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Urban Space and Transportation in Hong Kong: A Travelogue

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Abstract: *Visiting Hong Kong for foreign tourists is a very pleasant thing, at least because not everyone has the opportunity to visit. On the other hand, Hong Kong has the attraction of being the most vertical city in the world with its skyscrapers and reclaimed urban spaces. This paper discusses the portrait of urban spaces and transportation in Hong Kong with the approach of Sociology of Space and Sociology of History. Data collection techniques are done through direct observation in Hong Kong and Kowloon, literature study, and interviews with tour guides. The results showed that Hong Kong as a former British colony, until now still holds a variety of European social and cultural heritage, including public spaces and transportation facilities. Some streets in Hong Kong as well as types of transportation facilities are still a British heritage that is still maintained.*

INTRODUCTION

A geographical fact shows that Hong Kong (L. Chen & Ng, 2011) is only a small country and is larger than the island of Bali in Indonesia (Hakim et al., 2009). Its area is only 2,755 square kilometers (K. Lo, 2017), while the area of Bali Island is 5,780 square kilometers (Yoshikawa et al., 2020). The condition of this narrow area that is owned is what “forces” the Hong Kong government (Sing, 2018) to try as much as possible to develop its country. The form of development that is promoted is to create reclaimed product spaces (Kravchenko et al., 2024) so that skyscrapers and new urban spaces grow. In its development, who does not know Hong Kong, one of the world's most famous cities located in southeastern China (Strauch, 1983), precisely on the Pearl River Estuary and the South China Sea (Jilan, 2004). The city is sprinkled with skyscrapers and has Victoria Harbour (Yim, 1995), which is Asia's largest port and ranks 3rd in the world after San Francisco in the United States and Rio De Janeiro in Brazil (López-Gappa & Liuzzi, 2018). That's how history explains the development and progress of this country.

Hong Kong is geographically located on the South China Sea, 60 kilometers east of Macau on the opposite side of the Pearl River Delta (Owen, 2009). Mainland Hong Kong is surrounded by the South China Sea to the east, south and west, and borders Shenzhen City to the north, across the Sham Chun River (Shenzhen River) (Bolchover & Hasdell, 2016). Topographically, Hong Kong is mostly mountainous with steep gradients and this results in less than 25 percent of its built-up area (Y. Chen et al., 2023). The remaining 40 percent of Hong Kong's land area is actually used as urban parks and nature reserves. Hong Kong's spatial

structure with an elongated coastal area, making it have many rivers and beaches (Jim, 1998). No wonder UNESCO on September 18, 2011, included Hong Kong National Geopark in the Global Geoparks Network (Guo & Chung, 2019). The Hong Kong Geopark consists of 8 geo-areas divided along the Sai Kung volcanic rock area and the northeast New Territories sedimentary rock area (L. Wang et al., 2015).

As a former British colony, of course Hong Kong and its people keep European-style social and cultural heritage (Carroll, 2006), except for English. Many Hong Kong people do not speak English and instead choose Cantonese as their daily means of communication, especially in the marketplace (Li, 1999). Hong Kong people from an early age are educated to work hard to become a successful person to conquer life in their relatively expensive country (Martinsons et al., 1997).

One interesting fact about Hong Kong is that its low-altitude vegetation is dominated by secondary rainforests, as its primary forests were destroyed during World War II (Lai et al., 2011). So where is the concentration of urban development? Most of the region's urban development is on the Kowloon Peninsula precisely along the north coast of Hong Kong Island and throughout the New Territories (Bailey, 2009). The highest point in the country is Tai Mo Shan, which is 957 meters (3,140 ft) above sea level (Kagda et al., 2017).

The profile of Hong Kong in relation to urban space and transportation facilities is interesting to study, especially from the perspective of the sociology of space (A. Ahmadin, 2024) and historical sociology (M. Ahmadin, 2022). Although this study is a combination of direct observation and experience as a traveler with literature data, it is certain to have information value that is very useful for readers, especially enthusiasts about Hong Kong studies and tourism in general. With the style of presentation of the discussion of this article which is similar to the style of journalistic reportage (Hartsock, 2009), it is hoped that it can contribute to adding to the repertoire of libraries about Hong Kong.

METHOD

This type of research is descriptive qualitative both in terms of the type of data collected and the type of analysis (Huberman & Miles, 2002). The type of data used is a set of facts and phenomena traced by three types of data collection techniques, namely observation in the form of direct observation and experience in Hong Kong, literature searches through books, articles, and other types of scientific works relevant to the study, and documentation in the form of using supporting documents relevant to this study. This research uses two study approaches, namely first, the sociology of space (M. Ahmadin, 2024) which is intended to examine urban spaces both from the aspect of meaning and the spatial practices of the community. Second, the historical sociology approach which is intended as an analytical technique to compare synchronically between current phenomena and the past as a design for the construction of current conditions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Urban Spaces and Tourism Objects

The sunny weather in Hong Kong on the afternoon of November 1, 2017, was as friendly as the day before. This gave me the opportunity to comb the harbor and city areas freely without hindrance. An interesting place that offers the natural beauty of being able to see the beautiful

Kowloon Peninsula from the direction of Hong Kong Island and vice versa (C. Q. L. Xue et al., 2010). So what exactly is Hong Kong, the name of the island and country that has become so popular? Maybe some people already know. But it's okay to be reiterated to jog our memories.

Historically, Hong Kong means fragrant harbor where the terminology comes from the Chinese language, Heung, and Gong (Ingham, 2007). In addition, this country is also known as Hong Kong SAR or Special Administrative Region, while Kowloon means nine dragons (Yeh, 2011). There are two types of languages in this country, namely the official language of Hong Kong is English which is popularly known as Yingyu and Cantonese (one type of Chinese) (Shi, 2006).

While in Hong Kong, my friend and I visited The Education University of Hong Kong campus located in Tai Po (Yang, 2022) as well as some of the city's tourist attractions. I visited the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade, an interesting tourist spot on the Kowloon Peninsula. From this place, I was able to witness the beauty of the Victoria Harbor area and view the topographical splendor of the skyscrapers of Hong Kong Island next door. Hong Kong, with its many developmental advancements, does have a million charms. The Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade (Shing, 2010) brings us to the Hong Kong Cultural Center and the Hong Kong Museum space (Wong, 2019).

Historically, the western part of the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade was previously part of the Guangzhou - Kowloon railway (Chan, 2015). However, after the Guangzhou-Kowloon end station was converted into Hung Hom Station, the original railroad line was removed. It eventually became a project for the construction of commercial equipment and the provision of entertainment facilities. According to our guide, public access to the Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade, especially in the eastern part, started in 1982 (C. Q. Xue et al., 2022). According to our tour guide (HW, 2017) the western part of Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade was only opened to the public 7 years later, in 1989. The new Tsim Sha Tsui Promenade, west of the Hung Hom pier, was only officially opened in 2011.

He also explained that public space renovation project in Hong Kong continues and costs a fantastic amount of 190 billion Hong Kong dollars. The renovation project, which was carried out for 2 years from 2004 to 2006, then transformed into a cultural center, Avenue of Star, dining room, transportation area, park, and others. I also got to visit the Kowloon Islamic Center, which is one of the main mosques in Hong Kong. The mosque is located on the corner between Nathan Street and Haiphong Street, and next to it is Kowloon Park (Ho, 2001). It was at this mosque that we offered Dhuhr prayer. I also visited Ladies Market, Hong Kong's most famous shopping or bargain market (Lee & Pearce, 2020). That day I had dinner at Islam Food, a fairly old restaurant in Hong Kong that has been serving its customers since 1950. When I was about to enter this restaurant, I saw on the front written “Since 1950”. This old Hong Kong restaurant is located at 1 Lung Kong Road, Kowloon City (Ho, 2013).

The next day I visited the Avenue of Stars or also often referred to as Hong Kong's Hollywood. It is a place that is built similar to and designed like the Hollywood Walk of Fame (Hunt, 2004). The difference is that Hollywood Walk of Fame is a sidewalk, while Avenue of Stars is the edge of the harbor, namely Victoria Harbor with a view of Hong Kong City landmarks next to it. That afternoon, my friends and I enjoyed a typical Javanese menu at a restaurant called Warung Malang. This Indonesian Halal Fast Food is located on the 2nd Floor of Flat B2, Dragon Rise Building 9-11 Pennington Street, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong. In this shop,

there are chicken soup, mixed rice, gado-gado, and others as well as various drinks such as orange juice, ice dawet, sweet ice test, warm tea, and others. After lunch, my friends and I headed to another tourist attraction, Victoria Peak (Carroll, 2012). Many people say, this Hong Kong tourist attraction is a must-visit for tourists. To reach Victoria Peak, we used the MTR service to Garden Road station (C. Q. L. Xue et al., 2012). After that, ride a means of transportation in the form of an electric train called Peak Tram (Choi et al., 1999) or also popular as "Ding Ding Tram". I also visited several other fantastic attractions and views of the city space in Kowloon and Hong Kong before leaving for Macau.

Transportation Facilities

Behind the splendor and fame of Hong Kong City today, it actually holds British heritage in various aspects of people's lives (Henderson, 2001). History has recorded that in 1773, Hong Kong became the center of the opium trade between China and the British East India Company (Le Pichon, 2006). Even so, China's displeasure with the British eventually led to a war that is known in history as the Opium War (1839) (Melancon, 1999). China and Hong Kong now have their own governments, different flags and currencies, passports and trade policies. Even so, according to him Hong Kong remains a special (autonomous) part of China, so between the two is considered one country with two systems (McCall Smith, 2001).

Hong Kong is a city that has a modern transportation system (Govada et al., 2017), such as: trains, buses, trams, ferries, and taxis. More than 90 percent of daily trips in Hong Kong (or about 11 million people) rely on public transportation with an electronic money payment system in the form of the Octopus card, which is a balance card system (H. K. Lo et al., 2008). Since 2007, the Main Railway Network (KCRC) was merged with the MTR, making it a comprehensive rail network in Hong Kong (Yeung, 2008). The MTR rapid transit transportation facility (S. K. H. Lo & Louie, 2020) has 152 stations that serve about 3.4 million people every day.

Bus services in Hong Kong are managed by 5 private companies with more than 700 routes and the largest operator is Kowloon Motor Bus (J. J. Wang & Po, 2001) with 403 routes in Kowloon and New Territories. While City Bus has 154 routes on Hong Kong Island. The means of sea transportation in Hong Kong is the Star Ferry which was established in 1888 (Waters, 1990). This service is used as a means of crossing Victoria Harbor and other services on Hong Kong Island, Macau, to reach China (Leung et al., 2017). The number of passengers at this port, according to our tour guide, is not small and is estimated to reach 53,000 people per day.

CONCLUSION

The results show that Hong Kong is a country that has a very small area compared to the size of Bali Island in Indonesia. This geographical fact is a motivation for the government to develop the country and maximize all its potential. Hong Kong in its development, in addition to successfully building skyscrapers as a solution to limited space (building land), was also successful in creating new urban spaces in the form of reclamation products. Hong Kong then appeared to be one of the cities with the most vertical space and buildings in the world. From the aspect of transportation, Hong Kong has also successfully managed this sector, so that it is able to provide the best service for both its people and migrants including foreign tourists.

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