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# The social production of urban public space and the right to the city in contemporary Guangzhou

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## Abstract (in French and English)

When

Georg Simmel is right and the qualities of public space determine modern urbanism, what role does public space play for urban development and social integration in reform China? Taking Guangzhou as a case study I apply Henry Lefèbvre's ideas of social production of space by interwoven domination and appropriation of elites and daily user groups. Firstly, I show public space in the context of governmental social control, regime prestige, aspirations of modernization and globalization. Guangzhou's local government and urban management bureaus use public space as a means to exhibit a desired public, free of "backwardness" or "incivility" which could take the success of the reforms and the legitimacy of the state into question. Secondly, I point to the limits of state power and the agency of even the most marginalized user groups such as urban "vagabonds" - beggars, street hawkers and fortune tellers. I elucidate the successful contestation and appropriation of space, the influence on daily governance and the growing requirements to access an ever-unsteady public space. Beyond the discourse on loss or lack of urban public space in reform China, the study shows the multidimensional trends and dynamic processes of the right to the city.

**Keywords:** public space, China, urbanism, right to the city

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