Cinema architecture and the entertainment landscape: 
Moviegoing and the making of the middle-class in Hong Kong, 1967–1997

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Moviegoing has played an important role in the formation of Hong Kong's popular culture and urban organisation. The current research attempts to map the architectural forms and geographic distribution of Hong Kong's movie theatres, their ongoing emergence and disappearance, in relation to urban development trends and changing consumer practices from the 1960s to the 1990s. It argues that the urban character of the city and the cultural identity of its inhabitants are intertwined, and that the shaping of Hong Kong's middle-class consumer spaces and aspirations can be traced through the capitalistic processes of spatial production, entertainment consumption, and real estate speculation. Specifically, the dissertation considers the theoretical ideas of obsolescence and disappearance, and locates these ideas in the localisation, boom, and decline of Hong Kong's movie industry. In an attempt to tie together film studies and the architectural history of movie theatres—two areas of study seldom in conversation with each another—this research points to the ways in which changes in Hong Kong's movie industry were at the same time reflected in the physical presence of movie theatres amidst the rapidly changing urban entertainment landscape, and shows that both Hong Kong cinema’s film texts and the contexts of their exhibition have contributed to the formation and development of urban form and cultural identity.

State Theatre Building, January 2017. The State Theatre was opened in 1959 and closed in 1997. The building is currently under threat of being demolished. (Photo by author)