

### **Searching for a roof: Young people's dreams and struggle for housing**

by Cheung Yin Nung Ingrid

Searching for a roof is a title inspired by the Chinese saying 'a roof covering your head' (有瓦遮頭) because housing is a basic necessity in contemporary life. This thesis discusses the critical housing situation of Hong Kong, such as the controversies over young people applying for public housing flats. I focus on local young people who are in their final year of undergraduate study, and graduates who have less than 2 years of working experience. This group of informants belong to the emerging adults, who are physically and psychologically on the threshold of leaving school and entering the job market. As a local young people, I want to study this demographic of informants from a micro perspective. Individual interviews with 9 informants were conducted. And, to know what happens when individuals get together, I had fieldwork with the non-profit, non-governmental advocacy group No Flat Slave (青年拒當樓奴運動) by joining their meetings and activities. I aim to understand the construction of Hong Kong's housing dream, the sentiments among young people on housing issues, the ways housing affect us in various levels, and how the younger generation interpret and re-interpret the meaning of housing. The questions help reveal the ways social, political and cultural factors create a system from which young people cannot escape easily.

After the research process I have come up to 5 chapters of analysis: context, location, space, relationships and future aspirations. The policy context looks into the quota and points system under the public housing scheme, and the unfavourable situation to allocate flats for younger applicants. The socio-cultural context explains the dream of housing and the making of 'housing slaves', and the ways these concepts create strong expectations on young people.

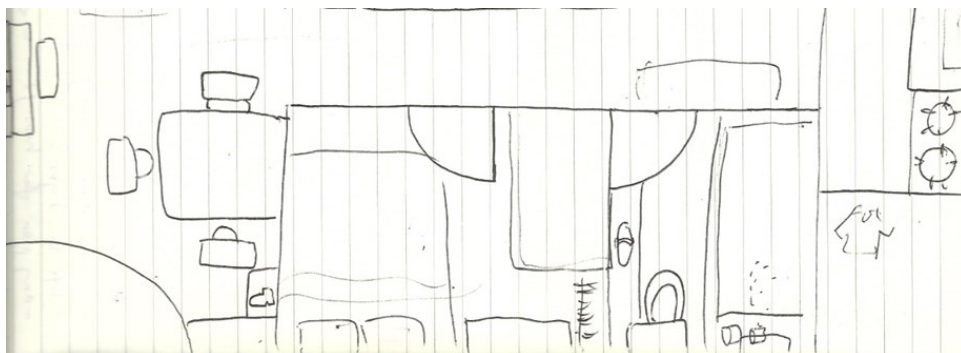
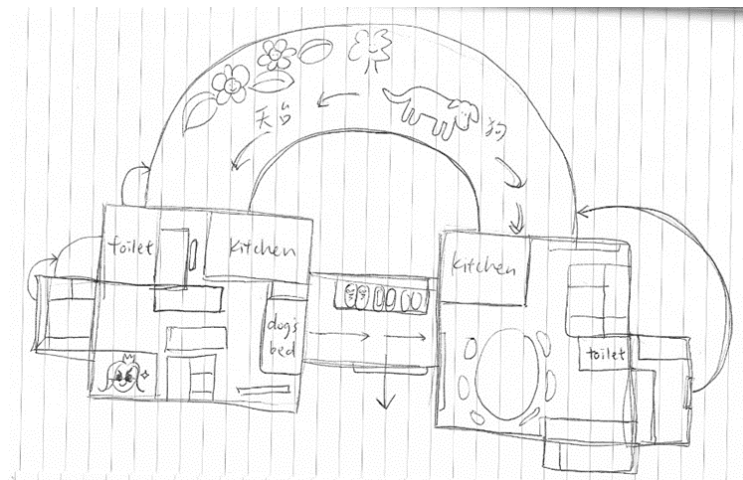
Location determines the value of properties, in the chapter I explain the ways locations affect my informants to make housing choices and their worries over urban development plans like MTR.

My informants and their parents understand the notion of ownership of space differently. In general, young people are more concerned about personal space, like having one's own room while parents are more concerned about having a place to live in and owning a flat.

Housing issues have profound effects on relationships in different levels. It is common for parents to plan for their children's housing future, yet it is interesting to note the two-fold parent-child relationship. Young people are both dependent and independent, not solely relying on their parents but also thinking for them.

Regarding their future, my informants mainly place their career progression as the top priority to work for, mostly because finding a secure job with good salary allow them to financially support themselves as well as their families. The search for meaning of life and personal goals is also important, and they tend to rethink if they are satisfied with the current living standard. Their imaginations of a dream home is an escape, in which indicates the ways that young people make sense of their situations, but cannot completely reconcile to their circumstances.

Throughout my interviews with informants and fieldwork with No Flat Slave, it can be observed that they have portrayed the other possibilities in life rather than focusing on homeownership. Young people are questioning more about the imbalanced housing system through rethinking about it, voicing out for themselves and getting together to show the changing dynamics of their power. After all, we are all dreaming and struggling under the roof, at the same time rewriting stories for ourselves because we want to search for a roof that we are truly happy to live under.



Drawings of informants' current home to see how they express a familiar space visually