

Artists vs Media vs Government vs Artists: Using Industrial Buildings Revitalisation as an Example

Carmi Ka-man Lam

In October 2009, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government announced the launch of a three-year scheme in its annual Policy Address. 'Revitalising Industrial Buildings', a package of measures to facilitate the change of use, redevelopment and wholesale conversion of industrial buildings to complement the development of the 'six industries where Hong Kong has enjoyed clear advantages' was officially implemented on 1 April 2010.

The announcement of the Revitalising Industrial Buildings Scheme stirred a flurry of controversy. With its promised benefits yet to materialise, the Scheme was held responsible for the surge in rental prices and effectively the eviction of existing tenants. Renting studio spaces in industrial buildings across the territory, artists, theatre companies, underground musicians and other creative units responded by organising themselves into concern groups, voicing their opinions and engaging in policy-making discussions. Over the past decade, the industrial districts of Sun Po Kong, Kwun Tong and Fo Tan have developed into sizable artist clusters. In response to the newly launched policy, artists based in these industrial districts established concern groups such as the SPK Artists & Friends, Revitalisation Independence Partnership (RIP) and the territory-wide Factory Artists Concern Group.¹

Acknowledgements: Anthony Po-shan Leung, Chow Chun-fai, AhKok Wong, Cheung Ngai-yee

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Leung: Anthony Po-shan Leung, Convenor, Factory Artists Concern Group

Chow: Chow Chun-fai, Convenor, Factory Artists Concern Group; member of Fotanians

Wong: AhKok Wong, Spokesperson, Revitalisation Independence Partnership (RIP); underground musician in Kwun Tong

¹For more information on the 'Revitalisation of Old Industrial Buildings', see 'Public Issues' in *Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2010*.

Lam: Your stance and suggestions to the policy have been stated clearly in your open letter and on your website. So perhaps let's begin by approaching it from a new angle.² What's your personal view of the revitalisation of industrial buildings? Apart from the rent hikes and forcing out, are there any other issues, practical or otherwise? For example, did the hounding/pursuit of the media turn Fo Tan [Artists Open Studios] into some kind of property viewing?

Leung: The property viewing craze has long emerged before this. The rent hikes and speculative activities in the industrial property market were not directly triggered by the revitalisation of industrial buildings.

Chow: The first newspaper report of a sharp appreciation in industrial property value came from the *Hong Kong Economic Times* in 2008. The article was the first of its kind to report on industrial space from this perspective. And I just bought my studio at the price of \$790,000.³

Lam: In a newspaper interview in 2010, you said the value of the studio has gone up to \$1.3 million. Is that true?⁴

Chow: People working in *The Visual Arts Yearbook* are living in the past! [laughs] It's now gone up to \$1.8 million.⁵

Lam: That's ludicrous!

Chow: I think the problem doesn't lie in its effects on the so-called 'arts districts' but rather why they pushed it further up when it's inevitable the property market would be shooting sky high? Every now and then I do wonder how much space arts districts in other countries the same money would get me. Take the example of the Beijing 798 Art Zone. The majority of the artists who stayed on have paid the rent up front for 20 years, which effectively also bought out the rights to the property for 20 years. But

² Revitalisation Independence Partnership website at <http://riphk.blogspot.com>; Factory Artists Concern Group website at <http://www.fac.org.hk/> 'Banish the speculators, keep the users!', a joint declaration by the Factory Artists Concern Group (Retrieved 29 July 2010 from the World Wide Web <http://www.petitiononline.com/factory/petition.html>)

³ 'Rent hikes at Industrial buildings Artist's studios to stay or move out?', *Hong Kong Economic Times*, C05, 10 January 2008.

⁴ 'Arts groups equipped with water, food and generator Uprising at occupied factory buildings to protest against revitalisation', *Apple Daily*, 31 March 2010.

⁵ The first five months of 2010 saw the sales of industrial properties total the annual sales figure of 2009, with a jump of 30% per square feet. 'Land and factory buildings in Fotan have market', *Oriental Daily*, B07, 17 June 2010.

it's not easy to do the maths accurately. The calculation of rent varies from place to place. While it's charged on a monthly basis here in Hong Kong, it's eight cents per square metre a day for the Beijing 798 Art Zone.

Lam: Fo Tan is basically home to visual artists, while Kwun Tong is where underground musicians congregate. Wong, do you have any idea how the studio cluster in Kwun Tong come about?

Wong: I'm not entirely sure. When I came back from my studies in England in 2002 there were already band musicians renting studio spaces in industrial buildings in Kwun Tong.

Lam: So it just happened by accident like Fo Tan then.

Wong: I agree with Leungpo [Anthony Po-shan Leung] that the revitalisation of industrial buildings is not entirely to blame for the spike. Rental prices have been rising since the urban redevelopment project began in Kwun Tong in 2008, which was why a lot of people had left Kwun Tong for Kowloon Bay and Ngau Tau Kok.

A cluster emerges not only from individual artists renting separate units but from the ties built between them in which the community also plays a part. A studio cannot survive on its own. Take the example of Kwun Tong. As well as people making independent music or selling and fixing instruments, there are those who are working in catering, performance venues or artists working in different media. Basically all your needs are met within the district. A so-called arts district or artist village, such as JCCAC (the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre), in fact destroys the entire natural ecology, an artificial construct like putting artists in a zoo.

Even with money, a community doesn't happen overnight; but given time and space, art will survive and thrive. The government shouldn't interfere too much but should instead give it time and space to develop. It's very important to provide rookie artists and newly graduated arts practitioners studio spaces at an affordable rent in order to encourage them to hold on to their dreams and give them time to develop their art.

Except property investment and finance, none of the industries in Hong Kong can survive without a struggle, especially when the government places production value over real value. For instance, some funding is available only to previous recipients and these opportunities will forever elude grassroots, small-scale arts groups and relatively inexperienced artists. It's a serious lack of vision.

Lam: Which aspect of industrial buildings revitalisation should be most censured?

Wong: The premise of revitalising industrial buildings is that the place is sapped of energy. But such

measures have clearly neglected the people and the things already living there: the artists, band musicians and the venues for rock climbing and war games...but we've been using the industrial buildings and taking root there! They can't pretend we're dead, can they? The skyrocketing house and rental prices have caused an exodus of talent from Hong Kong to other cities. What edge does Hong Kong have over other cities? What has it got to persuade our artists to stay?

Yet sceptics would argue that, despite speculative activities in the property market affecting the lives of ordinary people, it is best to minimise government interference in the operation of the free markets. But the notion of a free market is a lie. A government simply cannot practise laissez-faire liberalism; it should take the lead in preventing big corporates from monopolising the sector and maintaining a balanced equilibrium, or else why did the government intervene in the Lehman Brothers minibond fiasco and introduce measures to stabilise milk powder prices in Hong Kong? So much for 'big market, small government'.

Lam: There's one thing that got me really interested. During the past 18 months (I tried not to use the word 'fight' here) everyone has been using the media to voice their stance. In what ways did different media coverage of the issue vary? I imagine you'd give different responses to the same question asked by a TV journalist and a secondary student. On the other hand, the interference of the media sometimes 'worsens' the situation or shifts the focus of the issue. We said one thing but the media took a different angle in their coverage...

Chow: That's really expected, isn't it? What I wanted to say is that secondary students are much smarter than I expected, and very proactive. They called on me at the studio for an interview and their questions were not superficial at all. Of course I needed to do a bit explaining but they got what I meant. I view interviews like this as direct contact with the public.

On the other hand, the mainstream media is always on the hunt for 'victims' and 'embittered plaintiffs', conveniently shifting the focus to antagonistic sentiments against property developers, property hegemony and rich people. These are the kind of stories they are after.

Leung: Is that what you thought too? That's right. They always push you into that victim mentality. Journalists know little about things at the level of cultural policy-making and whatever you say falls on deaf ears.

Chow: Not sure if it would make any difference otherwise. Newspaper editors want property hegemony in the headlines and aren't concerned with things at the cultural level, or they think it's beyond the grasp of their readers. It's 'We Are All Victims of Property Hegemony' stuffed into your mouth.

Lam: When I was compiling 'Public Issues', I went through all related articles from 2010 at one go. Like you said, the artists featured in the articles are all dirt-poor, earning only a few thousand a month.

Wong: It's easy to write these articles and they appeal to the readers. Nothing illustrates more vividly than numbers.

Leung: Speaking of which, what do you think of interviews? Do you agree to an interview regardless of who does it? Even if it's just for an assignment of a secondary student?

Chow: Yes, as long as I can do it.

Wong: Same for me.

Leung: Really? I haven't given that many interviews. AhKok, you're interviewed quite a lot, aren't you?

Wong: Wasn't it about three interviews a week on average after "Being revitalized while alive"(生勾勾被活化)?⁶ Since the establishment of the RIP in 2010, the media began contacting us, then the university students. Now we have media bodies making review programmes and secondary students choosing it as their general education coursework topic.

Lam: How's the interviews conducted?

Wong: Some were done face-to-face, but more often on the phone or via emails. My impression is that secondary students are really well-prepared and the results are rather positive. They can easily grasp an overview of the incident during the interview because of the web search they did beforehand.

Lam: I learned from some artist friends that some interviewees came late or, worse still, failed to show up, or asked lame questions such as how much a painting's sold for. Their follow-up work also left a lot to be desired – you'd never expect to receive the publication as a token of thanks, if it did get published that is... gradually I learned not to entertain every interview request.

⁶ On 21 February 2010, Revitalisation Independence Partnership organised the "Being revitalized while alive"(生勾勾被活化)rally to protest against related policies which deprive visual artists of the space of survival. Starting in the Moreton Terrace Playground in Causeway Bay and ending in Hong Kong Arts Development Council, the rally attracted a crowd of 300 and received extensive local press coverage.

Leung: True, but I've got used to it. Chun-fai, I think it comes easily to you, doesn't it?

Chow: Of course we always want to shift the focus of the interview to our angle but how it'll turn out is beyond our control.

Lam: Like hours of interview are reduced into a one-liner: 'The value of Chow's studio has doubled, soaring to over 1 million in just a few years'?

Leung: That's not bad actually. You only got to see his big book shelves and wine cabinet in some articles!

Lam: It's just using a soft news approach to create the image of a yuppie.

Chow: Actually I placed the wine cabinet in a prominent place on purpose as a test. Then I began to consciously and systematically collect newspaper clippings of those which mentioned the cabinet.

Lam: ...sounds good. So how many have you got?

Chow: At least six, seven articles so far.

Lam: Well if they run out of new ideas, the best bet would be to package it as a phony kind of 'life style'. It's popular with the readers!

Chow: That's because people have certain fantasy about the life of an artist: dirt-poor, elegant lifestyle or an artist temperament...

Leung: Yes, like I had this meeting with a councillor and he was amazed: 'Golly good, you're actually on time?' He probably thought all artists throw tantrums and are terrible at keeping time.

Lam: I remember back in April [2011] the Factory Artists Concern Group held a press conference.⁷ The following day, many newspapers ran an article with the tagline 'one of the artist who designed the Hong Kong Film Awards trophy'.⁸ With the Awards held around the time, it's a gimmick of choice for

⁷ On 24 April 2011, the first anniversary of the Revitalisation of Old Industrial Buildings scheme, the Factory Artists Concern Group held a press conference and the noon fest, 'No Factory Buildings, No West Kowloon' in the space outside the Wah Luen Industrial Centre in Fo Tan.

⁸ The event was covered by a total of seven newspapers on 26 April 2011, including *Sing Tao*

both sides. ‘Homan Ho [who] loves his free and tasteful lifestyle’ gave up his full-time job and rented a 1,000m² studio in pursuit of his dreams. It’s a rhetoric that engenders a certain kind of imagination and orientation.⁹ Speaking of which, I’ve tried out an array of media channels ranging from internet radios, blogging sites, social networks and websites to find out which media I can find my true voice at my most comfortable.

Chow: Of course nothing beats your own writing.

Leung: Yes, like posting my writings on www.inmediahk.net. But the interesting thing is although the media has been steering their editorial direction towards the hunt of ‘victims’, the conscientious artists remain very alert in taking the discussion to a higher level, resulting in a tug-of-war between the two sides. To me, internet social media emerged as very important tools for organising social movements in recent years. The dynamics between mainstream media and independent media channels (like internet radios) is interesting: mainstream media scour materials from these sources, even social websites, from where they expand and develop their stories. It’s where we come in, pushing the mainstream media forward when it gets stuck in a mode of thought using these channels. Another thing is, we couldn’t possibly reach out to so many people without the influence of the mainstream media. Because of the TV programme aired just days before its closing, the Fotanian Open Studio received almost 10,000 visitors on the last day.

Lam: It’s definitely communication between both sides of the ideological fence. This brings me to another thing. Before this, artists could only take to the streets and protest or issue joint declarations and open letters as ways to express their views on issues such as the use of public space at Times Square in Causeway Bay and the Louis Vuitton art exhibition.¹⁰

Wong: Yes, it’s one form of protest.

Lam: But I also noticed you use a large amount of survey data and analyses on the academic level. Was it a conscious way of making a statement?

Daily, Ming Pao, Oriental Daily, Apple Daily, Sing Pao Daily News, Hong Kong Economic Times.

⁹ The original line comes from ‘Rent hikes in industrial buildings force artists out Hong Kong Film Awards designer leaves to escape skyrocketing rents’, *Sing Tao Daily*, A08, 26 April 2011.

¹⁰ For details of related discussions, see *Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2008* and ‘Public Issues’ in *Hong Kong Visual Arts Yearbook 2009*, as well as Anthea Fan’s ‘Look Back at the Louis Vuitton Exhibition: A Debate of Preferential Values’ contained in the latter.

Wong: Yes. From the onset we realised that importance of figures, such as the calculation of floor space. So I took the initiative to contact Leungpo. While a one-off demonstration/protest could shore up support, it failed to lead to any further discussion.

Leung: I've never rented a studio in an industrial building but Fo Tan certainly has my concern. Though I felt something was wrong with the 'Revitalising Industrial Buildings' scheme, it never occurred to me to organise anything until AhKok invited me to join in. It's too early to tell what it can achieve but sometimes I think we might be too gentle in our approach. What do you think, AhKok?

Wong: We've achieved something after just a year or so. We work well as a team, don't we? When we first initiated the "Being revitalized while alive" (生勾勾被活化) demonstration, we didn't plan to enter into any dialogues with the government but rather to spark widespread public reaction. While some of the underground musicians have been involved in social movement, their anarchist leanings prevent them from communicating with the government. So I'd imagine our ways of getting things done might upset some people.

Leung: I remember Oscar Ho used to work at the Hong Kong Arts Centre in the 1900s; later he became an advisor to the Home Affairs Bureau. Criticised for his decision, Ho responded in defiance, 'Why is it that cooking dinner in my own kitchen becomes an issue?' What he really meant was he chose to be in his own place, working before the frontline of the art circle and fighting in a non-confrontational way. Instead of agonistic, the relationship with the authorities could be an interactive one.

Wong: We did want to choose the road of resistance in the beginning...

Leung: But I think collaboration of this nature demonstrates a different kind of resistance; we keep learning from and communicating with each other. For example, the participation of different political parties at union meetings contributes to the interplay of different voices. Turns out artists working in different media do speak in unison and any differences could be easily ironed out.

Lam: Actually I noticed something rather unusual. There seems to be less participation on the part of political parties or party members. Artlessly but frankly put, there's less cashing in on the event. Is that true?

Wong: We contacted Tanya Chan of the Civic Party but didn't hear from her. Neither did we get a response from Andrew To of the League of Social Democrats through our contacts with FM 101, Hong Kong's pirate radio station, nor the PhD student who conducted a survey interview.

Leung: Legislative councillors are usually more concerned with how a policy can create jobs. Chan

Kam-lam is all for developing industrial buildings into Grade A offices. The pro-business political group Economic Synergy also gave us a call.

Wong: Personally I have some issues with certain political parties.

Leung: And I thought 'middle-class political parties' like the Civic Party should be concerned about cultural issues. Why did they skirt the issue? Is it something too hot, too big for them to handle?

Lam: Newspaper would usually interview councillors and end the articles with a quote from councillors and politicians, but not this time.

Leung: We've interviewed the legislative councillor Lee Wing-tat but there's been no follow-up by the Democratic Party. The issue here is unlike others which are more open-and-shut and politicians would jump at the chance to have their views heard. With cultural issues civic groups really have to make hard efforts and feed those legislative councillors related data and documents.

Wong: Chan Yuen-han and then Cyd Ho were among those who did follow up. Ho was at the demonstration, so were Ada Wong, Bull [Tsang Kin-shing] and Long Hair [Leung Kwok-hung]. I believe Ho is someone could make something happen.

Lam: Come to think of it, why did the rally end at the Arts Development Council [ADC]? The Council is not a policy-making body...

Wong: Right, we band musicians want nothing to do with the authorities at all; we didn't even apply to their venue subsidy scheme. This was precisely why we went to the ADC to make a gesture of protest. While many arts groups would bypass the ADC and present their petitions to the Home Affairs Bureau, we want to take it to the heart of art and cultural administration for which the ADC symbolises. The role of underground musicians is different from that of visual artists. The latter would complain that the JCCAC is like a zoo, overlooking the fact that the JCCAC provides only art studios but not music studios. The divide between media has always been clear; underground music is never regarded as an artform. Like I said before, if the artists were animals locked up in a zoo, we underground musicians would be stray dogs.

Leung: These words strike a loud chord with me! True, visual artists do apply for government funding, and business sponsorship, too. Take Fotanian Open Studio, for instance. It caught the government's attention the year [2004] I was in charge, perhaps because of the West Kowloon Cultural District Project. I chanced upon Executive Councillor Victor Chung-wing Lo¹¹ visiting the studio 'incognito'

¹¹ Victor Chung-wing Lo was a Non-Official Member of the Executive Council of the Hong

in Freeman Lau's company, a clear sign that the government realised the potentials of Fo Tan. The fact is both the business sector and the government did notice the capability of industrial spaces, though their development was restricted by policy constraints. For instance, the galleries inside the industrial buildings can't run their business legitimately and the economic and urban development policies are to blame.

Lam: AhKok mentioned that your chosen form of protest raised some eyebrows and your actions have inevitably affected some people. Do you ever feel frustrated?

Wong: To a certain extent, yes. The RIP has over 3,000 members on a social network site¹² but it's always the same few ones actively involved in discussions. My frustration also springs from people's misunderstanding. For example when we set up street booths to conduct questionnaire surveys¹³, there were people carrying their guitars – obviously our target group – but they would scamper off, responding with evasion probably thinking we're promoting some kind of social movement, exactly an area cultural workers shouldn't tread on.

Chow: Yes, some people choose to stay put even when they have the knowledge to comprehend the issue simply because they don't want to. The understanding of truth is a luxury; people choose to remain silent and stay put because they don't understand the truth.

Wong: We're all learning.

Leung: Frankly my head spins and swirls every time I take part in a demonstration or protest... I always have hunch that we're losing this time round but we'll learn something from it. People often say different media have different personalities. Visual artists usually work individually and their character is more individualistic; performing artists work better in a group as they have to rehearse and performance together. Is that right, AhKok?

Kong SAR government from 2005–2009.

¹² The Facebook group of the Revitalisation Independence Partnership can be found at <http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=295018057441>

¹³ In July and August 2010, the Revitalisation Independence Partnership voluntarily set up street booths in Kwun Tong and Ngau Tau Kok to help collect questionnaires on the 'Survey on the Current Status of Industrial Buildings for Arts Activities and Future Demand'. The survey was initiated and conducted by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.

Wong: Not necessarily. Musicians also love to be wrapped up in their own world making their music, like Kung Chi-shing before he held the 'Open Music' project, a street music concert, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Arts Centre. The results turned out to be pretty well.

Lam: True, artists working in different media have their own characteristics. Studio space in Sun Po Kong became home to theatre companies, Fo Tan to visual artists and Kwun Tong to independent musicians. During the process of collaboration, did it emerge that the three different districts would have different needs?

Leung: Fo Tan at first wasn't the ground zero, but Kwun Tong was. Fo Tan was hit hard by the rent surge only six months after the launch of the Revitalising Industrial Buildings scheme. So there's a difference of sooner or later for individual districts.

Wong: Artists working in different media look for different things in studios. Those who make music crank up the volume but it's way too expensive to install soundproof acoustic insulation. Besides they have a full-time job and can only make music after work. A 24-hour factory is most suitable since they can come and go freely at night when office people have left, or that the facility is a warehouse where noise is not an issue. Depriving them of industrial buildings is like taking away their most fundamental hardware for making their art. Incidents like this that remind me of the importance and meaning of social movement.

Lam: Apart from voicing your demands, you also have different ways of getting things done. AhKok is more action-oriented, while Leungpo focuses on academic research. Have you been through a 'break-in' period?

Leung: Of course. Put 10 artists in the same room and you'll have 100 minds working.

Wong: I did worry we might not get along. At one time the Hong Kong Federation of Trade Unions intervened in Sun Po Kong and we didn't want to work with certain political parties. Many a time musicians only mount a one-off protest, rather anarchistic. I'm not an anarchist but I think protests are rather ineffectual. It's back then I looked up Leungpo's articles in the hope of finding channels and ways to communicate with the government, thinking 'now that's a more reasonable approach'. But some would disagree with this form of protest, branding me a social activist. Their premise is that the cultural community should stay away from politics and to engage the authorities in communication is social movement.

Chow: Visual artists probably had some exposure to it at uni and the 'art vs social movement' debate wouldn't be an issue because it's the duty of an intellectual to know your current events.

Wong: That's right. Independent musicians are relatively less educated and don't particularly want the baggage that comes with it. We are simply not cut for these kinds of activities. Besides with media exposure we might be debunked for using industrial space illegally.

Chow: Open doors day has always been on Fo Tan's event calendar. We wanted to put ourselves out there in the first place. It's never our concern.

Lam: Any new development? You said you just had a meeting with Carrie Yuet-ngor Lam, Secretary for Development, and other officials.

Leung: Shall I begin with more recent events? The issue has evolved from finding solutions at a lower (eg 'property proprietors with a conscience'¹⁴) to a higher level of cultural policy-making. Because we don't have a centralised cultural bureau we have to go and talk to individual departments for any problems connected with cultural policies, and that's where the problem lies. No one can answer questions about long-term land use because such data is not available. Now *this* is what this Industrial Buildings Revitalisation uncovered, proving it is the roots of the problem.

Lam: Is it because of the absence of a department to spearhead initiatives?

Leung: Different departments are doing their own things. While the government undoubtedly has a clear vision and planning for future art policies with projects like the West Kowloon Cultural District, it lacks concrete strategies for pertinent factors such as land and human capital.

Lam: How did Carrie Lam respond?

Chow: In fact she showed concern for the use of industrial space back around 2007, 2008.

Leung: Yes, she visited studios in industrial buildings even long before the scheme was launched. She struck me as sincere in her attitude, pragmatic, a doer. Throughout our meetings she showed a grasp of things down to the details...

Chow: Like she shook my hand at our first meeting, addressing me 'Mr Chow'. [laughs]

Leung: Right...you can tell she did her homework. Dialogues between the government and the artists

¹⁴The government encourages landlords of industrial units who benefit from the scheme to fulfil their corporate social responsibility by leasing units to artists at a discounted rent.

are lessons both have to learn. The last time Tsang Tak-shing paid us a visit, his last line was 'So do you need to hire people to clean this place every day?' Shouldn't it be the least of your concern when you're the Secretary for Home Affairs? A concluding line like that is certainly not up to scratch culturally.

Chow: Another question is councillors did respond strongly to our suggestions but there's no follow up in practice.

Lam: What's your vision and thoughts on the future?

Chow: There's a turnover of talent in Fo Tan at the mo. There were people who came to buy art pieces but ended up purchasing a unit. They're not necessarily artists but people who fantasise about the life of an artist and seek an artist's life. Industries properties are comparatively cheaper than residential ones, so if you get a place at a favourable price you won't stand up and fight for anything. People who voiced their opinions were likely those who were moving out or were being forced to. Artists found the price incredulous but others think they bagged a bargain and the issue faded away.

Leung: I often thought what we could learn if we failed this one time. Of course we knew what our demands and requests are but how can we turn them into policies that can be implemented on a technical level?

Then again I am increasingly lost my patience with artists who seize every chance to pour out their grievances. Hong Kong artists tend to marginalise themselves, thinking people owe them something. But why don't the artists fight for themselves? Shouldn't they give more? They should understand where their edge lies and continue improving. How can one say they're marginalised when they have had tertiary education and a high intellectual level? They should analyse the issue, analyse the situation.

Wong: The concept of 'property proprietors with a conscience' is a good starting point. It wouldn't work if you forcibly break up organically formed communities and reintegrate them into artists' villages.

I can't agree with what Leungpo said more. Even if you fail eventually, you'd leave behind something to accumulate, accrue with time. The controversy surrounding the demolition of the Star Ferry might have died down but the fight and struggle put up during the process was still an experience, an educational process.

Chow: The artists are learning and the government officials have also gained something from it. They are both learning how to communicate and understand the way artists see things and the government.

Pictures courtesy of: Revitalisation Independence Partnership and Factory Artists Concern Group

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