 from Entrance with Street Lamps

Figure 13: Container with Pallets at Berth 13-26

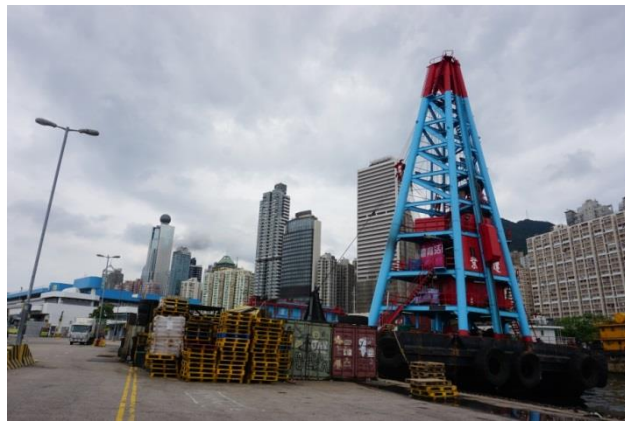Figure 14: Cargo, Container and Pallets at Berth 13-26

Figure 15: View from Berth 1-12 to Berth 13-26/ Shelters at Berth 13-26

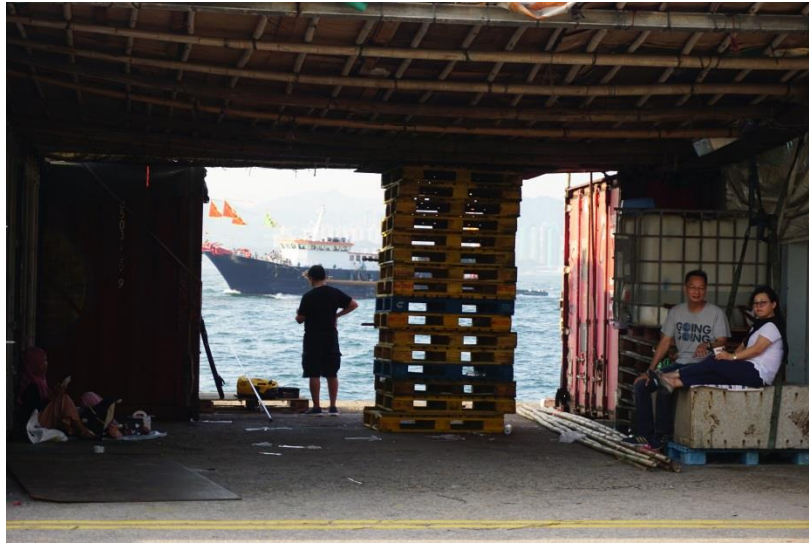Figure 16: Shelter with People at Berth 13-26

Figure 17: Berth 1-12 with Dispersed Materials

Figure 18: Berth 1-12 with Crane

Figure 19: Berth 1-12 with Shelter, Container, Pallets, etc.

Figure 20: Berth 1-12 with Bamboo Sticks

Figure 21: Berth 1-12 with Large Piles of Tiles

ii.   Movement of Users

Not much variation is shown in the movement maps made for all the four days of observation. At the end, the maps on Saturday and Sunday, at Observation Spot 1 and 2 are picked to illustrate the overall trend and the difference in the flow of people at weekend and on weekday, assisted by interview transcripts.

On Saturday, 9th June 2018, there was a continuous flow of people walking in all possible directions at the two subspaces at the Pier *(Figure 23, 24)*. P4 points out one of the activities - fishing, is happening at all subspaces of the Pier, and particularly the "finger" subspace due to its location next to the sea.

'I think the entire Pier has all those activities, people go fishing everywhere here. The "finger" (while pointing at Berth 13-26) attracts people to fish. People also fish at Berth 1 to 3 too.' – P4

From 1400 to 1600 (refer to HOUR for the following), there were fewer people (less than 10) when comparing to other time slots of the day. From 1600 onwards, there were more people, with 21 to 30 persons and 11 to 20 persons going to the "finger" at Spot 1 and Spot 2 respectively. The number of people was the most (31 to 40 persons) during 1730 to 1800 and 1800 to 1830. It is possible that people visited because it was almost sunset time for all participants, the sunset is beautiful with such protruding "finger" which shows both the sea and the mountain. The description by P3 suggests that one of the activities is to look at the sunset.

'It has a reputation for stunning sunset. You get the sunset from the water in between, the mountain ridge on the end, it gives you beautiful sunset so that it has that reputation and people go for that […].' – P3

The difference in the type and intensity activities of the two subspaces is found here. There were more people at the "finger" overall. This may be related to the fact that the "finger" is close to the sea and the view there is more open, which influences people in staying at the subspace as told by the P1.

'Usually I will walk past the Shek Tong Tsui Tram Terminus and cross the road next to the wholesale market, and then enter the Pier with that small entrance. There are two ways here in the Pier, I usually go to the side (Berth 13-26) that is close to the sea.' – P1

Another reason may be the more organized appearance of the "finger" with less dispersed materials all around, and people can simply sit on those pallets and under the shelters. Whereas for Berth 1 to 12, due to those materials shown, it may be difficult for people to stay and those materials also block the sea view.

On Thursday, 5th July 2018 *(Figure 25, 26)*, when comparing to the maps at weekend, it is the same that there was a continuous flow of people as well. However, fewer people in general were seen on weekdays than at weekend, the reason may be that people have to work. It is observed that cargo activities were active during the day, and especially on weekdays which may discourage people from visiting. This has shown there is a change of use at different time periods. One participant states that he would visit the Pier after the cargo activities. When there is cargo activity, there are fewer people using the space.

'I have thought that I may affect the work of the cargo workers before…normally I will wait till they have finished working and then I go inside.' – P13

The number of people started to increase from 1630 and there were even more than 41 persons being recorded at 1900 to 1930. Users may start visiting the Pier after work.

In this way, there is a constant flow of users at the Pier with more people at the "finger" and fewer people at Berth 1 to 12 which reflects a difference in the subspaces. In addition, there are fewer people at earlier time that the number of people starts to increase at sunset time and in the evening. There are more users at weekend than on weekdays as a result.

Figure 23: Movement Maps on Saturday, 9th June 2018 at Observation Spot 1 (edited by author)
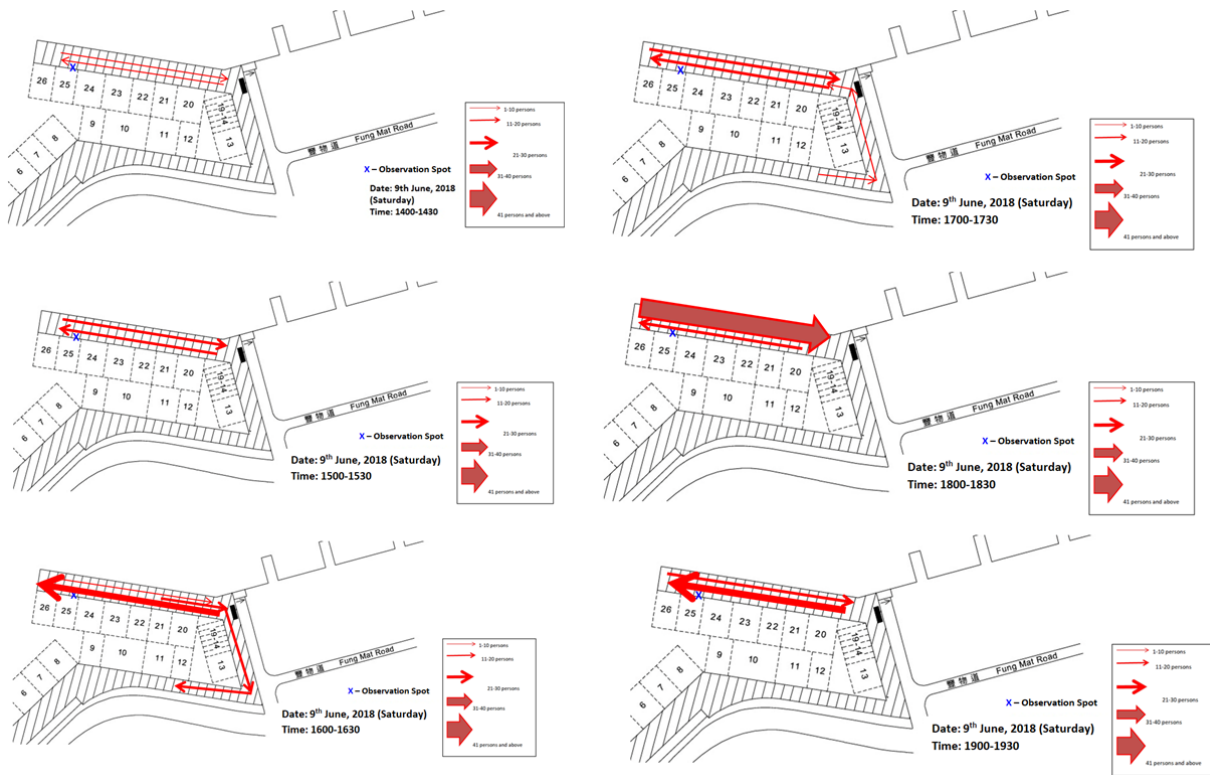

Figure 24: Movement Maps on Saturday, 9th June 2018 at Observation Spot 2 (edited by author)
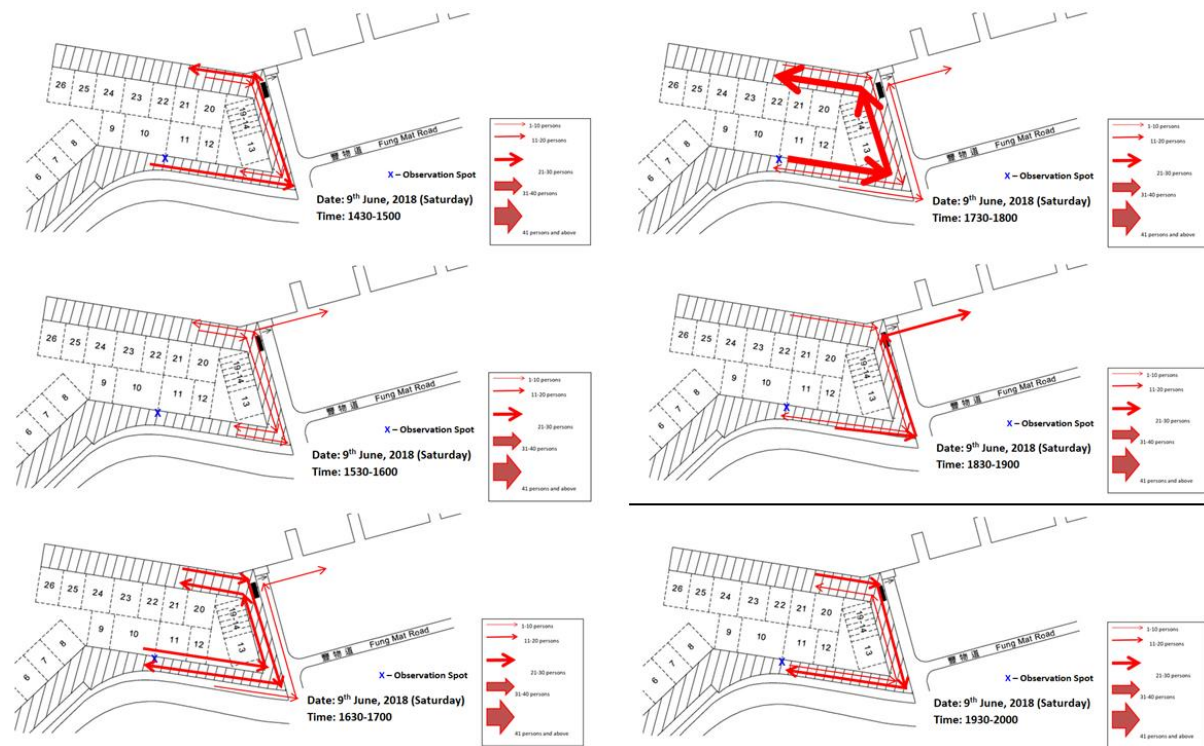
Figure 25: Movement Maps on Thursday, 5th July 2018 at Observation Spot 1 (edited by author)
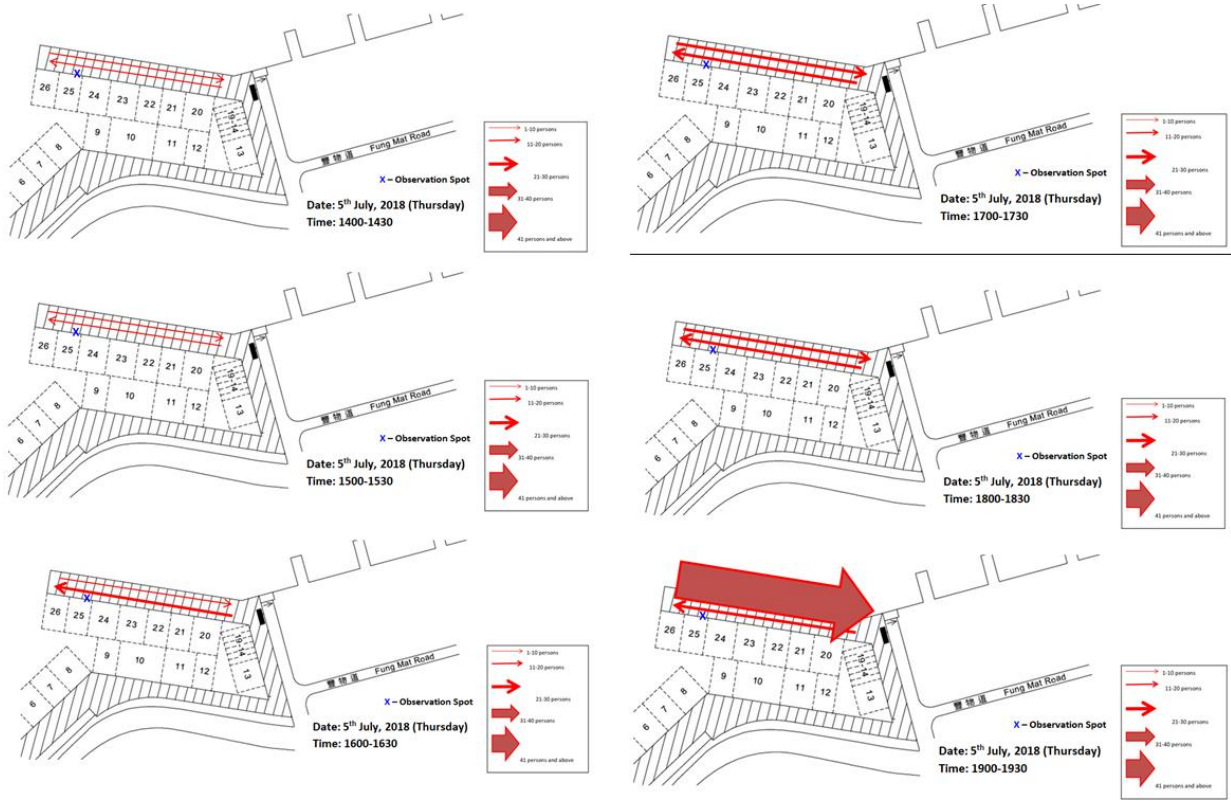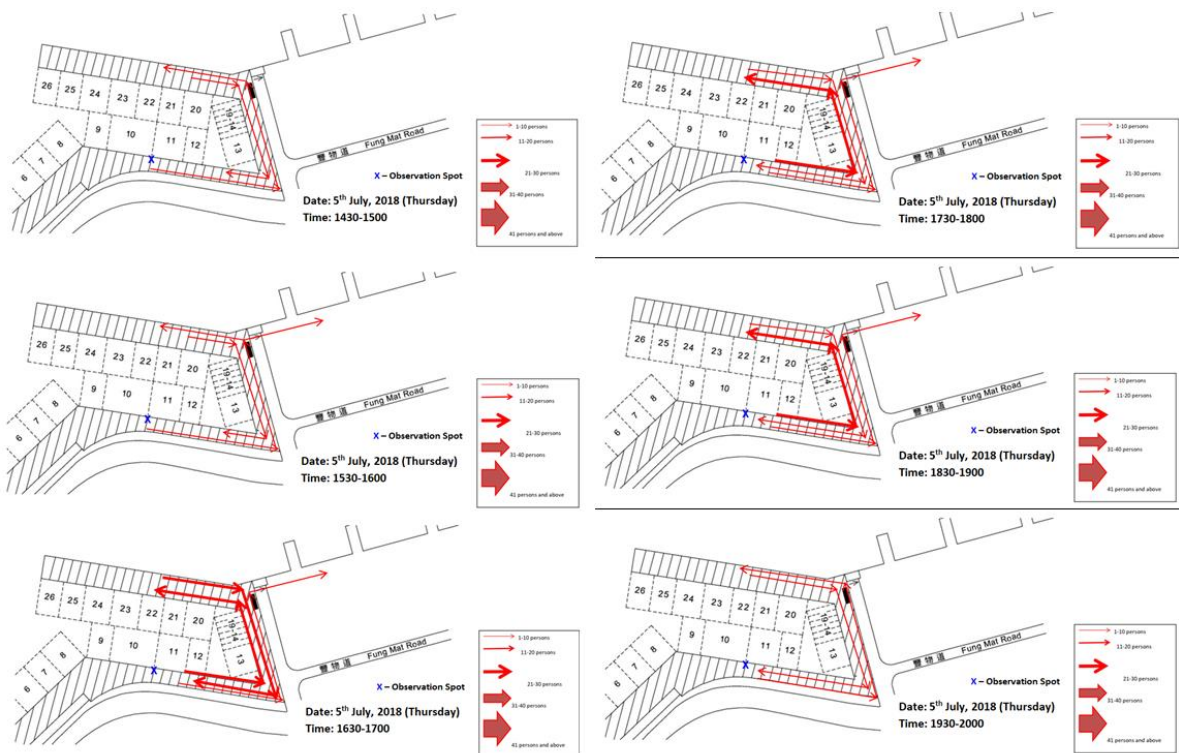

Figure 26: Movement Maps on Thursday, 5th July 2018 at Observation Spot 2 (edited by author)

iii.   Behaviour of Users

To give a better overview as referred from the movement maps, the behavioural maps on Saturday, 9th June 2018 and Thursday, 5th July 2018 are used for analysis in this section as well. The behaviours are recorded during 10 minutes each in the each of the six time slots.

It is found that at weekend, there were more people spending time at the Pier. The following figures have shown the number of users at the Pier on both days at each spot respectively. At weekend, there were 217 users at Spot 1 ("finger") and 199 users at Spot 2 (Berth 1 to 12) *(Figure 27)*. While on the weekday, there were 150 users at Spot 1 and 96 users at Spot 2 *(Figure 28)*. This has shown that users tend to visit the Pier at weekend than weekday, which affirms to what the movement maps have displayed. Additionally, the figures also reflect that there were more people spending time at the "finger" no matter on weekday or weekend.

For the distribution of users in age and gender *(Figure 29)*, most of the users (49.3%) are in the age of 20-39 and the second group of users (25.0%) is at the age of 40-59 on weekend day. The gender distribution is 46.9% for male and 45.9% for female. Whereas for weekday, 62.6% of the users are in the age of 20-39 and 27.2% of the users are in the age of 40-59. One thing to note is that there were no child users. This may be that the children are freer from schoolwork during weekend and they have more time to spend out of home or school. The gender distribution of users on weekday is average as that on weekend day, with 54.5% male and 45.5% female. The data of both days have shown that the age group of 20-39 dominates in using the Pier, but the gender difference is not vivid.

For duration of stay, at Spot 1, the number of users staying over 5 minutes (48.0% in total) outnumbered those who have not stayed or just a short period with 1-2 minutes (40.1% in total) on weekend day *(Figure 30)*. When adding the other groups who have stayed for more than 2 to 5 minutes, this shows that the majority of the users at the "finger" on weekend day tends to spend certain duration of time there. Whereas for Spot 2, most people tend not to stay there to perform activities as they have not stayed (24.6%) or only 1 to 2 minutes (62.8%) at the location *(Figure 31)*. This proves that people tend to spend more time at the "finger" and less time at Berth 1 to 12, with which the difference of physical setting may be the reason as discussed above.

For the weekday duration of stay, the situation is different that most number of people has not stayed (28.7%) or only 1-2 minutes (43.3%) and Spot 2 is the same as on weekend day that only 5.2% in total of the users have stayed for more than 5 minutes at the location. As a corollary, users tend to spend less time at the Pier on weekday.

For the number of activities performed at one time *(Figure 32, 33)*, there is one similarity of both days that users tend to perform more than 1 activity at one time (62.7% in total) at the "finger" while for Berth 1 to 12, there was even no one performing three activities at the same time. This comes to the conclusion that the "finger" encourages more activities to happen.

The behavioural maps drawn among the popular time slots are shown to give an idea for the types of activities at the two different subspaces. First, it is the 1800-1900 of the day at weekend *(Figure 34, 35)*.

Different types of activities can be shown at Spot 1 with gathering by the sea and walking with a pallet in hand, those cannot be found at Spot 2 as this may be the reason of the disorganized and chaotic appearance at Berth 1 to 12 with which all users only perform activities that they need to move around, like walking, skateboarding and jogging. The activities at the "finger" are calmer and still as users tend to place pallets from one place to another for sitting as the space is more open and spacious for various activities. Second, it is the 1900-2000 of the weekday *(Figure 36, 37)*. Again, still activities like reading can be found at the "finger" while more active activities like walking dogs can be seen at Berth 1 to 12.

Most cargo activities are recorded at Berth 1 to 12. It is noted that when there is cargo activity, there are fewer users at Berth 1 to 12. As shown from the relevant behavioural maps on Friday, 6th July 2018 where most cargo activities are recorded *(Figure 38, 39)*, there was only one person using the phone and walking past the space with the presence of cargo working at 1530-1600. At 1630-1700, the next time slot when cargo working no longer existed, more activities such as jogging, cycling, eating, drinking, etc. were resulted. The change of use temporally can be shown here.

Therefore, the spatial practice of physical setting of the Pier, and the movement and behaviours are intertwined with each other that informal activities are performed. The two subspaces differ in the way that the "finger" stimulates more activities than Berth 1 to 12.

Figure 27: Number of Users on Saturday, 9th June, 2018

Number of users on Saturday, 9th June, 2018 at Spot 1	
Time slot	Number of users (in 10 mins of the time slot)
1400-1430	24
1500-1530	32
1600-1630	27
1700-1730	31
1800-1830	58
1900-1930	45
Total number of users	217

Number of users on Saturday, 9th June, 2018 at Spot 2	
Time slot	Number of users (in 10 mins of the time slot)
1430-1500	20
1530-1600	24
1630-1700	37
1730-1800	36
1830-1900	37
1930-2000	45
Total number of users	199

Figure 28: Number of Users on Thursday, 5th July 2018

Number of users on Thursday, 5th July, 2018 at Spot 1	
Time slot	Number of users (in 10 mins of the time slot)
1400–1430	10
1500–1530	8
1600–1630	20
1700–1730	27
1800–1830	40
1900–1930	45
Total number of users	150

Number of users on Thursday, 5th July, 2018 at Spot 2	
Time slot	Number of users (in 10 mins of the time slot)
1430–1500	5
1530–1600	7
1630–1700	10
1730–1800	12
1830–1900	30
1930–2000	32
Total number of users	96

Figure 29: Age & Gender Distribution of Users
(left: Saturday, 9th June 2018; right: Thursday, 5th July 2018)

Gender	
Male	46.9%
Female	45.9%
Not Available	7.2%

Gender	
Male	54.5%
Female	45.5%

Age	
0–12	2.2%
13–19	0.5%
20–39	49.3%
40–59	25.0%
60–79+	15.9%
Not Available	7.2%

Age	
0–12	0.0%
13–19	0.8%
20–39	62.6%
40–59	27.2%
60–79+	9.3%

Figure 30: Duration of Stay on Saturday, 9th June 2018 (left: Spot 1; right: Spot 2)

Duration of stay	
0	19.8%
1 – 2 mins	20.3%
>2 – 3 mins	4.1%
>3 – 5 mins	7.8%
>5 – 10 mins	24.0%
>10 mins	24.0%

Duration of stay	
0	24.6%
1 – 2 mins	62.8%
>2 – 3 mins	2.5%
>3 – 5 mins	3.5%
>5 – 10 mins	6.0%
>10 mins	0.5%

Figure 31: Duration of Stay on Thursday, 5th July 2018 (left: Spot 1; right: Spot 2)

Duration of stay	
0	28.7 %
1 – 2 mins	43.3%
>2 – 3 mins	4%
>3 – 5 mins	9.3%
>5 – 10 mins	2.7%
>10 mins	12%

Duration of stay	
0	75.0%
1 – 2 mins	17.7%
>2 – 3 mins	2.1%
>3 – 5 mins	0.0%
>5 – 10 mins	3.1%
>10 mins	2.1%

Figure 32: Number of Activities at One Time on Saturday, 9th June 2018 (left: Spot 1; right: Spot 2)

No. of activities at one time	
1	37.3%
2	60.0%
3	2.7%

No. of activities at one time	
1	50.6%
2	48.3%
3	1.1%

Figure 33: Number of Activities at One Time on Thursday, 5th July 2018 (left: Spot 1; right: Spot 2)

No. of activities at one time	
1	37.3%
2	60.0%
3	2.7%

No. of activities at one time	
1	53.6%
2	46.4%

Figure 34: Behaviourial Map on Saturday, 9th June 2018 at 1800-1900 at Spot 1 (edited by author)

Figure 35: Behaviourial Map on Saturday, 9th June 2018 at 1800-1900 at Spot 2 (edited by author)

Figure 36: Behaviourial Map on Thursday, 5th July 2018 at 1900-2000 at Spot 1 (edited by author)
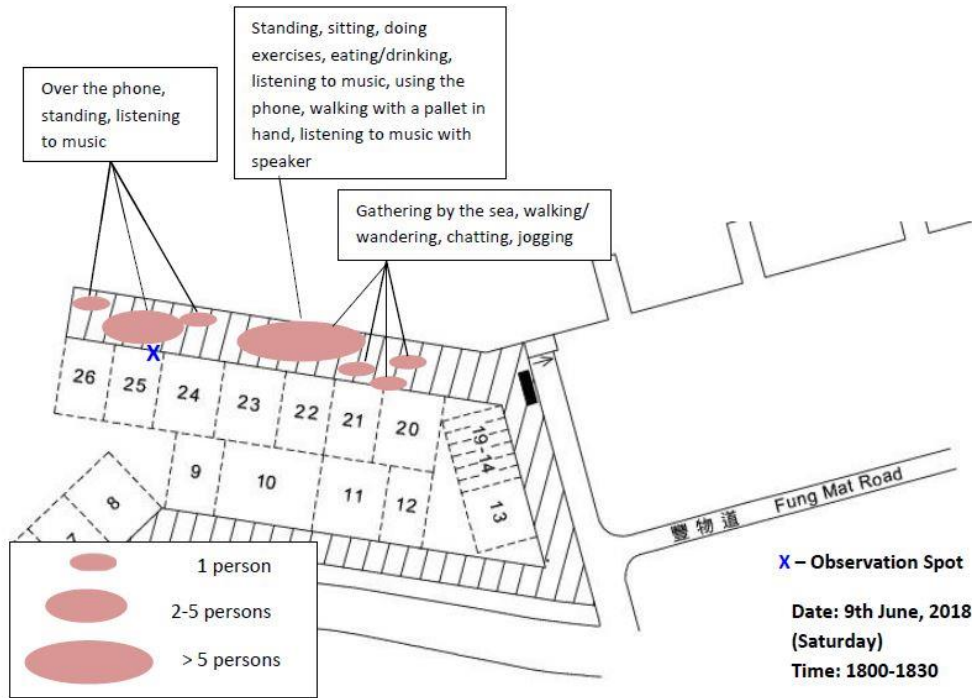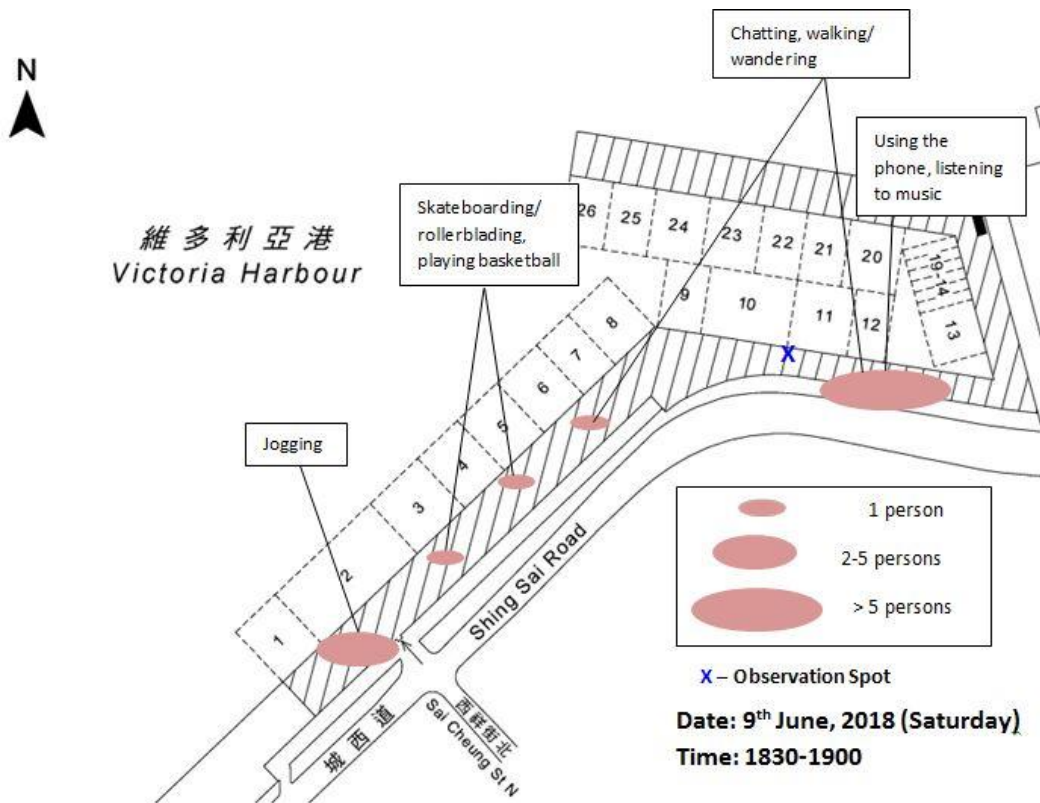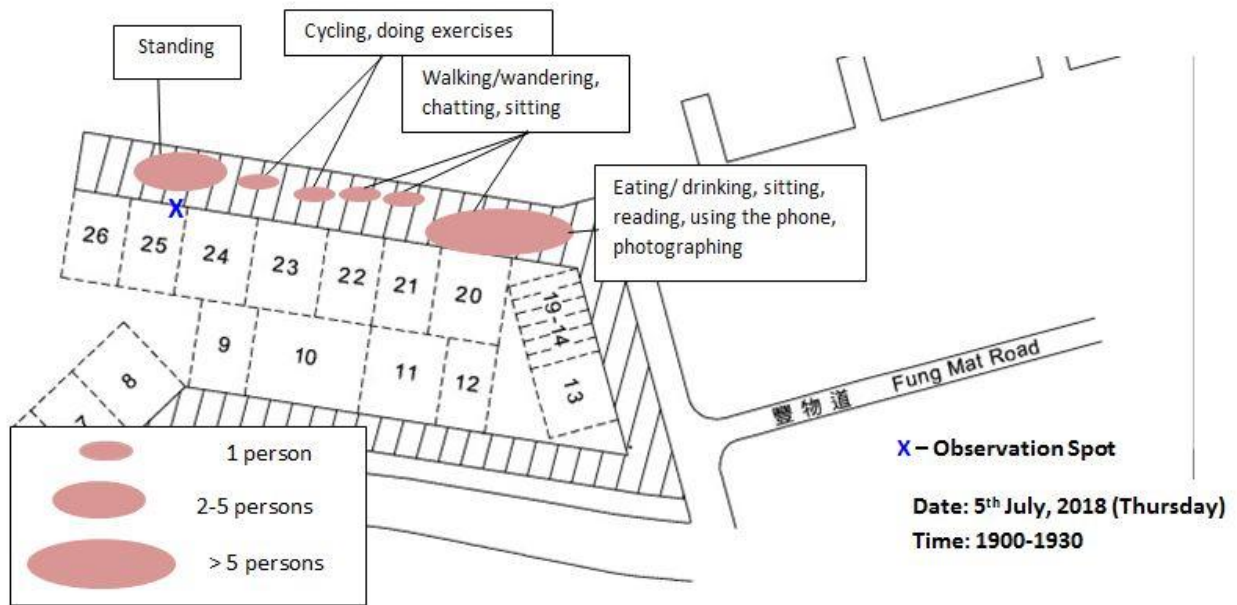

Figure 37: Behaviourial Map on Thursday, 5th July 2018 at 1900-2000 at Spot 2 (edited by author)
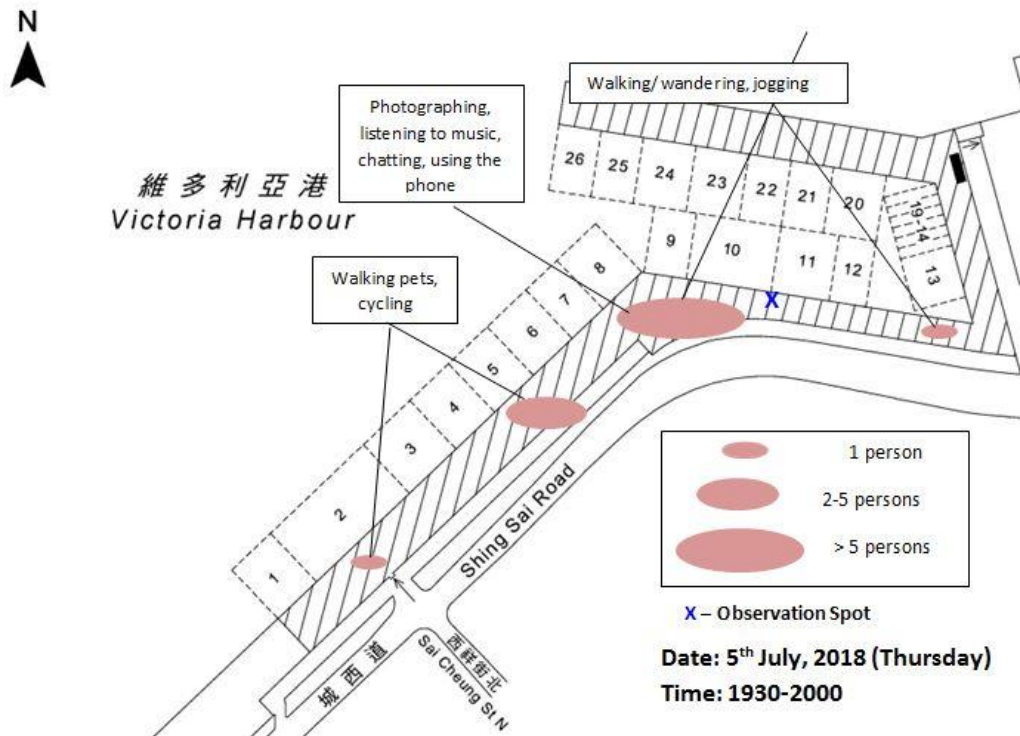
Figure 38: Behavioural Map on Friday, 6th July 2018 at 1530-1600 at Spot 2 (edited by author)
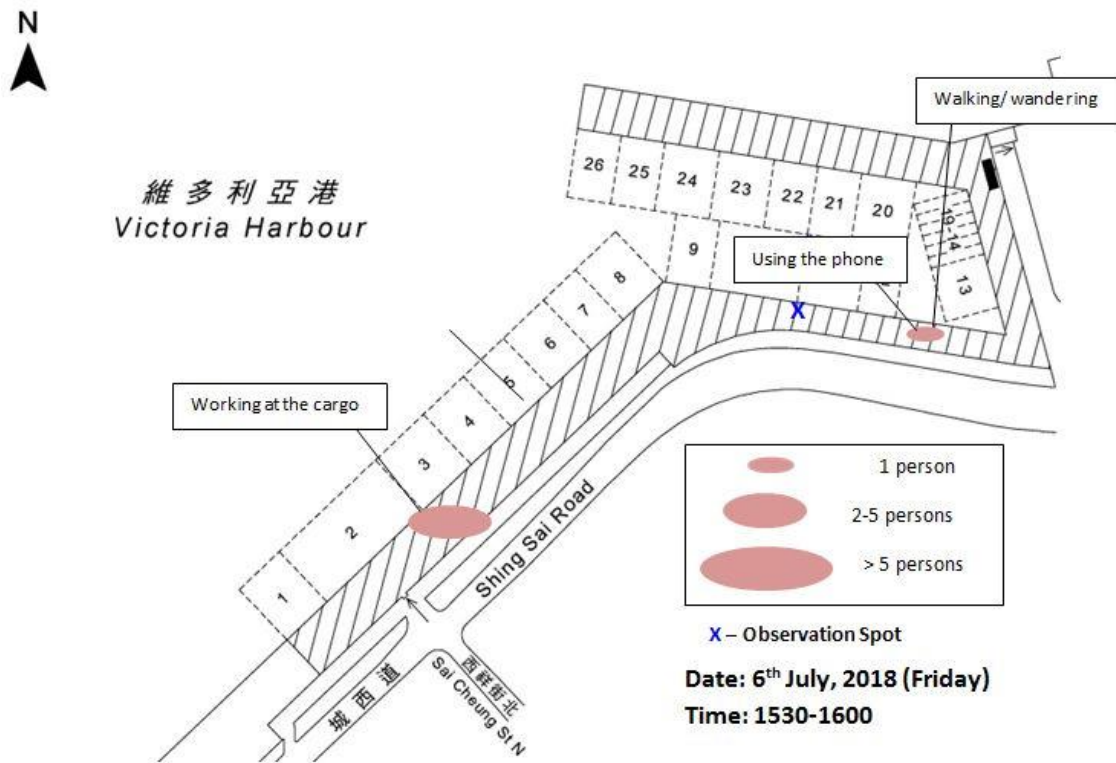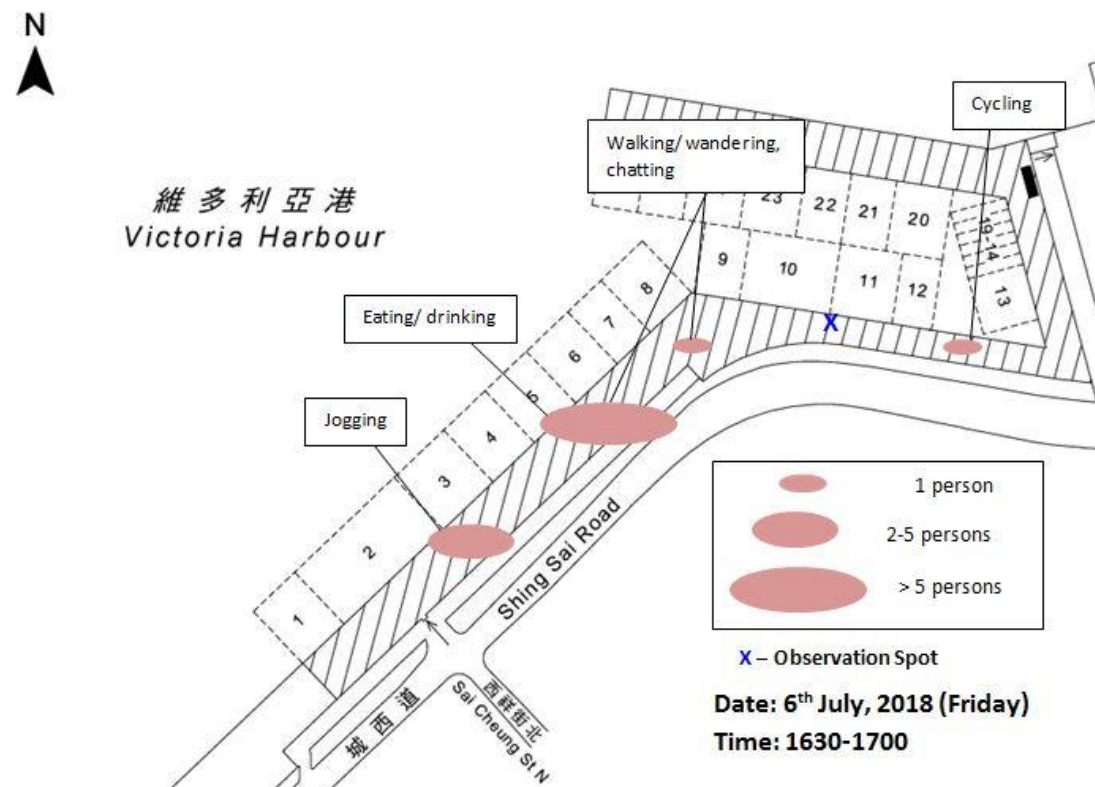

Figure 39: Behavioural Map on Friday, 6th July 2018 at 1630-1700 at Spot 2 (edited by author)

c. The Lived Pier

i. Nickname as a Symbol

The nickname of the Pier, "Instagram Pier" has shown the spaces of representation of the spatial triad by Lefebvre (1991). That is the people, the users who granted meanings to the space and live the space with their own activities. Under the conceived Pier by the authorities, some activities happening at the Pier are exclusive that affirms the looseness of the space.

The name of "Instagram Pier" is granted due to the spatial practice at the Pier and the meanings are given by the lived Pier with simply the act of taking pictures and uploading to Instagram according to P7. Through time, the Pier becomes popular with its nickname. It has also become a symbol for the Pier. Instead of calling it a cargo working area, it has a new name.

'They take photos the most at 5-6pm to take the sunset; as they view the pier differently as locals who live in the Western District, they just come here to take photo and put on Instagram […]' – P7

Even P9 the tourist from London, he has heard about the Pier on the mobile application Instagram. P2, a photographer usually visits the Pier for observing the behaviour of the users and uses photography to record them as he is interested in the phenomenon of people keep posting similar pictures of the Pier on Instagram. He even creates an Instagram account called "Instagrammer" for that. Such act may be sarcastic to reflect the trend, yet undeniably the symbol of the place being "instagramic" is in the heart of many users.

'Hmm, how do I get to know this place? Instagram I think?' – P9

'I used to live in Kennedy Town so I basically started to walk around in the area and I found it one day, and I returned and I started to recognize all the repetition. And when I learnt that it is called the Instagram Pier, I wanted to create the Instagrammer account for the Instagram Pier, so that is how it begins.' – P2

The two subspaces are being viewed as the Instagram Pier as a whole. However, people taking pictures of the sunset, and giving the name "Mirror of the Sky" to the "finger" makes the "finger" subspace representative of the entire Pier. After raining, the water on the ground makes users able to take wonderful pictures with the reflection of the sunset, the light, the Pier and the people. They have used their creativity in photography. P5 thinks that it is out of her expectation for people intended to make fake scenes even if it has not rained only for photography.

'I think the "Mirror of the Sky"? You know it's fake, I don't expect people to go that far for taking pictures […]' - P5

P13 who often jogs at the Pier during sunset, even picked a picture that he took which shows the "Mirror of the Sky" *(Figure 40),* and to him this represents the Pier the most as many people see it as a popular spot. With all the photography on Instagram, such image of "Mirror of the Sky" is mutually enhanced and constructed within the users.

Figure 40: "Mirror of the Sky" at "finger" (Source: P13)

ii.   Memories, Meanings & Place

Participants associate the Pier with various meanings and this space has gained spaces in their mind which turns the Pier into a place. Participants live the space and turn the Pier into a place with their values, history, experiences, etc., which is the same as what Madanipour (2013) and Lukermann (1964) have said.

Some participants have revealed some of their unforgettable experiences at the Pier. P11 mentions his experience of listening to music played by violin is unforgettable with his former girlfriend. Also, the memories for helping out to preserve the Pier are unforgettable too that he has been fighting, hoping to keep the Pier as what it is now.

'I have had fun with my ex-girlfriend, and it is romantic with a violinist playing music at the Pier…that is my ex-girlfriend, so it is the past already, haha…but if you talk about unforgettable stuff, have you listened to someone to play violin before at the Pier? I haven't, so it's unforgettable. Of course, later I have organized events for preserving the Pier, those are unforgettable as well…' – P11

P5 holds the same view that she has been working so close with her groupmates at her community group in fighting for keeping the Pier. In addition, she slightly associates the Pier as unforgettable personally with her relationship and her emotions towards Hong Kong. Her friends filmed the Pier whenever they need a scene of Hong Kong when they tell their story. The Pier has become the image of Hong Kong not only in the mind of her friends, but also hers.

'[…]it's sort of about my relationship, but it's not that good to add these personal things to an academic paper, haha…I have some friends who filmed here…what I feel unforgettable is that through the films made by my friends, I can feel their emotions towards this place that they want to keep it. The story is about the relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland, and the setting of the story is at this place…these are unforgettable in terms of images. But if you said it for real…it's a bit personal…it is that

our concern group has come and paid a visit for several times…Our groupmates are so close together […]'
– P5

P5 also discloses that her favourite activity is to look at the water and contemplate at the "finger" subspace, sitting at the far edge of the protruding part. She relates the water at the Pier to what she has encountered in life, and uses terms with emotions like "romantic" and "soothing". This again shows that the "finger" is important in the heart of the participants, which may even represent the whole Pier.

P7 personally relates the Pier to her childhood memories when she talks about the three words to describe the Pier. P15 refers the Pier as important to her as it is a family gathering every time she visits there. This is such personal attachment which makes the space becoming a special and lively place with soul among various users.

'Sometimes I will just sit on the far edge, with that light pole at my back…I just look at the water and think of stuff in life, you may say it's romantic, haha, it's soothing […]' – P5

'[…] Childhood memory: As I always came when I was small, when it was not given the name as 'Instagram Pier'.' – P7

'Yes! It is a family gathering. And we don't need to just look at the phone screens. We can look further.' – P15

P10 clearly supports the idea that the Pier is a cargo working area and is unhappy about users apart from cargo companies in entering the space; however she is living the Pier in her own way. She has been a regular user for years and every day as she said that she is a friend of a cargo working company. She states that the Pier should not be used for leisure, yet she is walking her dog at the Pier every day. This has in fact become a routine to her. The Pier is conceived as a cargo working area in her beliefs, but in practice, it is lived as her everyday routine that may contribute to certain meanings.

'It's different for me…this dog has always been here, it is born here, and it is registered here…everyone knows it…' – P10

The two subspaces may differ in the activities present, and participants generally exert more sentiment towards the "finger" subspace. Yet, both of them are lived as one single Pier among the users. The looseness of the Pier is revealed with its public character that people are able to get access to the area informally and create meanings even with its private nature of how it is being conceived. In the next section, the looseness of the Pier will be illustrated in detail which further shows the similarities and differences of the two subspaces further, the "finger" and Berth 1 to 12 in terms of their possibility, diversity and disorder.

(2) Looseness of the Pier

a. Possibility

i. Unexpected Activities & Choices

From the previous sections, the Pier is an informal non-fixed space which allows variety of activities. This results to unexpected activities as the Pier is open and free from control and economic constraints as raised by Franck & Stevens (2007). For control, it is what P5 describes that she does not want to be watched, she would like to be in a place without restrictions that she is not checked by anyone the reasons for her to be there. For economic constraint, that is what P15 refers to the Pier as a cheap option to hang out; people regardless of having money or not, are able to use the space.

'I don't want people to watch me, I don't want restrictions, I want it to be real…the meaning of real is that when I use it, I don't feel guilty and I am not afraid, cause there is some strange public space out there…When I get there, I am being asked. Why are you coming? I think I need not to answer such question in public space, I don't need to give response to someone.' – P5

'It's cheap because you don't need to pay a penny […]' – P15

The users have choices in performing activities that they are in favour of. Unexpected activities happened already during my observation on Wednesday, 30th May, 2018. I was walking around the Pier, and I heard someone singing at Berth 1 to 12. Among those oil cans, I spotted her facing the sea; she was playing songs with her radio while singing *(Figure 41)*. What's more, as I walked back to the "finger", I saw a man playing with his wooden sticks and doing some kung-fu-like stretching *(Figure 42)*. Further on Sunday, 10th June 2018. As I walked from the entrance next to the Wholesale Market to my observation spot at the "finger", what I heard is music from an instrument. I found the person at last; he was playing bagpipes, a musical instrument in a shelter at the "finger" *(Figure 43)*. He looked at the sea, and blew into the pipes; music was in the breeze, spreading through the Pier. The Pier is probably a spacious practicing ground for these users. Both subspaces have allowed unexpected activities to flourish, and Berth 1 to 12 may be a good hiding place, with all those construction materials like oil cans, for people to do their activities with their own space. Also, both subspaces are non-fixed, people are not being told to what they can do but they are the ones to perform playful and experimental activities with the low-level of use of the Pier after cargo working.

Their behaviours may be referred to the lack of choice in doing those activities elsewhere too, with which Hong Kong people yearn for space with their high density of living. P2 describes his frustration with the lack of space. He feels mentally stuck and the Pier is an open space in the city jungle that allows people to rest.

'[…]maybe if I would become a resident of the area, I would come to get fresh air and get out of the house…especially in the city part of Hong Kong because you have very tall buildings, mentally full of constraints, it's true you know? Like also when you are entering your house, it's a small house, you really feel the walls around you […]' – P2

All participants state that they can do their activities elsewhere, but the Pier offers them another choice, a better choice that they are in favour of. Even there may not be a lack of choice for them to perform particular activities in other public spaces, it is essential that choices are given to them.

'Yes, but the Pier has a better view. I will go to other places to jog too… I think it's different as I go to various places in different time. During sunset I usually visit the Pier, but in the morning I go to other places.' – P13

P13 has the choice of going to various places for jogging in different periods of time. During sunset, he can enjoy a better view, he visits the Pier not only for jogging purpose, but the Pier offers more to him. P8 is fishing at the "finger" when I interviewed her. When being asked why she was not joining her husband to fish at the Promenade section, she replied that as there is no railing at the Pier, it is easier for her to fish. Again, she has the choice for better options for fishing at the Pier. This at the same time leads to another factor, the presence of props that allows possibility for activities.

'It is hard to fish there, as there are railings. I usually come here, it's a bit dangerous…but it is more open and easier for me to fish.' – P8

Both P14 and P15 are surprised and they did not expect people taking pictures with containers at the two subspaces, and here the containers are props that attract people to visit that generate potentials even for wedding photography companies to establish their business out of the Pier. The possibility gives rooms for choices and unexpected activities, revealing the looseness of the Pier.

'Oh-my-god! Why do people take pictures with those containers?' – P14

'No…there are so many people taking wedding pictures though…why taking pictures with the containers? It is strange to me. Maybe it is related to their career? Haha!' – P15

In terms of unexpected activities, both subspaces are representable of the Pier with all participants actively using the entire Pier.

Figure 41: Woman Facing the Sea and Sing

Figure 42: Man Playing with Wooden Sticks   Figure 43: Man Playing Bagpipes at "Finger"

ii.   Degree of Control

Even though the conceived Pier has its control towards the space from the authorities, there is no single group which dominates the use when looking into the right of access to the Pier and how the users use the space, their ownership of the space, no matter practically or a sense, and the users' views towards their right to change or transfer the use of the space, and the meanings they attached to the Pier in the concept of Lynch (1981). The actors performing at the Pier all mutually control the Pier in some way, though in some moments, the control is back in the hands of the government.

For the right of access, all participants have found no big problem in visiting the Pier, it is only that in some special situations, certain subspaces are blocked that they failed to use it. P5 says that she does not feel restricted when visiting the Pier, as she finds that there is no staff and CCTV that she can enter and walk, looking at the sea. To add, P14 immediately replies that he does not think there is any control due to no security guard being seen, and he can go in and out freely.

'I don't think so, because there is no staff walking around or the presence of CCTV. I just come here and walk, or to look at the seaview […]' – P5

'I don't think there is…I haven't seen a security guard. I can go in and out freely.' – P14

Nevertheless, the Pier is still authorized by the government. There was a filming crew at the "finger" when I interviewed P1, and we were asked not to go near and to walk in specific area.

'Yes, sometimes…you see, like there are people filming here, and they just block the way and don't let you walk there. Sometimes it is even large scale, when TVB (a HK television production company) is filming here and the area is being blocked with some constructions, and they will just ask you to leave…but for others, I think there is no restriction […]' – P1

It turns out that there is still some control existing due to the conceived nature of the Pier. The Pier is managed by the authorities, and this filming activity was actually being approved by the Film Services Office and the Marine Department (HKSAR, 2012). This is allowed as the filming crew had sent an application for that. Of course, this is conceived as a cargo working area and there is limited accessibility especially when the cargos are at work. The participants know it clearly that there is such function at this Pier as specified by P6.

'In the cargo working area and the Pier, there are all sorts of activities carried out by people like the pier operators, there are restrictions on the activities and the time of public usage. Say like the public cannot enter the Pier in the morning as there is operation ongoing here.' – P6

With such function, they avoid going to the Pier when there are operations happening. P1 knows that she cannot have a say on the ownership of the Pier but thinks that only when it is after the operations, people are equal in using the space. Even with this freeness of the space, one knows how to react at the Pier with all those cargo facilities as put forward by P4 that she needs to be careful whenever she encounters loading and unloading activities. The control is occasional and only during business hours.

'[…]I think I cannot say that the public says it all, because the Pier has its daily operations, loading and unloading goods…but for the time period after its operations, I think everyone should be equal to use the space […]' – P1

'No, not really…except for former Berth 1 to 3 being blocked now. Of course when there are loading and unloading activities in this cargo working area, we need to be more careful, it's the same as you cross the road in the streets. The residents who usually come here, they know what the usual time for the operation is.' – P4

For actual ownership or the sense of ownership or belonging of the Pier, most of the participants doubt whether the Pier belongs to the public as they know the original purpose of the space. With the use of the Pier, people own it but in practice and under the law, they know deep down that it is not owned by them.

'For the usage that is made of, yes, officially I am not sure. No, I think it is public but it is regulated by Marine Department, so it is not really public.' – P2

'No, I think it is a place for people to do things. It should belong to the Marine Department.' – P12

'Well, the Pier is publicly owned. It is owned by the public than ever before and even in the future. Because right now, people are there despite the law, people are using it so they are owning the space in respective of the law.' – P3

Despite not having the actual ownership, most of the participants feel like they have the sentiment, thus the right to change the use of the Pier and not only they, but every stakeholder, everyone should have the right to express which the government should take their opinions into account when it comes to development as stated by P6 and P11.

'I do not opt for unlimited extension of rights. People can of course express their views towards the use of the Pier. Nonetheless, as this main purpose of the Pier is cargo working area, the livelihood of people like the operators of the berth needs to be taken into account.' – P6

'If that is the case, it should not be just us to voice out our opinions, but also the cargo companies and the government…to sit down and have a discussion. If the cargo companies would like to continue their business, and don't want to give up the Pier…the government has to realize that if the Pier changes to something like Berth 1 to 3, or the Promenade, the cargo business in Hong Kong then encounters the problem.' – P11

P11 further raises the issue that by changing the space into a formal public space, like former Berth 1 to 3 or the Promenade, is not what the users desire as the use of the Pier will be fixed. It is the fact that people would like to use the Pier publicly, but at the same time they know that the cargo working is crucial to Hong Kong which should be kept at some point. At the end, all they want is looseness at the Pier that accepts differences, but not those fixed public spaces that they are told and watched what to do like in a prison or a zoo.

'You can just do what the government recognizes you to do. How do you use a space and your related thoughts are being restricted…if there are too many restrictions, like those parks under the Leisure & Cultural Department, how is it different from being in a prison then? It is even worse if you are in those parks, you are being enclosed…am I those animals in the zoo? I think everyone knows what are the dos and don'ts in a public space.' – P11

The presence of control can be at both subspaces, and what people treasure is the looseness at the entire Pier. They view the Pier as whole, not separate subspaces. There is some form of control at the Pier with the actual ownership by authorities, but it is mild that the users can access to the Pier freely and equally after cargo activities, have the right to express what they want and enjoy the not-so-regulated Pier. As the Pier has its high degree of looseness in terms of possibility, the users utilize the Pier despite its conceived nature.

b. Diversity

  i.   Diverse Activities

What is unexpected at the Pier is its flexibility and potentials which determines its looseness, letting individuals to unleash its possibilities. It is the combination of activities that make the Pier unique. People can do all of these activities at the same time in the same space, that one is not able to find it elsewhere in Hong Kong. P3, another District Councillor, expresses that there is no other place like the Pier with such diverse activities.

'[…] it's the combination of things that happened there…so people are drone flying and dog walking and cycling and walking babies, and playing with kids, and taking pictures…they are all in the same space…where the normal belief in Hong Kong is that you have to separate them…you cannot have cyclists to mix with pedestrians, or have kids and dogs walking which is dangerous […]' – P3

The activities are diverse in the way that they are necessary, optional and social (Gehl, 2011). Necessary activities can be found with the commercial possibilities arise from the Pier. Wedding photography companies start establishing their business with taking pictures at the Pier; this has become their job, their work, which makes it necessary for them as referred to by P11.

'[…] some people even treated here as their space to earn money, taking pictures for models, or for wedding. There is so much happening here […]'' – P11

The activities are optional in the way that people perform due to exterior factors. How physical setting influences the presence of activities is discussed earlier *(Section on "Production of the Pier")*. With the more organized "finger", there is both the variety of still and active activities there. People only perform these activities when the conditions are favourable. For example, P8 comes to the Pier everyday as this is close to her work, and she does not come when the weather does not allow.

'I come here everyday, as I work nearby at the Wholesale Market, I usually come for fishing in the afternoon and sometimes I will have a walk in the area at night…but sometimes when it is too sunny or it's raining, then I don't come […]' – P8

The activities are social in the way that they are influenced by the presence of others. It is possible that if your purpose is to have a drink, and then one will perform other activities unintendedly, like making photographs of the sunset or to chat with the one sitting next to you as said by P2 and P5. It is at the same time observed that one person's act may influence the act of another. For example, when there is someone taking pictures while one is walking, then one gives way for that. Again, in terms of diversity, both subspaces are taken into account.

'[…] maybe you come here just for a drink and then you end up playing or making photographs…I don't know. Yeah, potentially are "influentible".' – P2

'I interact with those I don't know too, when it is even later, when we sit at the edge of the Pier and chat…I mean those pallets, and I usually look at my neighbours who sat next to me.' – P5

ii.   Social Relationships

That leads to the discussion of social relationships. P5 talks to strangers when she spends her time at the Pier that some forms of social contact do exist at the Pier. Nonetheless, such social contact is not strong or one can conclude as shallow. Most of the participants said that they do not talk to people they do not know at the Pier. P7 even says that she has not and she will not try either.

'I won't, haven't tried before.' – P7

District Councillors or community event organizers tend to talk more to people they do not know, it is because it is part of their job, and one may call, this is their necessary activities. Despite P6, a District Councillor, says that he only talks to the residents he knows. When looking back to the statistics of being alone or group when spending time at the Pier *(Figure 44)*, users always spend time in groups (58.6% in weekend; 59.2% on weekdays), and as told in those interviews, with friends or family, which shows that the social relationships are only strengthened among their own social circles. The users may be diverse in age and gender according to P1. This is a site of differences with various people with reference to to Valentine (2008), but they do not interact with each other.

'I think most of them are residents in the neighbourhood, and the range of age is wide, so male, female, elderly or young, all of them come here.' – P1

It is discovered that there are even some forms of conflicts in between the users. P11 says that some users do not respect those cargo companies and make a mess at the Pier which irritates the companies. People are living parallel lives that they do what they want only and there is no actual social relationship with trust being established.

'One thing that angers the cargo companies the most is that people just pour water on the ground in order to take those pictures with the "Mirror of the Sky", and they don't make it to original after pouring water. That water can attract mosquitoes to grow. Some people just go inside the office of those cargo companies and steal something. It's like they sit there and then take something with them after sitting. That makes the companies unhappy.' – P11

There is nuisance from the middle-aged woman dancing as told by P5, P7 and P11. Yet, they think it is because the Pier is spacious and no one claims its ownership that users just walk away from the nuisance instead of confronting it. There are urban encounters, but no social connection.

'[…] the other group is those middle-aged women who dance; they play music loudly and dance for an hour. Sometimes they behave, but sometimes not. But it is rare to have those activities called off; people just rolled their eyes and then left.' – P11

With the diversity in activities, and the characteristic of being weakly classified that ensures the diversity of users, though with shallow social relationships, the Pier has its high degree of looseness in terms of diversity.

Figure 44: Distribution of Users Alone/ Group at Both Spots (Left: Weekend; Right: Weekdays)

Alone/Group	
Alone	35.8%
Group	58.6%
Not available	5.7%

Alone/Group	
Alone	39.0%
Group	59.2%
Not available	1.9%

c. Disorder

The disorder of the Pier, no matter for which subspace, forms the different perceptions and experience of the users, in terms of the physical setting with objects and darkness and the activities carried out by users.

Certain participants indicate that the chaos, or what is said to be disorganized earlier, in fact reflects the beauty and the uniqueness of the Pier. P2 agrees that as there are only basic or even no facilities, the unplanned environment makes the Pier interesting.

'Taking into account it's simply like a…it's really just a cargo working area with really basic facilities, I think it makes it…it is beautiful because it is like that. You know, you don't have a sitting area, you don't have a thing that plants for the people who come here, that's what make it interesting and beautiful.' – P2

'Well, I think that makes an extremely interesting environment that people not usually experience therefore they enjoy it…normally they get plastic furniture and you know, bamboo, wooden floor ball whatsoever, the formular stuff that you normally get in public space…and here everything is different and people love that.' – P3

P3 holds the same view that there is no furniture as shown from other public spaces, but only objects that are informal, which make people fall in love with the place. During the observation on Wednesday 30th May and Sunday, 10th June 2018, there were someone climbing the container and crane with which these may be dangerous activities *(Figure 45, 46)*. Also according to P4, the pallets everywhere at the Pier may be dangerous in the eyes of many people, as they climb on them and take pictures, but people should be responsible to their own behaviour, and the pallets in fact are the symbol and are representative of the Pier.

'But I think those pallets directly represent that the space is a cargo working area. It's unique with those pallets. Without them, the Pier does not shine.' – P4

Hence, most participants like the Pier due to its chaotic manner but there is still participant who finds such disorder dangerous and unsafe affirmed by Franck and Stevens (2007). P13 even comments that

the Promenade section is safer with those railings and facilities, whereas the bamboo sticks and cranes that exist at Berth 1 to 12 make the space unsafe.

'That area with cargo and the workers is not that safe…there are many bamboo sticks for construction and cranes. The Promenade part is safer and the part near Kennedy Town is not that safe.' – P13

When it comes to the concept of safety, participants make the comment that it is not that safe to visit the Pier after dark, and P12 says she would not go after midnight and P1 mentions that there is a lack of street lights at Berth 1 to 12 and it is so dark that she finds it unpleasant to walk to the space as there may be dog shit on the way. Here, the subspace of Berth 1 to 12 is being pointed out with its safety problem with regard to the disorder associated with objects and darkness as mentioned by Painter, (1996).

'I think it is generally safe. But it is not very safe to go after midnight as it is a bit dark.' – P12

'Sometimes there are bamboos there, and they are so high that I cannot see the sea, and the street lights there are fewer, and sometimes it's quite dark here…and as people are walking their dogs there, sometimes there are dog shit…and it's too dark to see, so I tend to think that side (Berth 1-12) is more dirty.' – P1

Though there is disorder in both subspaces, Berth 1 to 12 is being pointed out with its safety problem with the darkness and objects. The disorder in the type of activities, or nuisance caused by activities is criticized by some participants as told in the last section. To add, they think there is no order at the Pier due to these activities. P10 even uses the term "uncivilized" to criticize the University students not being considerate and making noises, they even acted rudely when being asked to keep quiet.

'Uncivilized! […] Yes, many people are so undisciplined…this is not a cycling path here…and those students from the University of Hong Kong…are so irresponsible, especially after 7:30pm…they are so noisy, and I have heard that when people ask them to be quiet…they just replied that they are from the University of Hong Kong…so what? You are a university student and then you can do whatever you like? Non-sense.' – P10

'For those pallets climbing, I will remind people not to do that if I can…you need to teach them.' – P5

But to P5, though activities like pallet climbing are regarded as unsafe, it is the people's choice and responsibility at the Pier. What she would do is only to warn them. She finds the space with order and safe that there are implicit dos and don'ts. With the edge without railings, users at the space should already take note of it and this is the disorder that forms the order of the Pier.

'It's obvious that some dogs fell into the sea, but if you ask me whether I am scared or not, I don't think so. Because I think it is different for me to come here than visiting a park? When I visit a park, I will feel that it is too safe, with plenty of railings, and I won't die even when I am at the edge of the sea. At this place, I already know its nature, this is a Pier and all people enter through that entrance. I think all people who come here are not supposed to make a mess out of it.' – P5

'People don't kill each other, people don't bump into each other, people control their dogs, they may let at lieus but they control them. If they are out of control, people will be angry about the person who doesn't control their dog, people pick a dog shit, you don't see people leaving a dog shit behind, people keeping the area clean…you see people step aside to let other people take pictures…I mean, you see people look out for each other […]' – P3

P3 continues that users have their unwritten rules to put the disorderly place into order. One's activity affects one another, so most of the users follow these implicit rules. The informal pier is maintained by the automatic and civic behaviour of the people as they look out for each other. The frequent use of the Pier creates natural surveillance and public confidence to the Pier is achieved.

To sum up, the Pier with both subspaces has revealed its looseness with the extent of having possibilities and unexpected activities with the approximately low degree of control which allows it to flourish. In addition, diversity in activities and users are generated by possibility, yet social relationships remain weak at such flexible space. Lastly, disorder in physical setting and activities are found, users act with reference to the disorder with their own preference. As the users acknowledge the potential disorder at the Pier, orderly behaviours are resulted.

Figure 45: Man Climbing Up to a Container

Figure 46: Couple Sitting on a Crane

(3) Meanings of the Pier

The meanings are expressed for the whole Pier, regardless of the subspaces. The meanings of the Pier to the users are more than only performing activities with its spatial practice. The meanings from the perceived to the lived have vividly shown the significance of the Pier to the users.

With regard to the question in asking the participants to describe the Pier with one to three words and to take a picture which they think it represents the Pier the most, the element of **"space"** first pops up. First, the space is with **recreational** purpose which is important to the users. P4 mentions that there are no other proper parks nearby, so she referred the Pier as "good", "great" and "marvellous" that people can spend time there as in a park. P13 also reinforces the idea when he comments the space as "funny" with leisure purposes.

'For people who live in Shek Tong Tsui, there are no parks except Sun Yat Sen Park which is really far away…my office is near the park and during 11am or 12 noon, there are not too many people…but during weekend it's the other way round. People place their tent there and spend their time with their family.' – P4

'It's funny, cause one part is for working and another is for leisure so it is special.' – P13

When users gather at the Pier, then that makes it **"social"** like a community. No matter one is hanging out with his/her family and friends as what the participants have been doing most of the time, or one is alone, as said by P2, he/she is surrounded with people who are doing similar activities. These are urban encounters, with what P9 suggests as "real life", the Pier is a non-artificial place that people encounter each other like a miniature of society.

'It's social because you gather with friends, even if you are alone you gather with others with similar interests.' – P2

'Because there is some kind of relativity going on here, as well as people walking around […]' – P9

People co-exist at the Pier; they take and do what they desire at the Pier. P1 believes that the Pier offer choices for users to do whatever they like. However, P6 holds a negative view that people are having fragile relationships that they only tolerate each other which may refer to the weak social relationships as discussed in "Diversity". Yet, he still uses the word "co-existence" in describing the Pier, highlighting the social element *(Figure 47)*.

'Because everyone does their own stuff, the place is the same, but people can think of different activities that they would like to do!' – P1

'Co-existence. But this is a very fragile relationship and different groups of user just tolerate each other and this relationship may be broken if one group go across the bottom line.' – P6

But what they mean for "space" is much more, P2 makes the statement for the Pier that "it's like *an extension of your own home*," when he talks about the housing in Hong Kong are so small that this space allows residents to go out and breathe in some fresh air, also in the section of "Possibility" earlier.

'[…] everybody can do what he wants, it's like an extension of your own home. Especially in Hong Kong where you have very small housing and this is therefore a part of it, especially for the resident of the area. So that is what I think it is unique.' – P2

"Space" at the Pier is recreational, social, real and it reveals the quest for space in this land-hungry place. As users perform all sort of activities, another element of the meanings, *"freedom"* pops up. And the element of "water" symbolizes and indicates freedom. P2 states the fact that there is so separation between land and sea, apparently with the non-presence of railings at the Pier; he finds it poetic which he discloses his emotions a bit with the word "poetic". *Water* is a fundamental element to him that he finds no other place in Hong Kong with such access to water. And the Pier is his ideal public space that it is without boundary and he can live the freedom out of it. P12 also emphasizes that the Pier is *"boundless"* as there are no railings that she can get in touch with the water. The closeness to the water make the users feel free. As it is without railings, that attract people to visit the Pier, it shows the concept of freedom is crucial to them and again it manifests the social element of the Pier. P3 sums up that people are living a spiritual experience together at the Pier *(Figure 48)*.

*'Cause there is no railing, it's open, all the people can crowd in, there can be few hundreds of people all being together, close, shoulder to shoulder, all the strangers they don't know each other but doing the same thing…it's community, something like a **spiritual experience**'. – P3*

'And water, it's because it is by water and that also makes it unique and it gives you an incredible access to the harbour. There is no separation between land and sea…very poetic.' – P2

'There are no railings along the sea and you feel the proximity to the sea.' – P12

Freedom is associated with the *self-management* of the space by the users that they have appropriated the space. This allows them to imagine the possibility of the space, to create their own space out of the Pier. P3 concludes that the Pier is the best free space with which what P5 has mentioned about the activities which show the unwritten rules, making the Pier a norm to be visited. The activities there are organic with the middle-aged women that she eventually took a picture of them *(Figure 49)*.

'Free space, great free space, Hong Kong's best free space.' – P3

*'Secondly, people are so free…look at those middle-aged women, they place some pallets there and sat. I think it's funny. People have got used to the rules in those parks, being regulated and know that they should not do particular things. Here it is ambiguous, people know clearly that they can't enter but it becomes a habit of them entering…It's **organic**! There is no other place in Hong Kong which is so beautiful!' – P5*

The quest for freedom goes beyond what the users have expressed to the Pier, but the Pier even stimulates their reflection of freedom in the society. P5 has once organized a street tour during the time

that Liu Xiaobo, the human rights activist in Mainland China, had died; the Pier was a spot for the tour which intended to relate the sea, the water as freedom, that the soul of Liu is free as his ashes went away in the water. This is a reflection of freedom, and even democracy in China.

'We were saying that as the ashes of Liu Xiaobo are now in the sea, we can remember him everywhere.' – P5

Therefore, freedom with water, no railings, and self-management makes the whole experience an organic and spiritual experience. Meanings of the Pier are far more than "space", "social" and "freedom". With the meanings attached to the Pier, the Pier is in fact a practice ground for place-making process. The stance of users towards the development and management of the Pier is discovered and explored which give rise to the question to the right to the Pier in the next section.

Figure 47: Picture picked by P6 which shows "Co-existence" (Source: Internet)

Figure 48: Users Being Together, Shoulder-to-shoulder (Source: P3)

Figure 49: Middle-aged Women Sitting on the Pallets (Source: P5)

(4) From the Pier to the Right to the City

From conceived, perceived and lived, the production of the Pier with both subspaces is discussed in previous sections. This process of space production has actually transformed the Pier into a place evidently, as it is with meanings, inter alia the experiences, emotions, memories, the quest for space and freedom. With such a completed spatial triad as suggested by Lefebvre (1991), it becomes the place-production process as discussed in the literature (Franz, Güles & Prey, 2008). The Pier is socially and physically constructed with the users gathering there as a social place, and that they are present at the Pier with all forms of activities, fulfilling what Lombard (2014) has discussed. Undeniably, the Pier is imagined collectively the moment when the participants enter. They make the space public due to its looseness which creates as what Schneekloth & Shibley (1995) mention as shared value with their access and of course the intensity of activities. This has made rooms and created the prerequisites for place-making, a bottom-up approach in urban planning which public participation and people taking ownership of the city are essential.

Place-making sounds reasonable with how the Pier has come so far, this is however not the case at present. The redevelopment of the former Berth 1 to 3 and the Promenade section have been introduced all along in this study. And what are the users' points of view? P1 thinks sometimes the government works non-sense, greening the area like at former Berth 1 to 3 simply reduces the space for jogging. And P8, she simply believes that everyone should be able to use the Pier so that she does not support the closed community gardens. On the other hand, P6, a pro-government District Councillor, believes that many people support its development and the need for community gardens remain high in community, despite the active discussion among the public.

55

'If you put unnecessary greening here, people have less space to use, less space for jogging, I think the plan should be further researched into […]' – P1

'Yeah, you said that way right? (pointing at former Berth1-3) I heard that some parts will be used for farming, for growing vegetables, I think it is a waste…cause not everyone can use it…the area should be open to everyone.' – P8

'When talking about the addition of basic facilities or infrastructure, most people generally support this area as asked. As for the community garden, it is more controversial. Although there are some disputes, some people agree with such concept as it can be used for environmental teaching. The percentage of community garden usage is very high. I think the Pier can be more than only a space and can serve more purposes.' – P6

Yet, the government did not consult the users as said by P11, a community event organizer, who is enthusiastic in preserving the Pier as what it is now. As it is such an ambiguous space, public participation with the voices, movements and production of meanings are not recognized. The government is adopting a top-down approach instead.

'The plan hasn't undergone much consultation. There is no exactly a consultation being initiated by the government. It has just undergone some ridiculous processes. It is so-called being fought by the District Councillors, and being put in the policy address in the government, suddenly it needs to be done.' – P11

Users feel helpless and powerless in appropriating the space, making the Pier their own. Yet, they are living the Pier their own, and produce it as a new space for leisure, which is seen as autogestion (Lefebvre, 1996). P5, as a member of a community group, feels that she does not have the power and resources to fight against the government on those plans. No matter whether such development is what they want, they do not have the right to contribute. P2 states that he can only accept the development even if he disagrees on the development of railings like the Promenade. He also sees it as a removal of freedom and totality of the Pier.

'You mean in practice? I don't think it has, because the government has already decided those plans, and killed our imagination. Though I think I have the right, it is difficult to practice such right in Hong Kong. We are not in power…this also involves power and resources. The local community organizations do not have power and resources, thereby they have no say.' – P5

'I mean it would be sad if it is going to change because there are plans to make it in line with the rest of the promenade, with the rail protection but anyway it is going to modify the current usage.' – P2

The participants reply that they will continue in visiting the Pier even if it no longer maintains as what it is now. P3 points out that as there is little space for people to relax, people will still continue in visiting but the experience will surely be different. It is the fact that they are not able to have a say but they still continue in visiting which intensify such situation. P11 also says that people will continue to use it as they are forced but it will be different.

'I bet there will always be people going…several millions of people living on a small piece of land! People wanna get some fresh air on Sunday, people will go…people who live in the neighbourhood, people will go…there's always people going. But whether it has the same experience, the same enjoyment, the same surprise, the same feeling that there is something special going on, maybe not!' – P3

'People will still use it, but it will be different…it becomes that people are forced to use the space. It is being changed as what the government wants, and neglects the actual thoughts of the users.' – P11

People have struggled, and the presence of the Pier reveals the deficits of what is happening with all the redevelopment plans. Most of the participants actually feel attached with the uniqueness, and the current state and use of the Pier, instead of the usual management practices with regulations happening at space like the Promenade section. *"To safeguard the use currently" (P3), "the government should not change the use of the Pier" (P11), "it is important for the existence of the cargo working" (P14).* And the Pier itself with cargo boats is what attracts P7 *(Figure 50)*. There are the elements of the Pier that they find meaningful.

'It best represents the pier to me cause I can see the cargo boats and stuffs piled together as a whole from this broader angle.' – P7

Whether people hold the view they have the right to change the Pier or not is not of priority, what they should indeed have is the right to voice out their opinions, and they are entitled to that with all the meanings that they have expressed. They are the users of the Instagram Pier, and the public are the users of the city.

I think everyone has the right to participate in the development of the city. We have the right to the city. Fuck! We should have the right! I need to use the swear word to emphasize my anger. – P5

'[…] start a very good placemaking process where you have lots of debate with the community but how to do it and how to deal with these challenges.' – P3

What can be foreseen is that this whether-to-change-it-or-not question is to be answered with a long-term place-making process with public participation and negotiation. The living example of the Pier should be the start.

Figure 50: The Pier with Cargo Boats (Source: P7)
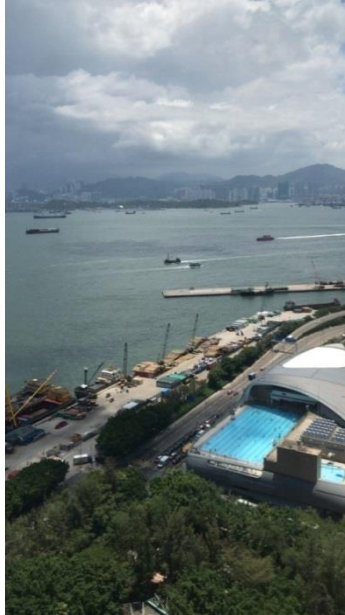
Conclusion

(1) A Study from Micro-to-Macro Perspective

This study has a thorough discussion from the production to the looseness of the Pier with the theoretical framework constructed with mainly Lefebvre (1991) and Franck & Stevens (2007), and dimensions of looseness in terms of possibility, diversity and disorder from various studies. To a large extent, the Pier has revealed its looseness and thereby its meanings which form the foundation for place-making, directly relating to the spatial triad that answers the research question.

The two subspaces, the "finger" and Berth 1 to 12 are viewed and treated as a whole most of the time, though in some way it may be different in the physical setting of spatial practice, leading to the intensity and diversity of activities, and with unforgettable experience at specific parts of the Pier by participants, the types of disorder found in its looseness. Besides, the meanings attached are often expressed with the entire Pier instead of having preferences or interpretations of specific subspaces. Sometimes the opinions of participants differ, but they all feel meaningful towards the Pier, as there is always something unique and means to them at the Pier that they would like to treasure, no matter physically with the water, with the breeze, with the great view or mentally with their memories, their feelings, their hope for space, social and freedom.

With this user-oriented perspective in the micro view of the case study, the preference of users has shown their stance towards the management of public space generally in Hong Kong, which is often regarded as having too many regulations. Following with the question of their right to the city as the Pier has been a wonderful example in showcasing how they live and self-manage the space with meanings,

this reminds and projects to the macro possibility of managing public spaces in other ways in Hong Kong. The scientific relevance that how and why the loose space is produced has been fulfilled and the societal relevance in rethinking the top-down approach instead of place-making process that the government has been adopted is highlighted.

(2) Unaddressed Discussions

On the other hand, there are some discussions left unaddressed along the study with the theoretical framework. First, the disorder at the subspaces in fact nurtures more than threatens the order of the Pier. Without doubt, the darkness and the construction materials to some extent create a sense of insecurity among some users. However, that does not threaten neighbourhood civility at the Pier that Jacobs (1961) believes in. And this does not make the Pier a fortress space with enhanced surveillance as studied by Smith (2001). In turn, users tolerate these discomforts and even they participate in turning these discomforts into order by reminding and reinforcing the behaviour of each other as they treasure the place. They do not want to make a mess at the space, resulting in the presence of implicit rules at the Pier. The case that disorder turns into an order is not covered in the theoretical framework at the moment, therefore left unaddressed.

Second, shallow social contacts have been found despite the diversified groups of users that fits into what Valentine (2008) proposes. Users only spend time with the ones they know may be some sort of self-segregation by Holland et al. (2007). They avoid bumping into conflicts with other people that they choose to walk away. Yet throughout the study, the users have the common goal of maintaining the order of the Pier in order to use it. They have common values like enjoying the freedom and space at the Pier with what Banerjee (2001) has researched into, while having differences among one another. As told by Peters (2010), such social interaction can increase cohesion among them which is failed to be found in this case. Having the same values, while with weak cohesion is left unexplained.

(3) Management Practices in Hong Kong

The case of Instagram Pier has proved that Hong Kong has the prerequisite for practicing place-making, with such a thorough production of the place. The fact that users start entering the Pier not with the original purpose has shown the looseness of the space vividly. With their usage, it becomes a norm that the Marine Department even tolerates such practice. When the redevelopment triggers public debates to its future use, the users have not only created a space for their own activities, but also the space for allowing attention and discussion to the Pier. This has enlightened the possibility of how other public spaces should be managed in Hong Kong, instead of keeping the management practice at present, as reflected from the situation of the Promenade section and the foreseeable future of former Berth 1 to 3. The current programmed management practice is not what the users would like to have, as those are opposite to the meanings that they have had at the Pier. Revealing the looseness of the Pier by the users can in turn bring possibility of the different usage to the space.

"Speaking, moving, and producing" the Pier entitles them to the right to the Pier, then how about our right to the city (Lefebvre, 1991, p.365)? This triggers further thoughts and debates for sure. Public spaces are disappearing in Hong Kong with its land-hungry feature and ongoing corporatization, the Pier has become a perfect example of how a public space (or not so public) can be like and lived with self-management (Law, 2002). This study is triggered by the development plans, what is sure are that the findings have allowed the public in rethinking the possibility of different spaces. Fighting for the right to the city in Hong Kong is still a long way to go, but the Instagram Pier has sowed the seeds to encourage people in discovering and using more loose spaces creatively. Only when these spaces are discovered, discussions on the possibility of the space then become possible, where the users of the city will be granted possible power of agenda-setting in discussing public spaces in Hong Kong.

(4) Recommendations for Future Research

For recommendations for future research, this study lacks the perspective of the cargo companies and workers, and security guards and even the officials of the Marine Department with the time constraints for data collection. It would have been interesting to see how the cargo companies and their workers view the informal use of the Pier. Do they think the other users are nuisance to them? Or do they welcome them? What are their views towards the redevelopment happening at former Berth 1 to 3? And is the Pier crucial for their work? All of these questions can now only narrowly answered by fragments of interview transcripts from the 15 participants. What about the security guards? What are their feelings of distributing a warning letter to the users? And are they annoyed by the large amount of users? Officials of the Marine Department can also specify their policy towards users apart from cargo companies.

At the same time, it can be found that the cargo activities are not active at the Pier but the participants have mentioned the importance of the Pier for transporting goods within Hong Kong. With this regard, the duration of observation can be longer, especially during weekdays, to observe the change of use more in-depth before and after.

For analysis, each participant may have some implications and stories behind each interview, and with the large amount of participants and within the scope of this study, not all their ideas and thoughts can be revealed and discussed, which may give rise to certain topics. For example, when it comes to their views on the redevelopment plans, one participant reveals her feelings that she would like to keep the Pier to be open to everyone, but at the same time she does not want to be selfish for not building railings only to be convenient for her fishing. That feeling may be another topic out of this research. There are always topics that can be explored into further.

Future research can also deal with the comparison of other public spaces, be it a case in Hong Kong or not with the Instagram Pier, instead of only a general comparison at present. How other public spaces are produced and what are the specific similarities and differences? A more detailed and credible study established from this initial study of the loose Pier towards the public space management practice in Hong Kong can hence be achieved.

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