



## CWLANE READING SPACE

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**Categories:** [expanding design practices](#), [Francesco Rossini](#), [High Density](#), [Project](#), [School of Architecture \(CUHK\)](#), [Technology and fabrication](#), [Territory and mobility](#), [Urban Paradigms](#)

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**Authorship:** Author: Francesco Rossini, Associate Professor - [School of Architecture CUHK](#) Project Team: Francesco Rossini, Tongyun Zhu Terrie Location: Hong Kong Year: 2023

*How can we reconnect people with underutilized public spaces through low-cost architectural interventions? How can temporary architectural interventions promote alternative uses in public open spaces? How can we challenge outdated design guidelines and rigid planning rules by using urban pilot projects? How can we promote culture in the city by implementing temporary self-managed community libraries?*







The key questions above were an essential step for the conceptualization of this research/design work. CWLane Reading Space is a pilot project aimed at reconnecting people with underutilized open spaces through temporary architectural interventions. In addition to exploring alternative solutions with the potential to positively impact the community, the project seeks to question the rules, limits, and guidelines present in government-managed spaces derived from a top-down approach.







Hong Kong is a world-class metropolis characterized by an extreme form of vertical urbanism. In this intense urban context, public open spaces are very limited, especially in older urban areas. Furthermore, most of these spaces were created using a rigid, top-down approach and applying standard solutions to a variety of different sites and urban conditions. These valuable but often underutilized open spaces do little to serve residents' needs, as they neither facilitate social interaction nor encourage community activity. This project responds to the need for high-quality open spaces that can become new gathering places for the people living in this dense urban area by making use of existing, but dysfunctional public open spaces.







The bright red color and a white geometric pattern used for the project intends to capture the attention of passersby and invite them to uncover and use this hidden and underutilized pocket of space in one of the oldest district of Hong Kong. The wooden structure of the tribune was partially pre-assembled at the School of Architecture (CUHK) and brought to the site where it was built within three days by students, volunteers, and local residents. The project consists of a series of steps and platforms that offer multiple flexible seating spaces. The concept was inspired by the stairs and ladder streets that are scattered throughout this area of the city and represent an important part of Hong Kong's cultural landscape heritage. To one side, the tribune incorporates a sequence of interlocking shelves for storing over 350 titles related to architecture, design, history, philosophy, and education, plus a wide range of children's books. The idea of transforming the area into a



reading space emerged from the various discussions held during the community engagement process. For more than six weeks, this community library was self-managed by its users, who were invited to swap their preloved books.







We are currently working on the development of two other pilot projects that will be completed by June 2024. The overall scope of this research is to provide new places for social interaction; the impact of each temporary intervention will be measured by using empirical research methods comparing data collected before, during, and after the realization of each project. The incremental approach of this research, through a feedback loop of experimentation and evaluation, will be extremely beneficial in understanding citizens' needs at different stages of the process. In the first phase (1-6 months), the projects will address shortcomings in public spaces by implementing innovative ideas and small-scale building initiatives. The knowledge generated by this initial phase will serve to spark public interest and to progress into more semi-permanent projects in the medium



term (6-18 months). This phase will also be informative for the Hong Kong Planning Department and Leisure and Culture Service Department, facilitating the establishment of a framework for significant spatial and programmatic changes before a permanent upgrade of any of the spaces is put into effect. This incremental process will create a ripple effect of awareness, demand, and realization that change is possible, as well as providing a significant opportunity to build relationships in the community.







