MR CHAN Koon Chung:

Dr Ma, I would like to thank the organisers for inviting me to give a lecture at this session. The topic of today's presentation is development of Hong Kong culture.

The conclusion and experience that we can obtain, and this can perhaps help you understand the culture of Hong Kong and formulate policies, and this may also be a good reference for the forum today.

The cultural industry in the last 40 years has undergone a trend of localisation. What I'm going to talk about will be three main characteristics.

First of all, the process of the localisation of our cultural industry is actually a process of import substitution for cultural products, namely using local cultural products to replace some of the imported local cultural products.

Second point I would like to make is the localisation of culture is a process of hybridisation.

The third point is the import substitution and hybridisation of culture has produced the cultural characteristics and identity of Hong Kong.

At least those who participated in -- at least it has played a role in shaping the cultural identity of Hong Kong. Our use of popular music and movies are examples.

First of all, Hong Kong movies since 1993, since we have Chinese television programmes, originally there were a lot of imported, you know, series which were dubbed into Cantonese. Gradually there were more and more local productions, especially in the middle of the 70s. We had so-called TV series or soap operas.

Soap opera is also called soap opera in the West. Basically they are, you know, programmes which were broadcast not during prime time, but in Hong Kong those were actually -- have stories about martial arts and so

on and so on, and that really had a lot of influence on China and so we see what we see here is a process of import substitution, it's also a time of cultural hybrid and these series, TV series, have helped shape the cultural identity of Hong Kong.

Same for pop music. In the 50s, Mandarin pop music was popular. Young people also like to listen to pop music from the West.

There were also some Cantonese ballads, you know, a change from Mandarin, ballads, but they were not as influential as pop music from the West and Mandarin songs.

Towards the end of the 70s, Mandarin songs from Taiwan also became popular for awhile and only in the mid-1970s did canto pop become popular. The reasons for the emergence of canto pop was the theme songs for TV programmes. Mr Koo Kah Fai used western type orchestras to accompany the singers and it was very similar to -- not the same as rock and roll that young people in the West heard, it was not like the ballads, the Mandarin ballads and songs earlier.

In the 1980s, canto pop developed further and many of the Cantonese songs were originally Japanese or American songs, adapted and converted into Cantonese songs.

Cantonese or canto pop is a very concentrated type of cultural species. It was far popular in the 80s than the pop music from the West or the Mandarin songs from Taiwan.

Movies was the same. In the early 1980s our movie industry took off and some of our movies actually beat the Hollywood counterparts in terms of box office receipts and Hong Kong movies was a very, very hybrid product.

I think we all agree that canto music, popular music and Hong Kong movies have helped shape Hong Kong's cultural identity.

In many areas you could say that we started from a process of the consumption of imported culture and then imported culture sort of, you know, suppressed local culture and some people took the imported culture and the local

culture and mixed them up, as a result of which you have a process of localisation.

Because of this localisation and the product proved to be popular, it substituted, it sort of replaced some imported products. Some capital started to flow into the market, the market expanded, there were more investment, more production, product quality improved, and subsequently products were exported, first to the neighbouring region. Popular music would first have to be popular locally before they were exported.

Since the beginning of the opening of Hong Kong, we had both local culture and imported culture. In 1949 imported culture from America, Japan, China and Taiwan, to a very large extent, they sort of, you know, suppressed local culture. Hong Kong is a city which consumes imported cultural products but there was no interruption for local culture and gradually local culture began to expand and there were lots of local cultural products which could substitute for imported cultural products. Hence in the 80s we had the process of relocalisation, true import substitution, hybridisation, the formation of new themes and the creation of a new cultural identity.

By "local" I meant all the culture that was accumulated previously.

Other than the example of Hong Kong, in some neighbouring cities there were similar examples. I can give two examples. After the modernisation and reform process in Guangdong, the television programmes are very much influenced by Hong Kong and Hong Kong TV series had an audience rate of more than 90 per cent. But that was declining recently because there's a lot of substitutes, namely programmes imported into Guangdong from other provinces and there were also some locally produced programmes in Guangdong. The Pearl channel produced a series of very successful Cantonese TV programmes, very successful, they captured a lot of audience, as a result of which they were exported to the neighbouring provinces and broadcast in the other provinces.

In Hunan, for example, they bought the rights and then they re-shot the whole programme, provided for Hunan dialect dubbing.

That's another example of import substitution.

Another example is that in this year in China there are some interesting movies, one of which is called "A Crazy Stone". Many of you when you saw it in the cinema, the response was very good and the public really identified with that movie. Some critics say in this movie they copy a lot from Western films, foreign films, especially the recent films about gangster movies in the UK. Actually they copy a lot from such movies from the UK. At the same time, they also added some local flavour into the movie like using local dialect. They used the, you know, the triad culture of the city of Chung Ching.

So it's a very unique movie, a very characteristic, you know, movie produced in the mainland, but it's actually a hybrid of many different elements.

So looking a bit further, for instance the hip hop music, it first started somewhere in New York and on the streets there from the Afro Americans. I think they mainly tried to identify themselves from the Caucasian whites, the rock and roll that they are playing. So they wear some very special clothing and their jewellery et cetera. I believe again for these street plans, they're using this sort of imported replacement culture to formulate their cultural identity.

So I'm using the concept of import replacement, actually was borrowed from Belgium writer as well as from North American writer, another book on the development of urban economy.

Of course, I use all those concepts to apply them to the pop culture. Of course, for pop culture, the most important thing is to create some sort of localised replacement. And in the book, it is mentioned that the economic life is developed because of the necessity of imported culture because of the replacement, the grace of replacement.

So he is using the word "the grace".

Perhaps I would like to spend more time on the word "hybridisation". In English there are a number of usages. People saying "mobilisation", "bastardisation" or "intermix". And the Central American countries they

have the words like "creole", "creolisation", "metissage". And of course also "metissation", as is pronounced in English.

And then the Chinese translation includes mixtures, hybridisation, and I've also used the term "hybrid" or "half Chinese, half European".

Then there is another word which has been used quite commonly, which is hybridisation, et cetera.

And I specially focus on the word "hybrid"because I believe the word really explains the situation. What "hybrid" really means is that the two products are mixed together to form a new product and this new product cannot be reverted back to the original product. I believe that there should be a meaning of the interpretation of the word "hybrid". According to the experience of Hong Kong the last 40 years in the process of hybridisation, we did not dilute our local characteristics or the local cultural identity, but rather the local cultural identity because of hybridisation have been further made even more prominent.

Of course for hybridisation, we also need rules and the rules are localisation. In other words, hybridisation is a component of localisation. So when we are talking about renovation or innovation, local innovation, of course we also need various sorts of mixtures to form the localisation before we can innovate.

In the localisation culture there are a number of modes, some are passive and some are imitation and eventually is hybridisation. And Hong Kong scholar Michelle Lam had promulgated the ideas that there are various formats, like corals, like also the butterfly, et cetera. In other words, the fourth one, the one applicable to the butterfly, of course, is the most innovative one. For the parrot one is the Japanese series which was dubbed into Cantonese, et cetera. As a matter of fact, that really is the beginning of the process.

The hybridised localisation, the reason why I am moved to such a theory is really to highlight the various concepts, various interpretations on culture. When we look at the academic view or the community or the other media, when they're talking about culture, the concepts of culture, I

really like to ask the question whether they should make amendments, changes. Because the understanding of culture firstly is that the global culture is taken as the so-called popular culture. Some people are saying that this is something good and some people are against it and some people really can't accept it.

Of course, the opposite view is that for those who are opposing such a popularisation of the globalisation, really advocating the cut-throat specialisation.

There are a number of responses to that, firstly is about the purity of culture. And many people are using the fundamentalist theory et cetera, and the other response is the so-called civilisation differences. They believe that such differences cannot be coordinated and that's the reason why civilisation confrontation is unavoidable.

And the third response is the competitive culture theory. In other words, a particular nation is used as a unit and all these nations are trying to create their own culture.

And the fourth response is the so-called localisation, to put it to the extreme, some people are saying of course there should be the linking process, in other words, there shouldn't be any further exchanges.

Another response to the amalgamation of culture is the polarisation of culture, in other words, people are also using the word "multiculturalism". When you're talking of multiculturism, that really accepts thatthere are differences in different cultures and all the different cultures tend to vie, in other words like the Asian Chinese, what they're saying is they're harmony but at the same time there are differences. All these can be maintained by different sorts of culture policies, standards. It's just like a safety net, in other words that such a platform should be there for such a process.

So I think for multiculturism, I believe the mistake people can make is reductionism, in other words they are reducing or impacting on the purity of the culture and very often the people become more like egoistic in their approach to culture.

We are talking here about modernity and very often we assume that there is a prerequisite existence of the so-called ethnicities and ethnic groups and their cultures. In other words, the different ethnicities are really reflecting on their identities. I believe at the same time, we can see that there are cross-culturalism and hybridisation of cultures particularly in metropolitan cities because in all the major cities there are in co-existence lots of different ethnicities. That's the reason why people are advocating cross-civilisation or hybridisation.

I personally, well, endorse such a pathway, but before I use such a word, perhaps a word of caution. I believe that is also the so-called naive and sophisticated hybridisation. For the sophisticated, they believe that there should be tolerance, there should be cooperation, there should be a process for the cultivation of a university sort of approach against cultural chauvinism and cultural fundamentalism.

At the same time that is the naive aspect, and that in other words that they have ignored, that in history the interchange was really not on a balanced sort of platform.

So localisation, again there are the sophisticated and the naive aspects. For the sophisticated aspects of course they can see that all those meaningful things happen locally but at the same time they believe that there should be a pure, purely localised features of the process, in other words it is exclusive in accepting other cultures.

Even for the most naive localisation is that it's still beneficial to the preservation of traditional culture. But of course it is static and there aren't that many changes in that sort of process. So in the formulation of such a process, there are actually a number of layers and it is active.

If we are using the terms of a rural, marginal et cetera to differentiate the various cultural centres of the world, we have to be very careful. We should not take the local culture, localisation, as exclusive. Of course we have to understand that there is also the aspect local to local rather than local to, in the abstract, global.

So we're talking about the hybridisation, we need also to find the local roots, so in other words for hybridisation and localisation, they should be complementing each other and at the same time the hybridisation concept should also take notice of the differences in the exchange of culture exchanges in the past. And for localisation of course we have to be very careful not to take up any exclusive attitude towards our cultures.

So I believe such a localisation can really handle the so-called bi-polar sort of culturalism rather pleasantly. So in other words we should be very careful with dualism. We're talking about dualism. Very often that really is one of the reasons why we should be accepting or supporting or against Westernisation or globalisation, et cetera. In other words, I think it all has something to do with the nature of the so-called fundamentalism. So as a result of that one choice is that antagonism has been stressed, in other words coordination is refuted. In other words, on the other hand, the stress is being, the emphasis is made on the so-called advanced culture.

I think to put it simply is that some people are saying that there should be exchanges and the local hybridisation allows certain flexibility and also ways of creating one's own culture.

For globalisation there are lots of different components, there are different formats for hybridisation. For instance, it's emerging that musicians from Hong Kong is using the rock and roll music from Iceland, African music and the sune instrument from China, and to form his own music is one example. In other words, I think there shouldn't be any directional guidelines, there shouldn't be any predetermined sort of practices.

Whether there are unlimited sort of combinations, that's not necessarily so, because there are always limitations to one's perspectives. We're talking about the disparity between the power, between the capitals. In other words, that really makes people -- that really brings in the sort of inclination to a process of more choices.

For the management of society, of the management because of disparity in the capital assets and resulting in the market failures and management failures, of course that can also be applicable to the cultural ecology.

I mentioned earlier on that most culturalism can be maintained by legal practices, hybridisation should be built on a multicultural platform. Within that safety net, the government can also do a number of other things, some of which, as I mentioned earlier on, and like supporting the equality of the sexes and supporting the underprivileged, underdogs. The maintenance of multiculturalism depends on the public capital support. For instance, the underprivileged cultures, local cultures should be supported, we should give support to the local drama, local operas, et cetera. We shouldn't simply be leaving such work to the market forces.

I believe the support of multiculturalism has become a consensus in many societies and there are in fact many controversies in that area.

At the moment, the government is trying to go in the direction of culture replacement for imported cultures. For instance, in Hong Kong, we have recently the Film Bureau has been set up and also there were active intervention by means of subsidies, for instance in countries like Korea and China. Many cities are doing that and some cities are using protectionalism to plan the infiltration of foreign cultures for the intellectuals, for the intelligentsia, I believe that they should accept the fact that disparity exists everywhere and they should try to advocate more in the process of the formulation of policies. And they shouldn't be scared of hybridisation, at the same time maintaining the mainstream sort of cultural elements.

And so there are different sorts of theories like cross-culture and open the localisation policy, as well as the acceptance of the process of a replacement culture. I believe many of these were actually experiences from many of the development processes in many cosmopolitan cities.

Now, such experiences, whether they should be applicable to the advanced cultures or the early stage of urban development or whether in some of the so-called forefront areas, whether all those three concepts can be incorporated into the daily life modes or whether they should become part of the human being's definition of culture.

Of course, I cannot jump to any conclusion now. At the same time I realise that there are lots of examples which are in support of such theories.

Because of time constraints, I'm not going to talk any further about these examples.

I'm now coming to the conclusion, the so-called non-border lands concepts, particularly the modern Hong Kong experience. Mainly based on the cultural development history in Hong Kong in the last 40 years. In the process, the process of localisation and there was the other stage, the so-called replacement for imported culture et cetera, and gradually Hong Kong's own cultural characteristics were highlighted.

Thank you very much.