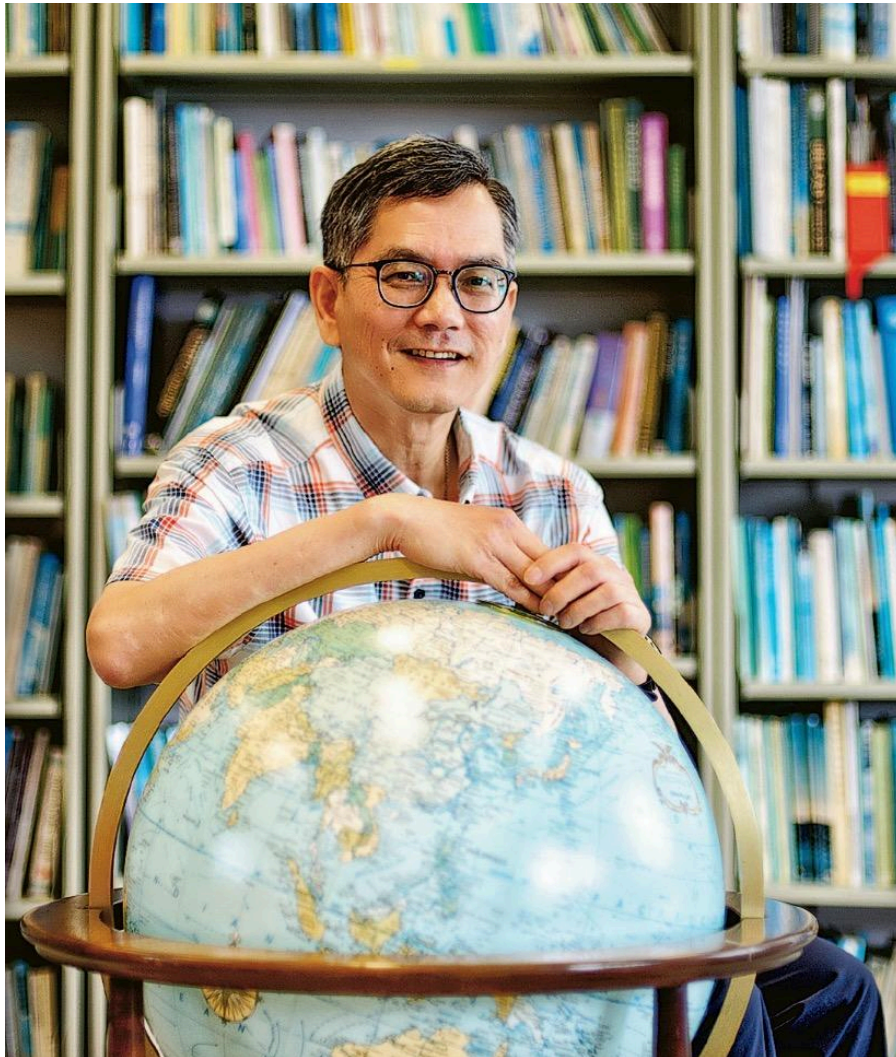


## **In Memory of Professor Tang Wing-Shing A Geographer Enlightening Urban Worlds**

By the Hong Kong Critical Geography Group,  
With Joanna Wai Ying Lee and  
Solomon Benjamin



May 2018 (Photo credit: MingPao Daily)

With the passing of Professor Tang Wing-Shing on January 26, 2024, at the age of 71, we have all lost an urban geographer who, for decades, has enlightened the world in both serious academic work as well as direct involvement in social practices. Located in Hong Kong, and founding chairman of the Hong Kong Critical Geography Group (HKCGG), Wing-Shing dedicated his life to teaching and researching at both the

Chinese University of Hong Kong (CUHK) and Hong Kong Baptist University (HKBU). He nurtured talents for decades, advancing academic theorisation, including the politics of knowledge generation. His contributions to Hong Kong, China, East Asia, as well as the international academic community emphasised how theory could inform practices. Wing-Shing, as he was known to all, was a keen observer of societal changes and engaged with viable alternatives for a just society. As a geographer who enlightened our worlds, the loss of this wise man, mentor, and friend to many, deeply saddens us all. We extend our heartfelt condolences to Wing-Shing's family.

HKCGG is considered a significant 'social practice' project in Wing-Shing's life. Through delving into the worlds of theory and contemplating social justice issues, he sought alternatives for the right to the city. Since 2002, he had regularly organised reading groups in coffee shops and meeting room 903 at the department. By 2004, Wing-Shing had officially established the HKCGG along with like-minded students. Together, they moved from the university reading about the world to exploring communities in Mong Kok, Tsim Sha Tsui, Sham Shui Po and Wan Chai. The HKCGG organised community tours for students and the public, interrogating knowledge through practices.

HKCGG thus also served as a platform for Wing-Shing to collaborate with numerous community, conservation and social welfare groups. His approach, striving to fight against the inequalities of urban life and defend human dignity, was to emphasise the understanding of subtlety and complexity anchored in particular, situated histories. He centred on the complexity of land and the politics of planning regimes to underpin the analysis of housing conditions for the urban majority. By doing so, his active attention to Hong Kong's current affairs and future prospects opened a grounded and realistic way to think about places elsewhere, beyond Hong Kong. Even after retirement, Wing-Shing continued to write prolifically, offering holistic and unique insights into Hong Kong's urban problems. His perseverance and dedication have inspired many across the city.

Wing-Shing's academic scholarship was anchored in urban geography, Hong Kong's land development, spatial theory, state theory, urban planning in China and historical geography. In 1973 he went to Canada to the University of Waterloo and McGill University, in order to study urban and economic geography. He graduated with first-class honours in 1976 and was recognized by the Canadian Association of Geographers. Moving to the University of Toronto for further studies in urban and regional planning, and he earned his master's degree in 1981 under the supervision of influential geographers Shoukry T. Roweis and Allen J. Scott. After graduation, Wing-Shing briefly worked as a research assistant at the University of Hong Kong before becoming an assistant lecturer at the Baptist College in 1982. Coinciding with China's reform and international opening, Wing-Shing's study of the nature of

urbanisation in China and of urban planning led him to pursue a PhD in land economics at the University of Cambridge in 1986. Working under the supervision of Donald Cross and Peter Nolan, he focused on Chinese urban planning in the Maoist era. Wing-Shing joined CUHK as a lecturer in 1989, then HKBU as an assistant professor in 1998. He was promoted to associate professor in 2005 and to professor in 2009, retiring with honours in 2018. It is this foundation in deep engagement with spaces of injustice that shaped his academic career and substantiated his academic contributions to Hong Kong society and the wider fields of urban studies.

Wing-Shing's materialist approach was informed early on by the Toronto school of planning theory, which reflected on the post-war capitalist city's development trends as an essence of human societies and cities. He realised the precept that land value is entirely reliant on the collective contributions of all, and that in reality, urban societies exhibit various forms of socio-spatial inequality. This realisation drove him to investigate power relations in urban space and to criticise urban planning as a state strategy and technocracy, to maintain its domination and hegemony. This enriched theoretical foundations about the very nature of the urban and of land. Furthermore, he engaged with geographical concepts and Western philosophy, including Michel Foucault's concept of governmentality, during his decade-long work in CUHK. Later at HKBU, his engagement with the works of David Harvey and Henri Lefebvre deepened his understanding of spatial justice. However, he also recognized their limitations, and from the early 2000s, explored critical urban theories that transcended binary perspectives of Western/non-Western. These concerns anchored his explorations across the history of disciplinary development of China, Asia, and the West to critics on the spatial perspective in Chinese urban research literature.

Wing-Shing's methodology, 'Spatial Stories', anchored these concepts but also grounded fine-grained, field-based rigour. These reflected historical conjunctions within Hong Kong Island, Kowloon and the New Territories as specific sites of theory building. It renewed spatial understandings and called for careful sorting through historical and geographical trajectories. His concept of 'Land (Re)Development Regime' challenged popular perspectives on urban land and spatial issues. Wing-Shing laid the ground to analyse Hong Kong's land reclamation, urban renewal, new towns and housing development. Such situated rigour allowed him to substantively criticise dominant concepts like 'gentrification' and 'neoliberalism' often randomly appropriated from the West. His engagement with varied developmental trajectories of Asian cities of entangled and situated colonial legacies. In more recent years, this sense of being mutually embedded shaped Wing-Shing's thoughts around the Chinese 'yin-yang' to develop a non-dualist, *tongbian*-informed spatial methodology. Post retirement, his publications explored these ideas via the materiality of land's mutual embeddedness via

the subtlety and complexity of property relations explored across Kowloon and sites in Mumbai, without being bounded by comparative anxieties.

'Interrogating and intervening in practice with theory' had always been at the forefront of Wing-Shing's work. His unique method of 'walking in the city through its neighbourhoods' set the ground for rigorous field investigation distilled into theories. These sites of theorisation remain unforgettable memories, inspirations and enlightenment to all of us: students, members, fellow academics, also ordinary people and *kaifong* (local residents) whom we met along the way. His spontaneous conversations with community workers showed their deep, long-standing connections and friendship. The city, for him, was not an abstraction, but built out of such human connections. Inspired by social practice, Wing-Shing and his students participated in numerous community projects that brought profound impacts at the local level, such as the 'Wan Chai Future Development Blueprint', 'Wan Chai Community Mapping', and other community networking work. They engaged in controversial issues like urban renewal, urban planning and land development, demonstrating social concern for the urban majority and urban poor. His praxis was always rooted in broader research, as well as the student and urban community. From the 2002 Tin Shui Wai 'City of Sadness' issue to the 2004 Wedding Card Street urban renewal, from the 2007 Central Star Ferry and Queen's Pier to the 2010 Choi Yuen Village and Northeast New Territories, along with numerous community forums in different places: all of these engagements sprouted academic-praxis reflection throughout the territory of Hong Kong.

As an academic legacy, Wing-Shing not only enlightened hundreds of university students, but also has profoundly influenced the wider international urban studies and geography community through his deep and grounded research on Hong Kong's urban issues. International scholars hold Wing-Shing in high esteem, reflected in invitations to serve as editor, or as editorial board member of many international academic journals. He was frequently invited as a visiting scholar or speaker to numerous renowned universities around the world. Wing-Shing also dedicated himself to participating in the East Asia Regional Conference in Alternative Geography (EARCAG), the East-Asian Inclusive Cities Network, the International Critical Geography Group, and the International Network for Urban Research and Action. These workshops took seriously field based theorisation by allocating for the city tours, the same time, (if not even more) as the in class theory sessions. Such togetherness in theory building extended discussions beyond the conference rooms and classrooms. It also illustrated the importance of nuance, wherein the actuality of social justice would differ from the New Territories to Kowloon to Wanchai. EARCAG was thus important for the non-East Asian academic community, shaped largely by Wing Shing's insistence on the serious consideration of situated complexities of land, economy and social justice. Rather than

a territorial or area-based obsession, these meetings were thus formative for critical dialogically sites.

Wing-Shing was born and raised in Hong Kong. He loved his family and students dearly and was widely respected and admired by scholars and friends around the world. On January 26, 2024, he passed away peacefully surrounded by his family and closest friends. We are profoundly grateful for Wing Shing's intellectual inspiration, just as he often said, 'I want to confuse you'. Wing Shing wanted to tell us that the world is full of preconceptions. He never gave us definite answers to any questions, yet we, his students, joyfully pondered and practised by his side. As both a teacher and a friend, Wing-Shing was our great companion who guided us through our academic and life journeys. We will extend his aspirations and visions, and pass on his teachings in our respective professions. His teaching, practice, enlightenment, generosity and intellectual contributions to academia and society will always be remembered.

您的精神會與這個城市這片土地同在

*Nei dik jing san wui yu je go sing si je pin tou dei tung joi*  
You will always be with us, with this city and this land.

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Please also read the links below for the obituaries issued by the family, the Department of Geography of HKBU:

1. Family obituary & funeral information: **In Loving Memory of Professor Tang Wing Shing** <https://bit.ly/in-memory-of-prof-tang-wing-shing>
2. Department of Geography, Hong Kong Baptist University: **In Memoriam - Professor Tang Wing Shing** <https://geog.hkbu.edu.hk/upload/files/1/file/65bb3b06701ff.pdf>

## 悼念鄧永成教授——經世啟蒙的地理學家

香港批判地理學會

<https://hkcgg.wordpress.com>

香港城市地理學家、香港批判地理學會創會主席鄧永成教授於 2024 年 1 月 26 日與世長辭，享壽 71 歲。鄧教授畢生從事地理學教研工作，先後任教於香港中文大學及香港浸會大學，作育英才數十載，致力推動學術理論發展，貢獻香港、中國、東亞以至國際學術界。他更將理論付諸實行，一直洞察社會轉變，尤其關心社會弱勢，為城市社會更好的未來提出建議，是一位經世啟蒙的地理學家。痛失這位智者、恩師、好友，本會深感哀痛，並向鄧教授家人致以深切慰問。

香港批判地理學會 (Hong Kong Critical Geography Group) 是鄧教授生命中相當重要的社會實踐計劃，透過走進理論世界，思索社會公義問題，為城市尋找他選。由 2002 年起定期舉辦讀書組，到 2004 年正式創立學會，鄧教授與志同道合的學生和友人，從在浸會大學 903 會議室、咖啡廳中閱讀世界，到走進旺角、尖沙嘴、深水埗等社區空間，為公眾及學生舉辦城市導賞團等，追求知識結合實踐，以獨特的田野考察，為會內外的參與者帶來畢生難忘的啟蒙。學會亦是鄧教授與不少保育及社福團體合作的平台，推動改善城市生活質素，尤其關注弱勢的住屋狀況和社會公義議題，積極關注香港的現狀及未來。榮休後，鄧教授仍筆耕不斷，為香港城市問題帶來宏觀而獨到的觀察，其毅力和堅持叫人欽佩。

鄧教授一生專注經營學術知識，其研究興趣橫跨城市地理學、香港土地發展、城市空間理論、中國城市規劃、歷史地理學等範疇。回顧鄧教授精彩的學術成長生涯，他在 1973 年負笈加拿大，先後於滑鐵盧大學及麥基爾大學修讀城市及經濟地理學，在 1976 年以一級榮譽畢業，獲加拿大地理學家學會嘉許。他隨後獲多倫多大學取錄，深造城市及區域規劃，師承 Shoukry T. Roweis 和 Allen J. Scott 兩位影響他一生的著名城市地理學家，並在 1981 年取得碩士學位。畢業後，鄧教授回港短暫任職香港大學研究助理，後於 1982 年加入香港浸會學院地理系擔任助理講師。時值中國改革開放，鄧教授期望出一分力，研究中國城市化的本質和城市規劃，故在 1986 年再次負笈英國，到劍橋大學土地經濟系修讀博士學位，師從 Donald Cross 和 Peter Nolan 教授，最終完成關於當代中國城市規劃的博士論文。鄧教授在 1989 年加入香港中文大學地理系擔任講師，1998 年再次加入香港浸會大學地理系擔任助理教授，於 2005 年升任副教授、2009 年晉升為教授，至 2018 年榮休。

我們無法忘記鄧教授在各方面為香港社會及地理學界帶來的學術貢獻。

在思想上，早年受多倫多規劃理論學派的啟蒙，鄧教授深刻反思戰後資本主義城市的發展趨勢、認識人類社會和城市的本質，尤其了解到土地價值全賴社會大眾的集體貢獻，但現實中城市社會存在各種分配不平等的狀況，驅使他著力探究城市空間的政治權力關係，反思城市規劃作為一種規管及調和城市空間政治的技術手段等，豐富了城市土地本質的理論基礎。他沿用 Michel Foucault、Henri Lefebvre 及 David Harvey 等西方思想家的理論，加深對這些城市問題的認識，

也同時意識到西方思想的局限，故他多年來一直研究人文地理學的方法論和歷史，嘗試超越西方/非西方的二元對立，疏理中國、亞洲和西方的學科發展歷程，評述中國城市研究文獻的空間視角。

在知識層面上，鄧教授發展出「空間故事」的方法論，試圖透過疏理歷史地理脈絡，探知一種新的空間認識和理解，挑戰既有對於城市土地及空間問題的看法。他用他的「土地發展體制」理論(Land (Re)Development Regime)剖析香港的填海、城市重建和新市鎮發展，亦拒絕以「士紳化」等現成概念粗略地將現況歸類，近年更醉心於結合中國易經思想和地理學的空間視角。他將這個方法論套用於比較亞洲及歐洲城市的發展歷程，重要成果在其榮休後陸續出版。

「用理論介入實踐」是鄧教授念茲在茲的工作。在社區實踐方面，他和學生一同參與眾多為城市發展帶來改變的項目，例如灣仔未來發展藍圖、灣仔社區地圖集等研究發佈，結合知識與實踐，參與市區重建、在地規劃、香港土地發展等關鍵課題，展現對城市弱勢的社會關懷。香港過去 20 年間的社會發展，無不有關心城市議題的批判地理學會師生關注和參與，從 2002 年天水圍悲情城市的議題到 2004 年禧帖街重建，從 2007 年天星碼頭到 2010 年菜園村、新界東北，再加上多次不同地方的社區論壇，鄧教授的實踐在香港的土地上不斷生根發芽。

學術傳承方面，鄧教授不僅啟蒙了中文大學與浸會大學十多位門生及眾多學生，更為城市地理學界及香港城市問題研究帶來深刻影響。國際學者亦對鄧教授推崇備至，邀請其擔任不少國際學術期刊的編輯或編委會成員，並受邀到世界多所知名大學擔任訪問學者。鄧教授也一直致力參與另類地理學東亞會議、東亞包容城市網絡、國際批判地理學會和國際城市研究及行動網絡的工作。

鄧永成教授生於香港、長於香港，他疼愛家人、學生，學者友好相識滿天下，深受愛戴。2024 年 1 月 26 日，他在最親近的家人、友人和學生陪伴下安詳離世。我們相當感激鄧教授對我們的啟蒙，正如他經常所言：「要 confuse 你們」。鄧教授從來想告訴我們的，是這個世界有太多既定思維、太多僵化的權力，他從來都沒有告訴我們任何問題的既定答案，而我們這些學生卻在他身邊樂此不疲的思索和實踐。鄧老師是我們在學術和人生路上一位亦師亦友的同行者，我們將在各自的專業中延續著您的生命和志願。您的授業解惑、身體力行、無私啟迪、對學術及社會的貢獻，我們永誌不忘。

您的精神，會與這個城市、這片土地同在。

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香港批判地理學會

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