

PARTICIPATORY LEARNING: THE CASE OF PING CHE IN CITY DEVELOPMENT IN HONG KONG

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The Study

Examines the effectiveness and challenges of a participatory community learning project “CUHK in Communities”

Methodology

Participatory observation, questionnaires, reflective journals & focus groups



Project features

- Non-credit bearing
- Participatory learning in community

Project aims

- To facilitate students to understand deeper the building of Hong Kong communities through engaging community research
- To test the knowledge they learn in class

2018-19 project

Participants: 21 students from the Faculties of Arts & Social Sciences

Duration: 9 months, meeting every two weeks

Theme: Community building at Ping Che, a rural area in the New Territories in Hong Kong which has been under severe threats of city development in recent years

Project learning activities

1. Thematic tours
2. On-site sharing talks
3. Cultural events (Fire Dragon Dance, Community Day)
4. Publication *Ping Che Seven Years*

The Results

Understanding concepts

Understand deeper some major concepts:
Land justice, civic participation, complex social dynamics in community building, and agency of change

Participation in communities

Students consider keeping a long-term relationship with Ping Che and other communities
More cautious about the power relations of researchers and informants, and the dynamics between insiders and outsiders

Impacts on studies, internships and abilities

Ping Che as a case study:
Apply the theoretical frameworks and concepts such as power and resistance taught in their majors to analyse Ping Che in their term papers

Insights for internships:
Pay more attention to environmental and development issues at work

Positive attitude towards affection:
Students consider affection to the place a key learning outcome which enables them to participate more intensely

Other abilities:
The publication enhances their writing skills, boosts creativity and facilitates collaborations



Thematic tour



On-site sharing talk

Difficulties and limitations

Students have tight study schedules during semesters, shouldered with various responsibilities:
Efforts put in the project are limited; some even quit.
Follow-ups and individual coaching are needed.



Community Day

Publication

Highlights of focus group discussion:

“The cultural events enhance my sense of belonging to Ping Che.”

“The preparation of the publication deepens my understanding of various aspects in Ping Che: the development plan, local agriculture and other economic activities, community art and cultural traditions.”

“The guests’ life stories allow us to understand their entrenched relationship with the community.”

Acknowledgement:
Teaching Development and Language Enhancement Grant (2016-19), Chinese University of Hong Kong
Dr. Sampson Wong Yu Hin (Project facilitator)
Miss Tiffany Ma Shuk Chun (Graphic designer)

