

“McSoundscape” – A Soundscape Project to Represent The Spatial Identity of McDonald Restaurants In Hong Kong

Ms Terrie M. C. CHEUNG, MA.

Visual Culture Studies, Department of CRS, Chinese University of Hong Kong

website: <http://www.cuhk.edu.hk>

e-mail: terriecheung@yahoo.com.hk

Mr Brian S. H. KWOK, MA.

School of Design, Hong Kong Polytechnic University

website: <http://www.sd.polyu.edu.hk>

e-mail: sdbriank@polyu.edu.hk

Abstract

The word “McSoundscape” refers to the Soundscape recorded from the interior space of McDonald restaurants in Hong Kong. Soundscape is the major medium of research and creation in this project, which allows audience to investigate the details of the surrounding environment, the actual activities, and all aspects of lived experience in our city space while making them a journey to the space of McDonalds.

Through Soundscape, our audience can explore the space for themselves by an acoustic approach, get a realization that is detached away from the routine life in reality, and examine how the users of Hong Kong McDonalds have actively performed their sense of locality through some creative tactics. The goal is to demonstrate how the commonly practiced appropriation of space, as a visual spectacle in Hong Kong, could re-articulate and govern the changing identities, characteristics and meanings of our social space temporarily and transitorily.

Research materials and sound data from McDonalds have been re-structured and visualized in the form of Information Design. Graphical representation of the data in those interface designs may allow us to discover any patterns or correlations between those different activities, which could otherwise be hidden or neglected in the forms of real-life photo, video or text.

Digital media offers us the chance to visit a particular space/site and to run through the space without physically being there. The technology helps to express and re-present the space of McDonalds in Hong Kong and further connect such space virtually with anybody from the world through the World Wide Web.

“McSoundscape” has been selected to exhibit in Japan during the recent Dislocate 08 Exhibition in Yokohama, Japan on September, 2008. <http://www.dis-locate.net>

(1) Introduction

Space appropriation is a very common practice in Hong Kong. When we go to the Central and Causeway Bay on Sunday, we can easily find many Filipino domestic workers who are actually camping on the street and doing all kinds of activities that they would have otherwise done at home. Many public spaces or even some privately-owned public spaces have been transformed into some sort of semi-private spaces temporarily by the users. The characteristic and identity of space is always temporarily shiftable in many places in Hong Kong. When people appropriate the space, it actually exhibits people's cultural resistance against some unfavorable rules or some customs of the place in a clever and innovative way. It sometimes also helps to unfold the social problems behind such phenomenon, for instance, as in the above case, there could be a severe lack of private space and entertainment areas for all the Filipino domestic workers in Hong Kong.

Since Apple Daily covered the story about the emergence of the "McRefugees" and "McGamers" phenomenon in Hong Kong (2007-04-30), a brand new spectacle has been illustrated in front of us in Hong Kong. And this project aims at examining how such new phenomenon of space appropriation at McDonalds represents the practical re-presentations of space in Hong Kong, in the form of a new media interactive project for the World Wide Web.

(2) Rationale & Objectives of the Project

2.1) To illustrate on how the McDonald restaurants, as an example, have been appropriated by the users for their private or even personal use and purposes;

2.2) To identify, categorize and analyze the practical strategies and powerful tactics (as forms of cultural resistance) of Hong Kong citizens over the daily use of space in Hong Kong and further identify how exactly Hong Kong people have the ability to change or even "lived" the meanings and identity of the social space, even in a temporarily and transitory manner;

2.3) To demonstrate how a cultural issue could be utilized as both a process of ethnographic research as well as the final output of a new media and design project itself through the experimental art of Soundscape;

2.4) To grant the novelty of treating visual culture in a different sense – through our acoustic sense instead of the visual sense in the development process, but at the same time deliver and display the final outcome by visual formats such as an information design and interface of an interactive website;

2.5) As a supporting source of information for other related research or practical projects in areas such as the interior design, information design, public space research and development, or even for the overall urban space design and planning;

(3) Conceptual Framework

The space in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, when you browse around no matter the city centre or some peripheral regions, the architectures of many buildings and shops are almost the same and are very similar to those from foreign countries. We can no longer perceive any obvious identity of our cityscape. This is due to the highly standardization and homogenization of needs and consumption patterns in the contemporary industrialized world where there is a kind of “hollowing” of places everywhere, especially under the influence of globalization (Marc Auge, 1995:6). Marc Auge use the term “non-places” to delineate places where there is a lack of personalities and special characteristics.

“If a place can be defined as relational, historical and concerned with identity, then a space which cannot be defined as relational, or historical, or concerned with identity will be a non-place” (Auge, 1995:77-78).

By living under Auge’s concept of “non-places” in the contemporary state of “supermodernity”, many places in Hong Kong are actually being eliminated with any historical meanings, and we are, in fact, left with no impressions or memories about the characteristics of the places anymore. Our emphasis on mobility in the society is another reason for the rise of “non-places” because the frequent traveling has transformed many places into “eroded” places which have been seen by many as merely passages to somewhere else, which neither can give us any impressions nor memories.

McDonaldization

Same as the idea of “non-places”, McDonaldization has been promoted due to the high priority of mobility among urban citizens in the modern world. McDonaldization is “the process by which the principles of the fast-food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of the American society as well as the rest of the world” (Ritzer 2001: 162). Due to the growth of globalization, McDonald has spread its chains to many other Asian countries, which allow them to bring with the model of McDonaldization into Asia as well. Fast-eating has been a growing trend in our lives of a modern city such as Hong Kong because we all emphasis the importance of mobility, efficiency, expectancy in quality, convenience, etc. According to George Ritzer (2001), such model depends on its characteristics as efficiency, calculability, predictability, control, as well as the substitution of non-human for human technology. These are all based on the ideology of rationality, through which the whole process of the food delivery and services at McDonald should all be highly rationalized.

The space of Hong Kong’s McDonalds as “non-places”?

Following the wide spread of globalization, many places with gentrification nature or characteristics are exported to other countries and being globalized in the rest of the world, which encourage some “world culture” as a result. McDonald, as a huge fast food chain from the United States, has demonstrated as a significant example of how the US culture has been exported worldwide. Since the business model of McDonald is highly standardized, which is also the major reason for their success financially, customers going to the McDonald in Paris would not feel any difference from the one they visit in the US, because the environment is very similar, the food is highly expectable and standardized, the staffs are trained with the similar scripts and rules to follow, etc. Basically, there are very little local color and sense of local identity in the interior environment of McDonalds everywhere, in order words, there is a lacking sense of place.

However, some may argue that McDonald’s identity has been constructed through the illusion of fun, which was promoted mainly by its enormous commercials (Douglas Kellner, 2003:39). It is because McDonald made used of themes and images throughout those commercials, such as family or youngsters’ gatherings, which further promotes such symbolic meanings for the food as well as the environment. Such collective experience of happiness was further combined with the American

culture while the McDonald restaurants were being imported into Hong Kong. Nevertheless, such projection of a fun image is nothing but JUST AN ILLUSION through which some of the target customers, especially the children, have equated with the identity of McDonald. They attracted customers by many collections of cartoon characters as gifts, the clown image of “Uncle McDonald” (name of Ronald McDonald in Hong Kong) as the avatar to welcome customers, some colorful interiors and furniture, etc. All these help to remind children of the atmosphere of fun and happiness, or even mimic the look of some playgrounds, instead of a conventional restaurants or café.

McDonaldization strives to control customers in every ways (such as queuing up for purchase, the range of food choice to be made, etc) and ignore their particular needs and desire, so as to maximum the level of efficiency and their profits. However, customers nowadays are NOT highly predictable and they always have their different individual demands and needs towards the producers. There is actually a vast variety in the type of customers who eat in the McDonaldized fast-food restaurants.⁶ Therefore, we have to consider the fact that there is a huge variation on the type of consumers at McDonald who has their own needs and are highly “unmanageable” (Ritzer and Oviaia, 2000:41), needless to say customers from different cultures are showing different kinds of behaviors.

Temporary appropriation of space and concept of “Lived Space”

In Hong Kong, a lot of space appropriation had created some visual spectacles in the society. The boundary between public and private can be blurred or even collapse due to such invasion of the private properties. Originally, our private space of home has always been established in the interior environment. Since space appropriation occurs, some of us used the exterior public space for some private activities and the result is the collapse of distinction between interior and exterior spaces.

As far as the identity of place is concerned, the space of Hong Kong’s McDonald is NOT one of the typical extreme as a non-place region. Nevertheless, these different roles of customers at McDonald are often temporary and could overlap with each other. In fact, space in Hong Kong has become a “renegotiable commodity” as there are a lot of intense temporary spatial appropriations and some of which are even for commercial usage (Leach, 2005:174). For instance, a great example Leach has given was the fact that thousands of Filipino girls have transformed the privately-owned public space in the open ground floor of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Bank in the Central District into a private space which is just like “a collective living room” on every Sunday. Similarly, today we spend an ever-increasing proportion of our time dealing with private matters in some open public space, which gradually affects our public and private experience collectively. In fact, the distinction between private and public sphere has gradually broken down, and the relationship between them is becoming a non-fixed, highly dynamic and mobile one in Hong Kong. In order to differentiate the characteristics of a space from the others, Leach has used Judith Butler’s notion of “performativity” to explain the way people can “act out” the identity of space (Leach, 2005: 174-176). Instead of being given with a certain identity or characteristics, a space has gained its identity through the process by which the participants engaged themselves with different kinds of performance and activities and further established a commonly recognizable identity of the particular space.

In fact, such concept is very similar to Henri Lefebvre’s concept of “Lived Space”, which actually makes the major focus and argument on the case study of this research project. In his book “The Production of Space”, Lefebvre (1991) had identified three different concepts for the production of social space: the first one is “Representation of Space” (or Conceived Space), which is the space being identified and conceived by our urbanists and planners as some dominant and controllable space in the society. It is “revealed through the deciphering of its space” (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). The

⁶ Ritzer and Oviaia (2000) have pointed out that there is actually a vast variety in the type of customers who eat in McDonaldized fast-food restaurants. It includes consumer as “chooser, communicator, explorer, identity-seeker, hedonist or artist, victim, rebel, activist, and citizen. For more details, see George Ritzer and Seth Oviaia, 2000, p40-44.

second one is called “Spatial Practices” (or Perceived Space) which “embodies a close association, within perceived space, between daily reality (daily routine) and urban reality (the routes and networks which link up the places set aside for work, ‘private’ life and leisure) (Lefebvre, 1991: 38). This is the way by which the space is being appropriated and actually being used in our everyday lives. The third one is called “Representational Spaces” (or Lived Space), which defines space as something “directly lived through its associated images and symbols, and hence the space of ‘inhabitants’ and ‘users’... (Lefebvre, 1991: 39). It is the practical and directly experienced social space, and transformation of space take place through bodily lived experience of some daily activities, which is sometimes even against the original conceived space. These experiences and practices are believed to be able to transform the characteristic and identity of our own social space. In fact, there are many different kinds of practical resistance in our everyday lives which reveal to us on how people actually do not consent to dominance in space.

Therefore, the concept of “Representational Spaces” (or Lived Space) is actually the focus of this project in the sense that the local people have been resisting to the original design of the conceived space by practically experiencing a totally different kind of daily activities and thus further “lived” and re-construct their own spatial identity and giving new meanings and characteristics to the space at the McDonald restaurants in Hong Kong. Nevertheless, if McDonald in Hong Kong is not on the extreme of being a hollowing non-place, then, what is the actual kind of spatial identity that Hong Kong McGoers are trying to “live” and “experience” in their real daily-life practice?

(4) Research Problems

Since a local Hong Kong newspaper, the Apple Daily, covered the story about the emergence of the “McRefugees” and “McGamers” phenomenon in Hong Kong (2007-04-30), a brand new spectacle has been illustrated in front of us in Hong Kong. It actually shows just one of the evidence of space appropriations in Hong Kong. It is an interesting issue to look at how the Hong Kong customers utilize the space in McDonald because it could be a certain kind of local resistance to the giant corporation of McDonald and its culture of McDonaldization. “**McRefugees**” refers to the term which was imported from Japan to Hong Kong now, as these people are being called “McRefugees” after McDonald’s, the fast food chain, providing many of them with their homes. Another term “**McGamers**” could be defined as people who play wireless handheld games at McDonald. They are usually young people playing online games together with their PSP or NDS consoles for overnight at McDonald and such phenomenon is unique in Hong Kong. Both of these new terms have demonstrated a certain kind of new social and structural transformations which has been taking place tranquilly under the Hong Kong cultural ecology. Social and cultural changes can affect the way we distinguish between the use of private space and public space. The temporary shift in the use of these spaces can represent some new forms of cultural practice in the society.

The major theme of this project is to examine how such new phenomenon of “McRefugees”, “McGamers” as well as many other groups of people who appropriate the space at McDonalds represents the modern way of space consumption and re-presentation of spatial identity in Hong Kong. When people go to McDonalds to do all kinds of stuff and appropriate the space, it actually exhibits people’s cultural resistance to some unfavorable rules and customs of the place in a clever and innovative way – as they use their “practical knowledge” to “twist” the use of space and adapt themselves to the environment comfortably, which is nevertheless against the big corporation’s rules.

This research-based new media project tries to demonstrate the followings aspects:

4.1) As a research-based new media artwork, the final output aims at illustrating the multiple, temporary and transitory characteristics regarding to its meaning and identity of space for McDonalds in Hong Kong.

4.2) It also shows the way such distinction between private and public sphere has gradually broken down, and the relationship between them is becoming a non-fixed, highly dynamic and mobile one in Hong Kong.

4.3) By questioning the notions of “non-places” through the medium of Soundscape, we can also make the audience a journey to the ACTUAL space of McDonalds in Hong Kong and explore their transient connections and communications among each other and within the space by allowing the audience to listen to the ACTUAL process of spatial appropriation themselves. Therefore, people listening to the soundscape data on the website can examine themselves on how the social space has been practically “lived” and “experienced” by the users of McDonalds.

(5) Significance of the Project

The website itself can serve the communities and Hong Kong as a whole by illustrating the current cultural phenomenon of space appropriation through an interactive new media platform. This is a total merge between the new media artform and the research data of a significant cultural issue, and the general public can get to know more about our city and such cultural phenomenon in a much easier and accessible way, through the popular platform of the World Wide Web. Besides, the research findings and report on the website could also provide an alternative and supplementary source of information for the mainstream mass media such as newspapers and magazines.

Why using Soundscape for this project?

Digital media allow us to visit a particular space/site and to run through the space without physically being there. It compressed the time and space in such a manner that it helps us to revisit ourselves and our actual daily experiences. Soundscape is the perfect choice of medium for this project, both as a research method and as an artform itself, because it can give us an idea of the exact kind of activities and movements of the space (if there is any) and therefore provide us directly the kind of spatial meaning that has been practically “lived”, experienced and transformed by the people at McDonalds.

Through Soundscape, the following goals are likely to be achieved:

5.1) To investigate the surrounding environment in details and take the viewers on a journey through the actual Hong Kong city’s space by Soundscape, which is the major documenting tool in the project;

5.2) As an interface for us to understand and explore on the cultural phenomenon behind those activities and movements;

5.3) To unwrap the daily activities and the use and production of space through a less commonly used and refreshing sense – acoustic, instead of our dominating sense of the visual, which allows a new and innovative experience of these immediate spaces;

5.4) To allow re-discovery and re-examination of OUR OWN ways of living by inviting each one of us to listen up carefully the sounds of the others’ everyday activities and consuming behaviors, while allowing us to reflect on our own experience in return.

(6) Research Methodologies

6.1) Qualitative Research – Soundscape Recording

The major part of this research project is to study and record some identifiable Soundscape data from some selected McDonald Restaurants in Hong Kong. The locations include places in the Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories and even some outlying Islands. The aim is to record any kinds

of movements and activities that can be found in the restaurants, including some environmental sounds, the verbal conversations between customers, McDonald staffs, people who appropriating the space, and any other types of activity that have been carried out inside the McDonald restaurants, and most of them can help to define the actual characteristics and identity of space at McDonalds in Hong Kong.

6.2) Qualitative Research – Ethnography Research, Interviews and Sound Recording

Another source of information mainly came from the sound files of a few verbal interviews conducted in some of the McDonalds restaurants. Interviews are recorded in the form of soundclip data, with both the customers from all ages and all walks of life, the McDonald staffs, and more importantly the people who appropriate the space in the McDonald restaurants. These interviews and observations could further help to identify the different kinds of space appropriations and for our understanding of the reasons and backgrounds behind these activities. However, the interviews would not be addressed as a separate categorization, since the major focus of this project is to let the participants to take the active role in experiencing and performing their actual everyday activities in the sound record, rather than concentrating on how they explain and defend on their behaviors or so. (Some data of the interview could be found in the form of text in *Appendix E*, while other interviews in the form of sound data could mostly be found under the categorization of “McRefugees” and “McGamers” on the website).

6.3) Qualitative Research – Ethnography Research, photo-taking & observations

Moreover, some supplementary source of information such as the field visit observations report (on *Appendix D*) and photo-taking of McDonald Restaurants were used to record some situations that the can hardly be presented or observed in the form of Soundscape. Although emphasis would not be placed on visual elements and the appearance of them would be minimal in the final outcome (the website), nevertheless, these images and other informative text, would also become part of the actual contents on the website and through out this analytical report, so as to supplement for the constraints of the Sound data.

(7) Observations & Findings

The following is a report on the research data from different sources:

7.1) From Literature Review

James L. Watson had also noticed such kind of space appropriation by secondary school students in Hong Kong, who often sit in McDonald for hours and treat it like a “youth club”. Instead of dining at McDonald, they come here for studying, gossiping, and picking over snacks. He also pointed out that there is a shift of target customers from those children of wealthy elites twenty years ago to the working-class people now, who are attracted to come to McDonald because of its low cost, convenience, and predictability.

Of course, it is not to say that customers from the other categories are all excluded, as it has been mentioned above that there is a vast diversity of customer types always. Nevertheless, it is a noticeable trend that the low-income class is now attracted to visit McDonald as more often than they do before. McDonald’s International says that the goal of the company is to “become as much a part of the local culture as possible.” (Watson, 2002:222-232). Instead of giving pressure to shorten or even limit the table time for customers to stay at McDonald, Ritzer (2004) pointed out that McDonald in Hong Kong is a more human setting and customers take it as a place for hanging out, especially for those teenage group, so that they feel it like “home.” (Watson, 1997:77-109).

7.2) From mass media (newspaper or magazines)

Since the fast food franchise McDonald has extend some of its stores into 24-hour operation in August 2006, the number of McDonald operating around the clock has now been increased to more than 60 stores, which account for almost one third of the total number of McDonald restaurants in Hong Kong. On 30 April 2007, the term “McRefugee” was imported from Japan into Hong Kong by a report from a local newspaper, the Apple Daily, which caught our attention both locally and internationally. Reporter has found more than 20 sleepers at the Cameron Road store at midnight and while some other customers are described as “McGamers” as they gather or meet randomly at McDonald and play PSP or NDS network games together. After that, some newspapers from the mainland China and Taiwan also give an account on such phenomenon.⁷



Photo from Apple Daily (蘋果日報), 2007-04-30

Caption translated: At 4am, there are a huge group of McRefugees at the corner of the Cameron Road Branch, as more than 20 people are actually sleeping in the restaurant.

Original caption in Chinese: (凌晨四時，麥難民重災區的尖沙嘴金馬倫道麥當勞分店的角落，約有二十多人在店內呼呼入睡。)

(For more photos and details from the Apple Daily on 2007 April 30, see Appendix B)

The original idea of McDonald to extend the opening hours to 24 hours is to adapt to the increasing demand of Hong Kong night owls after clubbing night, people with long working hours, or even people in night shift, who want to come and eat “breakfast”. Now, McDonald has now been filled with people who appropriate the space for their private use, such as playing wireless online games, sleeping or reading newspaper overnight. Some other people are even stuck at McDonald because of the lack of overnight transportation in some districts, which reflect the inadequacy of the current transportation services for the public.

7.3) From the Internet (Bloggers' opinion)

Generally speaking, McRefugees and McGamers seem quite commonly accepted by most bloggers, especially by those who also play games and appropriate the McDonald space themselves. Some of them have pointed out that such phenomenon of public sleepers has existed since a long time ago in the city, such as the “Airport Refugees”. They are encouraging each other to make best use of the 24-hour-operating “free space” by bringing as much of their personal belongings to McDonald as possible, so that they can make themselves like living at “home”. One of them even suggest to bring with the PSP handheld, MP3, electricity charger, newspaper, magazines, towels, tooth-brushes, clothing, backpack, etc. As long as the sleepers “do not disturb the other customers”, they feel that it is alright to take the advantage from large corporations like McDonald, through such a way that McDonald can fulfill part of their social responsibilities. (For details of bloggers' comments, see Appendix C)

⁷ They include the TVBS-N (2007-04-30, 2007-06-05) from Taiwan, China Times (2007-05-01) from mainland China, Lianhe Wanbao (2007-05-02) and Lianhe Zaobao (2007-05-02) from Singapore and Wen Wei Po (2007-05-23) from Hong Kong.

7.4) From participatory observations & field study

From the research data of participatory observations (details report on *Appendix D*) and sound recordings (on the website), we can conclude that many customers are giving the space of McDonalds some new and temporary identities which are listed as follows:

7.4.1) McDonald as free mobile office, workshops or tutorial rooms

- Commercial appropriation – McDonald almost functioned like the mobile office of broadband service promotion workers as well as salesperson of insurance companies;
- Some insurance or property salesmen even appropriate the space for selling their commercial products and services to their potential customers;
- Some customers discussed about their own financial plans or even sharing the information on the stock market;
- Some parents were giving private tutorials for their own children;
- Primary and Secondary students were doing homework together or holding some group discussions.

7.4.2) McDonald as free entertainment arena

- Some youngsters held a private birthday party of their own;
- It was very common and easy to find customers reading newspapers, magazines, books, etc;
- Some were attracted to the TV for the entertainment and news report;
- Others were listening to music that they brought with themselves;
- Customers came to meet at McDonald for social gatherings, private birthday party, family gatherings or even baby sitting;
- Different age-group and different types of customers treat McDonalds as some community centers, they include youngsters, Filipino domestic workers, middle-aged group, old-aged group, housewives, students, etc;
- Many McGamers were playing PSP and NDS games as connected groups or individually;
- A vast number of customers had brought with their own laptop computers, by which they would be able watch movies together in the public;
- A few could even get connected to internet through the free Wi-Fi services (although only 20 minutes free service for each time logging in.

7.4.3) McDonald as free shelter from rainy days, cold night or hot weather

- The poor and the low-income group came to get accommodation and slept overnight in order to save the rent;
- Other travelers came to get a temporary shelter while waiting for some transportation services;
- Some old aged people come to McDonald for sense of community and to spend their extra leisure time even at mid-night.

The following table (Table 1.0) shows the percentage of space appropriation observed during the six field research in 2007:

Number of Visit	Name of the Branch	Space Appropriation Percentage
1 st Visit: (11-12 Nov 2007)	Un Chau	48%
2 nd Visit: (12-13 Nov 2007)	Argyle	40%
	Cameron Road	22%
	Hillwood	78%
	Jordan Road	50%
	Un Chau	40%
3 rd Visit: (14 Nov 2007)	Un Chau	72%

4 th Visit: (16-17 Nov 2007)	Sai Yeung Choi	39%
	Sing Shing	25%
5 th Visit: (17 Nov 2007)	Sai Yeung Choi	25%
	Un Chau	65%
6 th Visit: (20 Nov 2007)	Un Chau	25%
Average percentage:		44%

Table 1.0, Percentage of space appropriation observed during the six field research in 2007. For details of information, see *Appendix D*.

The above data were obtained mainly by the method of participatory observations and they were further being quantified by calculating the average percentage. The final average percentage of space appropriation from all the six visits in 2007 is as high as 44%. It shows that the phenomenon is definitely reflecting some significant trends and changes in Hong Kong's social and cultural ecology. What could be concluded from these observations is that a few major types of activities were found among the Mc-Goers.

They have been taking advantage of the free service and space provision of McDonald and have identified this place temporarily as "efficient", "fun" as well as "safe and comfortable" respectively. Firstly, Mc-Goers who treat McDonald as their free mobile office identified it as an "efficient" place like their home office, or SOHO office, where they can deal with their small business efficiently. Since 24-hours McDonalds are easy to find in many places, their effectiveness and efficiency are improved by these highly mobile offices. Secondly, for those who treat McDonald as an entertainment arena such as McGamers, McDonald provides them with a sense of "fun" definitely. Young people hang out at McDonald and make it functions as a youth club, while the elderly also feel very comfortable and convenient to spend their leisure time here or meet here for social gatherings. Lastly, for McRefugees and other flaneurs, McDonald provides them with a sense of "safety and comfort" because it is a free sleeping place and good shelter against any weather condition outside, day and night. Most importantly, everything discussed above are all for free! All these are very similar elements or characteristics that our home can provide us. Thus, McDonald has given different types of Mc-Goers, at a diversity of age group, an identity of "home", regardless of its temporary and transitory nature.

7.5) From the interviews (with customers and working staffs)

During the field visits, seven short interviews were conducted with some customers, a McDonald staff, a McDonald Manager, as well as McRefugees. During the interviews, the McRefugees do not admit to their appropriation of space in McDonald. For example, the group of university students knows that it is inappropriate to hold a private Birthday party without following the arrangement of McDonald and pay for the service fee. However, they still say that it is okay, as long as they have bought some drinks with them. Even though they should know that it is considered as space appropriation, however, they persuade themselves that it would be alright, as long as they do not interfere with other customers or make too much inconveniency to the others. It shows the fact that many customers are quiet easy about everybody else's appropriation of the place. When being asked about their opinion towards McGamers and McRefugees, they do not hate either type of people in particular.

For the staff of McDonald, they basically are following the policy of tolerating such phenomenon. However, it was obvious that the staff, especially the managers can hardly endure the McRefugees who sleep around the place. This could be shown by the obvious tactic of blocking some gloomy areas during midnight after media reports. This is an interesting contrast to their level of tolerance towards McGamers, who actually occupy more space and create much noise and interruptions to the other customers than McRefugees. This could be explained by the fact that McDonald always target the young people as their major customers and attracting more youngsters to the restaurants actually

aligns with their basic policy and principle. Besides, McRefugees are usually the poorest and the middle age group who hardly have any purchasing power. Therefore, it is not difficult to understand the intension behind their behavior, although both of the types are appropriating the place in a different way. (For details of the information, see *Appendix E*)

(8) Analysis of the phenomenon

McRefugees and McGamers shared the same characteristics in the way that these customers have actually transformed the 24-hour-opening McDonald restaurants into a private bed room, private living room for gatherings, game room or entertaining room for group games, discussion room for group projects, students' study room for homework and tutorship, and some even treat it as the common room or dining room where people resolve their children's behavior problems or baby-sitting their children. These activities are actually in the opposite of McDonaldization because these McRefugees, McGamers, or even McStudents are no longer standardized and predictable customers. They do not confirm with McDonald's assumption that they should eat fast and leave immediately after dining. Other commercial appropriation of space has even transformed McDonald into some kind of mobile office. Such appropriation is especially against McDonald and McDonaldization because these activities are generating profits out of the space and service provided by McDonald. They are actually some irrational consequences to their around-the-clock policy. Under McDonaldization, it should be McDonald who always maximizes their profits by turning the customers into unpaid workers, such as making them to put the leftovers into the trash after dining.

In fact, space, as in our example, has become a commodity as well. In such process of spatial appropriation, space becomes transformable as well as renegotiable, even though it happens temporarily. All kinds of space appropriations actually are transforming McDonald's identity from the "illusion of fun" into some newly re-constructed "fun", "efficient", as well as "safe and comfortable" as discussed above. Private space has been transformed into semi-private space where people transformed the place into different functions temporarily and transitorily at different times. To conclude, they are making McDonald their temporary "Home" in a certain sense.

The emergence of the "McRefugees" and "McGamers" phenomenon actually illustrate to us a new spectacle in Hong Kong, which was promoted by the commercial world. As a symbol for globalization in economy, the golden arches of McDonald now become the mediator in reflecting such social phenomenon and social problem of poverty, the severe disparity between the rich and the poor, youth problem, as well as many other family problems. It also represents the fundamental changes in the social structure and consumer behavior. Such social phenomenon is actually an evidence of the overall hasty life in Hong Kong nowadays, including the long working hours, the social problem of homelessness, the high inflation rate, the inadequacy in transportation service in some district, the high rise rents, more contract and part-time jobs, irregular resting time, over-crowded living conditions, and most important to all, the vast gap between the rich and the poor.

(9) Scope of the Project

This project mainly combines of field visits & research on McDonalds located in the Hong Kong Island, Kowloon, the New Territories, as well as some of the outlying islands in Hong Kong. Although several field visits has been made in 2007 (see *Appendix C*), those data are just for the analysis part in this report. The data on the actual website comes from more field visits in 2008. During the period of time from 22 Jan 2008 to 20 March 2008, soundscape recording has been done for 21 different McDonald restaurants (see *Appendix A*) and more than 30 visits have been made with a total number of 44 final selected soundclip data being linked onto the website.

The following table shows the exact date and the name of the McDonald Restaurants that have been visited and studied for the purpose of soundscape data collection:

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
(Jan) 20	21	22	23	24	25	26
		Un Chau				

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THR	FRI	SAT
(Feb) 17	18	19	20	21	22	23
						Sai Yeung Choi / Sing Shing
24	25	26	27	28	29	(Mar)1
Sing Shing / Central / Connaught	Metropolis Plaza / Tin Ping / Uptown Plaza	Un Chau				
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Mui Woo / Cheung Chau / Connaught	Un Chau / Uptown Plaza / Tai Po Central / Tai Wo	Un Chau	Un Chau	Bonham Road / Hill / Causeway Bay Plaza II / Hennessy	Jordan / Un Chau	Sai Yeung Choi
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	Queen Road Central		Sun Chui / Shatin Racecourse / Un Chau			
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
				KCR Hung Hom Station		

Table 2.0, Visits and soundscape data collections have been done on the above date at different branches of the McDonald Restaurants in 2008. For a full list of these visited McDonald Restaurants and addresses, please refer to *Appendix A*.

(10) Format of the Project

The format of the final outcome of this research is an interactive website showing the identity of McDonald's space in Hong Kong through mainly soundscape data files plus the mixed materials of some others such as informative texts, tables, maps as well as some thumbnail photos. (URL: <http://www.mcsoundscape.com>).

All the findings of this research project are stored and displayed in the form of a website built basically by HTML with some additional techniques of database, xml and actionscripts. The front-end is composed of graphics built by using Adobe Flash and the goal is to create an interactive interface for users to control and browse among the data in a manner which allows multiple ways of accessing the same piece of data, which is the soundscape data file.

Multi-accessing of Information and Data

In the interactive website, there are several different ways to access the same piece of information and soundscape data file. The same data could be accessed through different tags as follows: (The details are visualized with sample screenshots in the next section called: "Project Outcome" below.)

10.1) Date and time using the **timeline navigation** on the **main** (timeline) screen;

10.2) Locations on the Hong Kong **map** screen (showing different districts in Hong Kong);

10.3) *Categorization based on the **nature and the type of activities** and displayed on the Hong Kong **map** screen; (i.e., the seven categories of “McStudents’ Study Room & Tutorial Room”, “McGamers’ Arcade Centre”, “Community Center/Playground”, “Business and Finance”, “McRefugees”, “Family Gatherings”, and “Other activities” respectively)

10.4) Categorizations based on the **nature and the type of activities** and displayed on the **weekly calendar** screen.

Color code (for the dots on website)	Categorizations	Descriptions
	Study Room & Tutorial Room	For Primary School students' Language class, Secondary School students' Mathematic class, Old-aged woman's English class, Primary School students under supervision of Father & Filipino Maid, etc.
	McGamers' Arcade Centre	For handheld network games such as PSP and NDS.
	Community Center / Playground	For Comics fans gatherings, Youth, Filipino Maid, Small Children, Middle-aged, Old-aged, Housewives, etc.
	Business & Finance	For Insurance Salesperson selling service to clients, McDonald's official promotional activities, Property Sales negotiating with clients, employers discussing business issues, Stock information sharing between old-aged women, etc.
	McRefugees	For those who sleep at McDonalds or others who hang around at McDonalds for the whole night.
	Family Gatherings	Parents & Children dinning while chatting, Old-aged couple discussing about financial situations, or other types of family member gatherings, etc.
	Other activities	As travelers' resting room to wait for the trains/ship schedule, Horse-racing fans' gathering place, tourists' rest place, coffee shops for off-hour gathering, etc.

Table 3.0, * Categorizations of the major types of users and their activities.

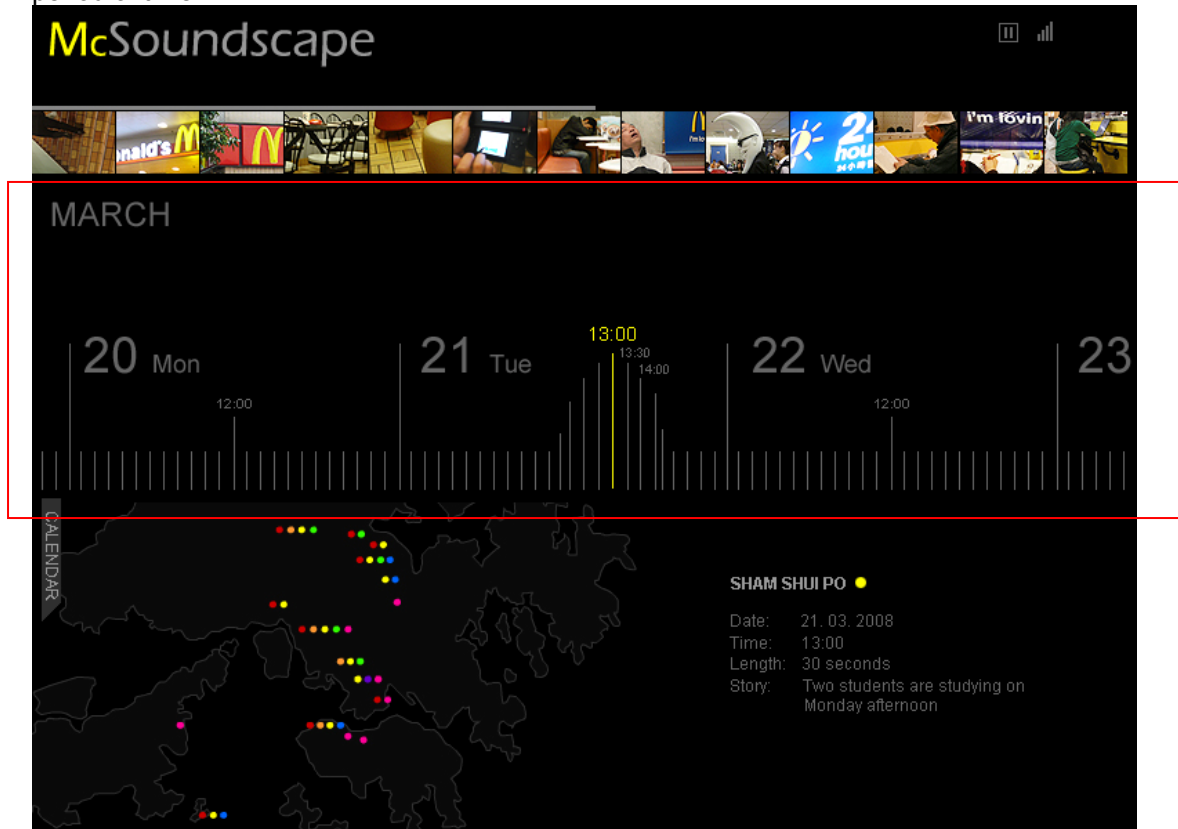
(11) Project Outcome

The followings are some screenshot samples showing a few major navigation steps in the final website.

11.1) Main screen > timeline navigation

Screenshot sample 1:

Users are welcome to drag and click on a specific time to call up a particular Soundscape file recorded at different McDonald restaurants in Hong Kong. Some detail information about the sound file will be shown on the lower right hand corner as it corresponds to the selection of the different period of time.

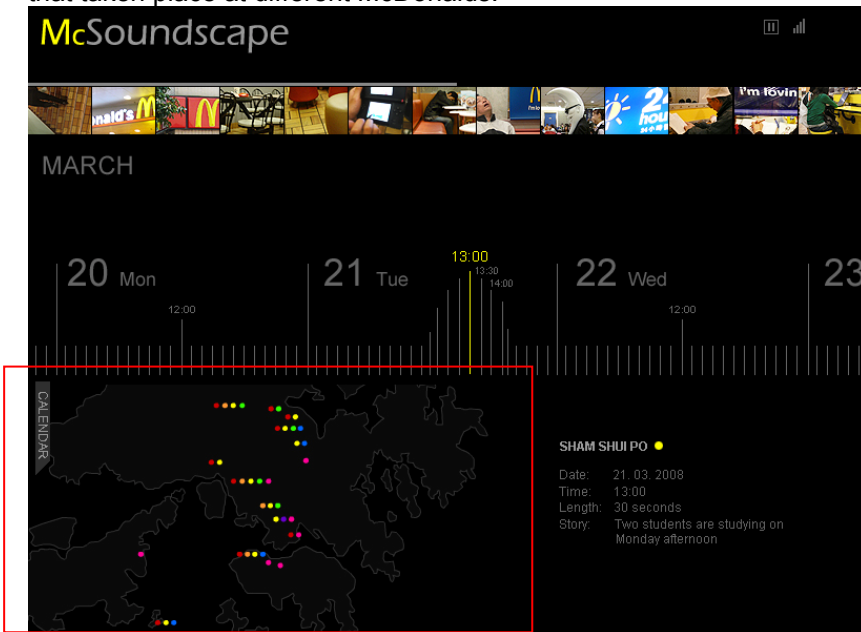


Screenshot sample 1

11.2) Main screen > map navigation

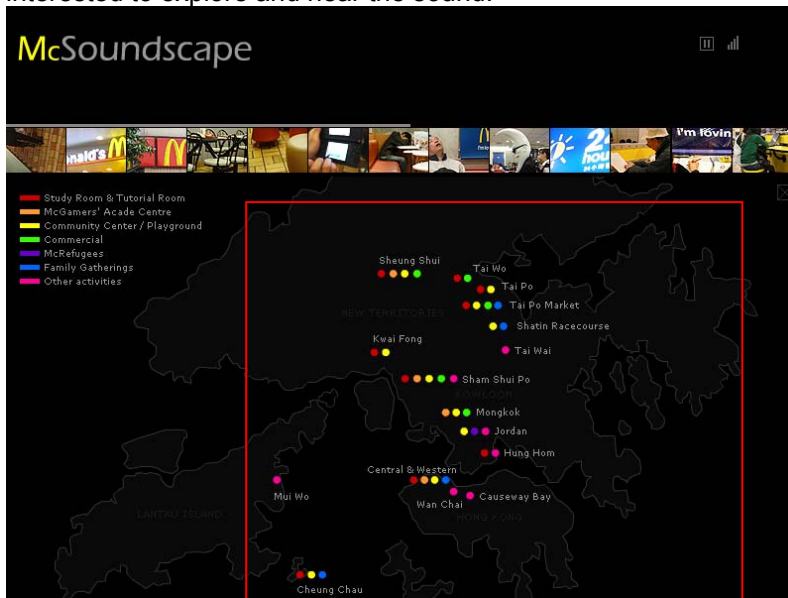
Screenshot sample 2a:

Users are able to access Soundscape (sound recording data files in the format of MP3) by clicking the dots on the map nearby where they live. Each color dot represents different categorization of activity that taken place at different McDonalds.



Screenshot sample 2b:

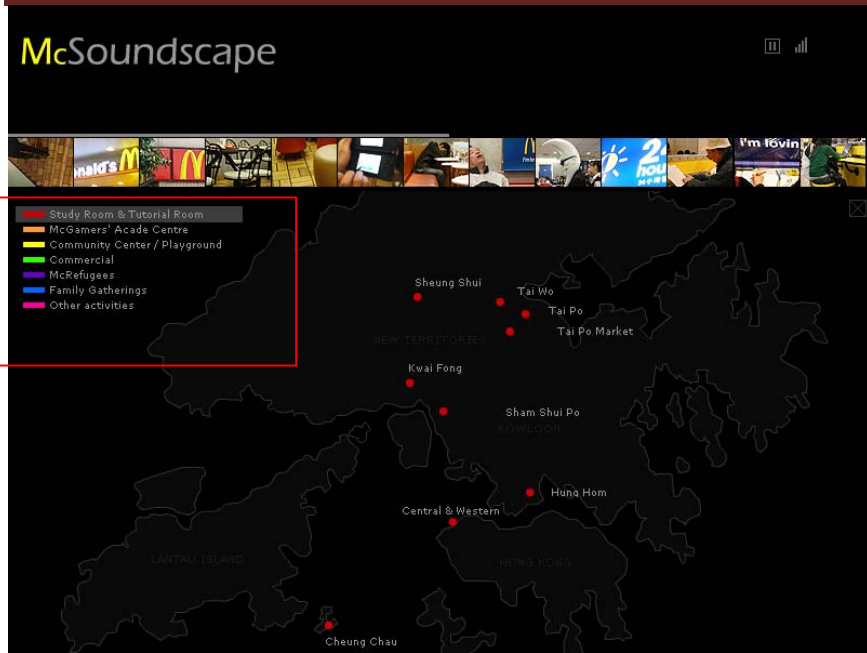
Once users click on the thumbnail of map which is showed on the previous screen, it brings users to the scaled-up version. Users can click on each colored dot in any specific locations where they are interested to explore and hear the sound.



Screenshot sample 2b

Screenshot sample 2c:

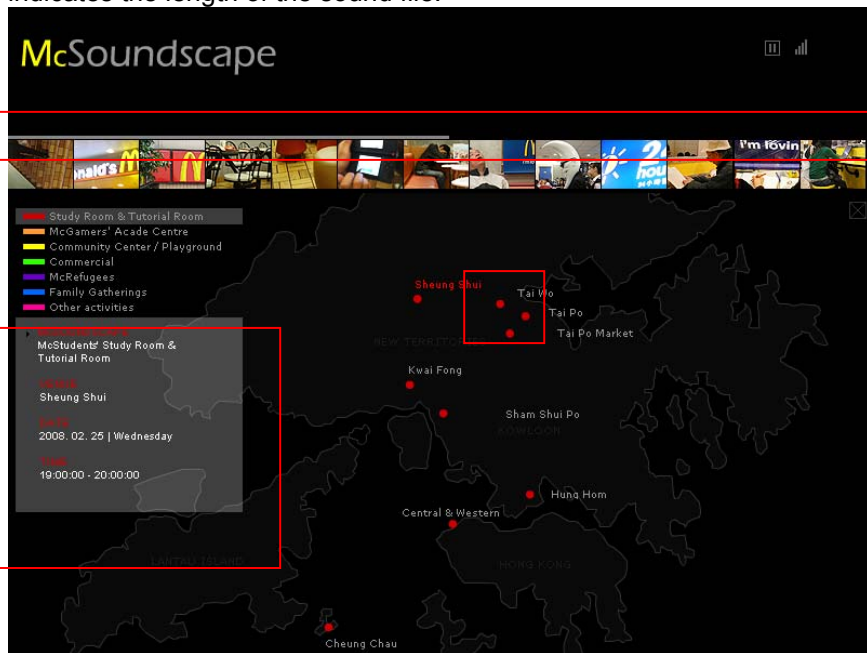
Users are able to show fewer dots to indicate a particular category (e.g., only the red colored dots below) on the map by clicking on them from the left-hand side column



Screenshot sample 2c

Screenshot sample 2d:

When the cursor comes over the dot, more detail information is being shown on the far left column, and Soundscape will be played automatically after pressed. The gray “sound-playing bar” on top indicates the length of the sound file.

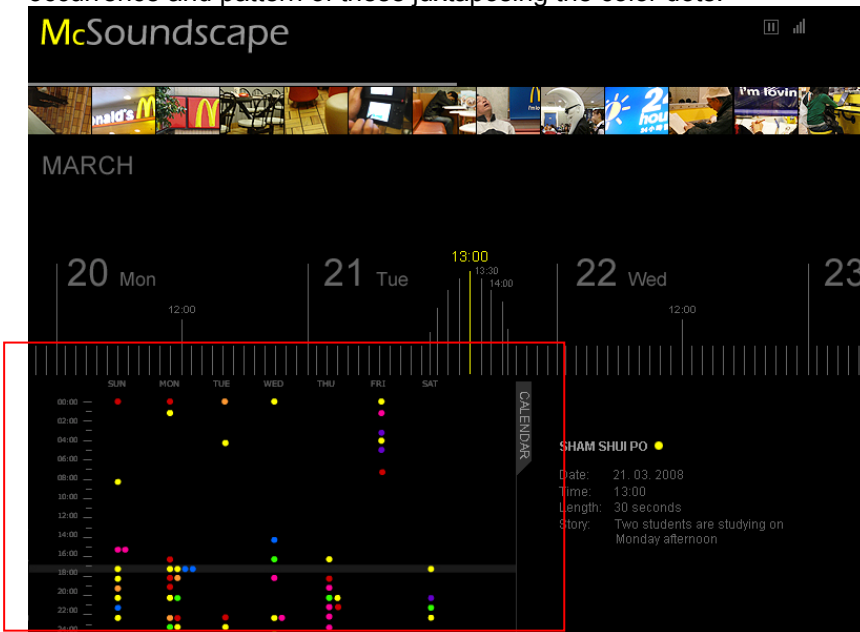


Screenshot sample 2d

11.3) Main screen > calendar navigation

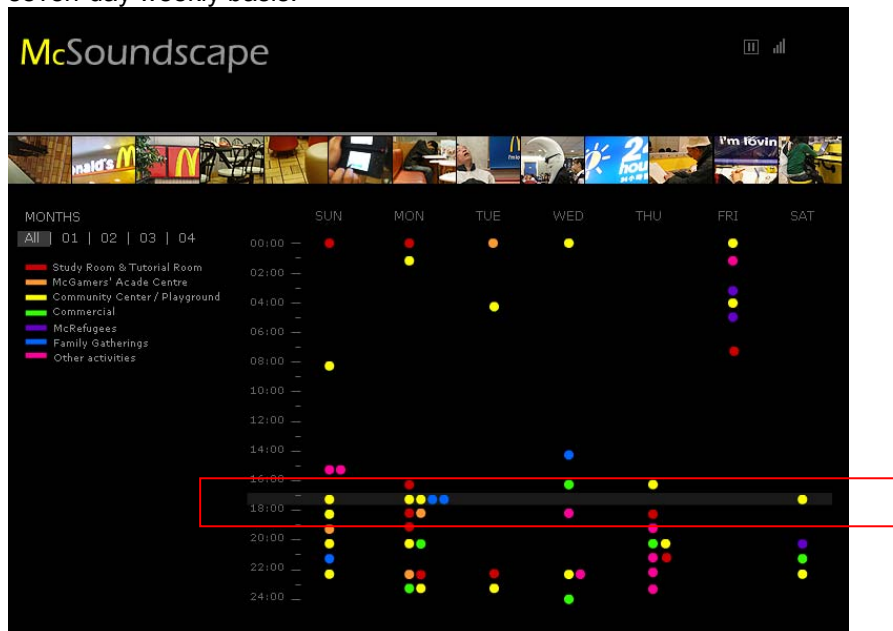
Screenshot sample 3a:

Soundscape is also organized and displayed within the weekly calendar. It helps to illustrate the Soundscape pattern visually and users can easily discover the frequent events by observing the occurrence and pattern of these juxtaposing the color dots.



Screenshot sample 3b:

Once users click on the thumbnail calendar shown in the previous screenshot, it brings users to the scaled-up version. Users can examine carefully each of the colored dots for a particular time on a seven-day weekly basis.



(12) Examples of Sound data

(For detailed information of all the Soundscape data, please refer to *Appendix F*)

Soundclip data sample 1:

District: Kwai Chung (by clicking on the map)

Date: 24 Feb 2008 (Sunday)

Time: 00:05

Sound Length: 2:38

Address: G/F, Sing Shing Building, 90 - 114 Wo Yee Hop Rd, Kwai Chung, New Territories

Story: McDonald staff cleansing the furniture at midnight

Categorization: "Others"

Soundclip data sample 2:

District: Central (by clicking on the map)

Date: 24 Feb 2008 (Sunday)

Time: 17:50

Sound Length: 3:03

Address: Basement, Yu To Sang Building, 37 Queen's Road, Central, Hong Kong

Story: A slight dispute between customers (Philippines working in Hong Kong as maids) and the staffs while many Philippines maids are occupying almost the whole McDonald

Categorization: "Community Center"

Soundclip data sample 3:

District: Tai Po (by clicking on the map)

Date: 3 March 2008 (Monday)

Time: 17:30

Sound Length: 4:05

Address: Shop 57-66, G/F, 4 On Chee Road, Fortune Plaza, Tai Po, New Territories

Story: Mother and father were teaching and tutoring their primary school son on school work.

Categorization: "McStudents' Study Room & Tutorial Room"

(13) Conclusion

This research-based new media project of “McSoundscape” is both an informative and artistic research project. This project mainly deals with the research findings and analysis in the way that it demonstrates to us how the commonly practiced transformation and appropriation of space, as a visual spectacle of Hong Kong, could re-articulate our identities of the space and even further govern the changing spatial identities, characteristics and meanings of our city space.

In many McDonald restaurants in Hong Kong, the local people do not want to spend time in such “non-places” and have been resisting to such original design of space by re-constructing the spatial identity and giving new meanings to the space by practical and direct experience. Hong Kong people change the meaning and identity of the space by actively participate in space appropriations and do their own private things at McDonalds. The users of Hong Kong McDonalds have, in fact, performed their sense of locality through some creative strategies (or tactics) and the result is a new construction of spatial meaning at the McDonald restaurants. What the customers have been practicing is exactly the same meaning as what Lefebvre (1991) defined as “Lived Spaces” or “Representational Spaces”.

Through some qualitative research methods such as field study, participatory observations, sound recording, research and interviews, the goal of this project is to provide us with a closer look at such a new cultural phenomenon. The final output is to express all these actual findings through the artform of Soundscape, which are being published as an informative webpage on the World Wide Web. The process of the research is also the new media artwork in itself. All the research data and findings collected from the McDonald restaurants have been classified and grouped under an interactive website, and they were being illustrated in the form of an information design which displays those everyday life activities via sound data. Data were further categorized and visualized according to the different layouts of the Hong Kong map, weekly calendar, scrollable timeline as well as different categorizations. It is a common practice for us to inspect our environment through video or photography. However, if the same cultural phenomenon is being displayed and visualized through a graphical interface and design, we could be sensitive enough to discover the details, status or the correlations between those elements, which could be neglected in other visual forms such as photography or video.

Moreover, re-presentation through the acoustic approach helps the reader and audience to explore for themselves and get a realization that is detached away from the routine life in reality, and hopefully such realization can help us to observe and understand more about the reasons behind such cultural phenomenon. It is believed that the final output of the “McSoundscape” website can help illustrating such cultural phenomenon of how Hong Kong people making use of McDonald restaurants as their “home” and participating in some daily activities that they would otherwise have done in other private areas of their own.

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Appendix A

Shop names (according to the McDonald's official web site) and addresses of all the McDonald restaurants that had been visited for this research project:

Shop Name	Address
Bonham Road	G/F & Lower G/F, Good View Court, No. 51 - 53 Bonham Road, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong
Causeway Bay Plaza II	Shop G04, G/F, Causeway Bay Plaza 2, 463-483 Lockhart Road, Causeway Bay, Hong Kong
Central	Basement, Yu To Sang Building, 37 Queen's Road, Central, Hong Kong
Cheung Chau	G/F, No. 101-103 San Hing Street, Cheung Chau
Connaught	Chuang's Tower, 30 - 32 Connaught Road, Central, Hong Kong
Hennessy	G/F, C.C. Wu Building, 302 - 308 Hennessy Road, Wan Chai, Hong Kong
Hill	G/F, 484 - 496 Queen's Road West, Sai Ying Pun, Hong Kong
Jordan	Basement, Pak Shing Building, No. 31 - 37 Jordan Road, Kowloon
KCR Hung Hom Station	Restaurant No.2, Mezzanine Level, KCR Hung Hom Station, Hung Hom, Kowloon
Metropolis Plaza	Shop No.106, Level 1, Metropolis Plaza, Lung Sum Road, Sheung Shui, New Territories
Mui Woo	G/F, Mui Wo Centre, No. 3 Ngan Wan Road, Mui Wo, Lantau Island
Queen Road Central	Shop 2A on G/F, Centre Mark, No. 287 - 299 Queen's Road Central, Sheung Wan, Hong Kong
Sai Yeung Choi	Shop B-1, Basement, Good Hope Building, 612 - 618 Nathan Road, Mongkok, Kowloon
Shatin Racecourse	Portion of 1st Mezzanine Floor, Grand Stand Two, Shatin Racecourse, Shatin, New Territories
Sing Shing	G/F, Sing Shing Building, 90 - 114 Wo Yee Hop Rd, Kwai Chung, New Territories
Sun Chui	Shop No. 1B, G/F Sun Chui Shopping Centre, Sun Chui Estate, Tai Wai, New Territories
Tai Po Central	Shop 57-66 , G/F, 4 On Chee Road, Fortune Plaza, Tai Po, New Territories
Tai Wo	Shop No. 102, Cooked Food Centre, Tai Wo Shopping Mall, Tai Wo Estate, Tai Po, New Territories
Tin Ping	Shop 122, Ground Floor, Tin Ping Shopping Centre, Tin Ping Estate, Sheung Shui, New Territories
Un Chau	Shop No. 9 - 19, Manor Centre, No. 213 Un Chau Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon
Uptown Plaza	Shop No. 009, Level One, Uptown Plaza, 9 Nam Wan Road, Tai Po, New Territories

Table 4.0, List of McDonald restaurants that had been visited for this research project:

Appendix B

More photos from the Apple Daily report (蘋果日報) published on 2007-04-30

Source:

http://appledaily.atnext.com/template/apple/art_main.cfm?iss_id=20070430&sec_id=4104&subsec_id=12731&art_id=7052150



Original caption in Chinese: Kelvin 每周總有數晚到麥當勞打機直至深夜。

Caption translated: Kelvin said that he often comes to McDonald to play games until midnight, about a few days a week.



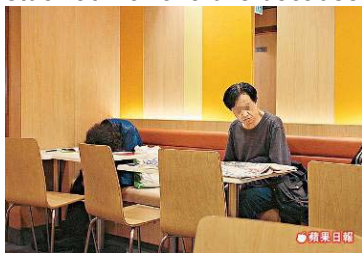
Original caption in Chinese: Iven 雖年逾三十歲，但經常到麥當勞以機會友，玩到凌晨兩、三時才回家。

Caption translated: Although Iven is over 30 years old, he admits that he still comes down to McDonald and plays with other McGamers until 2 or 3 am before he goes home.



Original caption in Chinese: 這位不願透露姓名的女士聲稱，只因通宵沒車搭，才會滯留在麥當勞。

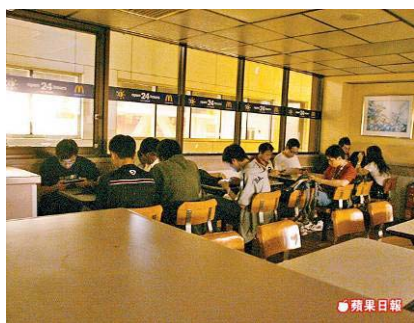
Caption translated: This lady, who is not willing to tell her name, claims that the reason why she is stuck at McDonald is because there is no overnight transportation for her to go home.



Original caption in Chinese: 文叔(右)在銅鑼灣廣場麥當勞通宵讀報，而鄰座的女士已倒頭大睡，對記者的提問全無反應。

Caption translated: Uncle Man is reading newspaper overnight at a McDonald in Causeway Bay, while a lady sitting next to him was sleeping deeply and does not response to any question that we

ask her.



Original caption in Chinese: 凌晨兩點，觀塘裕民坊麥當勞分店已局部熄燈，但一班遊戲機玩家依然在大玩特玩。

Caption translated: At 2am in the morning, a gang of McGamers are having fun and concentrating on their connected games in the Kwun Tong McDonald Branch, even though most of the lightings have been switched off in some sections of the restaurant.

Appendix C

Blogger's comments:

(The followings are quoted from different bloggers' message on different blogs or web sites:)

> 24小時..不過佢都唔會趕人走既

(Translations:)> Its for 24 hours, but they won't expel people or ask them to leave the place (McDonald restaurants).

> 不過我樓下果散孩一到9點度後半份就要青緊就算一早坐系果度都要叫你坐返上面

(Translations:)> But the staffs of the McDonald in the neighborhood are not very nice, as they always clean up some sections after 9:30pm, even though you have been sitting there since earlier.

> 重有好多打機黨~ psp ndsl大戰機戰獸

(Translations:)> There are even many McGamers who are killing Cyber Monster with their PSP and NDS handhelds.

> This happened b4 la!!! Aggress said McDonald tried 24hrs b4 and there were ppl sleeping over all the time!!

(Translations:)> This has always been happening before! Blogger "Aggress" said that ever since McDonald has opened for 24 hours, there have been many sleeping over all the time.

> 覺得自己好幸福.

(Translations:)> I feel like I am very lucky by looking at the phenomena.

> 依家好多區都有"麥記賓館"

(Translations:)> Now there are many "McHotels" in many districts.

> 有能力又點會想咁先?

(Translations:)> Who is willing to do this if he or she has the ability to afford their livings?

> There are more and more ppl playing NDS in public area

> It happens everywhere these days.

Fantasy: > 露宿者之家

(Translations:)**Fantasy:** > The Home of the Street Sleeper

張雲 > 唔知係唔係首日通宵,個收銀機冇用到,要用計數機表示找幾多錢

多個地方俾系街通宵玩的小朋友,打下機好過俾人踢入會

(Translations:)**Chang Wan:** > Don't know whether it is because of the first night to run 24 hours, I have found that a lot of the staff have to use the calculators to do the changes for customers. It is a better place for the small kids to hang around overnight, instead of letting them exposed to the influence of the members from those triad societies.

Katherine Chan: > 日本漢堡包平過hk 澳門1蚊喝一個漢堡包80日圓(約5.3港元),一杯咖啡100日圓(約6.6港元),還可無限次添飲。

(Translations:)**KatherineChan:** > Those hamburgers in Japan are cheaper than the hamburgers selling in Hong Kong and Macau by HK\$1 as they are selling at 80 yens (approximately HK\$5.3); and a cup of coffee costs only 100 yens (approximately HK\$6.6), and they can refill for unlimited times.

左少白 > 龍園m又為露宿者提供一個寄宿好地方, 近來天氣咁熱.. 岩西~

(Translations:) Jor Siu Bak: >McDonalds at Lung Yuen is providing a very good accommodation for the street sleepers, especially the weather is so hot right now!

ky953123: 果度d冷氣好勁

(Translations:) **ky953123**: > The air conditions are too strong, making the place too cold to stay.

左少白 > 帶多件衫,有睡袋更佳~~~~~

(Translations:) Jor Siu Bak >Bringing more clothes will do, or it is better off to bring your own sleeping bags.

Fantasy: >帶埋 psp, mp3, 乾電又電機 報紙 雜誌 毛巾 牙刷 衣服 背包 等等

(Translations:) **Fantasy**: > Should also bring with you the PSP handheld, MP3, electricity charger, newspaper, magazines, towels, tooth-brushes, clothing, backpack, etc.

pekheijnu: > 算啦, 勸老麥唔致推佢D甘絕, 唔致趕佢入窮巷D甘趕佢地走啦

大企業要幫手承擔下D由政府施政失敗而引起D既社會義務司責任啦

反正夜晚開埋幾多, 0米比D人訓下Naw, 唔致趕其他客0米得aw

(Translations:) **pekheijnu**: > McDonald should not expel them! The large corporations should sometimes share the social responsibility of taking care of the poor, which is due to the bad governmental policies. As long as the sleepers do not interrupted the other customers, McDonald should let them to stay there and they would not have a full house at night anyways.

> Hong Kong has once 無限次添飲 but now it is canceled. WTF.

(Translations:) > There was once unlimited refill service in Hong Kong, but now it has been canceled. WTF.

廚梓畢 >「即係McRefugee,又叫做「麥記難民」呀 傻婆」(近日在日本興起一個新字"McRefugees"

,意指那些辛勤工作,不肯離大手掌領薪俸,但工資太低,買不起樓,付不起租,索性將通宵營業的麥當勞當成超靚宿舍,每晚進去買一杯咖啡宿一宵的人。原生想搵振夫綱,今鋪全靠麥當當 ...

(Translations:) Yuen Chee Butt: > McRefugee means people who are Refugees at McDonald, silly you! "McRefugee" is new word made in Japan, which means those people who work very hard and are not willing to take government subsidies; but at the same time they cannot afford to buy or rent a place as their extremely low wages. Thus, they would rather made use of 24 hours McDonald to become their cheap accommodations, as long as they buy a cup of coffee every night. Their intention is to gain some respect from the society, but they now turn out to become a dependent on McDonald...

> 香港除了麥難民還有機難民啦..有空晚上去..

(Translations:) >Besides McRefugees, there are even Airport Refugees in Hong Kong... You better find some time to go there and have a look...

> 二十多人在店內呼呼入睡>>>好攞觀

(Translations:) >It is such a spectacular scene to look at when more than 20 people are making sweet dream inside the same restaurant!!

Appendix D

Observations and findings from the field visits in 2007:

1st Visit: (11-12 Nov 2007)

Date: 11 Nov 2007

Time: 11:25 pm

Branch: Un Chau

Address: Shop No. 9 – 10, Manor Centre, No. 213 Un Chau Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Observation: The branch was filled with customers of different age groups. Some of them are dining but many of the rest were utilizing the place for other functions, such as reading newspaper, playing NDS, doing homework, watching movie on laptop, or even baby-sitting. One lady was actually watching the TV screen installed at McDonald, which providing information such as time, date, weather, HangSeng Index, address of 24 hours McDonald branches, local news update in the form of running text at the bottom, commercials, as well as entertainment (mainly as some sponsored MTV or infotainment about soccer games).

- > *1 male (age of 40-50) – reading newspaper
- > *1 male (age under 18) – playing NDS
- > *4 youngsters, 2 female & 2 male (age around 18) – chatting, no food on the table
- > 2 elderly, 1 female & 1 male (age over 50) – chatting, have bought drinks
- > *2 Secondary school students, 1 female & 1 male (age under 18) – doing homework
- > *2 lady (age around 20) – hang around and one of them talking on the phone
- > 2 male (age of 30 & 40) – dining
- > *1 male (age around 40) – working on laptop
- > *1 man brought with 1 baby (age of 3) – playing around, chatting with staff, baby-sitting
- > 1 male & 1 female (both age around 30) – dining
- > *1 female (age around 40) – sitting and staring at the LCD screen at McDonald
- > *1 male (age over 40) – reading newspaper while falling asleep
- > 4 male (age under 20) – chatting, with drinks in hand
- > 4 male (age over 20) – dining & chatting

Space Appropriation Percentage: 14/29 = 48%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



Date: 12 Nov 2007

Time: 1:05am

Branch: Star Branch

Address: G/F & B/F Star House, 3 Salisbury Road, Tsim Sha Tsui

Observation: This huge branch of McDonald & McCafe is situated right next to the Tsim Sha Tsui Pier and it is supposed to be filled with lots of McRefugee in the past. However, since they have closed most of the area during 00:00 to 06:00, we even can hardly find customers there after midnight. Since all the lights were still turned on as other normal hours, it is very likely that such “temporary” closure is merely a tactic to deal with appropriation of space after midnight.

Interview: None

Photo:



2nd Visit: (12-13 Nov 2007)

Date: 12 Nov 2007

Time: 10:00pm

Branch: Prince (not for 24 hours)

Address: G/F, 416 Prince Edward Rd, Kowloon

Observation: Even though this McDonald is not opening for 24 hours, at least two groups of college or university students were doing group projects and discussion there, while a few others were reading newspaper. A couple of the gangs were playing PSP networked games together.

Interview: None

Photo:



Date: 12 Nov 2007

Time: 10:25pm

Branch: Sai Yeung Choi

Address: Shop B-1, Basement, Good Hope Building, 612-618 Nathan Road

Observation: As this branch is situated in the heart of a shopping district, there is always full house as the night of the visit. Although newcomers can hardly find spare seats, space was still being appropriated by some customers, such as working on projects, playing PSP/ NDS games, etc. However, a very different example was one large group of females (mainly university students) having a birthday party there. Instead of joining one of the McDonald's Fun-Packed Birthday Party, the group was holding a birthday party themselves as they bought their own birthday cake and occupied a large table with some spacious area. Although they had actually purchased some drinks at McDonald, however, they did not pay for the minimum service charge of HK\$150, which would allow a birthday party to be

GA2008, 11th Generative Art Conference

conducted at McDonald for only one and a half hours.

Interview: 1 (refer to Appendix E)

Photo:



Date: 12 Nov 2007

Time: 11:15pm

Branch: Full Win

Address: Shop B, G/F, Full Win Commercial Centre, No. 573 Nathan Road, Yaumatei

Observation: This branch is a small one, and there are only a couple of people dining there. One teenage girl was enjoying her own chocolate while playing her NDS handheld. Her friend was sitting behind her and playing his own PSP at the same time. They are waiting for some other friends to meet at here before they head to another destination.

Interview: 2 (refer to Appendix E)

Photo:



Date: 12 Nov 2007

Time: 11:40pm

Branch: Langham Place (not for 24 hours)

Address: Shop Nos. 32-37, Level 2, Langham Place, 8 Argyle Street, Mongkok

Observation: Since it is situated inside a plaza, the closing time is around midnight. During the visit, there were still some shoppers dining at McCafe only. None of them are using the place for functions other than eating or chatting.

Interview: None

Photo:



Date: 13 Nov 2007

Time: 12:15 am

Branch: Argyle

Address: G/F, 105 Argyle Street, Mongkok

Observation: The first floor upstairs was closed during midnight, and very little space appropriation was found because the remaining seats are just a few and they are all facing the cashiers' counter directly. Not a single McRefugee was found, but many people were discussing their group project even though other customers cannot find their seats. Another guy also brought his own laptop to work with.

> 12 people – dining & chatting

> * 1 person– reading newspaper

> * 6 people – holding a group discussion on their projects

> * 1 person – working on laptop

Space Appropriation Percentage: 8/20 = 40%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



Date: 13 Nov 2007

Time: 1:00am

Branch: Cameron Road

Address: Basement & G/F, L&D House, 2-4A Cameron Road, Tsim Sha Tsui

Observation: The "sleeping area" for McRefugee (as in the photo taken by Apple Daily) was closed during every midnight.

> 7 people – dining & chatting

> * 2 person– reading newspaper

Space Appropriation Percentage: 2/9 = 22%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



Date: 13 Nov 2007

Time: 1:10 am

Branch: Hillwood

Address: G/F – 1/F Pacific Mansion, 172-174 Nathan Road, Tsim Sha Tsui

Observation: This is another branch with plenty of seats, including the McCafe upstairs. However, since McCafe is closed during midnight, not too many McRefugees and McGamers were found in this location, since there were not much secret corners which the McDonald staff cannot put an eye on immediately. However, there were a couple of McRefugees sleeping in front of the staff, and some others were reading magazines and books while waiting for the time to pass. It was even strange to notice that McCafe didn't expel a group of four who was discussion their own projects upstairs and occupied a table at a very far corner, even though the whole floor was supposed to be all closed at that time.

> 2 people – dining

> * 2 people – sleeping

> * 1 person – reading magazines

> * 4 people – holding a group discussion on their projects

Space Appropriation Percentage: 7/9 = 78%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: 3 (refer to Appendix E)

Photo:



Date: 13 Nov 2007

Time: 1:45 am

Branch: Jordan Road

Address: Basement, Pak Shing Building, No. 31-37 Jordan Road

Observation: Since every corner is opening for business in the branch, there are some

“comfortable” dark corners for our McRefugees to have a nice dream here. At the McCafe, I found 3 men sleeping there, with no food on their table. At the other section with easy concealment (they have fewer disturbances from staff because it was not an area where the staff at the cashier place can have a direct sight to look over it), there were a couple few more sleepers who were also middle-aged male. However, generally speaking, the staffs here were far more active in interrupting the sleepers or even customers by coming to sweep the floor twice, made some noise by moving chairs and tables, frequently check my table to see if the food was finished. Within an hour, two different staffs (normal staff as well as Manager) came to wake up all sleepers twice (at 1:45 am and 2:35 am respectively). The Manager actually woke them up by hitting their tables while complaining to them, “Don’t sleep here! You guys are really doing too far! You have made the whole section looking like a sleeping section almost! How dare you!”

> 8 people – dining

> * 6 people – sleeping

> * 2 people – reading magazines & chatting

Space Appropriation Percentage: 8/16 = 50%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: 4 (refer to Appendix E)

Photo:



Date: 13 Nov 2007

Time: 4:10 am

Branch: Un Chau Branch

Address: Shop No. 9 – 10, Manor Centre, No. 213 Un Chau Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Observation: During 4am in the morning, McDonald has already been providing breakfast to customers. There a couple of McRefugees sleeping, reading newspaper, etc. Most of them are in their middle age and some elderly were attracted to come here for social gathering as well.

> *1 male (age 30-40) – sleeping, without purchasing any food.

> 3 females (age 40-60) – dining & chatting

> *1 male (age about 50) – reading newspaper

> 1 male and 1 female (age about 30-40) – dining

> *1 male (age over 35) – reading newspaper

> 2 males (age from 20-40) – dining

GA2008, 11th Generative Art Conference

> *1 male (age around 45) – reading newspaper while falling asleep

Space Appropriation Percentage: 4/10 = 40%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: 5 & 6 (refer to Appendix E)

Photo: (refer to the interview on Appendix E)

3rd Visit: (14 Nov 2007)

Date: 14 Nov 2007

Time: 09:40 pm

Branch: Un Chau Branch

Address: Shop No. 9 – 10, Manor Centre, No. 213 Un Chau Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Observation: This could be regarded as the golden time for many McGamers to meet here as there are at least 3 tables of gamers playing online games with their handhelds. It is also another peak period for study groups.

> 9 people – dining

> * 2 people – reading newspaper

> * 10 people – playing PSP connected games together

> * 7 people – working hard on homework

> * 4 people – chatting without any food on the table

Space Appropriation Percentage: 23/32 = 72%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



4th Visit: (16-17 Nov 2007)

Date: 16 Nov 2007

Time: 11:55 am

Branch: Sai Yeung Choi

Address: Shop B-1, Basement, Good Hope Building, 612-618 Nathan Road

Observation: One special phenomenon from this visit is that a lot of commercial appropriation has been discovered in this branch. More than twenty broadband service promotional workers (mainly from PCCW, and most of them were wearing the black and orange color uniform) occupied more than 6 tables at the same time. From observation, they look like working hard on their client's contracts and they were doing mainly paper work. Some of the PCCW staff even keep coming down from the booth just around the corner and delivered a few more paper works immediately to their colleagues in McDonald. McDonald is like another extension of their mobile office which originally situated on the street. Some other officers of insurance company were also negotiating with their potential clients here. Although any kind of gambling games are prohibited in McDonald, another guy was playing poker game himself at another corner, needless to mention the large group of McGamers in this branch.

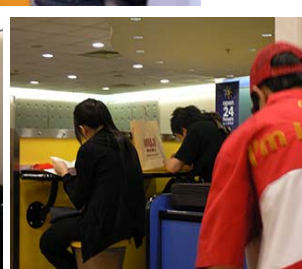
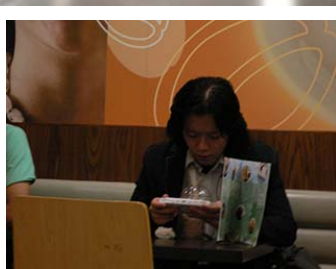
- > * 21 people – promotional staff of PCCW working
- > * 3 people – Insurance staff & clients discussing about their own business
- > * 1 person – playing card games
- > * 3 people – reading newspaper or magazines
- > * 13 people – playing PSP or NDS handheld games (either separately or connected together)
- > * 3 people – working hard on homework
- > * 3 people – discussing on projects
- > * 4 people – chatting without any food on the table
- > * 2 people – sleeping
- > 82 people – dining

Space Appropriation Percentage: 53/ 135 = 39%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: 7 (refer to Appendix E)

Photo:





Date: 17 Nov 2007

Time: 2:00 am

Branch: Sing Shing

Address: G/F, Sing Shing Building, 90-114 Wo Yee Hop Rd, Kwai Chung

Observation: Since most of the gloomy corners were closed for "cleaning", this McDonald was quite an empty one. However, one guy was sleeping inside the closed section and the staff did not expel him, even though they passed by his table.

> * 1 person – sleeping

> 3 people – dining & chatting

Space Appropriation Percentage: $1/4 = 25\%$

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



5th Visit: (17 Nov 2007)

Date: 17 Nov 2007

Time: 3:30 pm

Branch: Sai Yeung Choi

Address: Shop B-1, Basement, Good Hope Building, 612-618 Nathan Road

Observation: Again, this McDonald was filled with McGamers and McStudents during the tea time in the afternoon. Most of them were young people or shoppers who were either taking a rest or dining at the restaurant.

> * 3 people – playing PSP or NDS handheld games (either separately or connected together)

> * 10 people – working hard on homework

> * 4 people – discussing on projects

> * 4 people – chatting without any food on the table

> 64 people – dining

Space Appropriation Percentage: $21/85 = 25\%$

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



Date: 17 Nov 2007

Time: 4:45pm

Branch: Un Chau Branch

Address: Shop No. 9 – 10, Manor Centre, No. 213 Un Chau Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Observation: This was another peak hour for McStudents, as I could find more than 4 tables of customers working hard on their school assignments. Some of them were even parents giving tutorial to their own children in this public area.

> * 2 people – a mum giving private tutorials to her daughter

> * 9 people – working hard on homework

> 6 people – dining

Space Appropriation Percentage: 11/ 17 = 65%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



6th Visit: (20 Nov 2007)

Date: 20 Nov 2007

Time: 10:05 pm

Branch: Un Chau Branch

Address: Shop No. 9 – 10, Manor Centre, No. 213 Un Chau Street, Sham Shui Po, Kowloon

Observation: McDonald always attracts many young people for all kind of social gatherings in the evening. This night was not an exception as many McGamers and McReaders were found. A couple of families were also dining here while baby sitting their own children.

> * 10 people – reading books together

> * 3 people – playing PSP or NDS handheld games (either separately or connected together)

> * 10 people – working hard on homework

> * 4 people – discussing on projects

> * 4 people – chatting without any food on the table

> 64 people – dining

Space Appropriation Percentage: 21/ 85 = 25%

(Notes: * means space appropriation)

Interview: None

Photo:



Appendix E

Details of the personal interviews:

Interview 1



> One of the University student (female, age around 20-23), enjoying the birthday party organized by themselves (the one in blue shirt as in the picture)

Q: Have you guys bought any food from McDonald? If yes, what have you bought?

A: Yes. 3 or 4 cups of McFlurry.

Q: How long would you guys stay here for?

A: about 2 hours

Q: Have you bought your cake from McCafe?

A: No, we have brought it to here.

Q: Why do you choose to hold your own birthday party at McDonald but not elsewhere?

A: It is more convenient for all of us to meet and come here. Also, this place makes people feeling lots of fun and freedom.

Q: Why don't you join McDonald's Fun-Packed Birthday Party?

A: Those are for small kids and we do not need those arrangements. We feel more relax by doing it our own ways.

Q: When do you usually come to McDonald?

A: It depends.

Q: Will you come to McDonald after midnight?

A: No.

Q: Do you love playing handheld games such as PSP or NDS?

A: No.

Q: Have you notice that there are many people playing these games at McDonald recently?

A: Yes. They actually play in many other places too.

Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?

A: No. not at all.

Interview 2



> Female (at the age of 18), playing NDS handheld game

Q: What are you doing here?

A: We are waiting for some friends to come over.

Q: Are you gonna to eat dinner here together?

A: No. We just gather here and then will go to some other places together.

Q: How long would you stay here for?

A: Don't know.

Q: Have you bought any food or drinks at McDonald while you wait here?

A: No. I am having my own chocolate bar.

Q: Why do you guys like to gather together at McDonald?

A: Because it does not cost me any money here.

Q: Any other reasons?

A: No.

Q: If McDonalds do not open for 24 hours, where would you go instead tonight?

A: We could be waiting on the street or at the entrance of some malls, etc.

Q: Have you ever play connected games with friends at McDonald?

A: No. I only play my own games on NDS, just like what I am doing now. He (the guy sitting behind her) is playing his own PSP.

Q: Have you ever seen people doing that at McDonald?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?

A: No. not at all.

Interview 3



> Female (age over 40), reading magazines

Q: What are you doing here?

A: We are waiting for my brother to come over.

Q: Are you gonna to eat dinner here together?

A: No. We just gather here and then will go to some other local cafes together. Originally I was waiting at the Cameron Road branch, but their air conditioning system just broke down, so I walk to here.

Q: How long would you stay here for?

A: I will leave very soon, as long as my brother calls me while he arrives.

Q: Have you bought any food or drinks at McDonald while you wait here?

A: No. Because I won't stay here for long.

Q: Why do you guys like to gather together at McDonald?

A: Since I work until very late, it is quite convenient to find the 24 hours McDonalds everywhere in Tsim Sha Tsui.

Q: Any other reasons?

A: Because it is a very bright and safe place to stay, and it does not cost me any money.

Q: If McDonalds do not open for 24 hours, where would you go instead tonight?

A: I may go to places such as Internet Café or local café in Mongkok and wait for my brother then.

Q: Have you ever seen any customers doing personal thing at McDonald, such as sleeping, playing connected games, etc?

A: Yes. Of course. Nowadays many people sleep at McDonald, just like the guy next to us. Many kids are playing handheld games too.

Q: Have you ever do those things at McDonald?

A: No.

Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?

A: Not really. In face, McDonald usually woke them people up at 4 or 5 am so as to get ready for the business at the breakfast time.

Interview 4



- > Staff at McDonald (age around 30), working
- Q: Do you usually see customers sleeping at McDonald?
- A: Yes! A lot of them sleep here every night, even though people eating next to them.
- Q: What is the maximum number of sleepers you have ever seen at one night here?
- A: Can't remember... something like more than 10.
- Q: Is it allowed to sleep at McDonalds?
- A: No! Never! But there is nothing we can do because we cannot expel them. So, we would rather tolerate it.
- Q: What would you do to stop this phenomenon?
- A: Our Manager would ask us to wake them up occasionally.
- Q: Do you think the sleepers are interfering with other customers?
- A: Yeah! That makes it looking bad!
- Q: How about people playing games together here? Have you seen those?
- A: Sometimes.
- Q: Do you think that is disturbing kind of behavior too?
- A: Hmm... not really. As long as they buy food here.

Interview 5



- > Female (age 60), dining and chatting with friends
- Q: What are you doing here so early in the morning?
- A: I woke up early, and so I dated my friends to come over and have a chat.
- Q: You have had your breakfast here?
- A: Yes. We have just eaten.
- Q: How long would you stay here for?
- A: At least 2 hours usually.
- Q: Why do you guys like to gather together at McDonald?
- A: Because it is convenient place to meet my friends, since we all living nearby.
- Q: Any other reasons?
- A: We know the Manager very well here. In fact, she is also working at another McDonald in Sham Shui Po.
- Q: If McDonalds do not open for 24 hours, where would you go instead tonight?
- A: We may go to some other local cafes nearby.
- Q: Have you ever seen people sleeping at McDonald?
- A: Yes. There is one here now. Look!
- Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?
- A: I think when there is full house, it is no good to sleep here. But during other times like right now, I think it does not matter to me. But still, it is not good to look at the place with so many

people sleeping and not eating or chatting here.

Q: Have you ever seen people playing handheld games together at McDonald?

A: Yes. There are many of them, especially during the summer time. But now you do not see them during midnight anymore. Because they have to go to school the other day.

Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?

A: No. not at all.

Interview 6



> Male (age around 50), reading newspaper while falling asleep

Q: What are you doing here?

A: I am reading the newspaper while waiting for the train to my other home, Shenzhen.

Q: Have you eaten any McDonald's food here?

A: No.

Q: How long would you stay here for?

A: I will wait for a couple more hours, once the train is in service, I will leave immediately. That won't take long.

Q: So, you mean you do not have a home here in Hong Kong?

A: I am Hong Kong citizen, but my family is in Shenzhen. I work here now and then go back home in Shenzhen.

Q: Why do you like to stay here and wait for trains?

A: Well, I do not have to spend any money here.

Q: Any other reasons?

A: It is quite safe here.

Q: If McDonalds do not open for 24 hours, where would you go instead tonight?

A: I may go to other places instead. May be I will go to some local cafes nearby.

Q: That will cost you some money, won't it?

A: Yes. But everywhere costs some money except McDonalds.

Q: Do you do anything else here while you wait for trains?

A: I watch the news headline on the TV screen here, and sometimes I will write something quietly here.

Q: Have you ever seen people sleeping at McDonald?

A: Sometimes... People do not do that on purpose. They just fall asleep accidentally.

Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?

A: No.

Q: Have you ever seen McDonalds' staff do something against sleepers here?

A: Yes, sometimes, they warn them not to sleep here.

Q: Have you ever seen people playing handheld games together at McDonald?

A: Yes.

Q: Do you think that they will be disturbing you if they do so at McDonald?

A: Yes, as all the youngsters are not self-disciplinary, they sometimes disturb me as they are too noisy.

Interview 7

> Mr Chan, Manager at McDonald (age around 45), working while being interviewed

Q: I want to know if you have noticed that there are any sleepers at your restaurants during the night time.

A: Yes, sometimes.

Q: Are there many of them?

A: Well, I would say these people only appear after midnight. There are quite a few of them.

Q: What would you do if they sleep at McDonald?

A: I will go to interrupt and wake them up.

Q: Is there any rules posted or published anywhere in the restaurants saying that it is not allowed to sleep at McDonald?

A: No.

Q: If not, what is the excuse that you use to wake these sleepers (McRefugee) up?

A: Well, we are afraid that there is any accident happened to them. You know, the sleepers may have some kind of emergency illness or something. We have to make sure they are feeling alright.

Q: Have you noticed that there are many PSP or NDS gamers playing at lots of McDonald restaurants day and night?

A: Yes, I aware of that.

Q: Are there many of them at your restaurants?

A: Yes, there are always a lot of them all the time.

Q: Would you interrupt them if they are playing games and not eating at your McDonald?

A: No. They are free to do that at here.

Q: Is it allowed to play pokers at your restaurant?

A: No.

Q: What if only a single person playing it himself?

A: Still not allowed.

Q: How about holding a private birthday party here by bringing in our own cake and stuff. Is it allowed?

A: You must join our "Fun-packed Birthday Party" instead. Nobody should hold their own birthday party on their own at McDonalds. You can take a look at our flyers here.

Q: Would you advice them to go somewhere else if you see that happening?

A: Yes, if I see them doing that here.