

Before Hong Kong's 'fragrant harbour' was colonized these lands were settled by Hakka and other indigenous peoples who escaped uncertainly and started new lives at the end of the Pearl River Delta. Many chose to settle around the area now known as the 'New Territories' for its lush landscapes, abundance of water, and the protections afforded by the mountains and valleys. Hundreds of years later in 1898 villagers suddenly awoke to the news that they were now part of the Colony of Hong Kong. As the colony continued to grow over the decades that followed with successive waves of immigration, Hong Kong's housing strained under the pressure, resulting in riots and unrest. The government looked to the New Territories to provide the not only the space to grow and build new towns but also the water to sustain them.

Over one hundred and twenty years later British colonialism has left many enduring marks on Hong Kong's identity as well as on its physical landscape. One of the most peculiar, and controversial, is the legacy of the 'Small House Policy'. Unlike Hong Kong and Kowloon, the New Territories were leased and not ceded, and this led to Hong Kong developing very differently due to dual policies which govern the land use to this day. The Small House Policy was seen as compensation for ancestral lands relinquished by villagers for development of the New Towns. This policy grants decedents of 'original villager's' families, rights to build a three-story house for the next generations to live.

With skyrocketing housing prices downtown, this has created a boom of these 'village houses' being built, sold and rented out, many becoming homes for 'new villagers' migrating from the city, on lands that once were traditionally farming and fishing villages for centuries and once fed Hong Kong. This has led to significant changes in the visuality of these once traditional villages. Most notable is the disappearance of the traditional ancestral family homes. Through the rapidly vanishing visual markers remaining on the facades and entranceways of these simple homes we witness both visible and invisible tensions, politics, culture, commerce, and a tracing of the past five centuries.

This image-based project, funded by the **Research Grants Council**, has reached the end of a three yearlong study of approximately twenty villages of North-eastern Taipo. While the selection of images presented here reflect my own aesthetics they were also carefully guided by the villagers as they led me around pointing out things that were important to them. They welcomed me into their homes and rituals, shared their stories of history, culture, and described the most significant changes that have impacted them, their ancestors, and their villages. **I would like to extend my sincerest, heartfelt thanks to all the villagers (too numerous to name) who participated in my project, their kindness and generosity made everything possible!**

在很久以前，客家人和其他原居民，來到了珠江三角洲的盡頭-

香港，許多人選擇在現在被稱為「新界」的地區定居，新界有著豐富的濕地、水源和山谷，為他們的生活提供了保障和支持。直到幾百年後的1989年，村民住的地方突然變成了殖民地的一部分，隨著移民的陸陸續來，香港的房屋面臨著極大的壓力，導致了社會的不安。政府將房屋發展轉向新界，希望在那裡提供發展新市鎮的空間，還是為了維持城鎮所需的水源。

一百二十多年後的今天，英國殖民主義對香港的身份留下了許多持久的印記。其中最奇特和有爭議的之一是「小型屋宇政策」的遺產。與香港和九龍不同，新界是租借而不是割讓的，這導致香港至現今仍然管理土地的雙重政策而發展出了截然不同的方向。小型屋宇政策被視為對村民為發展新城鎮而放棄祖傳土地所進行的補償。該政策授予「原居民家族」後代建造三層樓房屋，供下一代居住的權利。

隨著市區房價飛漲，這一政策導致大量「村屋」被建造、出售和出租，許多人成為「新村民」，他們從城市遷移，定居在曾經是傳統耕作和捕魚村莊的土地上，這些土地曾經為香港提供糧食。這導致這些傳統村莊的視覺形象發生了重大變化，最明顯的是傳統屋宇的消失。通過這些簡單房屋外觀和入口仍然存在但快速消失的視覺元素，我們可以看到可見和不可見的緊張關係、政治、文化、商業以及過去五個世紀的追溯。

這個以圖像為基礎的研究由研究資助局資助，結束了需時三年對大埔東北約二十個村莊。雖然這裡呈現的圖像反映了我的美學，但我也受到村民子孫指導，他們帶著我四處參觀，指出對他們重要的事情。他們歡迎我進入他們的家和參與傳統儀式，分享他們的歷史、文化故事，並描述了對他們、他們的祖先和村莊最有影響的變化。**我要衷心感謝所有參加了這個研究的村民，他們的善良和慷慨將這一切成為可能！**