Beyond the Rail: Reimagining Heritage through Hong Kong Tramways

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Abstract: This paper takes Laurajane Smith's concept of Authorised Heritage Discourse further to argue that a Hong Kong Authorised Heritage Discourse is pervading and limiting our understanding of heritage and identity through the definition, study, and management of heritage. By reimagining the idea of heritage through Hong Kong Tramways, this paper attempts to reconnect heritage with the present and with the people, and therefore opening up space and freedom for a wider imagination of cultural identity.

Background

The idea of studying Hong Kong Tramways in my Bachelor's thesis came in a seemingly mundane way. I started off by planning to write on a Hong Kong cultural heritage that is related to me as I am interested in this discipline. Cultural heritage has different definitions, the one most commonly taken is given by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), that "cultural heritage is the legacy of physical artefacts and intangible attributes of a group or society that are inherited from past generations, maintained in the present and bestowed for the benefit of future generations." (UNESCO)

Without one readily in my mind, I started to "look for" something that can be recognised as "cultural heritage of Hong Kong", and I "found" Hong Kong Tramways to be an interesting subject which I have been taking it frequently since I was 9. Hong Kong Tramways commenced in 1904 under British colonial rule. Hong Kong at that time was facing a booming population, but there was not any public transportation. (Leeds 1984: 12) Under the rule of Governor, John Hennessy, who was empathetic towards the Chinese, Ordinance on Tramways was passed in 1882, proposing six tram routes covering not only European living areas, commercial centre and also the areas where the Chinese lived. (Ding 1997: 79; Leeds 1984: 9) Hong Kong Tramways' long history seems to confirm that it would be a good "heritage" to write on. But then, a question came into my mind. Why did I only realise trams to be possibly a "Hong Kong heritage" only when I am seeking a "Hong Kong heritage"? Why would not I be readily cognizant of trams' importance to me? This unnatural and problematic realization came into spotlight in this thinking process. Does this mean that I did not care about Hong Kong heritage enough, for me to overlook that the Tramways could be a heritage?

To consider this phenomenon in a wider context, this issue did not seem to just happen on me, Hong Kong people generally reflect a lack of interest in understanding and preserving cultural heritage proactively. According to a report published by Antiquities and Monuments Office, 17 historic buildings or sites were demolished in the past four years, including Ho Tung Garden, Tung Tak Pawn. (Zhong 2017) The continuous demolition of heritages in Hong Kong failed to induce a consistent passion of general public in the protection of cultural heritages and reflection on Hong Kong laws and outdated ordinance on the preservation policy of cultural heritage. There are indeed organizations paying close attention to the heritages and their preservations, such as The Conservancy Association Centre for Heritage, Docomomo Hong Kong, and Walk in Hong Kong, but the majority still remains to be lack of interest and affection towards heritages in Hong Kong.

The absence of consistent passion of the general public to heritage urges us to reflect on an apparent basic concept. What is "cultural heritage"? What is the essence and meanings of it? How does it affect our imagination towards cultural identity? The definition and therefore following management of it affects how we could possibly perceive heritage, and in this case, trams, and our identity. Previous studies on trams naturalise trams' importance for its long history, its universal uniqueness of being the only fleet of trams that are all double-deck, and its reflection of Hong Kong development along the coast. (Sy 2014: 1, 5, 8, 11, 46) But are these the only reasons why trams are significant to people and should be recognised as heritage? It cannot fully explain why heritage and trams are unique and important to us in the present, as its significance is always accounted to the past and self-referring to its physical elements.

These questions cannot be waited, for heritages are continuously being demolished or proposed to be destructed. (Zhong 2017) Trams could not escape this trend. In 2015 and 2017, Mr. Sit Kwok Keung, a former government town planner, proposed to the Town Planning Board to demolish part of the tramways, from Central to Admiralty. (Town Planning Board 2015; Town Planning Board 2017) He argued that Hong Kong Tramways is taking up 30% of the road in Hong Kong Island, leading to a serious traffic congestion problem. According to Sit, trams could be well replaced by MTR and "we should stop embracing something old and flawed (唔應該抱殘守缺)". He further criticised that those who want to preserve trams are only feeling nostalgic about it and suggested that trams can be put into a museum if trams are for nostalgia. (Sit 2015) There are more than 22000 and 6000 public opposition to the proposals. (Ng 2017) However, most of the justifications made by the public and Hong Kong Trams Enthusiast came through a historical lens and focused on the importance of trams being a physical representation of history and culture only. (Young Post 2015; So So 2015) Their statements in a certain extent are corresponding to part of Sit's view, that trams are something in the past, old and static, and nonetheless remain unable to fully explain why trams are important to us in the present and why we should preserve trams nowadays.

By questioning these phenomena, this research attempts to deconstruct the dominant discourse of heritage and reimagine "heritage" through Hong Kong Tramways, reconnecting heritage with the present and the people and thereby opening up space and freedom for a wider imagination of cultural identity.

Research Questions

1. How does the discourse of heritage affect our understanding of trams?

2. How can we understand heritage alternatively beyond the frame of "authorised heritage discourse" in the case of trams?

3. Why does the Hong Kong public remain passive, in terms of proactively understanding and preserving heritage, even in the face of continuous demolition of heritages?

Methodology

In this research, literature review is taken as one of the major methods, covering several categories of materials. To begin with, researches on trams are reviewed, to take their methodology, approaches, and perspectives as a reference, to recognise what have been achieved in previous studies and what a different aspect I can take to fill the research gap.

Books and articles on Heritage Studies will be studied to examine the definitions and meanings of "heritage". By assessing the dominant definition and its function, a different definition of "heritage" will be introduced and adopted in this essay. For a better understanding of approaches to study heritage, articles and literature will be reviewed to evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the approaches, justifying how the adopted approach will be beneficial in studying trams in this essay.

The passiveness of Hong Kong people in understanding heritage and recognising Hong Kong culture is obscure and vague. To untangle this riddle which appears to be insolvable for my generation, Hong Kong Studies books and articles will be covered in literature review, to explore the theories that could be applied to formulate

a different understanding on the perceived phenomena of the negotiation of Hong Kong identity and culture.

As I live most of my life after the handover of Hong Kong to China in 1997, I am unfamiliar with the political, social and cultural context of Hong Kong during the colonial period. To capture the dynamics in the British colonial rule and HKSAR government period, I would need to read books and literature on Hong Kong history, especially about the society and people's mentality during colonial rule, to comprehend the context when Hong Kong Tramways was established, as a supplement of the understanding of the values, meanings being attributed to trams over time.

To research on the field site and to facilitate the fieldwork and better answer the research questions, I also reviewed historical documents such as maps, photos, old and recent news reports, and other published materials.

To reimagine heritage through Hong Kong Tramways, a case study is carried out in Li Yuen Street East in Central District. Central District is where the earliest development took place after British colonial occupation officially started in 1842. (Ding 1997: 107) Ever since then, Central has been the central business district and is where most of the commerce and trading located. The field site, Li Yuen Street East, locates adjacent to the tramway, and it is where an open-air market locates. (See Figure 1) While Li Yuen Street East itself could be earliest dated back to 1887 as it could be seen on Map of Central and Western Victoria (see Figure 2), the open-air market also has the history for at least about 70 years (see Figure 4). Its location and dynamic nature shed light on how people's lives have been intersecting with trams. Its orientation forges a perpendicular "cut" to the tramline, revealing the meanings and values of trams from the angle of people and their daily life pattern in the local community, rebutting

Sit's claim that trams "are only for nostalgia" as he included Li Yuen Street East in the area he suggested in his proposals to Town Planning Board to demolish tramway. (Sit 2015) Apart from my familiarity with the field site as it is located in my living area where I grew up, the short length of Li Yuen Street East is also preferable in considering the limited time I have for fieldwork, as I could better comprehend it in a short period of time.
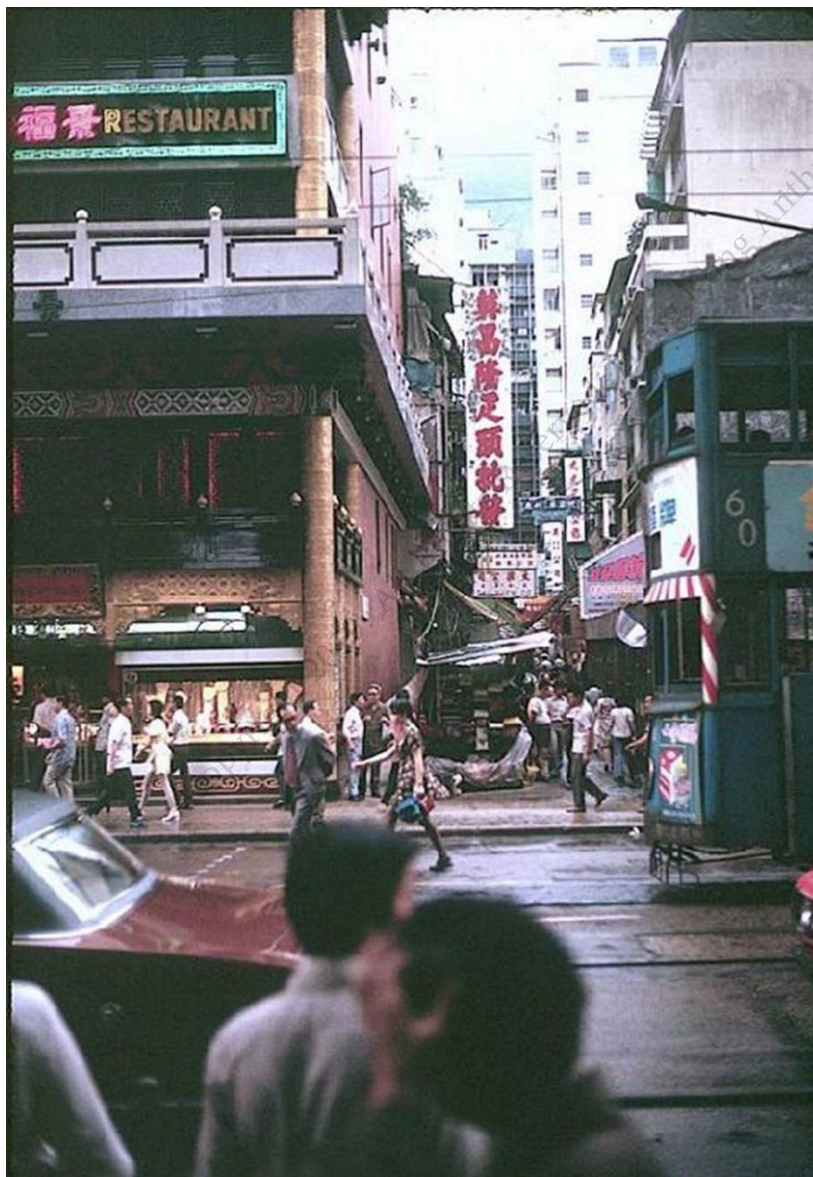

Figure 1. Tram passing by Li Yuen Street East circa 1972 (Source:
http://m.review33.com/forum_msg.php?db=3&tstart=&s=&topic=250906080215
37&start=20&sort=&number)

Figure 2. Identification of Li Yuen Street East Hawker Area on Part of Map of Central and Western Victoria, 1887 (Source: Public Records Office Call No. MM-0024)

Figure 3. Identification of Li Yuen Street East Hawker Area on Plan of Central District, City of Victoria by Hong Kong Crown Land & Survey Office P.W.D., 1957 (Source: Public Records Office Call No. MM-0614)

Figure 4. Li Yuen Street East circa 1948 (Source:
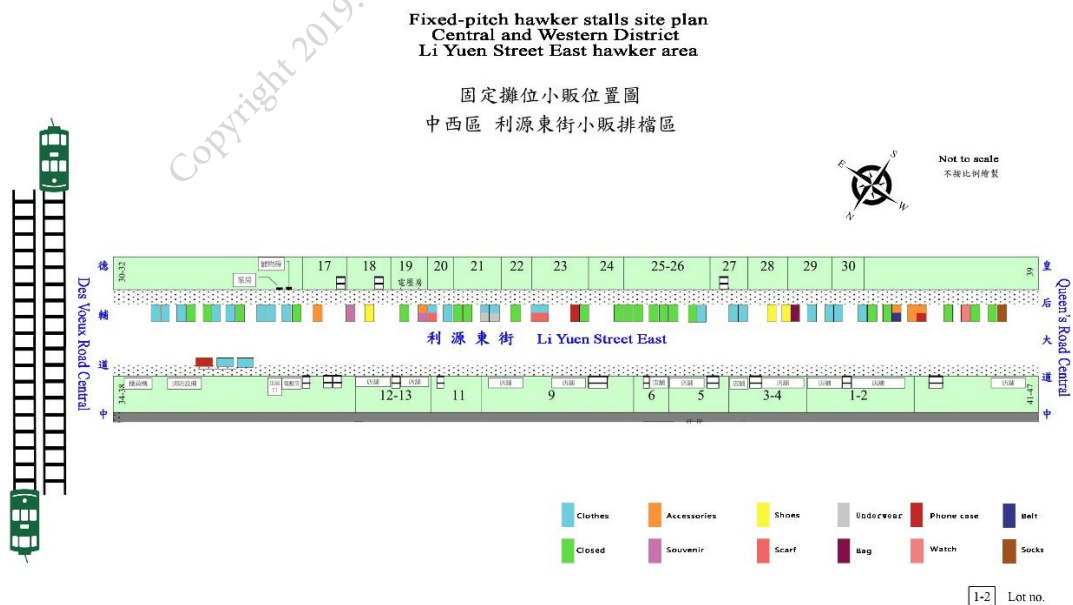*http://www.uwants.com/viewthread.php?tid=16732840&extra=&page=256)*

Figure 5. Li Yuen Street East Hawker Area Site Plan (22 January, 2018) (Source: The author)

*Figure 6-8. Photo Essay Depicting Li Yuen Street East Hawker Area
(22 January, 2018) (Source: The author)*

My fieldwork in Li Yuen Street East took one and a half months. The main field methods I applied is observation, cultural mapping, and semi-structured interviews. While cultural mapping more vividly illustrates the life pattern of the informants through mapping out the spatial relationships between people, trams, and stalls in the field site, semi-structured interviews allow me to understand how they perceive the meanings of this pattern and spatial relationships.

All of my seven informants were vendors in Li Yuen Street East. Stalls in Li Yuen Street East open from around 10am to 6pm, some would even open till 8pm. The market receives not only tourists, but also people who live nearby, office ladies, and domestic helpers on the weekends. The way stall owners extending their products to other closed stalls and this setting affects how visitors can move around in the market, the way vendors interact with one another and chat together when they are free, and how they sell products and develop conversations on daily life matters with customers, portray an intriguing hybridity of the market, and the vendors are the main actors in the

scene. Vendors thereby become the main focus in the case study, to explore how this hybridity in their life is constructed and collaborated with trams.

I got to know two of the informants by snowball sampling, the rest were from random sampling whom I interviewed as I saw them unoccupied. Mr. and Mrs. Tse were a couple. Mr. Tse had been living in Central since he was born and Mrs. Tse started living in Central after marrying him. Mrs. Tse was about 40 years old and Mr. Tse was around 60 years old. He inherited the stall from his father and he had been operating it for more than 40 years. Mr. Lam who was about 50 years old, had been managing his stalls for more than 23 years. He used to live in Sheung Wan but he later moved to Siu Sai Wan, another district in Hong Kong Island. Auntie Yu was more than 60 years old, having her stall in Li Yuen Street East for more than 20 years. She did not live nearby but she had been working in Central since she was 19. The Wong's sisters had been running their stall in Li Yuen Street East for about 27 years. The elder sister was about 60 years old and the younger sister was in her 50s. They lived in Central when they were small, and they later moved to other districts. Mrs. Lau was more than 50 years old. She did not live in Central but in Causeway Bay. She had been helping her husband to manage the stall since they got married in 1985. Among the informants, Mr. Tse, Mrs. Lau, and Wong's elder sister had been staying in the community for a long time, they had more experience of taking trams and were willing to share their experience. They had more information to impart and therefore are my key informants.

The localised ethnographic data obtained from the case study in Li Yuen Street East exhibits how trams have been constructing human experience and therefore valuable to people. By observing and collecting data on how individuals in the field site interact with the space and trams, it could capture the diverse processes of how their lives have been taking shapes with trams and hence understand the meaning-making

processes they have been engaging, in which they attribute trams with meanings and values continuously and thus make trams important and "heritage" to them. In this sense, the case study in Li Yuen Street East helps to reflect and unfold the way how heritage could be comprehended differently.

Literature Review

"A moving heritage: Hong Kong tramcars as an iconic urban heritage" is a Master Thesis studying Hong Kong Tramways and its heritage values in terms of its internal and external character-defining elements. The thesis provides detailed documentation of the history and development of tramways in Hong Kong, including the tramlines and components of tramcars in different generations. Although Sy assumed that the heritage significance of tramways only lied within its character-defining elements in the dissertation and neglected the role of intangible cultural heritage that could be found between local people, tramways and other tangible monuments, it is nonetheless a good source of information for me to build my research further on the study of trams, an interaction of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, as a medium for local community to negotiate their identity.

"Tram Number Seven to Heaven" is a Master Thesis studying how trams relate to people and how trams relate to cities. (Atherton 2011: 25) With the perspective of cultural analysis, the author explored the importance of trams in the creation of street-life and culture, of how people move and interact. Atherton argued that walking is linked with trams, in which shops and facilities will be set into walking distance between one another before one goes to further places with trams, and hence the city will become a "tram city" with a more intimate community as it fosters more social

interactions. (Atherton 2011: 50) This concept of walking and trams drives me to rethink how walking can create dynamics between trams, places and other monumental heritages, as one of the gear wheels of daily lives in the local community.

The methodology adopted in this research can be used as a reference. Besides in-depth interviews and participant observation, Atherton applied go-along method with interviewees to have a better understanding of how informants perform their daily routines in the context. Although the author adopted anthropological field methods, the way he analysed and drew conclusion leans towards the perspective of Cultural Studies. Atherton did not use anthropological theories in his elaboration, he analysed and explained the general ways people in Western cities find trams to be a "soothing presence" as they like the sound and the movement of trams, stating the social and economic benefits brought by trams to justify that the "tram method" is advantageous for urban development. (Atherton 2011: 56-57) In this essay, an anthropological perspective, of anthropological field methods and theories, will be adopted instead to understand how trams are significant to people in a specific context as a "heritage" in an Asian city, by analysing the role of trams in the identity and values through the case study in Li Yuen Street East.

What, ultimately, is "cultural heritage"? This question emerged as I questioned the public apathy to heritages in Hong Kong. Shouldn't heritage be closely and intimately linked to the people as they embedded with values for the present generation? Why do heritages in Hong Kong seem to be distant and isolated from the general public? Laurajane Smith's (2006) *Uses of Heritage* shed light on solutions to this riddle, inspiring me to study trams from a different perspective, laying one of the cornerstones on the approach I shall take in this paper.

In the book, Smith probed into the nature and uses of heritage by studying the development and functions of the dominant heritage discourse, in which Smith named it as authorised heritage discourse (AHD). (Smith 2006: 4) The AHD had its origin in Europe in the 19th Century, when the process of industrialization and urbanization dislocated people from their hometown where they originally drew social and geographical security, the newly-formed nation states required a new device for social cohesion and higher status of European identity in the face of colonialism as Europeans believed themselves to be superior. In this emerging atmosphere of nationhood and nationalism, the concept of heritage was formed to serve as "physical representations of national identity and European taste and achievements" by managing and preserving the "monuments". (Smith 2006: 17-18)

Thereby, AHD has a strong emphasis and preference on the material basis of heritage, for instances sites, artefacts, places, and buildings that are "old", grand, aesthetically pleasing, and monumental, in which these elements become the inherent cultural significance and values of heritage. (Smith 2006: 3, 11) This gives way to the dominance of meaning-making by the authorities as only elites have the professional knowledge to understand the history, monumentality, and aesthetics, to manage and preserve these values, and hence "educate" the public about it. (Smith 2006: 11-12, 19, 29) In this process, the discourse serves for the authority to create a certain "knowledge" and "truth", legitimising who has the power to speak about or for "heritage". (Smith 2006: 4, 12) This hegemonic discourse of heritage is imposed in other cultural contexts through colonial governance and international conventions on cultural heritage such as the Venice Charter and Burra Charter, constituting how people should think about heritage. (International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) 1964; Australia ICOMOS 2013; Smith 2006: 11, 21, 23, 87-90) With this power, the authority

"naturalise(s) a range of assumptions about the nature and meaning of heritage", naturalising the assumption that heritage is a "thing" from the past that should be preserved intact to pass on to the future generations, rather than a dynamic cultural process where identity, values, social and cultural meanings are constantly negotiated by different parties in the present, in which heritage is dissonant, discursive, and contested. (Smith 2006: 2-5, 19)

Smith's critique on "authorised heritage discourse" reminds me of the monument grading system in Hong Kong that place particular emphasis on "things". In Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance (1976), which is the only ordinance enacted by the government concerning heritage in Hong Kong, as the title has already confined the content, it "provide(s) for the preservation of objects of historical, archaeological and palaeontological interest". (Cap. 53 Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance) It constructs and regulates public understanding towards "heritage" through the management, study, and preservation of heritage. To break away from the authorised heritage discourse set by the Hong Kong government and study trams from a new perspective, the meaning of heritage in this essay is taken as "the ongoing negotiation and regulation of social meanings and practices associated with the creation and recreation of 'identity'", such that the changing values and emotional linkages attributed to trams and the negotiation and the process of meaning making which occurred in the form of trams can be explored and discussed. (Smith 2006: 5)

Taking Smith's idea further, "intangible cultural heritage" in this essay refers to non-material elements attributed to a heritage, including values, practice, rituals, and life pattern revolve around a heritage, rather than only an intangible event that is recognised to be "intangible cultural heritage" by authority. (Smith 2015: 138, 141)

The essays *Discussing strategy in heritage conservation: Living heritage approach as an example of strategic innovation* and *Moving Beyond a Values-based Approach to Heritage Conservation* by Ioannis Poulios likewise responded to the concern of the hegemony of "authorised heritage discourse", and suggested the "living heritage approach" to heritage sites that have continuous function and changing significance to the community, providing me a way to study trams in response to the heritage definition I adopted.

Poulios outlines and compares the popular values-based approach and new living heritage approach. The values-based approach understands heritage through the values of different stakeholders in the society ascribed to the heritage. (Poulios 2014: 18) The "value" ascribed can be any of a "set of positive characteristics or qualities" and the stakeholders can be "any group with legitimate interest in heritage". (Poulios 2014: 18-19) The values-based approach is drifting away from the concept that "heritage is self-evidently, inherently valuable" and attempts to recognise different values among the society for understanding a heritage. Nonetheless, the democratization of valuing a heritage does not perform well in practice. (Poulios 2014: 20)

The stakeholders are involved by participating in consultation or joint programmes led by heritage authority. (Poulios 2010: 172) The coordination of the management process and the power are therefore still in the hand of the authority which identifies the stakeholders, records and prioritises the values, and ultimately decides which values to take and which to decline. Without clear criteria of which party to be considered with priority, the process is utterly arbitrary as "assessment of value can differ greatly depending on who is doing the assessing", in which the authority, in most cases, under the prevalent concept of "heritage" as a "thing", is the conservation

professionals who ultimately adhere to the physical and material expression of heritage, the recognition of a heritage inevitably leans towards the importance of the tangible remains. (Poulios 2010: 173)

The conservation process remains to exist within the framework and under the supervision of professionals and authority; they are a stakeholder with equal power as others in theory, in reality, they remain to be the authority. (Poulios 2014: 20) In the process of resolving the conflicts aroused from the divergent values attributed by various stakeholders, their voices remain to be the loudest, while other voices are sacrificed if the authority and professionals decide that the heritage is not "worth" for preservation in their perspective, or the values are incorporated within and serving for the protection of tangible remains. (Poulios 2014: 21) As the strong professional managing authority subtly shows preference on the fabric, that the values of a heritage "ought to be the touchstone of management decision, day-to-day operations are most often concerned with the use and care of the physical resources", it upholds the idea that heritage has to be protected as a "non-renewable" resource with authenticity, something that belongs to the past and should be passed on intact to the future generation. (Poulios 2010: 174, 178) The values-based approach eventually echoes with the authorised heritage discourse rather than substantially challenging it.

Thereby, Poulios suggested the living heritage approach as a different way to study living heritage sites that "maintains its original function, as continually reflected in the process of its spatial definition and arrangement, in response to the changing circumstances in society at local, national and international level". (Poulios 2010: 175) In contrary to the discontinuity of heritage between the past and present recognised in values-based approach, living heritage approach embraces the evolving tangible and intangible expressions of a heritage in changing circumstances over time. A "core

community" is identified in this approach as those who create and sustain the function of heritage, and retain their connections with it, taking it as the integral part of their contemporary lives. (Poulios 2014: 21) This group of community is given the primary role in understanding and managing the heritage, differentiating from the supplementary role of the "broader community" and professionals who involved in the life of the heritage. (Poulios 2010: 180)

Although the case in Hong Kong is special in the sense that the "core community" may not be the one who creates and sustains the original function of heritage in the restriction of its colonial history and contemporary political situation, they certainly retain their connection with it in a changing way and incorporating it as an integral part in their lives. By adopting the living heritage approach raised by Poulios to study heritage as a "process" rather than a "product", which corresponds with the heritage definition I took, I can take a different aspect to explore the significance of trams by capturing the ongoing process of meaning-making by vendors in Li Yuen Street East, who are one of the "core communities" retaining their connections with trams, in this paper. (Poulios 2010: 178)

To capture the evolving intangible expressions and the ways people have been using trams for negotiating meanings and creating identity over time, the historical context is important to understand the role, and therefore the significance, of trams. *Hong Kong History: New Perspectives* allows me to take a glimpse of the past to understand the historical background where the present is engendered.

Trams were established by the British government during colonial rule as aforementioned. Its role and values attributed to it can be traced back to the time when the British had planned to colonise Hong Kong, as this was the turning point of Hong

Kong's development. The British did not colonise Hong Kong for the place itself, but for a physically isolated base that was out of the governance of the Qing Empire yet close to the territory of China for trading. As opium was banned in Qing Empire in 1820, the British were in need of a trading centre free from the ban so they could continue to trade in Guangzhou whilst ensuring the safety of British merchants. (Ding 1997: 60, 62, Long 1997: 212) In the early years of British rule, opium trade took up most of the import/export business in Hong Kong (Xian 1997: 160). Although opium was forbidden in the Qing Empire, the British merchants could continue to sell opium to Guangzhou as opium trade was legal in Hong Kong since the sovereignty of Hong Kong was in the hands of British after a series of conflicts and bargains. (Ding 1997: 60, 74-75) The purpose of acquiring Hong Kong merely as a place to trade with Guangzhou, constituted the mentality of British on the governance of Hong Kong.

Under this mentality, the colonial government adopted the stance of non-interventionism for its rule in Hong Kong. The major concern was to maintain social stability in Hong Kong to ensure smooth trading and operation of the free market (Xian 1997: 164). The British passive attitude in governance could be seen from the early urban development as it was criticised for a lack of thorough planning. After situating the barracks, freight house, pier, and area for residence of the Westerners, the colonial government did not make plans and policies for other urban development. (Long 1997: 213)

The government policies were strongly influenced by British merchants as they dominated the seats of unofficial members in Legislative Council, while the Chinese in Hong Kong barely had a voice in it. It was not until in 1880 there was a Chinese official member being temporarily appointed to Legislative Council, and one permanent seat for the Chinese unofficial member was finally added to the Legislative Council in 1884.

(Ding 1997: 82-83) Thereby, the Chinese as the colonised group had little influence in the colonial government.

The Chinese in Hong Kong were considered to be inferior to Westerners as could be seen from racist policies. The colonial government separated residential areas of Chinese and Westerners as it was deemed that tong lau (唐樓) where Chinese lived, had serious hygiene problems, and the health of the Westerners would be affected if they lived close to the Chinese. It first moved Chinese who lived in Middle Bazaar to Upper Bazaar, for the development of the residential and commercial area of Westerners in 1843 (Ding 1997: 105). Later in 1888, the government drafted an ordinance, forbidding the construction of Chinese buildings which did not fit the sanitary requirement in the area between Wellington Street and Caine Road. In that area, only buildings of Western style were allowed. In 1902, a group from Sanitary Board suggested reserving the area from Tsim Sha Tsui to Kowloon City as European residential area. (Ding 1997: 107) When the government passed the ordinance, it added that anyone who had permission from the Hong Kong Governor could live in the area. The government passed ordinance reserving the peak for the Westerners as a residential area in the same way in 1918 (Ding 1997: 107-108). Although the government emphasised that these regulations and policies were not racial segregation, the result of these policies showed that they served to separate Westerners and Chinese (Ding 1997: 107).

In this political and social context, trams were established in 1904. It could easily be inferred that trams were not established for Hong Kong's general public as an infrastructure before considering that John Hennessy was the Governor in rule when the Ordinance on Tramways was passed in 1882 (Leeds 1984: 9). However, John Hennessy was a Governor who was empathetic towards the Chinese (Ding 1997: 79).

Under his governance, even under a social context when Chinese were considered to be inferior to Westerners and separated from them, tram routes were proposed not only covering European living area but also extended to the Chinese living quarters (Leeds 1984: 9). Although trams remained to be only affordable by Westerners and some wealthy Chinese with social status at that time, the establishment of trams in Hong Kong was nonetheless a powerful symbol of inclusion, with consideration particularly for the underprivileged groups. In this sense, the function of trams is very similar to that of it nowadays, which continues to serve the general public and is seen as a means of public transport for the grassroots due to its cheap fares.

Nevertheless, the values attributed to trams has been changing over time. Trams were utilised as a medium for people to protest against the colonial government as could be seen in the Tram Boycott in 1912-1913. After the 1911 Revolution which overthrew the Qing Empire in China, the economic situation in Guangdong deteriorated severely. Therefore, the colonial government banned the new Chinese currency from being used in Hong Kong. The Chinese in Hong Kong had been using Chinese currency since the beginning of colonial rule and they deemed this sudden policy to be an insult to the new Chinese Republic. As Governor May urged the Star Ferry Company and two Tramways to stop taking Chinese coins of the new Chinese republic, it aroused discontent among the Chinese population and the boycott broke out as a way for Chinese to protest against the colonial government and to show their support for the new Chinese Republic. (Carroll 2007: 84)

This wide support of Hong Kong Chinese to the authority and political power in mainland China was not exceptional in Hong Kong at the time. Hong Kong Chinese had always been enthusiastic in participating in mainland Chinese politics and gaining mainland Chinese political status. For instance, Man Mo Temple (文武廟), which was

established in 1847, volunteered to arrange the accommodation of Chinese officials who passed by Hong Kong, and was in charge of the negotiation for purchasing official positions in the Qing Empire (Xian 1997: 165). In the opening of Tung Wah Hospital (東華醫院) in 1872, directors and managers of the Hospital wore formal attire for officials of Qing Empire to flaunt their status. In the past, gaining political power and status of mainland China was considered to be an honour for the Hong Kong Chinese, and participating in political events and supporting the mainland Chinese government was also seen as a responsibility and duty by them. This is greatly different from the contemporary situation in Hong Kong today as there is now only 18% of people in Hong Kong who recognised themselves as Chinese, let alone the amount of Hong Kong people supporting and participating politics in mainland China and perceiving the acquirement of mainland Chinese political power and status as an honour (Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong 2017). The historical account provides me more information about the social and political values upheld and ascribed on to trams by people in the past, which highlights the significance of trams as a heritage as it has been the negotiation of divergent meanings, values and a medium for creating and recreating identities by people in Hong Kong over time.

As I question the passiveness shown in recognising the negotiation of cultural and social meanings and creation of Hong Kong identity made through trams, *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* and *Hong Kong Studies as a Method (香港研究作為方法)* inspired me with remarkable theories to understand the obscure situation of Hong Kong culture and identity.

Ackbar Abbas's *Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance* is a book analysing Hong Kong culture and identity through historical events, cinema,

architecture, photography and literature, published in 1997 yet intriguingly echoes with the circumstances in Hong Kong nowadays.

In this book, Abbas suggested remarkable ideas, revolving around his main idea of Hong Kong culture as "a culture of disappearance". By identifying Hong Kong culture as a culture of disappearance, Abbas pointed out the phenomenon of reverse hallucination towards culture, that Hong Kong people were "not seeing what is there" and recognised Hong Kong as a "desert of culture", in which this only changed after the signing of Sino-British Joint Declaration and Tiananmen Massacre when Hong Kong people recognised that the Hong Kong way of life was facing immediate danger of disappearance, and it aroused people's interest in Hong Kong culture, forming the culture of disappearance, with disappearance referring to misrecognition of a thing as something else. (Abbas 1997: 6-7) The first sense of disappearance has been reverse hallucination itself, and the second would be that the representation that Hong Kong using was in fact causing it to disappear as it always drew on ideas that were fading, such as the old binary of East West difference.

This culture of disappearance problematized self-representation and led to the question of the "Hong Kong identity" or "post-colonial identity", in which people usually turned to three options, which only problematized the issue of identity further. They are firstly the temptation of being "local" with the idea of "local" finding difficulty to define itself; the temptation of being "marginal" as a defense resisting the colonial master's discourse as the legitimate center, yet only to re-affirm the "center". Thirdly would be the temptation of being "cosmopolitan" with a high tolerance towards otherness, embracing "one world culture", yet neglecting the unequal historical conditions of Western imperialism and hegemony implied behind this "one world culture". (Abbas 1997: 11-14)

Echoing these three facets of identity, Abbas further identified three types of built space, in which each of them claiming to represent some part of Hong Kong, to be somehow "local" yet incomplete. The Merely Local referred to indigenous architecture and colonial buildings which were once rooted in a time and space that no longer exists, in which they were preserved to combat the Placeless and Anonymous, constructing and reinforcing the culture of disappearance. Placeless refers to the skyscrapers that are driving forces of disappearance as these skyscrapers belong to the internationalist architectural system, in which no matter how different they look or the different ideology they have behind (e.g. Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank versus The China Bank). It fortifies the culture of disappearance as the cosiness of "one country" dissolves in the global economic system and the ideology of differentiated socioeconomic systems, as to how Hong Kong's capitalist system is being enveloped within the socialist country. Anonymous refers to the majority of undistinguishable commercial and residential buildings which becomes the urban vernacular, depriving the city of architectural character (Abbas 1997: 81-85).

To survive the culture of disappearance, Abbas argued, Hong Kong people would need to find their identity in a different way, and not fall into temptations of the three identities as aforementioned (Abbas 1997: 15). Likewise, seeing Hong Kong built space individually in the three categories mentioned above would not save Hong Kong from space of disappearance. (Abbas 1997: 89) According to Abbas, only when Hong Kong people carve out new identity in the large Anonymous, accepting different elements and forming a cultural hybrid from Anonymous, Placeless and Merely Local, Hong Kong will hence be able to find its way towards the future instead of disappearing.

The theory raised in *Hong Kong Studies as a Method* by Zhu Yaowei (2016) echoes with this theory. In the contemporary globalising world, locality is created and

embraced to combat globality as a defence from losing a unique self, being assimilated into one global identity. Yet the process of creating locality is often misrecognised as building a single, fixed subjectivity, such that a place equates to fixed elements and qualities. It can be problematic and misleading if we essentialise the locality of Hong Kong, as it will create a stagnant, single subjectivity which neglects diverse subjectivities and hybridity of Hong Kong based on its complicated historical and cultural background. (Chen and Li 2016: 139, 141, 143) If we merely adhere to Hong Kong culture and identity to Western culture or peripheral Chinese context, it could be a reproduction of violence (Zhu 2016: 20, 21). Therefore, Hong Kong has to create its own identity, by recognising different elements in the society and capturing the "cultural translation" of continuous changes in Hong Kong, to differ itself from other hybrid cities with the detailed depiction of diversity and transformation of the elements in Hong Kong through studies (Zhu 2016: 23, 25-26, Chen and Li 2016: 143-144).

This essay is fundamentally built upon the concept of Authorised Heritage Discourse, the theory of disappearance and the method of Hong Kong studies, arguing that a Hong Kong Authorised Heritage Discourse should be recognised and deconstructed to enable a wider imagination of heritage whereby the identity can be rediscovered, in this case, through tramways. Tramways are one of the fundamental things revolving around people's daily lives in that "anonymous" space that has always been expressed as a static, single subjectivity, being the narrative of depicting the original coastline, a "cultural heritage" symbol of Hong Kong, given its age. Yet this discourse of stagnant subjectivity neglected the complexity and hybridity of Hong Kong, and how it was attributed different meanings and values in different time and contexts. To break away from the obscure situation of identity making, we should

understand the change of values in trams and the current meanings negotiated as one of the ways to understand Hong Kong culture and identity.

A Hong Kong Authorised Heritage Discourse

Most of our understanding about heritage builds upon its definition, management, and preservation provided by the government and other authorities. In fact, what we know about heritage is largely regulated by authorities, in international, regional and local levels. Consider the 1972 World Heritage Convention issued by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the most powerful organization to define what heritage is and identify which heritage has enough outstanding universal value to be listed as one of the World Heritage Sites (UNESCO 1972). Consider how the local heritage listing system works and how we know about heritages in Hong Kong. Heritage was defined as antiquity and monument, in which antiquity is referred to as "a relic; a place, building, site or structure erected, formed or built by human agency before the year 1800 and the ruins or remains of such place, building, site or structure, whether or not the same has been modified, added to or restored after the year 1799". A monument is "a place, building, site or structure which *is declared* to be a monument, historical building or archaeological or palaeontological site or structure" (Cap. 53 Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance). As the only ordinance concerning heritage in Hong Kong, Antiquities and Monuments Ordinance greatly confines our understanding of heritage as a "thing" that is antique, old, grand, and has to be "found" and "declared" by the authority. Yet, this ordinance only serves as one of the gear wheels in the complex system of heritage management, the study of heritage, and cultural policy. All these together work closely to construct and control

the public understanding of heritage. This chapter attempts to recognise and therefore deconstruct a Hong Kong Authorised Heritage Discourse (HKAHD) by analysing how the authorities have been actively regulating the concept of heritage and public relations of heritage through its professional management, and how assumptions of heritage have been naturalised and reproduced, and eventually consolidating the HKAHD.

According to Laurajane Smith, the authorised heritage discourse (AHD) has a strong preference on sites, objects, buildings that are "old", grand, monumental, and aesthetically pleasing, which are ascribed to "heritage" as its inherent cultural values. (Smith 2006: 3-11) Although Hong Kong has "identified" a list of intangible heritage, the dominant discourse of heritage performs a high preference of tangibility such as monuments and historic buildings. Not only does the sole ordinance concerning heritage have the entire focus on tangible heritage, but the revitalization and rehabilitation plans and projects of tangible heritage also far outnumber the programmes and attention given to promote and preserve intangible heritage. Heritage in Hong Kong is thus continuously acknowledged as a "thing" with innate meanings and inherent values. Heritage is often recognised as a heritage because it "simply is". (Smith 2006: 3) This is reflected by how Hong Kong people speak of trams.

Trams are often referred to as "cultural heritage of Hong Kong". In a news article, written by former Director of Lands Department, under the subtitle "Trams are cultural heritage (電車是文化遺產)", it says "……I think no one will oppose that trams are cultural heritage of Hong Kong. (……說電車是香港的文化遺產相信沒有人會反對。)" without further elaboration (Liu 2015). Apart from the media, similar discourses can be found on the internet, made by Hong Kong Tramways, the company operating Hong Kong tram, and the public who wanted to preserve trams from proposed

development plan, but rarely this reference of trams as heritage is explained (Hong Kong Tramways, Young Post 2015). The notion of "heritage" is naturalised with a range of assumptions of what heritage is and should be, that never comes naturally and is substantially constructed by authority and its AHD.

The influence and power of AHD are stronger than one can expect. As AHD focuses on the tangibility of heritage and its role of physical representation of certain identity and "the past", these assumptions are remarkably received and reproduced by the public as shown in the way they perceive and interpret heritages (Smith 2006: 30). "…… (T)hey (trams) have become one of Hong Kong's historical and cultural icons". "(T)hey (trams) are representing Hong Kong's culture and history". "(T)he Tramways, having been around for more than a century, is definitely a piece of Hong Kong's past". (Young Post 2015) The prevalent concept held by the public reconfirms the authorised concept that heritage has to be "old", something in the past, static that we have to preserve it well for passing on to future generations. It disengages heritage from the present generation and therefore limits one's agency in making meanings, negotiating values and regulating understanding of "heritage" and "trams" (Smith 2006: 29).

This authorised heritage discourse works conjointly with the professional discourse and regulates the concept of heritage through the study, the management, and the preservation of heritage. In Hong Kong, material heritages are selected and graded by government and experts into four different grades and the grades are used to determine if a heritage is valuable enough to be preserved. The process of grading is largely reserved to experts and authority, in which the public was only consulted for the grading results (AMO 2017). The listing of intangible cultural heritage was done in a similar way (Intangible Cultural Heritage Office 2018). As heritage now becomes a valuable asset that has to be passed on to future generations, the management,

interpretation, study, and preservation have to be done in a careful and "professional" way and they are therefore put under the responsibilities of experts and professionals, who become the stewards and protectors of "the past" and heritage (Smith 2006: 4, 12, 29). Heritage is accordingly packaged and assumed as a "thing" with mysterious, innate worth that can only be identified and protected by experts. (Smith 2006: 29-30) In this process, it demarcates those who have the exclusive ability and power to interpret and speak for heritage, limiting public understanding of heritage in a perspective mainly based on the tangibility and a limited range of assumptions of heritage (Smith 2006: 12). The Hong Kong Tramways is often understood by its long history, the nostalgic sound and the intimate name "ding ding", its universal uniqueness of being the only entire fleet of double-deck trams in the world, and its reflection of the original Hong Kong coastline. (Sy 2014: 1, 5, 8, 11, 46, Pan 2011) We often take these understandings for granted, naturalizing and internalising these given values. Yet are these really the reasons why trams are important to us? Are there other possibilities? This will be further discussed in the next chapter.

This professional discourse of heritage places the public in a passive role that they can only be educated about heritage, excluding them from actively engaging with heritage and its meaning-making process. It displaces people from their heritages, in which it is where the meanings and values should come from, not the contrary (Smith 2006: 44). This broken linkage is more obvious when the public tries to resist the authority's plan of demolishing a heritage.

"Collective memory" and "nostalgia" are two discourses often cited by the Hong Kong public to oppose government redevelopment plans that involved pulling down historic buildings or sites. (Ku 2012: 10) Under the hegemony of AHD, where the public is de-legitimised for their ability to speak for heritage, they are two of the

few strategies that the public can deploy to re-establish their own connection with heritage. The two concepts provide resources to the public to challenge the authority because "collective memory" and "nostalgia" are feelings and emotions that can be personally experienced by oneself beyond the restriction of AHD. Yet, these discourses are used in ways that are indeed reproducing AHD rather than confronting it.

"Collective memory" is a concept that can be used to understand heritage as "a cultural process that engages with acts of remembering that work to create ways to understand and engage with the present" (Smith 2006: 36, 44). However, under the power of HKAHD, where the understanding of heritage is greatly dominated by the interpretation by the authority to be something "in the past", this concept remains much on a vague and general understanding and usage. Together with "nostalgia", they are often taken as an innate value of heritage that does not require much explanation and elaboration. (Smith 2006: 41) In this sense, these apparent counter-arguments, in fact, conform to the assumptions made by HKAHD, and further reproduces them.

There is a subtle yet influential wave of gentrification of heritages sweeping in Hong Kong, especially in Central recently as the authority is working on a series of revitalization and preservation projects. These projects, for instances "Old Town Central" and PMQ, are partly building upon the empty rhetoric of "nostalgia" and "collective memory", repackaging heritages in a gentrified form to attract tourists and Hong Kong public to taste "the past", producing HKAHD through consumerism and capitalism.

"Old Town Central" is a project to package Central into a historical place where one can enjoy culture, heritage, and art, aiming not only at tourists but also to Hong Kong people. It gentrifies the district with high-end shops that sell design products and

arts, nostalgic or stylish cafés that sells expensive coffees, with graffiti on walls painted by famous artists who were invited by the authority, while presenting heritages on its map among all the shops and cafés. The project promotes to the tourists and Hong Kong public that one could become a "Time Traveller" in Central (Hong Kong Tourism Board 2017). "Heritage" here does not only conform to the assumptions that heritage is something that stays far in the past and you can only reach it if you time travel back into history, it also serves as a seasoning that enhances the flavour and the class of consumption as the experience of "time traveller", signifying that the person has the taste to enjoy "culture" rather than just shopping.

PMQ is former Police Married Quarters located in Hollywood Road, is strived to be preserved by local residents in the community. (Zhao 2017) This former Police Married Quarters is now a hub of "culture and creativity", branding itself with lifestyle, fashion, and art packed with the subtle "taste" of heritage and nostalgia. It is recently sending gifts to overseas visitors, the visitors will receive "nostalgic paper costumes" if they share photos on social media with certain hashtags (PMQ 2018). PMQ mainly sells design products or artworks that targets the middle class (Hong Kong Tourism Board 2017: 17). It holds exhibitions and workshops throughout the year. Exhibitions are mostly free, while workshops are ranging from HKD$100 for making a red copper wire music note charm, to HKD$1500 for learning Kinstugi, the art of repairing ceramics with gold or silver (PMQ 2018). Apart from its apparent "old" architecture and a small hole covered with glass in the courtyard which allows you to see the old structure underneath, there is rarely anything inside PMQ that can recall a person to its original heritage and function, even for me as a resident who grew up in the local community. Heritage guided tour, although free, requires booking two months to two weeks in advance (PMQ 2018).

By packaging the former Police Married Quarters with consumerism, it decontextualizes heritage by continuously celebrating and encouraging the act of consumption, just as how the name, "PMQ", is gradually becoming less able to be relevant with its origin, Police Married Quarters, not to mention the Central School. They are becoming separate individuals. PMQ neglects the stories and values that are embedded in the heritage, and they became unimportant as being replaced by the vibe of lifestyle, fashion, and consumption, which does not reflect any intrinsic linkage with the heritage itself. In other words, this hub of culture and creativity can be well built in any other place. This does not only conform to the AHD that heritage has its inherent values that the public does not have to engage with its meaning-making process actively, but it also constructs the concept of how the public should engage and relate themselves with heritage. This concept portrays consuming heritage as a way to understand and preserve it, and hence limits heritage's meanings and values that are available to the public: either you buy, or you visit exhibitions and museums.

As archaeological and heritage knowledge is utilised by the authority and power, it becomes the "governance of archaeological and heritage knowledge", creating an "authorised heritage discourse" that regulates public understanding of heritage, defining what heritage is, and how people could possibly interact with heritage, for the regulation of people's identity and sense of community or belonging (Smith 2004: 1-2). To better regulate and control people's identity, Hong Kong government has been extending the portrayal of heritage from being something static and frozen in the past to an obstacle that is inevitably at odds with development and must be removed for a better tomorrow. This has been a substantial element of Hong Kong Authorised Heritage Discourse.

Since 2007, the work of managing and preserving heritage have been placed under the responsibility of Development Bureau. (Ye 2010: 66) Being placed under the control of an authority that is "economic development-oriented", the voices of Antiquities and Monuments Office and Antiquities Advisory Board, and the importance of heritage are dwarfed. The Office and the Advisory Board do not have enough power to fully embody the importance of heritages that are at risk when facing a mature development plan, while the government rejects alternative plan suggested by the public that considers both economic development and heritage preservation. This apathetic attitude reflects that the government, in fact, does not even attempt to consider heritage preservation in their development plan. (Ye 2010: 61) Heritage is then depicted as an old obstacle constantly hindering well-planned development project. The authority created a fallacy that heritage is inevitably in conflict with development, which such relation is not definite. (Ye 2010: 61) This works together with the eager pursuit of development and "improvement" that was first cultivated under the British colonial rule, then continued by the Hong Kong government with continuous "governance of archaeological and heritage knowledge" defining heritage as something stays in the past, something that could only be understood and protected by the professionals (while most of them were decided to be less desirable than economic development), something that one can interact with the act of consumption, and something that is at odds with development, to ensure people's identity could only be drawn from a limited and well-controlled resources. (Luo 2014: 113-114; Smith 2004: 1-2)

Hong Kong Authorised Heritage Discourse is an issue that has to be addressed. It is constructing and dominating our understanding of heritage, defining who has the power and authority to interpret and study heritage, and regulating how one can relate

oneself with heritage. It de-legitimizes a broad spectrum of heritage, limiting our imagination of its form and significance to us. By deconstructing it, we could open up new grounds that allows a wider imagination of heritage and identity.

Reimagining Heritage through Hong Kong Tramways

In 2015, the former government town planner, Sit Kwok Keung proposed to the government to demolish the tramways in Central and Admiralty. He criticised those who wanted to preserve trams as only being nostalgic, he continued that if preserving trams is only for nostalgia, trams could be put into a museum. (Sit 2015)

In response, most of the public disagreed with Sit on his proposal. As the concept of nostalgia was attacked, the public immediately shifted to support their stance by listing trams' practical values: being environmentally friendly, convenient, cheap, and famous tourist spots (Cai 2015). Yet these reasons are incapable to fully explain the importance of trams. What if there is a new public transport invented, that is more environmentally friendly, cheaper, more convenient and equally famous for tourists, will that public transport be more valuable than trams and can it replace trams? Should the answer be no, there is something more than practical reasons that make trams important to us.

By strongly opposing the empty rhetoric of nostalgia, which is recognised as the main reason for endangering the existence of trams as it disengages trams from the present, some take this "practical standpoint" to a height, denying other possible linkages trams can have with the public other than "practical public transport". The Chairman of Hong Kong Tram Enthusiast, Eric Lee said in a news article, "Taking trams is not an activity for enjoying leisure time, it is a real practical public transport,

and this is how it can survive…… (電車不是讓人享受悠閒的節目，是實用的交通工具，這才是它的生存之道……)". Meanwhile, Lee said in the very same news article, that "(s)ince 1904, Hong Kong trams have been growing together with us…… We do not want tram service to end in our generation, we do not want an icon of Hong Kong to be destroyed. (從 1904 年起，香港電車和我們一起成長。…… 我們不想看到電車服務在我們這一代終結，不想看到一個香港標記被摧毀。") In highlighting the possible emotional linkages Hong Kong people have with trams and trams' indispensable role in people's cultural identities for being a longstanding public transportation, Lee hoped to arouse public awareness and support in the face of the proposal raised by Sit to demolish part of the tramway, yet very much falling back to AHD. (Su 2015) More than just contradicting himself, it here portrays a seeming dead end: either we justify the importance of trams objectively through the practical values in the present, or we fall back to the AHD, interpreting trams through a historical lens, this can emphasize trams' general emotional connection with the public, yet rendering them as something in the past, vague and static, providing a reason to those who want to remove trams for "development".

Apart from AHD, is there any another way to understand trams?

Heritage is not inherently valuable. What make things "heritage" and valuable, is the cultural processes that have been carrying out around them till the present, in which social meanings and understandings have been continuously constructed and negotiated as people create their understanding of self and identity, making sense who they are and who they can be (Smith 2006: 2-3).

By capturing and understanding the cultural processes performed by my informants in the case study of Li Yuen Street East, this chapter attempts to explore

alternative ways to interpret and understand trams, deconstructing the authorised heritage discourse constructed and reproduced by the authority, media, tram enthusiasts, and the public, and reimagine the peculiarity of trams.

Trams as Connection Between Markets

For Mrs. Lau, who has been helping out in her husband's stall and running her family since 1985, she sees trams as a connection between markets, her home and her stall in Li Yuen Street East.

There are several markets along the tramway. As Li Yuen Street East locates right next to the tramway, and her home is in a reasonable distance situating in Causeway Bay, she often hops on a tram after work to go to different markets before she goes home. The markets she regularly visits are the Wan Chai Market and Market next to Canal Road Flyover, and she will occasionally go to North Point Market and Shau Kei Wan Market (see figure 9).
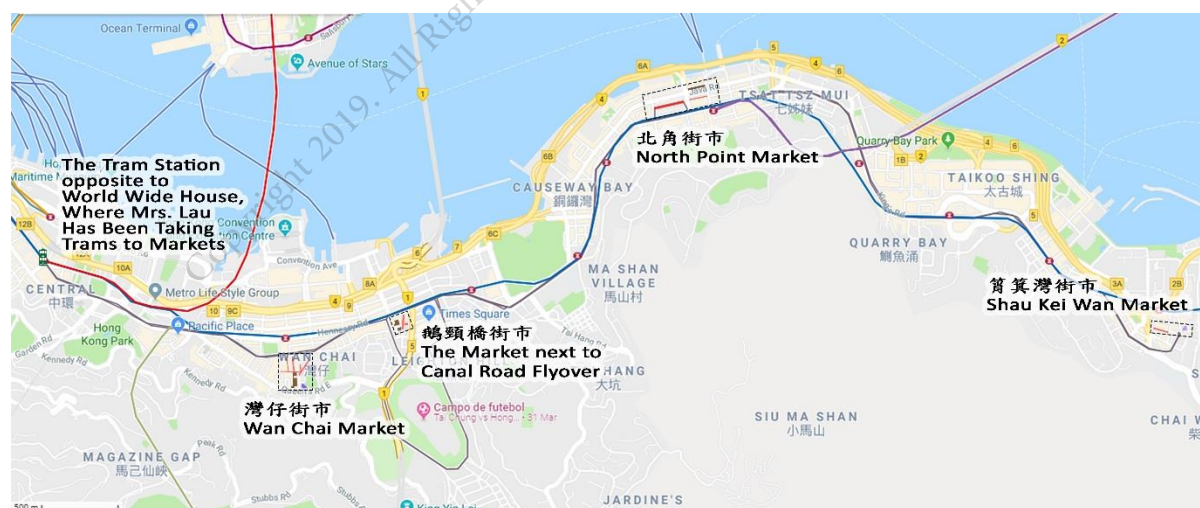

Figure 9. Cultural map of Mrs. Lau's visits to various markets along the tramway since 1985 on Google Map.

The routine of going to markets by trams for more than 30 years constitutes her life and her understanding of Hong Kong is embodied through her understanding of

different markets and distribution of good-quality produces: what produces are cheaper and fresher in different areas, the location, boundary, and characteristics of the markets.

"What are the cheaper things in that market? (嗰個街市有啲咩平㗎？)" I asked when we were talking about the Wan Chai market.

"Fruits, vegetables, everything! (生果、菜，乜都平！)" Mrs. Lau said.

"Even fish? I saw a lot of fish stalls and meat stalls there…… (魚都平呀？因為我見到嗰度好多魚檔肉檔……)" I asked.

"Yes! The fishes are good inside the market! (係呀街市入面啲魚檔都幾好㗎！)" Mrs. Lau seemed to be more energetic when she talked about the markets and the produces.

"The fishes there are good? Let me tell my mother! What about meat? (嗰度啲魚幾好呀? 等我同媽咪講先，仲有咁啲肉呢嗰啲呢！)" I asked curiously.

"The market outside has better meat! (肉就出面街市好！)" She replied.

"The market outside? That is…… (出面街市？即係……)" By the time, I finally realised the Wan Chai Market includes the "outside market" (open-air market) and the "inside market" (indoor market).

"The one without air-conditioning! There are many (stalls) outside! (即係唔使入去入面冷氣嗰度囉！出面好多㗎嘛！)" She said.

The markets understood by Mrs. Lau do not have a definite boundary, unlike supermarkets. For the indoor market, it has a solid area and space, nonetheless, it is always connecting to the open-air market, further extending the boundary of market. This discursive nature of market works conjointly with the tramway together with the

likewise discursive movement of people. Take North Point Market as an example, the open-air market in Chun Yeung Street forms a spectacular scene with trams, incisively and vividly embodies the working of people, market stalls and trams. The fluidity and discursiveness portray how movements and spaces are formulated and regulated by Mrs. Lau, and how her life has been taking shape throughout the years till now.

Figure 10. Chun Yeung Street Market circa 2017 (Source: Cathay Pacific)

Trams as Class and Confidence

The Wong's sisters' grandmother always took the elder sister to Kam Ling Theatre or Tai Ping Theatre in Sai Wan to watch movies when the elder sister was about seven to eight years old. They went there with a tram from Central, watched a movie and the elder sister would occasionally end this joyful time with an ice lolly, then they would take a tram to home.
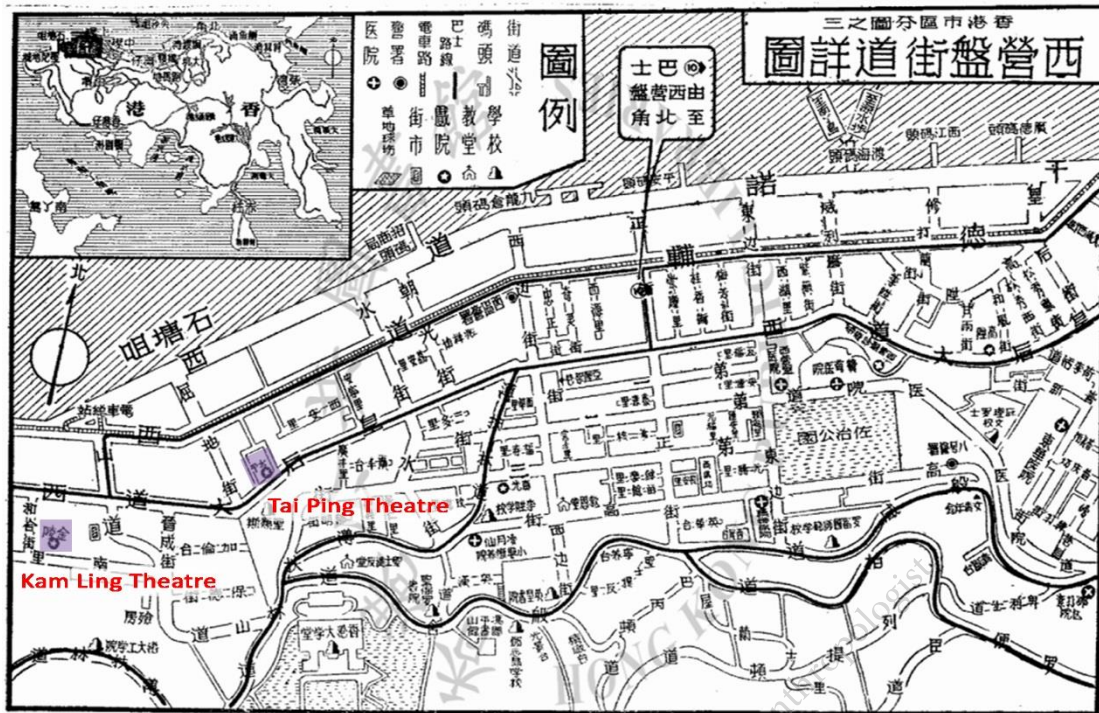
Figure 11. The identification of two demolished theatres in Sai Ying Poon on Sai Ying Poon Detailed Street Plan (西營盤街道詳圖) from 1966 Hong Kong Year Book published by Overseas Chinese Daily News (華僑日報). (Source: Hong Kong Public Libraries Multimedia Information System EB1303048)
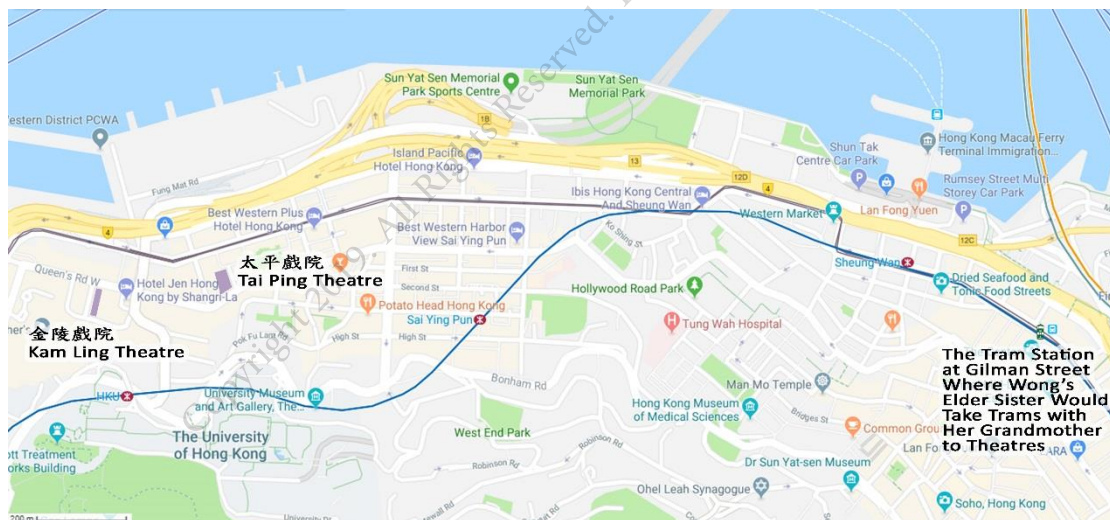

Figure 12. Cultural map of Wong's elder sister's leisure time spent with her grandmother in circa 1965 on Google Map.

To Wong's elder sister, trams are something that could be enjoyed by her exclusively, taking trams was not only a special experience that was not shared with her younger sister as her sister was still small, it was also rare in her immediate environment. It was depicted as a privilege for her to be able to enjoy this leisure activity alone with her grandmother in the time when most of the families, at least in

her immediate surroundings or local community, could only afford their basic necessities.

"People back then wouldn't take their children far away from home most of the time, they often walked around in the area near to their home, because you had to pay to have a ride (on tram or bus)! (不過好多時唔會帶啲細路哥去到咁遠嘅地方，多數喺啲週邊行嚟行去嘅啫，搭車要畀錢㗎嘛！)" Wong's elder sister said.

"Right! (係呀係呀！)" I responded.

"The life in the past couldn't……(以前生活唔係可以……)"

"Children also had to pay? (小朋友都要畀錢？)" I asked.

"Yes! 10 cents! People were not that rich before! (係呀！一毫子呀嘛！唔同而家咁豐裕呀嘛！)"

"So taking trams became a rare opportunity when the whole family could go out and have fun! (咁就變咗搭電車係難得成個屋企去玩嘅時候啦！)" I smiled as I rephrased and concluded her expressions.

"Yes! Exactly! (係嘞！冇錯！冇錯！)" She nodded her head and smiled gently.

"So taking trams was part of the 'fun time'? (咁電車都係玩嘅一部分？)" I wondered.

"There must be a destination you wanted to go when you took trams! (一定係有目的地先至係會坐車！)" Wong's elder sister did not answer my question directly.

"Right. (係。)" I responded, waiting for her to tell me more about her perception of trams.

"We wouldn't cruise around on trams, absolutely not! (唔會話去遊車河，絕對唔會！)" She said resolutely.

"Really? (真係㗎？)" I was amazed because another informant told me he would cruise around on trams.

"Of course! Money in the past was hard to earn! Didn't you think it would be easy?! (梗係啦！以前啲錢好難搵㗎喎！你估好易搵呀！)" The elder sister exclaimed.

"I had a happy childhood. (我童年好開心㗎喎！)" Wong's elder sister told me proudly later in the conversation.

"Please tell me more! (講嚟聽下！講嚟聽下！)" I said and smiled for her apparent happiness.

"I went to Tai Ping Theatre! Sai Wan Kam Ling Theatre…… (去太平戲院囉！西環金陵戲院啦……)" She raised her fingers to count the theatres she went to. "Yes! My grandmother had been very nice to me, she always took me to movies! (係呀！我阿婆對我好好，成日帶我去睇戲！)"

"Wow! How great! (好好呀！)" I said.

"Yeah! She instead did not have this! (係呀！反而佢又未必一定有喎！)" Wong's elder sister laughed and pointed at young sister. "She was smaller, so she couldn't go! (佢細啲咪冇得去囉！)"

This experience becomes a symbol of class and identity for the elder sister as she lived in a family that could afford to go to movie theatre from time to time by trams, which were both luxury goods, as compared to other families back then which could hardly afford it. It was exclusive to her, within the family and within her community or

immediate environment, these experience came together constituting her life, thus formulating her own identity and confidence.

Trams as Entertainment

Rather than a means of public transportation, which people usually take it when they want to go to a particular place, the tram is " only a pure form of common entertainment (「只不過純粹普通娛樂咋嘛！」)" for Mr. Tse when he is cruising around on a tram, without a specific destination.

In the 1950s, the tram was one of the very few choices of pastime he could afford. The time he could spend with parents, the understanding of community, the motion in the making of the sound "ding ding", and the breeze all integrated into this complex entertainment experience of trams in Mr. Tse's childhood.

"I liked to take trams when I was small, because we did not have many entertainments at night, so the whole family (will go cruising around in trams) after dinner, it was cheap, just ten cents or five cents, maybe just five cents…… (以前我係細路仔呢就鍾意搭電車，點解呢因為夜晚冇咁多娛樂，咁啲人呢食完飯呢一家大細，你又平喇，一毫斗零咋嘛嗰陣時，毫半子咋好似……)" He answered me as he leaned against his stall.

"People really considered trams as an amusement in the past, the parents and the children, father and mother would sit on the single seats, holding the child in their arms, explaining to the child about things they see along the journey. (以前啲人覺得係電車係娛樂嚟㗎根本，一家大細同細路仔，啲細路仔喺電車上面，爸爸媽媽坐喺個位度，咁樣譬如單邊位，抱住個細路，就同個細路仔講呢啲乜乜乜、嗰邊乜乜乜……)"

"Many Hong Kong people did the same! After dinner, there was no television, not a lot of people had televisions, so they cruise around in trams! Tram cruises with the window opened wide, people would take it from the first to the last stop, it is entertaining, and there is a lot to see! (全香港好多市民都係！食完飯，夜晚又冇電視睇，冇咁多人有電視，咁就遊電車河！電車河開曬窗，咁啲人就由頭搭到落尾，都好好娛樂，有時間又充裕 (實) 喇！)"

"When you would tell the conductor when you were about to get off the tram, he/ she would help you to ring the bell, of course, you don't have this joy now! There are many things you cannot have it back now…… (通常落車話畀個售票員聽，佢幫你噹噹，而家就梗係冇曬嗰啲娛樂㗎喇！而家根本你搵唔番好多嘢都……)"

"The bell that you would ring when you got off the tram…the bell…the string, there was a small hammer in front of "the bell", once you pulled the string, it would ring the bell…… (係因為以前落車拉嗰個噹……嗰個噹…嗰條繩，前面有個鎚仔嘅，一拉呢就會打響果個嘢叫噹噹……)"

"You didn't have much to play back then! You would then turn to save these (tram tickets)! (嗰陣時你冇嘢玩㗎！咪儲呢啲咋嘛！)"

For Mr. Tse, trams are readily understood along with other amusements that could be found in Central in the past and in the present in other places, as he said "Yes, just cruising around (on trams), the only pastime for people in the past was to cruise around, or the Gala Point for the lower class! Do you know what Gala Point is? (係呀都係遊車河，以前啲人嘅節目遊車河咋嘛，一係低下階層消費咪出去大笪地囉！
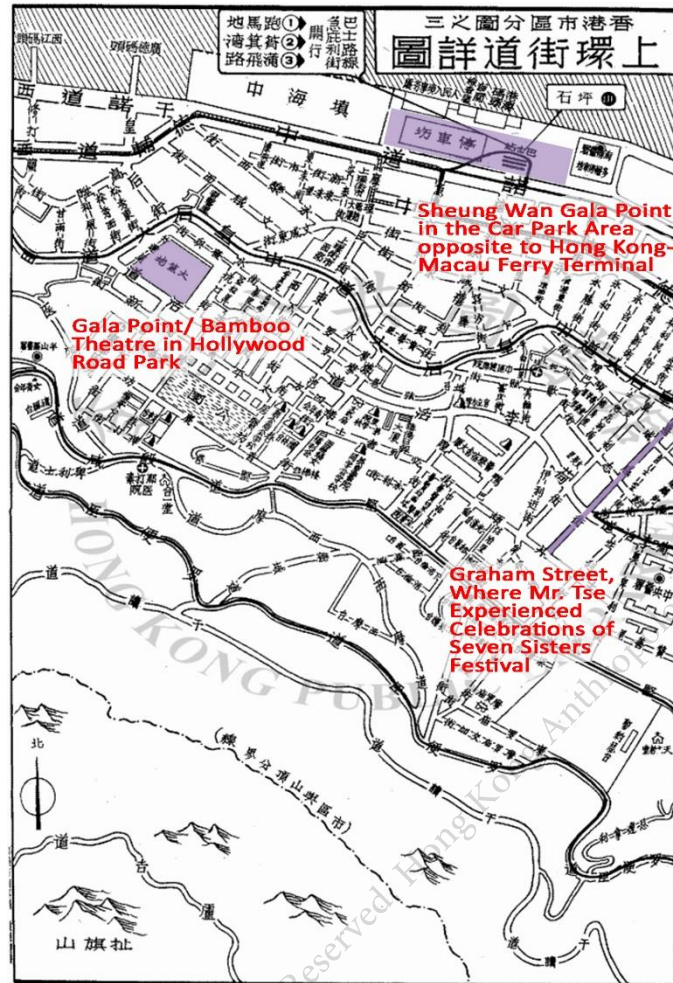
Figure 13. Cultural map of Mr. Tse's entertainments on Sheung Wan Detailed Street Plan (上環街道詳圖) from 1977 Hong Kong Year Book published by Overseas Chinese Daily News (華僑日報).
(Source: Hong Kong Public Libraries Multimedia Information System EB1303023)

知唔知咩係大笪地？)". Cruising around on trams and the collection of tram tickets

were connected with Gala Point, both old (Gala Point in Hollywood Road Park) and

new (Sheung Wan Gala Point in the Car Park Area opposite to Hong Kong – Macau

Ferry Terminal), the celebration of Seven Sisters Festivals in Graham Street, and

Bamboo Theatre in current Hollywood Road Park. This web of entertainment manifests

how Mr. Tse's life takes shapes through his shared understandings, observations,

perceptions and participations of various leisure activities and amusements, and how

space and values are thus constructed and regulated in the community.

"What kind of foreigners you would see most frequently back then (嗰陣時有 咩鬼佬多呢？)?" Mr. Tse asked me as we were flipping through the photos of Sheung Wan Gala Point and we saw a foreigner looking at a product closely.

"British? (英國人？)" I suggested, not understanding Mr. Tse's question.

"No! Apart from tourists, most of the foreigners were sailors. (唔係！係除咗 遊客仲有一啲，最多鬼佬就係水兵。)" He said.

"Sailors…… (水兵……)" I murmured, trying to recall anything about it.

"Wan Chai District, red light district…… (灣仔區、紅燈區……)" These words immediately popped out from Mrs. Tse's mouth the second after I whispered. She was looking at the photos intently, did not pay much attention to the conversation between Mr. Tse and me, yet being able to respond promptly.

"No, wait! First, do you know who sailors are? (唔係！你知唔知咩叫水兵 先？)" Mr. Tse shushed Mrs. Tse, did not want what she said to impede his story.

"Soldiers in the sea, like people in a navy? (喺水度當兵，即係水上兵嗰啲？)" I was not sure.

"No, sailors were those who served in the British navy or American navy, whose warships anchored along the shore and refilled supplies. They would be allowed to get onshore to have rest and entertainments, there was a red light district in Wan Chai…… (唔係 ，水兵以前叫水兵，主要就係英國同美國嗰啲軍艦埋嚟呢度泊岸、補給， 就畀啲員工上嚟玩、休息，嗰陣時灣仔就紅燈區……)" said Mr. Tse.

"There should be a very old movie about Suzie Wong! (應該有套好舊嘅呢就 係講蘇絲黃呀！)" Mr. Tse said, responding to what Mr. Tse said.

"Yeah! There's a movie called Suzie Wong! (係呀有套戲叫蘇絲黃！)" Mr. Tse said.

"Not that one! (唔係嗰個喎！)" Mrs. Tse said, realising the Cantonese pronunciation of Suzie Wong is the same as a popular TV host in Hong Kong.

"Right! The one who cooks…… (係囉煮嘢食嗰個……)" I knew which TV host she was referring to.

"Not the one who cooks! (唔係煮嘢食嗰個！)" Mrs. Tse said.

"No, not that one! Suzie Wong was a sex worker in the past, the sailors would go to Wan Chai red light district for entertainment and drinking, then come here (Sheung Wan Gala Point) to eat and consume. (唔係嗰個！係以前蘇絲黃係一名妓女嚟嘅，嗰啲水兵呢就係去灣仔紅燈區度玩、飲酒，就嚟呢度呢買嘢食、消費。)" Mr. Tse explained.

Mr. and Mrs. Tse have a common perception on the foreign sailors mostly based on a shared experience in Sheung Wan Gala Point and the movie, The World of Suzie Wong. Sailors were immediately associated with sex workers, while sex workers were right away linked with Wan Chai red district, thus resulting in the fast response of Mrs. Tse's "Wan Chai District, red light district" when we just started to talk about sailors. Space and values were constructed and regulated through these experiences and understandings. A popular red light district located in Wan Chai, where most of the sailors would go there, and they also could be seen in Sheung Wan Gala Point. From the way Mr. and Mrs. Tse depicted sailors, they were portrayed as an alien group of people, which largely remained unknown. Mr. Tse did not recognise that there could be sailors working on merchant vessels which also anchored along the shore and refilled supplies, rather than only navies. The main character in The World of Suzie Wong is

not a sailor but was naturally taken as one because it is a story between a foreigner and sex worker in Wan Chai red light district. This reflects the general xenophobia in the time that foreigners remained to be homogeneous and anonymous. Though they often came to Hong Kong, they were regarded as strange and were isolated from the local community.

Taking childhood entertainment experience of trams along with him, Mr. Tse now regarded trams as an entertainment, together with other new elements.

"Now when I don't have anything to do, or I don't want to work, I will take trams. (即係有時冇嘢做，或者唔想開工，咁就搭。)" He said, "……sometimes it's just for fun (riding trams)! (貪得意咋嘛有陣時呢啲嘢！) ……For example, when we are cruising around on trams after lunch on Sunday, we will think why not getting off in North Point to have a walk. (……譬如禮拜食完晏晝搭下車，有時候就不如喺北角落車行下。)"

"Nothing much (to do on trams) really. I look out of the windows when I am on trams, and I will observe the changes in Hong Kong……Oh look the building here was pulled down and a new one was built…… (喺車度都係頭岳岳咁樣，睇下香港嘅變遷都有嘅……呢度都拆咗喇起過一間新嘅……) For us old people, we have something called reminiscence……So we call the "things" to remembrance……Hong Kong in the past and present, I don't think you still have that……In the past, in Graham Street…Seven Sisters Festival…these old…… (都有嘅因為我哋老人家呢，有啲都叫做懷舊嘅觀念……咁咪回味下囉……以前宜家根本香港地呀，我諗你已經冇咗個樣……以前，嘉咸街呀…七姐誕呀…嗰啲舊…)" Mr. Tse left the unfinished sentence with a sigh.

To ride on a tram cruise now, for Mr. Tse, it is not only being reminiscent of Hong Kong in the past, the amusements that ceased to exist in his community, his childhood, but also a process of renewing his understanding of and association with the local community by observing the changes along the journeys.

"What time did the Gala Point open? (我想問大笪地係幾點開㗎？)" I asked later in our conversation.

"People would start opening at around four or five o'clock in the afternoon! They would open till midnight or one o'clock in the morning. (五點零四點零都有人開㗎喇！開到夜晚十二點一點。)" Mr. Tse replied.

"Wow, till midnight, that was late! (嘩！十二點一點咁晏呀！)" I was shocked, I thought people went to bed early in the past.

"It's not late! We here in the past closed at nine or ten at night! But business is getting quiet, and so people become lazier. Am I right? (唔晏㗎喇！我哋以前呢啲位都收九點十點㗎喇！不過而家冇生意越整啲人就越懶咋嘛！係咪呀？)" He laughed and asked me.

"Yeah…… (係……)" I nodded, not knowing what to reply.

"Because it was less commercial here in the past, all of them was residential, mostly residential…… (因為以前呢度唔係咁多商業咋，全部住家嘅，住宅多嘅……)" He explained.

"This street? (呢條街？)" I asked.

"No! I am talking about the whole Central district! (唔係！講中環區！)" Mr. Tse said. "Mostly residential here…except… (住家多……除咗你即係譬如……)"

"Queen's Road Central? (皇后大道中？)" I suggested, recalling photos of Queen's Road Central in the past.

"Yeah Queen's Road Central. Wellington Street! There were a lot of residents as well, so people would come down here to shop when it's Lunar New Year, even those from Sai Wan, or people in Sai Ying Poon, they would come here to shop, because it was more concentrated here! (皇后大道中呀！威靈頓街呀！嗰邊都係住家多，所以過年呀啲人買嘢呢就落嚟，就算你喺西環呀，或者西營盤啲人都係過嚟呢度買嘢，因為呢度集中！)" Mr. Tse said, describing the changing spatiality.

By comparing past and present, Mr. Tse constantly reformulates space, negotiates different social meanings and values and changing sense of community through tram cruises and the connecting web of entertainment.

Trams, as in free and discursive style of traveling, the breeze, the time spent with family, the views along the way, interactions with ticketing staffs, the making of the sound "ding ding", the collection of tram tickets, the reminiscence of Hong Kong in the past such as the surroundings, entertainments that ceased to exist, are all at "heritage" work with Mr. Tse. Tram is an agent that is constructing and reconstructing Mr. Tse's relationship with the community and Hong Kong, and thereby negotiating his changing sense of belonging and identity in the past, for the present and future.

The fieldwork I did in Li Yuen Street East demonstrates that the meaning-making processes of heritage, in this case, trams, as performed by informants, can come in diverse and discursive forms, instead of one dominant formula. From my interviews with informants in Li Yuen Street East, the significances of trams to people lie beyond the conventional saying of "physical attributes", "reflection of original coastline" or "the largest fleet of double-deck trams around the globe". The sense of importance rather come from the intimate engagement people have been having with trams. The ongoing meaning-makings, the negotiation of changing social and cultural values, and

the formulation of spatiality they have been performing on trams that make trams important, significant and hence "heritage" to them.

Passiveness, Powerlessness, and Identity

In 2014-2017, there were 17 historic buildings demolished for redevelopment (Zhong 2017). Facing this rapid change in the society, there were a different scale of resistance from the public very much every time when a historic building or site was planned to be pulled down by private developers or government. People would assemble, protest, get up a petition, and hold various activities to raise public awareness (SCMP 2015, Guan 2016) In some cases, it would develop into urgent documentation and study. For instance, Wan Chai District Council Cultural and Leisure Services Committee and The Conservancy Association Centre for Heritage (CACHe) underwent public tender and commissioned Department of Anthropology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2006, to carry out systematic documentation in an apartment in Lee Tung Street which was filled with artefacts and documents when Urban Renewal Authority planned to rebuild the area in 2003. (Lu and Tan 2006: ii-iii) It recorded and preserved a large number of artefacts that can reflect the way of living, education system, economic activities, and cultural practices of people in Wan Chai community and Hong Kong in the past. (Lu 2007: 14-16)

In most cases, the voices from the public projected in the form of joining protests, online petitions, taking some of the last photos of heritage, which soon died down after the incidents come to the end of the phase, either was the concerned heritage demolished or preserved. It would arouse public attention when heritages were about to disappear, but that was the time when people realised the heritages are important to

them. In any other "peaceful" time, the majority continues to disregard the heritages around them.

This situation is well depicted by what Simon, a participant of Sketcher-Kee, said in a news report, talking about State Theatre in North Point which was facing the danger of demolition in 2016: "My father would take me to watch movies when I was small, you will still have that emotional linkage, and it is a way to maintain family relationships! You would have emotional linkage (with this place) as you watched movies (here) with the whole family after dinner. Well actually, I always pass by North Point on my way to work or back home! But I didn't pay much attention to (the theatre), because you still had chances to look at it! Yet when you realised you didn't have many chances left, then maybe…… We didn't have this kind of activity (Sketcher-Kee) before, because… (people) think that it will still be here! This is human being! (細個我老豆拖我去睇戲，嗰個感情你會喺返到，你係一個親情或者家庭嘅維繫呀嘛！咁成家大細食完飯嚟睇戲咁都有感情。其實北角呢，我返工或者放工都會經過㗎！但係嗰陣時唔會太過留意，因為都仲有機會睇吖嘛！但當你發覺，睇完呢幾舖可能冇得再睇嘅時候，就會可能……以前都冇人搞呢個活動，因為……知道佢仲存在呀嘛！人係咁㗎啦！)" (Guan 2016)

Although there is an increasing number of organizations that focus on the documentation of heritage, local culture and practices through community engagement, education and promotion of the ideas of heritage, identity, culture and archaeology, such as Sketcher-Kee, CACHe, Docomomo Hong Kong, and Walk in Hong Kong, proactive participation and engagement with heritage is not prevalent in society.

There are several facets to understand this phenomenon. A popular explanation for this general lack of interest in understanding heritage is the overwhelming attention Hong Kong people have given to personal wealth gain and economic development. In

most cases when they are asked, people would recognise the value of heritage and agree to preserve on condition that economic development will not be hindered or personal share of public interest will not be harmed.

A man who was asked about his opinion on the preservation issue of State Theatre in North Point said, "I don't mind if the owner of the theatre is willing to pay (for the conservation fee)! Don't use the money paid by taxpayers! If it is paid by taxpayers, I absolutely do not agree (to preserve it)! (如果嗰個業主肯出錢我唔介意囉！千祈唔好納稅人出錢呀吓！如果納稅人出錢就絕對唔贊成！)" (Ming zhou 2016) This mentality is also reflected in the conversation I had with Wong's elder sister.

"Thank you! For telling me (so much information)…… Especially right now the government wants to demolish…or as you know Central is undergoing urban renewal. That's why I wanted to do something to tell the public that this place is important, at least to some people. (多謝你哋呀！話俾我聽……因為尤其是政府要拆呀…或者你知中環都重建緊呀嘛！所以就想…做啲嘢去話俾人聽呢個地方都係重要嘅，或者起碼對於一部分人嚟講係重要囉！)" I thanked them and made a little summary when our conversation was about to end.

"Let's put it this way! We have to progress. If it is worth to do so, we have to do it (remove the heritage)! (即咁樣喇！時代就係要進步嘅！如果真係要做起上嚟係有價值嘅呢，有時都係要做嘅！)" Wong's elder sister told me sincerely.

"So we have to sacrifice…… (都係要犧牲嘅……)" I tried to rephrase what she expressed.

"Exactly! It is impossible for you to always stay with old things, and there will be a lot of problems if you do that! You have to conserve it, you cannot use it, and…… there is a problem anyways, but still… you have to consider the effectiveness of urban

renewal first, to see if it will be better to the community, before you think about that (demolishing heritage), don't knock it down recklessly. (係啦！即係你成日守舊住啲嘢係無可能同埋好多個問題啦！又要保育啦、又要唔用得啦、又⋯⋯即係都有一個問題，但係呢⋯你話都係要講吓一個市區嘅重建有冇咩幫助、會唔會好啲呢，咁先至去諗嗰樣嘢，唔好霹靂啪啦敲咗佢先。)" She said.

"But sometimes when you see... for example in recent years, historic buildings were pulled down, or like Lee Tung Street, the whole street was gone, I felt pity about it. (但係，即係有陣時見到⋯譬如呢幾年啦，都拆咗舊嘅樓呀、或者係喜帖街呀，即成條街冇咗咁樣，即係都會覺得好可惜囉。)" I was not sure about what she said.

"You have to see if it's worth (to preserve)! (都係要看嗰個價值值唔值得囉！)"

"But like… if this street has to be demolished in the future, or to remove trams, will you feel pity about it? (但會唔會⋯即以後要拆咗呢條街、或者拆咗電車會唔會都覺得好可惜？)"

"Well I don't think you have to remove something like trams, right? Its history is a factor, after all, it still has a value, and it can carry people! It can still take people to where they want, right? So it doesn't have to be destroyed! You have to judge case by case! Take building as an example, you have to see if other buildings in the area are new and modern, but there is an old one taking up space, there isn't much economic benefit (to keep it there), you have to judge case by case. Does it still have the value? This is the one thing we all have to consider in this era. If you always stick to the past, staying with very old things, you will not be able to progress. (嗱你譬如電車嗰啲呢我覺得唔需要拆佢啦，係咪先？年代係一個問題啦，始終佢都仲有一個價值喺度㗎嘛，你係可以車人㗎嘛！你點樣行嚟行去都會有㗎嘛，係咪先！即係唔需

要一定係要毀咗佢嘅！即係看一啲啦！譬如你建築物，咁你看吓啦，唔通其他地方好新嘅，明明一棟係呀住嘅，效益唔高嘅，咁你即係看囉每一樣嘢都係。佢個價值喺唔喺度呢？即係大家喺呢個時代一定要諗呢樣嘢㗎嘛！成日守舊，守住好舊好舊嘅嘢你又唔得進步嘅啫！）" Wong's elder sister said.

Heritage is taken naturally as something to be at odds with development, which is constructed under AHD that heritage is static and in the past, neglecting its role in the present and the possibility of sustainable development, meanwhile there is an illusion that people will certainly have a reasonable share of benefits from this economic advancement, which is not necessarily true. This mind set was also studied and discussed by other scholars. According to Law Wing Sang, in his article "The Past and Present of Indigenousness in Hong Kong", this overemphasis of economic benefit and development was constructed by the British government and reproduced by the Chinese government. To better regulate the identity of Hong Kong people, the British government had placed Hong Kong merchants who were educated in British way or overseas as Chinese leaders among the Hong Kong people, for them to serve as a bridge of communication between the general public and the government, constructing the values that being rich and able to adapt to circumstances were the only ways to become the most powerful and respectful among Chinese in Hong Kong. (Luo 2014: 115-118; Xian 1997: 160, 169) It also actively represented "Hong Kong people" in the frame of economic achievement to avoid political elements or consequences. By continuously celebrating Hong Kong economic development and Hong Kong people's participation in it through media and movies, it further constructed the identity of Hong Kong people base on the pride of being utilitarian "economic man" who placed and would continue to place enormous efforts on achieving economic benefits. (Law 2014: 126-130) Therefore, Hong Kong people tend to pay close attention to the stock market, economic

trend and their jobs, rather than their culture and heritages, until they are soon to be wrecked and disappeared.

While it may contribute in shaping Hong Kong people's general unmindful attitude concerning the engagement with cultural heritage, this discourse cannot fully explain the current situation in Hong Kong. If the public indeed put such emphasis on economic benefits or personal wealth gain, why do not they readily dive in the embrace of mainland China, given the fast economic advancement she performs?

In the conversation between Wong's elder sister and me, it also revealed authorised heritage discourse as an important factor limiting people's active participation in understanding heritage and involving in its meaning-making process. Wong's elder sister understood heritage as something "you have to conserve it, you cannot use it", something very old and in the past that makes it at odds with development, while contradicting this thought by saying that the long history of trams makes it a factor to preserve it. In AHD, it, in fact, has presented heritage as an obscure concept, on one hand, it is self-referential; on the other hand, it is self-contradicting. As it continuously portrays heritage as something static and in the past, it is rejecting its role in the present and disengaging itself from the present, hence leaving people in doubt: then why should we understand and preserve heritage? On top of that, as AHD relied on the knowledge claim of professionals and experts, they became the one to have the exclusive power and ability to identify the innate values of heritage and to instruct the public in seeing those values. In this way, AHD "attempts to exclude, competing discourses is the way it constructs heritage as something that is engaged with passively – while it may be the subject of popular 'gaze', that gaze is a passive one in which the audience will uncritically consume the message of heritage constructed by heritage experts." (Smith 2006: 31) It subtly denies people's ability and agency in

participating in the meaning-making process of heritage, by continuously placing people in a submissive role of being "educated" about their heritage. By shaping heritage as something disengaged from the present and a subject reserved to professional study, the authority created the sense that heritage is not something that the public can actively engage with. Nonetheless, this likewise cannot fully account for the situation in Hong Kong, even AHD placed the public in a submissive role, it did not place them in an apathetic attitude. In another word, although it constructed heritage as something to be studied by professionals, it did not restrict one's agency in attempting to proactively engage with heritage, especially when the authority is flinging itself into the removal of heritages in the name of urban renewal widely in Hong Kong.

Wendy Ng, who is an architectural conservationist herself, strived to preserve State Theatre in North Point, to raise it from a third-grade historic building to a first-grade. She has been living in North Point since she was born, and had spent most of her childhood in State Theatre building and the lobby of the Theatre as her parent opened a shop there when she was four. In an interview, she said, "I had never thought of the possibility that old buildings which are intimately related to me would be demolished or would be placed in such critical situation one day. (咁即係嗰時冇諗過，原來有一啲係同我自己真係好有關係嘅舊嘅建築物，原來都有被清拆嘅一日、嘅危機喇。)" (Lu 2017) Given that she is an architectural conservationist herself, who has professional knowledge about heritage and the preservation of it, it did not put her in the mind of proactively engaging with the State Theatre, until it faced the crisis of being wrecked. This apparent apathetic attitude before, in which the passion of understanding and preserving the heritage only later evoked by the plan of destruction cannot only be explained by the restrictions placed by AHD.

This way of thinking portrays a strange sense of stagnancy. It stays in a space where "nothing has happened yet" and "not yet related to me". The future is not in the scene, it stays in a forever on-going empty "today".

Some people placed this passive attitude as in the powerlessness in the fast-changing world. This is a prevalent discourse adopted by many people in explaining why the public or even they are passive in actively engaging with heritage: the "old things" will be all gone eventually. It is understood as a social and economic trend that you are meant to be not able to keep the things that are valuable to you, not only the material, but also the values, feelings, and relationships among people in the society. "Under the giant wheel of time, you have no way out…… (時代巨輪之下，也是無可奈何……)" said a merchant whose shop was in State Theatre building. (Yong and Cen 2016) This powerlessness about the enormous changes in the society, and that "old things and values" that have been weeding out by time, can also be seen throughout my conversations with Mr. and Mrs. Tse.

"So we call the "things" to remembrance……Hong Kong in the past and present, I don't think you still have that……In the past, in Graham Street…Seven Sisters Festival…these old…… (咁咪回味下囉……以前宜家根本香港地呀，我諗你已經冇咗個樣……以前，嘉咸街呀…七姐誕呀…嗰啲舊…)" Mr. Tse left the unfinished sentence with a sigh.

As Mr. Tse was counting the food that one could find in Sheung Wan Gala Point, I was mouth-watering and said that I wished I could go. Mr. Tse laughed and sighed, "There isn't one for you to go anymore! (冇得你去喇！)", emphasising this by repeating it three times.

"These is just the Tsing Yi Bamboo Theatre right now, which seems to be something more…… (而家得青衣戲棚嗰啲囉，就叫比較好似係……)" I said.

"There isn't any Bamboo Theatre in Central now! We had everything in the past…… (而家中環都冇戲棚囉！以前都咩都有……)" Mrs. Tse said sadly, feeling pity about it.

"I heard from another neighbour said that the relationship between each stall is not as good as in the past. (我聽另一個街坊講話，而家好似即係每檔同每檔之間嘅關係…冇以前咁親密……)" In another conversation, I asked Mr. Tse about the current relationship between hawkers in Li Yuen Street East.

"You don't have a say on this! (冇得講㗎呢啲！)" Mr. Tse sighed. "Because the people……in the past, we would work as one when there was a problem. It's not just here between stalls, the relationships in Hong Kong society were less intimate than before! Political parties are always quarrelling with one another, we didn't have this before! This is a must…… (因為啲人……以前有咩事呢就大家齊心合力，唔好話我哋呢度檔同檔呀！香港呢個社會都係關係冇咁好喇！各有各黨派你鬧我我鬧你，邊度有啫！呢啲一定㗎喇……)"

This discourse of powerlessness seems overwhelming and alluring, it is nonetheless slippery. Powerlessness could be understood as in "there is nothing you can do (無可奈何)" or "you have no idea what you can do (迷惘的無力感)". The perception of "we don't have a voice" existed more in the frame of "there is nothing you can do" which cannot justify the complex phenomenon of Hong Kong people's performance of ongoing interchange of apparent apathetic attitude and sudden passion on heritage issues.

The absence of continuous passion for proactively engaging with heritage rather comes from the powerlessness of "you have no idea what you can do". The loss of identity is one of the main reasons. The old identity was not working anymore. "The

place where East meets West" was no longer unique in this globalising world, while it is also allowing many other cities to brand themselves as "cultural hybrid". (Abbas 2013: 11; Zhu 2016: 58) At the meantime, the authorised heritage discourse constructed by the government constantly regulates the public of what identities they can draw from designate heritages identified and graded by the authority. By managing heritage, it is indeed "the 'governing', of cultural and social values, meanings and associations they have" and the "governance and regulation of identities" rather than "purely intellectual or academic exercise". (Smith 2006: 2; Smith 2004: 3) The AHD which portrays heritage as "things" that have innate values, confines the imagination of heritage only within the physical representations of either colonial past or Chinese tradition, in which these "things" may have interesting histories to tell, but they rooted in "a time and space that is no longer there", and "have no real voice in the present-day life of the city" as they are disengaged with the public in the present by depicting heritage as something to be passed "untouched" to future generations, static and in the past. (Abbas 2013: 82; Smith 2006: 19) It further obscures the identity of "Hong Kong people" as these are cultures from elsewhere: Chinese tradition is "more legitimately located in mainland China and Taiwan" and the colonizer, Britain. (Abbas 2013: 6) While referring to the source of identity from the ex-colonizer is not enough, the trepidation of becoming "a homogeneous Chinese city" is tremendous and overwhelming. This fear is different from that in 1997 when Hong Kong was about to be returned to China from Britain. The fear in 1997 was the uncertainty towards the future that Hong Kong *may* lose its way of life, whereas the uncertainty is now replaced by pathetic certainty after witnessing the government gradually retrieving democracy in the struggle of Hong Kong people in these 20 years, the dread right now is flavoured with powerlessness, in

which people have no idea what they can do to change the foreseeable future. (Abbas 2013: 7; Zhang 2017)

On one hand, Hong Kong people feel impotent about the imminence of a conceivable future. On the other hand, the limited options of identities offered by a narrow range of heritages seem to reconfirm with the agitation. Through the designate heritages presented by the authority, Hong Kong people cannot understand themselves, their identities and belongings in the present, they likewise cannot see who they can be in the future due to trepidation and loss of old identities. Heritage becomes a vague, empty signifier that does not have any intimate relationship to the people, it also renders the identity of "Hong Kong people" as void rhetoric.

The AHD fraternizes with the other critical government policies, by restricting the imagination of heritage, it regulates and limits the identity of Hong Kong people, to further reproduce the impuissance and fear. Under the overwhelming trepidation and powerlessness, Hong Kong people are once again in the negative hallucination and culture of disappearance, for being obscured by the dominant discourse of heritage and the regulation of identity by the authority, they did not "see" the heritages until they were on the imminence of disappearance. (Abbas 2013: 6-7) The absence of proactive engagement with heritages originates from the impuissance and panic for a perceivable future, the restriction imposed by AHD and the loss of identity.

Conclusion

Rather than reproducing the feeling of impotence and panic, this project attempts to reimagine heritage and identity through trams. By understanding heritage beyond the authorised heritage discourse, it shows that the public indeed can have a wider imagination towards heritage, empowering the public to proactively recognising

and engaging with heritage, and through this process, to reopen up the space and freedom for exploration and creation of vibrant identity of "Hong Kong people" and dynamic Hong Kong subjectivity. (Abbas 2013: 11; Zhu 2016: 23-26)

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