



Advertising Modernity
"Home," Space and Privacy

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Advertising Modernity

"Home," Space and Privacy

To be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world—and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we are.

Marshall Berman, *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, 1988

Introduction

Advertising has quickly become one of the central cultural institutions in Asia; this is especially true of television advertising. Advertising promotes consumption, brings in foreign tastes, introduces new lifestyles, and helps transform Asian cultures. The advertising and media industries work under the assumption that advertising is an effective means of promoting products and ideas. Social critics view advertising more cynically; they see it as a powerful manipulator in the world of consumerism. However, in recent anthropological works, more focus is being laid on the long-term, rather than immediate, "power" of advertising. These recent works see advertisement as the ideological mirror of consumer society and as cultural expression of changing norms, stereotypes and collective ideals (Goffman 1976; Marchand 1985; Moeran 1983; Skov and Moeran 1995).

In the present study, we propose to use advertisement to understand how Hong Kong's lifestyles have been changing in the last five decades; we particularly choose housing advertisements as the focus in examining what idealized lifestyles are depicted and what their social meanings are. There are two rea-

sons for this study: firstly, the housing problem has been an ongoing issue in Hong Kong's postwar social development, and it plays a crucial role in individuals' values, meanings of family and sense of belonging; secondly, the study shows how people may be "taught" through their subjection to the housing policy and be manipulated by advertisements in the form of idealized lifestyles.

Nowadays, in Hong Kong, we have more freedom than before to make our own choices, but the standards that we set for ourselves are largely structured by norms and values imposed from without in various ways. For example, in comparing newspaper advertisements of different periods, it is not difficult to observe a current strong emphasis on "space" and "privacy," as compared to the 1960s, when good lighting, fixed (room) setting and telephone were the key factors in choosing a room or an apartment as the living place. But, who has designed it so that our standards in choosing our living environment as "home" depends on the degree of "space" and "privacy"?

In this paper, we are proposing to analyze how the two factors — government policy and media advertisements — have contributed to our present ideals regarding housing or "home." By looking at Hong Kong society, it is true to say that the government has been controlling individual's choice by using the housing policy to justify the "evolutionary" process of lifestyles changing from small to big, communal to independent, and public to private. But, in what ways are we planned and forced to move along the track that was created by relevant high authority? We need to take a look at the historic background of Hong Kong's housing policy. On the other hand, it is also necessary to consider all related standards as obsessive values imposed by advertisements in this consumer society. By considering two major housing advertising media — newspaper and television — in postwar Hong Kong society, what we are trying to determine in this paper is why "space" and "privacy" are considered so important in our modern lifestyles, especially as reflected through our choice of living environment as our "home," the most substantial part of people's "dream" in contemporary Hong Kong.

When and how did the demand of "space" and "privacy" become important in our expectations of life? A case study of one private housing estate located in Ma On Shan, a new town in the eastern part of the New Territories, will be examined both through its images disseminated by television advertising and also from the perspectives of the government's procedure in new town development. With the speculation about these factors, we would like to propose an insight through which an ideal "home" is transformed as the "dream" of the rising new middle class in contemporary Hong Kong society. In conclusion, we will summarize what is meant by a good living environment in present-day Hong Kong, and how this definition has been shown through advertisements portraying an idealized "home."

A Brief History of Housing Policy in Post-war Hong Kong Society

A sense of the impact of government policy on housing can be conveyed by reviewing its history in Hong Kong from colonial times. Hong Kong, part of the previous *Hsin-an* county in Canton (*Guangdong* in Mandarin) province, was taken over by the British in the middle of 19th century. The southern part of the Kowloon Peninsula, and Hong Kong Island with all its surrounding islands, was ceded to Britain by the Treaty of Nanking in 1842; however, a large part of the peninsula called the New Territories¹ was leased to the British government in 1898 for 99 years. Under this colonial administration, the Hong Kong British government had the highest authority in policy-making for the society. Still, Chinese residents (97 per cent of the Hong Kong population) were given enough religious, academic, press and economic freedoms, so that there was not much hostility towards the British, at least compared to other colonies. The alternative to staying in Hong Kong was to migrate overseas, which many did, or to return to China, which had its own turbulent history. The British did not always have a housing policy for Hong Kong. The Public Health and

Buildings Ordinance (1903) was the first governmental attempt at improving living standards for Chinese residents. However, it was not until 1935 that the Building Ordinance laid down certain improvements in the lighting, ventilation, latrines and bathrooms of old buildings in Wan Chai, the Central and Western districts of Victoria and a large part of Kowloon (*Hong Kong Annual Report 1950*).

In 1941, Hong Kong was recorded to have had a population of 1,600,000; however, the population was reduced to 600,000 in 1945 because of the three-year and eight-month Japanese occupation of Hong Kong. This was mostly due to emigration back to China. After two large-scale immigration waves during 1945-47 and 1949-52, the population of Hong Kong had risen again to 2,340,000 by the end of 1954. These two massive influxes included both Hong Kong's former residents who had previously fled the Japanese occupation and Chinese mainlanders who left China after the Communist revolution in 1949. This sudden rise of "new" population was considered the primary cause for the formation of large squatter settlements, including roof-top huts, houseboats and overcrowding of existing tenements in the early 1950s.

In 1952, the first public housing estate was completed by the Hong Kong Housing Society² at Sheung Li Uk; however, a long-term public housing policy did not begin until 1954 when the "necessity" arose following several fire accidents in squatter settlements. In particular, Shek Kip Mei squatter settlement's fire was the most severe of these accidents. On Christmas Eve of 1953, a total of 53,000 persons lost their homes in the Shek Kip Mei squatter settlement's great fire. The rehousing work was carried out by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. Established in 1954, the Housing Authority was financed by the Hong Kong government through a revolving fund and aimed to provide accommodation for people living in over-crowded and unsatisfactory conditions. Under this rehousing initiative, the government provided estate sites at one-third of the market price and low interest rate to the Housing Authority, which, in turn, was required to provide housing for low income families. The Housing Authority

thus was responsible to the Hong Kong government, yet it retained a separate budget which it had to balance on its own. Twelve months after the great fire, the Shek Kip Mei public housing estate, considered to be the first public estate with altogether eight seven-storey H-shaped housing blocks, had been built. This period of rehousing and changed housing policy had a tangible (visible) impact on Hong Kong society in various ways. For example, families became more isolated and independent than before, as they moved out of communal villages into individual apartments; the living environment was improved when compared to the squatter settlements; and, more job opportunities were created by the housing estate construction so that a rise in living standard was brought about into the society.

Summarizing Hong Kong's housing development, Castells (1986) states that Hong Kong society has undergone four distinctive stages in housing policy following the Shek Kip Mei fire, as follows: firstly, the squatter resettlement began in 1954 and extended to 1964. He particularly mentions that the first stage was public housing estate which "consisted of 6 storey H-shaped blocks without lifts and electricity, and with communal facilities for cooking, washing and toilets, in each floor. The spatial standards were set at 2.2 square meters per person and the average room was of 11 square meters. When families expanded, overcrowding became as bad as that existing in the squatter areas or slums tenements. The absence of any garbage disposal system led to the accumulation of waste in the little spaces of the settlements, and the lack of commercial facilities created the conditions for the expansion of hawkers' activity, with the consequent congestion of open space, and the deterioration of public hygiene" (Castells 1986:25).

The second stage would include in part the rehousing project from 1962 to 1974, with the characteristics of renovating the former government low cost housing and re-arranging the former households there (Castells 1986:25). But, at the same time, it should include in part the extensive private development made by several co-operative Housing Societies which were also carried

out in Yau Yat Chun, Kau Lung Tsai, Jardine's Lookout, Ma Tau Wei, Tai Kok Tsui, etc. In order to promote private housing purchasing, the Hong Kong Building and Loan Agency Limited was set up in 1964 by the government in conjuncture with the Commonwealth Development Corporation and four of the leading banks in Hong Kong. The object of this agency was to make mortgage financing available at reasonable rates on a long-term basis to prospective owner-occupiers of new flats in the middle-income group.

Then, the third stage would be the ten-year public housing programme (1973-1983) initiated by new Governor Sir Murray MacLehose in order to provide a permanent self-contained accommodation as a reasonable environment; and with the Home Ownership scheme started in 1977 whereby the government showed a changed attitude and encouraged the owning of private property among Hong Kong people. Following the success of Kwun Tong, the other three large new towns — Tsuen Wan, Shatin and Tuen Mun — in the New Territories were put on the agenda in order to meet this ten-year public housing target. The fourth and final stage would be from 1983 to the present.

We might ask why the Hong Kong government provided something lower than the standard, if we realize that the Building Ordinance had already mentioned that, "[t]he legal minimum living space in the Colony is 35 square feet for each adult and if this legal provision were to be enforced in existing tenements it is estimated that about 350,000 people would have to be rehoused" (*Hong Kong Annual Report 1954*:126). It is conceivable that the Hong Kong government considered the 1950s' immigrants to be just temporary refugees who might leave Hong Kong when the economic and political conditions in China quietened down (Drakakis-Smith 1979:39). While this might have been the case, now we have witnessed the continuous increase of population from the 1950s and what we need to consider is the effects rather than reasons. Before 1972, people living on the same floor needed to share a communal kitchen, washing areas and toilets in each floor. It was also common to see people cook in the outside corri-

dors. But, some of these utilities have been improved since the early 1970s.

In this brief review of the housing policy and its related social backgrounds in the past four decades, we can see how and what kinds of "home" were provided for the masses in the forms of low cost public housing estates; however, we might ask whether these were the living environment that residents in Hong Kong had been looking for. Apart from the public housing estates which were built by the government, we will focus as well on private housing, in order to see what characteristics were particularly created to meet customers' expectations and what kinds of standards were "taught" through the advertisements. In the following section, we are going to investigate how living space has been emphasized in advertising in relation to the changing standard of ideal "home" through a brief survey of housing advertisements in the past five decades.

Newspaper Advertising and Television Advertising

As Vinikas (1992:22) points out, advertising "must be viewed as an agency of socialization. It promoted more than just a product; it transmitted cultural values of an advertiser's own design.... Advertising copy moved from disinfectant to deodorant, from medical to romantic, from hygiene to hedonics." In Hong Kong, with the development of such a vibrant capitalistic system, advertisement has fueled the rising economy and has helped "teach" the public what a satisfying life is for a modernized city dweller. Being "taught" through exposure to advertisements becomes an inescapable, obsessive and collective socializing process in the modern consumer world. On the one hand, it might help people catch up with the rapid change in the society and get use to the socio-cultural environment (learn to become somebody); on the other hand, it might also force people to choose those traits considered rational in the society.

As we can see, advertising takes an "obsessive" strategy to create "necessities" as well as new consumption habits for its consumers. In other words, advertisements give guidelines for or "teach" people how to choose and purchase; and they also offer choices for people to build up their own characters "by themselves." Get people into the material world of desire and help them comfort themselves by practising consumption. One experienced advertisement producer summarized the changing modes of advertising in the last three decades thus: "In the 1970s, a rational and practical reason was necessary; in the 1980s, advertisements tended to be more emotional and needed to go with a character; and in the 1990s, the emphasis on quality worth the price became obvious." It is worthwhile to think about whether we are able to escape from these "idealized" values being projected through thousands and thousands of images that are shown to be the ideal through many forms, including posters on the subway, radio and television advertisements, newspapers, magazines and mail. With all this information available for us to make choices, we often struggle between whether this is what an affluent society needs to be or whether there is no space for "us" in the modern life because our choices are controlled and our imagination is limited to the exploration of advertisements.

In order to see how people's criteria about their living environment and how the idealized "home" were advertised and compared with previous ones, a survey of newspaper housing advertisements in the last five decades is carried out to show the change. We choose a local Chinese newspaper — *Sing Tao Daily* — as the sample and pick one whole set of newspapers from each alternative five years for the comparison. They range from 1960 to 1995 (all samples are from October 1), and through which all corresponding housing advertisements were counted. The reason for choosing *Sing Tao Daily* is based on two factors: firstly, it is known as one of the top five long-running newspapers so that its continuity is able to reflect the change of advertising during the period on which we put our focus; secondly, its housing advertisements are well-known and reputed as inclusive. Regarding

Table 1. Number of advertisements in *Sing Tao Daily*, 1950-1995

	Rooms to let	Apartments to let	Apartments for sale
1950	6	6	9
1955	25	16	29
1960	63	26	23 (1)
1965	61	113	45 (1)
1970	45	48	118 (6)
1975	168	48	294 (5)
1980	60	333	1724 (12)
1985	26	365	1390 (9)
1990	<20	(>10,000)	
1995	<20	(>10,000)	

Notes:

1. In 1950 and 1955, all advertisements fell into three kinds within the "categorized advertisements section."
2. From 1960, most advertisements fell into the "categorized advertisements section," but some advertisements began to be listed independently and more prominently. The number of such independent advertisements are shown in parentheses — e.g., (1).
3. Beginning with the 1975 sample, the emergence of property agents (sometimes called realty, or real-estate) becomes very apparent. Some of the single categorized advertisements included up to ten properties or real estates instead of containing one; thus, the number of individual properties involved should actually be much greater than the number indicated in our table.
4. From the 1980 sample, we can see more independent advertisements with more detailed descriptions of the apartments which are still under construction; also, the space for those advertisements is much bigger than the categorized advertisements from both individual owners and property/real estate agents.
5. In 1985, a sample of one mainstream property/real estate agent's advertisements actually lists 135 properties. By this time, many of the advertisements exhibit duplications: one property might be listed by more than one property/real estate agent.
6. In 1990 and 1995, many property agents advertise vacancies both for lease and for sale.
7. In the 1995 sample, we can see full-page advertisements for a private housing estate as well.

different ways the living environment is advertised, we separate and measure all advertisements according to three kinds: as rooms to let, apartments to let and apartments for sale.

Let us take a look at the change in quantity of newspaper advertisements about rooms and apartments in Hong Kong during the last four decades. According to the number of rooms to let, apartments to let and apartments for sale, we can tell that there was an obvious increase of supply and demand for living space. In 1960, there was a comparatively large proportion of advertisements for rooms to let. It was quite common for people to rent a room instead of an apartment during the 1960s, and obviously they had to share a communal latrine, kitchen and bathroom with people living in the same apartment. As we can see from those "Rooms to Let" advertisements, the most frequently mentioned characteristics of these "fixed" rooms were good lighting, a sturdy room and having a telephone close by.

Even though there were more public estates built by the government since the mid-1950s, the demand for private apartments did not show any sign of declining. This may account for the demand for rooms decreasing from 1960 when the standard of the living environment was being raised through the public housing policy. In other words, more families were able to have their own apartment if they succeeded in applying for government's public housing; so having an apartment of their own gradually became more and more an expected basic living standard. From the above data, we observe a clear change in the decrease in the amount of rooms to let, and the increase in the amount of apartments to let and for sale, especially the rapid increase from the mid-1980s forward. Apart from the amount increasing, we observe certain noteworthy characteristics. For example, there was a sudden increase of advertisements by moving agencies in 1970, which signified the mobility of households, especially families that had settled for a while started to move from one place to another. In addition, we can also see from the newspapers that there was brief information on mortgages, loans and monthly payments in some of the advertisements on newly built apartments. Of course, the

new mobility and ideas about housing plan by families would need to be considered with the establishment of new towns, such as Kwun Tong, Tsuen Wan, Shatin and Tuen Mun in the 1970s. In the 1980s, there were more advertisements in newspapers and on television, particularly for large private housing estates, such as City One in Shatin, Taikoo Shing in North Point, Discovery Bay in Lantau Island, etc.

According to a veteran advertising agent,³ space, privacy and quality of living had already been a selling point in the housing advertisements in the early 1980s. At that period in time, our informant had been directly involved in the advertising campaign of the private housing estate of Discovery Bay in Lantau Island. One emphasis of the advertisements had been on the abundant open space near the houses and apartments. Main attractions had been images of scenery beach, open sky and residents fishing leisurely by the seaside. These images had fostered a sense of the privatized space which could be purchased together with the properties. As a relatively restricted enclave in the Lantau Island away from the city, Discovery Bay had given its residents a sense of belonging to a class of cultivated taste. The residents' profile was a combination of expatriates and young professionals. Although the specific lifestyle associated with Discovery Bay was not of the mainstream at that time, the case demonstrated a remarkable change in the advertised norm of what was necessary: from the material need of accommodation to the pursuit of quality of living. This change of norm has been expressed in full scale in the housing advertisements since the early 1990s.

Compared with the small column of newspaper advertisements in the 1950s, land developers in the 1990s have many more catchy full-page newspaper advertisements with excellent graphic design. Advertising campaigns also rely heavily on audio-visual channels, such as television advertising, video presentations and sponsored magazine programmes. This promotional material is usually saturated with status markers, such as icons of up-market car, wine, furniture and other commodities. Open spaces, scenery gardens, sophisticated interior design, to-

gether with well-crafted visuals and music, are intertwined with the recurrent theme of an idealized family life: a standard family of a young couple with a son and a daughter, enjoying the freedom of ample space inside or outside the building.

Textual analysis of a television advertisement will be presented in the case study below; suffice it here to point out some obvious changes from the print advertisements of the 1950s to the multi-media housing advertisements of the 1990s. Firstly, practical concerns have been replaced by emotional appeals. The basic and substantial requirements for a modernized home are no longer good lighting, safe security measures or having a telephone as promoted in old print advertisements. Instead, space and privacy have become some of the major selling points. For instance, a recent television advertisement of Dawning Views in Fanling, eastern New Territories, features a man diving in mid-air again and again without falling into the water until the end. The advertisement resembles a diving sequence in a famous documentary titled "Olympia," produced by Leni Riefenstahl in 1936. The diving contest, shot in a thrilling montage, is treated as a poem of human flight. The men are seen "flying" in the sky with the moments of entering the water edited out throughout the sequence. In accordance with this poetic treatment, the advertisement does not carry any material reference; all we can see is a free floating male body "swimming and flying" freely and confidently within unrestricted space provided by the private estate. It is more reliant on the aesthetic, emotional and abstract appeal of space. Starting from the early 1990s, developers have hired prestigious designers and architects to provide interior and exterior design packages for home purchasers. Brand name marketing has been deployed to further aestheticized and commodified space.

Secondly, the commodity of living space has changed from the interior to the exterior. In the past, living spaces were sold according to the size of the apartment. Although interior space continues to be the basic unit of pricing, there has been a visible change of emphasis on exterior space. These marketable spaces include private gardens, sun decks, swimming pools, tennis

courts and, even, a privatized window view of the sea and the sky. A remarkable example is the advertisement of Villa Oceania in Ma On Shan. Most of the advertisements in print or on television feature a young couple standing on a balcony enjoying a gentle breeze from the sea. The advertisements go with a slogan: "180 degree unlimited sea view, the dreamland of home purchasers." The privatized spaces have moved outwards to include the surrounding area of the private estate.

Thirdly, conversely, public spaces have gone private. Most new private estates built in the 1990s have a private club house with restaurants, bars, dancing rooms, video theatre, billiard room and very large lobbies and common rooms. These facilities, which are supposed to be outside a private estate, have moved inside as integral private spaces for the exclusive pleasure of the residents and their visitors. These privatized outside spaces are dominant features of housing advertisements in the 1990s. In these housing advertisements, the audience can see a complex association of concrete images of modern living with the abstract concept of privatized space. Space has been valorised as a necessity and commodified as a saleable item with a calculable price tag.

But, why do the television advertisements emphasize "space" and "privacy" as the selling points of those private estates? Primarily because both the demand embedded in the people's thought regarding the construction of one's own ideal lifestyle, and the intension to be distinguished from other groups in the same area. The latter factor can be particularly seen in the development of new towns in the New Territories during the last two decades. In the following section, we would like to narrow down the discussion to the buyers of these new private estates, and a case study of Ma On Shan is used to show the complicated relations between the government housing policy, land developers' way of advertising and individuals' choices.

"Home" in Ma On Shan

Hong Kong is considered the migrants' city with the majority coming from south China; however, the population of local (born and raised in Hong Kong) generation has grown larger, and prominently, it is the group which considers Hong Kong its only "home"-land. They mostly identify themselves as *heunggongyan* (Hongkongese) instead of Chinese or British and are expecting to develop their career in Hong Kong. These native-born Hongkongese speak Cantonese as mother tongue, mostly receive their education in Hong Kong. Perhaps, the most important of these, especially as new "home" purchasers, is the large proportion of this population who is married with children and is not able to live in the city. They moved to live in those new towns of the New Territories and are readily willing to create their own "home" in Hong Kong. In addition, the majority of this population probably spent their childhood in public housing estates and now they consider themselves middle-class Hongkongese and eager to achieve a good quality of living in an environment they call "home."

Moving out from the government's public housing estates and having one's own house might be assumed to be the common dream of every city dweller in Hong Kong; however, we should also keep thinking about how such an expectation has been formed within the relevant social context. Considering that it is an expected cycle in a migrating society, Choi and Chan (1979:198) mention that the growing demand for private housing actually results in a "migration cycle involving two generations — the parents' generation moving from the private housing sector to the public, usually from old built-up areas to newly developed areas, and the children making the return move, although private buildings in the old built-up areas may now be re-developed." So, it is no surprise to find that the proportion of population living in private housing shows an increase from 27.9 per cent in 1981 to 42.6 per cent in 1991.

In Hong Kong, the emergence of private housing estates can be traced back to the late 1960s. Mei Foo Sun Chuen, Discovery Bay, Telford Garden in Kowloon Bay and Taikoo Shing are probably the best examples among the early ones. The distinguishing features of these private housing estates are their isolated locations and self-contained character when compared to the earlier private housing which was mostly built in the urban areas and was convenient for transportation and living. Here, I would like to put the focus on one of these newly developed areas — Ma On Shan in the New Territories — in order to demonstrate how the demand for "space" and "privacy" has been created by the government policy in new town development. In the following, we are going to use Ma On Shan as an example to show how the ideal lifestyle was "taught" regarding how public and private housing estates were geographically and chronically arranged during the past decade.

Ma On Shan is located in the coastal area of Tolo Harbour, in Shatin. It was famous for the Wu Kwai Sha Youth Village which could only be reached through a ferry departing from the pier of Ma Liu Shui near the present Kowloon-Canton Railway (KCR) University Station. Ma On Shan began undergoing development in 1979. According to the government's new town planning, it was to have a total population of 200,000; it was supposed to have 60 per cent of the population living in public housing, including home ownership scheme type and rental type, and the remaining 40 per cent living in private housing. Hang On Estate, the first public housing estate, also the first housing estate, was finished in 1987 and provided accommodation for about 20,000 people. Hang On Estate, built on the inner part of Ma On Shan, does not have a good view of Tolo Harbour. In contrast to public estates like Hang On, most private estates are located near to the shore and have the advantage of owning a good view of the "sea and sky."

In particular, Ma On Shan was largely invested in and developed by private companies merely in the last five years. Its continuous development by private developers is shown by the establishment of private estates, including Sunshine City, Villa

Athena, Bayshore Towers, The Waterside and the upcoming Vista Paradiso and Villa Oceania. These private estates mostly boast of the same selling points: "more space than urban areas," "a good view of the sea," "have most entertainment facilities" and "convenient transportation." Thus, the combination used to attract a large group of modern city dwellers is good transportation linking up downtown and Ma On Shan, and more living space and private facilities.

By looking at the government strategy in the development of new towns in the New Territories, or suburban areas, public housing estates have served as pioneers of settlement, and Ma On Shan has not been an exception. In Ma On Shan, we can see both Hang On Estate (the public housing estate) and Sing On Estate (temporary housing settlements) which were established in 1987 and 1989, respectively. Although residents who moved into these areas might have suffered from the unfinished infrastructure and transportation linkages with urban areas, they could still enjoy more living space and reduced burdens on housing loans or rent.

Apart from public housing estates, land developers would not overlook the potential of establishing private housing in this new town. In 1993, one of the largest private estates was finished, and a large influx of young urban and professional people fled into Ma On Shan. Notably, a large number of them was married couples who had small children. They can be considered as typical middle-class trying to live a "modern" lifestyle. Lacking a pre-established community in this new neighborhood, most daily activities are carried out at nearby shopping malls. Restaurants, shopping areas, food market, entertainment and other utilities are mostly included within one shopping area.

To illustrate the complex articulation between housing advertisement and the social practice of home purchasing, we shall briefly present a textual analysis of a television advertisement for Vista Paradiso in Ma On Shan. The advertisement was aired on major television outlets in 1997. The advertisement features a standard nuclear family of a good looking couple and the charming son and daughter. The husband and wife are in their 30s; their

children are less than 10. This age range is very common in all housing advertisements since it is within the period in which the need of home purchasing is strongly felt.

To heighten an intimate sense of time and an introspective feeling of space, all the shots in the television advertisement are static with very slow and gentle movement. Lots of extreme close ups, panoramic long shots, slow dissolves, fade ins and fade outs are used to provide a stylized and aestheticized visual dressing. There are status markers, such as a luxurious yacht, a scenic golf course, a classic Mercedes Benz, a metallic golf club and a sophisticated stereo set, all alluding to the aspiration to the lifestyle of the affluent middle class. There is also a harmonious mix of indoor and outdoor spaces. On screen, the man is absorbed in his music in a luxurious living room, while his wife and children are enjoying the sun and wind in a peaceful grassland. These immense outdoor and indoor spaces are designed exclusively for their pleasure.

The floating meanings of this stream of well-polished images are anchored by a calm and contemplative male narration, which goes like this: "I have a strong requirement for space.... For me, how to make use of space is a kind of art. I have always dreamt of providing myself and my family a spacious living environment. Spaces, I believe, make life different." The advertisement ends with a slogan: "Embracing space of superior quality, Vista Paradiso." The advertisement stages the wife and children in frontal shots; the audience can see their smiling faces clearly. However, the husband is staged by back shots or shots in which his face cannot be fully seen on screen. Combined with the voice over of a male narrator, the whole story is thus narrated from the point of view of the male protagonist, who takes the responsibility of providing comfort and happiness for his family. And, comfort and happiness are associated with the spaces provided by the dreamland of Vista Paradiso. In this advertisement, space is aestheticized, idealized, privatized and commodified as an essential element of modern living.

By using this private housing estates — Vista Paradiso — as an example, we can see how the ideas of privacy and space are emphasized as the basic criteria. Ma On Shan shows us also an exclusive environment (a new town in the New Territories) in which nuclear families are dominant; in addition, most of the private housing estates have their "own" club house in which different facilities are included. Swimming pool, gymnasium, poolroom, tennis courts, restaurants and festive activities would be contained. One of the private housing estates under construction includes an artificial lake as well as garden that drew the public's attention at the beginning.

What is most interesting, however, is the emphasis upon the "exclusiveness" of the private housing estate itself; the private housing estate has taken over or created an enclosed "living environment" for those young middle-class consumers. One of the reasons would probably link the demand for "space" and "privacy" as a collective social desire. Regarding the status and reputation which can be gained by showing one's living environment, I would suggest that it is the result of the shared values created through the government housing policy in which "space" and "privacy" mean more than the physical environment, but self-identification embedded in Hong Kong's social life. Being a resident of a special somewhere or being someone who is living in this somewhere reflects on one's identity. Being identified with a small group and able to be excluded from the mass might show some specific mentality among people living in the modern Hong Kong.

Discussion: "Home" for Thought

In *All That Is Solid Melts into Air*, Marshall Berman (1988:15) mentions that, "[t]o be modern is to find ourselves in an environment that promises us adventure, power, joy, growth, transformation of ourselves and the world — and, at the same time, that threatens to destroy everything we have, everything we know, everything we

are." As we have shown in this paper, on the one hand, we want to live in a place where various facilities are available; on the other hand, we just soon recognize that all we have is different from the "real," even Nature is just an image on the screen; then, we realize that all we can achieve is only a "private" cage in which to keep each one of us.

From the meanings given through advertisements, we can understand the historical trends from 1950s to 1995 from the newspaper advertisements and the contemporary values created and reinforced by television advertisements. Moreover, from the historical background and the social significance of the government's housing policy, especially new town development in the New Territories, we are able to speculate on the changing expectations in lifestyles through which "space" and "privacy" are created as the "dream" of the rising new middle class in contemporary Hong Kong. Finally, we would like to emphasize that advertisements cannot single-handedly create values, but they can be used as helpful data to investigate the social values regarding consumerism. The demand for "space" and "privacy" ends up as the product of the government housing policy in related to Hong Kong's social context.

There has also been a growing awareness of "Hong Kong Man" (Baker 1984) and how and why the identity of people in Hong Kong should be investigated. Due to the complex influx of migrants moving in and out the society, one's sense of belonging cannot be easily grasped through such factors as place of birth, language, religion and educational background. Yet, considering the construction of different cultural identities in Hong Kong, scholars have pointed out that economic and political power has been stratified with regard to different groups, such as those locally-born, Western-educated young professionals in Hong Kong who consider themselves *heunggongyan* or Hongkongese. We do not intend to simplify the complexities of the Hong Kong identity; however, from what we have observed in Ma On Shan with a high proportion of "young" families we speculate that they might belong to the generation which was influenced by the government

housing policy. We can only provide this hypothesis by puzzling through the growing expectations about "my home" with regard to the government's policy in the postwar society. We hope that these preliminary findings from examining the relevant historical background of the housing policy help us understand how we, as consumers exposed to inescapable advertisements in our daily life, are taught to buy a house that actually reflects the social history of Hong Kong's postwar society. My "home," as an indicator, a symbol and a metaphor, provide us with an insight into how status and class are shaped. It also sheds light on the changing lifestyles and cuts across the material culture, including social values, status and identity, in the postwar Hong Kong society.

Notes

1. The area of New Territories starts from Boundary Street in the southern part of the Kowloon peninsula and reaches the border between Shenzhen and Hong Kong in the north.
2. Being one of the two largest organizations (the Hong Kong Housing Society and the Hong Kong Housing Authority both have been playing important roles in carrying out the government's public housing policy), Hong Kong Housing Society, founded in 1948, is the biggest non-profit-making voluntary housing agency formed to improve housing conditions in Hong Kong.
3. Personal interview, February 1998.

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Advertising Modernity: "Home," Space and Privacy

Abstract

For most people in Hong Kong, buying one's own apartment seems to be the biggest purchase, and conditions to be measured for the final decision should not be overlooked. Advertisements for living environment have been changing so much, with the ideal always related to the existing social values. In this paper, we show how Hong Kong's lifestyles have been changing in the last five decades based on change in housing development and on how people are "taught" in the form of idealized lifestyles through housing advertisements. By using data from newspaper and television advertisements, we seek to understand such changing concepts as "home," space and privacy in contemporary Hong Kong society. We seek to analyze how the two factors — government policy and media advertisements — have contributed to our present ideal of the "home," and the new town development in Ma On Shan is used as demonstrative case in this study.

廣告中的現代性

家庭、居住環境與私人空間

張展鴻 馬傑偉

(中文摘要)

對在香港居住的大部份人而言，買房子算是人生中一宗最大的交易。為了保障這項長遠投資，「優質」的居住空間無形中成了港人不容忽視的選擇條件。一直以來，廣告所塑造的理想居住環境不斷在變遷，而這變遷又跟當時的社會價值不無關係。文中指出在過去五十年的歲月裏，在政府房屋發展政策及房屋廣告的教化薰陶下，市民對理想家庭及其居住環境的訴求出現了顯著的轉變。透過分析電視及報刊上的廣告，我們希望了解現代香港社會正不斷變遷的「家庭」、居住環境與私人空間等概念。我們更會以馬鞍山的新城市發展為例，進一步分析政府政策和傳媒廣告這兩個因素如何塑造「理想家居」。