Materializing the Hidden Identity of Hong Kong:

Re-connecting Hong Kong's vanishing fishing community through urban interventions on the Tam Gong Festival route in Shau Kei Wan

by

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the expanding metropolis of Hong Kong, many functioning members of contemporary society have concealed facets of themselves that they now deem irrelevant to their daily lives. Over the last half a century, dramatic changes in Hong Kong's urban form and industrial life have enticed fisherfolk out of their traditional way of life, dwelling in harbours and on the sea, resulting in the community and individuals moving on land and losing their sense of unique identity. Once forming the famous floating cities in Hong Kong, the community has since been broken up and displaced to the different corners of the metropolis, their presence now barely recognizable to outsiders.

The fisherfolk community faces many challenges promoting their collective identity continually with their lack of on-land architectural presence. Instead of focusing on the more permanent architectural elements, this thesis will investigate one of the main deity celebrations, the Tam Kung Festival, in the neighbourhood of Shau Kei Wan, where the presence of the community expands and contracts throughout the year. Combined with the effort of identifying traces of the fishing community buried in the contemporary urban fabric, urbanized traditional ceremonies can be used to build on the existing traces to create new imprints for others to discover the fisherfolk culture. Together, one can weave

meaning and memory into the city fabric. Additionally, by learning from the historic nature of the traditional rhythm and fluidity of the fishing community's lifestyle, we can better understand how to celebrate the different facets of one's identity.

I used mapping exercises based on historical documents, including official maps and annual government reports to help explain the community's rise and decline and to reveal its shifting presence over a 50-year period in Hong Kong's growth. I then illustrated the various elements of the Tam Kung Festival to showcase the magical transformation of the streetscape during these special occasions. These drawings, alongside street views and walks, helped me identify what kind of temporary and permanent markers could enhance the urban streetscape for both the fisherfolk and the general public. These elements and the festival act as a spatial catalyst that helps individuals recognize themselves as belonging to the fisherfolk community. By examining and redesigning both permanent and temporary elements of the festival, this thesis proposes a way to aid and expand the presence of the Tam Kung Festival, allowing for the continuous growth and identity renewal of the existing and new members of the fisherfolk community.

Acknowledgments

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Thank you to my external reader, Rufina Wu, and internal reader, Sifei Mo, for their enthusiastic engagement and the thought-provoking discussion at my final defence.

This thesis is a homage to my heritage, my grandparents' fisherfolk roots. Grandma and Grandpa, I hope I made you proud.

Thank you to my family, especially my parents and my two sisters. Mom, Dad, Fontane and Farah, thank you for always being there for me, allowing me to venture forward without fear. Our family trips to the beaches are memories I will always cherish.

To all of my friends, thank you for all your support over the past few years as I indulge in my curiosity in the humanities of architecture. To Francis, thank you for the insightful discussions and the outdated memes. To Ethan, thank you for sharing your passion for urban design with me. To Vivian, thank you for challenging me to new perspectives in life. To Jacqueline, I appreciate our hours-long phone calls; you kept me sane.

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All figures are produced by the author unless otherwise noted.

Prologue

During my formative years, I learned to adapt because my family repeatedly migrated between Hong Kong and Canada. Many people who know me have associated my adaptable nature with my childhood experience. However, this flexibility came with a price. Unlike many of my peers, I did not have foundational connections with people and my surroundings growing up. The only constant in my life was my immediate family. With the hectic nature of constantly relocating, the desire to explore my roots was never satisfied. When my parents decided to move back to Hong Kong during my teenage years, I had hoped to finally learn about my heritage and connect with people that look like me. However, I soon realized this was difficult to achieve. Although I am of Chinese descent, my early education in Canada made fitting in challenging. In addition to that, my less-than-typical family background, with my paternal side being Chinese Muslim and my maternal side being native to Hong Kong, yet part of the floating population, caused me to constantly question my heritage.

A dialogue about the ancestral hometowns with a teacher I had from Hong Kong left a deep impression on me because it challenged my understanding of my own heritage. I recall the conversation vividly as it rekindled the memories of confusion and dissatisfaction which I have carried with me all these years.

Ms. C: *So, we're going to talk about our ancestral hometowns today, which is different from where you're born. Do you know where your family is from?*

Usually, when people are talking about ancestral hometowns, they refer to their paternal side. However, I could not remember my father's hometown and decided to answer this question with my mother's hometown. After this internal contemplation, I raised my hand.

Florence: *My family is from Hong Kong.*

Ms. C: *I didn't mean where you were born; I was asking about your family's hometown (祖籍)*

Florence: *Yes, I know. My family is from Hong Kong. We have been here for generations.*

Ms. C: *Well, that's not right. No one is from Hong Kong. I think you're confused.*

I went back home that day feeling wronged. Why would the teacher challenge my family's history when they knew nothing about me or my family? It felt like my teacher was denying my identity. When I mentioned this to my mom, she dismissed it quickly. She claimed it is a common misconception as many people overlook the fishing community in Hong Kong, considering them to be illegitimate. She then confirmed my paternal family's hometown and told me to move on from the incident.

Introduction

Three reasons led me to pursue this topic for my thesis.

The first, is my personal curiosity to retrace my family roots on my mother's side as a descendant of the fishing community. Her family originated from the islands of Hong Kong and its waters. They were part of the indigenous water community and had been residing in the area for generations. Growing up, there was very little information about our past that had been shared, mostly due to their self-rejection of their heritage. Yet, I notice traces of our family's history subtly passed along, from the seafood we eat to the marine knowledge showcased in our family outings. We were taught the practical methods of consuming different types of seafood and got teased by relatives if we didn't efficiently de-shell or debone the food at our family gatherings. Our summer family outings often include days at the beach, teaching us how to harvest clams by understanding the tides and quality of the sand. Trips on small boats with handline fishing instead of fishing rods allowed us to learn how to feel the vibrations from the subtle pecking of the fish with our fingers. These cultural understandings allow me to identify certain fishing conditions that are not general textbook knowledge. I look forward to decoding the hidden messages shared by the community to better appreciate their stories and wisdom.

The second reason, is to avoid becoming someone who mourns the loss of our collective identity without examining an alternative solution. I wish to uncover the cultural knowledge hidden in forgotten corners, rituals and customs, and everyday life; Along with my rejection against the seemingly universal acceptance of losing our history and cultural practices simply because they no longer fit in our contemporary lifestyle and are deemed

unproductive. The cultural knowledge, values, and practices that are lost along the way as collateral of globalization, as well as the legacy of colonialism, are needed to be rediscovered to reinvent a community's collective voice. Unearthing the hidden wisdom of the group will allow us to start reclaiming our identity.

The last, is the magical transformation of the urban streets of Hong Kong I once witnessed at a Tin Hau festival. The energy exhibited by the community that day was unlike the Hong Kong I know. The streets were filled with excitement. The sounds of the parade were among the first things you recognize on the day of the Tin Hau festival celebration. From a distance, you can already hear the banging of drums, with the occasional clashing from the gong and cymbals piercing the air. As I walked through the bustling urban streets, I was struck by the incredible transformation of the neighbourhood. The typically boring concrete and glass build forms were adorned with colourful banners and flags. Decorative paper crafts and temporary bamboo structures contributed to the auspicious and pleasant atmosphere. The air had notes of incense from the ritual they performed. The neighbourhood came alive. Surrounded by relatives that day, it was one of the few times I thoroughly experienced the immense existence of the fisherfolk community in the urban fabric of Hong Kong. The power of the festivities has a way of bringing people together along with transforming street life in the neighbourhoods. I was inspired to forge a path forward for the fisherfolks among the juxtaposition of the bleak high rises and the colourful flags secured to the temporary bamboo structures decorating the temple, showcasing how to celebrate our collectiveness without being burdened by the past.

Chapter One

01 The Vanished Way of Life

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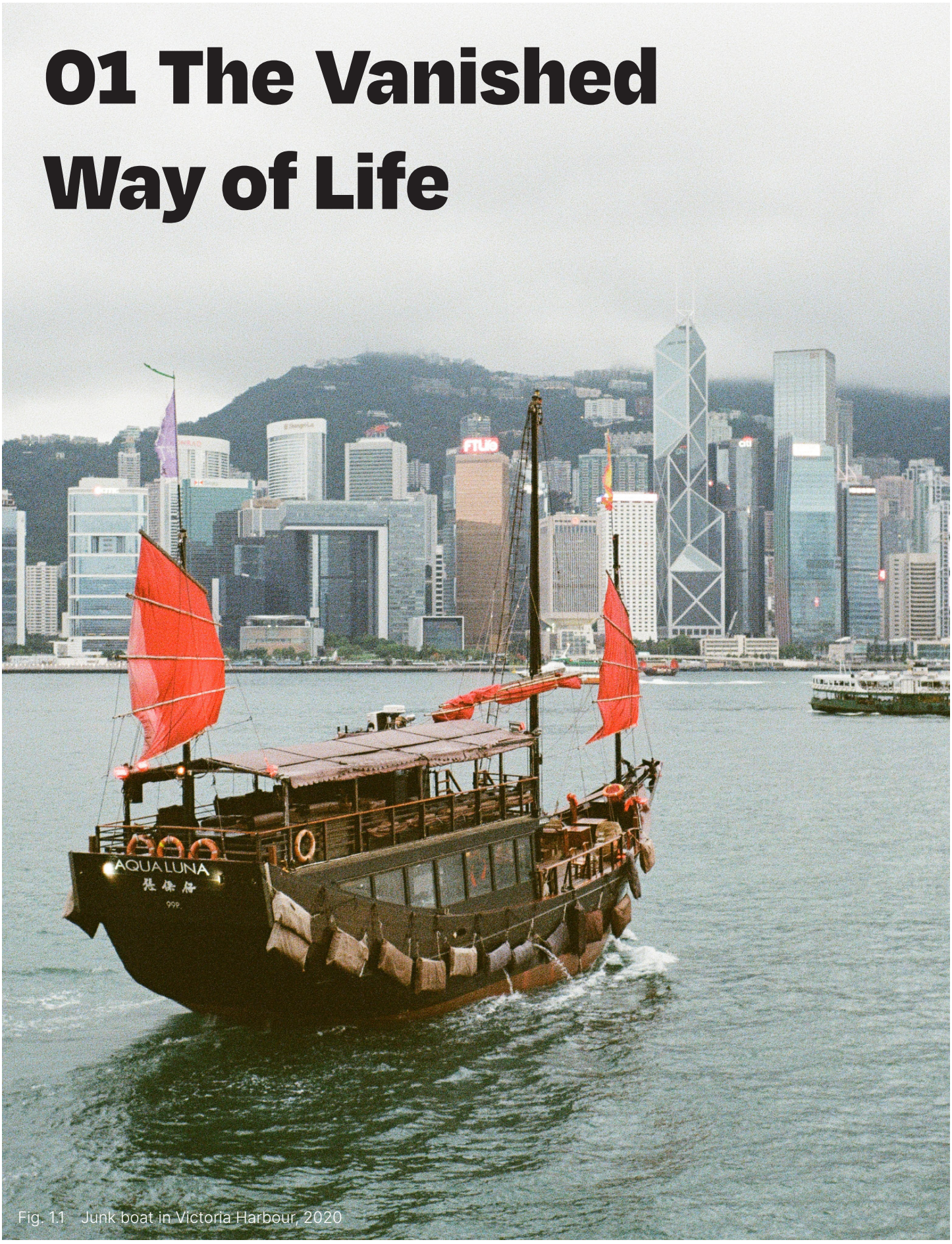

Fig. 1.1 Junk boat in Victoria Harbour, 2020

The Rise and Decline of the Fisherfolk Community in Hong Kong

With Hong Kong's current reputation as an international financial center, it may surprise many to learn of Hong Kong's former life as a thriving fishing village. Traces of Hong Kong's fishing activities date back to the Bronze Age (3000 years ago) from the evidence of rock carvings that are believed to be part of religious rituals before people headed to sea.[1] The fishing and maritime community in the area continued to thrive throughout the many dynasties of China and saw a rapid increase during the Ming and Qing Dynasties (1644-1912). The islands remained relatively underdeveloped and were sparsely populated. When the British acquired the relatively unknown islands and peninsula of Hong Kong in the 19th century, more than half the 7,450 population were fisherfolks[2]. The English name "Hong Kong" is a phonetic translation of the Cantonese word "Fragrant Harbour." Interestingly enough, this name itself tells that the first occupants the British encountered were fisherfolks since local Cantonese intonation would have made the term "Heung Gong" instead.

The British chose the islands of Hong Kong due to its deep narrow channels and a large amount of coastline for access to shipping ports, intending to set up a leading trading base in Asia. Within a few years, the islands were quickly developed, and the population more than tripled to 23,000 by 1845.[3] Surprising themselves, the British soon found this colony welcoming refugees due to war

1 'Ancient Rock Carvings' (Antiquities and Monuments Office, May 2021), https://www.amo.gov.hk/filemanager/amo/common/download-area/pamphlet/ancient_rock_carvings.pdf.

2 Saw Swee Hock and Chiu Wing Kin, 'Population Growth and Redistribution in Hong Kong, 1841-1975', *Asian Journal of Social Science* 4, no. 1 (1976): 123–30, https://doi.org/10.1163/080382476X00101.

3 Hock and Kin, 'Population Growth and Redistribution in Hong Kong, 1841-1975'.

Fig. 1.2 Rock carvings at Cape Collinson, Chai Wan

Fig. 1.3 The painting “Hong Kong City and Victoria Harbour” depicts the central harbour of Hong Kong in the 1870s, filled with ships from Britain, the USA, France and the Netherlands.

Fig. 1.4 Sampans in typhoon shelter, 1965

outbreaks in mainland China. With the fishing industry being the main commercial sector of early Hong Kong, one can observe a close parallel between the rate of development of the city as a whole and the fishing community. Hong Kong's population expanded in bursts, bringing along labour forces for the town. The first major growth was due to large numbers of Chinese people emigrating from the mainland due to the Taiping Rebellion in the 1850s; the second burst of population increase happened by absorbing residents of nearby lands. Unsatisfied by the expansion rate for their trade profits, the British sought to extend the boundaries of Hong Kong. In 1899, the British formally took possession of Kowloon and over 200 outlying islands that make up the New Territories today, under a 99-year lease[4]. At the turn of the century in 1900, the population of Hong Kong reached 383,905, where fishers made up 15% of the population[5]. The fishing community expanded alongside the city's development and has remained a core part of Hong Kong's identity ever since.

Many of these newcomers dove into the life of fishers since the trade was accepting. Their arrival greatly boosted the development of the fishing industry. The fishing community expanded greatly in the coming years and remained the main commercial force up until the 1960s, reaching its peak when the mobile population of the fishers totaled over 100,000. Harbours were filled with boats at the time, creating the phenomenon of the famous floating city in the Aberdeen harbour, which some say was more vibrant than the lives on the adjacent shores[6]. At the turn of the decade, post-war industrialization transformed the economic sectors of Hong Kong. It redirected many of these boat families into other working fields in the city. The implementation of the nine-year compulsory education for the children, combined with land reclamations in the coastal areas where the boat dwellers resided, forced many of them onshore and into public housing projects.[7] Little by little, the boat dwellers became land dwellers, and the fishing industry faced a sharp decline. Due to regional competition and overfishing in the area, the fishing industry

4 G. B. Endacott, *A History of Hong Kong* (London: Oxford University Press, 1964).

5 Hock and Kin, 'Population Growth and Redistribution in Hong Kong, 1841-1975'.

6 Michael Ingham, *Hong Kong: A Cultural History* (Cary: Oxford University Press, 2007).

7 Lo Shuk Ying 盧淑櫻, *Yu Gang Fu Chen: Shaojiwan de Yu Ye Fa Zhan* 漁港浮沉：筲箕灣的漁業發展 *[The Rise and Fall of the Harbour: Shau Kei Wan's Fishing Industry]* (Hong Kong: The Conservancy Association Centre for Heritage, 2019).

found it difficult to turn a profit. By the 1980s, many of the remaining older fishers started retiring and selling their family boats, joining their offspring who had been assimilated into the on-land society. In 2012, less than 10,000 fishers existed in Hong Kong, with only around 3,000 fishing boats scattered around the different harbours around the city.[8]

Today, the vibrancy of the fisherfolk community is no more. The rapid urbanization in Hong Kong in the past 50 years has led to a swift reduction in the fisherfolk population. The former members of the boat community have seamlessly integrated with the onshore society, displaced to the different corners of the metropolis. The mobility of their former boat-dwelling life also meant they could not claim land ownership when the government repossessed the harbours they inhabited for city development. Over the years, many moved onshore to public housing projects, leaving the boats they once called home behind. Without their owners, these boats were consumed by the great seas they temporarily floated on. The harbours were filled in, leaving little physical evidence of the fisherfolk's presence.

This thesis focuses on using a cultural history study along with architectural intervention to find a sustainable pathway forward for a thriving community with a diminished way of life in an increasingly urban global environment. Fisherfolks still exist across China and elsewhere, but the Hong Kong fisherfolk society is special in its trajectory alongside the city's development. This thesis is not just an investigation into their history to showcase their complex culture. Instead, it is to understand that the fisherfolks have much more than hard marine facts to teach us. We can gain greatly by learning from their lessons of adaptation when confronted with changes in our environments. The story of Hong Kong's fishing community is a testament to the resilience of human beings in the face of social and economic change. There might be a pause in their story currently, but the fisherfolk's ability to adapt to new circumstances is a strength that can allow them to overcome the obstacle of their struggling culture continuance. By recognizing the value of their heritage and remaining open to new possibilities, we can create a future that is both sustainable and fulfilling for generations of fisherfolks to come.

8 Kow Choy Iu, 傳承與轉變*:* 漁業 *[Impartation and Transformation: Aquaculture]*, vol. 1, 2 vols, Shi Jiu Ji Er Shi Shi Ji De Xianggang Yu Nong Ye Chuan Cheng Yu Zhuan Bian 十九及二十世紀的香港漁農業 [Hong Kong Agriculture & Aquaculture in the 19th and 20th Centuries] (Hong Kong: Cosmos Books Limited, 2015).

Fig. 1.5 Aberdeen Harbour, 1964

Fig. 1.6 Aberdeen Harbour, 2016

Seui Seung Yan 水上人 ***(The Fisherfolks)***

Modern Hong Kong is a highly heterogeneous society due to its colonial past and role as a safe haven for refugees from different parts of Asia. Among the obvious shared cultural markers of race, language, and history, subcultural groups have co-existed in this small city for centuries while being able to maintain their own identity. It results in a society where different ethnic groups have proliferated harmoniously side by side. Among the occupants of the city, the fisherfolk community has historically been a distinct group, with separation aided by their unique residence on the waters. For centuries, most of them have lived entirely on their boats, while the remaining resided in stilted shelters over the shallow tides. Their livelihood connects heavily to their fluid environments, making a living by harvesting seafood, cargo handling, and trading. Although the fisherfolks are typical "Han Chinese"[9] under current anthropological usage, they differed noticeably from their neighbouring land-dwelling counterparts. Perceived as a culturally separate caste, they were often referred to by the prejudicial slur term "Tanka." Their clothing and speech differ from land norms,[10] and they have a unique food culture. Although they worship similar deities, they have different religious practices.[11]

The fisherfolk's distinct way of being Chinese has humoured theories of racial disparities, even being constitutionally declared as a separate ethnic group in imperial times, subjecting them to discrimination. It is not an exaggeration to state that they were among the lowest-ranked social groups in Chinese society. Although their supposed "tribal" status was disproved decades

9 Eugene N. Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community* (New Orleans, LA: University Press of the South, 2007).

10 Barbara E. Ward, *Through Other Eyes: An Anthropologist's View of Hong Kong* (Chinese University Press, 1989).

11 Lo Shuk Ying 盧淑櫻, *Yu Gang Fu Chen: Shaojiwan de Yu Ye Fa Zhan* 漁港浮沉：筲箕灣的漁業發展 *[The Rise and Fall of the Harbour: Shau Kei Wan's Fishing Industry]*.

Fig. 1.7 Fisherfolk on sampan, 1965

ago by various anthropologists, these claims were repeatedly used as the basis for prejudice up until modern times. They are routinely referred to as *Tanka* or *Dan* 蜑家 by the neighbouring land dwellers and many research scholars. However, they dislike the term, viewing it as derogatory. Instead, the community called themselves *Seui Seung Yan* 水上人 *(people on water)*.[12] Terms including boat people, boat dwellers, water community, fisherfolk community, fishing community, and boat community are also used to refer to this group. Although some scholars would say they are simply a variant of the neighbouring land-dwelling Cantonese people, it is without a doubt that their distinct way of living allowed them to create their own sophisticated culture, including their own dialect, cuisine, music, attire, and religious customs. Many of these cultural features can be associated with their adaptation to their seafaring lifestyle. An example would be their traditional loose black cotton outfits which resulted from combining comfort and durability, as it was among the few garments that could withstand the harsh working conditions of boat living.[13]

12 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community*.
13 Iu, 傳承與轉變: 漁業 *[Impartation and Transformation: Aquaculture]*.

Marine Knowledge

Many falsely claim that indigenous knowledge is often culturally constructed and therefore has no grounds in science. However, the fisherfolk's sophisticated understanding of their environment can stand against modern biological studies, showcasing their valuable knowledge. Anthropologist Eugene N. Anderson resided twice in Castle Peak Bay, one of the fishing harbours, for up to 6 months in total between the 1960s and 1970s. Among his research was the investigation of the Hong Kong Boat people's knowledge of marine life. Anderson and his peer Dr. William Cheung, a Stanford-trained fisheries expert, estimated that the fisherfolks recognized over 1400 named taxa of marine life, and they were able to record over 400 common species physically.[14] Unlike many other folk biologists across cultures, they concluded that the Hong Kong fisherfolks' basic classification method was complex and had striking parallel similarities with the modern scientific system. It was to the fisherfolk's advantage to understand known common species and use this knowledge to predict the pricing and fishing grounds of unfamiliar new catches.[15] They concluded that the classification system, developed and maintained by an illiterate group, was expertly maintained. Their understanding of the realities of marine life and their surrounding environment as a complex ecosystem was scientifically impeccable.

In addition, the fisherfolk have also created additional categories for the system, including the value of fish, catching method, life cycle stages, location, symbolic and mythological metaphor, and religious importance, showcasing their flexibility.[16] These overlapping categories crosscut their basic system adaptively for the different interest groups they interact with. Some of these systems were grounded in their pragmatic and realistic approach, while others reflected cultural significance for the group. An example would be the pricing of their catch showcasing the economic consideration, as this is their means of survival. Furthermore, catching methods, life cycles, and location of marine life dictated their ways of fishing, allowing them to increase their success rate.[17]

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14 Eugene N. Anderson, 'The Ethnoichthyology of the Hong Kong Boat People' (PhD Thesis, University of California, Berkeley, 1967).

15 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community, 54*.

16 E.N. Anderson, *Essays on South China's Boat People*, Asian Folklore and Social Life Monographs (Taipei: Orient Cultural Service, 1972).

17 Iu, 傳承與轉變*:* 漁業 *[Impartation and Transformation: Aquaculture]*.

Food Culture

The nature of fishing trips means that the fisherfolks will spend days in open water, with dried seafood and some preserved vegetables they can store, items that do not require refrigeration. The fishing community is reliant on the seafood harvest on the trips to act as the primary food supply during their multi-day journeys. With fisherfolks' intimate understanding of seafood in the area, it is no surprise that they have become experts in cooking seafood.

It is expected that the fishing community prioritizes high-yield catches. Yet, with the nature of fishing, they would undoubtedly also harvest seafood less desirable on the market. The fisherfolks are experts in transforming these unwanted harvests into delicacies. Their home cooking method emphasizes preserving the ingredients' freshness of the ingredients, regularly using only soy sauce or salt as their main condiment, along with preserved vegetables to add aroma.

Although each fisherfolk may have their own preference, some of these "unwanted seafood" have become shared secrets among the fishing community. One of the open secrets is the "Fishermen's Three Treasures," which includes Cobia, Goose Barnacles and "Blind Crab." Grown in harsh environments for harvesting, these are considered delicacies that fisherfolks will go out of their way to acquire and would rarely be seen on the open market. In recent years, the food knowledge the fisherfolks obtain has been shared more openly. These traditional fisherfolk home recipes have become more mainstream and infused as one of the staples in Hong Kong's food culture.

Fig. 1.8 Fresh fish market in Hong Kong

Fig. 1.9 Saltwater Song Performance on the Piers

Saltwater Songs

Their integration of practicality into their cultural markers can also be observed in their distinctive saltwater songs. The saltwater songs are a great example of the sophisticated oral culture they carry. Their memories and history were mainly stored in media related to time and movement, instead of in the written form. The songs were highly improvisational and often emotional. They were composed and sung at all types of occasions, including weddings, festivals, funerals, or even on daily occasions as entertainment. Since the group was overwhelmingly illiterate, saltwater songs were among the best ways for the fisherfolk to pass on their knowledge to younger generations. Before the 1970s, almost all fisherfolk sang, accompanying the various life events.[18] Sadly, many of these songs were lost after the fisherfolk moved onshore since there was a lack of opportunities to perform. Recently, initiatives led by fisherfolk descendants and local film directors have led to the re-emergence of interest in this type of folk art. The following example depicts the geolocation of the Hong Kong shores, guiding them through different bodies of water.

18 Eugene N. Anderson, 'Songs of the Hong Kong Boat People', *CHINOPERL* 5, no. 1 (1975): 8–114, https://doi.org/10.1179/chi.1975.5.1.8.

Fig. 1.10 Mr Lai 黎連壽（塔門）is the performer of this song

The Sailing Song 行船歌

Before the invention of modern navigation systems, people had to rely upon the sun and stars for direction. They learned to read landmarks to navigate the seas. The fisherfolks had to venture out to the open waters, away from their origin bay, to catch fish. Unlike navigation on land, there are many hidden unknowns beneath the surface, undercurrents that may wreak your boat, pockets of areas with harsh wind, or even zones with no fish. Over time, these fisherfolks learn about these qualities of the waters as their experiences grow. For them, it was the easiest to pass along this knowledge through song. A great example is The Sailing Song. The Sailing Song illustrates the different landmarks in the waters surrounding Hong Kong. It presents an alternative perspective where one's experience originates from the waters instead of land. As you sing the song, you can mentally map the geological locations of the bays, hills and rocks you see along the way. There is also a description of the different landmarks, fishing grounds and tips to navigate the area. Before the motorization of the fishing boats, a full trip described in the song may take up to two days to complete.[19] Unsurprisingly, the song includes the several bays suitable for mooring during their multi-day journeys. The different locations mentioned in Hong Kong are identified in the following analysis of the song.

19 Ma Chi Hang 馬智恆 and Tsang Gam Tin 鄭錦鈿, *Ballad on the Shore* 岸上漁歌 (Hong Kong: Art & Culture Outreach, 2017).

行船歌 *The Sailing Song*

大星疊小星	Big Stars and Small Stars
挑拋六甲是沱濘	Riding the waves along the natural rhythm, we arrive at Tuoling
大船拋往**沱濘頭**[1]	The big boats moor at the tip of **Tuoning**[1]
舢舨送郎**賴氏州**[2]	The Sampan brings the man back to **Lai Shi Zhou**[2]
勿比東風吹窒你妹娘裙尾	Don't let the East Wind blow up your lady's dress
細魚投胎燉肚白	Small fishes reincarnate, and you see their white belly
燈盞無油是黑岩	The Lighthouse without light is where the black rocks are
黑岩岩黑岩搖返**大鹿灣**[3]	From the black rocks, we slowly head back to **Mirs Bay**[3]
大鹿灣拋船風花冷	Docking at Mirs Bay brings cold winds
鵝公灣[4]大好拋船	**On Gwan Bay**[4] is more suitable for anchoring
對開是**石牛**[5]	Across from it is **Shek Ngau**[5]
大石牛，細石牛	Big Shek Ngau, Small Shek Ngau
獨單一個沉排冇起頭	It is the only one there, with submerged reefs and no result
大浪澳[6]，小浪澳	**Big Wave Bay**[6], Small Wave Bay
近好先沙比浪淘	The sand comes and go along the great waves
大浪對開是山州	Across from Big Wave Bay are the hills
山州盡頭**大魚岩**[7]	The end of the hills is **Dai Yue Ngam**[7]
頸喝搖埋龍落水	If you're thirsty at this point, head to the shores
肚餓搖埋**飯甑洲**[8]	If you're hungry, head over to **Conic Island**[8]

大船難入**官門口**[9]	It's hard for Big Boats to get into **Kwun Mun Channel**[9]
大白腊，細**白腊**	Big Pak Lap, Small **Pak Lap**[10]
無風駛船哩打褶	There is no wind guiding the boat, the sails are folded
喊夥計起身勤掌舵	Ask a boatmate to be at the helm
仲好過**福建頭**[11]	It's better than **Wang Chau**[11]
銀坪[12]**果仔**[12]難收拾	**Ngan Peng**[12], **Kwo Chau**[12] is hard to travel through
掉了鐵針是裏頭	The metal needle will tell you what's inside
南佛堂北**佛堂**[13]	South Fat Tong(Temple), North **Fat Tong**[13] (Temple)
兩邊娘媽坐東方	Two Mothers (Tin Hau Temples) sits in the East
大柴灣，細柴灣	Big Chai Wan (Firewood Bay), Small Chai Wan (Firewood Bay)
斧頭[14]劈落是**柴灣**[15]	Where the axes (**Lei Yue Mun**[14]) strike towards, it's **Chai Wan**[15] (Firewood Bay)
洗淨筲箕撈落米	Wash the Sieve (Shau Kei), cook the rice
起頭拋錠**筲箕灣**[16]	Start the Anchorage at **Shau Kei Wan**[16]
大便檔，小便檔	Dai Bin Dong (Port), Siu Bin Dong (Starboard)
白牌對面**九龍塘**[17]	Across the piers is **Kowloon Tong**[17]
大舟孖你**昂船洲**[18]	A Big Boat will bring you to **Stonecutters Island**[18]
難分左共右	It's hard to tell left from right
斗門**交椅**[19]向西頭	Dau Mun **Kau Yi**[19] heads towards the west end

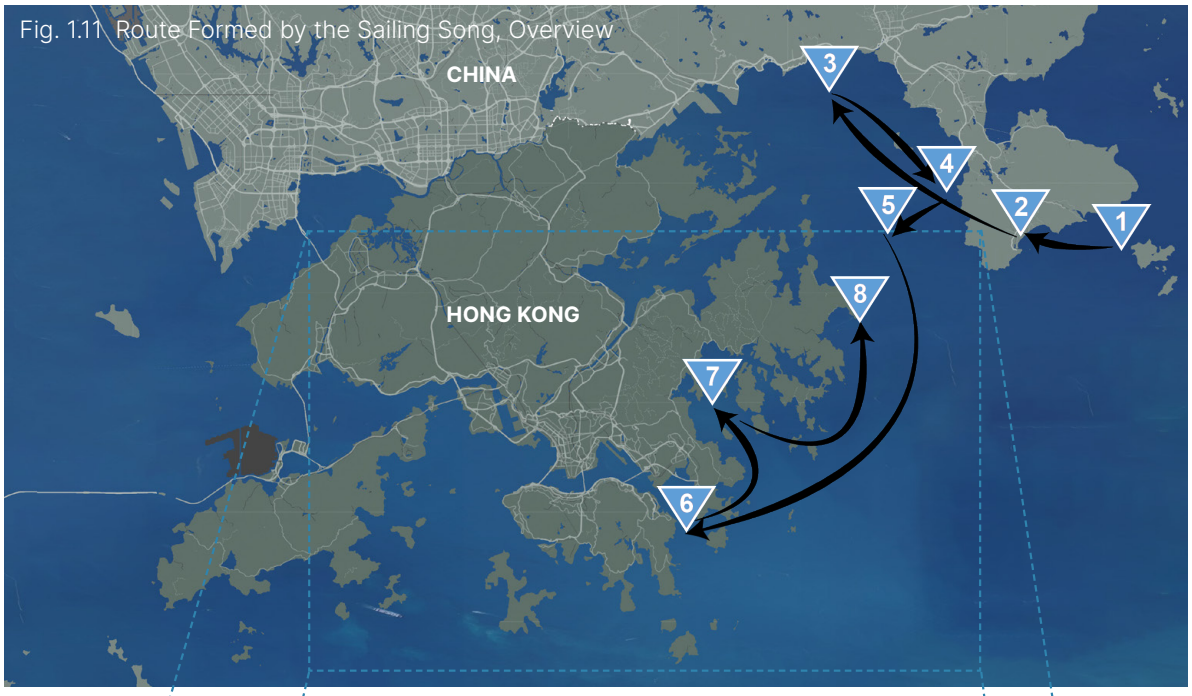

Fig. 1.11 Route Formed by the Sailing Song, Overview

1. (沱濘頭) 沱濘列島 Tuoning Liedao
2. (賴氏州) 賴屎洲 Laishizhou
3. (大鹿灣) 大鵬灣 Mirs Bay
4. 鵝公灣 Gongwan Bay
5. (石牛) 石牛洲 Shek Ngau Chau
6. (大浪澳) Big Wave Bay
7. (大魚岩) 睇魚岩頂 Tai Yue Ngam Teng
8. 飯甑洲 Conic Island

Fig. 1.12 Route Formed by the Sailing Song, Zoomed In

9. (官門口)官門灣 Kwun Mun Channel
10. (白腊) 白腊灣 Pak Lap Wan
11. (福建頭) 橫洲角 Wang Chau
12. (果仔) 果洲群島 Kwo Chau Islands
12. (銀坪) 銀瓶頸 Ngan Peng Keng
A cliff channel in the Kwo Chau Islands
13. (佛堂) 佛堂門 Fat Tong Mun
14. (斧頭) 鯉魚門 Lei Yue Mun
15. 柴灣 Chai Wan
16. 筲箕灣 Shau Kei Wan
17. 九龍塘 Kowloon Tong
18. 昂船洲 Stonecutters Island
19. (交椅)交椅洲 Kau Yi Chau

Built Structures of the Fisherfolks

Architecture has always been a marker of civilization; the permanency of buildings built on land allows the reflection of history and culture. The buildings tend to survive far beyond the passing of their people, allowing for the continuous presence of a community long past its prime. However, most of the fisherfolk's built forms do not enjoy the advantages of traditional buildings.

There are three main categories of their structures: boats, stilt houses, and temples. Boats are the most common element, a floating device supporting both their line of work and their basic dwelling needs. They are the most flexible yet temporary, demanding constant repair and upgrades. Stilt Houses are the happy medium between temporary and permanent, using salvaged materials; they are usually built on the tidelands. These structures allow for a longer-lasting existence but also need upgrades as they age. Temples, on the other hand, are the most permanent structures of the fisherfolks. Usually funded by an entire community, they are built on land and used by the community for both worshipping and communal purposes.

One of the biggest traits of the fisherfolks is their residence over the water instead of land. Their unique way of life implies that most of their built structure are floating devices - their fishing boats also act as their dwelling. Fishing Boats, usually junk ships, vary in size and style based on the fishing method they adopt. However, they all function similarly in the sense that they both support their line of work and the dwelling needs of the fisherfolks. With special fishing methods needing to act in pairs or groups, these boat groups act as a single unit and proceed to share equally. Fishing trips can take days and weeks in the ocean, but once they return to their harbours, the individual boat units acting as a single "household"

Fig. 1.13 Fishing boats in Shau Kei Wan, 2021

Fig. 1.14 Stilt houses in Tai O, 2021

Fig. 1.15 Tin Hau Temple in Shau Kei Wan, 2021

Fig. 1.16 Travelling on sampans, 1960

would moor together neatly to form a “bigger household.” There are unspoken rules in how these clusters of boats are grouped, with an explicit agreement between the individual boats.

Since there is a level of intimacy shared from physically mooring boats together, with their boat spaces accessible to everyone, they usually only moor with family or close friends. The direction of the boats and the size of the group would form the “water alleys” that form the streets of the floating village. Since there is no fixed plan for the layout, the floating village is essentially organic, expanding and contracting throughout the year. What land-dwellers usually view as a harsh border between water and land does not exist in the perspective of water-dwellers. For them, water is just an extension of the land. People jump from boat to boat among the connected units and rely on a *sampan (*or *yu lou)*, a smaller boat that acts as transportation between the land and the boats.

Many of these water-based structures have ceased to exist; their presence diminished along with the decline of the fishing community. Instead, what remains of the fisherfolks in current times is mainly the religious temples since they are the only few land-based long-lasting structures.

Fig. 1.17 Diagram of boats arrangements when mooring

Each boat acts as an individual unit for daily operations. Their lifestyle is highly individualistic.

Boats often moor together with family and relatives in harbours, forming a bigger household unit.

These family unit relations are then expanded to the neighbouring friends and relatives housing in the same bay.

Fig. 1.18 Aberdeen Typhoon Harbour, 1946

Fig. 1.19 Joss house Tin Hau Temple, 2018

Among the most popular deities worshipped by the seafaring communities in Hong Kong include Tin Hau, Hung Shing or Tam Kung. These temples are usually located near the shore, allowing the worshippers to easily pray before the start of their seafaring trip and at the moment of their arrival. It also frequently acts as the community centre since public buildings for the fisherfolks were lacking. The size of the temple is closely related to the size and wealth of its community, which is believed to be proof of the efficacy of the deities worshipped.

In Hong Kong, most Chinese temples are smaller vernacular temples not typically used for large rituals. Instead, these small temples are treated as the place of residence of the deities. Therefore, folk temples are commonly a humble two-hall layout at most. A two-hall temple consists of an entrance building and a main hall. Visitors will first walk into the entrance building when they enter the temple. This first hall includes a central screen door to shield the interior from the streets during daily use, allowing a sense of privacy. This screen door can be opened during the rituals, allowing for better public participation. Connecting the entrance building and the main hall is the courtyard, used to facilitate the ritual processes. Designed to be opened to the sky to allow smoke from rituals to escape, these courtyards in Hong Kong are now mostly covered. Once the visitor crosses this courtyard, they enter the main hall, where the sculpture of the main deity is housed at the center of the worship niche. There would be additional sculptures

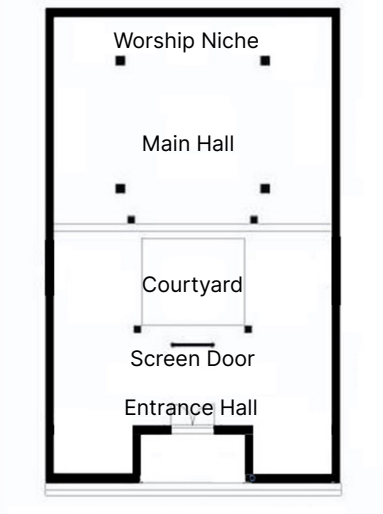

Fig. 1.20 Two-hall temple layout

Fig. 1.21 Interior of Yau Ma Tei Tin Hau Temple, 2021

adjacent to the deity, representing the aids and assistants of the god. An altar table will be placed in front of the niche, allowing for goods and sacrifices to be placed. In the side halls, additional deities are usually found. It is common to find multiple deities in the same temple, a distinctive feature of Chinese folk religion in Hong Kong. Larger temples are expanded based on this basic configuration, with larger and additional side halls. For spacious temples, additional features like kitchen facilities, washrooms and storage rooms can be found to support the users and visitors of the temple.

Just like other ancient Chinese architecture, the design of Chinese temples is strongly guided by the principles of Feng Shui. In essence, Feng Shui aims to achieve a balanced relationship between man and nature. In the context of architectural design, this starts with site selection. Most temples that house sea deities are built with their entrance facing the sea for both practical worshipping reasons and for good feng shui. In addition, an open space in front of the temple is required since it is crucial for their communal rituals and annual festivals. Ideally, the space would allow for a temporary opera stage to be assembled, aligning with the deity inside the temple and allowing the deity to enjoy the festivities. However, with the urban development carried out in the past few decades in Hong Kong, most temples have lost such commanding views. However, it continues to act as a gathering place for the community to come together.

Fisherfolk in popular culture

The floating villages of Hong Kong were vibrant between the 1950s to 1980s and are renowned worldwide. Consequently, the built forms of the fisherfolks were featured in numerous international films like the 1949 movie, *Love Is a Many Splendored Thing*, by director Henry King; the 1981 Spiderman film, *The Dragon's Challenge*, by director Don McDougall; and the 1960 movie, *The World of Suzie Wong*, directed by Richard Quine. Although these movies showcased the fisherfolks, the portrayals were superficial. In fact, the image of the floating villages was so prominent that Hollywood movies have attempted to recreate them long past their reality, as seen in the 2018 movie, *Tomb Raider*, by director Roar Uthaug. It is quite clear that these movies merely treat the fisherfolks as props to add flavour to the setting of the movie since the fishing community is rarely involved. These foreign movies also mainly focus on floating restaurants, which cater to outsiders, as the main visual prop.

Fig. 1.22 Screenshot from Tomb Raider (2018) depicting a vibrant floating community that no longer exists.

Fig. 1.23 "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing" movie poster

Fig. 1.24 Screenshots from "Love Is a Many Splendored Thing," where the characters visit the infamous floating restaurant.

Fig. 1.25 "The Dragon's Challenge" movie poster

Fig. 1.26 Screenshots from "The Dragon's Challenge", where Spiderman chases the criminals through the floating village and ended up at the floating restaurant.

Fig. 1.27 Movie Poster of "The World of Suzie Wong"

The World of Suzie Wong

The 1960 movie, *The World of Suzie Wong*, directed by Richard Quine, is among the limited movies that have a more in-depth depiction of the world of the fisherfolk. In the movie, Robert Lomax, an American architect, moves to Hong Kong to pursue a life as a painter. During his stay, he meets a local woman, Suzie Wong, and falls in love with her. Suzie showcases a surprising familiarity with the fishing community and introduces Robert to the floating city among the Hong Kong harbours. However, the experience depicted is from an outsider's perspective, with the whole journey treated as an amusement ride. Their journey through the floating cities leads to dining at the Sea Palace, a floating restaurant catered to outsiders.

Eventually, Robert discovered that Suzie works as a prostitute, forced into that life due to poverty. This discovery becomes a main source of conflict for the latter part of the movie. While the film may have been well-intentioned in showcasing the fishing community to outsiders, it perpetuates harmful stereotypes. Apart from the obvious "white saviour" problem, it plays into the discriminatory stereotype of all "Tanka" women participating in sex work and their deceiving nature.

Fig. 1.28 Screenshot from "The World of Suzie Wong"

The director showed an aerial view of the piers leading to the floating cities, presenting it as a "alternative world" to the society on land.

The camera pans to Suzie leading Robert through a chaotic street. This wooden structure to the piers acts as a threshold between the land society and the floating world formed by boats.

Fig. 1.29 Screenshot from “The World of Suzie Wong”

Robert eyes the surroundings with a curious look. The built structure leading to the boat has an amausement-park like quality. Every boat and its inhabitants that pass by becomes a point of interest to be observed.

Fig. 1.30 Screenshot from “The World of Suzie Wong”

Although they were led through the floating city, they had little interaction with the community and were led directly to the Sea Palace, the floating restaurant that caters to wealthy visitors.

Fig. 1.31 Screenshot from “The World of Suzie Wong”

Soon after, Robert discovers Suzie is a prostitute. When he goes to find her at night, an alternative scenery of the fishing community is shown. Multiple “flower boats” (floating brothels) aligned to land was shown, implying that the young girls work as a prostitute at night.

Fig. 1.32 Screenshot from “The World of Suzie Wong”

Local Portrayal of Fisherfolk in Popular Culture

Despite their prominent presence in the history of Hong Kong, the fisherfolks were only occasionally mentioned in local popular culture. Furthermore, even when they are featured, the portrayal consistently includes a hint of patronage. Fortunately, the rising awareness of Hong Kong's identity since the city's return to China in 1997 has led to an increased interest in fisherfolks. Domestic filmmakers have attempted to portray the fishing community through a more authentic lens but occasionally have some basic missteps. For example, the film Floating City, directed by Yim Ho, presents an authentic portrait of the lives of a fisherfolk family alongside the development of the city. However, at the beginning of the movie, the main protagonist opens the film with the dialogue, "*We are the Tankas*," which seems extremely out of place. The fishing community of Hong Kong has long viewed the term as derogatory and only really called themselves *"Seui Seung Yan,"* meaning *people on water*. Fortunately, the film redeems itself after this initial blunder and faithfully presents the struggles and reality of the fisherfolks and the trajectory of the fishing community in Hong Kong. Additionally, an increasing number of projects, including documentaries and theatre plays in recent years, have attempted to encapsulate the different cultural aspects of the fisherfolks authentically. These productions have encouraged the fisherfolks to take control of the narrative of their stories and have supported a more well-rounded portrayal of the fisherfolk.

Fig. 1.33 Screenshot from “Floating City”

Fig. 1.34 Documentary film “Ballad on the shore”

Fig. 1.35 Poster of theatre production “Century-Old Dreams of a Fishing Harbour, Episode III. The Awakening”

Sacred Fish

Although the basis of the fisherfolk's marine sorting system is mostly based in reality, there is an interesting anomaly that led the fisherfolks to resort to mythical understandings in the face of the uncanny. The fisherfolks had a category of sacred fish, *San Yu*, for creatures that seem abnormal, thus eerie and out of the normal realm. The concept of sacred fish is an interesting blend between practicality and mysticism. While the categorization of *san yu* is based on practical criteria such as their abnormal features and low economic value, their designation as sacred fish is based on a belief in their mystical significance. More than anything, *san yu* act as subjects of taboo; these creatures were not to be caught and must be released if caught by accident. If they are unfortunately dead, the sacred fish would have to be brought to a temple and offered to the gods as a sacrifice.[20] There seems to be no strict rule to determine what fish is sacred. Tradition, rather than science, determines which fish and sea creatures they consider sacred. The element of *haii,* the spiritual energy, is explored briefly in Anderson's *Sacred Fish,* but the deciding element remains unknown. Apart from the relatively larger size of the sacred fish and their typically low economic value, no conclusive criteria can be established.

Species that the fisherfolk revere as *san yu* include *chum lung* (the sturgeon), *king yu* (the whale), *paak kei* (white porpoise), *hoi tun* (dark-coloured porpoise), and soi yu kuai (sea turtles). These sacred fish mentioned either show abnormity in their features or their behaviours. For example, Sturgeons look nothing like a typical fish; instead, they show features that the fisherfolks view as similar to mythical dragons, something they must show respect for. Additionally, porpoises and whales are mammals that reside in the waters. The fisherfolks may not understand the scientific difference. However, they find the behaviours of porpoises and whales to be disturbingly intelligent and that their meat is more like other mammals than fish.[21] Turtles, on the other hand, is unique in its amphibian nature of residing in both water and land.

There is an uncanny parallel between the condition the fisherfolks find themselves in and these sacred fish. In ancient times, the fisherfolks were forbidden to live on land, and prejudice

20 Eugene N. Anderson, 'Sacred Fish', *Man* 4, no. 3 (1969): 443–49.
21 Anderson, 'Sacred Fish', 444.

towards them never fully diminished. However, they are undoubtedly land creatures residing in water environments temporarily, unable to fully detach from on-land society. They still had to rely on supplies from land to survive. The fisherfolk community's belief in the sacredness of these fish reflects their connection to the natural environment and their reliance on it for survival. Perhaps this betwixt quality of being in between two worlds landed these creatures the status of sacred fish. Their experience of being unable to embrace either lifestyle fully undoubtedly shadowed their perception of these special sacred fishes. The symbolic parallel between the condition of the fisherfolk community and the status of the sacred fish adds depth to the community's relationship with the natural world and its unique cultural perspective.

Fig. 1.36 Sturgeon

Fig. 1.37 Chinese white porpoise

Fig. 1.38 Sea turtle in Sham Wan

Fisherfolks' Folk Religion

Unlike the traditional understanding of religion in the West, traditional Chinese people saw no real division between the supernatural and the natural. Good and bad spirits are something that encompasses our lives and are simply part of it.[22] Throughout their lives, people organized annual celebrations for their favourite deities, and they regularly visited temples for the blessing of these deities. Many also set up domestic altars to communicate with these supernatural powers in their homes. The flexibility and ability to compromise with environmental and communal changes allowed the folk religion in Hong Kong to become one of its own. The locals in Hong Kong created their blend of religious practices with material offerings as an integral part of their religious expression. When asked for the name of their "religion," many would say they simply practiced *baishen*, "worshipping deities," with no affiliation to any specific religion.[23] By examining closely, one can say the amorphous folk religion in Hong Kong is a blend of Buddhist, Confucian, and Taoist practices. However, outsiders may categorize these practices as *mixin*, being superstitious. Unlike organized religion, the rules of *baishen* are relaxed and adaptive. Passed on from generation to generation, each family may have their own version of how these rituals are carried out. It is not uncommon to see local variations of the worship ritual or festival celebration for the same deity organized by different neighbourhood communities. These believers pick and choose which deities they want to worship, believing that there are different deities, each with its own specialties. They are very strategic in which deities they worship, which reflects the social situation of the community these deities protect.

The fisherfolks' religious practices follow the same logic. Reliant on nature and the sea, the fisherfolk community is viewed to be even more superstitious. Primarily, they pay thorough attention to their patron deities with their regular worshipping. In addition to the above religious practices, they are more meticulous with their taboos. An example of this is the way they eat their fish. When fisherfolks eat their fish, usually steamed, they are precious with how they remove the bones from the fish. The fish is usually presented whole on the dining table. After finishing one side of

22 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community*.

23 Liu Tik-sang, 'A Nameless but Active Religion: An Anthropologist's View of Local Religion in Hong Kong and Macau', *The China Quarterly*, no. 174 (2003): 373–94.

Fig. 1.39 Tin Hau Statue

Fig. 1.40 Tam Kung Statue

Fig. 1.41 Hung Shing Statue

the fish, they do not turn it over. Instead, they must debone the fish carefully and keep all the bones intact. Flipping the fish means the possibility of their boats being overturned in the seas. If the bones were incomplete, it represents the boat losing its integrity.[24] Apart from the taboos observed by the fisherfolks in their daily lives, their superstition still largely manifests in their recurring acts of worship for their deities in exchange for protection.

The three main deities that the fisherfolks worship are Tin Hau (the goddess of the sea), Hung Shing (the god of the southern sea), Tam Kung (Lord Tam, Sea Deity), along with some other minor gods.

Tin Hau is a Chinese goddess considered the protector of sailors and fishermen, who believe that she can predict the weather and guide lost sailors back home. She is one of the most popular goddesses in Hong Kong. Because her followers are travellers of the sea, her presence can be found worldwide across countries and continents.[25]

Hung Shing is also a sea deity that is known for the protection he offers to the fishermen. The historical Hung Shing was a righteous government official from the Tang dynasty (AD618-970), knowledgeable in astronomy, geography, and mathematics. Hung Shing used his knowledge to help his people, especially sea traders and fishermen in his jurisdiction. After his death, legend has it that he continued to help and showed his presence to those in need.[26]

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24 Hiroaki Kani, *A General Survey of the Boat People in Hong Kong* (Hong Kong: Southeast Asia Studies Section, Chinese University of Hong Kong, 1967), 73.

25 Che 徐徹 Xu and Tai Yun 陳泰雲 Chen, *Min Jian Bai Shen* 民間百神 *[Folk Gods]*, 1st ed. (Hong Kong: Hong Kong Open Page Publishing Company Limited, 2020), 341-343.

26 Shu Kai 周樹佳 Chow, *Xianggang Zhu Shen : Qi Yuan, Miao Yu Yu Chong Bai* 香港諸神：起源、廟宇與崇拜 *[Gods of Hong Kong: Origin, Temples and Worshipping]*

Tam Kung is a sea deity that presents himself as a child to his followers. Believed to be able to predict the weather and cure sickness, he originated from the Chaoshan region of Guangdong. Tam Kung is not as popular as the other two sea deities in Hong Kong, with only three main temples erected in his honour.[27]

These deities all function similarly, offering protection from the harsh conditions at sea and bringing good weather in return for offerings by the worshipers. Since they are sea gods, many worship structures started as a shrine adjacent to the coast (see Figure 1.42). Once the deities had accumulated enough followers in the area, temples would be erected. Among the 300 existing Chinese temples and shrines in Hong Kong, approximately 130 are dedicated to Sea Deities. In addition to the temples, domestic altars for ancestors and patron deities are set up in individual households (see Figure 1.43). The setup of these altars is relatively uniform, where popular deities, including the Earth Lord (*Tudi Gong),* Kitchen God (*zaojun*), and Door God (*Menshen*), are usually present, along with tablets for ancestors. Fisherfolks that used to dwell on boats would use predominately wooden made plates and sculptures in place of the ceramic sculptures normally present (see Figure 1.44). Incense sticks are offered daily, and other special rituals would occur during major life events. Outside of the domestic setting, temple visits occur occasionally, with the frequency depending on individual worshipers. These visits occur when the worshipper needs special help or guidance for their struggles. These visits would continue until the event is resolved. One would assume that a group would choose only one deity over others due to overlapping specialties, but that is not the case. Many people worship multiple deities simultaneously, hoping to gain additional blessings.[28] The only limitation preventing that would be money and time.

In addition to personal visits, there are temple festivals organized by the entire community for the deity's birthday. Based at the local temple, the celebration expands to the open spaces in the neighbourhood. The community would come together to craft the decorations and traditional signage crafts for the festival, utilizing many traditional handcrafting skills. Particularly, fisherfolks would

(Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Company (Hong Kong) Limited, 2022), 254-255.

27 Chow, *Xianggang Zhu Shen : Qi Yuan, Miao Yu Yu Chong Bai* 香港諸神：起源、廟宇與崇拜 *[Gods of Hong Kong: Origin, Temples and Worshipping]*, 206-207.

28 Liu Tik-sang, 'A Nameless but Active Religion: An Anthropologist's View of Local Religion in Hong Kong and Macau', 86-100.

Fig. 1.42 Small Tin Hau Shrine in O Tsai

Fig. 1.43 Typical domestic shrine in household

Fig. 1.44 Deity wood sculptures

Fig. 1.45 Yau Ma Tei Tin Hau Temple during Typical Days

create a paper floral plaque called Fa Pau[29] ranging from 2m to 6m in height. Occurring once a year, these festivals carry high importance, and they range between a day to a week. Cantonese Opera would be performed for more established celebrations, including nightly performances until the day of the main celebration. These theatrical performances are considered part of the offerings for the gods to entertain them. However, the community also enjoys these performances, allowing them to gather and connect while enjoying the festival.

In recent times, the magnitude of the celebration has been greatly reduced. We can investigate the neighbourhood of Shau Kei Wan, one of the major fishing villages in Hong Kong, as an example. A typical Tin Hau festival before the 1990s would last days and up to a full week, with daily performances and rituals. The intensity of the festivities can be confirmed by a festival program booklet published in 1986 by the Tin Hau Tam Kung Association based in Shau Kei Wan. The booklet records that the famous Chinese Opera group named “Chorfungming Opera Troupe” has set up a stage in the local

29 Fa Pau, also known as flower cannon, are paper offerings for the goddess of Tin Hau during Tin Hau Festival. Each village group would create their own Fa Pau and participate in a ceremony to compete for the blessing of Tin Hau. Historically, Fa Pau includes firecracker elements. However, this has been banned due to safety concerns in recent years. Although it was a tradition derived from the Tin Hau Festivals, its presence can be spotted at other fisherfolk-related festivals like the Tam Kung Festival.

Fig. 1.46 Yau Ma Tei Tin Hau Temple during Tin Hau Festival

Factory Street Playground and would perform daily between June 19 to 23rd of the lunar calendar. By the start of the 1990s, the same neighbourhood no longer organized any theatrical performances for the gods.[30] Although factors like the urban redevelopment of the neighbourhood leading to the sharp decline of the fishing community in the area contributed to the drastic change, this phenomenon was common throughout Hong Kong. In fact, in the 2000s, many Tin Hau festivals all over Hong Kong were reduced greatly in scale. Countless celebrations were now merely a one-day event.[31] The once crucial opera performances are now limited to neighbourhoods that still have the financial means. It is apparent that the popularity and importance of these festivals have been on the decline. Fortunately, in recent years, with the help of conservative groups, funding was provided by the local city council to continue the festivals. The extra support has allowed communities to expand the magnitude of the festival once again. Additionally, they have gained the opportunity to re-examine the role of festivals and become more creative with their program.

30 Tsz On 陳子安 Chan, *Yu Cun Bian Zou : Miao Yu, Jie Mu Yu Shaojiwan Di Qu Li Shi, 1872-2016* 漁村變奏：廟宇、節目與筲箕灣地區歷史, *1872-2016 [Changes of the Fishing Village: Temples, Festivals & Shau Kei Wan Local History, 1872-2016]* (Hong Kong: Chung Hwa Book Co., 2018).

31 Desmond 黃競聰 Wong, *Jian Ming Xianggang Hua Ren Feng Su Shi* 簡明香港華人風俗史 *[A Concise History of Chinese Customs in Hong Kong]* (Hong Kong: Joint Publishing (Hong Kong) Company Limited, 2020).

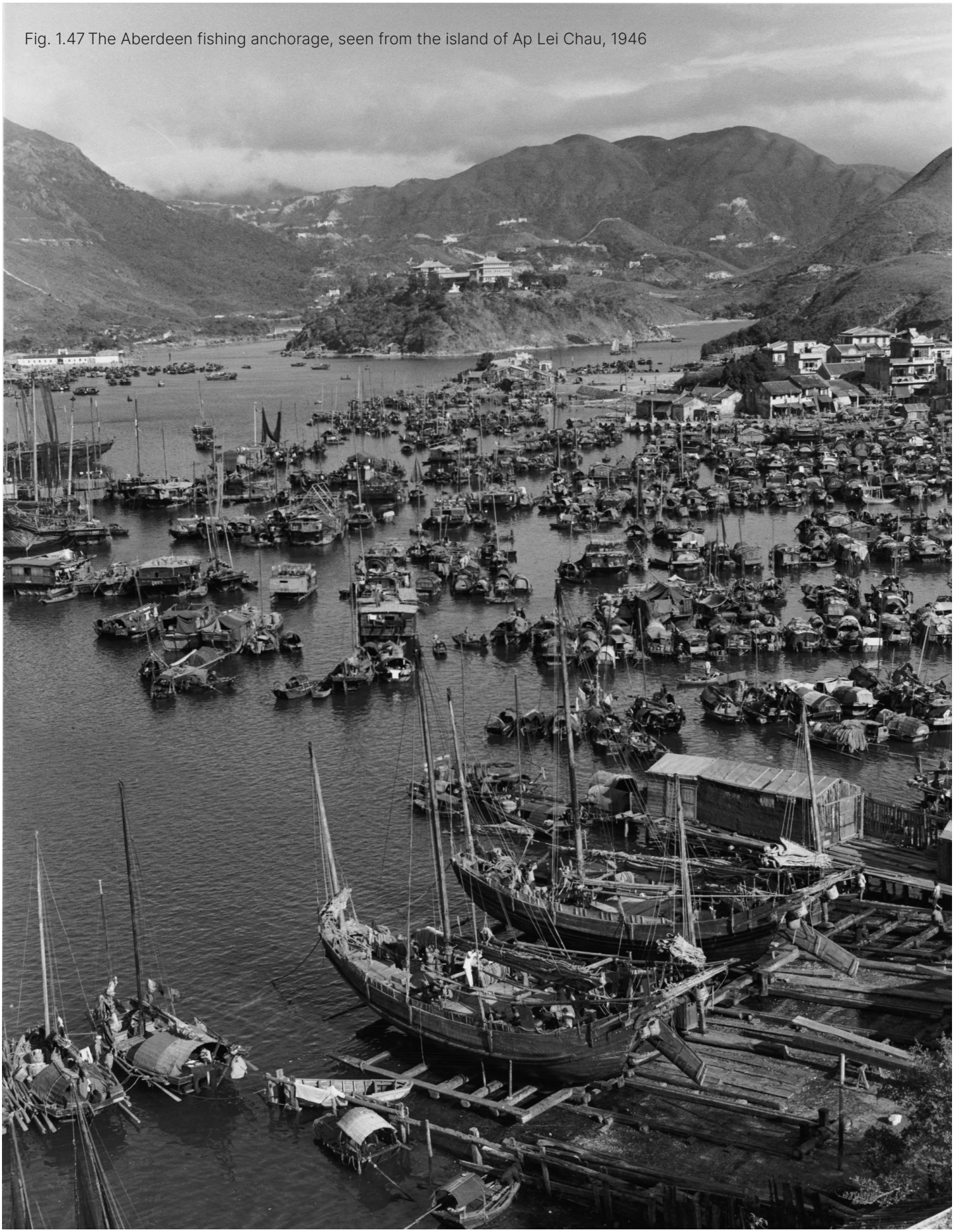

Fig. 1.47 The Aberdeen fishing anchorage, seen from the island of Ap Lei Chau, 1946

Anthropology Research on the "Tanka" Community

Research on the fisherfolk community can be roughly divided into four stages, starting in the early 1900s. This first stage was carried out by predominantly local Chinese researchers, where the focus was placed on the history of the nationalities, primarily on race and the origin of the different communities. The research aimed to reconstruct the history and development of China. The first stage of research started with setting up the status of "other," supported by common misconceptions held by society at the time. It was not until the 1920s to the 1940s that some scholars of the field, including Chen Xujing[32], a famed Chinese sociologist, started systematic research on the Tanka people, investigating the community through the lens of sociology and accumulating valuable field data on the subject. At the end of this first stage, there was a consensus that the Tanka were descendants of the tribe of Yue, comprised of various ethnic groups that once inhabited various regions of Southern China and Northern Vietnam from 7th century to 2th century BC. This theory has since been challenged and disproved.

The second stage of research was conducted soon after modern China was established in the 1950s. Due to the political focus at the time, academia was redirected to investigate the minority groups in the country as the government tried to reconstruct the identity of China as a whole.[33] The Tanka Community became a

32 Chen Xujing 陳序經's writing of the *"Dan min de yan jiu"* is one of the first distinguished modern study on the Tanka People.

33 Huang Xiangchun 黃向 春, 'Through the Angle of Tanka : A Hundred Years Exploration of Study of Ethnohistory and Ethnic Group of China 从蜑民研究

topic of interest due to its unique presence in society. This stage of Tanka studies ramified some earlier assumptions and established that the group belongs under the "*Han*" umbrella despite their unique way of living.

After this short array of research, once the group lost its "minority" status, local Chinese scholars showed less interest.[34] The third stage of research was instead done primarily by foreign scholars, using the Tanka community as the subject for their research in Sinology. Since it was almost impossible to enter the Chinese mainland due to political circumstances at the time, many scholars redirected their focus to areas outside the control of the communist party, including Hong Kong, Macau, and Taiwan. Through the lens of anthropology, much field data was recorded. These foreign scholars provided creative and refreshed ways to look at the fishing community through a foreign lens. Among them included Japanese Historian Hiroaki Kani, American Anthropologist Eugene N. Anderson and most notably, British anthropologist Barbara Ward. Hiroaki Kani was a Japanese historian and anthropologist focused on Chinese historical sociology. She researched various topics in Hong Kong during her tenure at the Chinese University of Hong Kong between the years 1965 to 1973.[35] Eugene N. Anderson, an expert on cultural anthropology and cultural ecology, researched the fishing community during his two stays living among the fisherfolks in 1965-1966 and again in 1975-1976. Barbara Ward, a well-respected British scholar among the fisherfolks of Kau Sai, lived amongst the Kau Sai community for many years. Although her focus was not only on the fishing community of Hong Kong, her astute observations of the community provided the basis for her refreshing reimagining of conscious models[36] in an attempt to understand Chinese society.

看中国民族史与族群研究的百年探索', *Guangxi Ethnics Studies* 94, no. 4 (2008): 55–65.

34 Another reason for the pause in local research is the Cultural Revolution that occurred between 1966 to 1976, where scholars and intellectuals were persecuted. During this period, the Chinese Communist Party launched a political movement aimed at eliminating capitalist elements in Chinese society. The Cultural Revolution led to many academics and "educated elites" being imprisoned, tortured and even killed. Many universities and schools were shut down, severely limiting academic freedom.

35 Hiroaki Kani's work "*A General Survey of the Boat People in Hong Kong*" is a rare in-depth study on the Hong Kong fisherfolk community at its time.

36 In line with Levi-Straussian's distinction between the conscious mode held by internal observers and the unconscious modes carried by external observers of an society, Barbara Ward expanded this concept by introducing a three-

Her work is invaluable in understanding the social structure of the community. They were among the first people to research the fishing community of Hong Kong specifically. Their research is also the main reference for understanding the Boat Dwellers of Hong Kong in this thesis. However, their research was published from the late 1960s to mid-1970s, when the fishing community was still mainly in operation and at its peak. Barbara Ward passed away in 1981, unable to continue her work after the population began to shrink.

In more recent years, many local Hong Kong scholars, including Wong Wai Ling, Tsang Gam Tin, Law Kai Fai, Lui Wing Sing, and Lai Chi Pong, have been revisiting and expanding the research on fisherfolks, many of them providing a better-organized overview of the community. Many new interviews have been conducted in the community, hoping to record the experiences of the "last generation" of fisherfolk. Documentaries have been made recording saltwater songs sung on film. Additionally, Eugene N. Anderson retroactively published his research on the subject in 2007.[37] Nevertheless, like many other researchers currently on the subject, his nostalgic tone seemed to focus on recording this once vibrant and sophisticated community, unable to see future growth.

Through roughly four generations of research on the subject matter, we have theorized and corrected our assumptions of the fisherfolk over time. Instead, with the valuable records of the lives and rich cultural practices that the fisherfolk community possesses recorded in these studies, we can gain insight into understanding a sociologically complex society with social groups proliferated side by side. What allows a group to keep its identity with constant intermingling with others, even after eras of coexistence? The particularities of their culture can only be understood by examining the group's past. By making sense of the culture of the fisherfolks, we can build a sustainable way forward.

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tier conscious mode that delved deeper into the classification. These include the "ideological traditional model", the "immediate model", and the "internal observer model". The internal observer model is particularly important for understanding the fisherfolks, since this is the model where any group of Chinese projects for another group of Chinese. This comprehensive distinction allows for the more accurate understanding of variations of cultural groups within the ostensibly uniform Chinese society.

37 Eugene N. Anderson published a few journal articles based on his time living in Castle Peak Bay among the fisherfolks in 1970s and 1980s, but it wasn't until 2007 that he published the book "*Floating World Lost: A Hong Kong Fishing Community*" on his research of the fisherfolks.

Chapter Two

02 Cultural Markers of the Fisherfolk Community

02 Cultural Markers of the Fisherfolk Community

Anthropologists would define culture as ultimately shared behaviour, a set of shared rules and ideas, allowing their members to operate as functional participants of the collective. However, beyond that basic description, these experts have differed in their theories. Early anthropology theories described culture as a set of unwavering rules.[37] Others believe culture as consensus around universal knowledge shared by the group, and some even linked cultural behaviours to racial biological traits. Alternatively, and more commonly seen today, culture is understood as patterns that regularly occur in certain groups of people. Some focus on studying cultural symbolism and how these symbols can be used to understand a particular part of society, while others see culture as an adaptation.[38] Additionally, some believe culture is a set of guidelines or a structure that guides its members on how to act and allows them to predict what others will do.

37 Edward Burnett Tylor, founder of cultural anthropology, and his successor Lewis Henry Morgan conceptualized culture as a process of unilinear evolution where societies progressed through distinct stages of civilization linearly, basing them on unwavering rules and cultural traits. Their theories have been widely criticized, and modern anthropology has moved away from these early evolutionist theories.

38 Julian Steward, a notable American anthropologist, believes that culture is a result of societies adapting to their environments, focuses on the dynamic relationship between culture and ecology.

The fisherfolk community exemplifies which of the above theories work and do not. I will continue the next part of the analysis of the fisherfolk community at the peak of their operation, mainly in the 1970s, to decipher the parameters that form their cultural markers. Firstly, the fisherfolk culture is the opposite of unwavering rules; as the marine environment shifts on a hour-to hour and day-to-day basis, they need to adapt and be fluid with the rules.[39] It is also not a consensus, with the vast body of knowledge that the fisherfolks come across, as it is simply impossible to know everything. Instead, everyone has their main expertise, some on weather management, some on the index of fisheries, and others on economic negotiation. By relying upon each other, they can come together as a unit. Additionally, their shared culture is not racial, even though they were misidentified inaccurately as "tribal." Years of research have proved that they are genetically similar to their neighbours, the land-dwellers.[40] Combined with the open fluidity of the occupation, it is clear that their shared culture is bonded by their ecology and not their biology.

Clifford Geertz, an American anthropologist, views culture as the collective construction of meanings and their shared interpretation among groups. To him, one cannot merely list out the cultural markers. Therefore, it is important to examine the group's history to understand the forces that impact their adaptation. Starting from where they began, what social, economic, and political factors influenced their path forward? What threats and dangers did they face? Context matters and must be accessed to understand the culture fully.

Hong Kong is undoubtedly a highly heterogeneous society. Among the obvious shared cultural markers of race, language, and history, subcultural groups have co-existed in this small city for centuries while being able to keep their own identity. It results in a society in which different ethnic groups have proliferated side by side. To decode the cultural traces the fisherfolk community left behind, one must first understand some of the core qualities of the group.

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39 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community*.

40 Huang Xiangchun 黄向春, 'Through the Angle of Tanka : A Hundred Years Exploration of Study of Ethnohistory and Ethnic Group of China 从蜑民研究看中国民族史与族群研究的百年探索'.

Fig. 2.1 Fishing Boats, 1950s

The Way of Boat

The fisherfolk of Hong Kong epitomized a quintessentially Chinese identity. They spoke a dialect of Chinese, embraced Chinese cuisine, and adhered to Chinese values. From examining the stereotypical contrast between a Westerner and a Chinese person, the fisherfolks fit many archetypal traits of what being Chinese means – influenced by Confucius' and Mencius' teachings, they value family heavily and prioritize group welfare over individual needs. [41]

However, the fisherfolk are also an immensely different breed of Chinese. Boat life demanded the community's culture to be adaptive and encouraged their individuality. Unlike typical Chinese people, they lack lineages and have limited family connections due to their unique way of livelihood. Using boats as

41 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community*, 26.

their primary dwelling, they have no fixed address to anchor. Their people have an egalitarian outlook on marriages, and unions occur naturally, even when arranged marriages are common in Chinese society. Although still patriarchal, their women have a lot more independence. Since the women are an essential part of the boat crew, their opinions matter.[42] These differences are derived from the flexible adaptation to the ecological and societal needs of the group.

The individualistic nature of the fisherfolk is also one trait that clearly differentiates them from their land counterparts. Although it is still true that the fisherfolk showcased the core stereotype of the communitarian nature of the Chinese, it is without a doubt that the fisherfolk highly valued their independence and flexibility. Their desire for freedom may stem from their seafaring lifestyle and disdain for governing powers after years of oppression. It is crucial for them to have the freedom to sail wherever they please, as nature is often unpredictable, and decisions need to occur within seconds. Moreover, generations of experience living under oppression taught them that many organizational powers are there to take advantage of them.

To survive under these conditions, the fishing community had to become highly individualistic. Since physical survival is their top priority, they take charge of their every decision with additional layers of importance. As a result, everyone has their own way of managing their boat and is fiercely defensive of their ways. This individuality is also prevalent in their despise of government control, unsurprising with the systematic discrimination they have faced over generations. Their survival needs ultimately resulted in their adaptive conformity in the community. However, it is not against their preferred independence. In fact, it is the delicate balance between the two that will be focused on. We can see the fusion of the two ideals at play when looking at the rhythm of living of the fisherfolk.

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42 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community*, 27.

Fig. 2.2 Fishing Boats moored in Typhoon Harbour, 1945

The Illegitimacy of the Fishing Community

Culture is heavily influenced by various power dynamics, including imperialism, colonialism, and globalization, all of which played a pivotal role in the history of Hong Kong. These powers at play would undoubtedly repress certain cultural elements, especially of the fisherfolks at the base of the ladder. The historical trauma these groups have endured led to a disruption in the continuation of their collective identity. One of the main problems the fishing community faced constantly was their inability to negotiate for better living conditions no matter who their "competitor" was. This is rooted in centuries of continuous oppression by many different governing bodies. The fishing community was first recorded during the Sung Dynasty as the *Dan* people. These records were written from central Chinese scholars' perspective, often with tones of prejudice. Recorded writings of these practices can be dated back to the Ming Dynasty when they were categorized among prostitutes, entertainers, and slaves as outcasts of society; some historic literature even claimed that they were not "real humans."[43] They could not break out from their social class label and did not have the same rights as other citizens. Systematic disadvantages denied them their legitimacy in society, and they were bullied in many facets of their life.

43 Qu Dajun Zhu 屈大均, *Guangdong Xin Yu* 廣東新語 *[New Index of Guangdong]*, vol. 18 (Beijing: Zhonghua Book Company, 1985), 485-486.

Fig. 2.3 Fishing Dealings at the Piers, 1945

Hence, one salient theme among the cultural models of the fisherfolk stems from their "response to oppression." The fishing community has always been at the base of the social hierarchy, even among the Cantonese. When the British colonized Hong Kong, the change of ruling power did not cause much change for the fisherfolks. Surprisingly, some would even say their conditions improved, with the British shielding them from the worst oppression they have faced under Chinese rule.[44] This is not to say colonialism was beneficial to them, but that it is noteworthy in showing the unfair treatment they had endured for generations. With no one to rely on, the fishing community could only turn inwards to defend themselves the best they could.

In a story recounted by Anderson during his time living in Castle Peak Bay, he noted that two cannons lay near the harbour when he was living on a boat in Hong Kong. The other fishermen told him it was to defend themselves against both pirates and the government., emphasizing how they were of equal threat. The fisherfolk were expectant of violence, having to fend for themselves during the multiple civil wars of China and the occupation of the Japanese forces during WWII. It led to a "me against the world" mentality, reinforcing their rebelliousness.

Their unfortunate situation transcends the complex colonial impact in Hong Kong since they were also historically oppressed by their land-dwelling counterpart, viewed as the lowest-ranked Cantonese. An example of the unbalanced power dynamic between the land-dwellers and the fisherfolks can be displayed in their basic financial transaction of seafood goods.

The financial relationship and power dynamic between the land-dwelling fish dealers and the fisherfolks also contribute to the abuse the fisherfolks face. I will briefly explain the process of the whole transaction, from the stage of harvesting to the selling of seafood in the markets.

Once the fisherfolks return from their trip from the sea, they have the option of selling their goods to *YuLaan* (魚欄 fish dealer), *SinTeng* (鮮艇 fresh boat), or *SaaiGaa* (曬家 salt fish specialist). *SinTeng* usually prefers more high-end seafood, and *SaaiGaa* acquires seafood to make dried salted goods. Whereas *SinTeng* and *SaaiGaa* are usually smaller, individual businesses. *YuLaan* are

44 Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community*, 17.

Fig. 2.4 Diagram of the Fish Dealings of Fisherfolks

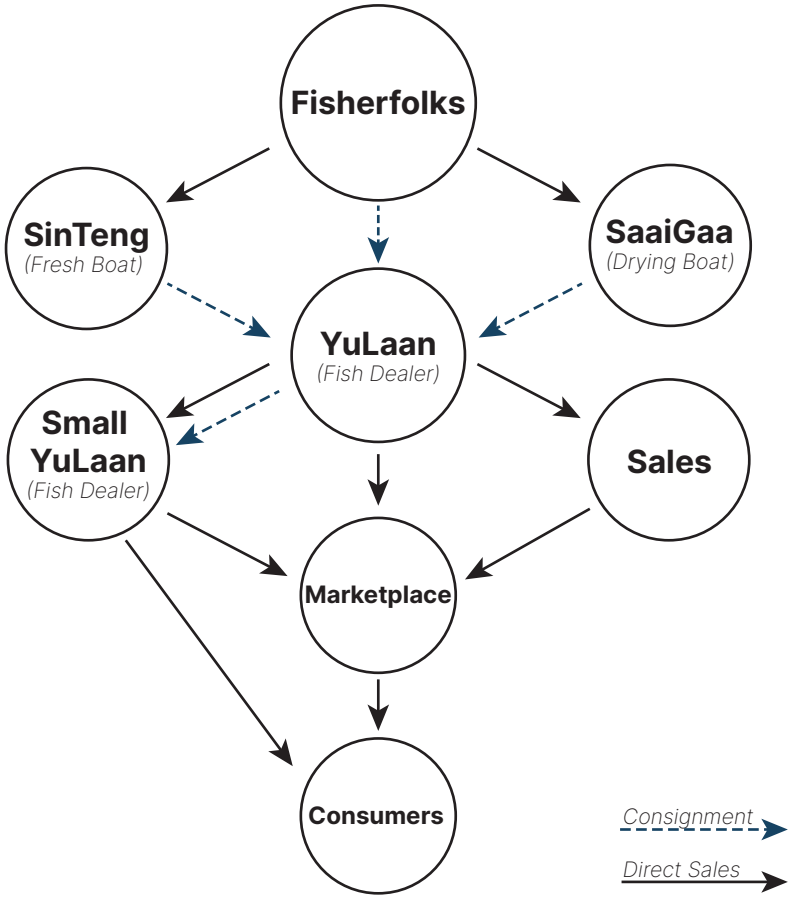

Fig. 2.5 Floating Kitchen in Causeway Bay Typhoon Shelter, 1974

operated by land-dwellers as a more established organization that will then resale the goods in wholesale fish markets for a higher price, where these goods are then transferred to the markets or stores. In theory, the fisherfolks can sell their goods directly to stores or markets, but that is never the case. *YuLaan* acts as more than a reseller, often acting as the connection fisherfolks have to the on-land society. They give out loans for the fisherfolks for the constant repairs and supplies they need for their boats. Since many fisherfolks are poor, they often rely on these loans to survive through bad times. These loans also ensure the loyalty of the fisherfolks, forcing them to provide their harvested goods directly to the *YuLaan*. The *YuLaan* would then take a percentage cut from the sales and deduct the remaining earnings from the debt the fisherfolks have accumulated. This setup also led to various exploitations of the fisherfolks, where the *YuLaan* purposely reduced the gains of the fisherfolks. They may also unexpectedly increase the loan interest, so they are stuck with the same *YuLaan* indefinitely. With this unfair setup, it was not easy for the fisherfolks to gain enough financial capital to leave their field.

The shared prejudice they faced is undoubtedly a driving force in unifying the community. The fisherfolk's rich saltwater songs had examples of their criticism of the outside world and its people. It is also reflected in a famous Cantonese saying, "Dragons on water, worms on shore." It exemplifies the situation where they felt inadequate in land society, yet in the waters, they were masters of their environment. Therefore, it is imperative for the fisherfolk to feel in control of the independence of their lives on the water. There was a great need to retreat into their water worlds to resist the oppression and discrimination they faced.

In the early years, the fisherfolks were able to retreat into their own water world in the face of these discriminations. However, as Hong Kong developed, the industrialization boom after World War II also brought along opportunities outside the fishing industry. With the vast number of factories set up in Hong Kong post-war, the fisherfolks were finally offered alternative choices to the traditionally life-threatening way of living they were limited to. In addition, compulsory education was established in 1971, allowing many descendants of fisherfolks with educational opportunities and avenues toward alternative life paths. Many fisherfolks joined the on-land society hoping for better working and living conditions.

Along with overfishing becoming a problem in Hong Kong's open waters around the same time, it was unsurprising that the fishing industry reached its peak in the 1960s and steadily declined afterward.

By then, the bigotry targeting the fishing community that may have led to a physical altercation in the previous century has sizzled down to mere verbal abuse. However, the decline in the fishing industry also meant that suddenly the fisherfolks had more frequent interaction with the people on land. Sadly, they could no longer retreat into the world they built for themselves to defend their sense of self. The fisherfolks had to endure discrimination as they eased into a new life. To combat this unfair treatment, they started disassociating with their own culture. The prejudice the fisherfolks faced led many of its members to "camouflage" themselves, trying to avoid detection. Many adjusted themselves, from hiding the different intonation in how they talk to altering their posture in how they walk. Some even went to extremes and changed their names to avoid detection from their land counterparts.

Since the early days of assimilation to the land society during the height of industrialization in the post-war era, the members of the fishing community actively tried to change themselves to blend in hopes of equal opportunity. Times have changed, and discrimination towards the fisherfolk has since improved. Yet, these habits of hiding their presence in plain sight have been sub-consciously carried on. Instead of celebrating their culture and claiming their rightful part in crafting Hong Kong's identity, many community members have grimly accepted that their legacy will slowly perish. Many elders have given up on passing on their heritage to the next generation. This desperate attempt to disassociate themselves from the community in the eyes of outsiders remains a big obstacle to the continuity of the shared culture for the fisherfolks.

Fig. 2.6 Hong Kong Waterfront in 1970s

Chapter Three

03 Path Forward -

Learning from the fishing community themselves

Fig. 3.1 West Kowloon District Waterfront, 2022

03 Path Forward -

Learning from the fishing community themselves

With the modern world developing at a remarkably rapid pace, much of our heritage has been deemed worthless and left behind. For especially vulnerable communities that do not have a say, members of the group can only accept that their ways and knowledge will discontinue after they pass away—conditioned by the hyper-capitalistic mindset of Hong Kong, the fishing community share that fate. Some individuals are only reminiscent of the former glory of the community, failing to see the potential for continued cultural growth. Fortunately, there has recently been a resurgence of interest among the younger generation in reclaiming one's culture to establish identity, heal from historical trauma, and preserve unique traditions in the face of globalization. Presently, the presence of the boat community may seem to be lost to the typical outsider. The high mobility of this style of living sacrificed the community's rightful claim to the land in the area. To the outsiders, the lack of land ownership and architecture leads to the community struggling to make a lasting presence in the city and failing to represent its legacy. The following chapter will discuss the existing cultural qualities of the fishing community, including their idea of permanency, their rhythm of life, their unique societal bonds, and their festivals to propose a way forward for the fishing community.

Built Structures and the Idea of Permanency

Architecture is a great marker of civilization. From the built forms of a community, we can interpret local culture and customs. We can get a sense of human activities and movement by analyzing the layouts of the clusters of buildings. Structures fall, leaving ruins at their place, but there are always hints and traces it leaves behind. This permanency is completed by the solid land it stands on. It, therefore, poses an interesting question, if the land is removed from the equation, would architecture still be as powerful in telling the stories of its people?

The boat community's highly utilitarian mindset led them to adjust all aspects of their life to support their fishing practice. The struggle between the desire for mobility and stability in their environment led to a variety of built forms occupied by the community. These built structures can be categorized into three main groups by their relative permanency and relationship to the land. First, there are fishing boats that support the livelihood of the fishers; many of these boats also function as the family's primary dwelling. Instead of anchoring to the fixed land, these family boats are mobile structures that allow them to move to different bays throughout the year to accommodate their seasonal fishing practices. Over time, some fishing families became wealthier and used older boats as houseboats that park in the bay for prolonged periods. At its peak, these houseboats formed the famous floating cities of Hong Kong, a vibrant water community with its own societal structure. The second type is the semi-permanent stilt houses that sit on the borders of water and land. These houses were usually built using scavenged driftwood and other free materials and

would need constant maintenance.[45] The last type of built form is the land-built, the relatively permanent temples of the local deities. These temples are some of the more prominent structures representing the fishing community that remain in modern Hong Kong.

The majority of these are built forms on the water, usually made with perishable materials. Meant to be continually replaced and upgraded, they mirror how organisms undergo a biological process of regeneration over time. The accepting nature of this process also gives us a glimpse of what the boat dwellers recognize as core to their identity.

To better understand what permanency means to the fisherfolk community, we can use a classic philosophic question on the Ship of Theseus, a thought experiment relating to the metaphysics of identity. The premise of this hypothetical story includes a ship sailed by Theseus, a famous hero in Greek mythology. Over time, the ship crew replaced the different parts of the boat, either due to maintenance issues or upgrades, until all parts of the ship were eventually changed. The main question would then be, is this "restored" ship the same as the original? Is this still the Ship of Theseus?[46] Contrasting the common hesitation of replacing land-built structures with the concern of genuine preservation, in the case of the fishing community, this process of constant replacement and upgrade is an integral part of their life. This flexible attitude is not only essential to their survival but also translates into the other parts of their life. Back to the thought experiment of the Ship of Theseus, many philosophic arguments focus on the physicality of the elements of the boat or the function this item delivers. Yet, in the case of cultural continuity, this type of adaptability is ideal. Culture transforms continually and must adapt to the community's current needs.[47] The transformation is an organic process that allows the culture to be able to exist continually and genuinely. Since permanency is no longer what the fishing community relies on, the proposed intervention will focus on intangible or temporary elements that connect the community.

45 Kok Ie Liem, 'Redevelopment of Tai O', *HKU Theses Online (HKUTO)* (PhD Thesis, 1994), https://doi.org/10.5353/th_b3198209.

46 S. Marc Cohen, 'Identity, Persistence, and the Ship of Theseus', 2004, https://faculty.washington.edu/smcohen/320/theseus.html.

47 Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; Cambridge University Press, 1982).

Rhythm of Life

The fishing community's flexible way of life reflected their adaptive nature amongst the elements. Contrasting the typical land-dwellers' daily routines that direct them back to a place of origin where they are fixed in a neighbourhood, the boat community's rhythm of life adapted to the seasons since they were often away from their origin bay for months. Their rhythm of life consisted of multiple layers, from their daily routine of fishing activities tied to their family boat to the various bays they occupied seasonally for different harvest grounds they accessed. The most important rhythm included returning to their original bays for annual festivals and once-in-a-lifetime events, including weddings and funerals. The boat families' vacillating relationship with their original bays and the community in it relied on constant maintenance and reconnection. This unspoken practice is also the main tie that connects the different members of the community without the link of blood and family.[48]

During the annual celebrations of different festivals, including Chinese New Year, Deity Festivals, and Mid-Autumn Festival, the community gathered, travelling from every part of the open waters near Hong Kong. These were, and still are, the most important events for the fishers. In the meantime, the community's population in the immediate harbour area would drastically increase. Only during these times will the community expand its territorial claim on the land.[49] The boat community's lack of land presence during the year may lead some to assume it is disadvantaged in keeping the group's heritage alive. However, it must be understood that the community has always responded in their own way to overcome the lack of permanent built forms on land. Their strategy has just been overlooked.

48 Barbara E. Ward, *Through Other Eyes: An Anthropologist's View of Hong Kong* (Chinese University Press, 1989). 10-15

49 Ward, *Through Other Eyes: An Anthropologist's View of Hong Kong*.

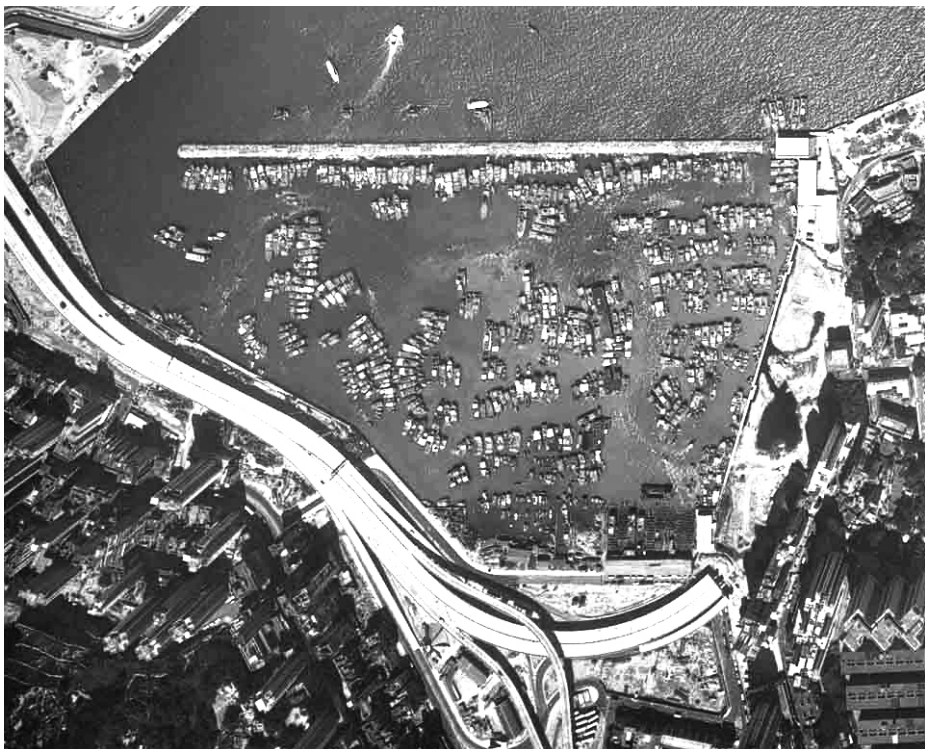

Fig. 3.2 Typical Day in the Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Harbour, Oct 1985

Fig. 3.3 Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Harbour filled with boats due to Chinese New Year, Feb 1986

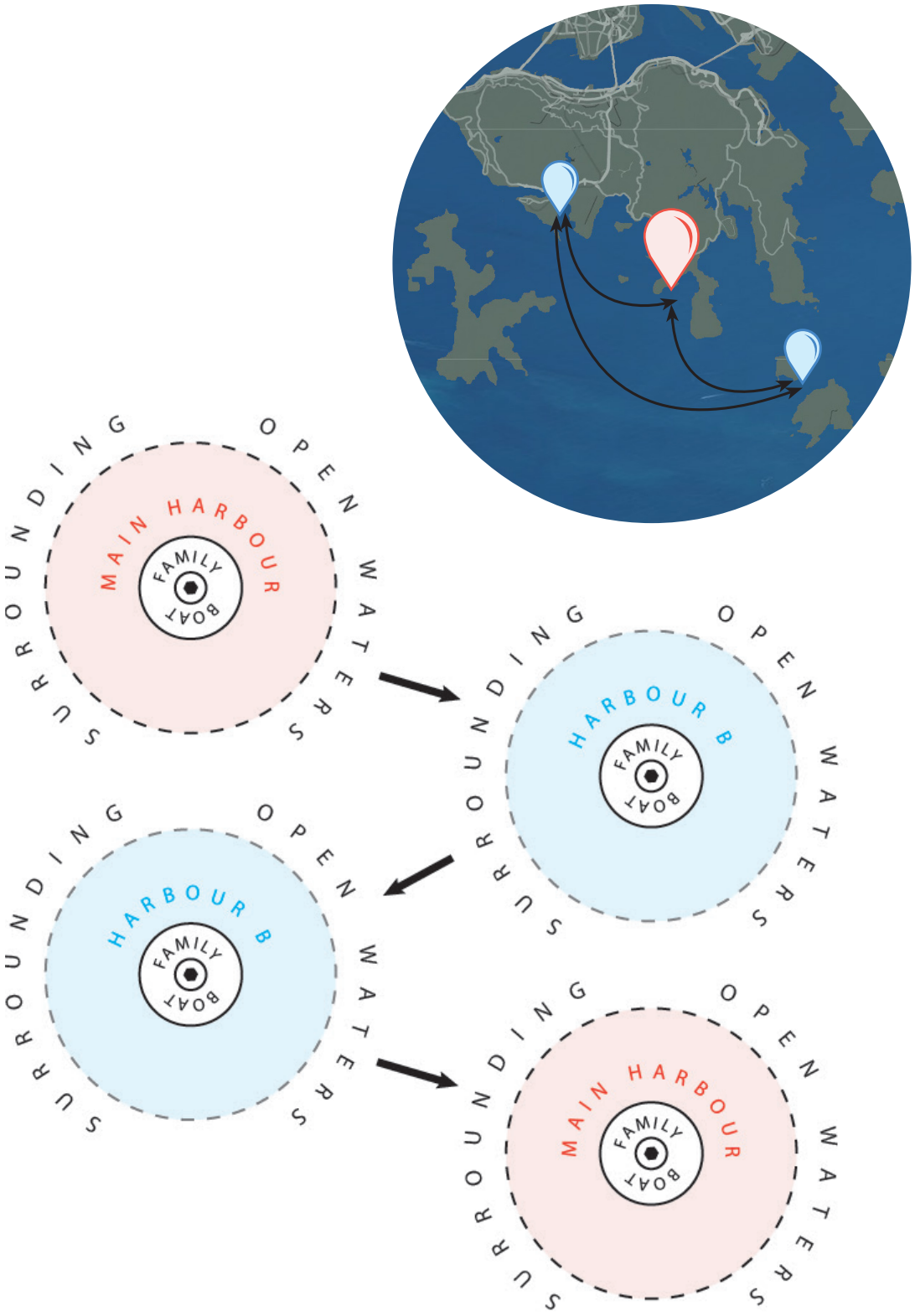

Fig. 3.4 Diagram of the flexible living situation of fisherfolks, where they move their "base" throughout the year based on the desired "catch" at the time.

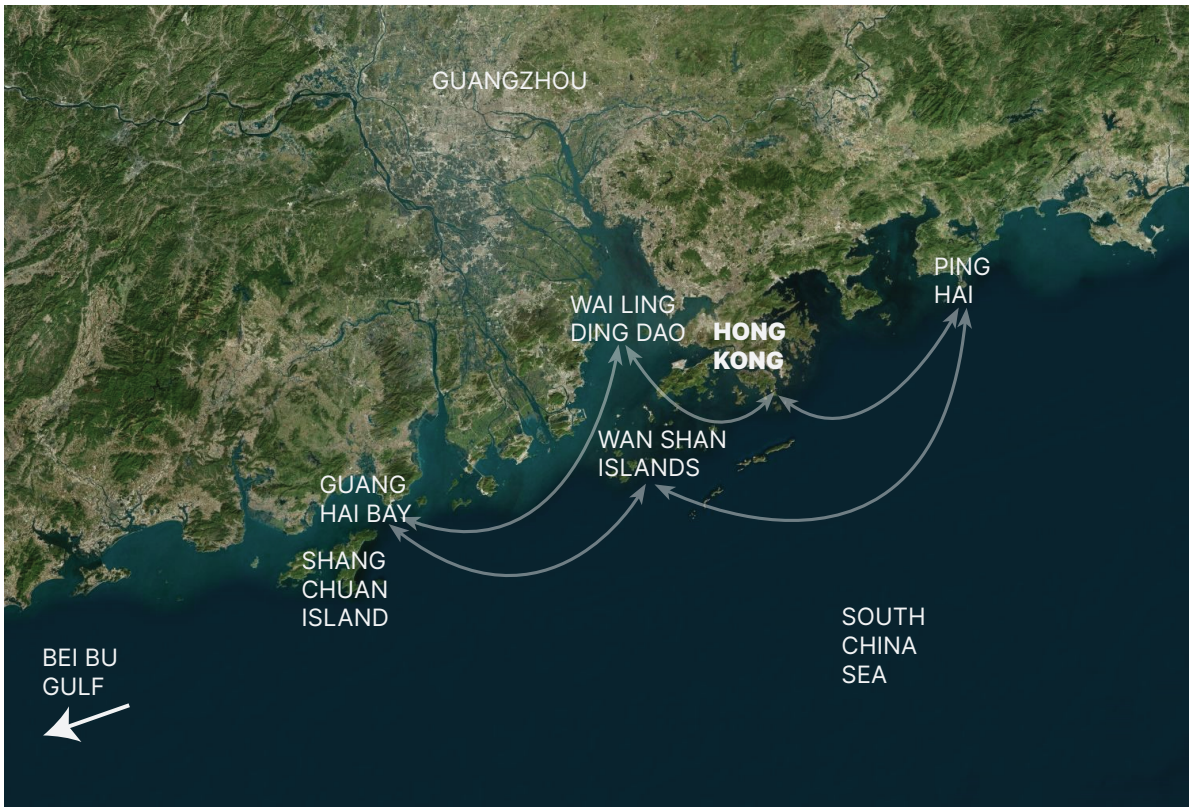

Fig. 3.5 Major Harvest Grounds in the Waters near Hong Kong

Month	***Great Harvest***		***Good Harvest***	
	Location	Fish Type	Location	Fish Type
Jan-Feb	Ping Hai	Mackerel Scad	Guang Hai Bay	Four finger Threadfin
Mar-Apr	Wan Shan Islands	White Herring	Guang Hai Bay	Dark Sleeper, HairTail, Stickleback
May-Jun	Guang Dong Seas	White Herring	Guang Hai Bay	Dark Sleeper, HairTail, Stickleback
Jul- Oct	Wan Shan Islands	Little Yellow Croaker		
Nov-Dec	Wai King Ding Dao	Mackerel Scad		
All Year			Bei Bu Gulf	Common Carp, Red Snapper, Groupers, Golden Thread, Bream,

Fig. 3.6 Harvest Schedule in the Waters near Hong Kong

Fig. 3.7 Yuen Long Tin Hau Festival

Fig. 3.8 Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade

Hong Kong Typhoon Season is from May through October, with June, July and August being the worse months. Many fisherfolks have limited their fishing activities during these months for their safety. Unsurprisingly, many of their festivals are scheduled in these months since it interferes with their work the least.

Fisherfolk Focused Festivals

Gregorian Calendar 2023 for reference	***Lunar Calendar***	***Events***	
Jan 22	First month	1st month, 1st -15th day	Chinese New Year
Feb 20 & Mar 22	Second month (Leap month occuring in 2023)	***2nd month, 13th day***	***Hung Shing Festival***
Apr 20	Third month	3rd month, 3rd day	Ching Ming Festival
		3rd month, 23rd day	***Tin Hau Festival***
May 19	Fourth month	***4th month, 8th day***	***Tam Kung Festival***
Jun 18	Fifth Month	***5th month, 5th day***	***Dragon Boat Festival***
		5th month, 15th day	Summer Solstice
Jul 18	Sixth Month	6th month, 6th day	Hau Wong Ye Festival (not as common)
Aug 16	Seventh Month	7th month, 1st day	Start of Fall
		7th month, 7th day	Seven Sisters Festival
		7th month, 14th day	Ghost Festival
Sep 15	Eighth Month	8th month, 15th day	Mid- Autumn Festival
Oct 15	Ninth Month		
Nov 13	Tenth Month		
Dec 13	Eleventh Month	11th month, 15th day	Winter Solstice
Jan 11 (2024)	Twelfth Month		

Hong Kong Typhoon Season

Fig. 3.9 Major Festival Calendar for the Fisherfolks

Fig. 3.10 Tam Kung Festival 2008

Festival, Scaffoldings, and Assembly

In the case of the fisherfolks, the liveliest events that amplify their culture are their annual festivals, usually when celebrating Tin Hau or other deities' birthdays. This festival demands meticulous planning and the volunteering of time among the community members[50]. Formerly celebrated over several days, there are many rituals to be performed. The community must come together to complete these tasks. These are also rare but cherished opportunities for the members to socialize and connect with each other. When the week concludes, appreciation is given to the gods, and a new year ahead is blessed.

Based at the local humble temple of the area, the presence of the fishing community is expanded during this special week of celebration. The main celebration takes place on the birthday of the deity. However, the festival starts a week or more before this main day. To accommodate the momentarily increased population, temporary bamboo structures would be erected. The main bamboo structure is the temporary theatre they built to host performances for the gods. This structure is usually big enough to accommodate all the participants of the festival, which can commonly host a

50 Lo Shuk Ying 盧淑櫻, *Yu Gang Fu Chen: Shaojiwan de Yu Ye Fa Zhan* 漁港浮沉：筲箕灣的漁業發展 *[The Rise and Fall of the Harbour: Shau Kei Wan's Fishing Industry]*, 99.

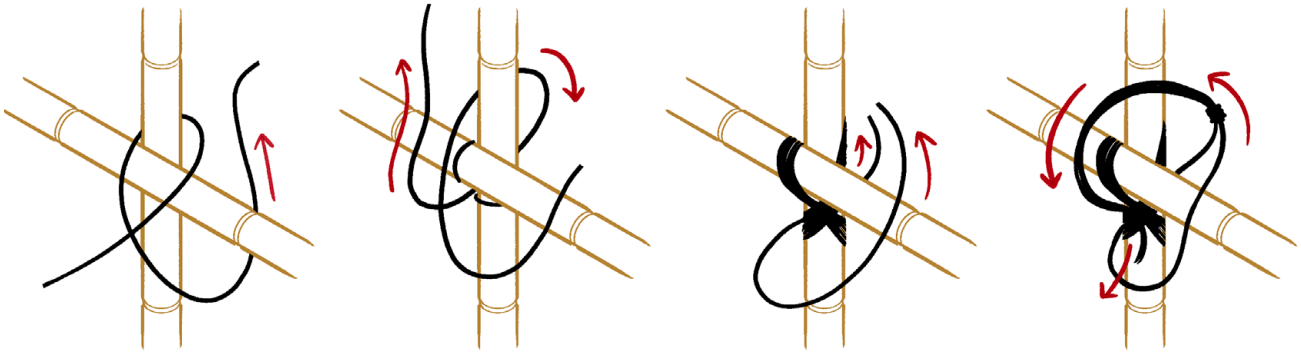

Fig. 3.11 Instruction for knots used in Bamboo Construction

couple of hundred people.[51] The host temple will also anticipate a façade upgrade reflecting the festivities. For Tin Hau Festivals, decorative signs called Fa Pau are created as offerings. Each small village or group would create its own Fa Pau to ask for blessings from the god.

These are all done by builders specialized in these areas and are not exclusive to the fishing community. However, they are especially crucial for the fishing community for their temporary expansion on land. The art of building bamboo theatres dates to the Han dynasty (100AD), when bamboo platforms were recorded for performances, and the technique continuously developed till modern days. Many skilled builders brought along this art to Hong Kong during the waves of migration in mid 19th century, and it has become an iconic building support aspect in the construction field to this day.[52]

Bamboo construction is highly adaptive. It is used in almost all situations in Hong Kong, from construction platforms to high-rise scaffoldings. The construction method used in Hong Kong is consistent and simple, using only bamboo, nylon strips and occasionally fir logs. Mostly utilizing two types of bamboo poles,

51 Yin-mo Tse, Xiao Kou, and Sze-man Poon, *Scaffolding, Viewing, Assembling: Cultural Observations on Bamboo Scaffolding, Chinese Opera and Markets* 棚・觀・集: 關於竹棚、戲曲及市集文化的探索 (Hong Kong: D'Art Research Unit 藝述研究社, 2010), 69.

52 Tse, Kou, and Poon, *Scaffolding, Viewing, Assembling: Cultural Observations on Bamboo Scaffolding, Chinese Opera and Markets* 棚・觀・集: 關於竹棚、戲曲及市集文化的探索, 102.

Fig. 3.12 Setting up Bamboo Scaffolding in Hong Kong, 2023

Kao Jue[53] for load-bearing elements and *Mao Jue*[54] for the rest of the construction, modern bamboo construction usually follows a standard grid of 1m x 0.7m.[55] The skills of constructing these bamboo structures continue to be passed down from masters to their apprentices.[56]

Even though Hong Kong has highly skilled workers in building bamboo scaffolding, the number of experts building bamboo theatres is decreasing. Presently, there are only around 25 skilled workers in this field.[57] Unlike many other built forms in Hong Kong, where detailed plans and drawings are done before the construction, bamboo theatres rely solely on the builders. They would usually only require the overall dimension of the theatre

53 Kao Jue, meaning pole bamboo, has a min diameter of 75mm, is stronger and act as the load-baring support.

54 Mao Jue, meaning hair bamboo, has a min diameter of 40mm, is thinner and used for for framing, and cross bracing, and other support.

55 Marcelo Duhalde, Dennis Wong, and Victor Sanjinez, 'Bamboo Scaffolding in Hong Kong', *South China Morning Post*, 28 June 2022, https://multimedia.scmp.com/infographics/culture/article/3183200/bamboo-scaffolding/index.html.

56 In Hong Kong, the new trainees now must undergo a year-long license training with the local Construction Council to ensure the safety and standards of these bamboo constructions.

57 *Bamboo Theatre* 戲棚 (Hong Kong: Golden Scene Company Limited, 2019).

Fig. 3.13 Po Toi Bamboo Theatre, Hong Kong

and will be able to finish construction in around two weeks. One of the important aspects is to determine the centerline of the temple since that would ideally line up with the centerline of the theatre, allowing the gods direct visual access to the stage and performance. Since many sites now cannot accommodate this need, a special ritual must be carried out to move the deity to a temporary temple in the back of the theatre.[58]

Due to the lack of workers and the demand for bamboo theatres for the festival occurring at the same period, the bamboo structure is usually built weeks beforehand. The signs and decorations on the bamboo structure are done by artisans specializing in Chinese festival signs. The designs can change yearly, but the iconography remains similar, with the option of adding modern lighting. There is also the component of fa pau, where boards and signs celebrating the deity are made, representing each small village or group that seeks the blessing of the goddess. These items used to be done by the participants themselves, but they have been outsourced in recent years.

58 Choi Kai-kwong 蔡啟光, *Xiang Gang Xi Peng Wen Hua* 香港戲棚文化 *[Hong Kong Bamboo Theatre Culture]* (Infolink Publishing Ltd., 2019), 34-36.

Fig. 3.14 Tam Kung Parade in the streets of SKW, 2010

Once these elements are ready, traditional structures with remarkable iconography detailing the stories of the celebrated deity will claim certain communal areas of the land dwellers, blurring the boundary of land and water. On the main day of the event, there would be a parade thrown for the deity, where dragons and lion dances take place. The participants of the festival temporarily occupy the main streets of the district and congregate in public areas for a brief celebration, then march towards the Tin Hau Temple for the lucky raffle for blessings of Fa Pau.[59] Some may view this festival entirely as a religious practice, but it can also act as an introduction to the fisherfolk community. It acts as a reason to gather and reconnect with each other, allowing the exchange of knowledge and values.

Sadly, the fishing community currently has little intention of passing along these practices to the next generation since they see no sustainable pathway forward. In recent years, the main participants are only the former fishers with limited descendants.

59 Lui Wing Sing 呂永昇, *Fu Sheng She Hui : Li Shi Shang d Shui Shang Ren Yu Xianggang Zao Qi Yu Ye* 浮生社會 : 歷史上的水上人與香港早期漁業 *[Floating Society: Historic Fisherfolk Community and Early Fishing Practices]* (Hong Kong: The Conservancy Association Centre for Heritage, 2019). 94-96

Fig. 3.15 Step-by-step transformation of the local temple into festival mode

They only extract a handful of cultural items that some deem worthy enough to promote to the outsiders, giving up the vast knowledge and sophistication the community contains. Many fisherfolk descendants currently have little to no access to meaningfully participating in important community activities such as the festival. By keeping it closed to former members, they were limiting the continuous growth of the community and dooming it to its demise. However, these experiences can be opened to a bigger audience with appropriate intervention.

> *"[The] boat people have much to teach us. Their knowledge of fish and fishing was unsurpassed. Their society was well-run in spite of the lack of government and police. Their social values and ethics were striking and original, and suggest to me important possibilities for the human future [...] Their songs were beautiful, their food was exquisite, and their boats were superbly engineered. All this they managed in the face of incredible poverty and uncertainty."*
>
> *-Anderson*[60]

The above quote by Anderson highlights the many remarkable aspects of the fishing community that many overlook. Despite experiencing prejudice and being seen as a low-ranking group, the fisherfolk was able to establish a well-organized and effective society by themselves. Their social values and ethics emphasized respect and collaboration. They showed great appreciation for nature and produced beautiful music and delicious cuisines. Regardless of their adversity, they continued to thrive and developed superb knowledge systems. The fishing community serves as a reminder of the complexity and diversity of human culture and the need to recognize and celebrate the distinctive contributions of all communities.

The fishing community is an important indigenous group of Hong Kong that contributed to the crafting of modern Hong Kong. Fortunately, many descendants have come forward and tried to reclaim their identity and make sense of who they are. By understanding the hidden value of the fisherfolk's intangible experiences and knowledge, the community should be able to continue to craft its ever-evolving communal identity. With a modern revival and adjustment, their heritage can be carried on to the new generation.

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60 Eugene N. Anderson, *Floating World Lost : A Hong Kong Fishing Community* (New Orleans, LA: University Press of the South, 2007).2

Unique Societal Bonds

At the core, the culture of the fisherfolk community is located within the individual. Although this might go against one's initial idea of shared culture, it can be liberating. Furthermore, their take on cultural conformity inspires how we consider the degree of culture that is "allowed" in our contemporary lives.

The unique societal bonds that clearly differentiate from their land counterparts also share wisdom for how we can connect with one another on our own accord. As mentioned, a single-family unit among the fisherfolk is usually the singular boat needed for their fishing expedition. Outside this basic social group of "family units" is the bigger social group- the village group itself. The village group comprises groups of families living in the same space of their choosing, usually the same harbour. A striking quality of these communal groups is their extreme looseness. They can come and go as they please and have less hierarchy in leadership. Often such "leaders" act merely as heads of communication, with little authority over others in community matters.[61] Everyone has an equal say when handling communal affairs, which also means determining their own preferred level of participation. Instead of being trapped in a community, it is of their own accord each time they return to their origin bay and participate in their annual events.

In a way, culture is not about uniformity. It allows a group of people to understand each other while living and working together and encourages them to renegotiate what is important to the group constantly. This delicate balance between the preferred independence and the fisherfolk's acceptance of adaptive conformity sheds new light on how we can continue their culture in contemporary society. Instead of having one's life fully overwhelmed by this one facet of their identity, there is more freedom to participate in what one values. Just like the fisherfolks before us, one's bond to another is not tendered by one's physical location, nor by lineage. It is the act of choosing to return and reconnecting with other community members that continues the culture.

61 Ward, *Through Other Eyes: An Anthropologist's View of Hong Kong*, 18.

Fig. 3.16 Aberdeen Typhoon Harbour, 1988

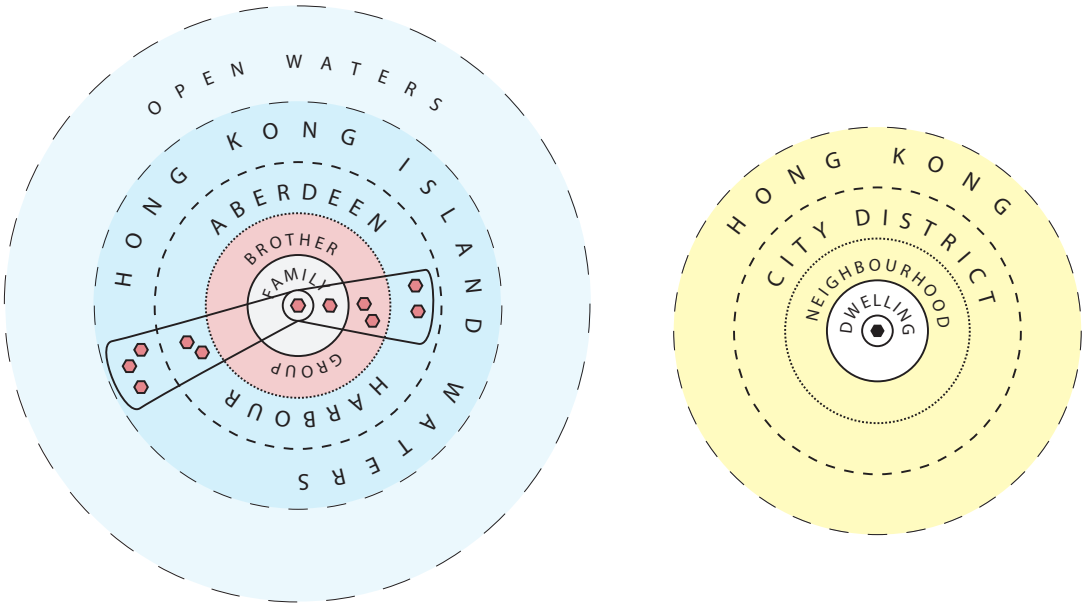


Fig. 3.17 Sociatial Bonds of the boat dwellers compared to land dwellers

Chapter Four

04 The Site

Fig. 4.1 Fresh Market of Shau Kei Wan, 2022

04 The Site

The next part of the thesis focuses on the neighbourhood of Shau Kei Wan. Chosen for its history as a former thriving fishing village, the urban transformation of Shau Kei Wan mirrors many other districts in Hong Kong. Shau Kei Wan is now seen as a typical mixed-use neighbourhood, with high rises filling up the area and limited cues showcasing its rich fishing community past. By examining the historical maps of the past 80 years, I can explain how urban development has provided significant obstacles for the fishing community to continue their culture, building a solid understanding of how the intervention can proceed.

Official Boundaries of Shau Kei Wan

Shau Kei Wan[62] (筲箕灣) is a mixed-used neighbourhood located on Eastern Hong Kong Island. Formerly a vibrant fishing village, the neighbourhood underwent a huge urban transformation that parallels the development of the City of Hong Kong.

Shau Kei Wan was one of the original districts established when the colonial government laid out districts for the city in 1857. It originally covered the area from Hung Heung Lo (紅香爐) to Ngo Yan Wan (餓人灣), which stretches half the Hong Kong. Over time, the districts were further divided into new areas for development. The Shau Kei Wan we recognized today is based on the 1967[63] and 1978[64] urban planning proposals, which can roughly divide the district into four areas, North, East, South and West Shau Kei Wan.

However, the locals divide the district differently, focusing on the neighbourhood. West Shau Kei Wan is usually referred to directly as Sai Wan Ho, and North Shau Kei Wan, the area with new builds on reclaimed land, is referred to as Aldrich Bay. Additionally, South Shau Kei Wan, where many squatter houses were located until their demolition in the late 1980s, is usually viewed as the threshold between Shau Kei Wan and Sai Wan Ho and referred to as the "area along Shau Kei Wan Road." Furthermore, East Shau Kei Wan spans from Ah Gong Ngam to Factory Street, mainly consisting of the area along Shau Kei Wan Main Street East. As the earliest developed area, East Shau Kei Wan has the closest tie to the fisherfolks in the area. It is the start of the development of Shau Kei Wan. For many outsiders, when they refer to Shau Kei Wan, they picture East Shau Kei Wan. This thesis will focus on East Shau Kei Wan, especially Shau Kei Wan Main Street East, for the proposed intervention.

62 Formerly written as Shau Ki Wan in many historical colonial records.
63 'Shau Kei Wan Outline Zoning Plan' (Hong Kong Government Printer, 1967).
64 'Hong Kong Planning Area No. 9 : Shau Kei Wan Outline Zoning Plan No. LH 9/38' (Hong Kong: Town Planning Office, 1978).

Fig. 4.2 Aerial View of Shau Kei Wan

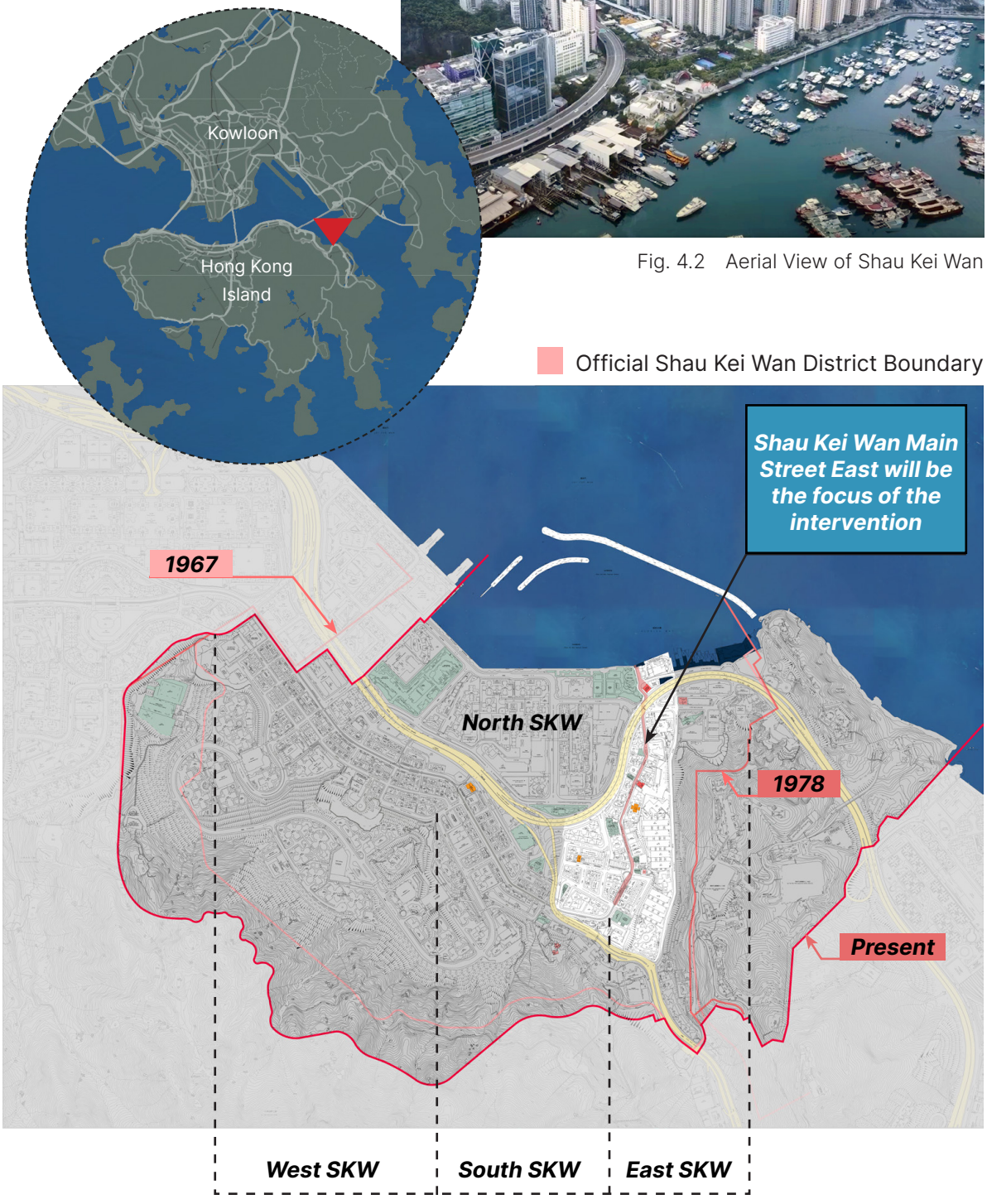


Fig. 4.3 Boundaries of Shau Kei Wan

History of Shau Kei Wan

Shau Kei Wan is a mixed-used neighbourhood located on Eastern Hong Kong Island. It gained its name from the shape of its bay; *Shau Kei* (筲箕)means colander in Chinese, and *Wan* (灣) means bay. Although the village of "Shau Kei Wan" has yet to be formed, the existence of the bay was recorded as early as in Ming Dynasty in the book "The Great Chronicles of Yue," published in 1600.[65] (Highlighted in Red in Figure 4.5).

However, the lands of Shau Kei Wan remained relatively uninhabited until the early 1800s. The fisherfolks naturally gravitated towards the bay after discovering it was a natural typhoon harbour that provided great protection from harsh weather. In the early days, some pirates frequent the bay. This situation improved when the Hong Kong Governor, Sir Richard Graves MacDonnell, decided to revitalize the area in the late 1860s. In addition, to eliminate the presence of the pirates, the area also underwent massive replanning, laying out proper roads and housing lots. The formal establishment has set the location of Shau Kei Wan Main Street, which continues to exist today.[66]

65 It was recorded under a slightly different name, 稍箕灣 instead of 筲箕灣

66 Lo Shuk Ying 盧淑櫻, Yu Gang Fu Chen: Shaojiwan de Yu Ye Fa Zhan 漁港浮沉：筲箕灣的漁業發展 [The Rise and Fall of the Harbour: Shau Kei Wan's Fishing Industry]. 15-16

Fig. 4.4　Restored photo of Shau Kei Wan, 1910

Fig. 4.5　Map from “The Great Chronicles of Yue”, 1600s

In the first Hong Kong survey after the British's official takeover in 1841 after years of presence on these lands, the population in Shau Kei Wan was around 1200, which comprised around 28% of the entire Hong Kong Island. Furthermore, the makeup of Shau Kei Wan's population consists of fisherfolks and the nearby rock quarry miners of *A Kung Ngam* (阿公岩). In the 1911 Hong Kong consensus, the proportion of the two groups is 5908+269, showing continuous growth in the area.[67]

The 1912 Hong Kong Sessional Papers mentioned Shau Kei Wan, Aberdeen, and Cheung Chau as the three major fishing harbours[68], showcasing the neighbourhood's importance for the fisherfolks in the areas around Hong Kong. To this day, Shau Kei Wan still houses one of the seven remaining official wholesale fish markets.

However, although the growth of the fishing community continued, the colonial government did not care too much about the fishing industry. This neglect was laid out plainly in the 1901 Hong Kong Bluebook: "*There are no fisheries of importance*."[69] In the following year, they further stated that "*the fishing industry has not assumed any considerable dimensions*"[70] regarding the industry's financial prospects, believing there was no need to promote the development of the fishing industry. The colonial government continued this act of non-action, leaving the fishing industry as it is, only requiring registering the boats for harbour boat control. Although it may seem absurd looking back from a modern lens, knowing how important the fishing industry was in Hong Kong's history, this treatment was not out of the norm.

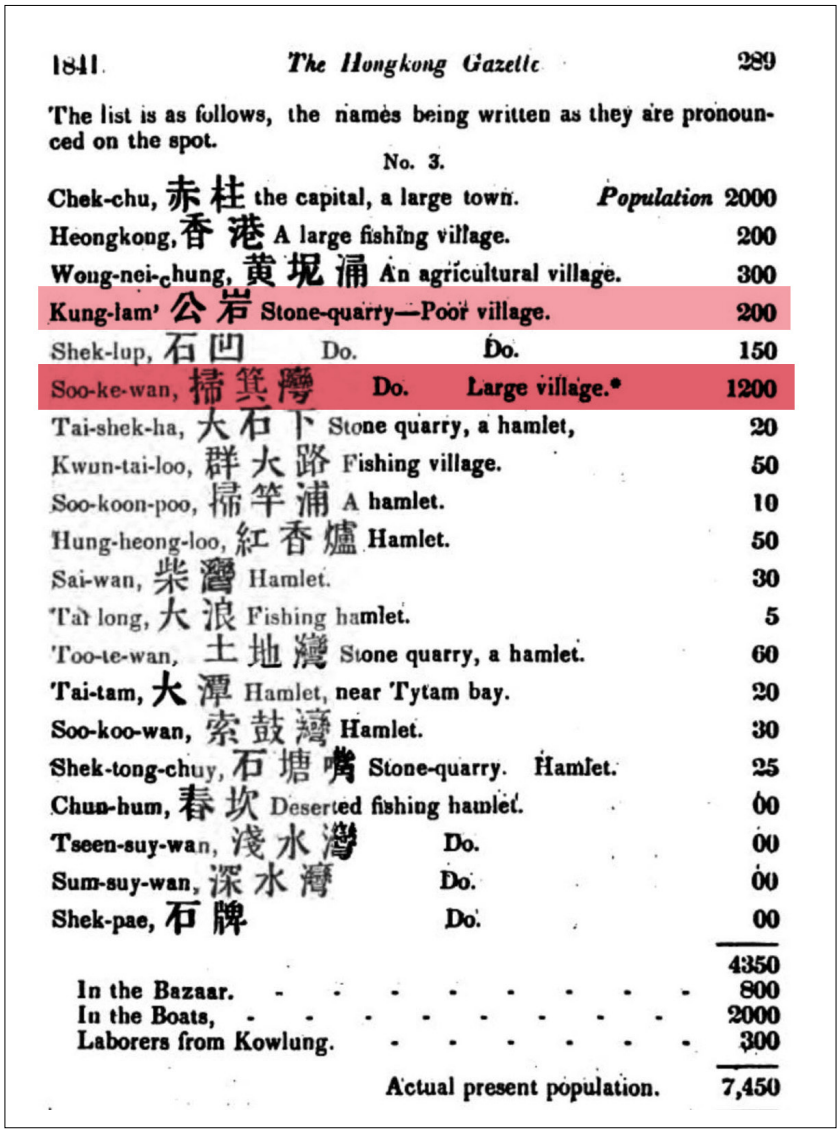
This status changed drastically during World War II when the Japanese occupied the islands briefly. After an initial pause at the beginning of the occupation, the Japanese invested efforts into the fishing industry to improve their food supply in Hong Kong. The Japanese introduced their own method of organizing the fishing industry, marking the first time it was actively interfered with by

67 'The Hong Kong Gazette', *Hong Kong Government Printer*, no. 2 (May 1841). 289

68 'Report on the New Territories, 1899-1912', Hong Kong Sessional Papers 1912 (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1913). 53

69 'Report on the Blue Book for 1901', Hong Kong Sessional Papers 1902 (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1903). 7

70 'Report on the Blue Book for 1902', Hong Kong Sessional Papers 1903 (Hong Kong: Government Printer, 1904). 330



1841. *The Hongkong Gazette* 289

The list is as follows, the names being written as they are pronounced on the spot.

No. 3.

Chek-chu, 赤柱	the capital, a large town.	*Population*	2000
Heongkong, 香港	A large fishing village.		200
Wong-nei-chung, 黃坭涌	An agricultural village.		300
Kung-lam' 公岩	Stone-quarry—Poor village.		200
Shek-lup, 石凹	Do.	Do.	150
Soo-ke-wan, 掃箕灣	Do.	Large village.*	1200
Tai-shek-ha, 大石下	Stone quarry, a hamlet,		20
Kwun-tai-loo, 群大路	Fishing village.		50
Soo-koon-poo, 掃竿浦	A hamlet.		10
Hung-heong-loo, 紅香爐	Hamlet.		50
Sai-wan, 柴灣	Hamlet.		30
Tai long, 大浪	Fishing hamlet.		5
Too-te-wan, 土地灣	Stone quarry, a hamlet.		60
Tai-tam, 大潭	Hamlet, near Tytam bay.		20
Soo-koo-wan, 索鼓灣	Hamlet.		30
Shek-tong-chuy, 石塘嘴	Stone-quarry. Hamlet.		25
Chun-hum, 春坎	Deserted fishing hamlet.		00
Tseen-suy-wan, 淺水灣	Do.		00
Sum-suy-wan, 深水灣	Do.		00
Shek-pae, 石牌	Do.		00
			4350
In the Bazaar.			800
In the Boats,			2000
Laborers from Kowlung.			300
	Actual present population.		7,450

Fig. 4.6 1841 Population Chart from the Hong Kong Gazette

Year	1881	1891	1901	1911	1921	1931	1943	1961
Fisherfolk Population in SKW	3731	3828	5439	6440	6714	4871	10408	14735
Total Population of SKW	-	-	-	-	-	-	47872	85000
Number of Boats	-	643	624	-	-	-	-	-

Fig. 4.7 Shau Kei Wan Population Chart, 1881-1961

a governing power in Hong Kong. The Japanese divided Hong Kong into eight zones, Shau Kei Wan being the only one on Hong Kong Island. They introduced a universal wholesale market that all fisherfolks were required to deal with. Unlike the traditional *YuLaan* method, the government controls these wholesale markets, where set prices are clear and fairness is safeguarded. During this period, Shau Kei Wan established its significance as one of the three major fishing hubs in Hong Kong, growing in its seafood production, even amidst the dire occupation of the Japanese. Following the end of WWII, the neighbourhood of Shau Kei Wan continued on its path as a fishing hub, slowly recovering from the occupation it endured.

The 1960s was a crucial decade recognized as the start of a new era for Shau Kei Wan. In 1967, the colonial government laid out concrete staged plans for the drastic urban development of the neighbourhood. The post-war population increase led to the city's desperate need for land and housing. Since Shau Kei Wan was located close to the center of Hong Kong, unlike the other fishing hubs, it was an easy target. The government and land developers saw enormous incentives for the site. They proposed land reclamation projects to facilitate the increased need for housing and the increased number of factories in the neighbourhood. Considering that Shau Kei Wan was the second largest fishing hub in Hong Kong, along with the huge floating population, the government decided to carry out the project in stages to decrease the harm and effect it would bring the fisherfolks. In retrospect, it is clear that this urban redevelopment was a disaster for the fisherfolk community.

The official proposal carried out the redevelopment in stages in hopes of urbanizing the neighbourhood while maintaining the fishing industry. Their plans seemed well-rounded at first glance. They divided the reclamation areas into three main districts, with Area A further divided into three stages. Area A is where the majority of the floating slums were located, whereas Area B and Area C are proposed new lands for future roads and piers. With the planning of moving the piers, docking area, wholesale market, and shipyards in stages, the government ensured all fishery-related facilities could function at all stages of the plan. However, logistics aside, they neglect one of the fundamental concerns – where the fisherfolks can dwell continuously.

Fig. 4.8 Aerial Photo of Shau Kei Wan before Land Reclamation, 1963

Fig. 4.9 Diagram for Shau Kei Wan Reclamation Proposal

Their plans involved removing the floating slums in the form of stilt houses in Aldrich Bay. However, the government refused to rehouse the floating population prior to commencing the project. They also never planned where the boat dwellers would move to after removing their semi-permanent dwellings. Stilt houses are relatively temporary structures that are made from salvaged materials. Better-made ones are made with wood or concrete, set over the water. Nevertheless, most of these temporary structures were not built immediately as houses. Instead, they were slowly transformed. The fisherfolks would re-purpose the older, inoperable boats into their dwelling by parking them in the shallower waters and repairing or upgrading them over time, eventually creating the stilt houses along the shore.

There was a rapid increase in these floating slums in the 1970s, corresponding to the decline of the fishing community and replacing old fishing boats with motor-operated new boats. The motorization of the fishing boats brought two important changes; the phasing out of the older fishing boat and lowering the manpower needed to operate a boat. Both these changes led to the increase of the floating slums since many of these older boats became the dwellings for members that looked towards on-land to find jobs or education. At the height of the floating slum's presence in Aldrich Bay, there were over 500 buildings in the Aldrich Bay Floating slum, including 29 shipyards, 34 lumber yards, 42 factories, 30 stores, and over 400 houses, housing over 5000 people.[71] The living condition of the slums was harsh, with mosquito infestation and a lack of hygiene facilities. The fisherfolks that resided here had little choice and faced extreme poverty.

In response to the growing population caused by the influx of refugees from Mainland China starting in the 1930s, the colonial government started proposing public housing projects. It was not until the 1950s, when numerous fires occurred in squatter areas all over the city, persuaded the government to finally establish the provisional resettlement department. Although the government was establishing public housing projects around the same time to help resettle many low-income families in the city, the boat squatters were excluded from the plan, once again

71 Lo Shuk Ying 盧淑櫻, *Yu Gang Fu Chen: Shaojiwan de Yu Ye Fa Zhan* 漁港浮沉：筲箕灣的漁業發展 *[The Rise and Fall of the Harbour: Shau Kei Wan's Fishing Industry]*.

Fig. 4.10　Aberdeen Floating Slum, 1964

Fig. 4.11　Aldrich Bay Floating Slum, 1974

systematically discriminated against by the governing power. The colonial government had a backward take on housing the different groups of fisherfolks. Although it was clear the fishing industry was declining, and many would eventually seek jobs on land, the government excluded all fisherfolks that resided on boats in their resettlement projects. Instead of thinking forward, they believed that providing them with on-land housing meant they would be cut off from their way of living, leading to the destruction of the fishing industry. In addition to the above thoughtlessness, the government was also unclear with its guidelines regarding fisherfolks living in the floating slums. The Aldrich Bay Floating slums were in horrible condition and imminent danger. Under the claim of fairness, the government refused to house the fisherfolks in the Aldrich Bay floating slums until a last-minute policy change in Sept of 1968, where residents of the floating slums were able to be included in the relocation plan. Although they were finally able to have a chance to move to public housing projects, there was a delay in the construction of the housing apartment these residents were assigned to. It was not until a devastating fire in 1979 burning down almost everything in the floating slums that the residents could finally move out and into the new housing developments.

In the two decades between the 1960s and 1980s, the neighbourhood of Shau Kei Wan was continuously modernized, introducing metro, highways, and residential towers to its lands. After the multiple phases of land reclamation, the typhoon shelter was pushed out of the core of the neighbourhood and only retained ¾ of its original size. The boat dwellers have slowly but steadily decreased. The stores that once were dedicated to providing services to the fisherfolks have dwindled. In the mid-1990s, the entirety of the original typhoon harbour was filled in, and all floating slums were removed. The shape of the harbour that gave the neighbourhood its name is lost entirely. The shipyards were moved to Ah Kung Ngam, away from the heart of the neighbourhood. All remaining fishery-related structures were finally tucked away and absent from the sight of the residents of Shau Kei Wan.

The neighbourhood is now known as a residential-focused mixed-used district, with many residential towers added to the area. For the outsiders, what now draws them to Shau Kei Wan is their main street east, renowned for numerous popular restaurants, many still with subtle ties to their fisherfolk past.

Fig. 4.12 Island Eastern Corridor Under Construction, 1980s

Fig. 4.13 Aerial View of Shau Kei Wan, 2020

Fig. 4.14 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 1960

1960s

Hong Kong in the 1960s

- Major economic-led transformation with export-oriented industrialization
- Low living standards
- The number of factories has more than tripled in this decade
- The Government Low-Cost Housing Scheme was first introduced in 1962
- Primary School Public Education project was proposed.
- Large Scale Social Unrest, 1966 & 1967 Riots
- Infrastructure projects carried out all over Hong Kong

Shau Kei Wan in 1960

- By 1960s, Shau Kei Wan has become the second largest fishing village in Hong Kong.
- Increased factories in the area
- Government proposed multiple phased land reclamation
- Existence of waterfront “floating” slum, mainly occupied by fisherfolks.
- Main Street East already in existence, developed along the coastline. It is the main market for many fisherfolk.
- Tram Services have been established since 1904 and is the main land public transportation the community relies on.
- Countless Shipyards along harbour

Fig. 4.15 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 1970

1970s

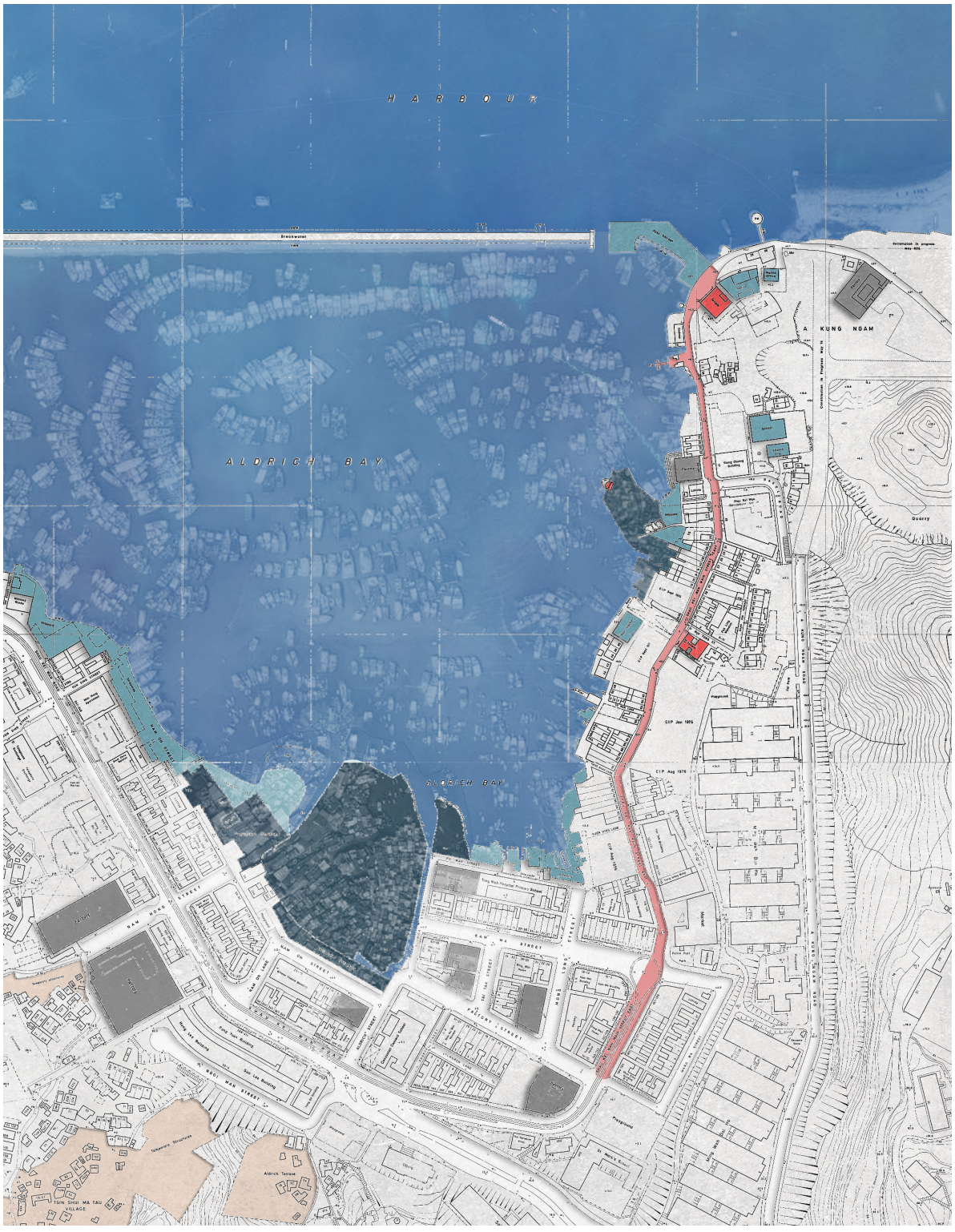
Hong Kong in the 1970s

- The transformation from a manufacturing base into a financial center, Hong Kong's establishment as one of the four "Asian Tigers."
- Start of political negotiation between the colonial government and PRC government about the future of Hong Kong
- Introduction of compulsory, free education for school-aged children
- Establishment of ICAC, which greatly eradicated corruption in every aspect of Hong Kong
- Ten Years Housing Scheme, a proposal to end squatting and slums and provide housing
- Great improvement in social welfare protection (elderly allowance, disability allowance etc.)
- Adoption of Chinese as second official language of British Hong Kong
- Establishment of country parks to preserve 70% of Hong Kong's green landmass

Shau Kei Wan in 1970

- First large public housing project in the area was built (Ming Wah Estate)
- Increased presence of squatter houses on the hill

Fig. 4.16 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 1976



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- Establishment of country parks to preserve 70% of Hong Kong's green landmass

Shau Kei Wan in 1976

- New Typhoon Shelter Barrier Built
- "Floating Slums" expanded
- Hillside Squatter Houses near Ah Gong Ngam are cleared out
- Shipyards in Ah Gong Ngam are cleared out
- Infamous 1976 Aldrich Bay fire, destroying over 1000 squatter houses or boathouses, and 3000 people became homeless. (Arson was suspected as a means to speed up the land reclamation process)

Fig. 4.17　Shau Kei Wan Plan, 1985

1980s

Hong Kong in the 1980s

- The Sino-British Joint Declaration on the Question of Hong Kong was signed, solidifying the return of Hong Kong to China on July 1, 1997
- Deng Xiaoping introduced the “one country, two systems policy.”
- The “touch-base policy” that allowed many mainland China illegal immigrants to stay in Hong Kong was abolished in 1980. On the other hand, large waves of immigration to Canada, the UK, and the USA were observed due to the uncertainty of the handover of Hong Kong in 1997.
- The manufacturing industry started to decline due to the difficulties brought by the increasing land and labour cost.
- Hong Kong’s lack of foreign-exchange control and low tax was an ideal location for international trade. Even with the two financial crises in 1983 and 1987, respectively, the recovery was swift. The International Monetary Fund officially listed Hong Kong as a high-income economy in 1988.

Shau Kei Wan in 1985

- Phase 1 of land reclamation complete
- “Floating Slums” completely removed
- Island Eastern Corridor construction commenced
- Hoi Sham Temple removed
- Island Line MTR (Subway) opened in May 1985.
- Tin Hau Festival stopped operating its annual theatre shows
- Shipyards moved to the base of the harbour and in Ah Kung Ngam
- Shau Kei Wan Fishermen’s Children’s School ceased to operate
- The number of factories decreased
- The Wholesale fish market was established next to Barrier

Fig. 4.18 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 1992

1990s

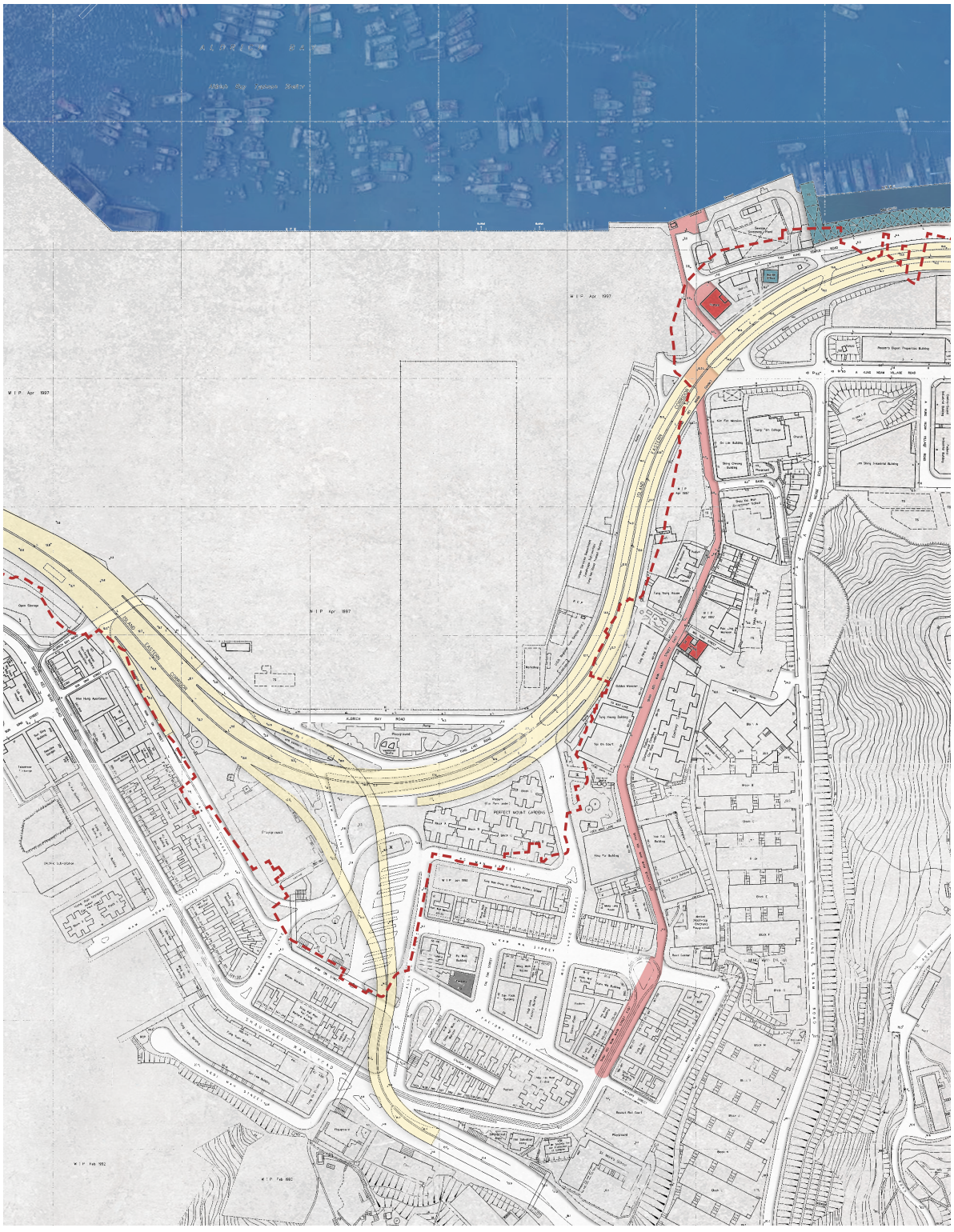
Hong Kong in the 1990s

- End of colonial rule in Hong Kong with the handover to China on July 1, 1997
- The rise of political awareness following the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests and massacre led to concerns over the future of Hong Kong under Chinese rule.
- Mass Migration Wave to Australia, Canada, the UK and the USA overseas.
- Golden Era of Cantopop culture, with many influential Hong Kong entertainment gaining widespread popularity in Asia and internationally.
- Hong Kong became a major international financial hub with its unique position as a pitstop between Asia and the West, Real Estate became one of the major economic sectors in Hong Kong
- Construction of multiple major infrastructure developments relating to the new Hong Kong International Airport.
- 1993 demolition of Kowloon Walled City, suggesting a major “slum clearance agenda

Shau Kei Wan in 1992

- Island Eastern Corridor construction completed
- Shipyards added in Ah Kung Ngam
- Fish Market cease to exist
- Limited factory left in the area
- Hillside squatter houses are completely removed
- Increase of high rise residential towers

Fig. 4.19 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 1997



Temple
Factories
Main Festival Route
Fisherfolk Related Buildings
1960 Original Coastline
Island Eastern Corridor

1990s

Hong Kong in the 1990s

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Shau Kei Wan in 1997

- Land Reclamation complete, former typhoon harbour fully filled in
- Shipyards removed from the base of the harbour
- All fishery-related buildings have been removed
- Drastic decrease of ships in the harbour
- Neighbourhood completely disconnected from the sea

Fig. 4.20　Shau Kei Wan Plan, 2005

2000s

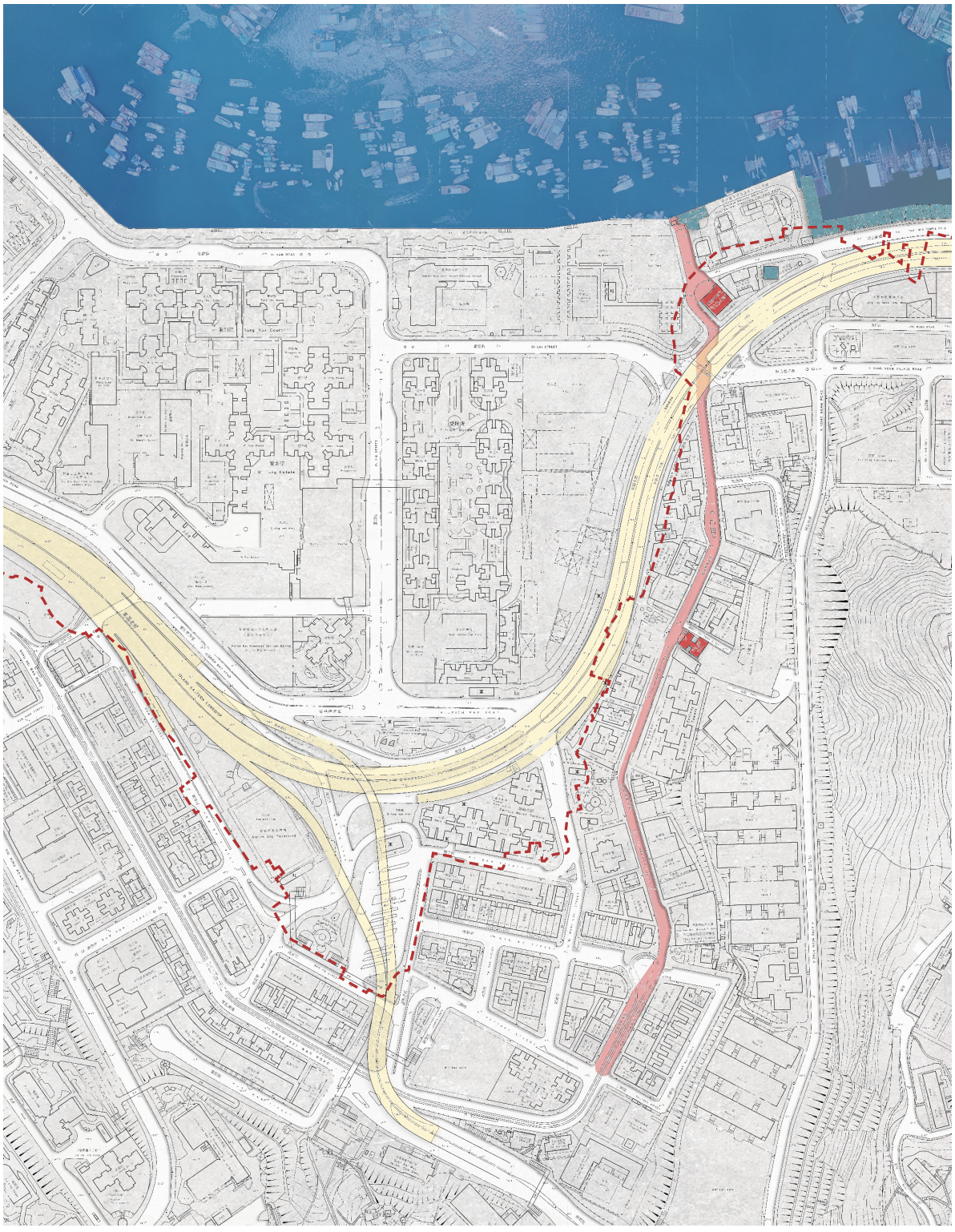
Hong Kong in the 2000s

- The effects of the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis lingered until 2004, the economy of Hong Kong became closely tied to China.
- The SARS outbreak happened in 2003, resulting in the city undergoing a lockdown. The general public's hygiene level has vastly improved after the epidemic.
- Many major infrastructure projects, including more than 10 new or extended metro lines, were completed.
- The population of the city reached 7 million
- The 2003 July 1 March saw close to 1 million participants in response to their dissatisfaction with the economic recession, the SARS pandemic control, and the fear of the anti-subversion law titled Article 23 proposed by the government. The march led to multiple resignations of important government officials.

Shau Kei Wan in 2005

- Multi-tower residential development constructed in Aldrich Bay Land Reclamation Area (both private and public)
- All major factories have moved out
- The general modern urban fabric of Shau Kei Wan has been established
- Shau Kei Wan Main Street East has been converted into a restaurant-focused street

Fig. 4.21 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 2015



2010s

Hong Kong in the 2010s

- The era of political unrest
- Umbrella Revolution, a series of sit-in protests in 2014 for democracy
- 2016 Independence Protest, which saw the rise of Hong Kong nationalism.
- The 2019-2020 Hong Kong protest, the largest series of demonstrations in Hong Kong History, is a response to an extradition bill to mainland China.
- Global COVID-19 pandemic outbreak, Hong Kong was relatively unscathed by the first wave of the COVID-19 outbreak.

Shau Kei Wan in 2015

- Residential Estates continue to be constructed in the Aldrich Bay Land Reclamation Area.
- Plot removal for new developments of residential towers in the area
- Waterfront public areas under construction

Fig. 4.22 Shau Kei Wan Plan, 2022

2020s

Hong Kong in the 2020s

- COVID-19 Pandemic continues, and due to its strict restrictions, the city saw various shutdowns across the city
- National Security Law was introduced swiftly in 2020, resulting in several pro-democracy or pro-independence groups disbanding
- The city saw huge waves of migration to Canada, Australia, the UK and the USA

Shau Kei Wan in 2022

- Residential towers completed on reclaimed land
- Waterfront promenade completed
- Boats in the harbour are mainly pleasure boats, with limited operating fishing boats

Analysis of urban development in Shau Kei Wan

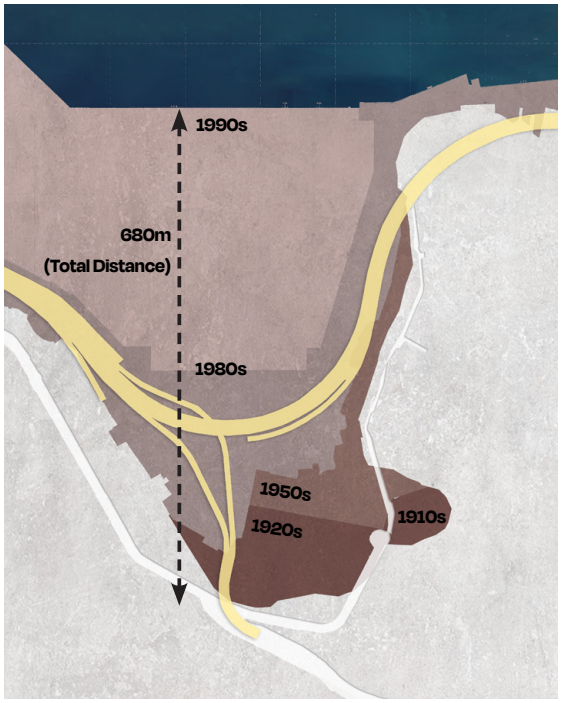
Impact on the Fisherfolk Community in the Neighbourhood

The urban development of Shau Kei Wan has effectively cut off the neighbourhood's connections to the seas. When you walk into this neighbourhood, there is a clear divide between the older portion surrounding the main street and the area where the original harbour was located. Furthermore, the remaining water-related structures have been pushed out of the core to be adjacent to the new typhoon shelter. This division is made apparent by the highway, which effectively acts as a physical and psychological barrier for the residents to walk toward the waterfront. The original streets of Shau Kei Wan were organically developed along the original coastline, with great emphasis on supporting the activities of the water-residing residents living in Aldrich Bay. Some structures had back and front storefronts that serviced both the land and boat dwellers. However, this apparent catering to the fisherfolks has all disappeared after the multiple reclamations that occurred. Although many major services (shipyards, the wholesale fish market) are still in operation, they are not to be experienced by the common residents. In addition, the government relocated many of the original Aldrich Bay boat dwellers to public housing estates around Hong Kong. Most of them relocated to Hing Wah Estate in Chai Wan. Although it is only 2km away, it is on the other side of a hill, making it very unlikely for the residents to return to Shau Kei Wan casually. Some of these fisherfolks have made an effort to move back to Shau Kei Wan after saving up enough money, hoping to rejoin their community.

Unsurprisingly, the fisherfolk's heritage has greatly diminished since the major land reclamation. Sadly, the case of the fisherfolk community in Shau Kei Wan is not special; other harbours near the urban fabric have undergone a similar fate. Only a handful of small villages with prominent fisherfolk presence survived in contemporary Hong Kong. These fishing villages only survive due to their undesirable location, being far from the core, and unprofitable for the developers.

With their lack of land ownership, fisherfolks have never had a great presence in society. The only remaining prominent structure is their temples. The establishment of the local fisherfolk-related temples in Shau Kei Wan mirrors the development of the area, where the first temple, Hoi Sum Temple, was only established in 1845. Subsequently, Tin Hau Temple was built in 1872, and the Tam Kung Temple in 1905.

Fig. 4.23 Land Reclamation Projects Carried out in Shau Kei Wan



Hoi Sum Temple was eventually taken down to make way for the land reclamation project during the 1970s. On the other hand, The Tin Hau Temple was destroyed in a storm in 1874 and rebuilt in 1876. The Tam Kung Temple also suffered from bombings during WWII and was repaired in 1944. From the recordings of the donations made towards the repairs, we can see many boat and store owners contributing, showcasing the community's vibrancy. The Tin Hau Temple originally housed the most popular deity in the neighbourhood; however, its prominence diminished along with the decline of the fishing community. After multiple rounds of development by land reclamation, the Tin Hau Temple is now situated in the middle of the land, losing its ties to the seas. It now has an unassuming presence among the bustling main street. Contrasting the fate of the Tin Hau Temple, The Tam Kung Temple became the more popular place of worship in Shau Kei Wan. Perhaps this has to do with its proximity to the typhoon harbour where the remaining boat-dwellers reside.

With the limited land structures the boat community has ownership of, this also means they have unofficially transformed the temple into a fishing community gathering ground. Using the temple as the base for organizing communal events, the fisherfolks can expand their presence on land during the limited time they have their festivals. For the Shau Kei Wan fish community, the most prominent opportunity to celebrate their own culture currently is the Tam Kung Festival.

Chapter Five

05 Tam Kung Festival

Fig. 5.1 Tam Kung Festival, 2023

05 Tam Kung Festival

As an established neighbourhood, Shau Kei Wan is filled with temples, and its residents are no strangers to deities. The residents of Shau Kei Wan believe in an old local mythical story of Tam Kung (譚公), the patron saint for seafarers, protecting the local community. In the early days of the village, the water currents outside Shau Kei Wan brought many troubles to the villagers. They believed that some spirits were bothering the channel of Lei Yue Mun, a short channel directly located in front of the bay. The story says Tam Kung tamed the evil spirits after hearing the villagers' wishes. To show their thanks, the villagers first established an outdoor shrine on the rocks near the shore, naming the area "*A Kung Ngam*" (阿公岩 Grandpa's Rock). Although Tam Kung was first introduced to Hong Kong by the people of Hakka descent, it became closely tied to the fishing community in Shau Kei Wan. The fisherfolks have nicknamed Tam Kung "ah Kung," meaning grandpa or old man, since he was well-loved in the community. Over time, the shrine was upgraded to a temple. To this day, Tam Kung remains one of their most trusted deities for the locals, and his birthday celebration is undoubtedly the most popular festival in the neighbourhood.

The Tam Kung festival (譚公誕) occurs during the deity's birthday, the eighth day of the fourth month in the lunar calendar, which usually occurs between late April and Early May. It coincidentally overlaps with Budda's birthday, allowing the festivities to happen on a public holiday in Hong Kong. It is the biggest deity celebration in the neighbourhood. Many former residents that moved away will return on this day to participate in the festivities. Although the main participants of the Tam Kung festival consist mainly of the older generation of fisherfolk, there has been a surge of interest from the descendants of the community. The Tam Kung festival allows for opportunities to introduce these new members to participate meaningfully.

Tam Kung Festival 2023: A Visual Exploration of Community Spirit

Despite the popularity of Tam Kung in the neighbourhood of Shau Kei Wan, the COVID-19 pandemic cast a shadow over its celebration, forcing its cancellation for three consecutive years. This unfortunate turn of events substantially impacted my ability to conduct in-person research for the festival. Although I have participated in other folk-religion celebrations in Hong Kong before, I have not yet attended the ones in Shau Kei Wan. Instead, I had to rely on the information about the Tam Kung Festival I could gather online. I watched numerous videos uploaded by the participants of prior years that offer glimpses of their day. Additionally, I went through social media posts of strangers to try and gain more insight into the participants' experience. Despite these efforts, I could not escape the feeling that my insight into the festival remains limited.

Formal information about the festivals was also challenging to collect. In a densely populated city like Hong Kong, the spread of information is less reliant on digital platforms than in Canada. Instead, street banners and posters in the neighbourhood are utilized to promote their local events. Since Tam Kung Festival relies on multiple local neighbourhood associations to come together, they did not have a formal and uniform platform to share the news.

Despite the festival's obvious connection to the local temple, seeking their assistance proved futile. They insisted they had nothing to do with organizing the festival celebrations and were unable to provide any names of organizations that would coordinate the events. Determined to uncover this key information, I meticulously examined images of festival banners captured

in previous years and finally identified a few organizations that participated in previous festivals. However, the challenge did not stop there. Many of these organizations do not have an email for contacting. Instead, they have a seemingly abandoned Facebook page and occasionally a phone number.

Undeterred, I made numerous overseas phone calls and encountered conflicting information along the way. Nonetheless, the organizations promised me that more information would be released closer to the festival date. Fortunately, they confirmed that the local community is actively preparing for this year's Tam Kung Festival and had ambitious plans for a grand celebration to signify the return to normalcy.

Upon learning the news, I immediately booked last-minute tickets to travel to Hong Kong, eager to participate in this special occasion. The opportunity to personally witness the festival was a chance to immerse myself in the vibrant atmosphere and experience the spatial transformation accompanying such a grand event. Additionally, I was eager to see if the ideas and observations presented in my thesis regarding the Tam Kung Festival held true in practice. Despite my extensive research, I could not shake the feeling that there might be crucial aspects I had overlooked. Being physically present at the festival would allow me to validate my findings. It was a necessary step to fully understand the intricacies and nuances of the festival's traditions, participant interactions, and the collective spirit of the community.

The following pages consist of my observation at the 2023 Tam Kung Festival.

Day Before the Festival

4 pm

Fig. 5.2 Tam Kung Festival Banner

i. From afar, glimpses of the festival decorations can be seen.

Fig. 5.3 Parade Preparations

ii. Arriving at Factory Street Playground, some performers are preparing in the open spaces adjacent to the temporary theatre.

5 pm

Fig. 5.4 Queue for Cantonese Opera

iii. Residents are lining up for the Cantonese Opera performing that night.

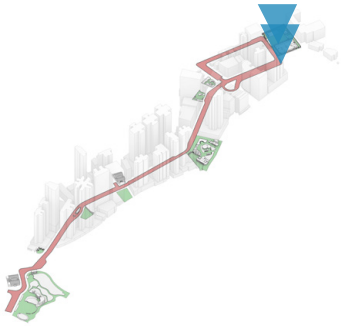


Fig. 5.5 Street Decorations for Tam Kung Festival

iv. The atmosphere is different along the main street where the parade occurs; flags are waving, and banners are put up, hinting that the neighbourhood is ready for the festivities.

Fig. 5.6 Food Sharing After Ritual

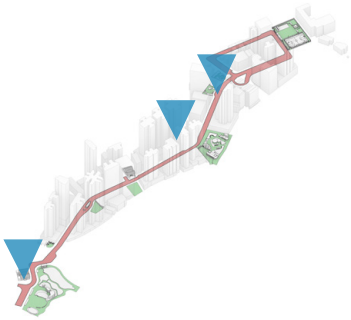
6 pm

v. People gather outside the Tam Kung Festival the evening before it, doing pre-ritual prayers. Instead of one big unified ceremony, in-temple prayers are done personally. One of the martial associations brings along their own Tam Kung statue and shares their offering, roasted pig and drinks, with the worshipers and residents walking by.

Fig. 5.7 Community Fund Raising Dinner

8 pm

vi. At one of the local Chinese Restaurants, a neighbourhood association came together to fund-raise and socialize for a dinner gathering.



Day of the Festival

8 am

Fig. 5.8 Festival Preparations at Nearby Parks

vii. Walking into the neighbourhood, you can immediately notice the festival partakers utilizing the surrounding parks as preparation sites.

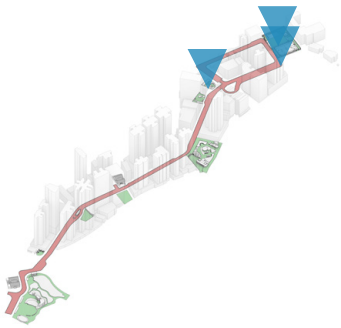
Fig. 5.9 Tam Kung Festival Banners

viii. Many police are set up outside Factory Street Playground, preparing for traffic control. You can sense the energy of the area shift like they are in anticipation. It was clear that the playground was acting as the parade's starting point without any signage explicitly noting so.

9 am

Fig. 5.10 Tam Kung Festival Initiation Ceremony

ix. Inside the temporary structure, a starting ceremony takes place; they invite local government officials and community leaders to kick-start the day. However, few casual spectators joined due to the limited space and enclosed nature.



10 am

Fig. 5.11 Parade Groups Waiting in Line

x. Outside Factory Street Playground, parade participants await their turn. They utilized the back streets, setting up their decorations and carts.

Fig. 5.12 Crossroad before entering SKW Main St E

xi. Although the parading groups have started near the factory street playground, you get a sense that the parade doesn't begin until arriving at the main intersection heading into Shau Kei Wan Main Street.

Fig. 5.13 Police Setting up Barriers

xii. Police are assigned along the parade route, setting up temporary fences along the way to avoid interference in the parade.

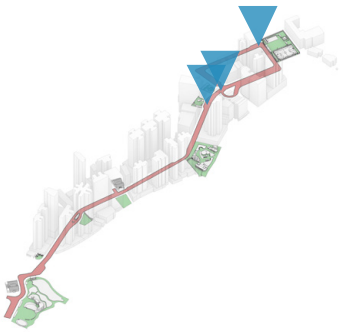


Fig. 5.14　Lion Dance Performance at an Open Space

11 am

Fig. 5.15 Tam Kung Festival Parade in Action

xiii. The drums accompanying the parade groups light up the street life.

Fig. 5.16 Parade group pausing in front of Tin Hau Temple

Arriving at the Tin Hau Temple

xiv. Tin Hau Temple is an important node on the parade path. Many groups will stop and bow or perform to show their respect to Tin Hau along the way.

Fig. 5.17 Dragon Dance in Action

xv. Occasionally, the groups would pause and do a short performance, interacting with the spectators.

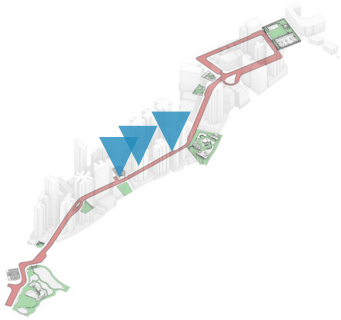


Fig. 5.18　Dragon Dance Performance in front of Tam Kung Temple

Fig. 5.19 Parade Group Crossing the Underpass

xvi. The street life dies a little when walking past the under cross of the highway. You can sense the disconnect and the teams rushing through this area.

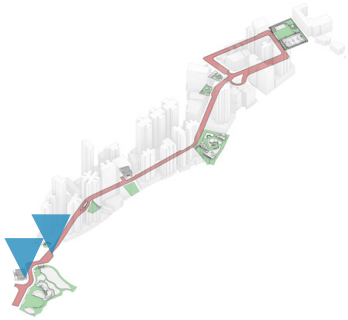
Fig. 5.20 Parade Groups at Tam Kung Temple

Arriving at the Tam Kung Temple

xvii. Upon arriving at the Tam Kung Temple, each group is allowed 5 mins to perform, showing their appreciation to the gods. Bigger groups will make use of the open space in front.

Fig. 5.21 Lion Dance Performance

xviii. For smaller groups, they can go ahead towards the Temple and do their performance up close.



12 pm

Fig. 5.22 Leaving the Tam Kung Temple

Leaving the Tam Kung Temple

xix. After their stop at the Tam Kung Temple, the group is ushered along the path to make way for the next group.

Fig. 5.23 Arriving at Shipyards

xx. The end of the path is where the shipyards are, where they have their own lions to await and greet each group.

Fig. 5.24 Community Dining by the Shipyards

xxi. The shipyards have their own gathering and set up tables for meal-sharing.

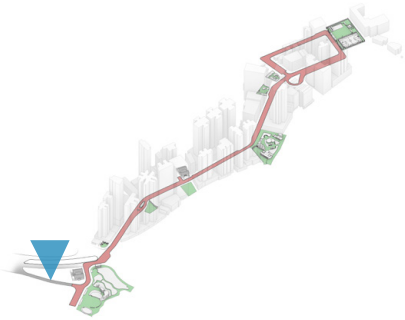


Fig. 5.25 Arriving at Ending Point

xxii. On the other hand, the performance group needs to continue their path to an area underneath the highway.

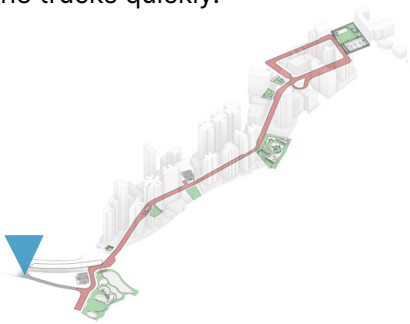
Fig. 5.26 Taking a Group Picture

xxiii. Before dispersing, they quickly take a group photo, signifying the end of their participation in the parade.

Fig. 5.27 Parade Group Packing Up

End of the Parade as an Active Participant

xxiv. Monitored by the police assigned for traffic control, they must disassemble their setups and pack up the trucks quickly.



Dragon Boat Racing Ritual

Fig. 5.28 Dragon Boats In Position

Fig. 5.29 Fishing Boats Returning for the Festival

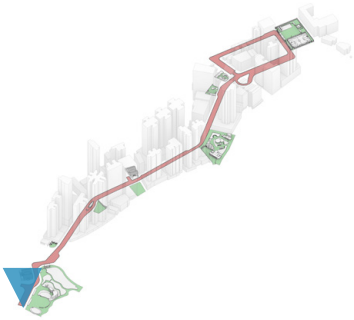
xxv. It is unsurprising to see boats docked along the waterfront decorated with festival flags. Many current fisherfolks have made the trip back to the bay to participate in the festival.

Fig. 5.30 Fisherfolks waiting in their boats

xxvi. Instead of waiting in line like the other participants, they spend their time on the boat awaiting their turn.

Fig. 5.31 Dragon Boat Racing Event

xxvii. An additional event was introduced this year, the dragon boat short race, where three teams were invited to race for the blessing of Tam Kung. This moved the attention of the participants to the waterfront.



Other Observations

Fig. 5.32 Spectators in front of Tam Kung Temple

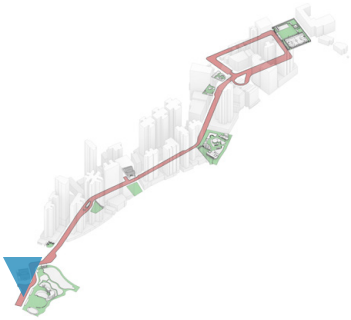
xxviii. The area in front of the Tam Kung Temple attracts many spectators since each parade group will perform their best routine for the deity. However, the current setup is very basic, with only a fence line for traffic control.

Fig. 5.33 Open Space in front of Tam Kung Temple

xxix. Looking from afar, you can see there is an underutilized open space. Apart from extra big groups that use the space, it remains empty.

Fig. 5.34 Adjacent Eastern District Cultural Square

xxx. Although its intention is to support community events, the public theatre stage right next to the Tam Kung Festival remains fenced up and unused most of the day.



Passive Participants

Fig. 5.35 Spectators Sitting on Concrete Formwork

xxxi. Elders use the base of the scaffoldings as chairs for more comfortable viewing.

Fig. 5.36 Children Sitting on Metal Fence

xxxii. Children appreciate the extra height to enjoy the festivities better.

Fig. 5.37 Impromptu Market

xxxiii. Some fisherfolks set up temporary street stands to sell dried seafood, hoping to benefit from the populated streets.

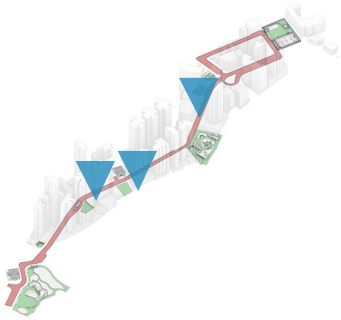


Fig. 5.38 Tam Kung Festival Community Event

Most importantly, this in-person experience exposed me to the dynamic of the different groups involved in the festival. Currently, the parties involved in the festival can be divided into three groups: the organizers, the active participants and the passive participants. Organizing the Tam Kung Festival in Shau Kei Wan is a unique combined effort by various community, business, and martial arts associations. These individuals and groups share a close relationship with the deity, and their primary objective is to express their gratitude and devotion through the grandeur of the festivities. Apart from the funding they obtained from the local government, they are pivotal in funding the festival and making decisions regarding its scale.

The active participants include a diverse array of performers during the festival. This consists of the various martial arts associations that would perform the lion dance and dragon dance, the local associations that join the parade, and the Cantonese Opera performers in the temporary theatre.

Fig. 5.39 Spectators in front of Tam Kung Temple

Lastly, there are the passive participants. The passive participants include people of the neighbourhood, descendants of the communities that once reside in Shau Kei Wan, and casual visitors from outside the area. They are the parade spectators, the audience for the Chinese opera and the observers of the lion dance competition. Despite their presence and interest in the festival, their connection remains relatively limited. They are usually only able to come in to observe without being able to contribute in meaningful ways.

As I expected, the information and organization of these festivals are mostly catered towards the local elders. All the barriers I faced trying to identify the organizers for the festival exist for the younger generations that hope to be more involved with the festival. These invisible barriers for outsiders stop them from participating in the festivals meaningfully.

Chapter Six

06 Intervention

Fig. 6.1 Fresh Market of Shau Kei Wan, 2022

06 Intervention

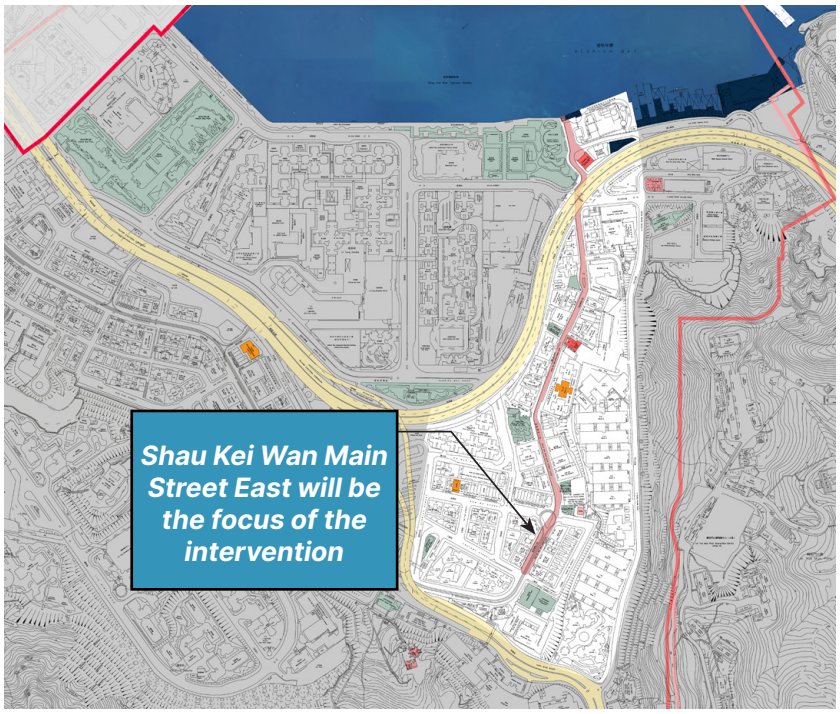


Fig. 6.2 Shau Kei Wan Points of Interest Map

The next part of the thesis aims to make use of the wisdom the community shared and discussed in previous chapters into a physical manifestation of how the fishing community can be reintroduced to the larger audience of residents and visitors, allowing future generations to take part in a community that has adapted to modern Hong Kong. We will focus on Shau Kei Wan Main Street East, as it has the closest ties to the fisherfolks and the site where the Tam Kung Festival Parade occurs. Using the Tam Kung Festival as a conduit, this intervention will aim to showcase how cues are purposely reintroduced to the urban fabric to increase the presence of the fisherfolks and to aid the continued growth of the community. The gestures will be shown in two parts. Firstly, how a typical street in Hong Kong can be transformed during the time of the Tam Kung Festival. Secondly, how to leave subtle traces of the fisherfolk in the modern fabric for the community during the rest of the year.

Keng Shan Lane

Tai On Court

Golden Mansion

Tung Hing

Tung Po Mansion

Empty Lot

Newton Harbour V

Fig. 6.3 Street Elevations of Shau Kei Wan Main Street East

Tung Keung Building

To Wan Lane

Golden Mansion

Building

Miu Tung Street Sitting-Out Area

Tung Wong House

iew

Tung Hei Road

Building Typology

The majority of the buildings along Shau Kei Wan Main Street East are mixed-used developments with a cohesive and vibrant retail-focused street life. The newer developments usually have a clear podium design, with 20-30 storey high-rise residential towers on top of their retail space. The older buildings also have their first floor dedicated to retail. However, they are shorter in height, with only 6-8 storeys of residential units on top.

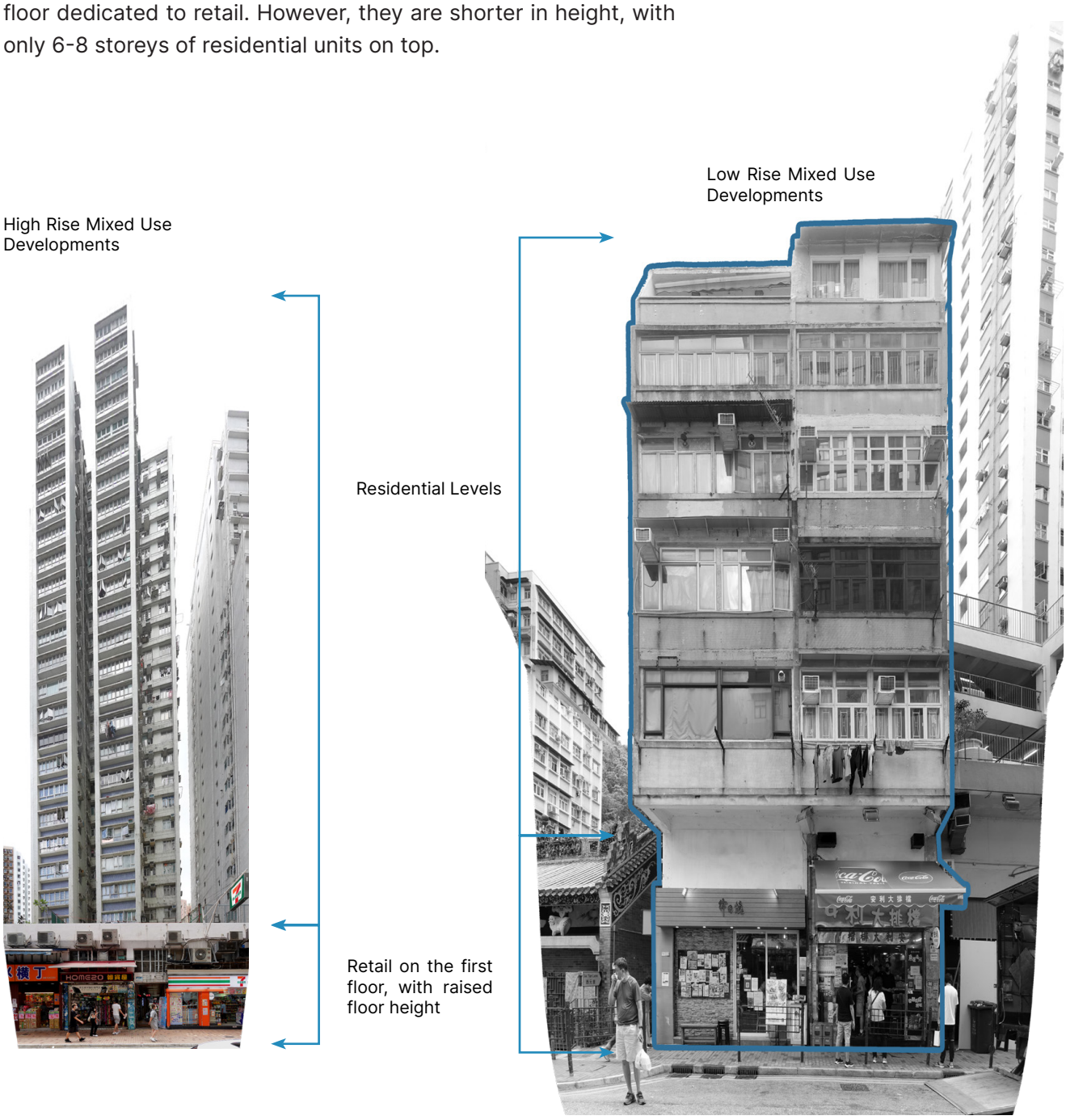


Fig. 6.4 Example of Mixed Use Developments along SKW Main Street East

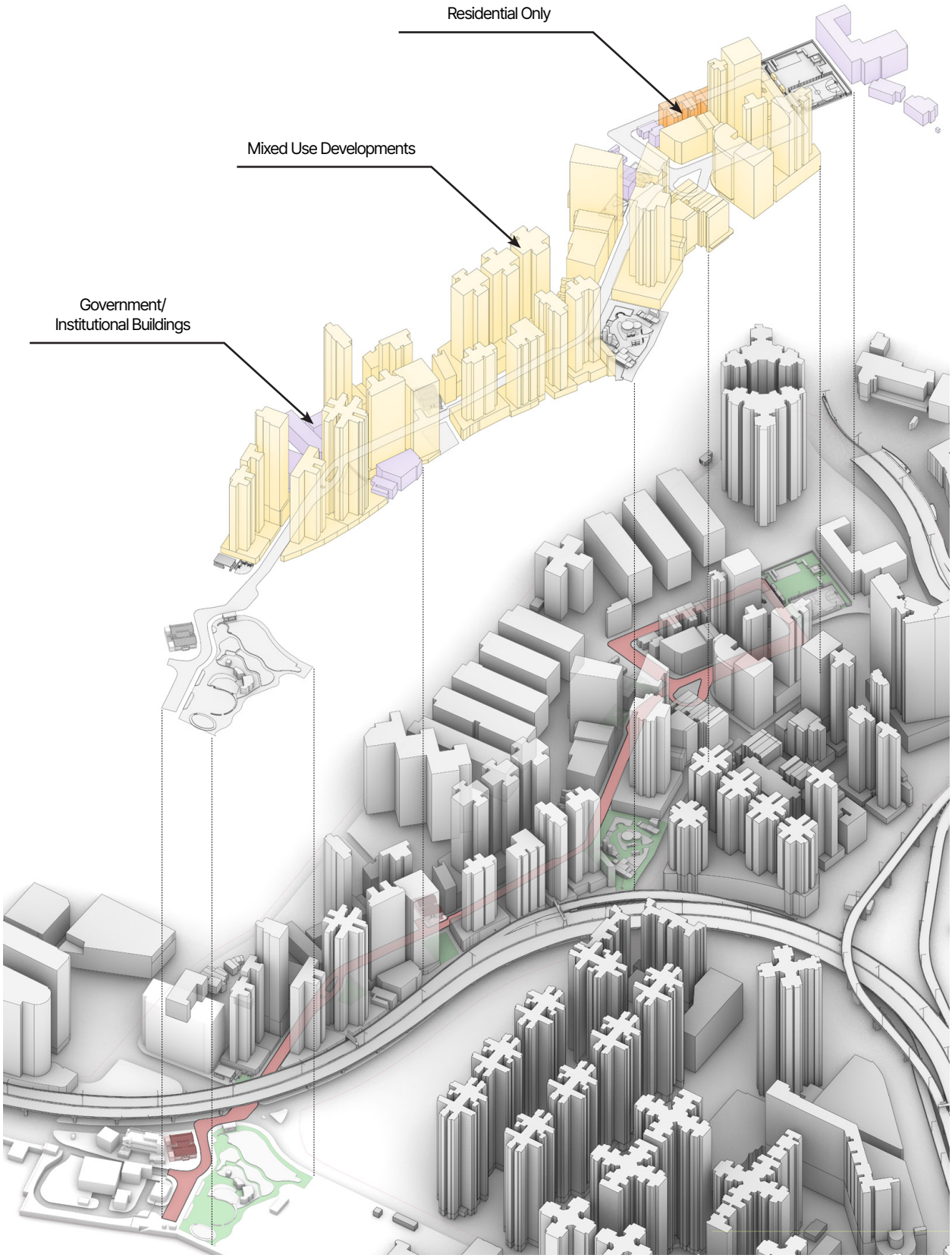


Fig. 6.5 AXO Diagram of Mixed Use Developments along SKW Main Street East

Current Traces of the fishing community in SKW


Fig. 6.6 Signage of the Tin Hau Tam Kung Association


Fig. 6.7 Seafood stalls in fresh market


Fig. 6.8 Seafood restaurant


Fig. 6.9 Tin Hau Temple


Fig. 6.10 Fishball noodle restaurants


Fig. 6.11 Tam Kung Temple


Fig. 6.12 Fresh water station


Fig. 6.13 Typhoon shelter


Fig. 6.14 Shipyard

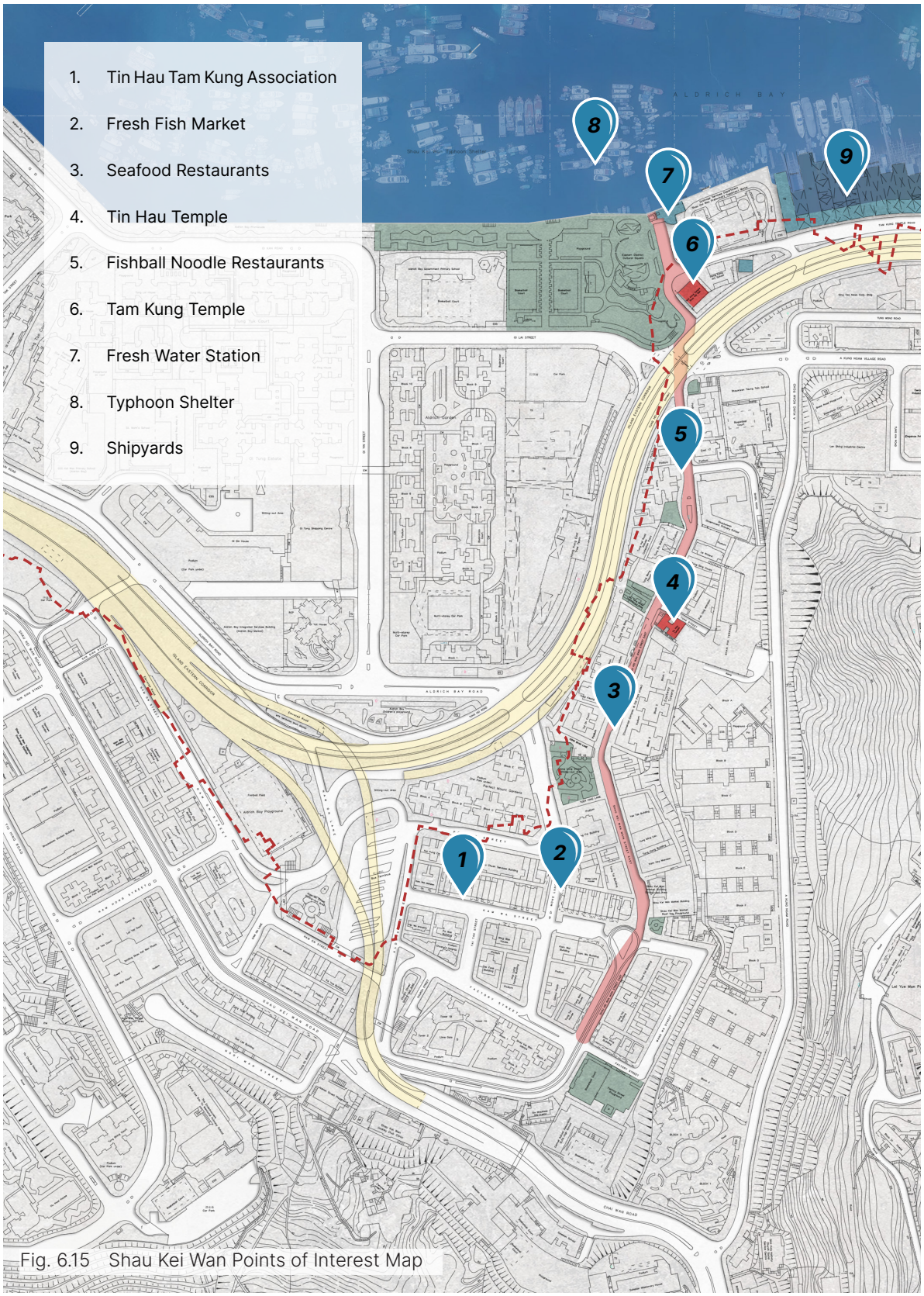


Fig. 6.15 Shau Kei Wan Points of Interest Map

Intervention Strategies

01 Introduce Permanent Traces

Addition of Street Pavements and Pavilion to accommodate the different dynamics of the neighbourhood throughout the year.

Fig. 6.16 Site 2 During Off-Season

02 Expand Presence of the Festival

Erecting Temporary Bamboo Structures during the festival.

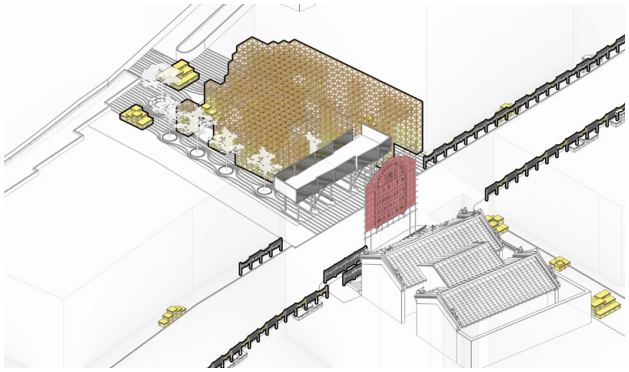


Fig. 6.17 Site 2 During Tam Kung Festival

03 Embrace Temporary Elements of the Festival

Allow the conversion of spaces and structures to accommodate the festive events.

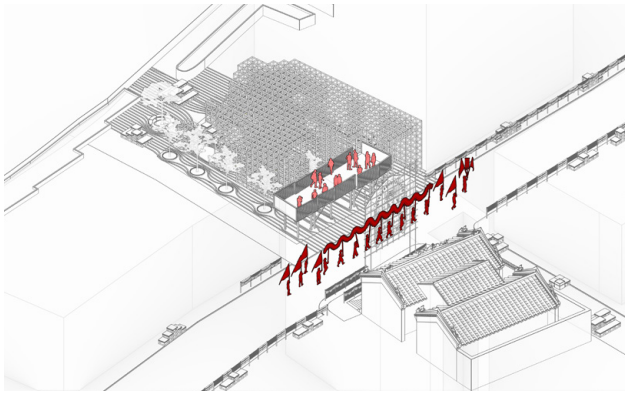


Fig. 6.18 Parade Elements at Site 2

04 Extend the Duration of the Festival

Inclusion of the Tin Hau Festival, making it a three week event.

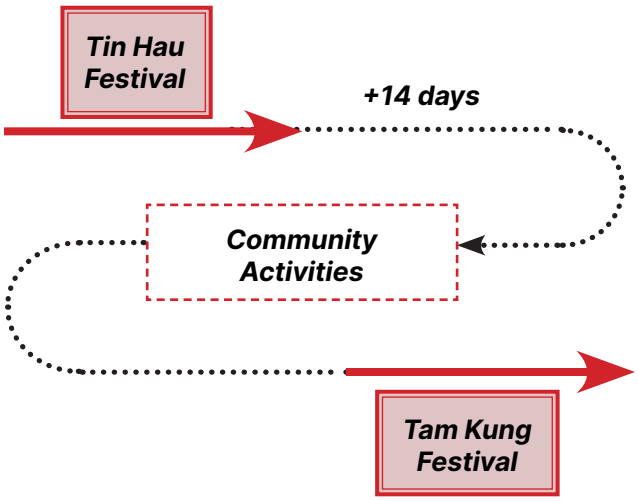


Fig. 6.19 Proposed Extended Festival Duration

05 Increase Community Involvement and Interaction

Introduction of spaces that allows community involvement projects leading up to the festival.

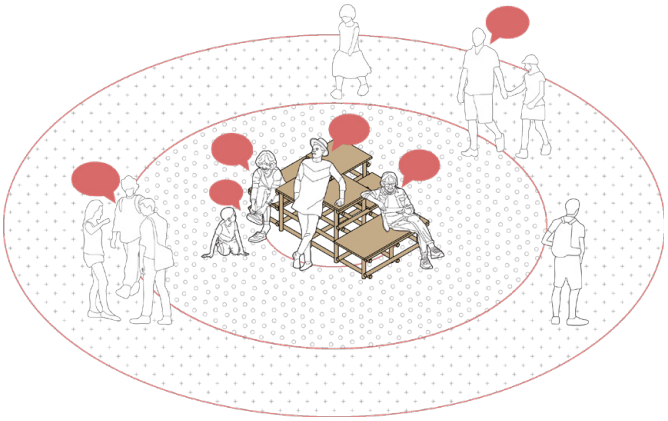


Fig. 6.20 Casual Transferal of Intangible Cultural Knowledge

Strategy 01

Introduce Permanent Traces

To solve the problem of the limited presence of the fisherfolks, the first step is to reintroduce traces that allow the neighbourhood to reconnect with its past. Below are the public spaces along the route that will enable opportunities for intervention. Additionally, the different urban elements, such as fences and pavilions along the main street, can be upgraded to hint at the uniqueness of the space during its off-season and accommodate for the transformation during the festival season.

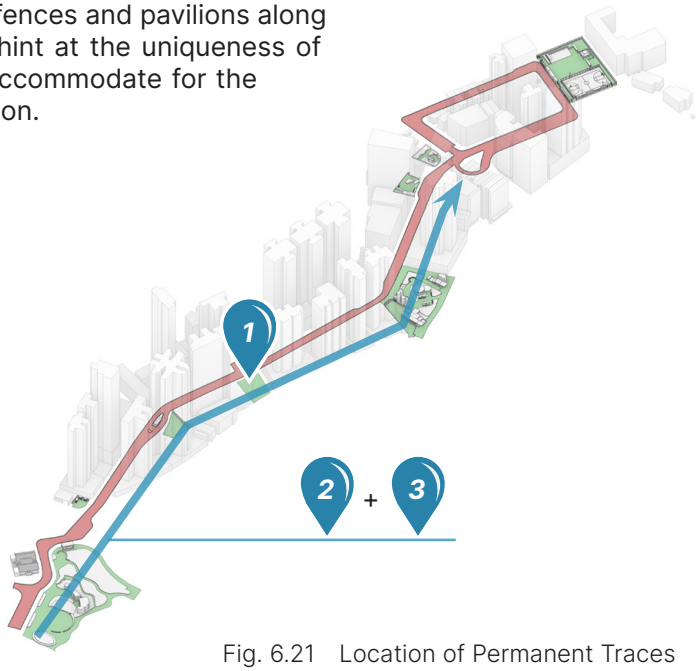


Fig. 6.21 Location of Permanent Traces

Public Space Redesign 1

Converting the public space in front of Tin Hau Temple to narrate its past ties as a fishing village. The new design allows for flexible uses, especially focusing on how it can accommodate the festival needs of the Tam Kung and Tin Hau festivals. A new pavilion is introduced that can be converted into a viewing platform during the parade. All park furniture can be removed during the festival when the site is transformed.

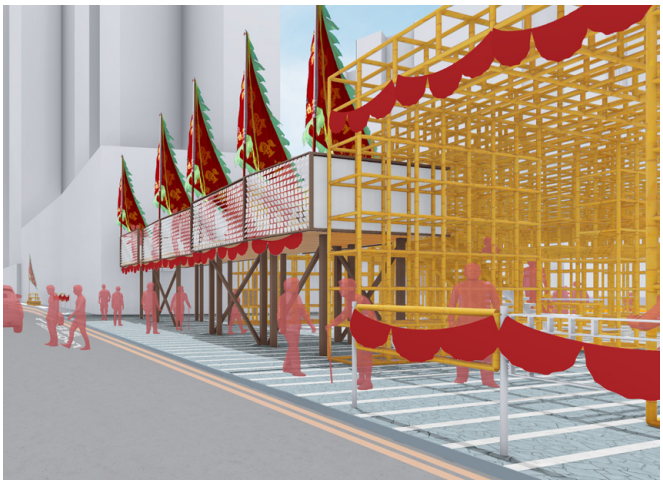


Fig. 6.22 Site 2 Pavilion Design

Proposed Fishing Community Inspired Design Elements

The Pavement of the Public Space is inspired by cross-cutting along the water's surface. The linear curves were introduced as pavement patterns to mimic how water ripples and parts ways for physical objects in the water.

Located close to the original shoreline, some boats used to dock right in front of the Tin Hau Temple. This is represented by the empty areas in the park where semi-permanent furniture is placed.

Fig. 6.23 Design Inspiration from Stilt Houses

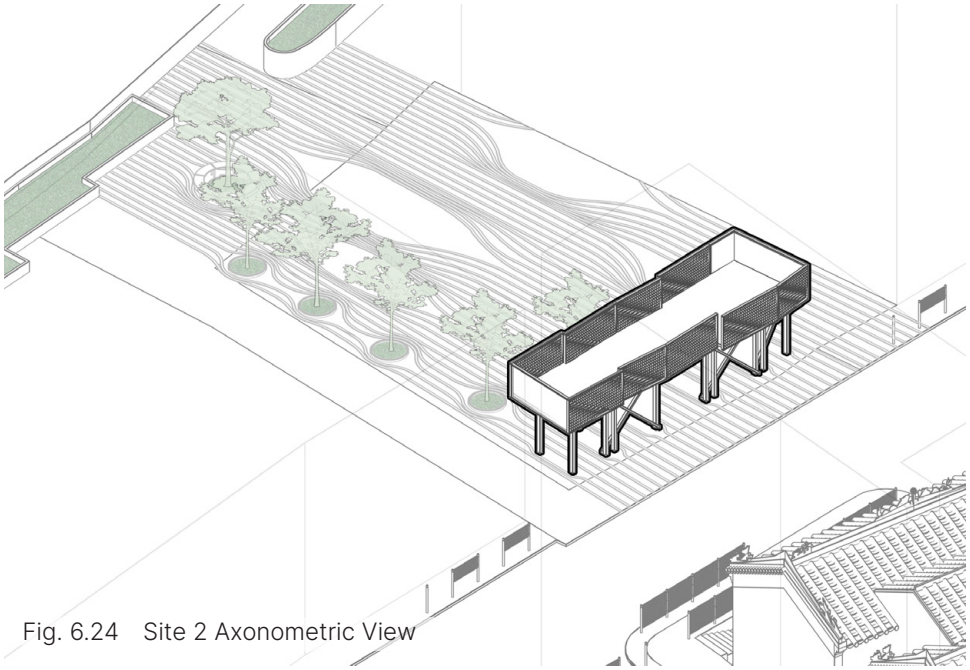


Fig. 6.24 Site 2 Axonometric View

Fig. 6.25 Example of Kinetic Facade

The Pavilion design is inspired by the stilt houses that used to populate the shorelines of Shau Kei Wan. Using wood as the primary material, the pavilion acts as a reminder of Shau Kei Wan's past.

The second level of the pavilion uses a kinetic facade, where the pieces can be moved by the wind, recreating the effects of the waves of the harbour.

Street Murals

Street Mural highlighting the festival's parade route will let the visitors know that the streets hold a special function for the community during its off-season. The underpass of the Island Eastern Corridor currently poses an obstacle. By introducing a mural, the portion of the underpass can be transformed into a gateway, linking the harbour back to the rest of the neighbourhood.

Fig. 6.26 Site 2 Public Space Proposed Design

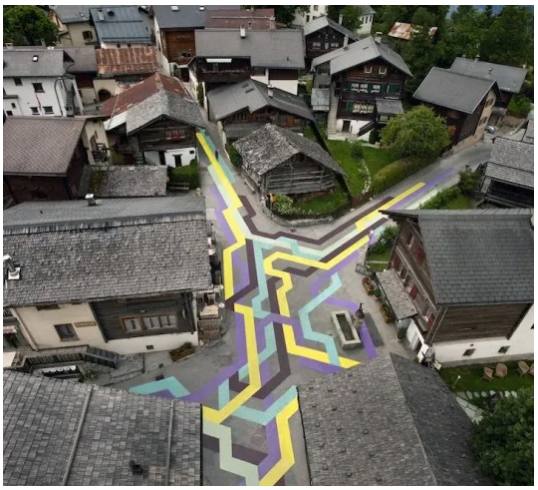


Fig. 6.27 Street Mural Example in Vercorin, Switzerland

Fences and Other Public Elements

A cohesive fence style should help define the festival route during its off-season. Additional motifs can be introduced to the public utilities in the area to provide hints about the neighbourhood's fishing village past.

Fig. 6.28 Standard Fences in front of Tam Kung Temple

Fig. 6.29 Special Fences along parts of Shau Kei Wan Main Street East

Proposed Fishing Community Inspired Design Elements

Fences Designs

A special fence design can be introduced to important areas along the parade path. Inspired by the open secret of the "Fisherman's Three Treasures", the design of the fences features three seafood that the fisherfolks views as delicacy. These seafood are often located at harsh environments, making them hard to catch. Due to the low yield and low demand at the market, the fisherfolks view them as a treat for themselves instead.

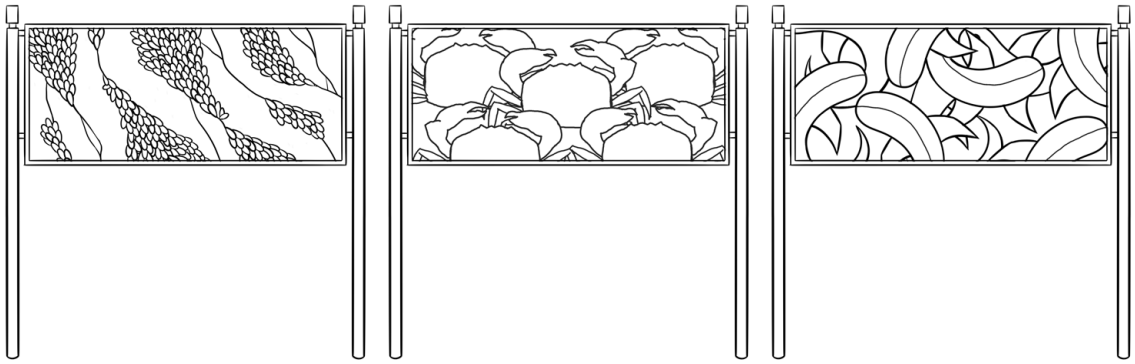


Fig. 6.30 Fence designs inspired by "Fisherman's Three Treasures", which are Goose Barnacles, "Blind Crabs" and Cobia

Planters Decorations

Another element introduced to the neighbourhood are barnacle sculptures added on existing public amenities. Scattered across the multiple common areas along the path this motif adds texture to the neighbourhood hinting its past.

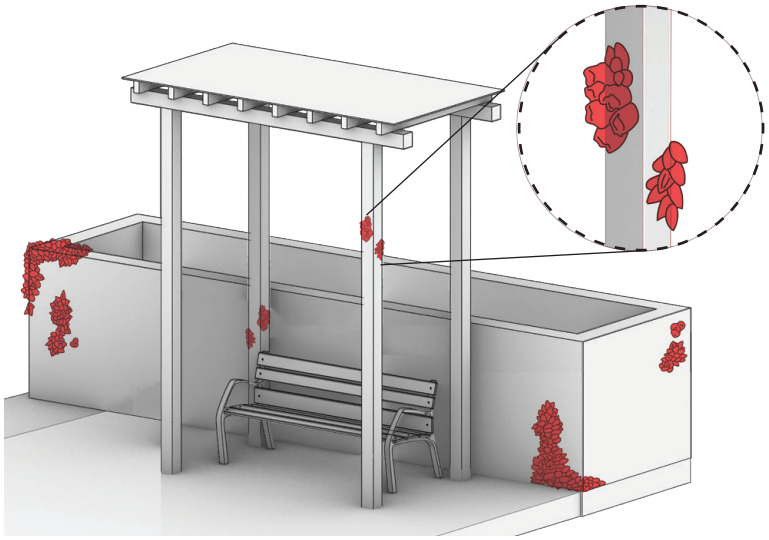


Fig. 6.31 Barnacle Elements added onto public amenities in the neighbourhood.

Strategy 02

Expand Presence of the Festival

Although the current Tam Kung festival already has the ability to transform the urban streetscape (see Fig 4.32, 4.33), they are usually limited to the times of the parade. The different elements are scattered across the neighbourhood and needs to be improved to build a continuous presence to hint the path of the parade. Building on the existing festive transformation of the urban streets, uniform gestures such as bamboo furniture and bamboo fences will be used throughout the parade route, allowing the neighbourhood to anticipate the full scale of the festival at its peak. Additional temporary bamboo structures will be introduced at selected sites to enable additional programs.

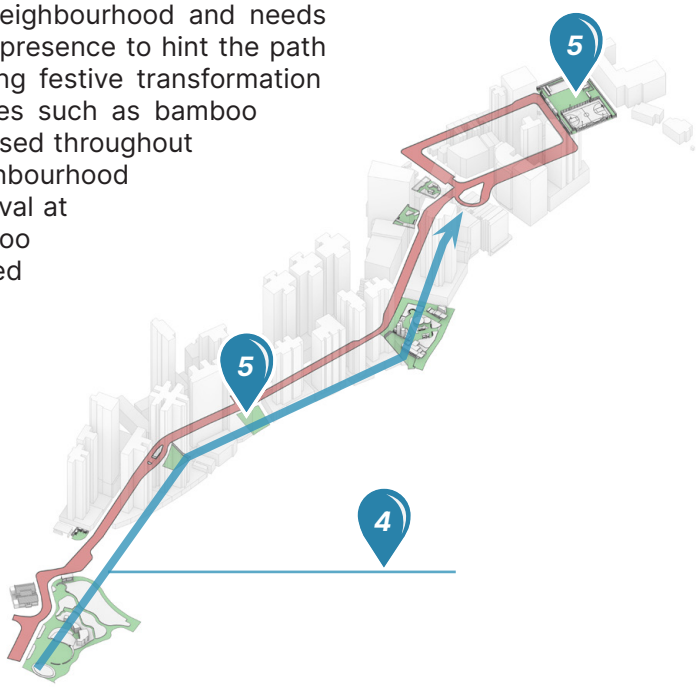


Fig. 6.32 Flags decorating the streets during Tam Kung Festival

Fig. 6.33 Decorative Banners of Tam Kung Festival

Bamboo Street Furniture

Street furniture with the same design language will be added to the public green spaces along the festival route.

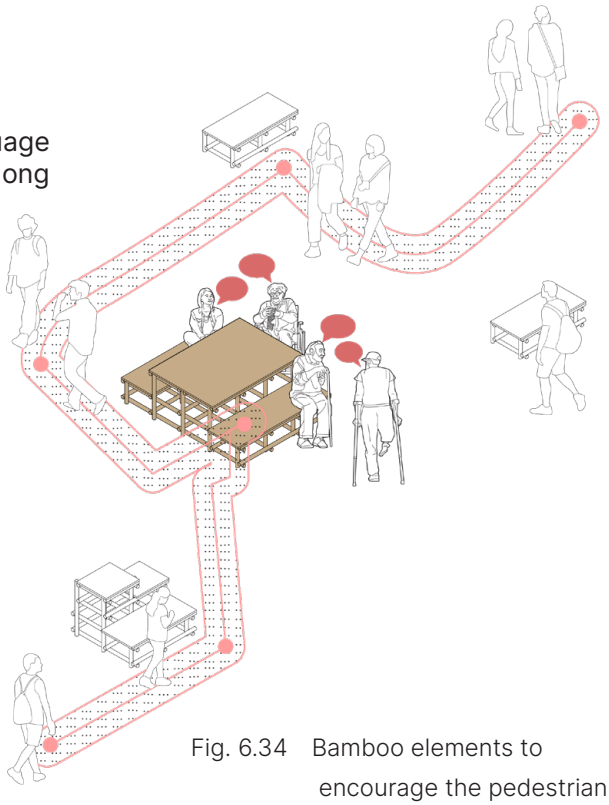


Fig. 6.34 Bamboo elements to encourage the pedestrian pathways along the parade

Temporary Bamboo Structures

Two main bamboo structures will be present during the Tam Kung Festival. The first is reintroducing the traditional bamboo theatre on the Factory Street Playground to allow for Chinese Opera Performances. The second is a bamboo structure, across the street of the Tin Hau Temple site, it redirects the community's focus back to its roots. The bamboo structure will also be a hub for various community engagement projects.

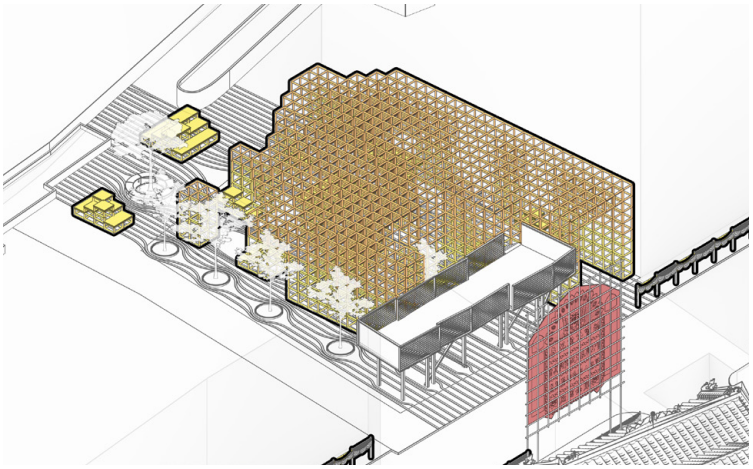


Fig. 6.35 Site 2 Bamboo Structure Proposed Design

Strategy 03

Embrace Temporary Elements of the Festival

The intervention aims to cater to the practical needs present to enhance the experience of the different participating groups at the Tam Kung festival. For example, to ensure safety, the local police sets up temporary fences along the parade route as a crowd control measure. To create a cohesive design language, a temporary bamboo fence system is introduced to work with the existing fences. On the other hand, parade onlookers tend to use the different elements of the urban fabric to gain a better view of the festivities. The proposed bamboo structures and existing pavilion is designed to aid these human behaviours, creating a dynamic experience for everyone involved.

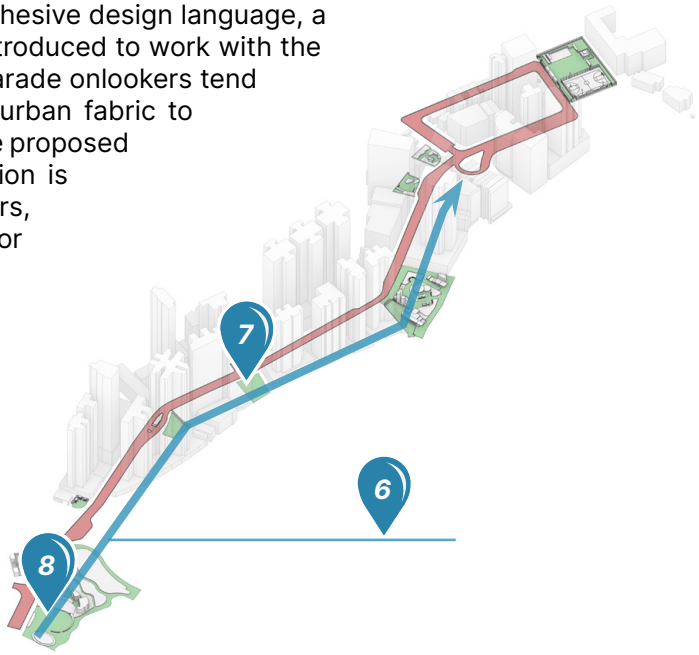


Fig. 6.36 Fences laid out by the police as a crowd control measurement.

Fig. 6.37 Pedestrians climbing on construction scaffoldings at the Toronto Pride Parade

Introduction of Temporary Fence System

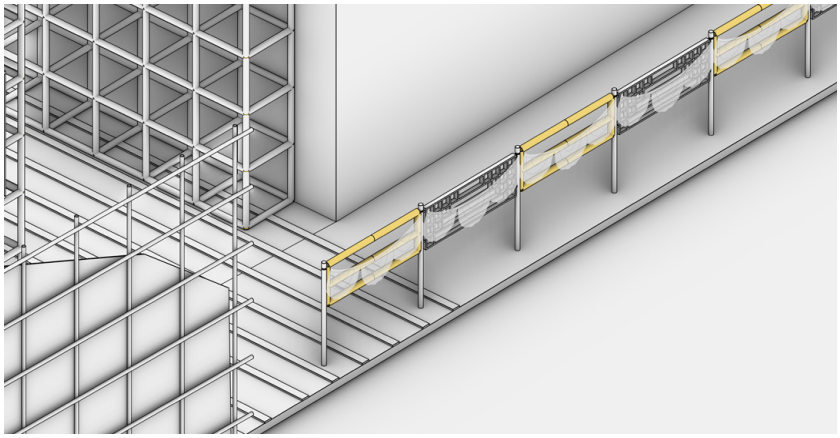


Fig. 6.38 Temporary Fence System

Pavillion Transformation into Viewing Platform

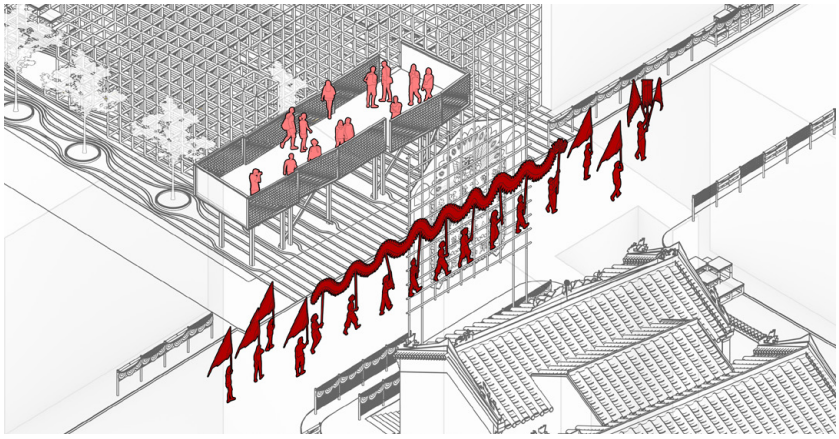


Fig. 6.39 Viewing Platform during Festival

Bamboo Structures to accommodate festival programs

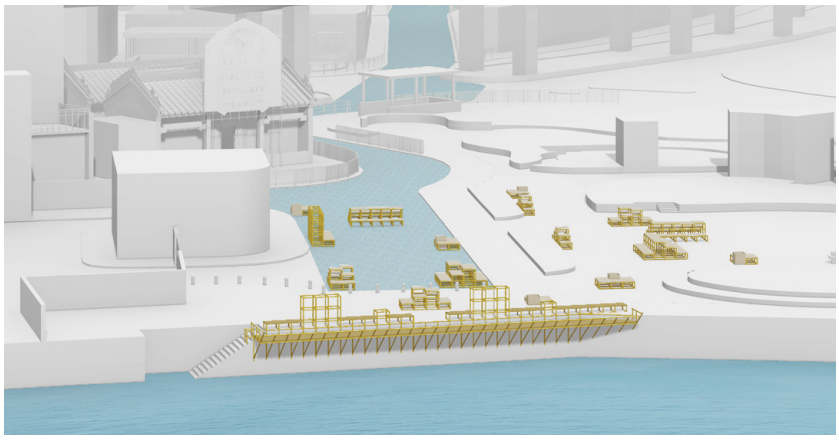


Fig. 6.40 Open Space in front of Tam Kung Festival

Additional Temporary Traces - Tam Kung Festival Parade Elements

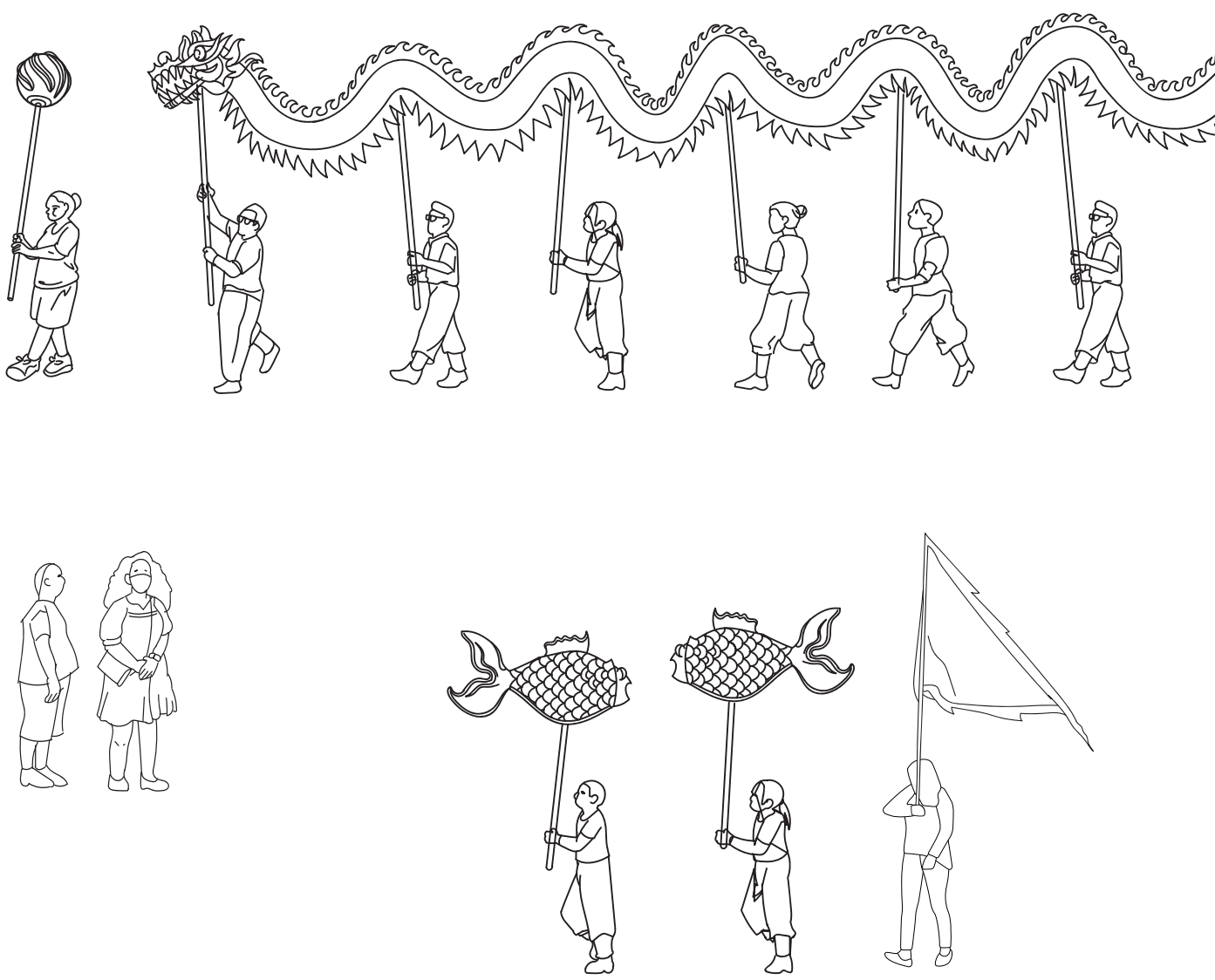
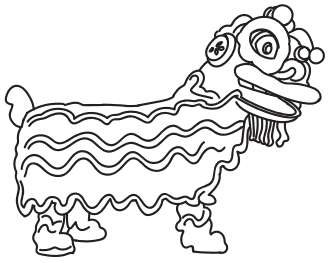
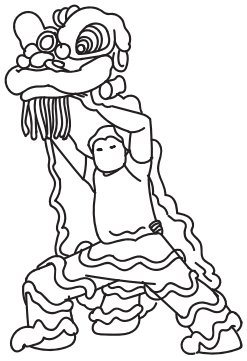
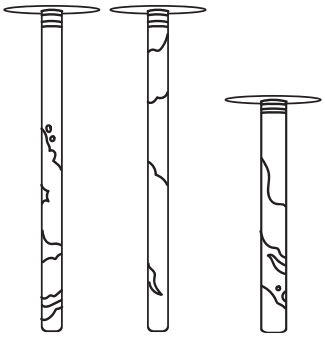
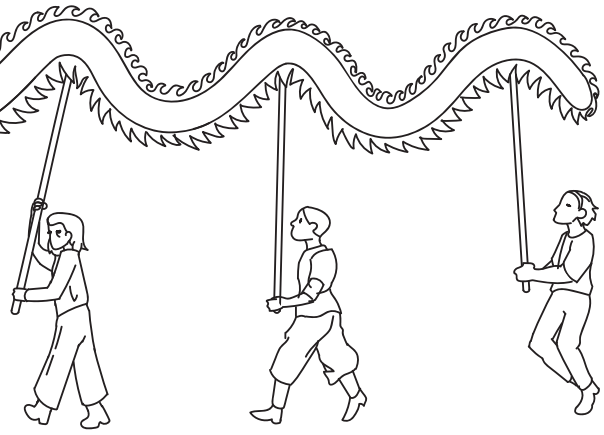


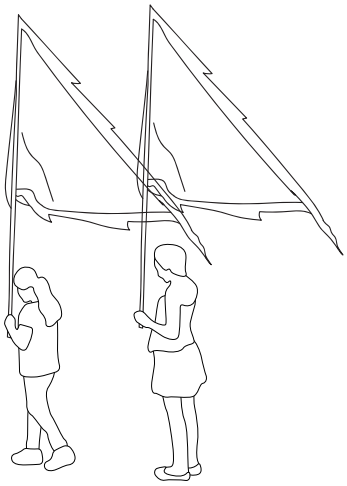
Fig. 6.41 Tam Kung Festival Parade Element Illustrations

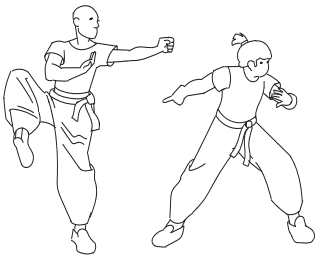


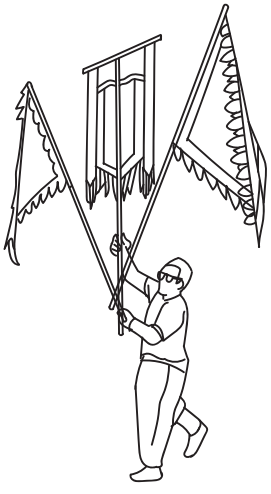












Strategy 04

Extend Duration of the Festival

Currently, the Tam Kung festival is usually limited to a one-day event, focusing on its parade celebration. This greatly reduces the scale and impact of the festival. To allow for a more impactful community event. This intervention proposes extending the festival celebration and starting it on the day of the Tin Hau Festival. This will allow for a transitional period of up to 2 weeks to fully utilize the temporary bamboo structures for various community involvement programs.

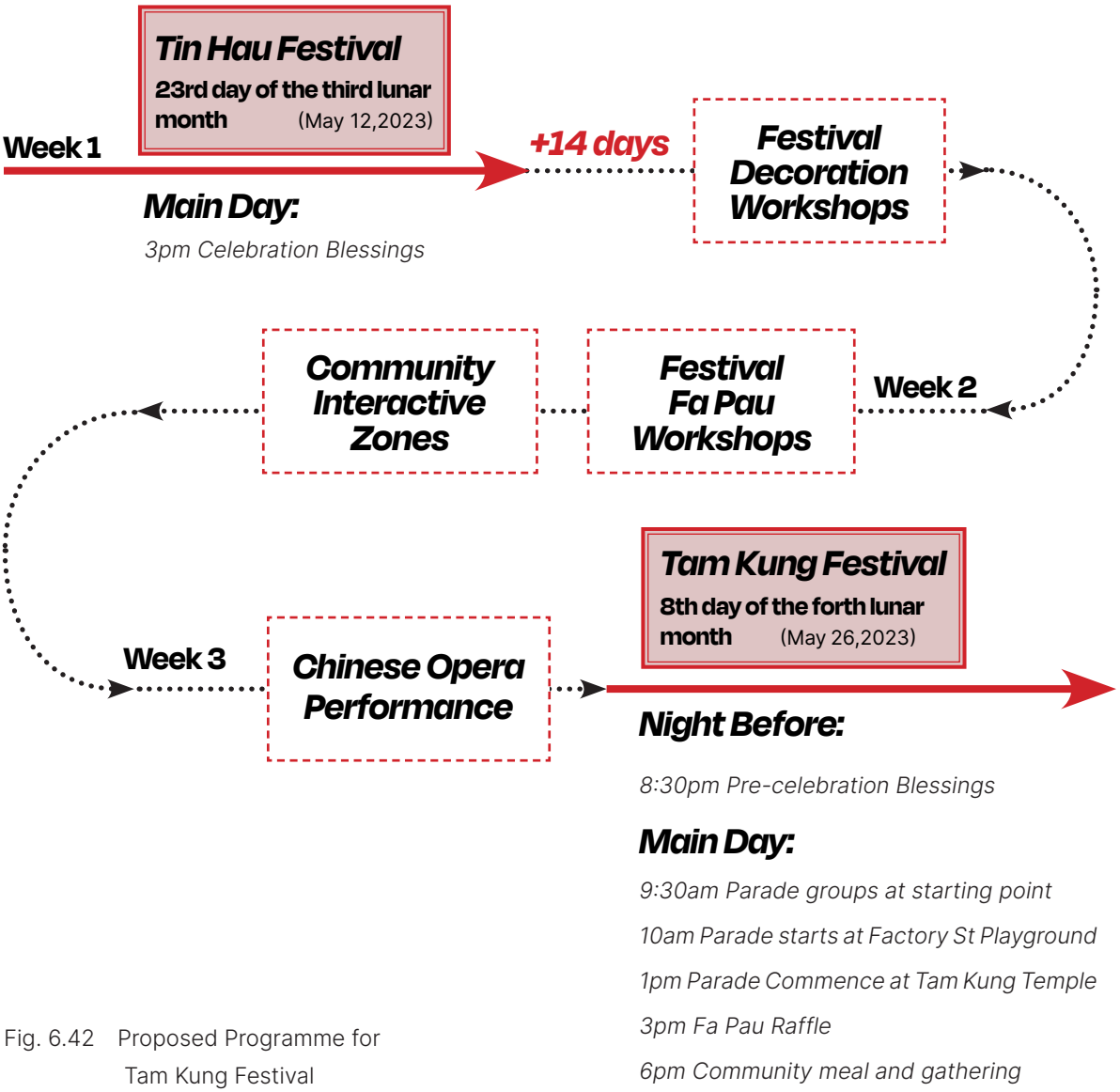


Fig. 6.42 Proposed Programme for Tam Kung Festival

Strategy 05

Increase Community Involvement and Interaction

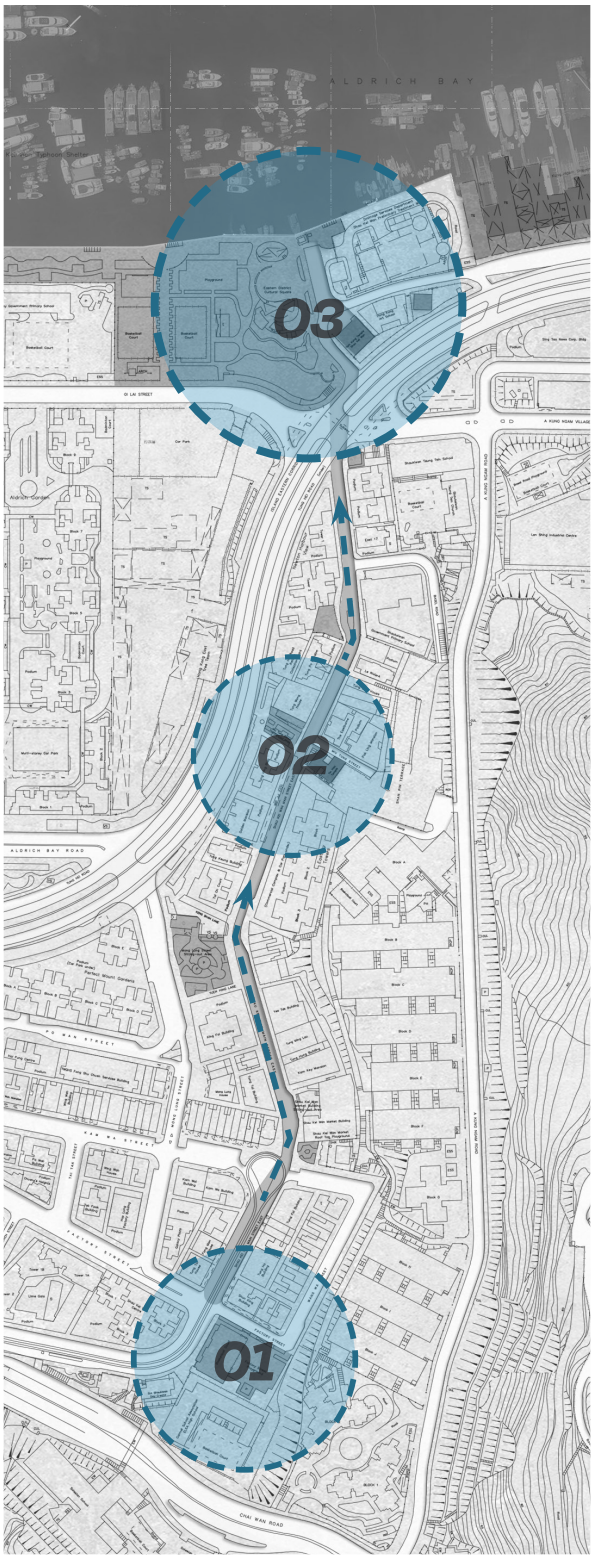
The current Tam Kung Festival is a community-led celebration, with no direct involvement by the Shau Kei Wan Tam Kung Temple when organizing. Instead, the groups involved are more exclusive, making it hard for casual participants apart from an observer in the Tam Kung Festival.

With the now extended festival period and additional spaces dedicated to the festival, various community involvement projects can be organized, opening up the experience for a broader audience. For example, traditional paper craft workshops can be set up in the main bamboo structures to allow casual participation by the residents in the neighbourhood, allowing them to take part in different aspects of the festival.

Fig. 6.43 Community Dining Events

Fig. 6.44 Traditional Handcraft Workshops

Intervention - Points of Interest



03 Tam Kung Temple + Pier + Threshold

- "The Return to the Sea", act as the ending point of the parade
- Highway acting as threshold between the sea and the neighbourhood

02 Pavilion Design + Tin Hau Temple

- Tin Hau Temple decreased in popularity, and Tin Hau festival celebrations no longer house performances
- The public space is the former location of local fish market decades ago, adjacent a pier.

01 Traditional Bamboo Theatre + Parade Starting Point

- Community public park converts to a bamboo theatre to house Chinese Opera performances for the gods

Fig. 6.45 Tam Kung Temple

Fig. 6.46 Highway Underpass

Fig. 6.47 Tin Hau Temple

Fig. 6.48 Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area

Fig. 6.49 Factory Street Playground

01 Traditional Bamboo Theatre + Parade Starting Point

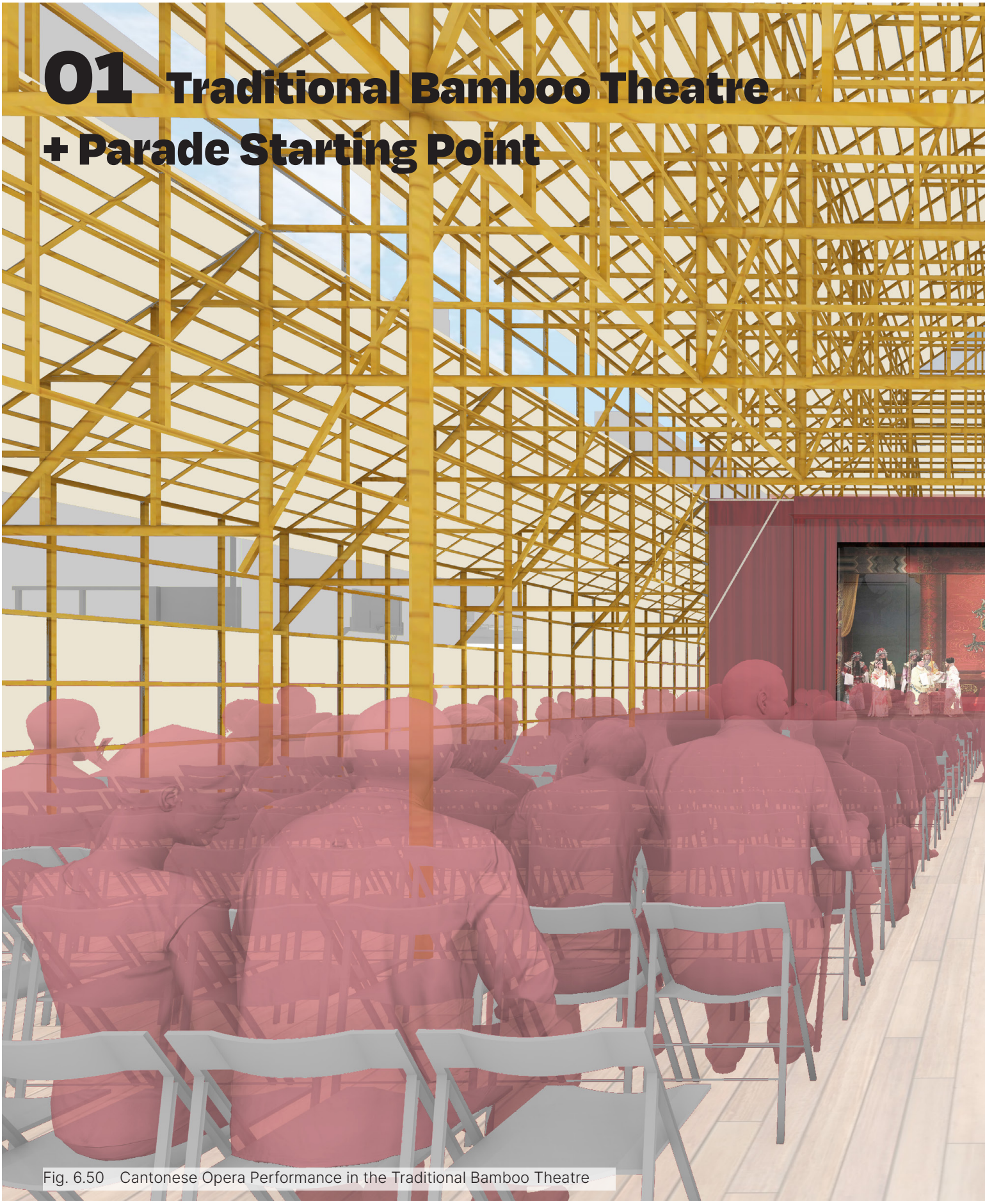
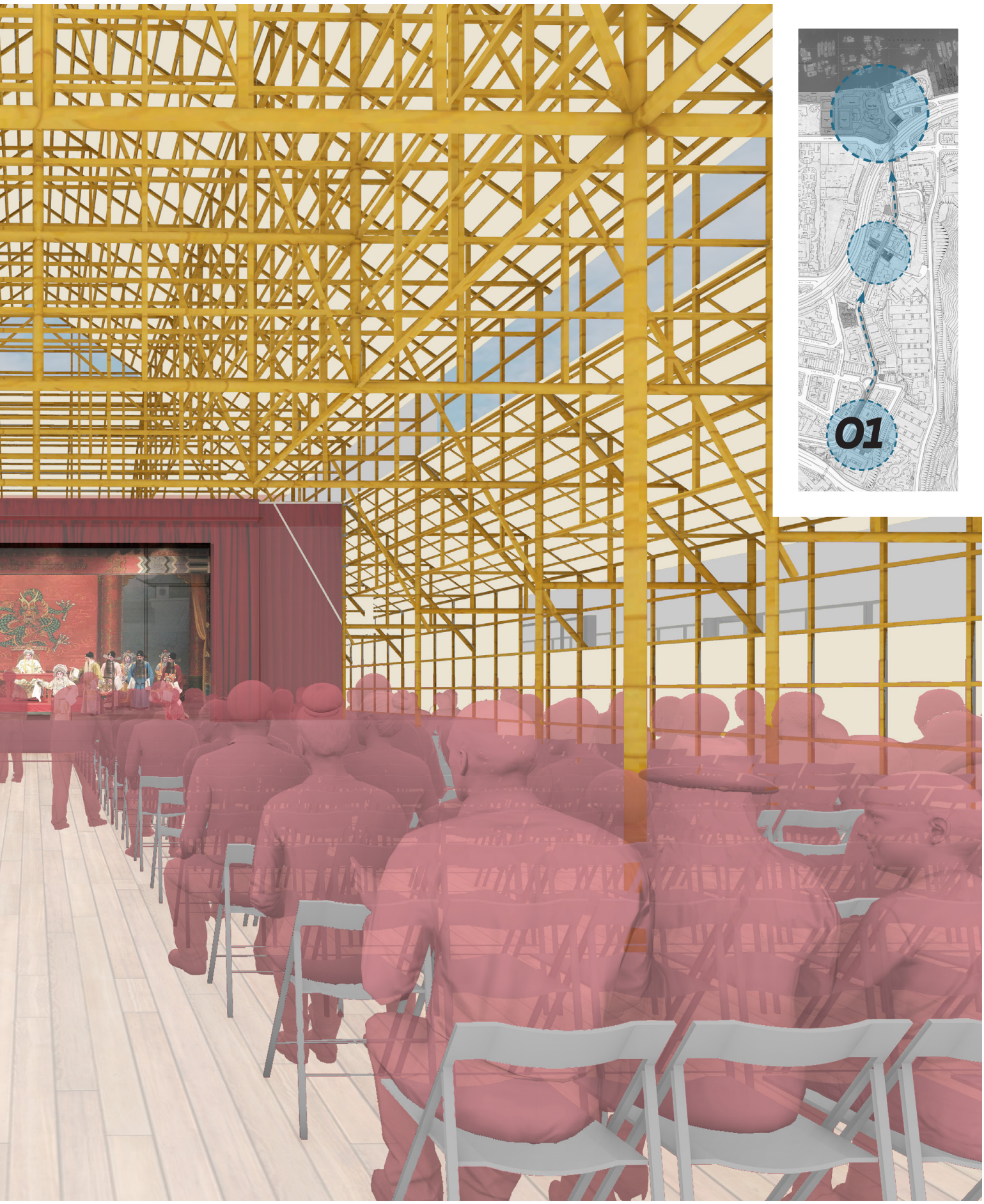


Fig. 6.50 Cantonese Opera Performance in the Traditional Bamboo Theatre



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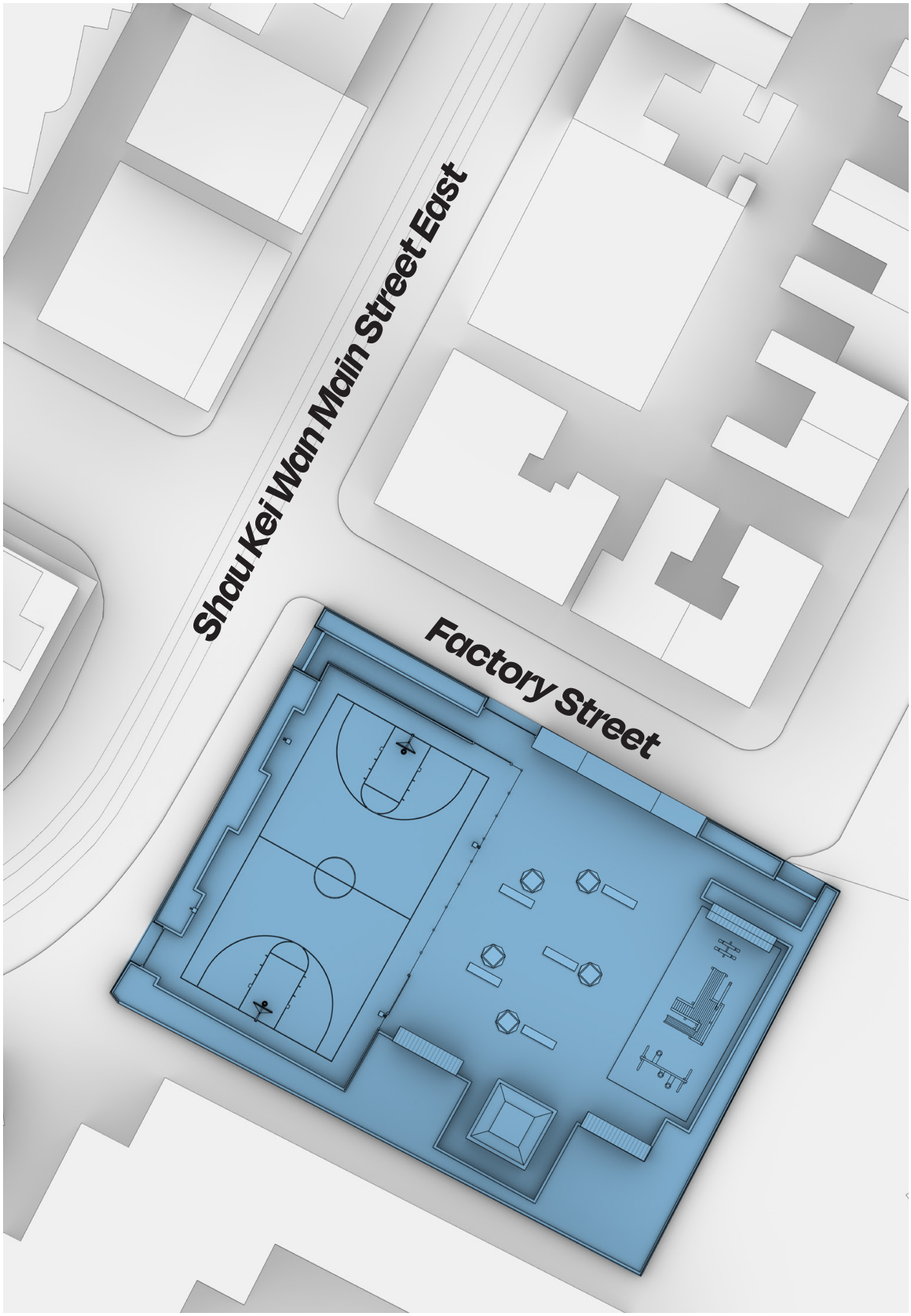


Fig. 6.51 Site 3 Plan during Off-Season

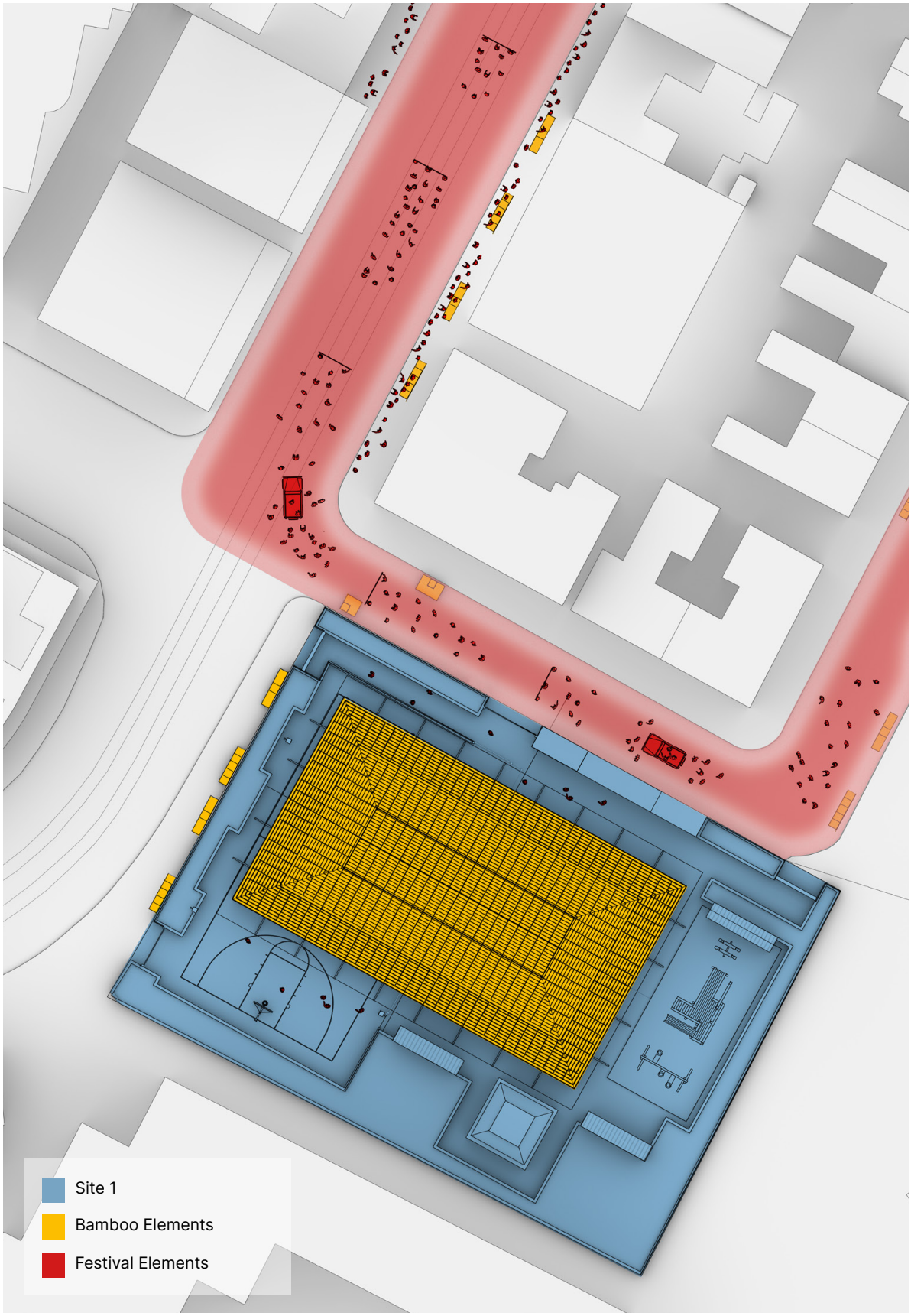


Fig. 6.52 Site 3 Plan during Tam Kung Festival

Shun King Building

Factory Street

Fig. 6.53 Site 3 Elevation during Off-Season

(Site 01)
Factory Street Playground

Elsa High School

Parade Starting Point

Shun King Building

Factory Street

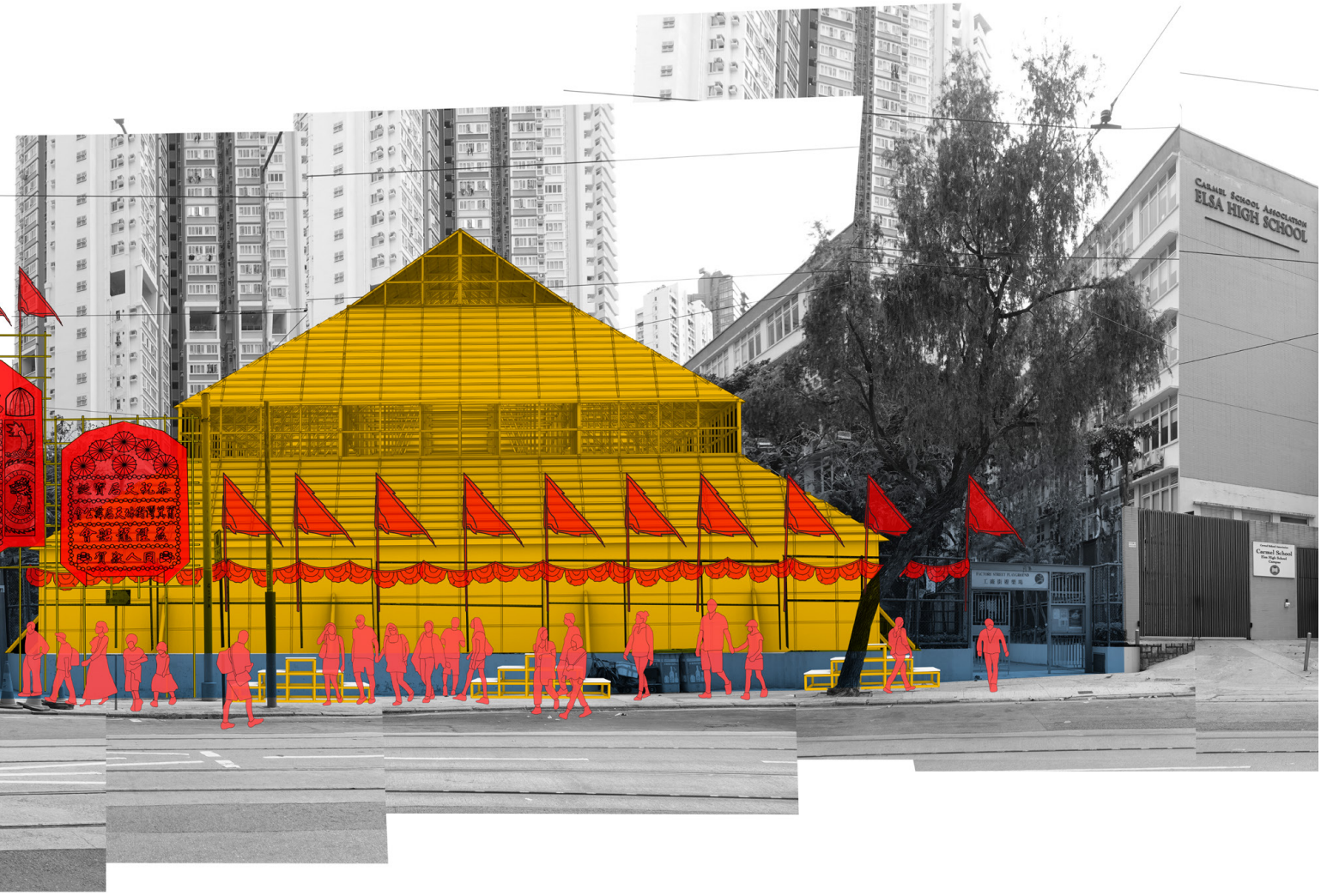
Fig. 6.54 Site 3 Elevation during Tam Kung Festival

Traditional Bamboo Theatre

(Site 01)

Factory Street Playground

Elsa High School



02 Pavilion Design

+ Tin Hau Temple

Fig. 6.55 Back View of Site 2 through Island Eastern Corridor


02
后天古
街灣箕筲
食鮮

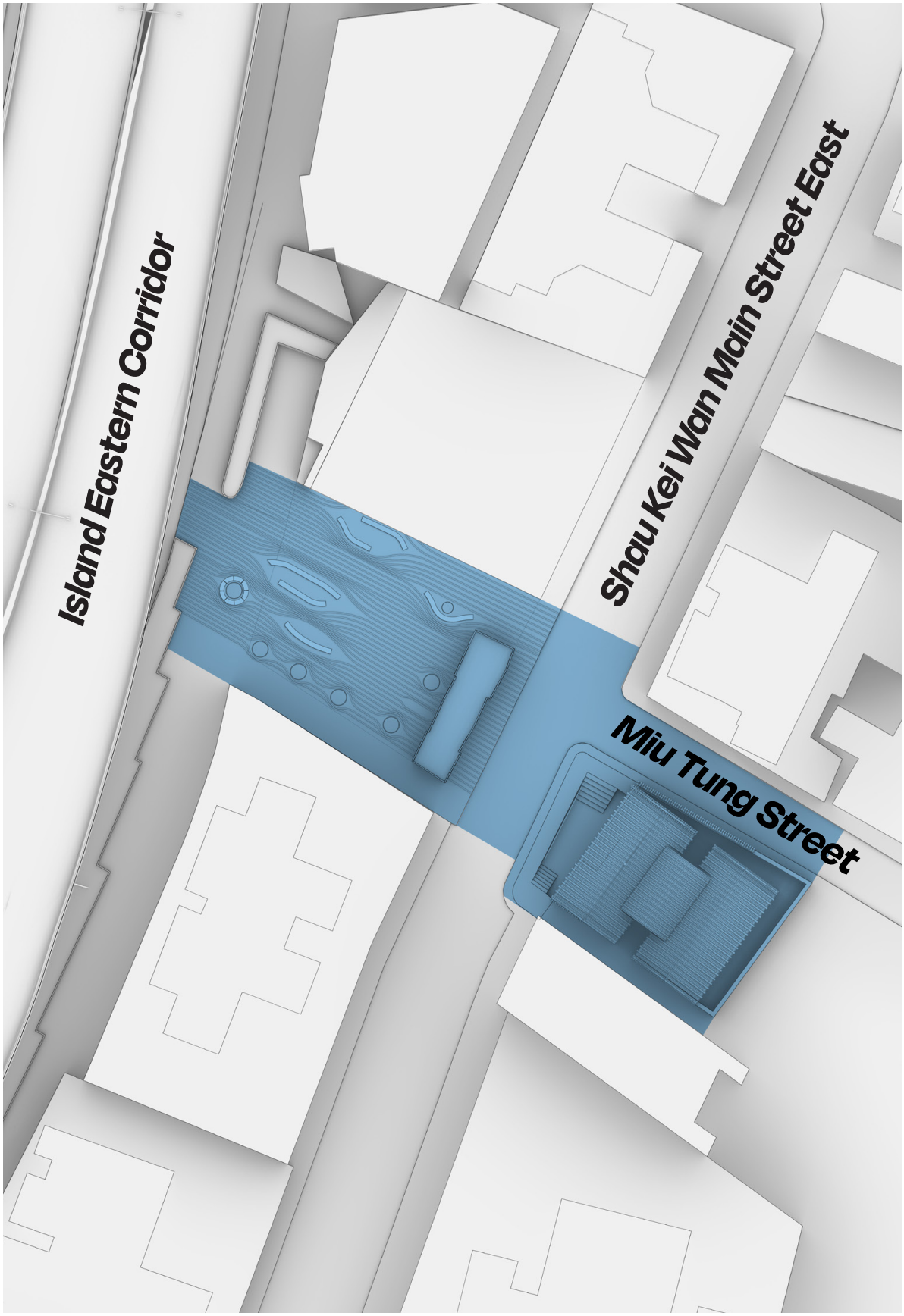


Fig. 6.56 Site 2 Plan during Off-Season

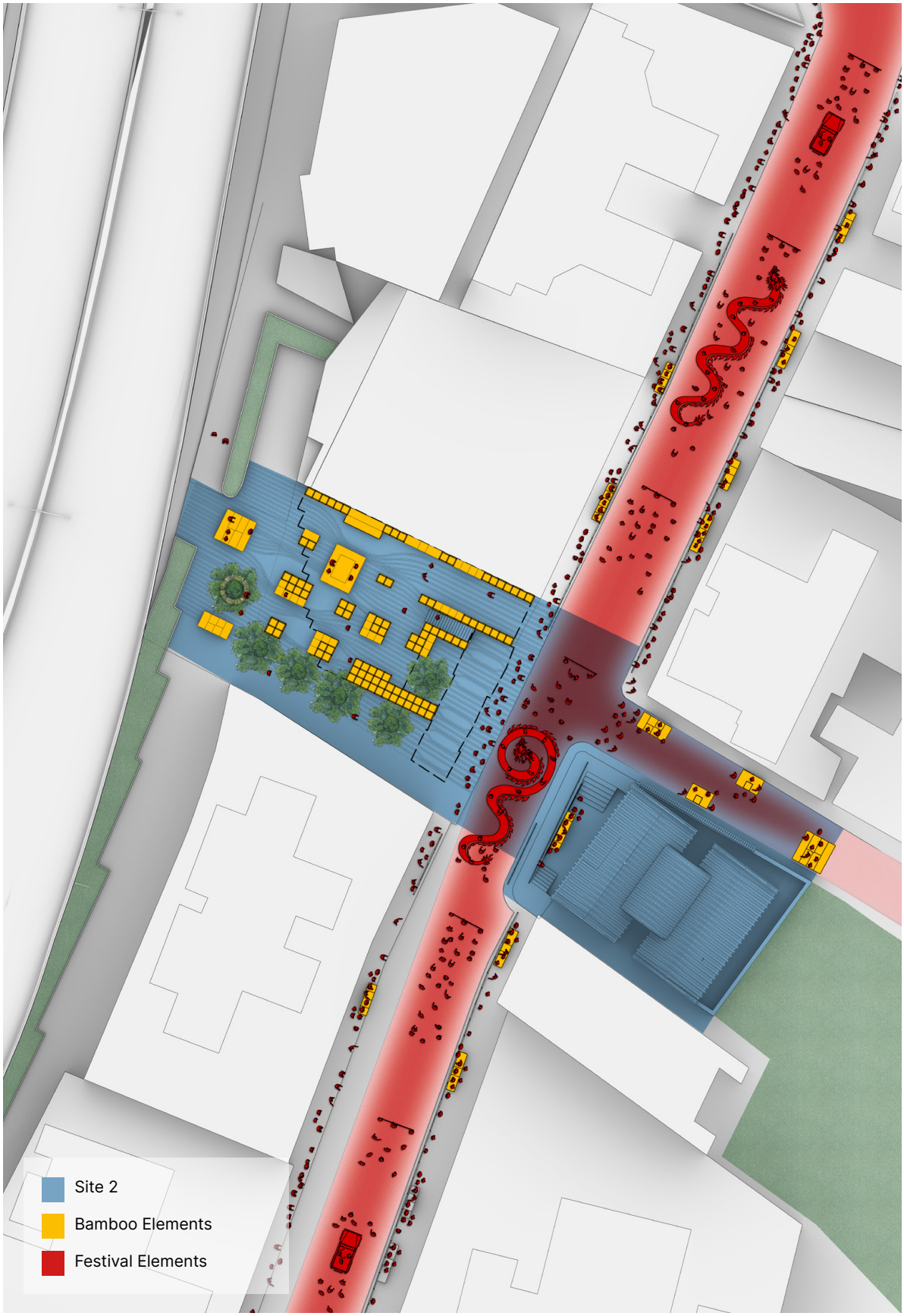


Fig. 6.57 Site 2 Plan during Tam Kung Festival

The Eastborne

Miu Tung Street

Fig. 6.58 Site 2 (Tin Hau Temple) Elevation during Off-Season

(Site 02)
Tin Hau Temple

Sai Yun Lane

55-57A SKW Main St E

Eastway Towers

Festival Gathering Area

The Eastborne

Miu Tung Street

Fig. 6.59 Site 2 (Tin Hau Temple) Elevation during Tam Kung Festival

Festival Decorations

(Site 02)

Tin Hau Temple

Sai Yun Lane | 55-57A SKW Main St E | Eastway Towers

Tung Hing Building

Fig. 6.60 Site 2 (Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area) Elevation during Off-Season

(Site 02)

Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area

Tung Wong House

Tung Hing Building

Fig. 6.61 Site 2 (Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area) Elevation during Tam Kung Festival

Bamboo Pavilion

(Site 02)

Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area

Tung Wong House

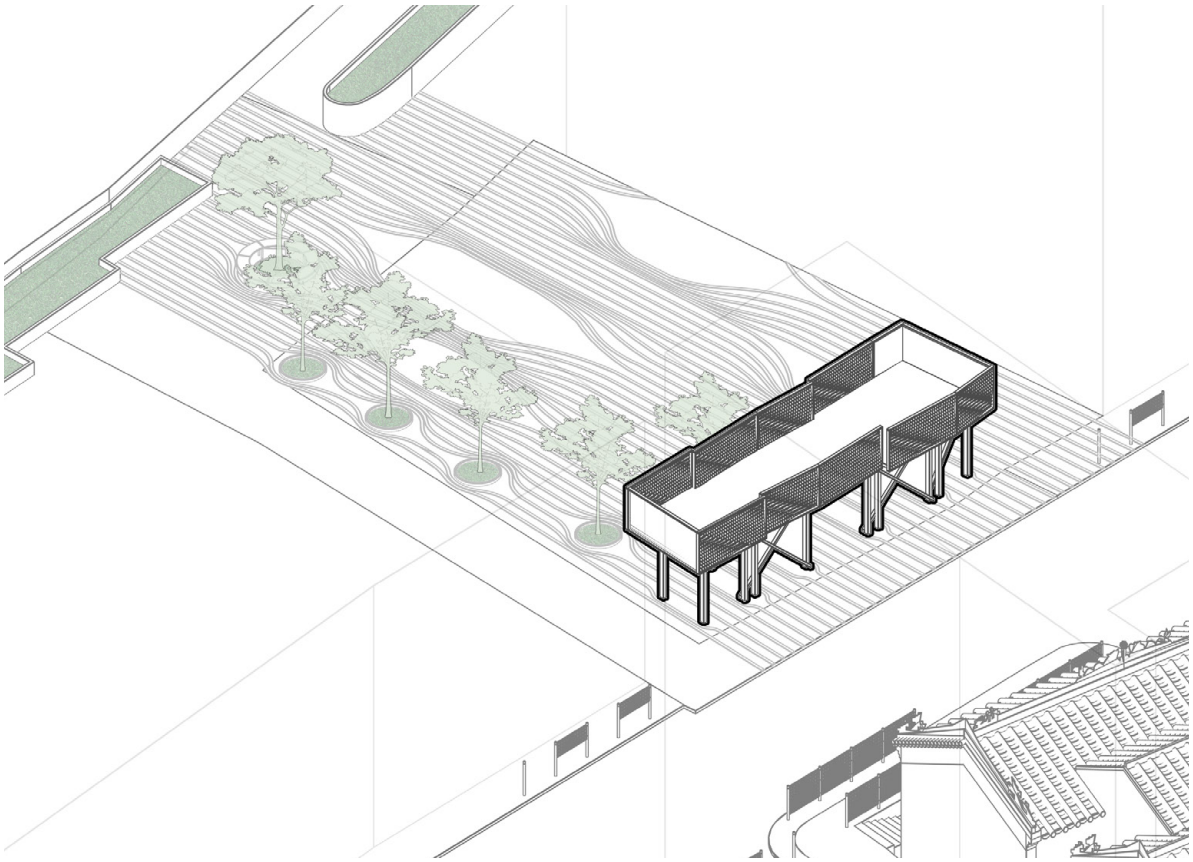


Fig. 6.62　Site 2 (Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area) AXO during Off-Season

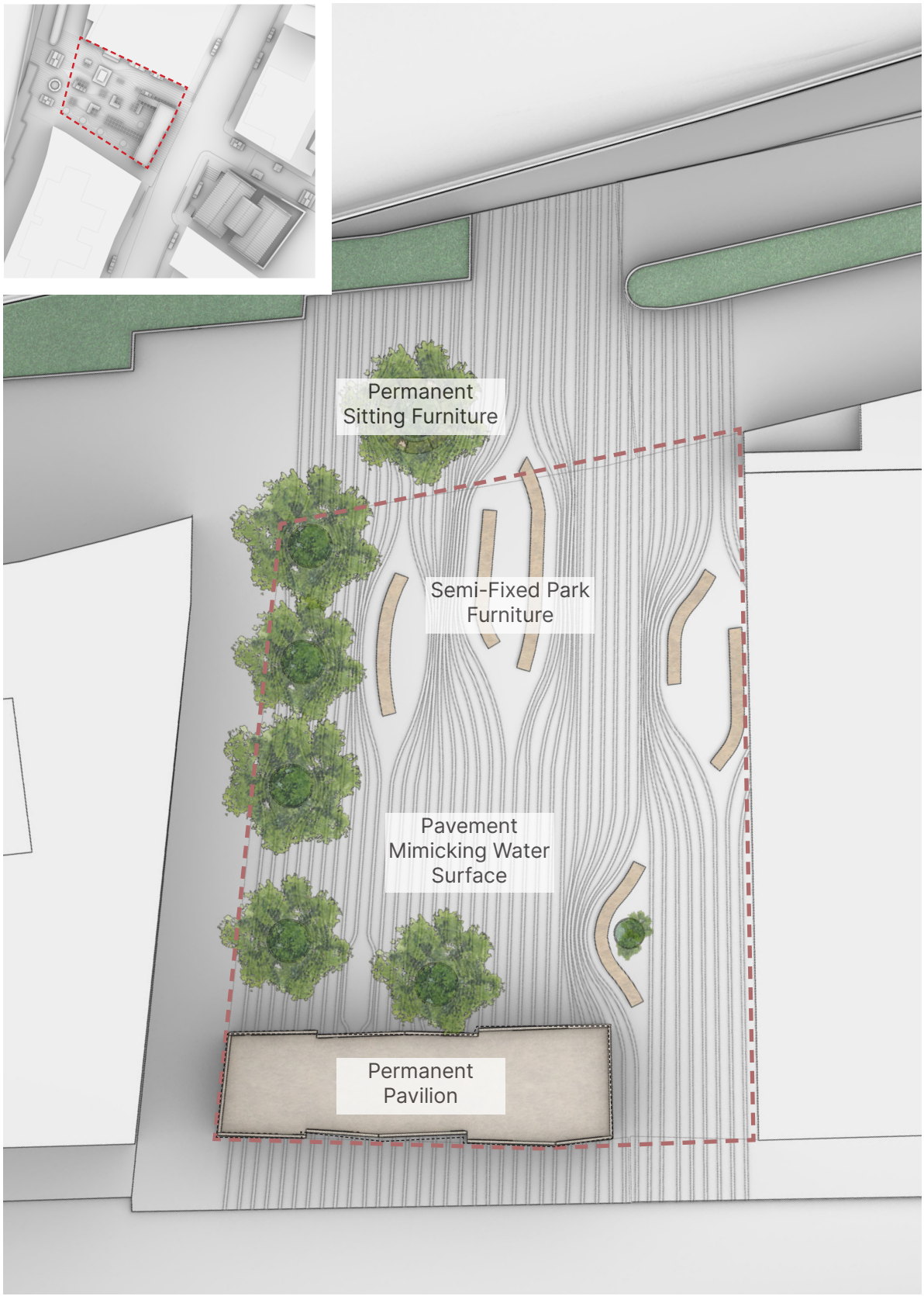


Fig. 6.63 Site 2 (Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area) Plan during Off-Season

Fig. 6.64　Site 2 (Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area) AXO during Tam Kung Festival

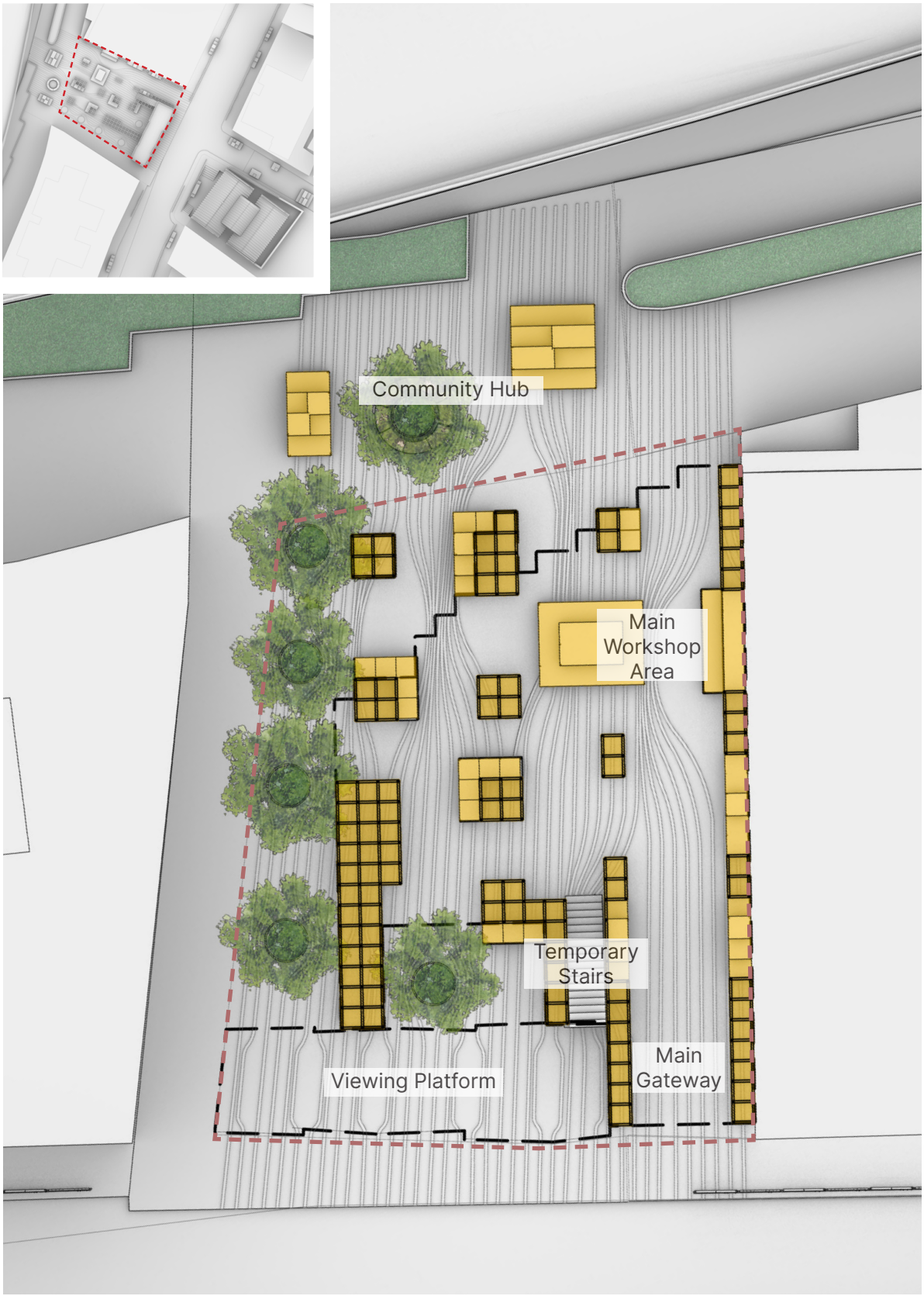


Fig. 6.65 Site 2 (Miu Tung Street Sitting-out Area) Plan during Tam Kung Festival

Fig. 6.66 View of Main Street at Site 2 in preparation for the Tam Kung Festival

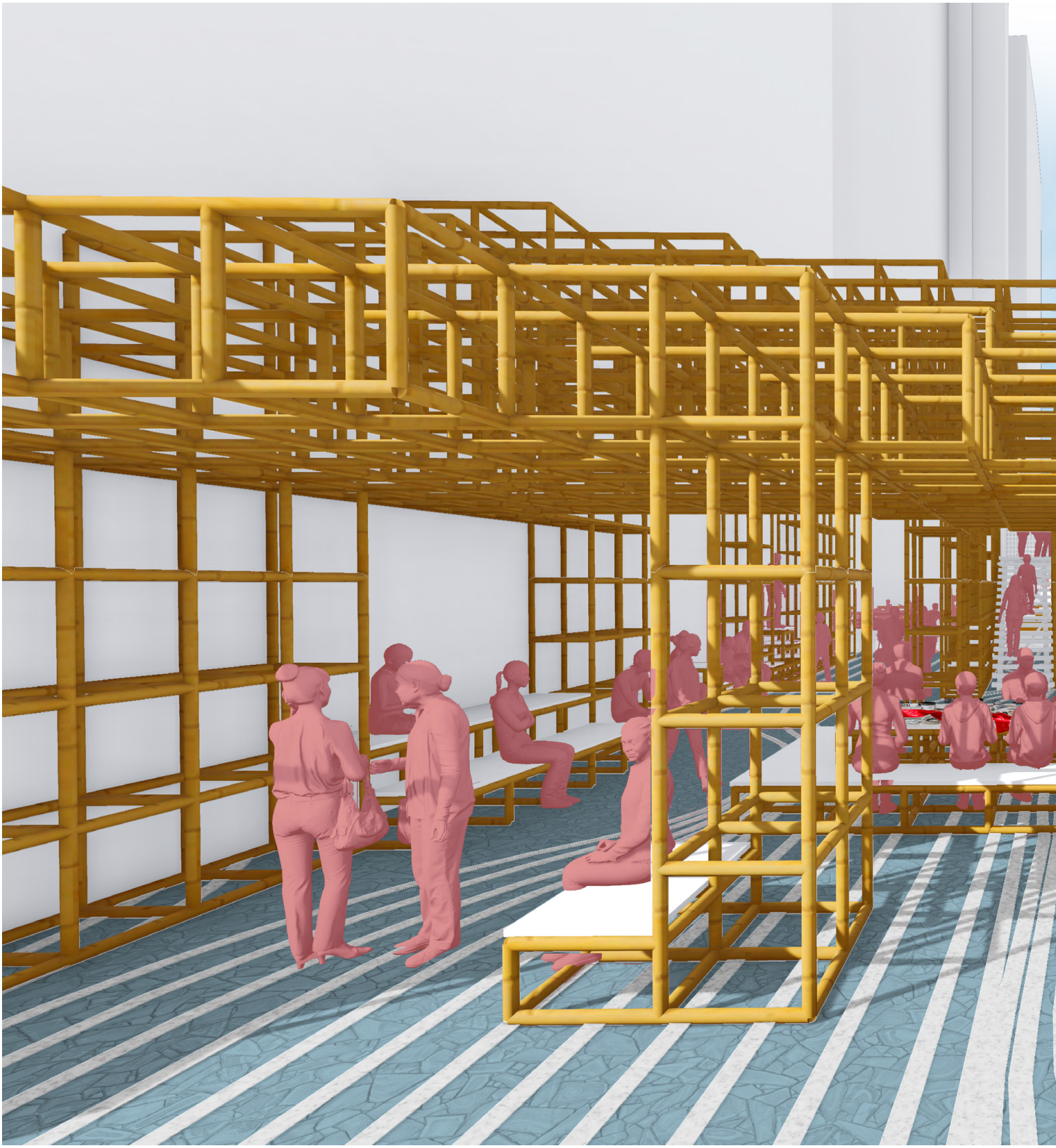
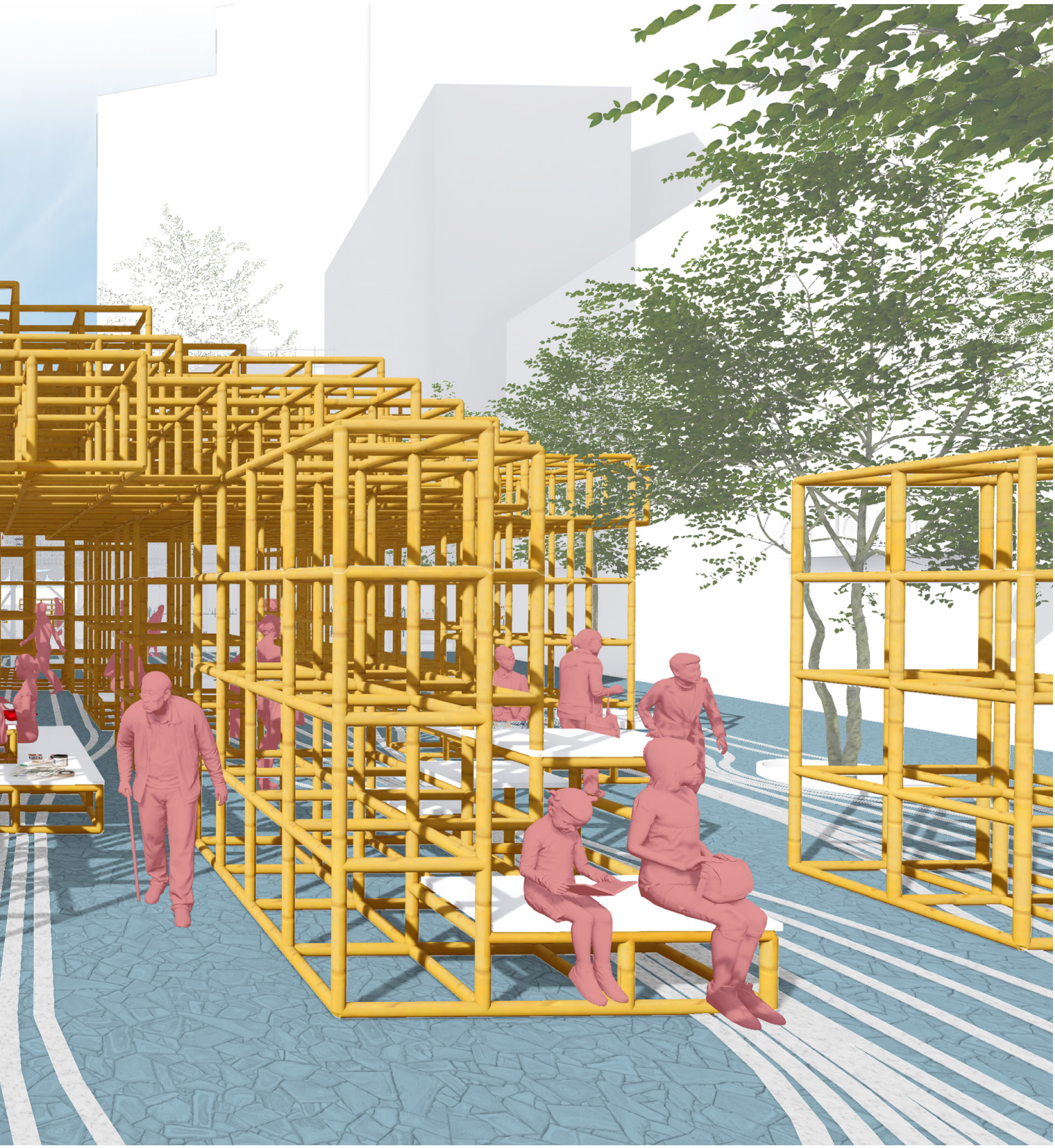


Fig. 6.67 Zoom-In View of Pavilion



03 Threshold

+ Tam Kung Temple

+ Waterfront

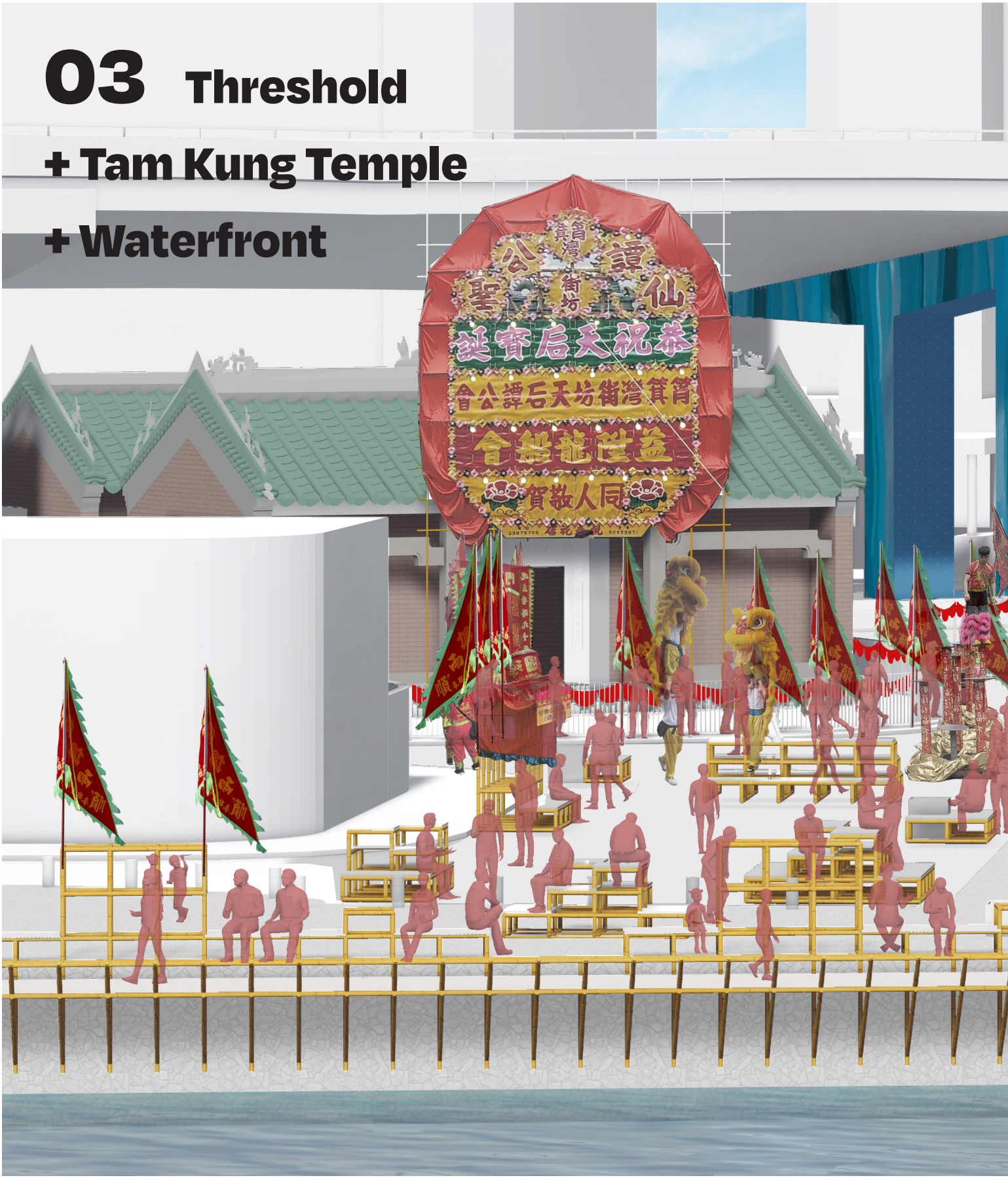
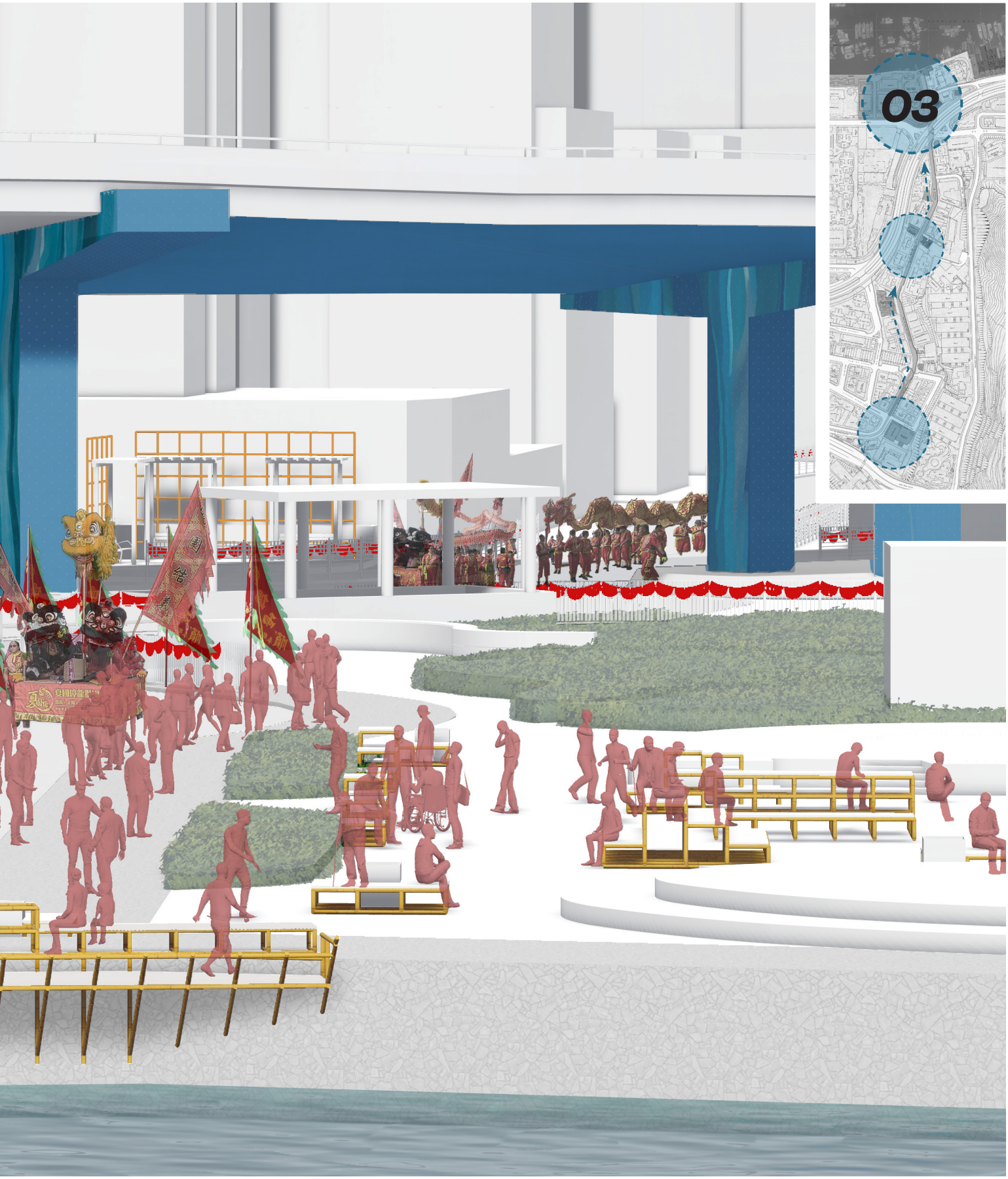


Fig. 6.68 Zoom-In View of Pavilion



03

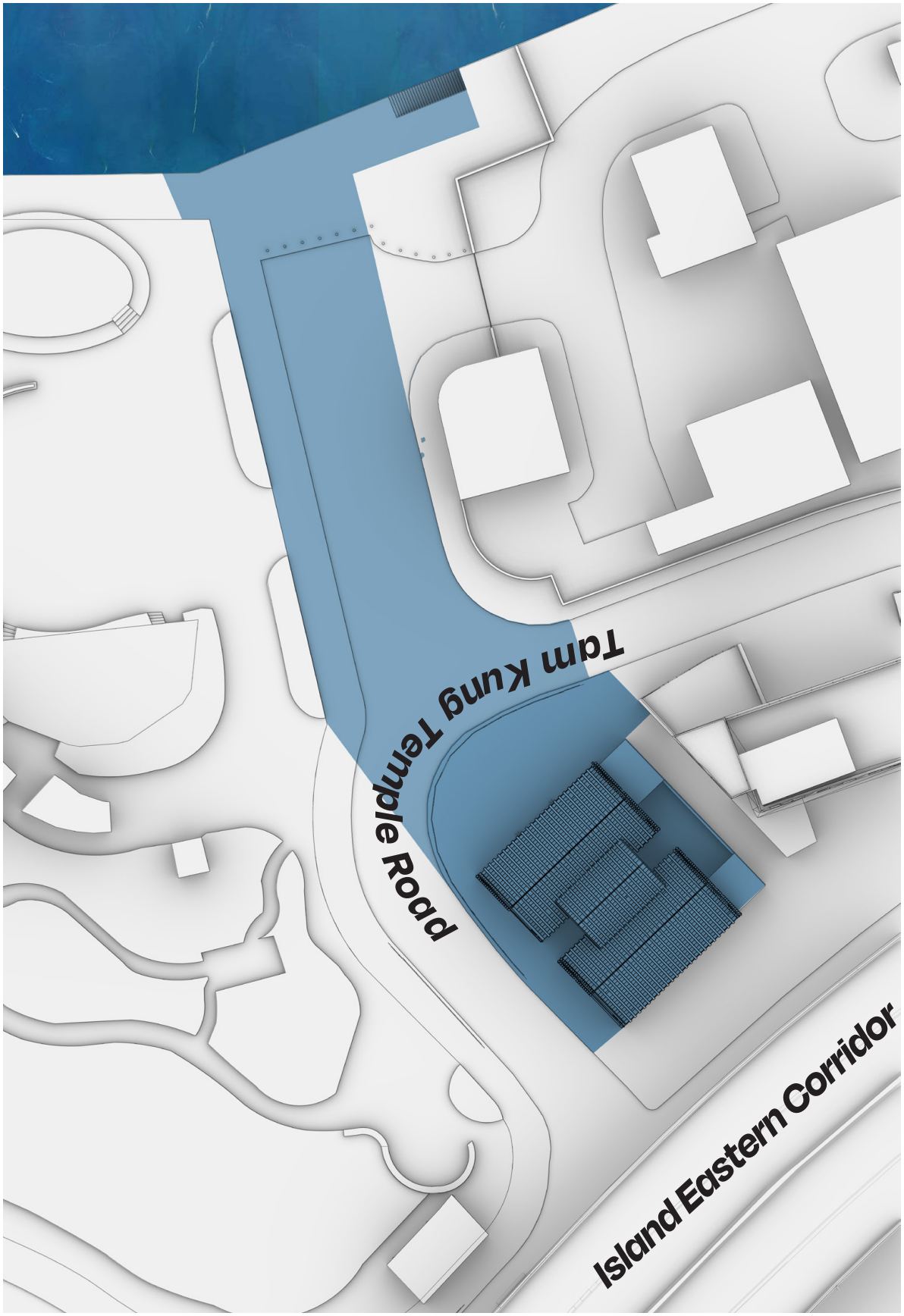


Fig. 6.69 Site 2 Plan during Off-Season

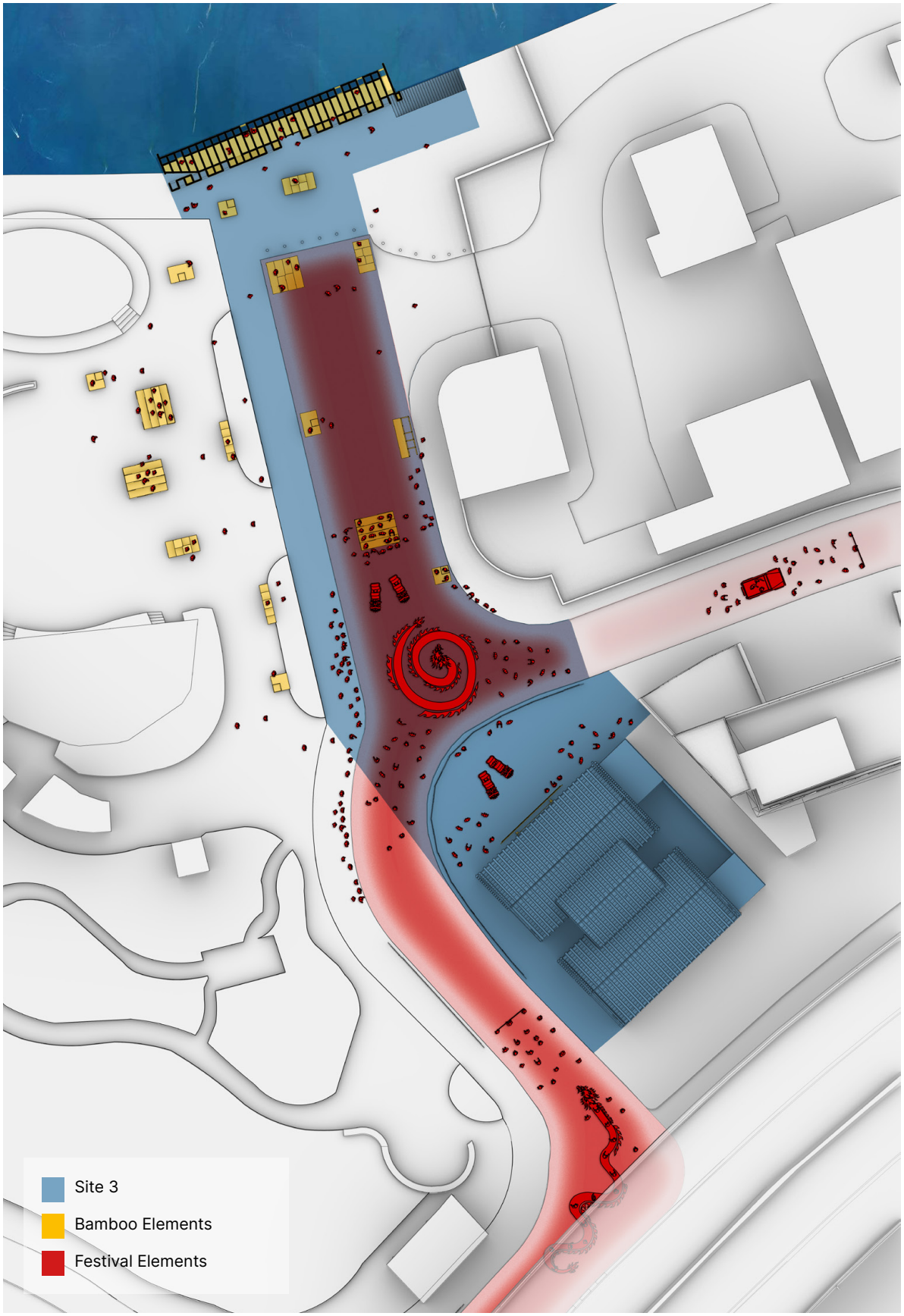


Fig. 6.70 Site 2 Plan during Tam Kung Festival

(A Kung Ngam Water Selling Kiosk)
Shau Kei Wan Typhoon Shelter Drainage Services Department Tam Kung Temple Road

Fig. 6.71 Site 3 Elevation during Off-Season

(Site 03)
Tam Kung Temple

Tung Hei Road | Island Eastern Corridor | Tung Hei Road

Fig. 6.72 Site 3 Elevation during Tam Kung Festival

Festival Decorations

(Site 03)

Tam Kung Temple

Tung Hei Road | Island Eastern Corridor | Tung Hei Road

Conclusion

"Materializing the Hidden Identity of Hong Kong" emerged from an investigation into how the story of my family heritage in Hong Kong's fishing community was expressed in the urban fabric. The lack of land-built structures owned by the fishing community severely limits how the fisherfolk can gather and connect. In turn, the inadequate environment poses a barrier for the descendants of the community to connect with their heritage. The result significantly affects the continuity and future of the fishing community.

As a response, this thesis focuses on how architectural interventions can aid the fostering of community identity. To help the fishing community stake their claim in the urban fabric, instead of creating another statement-like piece of architecture, this thesis hopes to work at a modest level, proposing an intervention that utilizes available resources for the community and suggesting that architecture can become a medium for dispersed people to recognize themselves as a community.

The site Shau Kei Wan was chosen due to its exemplary history as a fishing village and the intense urban transformation the area has undergone. The Tam Kung Festival, in particular, allows many dormant practices central to fisherfolk culture and to the heritage in Shau Kei Wan to come to life briefly. Festivals are experiences in time, transporting us to a realm where traditions, beliefs, and cultural practices are embraced. In essence, the festival is an experience that intertwines the past, present and provides a pathway to the future. In a dense metropolis like Hong Kong, it is sustainable to focus on experiences in time to enable spaces shared between different cultures and subcultures. Mirroring the traditional rhythm of life of the fisherfolks, this festival acts as an opportunity to enable the fishing community members to reemerge and temporarily stake their claim in the urban fabric.

My recent visit to Hong Kong gave me further insight into this intervention's practicality. Although I was optimistic about the proposal, I was initially unsure if my research would translate well into real life. It was a pleasant surprise to observe the promotion and work the current organizers of the Tam Kung Festival put

into this year's festival. It shows a strong desire to continue this tradition. Among the organizers, some have religious ties to the deity, others wish to engage in events that bring the community together, and a few may see this as a purely economic incentive to bring in visitors. No matter their agenda, the Tam Kung Festival can be all of the above and more. What is needed is for the community to acknowledge the potential of the Tam Kung Festival.

This thesis hopes to broaden the role the Tam Kung Temple can play in the neighbourhood and reveal its ability to also act as a catalyst for fostering meaningful connections and allowing for the renewal of community identity. As experienced throughout my research journey, there are apparent barriers for younger generations to gain information from the current members of the fishing community. The nature of this intervention is to create opportunities for dialogue; for both current and future participants, enriching the collective identity of the fishing community. It is a proposal to investigate how one can utilize tangible elements in a neighbourhood to facilitate the transfer of intangible cultural knowledge amongst its community members. The focus on transforming the urban streetscape of Shau Kei Wan, both temporary and permanent, would allow for more significant communal celebrations and performances. In turn, it encourages interaction and dialogue among festival participants. Additionally, the transformed spaces can be dedicated to cultural exhibitions and workshops, providing opportunities to transfer cultural knowledge and ensuring the preservation and continuation of traditions for future generations.

The proposed intervention is the first step of what I can imagine to be a series of community-led projects, with permanent and temporary traces added over time to connect to the neighbourhood's past. With hope, through the start of the purposeful architectural intervention of the Tam Kung Festival, the fishing community's presence will be prominently etched into the urban fabric of Shau Kei Wan, leaving a legacy for future generations to discover and build on.

Epilogue

"Materializing the Hidden Identity of Hong Kong" is a journey of exploration and rediscovery, aiming to bring together the threads of history, community and architecture. In the process of developing my thesis, my family's acceptance of our fishing community heritage underwent a beautiful transformation. From my mother's initial reluctance of sharing her stories to enthusiastically embracing her family's past - the stories of those who once weathered the open waters with resilience and spirit started to weave through our conversations. These once-muted tales gained new audiences, allowing us to reconnect to the fisherfolk heritage hidden beneath the surface of modernity. With each casual mention and shared memory, the fishing community's past became more vivid and alive.

I strolled through Shau Kei Wan a week after the festival ended. By then, the remnants of the festival had been long gone, and the neighbourhood seemed to return to its routine rhythm, reverting to a quintessential Hong Kong streetscape. And yet, as my footsteps retraced the main street once again, a transformation had occurred, not in the physical fabric of the place, but within me. After my time in the exploration of the fisherfolk's past, I have developed a newfound perspective. I was able to pick up additional subtle imprints of fisherfolk's history in the urbanscape. The stories of the fishing community seemed to linger in the air in every direction I looked. I realized that the heritage of the fisherfolk did not disappear. It merely sank beneath the surface and required us to acquire the appropriate toolset to see it.

"Materializing the Hidden Identity of Hong Kong" concludes the first chapter of my exploration of the fisherfolks, with seeds of change sown. Yet, Instead of an indefinite pause, I see many opportunities for future inquiries immediately ahead. There is much exploration regarding the architectural tectonics of the intervention, how we can incorporate fisherfolk's indigenous crafts, and most importantly, lessons from their close relation to nature to be done. The journey of architectural intervention has just begun, and further experimentation with architectural tectonics is desired. An exploration of incorporating indigenous crafts, including fishnets and boat-building techniques, into the design elements will allow for a multi-layered user experience. This gesture will reintroduce elements of the sea back into the urban core. It will also act as a tribute to the fisherfolk's ingenuity.

An equally profound exploration lies in the intimate relationship between fisherfolk and their environment. The harmony between man and nature has always been a fascinating topic for architects. The fisherfolk are experts, having had practical experience in this regard. Their ability to work with limited resources while respecting nature's balance holds crucial lessons for our sustainable future. As we stand at the crossroads of tradition and innovation, their insight could guide us toward an era of sustainable coexistence.

As this chapter closes, another begins. My next journey will use this thesis as a springboard to continually unearth the treasures that lie dormant in the fisherfolk's heritage in hopes of charting a course forward for our generation.

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