1. **Talk: Rural Landscape Heritage in Hong Kong and its Current Issues**

**Event page:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/2281824382031995/>

In recent years, it is not uncommon to hear the tragedies of abandoned rural villages. These villages faced aging and depopulation issues, and many of them faced rural development pressure. The issues diminishing rural villages, communities and their landscape heritage called for our attentions to re-examine the significance of rural capitals, and explore the future of rural areas.

Echoes to the call of ICOMOS, a lecture titled "Rural Landscape Heritage in Hong Kong" was held in Ipoh on 20 April 2019 with the support of ICOMOS Malaysia, Malaysian cultural organization People Ideas Culture, and Hong Kong cultural heritage entity Contemplate Culture. In the one and a half hour lecture, two young cultural heritage experts Ms Anna Yau and Ms Candy Law shared three different stories of rural landscape community and the challenges they faced to sustain and revitalise villages in Hong Kong.

The first case study - Mui Tsz Lam Village sets an example of rethinking the values of agricultural villages in the rural area. The village was once a rich agricultural resource with interesting layers of history within a self-sustain cultural landscape setting. However, local villagers moved out and left the village houses and farmland abandoned for decades. Its remote location, lack of vehicle access, electricity and water supply, and living condition that fits modern needs becomes the biggest challenge to revitalise this village. The agricultural landscape demonstrates the close relationship between human activities and natural environment and gave us important information of achieving self-sustainability. There are a number of initiatives in Hong Kong that are trying to reconnect urban dwellers to rural areas and achieve a rural-urban symbiosis sustainable development in the city.

In the second case, Ma Wan Fishing Village shows how an urban development project ignored the original maritime landscape heritage fragmented the fishing village community. The original village houses were scattered along the coastline and were organically formed with its own characters. The good will of new village were designed and built by the developer as a compensation to the villagers, however the mass redevelopment turned the new village into a typical suburban housing.  The original village house were left abandoned and the community has been fragmented. After a decade, the social bonding among the villagers are still maintained, but their historical and cultural associations of their fishing traditions with the maritime landscape cannot be restored. This case illustrates how a non-landscape management and planning approach destroyed the heritage.

The third case showed a research that rediscover the relationship between an intangible cultural festival and the historic urban landscape setting of a 400 years old Tai Wai Village. With development over time, the once rural village is now located in an urban setting, and they face challenge of redevelopment. Village's traditional ritual festival which carries out every ten years is an important cultural event that reunion as many villagers as possible. This tradition is passing on by teaching and encourage young descendants to participate in different roles. In this research, the cultural space of the festival was recorded. It demonstrates how the intangible cultural activity and ritual believes embedded in the built environment in Tai Wai Village.  Both intangible and tangible heritage intertwined and make this village still very much alive historic landscape.

The three cases showcased the variety of rural landscape heritage resources in Hong Kong and the different challenges they are facing. They collectively reminded the urgency to safeguard, revitalize and sustain these forgotten rural treasures.

**Photos captured:**

<https://www.facebook.com/peopleideasculture/posts/1268878813265454>

**News Coverage:**

<https://www.newsarawaktribune.com.my/two-cultural-talks-to-be-held-in-perak-in-april/>

1. **Workshop：探索鄉郊資本 - 社區的文化繪圖 Exploring Rural Assets- Cultural Mapping**

**Event page:** <https://www.facebook.com/events/1200966000060157/>

In conjunction with the seminar held on 20 April 2019 evening, a cultural mapping workshop was conducted in a rural village Kopisan Baru. This "Exploring rural capitals" cultural workshop aims to help local community members to explore and re-examine their rural capitals and record them using a mapping methodology.

Supported by ICOMOS Malaysia, Malaysian cultural organization People Ideas Culture, two members of Contemplate Culture, a Hong Kong cultural heritage entity, Ms Anna Yau and Ms Candy Law conducted the 3 hours’ workshop at Kopisan Keng Mee Coffee Shop. In addition to the local residents, students from UTAU University were also involved and assisted in the workshop.

Cultural Mapping has been identified by UNESCO as a useful tool to identify and record disappearing intangible values of a place and a community. The workshop began with games and exercises. Throughout the progress, the 36 participants of different age group, background were guided and encouraged to exchange views about kopisan village matters. Guided by the two facilitators, villagers and other participants generally revealed a number of tangible and intangible attributes that contribute to village's culture and history and the reasons behind. While the exercise moved on, these attributes were systematically recorded in a mapping format.

The resulted map vividly reflected villagers' strong attachments to the village which were closely interwoven with it unique historical and cultural background of repeated relocation for three times in history. It also showcased villagers' aspirations to develop the village by cultivating coffee which could help to develop local economy and tourism for job opportunities and quality education to their younger generations.

With further discussion and evaluations, the mapping also revealed the social values, in particular, the unique identity and sense of home attached to the kopisan village is most significant value identified by the village participants. A short lecture followed the mapping exercise explained what is social capital, the difference between a community of high and low social capital, and how it is important to build up community resilience to cope future unpredictable disaster or events. This cultural mapping workshop reminded the villagers that any development of the village including the coffee plantation plan they are working on, should be carefully planned in order to safeguard the villagers sense of belongings rather than concentrating on the economic return.

Some villagers participants reflected that the workshop was interesting and meaningful, yet more youngsters should be involved so that a dialogue could be created and enhance mutual understanding. The University students involved also gained an opportunity to learn about what is cultural mapping and get to understand more about the first visited kopisan village.

Community development requires substantial efforts, and should be inclusive to all members in the neighbourhood. This cultural mapping workshop demonstrated how historic, cultural and social capitals recorded in the map could be further utilized and contributed to achieving sustainable development in their neighbourhood. This tool aided the community based heritage conservation hopefully would inspire local villagers to continue the momentum.

**Photos captured:**

<https://www.facebook.com/peopleideasculture/posts/1269302759889726>

**News Coverage:**

<https://www.sinchew.com.my/content/content_2035376.html?fbclid=IwAR0DYt-tsS-0HrbekZ1bdnHT5-jP-4dN-mpzOZ596F3YtSNUn-MFTJTkCIs>

<https://www.sinchew.com.my/content/content_2042953.html>

<https://www.enanyang.my/news/20190510/%E8%B5%B0%E5%85%A5%E4%B9%A1%E9%83%8Abr-%E6%8C%AF%E5%85%B4%E9%9D%A0%E4%BA%BA%E5%BF%83/>

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