Tiananmen Square: A Contested Battlefront

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Problem Area

In 1989 revolutions heralded the new age of democracy in Europe, but in the periphery of the old world a similar movement made the scene on Tiananmen Square, Beijing. The Square, located in the centre of Beijing, is in short one of the largest squares in the world and carries both cultural and historical importance to the Chinese. Here, however, things took a different turn. Where the former satellite states in Central Europe experienced freedom and emancipation from the USSR, the confrontational public movement in China experienced a morbid authoritarian repression. Thousands of killings were documented, and the protests were forced into silence (Lagerkvist, 2014).

Albeit scholars have scrutinised the processual interaction between the leaders and the led in the context of 1989, the novel of contestation still seems inconclusive to us. Many have endeavoured to demystify the occurrence in Tiananmen Square by posing questions such as ‘How is a political and public space made?’ (Lee, 2009) or trying to popularise it through comparative studies between the former Soviet states and the People’s Republic of China (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1990).

In this regard it is key to underscore how the phenomenon, Tiananmen Square, transmits meaning vested in the past and in the present within a single location. Furthermore it both ‘exists as a subject and as a social context’ in comprehensive webs of meaning (Hung, 2005: 13), and thusly it invites for a multidisciplinary research strategy grounded in an interpretive approach. However, consistent with Daniel Nehring’s interpretation of the American philosopher Martha Nussbaum’s work Not for Profit: Why Democracy Needs the Humanities (2010), we believe that a study of social facts should be rooted in a creative frame of mind. Suggesting that an analysis of broader social, political and cultural issues that shape and are shaping, should inculcate ‘citizens to adopt an active, conscious role in society’ (Nehring and Plummer, 2013: 484).

On that note – and in spite of the general uncertainty surrounding the contestation, which we will explore later in the theory and analytical chapters – we wish to embark upon an analytical exploration dealing with the extant, ethical dimension of imaginations characteristic to Tiananmen Square and the conflictual narrative. Thereupon we propose an extensive search on the rituals of resistance and repression in order to identify the opposing schemes.
At this juncture we are inclined to read and interpret the contestation on the basis of the following three punctuations marked in the stream of history; 1919 in connection with the May Fourth Movement, 1949 and the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China, and 1989 touching on the occupation of Tiananmen Square. These inserted foci are to begin with what we, and authors such as Lee (2009), Thornton (2010), Hershkovitz (1993), and Hung (2005), judge as three pivotal points in the change and development of the various conflicting perspectives of meaning that a site can yield and produce. Additionally it is an attempt to separate the past from the present with the aim of creating a dynamic research established on flexibility on the one hand, and consistency and coherence on the other. As the event of 1989 arguably ‘generated more controversy than consensus’ (Wasserstrom and Perry, 1992: 3), our aim is to understand the impact it has had on the spatiotemporal dimension of Tiananmen Square. Concisely it means that we have an interest in what Tiananmen Square is, and we further desire to know how and why it is. By problematising the ways in which the Chinese Communist Party, the people, and the place interact, we will decode the mutuality between the political, the social and the physical, and furthermore we will propose a tool with which to analyse the contestation of place.

Pinning down an agreed timeline is a contestable task in this context, due to the very nature of place and space, as alteration takes shape through clash of perceptions. The type of political contestations and physical congregations that have occurred on Tiananmen Square have both started happening and changing in nature along with its spatial expansion. With this report, we wish to delve into the concepts of contested place and the process of meaning-making as it essentially contributes to how people make sense of their lives.

From the timeline we have proposed, Tiananmen Square has changed from sharing imperial sacral-ity with the Forbidden City, to; firstly, being historically recognised as a place where citizens can publicly air political discontent; and secondly, what was a ceremonial platform for the ruling party and still carries big cultural significance for the Chinese. Such is the case with meaningful places worldwide, these two traits are contradictory and yet, do not cancel out the presence of the other. As is relatable anywhere else in the world with meaningful locations, the collective memory of events associated with Tiananmen Square’s history cannot be easily shaken away, and they form the actions of both authoritative and layperson involved with the place.
Accumulating knowledge of the social patterns and processes scholars often seek to offer factual, systematic accounts, but risk to engender ‘static or monochromic portraits of Chinese culture’ (Wasserstrom and Perry, 1992: 4), which frequently derive from normative assessments of how social structures work. As the time and space surrounding us and our environment has a literal impact on how we live and perceive meaning, we find it important to explore and understand the context in which abstract space becomes a concrete place laden with meaning, and how space furthermore transforms through physical and practical forces. That said, we find the study of Tiananmen Square to be a good example of a tangible place which mirrors our interests, and thus we have settled on the following questions:

Research Question and Working Questions

- **How has the perceptual meaning of Tiananmen Square as a contested place changed from 1919 onwards?**
  - Did the May 4th movement in 1919 give impetus to Tiananmen Square as a public place?
  - How is the Chinese Communist Party’s annexation of Tiananmen Square in 1949 reflected in the contestation of the place?
  - How is the public movement’s appropriation of the Square in 1989 related to the contestation?
Methodology & Methods of the project

In its core the following chapter explains the methodological propositions together with the analytical framework established in the course of making this project. Additionally, this chapter will provide an epitome of the theory and a description of the select empirical material utilised. Moreover it elucidates and reflects upon a set of limitations identified in relation to the problem formulation and the material that we desire to explore, and in that regard the chapter will examine the consequences our choices have had on the study itself. Put in other words we aim to determine the boundaries of the project in order to explain the development of the conceptual design which form the backbone of the report.

Theoretical perspectives

Production of Space

Through our research question, we convey the message that we wish to look further into the concept of contested of place, through the illustrative example of Tiananmen Square with a set timeframe of 1919 and onwards, focusing on specific key events that hold importance to the meaning of space in said location.

In order to analyse the perceptual meaning of space that has been given to Tiananmen Square – and whether differences in the meaning of the space occur between different actors - we are firstly going to utilise the theoretical framework of space and place created by Henri Lefebvre in his work ‘The Production of Space’. Through The Production of Space we will ground our theoretical knowledge regarding how space is transformed into meaningful places through the actions of people. We will, furthermore, look at the actual physicality (architecture) of Tiananmen Square, and how this was practiced by the publics and transformed into a place of meaning with clear social and political connotations. Space, Lefebvre argues, is more abstract in its meaning than place. Space is a physical area that has not achieved significant meaning through the interaction of people, and thusly it remains largely impersonal and unbiased. Place, however, is space that has acquired value from personal affection or use through different actors (Lefebvre, 1991).
In Lefebvre’s work, *The Production of Space* (1974: 410-411), he concludes that the formation of social space does not exclude itself from other important aspects of the socio-political arena. Instead, he argues that social space appropriates resources and encompasses them to create a new meaning. Therefore, the production of social space, and that which social space represents, should no longer be looked upon as an independent factor in the social-political arena, but should rather be perceived as in synthesis with other factors. On the matter of social space Lefebvre states; ‘Is space indeed a medium? A milieu? An intermediary? It is doubtless all of these, but its role is less and less neutral, more and more active, both as instrument and as a goal, as means and as end.’ (Lefebvre, 1974: 411). Suggested by this quote, space is gradually becoming accepted as laden with meaning, and can no longer be viewed as an independent factor in reaching a goal, but rather as an important tool that integrates itself in interdisciplinary studies.

**Contested place**

Following the build-up of a theoretical framework of space and place, we wish to proceed by grounding the concept of contested place in said framework. In order to understand how space can become contested, it is important to understand how place initially takes form, thusly the concept of contested place derives from the theoretical framework set by Henri Lefebvre.

To further elaborate on the concept of contested place, we will draw upon the work *Contested Worlds* by Martin Phillips, professor of human geography. Contestation – often manifested in violence – takes many shapes and forms. Although violence provides a clear sign of contestation, it is important to realise that it merely portrays the most obvious of contestations, in which groups of people directly clash with one another.

Social contestation that occurs amongst people with differing ideals may further be portrayed through ‘ideological debates and conflict’ (Phillips, 2005: 3). Furthermore, Phillips importantly argues that social contests are largely geographical, in that space is often contested as various groups of people\(^1\) seek to utilise it for their own assigned purposes, thereby occupying a specific space. In accordance with this, the various groups of people may attempt to exclude their counterparts from

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\(^1\) In relation to this project we refer to the Chinese publics and state
the specific places they have chosen to represent themselves through. Social contestation is therefore often found to be manifested in spatial characteristics (Ibid).

Furthering the thought of contestation being bound to geographical and spatial traits, politics - read ideologies - distinctively uses space in all shapes and sizes, ranging from the figurative borders of a country, to municipalities, to certain areas, such as a square, as representatives of power or governmental ambitions (Phillips, 2005). As people become attached to specific places and imbue them with a collective public meaning, contestation may occur if changes are made in respect to what the government wishes for the space(s) to represent (Ibid).

In the research question put forth we show our initial bias by assuming that Tiananmen Square is a place of contested meanings. Thusly, we aim to utilise contested place as a conceptual lens, with which we can focus our research on an investigation of the meaning(s) invested in Tiananmen Square. Specifically, we will be looking at select events, such as the May Fourth Movement in 1919, the change to a Socialist regime in 1949, and the student protests in 1989. We do this in order to identify conflicts between the governmental elite and the protesters (the publics) that may portray the difference in the meaning they invest in Tiananmen Square as a socio-political arena.

Furthermore, our analytical approach will be shaped by an interdisciplinary use of the geographical imagination and sociological imagination. We aim to understand contested place both in its raw physical shape and its social sense.

**Dimensions of Contestation: Physical, Practical and Metaphysical**

Taking our point of departure in Lefebvre’s theoretical framework and the concept of contested place, we have additionally distinguished three sub-dimensions on which to base and specify our analytical approach: physical, practical and metaphysical\(^2\). In continuation of these three sub-dimensions we aim to understand the theoretical facets of the parallel development of Tiananmen Square which might branch off into new patterns of meaning through the interactive relations of the sub-dimensions. Furthermore, they will play an important role in bringing forth and casting light upon the complexity of contested place.

\(^2\) Also referred to as ideology
We arrived at this conceptual tool through our readings of both the theory presented by Lefebvre, on how space is produced, as well as the empirical material revealing the nature of the contestation entrenched in Tiananmen Square. The various articles we deal with primarily delve into one of the three concepts that we have amalgamated in order to provide a holistic account of the contestation. In this sense it is not a framework entirely of our own making, but rather a selection of concepts previously established and used in synthesis with each other.

In doing so we provide a physical overview of the space of Tiananmen Square, and the physical features’ processual change over time; as in The May Fourth Movement of 1919, the shift of government in 1949 and following the student protests in 1989 and until more recent times. The physical features that will be looked into are of architectural significance; how the space is arranged within the square and the physical objects that it embodies will be of importance here. We will look into whether any changes to the physical features carry noteworthy meaning to the contestation of the place.

Through the practical use of space we will look further into how both the government and the publics interact with both each other and the space itself, through for example parades and political ceremonies from the governments’ perspective, and protests and celebrations from the publics’ viewpoint. The practical dimension will allow us to investigate how the different actors operate within Tiananmen Square, and whether their actions are in alignment with each other, or whether they clash and create challenges to the perceived meaning of the space as seen by both the government and the protesters.

The metaphysical or ideological element carries the importance of considering the meanings that the two actors vest in Tiananmen Square. Here it is vital to note how the metaphysical aspect most often becomes explicit through the physical and/or the practical features of space. Meaning is thusly bound in both physical and practical uses of space, such as propaganda put forth by the government either through physical objects or through political agendas. Likewise, the protesters advocate ideas of democracy and freedom through their interaction with the physicality of the space and through their practical actions, such as the protests themselves.

Through an analysis of these three elements of space, it will be possible to gain a great insight into the meanings vested in Tiananmen Square, and how it came to be a contested place. They will further work to provide more depth to the analysis as they will enable us to cover several aspects of contested place, by inspecting both the physical and the social landscape, as well as the narratives.
and meanings that may present themselves through the metaphysical aspect. Collectively will provide us with a better understanding of how the different layers of space interact with each other to create meanings.

Distinguishing between the three sub dimensions is rather difficult, as we fundamentally find them to be overlapping in nature. However, the report will be composed by the three main chapters; *1919: The Force Awakens, 1949: The Party Strikes Back, and 1989: Attack of The Publics* which respectively focus on the physical, the metaphysical and the practical use of Tiananmen Square. The chapter on 1919 will thusly provide the reader with a primarily physical overview of the spatial changes that occurred in Beijing during the Republican. It aims to highlight the importance of these physical developments in understanding the contestation of the Square. The chapter on 1949 explores the metaphysical mind mapping of the Chinese Communist Party, in order to provide the reader with a strong sense of political and cultural connotations that may be imbued in the place and its perceptual meaning. Lastly the chapter on 1989 offers a perspective on the practical manifestation and interaction with Tiananmen Square, and so the Trinitarian relation is completed. Due to the overlapping nature mentioned above, each chapter will inevitably relate to the three conceptualisations, but with a primary focus on a singular dimension.

**Methodological perspectives**

**Interdisciplinarity, Constructivism and Interpretivism**

Initially the study is grounded in a multidisciplinary approach, integrating the relevant disciplines of human geography and sociology, which support a critical understanding of the available literature. Moreover this specific combination allows an exploration of the complex reciprocal relation between space and social practices.

Starting from a constructivist perspective with *The Production of Place* as our main intellectual framework, we strive to establish a holistic qualitative account of the processual development of Tiananmen Square. The holistic practice - grounded in our conceptual framework PPM - will ensure a comprehensive linkage between our methodology and methods, and thus work as the ‘research nexus’ (Hesse-Biber and Patricia, 2011: 7). Our interpretive research strategy will focus on the interactions between humans and objects in the context of Tiananmen Square from 1919 onwards.
The holistic approach will be what links our research strategy with our content analysis focusing on the construction of narratives and the annexation of the physical place. Concisely the content analysis will be focusing on Tiananmen Square as an illustrative example of contested place and how contestation takes shape in certain places.

Having established this frame of reference we find it relevant to incorporate, or perhaps better, reflect upon the Weberian conceptualisation of Verstehen, which engages with context-specific meaning and people’s interpretation of individual and collective experiences (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2005). In prolongation of Weber’s philosophy, the world perceived by the spectator is a social construct grounded in agents’ ‘membership in communities of meaning’, which according to theory is mediated by the Kantian notion of a priori knowledge (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2005: 10). To quote the anthropologist Clifford Geertz: ‘believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself spun, I take [...] the analysis of [those] webs to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning’ (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2005: 6).

Following this chain of thought our theoretical writing deliberately distances itself from the positivist idea of universality and predictability in regards to human behaviour. Truth is contested, and so evidence cannot necessarily manifest itself in the observational world since perception is filtered and shaped in relation to the minds which interpret the social webs (Yanow, and Schwartz-Shea, 2005). Videlicet we reject “common-knowledge” and hence do not claim to generate a model mirrored in the material world. Senses are without interpretation nonsense, and so the purpose of this paper is to understand and make sense out of the empirical material. Inasmuch the study calls for a dynamic processual research that calls for more than one possible interpretation of meaning.

**Hermeneutic Tradition**

To perform the previous mentioned content analysis we will partly draw on sources engaging with the architectural planning of Tiananmen Square, and furthermore we will look into other researchers’ interpretation and portrayal of the narratives surrounding the site.

With this frame of reference we are able to work qualitatively in the hermeneutic tradition, but with a somewhat nonpartisan relation to the empirical data. In lines with the hermeneutic rationale we do not recognise meaning as a direct expression. Artefacts e.g. the Monument of the People’s Heroes
in Tiananmen Square must project a constructed web of meaning as they are not completely external to the individual’s mind; rather they are entangled between the consciousness and practice of the agents involved with the artefacts (Yanow and Schwartz-Shea, 2005). On that note our interpretive research voids direct unmediated observation, since expression of meaning - from our vantage point - entails an iterative sense-making through the revision of provisional interpretations.

Thus in the light of the hermeneutic nature we will not generate new data, but rather reinterpret what is already at our disposal so as to identify a new angle of approach. This enables us to study potential patterns and societal themes produced in the Chinese culture, and so we unravel the processes exposed in the pre-existing data. Doing so will enable us to apply our conceptual framework in an attempt to re-examine previous interpretations of Tiananmen Square and the monuments that it encompasses.

Evidently our choices and presumptions related to the existing material are – as alluded to earlier - bound to shape the process, but by going in and out of the analysis we strive to channel new knowledge independent of manipulation and subjective judgements (Hesse-Biber and Patricia, 2011).

**Perspectives and Delimitations**

By applying the concept of *contested place* to our analytical investigation of Tiananmen Square as an illustrative case; we are able to delve into the select history and trace the Square’s process of production and representation. Our aim is to understand how the inflicted meaning has been contested and changed through various, but all the same similar, practices. Inherently this implies a research design reflecting individual as well as collective experience, and in this fashion the analysis is going to educate how ‘*cultural forms are created and projected*’ within the scope of Beijing, China (Hesse-Biber and Patricia, 2011: 229). Ultimately it is imperative to mention how our objective is to reveal the assumptions within the contextual frame of Tiananmen Square, and not to agitate one *indisputable truth*. Here it is noteworthy how political propaganda is a consistent feature of the mass produced meaning vested in Tiananmen Square, but pondering the various perspectives on the problem formulation we deliberately refrain from judging the actual socialisation process where *truth* is created through discourse (Cresswell, 2009). In this regard it is in place to mention how we intentionally omit a rigorous separation between politics, culture and place as one is not completely abstract from another.
In terms of biases our ontological stand is - in accordance with the legacy of Lefebvre - that place is a product of human practice, and so interaction must be prior to place. By means of this the epistemological considerations are with the meaning of place rather than the experience of place, which eventually determine the study’s end.

In conjunction with the above it seems logical to mention that none of the students behind this project have any strong affiliation to the Chinese society, and so the viewpoint presented throughout the report will be that of an outsider. Considering the innate limitations of our western inheritance, our linguistic (in)capabilities force us to rely on translated texts or texts written by English speaking scholars. Irrefutably this constraining barrier involves certain disadvantages in terms of access to Chinese literature and inside knowledge, and so we are intrinsically restricted to ground our argumentation in a western-influenced field of research. Sources that we might have applied count ‘Tiananmen guangchang de guihua he sheji [The planning and design of Tiananmen Square]’ by Wu, L. (1979), and ‘Tiananmen guangchang: Cong gongting guangchang dao renmin guangchang de yanbian he gaizao [Tiananmen Square: evolution and transformation from imperial square to people’s square]’ by Hou, R. (1984).

That is one of the reasons for us not to investigate the pure cultural connotations to the protests, but rather the concept of contested place with an interest in the objective environment and its relation to the inconsistent narratives constructed by the elites and the publics. Here we talk about the term “publics” with relation to the conceptual framework put forth by Forest, Johnson & Till (2004). They argue that public memory, the creation of meaning substantiated in space, is not the mere result of an encompassing singular elite-public dichotomy, rather, it manifests itself through an array of publics and elites that contest with each other to create meaning. In prolongation to this, we will utilise the term to talk about the publics, however due to the fundamental singularity of the Chinese Communist Party, we see it difficult to differentiate between the elites and will therefore not aim to do so.

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3 Note that we do differentiate between using public as a term with its original meaning, and the concept of publics as presented in the paragraph
Selection of sources

In terms of data we utilise various sources providing different and occasionally opposing viewpoints in order to secure a comprehensive empirical foundation for our analysis. To name a few, Sollinger for instance argues that the 1989 movement was innately democratic (1989), Colhoun questions whether it was democratic (1997), and Wasserstrom states that ‘it would be hasty to associate “minzhu” with any conventional western notion of democracy’ (1992: 30). This being said, the previously mentioned authors agree upon the contested nature of Tiananmen Square imposed upon it through the interactions of the publics and the state.

Hence the work will compose a synergy where books, journal articles, and architectural plans support the overall argument of contested place. In the context of our project, the actual socio-political reasons that were involved in bringing about the demonstrations and protests on Tiananmen Square are not our main research priority. The majority of our sources in this project will therefore be comprised of both primary historical sources and peer-reviewed secondary sources, mainly journal articles and books. Our angle of approach is to avoid taking up too much of a historical slant, but to rather focus on the changing of perception and narratives connected to a certain place, using Tiananmen Square as means to represent/illustrate our theories.

The following part will exemplify and elaborate how each type of data will be applied to the report, and further it will evaluate the consequences the specific use of data has had to our project: Books will be adopted as primary reading on the selected historical events, but further they will provide a more extensive understanding of the analytical and theoretical perspectives related to our research question. Particularly The Production of Space by the Marxist philosopher and Sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991) will help us to operationalise the notions of space and place, and further, the compilation of articles The Power of Place by Agnew and Duncan (1989) together with Contested Worlds: An Introduction to Human Geography by Martin Phillips (2005) will facilitate an interpretation of our primary concept contested place. Remaking Beijing: Tiananmen Square and the Creation of a Political Space by Wu Hung (2005), professor in art history, is another main source contributing with detailed information on the construction of the Monument to the People’s Heroes and

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4 Minzhu translates into Rule of the People
the symbolic traits of the Goddess of Democracy. Wu Hung also explores the meaning of time in relation to Tiananmen Square.

Journal articles will provide us with a subtle portrayal of the social-constellation in question together with a critical understanding of how the universally applicable idea of space and place has been employed differently by various scholars. To unravel the complexity of the power-struggle pertinent to Tiananmen Square we will, through *Tiananmen Square and the politics of place* by Linda Hershkovitz, former faculty member of the Department of Geography at Toronto University (1993), examine the architectural development and layout of the Square, and how it became a politically loaded place. Furthermore, articles like *How is a political public space made? - The birth of Tiananmen Square and the May Fourth Movement* by the PhD in political science Nelson K. Lee (2009), will enable ourselves to gain an insight into how Tiananmen Square became a public place through the use of its space by protesters, and the spatial changes that occurred in Beijing prior to 1919. Relating the symbolism of the Square to time we additionally engage with the article *Time* by Barbara Adam (2006), professor in social sciences.

**Chapter on 1919: The Force Awakens**

The following chapter aims to capture the physical - structural and architectural - development of Beijing, and the spatial changes that took place during the beginning of the republican era. Essentially, the chapter will discuss some of the structural changes that occurred to the city’s layout at the end of the Imperial era, and what these meant to the creation of Tiananmen Square as a public place. Furthermore, it will link these physical changes to the events of the May Fourth Movement, and how the two played together in shaping Tiananmen Square from being an *empty space* to being a politically loaded place. It is important to note that the pivotal point of this chapter is not to present the reader with a detailed historical overview of Beijing and the changes it underwent, or the specific historical details of the May Fourth Movement. Rather, it is to present to the reader the importance of certain spatial changes and link them to the social interactions with Tiananmen Square as observed through the May Fourth Movement. Hence the chapter will be dedicated to the conceptualisation of the physical dimension from our theoretical framework.
Imperial Beijing & the Spatial Development

Imperial Beijing originated primarily from the era of the Ming Dynasty, which had taken over the capital of Yuan that had been founded by Khubilai Khan in 1267 (Thornton, 2010). The city was reconstructed in 1420 by the Yonglo Emperor\(^5\) according to a spatial layout following a strict Chinese cosmographic design in order to signify the end of an era of foreign control (Lee, 2009; Agnew & Duncan, 1989: 203). The cosmographic design ensured that the emperor was designated as the ‘Son of Heaven’ placed at the *axis mundi*, the “centre of the world”, of Beijing. The cosmographic layout consisted of three primary ‘cities’ that subsided within one another. Innermost lay the Forbidden City, in which the Imperial Palace was located. Encircling the Forbidden City was the Imperial City, which itself was surrounded by the Outer City. Collectively the Forbidden City and the Imperial City were known as the Inner City. The spatial structure of Inner and Outer City worked as a scheme of dividing the commoner and the imperial, the sacred and the sacrilegious, “a *continuum of spaces of decreasing sacrality as one moved outward*” (Hershkovitz, 1993: 403). An architectural hierarchy was thusly established from which the emperor, located at the centre of the city, exerted ‘*earthly virtue and power*’ (Agnew & Duncan, 1989: 203).

The hierarchical structure of the city was in particular upheld by the strategically placed walls: the nine gates of the Inner City and the seven of the Outer City that acted as restrictive channels and as a mechanism of social control throughout the city (Hershkovitz, 1993).

The gate leading into the Imperial City was called Tiananmen\(^6\) (See Fig. 1, A). It was through Tiananmen that the emperor(s) of the imperial times “appeared” during the annual ceremonial acknowledgement of the publics, and furthermore acted as the place where commandments were issued (Thornton, 2010). However, neither the emperor nor the publics were present during the ceremonial event, and thus Tiananmen carried no substantial meaning to the people and acted merely as an image of symbolic value between ruler and subjects (Lee, 2009).

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\(^{5}\) Third emperor of the Ming Dynasty and ruled from 1402-1424.

\(^{6}\) Tiananmen translates into ‘*Gate of Heavenly peace*’, and should not be confused with Tiananmen Square, which is the space (square) located in front of Tiananmen.
As the Imperial era culminated towards the end of the 19th century, the spatial structure of Beijing proceeded to undergo change. With the revolution and the abdication of the last emperor on the 12th of February, 1912 the strict imperial and cosmographic layout of the city was abandoned in favour of a more modernised structure (Agnew & Duncan, 1989: 204). First and foremost the movement of the publics across the city was revitalised through the opening of the roads and the previously strictly controlled gates – it was in fact only the Front Gate that remained closed and under strict observation (Lee, 2009). One of the most essential roads to be opened to the public was Chang’an Avenue, which ran perpendicularly to Tiananmen (see Fig. 1, D) (Lee, 2009; Hershkovitz, 1993). The opening of Chang’an Avenue in 1913 meant that the place that formerly constituted the private square of the Forbidden City in front of Tiananmen was now open for public use as well, and the avenue furthermore continued to develop into a key location in Beijing, sprawling with people (Lee, 2009).
During the imperial era and the strict cosmographic spatial layout of Beijing, most parks, squares and scenic places in the city that provided a spacious environment for gatherings, were located in restricted areas within the Imperial City and the Forbidden City. Towards the end of the Qing dynasty, the last imperial dynasty to rule China, and at the start of the new republican period in 1912, the focus of the spatial layout of Beijing shifted towards catering more to the public. In order to provide more services for the common people of the city, public parks and leisure areas were created, and previously private parks, such as Central Park (See Fig. 1, F), were made public (Lee, 2009). The newly opened public places quickly developed into locations highly utilised for a range of activities, be they of “education, entertainment, commercial, cultural, social, or even political” status (Ibid: 35). However, the public parks were not entirely unrestricted as an entrance fee was imposed upon those who wished to enter and utilise the facilities and spaces that the parks and areas of leisure presented. Therefore the public parks were primarily used by middle to upper class citizens (Ibid).

The May Fourth Movement

On May the fourth in 1919, student protests with a political agenda occurred in Beijing. Over 3000 strong, the students rallied together in order to display their dissatisfaction towards the hesitance of the Chinese government in regard to the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I (Hershkovitz, 1993). During the negotiations of the Paris Peace Conference, Japan was awarded with a formerly Chinese city, Qingdao located in Shandong, which had been occupied by the Germans during the war – and the failure of the Chinese government to reclaim this territory during the discussion of the Treaty led the public to accuse them of having struck a financial deal with the Japanese. It was the lack of national interest shown by the republican Beijing government that gave birth to the May Fourth Movement in 1919 – a movement whose agenda was for the public to voice their cultural and political concerns (Lee, 2009). Initially the movement was primarily concerned with issues threatening Chinese sovereignty, and was largely a movement with strong patriotic connotations (Wasserstrom, 1990).
The May Fourth Movement was one of the earliest mobilisations of the common people to carry forth a political agenda in modern China\(^7\), and gave stimuli to future political movements. The Chinese Communist Party itself indeed claims that the patriotic, political and intellectual characteristics of the May Fourth Movement shaped scholars of radical intellectual thought, leading to success of the revolution and creation of the Party in 1949 (Ibid: 9). Furthermore, the movement played a vital role in establishing a ‘spatial practice to which virtually all subsequent protest movements (up to and including 1989) made self-conscious reference’ (Hershkovitz, 1993: 406). The spatial practice that the May Fourth Movement constituted regards the use of the *empty space* outside of Tiananmen, which today is known as Tiananmen Square.

Tiananmen Square is in contemporary time commonly known to have been the most popular venue for protesters to gather at due to its attained symbolic value of patriotism and revolution. However, it has not always been so. Prior to the May Fourth Movement, the Square, which at the time was referred to as ‘*empty space*’ (Lee, 2009; Hershkovitz 1993), held no specific significance to either the public or the government; the *empty space* in front of Tiananmen had acted as a private square during the imperial times, and was thusly inaccessible to the public, meaning that they had no ties to the place - it merely carried the symbolic values of the sacredness of the emperor. Following the end of the dynasties and the move towards the republican era, the *empty space* became accessible in 1913 with the opening of Chang’an Avenue as mentioned earlier, and the symbolic value of sacredness was lost in the ideological switch (Lee, 2009).

In comparison to the Front Gate, New China Gate and Central Park, Tiananmen Square did not hold the same level of political importance in 1919 – yet the students of the May Fourth Movement chose to utilise the empty space of the square for their protest on the fourth of May. The following sub-chapter aims to investigate and analyse why Tiananmen Square was chosen, and what consequences this had for the space.

\(^7\) Modern China refers to the early Republican era after the abdication of the last emperor in 1912.
The Choice of Tiananmen Square

After Central Park was made public in 1915, it functioned as one of the most important political and intellectual locations in Beijing. The park was used by the adversarial political elites to host demonstrations and protests, and as a place where concerns were voiced. One of the major adversarial elites to utilise the space of Central Park for political purposes was the Citizens’ Diplomatic Association (Lee, 2009). The functionality of Central Park as a public space did however carry several limitations; the parks were only semi-public as the government issued control over them. If the government wished for the parks to be closed, they would be so, and the elected members of the board of directors for each park were well established people with a healthy relationship with the government (Ibid). Furthermore, the Citizens’ Diplomatic Association and other social and political organisations required an entrance permission issued by the police in order to carry forth a meeting in the park(s) (Ibid). Lastly, as previously mentioned, an entrance fee was imposed upon those who wished to enter the parks – regardless of their intended purpose and use. As a result of this, only wealthy organisations that could pay for the attendants (primarily in order to allow low-class citizens to attend), such as the Citizens’ Diplomatic Association, were capable of hosting public demonstrations within Central Park (and other public parks) (Ibid).

Petitions, specifically, were popularly held near the New China Gate (see Fig. 1, L). Over the course of 1918-19, several petitions took place, organised by students; on the 21st of May, 1918, over 2000 students had gathered, and several of such events continued to take place during 1919 (Lee, 2009). Lee does note, however, that there appeared to be a slight affiliation between Tiananmen and the New China Gate, showing that Tiananmen was of less political importance to the public and the government; On the fifth of June, 1919, several hundreds of female students had gathered outside of Tiananmen, from where they continued to advance forth to the New China Gate to appease a petition to the president. Moreover, demonstrators that were arrested at New China Gate would be sent to Tiananmen to be apprehended, indicating the lesser importance of Tiananmen as a political site (2009).

The May Fourth Movement was no wealthy organisation; rather, it was a collection of students from thirteen different schools, and therefore faced limitations in its choice of public avenues to utilise for its demonstrations. However, the previously highlighted spatial changes to Beijing im-
bued the students with a wider variety of choices in terms of public space. The opening of Chang’an Avenue had meant that Tiananmen now functioned as the intersection between the major roads from each cardinal direction of the city. The thirteen schools from which the students came were primarily placed in the northernmost part of the Outer City and the more southern parts of the Inner City – for which reason Tiananmen acted as the fundamental crossroad between the schools (Lee, 2009). The beneficial traits of Tiananmen as an avenue of public demonstrations over Central Park and New China Gate proved to be quite essential to the May Fourth Movement. Unlike Central Park, the empty space in front of Tiananmen was not semi-public, in the sense that it did not enforce an entry fee upon the public, and nor did it require a permit to socialise or gather there. Furthermore, in contrast to both the Central Park and the New China Gate, Tiananmen had at the time not yet claimed itself as a politically active space, and was therefore less strictly overlooked by the government. Importantly, the square also provided the students with more than adequate space in which they could gather (Ibid). The combination of all these factors resulted in the space in front of Tiananmen to be chosen as the gathering point for the demonstrations by the May Fourth Movement in 1919.

In the final sub-chapter we will link the findings presented in the overall chapter of 1919 to the theoretical framework set by Lefebvre, and discuss the importance of the spatial changes made to Beijing, alongside the impact that the May Fourth Movement had on Tiananmen Square. For this, we will furthermore draw upon some of the conclusions made by the authors used through the chapter.

**Birth of Tiananmen Square & Theoretical discussion**

Thornton (2010), Lee (2009) and Hershkovitz (1993) all agree that the demonstrations on the fourth of May in 1919 at the empty space outside of Tiananmen provided the space with the initial impetus to become the social and political place known as Tiananmen Square. Following the events of the first large-scale demonstration that was held by the May Fourth Movement on the 4th of May in 1919 at Tiananmen Square, the majority of public protests proceeded to be held at the Square. Thirty-thousand students gathered at the Square on November the 29th in 1919 to voice their concern against foreign military interaction by Japan in the Fujian Province of China; on the 7th of December, over a hundred-thousand people gathered to protest against the same incident (Lee, 2009).
Any given space that is not considered empty is a vessel of substance, but is itself not a substance. This, however, does not mean that the space is simply an abstraction – rather, as it remains a vessel of substance it implies that space “is not a thing but rather a set of relations between things” (Lefebvre, 1991: 83). To specify, space, albeit not a thing, maintains and disguises social relationships. Furthering this thought, spaces are produced through social activities and the actions between actor and space – in this sense, space may arise from political, social or even economic conducts of activity. Space is thereby considered a physical actuality created from the earth, yet is also interrelated with the practical forces imposed upon it. Lefebvre sees this space as both a product of consumption, but also as a producer that cannot be detached from technology and physical changes, or the social interactions that metaphysically shapes the space, nor can it be separated ‘from the state and the superstructures of society’ (1991: 85). Social space thusly eventuates, or crystallises through ‘encounter, assembly and simultaneity’ of everything that exists within the space – natural or societal – as a product of contestation or harmony between humans, materials and monuments (Lefebvre, 1991: 101).

As was presented in the beginning of the chapter, Tiananmen Square during the imperial times merely served as a symbolic space of sacredness, disassociated from the publics that had no access to the Square. As noted above, social space and meaning creation is substantiated in the interaction of people, publics and elites, and their harmonious or contesting ideals. Therefore we argue that whilst the Square acted as a symbolic space – in the sense that the figurative bond between the emperor and his subjects was presented there, through the communication of a symbolic space – it did not function as a social and public space vested with meaning. As Wu Hung (2005: 58) notes, the ruler and subjects communicated through the symbolic value of Tiananmen, however neither were physically present at the space and so ‘Tiananmen both concealed and exhibited [...] the imperial power’. It seems clear that the restrictive and hierarchal nature of the spatial layout of imperial Beijing that functioned as a social control mechanism disabled the publics from interacting with Tiananmen Square – and therein lies the utter importance of the spatial changes that occurred during the early Republican era, to the creation of Tiananmen Square as a political public space. Lee (2009) argues that without the spatial and architectonic changes such as the opening of Chang’an Avenue and other roads and parks – the modernisation of the city – it would be hard to imagine that the May Fourth Movement would have succeeded in their actions, if even existed. It is, for example, for this reason that we find the investigation of the space’s physical features pivotal in order to un-
Understand how social space and meaning is created. Without an understanding of how spatiality relates to practice, is it difficult to fully capture the idea of social space and how it may be contested.

Another concept that is important to note in the discussion of the rise of Tiananmen Square as a public and political place is that of re-appropriation of space. A space which already has a place in existence may indeed be drawn from its ‘original purpose and the raison d'être which determines its forms, functions and structures; it may thus in a sense become vacant, and susceptible of being diverted, re-appropriated and put to a use quite different from its original one’ (Lefebvre, 1991: 167). We believe that this was precisely what happened to Tiananmen Square as it transgressed from being a private square, to empty space, to finally being re-appropriated by the actions of the May Fourth Movement into being a political public space. The actions of the Movement at Tiananmen Square in 1919, as Thornton (2010), Hershkovitz (1993) and Wu Hung (2005: 61) argue, thereby gave impetus to the production of the Square as a new political space that had grown into a different order of its previous version, starting a new era of public opinion rooted in the Square. In the following chapter we will look more into how the Chinese Communist Party attempted to dominate the space following the 1949 revolution and re-appropriate the space to be in line with its goals.

**Sub conclusion**

When the dynastic era came to an end in 1912, the spatial architectonics of the city of Beijing changed drastically, moving away from the hierarchical structure that placed the emperor as the axis mundi. Without the physical changes explored in the chapter that opened up and modernised the city, it seems unlikely that the May Fourth Movement would have been able to gather at Tiananmen Square as a place of public status, and imbue it with meaning through their political and cultural demonstrations. It therefore seemed essential to include and investigate the physicality of space when talking about how Tiananmen Square came to be a political public space, and furthermore how it came to be contested.
Chapter on 1949: The Party Strikes Back

In prolongation to the temporal trajectories presented in the problem area, the following chapter will succinctly cover the proceedings of 1949. More concretely, it will frame the metaphysical space created by the Chinese Communist Party together with the fundamental ideological schism characteristic of the time. Additionally, the chapter will dive into the geographical and sociological webs of meaning surrounding the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China, and the political annexation of Tiananmen Square which mirrors physical, practical and metaphysical aspects. Primarily, however, the target of the chapter will be to explore the metaphysical dimension pertinent to the contestation. This with regards to the Monument to the People’s Heroes in tandem with the implementation of Beijing time as ‘harmony between time and space [traditionally] was the foundation of rulership over a unified country’ (Hung, 2003: 109).

The inauguration of the People’s Republic of China

In the aftermath of the revolution the CCP claimed Beijing and its cultural inheritance; Mao’s portrait displayed on Tiananmen sealed the new political forces’ relation with the place. The successive official celebrations – which were executed on the square - arguably tied the people with the government, and so the secular, Trinitarian relation between government, place and people was established (Hung, 2005).

Evidently this argument could be challenged, but in consideration of the vast number of scholars agreeing to this proposal of a ‘new zero’ (Hung, 2005; Gittings, 1989) and the aim of our analysis, this constellation will not be questioned further in this project. Rather we intend to explore the particularity of representation together with the symbolic language which allows the agents identified in the research to mediate between their minds and to contest the meaning imposed by the other. On that note it is relevant to acknowledge the interdependency between politics, culture and place, as a separation of these could risk diminishing their significance to the present analysis. In other words this chapter will not rely on exclusive differentiations between the underlying intentions of a given practise or thought, but rather it will shed light on the conflict this practice or thought might encourage.
To return focus, Tiananmen Square was supposed to manifest the presence of the newly-ruling Party into the symbolic seat of China’s leadership (Hung, 2007). Inspired by Moscow’s Red Square (Thornton, 2010), Mao had a vision of a people’s square for a people’s state, and in order to realise this centre of attention, Tiananmen Square was already enlarged two months prior the proclamation of the new PRC in 1949. Additionally the Square underwent major reconstruction in the early 1950s as the space was not sufficiently large or accessible for the marches and national bi-annual parades that were planned. Surrounding structures like walls and decorative arches were torn down to make space. Mao wanted it to be able to fit ‘a billion people’ (Dutton et al., 2008: 24).

By 1959, the square stretched a whopping 440,000 square meters wide, 160,000 smaller than its current size (Hung, 2007). In keeping with its ceremonial purpose, there were no amenities like benches or trees. The vast stretch of paved flatness was not for socialization or leisure, but to look forward in one direction towards Tiananmen and the once Forbidden City. Raised above the masses in person and in portrait, Mao was the personification of the revolution and had to see, and more importantly, be seen, by the crowds in the square. If one could not see him for the distance, there was his forward-facing portrait casting his gaze over everyone in the square (Lee, 2011).

With reference to the expansion of the Square, the state-run press depict the process as a ‘spontaneous mass movement’ involving more than a thousand architects and engineers (Thornton, 2010: 304). The metamorphosis of Tiananmen Square hence resembled the foundation of a revolutionary, united China, and so it served as a socialist vehicle in architectonic form. The only recognised party, the CCP, strived to make space for the only recognised class, the proletariat, and so all geographical and social diversity seemed to be ignored (Thornton, 2010).

In regards to the inauguration of the PRC, one can imagine how the concrete-floor hosting grand scale propaganda and vibrant processions could unite the people and ‘transcend the particularity’ as Wu Hung phrases it (2005: 90). Herewith meant that the practise in Tiananmen Square seemingly partook in an effect of synergy, where the end was greater than the actual experience. As the helmsman, Mao Zedong, participated in the celebrations from atop Tiananmen – the place appraised most solemn in the whole parade - the barriers between the “civilian generals” and the commoners should begin to dissolve (Thornton, 2010). The people became both subjects and objects to a socialist community with an unambiguous origin centred in a majestic square, where they traditionally only featured as figurative subjects during imperial times (Hung, 2005). By means of this the CCP
gained its legitimacy through calculated iconoclasm where the reactionary, old order was annihilated in favour of the socialist, new order (Hung, 2007; Hung, 2005).

To accentuate this schism Mao suggested that ‘the people, and the people alone, are the motive forces of world history’ (Hung, 2005: 115). From the government’s point of view this statement simply manifests the nexus between government and citizen. A critic of the hegemonic discourse however, could debate that the socialist institution forged an imagined collective pronounced the people; a veil of illusion which explicitly promotes an internally homogeneous and externally bound nation. Moreover it equates the Chinese population with the source of power, but inherently that is an inconclusive notion. Do the people hold power, or is it rather the one(s) holding the people who hold(s) power? Another curious trait of the uniform conceptualisation of the people is the manner in which Mao becomes a prerequisite for the masses to identify themselves in the public space (Hung, 2005). By means of a well devised discourse and the repetitive nature of the pseudo-religious Mao cult, the people becomes a constructed unit summoned on his call (Gittings, 1989).

Another peculiar aspect of this relation, or dichotomy, between state and people exposed in the parades is the manner in which it is not the people constituting the visual focus, but rather the civilian generals. This observation was put forth by the professor Chang-Tai Hung, who argued that ‘the leaders were not the audience, they were the actors, while demonstrators acted as [the] audience’ (Hung, 2007: 430), and thus the presence of Mao and his fellow companions provided a target of appraisal to the people.

Contemplating this unusual relation between government, place, and people one might consider how the political campaigns could effectually pose a threat to the public space explored in our chapter on 1919. In accordance with theory ‘public space is often presented as an ideal of openness toward which social groups struggle’ (Staeheli and Mitchell, 2009: 512), but when the authorities dictate who is, and who can be part of the public is it then relevant to entitle Tiananmen Square as a public space prior to 1989? A central Party directive from 1955 paradoxically stipulate that ‘no single unit is allowed to come up with its own slogans’ (Hung, 2007: 424), but what means do the population then have to promote contestation and openness?

If public space is constituted in the critical theorist Nancy Fraser’s perception of ‘parallel discursive arenas where members or subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter discourses to formulate alternative interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs’ (Mitchell and Staeheli,
2009: 513) then it seems crucial to explore the public spaces accessible since they arguably determine the prospects for idiosyncratic movements and for individuals to be recognised in and as part of the public space (Mitchell and Staeheli, 2009). With these critical perspectives in mind it seems pivotal to dissect the politics of space with respect to the Mao Zedong Cult; an instrumentalist tool which determined the spatial hierarchy, and gained impetus from the rousing slogans attributed to Mao himself, the supreme authority (Hung, 2007).

Another pivotal theme in the processions was the aim and celebration of the united regions and nationalities (Hung, 2007), something which will be explored further in the subsequent subchapter, The Geographical Unification through Beijing Time. Before expanding on that dimension of the CCP’s political handling of Tiananmen Square it nonetheless seems appropriate to explore the perceptual meaning of architectural features since the monitoring system deciding on the destiny of the monuments erected in the Square arguably mirrors the CCP’s anxiety about its own existence (Hung, 2007). For this reason an analysis of the most important one - the Monument to the People’s Heroes – will be the focal point of the following subchapter.

Before going into greater depth with the specifics, we concisely wish to comment on a latent causal-mechanism behind this reframing of Tiananmen Square and the other artefacts. In keeping with Forest and Johnsons’ thought this paper advocates that the political actors attempt to exacerbate the inter-political conflict through monumental warfare. Doing so, they arguably encourage a shared public memory which necessarily shapes and draws up the boundaries of the collective identity (2011).

**The Monument to the People’s Heroes**

Traditionally war memorials are erected in order to commemorate the deeds of the dead, or the loss of the loved, but with the Chinese stele inaugurated on Labour Day the 1st of May 1958 the political programme proved to perpetuate the symbolism of the project. The Monument to the People’s Heroes had been commissioned and planned right from the very start of Mao’s claim to power (Dutton et al., 2008). With the immense construction situated in the centre of gravity – on the North South axis in Tiananmen Square – the 37.94 metre-tall obelisk crystallised the new political narrative rooted in a historical context. It was meant to embody the People’s Republic’s version of history up
to its inauguration. Tall and solid rather than low and arched like according to the old empiric translation of power, the features of the carved people at the bottom were devoid of any individualism as it originates from the tale of the mass. Their anonymous, triumphant poses rigid and well-rehearsed conveyed the heroic struggle for public emancipation and liberation. The Monument also faced north, towards Tiananmen. This creation of a new literal and figurative centre of power within Beijing deviated from the old dynastic formula of having power radiate outwards from the Forbidden City in straight lines through gates or gate-shaped structures (Hung, 2005; Dutton et al., 2008).

Through socialist realism it not only represented a select glorious past, but it also alluded to the promise of a socialist future guided by the revolutionary movement characteristic of the new realm (Hung, 2001). In this context one might speculate as to why monuments are so commanding and forceful? Forest and Johnson suggests that the physical arrangements – here the Monument to the People’s Heroes - gain strategic legitimacy as the spatial framing transcends time; by virtue of its external nature the Monument influences the mental representation by bringing past images and mystical characters into the present (2002). As in the dystopian novel by George Orwell, 1984, this constitutive narrative of a socialist identity implicates an intelligent combination of factual episodes, folklore, and fiction since it otherwise would not echo the utopian dimension promised by the ruling echelon (Gittings, 1989). The PRC was supposed to outperform the rival representatives – in this context the capitalist world – but as Lagerkvist (2014) argues the battle was on the expense of the individual’s autonomy, and hence the Monument to the People’s Heroes innately compromised the integrity of Chinese people in an artificially forged commemoration.

In stone, the political apparatus manifested the new spatial hierarchy through eight reliefs on the Monument to the People’s Heroes depicting; ‘the Opium War; the Taiping Rebellion; the 1911 Revolution; the May Fourth Movement; the May Thirtieth Movement of anti-colonial demonstrations in 1925; the Nanchang Uprising; the War of Resistance Against Japan, with an emphasis on the Communists’ guerrilla warfare; and the Yangzi Crossing by the Red Army in the Civil War to defeat the Nationalists in south China’ (Hung, 2001: 466). In this analysis we are not going into further detail regarding the specific events, but it is inevitable to consider the structured separation between ‘us’ and ‘them’ – here meaning the revolutionaries and the counterrevolutionaries - which offers both a mirror of reflection and a token of judgement. Everything connected with ‘us’ is endorsed by the official historical account, where everything connected with ‘them’ is completely erased from existence. Implicitly this dichotomy, or binary system, creates a foundational ground
upon which the CCP stages itself in contrast to the constitutional factor of the dialectical-other. To employ McEwan’s phrasing ‘superiority cannot exist without an opposite’ (2009: 328), and so it can be argued that the spaces manifesting diversity become momentous in staging the new political order. Generating such destructive psychological maps the regular Chinese man or woman might - parallel to the black man in Fanon’s analysis of the colonial power - be ignorant to his/her servitude in the ideological web spun by the Party, and thus alienated from his/her consciousness (McEwan, 2009).

By introducing such a rigorous storyline infused with progressive chapters targeting the ultimate conquest of the CCP in 1949, all alternative versions and experiences seem to be conjured away in order to accommodate contemporary political demands (Hung, 2001). The grounds of this perspective is not far from the truism that ‘history is written by the conquerors’, but the subtle architectural planning of the Square is nevertheless a symbolic dialogue which successfully persuaded public opinion (Gittings, 1989). On this subject we would argue that it is an ideological strategy with definite material consequences, and with this frame of reference it is rather alluring to promote the notion Banal Nationalism composed by the Professor of Social Sciences Michael Billig. According to his work Nationalism provides us with a perspective on how ideology shapes the human mind, and hoodwink it into accepting the social world as the true natural world (Billig, 1995). To reiterate the above, ideology operates to manipulate people, and put together an unquestionable world founded on common sense. Hereby the ruling power stimulates a collective existence established upon a progressively routinised process of remembering and forgetting. While having to consciously forgo questioning the ‘obvious’, these individual agents must uphold an identity constrained and bound, through external social fact(or)s. In Billig’s worded ideology it – if applied successfully – will inspire and secure a ‘continued existence upon a collective amnesia’ (Billig, 1995: 38). More concretely this metaphor refers to the method by which symbolism – constituted in e.g. the Monument to the People’s Heroes - intentionally located, merge into the surrounding environment over time. Herewith people forget to mind the different perspectives characteristic to the local milieus, and so Billig argues for a ‘movement from symbolic mindfulness to mindlessness’ (Billig, 1995: 41).

In prolongation to this the New China redefined itself – parallel to the Soviet Union – as the heart of an ideological empire (Forest and Johnson, 2002). Contemplating the monitoring of this dense symbolic landscape surrounding Tiananmen Square and the Monument to the People’s Heroes, one plausible interpretation would suggest that the Party’s accumulation of symbolic capital is not
merely a way to triumph, but triumph in itself (Hung, 2005). Following this chain of thought the monumental complex of Tiananmen Square was deliberately utilised as a political instrument channelled to optimise the ideological framing of the state, but also of the individual (Ibid). Herewith the Monument of the People’s Heroes - architecturally operationalised as a dominant official space embracing individual ideas and reminiscences of past events – exposes Mao’s vision of a deterministic narrative comprised of an independent linear motive (Ibid). With the ‘retrospective reconstruction of the past from a present vantage point’ (Hung, 2005: 29) the CCP strives to consolidate the foreordained destination, communism, in the collective consciousness.

As such the interplay between the physical, practical and ideological aspects of the Chinese political scenery proves helpful when searching for meaning touching on the intuitive patterns and latent relationships regarding the contestation of place. With Mao’s inscription on the front of the stele - ‘eternal glory to the people’s heroes’- the Monument can be read as an example of how the state metaphorically gave birth to a new public (Hung, 2005), notwithstanding this carefully designed picture of a civic community proves fairly intrusive. It is a social construct introduced into a pre-existing spatial context, and so it forced a profound reconceptualisation of social as well as political affairs; all which in nature are contestable.

As such the symbolically dense scene of Tiananmen Square was altered into ‘a site of visual production and presentation’ (Hung, 2005: 9), which explicitly articulated the visions of the CCP. In this context one may perhaps wonder whether or not the residents of Beijing internalised the reconstructed memory of the past and the displaced mirage constituting the future? Answering this question is from our position as outsiders is unthinkable, but it is certainly appealing to follow the protests in 1989 since the ideological thickness becomes far less definite.

The geographical unification through Beijing time

In continuation of the inauguration of the PRC, the Party not only replaced the nationalist capital Nanjing with Beijing as mentioned earlier, but it also adopted the somewhat controversial Beijing Time. In effect, the New China officially started to tag on eight hours in front of Greenwich Mean Time, and so it abandoned the clocks adjusted to the five time zones spanned by the territorial map (Dutton et al., 2008). Herewith the CCP arguably unified the people of the infant nation through an
artificial time-regulation centred in Tiananmen Square, and ‘thus from 1949 onward China would awaken and rise to the ticktock of Party time’ (Dutton et al., 2008:16). In this regard some scholars underscore the dismissal of cultural and regional diversity (Hung, 2005 and Calhoun, 1997), but as Michael Dutton acknowledges the CCP not only brought death and dismay to its competitors; it also aroused new life to its allies (2008). In addition one can imagine how the implementation of Beijing Time had both its social disadvantages and its political advantages; the latter enhanced by the combined restructuring of the representational dimensions of Tiananmen Square.

Besides the obvious symbolism of a synchronised socialist force, the notion of time also carries great importance in Chinese culture. Reading Hung Wu’s interpretation of time keeping and time telling in the dynastic periods, one acquires a foundational understanding of how the emperor’s divinity was channelled by means of monumentality. Literally speaking this monumentality was – according to Wu - expressed through architecture and sound in the drum tower and the bell tower situated on Beijing’s central axis (2003). Following Wu’s mind mapping, time keeping was the secret science guarded and exercised by the emperor to ‘regulate seasons, months, days, and hours’ (Ibid: 107). The practice of time keeping was carried out in the shadows of mystery behind the gates to the Forbidden City, where no commoner was allowed access. Adopting Barbara Adam’s perception of time keeping, it furthermore legitimised the emperor – and similarly it must legitimise the CCP - as the keeper of collective memory (Adam, 2006). Time telling on the other hand was an instrument applied to convey a uniform timetable to the public. It was not an expression of time, as most Westerners know it; rather it was ‘an official schedule of projected operations and recurring events’ (Ibid: 108) such as announcing and facilitating the nightly curfew (7pm – 5am) together with the hours of the night watch. To further reiterate, it is a tradition of a two-pronged symbolic monumentalism encompassing a concealed and a displayed power; a perspective which could potentially also be projected in e.g. the Monument to the People’s Heroes discussed earlier.

Apart from being positioned on the central axis - materially represented by virtue of the two towers - the dimension of time was subtly integrated into the city’s symbolic arrangement. Operating the Drum tower and the Bell tower outside Di’anmen⁸, the imperial power could debatably be transmit-

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⁸ Di’anmen translates into ‘Gate of Earthly Peace’
ted from inside the spiritual domain behind Tiananmen into the public space via these architectural installations (Hung, 2005).

Arranging the token of static spaces in a temporal, dynamic composition the emperor figuratively synchronised the earthly and heavenly movements. By extension of this ceremonial practise the emperor engendered cosmic order, and in doing so he could ‘internalise the intrinsic movement of the universe [...] to rule without using force’ (Ibid: 113).

These cultural perspectives could immediately seem without reference to the present report; however we would argue the opposite. Indeed we find it pertinent as there ostensibly are quite a few paradoxical incidents - linked with the way of the dynasties and the mode of the PRC - revealing the inconsistency of the ideological narrative constructed post 1949. In all aspects the CCP strived to divorce itself from the reactionary past affiliated with the dynasties and nationalists by alienating the structures which supposedly facilitated the antagonistic division of social classes (Dutton et al., 2008). Nonetheless we would advocate that the personification of the socialist authority takes the same form as prior ruling powers; the transparent, omnipresent face of one man embedded in material practises.

The new China might be embossed in Tiananmen Square to commemorate the founding of the PRC, but focusing on time and the temporal relations of the Square it is possible to identify openings for alternative perspectives. As alluded to in the previous paragraph Tiananmen Square is historically the originator of public time, and hence time is inherently a crucial dimension of the CCP’s spatial framing of the site. Encapsulating the process of nature in a deterministic timetable of human design - here referred to the Beijing Time - the CCP arguably aim for the ultimate compression of time to exercise control over the individual and the collective, but also over the space.

In accordance with theory ‘invariable time [...] superimposed on living systems’ tend to coerce the living, and so humans have to adapt to the directional ticking (Adam, 2006: 123). Herewith people follow the cyclical repetition of time as it interacts with the spatial sense-making partly structured by the Party, and thusly the political time proves to be closely interwoven with the political framing of Tiananmen Square. Implementing a universal time the CCP subtly incorporates what we previously called time keeping and time telling into the realm of the PRC, and hence it also exercises a concealed and a displayed power in keeping with former emperors.
In this regard a fascinating observation made by Wu is that the Drum tower and the Bell tower are respectively 46.7 and 47.9 meters tall, and would be seen in day and heard at night. Herewith the power relation between the emperor and the populace would prevail and be reproduced through a latent ritual due to the omnipresence of the central leadership (Adam, 2006). Equal with Mao, the emperor could – if not observe his subjects directly from behind a portrait – then at least reach them through the medium of sound.

In connection with the above we would in retrospective argue that there seem to be certain parallels between the new structural changes and the former imperial conceptualisation of time and space. Concretely we allude to the control of the population through regulation and management of time by means of an externally implemented structure materialised in an imposing monumentalism.

Conclusively the matter of time is a curious phenomenon. In pursuance of the historian Mircea Eliade’s explanation of rituals as key to capture - or perhaps better phrased - freeze time (Adam, 2006), we would propose that the socialist administration enforced Beijing Time since it by virtue of the national and bi-annual parades etc. could entrench a sense of ‘eternity in the present’ (Ibid: 121). Put differently the CCP could allegorically create a timeless space in Tiananmen Square considering that this is where time itself originates from. Thusly, the perhaps most challenging factor of the Party’s existence – the disappearance of the present as the clock ticks on – can be circumvent by means of a novel absoluteness.

**Sub conclusion on 1949**

In short the chapter on 1949 offers an analysis exploring the ideological initiatives utilised to appropriate, and subsequently dominate Tiananmen Square, contrasting its meaning to the traditional one. Inasmuch as the “face” of the socialist institution immanently reveals itself in the portrait of Mao, the Chinese Communist Party annexed the site in prolongation of the symbolism permeating the new framing of the People’s Republic of China. Herewith the contestation was arguably silenced temporarily, as the spatial framing was carried out in a highly exclusive environment. In this regard it is interesting to notice how the dynastic practise of concealed and displayed power was intimately utilised in the course of appropriation, and thereby the CCP’s paradoxical alignment with the prior leadership is revealed.
Chapter on 1989: Attack of the Publics

At its core the following chapter will address the publics’ practical utilisation of Tiananmen Square to convey their political demands by means of protests, demonstrations and physical occupation of the place. The chapter engages with the Monument to the People’s Heroes in relation to the death of Zhou Enlai and the erection of Mao’s Mausoleum, as these two events altered the people’s relation to the Monument and their perceptual meaning of the Square.

Inasmuch we will be looking at the contestation between the portrait of Mao hanging from Tiananmen, and the Goddess of Democracy constructed by the students, as this binary system inherently represent the state and the publics. The above mentioned practical methods applied by the students, will be outlined in relation to theory of contested place together with how space and meaning is produced and altered through domination and (re)appropriation.

Appropriation of the Monument to the People’s Heroes

With the death of the Premier Zhou Enlai in 1976, the constructed memory of the People’s Republic of China arguably stood trial. People were mournful, and hence no less than two million Chinese citizens defied the socialist authorities’ prohibition of public memorial processions, and gathered in Tiananmen Square to mourn the pragmatic icon (Panda, 1999).

In effect the ultra-leftist Gang of Four⁹ had attempted to impose a ban on the sales of white crepe paper, but as the day went on it showed to be futile (Gittings, 1989). White, traditional paper wreaths appeared on the Monument to the People’s Heroes together with a large portrait of the Premier; the latter directly opposing the official portrait of Mao Zedong communicating an unequivocal, iconoclastic message (Teiwes and Sun, 2004).

This explicit challenge of the hierarchical order coincided with the start of Quingming in early April¹⁰ which only seemed to stir the publics sense of righteousness; they marched to defend the traditional call for commemoration (Panda, 1999). As such it must primarily be seen as a procession

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⁹ A political faction constituted by four Party officials: Mao’s wife Jian Qing, Zhang Chunqiao, Yao Wenyuan, and Hongwen

¹⁰ A traditional festival devoted to ancestral veneration and mourning
with patriotic connotations rather than a democratic resistance movement; people wished to pay their respect in keeping with the old cultural codes. Wasserstrom, however, also deciphered an objection toward the Gang of Four upon their malevolence exposed during the Cultural Revolution\(^\text{11}\) (1990).

One of the main explanatory factors in regards to the spontaneous demonstrations in Tiananmen Square, was the general feeling of indifference with which the Party had silenced and censored Zhou Enlai’s death (Teiwes and Sun, 2004). As the publics decided to visit the Monument to the People’s Heroes - the official symbol of the people (Dutton et al., 2008) - in tribute to the respectable Premier, an individual who had been criticised by the ideological machine during the Cultural Revolution it impassioned the currents of political tension. A curious observation in this regard was made by the public security leader of Beijing, Liu Chuanxin, who claimed, that the improvised marches and banned paper wreaths ‘reflect severe class struggles’ (Teiwes and Sun, 2004: 217).

Intrinsically the unanticipated amplitude of the demonstrations gave impetus to a well-founded vexation and uncertainty, which urged the autocratic management to take action. On that note the Square was emptied to the sound of cannons, and only the - now bloody - Monument to the People’s Heroes was left on the surface of the paved expanse of the Square (Hung, 2005). Herewith the Monument seceded itself from the constructed narrative depicted by the state, and acquired a new perceptual meaning. The public was from thereon both figuratively and literally tied to the Monument by blood, and so the events of the illicit mourning and subsequent defiance of the authorities in 1976 remained in the collective memory of the publics.

The official symbolism of the monument had been displaced, and herewith it gained a slot in ordinary people’s reinterpretations and association with the site. Just like the individuals that had been affected in 1976 protests, the Monument was also figuratively and symbolically hemmed in on all sides by the watchful authorities (Hung, 1991)

The ailing Chairman Mao was to die a mere five months after the 1976 demonstration (Gittings, 1989). In addendum, Mao’s mausoleum was constructed and inaugurated - disrupting the open scene - in the critical space between Tiananmen and the Monument to the People’s Heroes. Facing

\(^{11}\) Political campaign spurred by Mao Zedong with the aim of preserving “true” communist ideology
Tiananmen it created a new southern border of Tiananmen Square, and as such it enveloped the Monument within the four structures that made up the figurative and symbolic walls of the square (Hung, 2005). As Hung proposed this captured the people - now inseparable with the Monument to the People’s Heroes - in an allegorical prison. The publics were checked in the political game of chess, continuously under surveillance; observed from beyond by the all-seeing-eye of Mao elevated above Tiananmen (2005).

Additionally the mausoleum took on the role of the representative of the PRC’s revolutionary past. Doing so it firstly left tangible contradiction of having Mao’s embalmed body housed opposite his “living” embodiment in the omnipresent portrait across Tiananmen Square; and secondly, leaving the Monument to the People’s Heroes in the middle of the Square to the living. As a side note, it is worth mentioning, that the Monument incarnated the only place with unrestricted access, and so in 1977, common citizens of Beijing were not allowed inside any of the buildings encircling the Square (Hung, 2005). Immediately this is reminiscent of the dynastic era’s isolation and secrecy, but what the official rationale behind these restraints is, would call for divination. A persuasive explanation would perhaps insinuate, that the spontaneous assemblies could aggravate the anxiety of the CCP. If the publics engaged and appropriated the rest of what constituted Tiananmen Square, the collective identity, rooted and shaped around the shared memories indoctrinated by the state made known in the chapter on 1949, might crackle into unstable, fragmented pieces. Inherently, this would pose a palpable threat to the political narrative dictating permanence and Party servility.

In 1978 a series of economical reforms were implemented in China. These partially separated politics from the contemporary bureaucratic machinery, but they also divorced the social society from the omnipresent state, and so, according to the anthropologist, Sullivan, the reforms ‘gave impetus to “civil sovereignty”’ (1990: 130).

Since the contestation of Tiananmen Square is the cynosure of this project, we do not go into further detail regarding the content, nor the political reasons behind the reforms. However, it is pertinent to acknowledge the impact these reforms had on the definition of borders in contemporary China; it so happened that the figurative limits of the state were significantly degraded (Gittings, 1989). Categorically this evoked China’s interaction with the surrounding world, and so students could among others exchange experiences with their westerly counterparts (Panda, 1999).
With this opening up of the country’s figurative borders came an exposure to Western concepts of organized, political democracy. Even though there were campaigns by the Chinese Communist party in the early Eighties to try and curb the influence of these imported concepts, tens of thousands of students and scholars had been out of the country to study and travel (Panda, 1999). An observable example of this overseas influence later took form in the reproduced form of the Goddess of Democracy, which we will address in the subsequent chapter.

The political movement in 1989, initially sparked off by the death of the Party General Secretary Hu Yaobang, collided with the 70th anniversary of the May Fourth demonstration in 1919 (Solinger, 1989; Chan, 1999). Initially the publics demanded ‘a more open political system, freedom and democratization, an end to dictatorship, legal guarantees of citizen rights, and a free press’ (Solinger, 1989:624), but during the protests the perhaps most prominent issues became officials’ corruption and open dialogue (Ibid.).

During the protests the publics had tried their best, to fully customise the Monument to the People’s Heroes to suit the movement (Hung, 1991; Panda, 1999). White wreaths and flowers lay at its base, and the portrait of Hu and a banner proclaiming “Long Live The People” covered Mao’s engraving of “Eternal Glory To The People’s Heroes”. This deliberate juxtaposition of using the image of Hu Yaobang - the personification of a new era leader - against the image of Chairman Mao - the personification of the old era leader by using the Monument - developed into using the Goddess of Democracy (Hung, 1991). As a symbol that was undeniably associated with the United States of America; China’s theo-political antithesis, it would first be used as a figurehead for the democratic demands of the protestors and later, as the inspiration for the self-made Goddess of Democracy.

**Goddess of Democracy**

When demonstrators took over Tiananmen Square in the spring of 1989, a symbolic centre displacement occurred. Tiananmen Square and the Monument to People’s Heroes were symbols of the state's power and the unmistakable authority to create a convenient history according to its ideological mindset. As illustrated in the previous chapters, the Square had been modified deliberately since the inauguration of the People’s Republic of China to represent the CCP’s mapping of the Chinese community as one symbiotic whole, but with the civil protests in 1989 the orthodox ideological stand was somewhat deteriorating (Saich, 1990). Through iconoclastic political street thea-
tre, the publics interfered in the sphere of story writing, and hence the civil society arguably distanced itself from the government (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1990). As a side note, it is noteworthy how the Chinese civil society - constituted by state-independent, voluntarily founded organisations - was of minimal importance in contemporary China; every aspect of everyday life seemed to be mediated by the omnipresent state. Immediately this note might seem somewhat arbitrary, but it is imperative to recognise the obvious advantages such organisations might furnish, facilitating the demonstrations with a stronger administrative base (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1990).

To return focus, this newly created, undefined space gave ground for the emergence of a spontaneous popular consciousness, which eventually could - or perhaps better phrased, had the potential to - sabotage the autocratic hegemony constituted by the state (Saich, 1990; Sullivan, 1990). This replacement of the state’s representation by the students’ in public commemoration leant a sense of instability to the centring of symbolism (Chan, 1999). The centre of gravity was figuratively elevated and the steady stream of petitions to the Party was audible, as the protesters promoted resistance and free speech in Tiananmen Square (Hung, 2005).

Unprecedented in Chinese history, the protesters devised a novel monument, the Goddess of Democracy (Wasserstrom, 1990). The appropriation of this figure was just that, appropriation. Creating a new gravitational field with the Goddess of Democracy as its centre, the publics attracted new attention to their cause promoting openness and transparency. The statue made a great symbol - build in white plastic foam - visible from the distance, and so it awakened new interest for the cause. Built in four sections for ease of assembly, it was transported from the Art Academy where it was created to Tiananmen Square. With its sudden appearance, people who had otherwise started to leave due to flagging interest responded positively, rejoining the protesting masses (Calhoun, 1997).

A viewpoint that one could take up in this context is, that the harnessing of buzzwords - such as democracy and freedom - were just borrowed icons that the dissenting public had endorsed, and brought home from overseas. However, to assume that the Goddess of Democracy was simply an early symptom of Chinese plagiarism would testify a parochial attitude towards the protesters. In other words, it would be misleading to delineate the Goddess of Democracy directly with the western ideological camp. She truly was a complex mixture between Western ideals, immanently re-
revealed in the esteemed Statue of Liberty, and vernacular assessments originating from Chinese tradition (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1990; Calhoun, 1997). To exemplify the latter, there was a great similarity to the giant white statues issued in the Party’s National Day Parades back in the Sixties. This anachronistic representation of recognizable traits, some earnest and some ironic, leant itself to the air of performance in the public space (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1990).

Of itself this practical utilisation of conventional and dissident symbolism marked a tangible parallel to the CCP’s practical modelling of Tiananmen Square, and hence the substance in the publics’ actions was the deliberate participation in claiming the site for their own in the face of governmental adversity (Hershkovitz, 1993). Protesters usurped traditional rites and state ceremonies upon which they could improvise ‘to make it serve subversive ends’ (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1990: 840), and thusly the audience became a part of the drama. Gathering around the Goddess of Democracy stationed in symbolic opposition to the portrait of the helmsman, Mao Zedong, the publics effectively italicised their ideological position in prolongation of their practical management.

Confronting Mao’s portrait the rising Goddess of Democracy acquired symbolic merits on par with the other political figures and monuments in Tiananmen Square, and so the publics appropriation - at least temporarily - overshadowed the official narrative of the state as they became representatives of the symbolic centre (Chan, 1999).

![Figure 2; “Statue of the Goddess of Democracy in Tiananmen Square” (Hung, 2005: 17).](image-url)
When compared to the Monument to the People’s Heroes - a static stone memorial in opposition to a past realm, erected for the dead - the Goddess of Democracy was a relatable symbol for the living born out the people’s own making (Hung, 1991). As the Goddess of Democracy emerged in Tiananmen Square, it represented a structure carried and retained by the masses; a monument that could preserve the individual’s integrity through the collective actions of the protesting publics (Sullivan, 1990). Put differently the monument gave space for representation of the individual, as it was a product of their own actions - the Goddess was created by the protesters, for the protesters - and as such it was more relatable to the individual than the state-constructed monuments.

By virtue, the uprising channeled discombobulated signals. This is undeniably exhibited in the various journal articles where scholars diverge on the question of the nature of 1989. Is it a revolutionary displacement of the collective consciousness, or is it rather a pluralistic democratic movement? Perhaps it is neither of the two, but notwithstanding it is relevant to reflect upon the integral meanings, as these are mirrored in the practical use of the Goddess of Democracy.

With reference to the first proposal, it is curious to witness how the publics employed a monument. Typically, monuments would be constructed to furnish permanence, but inherently permanence seems alien to the idea of revolution, which after all, means to rebel against supposed “permanence” (Hung, 1991: 113). Following Wu Hung’s chain of thought, the construction of the Goddess of Democracy effectively announced the end of revolution and the beginning of a “permanent” order (Hung, 1991).

Pondering the “future perspectives” of the Goddess of Democracy, people recognised, that she would potentially be demolished by the state; as it happened. Some, like e.g. one sculptor, even expected her to be pulverised, but predicted a positive outcome ‘they’ll have to smash her into pieces, thereby exposing their anti-democratic faces’ (Ibid: 113). The Goddess of Democracy was not exactly supposed to bring permanence, but rather she was meant to; firstly, create an imposing figure for the protesters to follow, and secondly, employ a dissent intelligensia to lure the red, socialist fox out of its cave. Hereby - openly caught by thousands of voyeurs - the state would have to waive its secret diplomacy. The publics would have direct evidence of their assumptions regarding the true nature of the state.
Practical use of Tiananmen Square

The large protests that took place in May in 1989 were semi-organised by students, inasmuch that a system of democratically elected student representatives was established, and served to function as various governing bodies of the protest. In this sense the demonstrating students of ’89 were different from their predecessors of 1919 – and an important thing to note here, is that May in 1989 marked the seventieth anniversary of the May Fourth Movement, and was the first time public dissent of such large scale had inadvertently been a location for expression (Panda 1999). The students furthermore led an array of practical approaches to occupying the Square and portraying their discontent, as we will discuss below.

On the 13th of May in 1989 the demonstrators embarked upon a hunger strike; a conclusive symbol of self-denial. In not attaining their basic needs - such as eating - the demonstrators literally pertained themselves to self-sacrifice, for the cause of the greater good. A selfless action that was centered around the Monument to the People’s Heroes, which additionally gave it another layer of complexity (Chan, 1999). News of the hunger strike was apparently what swayed the general non-actively participating observing citizens onto the side of the protesters.

The student demonstrators formed a small settlement on the Square, rather than staying in their “proper” parts of Beijing in their campus districts. They took control of the space for their own uses by implementing amenities such as rain shelters, toilet and sleeping facilities on the normally barren location, dealing with and organising both their own demonstrators and the visiting news media. Moreover banners and posters with political epitaphs were hung; an example of which read ‘Chairman Mao, old man, are you weeping now?’ (Hershkovitz, 1993: 413). In keeping with well-rehearsed organisational strategies, the protesters actively related themselves to the ancestral protesters in 1919 (Wasserstrom, 1990). The physical occupation of Tiananmen Square by the publics during the protests of 1989 showed strong signs of contestation between the publics and the state, as they struggled for the power of the place.

The following quote from Esherick and Wasserstrom captures the meaning of contestation as followed through the inauguration of Tiananmen Square 1949, and the consequences this lead to through the 1989 demonstrations:
'Some public rituals are always necessary, and in this event, there is always the danger that students or other actors will usurp the stage and turn the official ritual into their own political theater [...] With all this theater, the students appealed to a tradition of principled dissent and revolutionary action that the party itself had legitimised and mythologized in the attempt to claim such theater as its own.’ (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1992: 51-52).

The state and the publics in this sense utilised Tiananmen Square as the stage upon which they perform their own political theatre; however as the stage only allows for one play, one political theatre, to be performed at a time, contestation occurs as a result of the ideological clashes portrayed through the two political theatres. In retrospective it is curious how contestation of the place has been dominated through the theatrical stage of social development centred in Tiananmen Square. Large parades and shows of supremacy were - as voiced in the chapter on 1949 - crucial parts of the Maoist style of ritualised demonstrations; especially in the Party’s heyday in the years immediately following their inauguration. With 70th anniversary of the May Fourth Movement the CCP had invited the leader of the USSR, Mikhail Gorbachev, to join the official celebrations (Esherick and Wasserstrom, 1992).

By upstaging and stealing the thunder from the authorities, this became a show of the power struggle between the publics and the Party. In this case, the undermined authorities were forced to settle for using less meaningful, less powerful locations for Gorbachev’s visit – an unmistakable cleaving of official state actions and those of the people (Ibid).

By the end of May in 1989, over a million people occupied the Square despite declaration of martial law, Mao’s portrait had been spattered with paint, and the Goddess of Democracy statue had appeared in the centre of the square. Within the first week of June, the Square had been forcibly cleared, with the estimated death toll ranging from the hundreds to the thousands. (Hung, 1991; Lagerkvist, 2014) In accordance with the concept of contested space as presented by Phillips, the violent acts enacted by the government towards the protesters of 1989 portray a clear sign of contestation over the Square during its occupation.

Much like how the Party had to project the image of a revolutionary selfless mass of people who fought for China before the CCP’s inauguration, the students had to demonstrate their own willingness to lay themselves down for the cause of change and democracy. As thought upon by the stu-
dents who carried out hunger strikes, selflessness was the act that would garner empathy and the attention of citizens in Beijing who observed but were not active in the demonstrations. This is what prompted the students to build the near-sacrificial figure of the Goddess and occupy the Square despite threat of bodily harm (Hung, 1991). Through the physical practises of occupation, raising the Goddess of Democracy, parades and waving banners and engaging with political posters, the publics were arguably attempting to yet again re-appropriate the meaning of Tiananmen Square. The military intervention that came to ensue, however, came to impose upon the publics the complete domination of the space by the state (Chan, 1999).

**Sub-conclusion**

Succinctly, Chinese society was enduring a crisis of memory. The geographical and sociological imaginations constructed and controlled by the ideological machinery, were openly exposed as the democratic protesters challenged the coercive powers of the commanding system. Marchers gathered in Tiananmen Square to voice suppressed frustration regarding the exclusive political practises neglecting the demands of the people, and herewith the citizens of Beijing arguably reclaimed a lost identity masked in the discursive jungle of half-truths. Through the practical utilisation and interaction with Tiananmen Square the publics shake the perceptual meaning of the Square in an attempt to appropriate it.
The Trinitarian Relation: The End of the Third Age

Upon the conclusion of our three primary chapters on 1919, 1949 and 1989 the subsequent paragraphs will discuss contestation in relation to the production of Tiananmen Square. Concisely we target the points retrieved in the respective chapters, and hence focus will be on the interaction between spatial changes, practical use, and the metaphysical manifestations that this may lead to. In doing so we draw upon the various scholars utilised in the exploration of our analytical and theoretical framework.

As such the aim of this discussion is to substantiate the understanding of the perceptual meaning of Tiananmen Square which we contemplate in order to answer our research question: *How has the perceptual meaning of Tiananmen Square as a contested place changed from 1919 onwards?*

**Appropriation and Domination**

In *The Production of Place*, Lefebvre writes that space cannot simply disappear – if it was the case, we would experience no permeation of spaces or contestations for that matter (1991). Rather, spaces are interwoven and succeed each other by reconstructing prior meaning, as it seems to be the case with Tiananmen Square that as a place has transgressed through several contestations between publics and the government. Here, however, it becomes important to draw upon the concept of dominated space that is in direct disclosure with that of appropriation of space. A space that has been altered and negotiated by the practice of the state and by technology that enables physical transformation of space, is considered to be dominated. For space to be dominated it is in this sense necessary to physically reshape the preceding space into a ‘usually closed, sterilized, emptied out’ place (Lefebvre, 1991 : 165).

It seems appropriate in this regard to argue that prior to the end of the dynastic era, the space that now constitutes Tiananmen Square, was indeed dominated by the emperor as it was empty and isolated from the public. Continuing through time, however, the republican era from 1912 proved to re-construct the spatiality of Beijing, offering more flexibility of movement to the public. This ar-
guably seemed to provide the May Fourth Movement with the opportunity to re-appropriate the Square to serve their needs as investigated in the chapter on 1919. Jumping to the revolution of 1949 that brought the CCP into power it is imperative to note how Lefebvre disputes that appropriation and domination does not exclude one another. Rather they occur concurrently, but eventually domination is expected to exceed appropriation (Lefebvre, 1991). Taking this as point of departure we would argue that the state in 1949 dominated the space through exerting its own political power over the Square, although it did not physically close the space to the public. Consequently, the ideological prospects of the May Fourth Movement remained imbued in the Square, and the theory of appropriation thus remains relevant as the socialist apparatus - immediately after its inauguration - embarked upon a voyage of meaning making. Interpreting the events of 1989, we ponder how the publics attempted to re-appropriate the Square, but in spite of their efforts the protests were shut down by the coercive practice of the government. Perceptually the state proceeded to dominate the space by adapting a strategy of social enclosure and depoliticisation; concretely, flower beds, digitalisation and a more disciplinary surveillance was adopted (Thornton, 2010). In regards to the contestation of Tiananmen Square it is debatable whether the autonomous protests of 1989 ignited new hope or completed the power of the state. Did it sow a new awareness of independency in the consciousness of the publics, or did it in fact disillusion their beliefs of a people’s state tolerant to political opposition?

Meaning making

Considering the meaning consigned to Tiananmen Square, it is relevant to discuss how contestation is expressed, and eventually by what means. Immediately this calls for cultural mediation as people - ‘transform the mundane phenomenon of the material world into a world of significant symbols of which they give meaning and attach value’ (Jackson, 1989: 47). Another alternative perspective proposed, explains cultural mediation as an instinctive effort to exceed the unilluminated boundaries of human existence (Adam, 2006), and so both judge the externalisation of knowledge as a way to channel meaning beyond the presence.

In relation to Tiananmen Square it is imperative to acknowledge the asymmetry ingrained in the contestation regarding the cultural mediation, as the socialist institution indoctrinates and coerce its subjects via the political domination of the place. The civic society is not a homogenous entity, but
rather a fragmented collection of deviating subgroups and dynamic identities constituted in various publics as indicated in the chapter on 1919. In this fashion the organisational prospects of the people are ambiguous, where the socialist institutions conversely command the undivided capacity of the state (Jackson, 1989). Herewith the Party vehicle effectively runs down all resistance as proved in 1989 with the massacre. However, this administrative advantage might diminish, or eventually vanish completely, as the protests also embodied a genuine challenge to establish spatial hierarchy and social order.

Nevertheless, having to evaluate the perceptual meaning of Tiananmen Square can be troublesome, as any interpretation or judgement exclusively relies on the scale of analysis. Firstly, the spatial patterns, or perhaps better phrased perceptual structure of earthly objects, depend on the disciplinary lens applied. Secondly, the political and social patterns orbiting Tiananmen Square are so complex, that it almost seems futile to navigate in the multilayered perceptual structure of intellectual networks.

On this matter it is demanding to determine focus, and moreover to determine the limits of one’s focus. As alluded to throughout the project the contestation is not purely one dimensional, and hence nothing seems to be directly corollary; one-to-one scale. Since we to all intents and purposes search for meaning vested and conveyed in Tiananmen Square the literary scholar Jonathan Culler captures the fundamental issues in the quote ‘Meaning is context bound, but context is boundless’ (Culler, 2009: 91). In elaboration of this statement a paragraph dedicated to our theoretical framework - forged together by the physical, practical and metaphysical aspects of production of space - seems relevant as we delved into the multifaceted analytical approach.

If we were only to have focused on a singular aspect, it would easily become a very narrow project. By applying the three, however, it better captures the depth of contestation, and how it fundamentally overlaps the dimensions of time and space. Had the research only explored e.g. the physical world it would have been more of an architectural project, and not so much a social scientific one.

In order to fully understand contestation from a social scientific perspective, we therefore propose the importance of the versatile approach that we have come to use, and as discovered through our three chapters it becomes clear that they are indeed interlinked; implicitly and explicitly.

Through the operationalisation of the physical, metaphysical and practical in the chapters on 1919, ‘49 and ‘89 respectively, we have attempted to show the depth of contestation. In this sense, we propose that this specific theoretical method of analysis could beneficially be utilised in future studies on contested place.
Conclusion

Considering the occurrences of the selected historical junctures we identified what we would postulate to be a circular development of space. With the opening of Tiananmen Square in the aftermath of dynastic era’s dissolution, China underwent a metaphysical journey through which the publics were finally capable of interacting and portraying their own ideals in the Square. Put differently, the rupture gave impetus to a paradigmatic shift from the sacred to the profane; herewith the publics could disengage their collective memory from the fang of the emperor and thus appropriate a novel identity within the opened, social space of Tiananmen Square.

In the light of the revolution of 1949, the newly constituted Chinese Communist Party annexed the space and claimed its public collective memory to serve as the axis mundi of the regime. By virtue of ideology, the Party arguably inspirited a hitherto-unknown constellation of social relations that ignited a new paradigmatic shift from the profane to that of a political cult revolving around the helmsman, Mao Zedong.

Lastly, as bookends to complete the circle, we invigorate the importance of the 1989 protests exercised in Tiananmen as it seemed to function as one of the primary manifestations of contestation post 1949. On that note, the political atmosphere surrounding the environment of Tiananmen Square was altered and hence a third paradigmatic shift ensued; here from a political cult to a state of limbo in which the place is contested openly.
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