

ORIGINAL ARTICLE

The development and revitalization of “rural schools” in the Sha Tau Kok area

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Abstract

Sha Tau Kok is one of the most undeveloped and remote regions in Hong Kong SAR, China. This region preserves traces of the history of local towns and clans; some buildings have even been designated as historic by the Antiquities Advisory Board. Among these structures, rural schools have been left vacant as most younger generations have moved away. Nevertheless, these schools have historically maintained strong connections with rural communities. In recent years, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) established the Countryside Conservation Office to revitalize certain villages in the Sha Tau Kok area, such as Lai Chi Wo. Some vacant rural schools have also been restored and repurposed as “Story Rooms” or exhibition spaces. With the ongoing implementation of the Northern Metropolis Development Strategy, there are robust discussions surrounding the balance between development and conservation in this region. This article explores how to reconceptualize the social relationship between conservation and development, focusing on the case of rural schools in Sha Tau Kok. Through archival research, oral histories, and field visits, the paper traces the historical significance of these schools. Case studies are also presented to illustrate their historical and connective value. In examining revitalization, the paper categorizes the present status of rural schools as revitalized, awaiting maintenance, or abandoned. It further considers the implications of cultural construction, including the preservation of traditional values, changes in government policies, and contributions to creative transformation. Finally, the study evaluates existing government policy approaches and proposes recommendations for related conservation measures.

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1. Introduction

The study of rural regions in Hong Kong SAR, China, has become a hot topic over the past few years, largely due to the introduction of government-led development strategies. Among the various aspects of rural regions, rural schools represent key milestones in Hong Kong's education history. They symbolize the gradual changes, modernization,

and development of the New Territories. However, these schools were abandoned over time following their closures. Public discussions have emerged around the potential reuse of the land they occupy, raising new concerns and interests.

This article reviews the situation of rural schools in Sha Tau Kok, a region often considered peripheral within Hong Kong (Yuen, 2021). The so-called “Ten Alliances” (沙头角十约; *Shatoujiao Shiyue*) emerged in the early 19th century with the formation of Hakka villages (Faure, 1986) and gradually expanded in influence until the establishment of hard Sino–British borders after 1949. Hase (1993) also mentioned the historical prosperity of the Sha Tau Kok market and its interactions with communities in mainland China, particularly those in Shenzhen. However, economic development in Sha Tau Kok has lagged behind due to its designation as part of the Closed Frontier Area (CFA). With the gradual relaxation of restrictions in the northeast New Territories (HKSAR Government, 2021), the government is now eager to redevelop Sha Tau Kok and integrate it into Hong Kong’s future development. This raises a critical question: how can new development strategies be implemented in this borderland while taking its historical significance into account—especially when public awareness of its heritage is often limited due to its geographic isolation?

This ossified view has begun to change in recent years. As the Greater Bay Area initiative and broader development strategies by the HKSAR government have advanced, public interest in the region has grown. Increasingly, scholars are engaging in studies on border areas, supported by sufficient funding and growing research interest in topics such as integration and tourism development (Luo & Lam, 2020; Mitrašinović & Jachna, 2021). Scholars such as Lu (2009) have explored government strategies for heritage conservation, though much of this work has focused on urban areas. Law (2023) has examined the colonial government’s orientalist portrayal of Hong Kong to attract tourists, including the emphasis on the “Chineseness” of villages to offer a cultural experience distinct from that of mainland China.

International cases also offer relevant comparisons. In Portugal, rural revitalization efforts have supported sustainable community development (Filipe & de Mascarenhas, 2011). In the Czech Republic, research has explored the evolution of medieval villages (Houfková *et al.*, 2015), while in Poland, national airborne light detection and ranging datasets have been used to preserve pre–World War II (WW2) landscapes of abandoned mountain villages in the south (Affek *et al.*, 2022). These examples highlight broader trends in rural development and heritage conservation relevant to this study.

Recent research has increasingly focused on rural education and conservation. Scholars such as Lee *et al.* (2022) have published a monograph based on oral histories to document livelihoods that are often absent from the written literature. Their work includes reflections on the impact of rural schools in the New Territories, featuring the shared thoughts from former students – primarily male alumni. Hayes (2006) has also explored the general historical development of the New Territories. Ng (1984) examined the development of village education during the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1911) and its impact on British colonization, although her work mainly focuses on the major clans in the New Territories. With respect to the conservation of schools or rural areas, most related literature emphasizes the architectural authenticity of the buildings, drawing on examples from countries such as Chile and Australia (N.S.W. Landscape Conservation Committee, 1983; Torres, 2023). However, few studies adopt a people-centered approach or address the center–periphery (e.g., markets or schools vs. villages) dynamics within the New Territories.

International revitalization efforts offer further insights. For instance, in Portugal, old school buildings have been redeveloped into new school complexes or repurposed as social centers and bookshops, supporting both educational development and community building (Godinho, 2012; Freire-Lista *et al.*, 2022). In Malaysia, however, the government has faced difficulties revitalizing rural schools due to policy constraints and a lack of resources (Marwan *et al.*, 2012). Further findings related to the modern era will be discussed in this article, with a particular focus on the case of Sha Tau Kok in Hong Kong SAR.

Earlier studies on government intervention and development strategies for rural schools generally anticipated positive impacts on education (Ma *et al.*, 1997). However, these studies often lack a historical perspective to explain present trends. Today, rural schools experience diverse circumstances: While some have been successfully revitalized, others remain abandoned or vacant. Li (2002) observed that previous conservation efforts by the government focused primarily on cultural heritage, neglecting colonial heritage and the associated sense of belonging within rural communities. This oversight has, in many cases, alienated local residents, especially the youth. In China, the concept of “rural civilization” through cultural construction has contributed to the revitalization and development of rural areas (Liu *et al.*, 2020). According to a 2025 report by Assumption University of Thailand (2025), a recent conference held by Peking University on May 18, 2025, to inaugurate the UNESCO

International Workstation on Rural Creativity and Sustainable Development (Thailand), emphasized the need to integrate digital intelligence and culture for the benefit of rural communities, including schools. These efforts can be viewed in relation to Hong Kong's own experiences and can serve as a reference point for analyzing existing practices and identifying areas for improvement.

In relation to the development of border regions, such as those within the CFA, there is a pressing need for a new model of conservation – one that preserves the uniqueness of these areas while aligning with contemporary conservation principles. As articulated in Article 12 of the Burra Chapter:

“Conservation, interpretation, and management of a place should provide for the participation of people for whom the place has significant associations and meanings, or who have social, spiritual or other cultural responsibilities for the place (Australia ICOMOS, 2013).”

A collaborative approach to conservation is also recommended (Waterton *et al.*, 2018), particularly in the context of revitalizing areas such as Sha Tau Kok.

While Dasgupta *et al.* (2022) have discussed how climate change affects the resilience and vulnerability of villages in the Indian Himalayan region, the present study addresses a different type of transformation: artificial changes with socio-economic significance. In Hong Kong's case, these changes involve fundamental shifts related to development.

The above literature reflects a broad spectrum of strategies for managing heritage, drawing from China and international standards. These models can serve as the doctrines for the present study. In the case of rural schools of Sha Tau Kok, three primary trends can be identified: (i) safeguarding traditions, (ii) witnessing policy changes, and (iii) facilitating creative transformation through the involvement of multiple stakeholders. Accordingly, this article aims to address the scientific issue of rural decline and to provide contextually grounded solutions and analysis.

Against the background of recent development and revitalization efforts, this article examines how to reconsider the social relationship between conservation and development in the context of the historical environments of rural schools, particularly in Sha Tau Kok. These dynamics continue to shape the value and existence of such schools from historical, contemporary, and future-oriented perspectives. Following a review of the region's historical context, the present article draws on traditional literature and field trips conducted over the past 2 years to explore the roles of various societal stakeholders. It also

uses case studies related to development and revitalization initiatives in the region. In addition, we reference interview transcripts collected by David Faure and his colleagues in the 1980s, which were obtained primarily through snowball sampling of elderly male interviewees (mostly over 60 years old) (CUHK Library, 1980; Faure, 1986). We then highlight the historical importance of rural schools for communities in the Sha Tau Kok region and discuss present preservation measures. Finally, the article proposes possible strategies for improvement.

By focusing on Sha Tou Kok, this article contributes to broader research on border regions and offers new insights into place-based development. Drawing on the above experiences, we develop our arguments through the specific case of Sha Tau Kok. This reflection allows us to reconsider the trajectory of educational development in the New Territories and explore the potential for learning from the past to inform contemporary issues and education policies. The research framework is presented in Figure 1 for reference.

2. Historical development: The development of rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area

Official Hong Kong government records show that the New Territories have a long history of rural school development. When the British began administering the New Territories in the late 19th century, they conducted a comprehensive survey of the newly acquired land, including the state of education in rural areas (Ho, 2018). A report submitted in 1899 summarized the rather rudimentary conditions of

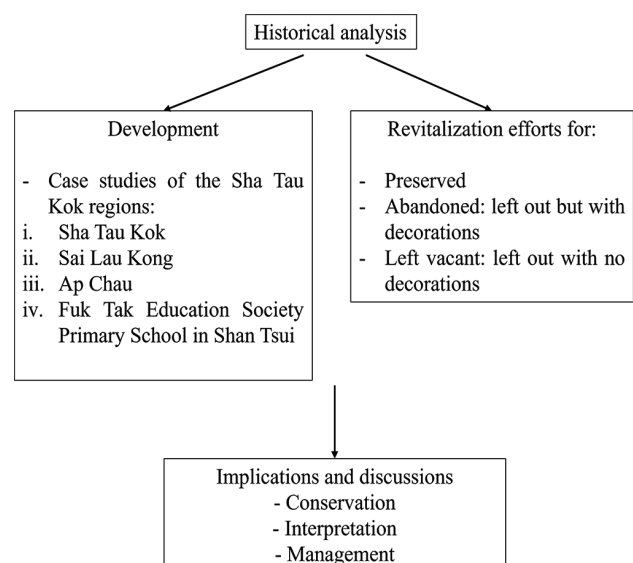


Figure 1. Research framework
Source: Diagram by the authors

“schools,” the qualifications of teachers, and the curriculum in the villages at that time (Ho, 2018). There were no dedicated school buildings; instead, villagers used private houses, ancestral halls, or temples as learning venues. These locations were often chosen because they were regarded as communal village property and served as community spaces (Ming *et al.*, 1996), which can be regarded as “public spheres” for sharing information (Habermas, 1991).

Teachers were typically local villagers, and only a few held any form of formal literary qualification. The teaching materials primarily consisted of Chinese classical texts, indicating that rural education largely followed traditional Chinese educational models (The Government of Hong Kong, 1900). Some students even returned to mainland China to sit for imperial examinations and enter the Chinese civil service system, demonstrating the region’s vast connections with the Qing government. According to a report co-authored by the Hong Kong Museum of History, the Hong Kong Heritage Museum, and the Hong Kong Institute of Education, rural schools exhibit four main characteristics (Lo *et al.*, 2008):

- (i) Operational background: Village schools were mainly operated and managed by non-government organizations, most of which had village affiliations. These organizations typically comprised villagers, with a smaller presence of guilds, clan members, associations, and religious groups.
- (ii) Class size: Most village schools had a maximum of 12 students and typically offered only six grade levels.
- (iii) Architecture: These schools were generally housed in single-story buildings, some with pyramid-shaped roofs and others resembling bungalows. This architecture contrasted with the more formal, campus-style structures of urban primary schools.
- (iv) History: The origins of village schools trace back to traditional private schools that existed before the Japanese occupation of Hong Kong (before 1941). Their development peaked in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Hong Kong Government aimed to preserve the traditions and customs of the New Territories to maintain stability and avoid conflict with the villagers. As such, it encouraged self-governance among villagers, including the establishment of their own schools to overcome illiteracy. This approach exemplifies the “administrative absorption of politics” in Hong Kong, wherein the gentry played a role in indirectly governing education in the New Territories (King, 1975; Sit & Kwong, 2011). The government opted to incorporate rural schools into the broader education system while also seeking solutions to improve their standards to align more closely with urban schools. This approach sought to address the persistent lag of rural middle schools

compared to their urban counterparts. In the 1970s, stricter regulations were introduced for rural schools, contributing to their decline. Sha Tau Kok, like other rural areas in the New Territories, enjoys a certain degree of autonomy from the government, with village affairs primarily determined and executed by village representatives and the local Ten Alliance, which comprises approximately 50 villages (Faure, 1986). According to Hase (1993), these schools were governed by Hakka villages, with some located within Sha Tau Kok’s central market. Due to the area’s peripheral status, there was greater flexibility in designing the school curriculum. Under such circumstances, rural schools were often operated by the villagers themselves. Although they adhered to the general principles set by the Education Department, rural schools enjoyed more autonomy than their urban counterparts due to more lenient regional controls. Rural schools once flourished in the Sha Tau Kok areas, with most villages operating their own institutions. In sparsely populated areas, children were often sent to the neighboring villages to study. This historical review focuses on identifying and analyzing these patterns in the development of rural schools.

Reports submitted by District Officers (理民官; *Liminguan*) of the New Territories in the early 20th century provided statistical figures on rural schools, including those in the Sha Tau Kok area (Figure 2). A school census of the New Territories conducted in April 1912 was included as a table in the Report on the New Territories, 1899 – 1912 (Figure 3), summarizing statistics on rural schools in different regions of the New Territories. At that time, the territory was divided into the Northern District (北约理民府; *Beiyueliminfu*) and the Southern District (南约理民府; *Nanyueliminfu*), with Sha Tau Kok falling under the jurisdiction of the former. According to the 1912 census, there were 21 schools in Sha Tau Kok. Of these, 20 were Hakka schools, while the remaining one served the so-called “Punti” (native Cantonese people), reflecting the predominance of the Hakka population in the region. The average enrollment across these 21 schools was 19 students, representing the highest enrollment figure within the Northern District. This suggests that communities of differing cultural backgrounds often established their own schools as an expression of their identity and livelihood.

Due to the shortage of teachers and limited infrastructure, most rural schools at the time adopted a “combined classes” (复式教学; *fushijiaoxue*) instructional model, in which pupils from two or more grade levels were taught together in a single classroom. Over the years, government officials, including the Education Department (教育司署; *Jiaoyusishu*) and the District Officers of the New Territories, attempted to enhance the quality of rural

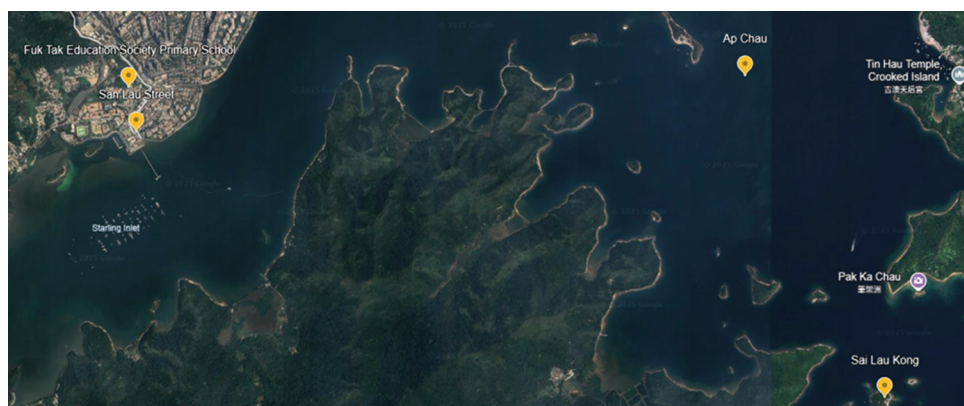


Figure 2. Spatial location map of the case study areas. San Lau Street indicates the location of Sha Tau Kok (discussed in Section 3.1), Sai Lau Kong (Section 3.2), Ap Chau (Section 3.3), and Fuk Tak Education Society Primary School (Section 3.4) in Shan Tsui
Source: Map by Google Earth

Appendix G.
School Census, New Territories. April, 1912.

District.	No. of Schools.	Average Attendance.	Average fee per month per hour.	Penti.	Hakka.	Hoklo.
A.—Northern District.						
Au Tau (with San Tin) ...	34	15	47 cts.	26	8	...
Ping Shan	28	12	46½	24	4	...
Sheung Shui	13	13	58	10	3	...
Tai Po	27	13	60	8	19	...
Sha Tin	8	14	62½	3	5	...
Tsun Wan	12	17	47	1	11	...
Sai Kung	23	16	36	10	13	...
Sha Tau Kok	21	19	40	1	20	...
B.—Southern District.						
Kowloon City	14	34	40	6½	7½	...
Sham Shui Po	15	22	50	8	7	...
Tai O	8	21	33	8	...	...
Cheung Chai	10	20	38	6½	2	1½
Lamma	1	13	40	1	...	...
Po Toi .....	...	...	...	...	...	...
Hang Hau Peninsula	7	19	45	3	4	...
Ma Wan	2	20	42	1	1	...
Ching Yi	1	16	40	...	1	...
Total,	224	16	46 cts.	117	105½	1½
Mean Average.						

Figure 3. School census of the New Territories, April 1912
Source: Orme (1912)

education (Sweeting, 2004). In the 1920s, the Hong Kong government began subsidizing New Territories schools, including those in Sha Tau Kok. However, eligibility for subsidies depended on whether schools could teach “modern subjects” (i.e., subjects other than the Classics) for at least a quarter of the curriculum and achieve a generally high standard. Schools that did not meet these requirements received lower subsidy rates (Hase, 2020). Under this framework, District Officers of the New Territories remained essential in local administration during the post-WW2 era (1939 – 1945), serving as intermediaries between villagers and education officials (Hayes, 2006).

Following the government’s reorganization of the New Territories into separate administrative districts, Sha Tau

Kok was initially placed under Tai Po district (大埔区; *Dabu qu*) before being transferred to the newly established North district (北区; *Bei qu*) in the early 1980s. As local administrators, District Officers of the New Territories were responsible for inspecting villages and identifying the villagers’ needs within their district. Apart from the villagers’ livelihoods, they also supported the development of local education. With their assistance, some villages were able to secure government funding and materials to rebuild or repair deteriorating school facilities. For instance, the village of So Lo Pun benefited from such support. John Walden, the District Officer of Tai Po at the time, visited So Lo Pun in the 1950s and discovered that the premises of the Kai Ming School (启明学校; *Qiming Xuexiao*) were inadequate. He suggested that the villagers construct a new school building. To support the reconstruction, the Tai Po District Office donated 515 packs of British clay, while the Education Department subsidized more than HK\$16,000. Thanks to this governmental assistance, the school reconstruction project was successfully completed in the late 1950s (Shi Dai She, 1959).

Initially, rural schools employed only teachers from their own village or neighboring villages. Over time, they began to welcome teachers from urban areas, including graduates of teacher training institutes established after WW2. The modern education system gradually extended into the New Territories, including peripheral regions, such as Sha Tau Kok. However, the education level in the Sha Tau Kok region lagged behind that of urban areas due to limited access to information and resources. Nevertheless, education policies effectively enabled students in the New Territories to receive formal teaching and training.

The construction of rural schools can be viewed as a transitional phase in the broader modernization of education, which gained momentum with the introduction

of “New Towns” in the New Territories during the 1970s. When these development strategies were implemented in villages, they brought unprecedented changes to the local economy, reflecting the broader pattern of Hong Kong’s transformation as one of the “Four Asian Tigers” (Vogel, 1991). In this context, we observe a trend in which government education policies contributed to the decline of rural schools, particularly in relation to shifting social strata. The development of “New Towns” also weakened students’ sense of belonging to their rural communities, as increasing numbers of students from village areas began receiving primary and secondary education in urban centers, leading to the deterioration of rural schools (Leung & Li, 2020).

In 1981, the Hong Kong Government published a white paper titled *Primary Education and Pre-primary Services*, which identified major challenges faced by rural primary schools in remote areas. According to the report, 234 out of 347 aided primary schools in the New Territories were “sponsored or managed by villagers or local groups.” Among these schools, more than 100 lacked a complete stream, consisted of fewer than six classes, or were situated in remote areas with poor accessibility. The paper therefore suggested that “schools of fewer than six operating classes should be closed” and replaced by “centrally located primary schools” to establish relatively sizable primary schools that could provide better education (The Government of Hong Kong, 1981, p. 17). This policy marked a turning point in the government’s approach to rural schools, signifying a shift toward increased regulation and centralization. Rural schools subsequently faced a series of challenges contributing to their decline, including (i) a declining birth rate since the mid-1970s, (ii) emigration of villagers, which drastically decreased the number of local students, (iii) improvements in transportation infrastructure, which enhanced connectivity between remote villages and other districts and led to student outflow, and (iv) the rise of new towns and prominent schools during the 1980s, which attracted many students away from village schools (Wong, 2011).

Following the recommendations of the 1981 white paper, Sha Tau Kok became one of the regions selected for the establishment of a centralized primary school. As a result, five rural schools, including the Fish Marketing Organization Sha Tau Kok Primary School (鱼类统营处沙头角小学; *Yulei Tongyingchu Shatoujiao Xiaoxue*) in Sha Tau Kok town, Kok Kwan School (觉群学校; *Juequn Xuexiao*) in Wu Kau Teng, Man Wo School (万和学校; *Wanhe Xuexiao*) in Man Uk Pin, Luk Keng School (鹿颈学校; *Lujing Xuexiao*) in Luk Keng, and Tai Wah School (大华公立学校; *Dahua Gongli Xuexiao*) in Ma Tseuk Leng, were merged to form the Sha Tau Kok Central Primary School (沙头角中心小学; *Shatoujiao*

Zhongxin Xiaoxue). Teachers and students from these five abandoned schools were relocated to the new central school, symbolizing the government’s effort to centralize resources and improve educational management. Consequently, the original village schools declined or were gradually abandoned—an issue that persists today. Table 1 outlines the timeline of these historical developments.

3. Result analysis: Case studies on the present development of rural schools in Sha Tau Kok

Located along the coast, Sha Tau Kok is one of the key areas in Hong Kong historically inhabited by fishing communities. Due to generally low literacy rates among fishermen – caused by social, economic, and geographical disadvantages – the Fish Marketing Organisation (FMO; 鱼类统营处; *Yulei Tongyingchu*) established several primary schools in fishing villages across Sha Tau Kok to provide access to basic education. Three Fisherman’s Children’s Schools were located in the Sha Tau Kok area. In what follows, we briefly introduce these three schools to highlight their uniqueness and importance as rural schools specifically designed to serve fishermen communities and to illustrate their present state of development.

3.1. Sha Tau Kok

The Sha Tau Kok Fishermen’s Children’s School was founded in 1948 in a leased building on the 2nd floor of San Lau Street, Sha Tau Kok. From 1948 to March 1957, the school operated as a private school under the Fisheries Bureau and started receiving funding from the Education Department in April 1957. Students were exempted from

Table 1. Developmental timeline of rural schools in Sha Tau Kok

Year	Incident (s)
1899	A report was submitted, summarizing the rather primitive situation surrounding the “school,” the quality of teachers, and the curriculum in villages at that time.
1912	A school census of the New Territories conducted in April was included as a table in the <i>Report on the New Territories, 1899 – 1912</i> , summarizing statistics about the rural schools in different regions of the New Territories. According to the census, in 1912, there were 21 schools in Sha Tau Kok.
1920s	The Hong Kong government subsidized New Territories Schools, including Sha Tau Kok.
Late 1950s	Kai Ming School (启明学校; <i>Qiming Xuexiao</i>) completed the reconstruction project with the government’s funding support.
1981	A white paper on “Primary Education and Pre-primary Services” was published by the Hong Kong Government, pointing out the problems rural primary schools face in remote areas. As a result, five rural schools were merged to form the Sha Tau Kok Central Primary School.

paying tuition, which was covered by the FMO. The school operated out of rented private homes, with first and second grades taught in combined classes. In 1958, the school admitted approximately 50 students. After completing their studies, students were transferred either to public schools or, if their academic performance was weaker, to other schools. In 1965, a new school building was completed and officially opened, replacing the former rented premises. The new school building was a standard school structure with two classrooms. The total construction cost exceeded HK\$50,000, with half subsidized by the Hong Kong Education Department and the remainder funded by the Fisherman's Education Development Fund of the Agriculture and Fisheries Department. At the time, the school had 163 students and five male teachers, including the principal. In 1988, the school was merged with four other rural primary schools to form Sha Tau Kok Central Primary School (Wah Kiu Yat Po, 1958; 1965; 1969).

3.2. Sai Lau Kong

The Fishermen's Children's School at Sai Lau Kong was another school established in the Sha Tau Kok area to serve fishing communities. In December 1959, elders of the Sai Lau Kong fishing community raised HK\$1,500 and petitioned the government for assistance in constructing a school for fishermen's children along the banks of Sai Lau Kong. In 1960, the FMO applied for funding from the Education Department, and the school was completed in August 1962 (Wah Kiu Yat Po, 1962). The total construction cost was approximately HK\$35,000, with an additional HK\$3,000 for equipment. The expenses were shared equally by the FMO and the Education Department. The opening ceremony took place on December 18, 1962, and was officiated by Mr. Kenneth Topley (1922 – 2007), then Director of the Cooperative Business Management Department.

The school building was a simple bungalow with two rustic classrooms, capable of accommodating 90 students. When divided into morning and afternoon sessions, the capacity increased to 180. Upon opening, 160 students (both boys and girls) were enrolled in Grade 1, divided into four classes in the morning and afternoon. The government even arranged special boats to transport children to school. The 1976 issue of *The Great Outdoors* (野外; *Yewai*) included a report noting that more than 70 students attended the school (*The Great Outdoors*, 1976). However, after a new primary school was built in Wanzhou, enrollment at Sai Lau Kong School dropped to just over 50 students. The school was eventually discontinued in 1988.

3.3. Ap Chau

In the early days, the fishermen living on Ap Chau faced difficulties in securing stable housing and livelihood,

which made access to education nearly impossible. However, following the end of WW2 and the gradual stabilization of Hong Kong society, many fishermen – who previously had few educational opportunities – began to hope their children could receive formal schooling, and the government responded to their voices (Hong Kong Government Information Service, 1976). In 1953, the FMO borrowed the church hall on Ap Chau to establish the Ap Chau Fishermen's Children's School. The church was a small Christian building where children received basic education (Chan, 2023). In its 1st year, the school offered only a first-grade class. In 1956, a standalone school building with two classrooms was built, and Colonial Secretary Sir Edgeworth David presided over the opening ceremony on November 19 of that year. According to archival documents, by July 1956, the school had opened classes for Grades 1 – 3, enrolling 68 students. The first sixth-grade cohort graduated during the 1959/1960 academic year. Although the school's history is relatively short, its infrastructure remained unchanged, with only two classrooms since its establishment. From the late 1950s, the school adopted the same curriculum as regular government schools, including Chinese, English, mathematics, social studies, nature, health education, esthetics, labor studies, music, and physical education. Records from 1965 to 1974 indicate a consistent student population of over 100; however, by 1974, enrollment had dropped by nearly 50 compared to a decade earlier. Official figures from December 1971 recorded five teachers and 159 students, with a relatively balanced gender ratio (84 boys and 75 girls) (Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark, 2019).

According to Wah Kiu Yat Po (1958), by September 19, 1958, the Ap Chau Fisherman's Children's School had four classes and two classrooms. First and second grades were combined, as were third and fourth grades. The total enrollment was approximately 70 students. The school building had a roof made of asbestos tiles, which became uncomfortably hot in the summer. To encourage saving habits, the school established student savings accounts, returning 20 cents per share to promote financial discipline among the students. In 1978, the school was renamed FMO Ap Chau Primary School. Although student numbers declined as the children of fishermen had no alternative schooling options on the island, the authorities maintained operations for as long as there were school-aged children. However, despite these efforts, the school ultimately closed in 1988.

3.4. Fuk Tak Education Society Primary School in Shan Tsui

Fuk Tak Education Society Primary School (FTESPS) (福德学社小学; *Fudexueshe Xiaoxue*) was originally established inside Kwan Tai Temple, a religious building

used for worship, located next to the present school premises. The school initially followed a traditional Chinese educational approach, with a single teacher responsible for teaching all students across different classes and subjects. At that time, it was known as Fuk Tak Private School, and the majority of students were children from the local village. The elders of Shan Tsui (山咀; *Shanzui*) advocated for the construction of a new school building. The villagers contributed land and raised funds, while the Education Department subsidized the construction costs (Yuen, 2014). In 1966, due to financial difficulties, the school was placed under the jurisdiction of the Education Department. The chairperson of the board of directors was required to be the North District Education Officer, ensuring that the school was administered in accordance with government oversight. Other members of the school board were representatives from the village, although local officials and community leaders could also serve.

In 1984, Shan Tsui Public School held its 1st open day. The then-school supervisor, Kwan Kei-tai (fl. 20th century), publicly addressed the school's financial difficulties, including a shortage of books and insufficient resources to purchase musical instruments such as pianos (Wah Kiu Yat Po, 1984).

In 1993, declining enrollment forced the school to reduce its class structure from six to five levels, marking a period of crisis. That same year, Ng Lan-ying (fl. 20th–21st century), who had initially served as a teacher, was appointed principal. To support students with academic difficulties, the school allowed those who were not meeting grade-level expectations to remain after school to complete their homework. Due to a shortage of classroom space, the nearby Guandi Temple was repurposed as a tutoring center. Over time, the after-school tutoring program grew increasingly popular, with students from all grade levels willingly participating. Morning-session students stayed at school in the afternoon for tutoring, while after-session students returned in the morning (Lo, 2015).

The school's after-school tutoring program became well known and helped establish Shan Tsui Public School's reputation within the Sha Tau Kok area. In 1995, the student population had grown from just over 70 to 120, allowing the school to resume its original six-grade structure. In 2000, the school successfully applied for improvement funding, and in 2003, the new school building was expanded to include teachers' rooms, additional classrooms, a library, and multimedia computer rooms. By 2008, the school continued to operate six classes and enrolled more than 40 students. It remained one of the few schools in the Sha Tau Kok area that managed to resist the broader trend of under-enrollment (FTESPS, n.d.).

In summary, based on the analysis of the four schools, Table 2 and Figure 2 are used to illustrate their historical trajectories and spatial distribution, providing insight into the rise and fall of rural schools in Sha Tau Kok. Table 2 also reflects broader changes in Hong Kong's education system and the colonial government's approach to schooling, namely, a centralized and systematic model of curriculum governance, teacher deployment, and resource allocation. On the contrary, villagers' educational autonomy gradually diminished due to increased compliance with the Education Ordinance (Sweeting, 2004).

4. Results analysis: The extent of the revitalization of rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area

Drawing on the concept of rural revitalization (Liu *et al.*, 2020), the present status and extent of revitalization can be categorized into three scenarios: Preserved, abandoned with decorations, and left vacant (i.e., abandoned without decorations). The findings suggest that revitalization efforts have only achieved limited progress thus far. Greater involvement from the government or other stakeholders increases the likelihood that schools will be preserved; conversely, limited engagement corresponds with a

Table 2. Examples of rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area

School	Year of establishment	Maximum scale and number of students	Present situation
Sha Tau Kok Fishermen's Children's School	1948	163 students and five male teachers, including the principal (1965).	In 1988, it was merged with four other rural primary schools into Sha Tau Kok Central Primary School.
Sai Lau Kong Fishermen's Children's School	1959	160 students were in the first grade, divided into four classes in the morning and afternoon (1959).	Ended in 1988.
Ap Chau Fishermen's Children's School	1953	5 teachers and 159 students (1971).	Ended in 1988.
Fuk Tak Education Society Primary School	Unknown	6 Classes and approximately 120 students (1995).	Operating.

greater risk of neglect or abandonment. Based on these three scenarios and four case studies, Table 3 presents the conditions of the rural schools examined and highlights the varied outcomes among them. These cases reflect both continuity and change, illustrating how the schools either adapt to changing social contexts or cease operations altogether. Despite ongoing efforts, present revitalization initiatives remain in an early stage, and further work is needed.

4.1. Preserved: Siu Ying School at Lai Chi Wo and Ap Chau fishermen's children's school

Established in 1927, Siu Ying School (小瀛学校; *Xiaoying Xuexiao*) is located in Lai Chi Wo village (荔枝窝; *Lizhiwo*), one of the region's few well-preserved rural schools. It is situated beside Hip Tin Kung and Hok Shan Che. With its single-story structure and pyramidal roof, the school is considered the most distinctive building in the village. Lai Chi Wo is the most populous among the seven villages of the Hing Chun Alliance (庆春约; *Qingchun Yue*), often playing a vital role in coordinating events related to lineage and religious activities. Siu Ying School became the center for primary-level education for children from these seven villages. According to archival records from the Government Records Service, the school acted as a bridge between the government and the villagers until its closure (Hong Kong Public Record Office, 1996). As villagers gradually migrated to urban areas, the student population declined, and the school was forced to shut down in 1998. Nevertheless, the alumni association remains active and continues to hold regular meetings (Mingpao, 2021).

Supported by the Hong Kong Geopark, the Siu Ying School's extension (Figure 4) was revitalized as the Siu Ying Story Room (小瀛故事馆; *Xiaoying Gushiguan*) (Figure 5), which has become a notable village attraction. This facility introduces visitors to the history and culture of the Hakka people. Our field research revealed that although the main

school building remains closed, an adjacent building now houses the Story Room.

Siu Ying School played an essential role in the New Territories' village communities, symbolizing a milestone in the development of Sha Tau Kok and the Hing Chun Alliance. The story room narrates the history of the Hing Chun Alliance and offers a systematic analysis of



Figure 4. Lai Chi Wo Siu Ying school at present
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2019)



Figure 5. Siu Ying story room
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2019)

Table 3. Present situations of rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area

School	Year of establishment	Present situation
Siu Ying School at Lai Chi Wo	1927	Well-preserved and became an exhibit space for Lai Chi Wo.
Ap Chau Fishermen's Children's School	1953	Well-preserved and became an exhibit space for Ap Chau.
Tsing Kun Study Hall at Nam Chung	Approximately 1900	Abandoned but may be renovated later
Tai Wah School at Ma Tsuek Ling	Unknown	Left abandoned.

its relationship with the Sha Tau Kok area. It encourages visitors to learn about the historical significance of the alliance and fosters public understanding of the importance of the border regions and the broader development of Hong Kong. The exhibition also addresses Mainland–Hong Kong relations and invites reflection on the present development of the Greater Bay Area.

Moreover, the transformation of the rural school into a story room highlights the local identity of the educated villagers and serves as a space for preserving collective memory. It also demonstrates how the area historically functioned as a site for inter-village interactions and symbolic knowledge transfer. Alumni of the school, who are former villagers of the Hing Chun Alliance, now serve as volunteer docents for the Story Room and actively promote the revitalization of this historic building (Mingpao, 2021).

The fishermen's children's school at Ap Chau has undergone a similar process of preservation. This initiative contributes to fostering a stronger sense of community and developing a new cultural tourism site in Sha Tau Kok. The school exhibition presents the history of rural education in Ap Chau and the traditional lifestyles of local fishermen, offering insights into the region's past economic patterns. Recently, the school was transformed into the Ap Chau story room (Figure 6), which informs visitors about the area's history. The exhibit also serves as a venue for public education on the rise and fall of the Hong Kong fishing industry and how education enabled children at the time to pursue alternative careers (Acton, 1981).

This transformation also sheds light on regional development and its interaction with the Mainland, contributing to a broader understanding of coastal development. As Ap Chau is part of the Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark, the school exhibit space enables visitors to explore the region's relationship with nearby Shenzhen (Hong Kong UNESCO Global Geopark, 2023). Alumni of the Ap Chau School also serve as docents (Lee, 2018), similar to the model adopted at the Siu Ying Story Room in Lai Chi Wo. These revitalization efforts connect with the historical development of Hong Kong's coastal areas and provide visitors with a multifaceted cultural experience.

4.2. Abandoned: Tsing Kun study hall at Nam Chung

The Tsing Kun Study Hall (静观家塾; *Jingguan Jiashu*) is located in Lei Uk Tsuen of Nam Chung (南涌李屋村; *Nanchong Liwucun*). Established by the Li clan around 1900, the Study Hall provided traditional education for children in Nam Chung, as well as those from Wo Hang (禾坑; *Hekeng*) and Wu Kau Tang (乌蛟腾; *Wujiaoteng*). The



Figure 6. Ap Chau story room
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2020)

study hall served as a gathering space for both students and parents, and such halls were commonly found in the region (Hase, 1990). One of the teachers, Li Kam-cheung (fl. 20th century), was a *siuca* (秀才; scholar who passed the county-level examination) from Wo Hang. In Chinese culture, this degree symbolized honor for the family and earned high praise within the village. It was common for Chinese villages to promote education in their sphere (Hase, 2020).

Each clan encouraged its children to study the Confucian classics and participate in the imperial civil service examinations. Even if they did not achieve outstanding results, these scholars could return to their villages and teach at the study hall (Faure, 2007). The Tsing Kun Study Hall is a small Qing-era vernacular building with a three-bay layout consisting of two halls and one courtyard. The structure is symmetrical and traditionally would have featured a portrait of Confucius in the center of the main entrance. These educated individuals often became gentry within their villages, using Confucian teachings to govern local affairs and assert cultural authority. The main ridge features geometric moldings, while the connecting boards, walls, and gable friezes are adorned with exquisite carvings, moldings, and paintings – including calligraphy and auspicious motifs such as dragons, landscapes, phoenixes, flowers, birds, and plants. Following the establishment of Nam Chung Public School in 1960, the Study Hall's role as an educational center was gradually replaced – an outcome similar to that of other traditional schools in the New Territories (Antiquities Advisory Board, 2023). The Study Hall was designated as a Grade 2 historic building in 2009. However, field research revealed that it is now abandoned, making it difficult to repurpose as a tourist spot due to ineffective management (Figures 7 and 8). Nonetheless, the Antiquities Advisory Board noted that the hall was



Figure 7. The front gate of Tsing Kun study hall at Nam Chung
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2020)



Figure 8. The interior of Tsing Kun study hall at Nam Chung
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2020)

used to shelter children and guerrilla fighters of the Hong Kong Independent Battalion of the Dongjiang Column (东江纵队港九独立大队; *Dongjing Zongdui Gangjiu Duli Dadui*) during the Japanese occupation. This historical association suggests that the building could be included in a future patriotic heritage trail. In support of this idea, Lingnan University has also proposed the establishment of three heritage trails incorporating the Study Hall to promote Chinese cultural and patriotic elements (Lingnan University, 2021).

4.3. Left vacant: Tai Wah School at Ma Tsuek Ling (麻雀嶺大華公立學校)

A declining number of school-age children due to rural depopulation, along with unfavorable government education policies, are among the key factors contributing



Figure 9. Tai Wah School at Ma Tsuek Ling
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2020)

to the abandonment of rural schools. This situation is visually documented in the accompanying photographs.

According to local villagers, Tai Wah School (大華公立學校; *Dahua Gongli Xuexiao*), located in Sheung (Upper) Ma Tseuk Leng village (上麻雀嶺村; *Shang Maque Ling Cun*), was originally a Kwan Tai Temple. At 1 time, approximately 20 students were enrolled at Tai Wah School. In addition to children from Ma Tseuk Leng, students also came from nearby villages such as Ha (Lower) Wo Hang (下禾坑; *Xia Hekeng*), Wu Shek Kok (烏石角; *Wushijiao*), and Shek Kiu Tau (石桥头; *Shiqiaotou*) (CUHK Library, 1980). In line with government policy to close all under-enrolled rural schools, Tai Wah School and four other schools in Sha Tau Kok were merged to form Sha Tau Kok Central Primary School, as mentioned earlier. The original Tai Wah School building has since been left vacant as a bungalow (Figure 9). However, it remains a representative example of a village school building and is architecturally comparable to the Lady Ho Tung Welfare Centre (Conserve and Revitalise Hong Kong Heritage, 2021).

5. Discussions and implications of rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area

Based on the above analysis, the historical and architectural significance of rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area can be better understood. Drawing on the concept of cultural construction in rural contexts as outlined in Article 12 of the Burra Charter (Australia ICOMOS, 2013), we propose a framework to analyze the implications of these schools, organized under three themes (Table 4):

- Conservation: Safeguarding traditional characteristics,
- Interpretation: Witnessing changes in government

Table 4. A framework for analyzing the cultural construction of rural schools

Dimension	Focus
Conservation	Safeguarding traditional characteristics
Interpretation	Witnessing the changes in government policies
Management	Providing creative transformation

policies, and

- Management: Enabling creative transformation.

5.1. Conservation: Safeguarding traditional characteristics

In the context of conservation, rural schools help reconstruct and illustrate the often-forgotten histories of villages in the Sha Tau Kok area. The rise and fall of the Tsing Kun study hall, for instance, reflects the broader evolution of education in Nam Chung – from a traditional study hall to a modern school, and finally to a public institution integrated into the standardized education system. Rural schools in the Sha Tau Kok area are emblematic of such transitions. Most were established by clan and rural communities and served not only as educational institutions but also as spaces for leisure and administrative functions. As many of these schools were founded by clan communities in the New Territories, they also fulfilled religious and governance-related roles. This observation aligns with the arguments of scholars specializing in the New Territories, who suggest that clan communities used their social and economic influence to assert legitimacy in the region and act as key stakeholders in local governance. Given the region's remoteness, government intervention in village affairs was minimal, enabling clans to serve as *de facto* decision-makers who helped the colonial government implement local policies (Faure, 1986; Watson, 1982).

While existing scholarship often focuses on the five great clans and other prominent clans of the New Territories, the case of Sha Tau Kok has received comparatively little attention. In reality, the area presents enormous opportunities for integrating such rural heritage into broader heritage trails.

Our research revealed that although the clans in Sha Tau Kok were not as influential as the major clans in other regions, their traditions nonetheless symbolize the structure and values of traditional Chinese family life. This provides an opportunity for the government to promote filial piety through the “Values Education” curriculum developed by the Education Bureau (HKSAR Government Education Bureau, 2022). In addition, rural schools showcase a range of architectural styles from different historical periods. For example, the Tsing Kun

Study Hall features a symmetrical layout of two halls and one courtyard, characteristic of vernacular Qing dynasty architecture. The Study Hall has become a rare example, and its authenticity has remained unchanged. At the same time, Siu Ying School, built before WW2, represents another case. Although most rural schools were constructed with simple designs due to limited financial resources, they still functioned as open spaces for teaching and village deliberation. These architectural elements can serve as educational tools for teaching Chinese culture and heritage, ultimately contributing to the preservation of traditions and a sense of belonging in Hong Kong.

5.2. Interpretation: Witnessing the changes in government policies

Beyond their historical and architectural significance, rural schools also reflect the evolution of Hong Kong's education policies and serve as markers of both colonial and post-colonial governance changes. After WW2, the Hong Kong government aimed to expand the education system. However, implementing this system in the New Territories posed substantial challenges. As a result, the government relied on rural schools to provide basic education services to local students (Sweeting, 1993). Although the quality of education in rural schools may not have matched that of their urban counterparts, these schools contributed significantly to improving literacy rates among local children, which in turn supported Hong Kong's economic transformation during the period of mass industrialization. With the introduction of new policies asserting direct government control over village schools, many rural schools completed their historical mission and were subsequently either abandoned or revitalized.

While present development needs make it difficult to reverse government policy decisions, it is suggested that school closures adopt a “soft landing” approach. Such closures affect not only students and teachers but also the broader social cohesion of village communities. The colonial government's past educational policies indirectly disrupted rural livelihoods. The present government should exercise caution, as continuing this trend may further erode regional cohesion and identity.

In response to policy development in 2023, the government announced plans to further open the Sha Tau Kok area, while ensuring minimal disruption to residents. Future land use will be reconsidered as part of the overall development strategy under the CFA. As part of this initiative, the Agriculture, Fisheries, and Conservation Department will launch the first phase of the Hing Chun Alliance Heritage Trail, linking Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, and Kop Tong, with interpretive panels installed along the

route to introduce village culture and history. (HKSAR Government, 2023b).

With the gradual opening of the Sha Tau Kok region, the government is expected to continue playing a crucial role – as both a pioneer and collaborator – working with villagers, social communities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to develop more effective preservation strategies. A recent example is the revitalization of Lai Chi Wo, sponsored by the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation Limited (HSBC), which illustrates successful multi-sector collaboration in the development of the Northern Metropolis region. We anticipate similar projects in the future, such as integrated initiatives that combine the historic hiking trail of the Hong Kong Independent Battalion of the Dongjiang Column with both natural and built heritage within the Sha Tau Kok region (HKSAR Government, 2021). These sites are located within the Mirs Bay/Yan Chau Tong Eco-recreation/Tourism Circle.

According to the government's 2023 reply to the Legislative Council, due consideration will be given to the historic and rural features of the region, with the aim of creating a metropolitan environment characterized by "urban–rural integration and co-existence of development and conservation" (HKSAR government, 2023a). Although rural schools were not explicitly mentioned, it is believed that further communication will be required to ensure that villages' built heritage, such as traditional schools, can be effectively preserved and repurposed, especially as potential tourist spots or community hubs. For schools located in the Tso/Tong lands, the government plans to consult the Heung Yee Kuk to develop better strategies and engage other relevant stakeholders (HKSAR government, 2023a). Overall, future projects are expected to be more diversified and internationalized, aiming to improve research and development quality. This may include creating a database for rural schools and implementing a comprehensive preservation and revitalization program to capitalize on their cultural and tourism value. As many of these schools remain abandoned, such efforts could also encourage the government to rethink educational policies related to school mergers and closures in light of social and demographic changes – for instance, the recent waves of emigration.

5.3. Management: Providing creative transformation

Garcia (1991) introduced the concept of creative transformation in 1991 to highlight the creativity involved in enacting transformative change – a notion that can be extended to heritage development efforts. Today, an increasing number of research activities and community projects are being implemented to preserve rural areas and protect vanishing cultural memory. Several revitalization

schemes have recently been implemented in the Sha Tau Kok area, with notable efforts in the villages of Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam, and Kuk Po. In 2013, the villagers of Lai Chi Wo cooperated with the Policy for Sustainability Lab in the Faculty of Social Sciences at the University of Hong Kong to launch a multiyear, cross-sectoral collaborative project titled "Sustainable Lai Chi Wo: Living Water & Community Revitalization – An Agricultural-led Action, Engagement and Incubation Programme at Lai Chi Wo (HKU Policy for Sustainability Lab, 2018)." The project was supported by HSBC as part of its community engagement efforts (Figure 10). The campaign has been widely recognized by stakeholders and served as a pioneering model for subsequent revitalization initiatives. Conservation efforts in the region continue to attract increasing numbers of visitors. Located near Lai Chi Wo, Mui Tsz Lam – one of the seven villages of the Hing Chun Alliance – has



Figure 10. Information board introducing the Lai Chi Wo Scheme
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2019)



Figure 11. The Mui Tsz Lam story museum
Source: Photo by Samuel Tsang (2019)

Table 5. Strategies for government-led revitalization of rural schools

Community cooperation	Policy and data integration	Borderland development	Creative reuse
Cooperate with the villagers, social communities, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector to improve preservation strategies.	Establish a centralized database of rural schools and implement a comprehensive preservation and revitalization strategy, revisiting the implications of policy values.	Reconsider borderland policies to create integrated tourist attractions in Hong Kong.	Revitalize rural village schools as cultural artifacts, or transform them into artistic or community centers.

received attention from local citizens after featuring in the film *Far Far Away* (沿路山旂旂; *Yanlu Shan Gala*). A traditional village house in Mui Tsz Lam was revitalized and transformed into the Mui Tsz Lam Story Museum (梅子林故事馆; *Meizilin Guishiguan*) (Figure 11), which showcases Hakka culture and the village's history. Other successful revitalization efforts include the rehabilitation of agricultural lands and the painting of murals throughout the village (Hing Chun Yeuk Da Jiao Organisation Committee, 2010). Additional university-led research projects are also underway in the region. For example, the School of Architecture at the Chinese University of Hong Kong has launched rural development initiatives, while the School of Design at the Hong Kong Polytechnic University has documented the history of Kuk Po (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University, 2023). The team from the Hong Kong Polytechnic University collected old photographs from Kuk Po villagers and presented them in exhibitions to share the village's story with the broader public. Their oral history records also reflect the cultural diversity of Hakka villagers and the cross-border interactions, especially with people from Shenzhen (The Hong Kong Polytechnic University School of Design, 2023). This process of creative transformation, enabled through collaboration among multiple stakeholders, contributes to the management of these rural schools.

6. Conclusion

Rural village schools are an indispensable part of Hong Kong's educational history, as demonstrated by our findings. This study suggests that it is feasible to develop and revitalize some abandoned rural village schools, particularly those that have been left vacant. Further maintenance and conservation efforts are necessary to restore their original appearance and value.

We argue that the government must strike a balance between development and conservation, given the unique heritage significance of rural schools. To support this goal, we offer several policy recommendations. These suggestions may also hold relevance for other countries, where rural schools often receive less attention compared to urban institutes or religious sites. In this context, rural schools in Hong Kong can be regarded as unique

community spaces with educational, cultural, and architectural significance.

The case studies presented herein illustrate the historical values of rural schools through the framework of conservation, interpretation, and management. They also reflect the indirect forms of governance and community linkage that align with international standards.

Despite recent land development strategies and the aforementioned analysis, the government faces certain limitations in implementing heritage conservation and repurposing abandoned rural schools. While policies have been reconsidered in borderland regions to promote the development of built-up tourist attractions in Hong Kong, these efforts could be supplemented by a more reflective approach that considers changes in local schools within Sha Tau Kok and surrounding areas, as highlighted by scholars (Zhou, 2021). Given the abundance of tourist destinations, the government could merge and revitalize rural village schools as cultural artifacts or repurpose them into artistic and community centers to attract broader public interest.

However, it is also necessary to accommodate the livelihood needs of local residents to manage the influx of outsiders. Previous findings suggest that overdevelopment may easily distort the rural landscape and lead to capital-driven overexploitation (Orbaşlı, 2017; Pentz & Albert, 2023). For currently abandoned rural schools, the government should consider redevelopment strategies based on quality and contextual appropriateness. This would enable further research and educational activities, potentially reviving the schools' original functions (Table 5). Continued efforts in this direction are expected in the future.

This study is not without limitations. Some intended interviewees either declined participation or had passed away by the time David Faure and his team conducted interviews (CUHK Library, 1980; Faure, 1986). Many of the witnesses at that time were elderly, and it was often challenging to stimulate accurate recall, making it difficult to ensure the reliability of their accounts. These oral testimonies must be cross-referenced with historical archives, and future studies could consider conducting updated interviews to improve accuracy. Although several field trips have been carried out,

the physical environments may have undergone changes over time, and it remains unclear whether some alterations are recent adjustments or part of long-term developments. Therefore, continuous monitoring of development strategies in the Sha Tau Kok areas is necessary, as the broader implications of government policy remain to be seen. Moreover, addressing these challenges may require closer collaboration with international academics to contextualize borderland development within a global framework. As outlined in the policy agenda, drawing upon successful international models could help guide the revitalization of this border region. We anticipate a shared developmental trajectory for rural school revitalization, with the government cooperating with various stakeholders to implement those projects – though their long-term effectiveness remains to be evaluated.

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