

**Part I. Economy Case Studies**

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# **HONG KONG, CHINA**

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# **Hong Kong: Demographic Change and International Labor Mobility**

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## 1. Introduction

Hong Kong is a city created by migrants.<sup>1</sup> Due to special historical circumstances, it became a crossroad where people and capital converged. Hong Kong has been through many stages in its transformation from a small fishing outpost into the fast-paced metropolis place we find today. Strategically positioned in East Asia, bordering the South China Sea and the Chinese province of Guangdong, it has developed close links with the economies of Southeast Asia, Japan and the People's Republic of China (PRC). These links gave rise to Hong Kong's image as a regional entrepôt and a business gateway to China. The same applied to the migration landscape, in which Hong Kong served as a major conduit for emigration from China.

In the colonial days (1842-1997), the British administration formulated Hong Kong's city-specific immigration policies. After 1997, Hong Kong continued to create its own independent immigration policies as a special administrative region of China. Hong Kong has changed from an open port into a city with tight and institutionalized immigration system, which was put in place in the early 1980s. According to Jon Vagg (1993), Hong Kong's immigration system has been based on the Western model, which is geared towards policing a large "problematic" population. Hong Kong has never had a population so large as to justify the robustness of its immigration system, and Vagg argued that immigration laws and regulations were used to control various economically marginalized groups.

Hong Kong has been shaped by successive migration flows and immigration is also expected to mould Hong Kong's demographic future. In this paper we will first analyze the historical trends of labor migration to Hong Kong with focus on prevalent migration from, and more recently also to, China, followed by current trends in labor migration from South East Asia, and migration of professionals from China as well as from the USA, Canada, Japan, Europe and Australia.

Illegal immigration to Hong Kong presents a very specific case. We will explain how the meaning of illegal immigration has evolved in time depending on socio-political conditions. A discussion of migration trends will be put into the historical context of Hong Kong's rapidly changing demographics. Finally, we will examine the economic and social impact of the migration inflows and subsequent changes of immigration policies. An analysis of the specific contextual factors that formed Hong Kong's immigration instruments and produced three distinct but often interlinked patterns of migration to Hong Kong, i.e. labor migration, political motivated migration (refugees) and migration on the basis of family reunion, and, above all, Hong Kong's transformation from a labor-exporting to a labor-importing city, may generate useful insights that could help us better understand the current dynamics of migration flows in the Asia Pacific region.

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<sup>1</sup> Earlier versions of this paper bearing the titles of 'Hong Kong Labour Migration and East Asia Integration' and 'Hong Kong: A Migration Crossroad Between China and South East Asia' have been presented at meetings of the East Asia Development Network (EADN) on Labour Migration and East Asia Integration held in 2004.

## **2. Migration inflows from China in an historical context**

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century there were little restrictions on the movement of people between the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong. The Peking Treaty signed between the Qing dynasty and the British government in 1898 allowed Chinese people free travel to or from Hong Kong. Even the quota system imposed much later in the 1950s was initially directed only towards migrants from Taiwan and provinces other than Guangdong. People from the bordering Guangdong province continued to enjoy freedom of movement to Hong Kong (Lam and Liu, 1998). These early migration flows can be conceptualized as a circular rural-urban migration with people moving between their native villages in China and the labor market in Hong Kong.

According to historians, before 1941 most Chinese immigrants did not intend to settle down in Hong Kong. They often used the territory only as a transit to other destinations, staying in Hong Kong for several days to a few years before they could take up opportunities overseas. It has been estimated that between 1868 and 1939 over 6 million Chinese left through Hong Kong for various destinations, ranging from Singapore and Thailand, to San Francisco, Cuba, Peru, Australia and Hawaii (Sinn, 1995a). Skeldon (1994) argues that the total number of emigrants from and through Hong Kong was probably much higher.

Organizing emigration became a lucrative industry for many players, including shipping companies, migration brokers, lodging owners as well as banks and insurers. After 1949 Hong Kong replaced Shanghai as the key center of Chinese emigration, handling an intense traffic of people, remittances, and information. However, even more important than the immediate economic effect was the less tangible long-term impact of these migration movements. According to Sinn (1995b), the idea and practice of emigration became a part of Hong Kong's collective psyche and an accepted way of life. Starting as a springboard for overseas Chinese, Hong Kong developed into an important transnational center of Chinese culture and trade.

The migration inflows and outflows that have shaped Hong Kong's population can be analyzed from macro, meso and micro perspectives. On a macro level, larger social forces and historical events triggered migration flows. On a meso level, they were executed through social networks, and on a micro level they were the results of personal decisions made by would-be migrants (Faist, 2000). On the macro level, the first large influx of migrants who came to settle down in Hong Kong was triggered by political chaos during civil wars and the subsequent Communist take-over of China in 1949. Consequently, immigrants from communist China started to be accepted in Hong Kong as political refugees despite the fact that the British government had never signed the 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees on Hong Kong's behalf.

Although the exact number of Chinese immigrants who arrived in that period is not available, it is believed that hundreds of thousands reached Hong Kong between 1948 and 1953. During the 1950s, Chinese migrants moved to Hong Kong mainly for political

reasons or for family reunion. Hong Kong's population rose from 600,000 in 1945 to 2.2 million by the mid-1950s and almost doubled again by 1971 (Ho et al., 1991). Emigrant entrepreneurs who fled China and reinvented their business empires in Hong Kong (Wong, 1988) fueled an economic expansion that absorbed a large pool of manual as well as professional labor.

The second wave of Chinese immigrants was pushed to Hong Kong by wide spread starvation in the PRC, following Mao Tse-tung's ill-conceived agricultural policies of the Great Leap Forward in 1958. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, around 27 million people died of famine on the mainland because of the nationwide People's Commune Movement launched by Mao and his government (Lin, 1990). Subsequent immigration wave to Hong Kong upset the traditional agricultural production in the local rural areas. Traditional rice farmers from the New Territories were not able to compete with new immigrants from China. Losing their livelihood in farming and unable to find jobs in Hong Kong's newly established factories, rural residents from the New Territories started to emigrate to Great Britain, where they established themselves in the catering industry (Watson, 1977; Baker, 1994).

The 1970s marked the third large migration inflow from China to Hong Kong. In 1973, 56,000 illegal immigrants entered Hong Kong, illegal because they did not possess valid exit permits from China (Skeldon, 1995b). Faced with a huge influx of Mainland Chinese, the Hong Kong government was compelled to modify its politically motivated sympathetic approach to illegal immigrants. While they had earlier been accepted as political refugees fleeing the communist regime, in the 1970s their popular image had been redefined as problematic "economic" migrants (Vagg, 1993) who were posing a threat to social stability.

The government responded to the growing number of Chinese immigrants by toughening regulations on legal immigration in 1974. At the same time a new instrument, the so-called "touch base" policy, was implemented. The policy provided a channel through which illegal entrants could legalize their stay. If they managed to evade immigration control in border areas and reached the urban areas of Hong Kong they were granted permission to stay.

The "touch base" policy was seen as conducive to illegal entry at a time when the legal entry to Hong Kong was restricted. At its height in 1979, border police apprehended about 200 illegal immigrants each day and the total number of new immigrants to Hong Kong reached more than 100,000 people. Most of them were single young men from rural areas who further skewed the unbalanced sex ratio among Hong Kong's population, which increased to 115.8 males per 100 females in 1981.

This new inflow coincided with an economic open door policy adopted in China in 1978 and the Chinese government's subsequent relaxation of mobility control over Chinese citizens. Most restrictions on population movement and household registration imposed by the Chinese government for almost three decades were lifted. This in turn encouraged a great number of rural residents to rush into urban areas, including

neighboring Hong Kong, in search of better opportunities. For example, Chan (1992) described how news about the lenient “touch-base” policy reached one village in Guangdong province and resulted in an exodus of all the young people to Hong Kong.

With restrictions on movement lifted, a large number of Mainland Chinese came to Hong Kong to visit their relatives or used Hong Kong as a transit to other countries. In 1980 alone, 55,452 people came to Hong Kong legally to visit their families. Most of them eventually overstayed and did not return to China. Between 1978-1980, more than 300,000 unskilled workers found their way into Hong Kong’s labor market. Some observers argued that the flood of illegal immigrants had a negative impact on the wages of local workers and put serious social and economic pressures on Hong Kong. Others, like Ho (1991), maintained that on the whole the new influx was beneficial to Hong Kong by fuelling the double-digit economic growth in 1986 and 1987 and delaying a labor shortage crisis for several years.

The benevolent immigration policy was scrapped in October 1980. Under the amended Immigration Ordinance, all persons in Hong Kong aged fifteen or above had to carry their identity card with them at all times and produce it upon demand for police checking. When caught, illegal immigrants were prosecuted and imprisoned (in most cases for 15 months) and then repatriated. The amendment further required the inspection of employees’ identity cards by employers, and the employment of illegal immigrants, which was wide-spread especially on construction sites, was made a criminal offence punishable by a fine of HK\$5,000 or imprisonment for a year.

The change in immigration regulations caused a lot of uncertainty and unease in Hong Kong and affected it in a number of ways. The immediate result was a drop in the number of illegal immigrants in 1981. One of its long-term effects was a shrinking labor force in the 1980s. The new immigration policy introduced in late 1980 was a product of close collaboration between Hong Kong’s colonial authorities and the border authorities of Mainland China. This policy effectively reduced the inflow of illegal laborers from the Mainland over the next two decades. However, illegal immigration was never completely eradicated. It continued to thrive as a lucrative business activity organized by human smugglers, reaching new heights of 20,000 persons per year in the mid-1980s (Ho et al., 1991). While in 1986 there were 56 illegal immigrants arrested daily, the number increased to 73 in 1987 and over 100 a day in 1988 (Vagg, 1993). Modernization of technology, upgrading of security measures and also the opening of legal ways for short-term visits to Hong Kong led to a subsequent decline in the number of daily arrests. Only 15 and 10 illegal immigrants were arrested each day in 2002 and 2003 respectively (Immigration Department of Hong Kong, March 2004).

The end of the flow of cheap labor from the mainland had a significant impact on Hong Kong’s economy. It helped to encourage the surge of Hong Kong investment capital across the border in the 1980s. The neighboring Guangdong province was often described as Hong Kong’s labor army reserve. Instead of importing cheap labor from Guangdong province, Hong Kong’s labor-intensive industries simply moved across the border into the special economic zones (SEZ), which offered them economic incentives.

To this day, more than 80 percent of Hong Kong manufacturers have established production facilities in the Mainland, a move that has boosted outward processing activities and Hong Kong's re-export growth. New job opportunities created in the SEZs proved to be a pull factor that attracted a pool of migrant labor from all over China. Today Hong Kong companies employed an estimated ten million workers in the Pearl River Delta, 'injecting great vitality to the development of the region and helping Guangdong establish itself as an important global manufacturing base'. (Guangdong Research Institute of Foreign Economic and Trade Relations, 2008).

### **3. Emigration from Hong Kong**

Immigration to Hong Kong has consistently exceeded emigration from Hong Kong. The main shift in emigrant population came in the 1980s. While post-WWII emigrants hailed from rural parts of Hong Kong and lacked education or skills, highly educated urban professionals formed the outflow that started in the 1980s. It has been characterized as a middle-class phenomenon (Salaff and Wong, 1997) sparked by political uncertainty associated with the return of Hong Kong's sovereignty to China. Especially after the signing of the 1984 Sino-British joint declaration on handing Hong Kong back to China in 1997, many people from Hong Kong started to evaluate their future in the territory. While some began to search for new residence overseas, others sought foreign passports as a form of insurance policy against an uncertain future under Chinese rule. Unfortunately, data on Hong Kong emigrants were usually compiled on the basis of visa applications at local consulates, and therefore are hardly accurate. One estimate by Skeldon (1995b) put the number at 300,000 between 1987 and 1992. According to other estimates, in the period between 1987 and 1996 up to 503,800 Hong Kong residents moved abroad.

The outflow of Hong Kong residents reached a peak in 1990 when 62,000 (i.e. one percent of the entire population) Hong Kong residents emigrated (Wong, 1992), a sharp rise from 22,400 who emigrated in 1980. This sudden upsurge was triggered by the 1989 "Tiananmen incident" in China that further amplified Hong Kong people's concern towards the future of their city under Chinese sovereignty. The number of emigrants remained high during the first half of the 1990s, but with growing confidence towards their future under the Chinese flag, the number started to decline between 1995 and 1997. Only 10,500 people emigrated in 2002. The number stayed around that level since then. In 2007, the total outflow stood at 9,900. (Hong Kong Security Bureau, cited in *Ming Pao Daily*, 6 February 2008).

Fig. 1: Emigration from Hong Kong (1981-2002)



Source: *Hong Kong Information Notes : Emigration – October 2002*

Unlike the earlier emigration wave in the 1960s, which was economically motivated (mostly farmers from the New Territories who, facing agricultural crises and unemployment, decided to relocate themselves to the United Kingdom), the outflow of the 1990s was politically motivated and was led by young educated professionals who emigrated predominantly to Canada, the USA and Australia (Skeldon 1994 and 1995b, Mak 2001). Economists and policy makers expressed concerns about the long-term effect of this brain drain on the Hong Kong economy. Others felt that such fears were premature (Wong 1992; Skeldon 1994). Skeldon argued that these Hong Kong emigrants formed a special case of transient migrants “who never were”, i.e. who were attracted by economic opportunities back to Hong Kong soon after they left while their wives and children settled down in the country of immigration. This arrangement was branded an “astronaut syndrome”, a metaphor with double meaning: firstly illustrating the situation when fathers commuted from Hong Kong by air to their families across the Pacific and secondly playing on the phonetics of the Cantonese words for “space” and “empty wife” (*tai kong*). The “astronaut syndrome” is related to another metaphor, “parachute children”, a term that illustrates the situation of offspring “parachuted” into destination countries where they lived without their fathers or both parents. Both metaphors are vivid expressions of the transnationalism of Hong Kong families, indicating a disruption of family life due to emigration and creating social problems of still unknown magnitude.

The Hong Kong government reacted to the outflow of its highly educated workforce by adopting more flexible policies for attracting skilled migrants and put in place incentives for Hong Kong emigrants to return to Hong Kong (Wong, 1992; Mak 2001). These incentives were rather successful, as an estimated 12 percent of emigrants who had acquired permanent residency abroad returned to Hong Kong in 1992 alone. The return rate from Australia was up to 30 percent in 1990 and 1991. Skeldon (1995b) estimated that about 20 percent of all emigrants between 1987 and 1992 returned to Hong Kong.

The exact number of returnees is not known, but according to the Immigration Department, about 290,000 Hong Kong permanent residents may bear foreign nationality. From the Joint Declaration in 1984 until 2000, roughly 5 percent of the population of Hong Kong had moved to Canada, and about 53 percent of those emigrants had returned to Hong Kong (*SCMP*, 1 July 2004). By the end of 2007, there were about 220,000 Canadians living in Hong Kong, “with the vast majority believed to be either returnees or part of the floating population that moves back and forward between the two.” (*SCMP*, 6 December 2007). The Report of the Task Force on Population Policy (2003) pointed out that many ethnic Chinese prefer not to declare their foreign passports, which therefore makes it more difficult to establish an accurate estimate of the actual number of Hong Kong citizens with the right of abode in foreign countries. Many of Hong Kong’s most famous public figures, businessmen or entertainers were described as “hidden Canadians” for the ease with which they carry their Canadian passports in one pocket and Hong Kong identity cards in another (Nairne, 2004). It has been suggested that in Hong Kong foreign passports were understood more as practical documents facilitating travel than symbols of nationality (Asia Pacific Migration Research Network, 1994). Only Hong Kong’s upcoming political elite, such as new legislators who ran for the Legislative Council elections in September 2004, had to make a radical decision about their allegiance and give up their Canadian citizenship in order to be eligible to run in the election.

#### **4. Hong Kong’s demographic predicaments**

Hong Kong’s population in 2007 stood at 6.9 million. According to a set of Population projections compiled by the Census and Statistics Department (2004) it is expected to reach 8.3 million in 30 years’ time. The average annual population increase has been estimated at 0.7 percent, which is significantly lower than the population growth rate of one to two percent throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Table 1: Hong Kong Population Annual Growth\*

YEAR	HONG KONG POPULATION	AVERAGE ANNUAL GROWTH RATE (PERCENT)
1978	4 769 900	1.8
1988	5 627 600	1.0
1991	5 674 100	0.8
1996	6 412 900	1.8
1998	6 543 700	0.8
2001	6 708 400	0.9
2006	6 909 500	1.0
2007	6 921 700	0.9

\* Figures refer to growth between mid-year of preceding year and mid-year of designated year.

Sources: Hong Kong 2001 Population Census, *Hong Kong in Figures*, 2004 edition, and Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, February 2008.

Hong Kong has been experiencing a rapid demographic transition. Starting from the 1960s, net immigration overtook natural increase by birth (Ho et al., 1991) and this trend is expected to persist in the future. Migration inflows had an immediate impact on the demographic structure. For example, while in 1931 only one third of the Hong Kong population was born locally, in 1961 their number rose to almost half of the population (Hong Kong Population and Housing Census, 1961). In the early 1970s, 56.4 percent of residents claimed Hong Kong as their birthplace and the 1991 census found that this had risen to almost 60 percent. In 1996, about two thirds of Hong Kong's residents were born in the territory.

The numbers are even more telling when we look at the younger generation. In 1971 over 95 percent of those under 15 were born in Hong Kong. Since the early 1980s the second and third generation of locally born people developed a distinctive Hong Kong identity and culture in contrast to the Mainland Chinese identity. The Cantonese dialect replaced Chinese *putonghua* (the standard language of the Mainland China) as the lingua franca in Hong Kong.

Hong Kong has had one of the lowest fertility rates in the world (lower than, for example, Japan or Western Europe), well below the replacement level of 2,100 children per 1,000 women, and in 2005 it reached an extremely low level of 966 children per

1,000 women (Council for Sustainable Development, 2006, p. 44). Still, the Hong Kong government did not plan to introduce special pro-natal policies as it considered parenthood to be a personal choice.

Table 2: Hong Kong's Total Fertility Rate in Comparison with Selected Economies, 1983-2005

Economy	1983	1993	1999	2001	2003	2005
Hong Kong	1,722	1,342	982	932	901	966
Japan	1,800	1,460	1,340	1,330	1,290	-
U.S.A.	1,800	2,020	2,010	2,030	2,040	-
United Kingdom	-	1,760	1,690	1,630	1,710	-

Note: Total fertility rate = number of live births per 1,000 women

Source: Council for Sustainable Development, 2006, p. 44.

One possible explanation for the extremely low birth rate is that Hong Kong has been “exporting” marriages and birth rates to the Mainland, as more Hong Kong people have been marrying across the border, leading to more births attributable to Hong Kong people in China. The emerging trend today is a two-way flow of population movements, which was common before 1949, but was curtailed for the following 50 years. This mobile population comprises mainly Hong Kong residents working and staying in the Mainland (Hong Kong Population Projections, 2004).

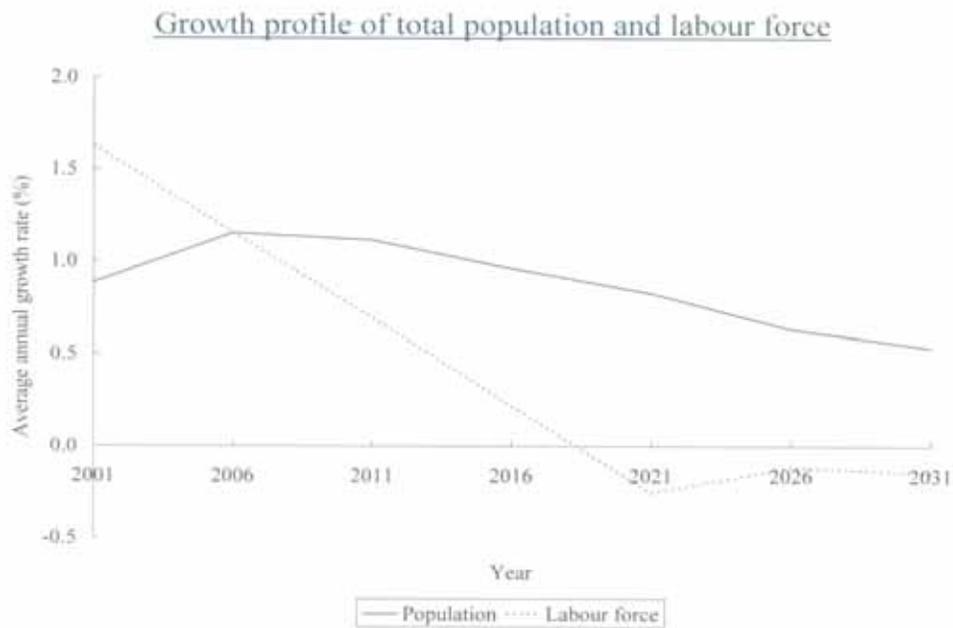
In the past, Hong Kong's population grew steadily despite the low fertility rate, mainly due to inflows of migrants (see Table 1). For the future, an important source of population growth will be mainland immigrants. In 2002 the population grew by 56,800 people to 6.815 million, with 72 percent of the increase accounted for by immigrants. In 2004 net migration was estimated at 5.24 migrants per 1,000 population compared to 7.64 migrants in 2003. According to demographic forecasts, in the next 30 years Hong Kong is expected to have a natural decrease of 0.16 million (indicating 0.16 million more deaths than births) and a net in-movement (i.e. inflow less outflow) of 1.74 million people (Hong Kong Population and Housing Census, 2001).

Another alarming demographic trend is the rapid aging of Hong Kong's population. While in 1961 Hong Kong was a youthful city where young people aged below 15 made up 40.8 percent of the population (Hong Kong population and Housing census, 1972), in 2003 the proportion dropped to only 15.7 percent. In 1998, the largest age group consisted of people aged 35-64 (39.9 percent) and it continued to grow to 43.1 in 2002 and 44.8 in 2003 (Census and Statistics Department, 2003).

With the improving quality of health care, life expectancy is also estimated to rise from the current 78.7 years for males and 84.3 years for females to 82 and 88 in 2033,

respectively. People will live longer and, according to projections, by the year 2033 one quarter of the territory’s population will be aged 65 or above. The combined effects of the decrease in the number of young persons and the increase in the number of elderly persons are reflected in the increase of the median age of the population from 31 in 1991 to 38 in 2003 and projected to 46 in 2033 (Key Statistics of the 2001 Population Census). Hong Kong’s prime working age population will continue to decline, and the government hopes to keep the economy competitive by increasing the net inflow of immigrants.

Fig. 2: Growth Profile of Total Population and Labour Force in Hong Kong



Source: Census and Statistics Department

## 5. Immigration instruments for Mainland Chinese

As suggested earlier, immigration from the Chinese mainland has been crucial for Hong Kong’s economic development as well as for its demographic growth. Apart from “illegal” or facilitated semi-legal entries discussed earlier, certain legal instruments were put in place to allow new arrivals from the Mainland to settle down in Hong Kong. The most important was the One Way Permit (OWP) Scheme. British authorities first introduced the Scheme after several rounds of negotiations with the PRC government in the 1950s. The final agreement empowered the Chinese government to regulate the size of Mainland Chinese outflow to Hong Kong by issuing them One Way Permits. This unique institutional arrangement has been in place for more than half a century. Since the 1980s, it has been the main instrument that facilitated the reunion of Chinese families divided by the Hong Kong border.

After reunification with China in 1997, Hong Kong has maintained its separate immigration system. It continued to closely monitor the number of new immigrants from the PRC even though it does not have any control over their selection. Since the mid-1990s, administratively, the term “new immigrants” has been replaced by “new arrivals” as the former carried many negative connotations and did not reflect the reality that Hong Kong has become a part of China.

But the OWP Scheme that was devised during colonial times has remained intact. The first quota of 75 new arrivals per day in 1982 was increased to 105 in 1993 and subsequently to 150 in 1995, or some 55,000 a year. While the quota remains unchanged, preference was given to the younger mainland children as they may have better chance of integrating into Hong Kong society. Academic studies showed that children who entered Hong Kong by the age of nine do as well academically as local-born children. Currently 40 percent out of the quota of 150 are reserved for mainland children.

The importance of the Scheme for Hong Kong’s future development was acknowledged by the Report on the Task Force on Population Policy (2003), which stated that the OWP has been an “immigration policy that continues to shape Hong Kong’s demographic growth and composition.” From 1983 to 2001, there were 724,259 new arrivals from the Mainland admitted to Hong Kong under the OWP Scheme. Between 1997 and 2001, they contributed to some 93 percent of the population growth. The Report also predicted that the OWP Scheme would continue to be a main source of population growth in the future.

## **6. The socio-economic impact of new Chinese immigration**

In the 1960s and 1970s the Hong Kong media formed an image of new immigrants by contrasting “modern Hong Kong” with “primitive China”. In 1979 a popular TV series introduced a prototype of a Mainlander in the person of “Ah Chan”, an uncouth country bumpkin from the Mainland, who could not cope with life in sophisticated Hong Kong. “Ah Chan” made it into local slang describing “an ignorant newcomer”.

The media further contributed to the proliferation of negative images of Mainland immigrants by their reports on the crimes committed by new immigrants and by overstating the pressure they put on the welfare system. Hong Kong people developed a strong prejudice against their “cousins” over the border, and saw influx of cheaper labor as a potential threat to their high wages.

The latest migration flow from Mainland China facilitated by OWP is age and gender-specific, that is, most migrants are Mainland children and spouses of Hong Kong permanent residents. While the sex ratio is balanced among children, females prevail among adults, with up to 72.5 percent in the working age (20-59).

Upon their arrival in Hong Kong the mainland children and wives face many challenges. Some children experience feelings of marginality and structural as well as cultural alienation (Tang, 2002). It has been reported that many of them were reluctant to move to Hong Kong, where they were treated as “second class” citizens and subjected to prejudice from their peers. They felt discriminated against because they were from Mainland China, which could be detected from their accent, and because of their lower economic status (*SCMP*, 8 October 2004). Their view of the world was formed in different social system and their education in China did not prepare them well for life in a capitalist society (W.K. Lee, 2002a). The new OWP arrivals were often isolated from the larger community, be it spatially (living in housing estates in remote parts of the city), socially (they were not able to find their place in Hong Kong society) or culturally (they adapted poorly to Hong Kong’s way of life).

Mainland women experienced complexities on various levels, from structural societal tensions to micro level conflicts within their newly reunited families (Tsoi and Chan, 2004). After their arrival in Hong Kong, Mainland women were reported to suffer from depression, lack of privacy at home and marital discord with their husbands with whom they were separated for quite some time (most OWP applicants have to wait several years before their application was accepted and they could move to Hong Kong). They were also frequently mentioned in statistics on domestic violence. The number of battered spouse cases reported in Hong Kong rose by 264 to 3,298 incidents in 2003 (almost double the 1,679 reported five years earlier). The largest portion of cases involved new mainland immigrants (*SCMP*, 18 April 2004).

The economic and social mobility of new arrivals to Hong Kong was limited. They were marginalized (suffering from exploitation and unfair employment) or excluded from the labor market (Chui, 2004). Their educational credentials and prior working experience were either low or were not recognized. As a result, the unemployment rate for new arrivals was disproportionately high, even though they were ready to take up less attractive jobs in the service/retail and receive lower wages than the Hong Kong workers. The median income of new arrivals was HK\$6,000 compared to HK\$10,000 for local people. Based on the 2001 Population Census data, labor participation of new arrivals was lower than that of the overall population (i.e. 44.2 percent compared to 61.4 percent).

The stigma of being a new immigrant was often combined with the stigma of being a welfare recipient, even though under the new regulations the new arrivals are now disqualified from welfare payments in their first seven-years. Since the 1980s new immigrants from the Mainland were also excluded from public housing (Smart, 2003). According to data from the Social Welfare Department, new arrivals (including non-Mainland immigrants) made up less than 15 percent of welfare recipients.

The Social Welfare Department (SWD) and various NGO groups made an effort to help the new immigrants to adjust to local conditions and provided them with family and community services. However, despite considerable investment, the social support networks did not match the need of the rapidly increasing immigrant population from the Mainland that was concentrated in the satellite towns of the New Territories. Social

services directed towards new immigrants presented yet another source of resentment among local people who believed that social resources were utilized unfairly (J. Chan, 2004).

The Hong Kong people's fear of new arrivals was also played out in a legal battle over "right of abode". In January 1999 the Court of Final Appeal ruled that the mainland children of Hong Kong residents were eligible for the right of abode in Hong Kong. The government and media were taken by panic. They published reports that overestimated the total number of mainland children who could be eligible for the right of abode in Hong Kong, stating that up to 1.6 million mainland residents would be eligible. In response to a request from Hong Kong's Chief Executive at that time, Mr. Tung Chee-hwa, Beijing reinterpreted the Hong Kong's mini-constitution (the Basic Law) to overrule the Court of Final Appeal's ruling. The immediate purpose of this interpretation was to prevent a "mass influx" of mainland immigrants into the territory (Ku, 2001).

However, some observers suggested that the new arrivals had a positive impact on Hong Kong's economy. They provided a steady supply to the labor force and contributed to about 30 percent of the annual growth from 1999 to 2001 (Report of the Task Force on Population Policy, 2003). Despite the expectations of population planners, not all of the new arrivals stayed in Hong Kong for seven and more years to be able to apply for permanent residency. Between 1994 and 2001, about 27 percent left Hong Kong, either moving back to the Mainland or emigrating to other countries.

## **7. Relaxation of rules on mainlander visits to Hong Kong**

Economic cooperation between the Hong Kong SAR and the neighboring Pearl River Delta (PRD) in Guangdong Province pre-dates Hong Kong's return to the PRC on July 1, 1997. Since the establishment of China's open door policy in 1978, the two economies have become increasingly interdependent. After 1997, Hong Kong's closer economic integration with China, especially with Guangdong province and the PRD, entered a stage of highly integrated economic development, further enhanced by the signing of the Close Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) between the HKSAR Government and the Central People's Government in June 2003. Under the CEPA framework, the mainland would gradually eliminate tariffs imposed on Hong Kong products, open up 18 service sectors to Hong Kong companies, and create a formal arrangement for people from the mainland to visit Hong Kong.

CEPA has opened up new areas of co-operation between the two sides that allowed more people and enterprises from the Mainland to move to or visit Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Government also pledged its willingness to assist PRD enterprises to establish outlets in Hong Kong so as to enable them to trade directly with foreign companies (Chief Executive Policy Address, 2003). Among others, the new policies accepted under CEPA included the relaxation of mainlander visits to Hong Kong and strengthening of cooperation in industries and projects.

The expansion of the “individual visit” scheme propelled the flow of people and capital between both sides, and has made mobility freer and more convenient. Mainland Chinese used to comprise the largest grouping of visitors to Hong Kong even before CEPA; in 1998 from January to October 2.11 million Chinese visited the SAR, making up 27 percent of Hong Kong visitors. In 2003 the number of Chinese visitors jumped to 8.4 million, i.e. 54.5 percent of all visitors, and it is expected that the number will continue to grow. This sharp increase is directly related to the introduction of the individual travel scheme introduced in September 2003. Previously, Chinese tourists could visit Hong Kong only in tour groups. Since the introduction of the new scheme, the restrictions have been relaxed and 150 million mainland residents from 32 cities became eligible to visit Hong Kong individually. In May 2004 the scheme was extended to the whole of Guangdong province and in July 2004 to nine cities in Fujian, Zhejiang and Jiangsu provinces. By 2006, mainland visitor arrivals to Hong Kong reached 13.6 million, amounting to 53.8 percent of the total number of tourists visiting the territory (*Hong Kong in Figures*, 2007, p.39). Mainlanders are the biggest per capita spenders, and have overtaken tourists from USA, Taiwan and Europe.

## **8. Illegal labor migration**

In September 2003 the Hong Kong government lifted restrictions on Mainland visitors to Hong Kong. Since then, there has been a higher occurrence of people overstaying their two-way permits and engaging in illegal labor ranging from prostitution to construction work. While Hong Kong did benefit economically from self-organized tours from the mainland, especially in the travel-related sectors, such tours also opened a new channel for illegal laborers and sex workers who can now enter Hong Kong disguised as tourists. Mainland sex workers first appeared in Hong Kong in the late 1980s as a result of a more relaxed immigration policy. In 1999, most of the women were traveling to South Asian countries on Chinese passports and used Hong Kong as a transit point. Today, an increasing number of them enter Hong Kong on individual visit permits for two weeks to three months. As prostitution is not illegal in Hong Kong, offenders were prosecuted as overstayers and were liable for a maximum penalty of two-year imprisonment and a fine of HK\$50,000, although most of them were jailed for three months and then deported back to China. In the first four months of 2004, 3,400 Mainland sex workers were arrested in Hong Kong (*SCMP*, 6 June 2004).

Some Mainland sex workers came to Hong Kong with fake travel documents purchased in China. Several publicized cases revealed that Guangdong operators have been selling two-way permits for HK\$1,500 to 6,000, and Hong Kong passports for RMB10,000 to 20,000. The two-way permits were originally designed for short business visits or for visiting relatives in Hong Kong. In 2003 immigration officials seized 3,094 fake passports in Hong Kong. The maximum penalty for possessing forged travel documents is HK\$150,000 and imprisonment for 14 years (Immigration Department, Hong Kong SAR, 7 June 2002).

A category of illegal laborers called “*hei-gong*” (black laborers) is also gender specific. “Black laborers” are usually men who engage in labor-intensive work and come to Hong Kong from various developing countries, including India, Pakistan, Nepal, Bangladesh, as well as countries of Southeast Asia. However, by far the biggest group, up to 80 percent of them, arrives from the Chinese mainland.

Unlike their predecessors in the 1970s, most new Chinese laborers enter Hong Kong legally holding valid travel documents. However, they become illegal workers when they overstayed. Their illegal status drive them into accepting exploitative working conditions and made them prone to abuse by local employers. Apart from building sites, they also work in shops, restaurants, decoration companies and wet markets or are employed by Hong Kong families to perform three-D jobs (dirty, difficult, dangerous), such as transporting goods or cleaning.

Investigations conducted by the Labor Department revealed that the wage of illegal workers is as low as HK\$2,000 to 3,000 per month or HK\$200-300 a day for shorter contracts (about one third of the wage of local workers). These illegal laborers were satisfied with their low wages, as it is several times higher than standard wages in their home county in the Chinese countryside. However, it has been argued that their low wages drove down the wages of local laborers and contributed to a higher than average unemployment rate among local construction workers.

Hong Kong was not only seen as an ideal place to make quick money, but also as an important transit point for illegal migrants on their way overseas. A senior immigration official indicated in an interview that local criminal groups were involved in selling genuine as well as fake HKSAR passports to illegal immigrants and arranging for them to be smuggled to Japan, Canada or the USA. Up to 83 percent of illegal laborers caught with fake passports admitted that they were hoping to find work overseas. A study conducted by James K. Chin also reveals that Hong Kong has been increasingly used as a transit port for illegal emigration to other countries (Chin, 2003b).

The number of illegal immigrants from Vietnam declined from 952 in 1999 to 579 in 2000 and 165 in 2003. However, the latest somewhat curious trend of illegal immigration to Hong Kong emerged in 2004. Migrants from Vietnam were smuggled to Hong Kong via the Mainland by organized networks for a fee of about 3 million dong, i.e. HK\$1,500 on “two-bullets tours” or “travel packages to Hong Kong prisons”. They entered the Mainland legally with their Vietnamese passports and then were given a knife and two bullets and sent on their way to Hong Kong. These Vietnamese immigrants usually carried a knife and two bullets with them in order to be prosecuted and imprisoned for violation of HK laws instead of being repatriated if caught by police. It was revealed in court hearing that the lengthy prison sentence was not seen as a deterrence, but rather as a goal for these migrants - it guaranteed them free meals, medical treatment and shelter as well as an opportunity to repay the smuggling fees from their prison wages of HK\$400 per month (*SCMP*, 27 October 2004). After serving their sentence, they could leave Hong Kong with as much as HK\$7,000 according to Michael Wong, the Deputy Secretary for Security (*Standard*, 29 October 2004).

The Hong Kong SAR government has implemented various curtailing strategies in response to the new trends in illegal migration. These strategies were predominantly reactive and restrictive in nature, further hardening the Hong Kong immigration system and law enforcement. A cross-departmental task force was established to coordinate the joint operations, intelligence gathering and information sharing among the Security Bureau, Immigration Department, Labor Department, Customs, the Correction Department and Police. The authorities regularly organize unexpected checks on suspected construction sites or shops and arrest illegal laborers. In 1998, 1,329 building sites were inspected and 3,614 illegal mainland workers were apprehended. Government statistics show that 16,548 illegal laborers and 1,078 employers violated immigration and labor laws (up from 276 in 1998 and 201 in 1997) and were detained in 2003. Once they are detained, the Hong Kong government would forward their data to law enforcement authorities in the Chinese mainland, let them internally monitor these laborers and prevent them from acquiring a travel pass in future.

Such strategies resulted in an increased number of arrests. However, detention of illegal immigrants put an enormous pressure on allocated resources, especially on Hong Kong's prison system. Illegal immigrants form a relatively high percentage of prison inmates and contribute to overcrowding. In October 2004, 396 of the 13,084 (18 percent in excess of the capacity) inmates were Vietnamese, many of them illegal immigrants. About 30 percent of male inmates were from the Chinese mainland. The situation is even more dramatic among female inmates; some 60 per are mainland women who entered Hong Kong legally with two-way permits then overstayed and got caught while working in the sex industry. The female prison population is almost 60 percent above capacity.

The Hong Kong government has also stepped up its efforts to increase punishment for illegal labor. The legal Ordinance was amended and for instance, illegal laborers could be fined up to HK\$50,000 and sentenced to two years, while employers who are found violating labor laws could be sentenced to imprisonment for three years and fined HK\$350,000. On the international level, Hong Kong is willing to co-operate with other countries to fight the flow of illegal laborers and people smuggling. For example, although Hong Kong is not a member of ASEAN, it attends relevant ASEAN meetings and co-operates with ASEAN to combat people smuggling. For example, the Director of Immigration attended an ASEAN meeting on fighting human smuggling and related transnational crimes in November 2002.

## **9. Legal labor migration to Hong Kong**

Throughout history, Hong Kong has remained a Chinese city, despite its colonial past and an international image. Its cosmopolitan character was nurtured mainly through linkages to overseas Chinese communities and through the cultural capital of returned migrants. According to the 2001 census, up to 95 percent of Hong Kong residents were ethnic Chinese, and only some 344,000 were non-Chinese people.

The top three nationalities of foreign residents hailed from the Philippines (142,640), Indonesia (85,240) and the USA (32,340), representing two important subgroups of labor migrants. Like other regional or global cities (Sassen, 2001 and Findley 1998), Hong Kong has attracted a two-tiered migrant population, i.e. low waged laborers and highly mobile professionals. The first subgroup comprises contract workers from South East Asia, who migrated to Hong Kong in large numbers for short-term contracts after restrictions on Chinese migrants were imposed in 1980. Highly skilled migrants from around the world and their dependants formed the second, much smaller, subgroup.

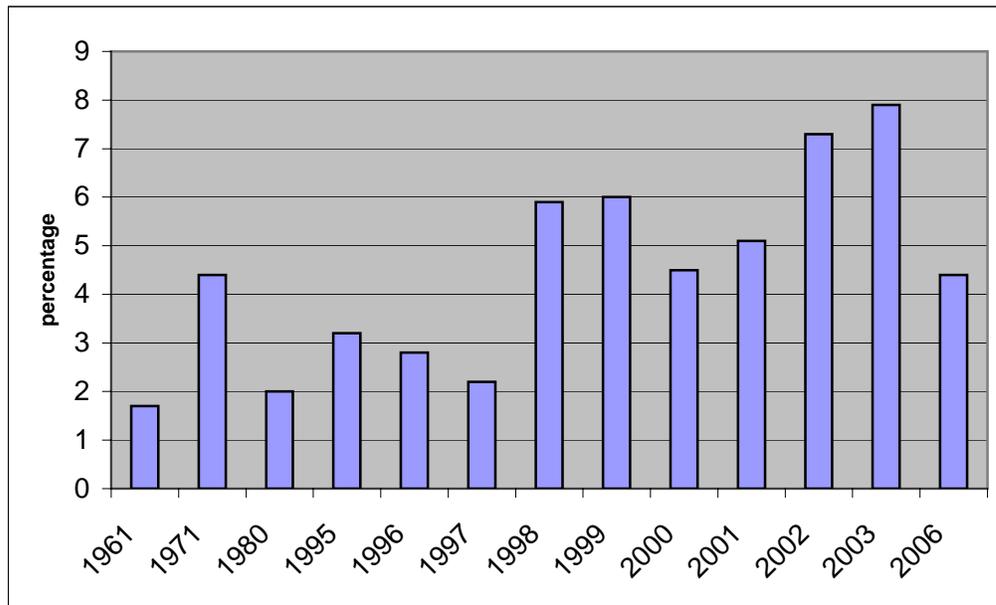
Labor migrants in Hong Kong are primarily, but not exclusively domestic helpers. By the late 1980s, Hong Kong achieved near full employment and a “serious labor shortage”. The government encouraged mobilizing the local female labor force. Inflation and the prohibitive cost of living also encouraged local women to enter the labor market in order to increase their household income. However, due to the traditional patriarchal family structure Hong Kong women remained responsible for childcare and housework in spite of their full time work.

One solution for women’s double burden of domestic and professional work was the import of domestic helpers from South East Asian countries. Early on the import of domestic helpers from China was not allowed due to concerns that such a step may be misinterpreted as a general relaxation of Hong Kong immigration control and trigger off another wave of illegal migration. There was also concern that the employment of domestic helpers from the PRC may lead to abuse of the system, such as Hong Kong residents seeking to bring their family members from PRC on the pretext of employing them as domestic helpers (Chiu, 1999). As nationals, Mainland Chinese would also be entitled to certain rights, which were not available to foreign domestic helpers (FDH), for example bringing their children, schooling of children, etc.

Historically, having domestic help used to be one of the most potent status symbols in Hong Kong, but more recently it became more of a necessity for middle-class families with children. In double-income families, the relatively high wages of Hong Kong’s middle class women allowed them to employ domestic helpers who relieved them of their domestic duties and child care (Tam, 1999). A similar trend has been observed throughout the region, for example, in Singapore (Yeoh and Huang, 1999), Taiwan (Lan, 2002, 2003a and 2003b), and Japan (Suzuki, 2002).

Foreign helpers started to enter Hong Kong under the Supplementary Labor Scheme since the 1980s. Today, roughly 20 percent of Hong Kong households can afford to employ FDH. Although local workers must be given priority, there has been little interest among local women to engage in full time paid domestic work, which is associated with low social status (Constable, 1997). However, with growing unemployment in the late 1990s (see Fig.3), FDH started to be seen as potential competitors to local women who began to enter domestic labor market as part-time workers.

Fig. 3: Changing unemployment rate in Hong Kong, 1961-2006



Source: *Hong Kong Population and Housing Census* (1972). Hong Kong. Statistics and Census Department.  
*Hong Kong in Figures*, 2007 edition. Hong Kong. Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, February 2007.  
*Hong Kong Population Projections 2004-2033*, Census and Statistics Department.

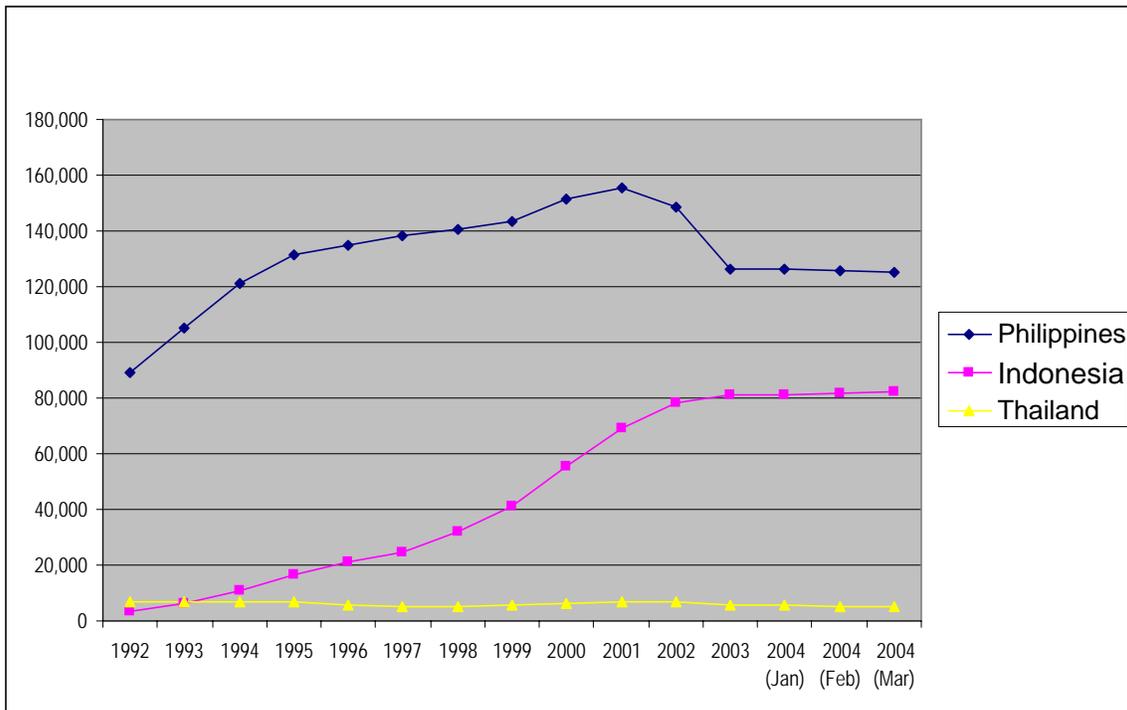
The Scheme imposed restrictive rules that applied exclusively to domestic helpers. First, foreign domestic helpers (FDH) do not have the right to remain in Hong Kong indefinitely and their stay is completely dependent on their work. Second, they are bound to work for a specific employer and they are not allowed to find any other kind of work. Third, they can never gain residency in Hong Kong or bring their dependents. While they can apply for an extension of their contract, they are seen as temporary migrants, not eligible for permanent residency, and they are expected to return eventually to their home country. The so-called “two-week rule” under Hong Kong’s immigration policy instituted in 1987, prohibits FDH from seeking employment or remaining in Hong Kong for more than two weeks after the expiration of their employment contract. The United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination criticized Hong Kong in 1997 for imposing such a rule and suggested that the Hong Kong government should consider its modification or repeal (CERD/C/304/Add.20).

Table 3: Foreign Domestic Helpers Population in Hong Kong (1992-2004)

Year	Philippines	Indonesia	Thailand	India	Sri Lanka	Nepal	Others	Total
1992	89,140	3,541	6,718	963	517	58	245	101,182
1993	105,410	6,148	6,999	1,027	632	104	284	120,604
1994	121,178	10,716	7,098	1,145	749	150	332	141,368
1995	131,176	16,357	6,708	1,222	831	318	408	157,026
1996	134,713	20,960	5,770	1,204	950	426	276	164,299
1997	138,085	24,706	5,142	1,157	1,089	528	264	170,971
1998	140,357	31,762	5,335	1,192	1,172	557	229	180,604
1999	143,206	41,397	5,755	1,244	1,232	640	226	193,700
2000	151,485	55,174	6,451	1,354	1,317	746	253	216,790
2001	155,445	68,880	6,996	1,406	1,407	883	257	235,274
2002	148,389	78,165	6,669	1,372	1,269	1,015	225	237,104
2003	126,557	81,030	5,495	1,269	1,025	1,289	198	216,863
2004 (Jan)	126,558	81,299	5,484	1,280	1,030	1,298	199	217,148
2004 (Feb)	125,844	81,820	5,401	1,279	1,011	1,320	199	216,847
2004 (Mar)	124,921	82,307	5,328	1,280	993	1,321	195	216,345

Source: Immigration Department, the Government of Hong Kong SAR.

Fig. 4: Foreign domestic helpers in Hong Kong, 1992-2004



Source: Immigration Department, Hong Kong SAR Government.

In terms of composition, the largest FDH group has been recruited from the Philippines. Throughout the 1980s and 1990s, Philippine citizens formed the largest foreign community in Hong Kong. Indonesian laborers formed the second largest group of FDH, and the third FDH group hailed from Thailand. Migration of foreign domestic helpers is gender specific –FDH are predominantly female – a practical manifestation of the latest theories on the feminization of migration (Castles, 2003).

These three groups of FDH experienced different migration dynamics. FDH from the Philippines have been well established in Hong Kong for more than two decades. The Asian financial crisis and subsequent recession in Hong Kong did not have a large effect on the aggregate number of FDH in Hong Kong. Hong Kong rated as the second most popular destination for Filipino FDH due to high wages, convertibility of Hong Kong currency and sound and transparent legal system. Even before the devaluation of Asian currencies in 1997, Filipino FHD earned at least twice as much as skilled factory workers in the Philippines. Their number was steadily increasing throughout the 1990s and reached its peak in 2001. Since then the number started to decline. The wages started to fall since 1999 and increased competition from Indonesian and Thai FDH saw the drop in the number of Filipinos, who despite the recent shake-ups remain the largest foreign community in Hong Kong and the biggest group of FDH (57 percent in 2004, down from 80 percent in 1998).

The decline of FDH from the Philippines seems to be directly related to a Hong Kong government “levy” for FDH, set at HK\$400 per month introduced on 1 October 2003. The new policy was publicly justified as “necessary” step to tackle Hong Kong’s ballooning budget deficit. While the levy is paid by employers, the minimum wage of FDH was correspondingly reduced by an identical amount for all contracts signed on or after 1 April 2003, effectively reducing their wages to HK\$3,270 a month, down from HK\$3,750 in 1995 and 3,860 in 1996. FDH have not received any salary increase since 1997 and in 1999 they endured a 5 percent minimum wage cut that was justified by the Asian financial crisis. It is worth noting that Hong Kong does not legislate a minimum wage for its own workers, but does so only for FDH.

Indonesian FDH are on average younger than Filipino or Thai FDH, and received less education. They were often underpaid with some of them working for rates of less than half the minimum wage. Hong Kong employers preferred Indonesians for the care for elderly members of their families (Wee and Sim, 2005). Before coming to Hong Kong Indonesian FDH received three to six months live-in training in household work and in Cantonese. Their better command in Cantonese gave them another competitive advantage over their Filipino counterparts. This advantage, however, came with a high cost. As Sim argued, the training centers in Indonesia could be better described as detention centers that severely restricted personal freedoms of would-be migrants. They took control over personal life of would-be migrants, subjecting them to strict daily regime. Another reason for training/detention of future FDH was to assure that they were not pregnant before they left Indonesia (Sim, 2003).

The number of Indonesian FDH in Hong Kong was almost insignificant in the late 1980s, but increased dramatically in the past few years and in 2003 reached a level comparable to the Philippines FDH in the early 1990s (see table 3). Indonesian migrants have been the fastest growing group in Hong Kong, rising from only 670 in 1989 to 82,307 in 2004. As there is a sizable returned Indonesian Chinese community in Hong Kong and *Bahasa Indonesia* is the main working language being used by these families, Indonesian FDH are as a result more readily accepted by returned Indonesian Chinese based in Hong Kong (Chin, 2003a).

The number of Thai FDH has not experienced any dramatic shift and has remained stable throughout the 1990s and in the following years. The number of Thai FDH has been declining during 2003. Most of them came from poor areas of North and Northeast Thailand (Hewison, 2004). Hewison claimed that Thai FDH were “reasonably satisfied with working and living in Hong Kong” and were not subjected to such gross mistreatment as other groups of FDH. While Hewison did not give the reasons for the better adjustment of Thai FDH in Hong Kong, he speculated that maybe due to the average older age of the Thai women (compared to Filipinas and Indonesian FDH) and their working experience, they were in a better position when negotiating work conditions.

The Hong Kong public’s response to labor migration inflow has been mixed. A poll of 1,011 Hong Kong people on their attitudes towards immigrants conducted by the University of Hong Kong between 19 and 25 February 2004 showed that 60 percent of those interviewed preferred immigrants who engaged in the investment scheme and one quarter wanted professional immigrants, compared to only 8 percent who preferred immigrants being granted residency on the grounds of family reunions.

The findings also showed that 60 percent of people thought the daily quota of 150 new migrants from the mainland permitted to settle in Hong Kong for reasons of family reunion was too high. Only 3.7 percent said the quota was too low and 31.3 percent said it was reasonable. Aside from the mainland, the survey indicated that immigrants from Europe and North America were seen as most valuable, followed by those from Southeast Asia (9.8 percent), Japan and Korea (5.3 percent), and Australia and New Zealand (4.5 percent) (Zheng and Wong, 2004).

## **9.1 Immigration of professionals**

While foreign domestic workers are seen as unskilled laborers who are potentially competing with local workers for the decreasing number of low-waged jobs, foreign professionals were classified as “foreign talents” that Hong Kong wishes to attract (Wee and Sim, 2005). The Hong Kong job market has always been open to foreign professionals. Their admission has not been constrained by quotas or job sector restrictions. The Hong Kong Government acknowledged that to ensure the long-term sustainability of Hong Kong’s economic growth, it could not rely solely on the pool of home grown talent to raise the overall quality of human capital. Under the General

Employment Policy, foreign residents could apply for work permit as well as residence permit. About 16,700 skilled migrants were admitted to Hong Kong each year between years 1997 and 2001, rising to 18,000 up to 1 July 2003. Work permits were also granted to the dependents of foreign professionals. In contrast, only 268 mainland professionals were admitted between 2001 and 2002.

The latest data show that the overall level of foreign skilled immigrants in various professions dropped in recent years (see table 4), and so did the population for some specific nationalities. While the number of US and Japanese citizens has remained stable since the mid-1990s, the number of British and Canadian migrants declined after 1997 (see table 5).

In the case of British migrants, the decrease seems to be a direct result of new immigration regulations. While before 1997 British citizens were allowed to stay and work for one year without a visa, after handing over sovereignty to China they were allowed to stay for only six months. With effect from 1 April 1997 they are, like other foreign residents, required to apply for a work permit if they wish to take up employment.

Most foreign communities in Hong Kong are of a transient nature with most migrants staying for only a limited period of time, ranging from 1 to 4 years. Ethnographic studies on foreign communities in Hong Kong revealed some factors that attracted professionals to Hong Kong. For example, Hong Kong was high up on the list of migration options for Japanese career oriented women (Sakai, 2003). Japanese female migrants favored Hong Kong for its perceived gender equality and fair competition in the job market compared to Japan. Japanese professionals also praised Hong Kong as a multi-cultural and multilingual society. For the Japanese, Hong Kong was one stopover on their career path that would take them all around the world in the course of developing their transnational professional life.

Table 4: Visas Issued under the General Employment Policy \*

<i>Profession</i>	<i>2003</i>	<i>2006</i>
Investors	297	372
Lawyers	206	280
Medical & Dental Professionals	60	79
Other Professionals and Technicians	3,002	3,988
Administrators, Managers and Executives	5,297	8,615
Chef and Professionals in Food & Beverage	149	151
Teachers / Professors	1,799	2,236
Sportsmen and Entertainers	3,746	4,617
Others	1,218	1,620
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,774</b>	<b>21,958</b>

\* Excluding foreign domestic helpers, imported workers admitted under the Supplementary Labour Scheme and persons admitted to take up employment under schemes or arrangements catering for Mainland residents.

Source: Immigration Department, Government of Hong Kong SAR.

Table 5: Number of foreign nationals from selected countries living in Hong Kong (1986-1996)

<i>Year</i>	<i>1986</i>	<i>1988</i>	<i>1990</i>	<i>1992</i>	<i>1994</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>1996</i>
Total number	168,400	186,300	227,300	283,300	368,500	415,400	438,200
United Kingdom	16,000	14,400	16,400	18,400	23,700	26,700	25,500
USA	14,000	16,300	19,300	23,500	29,900	32,600	34,700
Australia	8,400	9,800	12,000	18,700	20,500	21,200	
Canada	8,100	10,000	13,000	24,700	28,200	30,600	32,515
Japan	7,500	8,800	10,600	17,600	21,500	21,800	14,180

Source: Immigration Department, Government of Hong Kong SAR.

## 9.2 Professionals from the Chinese Mainland

In the quest for talent and skills, Hong Kong made several cautious moves towards opening doors to Mainland professionals. The admission schemes for Mainlanders were usually much more restrictive than those for foreign professionals and as a result did not generate much interest. The first scheme was introduced by the British

colonial government in 1994 and intended to be a limited extension to the entry policy for overseas professionals who possessed skills, knowledge or experience needed in Hong Kong, but lacking in the local population. It provided for an employment quota of 1,000 Chinese nationals in professional and managerial vacancies in companies in Hong Kong, other than PRC state owned enterprises. The requirements set by the Scheme were seen as too limiting, for example, its restriction on bringing dependants to Hong Kong, and entrance was limited to graduates of only 36 key mainland tertiary institutions with relevant working experience. This pilot scheme was abandoned in 1997 when Hong Kong returned to Chinese sovereignty. Over those three years (i.e. 1994-1997), 3,129 applications were received for the 1,000 quota spots per year, but only 560 of them were approved.

After the handover in 1997, integration between Hong Kong and Mainland China continued to accelerate. Multinational and Hong Kong companies conducted business on the mainland and their demand for people who understood China increased. However, they were not able to recruit Mainland employees for their head offices in Hong Kong. The second scheme, the Admission of Talent Scheme, inception in December 1999, could hardly meet the growing demand for Mainland professionals as it has recorded only 256 successful applicants in three years.

The third scheme was the Admission of the Mainland Professional Scheme, launched in June 2001, and was even more restraining than its unsuccessful predecessors. It was confined to the sectors of information technology and financial services, and, again, successful applicants were not allowed to bring their dependants.

The number of successful candidates stood at 242 for second half of the 2001 and 211 for 2002. The Scheme was abolished on 15 July 2003 and replaced by a fourth scheme, namely the Scheme for Mainland Talents and Professionals, to enlarge the pool of talent needed to meet the requirements of a knowledge-based economy and “enhance the competitiveness of Hong Kong’s demographic structure” (Hong Kong Releases Population Policy Report, 26 February 2003).

The Scheme is quota-free and non-sector specific and restrictions on the admission of dependent family members were lifted. The number of talents and professionals to be admitted under the Scheme will be regulated only by demand in the local human resources market. Apart from business talent, Hong Kong also strove to attract Mainland talent from other fields, such as the arts and sports, while the Hong Kong government pledged to promote social integration of new arrivals.

Hong Kong companies may directly recruit candidates for employment that cannot be readily taken up by the local work force. Eligible candidates are required to possess a good educational background or technical qualifications. Successful applicants will be granted an entry permit for employment with an initial stay of 12 months, which may be extended shortly before it expires. The extension will normally follow the 2-2-3 years pattern, or be in accordance with the duration of the employment contract. Upon completion of 7 years the candidate will be eligible for the right of abode in Hong Kong.

In 2006, according to the Hong Kong Immigration Department, 5,656 applicants were accepted to Hong Kong based on the Scheme and between January and September 2007 another 4,952 Mainland professionals entered Hong Kong owing to the Scheme.

Some Hong Kong studies pointed out that Mainland professionals from large Chinese cities (Beijing, Shanghai, Xiamen and Guangzhou) faced various challenges in their new residence. Even though they do not experience the same level of social and cultural discrimination like unskilled laborers, their adjustment and integration into Hong Kong society have not been easy. Longitudinal research conducted by the Hong Kong Baptist University comparing psychological and sociocultural adjustment of foreign and mainland professionals came up with surprising findings. Comparing the three-dimensional model of expatriate adjustment, i.e. (1) adjustment to work, (2) adjustment to interaction with local people, and (3) adjustment to the non-work environment, it was suggested that despite cultural proximity the mainland professionals' adjustment fell behind that of western expatriates (Selmer et al., 1999a and 1999b). These findings were based on a quantitative analysis of a small-scale questionnaire survey among Mainland Chinese and western expatriates. Ethnographic fieldwork among Mainland Chinese professionals may help to explain these findings and shed further light on the cultural experiences and adaptation strategies of professionals from the Chinese mainland.

## **10. Investment migrants**

The Capital Investment Entrant Scheme (CIES) implemented in October 2003 aimed to facilitate residence for capital investment entrants, i.e. persons who make capital investment in Hong Kong of at least HK\$6.5 million but would not be engaged in the running of any business. The entrants would be allowed to make their choice of investment amongst permissible assets without the need to establish or join in a business. The Scheme is open to foreign nationals (except nationals of Afghanistan, Albania, Cuba and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea); Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR) residents; Chinese nationals who have obtained permanent resident status in a foreign country; stateless persons who have obtained permanent resident status in a foreign country with proven re-entry facilities; and Taiwan residents. Prospective applicants are allowed reasonable flexibility in their choice of investment, but only within qualifying asset classes, such as real estate and specified financial assets. The successful applicants are allowed to bring their dependants (i.e. spouse and unmarried dependent children under 18 years of age) provided that they are capable of supporting and accommodating their dependants on their own without relying on any return on the permissible investment assets, employment or public assistance in Hong Kong. The entry of dependants is subject to any other policy applicable to such entry at the time of application.

By the end of September 2007, 3,107 applications were received and 1,516 approved. Some 1,924 Mainland applicants residing from overseas, namely in Canada, New Zealand and the Philippines, were among the applicants, accounting for 61.9 percent of the total. Others came from Taiwan (292 applicants), Macau (116), and, the

remainders were from non-Chinese from other countries, such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Canada, the US and the UK (773). By September 2007, the scheme had attracted HK\$10,753 million in foreign investment since it launched in October 2003. Despite the current investment threshold of HK\$6.5 million, the average investment amount was HK\$7.09 million per entrant.

Table 6: Breakdown of Applicants under CIES (as at 30-9-2007)

	<i>Received</i>	<i>Approval-in-principle granted</i>	<i>Formal Approval granted</i>
Foreign nationals	773	83	386
Macao SAR residents	116	8	57
Chinese nationals with permanent residence overseas	1,924	176	910
Stateless persons with permanent residence in a foreign country	2	0	2
Taiwan residents	292	17	161
Total	3,107	284	1,516

Other legal migrants included dependants of foreign professionals or Mainland talents as well as foreign students (see table 8). The Hong Kong government pledged to implement measures to attract more overseas students to pursue their tertiary postgraduate education in Hong Kong.

Table 8: Statistics on Employment/Investment, Dependant and Student Visas Issued \*

	2003	2006
Employment / Investment	15,774	21,958
Dependant	11,864	15,905
Student	1,479	4,046

\* Excluding foreign domestic helpers, imported workers admitted under the Supplementary Labour Scheme, and persons admitted to take up employment or full-time tertiary study under schemes or arrangements catering for Mainland residents and their dependants.

## 11. Conclusion

Globalization does not operate in a geographically even or neutral fashion. Instead it had evolved a highly structured set of interwoven processes organized on a hierarchical basis (Findley, 1998). Central to the functioning of this system have been a small number of global cities, such as New York, London, Los Angeles and Tokyo (Sassen, 2001; Friedmann, 1986). In the world migration system global cities sustain their reach through

lower order cities such as Hong Kong and Singapore, which formulate their city-specific immigration policies and form important nodes in the regional migration system.

Hong Kong lies in the core of the regional migration system. Migration injected life to Hong Kong and transformed it from an insignificant rural outpost to a regional metropolis. In the past Hong Kong was on the receiving end of rural-urban migration from Guangdong province. After 1949, the openness of its immigration system together with its free economy gave Hong Kong a competitive advantage over neighboring cities. Conditioned by geo-political and to a lesser extent also economic factors, Hong Kong evolved into a prototype of immigrant society. At the same time it served as an egress from China and a stepping-stone to overseas destinations. With its close connections to Chinese communities in the USA, Australia, South America and later also, Great Britain, Hong Kong replaced Shanghai as an important center of the Chinese diaspora.

Since the early days, Hong Kong has experienced several waves of outward migration. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century it served as a migration springboard for Chinese laborers heading to the USA, Australia and South America. Emigration became an accepted way of life in Hong Kong and a part of its collective psyche. The 1960s and 70s saw an exodus of farmers who were losing their livelihood in the New Territories. They reinvented themselves as restaurant operators in Britain. Former Hong Kong residents created their ethnic enclaves on different continents and Hong Kong culture became a part of the multicultural facet of cosmopolitan cities from London and Sydney to Toronto and San Francisco.

The last wave of Hong Kong emigration in the 1980s and 1990s was a qualitatively different process. It was described as a “middle class phenomenon” motivated by political uncertainties associated with Hong Kong’s return to Chinese sovereignty in 1997. The new emigrants headed mainly for Canada and Australia, but many of them were attracted back to Hong Kong and with their expertise and network capital around the world they contribute to building Hong Kong’s international outlook.

Thanks to its geographical as well as cultural proximity to Guangdong province, its free economy and a pluralistic society based on the rule of law, Hong Kong attracted successive waves of immigrants from the PRC. They came from different parts of China, mainly pushed by poverty and civil wars, or pulled by business opportunities offered by Hong Kong’s *laissez-faire* economy. Poor refugees from Guangdong and Fujian, who had come carrying little more than their “Hong Kong dream” (a dream of success), Shanghainese entrepreneurs who fled China in 1948 and reinvented their business empires in Hong Kong, but also British colonial officers, Indians and Pakistanis, they all started to call Hong Kong their home. Despite the considerable ethnic variety, Hong Kong remained a Chinese city, albeit with a multicultural facet.

Geopolitical factors were more critical than economic development in affecting migration experiences. It was the “refugee mentality” of Chinese migrants, a result of insecurities and uncertainties they faced in their new environment (Wong, 1988:176), and their frugal determination to succeed, that helped to transform a small and insignificant

Chinese enclave of 1841 to a major industrial center of the 1970s and a bustling international financial center of the 1990s.

It has been argued elsewhere (Sassen 2001) that global cities attract different tiers of labor migrants, from transnational highly paid professionals to under paid illegal to semi-illegal labor migrants, who play an important role in fueling the global economy. This two-tiered labor migration is consistent with Hong Kong's historical experience. The success of Hong Kong as a knowledge-based society supported by a service economy would not have been possible without a large pool of immigrants from China, professionals from all around the world and more recently also imported workers from South East Asian countries.

Since the late 1970s, strong movement towards "localization" saw the emergence of a Hong Kong identity that was negotiated in contrast to the Mainland Chinese identity. This new identity later became the foundation of Hong Kong's "exclusion mentality" which manifested itself in the restrictive immigration system and hardened immigration policies. Fears of new immigrants from China were manifested not only in restrictive immigration system and criminalizing of people who overstayed their permits, but also in the case of FDH from South East Asia who were preferred over Mainland domestic helpers. Mainland professionals too experienced more restrictive entry requirements than their foreign counterparts.

Illegal migration formed a special case in Hong Kong and its meaning has been changing in the last few decades. Prior to 1980, Chinese immigrants who entered Hong Kong illegally were allowed to legalize their stay through so called "touch base" policy. Today, many migrants enter Hong Kong legally, but fall into the category of illegal immigrants by overstaying their visa. The year 1980 presents a milestone in classifying illegal migration. Since then, immigration policies started to develop into a highly institutionalized and restrictive system, which remains in place today.

With a sharply declining fertility rate, strict control on illegal immigration, and a booming economy, Hong Kong experienced an acute shortage of labor in the second half of the 1980s. This change marked Hong Kong's transformation from a labor exporting to a labor-importing city. The Hong Kong government introduced various labor importing measures to satisfy the growing demand for labor. Various studies analyzed the social costs and economic gains of foreign labor migrants in Hong Kong. Researchers paid special attention to the case of Filipina contract workers who formed the largest foreign population in Hong Kong (Constable, 1997; Gibson, 2001; Law, 2001). Labor migrants were sometimes described as "victims" of the global economy and at the same time as "heroes" whose remittances significantly contributed to the economies of their home countries.

Hong Kong presents one of the desirable migration destinations for contract workers due to its transparent legal system and high wages. However, discriminating immigration policies that pushed labor migrants outside of the immigration system and into illegality by overstaying their visa has undermined its attractiveness. Hong Kong

immigration policies are guided by differential exclusion, i.e. creating attractive conditions for “quality migrants” from certain countries and at the same time introducing restrictions on entry of others.

Given the looming demographic challenge facing Hong Kong, the defensive stance towards new immigrants and labor contract workers is a matter of concern for policy makers. The Hong Kong government is aware of the fact that its demographic future depends on immigration, but it has not managed so far to dispel the widespread fear of new immigrants among its inhabitants. Opinion polls have indicated that the Hong Kong populace, having undergone the transition from a community of migrants in the past to a more settled community of citizens since the 1980s, are reluctant to open their doors again to accept new comers. Then there is institutional inertia within the government itself. In the post-WWII ear, the entire government machinery in Hong Kong was geared up to deal with the ‘problem of people’, i.e., the influx of refugees and illegal immigrants. It had to develop defenses against these human tidal waves by adopting the stance of a passive immigration regime. Institutional memory and accumulated wisdom within the official bureaucracy would counsel against radical changes in matters relating to immigration, particularly in the relaxation of control. It would take considerable time and much lobbying before the bureaucracy could be turned around to become an active immigration regime that would reach out to search for new blood to sustain Hong Kong’s future development.

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