

The New Political Culture is an analytical framework to interpret global transformations in socio-economic organization. It suggests that socialism and capitalism, social class, and capitalist class conflicts explain less than in the past. For a country like China the New Political Culture emphasizes the importance of education, technical expertise, and new institutional arrangements which encourage political openness, economic achievements, and social tolerance. China has developed a new social class sometimes termed the New Social Stratum. Its dynamics demand analysis. There are some common features of the new class of the New Political Culture and the New Social Stratum of China, but they differ on both the economic base and social conditions. As most past work on New Political Culture has been in developed countries, it is important to ask which propositions about socio-economic change shift in China, especially in defining social problems and questioning the welfare state. Our conclusion is that some elements of the New Political Culture clarify new developments in China, but revisions are necessary to interpret the Chinese case.

Reclaim the Public Space Movement in Hong Kong: The Struggle to Liberate Victoria Harbor and Times Square

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When the Hong Kong government tore down the Star Ferry Pier at the Victoria Harbor in a hurry on 13 December 2006, they did not realize that their “routine” bulldozing style of development has ignited a new social movement, which, for lack of a better name, is now often understood as a reclaiming the public space movement. On that night, 14 protestors who occupied the construction site in order to stop the demolition were forcefully dragged out of the site into the police station. More than 200 supporters rallied outside the construction site, with new comers rushing to show their support. Some of them came due to sms messages. Some came after seeing the live footage of the police round-up on the independent media online. A spontaneous crowd who barely knows each other witnessed not only the government’s violence against the historical building and the people. Some of them have never participated in a police confrontation before. These new Star Ferry warriors, together with the anti-urban renewal groups and concerned artists formed a new alliance – Local Action. From April to August 2006, Local Action activists occupied the soon-to-be demolished Queen’s Pier –adjacent to the Star Ferry Pier – for 3 months demanding that this public space be kept in the heart of the financial district as a way to prevent further commodification and militarization of the Victoria Harbor. Since then, the reclaim the public space movement has spread all over Hong Kong, and forced the government to sue the Times Square owner for illegally subletting the Times Square (a privately owned public space) to Starbucks for profit. What brought these new agents together in the first place? Are they awakened to anger and defiance by the brutal demolition of the Star Ferry & Queen’s Pier? Or are they, as the government, mainstream politicians and media claim, in search of a “collective memory” at the death of the Star Ferry, which surprisingly happens to be a symbol of local Hong Kong identity? The purpose of this article is to unravel what we can learn from this seemingly new social movement. What is the driving force behind the movement? What are the politics of preservation involved?