

Is Ethnic Cultural Participation the Answer?: A Cultural Capacity Analysis

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Abstract

In this paper, I interrogate a much-discussed dimension in anti-racist work today, namely the role of “cultural participation” in developing strong social capital and a resilient cultural identity for ethnic minority groups. The notion of the “right to culture,” as enshrined in international human rights frameworks such as Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, has spawned robust cultural participation research in many cities and countries around the world. In many such contexts, the research prompted has gone well beyond mere access to legitimate forms of culture to encompass the vital development of language, education, class mobility, social service provisions, and of course an appreciation of the arts. Unfortunately, in many cases, there is rarely mention of indicators that directly address the needs of ethnic and linguistic minorities. In fact, in these research studies, sub-sector participation in the arts and culture has often been ignored. To address this gap, I conducted a detailed capacity analysis that aims to pave the way for a more formal cultural indicator survey development. I argue that the capacity analysis has implications for understanding the habitus and cultural dispositions of ethnic minority communities, which in turn sheds light on whether migrant ethnic marginalization can or cannot be ameliorated by participatory practices, especially the enjoyment and creative participation in the popular arts.

Keywords: ethnic minorities, right to culture, cultural participation, cultural infrastructure capacity, Hong Kong

Introduction

By now, the “cultural turn” in citizenship studies has successfully enabled critical scholarship to reconfigure the complex relations among citizen-subject formation, cultural resources, and power. The term cultural citizenship draws on innovative theories about cultural identity, engagement with interpretive communities (especially migrants and minority cultures), and cultural policy development (such as national and city-based cultural R&D). It has also been increasingly promoted as a means of conceptualizing the new field of research opened up by the notion of cultural rights.¹ At its broadest, cultural citizenship—as something borne out of cultural rights—points to the humanistic and lived dimensions that attend membership of a national population, such as social participation and specific knowledges regarded as important for citizens to engage in and possess. It can refer to both rights and obligations and has been described in terms of “cultures of citizenship” by scholars such as Nick Couldry.²

I appreciate this approach because it provides us with an analysis of a set of *capacities* necessary for practical support for civic participation and the activation of other citizenship rights (including the right to education, mobility, and employment in the creative class). Accordingly, cultural citizenship refers to active capacities that are differentially distributed throughout society. It is a field of contest in which the recognition of cultural diversity and difference is understood as central to the way those capacities are shared. Given the shifting priorities and rhetoric of the creative cultural sector in more and more places around the world, cultural citizenship offers, at least provisionally, a useful rubric with which to consider the intersection between community engagement in cultural activities, cultural diversity, and strategies of community capacity-building.³

In this paper, I discuss a study of ethnic minority youth and their cultural participation in Hong Kong. This is the first such study in Hong Kong that responds to the scholarship of cultural citizenship and one that can directly assess cultural participation as a vital condition for recognizing the cultural rights of ethnic minorities. The study explores their popular arts participation as a means for developing social capital,

cultural identity, and ultimately citizenship cultural belonging. In part as a way to assess the practical utility of the theory of cultural citizenship, we believe in the need for applied cultural research of this kind. More importantly, strategic or applied cultural research paves the way for a more robust policy discussion that, for Hong Kong as for elsewhere, will lead to meaningful change in the conditions and practices of cultural participation for migrants and minorities. As Couldry reminds us, “Whether citizens feel they have a voice, or the space in which effectively to exercise a voice, is crucial to their possibilities of acting as citizens.”⁴ In a way, through a focused examination of the “capacity” question, this essay directly addresses the “possibilities of acting” that constitutes citizenship.

Our approach includes an examination of (1) *stakeholder practice indicators* (benchmarks) and (2) *quality of life enhancement* (planning toward cultural citizenship). A quantitative study of the online digital cultural participation of ethnic minorities has been produced.⁵ We are in agreement with UNESCO’s broad definition of cultural participation, which is backed by a cultural rights paradigm. The main thrust of their definition is that cultural participation goes well beyond the consumption of elite cultural goods to embrace those aspects of everyday life that contribute to the quality of life and social cohesion of a given community. Cultural participation is a conscious act involving information-seeking, intra- and inter-ethnic interaction, enjoyment and expression, transaction, and, ultimately, identity formation. Through various modes of participation—active, passive, interpretive, creative, critical—participants cultivate community stakeholderhood. We hope to offer a rarely known practical template with which to trace the contours of identity and social existence in relation to cultural infrastructures and resources. The central focus is on the popular arts because my own research in the past few years has strongly indicated the passion for music, public (street) performance, creative works online, and film and visual arts of ethnic minority youth.⁶ What is more, participation studies of the popular arts in other countries have been proven to be powerful for studying sub-sector population groups.⁷

In Hong Kong, at the time of growing appreciation of the needs of

South and Southeast Asian ethnic minority groups, the vital question of recognizing them as equal, autonomous, and valued members of society—underwritten by a rights-based recognition of cultural citizenship—has yet to appear in public discourse. In an earlier work, Lisa Leung and I mapped a cultural history of minorities with details of their presence and experiences in schools, the media, community life, law, and self-sustaining small businesses.⁸ In that work, we detailed various structures of social and cultural exclusion. However, the theme of exclusion, while important, may obscure a more interesting set of questions having to do with how ethnic minorities themselves grapple with existing resources, however limited they may be, and therefore with how we can constructively think about ways to change the existing conditions.

It is still true that major socioeconomic indicators of development in Hong Kong do not contain data on the situation of ethnic minorities at all. And in the baseline studies for assessing the general state of arts participation in Hong Kong, such as the ones conducted by the Arts Development Council, the ethnic population has been completely excluded. Simply put, no work has been done by either the government or the scholarly community to evaluate participation in the popular arts by the South and Southeast ethnic migrant and settler communities. Yet, as mentioned before, the youth of these communities are known to be active in the popular arts, including such cultural forms as music, street dancing, cheerleading, and YouTubing. Is the lack of a meaningful and robust cultural awareness of, let alone cultural policy for, minority citizenship development a cause of the neglect? Or is it in fact the result of long-term cultural invisibility of ethnic minorities, especially in the creative cultural fields?

Against the backdrop of the existing cultural policy landscape, and in light of the present and future need of attaining a more meaningful and sustainable cultural future for minority youth, I want to turn our attention to an important dimension that can bring the theoretical cultural studies scholarship on ethnic minority identity to bear on the cultural policy and creative culture studies in Hong Kong: *How do we capture and survey the local popular arts infrastructures (hard and soft:*

physical facilities and digital platforms) and practices for and by ethnic minority youth? It is suggested that a detailed capacity analysis will be able to pave the way for a more formal cultural indicator survey development, and that the latter is what Hong Kong needs to engage with this sector of the youth population in order to help forge connections between their rich tradition and identity and a sense of community stakeholdership and cultural citizenship. A set of meaningful cultural indicators should be developed in Hong Kong, to measure, map, and evaluate the cultural participation of minority youth in the popular arts. The indicators would then offer themselves as a reliable barometer of belonging and community development and, when properly interpreted, can provide critical insights into minority cultural participation. This will in turn help to forge a public discourse about minority cultural citizenship rights, through cultural policy planning that is stakeholder-centered, capacity-building oriented, and identity-affirming. Is this the answer, finally, to the problems of Chinese ethnocentrism and racialism in Hong Kong society?⁹ Much of it depends on whether there is sufficient advocacy and political will. The discussion in this paper aims to make a small contribution toward establishing a framework of minority cultural participation indicators in the city's cultural policy debates in the future.

This paper consists of three parts. In the first part, I will briefly discuss the context of relative cultural invisibility of, and indifference toward, ethnic minorities in Hong Kong, even as the city has been more aware of the importance of arts and culture participation for it to sustain a metropolitan reputation. I will then present a series of findings we captured through a capacity analysis. Finally, there will be a discussion of the methodological considerations for how to use the baseline capacity inventory as a pillar for establishing a cultural indicator framework and a cultural mapping strategy.

The Context: Cultural Absence and “Stranger Politics”

In Hong Kong, the encountering of strangers has been the *modus operandi* of modern living in the hustling and bustling, and often shoulder-rubbing, spaces of movement in the city. Observations made

by urban sociologists have pointed to a general lack of compulsion among city dwellers to bring the stranger closer—for example, by doing something to reduce our feeling of strangeness toward one another. In city living, we are told, the stranger is simply an unmarked creature. Elsewhere, I have stated that there is an urgent need to grapple with the politics of stranger-relations, particularly in cities that have seen more and more overt conflicts arising from generational differences, class and income gaps, racial and ethnic tensions, and various forms of social dissatisfaction.¹⁰ Political conflicts with “stranger effects,” we may say, have evolved from deeply divided value conflicts (such as urban versus rural values or developmental against preservationist values). Recent events of conflicts between minorities and the dominant society, such as Black Lives Matter, the violent rise of Hindu nationalism in India, or the recurrent oppression of the Kurds in Turkey point to the widening of value discrepancies, discrepancies that actively shape, and are shaped by, “stranger politics.”

To talk about strangers, like talking about racial and sexual difference, is to enact classifications.¹¹ The object of our pervasive indifference in our common urban life is most likely the stranger who tends to be silent, private, and acquiescing, while the one whom we notice tends to be the opposite—agitative, demanding, unforgivingly vocal.¹² In Hong Kong, South and Southeast Asian migrants and settlers tend to fall into the first category. Without delving into the complex reasons of whether they are silent, private, and acquiescing in nature or whether disenfranchisement has shaped them that way, we can nonetheless state that racial and ethnic inequality, social exclusion, and discrimination have been part of Hong Kong’s history. For better or for worse, racism, cultural indifference, and Cantonese cultural dominance—along with (economic) freedom and diversity—have been among our most persistent values.¹³ In the 1990s, after more than a decade of public debate, social movement struggles, and political compromises, Hong Kong’s first anti-discrimination legislation, known as the Race Discrimination Ordinance (RDO), was finally passed in 2008 (the Ordinance went into force on 10 July 2009). Yet the passage of legislation—while appearing as a victory—is but one of many ways to confront the politics of stranger relations. What the RDO

does is to enable an *emerging* realization that minority groups present some formidable challenges to the city, including in the areas of housing, employment, economic development, education, language use, domestic life, class and gender relations, and media representation.¹⁴

This emergence of awareness is critically important because, among other reasons, the question of racial minority politics as a specific form of stranger politics has not been adequately addressed, researched, or theorized. One thinks about the puzzling void amidst the intellectual effort to theorize the vexing question of “Hong Kong identity.” Ever since the complicated moment of the “1997 question,” there has arisen an amazingly enduring intellectual and political preoccupation about what or who is the “local” and what kind of “politics of the local” will enable the people of Hong Kong to survive in the future. To put it bluntly, racial and ethnic difference has played a scanty role in forging an identity politics of the local, both in the historical sense and in the sense of the evolution of identity and citizenship in postcolonial times.¹⁵ Of all the complex demarcations made between “the local” and its corollary terms—the colonial, the postcolonial, the global, the regional, the national, the bordering, the mobile, and the transient—there has only been a short-lived and rather fragile attention paid to the importance of racial/ethnic politics in shaping and transforming the translocal understanding of stranger-relations.¹⁶ It is for these reasons that I think it increasingly important to attempt to reimagine the city and its residents around the forms, practices, and cultural rights of the “minor locals.”

The “Minor Locals”

In Hong Kong, the common terminologies used to describe ethnic minorities are varied—and somewhat telling. The seemingly generic term “ethnic minorities” [少數族裔] is commonly used to refer only to the unprivileged class; rarely does it connote the Anglo or European expatriate class living in Hong Kong. The terms that more clearly delineate this difference are “South Asians” [南亞裔] on the one hand, and “expatriates” [外籍人士] on the other. Notice that the latter term, which is used to refer to the Anglo or European population, is de-

racialized; the Chinese words for “race/ethnicity” [族/裔] are noticeably absent. Meanwhile, the local press often uses the shorthand “Indo-Pakistani race” [印巴裔] to refer to all South Asians, suggesting a compressed racialized imagination that highlights perhaps the visible dark skin and facial features and implied cultural and religious differences, which are deemed to connote a minority race, even though, according to the 2016 by-census, the combined population of Indians and Pakistanis living in Hong Kong is only around 9% of the whole ethnic minority population. Over the last 25 years, the term “new immigrants” [新移民] has been introduced to refer mainly to Chinese Mainlanders who relocate to Hong Kong. The “new” in “new immigrants” has two main associations, one speaks to the political and administrative reality of post-1997 Hong Kong, while the other, more recent, association tends to suggest that Chinese Mainland immigrants are poised to become the “new HongKongers” [新香港人]. Interestingly, although the size of the ethnic minority population grew by as much as 70% from 2006 to 2016, the connotative references to them as new immigrants remains remarkably weak.¹⁷

In the most recent by-census exercise conducted in 2016, the government recorded a total of 584,383 ethnic minorities living in Hong Kong, a figure that constitutes 8% of the entire population. They comprised Indonesians (26.2%), Filipinos (31.5%), “Whites” (10%), Mixed (11.2%), Indians (6.2%), Pakistanis (3.1%), Nepalese (4.4%), Japanese (1.7%), Thais (1.7%), Koreans (1.1%), Other Asians (1.4%), and Others (0.6%). In 2016, 72.2% of the overall ethnic minority classification aged from 0–14 had been born in Hong Kong, while 51% aged from 15–24 had been born locally. For the older age groups, the proportion of Hong Kong-born minorities dropped to below 20%. Clearly, more and more ethnic minority youth were definitively local Hong Kongers. What is more, they generally had a higher ability to read and write Chinese (64.3% of the group aged from 5–14 and 52.9% of the group aged from 15–24 were able to read Chinese. The corresponding proportions of those who were able to write Chinese were 62.0% and 49.7% respectively).

For a long time now, few scholars have taken the mathematical connotation of the term “minority” so literally as to believe that being

small in size automatically means that these groups are not powerful or influential. It is possible to recognize that statistical smallness may disguise an immense cultural influence. Historically, for example, both the British colonialists and settlers on the one hand, and the Indian merchant class on the other, were relatively small in size in Hong Kong, but their presence in public life, especially in administrative and economic arenas, was clearly significant. “Minority status has more to do with the distribution of resources and power than with simple numbers,” writes Joseph Healy.¹⁸ However, for ethnic minorities who are not members of the privileged class, their numerical insignificance does contribute to the sense of cultural smallness. The identity of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong is a “minoritarian” one, defined in terms of a double sense of smallness.

Sociologically speaking, ethnic minority people who lack privilege tend to exhibit some common characteristics: (1) a set of visible traits that differentiate them from other groups, most prominently their skin color; (2) a form of relative self-consciousness about their social status and cultural difference; and (3) a pattern of disadvantage or inequality. And yet, if defined culturally, those characteristics are often felt and reframed in different terms: (1) their minoritarian status often renders their visible traits invisible in society. Dark-skinned individuals, for instance, move in our society but are often not noticed; (2) their self-consciousness about difference often translates into an experience of alienation and self-isolation—but it can also give rise to feelings of ethnic self-sufficiency and even pride; and (3) the inequality they experience may be internalized and transmitted in the form of silence and self-doubt, but given appropriate resources, some may break the silence and demand social, cultural, and legal recognition. It is these subjective feelings and reframings that allow us to understand that an ethnic minority individual in an unprivileged class position may be one whose sense of self is primarily shaped by minoritarian identity struggles. It is important to note that, in circumstances of disadvantage, such a person nonetheless struggles to gain a certain social positioning—for example, by developing a sense of belonging, however ambiguously, or by participating in activities that suggest visibility or even demand

recognition.

For the most part, the existing research on Hong Kong's "minor locals" comprises three broad types: academic research utilizing social scientific methods; policy research conducted by NGOs; and a small number of cultural research items. Since the mid-1990s, the first two types of research have predominated, while the last type has witnessed a slower emergence. The social scientific work on ethnic minorities has tended to focus on demographics, labor, migration, or human-rights problems (or a combination of them). For example, social scientists such as Hok-bun Ku, Barry Sautman, Ellen Kneehans, and Gordon Matthews have all produced influential work.¹⁹ Kevin Hewison and Stephen Frost have explored labor issues among Thai and Nepalese migrants respectively.²⁰ Legal scholars Kelley Loper and Puja Kapai have studied the problems encountered by ethnic minorities in terms of the theme of human-rights violation.²¹ Furthermore, there has developed a considerable body of research on domestic helpers and the Southeast Asian migrant labor class in Hong Kong.²² Social service NGOs have been active in collaborating with social studies, social work, and law departments to conduct research on ethnic minority labor problems, education, and youth issues, among other topics.²³ However, very little *cultural* knowledge about these ethnic minorities has emerged from NGO research, because the latter tends to be mired in a "social exclusion" theoretical approach, while paying scant attention to *new* expressions of ethnicity. Meanwhile, critical ethnic minority cultural studies in Hong Kong have started to emerge but are still rare. For example, Kwai-cheung Lo, using psychoanalytic and postcolonial theories, has written some groundbreaking work on racial minorities and their symbolic relationship to the Hong Kong Chinese community; Hung Mui Sung has examined South Asian identity struggles in the context of post-1997 Hong Kong; and Chun Yeung has explored the representation of Hong Kong's ethnic minorities in select films.²⁴ While Paul O'Connor's work (2012) on the Muslim minorities in Hong Kong helped shed new light on the way in which religious practices help shape ethnic minority cultures in the city, Sophia Suk-mun Law's (2014) discovery of hundreds of articles, poems, and drawings by the Vietnamese boat people who took refuge in

Hong Kong provides a powerful account of this tale of migrant tragedy.²⁵ Finally, based on a number of years of sustained research on EM cultural studies, Erni and Leung have provided ethnographic analyses of the creative sense of ethnic minority survival;²⁶ their transnational media consumption;²⁷ their cultural history in the educational, media, legal, and business fields;²⁸ and their portrayal in Hong Kong cinema.²⁹ The present study on cultural participation represents an important step forward in the accumulation of knowledge necessary for a better recognition of ethnic minority cultural rights in public life.

Mapping Cultural Access: An Inventory of Cultural Infrastructures

In order to look at what user-oriented cultural resources in popular arts are provided in the city, we conducted a survey of the local popular arts infrastructures (both hard and soft) for and by ethnic minority youth over a ten-year period (2008–2018). In this way, we hoped to capture the scale, tendency, pattern, and distribution of a variety of local organizations and venues providing arts participation for ethnic minority groups. In the overview below, we analyze the landscape in terms of numbers, levels of growth, types and clusters of local organizations and venues, and the kinds of activities on offer. Important themes and tendencies are identified and discussed to form a baseline understanding of the capacity for ethnic minority cultural participation over a ten-year period. This kind of cultural archive or inventory does not exist in Hong Kong, when an empirically-driven grounding of the stakeholder-participation approach is much needed.

A close reading of a variety of official websites, advertisements, program handbooks, activities albums, and annual reports was conducted. As a whole, five types of organizations provide arts and cultural activities for ethnic minorities:

1. Schools, such as the Delia Memorial School (Hip Wo branch), Hong Kong Taoist Association The Yuen Yuen Institute No.3 Secondary School, and the Islamic Kasim Secondary Schools;

2. NGO-run community centres, such as the HOPE Centre, LINK Centre, SHINE Christian Action, The Hong Kong Arts Centre, TREE Centre for Service for Ethnic Minorities, HKSKH Lady MacLehose Centre, and the Hong Kong UNISON;
3. Groups formed by ethnic minority community leaders, such as the Tamil Cultural Association, Teacup Production, and the Hong Kong Integrated Nepalese Society;
4. Government institutions, such as the Equal Opportunities Commission, Radio-TV Hong Kong, and the Tuen Mun Hospital;
5. Groups formed by ethnic minority youth, such as the Nepali Youth Roundtable and the Joint University Nepalese Society.

In the survey, we discovered a total of 36 organizations that provided 756 programs over the ten-year period. (In this sense, a program is included based on the fact that the program, or a part of it, was consciously designed to involve ethnic minority youth participants in the roles of instructors, performers, creatives, learners, and audience.) In order to be accurate, a number of criteria were used in order to evaluate these programs. If a course and a series of workshops consisted of numerous lessons, such as seasonal Chinese language learning classes, it was classified as a single entry. If a big event, like a cultural festival, offers a section for participation by ethnic minority youth, it was counted as one entry. However, if a program was held at different venues with different participants, such as the Hong Kong Arts Centre's "ifva Community Tour" that screened ethnic minority amateur films at different districts of the city, it was counted as four or five separate programs, depending on the number of the tours it involved. The ifva Community Tour is known to involve quite different batches of ethnic minority film students making a variety of short films on a range of themes. The tour includes visits to both schools and universities, and holds "outdoor carnivals," so that a variety of forms of public attendance is possible.

There are, however, a number of limitations that affected the reliability of this inventory. For instance, sometimes program information has only become available in recent years, so that the data

for past programs is missing. Some programs are undated. In addition, we find many more “hard programs/activities” than “soft” ones. Hard programs or activities are those that have been run for a number of years, perhaps receiving recurrent funding and provided seasonally or annually. For this reason, they have acquired a sustained visibility in the community. Soft programs and activities, in contrast, tend to be one-off and perhaps run on a smaller scale. As a result, soft programs may not have been properly recorded by the organizations that held them. In addition, some programs look like annual activities but lack the evidence of historical records to demonstrate this. Some of these factors help explain why hard programs far outnumber soft ones. For this reason, it should be understood that this inventory is not comprehensive; instead, it is necessary to work toward the “priority development of research and data to capture on cultural consumption patterns and trends” at the level of local culture and arts resources, a recommendation made in the 2005 report on Hong Kong Arts and Cultural Indicators conducted by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council.³⁰

Table 1. The number of programs of popular arts activities for EM in Hong Kong by year (2008–2018)

Year / Categories	Occasional (“soft”)	More sustained (“hard”)	All
2008	0	14	14
2009	0	16	16
2010	0	16	16
2011	0	19	19
2012	0	21	21
2013	0	24	24
2014	2	28	30
2015	4	50	54
2016	30	96	126
2017	42	156	198
2018	84	154	238
Total	162	594	756

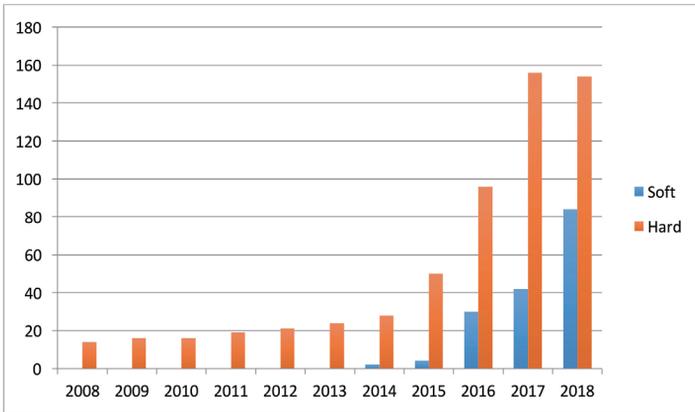


Figure 1. A chart showing the number of programs of popular arts activities for EM in Hong Kong by year (2008-2018)

Table 1 and Figure 1 show two noteworthy findings. First, from 2008 to 2018, there has been a significant growth of cultural programs on offer. In that period, the number of “hard” programs grew from 14 to 154, while that of the “soft” programs increased from none to 84. Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK), for example, received annual government funding to implement the Community Involvement Broadcasting Service (CIBS), a platform for the community, non-government organisations and the underprivileged to participate in broadcasting. In 2012, the government allocated \$45 million for the first time to establish a community participation broadcasting fund managed by RTHK. Following this decision, CIBS was started as a three-year pilot program. Three years later, in 2015, the government officially implemented permanent annual funding for CIBS. This explains the steady growth of opportunities for ethnic minority participation in their talent development program (including work as project coordinator, researcher, scriptwriter, actor/presenter, and technician producer, among other occupations), as well as a growth in their representation in terms of broadcast air time. However, there is another reason for the growth. Less as a positive investment in ethnic minority programming, there was, ironically, growth because

some organizations saw a troubling trend of stigmatization that needed attention. Programs that served to counter a set of negative stereotypes about ethnic minorities were then produced. For instance, Mandy Cheuk, a Project Manager with a background in social work for Hong Kong Unison (a major non-governmental organization founded in 2001 to serve the EM community in Hong Kong), emphasized in an interview with us that Unison tended to change its agenda and discussion focus every year in response to the changes in the social environment. Around 2015, she helped to develop the “Trace Our Roots Project,” because as Mandy suggested, she had noticed that the image of ethnic minorities was becoming worse in the popular media in that period. For this reason, the organization decided to re-focus their strategy on re-building a suitable image and identity for ethnic minorities via those activities. Mandy recalled:

We have done “City Hunt” or “Trace Our Roots,” during that time there was actually a lot of negative news about ethnic minorities, such as the problem of the so-called fake refugees and minority idling in Hong Kong. Schools rarely discuss the recognition of ethnic minorities in Hong Kong. They only discuss the general history of Hong Kong, promoting only a kind of passive integration of ethnic minorities. Therefore, we promoted those activities in accordance with the social environment and atmosphere.³¹

The second noteworthy finding is that while the “hard” programs were becoming stable, the “soft” ones gained ground over time, jumping rapidly especially in the years since 2015. For example, from 2015 to 2018, the hard programs grew by five-fold, but the soft programs jumped by twenty-one-fold. Overall, these different organizations recorded a steady increase of interest among ethnic minority youth to improve their Cantonese language skills, and to participate in photography, dancing, guitar lessons, and volunteer work. Some organizations subscribe to the fairly conventional view that cultural activities can be an antidote to “youth troubles.” Unlike the attitude exemplified by Unison of

wanting to use “culture” to counteract negative public perception of ethnic minority youth and build the latter’s self-confidence, these other organizations tend to subscribe to the “culture-as-escape” view, engaging relatively little with why ethnic minority youth wanted to make trouble. For instance, the person in charge of a major ethnic minority support service centre under the Race Relations Unit of the government (who requested anonymity) told us:

Our target is to make them to be good persons to deviate their attention from the drugs, alcohol and cigarette, whatever the teenagers involve. If we don’t organize these programs in our centre, they will be loitering around because their parents are working ... As they grow up, they loiter around at parks and have their own gang. But when they move around to our centre, they find that “Oh, there is a guitar class, photography class, dance class!” Then they can join at least 5 sessions. If it is just a training workshop to just listen to you, they don’t want to attend. We have tried already. They want something physically engaging or something interesting to touch. If I invite them to come for a career guidance, they won’t show up. It’s boring and they don’t want to sit for an hour and just listen. They want something different like outdoor activities so that’s why we changed to focus to programs like music and so on following their needs.³²

To understand better this difference in strategy, we devised a number of activity clusters provided by organization-types. We had previously classified five types of organizations by virtue of their distinct character—for example, schools, NGO-run community centres, groups formed by ethnic minority community leaders, government institutions, and groups formed by ethnic minority youth. We saw the need to re-classify the 36 organizations functionally, that is, according to the cultural role they played, as measured by the clusters of cultural activities they offer. Table 2 and Figure 2 below show the breakdown.

Table 2. The number of programs offered by four clusters of organizations

Organizations classified by cultural functions	No. of organizations	No. of programs (2008-2018)	No. of soft/hard programs (2017)	No. of soft/hard programs (2018)
Minority Interest organizations	10	97	2 /11	5 /11
Cultural Intermediary organizations	9	115	1 /17	1 /28
Community Centres	11	471	37 /121	78 /102
Public education organizations	6	73	2 /7	0 /13
Total	36	756	42/156	84/154

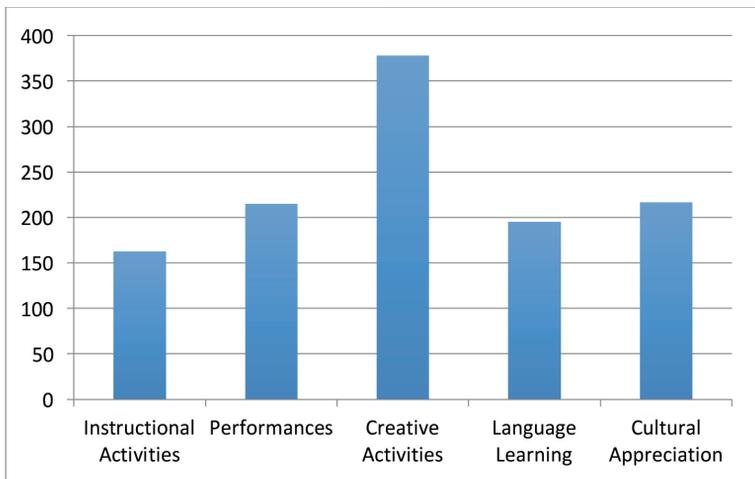


Figure 2. The number and types of cultural activities offered by organizations serving EM communities

There are ten organizations in the “Minority Interests Cluster,” defined as those organizations who mainly target minority young persons of the same ethnic background in order to help nurture them with particular cultural activities. The Tamil Cultural Association is

one such example. Annually, it organizes screening activities, dances, and celebrations of Indian culture to build community capacity. Cheerleading competitions organized by the Delia Memorial School is another example. At the school, cheerleading squads are mainly made up of ethnic students predisposed to American pop culture. By organizing inter-varsity cheerleading competition, Delia aims to strengthen minority interests as part of the school's education mission.³³

There are nine organizations in our survey that we define as belonging to the "Cultural Intermediary Cluster." These organizations set out a unique strategy to promote inter- and intra-ethnic interaction, hoping to draw vital energy by ethnic minority youth of different ethnic backgrounds interacting with each other and doing creative projects together. They stay away from singular ethnic minority interests. For example, the flagship program "ifva" (Incubator for Film & Visual Media in Asia) of the Hong Kong Arts Centre organizes an annual ethnic minority youth creative filmmaking project. The project, which is called "All About Us," has been running since 2009.³⁴ Popular among ethnic minority youth aged from 13 years and up, All About Us requires working across ethnic lines to form teams that can share and discuss the differences and similarities in their experience as young urbanites. For instance, in the 2019–20 season, one team was made up of students with Indian, Pakistani, and Chinese backgrounds, and a second team was formed of Indonesian, Filipino, Pakistani, Indian, and Chinese students. These students moderate the theme of the film they want to make, sometimes through heated debate over their different cultural and religious mores—and even their differences in gender expectations.

In our survey, there are eleven organizations in the "Community Service Cluster," which are place-based organizations that plan all-round programs to develop the cultural capacity of ethnic minority youth residents in a particular district, through language classes, talent training, arts competition, and local cultural festivals. Six such ethnic minority community support centres are funded by the government's Home Affairs Department, including the TOUCH Centre based in Tung Chung, the HOME Centre based in Yau Tsim Mong, the Support Service Centre for Ethnic Minorities under the Yuen Long Town Hall in Yuen Long, the

SHINE Centre based in Tuen Mun, the Hope Centre based in Wanchai, and the CHEER Centre located in Kwun Tong. There is also the TREE Centre in Kwai Chung that is funded by the Hong Kong Jockey Club. Because of government or charity funding, this cluster of organizations tends to be able to develop many more programs on a sustained basis.

Finally, the fourth type of organizations belong to the “Public Education Cluster,” which mainly focus on offering anti-discrimination education projects via cultural messages. We surveyed six organizations in this category. Ethnic minority participants in these organizations engage in education workshops and inclusive activities that advocate anti-racial discrimination, racial equality, racial harmony, or multiculturalism. Each year, for instance, the festival celebrating the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is organized by the Equal Opportunities Commission. Besides offering an opportunity to ethnic minority groups to showcase their cultural traditions, the festival often includes a competition for creativity in promoting the message of diversity. What is more, Unison has consistently been active in holding public education programs to raise the community’s awareness of discrimination against ethnic minorities. Their series of “IN.VISIBLE” activities and “Central Harbourfront SummerFest” include performance by ethnic minority groups that accentuate diversity and anti-discrimination.

Further, we observe that the majority of programs (whether soft or hard) are offered by community centres (see Figure 3 below). This is because they receive the lion’s share of public and private funding, they are often the result of initiatives set by the government to improve racial harmony in the city, and they are much more systematically promoted to the ethnic minority communities through established channels. In contrast, organizations that act as cultural intermediary or to promote cultural coherence and growth within particular ethnic communities tend to have less stable funding.

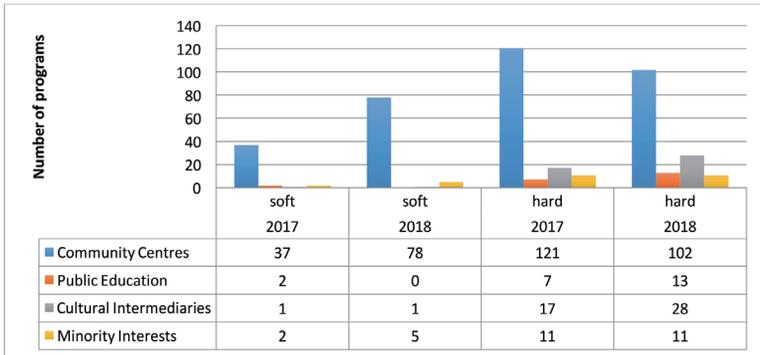


Figure 3. Number and types of programs offered by four clusters of organizations in 2017 and 2018

In this respect, a clear personal vision can make up for very little resources. During our research, one particularly striking example stood out for us. Ghonhey Ashmi, of the Joint University Nepalese Society (JUNS), operates largely on the basis of her own frustrations about seeing the social alienation experienced by her Nepalese friends. JUNS was found in 2016 by a group of Nepalese university students and fresh graduates. The annual budget of JUNS is only about HK\$ 20,000–30,000, which is mainly due to the financial input of the father of one of the committee members. Operating on such a small budget, JUNS nonetheless has been able to organize sixty active members to set up various activities monthly. Besides activities that aim at building social bonding and self-confidence, such as workshops on further studies and career planning, JUNS also organizes sports matches and creativity workshops to showcase some of the members’ arts and design talents. Ghonhey Ashmi comments:

We have noticed that most of the Nepalese youth lack motivation when they come to their dreams, passion, school work. The second thing is that there is not much pressure or guidance given by respective schools. Kids are not motivated at all. They don’t have the reference that they can look up to or get inspired from,

or have the awareness that this is what I want to be, that is what I am going to do. They just need an extra push and inspiration.³⁵

Her personal vision came through in the interview:

The Nepalese people here, they don't have the sense of belonging when they come to Hong Kong. Even though they were born and raised here, they are still living in their own bubble... It is problematic because now they look at themselves as a third person and not really like first person view like this is my home. I should do something, you know, I should make my name here and I should do something to contribute. Contribution is like way behind because if they don't have the sense of belonging, that's why they create a lot of problems, you know, communication comes in place, language comes in place, when comparing to other people like Pakistani and Indian, Nepalese people are still way behind. When it comes to career, their own passion and goals, you go to a secondary school that has a lot of Nepalese and then ask the kids "What do you want to be/do?" they will be speechless and they just like "why should I even bother to think about that?" That's my experience.³⁶

Although the number of activities provided by the cultural intermediary and minority interest clusters are low, our survey shows that there is a stronger sense of personal and organizational commitment. Operating on a shoe string budget, these organizations tend to display an interest in helping ethnic minority youth to balance their life and career goals by developing forms of creative cultural expression and appreciation. Table 3 shows a breakdown of the distribution of the activity types organized by the four clusters of organizations, a snapshot from the year 2016.

Table 3. The distribution of programs in 2016

	Public education orgs	Minority Interests orgs	Cultural intermediary orgs	Community Centres	All clusters
EM as cultural ambassadors	1	4	18	15	38
EM as performers	8	8	19	24	59
EM engaging in creative activities	2	8	18	113	141
EM engaging in language learning	2	4	1	29	36
EM as audience for cultural appreciation	4	7	8	53	72
The total number of cultural access	17	31	64	234	346

In comparing the different clusters, it can be seen that the cultural resources developed by the minority interest cluster supports a fairly even interplay among creative, performing and cultural appreciation, while the cultural intermediary cluster manages mainly the interaction of creative cultural forms by providing these youth the opportunity to showcase their heritage in performance and develop their creative talents. The community centres, which organized a larger number of activities in 2016, tend to position themselves as a kind of cultural resource avenue for the general public.

Conclusion

One of the advantages of turning to a rights-inflected cultural participation paradigm is that it can offer a practical template for tracing the contours of social existence *in relation to* cultural infrastructures and resources. It is quite remarkable that the liberal notion of cultural rights as enshrined in international human-rights frameworks concerning indigenous and minority cultures has spawned robust cultural

participation research in Canada, Australia, France, New Zealand, Chile, Colombia, South Africa, the UK, the US, and elsewhere.³⁷ In Asia, similar research has been conducted in Singapore, Japan, and Hong Kong.³⁸ Research prompted by these international standards coalesces around the broad argument that “the right of access to culture” goes well beyond mere cultural availability to encompass vital concerns about the capacity to enter into and retrieve education, language, social service provisions, geography and territory, and arts and cultural life.³⁹

Before any measurement and planning can be considered, it is important to clarify the meaning of cultural participation. For instance, the National Endowment for the Arts in the U.S. (2009) defined arts and cultural participation to attending arts events, experiencing recorded or broadcast live performances, exploring arts through the Internet, and personally performing or creating art, among other things. In Chile, researchers take a more inclusive view: “In every case we are talking about practices where the individuals make use of their cultural repertoires and resources, their ways to organize the reality and capacity to communicate and signify.”⁴⁰ The data presented in this paper serve precisely to shed light on the vital role played by our ability to capture the typology, scale, pattern, and distribution of cultural access. There is no point in developing a cultural indicator framework or a cultural mapping strategy without first understanding *capacity patterns and capacity gaps*. The capacity question has many implications for social cohesion and the minority-belonging agenda.

I conclude this paper with some reflections on the way forward in the specific context of Hong Kong. In 2000, the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) commissioned “Arts Poll 2000” to look at public attitude on the arts, their social contribution, and how culture can be part of the urban development agenda. It found that the public’s arts participation had increased; what is more, most residents agreed that arts enhance the city’s image and creativity, and that artistic creativity was an important contribution to a knowledge-based economy. In 2005, a second HKADC report, *Hong Kong Arts and Cultural Indicators*, was produced by a group of international researchers while the Home Affairs Bureau was commissioning a study for the development of a *Creativity*

Index. Interestingly, the HKADC report's findings stated:

It is in the area of consumption and participation that the most significant policy issues arise.... There is a broad consensus across the demographic groups on the actual and tangible contributions that culture and the arts make in community building, personal development.... However, these high valuation rates do not translate into consumption and participation rates because a high percentage of individuals consider themselves to be either "too busy" or "too busy to participate more often."⁴¹

In other words, the local situation is characterized by a dichotomy between a high valuation and a low participation in the arts. The report called for the "priority development of research and data capture on cultural consumption patterns and trends and attitudes to the arts and culture" and "the development of research targeted at qualitative issues relating to social impacts of the arts and culture."⁴²

These same results and recommendations were echoed in the *Hong Kong Sustainable Development Index* in which respondents were asked to rank priority aspects for community well-being. It found that "arts and culture" was rated eighth out of nine categories with only a 6% level of recognition. In the same Index, "cultural/ethnic diversity" was rated at the very bottom with only a 4% level of recognition. Through these local studies, a wide consensus across stakeholders has been reached that call for: (a) a better capture, refinement, and analysis of the cultural sector as a whole and its component sub-sectors; (b) more research linking cultural statistics (as a quantitative baseline) to the quality of life, social cohesion, identity, and cultural rights (as aspects of the qualitative profile); (c) the strengthening of arts education; and (d) the research of "sub-sector specific snapshots." This paper makes a small contribution toward providing one such "sub-sector specific snapshot" by drawing on insights from a capacity analysis. But what's next?

Provisionally, our capacity analysis implies at least four priority areas. The various typologies, patterns, and tendencies identified indicate the need to reconsider the visions in our various types of organizations and to redeploy public and private resources:

1. *Tier 1 indicators: Ethnic minority youth community capacity* (e.g. skills/education attainment; self-organizing capacity for cultural, arts, and leisure activities; capacity for cultural initiatives (e.g. dance, music, websites); cosmopolitan/ liberal capacities; civic engagement);
2. *Tier 2 indicators: Ethnic minority youth social and cultural capital* (e.g. resources and networks embodied in life domains (school, family, friendship, work); bonding, bridging, and linking forms of capital; capacities to engage social agencies that hold power (media, cultural organizations, industry); ethnic community cohesion, belonging, confidence, ownership);
3. *Tier 3 indicators: Cultural identity* (including heritage; struggle for self-recognition/ respect; paths of maturation; intra- and inter-ethnic identity negotiation and development);
4. *Tier 4 indicators: Access and participation* (including frequency; resource expenditure; locations; sense of availability and variety; physical and symbolic aspects of access; self-narration of a “participation continuum” (active, passive, creative, interpretive, critical); place-making (sense of belonging, artistic aspirations, defense of community spaces); assessment of responsiveness of social agencies and government).

These categories are conceived of as tiers because of the way that the ethnic minority community capacity, social and cultural capital, and cultural identity impinge on their relations with cultural activities.

Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu, the provision of access and participation in a well-coordinated cultural infrastructure ought to help to produce a habitus conducive to positive self-confidence, which in turn impinges on how organizations (such as the 36 organizations we identified) re-chart their visions and operations. Bourdieu’s cultural sociology defines habitus as the site of an interplay between structure and practice.⁴³ While structure and practice can be observed directly, the habitus cannot because, according to Chigeza, the “habitus can be understood as a person’s mental and inner processes formulated as a result of cultural disposition.”⁴⁴ Chigeza goes on to suggest how the interwoven aspects

of cultural resources (the cultural infrastructure and cultural capital on the one hand, and the habitus and cultural disposition on the other) ultimately inform human agency.⁴⁵ Through the investigation of our four-tier indicators—and including a statistical mapping followed by a qualitative probing—we can gain a sense of how ethnic minorities navigate and find orientations in the popular cultural sphere. This can provide us with better insights into the way that they work out their habituses through their sense of community capacity, cultural capital, cultural identity, and access and participation. In this way, we can better align the social scientific approach of indicator research with the cultural theories of citizenship, where the notion of “citizenship” is understood as something interactive (as opposed to “top-down”), formative and evolving (as opposed to summative), and negotiable.

The Australian Aboriginal scholar Marcia Langton has argued: “Through cultural mapping, communities and their constituent interest groups can record their cultural practices and resources, as well as other intangibles such as their sense of place and social value. Subjective experiences, varied social values and multiple readings and interpretations can be accommodated in cultural maps.”⁴⁶ Critical cultural-mapping studies take the analysis of cultural access and capacity-building to establish indicators to explore in greater depth the reality of the “subjective experiences, varied social values and multiple readings and interpretations” of minority communities—that is, “measuring” human agency. The mapping also requires consultation with the cultural sectors of schools, NGOs, groups formed by the ethnic minorities themselves, and government agencies, which can in turn take the results of a continuous cycle of capacity mapping as a basis for considering resource allocation and program implementation (i.e. the cycle of capacity mapping—community-derived indicators → cultural planning). Such a mapping is operationalized through a continuous feedback loop across constituent interest groups, forming *cultural portfolios/inventories* consisting of the interplay between cultural infrastructure inventories and cultural narratives of agency *qua* participation.

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