

Art, Displacement and Sociology

*The aim of this post is to highlight the way in which sociological issues can be explored through art and non-textual form. The following is a selection of work from a project by **Wilfred Lim**, an artist from Malaysia, which focuses on issues of forced displacement. More details of Wilfred and his work can be found at: <http://wilfredweegee.com/index.php>*

Wilfred grew up in Pengerang, a small fishing village situated in the south of Peninsular Malaysia. Unfortunately, in 2011 it was decided that as part of a petrochemical project Pengerang would be demolished in order to construct an oil refinery. Apart from destroying the shoreline and marine life, this meant that all the houses in the village had to be demolished and the inhabitants relocated. The demolition of the village was completed at the end of 2013.

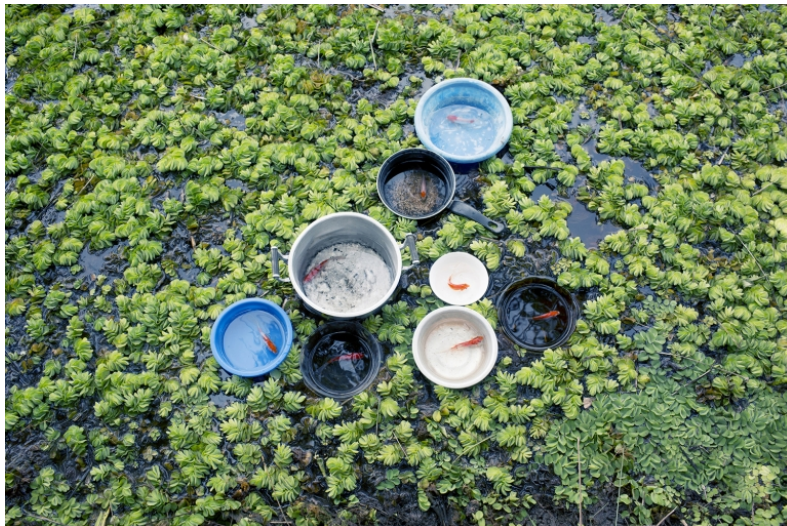
Commenting on this forced displacement process, Wilfred writes:

“The relocation of residential estates has brought my attention to the issue of living space as one of the basic human needs. The Malaysian government’s act of compensating villagers with a new house does not solve the problem. The destruction of habitat is able to impact one’s life radically, this issue has piqued my curiosity in the way humans define their living space.”

Whereas sociologists would usually try to investigate the impact of instances such as this through ethnographic work or by speaking to the residents, as an artist, Wilfred sought to capture and articulate the feelings of the villagers – and himself – through a series of photographic pieces. These provide an interesting and thought-provoking contrast to the way much qualitative sociology is conducted, and we hope they stimulate reflection on the role art can play in exploring sociological themes.









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