

**THE OFFICE OF ROBERT T.Y. CHUNG 鍾庭耀辦公室**

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4 January 2007

Hon Alan Leong Kah-kit, SC  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on West Kowloon Cultural District Development  
Legislative Council  
Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China  
(by post, fax and email to [cshiu@legco.gov.hk](mailto:cshiu@legco.gov.hk))

Dear Mr Leong,

**West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) Development**

Thank you for your Subcommittee's letter to me dated 4 December 2006 inviting me to present my views on the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) project, in person on 6 January 2007 and also in writing by means of this submission. I have been actively involved in the development and operation of public opinion research in Hong Kong for more than 15 years, so you would expect that my main concern lies in the proper use and interpretation of public opinion in the decision process. You would notice that this is my third written submission to your Subcommittee, the last two being dated 27 October 2005 and 25 May 2006.

2. My last submission of 25 May 2006 was made "to alert your Subcommittee, the Administration and the general public to the misuse of opinion surveys by all parties, stakeholders and non-stakeholders alike." I also wrote that I "welcome the Administration's decision not to pursue the WKCD under the Invitation for Proposals process due to 'a significant gap between public demands and market reality'". I pointed out three major mistakes committed by the Administration in its process of collecting public opinion prior to making that decision, and then made three suggestions regarding future consultations, briefly summarized as follow -

- Follow international standards when conducting and publishing opinion surveys, and supply all methodological and operational details of an opinion survey if it is quoted in support of certain proposition(s).
- When expert and public opinion differ significantly, or among the experts themselves, the issue should be resolved by democratic means like open hearings and civil referendums, but never by biased surveys initiated and directed by the Administration or parties with vested interests.
- Shall the Administration or any stakeholder see the need to conduct opinion surveys, it should employ independent consultants to conduct such surveys independently and professionally.

3. I understand that your Subcommittee's meeting scheduled on 6 January 2007 which you have

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kindly invited me to attend is mainly to hear the views of experts and interested individuals on the work done so far by the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the WKCD, in particular the reports of its Performing Arts and Tourism Advisory Group (PATAG) and the Museum Advisory Group (MAG). I shall, therefore, concentrate on the opinion collection process of the PATAG and MAG.

4. According to Para. 3 of document CC/13/2006 which presents the report of PATAG, the recommendations now put forward by PATAG are based on general directions which “had taken into account public views received before the establishment of the PATAG as well as those submitted to the PATAG during public consultation and sector-specific focus group meetings”. In other words, there are three different (but could be overlapping) sources of opinion input in PATAG’s deliberation, namely, public views, submissions and focus group meetings. Para. 4 of the said document further explains that “[i]n drawing up its recommendations, PATAG Members have taken into account the existing cultural policy and the current performing arts scene, views received from the public and the professionals, and the need for performance venues in WKCD to contribute to achieving artistic excellence, enhancing vibrancy of the arts, and facilitating integrated development.”

5. On the other hand, according to Para. 5 of document CC/16/2006 which presents the report of MAG, “[i]n drawing up their recommendations, MAG Members have considered: (i) views received from the public and local / overseas experts through public consultations, sharing sessions and overseas study visit; (ii) the current provision of museums in Hong Kong; (iii) the existing cultural policy; and (iv) the vision of the Culture and Heritage Commission on WKCD.”

6. Although the process is not particularly clear to me, I find no problem in the way PATAG and MAG have assimilated public and expert opinions, and then come up with their own recommendations based on a variety of considerations. In fact, I applaud the Advisory Groups’ creativity in coming up with innovative concepts like “Theatreland”, “Museum Plus”, “cultural hub” and the like, which do not easily come through mechanical consultations. I am, however, slightly worried that these concepts might not solicit the amount of public support they warrant if the public is not kept well informed of these developments in their early stage.

7. No matter how good these concepts are, and no matter how little controversy the final direction of WKCD development would become, it is important for the general public to develop their sense of ownership for the project, and the best way to do this is to offer them with a number of alternatives at strategic stages for public consultation. The consultation process, I repeat, may include democratic means like open hearings and civil referendums, but not biased surveys directed by the Administration or parties with vested interests.

8. Shall opinion surveys be conducted, they should be designed and executed by independent researchers following international standards. I have explained the importance of this in my last submission dated 25 May 2006 and I would not repeat them here.

9. At this juncture, let me refer to the Administration’s document WKCD-219 Annex B dated 6 December 2005, in response to my submission of 27 October 2005, and entitled “Responses to Dr

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Ma Ngok's and Dr Robert Chung's Comments on the Report on the Public Consultation on the Development of West Kowloon Cultural District". Para. 1 of it reads, "... In relation to the tender document mentioned by Dr Chung, the Government issued a Consultancy Brief when it invited submission of Proposals for the Consultancy Services from academic institutions. Government is prepared to disclose the Consultancy Brief..." With the help of Ms Anita Sit, Clerk to your Subcommittee, I have managed to retrieve the Consultancy Brief from these websites:

- [http://www.hplb.gov.hk/wkcd/eng/consultation\\_report/brief.htm](http://www.hplb.gov.hk/wkcd/eng/consultation_report/brief.htm)
- [http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/hc/sub\\_com/hs02/papers/hs021213cb1-wkcd221-e.pdf](http://www.legco.gov.hk/yr04-05/english/hc/sub_com/hs02/papers/hs021213cb1-wkcd221-e.pdf)

10. I have studied the Consultancy Brief in detail, and found the following two provisions controversial:

- Appendix 2 "Essential Requirements for telephone polls" Para. (c) captioned "Sample Design" stipulates that "... The sample design and the estimation methods shall be subject to vetting and approval of the Government..."
- Appendix 2 Para (d) captioned "Questionnaire Design" stipulates that "The questionnaire shall be designed by the Consultant in consultation with the Government and subject to the Government's approval..."

11. The two provisions have basically suppressed the autonomy of the researchers and should be removed or significantly revised in future contracts. Otherwise, the Administration shall be held fully responsible for any flaw detected in the research instrument, and the survey cannot be branded as an "independent" consultancy research.

I hope my suggestions and comments above would be of some help to your Subcommittee.

Yours sincerely,



Robert Ting-Yiu Chung  
Director of Public Opinion Programme at the University of Hong Kong  
Secretary-Treasurer of World Association for Public Opinion Research