Critical practice in Hong Kong is part and parcel to offer both engagement with and resistance to a development model based heavily on land-economy. A condition created by population growth and compact-city planning policy beginning in the 1970s. Under this premise, the production of architecture is nothing but synonymous with and diminishable to the financial bottom line, where form follows truthfully the buildable area. In recent years, such tension has been exacerbated by cross-border property investors from the Mainland. The strain of the land-shortage has given form to a number of building typologies reflective of this economic constraint. One such building type is the Municipal Services Building (MSB), which began surfacing in 1978 as a government-led effort to provide district-based enhancement of the public life. The essence of the MSB is hybridizing the seemingly irreconcilable functional demands within a confined urban context, very often involving market hall, cooked-food stalls, library and gymnasium. Far from being formulaic, the specific programme mixtures depend upon...
the district it is located. The building is operated by district municipalities to provide its constituents with work opportunities, intellectual growth and leisurely events. MSB is the building type that offers the potential of resistance to the privatized and pressurized condition that has overtaken much of the city. The aim of this paper is to study the evolutionary development of the MSB and its potential for advancing the public life, vis-à-vis a New Development Area (NDA) currently being planned by the Hong Kong government on a swath of borderland situated at the intersection between Country Parks and the edge of the City. The research is based on a joint-study between Master of Architecture students from both the Chinese University of Hong Kong and the Delft University of Technology in 2017.

• Author(s) Biography (200 words each):

Patrick Hwang directs the Thesis Project and the Architecture Explorer Programme and teaches design and theory at the School of Architecture in the Chinese University of Hong Kong. He is a licensed architect with over a decade and half of experience from practice and academia in the United States, Hong Kong and Netherlands. Mr. Hwang was involved with the design and execution of several notable public buildings including: Art Gallery of Ontario, David L. Lawrence Convention Center and Fresno Metropolitan Museum through experiences from the offices of Michael Maltzan, Rafael Viñoly and Frank Gehry.

Mr. Hwang’s recent research is focused on the presence of the public building and how drawing necessitates in its making. This topic is being explored in the MArch design studio and research through the works of Etienne-Louis Boullée. He holds degrees in architecture and fine arts from both Columbia University and Rhode Island School of Design, and has taught at the University of Arizona and Delft University of Technology.