

PRESS RELEASE

## Civic Exchange Urges Stronger Government Leadership in Building a More Comprehensive Street Performance Policy

**Hong Kong, 24 September 2020** - Independent public policy think tank, Civic Exchange (CEX), urged the government to step up its efforts to build a more active, comprehensive management of street performance in Hong Kong, in a report released today.

The organization also urged the HKSAR to bridge government department siloes that prevent developing a coherent and consistent street performance policy.

Street performers enhance our city's cultural life, yet, a 2018 study, "Managing Vibrant Streets," identified street performance as a significant street management challenge in Hong Kong.

Expanding on this finding, a new two-phase study led by CEX urban planning researchers, Carine Lai and Ximin Zhou, sets out to provide specific recommendations on the development of a modern street performance management system.

The first of these reports, published today, yields comprehensive insights into key stakeholder viewpoints and outlines how street performance policy measures from overseas could be applied to Hong Kong.

"We talked to different sectors to gain a better understanding of each group's concerns and their relationships with one another so that we could try to find areas in common and identify opportunities to shift relationships in a more productive direction," said Lai, Civic Exchange Senior Researcher and Co-author of the report.

A total of 28 individuals from 11 stakeholder groups including government, businesses, resident advocacy groups, district councillors and street performers were interviewed. Three major focal issues were identified through these engagements: noise, obstruction of public spaces and performance quality.

"There is room to transform street performance into something more beneficial to different groups including local businesses, property owners, tourists and street performers themselves while reducing disturbances to local residents," said Lai.

The engagement exercise also underlined the key players' major concerns, their shared interests, and highlighted the potential for reaching a mutually beneficial consensus to remedy the current poor street management system.

"The regulatory system of public space management in contemporary Hong Kong is still predominantly anchored on the idea of public hygiene, which extends far beyond the original intention of disease prevention," said Ximin Zhou, Civic Exchange Associate Researcher and Co-author of the report. "Management style is fundamentally about restriction. Ironically, the reputation of street performance as a nuisance is deeply ingrained in its informal and spontaneous nature, with which the current system is unable to cope. Allowing street performers their legitimate space to thrive is an important step towards improving the current situation," Zhou added.

While LegCo's recent amendment (July 2020) of the Pleasure Ground Regulation to tackle nuisance in public grounds is aimed at improving the quality of public spaces in Hong Kong, its restrictive approach could further stigmatize street performers and shunt them into less easily manageable locations.

The report examined international experiences and best practices against the backdrop of Hong Kong's local institutional context, to identify viable policy options for the Hong Kong Government to consider in devising appropriate street management measures.

Building on the findings of this report, Civic Exchange will develop concrete policy recommendations on how street management should be effectively designed and applied in phase 2 of the study.

Street performance provides a vital contribution to attractive and liveable public places and with this work, Civic Exchange aims at a well-balanced and effective approach to street performance management that is fair to all users of public spaces – and to the benefit of all Hong Kong citizens.

### **About Civic Exchange**

Civic Exchange is an independent public policy think tank with a vision to shape a liveable and sustainable Hong Kong. Our mission is to engage society and influence public policy through research, dialogue and the development of practical solutions. Civic Exchange has been ranked among the top 50 environment policy think tanks in the world by the University of Pennsylvania since 2011.

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### **Full Report and Press Materials available at**

(English) <https://civic-exchange.org/report/managing-vibrant-streets-2-interim-report/>

(Chinese) <https://bit.ly/3cqBQJS>