

**Research Assessment Exercise 2020**  
**Impact Case Study**

**University: The Chinese University of Hong Kong**  
**Unit of Assessment (UoA): 34**

**Title of case study:** Achieving Policy Changes on Conservation and Revitalisation of Built Heritage in Hong Kong through a Historical Perspective

**(1) Summary of the impact** (indicative maximum 100 words)

Conservation of Hong Kong's built heritage has long been neglected. Demolition of Star Ferry Pier and Queen's Pier in 2007 exposed inadequacy of conservation policies. Research by HO Pui-yin of CUHK's History Department has resulted in publications, media reports and public lectures have provided relevant expertise to the community and enhance Hong Kong government's policy changes. As Council chairperson of Lord Wilson Heritage Trust (LWHT), non-executive director/member of Urban Renewal Authority (URA), Antiquities Advisory Board (AAB) and Advisory Committee on Built Heritage Conservation (ACBHC), HO has been actively involved in official heritage conservation policy-making and revision at all times.

**(2) Underpinning research** (indicative maximum 500 words)

In 2001, HO published *Water for a Barren Rock* (2001), a pioneering work that studied Hong Kong water supply system's historical monuments and sites, leading to discoveries of historical buildings related to Hong Kong's water supply system, such as Tai Tam conduit, Bowen aqueduct, old water pumping station in Shanghai Street, and the appreciation of Pok Fu Lam and Tai Tam reservoirs. Her impact began with comprehensive analysis of historical buildings of and stimulated wide debate on Hong Kong's built heritage, playing a key role in introducing Hong Kong's built heritage conservation and revitalisation information to the community. This was followed by *Weathering the Storm* (2003), investigating Hong Kong Observatory's historical monuments and sites (such as the two time ball towers and historical meteorological monuments at King's Park Meteorological Station) and *Challenges for an Evolving City* (2004), providing in-depth and impartial historical insights on the history of Victoria Harbour and facilities such as Star Ferry Pier and Queen's Pier and reclamation projects, analysing the pros and cons of reclamation works in Hong Kong.

The rise of public consciousness and enthusiasm in protecting historic buildings is greater than what the government has expected, making historical analysis of the protection of Hong Kong's built heritage and review of government's preservation and conservation policies a matter of urgency. The gap between general public cognition on preservation policies and government's development constraints creates major problems for compromise of both parties. HO's analysis of the long neglected social value of historic buildings and historical development constraints has led to more reasonable discussion. Her subsequent research output *Becoming Hong Kong* (2010) compared historical conservation status of Hong Kong's old and new landmark buildings, especially historical buildings in the city's core, such as Central, Sheung Wan and Mong Kok, providing insights on selection of historical buildings, while *Hong Kong Town Planning Development History 1841–2015* (2016) analysed Hong Kong's conservation policy and protection of Victoria harbour, design of the new Central harbourfront, renovation of Central Police Station Compound, preservation of Central Government Offices and the shortcomings of existing governmental policies on conservation and revitalisation. They are insightful works on government policies on antiquities and monuments, providing the public and governmental departments with a solid foundation to take Hong Kong to its next stage of built heritage's conservation and revitalisation.

The quality of Ho's research is recognised by the Hong Kong community through numerous book

awards. *Weathering the Storm* won the 2003/04 Distinguished Publishing Award. *Challenges for an Evolving City* was one of the ten highly recommended books at the 2005 Hong Kong Book Fair. *Hong Kong Town Planning Development History* received the Hong Kong Golden Book Awards 2016.

HO's research outputs have significantly overcome the lack of comprehensive research on Hong Kong's built heritage. They have combined academic pursuit with practical application of policy-making, proposing a new heritage conservation framework for Hong Kong's sustainable future development.

**(3) References to the research** (indicative maximum of 6 references)

3.1 HO Pui-yin, *Water for a Barren Rock — 150 Years of Water Supply in Hong Kong* 《點滴話當年 — 香港供水一百五十年》, Hong Kong, Commercial Press, 2001, 250 pages. (Chinese and English versions)

3.2 HO Pui-yin, *Weathering the Storm: Hong Kong Observatory and Social Development*, 《風雲可測 — 香港天文台與社會的變遷》 Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2003, 364 pages. (Chinese and English, bi-lingual version) **Distinguished Publishing Award, 16th Hong Kong Print Awards (2003–2004)**

3.3 HO Pui-yin, *Challenges for an Evolving City: 160 Years of Port and Land Development in Hong Kong* 《地換山移 — 香港海港及土地發展一百六十年》, Hong Kong, Commercial Press, 2004, 274 pages. (Chinese and English versions) **one of the ten highly recommended books at Hong Kong Book Fair 2005**

3.4 HO Pui-yin, *Ways to Urbanisation: Post-War Road Development in Hong Kong* 《建城之道 — 戰後香港的道路發展》, Hong Kong, Hong Kong University Press, 2009, 350 pages (Chinese and English, bi-lingual version)

3.5 HO Pui-yin, *Becoming Hong Kong: Development of Construction in Hong Kong 1840–2010*, 《築景思城：香港建造業發展史1840–2010》 Hong Kong, Commercial Press, 2010, 308 pages. (Chinese and English versions)

3.6 HO Pui-yin, 《城傳立新：香港城市規劃發展史1841-2015》 (Hong Kong Town Planning Development History 1841-2015), Hong Kong, Chung Hwa Book Co. (HK) Ltd., 2016, 446 pages. **Hong Kong Golden Book Awards 2016**

**(4) Details of the impact** (indicative maximum 750 words)

1. Advise on selection and grading of historical buildings:

As non-executive director/member/chairperson of Hong Kong's most authoritative government and non-government bodies on conservation and revitalisation of historical buildings, including URA, AAB, ACBHC and LWHT, HO has advised on selection and grading of historical buildings and monuments, and provided insights on conservation and revitalisation. In 2013, as non-executive Director of URA, HO advised on the implementation of revitalisation scheme for two historic buildings, in addition to the 14 completed. As Member of AAB, HO advised on the preservation of West Wing of Central Government Offices and successfully helped save the West Wing from demolition. HO also dealt with the grading of 1,444 selected buildings of high heritage value based on their historical significance, architectural features and community functions. HO's advice has been recorded in AAB meetings' minutes, which are widely cited by the media and the public. They are important references for Legislative Council discussions.

2. Participate in government's review of conservation policy:

In 2014, HO participated in the conservation policy review and contributed her extensive research experience on historical buildings, which led to the promulgation of four focal changes in

conservation strategies:

- Setting up a dedicated fund on conservation of built heritage for public education and publicity activities, academic research, public engagement and consultation programmes.
- Offering prevailing incentives through a more systematic mechanism;
- Conserving and protecting selected building clusters with unique heritage value under the "point-line-plane" approach;
- Arranging thematic surveys on building clusters with heritage value for drawing up appropriate conservation strategies and protection measures for future planning.

In 2016, HKD500 million was earmarked as the Built Heritage Conservation Fund to implement the recommendations of AAB. ACBHC was established to distribute subsidies for public education, community involvement and academic research, with HO as a founding member. An amount of HKD32 million was allocated for local tertiary institutions' heritages studies, and adopted the "point-line-plane" approach as the major theme for 2017.

### 3. Promote education and research activities on Hong Kong's heritage:

As Council chairperson of LWHT which was established in 1993, HO leads the Hong Kong community in preserving and conserving Hong Kong's heritage by organising activities and providing funding support to assist community organisations and individuals undertake heritage related activities and research projects. As of March 2019, subsidies totalling HKD6.058 million had been provided by LWHT on 243 community projects that focus on restoration of antiquities and monuments, promotion of education activities that increase public awareness on Hong Kong heritage, and publication of research results. Heritage talk series and heritage walks have been organised in collaboration with Antiquities and Monuments Office, Central Library, Hong Kong History Museum and Hong Kong Heritage Museum to engage youngsters, teachers and general public to explore local heritage.

### 4. Provide relevant expertise and stimulate wide debate on Hong Kong's heritage:

Between 2013 and 2019, HO undertook a wide range of public engagement activities, including frequent public talks on conservation and revitalisation of built heritage at Central Library, Hong Kong History Discovery Centre and Hong Kong History Museum. Each with a capacity of approximately 200, they provided abundant information and made a strong impact. Recordings of these talks are kept in public libraries for public use. HO's insightful historical analyses are recognised by the widespread media coverage received. Three series of the RTHK television programme *Hong Kong History* were produced, totalling 29 episodes. It has been one of the ten most appreciated programmes since its launch, with more than one million viewers per episode. Teaching materials have been designed based on this programme. HO's critiques on heritage preservation and conservation campaigns are regularly referred to in news reports of TVB, ATV and CCTV as well as documentary programmes, attracting millions of viewers. These comments are crucial for further analysis in local newspapers that include *South China Morning Post*, *Apple Daily*, *Ming Pao*, *Oriental Daily*, *Ta Kung Pao* and *Wen Wei Po*, and draw the attention of leading international media such as *The New York Times*. The webpage and app set up to engage in dialogue with the community and arouse public interest in current developments of Hong Kong's heritage have attracted thousands of followers.

HO's contributions ensure that the government understands public concerns, and help to establish mutual trust between the public and policymakers. The government's "Final Report on Hong Kong 2030" emphasises "protect, conserve and revitalise as appropriate historical and heritage sites and buildings through relevant and sustainable approaches for the benefit and enjoyment of present and future generations".

**(5) Sources to corroborate the impact** (indicative maximum of 10 references)

- i. Websites of URA, AAB, ACBHC and LWHT of the HKSAR Government that confirm the responsibilities, official appointments, membership of HO Pui-yin and activities of these bodies.
- ii. Minutes and newsletters of government advisory committees proved HO Pui-yin's advisory role and her contribution to conservation and revitalisation of built heritage policy.
- iii. The cited Legislative Council minutes are records of HO Pui-yin's critique and recommendations on Hong Kong SAR Government's conservation and revitalisation policies.
- iv. The apps "Take on Hong Kong", designed by HO Pui-yin, on Hong Kong's most significant historical sites and monuments, provides comprehensive knowledge and increases public awareness of Hong Kong's heritage.  
<https://apps.apple.com/hk/app/%E9%81%8A%E6%AD%B7%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF-cuhk/id1473092424>.
- v. Letters of appreciation to Ho Pui-yin from various HKSAR government bodies.
- vi. The cited news reports show HO Pui-yin's historical analyses on Hong Kong's heritage were recognised by widespread media coverage.
- vii. The attached link shows Radio Television Hong Kong's use of Ho Pui-yin's insightful analyses on the significance of Hong Kong's heritage in the production of online radio and television educational programmes.  
<https://www.rthk.hk/tv/dtt31/programme/knowledgezone2019/episode/604245>
- viii. HO Pui-yin served as a commentator on different TV programmes, imparting comprehensive knowledge on Hong Kong history, heritage conservation and revitalisation to arouse public awareness and enthusiasm.
- ix. Recordings of public lectures by HO Pui-yin between 2013 and 2019 on Hong Kong history and heritage conservation are kept at the Central Library, the Hong Kong Museum of History and the Antiquities and Monuments Office for public use.
- x. HO Pui-yin was the Academic Director of the following exhibitions held at the Hong Kong Heritage Discovery Centre: 60 Years of Public Housing Development in Hong Kong; Building the City: Inspirations from the Emergence and Continued Development of Construction Technology in Hong Kong; Building Together: 160 Years of French Heritage and Perspectives in Hong Kong.