

STRUGGLES FOR SYMBOLIC POWER: DISCOURSE, MEANING, NOSTALGIA,  
AND MOBILIZATION IN MACAU

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by  
Esther Hio Tong Castillo

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Examining Committee Members:

Matt Wray (Chair), Department of Sociology

Sherri Grasmuck, Department of Sociology

Lu Zhang, Department of Sociology

Mark Purcell, Department of Urban Design and Planning, University of Washington

## ABSTRACT

This dissertation traces the formation of powerful urban discourses in the context of rapid economic transformation in Macau to understand different levels of symbolic production as they are situated within the larger symbolic structure of power. The research is motivated by my attempt to assess the Neo-Marxist utopian proposition about local culture being a possible counter-hegemonic space where revolutionary politics will develop. Exploratory in nature, my research questions are: Can local culture in the forms of personal and localized practices actually generate oppositional politics? Or do they merely serve as marketing tools for the expansion of economic development? What is the role of local culture in the context of Macau's urban restructuring?

To answer these questions, I view the ongoing cultural production of discourse as indications of local culture. Employing the extended case method, I apply reflexive science to ethnography as an ongoing process that looks continually for patterns of situations and elements to inform me about the relationship between local culture and social change. My research adopts a variety of qualitative methods --- I conducted 5 focus groups, 50 in-depth interviews which included life stories and photo-elicitation, critical discourse analysis, as well as extended ethnographic participation.

Three types of discourses were identified during fieldwork to understand the formation of local culture with relation to power and social change: authorized, everyday, and mobilizing discourses. Drawing from the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu such as symbolic power, field, and misrecognition, I connect and map the production of discourses and argue that they represent the macro-, micro-, and meso-levels of a

symbolic system whereby authorized discourse (such as political rhetoric and global neoliberal ideology), everyday discourse (such as local narratives and emotions), and mobilizing discourse (such as protest slogans and grassroots campaigns) interact with one another in multiple fields where the struggle over meanings reinforces and creates social relations linked to power positions.

My overall argument asserts that discourses should be conceptualized as a symbolic structure—one that provides the organization and transformation of power relations. Since the struggles over symbolic power via the construction and maintenance of effective discourses involve the production, transmission, and transfusion of cultural meanings that provide appropriate frames and positions for social agents who occupy multiple and sometimes overlapping sub-fields (e.g. fields of social activism, politics, everyday life) structured by the larger field of power relations, social change does not transpire in the field of local culture separate from or innocent of hegemonic power relations. In Macau, local culture simultaneously contains both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic frames and arguments. Social change occurs dialectically when agents negotiate their specific sets of economic, political, and ideological interests within the sub-fields they find themselves in by choosing from the reservoir of possible cultural symbols and thereby reproducing part of culture as structure, while repurposing and tailoring them to create new social practices in pursuit of what they deem desirable and valuable.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

I used to travel to my hometown—Macau—every summer while I was in college in the United States. During these visits, I was repeatedly stunned by the rapid process of urban transformation taking place in the city. Each year, a new hotel resort, a large-scale casino, a shopping mall, or a cluster of high-rise condominiums would appear. Macau was changing so quickly that I had trouble recognizing the city in which I grew up. Local streets and places where I hung out with my friends and went about my daily routine had suddenly become tourist attractions and shopping centers. At the same time, new urban spaces suddenly emerged: Las Vegas-styled casinos and resorts were built on newly reclaimed land; natural wetland and hiking trails were destroyed to make way for luxury condominiums; the “suburb” was turned into a stretch of resort casino complexes. Beginning in 2004, I witnessed the city’s rapid transformation from a sleepy colonial town into a global casino hub.

By the numbers, Macau’s transformation has been nothing short of an economic miracle. Between 1999 and 2014, GDP per capita grew from \$14,000 to \$96,000 (World Bank 2017). Bolstered by the expansion of the casino gambling industry, Macau became the world’s fastest-growing city in 2014 (Florida 2015). Today, the city is the world’s most lucrative casino center, with annual gambling revenues approximately seven times higher than those of Las Vegas. Gambling revenues have skyrocketed from US\$2.7 billion in 2002 to US\$43.9 billion in 2013 (Center for Gaming Research 2016).

This kind of growth, while exceptional, is not unique in the region. Rapid urbanization has been a common theme in many Chinese cities since the 1990s. Similar to major cities in China such as Shanghai and Shenzhen, Macau has been incorporated

into the national “Go West” development strategy, whereby rapid urban growth charts a new path for China to insert itself into the global economy (Chen 2014). Governments at the national and local levels steer global economic forces toward jumpstarting and sustaining economic development. In Macau, the local and central governments have acted cooperatively to boost local urban growth by, for instance, injecting foreign direct investment into the local gambling industry and creating regional demand for gambling tourism via a national policy that controls the population flow. Strong state interventions make the pace of development fast and national economic planning very effective.

Beyond the numbers, however, Macau’s transformation amounts to more than economic betterment for people living in the city. During those summer visits from 2004 to 2010, I heard complaints, laments, yearnings, and aspirations from ordinary people with regard to this urban transformation. While some local residents talked proudly about the rapid pace of economic growth and the increasing recognition that now put Macau next to Las Vegas as a global destination city, they also mourned the destruction of public squares, parks, and green spaces, as well as the loss of cultural traditions that were associated with the history of the city. This was my first inkling that economic development and the related changes in urban space occupy an important locus in people’s consciousness and social lives. With old urban spaces disappearing and new ones burgeoning, ordinary people inevitably alter their daily routines of commuting, leisure, and social interaction.

What are the lived cultural reactions to structural economic changes? Do they reject the processes of development? Or do they welcome and adapt to them? More significantly, what is the range of new cultural meanings produced in response to the

global changes? How do various aspects of rapid urban growth affect people's social life in concrete ways? These were the questions that I had in mind when I first began the dissertation project.

To contextualize my initial observation, Marxist urban studies provide a way through which urban transformation can be understood in relation to contemporary capitalism. David Harvey, a central figure in urban studies who has popularized spatial Marxism, argues in his early work that contemporary processes of city building reflect the spatial manifestation of capitalism as an economic system (Harvey 2009). Since urbanization works to efficiently absorb the constant production of goods and services, the formation of cities is key to the spread of global capitalism. Though varied in local adaptation, cities generally offer built environments in which capitalistic exchange and accumulation can freely begin and develop. For example, while an oligopolistically organized metropolitan area, such as Pittsburgh, encouraged the development of existing industries, entrepreneurial and financial metropolitan centers, such as New York, breed new work and capitalist innovation (Harvey 2009:269). In both cases, capitalism develops through the making of urban areas, a process that Harvey (1985) calls "the urbanization of capital."

Inspired by Harvey's provocative propositions, critical urban scholars have analyzed contemporary processes of urban change as part of the globalizing project of capitalism. When translated into action at the urban level, the geographical expansion of capital involves the widespread partnership between market and state agents who work collaboratively to create "good business climates" across cities. Increasingly, local politicians and global businesses join together to turn cities into attractive locations for

capitalists and visitors to spend money and time (Hackworth 2007; Zimmerman 2008; Brenner and Theodore 2008; Hall 2006).

Although Harvey's early work and other accounts of Marxist urban studies provided a compelling explanation for urbanization in relation to capitalism (Swyngedouw and Kaika 2003; Harvey 1989), this perspective was also criticized as being overly economistic and deterministic because it overlooked the importance of culture and human agency (Purcell 2014; Logan and Molotch 2010). In the United States, a "new" urban sociology emerged during the 1970s to address the role of human actors in the context of capitalist urbanization. Focusing on the cultural consequences of economic development in the urban context, for example, Sharon Zukin (1989; 1995; 2011) has examined the ways local culture is influenced by urban change through real estate development, urban revitalization projects, and gentrification. Zukin, studying cities in the United States, argues that urban culture has increasingly become an instrument of entrepreneurial strategies that serve the private interests of some while excluding the majority of less powerful social groups. Put differently, the cultures of cities are gradually co-opted and appropriated for capitalistic gain. Those who participate in the collective lifestyle of consumption earn the public identity of "urban citizen," while those who do not are made invisible or cropped out of the image of public urban life (Zukin 1995). Hence, urban development that seeks to appeal to global businesses and transnational capital, though it facilitates local economic growth, also exacerbates social inequalities.

Coincidentally, the introduction of Henri Lefebvre's newly translated works has triggered an unprecedented wave of discussions about the role of culture within urban

Marxist scholarship. Subsequently, some scholars seek to engage with Lefebvre's theoretical provocation about utopian pursuits via "the right to the city" (Brenner et al. 2008; Chen 2013; Fainstein 2010; Mitchell 2003; Purcell 2013; Shlay and Rosen 2015; Smith and McQuairre 2012). In particular, Lefebvre's vision about the promise of another world based on use value over exchange value, or the prioritizing of non-commercial needs, has prompted scholars to explore the possibility of local everyday practices being the catalyst for radical social change. For instance, Lefebvre's conception of *autogestion* provides an optimistic framework that illuminates the pathway for the production and management of a utopian society characterized by meaningful collaboration among people relatively free from alienation and domination. Directly translated as "self-management," *autogestion* suggests a radical attack on the foundation of social relations and the means of production controlled by the bourgeoisie. Interpreting Lefebvre's texts, Purcell (2014:147) describes self-management as "people managing collective decisions themselves rather than surrendering those decisions to a cadre of state officials." According to Purcell, utopia will only be realized when ordinary people exercise their power by refusing to accept the dominant vision produced by the bourgeoisie, by emphasizing the importance of their everyday lived experiences, and by producing and managing their own space according to their experiences. Furthermore, culture, in Lefebvre's theorization, is defined as "the work" (i.e. oeuvre) that is *lived* in reality through everyday experiences as opposed to cultural products that represent bourgeois ideals. "The work," therefore, escapes the realm of commercial and economic interests and restores use value by privileging the notion of resistance over commodification (Fraser 2015).

Building on Lefebvre's theoretical proposition, Harvey (2000) advocates the creation of "spaces of hope" in which the bridge between the micro-scale of personal life and the macro-scale of global political economy serves as a vital force for positive social change. Accordingly, the development of local urban culture is seen as an important source of counter-hegemonic forces that have the potential to grow into oppositional social movements and in turn open up new possibilities and alternatives to global capitalism (Harvey 2013). As global businesses seek to appropriate localized cultures and histories for capitalistic gains, ordinary people produce meanings, authenticity, and aesthetic interpretations that can be antagonistic to capitalistic development, setting the stage for radical politics that can reclaim urban space for the people. This perspective highlights the autonomous aspect of local cultural forces. Hence, it provides a more optimistic outlook for the role of culture than that of Zukin, who saw culture as a means of controlling cities, and therefore as inseparable from relationships of power. In the same vein, empirical accounts present social resistance in the forms of property rights activism, alternative use of urban space, and opposition to urban development projects as examples of everyday revolutions that escape the control of capitalistic domination (Iveson 2013; Novy and Colomb 2013; Schmelzkopf 2002; Shin 2013).

One weakness in Harvey's and other Marxist accounts which engages with Lefebvre's theory is the narrow analysis of social resistance based on class subjectivism, that is, social relations of production based on the notion of class struggle. By focusing on class-based contention, they overlook the dynamic nature of social relations as constantly changing processes that arise from new and renewed relationships of power. While these accounts bring to light class-based struggles for social justice in the urban



context, they fail to fully appreciate the complexity of Lefebvre's theory by positioning social activism organized by ordinary people in direct opposition to capitalist forces. In other words, these aforementioned accounts present social relations of ordinary people, social activist groups, power elites, and governments in the binaries of the dominant mainstream and the marginalized community. Consequently, they do not address how ordinary people can be embedded in or become part of the structure of power and how they can actively contribute to the production of capitalist relations.

In fact, Lefebvre (2008) has criticized Marxist theories and scholarship for its reductionistic framework for understanding the process of cultural production as strictly based on class relations. While Lefebvre (1996, 2003, 2008, 2011, 2013) draws attention to the autonomous opportunities that cultural lived experiences can provide for battling against capitalist domination, he also recognizes that capitalist production produces new form of cultural and social context within which ordinary people engage in everyday practices. The individuals, therefore, do not simply win or lose the battle against capitalism. People produce both continuous fulfillment and increasing alienation in capitalist production while transforming the relations of production that they enter into. In *the Critique of Everyday Life* (2008), Lefebvre calls for the study of everyday life that reveals the tactics and strategies of particular social groups and the relations between groupings to understand how social change can take place at the micro-level of events, strategies, and historical moments. While capitalist production produces a dominant cultural and social context within which people practice their everyday life, mundane activities by ordinary people simultaneously produces an ever-changing social context whereby the dominant culture can be challenged and transformed through the variety of

responses, oppositions, and events produced by diverse social groups. What is not clear from Lefebvre's accounts, however, is *how* local cultural resistance emerges and the material base it builds on in creating resistance rooted in local culture.

Based on these theoretical claims and orientations, I set out to examine the link between local cultural practices and global political economic forces in Macau.

Exploratory in nature, my research seeks to address the question of the possibility of culture galvanizing people into revolutionary politics given the context of global capitalism; what is the role of local culture in the context of Macau's restructuring? Do personal and localized practices actually generate oppositional politics? Do they serve as marketing tools for the expansion of economic development? And more importantly, how do these social processes emerge?

Armed with these questions, I arrived in the field in May 2014. Surprisingly, the largest protest in Macau's history broke out two days before my fieldwork began. On the surface, the protest could be easily perceived as an example of autonomous social resistance and therefore supportive of the supposition about the counter-hegemonic role that local culture plays in the context of global capitalism. My ongoing engagement in the field, however, pointed to the complexity and volatility of social relations within which local culture is developed. At the minimum, these social protests rendered the research more dynamic and analysis more difficult given these unfolding rapid social changes. The sudden upsurge of grassroots movements, as well as the public support for and criticism of social resistance, changed Macau. During interviews with local residents, thereafter, I was unable to extract general responses to economic change from specific reactions to the rise of the social protest that was now an important part of the social

context. That is, general questions produced responses contaminated by the recently emerging discourses of protest and anti-protest. For example, when I solicited opinions about general urban change, some of my respondents attributed their discontent to the perceived ineptitude of public officials, which was the central theme of the protest. Those who did not support the protest or were indifferent to it, on the other hand, adopted the frames and arguments of public officials when they attempted to condemn or discount the goals and intentions of social movement groups. My early experiences in the field revealed that people's personally scripted narratives did not translate into "personal" experiences but rather, their experiences were mediated by floating scripts provided by the dominant culture. The borrowing of dominant cultural frames to give meanings to one's reality was not restricted to the interpretation of social protest; it also extended to the interpretation of other urban processes.

The complexity of social patterns about the relationship between local culture and power relations continues to unfold during my fieldwork. Although people's "personal" opinions were often drawn from dominant frames, the interpretation and utilization of these frames were diverse, heterogeneous, and multi-directional. People created multiple layers of cultural meanings to make sense of available dominant symbols. By articulating and positioning dominant discourses in relation to each other in specific and flexible ways, people formed a constellation of meanings that sought to conform, adapt, resist, recreate, and transform social relations. Regardless of age, sex, occupation, or socioeconomic status, people criticized the encroachment of development into their everyday lives while also valuing some of the changes that resulted from development. For instance, they condemned the transformation of only a few urban places, while they

simultaneously disregarded or even welcomed the transformation of others. Similar to the interpretation of social protest, people repeatedly articulated their judgment, approval, and criticism of urban development *through* the use of diverse and even incompatible arguments and frames produced by the government, public officials, urban elites, transnational corporations, labor unions, and community organizations. Despite their adoption of established dominant culture or resistance to it, individuals were not quite “cultural dupes” in a sense that they did not exactly reproduce capitalist ideals promoted by those in power, nor were they purely “cultural revolutionaries” because they did not see their cultural and social practices as directly challenging bourgeois vision. Similar to what scholars of postcolonial and diasporic theories have suggested, people rethink, reconstruct, reinterpret, and repurpose dominant knowledge. The reconstruction of established or globalized views is characterized by hybridity, flexibility, adaptability, and specificity (Arora et al. 2013; Ashcroft et al. 2013; Young 1995).

As my fieldwork continued, my data became increasingly convoluted because these narratives that I had collected from Macau residents represented neither their compliance with the hegemony of the commodity form nor their own unique resistance narratives based on “subjective” and “personal” lived experience. My observation, therefore, could not easily fit into a binary model that positions culture as either coopted or revolutionary. Indeed, the harder I tried to categorize my participants’ responses, the more confusing the data became. For instance, in hope of collecting anti-capitalist narratives, I interviewed activists, social movement leaders, and union leaders who organized social protests against the local government and transnational casinos. Instead of hearing arguments antagonistic to capitalism, neoliberalism, or globalization, however,

I heard motivations that were supported and guided by self-interests (both material and symbolic) that were seemingly presented as part of dominant political ideologies.

Agency, therefore, was not realized by directly combating against dominant ideologies and the structure of power that produced them. I had difficulty examining agency as a unit of analysis separate from the structure of power. Furthermore, my data showed me that agency worked *through* existing power relations. Clearly, then, theoretical frameworks that locate culture and agency separate from structures of power did not explain what I observed in the field.

Although the ethnographic data that I collected from the field generally aligned with Lefebvre's general theorization about the complexity of socio-cultural formation and they showed a glimpse of spontaneous resistance from below, Lefebvre's notion of urban society as a flexible and utopian object was too general and vague for the purpose of systemic analysis of ethnographic data. In search of theoretical tools to capture the specificities that constitute this generalized utopia that Lefebvre devised, I revisited Pierre Bourdieu's theory on symbolic power to help more accurately map the interactions among the cultural discourses I was encountering. Bourdieu's theoretical concepts are particularly beneficial for my purposes for a couple of reasons. First, he views any cultural productions as *part* of the symbolic systems that provide "reference points" through which people objectify reality and make it their own (Bourdieu 2003). This approach to understanding culture explains the borrowing, tailoring, and reappropriating of dominant frames by people that I observed in the field.

Second, while acknowledging Marxist assertions about culture as instruments of domination, Bourdieu also understands culture as means of communication and an

instrument for knowing. As he argues, cultural productions are “doubly determined.” That is, on one hand, culture owes its structure to the material conditions of production established by those in power and therefore, as a product, culture serves the interests of powerful agents who produce the field of production.<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, culture is a byproduct that expresses the interests of those who did not create the material reality.<sup>2</sup> As he clarifies:

[Cultural productions] owe their most specific characteristics not only to the interest of the classes or class fractions they express (the function of sociodicy), but also to the specific interests of those who produce them and to the specific logic of the field of production (commonly transfigured into the form of an ideology of “creation” and of the “creative artist”) (Bourdieu 2003:169).

This explains why ordinary people, as well as social movement leaders with whom I spoke, were able to extend their self-interests and fight for their rights without directly confronting bourgeois ideologies.

In the following chapters, I build on Bourdieu’s framework to explore the different types of available discourses that I found in the field and how they are utilized

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of *field* can be contrasted with Marxist’s idea of *base*. In Marxist theory, society is shaped by base and superstructure. Base represents the material environment that gives form to the means of production and relations of production (e.g. class relations). Base is seen as dominant to superstructure, which includes culture and ideologies. Therefore, the Marxist theory of base and superstructure suggests the separation between material condition and cultural beliefs. Bourdieu’s conception of field does not separate the cultural, social, economic, or political. According to Bourdieu, social agents interact according to both cultural and material interests in each given field. Power relations are generated and sustained through the interaction within and among different fields, rather than the interaction between base and superstructure.

<sup>2</sup> Bourdieu criticizes the Marxist approach to symbolic systems as reductionistic and totalistic in the sense that it assumes cultural productions as independent of a pure internal analysis of class relations.

by locals making meanings of economic transformation. Viewing discourses as a form of cultural production, I argue that discourses both *organize* and *are organized by* local everyday practices, social movements, and the political economy in the midst of urban transformation. In Bourdieu's terms, discourses are both *structured structure* and *structuring structure*. Whereas discourses as cultural and symbolic products provide a system of structure for social actions, they also generate and organize practices and representations of practices. As such, dominant social agents construct discourses as *structured structure* in order to compete for the monopolistic representation of reality. As *structuring structure*, however, discourses become dialectically and relationally recognized and incorporated into thoughts and actions (Bourdieu 2008).

In order to tease out the complexity of the processes of discursive production, I have developed my own categorization of cultural discourses based on my ethnographic observation that is unique to the local context of Macau: authorized, everyday, and mobilizing discourses. To connect them, I argue that these discourses represent the macro-, micro-, and meso-levels of a symbolic system whereby authorized discourse (such as political rhetoric and global neoliberal ideology), everyday discourse (such as local narratives and emotions), and mobilizing discourse (such as protest slogans and grassroots campaigns) interact with one another in the field where the struggle over meanings reinforces and creates social relations linked to power positions. Furthermore, internal to each level are competing discourses developed by different social groups vested with their own sets of interests, seeking the monopoly of conservation (i.e. symbolic power). All existing discourses are available for the utilization of actors operating at different levels in this complex structure.

After I discuss the research methods that structured the investigation in the following chapter, Chapter 3 will examine, what I call—authorized discourse—that was produced by colonial, local, and national state agents as well as transnational casino corporations; and more specifically, it will explore the range of competing dominant narratives about *the* vision of Macau to justify and rationalize economic and political transformations. Chapter 4 will focus on the collective yet diverse narratives of ordinary people, with which I refer to as everyday discourse, and its relations to authorized discourse in extending and destabilizing the power structure. Lastly, Chapter 5 will examine the frames, debates, and arguments that emerged during the organization and mobilization of social protests, a set of narratives that I call mobilizing discourse; in so doing, I reveal the dynamics and contingencies that social movement groups faced during the production of effective arguments as well as the embeddedness of social activism within the complex structure of culture.



## CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

### 2.1 *Extended Case Method*

This dissertation employs the methodological foundation of the extended case method to provide the principles that guide the design of the study. The extended case method (ECM) applies *reflexive* science to ethnography (Burawoy 1998, 2009). Similar to grounded theory (GT), ECM emphasizes ethnography as an ongoing process that looks continually for patterns of situations and elements to inform the theory. Presented as alternatives to functionalist positivist research that seeks to measure objective evidence through a set of procedures, both GT and ECM propose that the researcher must reflect upon how his or her own scientific practice produces “evidence” framed by scholarly traditions and preexisting theory. Taking into account the researcher’s own positionality, GT and ECM aim to develop improved research methods by viewing the construction and reconstruction of theory as an active part of the fieldwork, rather than a strategy of post-fieldwork analysis.

Despite these similarities, Tavory and Timmermans (2009) argue that GT and ECM produce different types of ethnographic scholarship. Since GT views the social world as consisting of narratives and situations that are “grounded” in social life, the researcher begins with the collection of data and ends with the construction of new theoretical principles based on the participants’ grounded narratives. Hence, GT tends to produce relatively inductive analyses, with “thick” description that results from fieldnote writing, constant comparison, and coding. ECM, on the other hand, begins with a “favorite theory” and seeks to refute, elaborate, or rethink that theory through

ethnographic observation (Burawoy 1998). Accordingly, ECM tends to produce comparatively deductive analyses that aim to tie the field to a particular theory.<sup>3</sup>

Michael Burawoy, a major proponent of ECM, argues that ethnography based on ECM connects localized action to wider operations of power. It “extract[s] the general from the unique” and “move[s] from the ‘micro’ to the ‘macro’” in order to extend or reconstruct theories (Burawoy 1998:5). The strength of ECM, therefore, is its ability to connect empirical details to structural analysis, to explore the interrelationship between field and theory. In that sense, ECM produces more theoretically driven ethnography, or what can be called a “theorygraphy,” because it sees the field as a case that modifies, exemplifies, and extends existing theories (Tavory and Timmermans 2009).

Applying ECM to my ethnographic research, I entered the field with the theoretical ambition, informed by Neo-Marxist theory in critical urban studies, to explore whether and how urban culture might act as a counterhegemonic force against the structure of power. Although I explicitly used theory as the starting point to set the boundaries of the case, I also actively looked, both during and after fieldwork, for situations in which my favored theory seemed to be disconfirmed or refuted. For instance, as I noted in the introduction, my investigation into urban culture through the collection of localized everyday narratives among ordinary residents led me to multiple fields, including those of social activism, online media, political parties, interest groups, and transnational businesses. The complexity and interrelatedness of the narratives and fields suggested to me that power relations were structured not only by class differences (i.e. the Marxist presupposition), but also by powerful webs of material and symbolic

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<sup>3</sup> That said, both types of researchers use both deductive and inductive methods.

interests that were understood and articulated in historical, ideological, and social terms (i.e. Bourdieu's proposition).

## *2.2 The Study Design*

I employed a variety of qualitative research methods. Data were collected from focus groups, in-depth interviews, photo-elicitation, and ethnographic observation, as well as critical discourse analysis. While some of these research methods were adopted prior to entering the field, others were developed during the process of fieldwork with the aim of deepening my understanding of the theory that I brought to the field and to elicit more in-depth narratives from my informants.<sup>4</sup> In the following section, I will discuss each research method in greater detail and elaborate on the factors influencing my choice of these methods.

### *2.2.1 Focus groups*

I conducted five focus groups with ordinary residents and two with members of social movement groups.<sup>5</sup> These focus groups were completed early on during fieldwork, in June 2014. Focus groups comprised three to seven participants from homogeneous backgrounds, i.e. university students, young professionals, mid-life men and women,

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<sup>4</sup> Specifically, focus groups, in-depth interviews, ethnographic participation with key informants, and discourse analysis were included as research methods in the original research plan, whereas photo-elicitation and ethnographic participation in cafés, shopping malls, and social protests were added only after I entered the field.

<sup>5</sup> The two focus groups with social movement activists were with members from Macau Gaming Vanguard (MGV) and Macau Voice (MV). These two social-movement groups were identified by participants in the initial focus groups. Activists were recruited after I contacted them through email addresses published on the groups' official websites or after I met them at protest events. They were structured similarly to the other focus groups.

retirees, and members of social movement groups. During the focus groups, I asked participants a series of open-ended questions that probed their perceptions of urban change.

Focus groups can uncover complex, contradictory definitions of social categories, and different senses of agency among participants (Macnaghten and Myers 2004). In addition, they can facilitate the circulation of ideas that are not only co-constructed in dialogue at the moment but also shared as common knowledge rooted in the past and open toward the future (Markova et al. 2007). My goal in conducting these focus groups was to get a sense of how local culture creates cultural presuppositions and frames with which to interpret urban change. Therefore, during these focus groups, I paid attention to any possible themes that might demonstrate ambivalence, divergence, or conflicts related to urban change and the cultural knowledge upon which people drew to interpret urban change.

### *2.2.2 In-depth interview, life story, and photo elicitation*

I conducted 50 in-depth interviews with ordinary residents, local elites, and members of social movement groups.<sup>6</sup> Each interview lasted for approximately two hours. I combined interview questions with life stories and photo-elicitation. Each interview consisted of three components: (1) interview questions, (2) the construction of a life story, and (3) photo-elicitation.

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<sup>6</sup> I conducted individual interviews with thirty-nine Macau residents, two interest group members, and one local politician. Eight interviews were conducted with key members of Macau Gaming Vanguard and Macau Voice. The interviews with activists were longer, with all of them lasting for at least 2.5 hours, because I also asked them an additional set of questions related to their roles in social activism.

The design of the in-depth interview was guided by themes that emerged from the five focus groups. Focus group discussions revealed that urban change was an emotional topic, both subjectively and objectively. That is, focus group participants felt emotional about urban change subjectively—they displayed mixed emotions, such as nostalgia and a sense of loss toward the past, as well as aspirations and desires for the future. Moreover, feeling emotional about urban change was conceived as an object truth—common sense that is embedded in the urban culture. Therefore, I designed the interview in a way that enabled me to examine how my interviewees' emotions might be connected to their relationships with various social institutions, such as local or national governments and transnational casinos. The purpose was to find out whether urban culture (represented and expressed in these emotions) creates forces antagonistic to the economic and political structure, as suggested by Harvey's proposition that culture is the "spaces of hope."

First, to find out people's relationships with and positions within the structure of power, I relied on the life-story method. A life story is "the story a person chooses to tell about the life he or she has lived" (Atkinson 2011:8). The life-story method is particularly suited to exploring a person's social position (and their self-perceptions). This is because life stories can explain the perceptions about social events and changes or how members of a group, generation, or cohort see those events or changes and how they see, experience, or interpret those events linked to their personal development (Atkinson 2011). As such, they can help the researcher understand the social reality of urban change described by people's individual stories and allow the researcher to locate interviewees' positions within the social structures undergoing urban change.

During the interviews, I asked my interviewees what their relationship with Macau was, how long they had lived in Macau, and whether or not they ever left Macau for an extended period of time. Their answers to these questions became a springboard for me to probe for more details into their individual lives and to ask how their personal development was related to or influenced by processes of rapid urban change. These life-story interviews lasted, on average, for about one hour.

Second, since the distinction between the past and the present and the creative destruction of urban spaces emerged as important themes from the focus groups, I used photo-elicitation to further explore the ways that local residents interpreted their personal connections with or experiences in various urban spaces and how those connections and experiences were situated in their personal lives structured by economic and political change. Photo-elicitation is a research method whereby the researcher shows a single photograph or a set of photographs to the interviewees with the aim of exploring their values, beliefs, and attitudes (Prosser 1998). Photo-elicitation provides a few possibilities that make the method particularly useful for my purpose. First, the photos can promote more open communication by reducing discomfort or fatigue that some participants might experience over the course of the interview. Second, it gives agency to interviewees by focusing on them as the producers of knowledge (Vila 2012). Lastly, it can stimulate latent memories and evoke emotional recollections about one's social life (Harper 2002). Because the sense of nostalgia I observed involves the decline and loss of personal wholeness or familiar experience (Turner 1987), the photos helped me establish rapport with my informants more easily, thereby allowing me to explore their personal meanings of what they had lost and gained due to urban change.

During the interview process, I showed my informants a series of 25 photos that depicted different forms of architecture in Macau. These images included casinos, residential and commercial buildings, religious buildings, and government buildings. They first looked through the series of photos that I assembled, and they then singled out those they wanted to comment on. Typically, they selected 5 to 10 photos to discuss.

Lastly, interview questions mostly focused on people's opinions about urban change, the expansion of the gambling industry, and rapid economic growth. These questions were usually asked after the life story and photo-elicitation were completed. Their order varied, however, in different interviews. For example, when interviewees did not disclose enough to produce a life story, I resorted to conducting the photo-elicitation first because it could reduce discomfort and encourage rapport. When interviewees appeared to be comfortable and open, however, I aimed to complete the life story first in order to gain better insights about the social context through which they answered my questions and interpreted the images presented to them.

### *2.2.3 Ethnographic participation*

At various sites, I took part in social interactions and events to learn the explicit and tacit aspects of local culture in relation to urban change. These sites included public spaces, such as public squares and public transportation, semi-public spaces, such as shopping malls and cafés, and private spaces, such as participants' homes. Because ethnography seeks to understand and explain cultural knowledge as a fundamental aspect of the human lived experience (Hammersley and Atkinson 1983), ethnographic participation allows researchers to recognize and understand the shared knowledge that

people learn and use to engage in their cultural behavior. Pink (2009) argues that the transmission of knowledge between persons is a social, participatory, and embodied process. To explore the process whereby cultural knowledge is transmitted from one person to another, researchers should engage in practices with their subjects and make participation central to their task.

During ethnographic participation, I paid close attention to what were recognized as taken-for-granted cultural behaviors and explored the sources of cultural knowledge that provided the cultural legitimacy and significance for those behaviors. If having certain responses to urban change is recognized as culturally appropriate behavior, then those responses should be understood as based on cultural knowledge that is produced socially and embedded in local culture. As the fieldwork continued, the investigation into these “sources” of local knowledge brought me to different spaces—social protests, public forums (both online and offline), casinos, shopping malls, bars and restaurants, and people’s homes.

#### *2.2.4 Critical discourse analysis*

Critical discourse analysis is a variant of content analysis, which focuses on the role of power in shaping knowledge, attitudes, ideologies, and other social representations (van Dijk 1993). Content analysis as a research method originates from the study of mass communication. Researchers of social science have used content analysis to investigate and understand communicators, their messages or texts, and the contexts within their production (White and Marsh 2006). Specifically, “discourse...mean[s] particular ways of representing part of the world” (Fairclough,



2003:26). The manner of reportage (e.g. the operations of selection, summarization, and generalization) and the multiplicity of voices are two of the primary foci of discourse analysis (Fairclough 1992).

The language of the state in mass media is a site of power and of dominant discourse (Wodak 2004). Using the official websites of government institutions and casinos, official government documents, and newspaper and magazine articles, I identified the ways that specific “frames” of seeing urban change were drawn upon and developed, as well as who the producers of these frames are. For example, when analyzing newspaper articles, I paid attention not only to issues such as the expansion of the casino gambling industry, but also how it was presented, and upon whose voices journalists drew in their reporting.

Since “online interpretative work provide[s] the foundations for social criticism and social action” (Denzin 2004:7), I also examined everyday discourse produced by residents of Macau and mobilizing discourse produced by social activists on internet forums. These internet forums are platforms for individuals to express their voice in a more direct and explicit fashion than are interviews and focus groups, due to the anonymity they provide. In addition to physical urban places, the internet provides a space where people can make meanings about their lived experience in the city. Because both online and offline content can shape the ways people understand their lives (Orgad 2008), I considered the data that I collected online equally real and significant as those which I collected offline.

### 2.3 Studying “My Own People”

I entered the field as a graduate student in the United States “going back home.” To a certain extent, access to informants was relatively easy due to our shared language and perception of our shared identity as Macanese. Because I told the participants that I was from Macau and that I had grown up in the city, many of them assumed that we shared cultural values. Some participants, especially those who had studied abroad and returned to Macau, said that they were glad to “help out a fellow Macau native.” Others felt relieved when I told them that I was a local because they said they did not have to “explain as much” (although of course, rich explanations were exactly what I was seeking). In general, participants became less resistant during interviews and focus groups as soon as I revealed my connection with the city. In that sense, I achieved insider status quite easily—I was considered as a member of my informants’ group and became a participant rather than simply an observer.<sup>7</sup>

Nevertheless, the relationships among my cultural upbringing, educational background, gender, and age showed me that the negotiation of power between researcher and informant happened in different communities of participants, at different levels, and at different times. I noticed that participants were more defensive when they considered me an outsider, that is, someone who was seen as the “other” and shared little mutual homogeneity with them (Acker 2000). In a culture that places greater value on age, maleness, education, and degree, as well as Western culture, my position as a young female doctorate student from the United States created contradictory relations of power

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<sup>7</sup> For discussions about insider and outsider’s perspectives, see Dwyer and Buckle 2009; Acker 2000; Mullings 1999.

that placed me at times among the dominant and at other times among the dominated. In general, participants often put up their shields in initial encounters. For example, they usually showed some level of discomfort at the start of the interview and were hesitant to reveal their own feelings.

To penetrate these shields, I employed different tactics depending on the situation. When I encountered participants who were endowed with power derived from their gender or seniority, I sometimes asserted my privileged educational status to try to equalize the power between us. On the other hand, when I encountered less-privileged groups, such as local working-class women, I downplayed my educational privilege to create perceived commonality. For instance, I told them I was a student, but did not mention the advanced degree I was pursuing. As a result, many assumed that I was an undergraduate student doing a class project.

I had very limited access to more privileged urban elites and local politicians. Since almost all of them are middle-aged men with deep ties with powerful local interest groups, I was only able to interview one local politician (a man of Portuguese-Chinese descent) and two interest-group members (both women). Similar to other researchers who have discussed the problem of power and positionality during the research process, the intersection of my age, gender, education, and class background, therefore, put me in different positions of power, depending on the person or persons sitting across from me in the interview or focus group setting (Huisman 2008; Merriam et al. 2001).

## 2.4 *Doing Reflexive Science through ECM*

According to Burawoy (1998), ECM involves the reflexive principles of (1) intervention, (2) process, and (3) structuration, all aimed at rethinking and extending a working theory.

### 2.4.2 *Intervention*

Intervention refers to the researcher's ability to provoke reactions from his or her participants, in order to transmit the hidden secrets of their world:

The most seismic interventions are often entry into and departure from the field. Any group will often put up a great deal of formal and informal resistance to be studied at close quarters—resistance that discloses much about the core values and interests of its members as well as its capacity to ward off danger. Leaving the field is also an “intervention” since it is then that participants often declare well-kept secrets, or pose revealing questions that they had never dared ask before (Burawoy 1998:17).

In each interview, focus group, or encounter with participants, therefore, my goal was not to remain an observer but to take advantage of the disruptions and interventions that I created by asking questions, presenting photos, or simply being present. My dialogues with my informants fluctuated depending on how they perceived particular questions, statements, or photos I presented to them. While I was assessing them as research participants, they also judged what kind of researcher I was—whether my reactions to their responses represented agreement with, disapproval of, or ambivalence toward their perspectives. In these relations, informants did not communicate *my* concerns informed by sociological theory; rather, they revealed *their* concerns as everyday aspects of their own social lives (Katz 2015). For example, when activists did not frame their arguments as anti-capitalistic, I did not understand them as “negative cases” that deviated from the

research. Instead, I viewed them as substantive data that guided the subsequent collection of data and then changed the analysis.

#### 2.4.3 *Process*

Reflexive science understands meanings as derived from multiple experiences and as contingent upon different situations. ECM requires that the researcher unpack those situational meanings and experiences by moving with the participants through time and space. By extending ethnographic participation to multiple sites over time, the researcher can uncover the process by which meanings are generated and embedded in the cultural context. In this way, it seeks to avoid the silencing of the participants.

“Situations involve relations of co-presence, providing the conditions for practices that reproduce relations” (Burawoy 1998:18). As people gradually produce and transform the local context through their daily routines, they also reproduce Macau as a place where existing social relations continue. By joining participants in different places as much as I could and traveling in time and space with them via the construction of life stories, my goal was to uncover the reproduction of social relations under particular structures of power. During fieldwork, I observed the ways in which social situations became social processes that informed and revealed the patterns of power relations. For example, some of the participants’ sense of nostalgia toward “lost urban spaces” originated from their past experiences and social interactions, or was interpreted through shared knowledge produced by social institutions. These experiences, interactions, and knowledge made up the social process of the production of a shared attitude toward urban change.

#### 2.4.4 *Structuration*

Structuration involves the extension of social processes to larger structural forces. The goal is to position social processes (e.g. the production of local culture, attitudes, practices, or objects) in the constellation of trans-historical and extra-local context. How can the existing political or economic structure produced in the past shape social processes in the present? How can global economic forces influence local mindsets and practices? And how, if at all, does this exercise of locating particular social process within the larger social structure shed light on particular patterns of power relations? During fieldwork, I kept in mind the possible existing power relations that provided structure and organization to local social processes. The investigation into hidden power regimes led me to new fields—local historical accounts, national discourse, and global political economy—that I had not originally planned on incorporating. For example, my examination of the source of nostalgia unveiled a structure of unequal relationships between the previous Portuguese colonial government and the local population. Participating in the expression of nostalgia continued to reinforce and make real the power of the colonial government.

By deploying a variety of qualitative research methods, I was able to travel to different fields of power (virtual or real) occupied by my participants and myself to examine localized social relations as they are structured by global economic and political forces. In doing so, I extended the local context and situation where cultural meanings and discourses are produced to the global structure of international capital and neoliberal politics. My research is reflexive in the sense that it recognizes data that are “irrelevant” to my original objective as valuable substantive data but that are nonetheless rich with

indigenous meanings. The social relations that were built up from initial entry into the field to the point of departure continuously informed the research process, changed the analysis, and deepened my theoretical understanding.

As shown in Table 2.1, this research involved multiple methods, consisting of 5 focus groups of 26 total participants, 50 in-depth interviews with ordinary residents and social movements activists, photo-elicitation, participant observation, critical discourse and content analysis of government.

<u>Methods</u>	<u>Duration/Number</u>	<u>Specified Time</u>
Fieldwork	12-13 months	May-August 2012; May-August 2013; May-August 2014; November 2014 -January 2015
Participant Observation	Approx. 460 hours (e.g. casinos, public spaces, meetings, protests)	May-August 2013; May-August 2014
In-Depth Interviews/photo-elicitation	50 interviews with ordinary people, activists, movement leaders, and local politicians	May-August 2014; November 2014 -January 2015
Focus Groups	5 focus groups with 26 ordinary people and members of social movements groups	May-August 2014
Content Analysis	5 websites (government institutions and casinos); 3 online forums; 150 newspaper articles	September 2013-April 2014

Table 2.1. The Study Design

## CHAPTER 3: THE SYMBOLIC STRUGGLE FOR AUTHORIZED DISCOURSE

### 3.1 *Introduction*

In this chapter, I identify four groups of authority that have, over time, produced and reinforced discourses to compete for symbolic power in Macau, China. These groups are (1) the Portuguese Macau government, (2) the Chinese national government, (3) transnational casinos, and (4) the Macau SAR government. Vested with their own sets of accumulated economic and political capital, these four groups constructed and manipulated discourses, symbols, and urban spaces in the pursuit of symbolic and material interests. These discourses result in the coherence, ambivalence, and contradiction of various visions of Macau, with various targeted audiences and different degrees of effectiveness.

Bourdieu (2003) refers to authorized representatives as social agents who are entrusted with authority and whose words and actions are therefore loaded with accumulated symbolic power of the group they represent. In Macau, different authorities struggle for increasing symbolic power to confirm and transform varied visions of Macau in order to serve their specific interests. This chapter is an examination into the ways that different sets of authorized representatives construct symbols to structure symbolic systems and integrate their particular ideas and worldviews into the society. Such investigation matters because it will demystify the complexity of what can be called dominant culture by showing the elements such culture constitutes and the process through which its dominance is established and maintained. Ultimately, I will show that the process of producing the dominant vision(s) of Macau is not shaped simply by powerful social and political agents who represent homogeneous economic interests.



Rather, the reciprocal, opposing, and overlapping interests of different authorized groups and the ideas they produce continuously shape and reshape the structure of urban politics and the structure of urban space that these agents and their ideas represent.

### *3.2 The Production of Colonial Nostalgia*

One of the authorized producers of discourse in Macau was the Portuguese Macau government. Portuguese traders settled in Macau beginning in the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The city became a Portuguese colony in 1887 when China was invaded and divided into multiple European-controlled territories. Fast-forward to 1974, when the leftist Carnation Revolution in Lisbon ended the totalitarian rule of Salazar. The new Portuguese national government advocated “a policy of good relations and friendship with all peoples on the basis of mutual interest, non-interference, independence, and equality among nations” (Cheng 1999:35). Portugal was prompted to decolonize its remaining overseas possessions. Macau, however, remained a Portuguese colony because the People’s Republic of China (PRC) refused to redeem its sovereignty over the territory. Two years later, Portugal established Macau as a “special territory,” characterized by its politico-administrative autonomy from the metropole except for military defense and foreign policy (Aldrich and Connell 1998). The handover of Macau from Portugal to China in 1999 was perceived as a “deferred reunion” after the Carnation Revolution when Portugal was ready to retreat during the climax of the Cultural Revolution in China (Cheng 1999).

As the Portuguese Macau government prepared for the impending political handover in 1999, Macau underwent a “pre-postcolonial era” in which the government sought to promote its colonial legacies in Macau (Cheng 1999). During this period, a number of government institutions were established and a series of laws and policies

were implemented to produce and promote a vision of Macau as a “city of culture” (Tieben 2009). These institutions included the Heritage Committee, established in 1976; the Cultural Institute of Macau, in 1982; the Orient Foundation, in 1988; and the Institute of Cultural Studies of Macau, in 1993 (Cheng 1999). The Portuguese Macau government focused on two goals: the preservation of Macau’s colonial geography and the creation and promotion of Macanese heritage by giving meanings to its culture and history.

Between the 1970s and 1990s, the Portuguese Macau government strived to preserve and construct colonial spaces through the implementation of laws and the development of public space projects. First, new laws and policies with regard to cultural heritage preservation were introduced. The Heritage Committee created and published a list of protected properties and sites (Chung 2009). Furthermore, cultural-heritage laws provided specific categorization and definition of cultural heritage, detailing the types of conservation measures for each category. Categories included monuments, buildings of architectural interest, classified complexes, and classified sites. Several places in the city were also categorized as “protected areas” (Cultural Institute of Macau 2005). To safeguard the preservation of Macau’s cultural heritage, the 1987 Sino-Portuguese Joint Declaration made explicit that the Macau government under Chinese rule should “protect cultural relics in Macau according to law” (Government Printing Bureau 1987). Between 1990 and 1995, for example, the government spent approximately US\$3 million to restore the ruins of Sao Paulo Church, a four-story stone façade that remained after a fire that burned the original church to the ground in 1835 (Clayton 2009).

Toward the 1990s, more stringent laws were established to conserve the colonial geography. In 1991, the decrees of “Outer Harbor Reclamation Area Urban Intervention

Plan” and “Nam Van Bay Renovation Plan” were passed, setting limitations on building height so that the visual connection between Guia Hill (the location of the first colonial fortress and church) and other parts of the city would not be obstructed. The following year, the government passed a law (no. 83/92/M) to protect buildings and monuments of colonial importance, demanding that private developers obtain official authorization concerning any demolition and renovation of the designated buildings and creating buffer zones around these properties (Tam 2014).

The renewal of Leal Senado Square was an important part of the heritage-preservation movement during the 1990s. With the vast majority of nearby buildings being Portuguese-styled and protected monuments,<sup>8</sup> the square became the biggest public space constructed to evoke and foster the coexistence of Portuguese and Chinese cultures. In 1993, the Portuguese Macau government transformed the square and its adjacent street into a no-car zone. As a result, the original concrete pavement was replaced by traditional Portuguese Calçado—a decorative, irregularly shaped mosaic flooring composed of limestone and basalt. Benches and trees were built next to Macau Central Post Office and St. Dominique Church, which mark the boundaries of the pedestrian zone. A new circular fountain was installed in front of the Leal Senado Building. Furthermore, all buildings surrounding the square were repainted and the entire zone was ornamented with lamp posts and plants (Macau Heritage 2016).

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<sup>8</sup> Protected buildings include Cathedral of the Nativity of Our Lady, the Leal Senado Building, Holy House of Mercy, St. Dominic’s Church and the Ruins of St. Paul’s.



Illustration 1.1. Renewal of Leal Senado Square (Macau Heritage 2016)

At the same time, the Portuguese Macau government also invested in the building and expansion of libraries and museums. For example, the government established the Museum of Sacred Art and Crypt in 1996; the Museum of Macau in 1998; and the Cultural Center of Macau in 1999. In addition, it built public galleries and exhibition centers. Between 1993 and 1999, the government also spent over US\$10 million to build and install ten public art projects in different parts of the city. These permanent sculptures were designed and created by local and Portuguese artists as part of the public art collection known as “objects of friendship and memories” (Social Science Academic Press China 2004). The art pieces consist of abstract sculptures, modern monuments, and statues of Buddhist deities and local people.

Through the preservation of colonial geography, urban renewal projects, and the construction of public projects, the Portuguese Macau government presented a clear vision of Macau—a post-colonial place whose true identity is rooted in the historical legacy of 400 years of Portuguese colonialism in China. These policies and projects

transformed more than just the physical appearance of Macau. By giving buildings and spaces names and assigning meanings to them, they also created a particular way of seeing and understanding Macau as Portuguese. In Bourdieu's terms, these public projects projected symbolic power by becoming key instruments of domination, making people see and believe a particular vision of the world (Bourdieu 2003). Through the institutionalization of cultural heritage, the Portuguese Macau government achieved "symbolic efficacy," "the power to act on reality by acting on its representation" (Bourdieu 2003:119). More precisely, by establishing laws that achieve heritage preservation and construct a Macanese culture based on a specific, colonialist interpretation of Macau's history and urban aesthetic, heritage preservation becomes highly significant and Macanese culture is elevated as distinctive and superior to indigenous Chinese culture. Cathryn Clayton (2009) argued that this massive campaign during the "transition era" of the 1990s was designed to convince the Macanese population that they possessed a "unique cultural identity" different from that of mainland China. The construction of a unified identity characterized by multiculturalism and the tolerance of differences sought to erase the history of Macau as a place of segregated communities divided by language, religion, nationality, and ethnicity. As I will show in the following chapter, this postcolonial identity would provide important narratives on which many Macau residents draw to interpret their social life after 1999, despite it being a Portuguese invention.

### *3.3 The Chinese Narrative of Modern Nationalistic Macau*

The pursuit of symbolic power by the Portuguese Macau government was not without struggle, for the government was not the only authority group that competed for

symbolic power. Beginning in the 1990s, the Chinese national government also began to construct discourses about Macau as the impending political handover loomed. The official Chinese view was that Macau was a part of China that was gradually occupied by the Portuguese during the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century (Government of the PRC 2013). According to this view, Macau has always been under Chinese sovereignty. The political handover of 1999, hence, was interpreted as “China’s resumption of the exercise of sovereignty” (回歸) (Government Printing Bureau 1999), as opposed to “the transfer of sovereignty” (*Transferência de Poderes*) in the Portuguese version (Government Printing Bureau 1987).

This conflict over how to represent Macau’s political status was heightened in 1992, when a four-ton bronze statue of a controversial 19<sup>th</sup>-century Portuguese governor of Macau was pulled down without ceremony. The statue, which showed Governor Amaral mounted on horseback swinging a sword, was positioned across from the newly built headquarters of the Bank of China. At that time, Lu Ping, the chairman of China’s Hong Kong and Macao Affairs Office, demanded its removal because of its “colonial symbolism” (Bruning 1992). In addition, the statue was accused of creating bad *feng shui* by disrupting the harmonious geomancy for the new Bank of China. The 37-story octagonal tower was a representation of China’s resurgent political power and a celebration of modernity. Composed of glittering silver triangular-shaped glass, it was the tallest structure in Macau. The tower also symbolized the importance of the economic role that China would play in Macau (Cheng 1999). The removal of the Amaral statue across from the Bank of China signified China’s desire to erase Macau’s colonial past and to advance modernization by introducing a new economic and political environment.

Congruent with this architectural symbolism, the Basic Law of Macau Special Administrative Region (SAR) expresses the role of the Chinese government in transformative economic development that reflects the presence of a developmental state—the state-led macroeconomic planning common in East Asia (Nee et al. 2007; Woo-Cumings 1999). In the text of the Basic Law, for example, the Chinese government defines the political handover of 1999 as “contributing to social stability and economic development” (Government Printing Bureau 1999). This development strategy echoes the meta-narrative of societal betterment that is repeatedly emphasized by top Chinese officials, who equate economic growth with social welfare and progress in Hong Kong and Macau through the narrative of the “one country, two systems” policy. As President Xi Jinping stated in his speech at the gathering for Macau SAR’s 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary:

Facts have shown that as long as we understand and implement the principle of “one country, two systems” fully and correctly, strictly abide by the Basic Law, focus on economic growth and people’s well-being, uphold inclusiveness and mutual assistance, and promote broad unity under the banner “love the country, love Macau,” the implementation of “one country, two systems” will make steady and continuous progress along the right track and Macau will have a better future (Xinhua 2014).

The construction of this political discourse that seeks to interpret Macau as a symbol of national unity and socio-economic progress can be traced back to the 1980s. After the end of the Cultural Revolution and Mao’s death in 1976, Deng Xiaoping formulated the constitutional principle of “one country, two systems.” Deng—arguably the most powerful leader in post-Mao China—aimed to attain three major political goals for the Party. As Chiou (1986:467-8) quoted Deng stating:

The 1980s is the most important time in the development of our Party and nation. The major tasks for our people in the 80s are to achieve rapid progress in socialist modernization, to realize national reunification of the

motherland, including Taiwan, and to carry out anti-hegemonist struggle to maintain world peace.

The CCP led by Deng constructed a new vision of Chinese nationalism supported by Chinese economic reform (literally translated as “reform and opening up”) and the plan for national reunification. When he published “Building Socialism with Chinese Characteristics,” Deng (1984) adopted a modernist vision, condemning China’s economic isolation as the cause of the country’s backwardness and rural poverty. Furthermore, he suggested that economic reform, which would open up China to foreign investment, would put China on the path to modernity and affluence. After Deng retired in 1989, asserting nationalism became increasingly important due to the unprecedented international pressure caused by the Tiananmen Square protests. Writing about nationalism in the post-Deng era, Whiting (1995) argues that China opted to emphasize external rather than domestic factors by evoking past themes of China’s humiliation and reaffirmed self-reliance. He quoted an article in *China’s Daily (renmin ribao)* stating:

For a country to shake off foreign enslavement and become independent and self-reliant is the premise for its development...Although China was a big country before the liberation, it was slavishly dependent on others and could only be bullied by them (Whiting 1995:297).

Economic growth, therefore, was seen as the nation’s redemption from past indignity (Whiting 1995). Furthermore, it was believed that a national identity (i.e. collective “Chineseness”) would be secured through the integration of China’s “lost territories” (Yu and Kwan 2013). Accordingly, the push for rapid economic progress, as well as the return of Taiwan, Hong Kong and Macau to “the embrace of the motherland” (祖國的懷抱) has been central to China’s geopolitical strategy. For that reason, the integration of Macau into Greater China serves not only the economic function of



connecting China's economy with that of the rest of the world but also the political function of serving as an exemplar of "one country, two systems" to pressure Taiwan into reintegration. Unlike the Portuguese Macau government that sought to produce and reinforce a culture based on colonial nostalgia, the Chinese government attempted to build a renewed vision of Macau defined by economic growth and the national identity of Greater China.

If the goal of the Portuguese Macau government was to justify its past political power through the pursuit of symbolic interests via the creation of colonial memories, the goal of the Chinese government to represent Macau was clearly motivated by China's own economic and political interests that are best understood in ideological terms. In the local context of Macau, these various discourses have created multiple layers of social reality. By constructing different historical accounts and material circumstances about Macau, these two groups of authorized representatives compete with each other for the dominant symbolic representation through which their (past and present) political power is legitimized. As Bourdieu (2003:168) writes, "dominant class fractions [...] aim to impose the legitimacy of their domination either through their own symbolic production, or through the intermediary of conservative ideologues." The struggle over the monopoly of legitimate ideological production is, therefore, rooted in the struggle over symbolic and material interests in which both authorities represent.

### *3.4 The Urban Representation of a Sin City*

Theoretically, the efficacy of political discourses in the construction of reality is exercised if existing social mechanisms confirm the utterance of such discourses (Bourdieu 2003). In other words, political discourses become effective and valid when

the continual structuring of agents and institutions actualizes and makes official the visions of the world that political discourses seek to produce. Attaining symbolic efficacy is often difficult, however, because the production of symbols and representations in relation to the structuring of agents and institutions—a process Bourdieu refers to as the *labor of representation*—involves a certain amount of indeterminacy and vagueness. Because the properties attached to agents and institutions and their combinations can vary widely, the social world can be perceived and expressed in ways that are different from the construction of the visions of the world imposed by political elites (Bourdieu 2003).

This is evident in Macau. Despite state efforts to actualize political discourses through the control and manipulation of architecture, public space, historical accounts, and information, the authority of these discourses was threatened by the competing representation of Macau as a “sin city” in both Hong Kong and international media<sup>9</sup> during the transition era of the 1990s. At that time, due to triad wars, both the Chinese and Portuguese governments had difficulty establishing their own visions of Macau. Foreign media depicted Macau as a crime-ridden city overrun by local casino gangs. Macau was characterized as a place of violent crime, with machine gun shootouts, casino murders, bombings, and assassinations (Gee 1998). To understand the prevalence of this specific urban discourse, I obtained a random sample of 75 newspaper and magazine articles between 1997 and 1999 generated by using keywords of “Macau” and “casino.” In these articles, the word “gang” appear 288 times, an average of 3.8 times per article.

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<sup>9</sup> Local media organizations in Macau have long succumbed to competition from Hong Kong. In Macau, most local media outlets have been unable to survive commercially without government subsidies. Hong Kong television has dominated Macau's airwaves ever since television broadcasting was introduced in the late 1960s (South China Morning Post 2005).

Coverage of Macau generally discussed violence and bloodshed as the result of rivalries among gangs over the control of casino VIP rooms and the inability of the local police to enforce law and order.

Such media representations were not completely unfounded. Indeed, the triads have always played a key role in the local casino business. Also known as the Chinese mafia, the triads are branches of a transnational criminal organization that controls various illicit activities including illegal gambling, prostitution, human trafficking, and the drug trade in Asia (Chu 2000). Macau's casino gambling industry has deep historical ties with powerful networks of regional businesses, local elites, and the triads. As early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century, gambling activities were controlled by triad members who were also involved in the slave trade, opium trafficking, and prostitution (Liu 2008; Godinho 2014).

In 1847, the colonial governor issued the first official casino license to a local businessman to increase tax revenues after Hong Kong replaced Macau as a major regional trading post (Leong 2002). In 1962, the Portuguese Macau government granted the Sociedade de Turismo e Diversões de Macau (STDM) monopoly rights to all forms of gambling and casinos. While the Portuguese Macau Government was promoting cultural preservation and colonial heritage in the 1970s, STDM dominated the local economy by becoming the largest commercial employer and funding major infrastructure projects (Leong 2002). In the 1980s, STDM began to establish VIP rooms that were contracted out to individual operators. In VIP rooms, high rollers gambled large amounts of money over rounded baccarat tables. VIP room owners hired junkets, also known as VIP room promoters, to extend credits to gamblers on a commission basis. In exchange, junket promoters ensured the continuous inflow of high rollers from nearby cities into private

gambling rooms in Macau (Leong 2002). Until recently, VIP rooms were notorious for their connection with criminal organizations (State of New Jersey 2009). Between the 1980s and the late 1990s, the proliferation of VIP rooms and the underground credit system enabled triad gangs to become very powerful through the profitable channel of junket and sub-junket systems (Hing 2005).

Despite the embeddedness of triad crime in the local casino industry, the global representation of Macau as a place of the criminal and the illicit was largely interpreted as the consequence of an impotent, incompetent, and irresponsible colonial government. As the political handover approached, the public saw the colonial police force as “not very trustworthy, not well-established, and lacking any capacity to effectively deal with conflict and possible violence arising from clashes among the triad societies” (Ho and Lam 2014:426). Furthermore, the government’s inadequacy was understood as an inferior mode of governance that was derived from the “soft” and “laid-back” Portuguese national character (Clayton 2009). The problem of organized crime, therefore, made it difficult for the Portuguese Macau government to sustain the vision of Macau as a city of colonial culture, as it undermined the legitimacy of the colonial government.

From the view of the Chinese government, the representation of Macau as a gangland also contradicted the political discourse of economic prosperity and Chinese nationalism. In response to this representation, the PRC declared crime in Macau a national security concern and launched yet another series of highly publicized “Strike Hard” (*yanda*) anti-crime campaigns in 1998 (Hing 2005). Although these campaigns resulted in the purging, arresting, and executing of criminals and even high officials involved in political corruption, they only lasted for a short time, after which criminal

organizations and their illicit businesses revived and remained strong (Lo 2009). Despite the fact that the anti-crime campaign led to the arrest of the most powerful local triad boss Wan Kwok-kui, “Broken Tooth,” in 1999, many local residents with whom I spoke in 2014 still talked about the illegal activities of the casino business as common knowledge. Furthermore, they believed that criminal activities were connected to political corruption in Mainland China. For example, I heard Macau residents joke about their belief that the casino industry was largely supported by corrupt money from Mainland China and that Chinese government officials often gambled away millions of dollars obtained illegally.

Writing about sovereignty in Macau during the transition era, Clayton (2009) argues that even though the PRC government was commonly viewed as equally as corrupt and lawless as the colonial government, it was recognized as the better government in the late 1990s. Unlike the Portuguese government, the Chinese government was perceived as relatively capable because it was able to make Macau *appear* orderly and free of crime. As Clayton (2009:81) writes, “No one expected the Macau government to actually stop the triads; rather, what was wanted was for the government to make a good show of stopping the triads, sending them back underground to do their job quietly.” The comparison between the inadequacy of the Portuguese government and the relative efficacy of the Chinese government, therefore, temporarily justified the political handover. Such unpremeditated appropriation of the informal discourse of Macau as a criminal city, however, disrupted the production and promotion of the aforementioned authorized discourse. Although the Chinese government was recognized as having greater authority than the Portuguese, its inability to *actually*

suppress triad crime subsequently presented challenges to its legitimacy as well as to the legitimacy of the authorized discourses it constructed. In other words, the prominence of triad crime as an actually existing social phenomenon interfered with the efficacy of authorized political discourse in Macau in the late 1990s.

### *3.5 The Symbolic Dominance of Macau as a Global Casino City*

In 2002, the Macau SAR government abolished the gambling monopoly and subsequently granted gambling concessions and sub-concessions to six transnational gambling corporations. These transnational casinos include Wynn Resorts and Las Vegas Sands from the United States, as well as three regional corporations from Hong Kong and Macau. The expansion of the gambling industry has had a significant economic effect on Macau. Between 2002 and 2014, the total gambling revenue increased fifteen-fold, from US\$2.8 billion to US\$44 billion (Statistics and Census Service 2016). The annual GDP growth rate of Macau increased from 2.9% in 2001 to as high as 27.5% in 2010 (World Bank 2016). The economic growth was so dramatic that Macau has become the fastest-growing city in the world (Trujillo and Parilla 2015).

Since the opening up of the gambling industry, transnational casinos have been among the most powerful discourse producers in Macau. One of the most pervasive urban representations that transnational casinos produced is the idea of Macau as “Asia’s Las Vegas.” Sheldon Adelson, the chief executive officer of the Las Vegas Sands Corporation, created and trademarked the term. Between 2000 and 2002, Sands repeatedly stated that it would “bring Las Vegas to Macau.” To realize the vision of Macau as Asia’s Las Vegas, in 2007 the corporation built and opened the Venetian Macao, which is modeled after the Venetian Hotel and Resort in Las Vegas. The

Venetian Macao looks almost exactly the same as its sister casino resort in Las Vegas, featuring the Rialto Bridge, the Doge's Palace, and gondola rides, a miniature simulacrum of Venice. Standing on the 250 acres of reclaimed land between the islands of Coloane and Taipa, the Venetian Macao is the first large-scale casino hotel complex in the district now known as the Cotai Strip, an imitation of the Las Vegas Strip. The Venetian Macao is the largest casino in the world and the largest single-structure hotel building in Asia. Today, there are at least six large-scale casino resort complexes in the Cotai district, including City of Dreams, Studio City, Sands Cotai Central, Wynn Palace, and MGM Cotai. The Cotai Strip has attracted some of the world's most famous hotel brands, such as Hilton, Hyatt, Shangri-la and Sheraton, to invest in Macau.

Across from Taipa Island, the NAPE district in Macau Peninsula is another area where global casinos and hotel chains, such as Casino Lisboa, Sands Macao, Wynn Macau, MGM Macau, and Mandarin Oriental, are concentrated. Steve Wynn, an American gambling mogul who acquired most of his wealth in Las Vegas, built two hotel resorts in the area. The resorts include a casino, spa, designer shops, high-end restaurants, and a Bellagio fountain. Inside the casino, there is a gold-sculpted domed ceiling of zodiac symbols that opens and transforms into a glittering crystal chandelier and a golden tree. Unlike the Cotai Strip, the NAPE district is a mixture of large-scale casino hotels and smaller businesses. Pawnshops that carry Rolex watches, three-carat diamond rings, and various kinds of high-priced items have burgeoned around the casinos. Sex-oriented businesses can also be found nearby.

When it comes to constructing symbols and language to bolster the vision of Macau as a casino city, transnational casinos often emphasize several key themes to

promote their businesses and Macau. To further examine the specific themes that casinos employ, I conducted an image analysis of images found on four major casinos' websites (City of Dreams, Grand Lisboa, the Venetian, and Wynn Macau). A total of 143 images were collected. I developed codes as various categories emerged upon comparison during the data-collection process. As shown in Figure 2.1 even categories were generated after collection: (1) cuisine and dining, (2) entertainment and nightlife, (3) gambling, (4) history and heritage, (5) hotel facilities, (6) shopping, and (7) other. As shown in Figure 2.1, among these images (N=143), "entertainment and nightlife," "hotel facilities," "cuisine and dining," and "shopping" are the most prevalent kinds of representation. Similarly to Las Vegas, transnational casinos promote Macau as a destination for shopping, fine dining, and nightlife. Interestingly, "history and heritage," which is linked to the Portuguese Macau government's vision of Macau as a city of culture, are the least popular kinds of images that appear on these official websites. In fact, only seven images of Macau's colonial landmarks and traditional local places are found on the Venetian's website under the subpage named "Macau guide," a section that is absent on the other casinos' websites. Casinos are also careful not to highlight gambling on their websites because gambling is illegal in Mainland China.



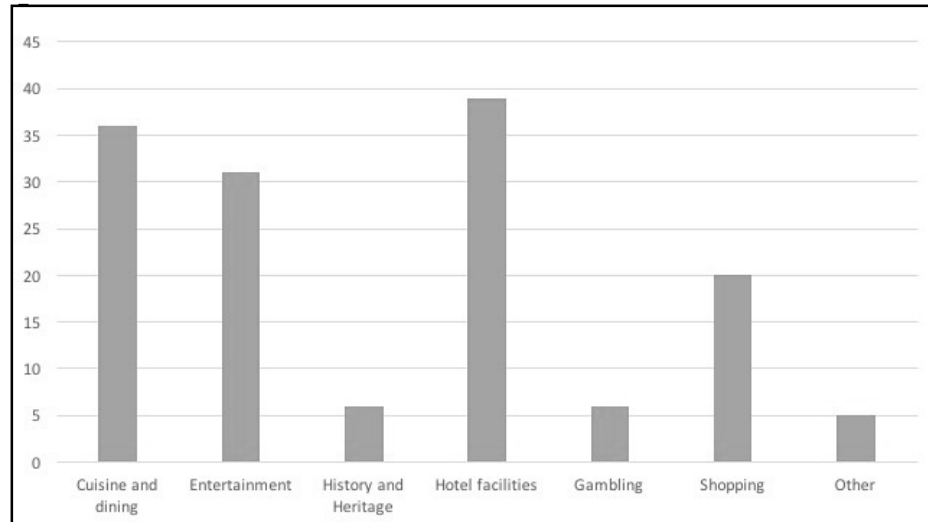


Figure 2.1 Number of Images on Websites of Major Casinos in Macau by Category

Like other corporations, casinos use branding to market their businesses. For example, Melco Crown Entertainment, the corporation that owns City of Dreams and Studio City, most recently spent US\$70 million on a 15-minute promotional film directed by Martin Scorsese and starring Brad Pitt, Leonardo DiCaprio, and Robert De Niro. Scorsese and the actors all play themselves to promote Melco's new casino. In addition, casinos stage high-profile events in which celebrities like soccer star David Beckham, Asia's biggest movie star Chow Yun-fat, and action movie stars Sylvester Stallone and Arnold Schwarzenegger attend movie premieres and visit casinos in Macau. Branding strategy is also combined with other symbolic tools, such as interior design and architecture. Casinos develop aesthetic and cultural criteria that foster the representation of fame, fortune and opulence by incorporating artworks, artifacts, and/or design elements, from a display of Matisse's paintings to an entire room dressed in mother-of-pearl. In addition, stores for luxury brands like Channel, Hermès, and Louis Vuitton are featured as important elements that characterize casino spaces. Through these symbolic

tools, transnational gambling corporations control the aesthetic view in order to legitimize their vision of Macau as a global casino city. In this part of the world, where the symbolic distinctions of taste and style are deemed inferior in the cultural hierarchy in which Europe and America set the standards of “global culture,” the production of Western architecture, fashion, food, and other cultural objects that carry hegemonic cultural meanings by transnational casinos actualizes and authorizes the global status of Macau.

The interconnection between the accumulation of material and non-material power is not unique to the case of Macau. Indeed, many urban scholars who study American cities have argued that physical urban environments often interact with cultural symbols and languages to convey cultural meanings to bolster the material effect of economic growth (Zukin 2010; Greenberg 2008; Gottdiener 1996). For example, comparing Coney Island with Las Vegas, Zukin et. al (1998) conclude that the physicality of urban spaces plays an important role in shaping the cultural identities of these two places because space produces and sustains cultural texts and visual images that bear the ability (or the lack thereof) to attract residents, tourists, and investment capital. Therefore, physical space serves as a symbolic tool to promote and reinforce discourses, narratives, and languages generated by dominant social agents.

In Macau, the spaces of casinos and hotels are not simply containers in which economic activities of gambling and tourism take place. Rather, these spaces project an image and offer an abstract symbolic basis for the transnational casinos’ discourse to take form and become concrete. Studying the casino spaces in Macau, Luke (2010) argues that the social construction of Macau as a global casino city involves processes by which

symbolic representation is attached to physical spaces and social practices, thereby blurring the lines between the material and spatial and the symbolic and cultural. Such processes simultaneously actualize the vision of Macau as a global casino city and render Macau a desirable destination for tourists and visitors.

The mushrooming of casinos and hotels, as well as auxiliary industries, have transformed the landscape of Macau. Within a decade, 24 new casinos and casino resorts have been built in a city of 11.39 square miles (Center of Gaming Research 2016). These changes to the built environment constitute an important part of the discursive construction of Macau as a global casino city. As transnational casinos accumulate more and more economic power, they also acquire symbolic power. Bourdieu calls the interexchange between material and non-material interests “interconvertability.” Theoretically, dominant social groups become powerful when they achieve economic dominance (i.e. real dominance), which in the long run provides them with symbolic power in the field of cultural production (Swartz 2003:78-82). Likewise, symbolic capital can be converted into economic interests. As Swartz (2003:92) writes, “Symbolic capital, like material capital, can be accumulated, and under certain rates be exchanged for material capital.” Since 2002, transnational casinos have become the most dominant discourse producer, constructing the urban representation of Macau as a global casino city. Such discourse in turn justifies and legitimizes their economic power.

### *3.6 The Inconsistent Discourse of the Macau SAR Government*

If transnational casinos are the winners in the contest for symbolic power through the construction of authorized discourses, the Macau SAR government is possibly the biggest loser. Indeed, since the political handover in 1999, the local government’s vision

of Macau has been mixed and ineffective. In 2001, public officials defined the city through the political discourse of economic development enabled by the opening up of the casino gambling industry. Government officials announced that casino gambling was the “dragon head” industry that would trigger and reinforce the growth of other economic sectors. At that time, the Macau SAR government set forth three goals related to the role of the casino industry in realizing the new vision of Macau:

1. The development of a competitive casino industry that will move to adopt more contemporary practices in casino operations and customer service
2. Providing additional employment opportunities for Macau residents and deriving associated benefits of enhanced economic development and social stability
3. Consolidating Macau’s position as the regional center of casino gaming, with an enhanced reputation in its gaming industry for fairness, honesty and freedom from criminal influence (Hsu 2006)

The emphasis on the role of the casino industry in bringing about modernization, economic development, social stability, and crime elimination at first generally aligned with Beijing’s vision of Macau as a modern and nationalistic society. Such discourse mirrored the national government’s ambition, which saw Macau as instrumental in facilitating the larger political project of nation-building. As transnational casinos continued to attain increasing and overwhelming economic power, however, the success of the casino industry in achieving symbolic recognition and in transforming the material environment generated ever-increasing cleavage between state discourses and Macau’s reality, threatening the state’s symbolic efficacy.

Soon after 2002, the Macau SAR government abruptly altered its discourse. More specifically, the government began to condemn the dominance of the gambling industry and to stress the importance of economic diversification. In the Chief Executive’s 2004 Policy Speech, for example, public officials stated that it was the local government’s

vision to transform Macau into “a key international recreation and shopping destination with less reliance on gaming” (Du Cros 2009:82). As an economic diversification measure, in 2006 then-Chief Executive Edmund Ho also proposed cutting corporate and property taxes to draw more investors from industries other than casino gambling (Macau SAR Government 2006). Such a discourse that saw the casino industry as having too much power gradually augmented over the years. For example, in his inauguration speech in 2009, second Chief Executive of Macau Fernando Chui asserted that the most important political goal would be to actively promote a diversified economy. As he said:

While enhancing regulation on the gaming industry, Macau will also put emphasis on convention, exhibition, logistics, cultural and creative industries and the upgrade and transformation of the traditional industries (Xinhua 2009).

The inconsistency in the local government’s discourse about urban development needs to be understood within the context of rapid urban restructuring that occasioned economic and power struggles among the most powerful elites who operated in local, national, and transnational networks. In 2005, for example, the sharp conflict between local and foreign economic powers surfaced when a public quarrel broke out between Sands CEO Sheldon Adelson and Stanley Ho, the former casino monopolist known by the nickname Macau casino king. The open conflict began when Ho criticized Adelson for offering excessive commissions to casino junkets and thereby squeezing his own profits. In response to Ho’s attack, Adelson warned that competition would intensify and indicated that Ho’s operation was inefficient and obsolete (Lau 2006; Mitchell and Lau 2006). Angered by Adelson’s comments, Ho further blamed Sands for its lack of contribution to the local community and public welfare. Still, he publicly criticized the local government for giving U.S. firms preferential treatment, suggesting that such

practice could threaten political stability (Sheng and Tsui 2010) —a central governmental goal of the CCP in Post-Mao China (Feng 1997). Ho’s aggressive attitude reflected a deep worry of local interests concerning the success of foreign corporations in Macau. More importantly, such worry was shared by the Chinese central government. The increasing foreign economic influence on Macau took the national government by surprise. Furthermore, efforts by the local government to create and promote an open market as well as its “hospitality” and “openness” toward U.S. firms rendered the Chinese government dissatisfied about the rise of foreign casinos (Sheng and Tsui 2010). Indeed, both Ho and Adelson have established close ties with local political elites. While Ho has close relationships with the Chinese and the Lisbon governments and has forged alliances with political elites in Hong Kong and Macau (Chan and Li 2016), Sands has connections with local officials—one former government official joined Sands as one of their top-level managers in 2003 (Sheng and Tsui 2010). Therefore, against the backdrop of political changeover and economic restructuring, intense struggles for entangled economic and political interests made Macau a battleground for symbolic power.

The political discourse that criticized the overreliance on casino gambling contradicted the initial vision by the Macau SAR government. Such discourse was coupled with the general national pressure and specific local efforts to diversify Macau’s economy through the development of heritage tourism. In 2003, for example, the Cultural Affairs Bureau (previously known as the Cultural Institute of Macau) compiled a nomination proposal to apply for Macau’s inclusion in UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Two years later, Macau was added to the list. The Historic Center of Macau, a collection of over twenty monuments, including temples, churches, squares and streets, was

established. Two particular government institutions continue to develop heritage tourism in Macau—the Cultural Affairs Bureau and the Macao Government Tourist Office (MGTO). In an attempt to construct Macau’s image as a world heritage site, these institutions periodically organize promotional events such as festivals and create brochures, maps, and walking tours of Macau’s heritage locations (Cultural Affairs Bureau 2016; Macao Government Tourist Office 2016). Despite these efforts, the urban image of Macau as a city of culture and heritage has not gained visibility. For example, in an online content analysis, Kong et al. (2015) conclude that Macau’s image of heritage and cultural tourism is not consistent with tourists’ perceptions about Macau. Tourists tend to associate Macau with the image of Asia’s Las Vegas and regard Macau as a mega-casino hub with themed properties and entertainment complexes.

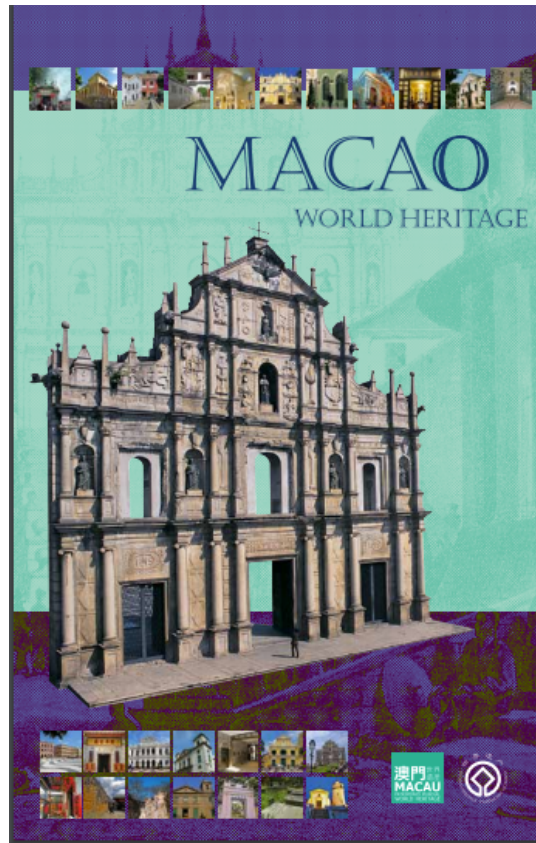


Illustration 1.2. Macao World Heritage Brochure (Macao Government Tourism Office 2016).

Given its embeddedness within interlocking networks of local, national, and transnational actors, the Macau SAR government continued to face difficulty when trying to produce an authentic and consistent vision of Macau. While its vision of Macau as a regional casino hub was seemingly hijacked by transnational casinos, the vision of the city as a heritage tourist destination paradoxically resonated with the one constructed by the Portuguese Macau government before the political handover. In 2011, the Macau SAR government created yet another image for Macau—“the world center of tourism and leisure.”<sup>10</sup> Thus far, this image did not gain much recognition by either the media or the

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<sup>10</sup> The term “world center for tourism and leisure” appeared in three national official documents and reports: “The Outline of the Plan for the Reform and Development of the



local population. An online database search using the keyword phrase “world center of tourism and leisure,” for example, generated only nine newspaper articles that mention the term in relation to Macau. During my fieldwork, when I asked about the development of the tourism industry, respondents generally conveyed the inferiority of Macau’s image as a city of tourism. As one respondent said:

After all, the gambling industry is so dominant that it overshadows any other industries. For example, Macau is enlisted as a world heritage site. The MGTO has put a lot of efforts to promote Macau as a tourist city. But I know for a fact that there aren’t many tourists who actually go to Macau for its (cultural) attractions.

And this:

I’ve always thought [economic] diversification was taken at face value. I have yet to see enough efforts from the government to make diversification a reality. At the end of the day, it is all about the gambling industry (chuckle). Sure, there was discussion about promoting local art and culture. However, I didn’t see other industries [besides the casino industry] having any substantial growth. You could probably blame it on the lack of local talents and marketing strategies.

The local government’s inability to produce a clear and coherent discourse that represents the material reality of Macau undermined its authority and legitimacy. When I was in Macau, I often heard Macau residents refer to the Macau SAR government as “useless” and “incapable.” The perception of the government as impotent and corrupt is also reflected in the local characterization of public officials. For example, Chief Executive Fernando Sai-on Chui is given the nickname “pig” in Cantonese (*Chui sai- “chu”*), a slang term that is usually used to describe someone who is dumb and greedy. Legislator Fong Chi Keong was locally known as “big cannon” (*Fong “Dai-pow”*), which can mean

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Pearl River Delta” in December 2008; The National “Twelfth Five-Year Plan” in March 2011; and the Guangdong-Macau Co-operation Framework Agreement in March 2011.

someone who brags and lies. Furthermore, the perceived illegitimacy of the local government was most clearly manifested in local protests, which became increasingly frequent in recent years. I will further examine the emergence of local social movements in Chapter 4.

### *3.7 Conclusion: The Multiplicity of Authorized Discourse*

Bourdieu argues that dominant social groups are less likely to bring about a symbolic revolution because they often have an economic and political interest in maintaining the status quo. Therefore, symbolic production tends to bolster the interests of the powerful. Studying cities in the United States, Zukin (2002) argues that culture and symbols serve as powerful tools to expand economic interests and create a symbolic economy. In the U.S. context, governments, local elites, and big corporations tend to represent homogeneous material interests and thereby often collaborate in the construction of public discourse through methods like urban boosterism (Molotch 1976).

This process is quite different in Macau. The efforts by distinctive authorized groups to construct Macau's vision have produced an ambiguous and sometimes even contradictory image of the city. Macau's unique political and economic situation, characterized by the sudden change of sovereignty in 1999 and the injection of foreign direct investment, has produced both convergence and divergence in the process of symbolic construction. Working to sustain their specific sets of economic and political interests, different authoritative groups promulgate their discourses, which contradict and overlap with each other at various moments. Although the consistency of discourses contributes to their effectiveness and validity, the production of discourses is often prone to change. Hence, the production of urban discourses does not follow any particular set of

logic (e.g. the logic of capital or the city as a growth machine). Rather, they are contingent upon the shifting interests of authorized discourse producers.

In Macau, the interests of each authorized group are shaped by not only economic factors, but also historical and political concerns. More specifically, the interests of the state and the market do not always align. This is especially accurate in Macau, a city in the Global South, where the legacy of colonialism at both the local and national levels has made the road to globalization and modernity problematic. From the perspective of the Chinese government, Macau's economic growth driven by transnational casinos presents an awkward and uncomfortable situation. On one hand, economic growth is materially and symbolically necessary for the interests of China on the global stage. On the other hand, the dominance of American casino corporations in Macau is a constant reminder of China's painful past marked by Western domination. In 2014, Beijing urged the Macau SAR government to address its overreliance on casino revenues. Economic diversification was seen as not only a local matter, but also "the interests of the whole nation" (Fraser 2014). Ultimately, national measures to control Macau's gambling industry, including the restriction of mainland Chinese visitors and the nationwide anti-corruption crackdown, directly affected Macau's local economy. Although the annual GDP of Macau had been increasing, the rate of GDP growth dropped from an all-time high of 54.1% in the second quarter of 2004 to a record low of -23.7% in the second quarter of 2015 (Statistics and Census Service 2016).

To add to the challenge for the governments, transnational casinos are not the only group that threatens the legitimacy of the Chinese state. Interestingly, spaces of colonial nostalgia and Macanese identity that the Portuguese Macau government

constructed between the 1970s and 1990s have become an important frame through which Macau residents give meanings to the place they live and work and their everyday experiences in such a place—a topic on which I will focus in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER 4: EVERYDAY DISCOURSES AND THE DESTABILIZATION OF AUTHORIZED DISCOURSE

### *4.1 Introduction*

This chapter examines everyday discourses about Macau produced by ordinary people and their interaction with authorized discourses. I define everyday discourse as ways in which people communicate and talk about Macau in informal settings, such as casual discussion and private conversation. Everyday discourse is compared to authorized discourses, which are typically produced carefully in more formal, organized settings (e.g. media representation and official politics). In this chapter, I focus my investigation on everyday discourse in order to try to reveal the relationship between how ordinary people think and talk about their city and how officials and other authorities represent Macau.

Two major themes in everyday discourse consistently emerged in my interviews and during ethnographic observation. I call these themes (1) the discourse of colonial nostalgia and (2) the discourse of global desires. By examining these two strands of everyday discourse, I explore discrepancies and alignments between people's interpretation of Macau and the image of Macau constructed by authorized representatives. How are everyday discourses different from or similar to authorized discourses? And more importantly, what, if anything, can this investigation tell us about how symbolic structure works as a tool for social domination? The chapter is organized in the following way. First, I briefly discuss the theoretical foundation for the analysis.

Second, I examine the aforementioned everyday discourses and their relations with authorized discourses.

#### 4.2 *Symbolic Domination Through Misrecognition*

Bourdieu theorized that the exercise of power essentially requires legitimization (Swartz 1999). In other words, all forms of domination—including symbolic domination—necessitate justification in order to be accepted and recognized.

Accordingly, legitimization for authorized discourses does not manifest itself naturally.

As he writes:

The specificity of the discourse of authority (e.g. a lecture, sermon, etc.) consists in the fact that it is not enough for it to be *understood* (in certain cases it may even fail to be understood without losing its power), and that it exercises its specific effect only when it is *recognized* as such (2003: 113).

Bourdieu's theory is that discourses do not automatically evolve into legitimate culture or language upon the utterance of words or phrases by the spokespersons of authority.

Authorized discourses are powerful only when they represent the views of powerful social institutions whose interests are recognized as common, as shared by those in a given society (Bourdieu 2003).

To analyze more deeply the process by which symbolic domination is generally achieved, Bourdieu formulates the theoretical concept of *misrecognition*. In short, misrecognition is created to achieve durable domination through symbolic means. Since Bourdieu argues that all activities are essentially linked to material interests (e.g. economic and political interests), misrecognition happens when social practices, including the construction of authorized discourses, are misunderstood as not serving any hidden economic or political goals (Swartz 1999). Thus, misrecognition is the process

whereby practices produced by the ruling class are misrecognized as “disinterested”: i.e. free of class-based interests. As Swartz explains:

Activities and resources gain in symbolic power, or legitimacy, to the extent that they become separated from underlying material interests and hence go misrecognized as representing disinterested forms of activities and resources (1999: 90).

Accordingly, when authorized discourses are misrecognized, they are recognized as socially legitimate. Symbolic domination (sometimes referred to by Bourdieu as symbolic violence) is achieved when authorized discourses gain legitimacy through misrecognition (Bourdieu 2003).

Studying Bourdieu’s conception of misrecognition in relation to domination<sup>11</sup>, Michael Burawoy (2012) argues that, based on Bourdieu’s theoretical formulation, misrecognition is rooted in the habitus of subjugation (i.e. the ingrained habits and internalized dispositions of being dominated). Consequently, domination is interpreted as deep, durable, and hard to challenge and that this limits opportunities for social change. This assertion—which presents misrecognition as deeply embedded in people’s subjectivity and consciousness—is also reflected in Bourdieu’s own writing about the structure of the bureaucratic state:

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Burawoy (2012) compares Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic domination with Gramsci’s idea of hegemony. While Bourdieu argues that symbolic power is achieved through *misrecognition*, which is incorporated into individuals’ cognitive structure, Gramsci saw hegemony is based on *consent*, which is generated by the technique of persuasion and organized as a game whereby social relations are reproduced by relatively autonomous social agents. Burawoy argues that if Bourdieu was too pessimistic about the possibility of contesting social domination, Gramsci was too optimistic. Specifically, Burawoy asserts that Bourdieu’s concept of misrecognition presupposes the notion of habitus—the unconscious internalization of power relations—which is too deep and universal. On the other hand, he criticizes Gramsci’s notion of consent because it overlooks *mystification*—the social process that produces the discrepancy between lived experience and objective reality—as the precondition of hegemony.

If the state is able to exert symbolic violence, it is because it incarnates itself simultaneously in objectivity, in the form of specific organizational structures and mechanisms, and in subjectivity in the form of mental structures and categories of perception and thought. By realizing itself in social structures and in the mental structures adapted to them, the instituted institution makes us forget that it issues out of a long series of acts of institution (in the active sense) and hence has all the appearances of the *natural* (Bourdieu et al. 1994: 3-4).

To clarify: Bourdieu's argument asserts that powerful social institutions, such as the state, sustain domination through the binary process of subjectivism and objectivism: the convergence of subjective perceptions and objective conceptions. Domination becomes durable when people internalize and incorporate powerful social structures in their dispositions—perceptions, sensitivities, and desires. Based on this theoretical foundation, my investigation of everyday discourses in relation to authorized discourses is an effort to reveal people's experience of domination. If people's subjective realities are the product of power relations rendered invisible through misrecognition, everyday discourse should mirror more closely the authorized discourses produced by the state and casino corporations as people internalize and misrecognize the material interests of the dominant class as universal and legitimate. Alternatively, more arbitrary or complicated social processes might be at work to sustain domination.

#### 4.2.1 *Colonial nostalgia as a tool for symbolic domination*

As I have shown in the previous chapter, the Portuguese Macau government has constructed a postcolonial identity based on the discourse of colonial nostalgia through a series of heritage-preservation projects and the documentation of Macau's history. In this section, I further examine the construction of such a discourse and its basis. Here I argue that postcolonial identity functions as a tool for misrecognition; it is designed to be mistaken as free of political interests and thereby innocent of power.



The idea of colonial nostalgia rests upon the vision of Macau as a postcolonial city characterized by tolerant multiculturalism and social hybridity, free of ethnic conflict. In reality, Macau was a largely divided society during the colonial era. Far from being accepting and tolerant of differences, colonial politics were characterized by exclusion and isolation. Spatially, segregation between the colonists and the indigenous population was rigid before the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. More specifically, city walls physically separated the Chinese and the Portuguese communities (Hao 2011; Pinheiro et al. 2005; Duncan 1986). Moreover, the process of uneven development—whereby racial and ethnic stratification was maintained spatially—continued after the dismantling of the walls. Oral historical evidence suggests that modern infrastructure, such as roads and water and power lines, was mostly concentrated within Portuguese neighborhoods while the Chinese parts of the city remained underdeveloped (McGivern 1999). The Portuguese largely reinforced spatial inequalities through the functions of the Catholic parish system. In particular, they established public institutions, such as schools and post offices, around important cathedrals and built roads to connect them. Accordingly, neighborhoods were organized through the spatial division of parishes, with some parishes more privileged than others (Pinheiro et al. 2005). For example, infrastructural extension and upgrading, which was part of the Urban Intervention Plan in the 1980s, largely concentrated development in the former Portuguese community of Outer Harbor (Porto Exterior). On the other hand, the original Chinese community in the Inner Harbor area remained undeveloped, with narrow streets packed with motor vehicles and run-down granite-cobbled sidewalks that “have lost their former charm and attraction” (Duncan 1986: 4).

The underdevelopment of the Inner Harbor can therefore be interpreted as the product of years of public disinvestment.<sup>12</sup>

There was also a clear social separation between the Chinese and the Portuguese. Although interracial marriages existed, they were not widespread. The Portuguese Yearbook of 1950 estimated that about 1% of the population in Macau was classified as “whites,” 1% as “mestizos,” and 98% as “yellows” (Mata 2007). Portuguese and Macanese (i.e. mixed-race people with Portuguese ancestry in Macau) constituted only a tiny portion of the population. Furthermore, social interaction between the Portuguese and the Chinese was uncommon. *De facto* segregation was maintained in schools, with Portuguese and Chinese children attending separate schools. Often, Chinese children never learned Portuguese (McGivney 1999). Most Macanese did not begin to speak Cantonese (the native dialect of Chinese in Macau) until after the decline of Portugal in the 1970s. The Macanese ethnic group had more privileged lifestyles and lived their lives separated from the Chinese (Hao 2011).

Politically, the Chinese were largely excluded from the colonial government, as inequalities were institutionalized in the form of a closed political system and the imposition of Portuguese as the official language. Before the Carnation Revolution ended in Portugal in 1974, both the executive and legislative functions of the Portuguese Macau government were controlled by the governor and his councils. When an electoral system was finally introduced to form the Legislative Assembly in 1976, Portuguese and

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<sup>12</sup> Despite the connection between spatial inequalities and the colonial politics of exclusion, research about Macau continues to relegate these unequal spatial processes to the natural phenomenon of urban ecology or as evidence of inadequate urban revitalization (See Lei et al. 2014; Tieben 2009).

Macanese legislators assumed most of the seats (McGiving 1999; Duncan 1986).

Although the Chinese made up the majority of the local population, there was not a single Chinese politician in Macau until 1984 (Yu and Chin 2012). Since Portuguese was the only official language adopted by all public institutions, government positions from low-ranked civil servants to top officials were filled by either Macanese or Portuguese (McGiving 1999). As these examples show, segregation and discrimination were reinforced through an unequal spatial, social, and political system that ensured ethnic oppression and cultural domination.

Despite the deep-rooted division between the indigenous Chinese population and the Portuguese during Macau's colonial period, the Portuguese projected the discourse of colonial nostalgia based on the construction of collective memories that portrayed Portuguese colonialism as tender and idyllic. Indeed, narratives that described Macau through the lens of colonial nostalgia did not proliferate until the 1990s (the last decade of Portuguese colonialism in Macau). During that time, Portuguese production of visual representation and print literature, for example, constructed Macau as a heterotopic space imagined through the lens of European romanticism (Wong and Wei 2014). In particular, the themes of nostalgia and mystique were central in Portuguese fiction films of the 1990s, which depicted Macau as a heterogeneous, hybrid, and transient space (Piedade 2014). Likewise, Portuguese and Macanese literature about Macau focused on the liaison between Europe and "the Orient" (Brookshaw 2014). In these narratives, Macau is imagined as a Eurasian space through which maritime colonialism is aligned with romantic and glorious sensitivities.

Curiously enough, similar narratives have also appeared in academic studies. What began as a Portuguese vision developed into a more comprehensive appropriation during the postcolonial period. By the 2000s, the discourse of colonial nostalgia became more deeply absorbed in the expert systems. More precisely, historical accounts written by local and Western scholars continued to reinforce the viewpoint that sees the colonization of Macau as a peaceful and innocent development rather than an act of oppression against the indigenous population. In these accounts published by Western academic publishers, Portuguese occupation in Macau is interpreted as a perpetual but harmless process whereby Portugal proclaimed Macau as a colony without imperialist aggression (Hao 2011; Porter 2009). Some scholars continue to call the Peking Treaty of 1887—an unequal treaty that the Qing government was strong-armed into signing with Western powers during the Opium War—the “Luso-Chinese Friendship and Commercial Treaty”<sup>13</sup> (Morais 2014; Wong 2009). By using the positive language of friendship to signify the treaty that declared the status of Macau as a Portuguese colony, these scholars obliquely affirm Portuguese sovereignty and administrative rights over Macau without calling into question either colonialism or Western imperialism. In such a historical context, Macau is largely conceived as a harmonious place where social acceptance and tolerance were created through interracial marriage and the active mixing of Chinese and Western cultures (Wei and Zabielskis 2014; Wong and Wei 2014). George Wei (2014), for instance, writes that Macau is a true “global city” where cosmopolitanism is rendered through “the constant exposure to otherness” and where “the irreducible value of diversity within sameness” characterizes the intercultural nature of the city.

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<sup>13</sup> It is also translated as “Sino-Portuguese Friendship and Trade Treaty.”

In these accounts, colonial Macau is portrayed as an island of peaceful coexistence shared by the Chinese and the Portuguese. The discourse of colonial nostalgia captures the imagination of cultural producers while simultaneously concealing domination and oppression by the Portuguese. By appearing as innocent yearning, the discourse separates colonialism from any material interests (e.g. political interests to extend sovereign territorial power, or economic interests in resources). By definition, therefore, the discourse of colonial nostalgia serves as an effective mechanism for misrecognition.

#### *4.2.2 Colonial nostalgia as everyday discourse*

Let me now turn to the effects of the discourse of colonial nostalgia by examining everyday discourses related to nostalgia. What consequences does the construction of colonial nostalgia have for the consciousness and action of Macau locals? Precisely, to what extent is this authorized discourse able to elicit misrecognition?

Although I arrived in the field with the intent to understand contemporary local culture in the context of recent urban restructuring, it soon became clear to me that it was impossible to address my research question without understanding more about the intersection of the past and the present. Time and time again, people talked about their yearning for a past they had lost. This nostalgia entered into my ethnography despite my attempt to disregard it early in my fieldwork. Repeatedly, I heard that recent global forces “wiped out” the previous way of life. But what had been eradicated? An oppressive colonial past? A postcolonial fantasy? During initial interviews, I had trouble extracting from my informants what they were actually missing that has now disappeared as a result

of urban transformation. Seeking a way to better capture what triggered such a strong sense of nostalgia, I turned to the use of photo-elicitation.

Photo-elicitation revealed that people generally spoke about nostalgia when they were presented with images of Portuguese government buildings, religious buildings, shops, and houses in both Chinese and Portuguese communities. To my surprise, Portuguese-styled architectural forms did not represent for my informants oppressive practices associated with colonialism. Rather, they were seen as representations of an authentic urban identity. In one instance, my interviewee Ming adopted the authentic discourse of colonial nostalgia to articulate his personal experience as a Macau native. I interviewed Ming in a busy McDonald's on a Sunday afternoon. Although in his 30s, his large black glasses made him look like a young college student. He spoke in a loud, bold voice and moved his hands while he spoke. He pointed to photographs of Portuguese cathedrals and libraries, as well as old shops in the original Chinese community. With great enthusiasm, he exclaimed:

These several pictures represent Macau's everyday life! There are Western culture and Chinese culture. Why did I choose these pictures? Because these are real Macau. If you ask other ordinary Macau citizens...many of them...I believe their answers will be similar to mine. This is the authentic way of life for Macau natives. Look at them! This is Macau in the past.

This comment led to an extended discussion revealing the deep notion of social and spatial division between the Chinese and the Portuguese. Such division was interpreted as common and natural, however. More importantly, from Ming's perspective, it was precisely the cultural differences rendered by ethnic division that gave Macau its unique quality. In particular, Ming began to categorize the photographs based on whether they possessed Chinese or Portuguese characteristics:

In the old part of the city [*referring to the old Chinese community*], it mainly consists of narrow bystreets and alleys. These places reflect the character of old Macau. This is really the local way of life. They are the everyday life of the Chinese. But then I also picked these few photos. These are Portuguese architecture. These authentically represent Macau. It is not...how should I put it...This is authentic Macau. If you ask me what defines Macau, it will be Macau's cultural characteristics. These are Macau's real cultural characteristics, or real cultural traits.

Here ethnic division was used to bolster the argument about Macau's authenticity as being defined by the combination of both "cultural traits." Zukin, who has studied authenticity in the context of the city, argues that the appeal of authenticity suggests that people hold on to the ideal of a timeless city represented by cultural images of specific historical period. Mental images of authenticity reflect the experience of the city at a given time. Such experience influences how people think about the buildings, streets, and people who belong in a neighborhood and in the city as a whole (Zukin 2010). Consistent with Zukin's assertion, Ming defined the city through his idealization of the 1990s. As he said, "Imagine what Macau was like in the 90s. That is how I see Macau."

I began to wonder, however, whether Ming's mental images of Macau in the 1990s were based solely on his personal experience of the city or whether these images were also drawing upon the official discourse of colonial nostalgia. Oddly, Ming's account reflects a collection of interpretations of the authorized discourse produced by the Portuguese Macau government during the 1990s, for his verbal expressions mirrored fragments of official texts of colonial nostalgia: namely, the importance of cultural hybridity, the grief for the passing of colonial society, and the whitewashing of racism.

Ming was not the only informant who evoked nostalgic sensitivities for Portuguese Macau or who mediated feeling and affect through this specific strand of authorized discourse. Out of my 50 respondents, 35 of them also used the argument of

authenticity to express their sense of nostalgia in relation to colonial cosmopolitanism. In particular, they pointed to photographs of Portuguese architecture to help them talk about Macau through their own eyes. Cultural products that were viewed as uniquely Portuguese were characterized as representative of Macau. For example, Azulejo (Portuguese painted ceramic tiles) and Pastéis de Nata (a Portuguese pastry) were seen as symbols of the city. Respondents also discussed how architecture and cuisine reflected centuries of intercultural mixing. In many ways, the discourse of colonial nostalgia was recognized as not only legitimate, but significant to the construction of a common identity.

Using Bourdieu's terms, it is likely that colonial nostalgia produced by the then-Portuguese Macau government functions as an instrument of domination that structures the collective consciousness of ordinary people in Macau. Through the authorized discourse of colonial nostalgia, a common local identity is produced and reproduced. The Portuguese Macau government, though no longer possessing any legal political power over the territory, sustains its symbolic dominance by virtue of having colonial nostalgia recognized and hence misrecognized as arbitrary and subjective.

#### *4.2.3 The re-appropriation of colonial nostalgia as anti-development discourse*

The misrecognition of Portuguese political power is not the only symbolic function of colonial nostalgia. During interviews, I also noticed that ordinary people used colonial nostalgia as a discursive tool to persuade me, a researcher from the United States, that their arguments were legitimate and therefore should be taken seriously. When respondents pointed to images of Portuguese architecture to express their individual sensation of nostalgia, their intention was not only to support the Portuguese



vision of Macau, but more importantly, they expressed their emotions of anger and grief over Macau's transformation through colonial nostalgia. For example, Ming appropriated colonial nostalgia to extend his argument about the negative aspects of casino development. Consider the way he described the image shown below:

This [photo] is ridiculous (pause) and sad. In the front there is a church and at the back it is the Venetian [casino]. It's a bit sad. At a certain level, this photo reflects what Macau is in reality because that's what the city is right now. Here you see an old church. And near this church or next to it, they put...mmm...this...casino hotel. That's it! You can say this is a characteristic—Macau's new characteristic. But from my personal point of view, I don't think it should be Macau's characteristic.



Illustration 4.1 Venetian casino (left) and Our Lady of Carmel Church (right) in Coloane Island (Macao Government Tourism Office 2014)

If the blending of Chinese and Portuguese cultures connects to the sense that the city was once true and original, it is only because people are resisting what is at present. It turned out that many people with whom I spoke generally contrasted the proliferation of casino gambling and tourism with the representation of authenticity and nostalgia. Although

people's reactions towards Macau's economic restructuring varied in intensity and style, they generally communicated a sense of discontent. While more eloquent respondents could thread together more easily coherent narratives that rationalized their feelings of loss, fear, melancholy, anger, and powerlessness, other expressions were clumsily organized and at times appeared to be unclear or even contradictory. For example, Luke, in his early 20s, recently graduated from a local college and immediately landed a job as a supervisor in the casino. He is tall, thin, fair-skinned, and has a tattoo of a tree on his wrist. Luke's discussion about urban change during his interview was quite awkward and uncoordinated. Nevertheless, the contrast between the old and the new still evoked a sense of thinly veiled nostalgia and his attempt to resist casino development. He pointed to a photograph depicting a large-scale casino and said:

Casinos are pretty much what Macau is about these days [...] The city also has other characteristics. But there are so many casinos. And casinos are now part of the landscape [...] I do think [casinos] are part of Macau's characteristics, but they are more like an extra feature, an accessory. What I'm trying to show you is what Macau felt like in the old days. Now there is something extra.

Likewise, another informant, Eve, in her late 30s, told me that the most valuable elements of Macau "had nothing to do with casinos." Eve works as a freelance writer. She has a degree in journalism from the University of Macau and studied abroad in Michigan for one year. When we met for our interview at her workshop in an abandoned factory building, her senior Chihuahua with glaucoma was sitting at her feet. Eve wore short hair and no makeup. She spoke in an assertive and serious tone. During the interview, she talked at length about the contradiction of the representation of Macau as a casino city with her own perspective of the city as a place of residence. When I asked her to point to photographs that represented Macau, she at first sorted out an image of the Venetian

casino but eventually decided to put it down. Retrospectively, she said that while she acknowledged the centrality of casino development and the effect it had on the urban economy, she did not find casinos relevant to herself or to other local residents. As she said:

I know most people immediately think of casinos when they think about Macau. However, I don't think casinos have any weight in my life. These photos [that I picked] would tell you about the Macau that I love, which is without casinos. I cannot deny the existence of casinos, of course. [...] I would not deny the fact that casinos are there. They are simply not relevant to me. They have no value to me.

What was valued by Eve, contrastingly, were her everyday experiences lived through the spaces produced by the Portuguese Macau government. Out of the seven photos she chose, four depicted Portuguese architecture or urban spaces that were produced as part of the heritage preservation project.<sup>14</sup> Similar to Ming, Eve spoke about the quality of authenticity and tradition attached to Portuguese spaces and Portuguese culture in Macau. But here again, colonial nostalgia was used as a symbolic tool to argue against the dominant rationale of casino development. When discussing the photos of her choice, Eve told several childhood stories and her memories associated with those particular urban places. Although she used colonial nostalgia to make sense of Macau's rapid change, she did not reiterate the official interpretation of colonial nostalgia, that is, the sentimental longing for intercultural hybridity; rather, colonial nostalgia represented a yearning for Eve's own positive lived experiences in the past.

The repurposing of colonial nostalgia to express local antagonism and negative emotions did not only limit in the discussions about casino development; it also extended

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<sup>14</sup> The other three photos portrayed urban places in traditional Chinese community. Eve did not choose any photos of casinos to discuss.

to conversations about the commodification of place. As gambling tourism dominates the local economy<sup>15</sup>, urban spaces are increasingly produced and organized in ways that seek to accommodate the demands of gamblers and tourists. Gambling tourism attracted many transnational corporations, including Starbucks, Forever21, Apple, and many more to rush to open branches. These transnational chains that sell clothing, cosmetics, jewelry, handbags and more opened inside casinos as well as on everyday streets. For example, Leal Senado Square—one of the key urban renewal sites during the urban preservation campaign orchestrated by the Portuguese Macau government in the 1990s—has seen mom-and-pop shops, independent bookstores, and small bakeries gradually replaced by transnational chains in the past 15 years.

The forceful injection of these new sites of consumption is hardly a unique phenomenon. Urban scholars have studied similar socio-spatial restructuring processes happening in other post-industrial cities (Kenny 1995; Judd and Fainstein 1999; Smith 2002; Strom 2002; Zukin 2010). For instance, studies of urban renewal, tourism, and gentrification, which examine the transformation of urban space as local processes shaped by global capitalism, have characterized this type of development as a global strategy among cities to attract economic activities and secure revenue (Harvey 2012; Smith 1996; Zukin 2010). In particular, Zukin calls the conversion of public places into private spaces of consumption that aim to provide options for potential consumers and tourists “pacification by cappuccino” (1995: 28). Moreover, Zukin, along with other

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<sup>15</sup> Direct taxes from casino gambling constituted 76.9% of the Macau government’s total revenue in 2015. In 2014, as many as 31.5 million visitors traveled to Macau to shop, gamble, and dine, bringing with them billions of dollars in revenue (Statistics and Census Service 2015).

scholars, has criticized these urban processes as causes of displacement and dispossession for relatively less powerful social groups, as rental inflation often results from this type of spatial reconfiguration (Freeman and Braconi 2004; Atkinson and Bridge 2005; Slater 2009). Similarly, Molotch and Logan (1987) have argued that the production of urban places almost always represents the interests of capitalists and entrepreneurs at the expense of the use values for the local population, which calls for communities attached to a place. From this perspective, local residents are seen as losers and businesses and developers as winners in the political economy of urban development.

To a certain extent, these viewpoints that see local residents as victims of capitalistic urban development do capture what I have observed in Macau. For example, in photo-elicitation, many informants complained about the transformation of Senado Square. Similar to their reactions toward casino development, respondents articulated an intense sense of loss and expressed negative emotions like anger and frustration when they discussed the replacement of local retailers with international chains. Many of my informants spoke about anger, disgust, and sadness in response to the decline and loss of a perceived “genuine” or “authentic” experience associated with Macau in the past. Once again, respondents armed themselves with the discursive tool of colonial nostalgia to fight against the dominant discourse of economic development and to add legitimacy to their own arguments.

Particularly, some informants attempted to exert a sense of empowerment by borrowing the symbolic power of Portuguese Macau through the discourse of colonial nostalgia, even though they were still powerless. For example, Kin, who studied law in the local university and now worked as a human resources manager at an American-

owned casino, discussed the transformation of Senado Square during the interview. In his early 40s, Kin had a crew cut and was casually dressed in a windbreaker jacket and sweatpants. He spoke softly and rapidly:

In the past, the fountain [in Senado Square] was huge. It was glorious, and so it was important. Nowadays it has lost its significance. [Senado Square] is reduced to a place for tourists to walk around. There has been a massive shift in terms of what it represents [...] Senado Square has changed from a public place for local residents, a place that represented the public, to just a crowded tourist attraction [...] It has become just another shopping center full of chain stores.

The antagonism toward the increasing commodification of place in many ways reflects the rejection of Macau as a casino city. In a similar fashion, people deployed colonial nostalgia to articulate their own sense of dissatisfaction and disapproval. Similar to what scholars of postcolonial theories have suggested, therefore, the *hybridization* of established colonial discourse offers the “space of liminality” where colonized subjects are able to resist colonial interpretations, challenge their overt intentions, and create new identity categories and positionalities (Kuortti and Nyman 2007; Werbner et al. 2015; Young 1995). Through the production of everyday discourses, people presented interlocking positions that both challenge and reinforce the power structure. The end of Portuguese colonialism created fissures, gaps, and possibilities for Macau residents like Ming, Eve, and Kin to deploy colonial symbols to resist the new system of oppression produced by the Chinese regime and transnational corporations. In this sense, ordinary people borrowed the symbolic power of the Portuguese and pit it against the present power structure established by the Chinese government and the market.

#### 4.3.1 *Situating the authentic discourse of neoliberal global urbanism*

If colonial nostalgia was a state project that sought to mask the oppression of the indigenous population and concealed the inequality produced by the colonialist system, then what is the aim of the authorized discourse produced by transnational casino corporations that promotes Macau as a global casino city? In this section, my goal is to locate such discourse within the larger discursive paradigm of globalization. While colonial nostalgia can trace its origins back to the proliferation of academic and political accounts as well as the revamping of urban spaces orchestrated by the Portuguese Macau government between the 1980s and 1990s, the urban discourse of casino development can be situated in the transnational discursive paradigm of neoliberal globalization that assumes and promotes transnational and interurban competition.

In both the developed and developing world, transnational corporate executives and political elites often produce the same discourse that emphasizes the pressure of global competition and promotes “good business climate” as part of the global discursive paradigm of the neoliberal doctrine (Harvey 2011). Cities compete for the status of *global cities* through the formation of public-private partnerships, the privatization of urban planning, and the restructuring of the labor market (Shatkin 2007; Mouaert et al. 2003; Sassen 2001). In China, winning in the global competition for position is a source of national pride (Harvey 2011). The pressure to obtain global status in the world economy constitutes a large part of Chinese nationalism, with the government eager to put an end to past humiliations by achieving social and economic development (Callahan 2004).

Scholars of urban development have argued that casinos (along with private prisons, waterfront projects, shopping malls, and so on) are market-based solutions to

boost local economic growth under neoliberal globalization (Mele 2011; Parker 1999). In Melbourne, for example, casino construction was central to the city government's urban plan for the development of central Melbourne with rhetoric of flagship projects being essential in global interurban competition (Searle 2013). Peck and Tickell (2002) argue that the push toward global place marketing and new spatial strategies geared toward private-public development and entrepreneurialism increasingly turn cities into neoliberal spaces. Discourses that emphasize accelerated interurban competition extend and normalize a "growth-first" approach to urban development for cities across the globe. Increasingly, political actors are pressured to implement policies that maximize the economic potential of place because the non-adoption of market-driven policies is often punished through coercive measures, such as exclusion from funding streams and the relocation of companies (Peck and Tickell 2002).

Leslie Sklair (2010; 2016) who has studied the rise of the transnational capitalist class under processes of globalization, argued that transnational elites who traverse the worlds of academics, politics, businesses, and the media are very much behind the creation of neoliberal dogma. This transnational capitalist class occupies a variety of interlocking positions in the economic, political, intellectual, and media fields (Sklair 2016). For example, it is not uncommon for members from this class to serve on and chair boards of business corporations, think tanks, charities, universities, financial agencies, and similar institutions (Sklair 2001; Domhoff 2014; Medvetz 2012). Together, they promote the culture and ideology that centers on neoliberalism, which privileges the unrestricted flow of global capital (Sklair 2016), while limiting the power of workers, citizens, and states to resist capitalist development.



Casino corporate executives belong to this transnational capitalist class. Sheldon Adelson—the founder and chairman of Sands Corporation who trademarked the term “Asia’s Las Vegas”—for example, is active in the fields of business and politics. An American casino magnate, Adelson is also a major contributor to the Republican Party in the United States. In 2012, he donated nearly \$100 million to various Republican interests during the presidential election (Cillizza 2014). In 2016, Adelson and his wife contributed more than US\$20 million to a super PAC that supported the presidency of Donald Trump (Costa 2017). Within Macau and China, Adelson has established connections with local and national political elites. For example, through his company’s “chief Beijing representative,” a mysterious businessman named Yang Saixin, Adelson was introduced to important political figures within the CCP (Lou et al. 2012; Zhen 2016). His personal connections stretch beyond the circles of U.S. and Chinese political elites; they expand into Asian organized crime figures. In 2012, for example, a lawsuit brought to light Sand’s partnership with junkets who were underwritten by the triad (Isaacs 2016).

Similarly, Stanley Ho, the chairman of SJM, one of the six companies authorized to operate casinos in Macau, is a powerful force in business and politics in Macau, Hong Kong, and the nearby region. More specifically, Ho has sat on numerous boards of corporations, charities, universities, foundations, and political committees (Forbes 2017). He is the co-chairman of the Advisory Committee of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in Macau and was a standing committee member of the 9th, 10th and 11th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (Shun Tak 2016). Compared to Adelson, Ho’s ties with organized and violent crime figures expand even

broadly. In a report published by the State of New Jersey (2009), it is revealed that Stanley Ho, together with his daughter, Pansy Ho, were engaged in multiple businesses with Asian and Russian organized crime, Saddam Hussein and other Iraqi leaders, as well as top officials from North Korea.

Evidently, the interconnectedness between businesses and governments as well as the intersection of wealth and politics is deeply entrenched in the power structure that organizes and shapes the local political economy. In Macau, those who belong to the power elite make up of corporate executives, higher politicians, CCP elites, and their personal friends and allies. Although occasional conflicts or points of crises could reveal the divisions between and among these economic and political elites who occupy a set of overlapping fields (e.g. public quarrel between Ho and Adelson). As a whole, however, members of the power elite are often deeply invested in the support of the economic and political structures they help create and the resistance of others to its use in order to protect and extend their own interests (Mills 1999). The authorized discourse of Macau as a global casino city, therefore, should be seen as a social and symbolic product resulted by the interdependence of major institutions that constitute the means of power. It should be understood within the context of the symbolic struggles between elites within and among complex and interlocking networks of power. In general, the authorized discourse of Macau as a global casino city is embedded in the larger global discursive paradigm of neoliberal globalization at the macro level. More specifically, it is asserted and negotiated by powerful individuals who operate in transnational networks that are fixed in local places.

#### 4.3.2 *Global sensibility and Western domination*

Given the pervasiveness of the discourse of globalizing urbanization and neoliberalism, what is its effect on the collective consciousness, subjective thoughts, and everyday practices of Macau residents that constitute various aspects of local culture? How—if at all—do global ideologies established and sustained by the transnational capitalist class translate into everyday discourse?

Similar to other cities where globalization processes have restructured the local economies, Macau has seen the inflow of finance capital, people, ideas, technologies, and imagery from elsewhere (Appaduri 1990). On one hand, transnational casinos were promoting the authorized discourse of Macau as a global casino city; on the other hand, global corporate knowledge, foreign culture, cosmopolitan attitudes, international mentalities, and other kinds of global encounters that linked to Macau's political economy already began to transform everyday social interactions in social spaces, such as corporate workplaces, cafes, bars, shopping malls, and so on.

Studying the flexible arrangement of neoliberalism in the context of East and Southeast Asia, Aihwa Ong (2006) argues that the flow of neoliberalism into different local contexts, such as China, takes actual work through which ethics, knowledge, beliefs, attitudes and skills are articulated, taught, and learned. Such work, as Ong pointed out, can happen through structured circuits, such as corporate training and overseas education, or more arbitrary ones, such as social interaction and exchange in bars, restaurants, airport lounges, and other transnational spaces. While expatriates from the United States, Australia, and other countries in the West have migrated to Macau to fill top executive positions in transnational casino corporations, locals who have

graduated from foreign universities returned to fill middle managerial positions. Armed with English skills and “world-class” degrees and credentials, these young local individuals bring back with them a specific set of human capital as well as Western cultural values.

Karen, a Macau native who went to college in London, is in her early 30s. She works for one of the major transnational casinos as a marketing event manager. Karen speaks fluent English and has been back in Macau for four years. Most of her friends also have overseas educations and now hold management positions in transnational corporations. Perhaps due to our similar backgrounds, Karen quickly established rapport with me after we met initially at one of the focus groups. She invited me to dinner with her friends at her home. At the dinner table were salad, pasta, and wine. Jazz music was playing in the background. During dinner, her two friends and she discussed their jobs in foreign-owned corporations. Many of them see themselves as “yompies” (young, outward mobile professionals). Sipping a glass of red wine and speaking Cantonese and English interchangeably, Karen talked about her inability to move up the corporate ladder despite having a business degree from a prestigious college in London. Her friends joked about how they are at the “fringe” of their career as corporate directors. Unlike their expatriate counterpart, they did not have international work experience, nor could they become friends with top executives outside the workplace, due to their cultural differences. Recognizing the glass ceiling that exists, they discussed their lack of acculturation to Western culture and how it was a barrier in their careers.

Indeed, the real or imagined Western gaze that presupposes the superiority of cultural practices and objects originated in the West is not new. For example, Mata

(2006) argued that although there was no legal discrimination by race in Portuguese Macau, people of European origin and natives who had converted to Christianity formed a dominant social stratum. Of course, neoliberalism has added a new layer of meanings to this symbolic system of oppression. Such a hegemonic symbolic system that devalues local traditions on one hand but places high cultural value on the importation of foreign products and practices has combined with the discourse of global competitiveness and neoliberal knowledge.

In the field, I frequently observed individuals participating in the management and presentation of self according to the neoliberal principles of competitiveness as well as the presumption of Western superiority. Public and semi-public spaces, such as local streets, shopping malls, and restaurants become stages on which people persistently perform and maintain proper attitudes and conduct to uphold themselves as worthy participants in the global society. Similar to what Ong (1999) has observed in Asia, the large-scale flow of people, images, and cultural forces across borders has created new kinds of subjectivity whereby “Western” liberal rationalities are re-appropriated to regulate everyday practices of travel, discipline, consumption, production, and accumulation.

If the processes of globalizing urbanization featuring the casino gambling development is transforming the subjectivity of the local population and changing the everyday discourse of local culture, this raises the question of how this particular cognitive structure, rooted in the presupposition of an unequal global hierarchy and manifesting itself in the performance of a bourgeois lifestyle and consumerism, is

formed. Precisely, how do people learn about this specific way of knowing? And how do they maintain it?

To find out more about this process of transmission, I immersed myself in nascent sites of consumption, including cafés, restaurants, bars, and shopping malls. In these spaces, I often heard people talk about and act out what global modernity means to them and to others. In some of the newly established cafes, for example, I witnessed staff instructing customers on how to drink their coffee properly or to distinguish the quality of various types of coffee: a cultural product that encapsulates the Western bourgeois lifestyle. In these instances, people produced new social norms by sanctioning behaviors that were deemed deviant through micro-gestures of derision and disrespect, such as rolling their eyes or pressing their chins. In my field notes, I regularly wrote down my own subjective experiences of being watched when I visited these new spaces of consumption. Fearing of failing at the tasks of competence, I was eager to give the appearance of being a member of the global bourgeoisie by overplaying my Western self that I have cultivated through years of living and studying in the United States—like Karen, I intentionally and unintentionally mixed English with Cantonese when I ordered my coffee at Starbucks, shopped for clothes at global chain stores, and ate at restaurants in resort hotels.

To further illustrate this subtle but strong pressure to adopt this cosmopolitan behavior and attitude, consider my description of the local café that I frequented:

This place is popularized by expats and young professionals. Here, customers speak English, Portuguese, Mandarin, and Cantonese. There is a chalkboard menu hanging against the yellow wall. It is written in both English and Chinese. Interestingly, the baristas here don't speak Chinese at all, and customers can only order their drinks in English. A sign is attached next to the menu: it writes "hot," "iced," and "blend" [sic]. There

are Chinese translations below the English words and corresponding drawings showing the difference between them. It seems to me that this sign is used to educate customers on how to appropriately order a drink. Occasionally, I saw Chinese customers speaking limited English came into this place “by accident.” These customers didn’t seem to be welcomed here. The baristas would not make an effort to communicate with them in Chinese. They were impatient with them, interrupting them by asking questions in English while they were looking at the menu. Other customers would stare at them. Obviously, they didn’t “belong” to this place.

The performativity of global modernity organizes and manages the ways people act, speak, and behave. For example, in this café, to be seen as bourgeois and global requires one to speak English and know the differences between iced and hot coffee. The pressure and aspiration to adopt transnational behavior point to another aspect of everyday discourses as local responses to forces of the globalization of gaming—one that is characterized by accommodating desires rather than resistance.

Writing about the impact of economic reform on public culture in China, Lisa Rofel (2007) highlighted the creation of “desiring subjects” as a result of the negotiation of new form of citizenship. Similar to what I observed in Macau, she found that rapid economic transformation inflicted sweeping changes in all aspects of social, political, and economic life. Furthermore, new social hierarchies structured by gender, sexuality, race, and class that were enabled by the locally differentiated neoliberal order were manifested through the construction of desires. Globalization, therefore, can have an effect on the quotidian mental work of ordinary people. In Macau, as post-public sites of consumption were integrated into the new urban landscape, people engaged in acts of consumption and social interactions for the purpose of leisure and entertainment as well as in hopes of renewing themselves as worthy subjects in the changing society through the imagination and discussion of desire. The global neoliberal discourse of competition and economic

development is powerful not only because it pressures local politicians to embrace it as a set of transnationally legitimate economic ideas but also because it can transform the ways ordinary people frame the objects and subjects of global desire.

#### 4.3.3 *Globalization and local contradictions*

Perhaps due to the widespread sense of nostalgia I described above, this desire for global recognition and the pursuit of global cultural practices did strike me as surprising, even contradictory. Yet, oddly, the yearning for the past and the longing for a global future did not seem to reflect a clash of urban identities. Rather, many informants quite easily threaded their symbolic interest in the past with their desires for a future characterized by increasing globalization in the political, social, and cultural fields. For instance, while people lamented the way Macau's colonial history was overshadowed by the prominence of casinos, they also talked proudly about the city's newly adopted image as a "world-class" city.

During my fieldwork, many informants appropriated this set of neoliberal global ideas to discuss Macau. For example, Eve, who argued that Macau's authenticity rests on the elements that "have nothing to do with casinos," paradoxically expressed her feelings of pride and contentment with regards to the city's ascending global status:

Nowadays, there are plenty of resources in Macau. People here aren't lacking resources when they want to try something new. For example, they can apply for various scholarships when they choose to further their education. Either they can study abroad, or they can bring knowledge back to Macau. Also, people from overseas have known more about Macau due to the casino business here, which has created various opportunities. Personally I'm happy about that. I remember when I was an exchange student in the U.S. ten years ago, I had troubles passing through the customs. "Macau? Where's Macau?" The officer asked me. I had to explain a whole lot which wasn't useful. I said, "it's a part of China." Americans didn't know Macau was colonized by the Portuguese. They didn't know anything about Macau until I said, "it is next to Hong Kong."



Then they were like, “Oh! Hong Kong!” (Laughter) Nowadays, people know Macau. They would say “Oh! The casinos!”

In the interview, although Eve insisted that Macau should not be viewed as a casino city, she readily welcomed the rising status that Macau now enjoyed as a result of casino development. This particular standpoint was quite prevalent in my interviews with Macau residents. For instance, informants simultaneously argued that Macau’s authenticity should lie in its unique cultural characteristics as a postcolonial city and praised the importation of new cultural products and activities brought by transnational casinos (e.g. shows, events, concerts, and exhibits). For example, Ying, a mother of two in her early 40s, said that the growth of sports events and music concerts was welcomed because these activities “improve Macau’s image.” In addition, Anna, a casino host in her mid-20s who planned to move to Taiwan due to Macau’s rising housing costs and the lack of job opportunities in industries other than casino gambling, said that although her general view of the industry was negative, she liked how it created new businesses in the city:

The casino industry has brought in with it plenty of entertainment businesses. Prior to the opening of the casino industry, entertainment businesses such as shows and concerts were non-existent. You would have to visit Hong Kong for those [activities]. Right now, these businesses have enough budget to invite foreign talents for operate concerts here.

Although people condemned the commodification of place because they felt that social interaction was becoming increasingly restricted in public spaces, such as Senado Square, they did not challenge the ideology of global capitalism that produced these very processes to which they were opposed. As people attempted to construct a common local identity antagonistic to globalizing forces through the evocation of colonial nostalgia, they also sought to become an integral part of the global capitalist system through their daily participation in globalizing cultural practices.

Such desires to become global citizens do not only influence the ways people see their city, but they also provide a powerful frame through which they talk about their governments. Similar to the re-appropriation of colonial nostalgia, neoliberal global discourse was reinterpreted to craft diverse dialogues about the meanings of urban transformation. In both formal interviews and informal conversations, the shortage of talented, educated, and skilled government officials, as well as the lack of an expert system that provides prudent public policies in the midst of Macau's rapid transformation, were themes that emerged as important threads of everyday discourses. For example, Pedro, a government employee in his late 50s, complained about the lack of expertise among public officials.

Our government leadership is not talented or skilled at all. I'm talking about the higher-ups. They won't hire real talents because they're afraid that their positions will be threatened, which is a very outdated concept carried over from ancient China. In ancient China, officials would never hire people who might threaten their positions. This attitude can definitely muffle voices and bury knowledge. Usually, professionals have their unique point of view in their area of work. But in Macau, they would have to work in fields they did not specialize in. In this sense, their talents would be wasted.

In the interview, Pedro emphasized the importance of expert knowledge in providing sound policy advice, which, accordingly to him, was what Macau's government lacked. His comment simultaneously hinted at his disapproval of the local government and his recognition of the legitimacy of expert knowledge. More generally, there is a common perception that the local government is unwilling to adopt international standards in order to improve its governance. Another Macau resident who raised concerns about the lack of urban planning and what she called "long-term visions" from the local government said:

When the highly skilled are in positions of power, the government body will try to persuade them that what they have learned from the West is not going to work here. "We have been doing things this way forever," they

would say. So, are talented professionals actually welcome here? The government has plenty of resources, but resources are wasted away.

While I cannot conclude that the discourse of global desires directly serves to delegitimize the authority of the local government, such discourse clearly provides a powerful frame for Macau residents to articulate their discontent and dissatisfaction toward the government. Similar to colonial nostalgia, therefore, the discourse of global desires does not only serve to extend the symbolic power for those who produced it, but it can also be appropriated by ordinary people to temporarily destabilize the authority and challenge the symbolic power of other competing discourse producers.

#### *4.4 Conclusion*

Let me return to the issue of the relationship between misrecognition and symbolic domination. Although authorized discourses did mask oppression and thereby justify domination, ordinary people did not simply adopt the authorized frame(s) of seeing solely because they could not distance themselves from their relations to the symbolic structure that various dominant classes at different historical time had created. To put it differently, even though authorized discourses have been misrecognized and mistaken as apolitical and disinterested, they might not inflict symbolic violence, which “is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity” (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992:167). To clarify, I do not argue against Bourdieu’s theoretical assertion about how symbolic domination is achieved through misrecognition. Rather, my goal is to highlight misrecognition as a multilayered process through which symbolic domination may or may not be obtained. During such a process, people can exercise their agency (however limited) in ways that suggest that they are more than cultural dupes who blindly reinforce their own domination. More specifically, they re-appropriate, reinterpret, and reassign

meanings to authorized discourses to their own use. For example, Macau residents used the authorized discourses of colonial nostalgia and globalization not only to extend the symbolic domination imposed on them; they also deployed these discourses to serve their own distinct set of interests—one that argued for the importance of local identities under globalizing processes. In a sense, the reappropriation of authorized discourses provided ordinary people with useful frames to hold onto certain aspects of the past that they deemed valuable and important to themselves and envision a future that they sought to realize by challenging specific aspects of the existing structure.

Despite their multiplicities, what united all these accounts was the intense emotions evoked upon the act of thinking and talking about urban transformation. Jonathan Turner (2007) argues that social change within meso- and macro-structures can arouse both positive and negative emotions among people at the micro level of everyday life. More importantly, social structures are held together by the positive emotions that people feel toward the established structure. While consistent positive emotions reflect people's firm commitments to dominant structures (e.g. social institutions, systems of stratification, hegemonic ideologies), negative emotions can be elaborated as counter-narratives to change culture at the meso-level of society, and thereby reconfigure preexisting networks, form new fields of contention, or facilitate social movements.

## CHAPTER 5: MOBILIZING DISCOURSES IN URBAN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

### 5.1 *Introduction*

In the previous chapters, I examined the authorized and everyday discourses produced by power elites and ordinary people respectively. This chapter investigates the production of mobilizing discourses by non-elites during the emergence of urban social movements that take the form of collective action and mass events in Macau. In particular, I focus my analysis on two particular social movement groups—Macau Voice, which mobilizes for political reform, and Macau Gaming Vanguard, which advocates for casino workers' rights. By empirically exploring the mobilizing discourses produced by these two groups, their emergence and development, as well as the specific qualities and components that make such discourses relatively successful or unsuccessful, my larger goal is to understand more deeply the way mobilizing discourses interact with other available discourses in Macau.

Bourdieu (2003) argues that political representations that succeed in mobilizing in an enduring way should involve developing and imposing visions that are capable of obtaining the support of the greatest possible number of citizens. Furthermore, effective political representations should be able to gain position by winning against competing discourses produced by other representatives. To a certain extent, therefore, mobilizing discourses constitute a form of political representation because, similar to authorized discourses offered by powerful *élites* in the society, mobilizing discourses are also “instruments for perceiving and expressing the social world” or “principles of division” with reference to the political field (Bourdieu 2003: 172).

My arguments are twofold. First, in examining the production of mobilizing discourses in Macau, I find that social movement groups not only are devoted to the interests of the agents they represent, but also simultaneously pursue their own interests. In that sense, social movement groups are similar to political parties, for they exist not only to serve the interests of those they represent by defending and fighting for specific causes, but also to engage in the symbolic struggles with other representatives to compete for the monopoly of conversation for their own sake. My argument therefore aligns with the “political process” school of social movement studies that views protest groups as similar to political parties who deploy “cultural framing” to create opportunities for mobilization and organization of social movements (Goodwin et al. 1999). Using Bourdieu’s terms, the manipulation of politics and representation, which Bourdieu refers to as a “double game,” is not limited to the use by political elites and other authorized representatives, but also by non-elites, such as grassroots groups and activists.

Second, the production of mobilizing discourses does not simply emerge as counter-hegemonic discourses that call into question the legitimacy of authorized discourses. In contrast to some Neo-Marxist studies that position urban struggles for housing, public spaces, and workers’ rights as direct antagonistic responses to neoliberal capitalism (Leitner et al. 2007), I argue that mobilizing discourses are not located in direct opposition to authorized discourses of the state or the dominant class in the political field. Although it is tempting to interpret mobilizing discourses produced by grassroots groups as evidence of direct resistance that challenges the neoliberal state and market-oriented politics, one must recognize that the relationship between oppositional movements and politics within the political field of activists, politicians, and other

discourse producers is more complicated. Indeed, mobilizing discourses share commonality with authorized discourses. Similar to the production of dominant culture, for instance, oppositional politics and counterculture are subject to change based on the opposing and overlapping interests (both symbolic and material) of different groups in various fields that constitute the structure of power and symbolic relationships.

In what follows, I will first discuss the theoretical conception of symbolic power in the social movements literature. Second, I will provide some historical context of oppositional politics in Macau. Third, I will explore two specific social movement groups in Macau and their relative successes or failures in terms of mobilizing participation through the discussion of a series of protest events in 2014 and their consequences. In so doing, I will reveal the structure of positions and oppositions that constitute oppositional politics in Macau over time.

### *5.2 Symbolic Power in Social Movements*

The sociological inquiries of culture and symbol have long informed social movements researchers. Researchers and theorists like William Gamson and David Snow (Gamson 1992; Snow et al. 1986; Snow and Benford 1988) analyze the use of symbols and languages in the mobilizing processes of social movements and the cultural contexts for activism. More specifically, the concept of framing, i.e. the process of organizing thoughts and highlighting certain events and facts as important and visible, is used to analyze how fragmented social dialogues transform into coherent ideas and causes for mobilization. Since the strategic use of symbols and languages can connect social movement groups with potential supporters, movement organizers necessarily choose appropriate symbols from the cultural reservoir of meanings in order to extend their own

beliefs, aspirations and grievances (Snow et al. 1986). Accordingly, although the framing strategies that social movements groups employ (for example, the combination of symbols, images and arguments) matter, mobilizing discourses must also be integrated with the existing symbolic order to be successful (Ryan and Gamson 2009). Symbolic order—the way people define their world—therefore, becomes the underlying force that shapes actors’ motives, ideas, and identities.

Bourdieu (2003; 2010), who argues that symbols function as tools of power, analyzes how the production of knowledge and corresponding social practices construct and sustain fields of power that guide people’s judgment, aesthetic response, and political view. Accordingly, symbolic tools, such as discourses, serve the purpose of situating the structural location of different groups and classes through distinction and differentiation. In *Distinction*, for example, Bourdieu (2010) argues that the dominant class deploys symbolic resources to present itself as superior to lower classes and to hide its class origin and interests. Relatively powerless social agents paradoxically reproduce the symbolic system that continues to oppress them. Hence, the production of symbols and representations perpetuates structural inequality by promoting conformity instead of social defiance. Social movements can then be considered as collective action that breaks this process by inverting the rules established by powerful social institutions (Eder 2015). From this perspective, social movements represent counter-hegemonic forces that effect social change by challenging the dominant culture in a given society.

Tarrow (1998) examines the relationship between social movements and social change by focusing on the power of movements and how they are capable of creating new opportunities, developing innovative tactics, frame their arguments, recruiting and



organizing constituents. Adding to these accounts, scholars of social movements who adopt a cultural approach highlight the central role of emotions in social movements (Castells 2012; Goodwin et al. 2001). They examine the ways in which frames provide the channels to make sense of emotions such as outrage about injustice, moral panic, or anxiety associated with diminished collective identities. To elaborate, people feel angry about oppressions and injustices only when their emotions are connected to certain available symbols that interpret their feelings as feelings of oppression or injustice. Therefore, mobilizing discourse becomes effective only when they are framed in ways that tap into specific symbols that are emotionally invested. Because the effectiveness of frames depends on their ability to link up with people's emotions that are occasioned by different aspects of their social lives, mobilizing discourse produced by social movement groups necessarily include diverse, fragmented, and unorganized concerns, demands, and interests.

Using Bourdieu's conception of field, Nick Crossley, calls for a more multidimensional model in the study of social movements. Field is defined as "a network, or configuration, of objective relations between positions" (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 97). Fields constitute the positions held by social agents in their struggle to compete for different kinds of capital (economic, political, social, cultural, and symbolic capital) (Swartz 1997). More specifically, Crossley (2003) argues that activists are not only situated in direct opposition to the political field occupied by the dominant class, but that they also work through multiple positions in various fields which represent diverse interests (e.g. the media, legal, and economic fields). As he writes:

One cannot engage with the media in the same way that one might engage in the legal world, for example. And in each of these fields the same

capital has a different value. Legal expertise will usually have little value in a media-based publicity battle, for example, but it has a very obvious value (qua cultural capital) in a legal battle (Crossley 2003: 60).

For the purpose of this dissertation research, Bourdieu's conception of fields is particularly useful in ways that allow me to analyze the process of production of mobilizing discourses by social movement groups in Macau in a culturally and historically "thick" manner. As the chapter will show, activists in Macau simultaneously hold positions and invest time and efforts in different fields that are distinct from the field of social activism.

### *5.3 Oppositional Politics in Macau*

To make sense of the positions and oppositions in which activists situate themselves in the field of movement activism in Macau, one must first understand the history and the system of political networks in the local context. Macau's political system is dominated by two major political camps: the pro-Beijing camp (also known as the pro-establishment camp) and the pro-democratic camp.

#### *5.3.1 The pro-Beijing camp*

Pro-Beijing interest groups have been very influential in Macau's politics since the 1960s. The emergence of pro-Beijing interest groups can be traced back to 1966, when Macau's leftist organizations mobilized hundreds of union members and workers to stage large-scale protests against the colonial government after the government blocked the construction of a school sponsored by the leftist camp. As the protests escalated, Macau's leftist organizations collaborated with the Guangdong provincial government to cut off the supply of food and water by closing the border checkpoint between Macau and Zhuhai. As a result of the protests and blockade, the Portuguese Macau government

offered the protesters a compensation of MOP\$3 million (about USD\$375,000) and prohibited all pro-Taiwan organizations in Macau (Cheung 2010: 16-20). Between the 1960s and 1980s, members from these leftist organizations transformed into one of the most powerful social groups in Macau as they penetrated the formal political system by winning seats in the legislature and continuously providing social services, such as medical care and education. These organizations later evolved into today's pro-Beijing interest groups. As of 2000, there were 1,700 interest groups in Macau (Chou 2005), the most powerful of which are organized by Chinese businessmen as well as members of trade unions and neighborhood associations (Ho 2011).

Pro-Beijing interest groups have strong ties with the Chinese central government. Since the political handover of 1999, they have served to enhance the legitimacy of the Macau SAR government by refraining from criticizing the new regime (Chou 2005). During my interview with two interest group members, I noticed that they were more inclined to highlight the positive aspects of Macau (e.g. the growing economy and increasing international recognition). It was also harder for me to establish rapport with the two interest group's members whom I interviewed when compared to my other respondents. I repeatedly obtained answers that were oddly similar to the authorized discourse established by the local and national governments. My respondents reused phrases and words commonly found in official speeches and documents to describe the current condition of Macau: "harmony," "stability," "prosperity," and "development" were often used. Below is one member's response about her general view on Macau:

I think Macau is getting better. It is full of hope [...] I think the economy will continue to grow [...] Even though Macau is so small, it has very promising prospects. The fact that it is so close to Zhuhai can broaden the

scale of communication and development. Hence, my general view is hopeful.

How pro-Beijing interest groups are embedded in national and local politics is also evidenced by the fact that the central government appointed interest-group leaders to positions on the drafting committee of Macau Basic Law—the constitution of Macau SAR (Liu 1999). Interest groups' members who hold positions in the local government serve as an extension of the Beijing authorities. As then-President Jiang Zemin laid out the party's expectation in his speech at the Meeting in Celebration of the First Anniversary of the Return of Macao to China on December 20, 2000:

I hope that people of all walks of life in Macau will conscientiously safeguard the authority of the Chief Executive and support and help the Chief Executive in implementing administrative policies [...] Both Macao and the mainland should ensure that anything that is unfavorable to the prosperity, stability and development of Macau will be refused (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China 2000).

Despite their grassroots origin, pro-Beijing interest groups are no longer the agents of oppositional politics. Quite the opposite: these groups often represent the interests of some of the most powerful elites in Macau. In addition to political privileges, many interest groups also receive tremendous government subsidies. For example, the Macau SAR government restructured the Macau Foundation in order to regularly allocate public money to fund clinics and schools operated by interest groups, as well as to finance various public activities and festivals organized by them (Chou 2005).

### 5.3.2 *The pro-democratic camp*

In the 1980s, Alexandre Ho Si-Him, a local educated elite member, founded a new political camp in Macau by breaking into the local political system as an outsider—someone who belonged to neither the Portuguese Macanese community nor the pro-

Beijing camp. Ho led a group of college graduates to form what was later known as the “livelihood faction” after he finished his graduate study in Switzerland. Aligning his interests with those of the working class, Ho won a directly elected seat in the legislative election in 1984. Soon after the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, Ho’s group drew upon the goals and ideals of the protesters in Beijing and mobilized students as well as other young people in Macau to call for democracy, government accountability, freedom of the press, and freedom of speech (Yu and Chin 2012).

Today, Ho’s group has expanded and become the pro-democratic camp, which consists of a number of non-profit organizations and political associations. The camp comprises local politicians and activists who commonly support an increasingly democratic government. This group of politicians and activists sharply contrast with the interest groups and political parties of the pro-Beijing camp, which supports pro-growth policies and the political views of the People's Republic of China and the Communist Party.

Other than political ideologies, the main difference between the pro-democratic camp and the pro-Beijing camp is their source of funding. Unlike pro-Beijing interest groups, organizations that exist under the pro-democratic camp do not receive much funding or subsidies from government institutions. Except for those who hold formal positions in specific politicians’ offices, many activists are volunteers who dedicate their spare time to participate in the organization and mobilization of collective action. Wei, a member of the pro-democratic camp, member of Macau Voice, co-founder of MGV, and casino dealer, met me at a busy restaurant for lunch. A father of two young children, he got involved in politics after the birth of his first child because he was concerned about

Macau's political environment and wanted to "create a better future for the next generation." Wei told me in his interview:

The big difference between us and them (the pro-Beijing camp) is that we do not want a single dime from the government. We'd rather receive donations from common folks or do fundraising ourselves. We've also demonstrated to other communities in Macau that social movement work is not necessarily expensive, because most of it is based on people volunteering. Sending flyers or handing out water bottles: those are not costly at all. The pro-Beijing camp does not do much despite being very well funded. The reason is that funding of those organizations usually goes to the members' pocket. Yet we push the society forward by participating as volunteers during our spare time.

Due to the heterogeneity of the members of the pro-democratic camp, conflicts between members with diverse symbolic or political interests were not uncommon. For example, when some of the pro-democratic activists wanted to advocate the rights for migrant workers in Macau, the activists' action was met with disapproval by politicians in the same political camp. Simon, a former assistant to a politician from the pro-democratic camp and a leading student activist, spoke about the struggles he faced when working with pro-democratic politicians. In his early 30s, Simon studied political science in Taiwan and became involved in local politics after he returned to Macau upon graduation. He was tall and charismatic and spoke passionately about politics and social justice. He revealed to me during an interview:

To be honest, maybe this is the difference between a person with power and a person with none. If he or she has a position in the government, undoubtedly his or her burden is heavier. About two years earlier, we had a workshop on human rights and invited some migrant workers from the community to speak up. They complained that their employers were really harsh. After this was picked up by the news, many employers (of migrant workers) called us. Even our politicians said we were biased and unfair [...] To be honest, politicians get no votes by helping migrant workers, because they don't have the right to vote. This is very important. We have different points of view.

Because activists in the pro-democracy camp like Simon were involved and operated within the network of local politicians who were embedded in the formal political field, oppositional actions organized by the camp were often bound to the political interests of specific politicians. Some activists in the pro-democratic camp often needed to negotiate power relations among existing political networks and found themselves only pushing forward political ideologies that were already established and were accepted by other members in the camp.

In the past several years, social media has given rise to public discussion over urban issues like local policies, planning, housing, and transportation, to name just a few topics of concern. While ordinary citizens had discussed these issues privately, the transition of private everyday speech to the public realm via online forums and discussion boards created a broad-based, online community of students, casino workers, writers, activists, and ordinary citizens in Macau. Responses to changing circumstances and innovative channels of communication resulted in new public discourses. Through them, various forms of discontent and daily oppression were expressed on public forums and cross-platform instant messaging services like Facebook and WeChat. During my fieldwork in Macau, I learned that these emergent patterns of social interactions were key to the formation of new grassroots groups external to the established political structure. Unlike activists who were officially part of the pro-democracy camp, members of these new social movements groups were organized in ways that were *relatively* unencumbered by the formal political structure.<sup>16</sup> Among these various groups that have recently

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<sup>16</sup> Although new social movements groups are not bound by rules and regulations imposed by political organizations, many activists in these groups simultaneously occupy multiple positions in the internal spaces of various fields (e.g. political associations,

emerged are Macau Voice, an oppositional group organized by students and young professionals, and Macau Gaming Vanguard (MGV), a labor group formed by casino workers.

#### *5.4 Macau Voice and the 5.25 Protest*

On a Sunday afternoon in spring 2014, thousands of local residents gathered in Tap Seac Public Square and marched on the narrow streets of the city center. They wore white t-shirts and held signs and banners that read “withdraw the bill” to protest against what the organizer of the rally called “Bill of Greed and Privilege”—a law that would have granted new benefits and privileges, such as immunity from criminal prosecution and lavish pension plans, to government retirees. Two days later, on May 27, 2014, thousands of protesters occupied the Legislative Assembly to continue to protest against the bill. They sat down and occupied the area around the Legislative Assembly into the night. These peaceful demonstrations were the largest in Macau in years and subsequently caused Chief Executive Edmund Chui to scrap the bill.

Macau Voice organized the protest by creating event pages on Facebook about two weeks before the protest on May 25, 2014 (dubbed the 5.25 Protest). Founded in 2012, the social movement group consists of roughly ten students and young professionals, all of whom are activists in different community and political associations. As of 2016, its Facebook group had 8,790 members. According to an interview with the founder, there are currently 15 active members. While some members of Macau Voice are actively engaged with or work for local politicians in the democratic party that

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personal social networks, casinos, and online forums). Their actions and decisions are nevertheless shaped by such positions.



organizes the political interests of the pro-democracy camp, other members come from community youth groups or local alternative-media networks that focus on local social issues that are not directly linked to the material interests of any political organization or institution. According to its official description, Macau Voice exists as an independent social movement group that “raises awareness about social justice, deepens political participation, and works toward the implementation of democratic elections” through collective action. Its website claims that the group has no official theme, spokesperson, or leader beyond a general focus on social justice and democracy.

Macau Voice is different from pro-Beijing interest groups and pro-democratic organizations that are embedded within the larger political system. First, unlike other groups, Macau Voice exists only online and is not officially registered as a political organization or interest group. Hence, it does not need to follow any rules or regulations found in traditional organizations. For example, they do not have to maintain a certain number of members or host regular meetings. Its informal nature allows members to mobilize action and react to emerging threats and opportunities with greater flexibility and immediacy than formal organizations have. Second, the management and operation of the group remains independent of the influence of any political party or institution. Although some group members are associated with local politicians in the democratic party, Macau Voice’s agendas, goals and values are not directly shaped by any specific set of political interests or confined by existing organizational culture.

Moreover, the process by which members come up with ideas or themes for mobilized activities is relatively flexible and spontaneous. Because the goal of Macau Voice is to generate public reaction to specific social issues rather than to build its

organization through name recognition, the group does not need a meta-narrative that gives a comprehensive and coherent account of the various events and activities it organizes. According to members of Macau Voice, themes are selected based on relevant discourses that are already circulating in the public realm. Its members believe that its small size and relative freedom from political influence make the group more effective and efficient when it comes to protest organization. As Simon said in the interview:

In general, the smaller the organization, the larger the opposition it can mobilize. For example, traditional student groups are bound by many rules and obstacles, especially when they are influenced by political interests. In fact, whoever has political influence tends to want to maintain the status quo because there is more to lose. The smallest unit, such as an individual, is able to react more strongly. Macau Voice is this sort of organization. It is formed by a few people. This kind of organization can be more aggressive; hence, we are more feared by the government.

The mobilization process of the 5.25 protest was short. From raising awareness to mobilizing support to building the organization, it took Macau Voice less than three weeks to actualize the protest. Activists from Macau Voice used alternative-media outlets to build discourses that identified the bill as an urgent public matter and provided compelling accounts that mobilized collective action. A few local alternative-media outlets, which mainly provide Internet-based content, first uncovered and brought the bill to public attention. They focused on reporting the high amount of pension payout to elicit public reaction on their websites and Facebook pages. They also uploaded videos of committee meetings in which the bill was discussed and reviewed. In this early phase, neither Macau Voice nor alternative-media outlets constructed the discourse about the bill with the purpose of organizing a collective mass event.

Subsequently, during the mobilization process of the 5.25 protest, Macau Voice responded quickly to the ensemble of individuals expressing opinions against the bill by

creating a protest event on Facebook. Once online discussion began to accumulate in the two weeks leading up to the protest, activists created slogans and images to articulate and promote opposition to the bill. These discourses that consisted of words, images, slogans, statistics, and videos can be understood as propaganda. Movement propaganda frame news and allow debate within the parameters of perspectives that reflect the activists' frames and the perception of their target (Oliver and Johnston, 2000). Like effective propaganda, these discourses about the bill signified and embodied an argument about what was happening in Macau.

One of the slogans that received the most powerful resonance was *fan-lei-bo*, whose literal translation is “against pension payout upon retirement.” The Cantonese words *lei-bo* in the slogan sound similar to *lei-po*, which can mean “absurd, ludicrous, ridiculous, and unreasonable.” The slogan, therefore, derided the bill through the creative and playful usage of words and phrases by implying the bill was an example of the absurdity of the government's conduct. It also represented in a few words the general critique of Macau's government by characterizing the bill as ludicrous, reflecting the public perception that the local government lacks the capability and competence to govern Macau.



Illustration 5.1 Organizers posted the design of the 5.25 t-shirt (Facebook 2014).

The purpose of these discourses is to convince and to mobilize. These slogans and images succeeded in the sense that they mobilized people to organize and participate in collective action by convincing people that the bill should be withdrawn. Subsequently, Macau Voice developed the theme for the protest event by focusing on pressuring Chief Executive Edmund Chui to withdraw the bill. On the event's Facebook page, the organizer urged citizens to wear white t-shirts and take to the streets on May 25, as shown in Illustration 5.1. The slogan *fan-lei-bo* was featured at the top of the webpage. 46,000 people were invited to participate in the event; about 6,900 clicked “going,” indicating that they planned to participate in the protest, and 823 people clicked “interested” on the event page. Prior to the protest, activists also distributed handouts, posted flyers, and collected signatures. Measured by its effectiveness, the 5.25 Protest

was extremely successful. As a result of the protest, Chief Executive Ho yielded to public pressure and withdrew the bill. While the police reported that 7,000 protesters showed up on the day of the protest, the organizer reported 20,000. In any case, it was one of the largest protests in Macau's history.

The 5.25 was effective mainly because symbols like *fan-lei-bo* evoked the “appropriate” emotions from movement participants from different mobilizing fields (e.g. those of informal networks of friendship, neighborhoods, and communities). By expressing discontent and dissatisfaction with particular local political figures—that is, emotions that were already pervasive in the spaces of everyday lives (See Chapter 4)—slogans and images produced by Macau Voice entailed and resonated with the local culture and the forms of selfhood and identification that ordinary people elaborated and developed at the micro-level of personal thoughts and social encounters. These symbols, therefore, tapped into and reinforced everyday discourses which expressed a range of negative emotions toward the government as well as the bodily and lived dimensions of everyday life imposed by those in power. Movement symbols invited out-groups (i.e. non-Macau Voice members) to treat each other as members of the same group and thereby augmented the anger and outrage against the state represented by those politicians who proposed the bill.

### *5.5 Macau Gaming Vanguard (MGV): From Facebook to the Streets*

MGV gained global media attention after a series of protests against casino corporations that broke out in the summer of 2014. Unprecedented in both extent and effect, these protests involved thousands of casino employees gathering in front of their own companies and rallying against their employers—some of the wealthiest businesses

in the world. The organization reported that up to 7,000 people turned up for some of these protests organized by MGV. At each protest event, protesters, shouting and carrying signs, gathered near a selected casino and demanded better wages and benefits. These casinos included Galaxy, Grand Lisboa, Wynn Macau, the Venetian, and Sands.

At the protests I attended, few protesters stayed for the entire protest, which could last anywhere from three to four hours. Most protesters stayed for up to two hours. Because almost all casino workers are shift workers, all the protests were scheduled to allow workers of different shifts to attend, usually during later afternoons or evenings. Furthermore, some protests were more organized than others, with designated picketing areas and signs prepared by MGV. Very often, protesters wore masks for fear of being recognized as casino employees. During these protests, many protesters were on their smartphones calling their coworkers and pinning their location via mobile apps. Each protest concluded with a speech given by several MGV leaders.

What subsequently became one of the most successful labor movements in Macau's history was first born out of an informal online forum. Through the use of social networking sites like Facebook and cross-platform mobile messaging apps like Whatsapp and Wechat, members shared narratives about workplace practices, disseminated information about official casino announcements, and organized actions by casino workers. Between 2014 and 2015, MGV organized thousands of workers from various casinos to participate in different forms of collective action.

Until 2012, MGV existed only virtually, as an online discussion forum on Facebook. There was no kind of *de facto* action by MGV. Although some of the online forum members knew each other in person through work, members did not meet face-to-

face to discuss the management or organization of the group. MGTV was merely an online platform on which members shared personal narratives about their daily encounters, rumors, and gossip at the workplace. Most members are dealers or supervisors who work on the gambling floors or gambling rooms where they directly attend to gamblers or monitor games and dealers.

May 2012 marked a watershed moment in the development of MGTV. On May 1, five MGTV members joined hundreds of protestors from the pro-democracy camp and several local associations in the May Day protest. Demonstrators expressed diverse areas of discontentment, including with the number of migrant workers, poor infrastructure, and the inefficiency of the education and medical systems (Macau Business, 2012). Demanding a smoking ban in all casinos, these five MGTV members created banners and marched along with other protestors on the day of the protest. Later, they posted several photos of themselves holding an anti-smoking banner on an MGTV online forum. Most interestingly, online MGTV participants (mis)interpreted these photos: they understood them as a signal of the development of MGTV into an actually existing grassroots organization instead of an online forum. As a result, more people joined the online forum; participants began to plan and organize *de facto* collective action on the forum. One of the five members who appeared at the 2012 May Day protest explained:

We did not expect the impact to be so great. We posted several photos of what we did that day on Facebook. Suddenly, we discovered that others had similar demands. Even though they had not voiced their demands, they showed great interest to support our cause. At that time, they thought we were an organization [...] But it wasn't. We just wanted to help people voice their concerns. To our surprise, we've started a movement after that single event.

After this protest event, the number of protest participants increased from five individuals to thousands per protest over the course of two years. Between 2012 and 2014, MGCV mobilized and organized multiple demonstrations against oppressive practices across different casinos. As a labor group, it helped workers negotiate with casino management with regard to fair pay and better working conditions. Because there was no pre-established structure or comprehensive arrangements in terms of MGCV's internal organization or leadership, several members who initially volunteered to gather signatures from fellow casino workers, create protest banners, or collect supplies for protest events gradually became key members of the group.

#### *5.6 Patterns of change: bureaucratization and contingencies*

I will now turn to my analysis of the organizational characteristics of Macau Voice and MGCV to support my arguments. To reiterate, first, I argue that the organization of social movement groups is similar to that of political parties. Social movement groups exist not only to serve the interests of those they represent by defending and fighting for specific causes, but also to engage in the symbolic struggles with other representatives to compete for the monopoly of conversation for their own sake. Second, I argue that mobilizing discourses are not located in direct opposition to authorized discourses. That is, mobilizing discourses produced by grassroots groups should not be simply interpreted as evidence of counter-hegemonic forces. Instead, the relationship between oppositional movements and politics should be recognized as more complicated. To illustrate my arguments, I will focus on two processes: (1) the bureaucratization within both Macau Voice and MGS and (2) how the development of both movements is influenced and limited by other unforeseen events, in this case, the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong.



### 5.6.1 *The interlocking of Macau Voice and the pro-democratic camp*

Despite the success of the 5.25 protest, Macau Voice as a social movement organization did not continue to grow. In fact, subsequent protests and opposition organized by the group failed to gain traction. Moreover, outsiders viewed successive protests that focused on the organization of pro-democracy movements as tone-deaf and ill-conceived.

Curiously enough, my interviews with activists suggested that many of them were not surprised by the lack of public support they were able to garner after the 5.25 protest.<sup>17</sup> Although activists told me individually during their interviews that they somehow knew that the promotion of democratic elections would not resonate with the general public, they still organized and coordinated action on democratic issues regardless. Paradoxically, Simon, who was viewed by other activists as one of the most zealous about Western democratic ideologies complained to me about the lack of continuity in the group's development and how their failure was rooted in the underpinning of political ideologies that are overly abstract and idealistic. As he explained:

Being “off the ground” is our biggest problem [....] We don't organize any activities at the community level. We have been focusing on the sky, precisely on the creation of public discourse. But without community outreach, our concepts can never be reached to people. That's why political revolution has been “off the ground” in Macau. If you want people to talk about democracy, you need to teach them about democracy by addressing basic livelihood issues. I do not think we should focus on shaping public discourse only. This strategy [employed by others in the group] has actually reduced the progress of democracy [....] I want to

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<sup>17</sup> Despite sympathy among Western commentators who imagine Chinese people as enthusiastically seeking liberation from the oppressive communist regime, local negative emotions toward Macau's closed election system that draws ballots from a small pool of power elites were minimal.

maintain the “sky,” but we also need to repair the “ground.”

During the interview, Simon repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction about the difficulty of Macau Voice to become more practically focused. Even though, in his opinion, he had the solution to tackle the problem that the group faced, his responses conveyed a sense of powerlessness. As I probed further, it turned out that Simon, like some other members of Macau Voice, were embedded in the network of relationships with the official pro-democratic camp. For example, a number of activists shared personal biographies that aligned them through their involvement in the political party and their relationships with specific politicians. A few of them had even run in legislative elections as candidates under the pro-democratic camp. More specifically, Simon had worked as a personal assistant for a pro-democratic politician and even ran for office under the pro-democratic camp.

Despite Macau Voice’s relative autonomy in terms of management and operation, their actions and decision-making processes were heavily censored by their peers. Wendy, a member of Macau Voice and the leader of a pro-democratic student group, explained to me that activists who participate in oppositional politics often belong to a closed network of individuals. In her early 20s, she graduated with an art degree from Taiwan a few years ago. We met in a secluded café that seated no more than six people on a Saturday afternoon. Dressed in a plain white t-shirt and a pair of skinny jeans, Wendy struck me as incredibly young-looking. To get a better sense of the social networks within which these activists were embedded, I asked her whether she knew my other respondents, including members of both MGVS and Macau Voice. This was what she said:

Of course I know all of them because we are in such a small cliché!  
People often said that whoever are involved in politics in this city are either pro-democratic or pro-Beijing. It is quite black and white. Pretty much people are cool with each other as long as they are not pro-Beijing. Plus, our circle is rather small, so we will eventually encounter everyone.

Subsequent ethnographic observation confirmed Wendy's statement. Indeed, this group of people (about 20 of them) socialized regularly at parties and dinner events and considered each other personal friends and allies. They generally perceived themselves as having common ideals, values, and beliefs. In these private settings, they shared, reproduced, and reinforced political ideologies and beliefs.

In addition, this network of activists occupied multiple positions in various grassroots groups as well as the pro-democratic political party. In fact, their positions overlapped so much that when they talked about their roles in these different groups during interviews, I had trouble distinguishing which organizations they represented. Pronouns of "they" and "we" were thrown around and used interchangeably. I often had to ask to whom the "they" and "we" they were referring. Due to their intersecting positions in various fields including local political parties, the media (e.g. bloggers and reporters), the intellectual (e.g. university professors and public scholars), the arts (e.g. artists and musicians) and social activism at large (e.g. activists' networks at home and abroad), the difficulty for Macau Voice to separate itself from this relatively rigid set of political ideologies could not be easily overcome, for such ideologies create the reality of the unity and identity of the group.

In spite of its operation being external to the formal political field, members of Macau Voice were deeply embedded in the broader networks of social relations through which an ideological basis for oppositional politics was mediated through political and

symbolic interests. For example, Wendy jokingly told me in her interview with me that some of my other respondents “had to” show up at a protest that recently happened:

Wendy: Of course they had to show up. My explanation would be that they got used to protest (chuckle). Just like my case. I’ve thought about whether I should join the protest or not.

Me: Really?

Wendy: I did! But I got so used to protesting so I joined anyway. It was like autopilot.

Me: So you have been debating about showing up or not?

Wendy: To be honest, not showing up was not really an option.

Me: Not an option?

Wendy: Yeah you could say that (chuckle). We have protests on May 1<sup>st</sup> every year; after a while, the meaning really gets lost. Every year, the date is always the same and we will have to show up, so we have to figure out a theme for the event and its promotion.

Me: How did the theme get settled?

Wendy: It is usually based on consensus among the core members supposedly.

Me: Who are they?

Wendy: Yesterday’s event was organized by New Macau [an official student group associated with the pro-democratic political party]. So it was up to their core members. If it were up to me, I would touch upon tangible issues such as tourists’ behaviors and the shrinking of public space [...] In fact, I believe we should have more diversity in our voices. We ended up sticking with the theme of political reform, but I was rather unwilling.

Wendy’s comments showed that even though some members of Macau Voice were not officially associated with the pro-democratic political party, these individuals who saw themselves as activists were involved in a set of overlapping crowds. There is also a kind of mutual attraction or a sense of comradeship shared by those who were intricately connected in the “cliché.” As Wendy said, what distinguished themselves from

others was their anti-Beijing stand. The formation of Macau Voice was therefore coterminous with the pro-democratic camp—the two organizations share the same boundaries of self identification. Therefore, members of Macau Voice inevitably incorporated the cultural forms, ideologies, and emotional orientations with those in the pro-democratic camp. Given the overlapping of positions by individuals within this given structure of social networks and relations, the conflicts of interest and pressures to conform watered down and contaminated the goals of Macau Voice.

#### *5.6.2 The bureaucratization of MGVS*

Unlike Macau Voice, MGVS's development was relatively more enduring. For example, it successfully organized a sequence of collection actions and was able to achieve several goals for those they represented. As a result of these protests, casinos introduced and enforced a permanent smoking ban across all casinos, increases in salaries and bonuses, and additional employee benefits. During this process, MGVS worked with casinos, local politicians, and government institutions to actualize these goals.

As MGVS continued to grow, however, I noticed that the MGVS leadership became increasingly careful about the way that they produced, framed, and disseminated their mobilizing discourses, and that it seemed less open to accepting and representing the diverse range of needs and demands among the actors they represented.<sup>18</sup> Social

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<sup>18</sup> As a researcher, I had a much more difficult time establishing rapport with and gaining trust from the MGVS leadership compared with that of Macau Voice. For instance, MGVS activists would not readily share their strategies of mobilization or organization and the internal workings of their group during interviews and focus groups. Information was obtained not only from formal interviews but also often from informal conversation among activists during meetings and protest events. For example, although I saw Ryan, the charismatic leader of MGVS, at every rally and protest, I was only able to obtain an interview with him after six months of participation in MGVS events and socialization with other MGVS members. SPECULATE.

movement scholars generally refer to this kind of movement development as the formalization or the bureaucratization of social movement organizations (Staggenborg 2013). Because any form of collective action (e.g. social protests) requires some degree of organization and coordination, bureaucratization can happen when oppositional groups seek to stabilize or formalize certain aspects of social movement work. Paradoxically, the same process that empowered MGV simultaneously imposed constraints on emerging heterogeneous ideas and therefore rendered some voices silent. When individual participants expressed demands that were incongruous with the selected theme of the given event or the overall goals of the group, these demands were interpreted as insignificant or irrelevant and therefore were often dismissed. During my fieldwork, for example, I witnessed a situation in which a member was told to hold off her concerns at a signature-gathering event organized for equal pay for dealers across all casinos. Probably in her 40s, the member spoke with a regional accent and suggested to Coco, one of my key informants and a founder of MGV, that casino dealers with more work experience should receive larger pay raises than those with less experience. After the woman signed the petition and left, Coco told me that her view was flawed and said “It is precisely this kind of thinking that separates casino workers.” The member’s concern about raising pay in proportion to work experience was ignored because it did not provide coherence to the established goal of overall pay raises for everyone at the event, nor did it help unite or mobilize casino workers. Although Coco’s decision to disregard issues that would clearly divide workers around seniority could help keep the issue focused and avoided division among workers, such strategy also risked leading to bureaucratization and losing MGV’s critical edge.

Furthermore, as MGTV gained more symbolic and political power, activists became increasingly concerned about the management of interests and positions in different fields. For example, selecting the appropriate slogans for protests, producing and editing messages, and distinguishing different types of actions became major topics of discussion during informal gathering. I noticed that providing coherence to the formation of arguments in ways that sought to avoid symbolic and material conflicts with others became one of the most important mobilizing strategies. For example, MGTV activists would discuss extensively how the media could be used as a tool to win support while putting the group at risk of misrepresentation and thereby making enemies in different fields (e.g. politicians, casino workers, employers, reporters, and other social movement groups). Because of that, they deployed strategies aimed at reframing the media's arguments without discrediting them. Ryan, the leader of MGTV, told me in an interview with me about his tactics in handling the media:

I would like to think that I would be able to trick [the reporters] [...] I do my best to get around those [tricky questions], but sometimes I got tricked. Because of these trickeries, I prefer not to go on interviews in case I get quoted the wrong way [...] This is how I see it, bouncing between the Internet and the traditional media is a skill. People believe that the official media is credible, but they don't follow the news. How are we going to get their attention? We go to the Internet. We put pictures of us being interviewed on our online platform. That picture alone will do the trick. People will be like "Oh! you were on TV! You must be good at this." [...] Naturally, more people will go over our online content. There is the difference.

In comparison with Macau Voice activists, MGTV activists were more cautious in terms of their positioning in different fields. While strategic media framing could attract potential constituents and acquire greater legitimacy through the borrowing of symbolic capital by other groups (e.g. the power of mainstream media), these strategic moves could

potentially corrupt or contaminate the interests of grassroots if MGCV's goal was to become a more established or formalized organization through political cooptation (i.e. the incorporation of MGCV into the existing political structure).

#### *5.6.2 The Umbrella Movement and its impact on Macau Voice and MGCV*

The Umbrella Movement broke out in Hong Kong in September 2014. Although portrayed by Western media as a general democratic movement, protests were organized by a set of overlapping pro-democratic networks including Scholarism and Hong Kong Federation of Students and focused on the demand for free and fair elections (Hui and Lau 2015). The occupation of the city center by protesters lasted for almost three months, from September 26 to December 11, 2014. On September 29, protesters used umbrellas to defend against police tear gas, giving rise to the name of the movement. Although the Umbrella Movement received relatively positive reports from global media outlets based in America and Europe, the local media in Hong Kong and Macau largely constructed and presented a different perspective. While media in the English-speaking world generally framed the 79-day protest positively, as a call for democracy that challenged the tyranny of Beijing, much of the local media focused on the disturbances, such as noise, traffic congestion, and other everyday inconveniences, caused by the protest.

During my fieldwork, I found that actions organized by Macau Voice and public reactions toward the group were easily influenced by the ever-changing relations within and among these fields. For instance, when the Umbrella Movement broke out, members of Macau Voice were very quickly labeled as “troublemakers,” a radical shift from the comparatively positive public image they enjoyed soon after the 5.25 Protest in May of the same year. As social conflicts between protesters and businesses and residents added



up, discourses that condemned the movement began to accumulate. These dominant discourses criticized the movement by characterizing it as a party for young protesters to have fun at and/or a major social and economic disruption.

Due to the geographical proximity, cultural similarities, and shared colonial history of Hong Kong and Macau, negative reactions over time to this Hong Kong event inspired much negative response subsequently to oppositional politics in general in Macau. Influenced by dominant discourses that argued that oppositional action in Hong Kong was disruptive, problematic, and unrealistic, for many Macau residents the mere mention of protest or demonstration conjured up a vision of a gang of entitled, needy, self-centered youth. Consequently, when Macau Voice activists decided to carry through with a protest event that was scheduled in December 2014 in spite of popular confrontational discourses against oppositional politics, only about 200 people attended. One of Macau Voice's leaders told me that the Umbrella Movement directly caused a negative effect on the group's development. Indeed, when I attended the protest in December, I witnessed some members being yelled at by onlookers. Protestors were told to stay out of trouble and not to copy what happened in Hong Kong.

Because the network of leadership of Macau Voice was embedded in an assemblage of local organizations, individuals, and institutions that generally support the ideological argument under the aegis of the pro-democracy camp, the organization of collective action and the construction of themes by Macau Voice were often shaped by the importance of ideological coherence more than the practical need for expansion and consolidation. Many members of Macau Voice maintained an ideological allegiance to the pro-democratic camp. Although the goals of Macau Voice—such as fighting local

corruption—were not immediately discarded after the eruption of Umbrella Movement, these events made the formation of subsequent movements difficult and problematic.

When compared to Macau Voice, Umbrella Movement created fewer negative outcomes for MGVS. Still, leaders of MGVS were careful about the organization of protests during what they called “sensitive time.” For example, Ryan revealed to me that during that time, his position as the leader of MGVS interacted in unpredictable ways with his other position as a member of the closed social network of individuals who perceive themselves as pro-democratic. These seemingly compatible positions became contradictory and conflicting due to the Umbrella Movement, creating a symbolic association between pro-democracy demands and external agitators ungrounded in local, winnable struggles.

Personally, I was in a dilemma. If I didn’t show up in the protest [organized by the pro-democratic camp], then [my pro-democratic allies] would say that I was bought out. They would say things like (pause) the Chinese government brought (bought?) me out with their white terror repression; they would brand me as a betrayer who surrendered to the government. So I had to show up. But if I did show up...well, because the theme of the protest was to demand “democracy and universal suffrage” (pause) If I ever said those phrases, I would be done with my colleagues [at the casino]. See, [MGVS members] wouldn’t want to be associated with the troubling bunch. So I ended up not calling anyone [from MGVS to attend the protest], and I held a sign that had nothing to do with demanding universal suffrage. Turned out that it was the best solution.

As it is shown, the continual development of MGVS creates layers of discourses that need to be maintained in different fields over time. As the membership and support base continued to grow in size, MGVS was increasingly pressured to secure a master discourse to provide a structured coherence to support the accumulation of different discourses in the forms of demands, complaints, narratives, debates, and discussions. In order to sustain the development of MGVS, activists have had to work hard to select and

articulate discourses that correspond to (or at least do not contradict) the interests of allies and supporters in other fields. Because there were always marginal, irrelevant, or contradictory elements that attempted to destabilize the established goals and arguments of MGCV, over time it became necessary for leaders to manipulate content and knowledge to secure recognition of the boundaries that define MGCV. More specifically, MGCV leaders increasingly shifted away from overt articulations of pro-democratic demands in order to satisfy casino allies.

Although both Macau Voice and MGCV had achieved major successful mobilizations, the above examples pointed to the dangers that social movement groups faced when mobilizing and organizing movements on the ground. My argument here is not that both groups were somehow dupes of established groups. Rather, my goal is to shed light on the politics, conflicts, and dynamics within the organizations of social movement groups and the complex relationships between oppositional movements and existing political system.

### *5.7 Conclusion*

In Macau, social movement groups produce mobilizing discourses to defend the interests of those they represent and to win positions against other competing discourses in the struggles for symbolic power. While the advent of mobilizing discourses often traces its origin to popular discontent arising from injustice or inequality at the grassroots, the maintenance of membership and the development of collective identity necessitate the production of mobilizing discourses as a form of political representation. As political representations, mobilizing discourses share some characteristics with authorized discourses. For example, they both serve the purpose of obtaining support from the

greatest possible number of citizens. Furthermore, both forms of discourses attain authority and legitimacy through the authority and legitimacy of those who propagate them (Bourdieu 2003).

Like politicians and spokespeople of transnational casinos, social movement leaders obtain the language of authority by winning positions in the struggle of symbolic power in fields that serve to maintain and reproduce the social structure. To do so, activists have to deploy tactics that aim to garner symbolic power by figuring out, connecting, and marking boundaries in multiple fields that consist of various positions and interests. Due to the complexity and dynamics of the fields in which activists find themselves, not all tactics work to balance these interests or to secure gains in the fight for greater equality. Moreover, the same tactics that are effective at a given moment can lead to negative outcomes at another moment given broader social transformations. For example, I have shown the effect of the Umbrella Movement in Hong Kong on the context of social activism in Macau and how the evolution of that movement and its symbolic associations transformed the symbolic field and the tactics of Macau's social movement groups.

Furthermore, during the struggle for symbolic power, activists can also (intentionally or unintentionally) reinforce certain aspects of the power structure established by dominant social groups for the purpose of their own interests or the interests of others who occupy common or opposing positions. For example, when movement groups borrow the symbolic power possessed by politicians or global media outlets in the political or media fields to further their goals, they inevitably reproduce the dominant symbolic order that serves the interests of the powerful. But similar to the

reappropriation of authorized discourses by ordinary people at the micro-level of everyday lives (as illustrated in Chapter 4), global discourse of democracy and labor rights could at times be adapted and repurposed by local activists. With grassroots ingenuity and innovation, local actors could mold and use authorized discourse for focused local gains. Successful mobilizing discourses, therefore, need to pass somewhere between dominant authorized discourses and fragmented everyday discourses, or perhaps offset the tendencies of one against the other, giving structure to everyday fluidity by strategically selecting and borrowing the symbols through which the structure owes its power to.

## CHAPTER 6. CONCLUSION

### 6.1 *Division of the Symbolic Structure*

This dissertation has traced the formation of powerful discourses to understand different levels of symbolic production as they are situated within the larger symbolic structure of power. Drawing from the theoretical framework of Henri Lefebvre and the theoretical concepts of Pierre Bourdieu, I have mapped the interaction among everyday, mobilizing, and authorized discourses to show how symbolic products influence individual consciousness, collective action, and authorized practices in the midst of urban transformation.

At the micro-level, everyday discourse has given rise to local identity through the vernacular expression of nostalgia and desire. On one hand, people in Macau appropriate the symbolic tool of colonial nostalgia in order to hold on to a specific version of the city represented by the cultural images produced by the Portuguese Macau government. On the other hand, the spread of global capitalism has transfigured the subjectivity of individuals. Embedded in the nascent development of consumerism enabled by economic development and urban transformation, people gradually acquire the universalistic judgment about lifestyles, practices, and visions that distinguish them and others as more or less worthy subjects in the context of economic globalization. Though these two positions are rooted in the symbolic structure produced by dominant groups—namely, the Portuguese colonial government and transnational corporations—ordinary people tailor and repurpose them to advance their own symbolic and material interests *through* the reproduction of particular aspects of the dominant culture. For example, by presenting colonial Macau as authentic, local residents produce social resistance to the urban

redevelopment process led by transnational corporations—the omnipresence of transnational casinos and the increasing commodification of public urban spaces. Yet by appropriating the global discourse of competitiveness, people question and challenge the legitimacy of the Chinese state. As such, everyday discourse reinforces and reworks various aspects of the dominant culture at the same time.

At the meso-level, social movements groups formulate mobilizing discourse in the struggles over their own interests and/or those they represent. Contrary to popular myth, mobilizing discourse, which includes arguments and debates used in protests and other kinds of collective action, does not directly reflect the interests or voices of marginalized social groups. In Macau, leaders of social movements groups often occupy interlocking positions in multiple fields (e.g. politics, social activism, media, academia). As such, they are embedded in a number of powerful *and* marginalized networks that serve divergent, overlapping, and conflicting interests. These networks, which consist of intricate material and symbolic relationships, can grow and be reconfigured over time, depending on existing paths and contingencies. It is through the dynamic negotiation among differentiated positions that embody various sets of interests that mobilizing discourse comes to create counterculture and facilitate social change while simultaneously being incorporated into and co-opted by dominant culture.

At the macro-level, powerful elites produce authorized discourses to present their worldviews and values as universal. The process of producing authorized discourses, however, is neither smooth nor unidirectional. Different authoritative groups not only seek to impose their visions on ordinary people in order to maintain and further their interests, but more importantly, they fiercely compete with each other to attain legitimacy

and thereby claim dominance. Given Macau's unique historical and geopolitical context as well as the dominance of transnational corporations in the local economy, the state and market do not seamlessly collaborate with one another to bolster economic growth or promulgate homogeneous ideologies. For instance, burdened by its problematic relationship with the West, the Chinese state struggles to achieve political legitimacy in Macau by pushing economic development without promoting Western ideologies. To further complicate the issue, the symbolic products that were created by Portuguese colonialism (e.g. the preservation of Portuguese architecture and historical accounts of colonialism) have now reified and been converted into local identities that continue to threaten the legitimacy of the Chinese state.

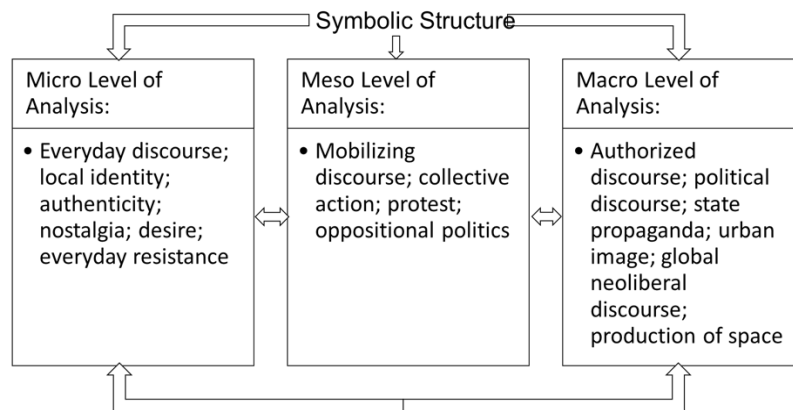


Figure 6.1 Symbolic Structure

As indicated in Figure 6.1, my overall argument asserts that discourses should be conceptualized as a symbolic structure—one that provides the organization and transformation of power relations. The conception of *culture as a structure* will help us better analyze the ways that different symbolic instruments are embedded in the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels of the society. Traditionally, sociologists contrast “structure” to “culture.” While structure is seen as a set of rigid and material patterns that shape the



social world, culture is regarded as a set of fluid and symbolic processes derived from structure and therefore secondary to it (Sewell 1992). The conception of symbolic structure, therefore, suggests that culture is not simply symbolic or mental processes that are contained within or wholly produced by structure. As part of the social structure, culture creates, confirms, and sustains economic and political systems. Rather than understanding cultural productions as either reflecting the dominant structure or actively challenging it (e.g. the Marxist perspective), this approach *simultaneously* addresses these seemingly separate processes of cultural production as two sides of the same coin. By organizing cultural productions within each level of the symbolic structure, we can uncover the nuances of culture as doubly determined by *structured structure* and *structuring structure* without dismissing the ways that existing and emerging power relations influence the continuous making and remaking of culture. In other words, this approach can shed light on how the interactions within and among different levels of symbolic production constitute the reproduction of and resistance to social domination as a whole, thereby echoing Lefebvre and Bourdieu's mutual assertion about a more robust understanding of social and cultural practices as forces that both restrict and enable human agency.

More specifically, I have shown that local culture in the forms of personal and localized practices can both generate oppositional politics and serve as marketing tools for the expansion of economic development in Macau. Local cultural practices and everyday lived experiences do not automatically become oppositional politics nor did they exactly reproduce capitalist ideals promoted by those in power. Rather, local culture borrows, reinterprets, reconstructs, and gradually transform dominant culture. Certain

aspects of local culture then transcend into the meso-level of social movement organization and mobilization to generate counter-hegemonic culture. Although instruments of power such as authorized discourses impose boundaries of contention, they do not prevent it from happening. No doubt, people and their meaning-making processes are constrained by the production of authorized discourses, but people are not “captive audience” or “cultural dupes.” They negotiate social control and express dissent and dissatisfaction creatively and artfully. The production of everyday and mobilizing discourses may not make Macau a more just and equal society, but people have experienced and will continue to wage their struggles through the expression and production of them. And there is an intrinsic value in these stories and experiences that constitute a social process.

## *6.2 Scope and Delimitations*

Exploratory in nature, this dissertation aims to shed light on the link between political economic change and local cultural practices in Macau. Although I orient my ethnographic observation in theoretical terms, this dissertation does not seek to use the case of Macau to make generalized theoretical claims. I have used sociological theory as a tool for analysis rather than for prediction or generalization. While Lefebvre’s urban theory provides me with the basis for understanding global capitalist urbanization processes, Bourdieu’s theory on culture provides a more nuanced understanding with which to interpret the ethnographic accounts I witnessed in the field.

Above all, this dissertation points to the doubly determined nature of culture as both an instrument of power and a structuring force that facilitates social change. The most important goal of this dissertation, then, is to reveal some of the ways in which

culture organizes and is organized in the society of Macau amidst the backdrop of rapid economic change. As a field of production and a product at the same time, culture is dynamic and always shifting—an unstable “-scape” that embodies various processes and outcomes (Appadurai 1996). Hence, culture and the extent to which it interacts with power relations and taken-for-granted social practices cannot be fully comprehended merely by studying cultural products. As a form of cultural product, public discourse (similar to literature, movies, or artwork) reflects only an aspect of the myriad cultural productions. My analysis of discourse represents a window into the larger working of culture with relations to power as they play out in Macau.

### *6.3 Agency in a Globalized World*

Since the struggles over symbolic power via the construction and maintenance of effective discourses involve the production, transmission, and transfusion of cultural meanings that provide appropriate frames and positions for social agents who occupy multiple and sometimes overlapping sub-fields (e.g. fields of social activism, politics, everyday life) structured by the larger field of power relations, social change does not transpire in the field of local culture separate from or innocent of hegemonic power relations. In Macau, local culture simultaneously contains both hegemonic and counter-hegemonic frames and arguments. Social change occurs dialectically when agents negotiate their specific sets of economic, political, and ideological interests within the sub-fields they find themselves in by choosing from the reservoir of possible cultural symbols and thereby reproducing part of culture as structure, while repurposing and

tailoring them to create new social practices in pursuit of what they deem desirable and valuable.

Within the larger structure of power, inequality is reinforced via the mechanism of social domination in different dimensions of the society: economic, political, and cultural. Today, powerful social elites have become ever-more dominant through the processes of globalization. Specifically, the transnational capitalist class has extended and consolidated its interests through the widening of transnational connections (Robinson and Harris 2000; Sklair 2000; Robinson 2004; Murray and Scott 2012; Shoup 2015). Propelled by neoliberal ideology, which promotes open and unregulated markets, ordinary workers are increasingly pressured to become globally competitive by accepting longer work hours with less job security (Harvey 2011). Under these globalizing processes, it is no surprise that our world has become more unequal and unstable. While the critical studies of urban scholars have built a substantial foundation for research on emerging power relations in cities within the context of an increasingly globalized world, these studies also tend to put a strong focus on the economic and political dimensions of global capitalist urbanization (Jessop 2000; Brenner and Theodore 2002; Keil 2002; Sassen 2002; Hsu 2011; Dupont 2011). This dissertation project, therefore, reflects my effort to put culture at the center of critical scholarship that seeks to explore the effects of globalization related to issues of structure and agency in the urban setting. Precisely how do less powerful social groups relate to the structure of power under globalization? When and how do ordinary people at the local level challenge the systems of oppression at the global level? What is the role of agency and how do we know when and where to look for

it? These should be among the important questions that contemporary critical scholars ask going forward.

As global capitalism continues to spread, transnational elites will have to rely on the use of symbolic power to rationalize and justify their domination at the global scale. For example, transnational corporations necessarily make use of the symbolic structure created by global neoliberalism, which glorifies economic development and promotes consumerist consciousness among individuals to serve corporate interests. In the context of globalization, a framework that traces cultural production in the structuring of social domination will help uncover the source and direction of oppression and inequality. If culture is one of the few weapons the weak possess, then we must pay close attention to the micro- and meso-processes whereby ordinary people at the local level reinterpret and mobilize the dominant culture to create opportunities for social change.

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