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SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Revitalising Rural Communities



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Abbreviations

AFCD	Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department of the Hong Kong SAR Government
AIRI	APAC Initiative for Regional Impact
APAC	Asia Pacific Accreditation Cooperation
CCO	Countryside Conservation Office
DBH	Diameter at breast height
DSD	Drainage Services Department of the Hong Kong SAR Government
HKCF	Hong Kong Countryside Foundation
HKSAR/SAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HKU	The University of Hong Kong
HSBC	Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation
LCW	Lai Chi Wo
NGO	Non-government organisation
Programme	The Sustainable Lai Chi Wo: Living Water & Community Revitalization—An Agricultural-led Action, Engagement and Incubation Programme at Lai Chi Wo and the HSBC Rural Sustainability Project
Programme team	PSL, HKU and partner organisations responsible for the development and implementation of the Programme
PSL	Policy for Sustainability Lab of the University of Hong Kong
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SES	Social-ecological system
The Academy	The Academy for Sustainable Communities run by the Centre for Civil Society and Governance at the University of Hong Kong
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations

Chapter 1

Rural Sustainability: Challenges and Opportunities



Abstract Rural areas across the world have experienced outmigration and loss of economic viability due to processes such as globalisation and increased urbanisation. The loss of rural areas, which provide important resources on which wider societies depend on, creates immense risks for the long-term well-being of the world's growing urban populations. Their revitalisation, therefore, has benefits for both rural and urban areas. The interconnections between rural and urban areas, in this respect, are, however, often overlooked. By exploring the case of Lai Chi Wo, a village in Hong Kong on the outskirts of the urban community, it is demonstrated how these connections can be enhanced and better managed through the revitalisation of a rural area, bringing vibrancy back to a near abandoned village.

1.1 Introduction

In many developed countries and regions, rural areas have experienced a rapid demographic change and socio-economic transition through the process of rapid industrialisation and urbanisation. The migration of rural populations to urban areas has led to a dramatic decline in rural populations (Bjorna & Aarsaether, 2009; McGreevy, 2012; Stead, 2011; Walser & Anderlik, 2004). The depopulation of rural communities has been accompanied by a widespread loss of farmland to urban encroachment, abandonment of rural housing and the degradation of public infrastructure and other services (Bjorna & Aarsaether, 2009; Li et al., 2014; McGreevy, 2012).

Researchers and development practitioners increasingly recognise the potential of rural regions in providing the backdrop and resources for developing sustainable models as these provide the needs and well-being of growing population. As such, institutions at global and national levels have begun to pay attention to rural development. This book responds to the demand for a better understanding of the complexities of building sustainable rural communities, focusing particularly on revitalising rural resources in the urban context. It draws primarily upon knowledge and experience accumulated over approximately nine years of dedicated revitalisation efforts in the