

Ecomuseum as a strategy: An anthropological study on urban redevelopment and preservation in To Kwa Wan

PAK, Hiu Ching

To Kwa Wan, giving the impression of “old urban town” due to the number of aged buildings in the area and lack of Mass Transit Railway (MTR), which symbolizes convenience, fast and modern to citizens. In previous studies, understanding of To Kwa Wan was separated by different parties in terms of social, historical and archaeological, etc, though they were the studies of same place, they seldom incorporated to form a holistic view of To Kwa Wan. With the background of a rapid changing To Kwa Wan due to the soon opening MTR and the 15 urban redevelopment projects happened/are happening here, I have studied this place from both local (as I have lived in this place since I was born) and anthropological (as an anthropology student) perspectives. The significance of preserving To Kwa Wan and understandings of how different stakeholders perceive this place and see the changes happening were identified through participant observation, and semi-structured interview, and the historical flow of the development in this place were reconstructed by the archival studies from historic archives to archaeological reports. A fragmented relationship between local stakeholders, from local people, to the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), such as the House of To Kwa Wan Stories (Tohome) (土瓜灣故事館), Caritas Community Centre-Kowloon, and the authorized parties like the Urban Renewal Authority (URA), the Antiquities and Monuments Office (AMO), the Development Bureau (DB) and the Kowloon City District Council, were observed and analyzed. In order to integrate the fragmented situation I have observed, ecomuseum, a territory-based museum revolution emphasized on the interaction between humans and natural environment, also encouraged bottom-up community engagement in conserving local

heritage and culture, was proposed in this thesis, as strategy to confront the recent fragmentized phenomenon and rapid changes, by completing the story of To Kwa Wan as one and empowering the local community by acknowledging them the cultural capitals have had in To Kwa Wan. The proposal of ecomuseum is an innovation that brings new imagination to the urban development in Hong Kong, other than the recent “redevelopment” approach, while it has not been utilized in Hong Kong urban development before.