Remaking Citizenship in Hong Kong
Community, nation and the global city

Edited by
Agnes S. Ku and Ngai Pun

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Remaking Citizenship in Hong Kong

Hong Kong has undergone considerable changes since its post-colonial independence and increasing conflicts have arisen over the meaning of citizenship. *Remaking Citizenship in Hong Kong* rethinks the citizenship project as well as the contested state-society relationship in Hong Kong in the face of local, national and global changes, particularly the changing relationship with China as well as the global challenge of neo-liberalism. Ku and Pun, together with strong contributions from Hong Kong and the USA, consider the nature of citizenship itself as a manifold construct regarding membership, rights, participation and belonging, which has been defined and re-defined from the colonial era to the present time.

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Foreword

Making and unmaking citizenship in neo-liberal times

Bryan S. Turner

Introduction

Although citizenship studies have flourished in the past decade, there is a dearth of empirical research on the comparative conditions of citizenship formation. This collection of essays on citizenship in Hong Kong represents a path-breaking contribution to the comparative sociology of democratic change within the broad framework of modern citizenship. The modern history of Hong Kong provides a fascinating case study of the emergence of a citizenship subject, first, under British colonial rule, then under the Sino-British 1984 arrangements of “one country, two systems,” and since 1997 in a global city with competing norms of political practice. From a comparative perspective, these chapters tell us as much about the problems of citizenship in post-war Britain as they do about the political history of Hong Kong. This case study offers an important insight into the complexity of post-colonial politics and the problems of citizenship in an era of neo-liberal economic change. These political changes clearly illustrate the strengths and weaknesses of national citizenship and the emerging possibilities of flexible citizenship in a global age.

The enduring notion behind the institution of liberal citizenship is that the democratic state is a political association, where membership and its rewards are ultimately dependent on individual contributions to the public good. These contributions are the principal underpinnings of the rights and duties of members of a nation-state community, and citizenship is in theory an effective juridical status conferring a specific socio-political identity. In material terms, citizenship plays a significant part in determining the redistribution of economic resources within society through taxation and welfare benefits. In this sense, citizenship is an important aspect of distributive justice, because with the contributory principle there must be some long-term balance between individual contributions, typically through work, military service and parenting, and rewards such as welfare, health, and education.

Citizenship is the cornerstone of modern democracies. As a bundle of political rights, it can be traced back historically to the classical world of Rome and Greece, and later through the Renaissance cities of northern Italy. However, the social rights of modern citizenship are the product of revolutions, especially the English Civil War, the American War of Independence and the French Revolution. In the process of nation-building, nineteenth-century citizenship incorporated the urban working class into industrial
capitalism through welfare institutions. Welfare states achieved this social incorporation of the working class with relatively little concession to the basic question of social equality in terms of the redistribution of wealth and power. Modern citizenship ameliorated the inequalities of the market society without challenging the underlying structures of capitalism. While welfare capitalism avoided the revolutionary transformations that were predicted by Karl Marx’s political sociology, there were significant historical variations between capitalist societies in terms of their relationship to dictatorship and democracy. In Germany, Otto von Bismarck was the reluctant founder of the modern welfare state, and social citizenship was developed with limited provision for civil and political rights. Despite the massive upheaval of the Second World War, German statism and its authoritarian welfare system remained intact until the 1960s. In Japan, the Meiji Restoration of 1868 reorganized the emperor system as a legitimating principle in the strategy of conservative modernization, and eventually promoted national citizenship as an exclusionary principle of loyalty, commitment and hierarchy. Modernization was harnessed to the idea of Japan as a society with a special destiny as the land of the rising sun. Japanese modernization was undertaken without a bourgeois revolution and hence citizenship was an instrument of bureaucratic state control rather than a platform for civil liberties. Russia was the least successful state in developing an effective strategy to retain power and to modernize the imperial regime. It favoured periodic repression of its population, followed by periods of ineffective reform. The absence of basic conditions for citizenship, agrarian backwardness, rapid industrialization and heavy military expenditure created the social conditions for violent revolutionary change. These regimes, with the possible exception of Germany, did not fully develop social citizenship, and civil rights were periodically abrogated by arbitrary political interventions.

The welfare state in Britain and America

In Britain, welfare institutions expanded partly in response to working-class pressure on the state to protect workers from unemployment and sickness. However, mass warfare and post-war reconstruction were especially important in building modern citizenship. Nineteenth-century imperial wars often served to illustrate the poor health of the British working class, and evidence from medical examinations of army recruits demonstrated a significant amount of disability. Public health statistics were important in the development of the national efficiency movement that promoted discipline and health through physical training, temperance and military discipline. The Boy Scout movement, the development of rational dietary schemes based on calorific measurement in prisons and the army, the introduction of school meals, the pedagogical evolution of domestic science for girls, and regular medical and dental inspections for children reflected a public concern to improve the nation’s health, economic efficiency, and military capability. Social citizenship in British society was primarily the product of wartime mobilization and strategies to rebuild post-war society in both world wars, rather than a
John Maynard Keynes’s economic strategies for Britain were based on his assumption that the inclination to save was always stronger than the propensity to invest, and hence under-consumption was a critical problem for advanced capitalism. Keynesianism in principle suggested three solutions for under-consumption in capitalism: (1) export a population surplus to colonies; (2) create a military economy through investment in armaments; (3) invest in the social infrastructure. Keynes thought that social investment to create effective demand in peacetime was the most rational solution. In Britain, social Keynesianism as an economic policy attempted to correct under-consumption through investment in public utilities and services, and hence the Beveridge Report was consistent with Keynesian strategies for peaceful economic growth. We can regard Keynesian welfare economics as the background to T.H.Marshall’s theory of citizenship. In his famous essay on “Citizenship and Social Class” in 1950, Marshall argued that modern citizenship was composed of three sets of rights. Civil rights emerged in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and were institutionalized in common law, habeas corpus and the jury system. Nineteenth century political rights were inscribed in the parliamentary system, and social rights were built into the twentieth-century welfare state. The sociological views of Beveridge, Marshall and Titmuss were less important than the economic ideas of Keynes on government policy. Social Keynesianism was a critical response to both the neo-classical confidence in the tendency of the economy to achieve equilibrium with the full employment of the factors of production, and Marx’s analysis of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, by advocating state intervention to stimulate demand and mitigate the negative effects of the business cycle. While the development of social citizenship in Britain took place under Keynesianism policies to eliminate unemployment, the real objective of Keynesian economics was to promote a form of passive citizenship and to preserve capitalism rather than to advance welfare and social democracy. In this respect Keynesianism was successful as a policy for rebuilding the post-war British economy and as a framework to give the working class what Marshall had called a “modicum of economic welfare and security.”

The welfare model of social Keynesianism was subsequently resisted in the 1960s and 1970s in Britain, when stagflation was seen to be a con-sequence of Keynes’s welfare economics, the decline in industrial competitiveness, and the disruption to production from wildcat strikes and illegal picketing. With the Miners Strike (1984–85) as a backdrop, Mrs Thatcher’s monetarist revolution was intended to roll back what she called “the Nanny State,” create an enterprise culture and emphasize individual rights. In the United States, which retained a greater emphasis on individual responsibility for welfare and reliance on local community initiatives to solve collective problems, President Reagan’s economic strategies also reversed the policies that had earlier been attempted under the New Deal. The neo-liberal revolution and the deregulation of financial markets signified a major transformation in economic strategies away from Keynesianism and the post-war consensus. This neoliberal strategy was quickly adopted voluntarily in societies such as Australia and New Zealand, but many countries were forced to adopt similar strategies under pressure from the Washington consensus between the IMF, the World Bank and the US Treasury in the 1980s.
The commitment of the US government to liberal foreign policies is a reflection of its historical association with liberal politics. The citizenship debate in America has to be seen within the historical context of liberalism and it remains indebted to Alexis de Tocqueville and the theory of associational democracy. In *Democracy in America*, de Tocqueville argued that the lack of centralized, bureaucratic government had encouraged individual initiative. Voluntary associations and community groups, rather than state intervention, had flourished to solve local problems. These local community groups and voluntary associations were important defences against the threat to private conscience from a mass democracy. In his *Habits of the Heart* (1996), Robert Bellah found that Americans were often alienated from formal politics, but their political commitments were expressed through a multitude of local and informal associations. In his *Bowling Alone* (2000) Robert Putnam showed that social participation in churches, voluntary associations, neighbourhood groups and sports clubs has declined continuously through the post-war period, resulting in an erosion of trust, political participation and interest in politics. Modern Americans watch more television, read fewer newspapers, and undertake less voluntary service, producing an erosion of trust and active citizenship. There is evidence that the decline in civic engagement in America reflects a general decline in volunteering in modern societies. In addition, voluntary associations are often run by professional managers rather than amateur activists and they are committed to resource maximization rather than service. The distinction between for profit, with profit, and not-for-profit has been obscured, and voluntary associations or community enterprises are often in partnerships with business enterprise.

In the United States and Britain, citizenship and welfare were profoundly altered by the neo-liberal revolution of the late 1970s. This revolution created a political environment in which governments were no longer committed to the universalistic principles of social citizenship, the contributory welfare state and full employment. These economic changes—reduction of state intervention, deregulation of the labour and financial markets, implementation of free trade, reduction in personal taxation, the creation of welfare-for-work policies, fiscal regulation of state expenditure, and consequently the elimination of deficit financing—were a reflection of New Right doctrines that were derived from the philosophical writings of F.A. Hayek, Karl Popper and Milton Friedman. New Right doctrines argued that the spontaneous order of the market was to be valued and liberated from state regulation, and that governments could not claim to have any reliable, precise or definite knowledge of human needs. All judgements about human needs should be left to the operation of the market. New Right authors such as Murray Rothbard and Robert Nozick rejected all state interference, apart from the protection of property rights, and argued that all statutory restraints on individual freedom (such as drugs and sex) should be removed, and all forms of public property and infrastructure should be privatized (including all forms of public education and welfare).

These neo-liberal doctrines became popular as the post-war Keynesian consensus collapsed as a result of the OPEC oil crisis, rising prices, stagflation, declining corporate profitability, and the expanding costs of welfare that were driven by the elasticity of demand and high expectations. Ageing populations in the West created an additional burden on inadequate welfare budgets and pension funds. However, the most important political change that sustained the neo-liberal revolution was the eventual collapse of the
Soviet Union at the beginning of the 1990s. The West had supported the idea of the welfare state in part as a response to the challenge of organized socialism. When socialist welfare regimes no longer offered an alternative model, neo-liberal doctrines were no longer challenged. The neo-liberal revolution has converted the citizen into a passive member of consumer society, where conservative governments define “active citizenship” as a method of regulating the efficiency of public utilities, such as the railways. An active citizen during the government of John Major was somebody who complains about poor services.

Against this theoretical and historical framework, we can argue that British citizenship has been largely passive, pragmatic and minimalistic. Unlike France and the United States, it was not the product of revolutionary and republican struggles. Unlike Germany and Austria, it was not the consequence of the creation of social rights by an interventionist state. Unlike Canada, New Zealand and Australia, it has not yet successfully confronted the issue of multiculturalism and citizenship. It was initially the outcome of a series of compromises with the working class under conditions of mass mobilization for warfare. British citizenship and British identity are yet to face up to the challenges of globalization, and migration, as, for example, in its attempts to come to terms with its own Muslim citizens. British attitudes towards the citizenship status of the members of the Commonwealth have been conditioned by the needs for global trade, the preservation of the Establishment (such as the Crown and the Church), and its reluctance to become drawn into “local” political problems, especially where British interests were not directly involved.

**Hong Kong citizenship**

The political history of Hong Kong and its relationship to successive British governments reflect this pragmatic attitude to what we might call conditional or provisional citizenship. Hong Kong became a Crown colony in 1843 and remained essentially a safe harbour and trading centre to support British economic and military interests in East Asia. Citizenship in Hong Kong was never intended to be a nation-building exercise. Successive British administrations had denied basic citizenship rights in the colony, and it was not until the final stages of the process of the transfer of sovereignty that the conditions for citizenship arose. Thus, Britain did not offer the Chinese majority in Hong Kong opportunities for active citizenship and effective participation, and the development of political rights was initially a reaction to the riots of 1966–67, and the formation of the Mutual Aid Committee, which provided, through its local community activities, a training ground for practical citizenship. In 1984 the British Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe made it clear that the British government did not intend to extend its administration beyond the end of the lease in 1997. In return, the Chinese government agreed to make Hong Kong a Special Administrative Region of the People’s Republic of China with considerable autonomy, except in defence and foreign affairs. The first draft of the Basic Law in 1988 made it clear that Beijing would have sovereign power over the
common law courts of Hong Kong. The Tiananmen Square crisis of the following year produced massive protests against the authoritarian response of the Chinese Communist Party and triggered a brain drain of professional and business people out of Hong Kong.

Official British attitudes towards passports for the Chinese denizens of Hong Kong were instructive. After 1997 all Hong Kong residents holding British Dependent Territories passports would in practice have dual citizenship outside China, but this privilege would not be extended to individuals born in Hong Kong after the ending of the lease. Further-more, holders of these passports were not initially deemed eligible for residence in the United Kingdom. In 1990 immigration policy was modified to grant British citizenship to a limited number of Hong Kong residents, and a nationality bill granted the right of abode to around 50,000 Hong Kong residents who were to be selected on restrictive criteria of education, occupational status, and age. In the House of Commons, Mrs Thatcher defended an elitist bill on the grounds that it would stem the tide of people leaving Hong Kong. The emphasis was on the economic contribution, which a limited number of Hong Kong Chinese would make in Britain, and hence the nationality bill effectively constituted citizenship for Hong Kong Chinese as homo economicus.

**Britain and immigration and identity**

Official reluctance to embrace Hong Kongers with full citizenship has to be understood against the general background of immigration to Britain in the twentieth century. As a liberal society committed to *laissez-faire* economics, the British government should rationally welcome immigration, but these raw economic interests are curtailed by a culture that remains at best indifferent to foreigners. The official attitude has been to accept out-siders under the compulsion of international legal agreements such as human rights and simultaneously hope that the inclement weather would eventually drive them away. In the context of nineteenth-century liberalism and *laissez-faire* economics, there were almost no laws regulating refugees. The official attitude was one of apathy and indifference to out-siders. Between 1880 and 1905, 120,000 Russian Jews came to Britain, and triggered a process of juridical restriction and regulation. The 1905 Aliens Act was the foundation of immigration law until 1971. Because Britain only accepted those who could prove they were self-sufficient, there were by 1938 only 8,000 refugees in Britain, of whom 80 percent were Jewish. By 1939 there were 56,000 refugees.

Post-war migration was largely economic and from the Commonwealth. The Nationality Act of 1948 recognized the right of Commonwealth citizens freely to enter and work in Britain. The Act was generous, because it incorrectly assumed an outflow, not influx, of Commonwealth citizens. By 1971 there were 300,000 Caribbean migrants who, for Conservatives like Enoch Powell, created a racial crisis. Powell’s 1968 Birmingham speech on the “River Tiber foaming with much blood” was popular and he received 100,000 letters in support of his position. The 1971 Immigration Act that introduced work permits without a right of residency was thought to be inspired by
Powellite convictions. However, Powellism as a racial ideology did not gain long-term support, Powell never held an influential government office, and the pragmatic reluctance of post-war British governments to become involved in colonial wars after the Suez Crisis meant that overtly racist politics were unpopular. In any case, Harold Macmillan’s African “winds-of-change” speech in 1960 had already made Powellite visions of a white-dominated Commonwealth unrealistic and anachronistic. The British political elite has, since the defeat of the Powellite Tories, successfully excluded race from parliamentary politics.

Subsequent legislation has attempted to restrict the generous but mistaken provisions of the Nationality Act. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962), the Immigration Act (1971), the Nationality Act (1981), the Immigration (Carriers’ Liability) Act (1987), and the Asylum and Immigration Appeals Act (1993) constituted a battery of legislation that has restricted entry, reduced access to citizenship status, and constrained labour migration. The 1981 British Nationality Act created three categories of citizenship: British citizens, British Dependent Territories citizens and British Overseas citizens. The Act restricted real British membership to the first category, removed residential criteria for citizenship status (jus soli), and effectively excluded Asian Commonwealth people from British identity.

Before the European involvement in Kosovo and the security crisis around 9/11, racial conflicts in Britain had been largely over two separate migratory waves, namely, the post-war migration of Afro-Caribbean people from the West Indies and Pakistan-Bangladesh migrants. While the stereotype of Pakistani migrants in Britain was that of reclusive, family-centred Muslims who were law-abiding, the policing of Caribbean communities involved stereotypes in which young black men were assumed to be drug-dependent, lazy and aggressive. The policing of migrant communities involved neither security activities nor the intelligence services. Black crime was characterized by low-level offences such as cannabis use, pimping, and auto-theft. The issue of law and order in relation to black youth came to prominence as a result of the Brixton riots and the Scarman Report (1981). Police relationships with the black community were transformed by the murder of Stephen Lawrence, the launch of the National Civil Rights Movement and the Macpherson Report (1999). Black crime remains an important problem in London, with Ken Livingstone complaining of a free trade zone in drugs and guns. However, the Chinese community in Britain did not have a high profile in popular attitudes against outsiders and was, generally speaking, not involved in racial unrest.

While negative stereotypes of Muslim youth have intensified since 9/11, migration as such has in the last decade ceased to be a political or economic issue, partly because labour migration from the Commonwealth has come to an end. Popular concern has been instead directed against asylum seekers entering Britain from France. By the 1980s less than 5 percent of Britain’s 55 million population were immigrants from the Caribbean, India, and Pakistan, as compared with Germany’s 7 percent. Germany is often criticized for its low level of naturalization when compared with France, because the German emphasis on *jus sanguinis* gives a privileged status to “ethnic Germans” from Eastern Europe and Russia over Turkish guest workers. However, Germany’s intake of refugees is far greater than Britain’s. Government anxiety shifted in the 1990s from migration to asylum seeking, and asylum seekers from the former Yugoslavia, Albania, Iran, Iraq and
Afghanistan have coloured public attitudes towards immigration. Throughout the 1990s, Eurobarometer Surveys of British attitudes showed that 63 percent thought Britain had too many immigrants and 78 percent, too many refugees. In fact, both the media and parliamentary debates consistently confuse migrant, refugee and asylum seeker. After 9/11 the Labour Government has become increasingly intolerant of asylum seekers and increasingly subservient to American foreign policy objectives in the “war on terrorism.” There has been a relentless criminalization of young Muslim males.

British attitudes towards “Britishness” were late in developing, because, after the conclusion of the Napoleonic Wars, social membership in “the blessed isle” was taken for granted. Britain has no constitution and no bill of rights. The Magna Carta was essentially a list of feudal immunities rather than a democratic charter of citizenship. The evolution of national identity in the twentieth century was primarily a consequence of responses to external pressures from migration, refugees, and, more recently, asylum seekers. The definition of British identity has primarily been a response to “otherness.” Refugees in the late nineteenth century and migration in the twentieth have had the unintended consequence of forcing successive British governments to set about the juridical task of precisely defining (for the first time) the nature of citizenship and hence British identity. Because Britain has not been occupied since the Norman Conquest and has no land frontier with an adjacent or powerful neighbour, in formal and legal terms, national identity was defined very late in modern British history—primarily by the British Nationality Act of 1948. Official indifference to the status of Hong Kong citizens, despite periodic attempts to force the People’s Republic to respect the special legal status of the city of Hong Kong, was the product of political realism. Mrs Thatcher might compel Argentina to hand back the Falklands, but confronting China presented formidable political, let alone military, risks. Nevertheless, indifference towards the ultimate fate of the Hong Kong Chinese reflected official attitudes towards foreigners that have their modern origin in the 1901 Aliens Act.

The influx of Asian and Caribbean migrants in the second half of the twentieth century produced a protracted debate about identity that has been complicated by devolution for Scotland and Wales, uncertain and reluctant entry into the European Union, and the ongoing political difficulties in Northern Ireland. While British identity has become an acceptable self-definition for second-generation youth who are “Black British,” “Englishness” has become a confused, and poorly defined cultural label. While the flag of St George proliferates in the English countryside, nobody is entirely certain what it stands for. Was success in the Rugby World Cup in Australia in 2003 a victory for England or for Britain? If British identity is national, Englishness refers to a complex cultural tradition that is difficult to define and impossible to acquire by possession of a British passport. The traditional institutional glue of the United Kingdom (the monarchy, religion, Parliament, the ancient universities, the Mothers Union, the welfare state and the BBC) has been declining through this period, further eroding the cultural framework of both Englishness and British citizenship identity. The transformation of the political status of Hong Kong citizens has to be understood, at least in part, against the erosion of the United Kingdom and its changing patterns of citizenship and cultural identity.
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Abbreviations

AIHK  Amnesty International Hong Kong
AMWC  Asian Migrant Workers Centre
CCP    Chinese Communist Party
CDC    Curriculum Development Council
CEDAW  Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CEPA   Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement
COME   Community Oriented Mutual Economy
CPCE   Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education
CSSA   Comprehensive Social Security Assistance
CYC    Community Youth Club
DPP    Democratic Progressive Party
DSS    Direct Subsidy Scheme
EOC    Equal Opportunities Commission
FDW    Foreign Domestic Worker
FLE    Family Life Education
GMD    the Guomindang
HAB    Home Affairs Bureau
HKCC   Hong Kong Christian Council
HKCSD  Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department
HKFS   Hong Kong Federation of Students
HKFI   Hong Kong Federation of Industries
HKGCC  Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce
HKHRC  Hong Kong Human Rights Committee
HKHRM  Hong Kong Human Resource Management
HKPTU  Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union
HKSAR  Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
HRM    Human Rights Monitor
IEA    International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
KFWRA  Kwan Fook Women’s Rights Association
LegCo  Legislative Council
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>MAC</td>
<td>Mutual Aid Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>MPG</td>
<td>Mandatory Provident Fund</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NMM</td>
<td>New Mainland Migrant Hybrid</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRC</td>
<td>People’s Republic of China</td>
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<tr>
<td>PWC</td>
<td>Preliminary Working Committee</td>
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<td>SAR</td>
<td>Special Administrative Region</td>
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<td>SCMP</td>
<td>South China Morning Post</td>
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<tr>
<td>TFOPP</td>
<td>Task Force on Population Policy</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOC</td>
<td>Target-Oriented Curriculum</td>
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Introduction

Remaking citizenship in Hong Kong

Agnes S.Ku and Ngai Pun

The formation of citizenship in Hong Kong embodied a distinctive colonial history of more than one hundred and fifty years under British rule. The colonial years, in different stages, were marked by continual tensions and struggles between the state and civil society over the questions of rights, belonging, and participation. With the handover in July 1997, the reconfiguration of Hong Kong as the Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China is steering a project of remaking citizenship in the city. Politically, the SAR government has sought to produce a nationalistic civic subject, as signifying a change from British colonial rule to Chinese sovereignty. This is to be achieved through new legislations, through a soft-authoritarian way of regulating political order, and through a programmatic project of civic and patriotic education. Economically, the government has projected strategic visions of enterprising Hong Kong as a global city amidst increasing economic competition world-wide (Jessop and Sum 2000; Pun and Lee 2002). It has, moreover, put forward proposals to address the issue of social participation in the context of global economic restructuring, regional financial turmoil, and growing domestic unemployment. These include new urban governance projects, education reform, the provision of employment retraining, and welfare and community programs. The slogans of Asia’s world city, lifelong learning, and the welfare-to-work scheme are examples of such new initiatives. What lies behind the new political project is the construction of a citizen-subject who is required to acquire a specific ethic of self: the enterprising individual.

The enterprising individual is someone who is always on the lookout for resources and new opportunities to enhance their income, power, life chances and quality of life in order to take advantage of the rapid changes of economy and society. It is a conception of an ideal citizen-subject emphasizing self-enterprise and self-help. In the words of the Chief Executive, the enterprising individual embodies certain personal qualities such as “intelligence, determination and adaptability,” which can motivate and enable him or her to strive after continual “self-improvement,” and to “rise to the occasion” even in times of adversity.

In a nutshell, the hegemonic state project has been one of subsuming politics under the dual vision of Hong Kong being both a global city and a Chinese city within a grandiose framework of “one country, two systems” (Ku 2002a). This, in turn, requires a specific ethic of self and citizenry—an apolitical and yet productive economic subject—to live up to the project. Yet, the question is, where does this project lead us with respect to the issue of citizenship?

In the classic formulation by Marshall (1950), citizenship has been as much about civil and political rights as about social participation. The notion, moreover, necessarily entails
a question about membership and exclusion (Brubaker 1992). For the past decade or so, the issue of citizenship has gained growing salience in the context of new developments and new challenges in different parts of the world (Turner 1986, 1993; Roche 1992; van Steenbergen 1994; Stewart 1995; Shanley and Narayan 1997; Hanagan and Tilly 1999; Crouch et al. 2001; Stevenson 2001; Goldman and Perry 2002). In particular, there has developed an imperative to rethink citizenship in advanced capitalist societies as precipitated by a number of ruptures in the prevailing political, economic, and social orders in such societies. These include the ideological ascendency of neoliberalism (Harvey 2000) as well as its crisis (Touraine 2001), the challenges of globalization and transnational development (Ong 1999; Isin 2000b), and the proliferation of new cultural and social identities (Isin and Wood 1999). Such changing scenarios and new challenges pose the problem of citizenship afresh in the context of shifting boundaries between the public and the private, between the global and the local, between state and society, and between nation and city (Holston 1999; Isin 2000a).

Emerging as a global city within the nation and in the region, Hong Kong has been undergoing socio-economic changes similar to other megalopolises. Situated between China and the world, and as specific to the history of the city, the formation and reformation of citizenship in Hong Kong nonetheless show a sui generis path that is perhaps rather distinct from Western and other models and experiences. Among others, what provides distinctive meanings to the (re-)configuration of citizenship in this particular context is its political identity as a quasi-city state in changing forms. Formally speaking, people were largely either British subjects/nationals or immigrants in the past; today most of the people are “permanent residents” of Hong Kong but citizens of the People’s Republic of China. People rarely speak of themselves as gongmin (citizen) and, as reflecting a sense of civic identity, it is common for them to refer to their public status as shimin or city people (see Leung, Chapter 5). Nonetheless, as pointed out by a number of authors in this volume, some substantial aspects of local citizenship have been operative in society at different times: certain rights endowed by the local state that are otherwise unavailable such as the right to stay, work, vote, stand for elections, and receive social benefits.

Hong Kong, under British rule, had embarked on a path of development in the form of “colonial citizenship” (see Ip, Chapter 2), “semicolonial citizenship” (see So, Chapter 12), or what Bryan Turner describes as “conditional or provisional citizenship” in the Foreword. This reflects a pragmatic ruling strategy by the British, which leaves behind a historical legacy in society. Today in Hong Kong, as in many other places, the government is repositioning itself nationally and globally; society is under-going fundamental socioeconomic and demographic changes internally; civil society is making divergent claims on issues ranging from livelihood, welfare and employment, to civil liberties, human rights, gender equality, and sexual rights. These have given rise to changing and contested meanings of citizenship. This volume seeks to rethink the citizenship project as well as the contested state-society relationship in Hong Kong from the colonial era to the present. It considers citizenship as a manifold construct regarding membership, rights, participation, and belonging, in the face of local, national, and global changes. More specifically, it focuses on the changing political, socioeconomic, and ideological contexts under which the hegemonic state project, in partnership with other
agents and institutions, and in the face of challenges by civil society, takes place: the construction of the idealized enterprising citizen through schooling and other social programs; the projection of the depoliticized or patriotic civic subject through education; the contested meanings of rights and law in the regulation of civil and political citizenship; and the everyday experiences of social citizenship and exclusion. In tandem with these are the agendas of political rights, gender equality, sexual identity, and economic communal participation opened up by a flourishing civil society.

Colonial citizenship, de-colonization, and re-nationalization

Historically, colonialism has been central to the architectonics of the city of Hong Kong. In the mid-nineteenth century, the British colonial project kicked off ironically from a barely populated island, and its development fed on the flows of migration from nearby towns and villages in the Pearl River Delta such as Pun-yu and Dongguan, from where people came in search of work. As an early colonial settlement, it was still not home to the many people who resided in the territory. As historian David Faure said, “For most of the Chinese people who lived in Hong Kong, Hong Kong was not home until they made it their home” (1997:58). The transient mentality of the population, however, has often been used as the justification for denying substantive citizenship, politically and socially, to the colonial subjects.

The incipient idea of citizenship used by the colonial government was very much about law and order. To educate residents in a “proper understanding of the privileges and obligations of citizenship” was to shape lawabiding subjects. This inscribed a colonial conception of citizenship. The idea of colonial citizenship captures at least three inter-related aspects of citizenship formation under colonial governance: first, the dependent status of political membership attached to the colonial sovereign rather than to the nation; second, the making of a new urban-civic subject as a civilizing (modernizing), depoliticizing, and de-nationalizing project; and, third, the limited development of rights and the prioritizing of economic development, with a residual conception of social welfare, over political participation within the colonial state.

The provision of public housing in Hong Kong started in the 1950s, and as Lam-chong Ip reveals in Chapter 2, it was underpinned by a concern about public health rather than an idea of social citizenship. In his genealogical account, Ip shows that the thrust of early colonial rule was based on sanitary control and social order, which embodied a process of colonial transplantation of ideas, knowledge, and bio-techniques on the Chinese bodies. Then, in the 1950s, as the government launched the resettlement project, a new citizen with a new civic ethic was invoked through the spatial design: “self-respect and respect for the rights of their neighbours...to forget the defeatist attitude towards dirt and disease.” Ip argues that the colonial discourses of public health served to displace if not repress the rise of a social citizenship concept that might take public housing as social right rather than a mere health and safety issue.

Drawing on the idea of citizenship as governance, Denny Ho’s historical overview (Chapter 1) explains how the colonial government has sought to depoliticize society while legitimating itself through welfare provision since the 1950s. Taking economic
development as the most salient political task, the government endorsed only market rights—while delimiting their scope— but restricted those rights pertaining to political freedom and political participation. At the same time, the government promoted the identity of a modern subject that embodied the ethos of economic rationality. After the mass riots in 1966 and 1967, welfare provisions and community programs were expanded; administrative reforms were introduced; new slogans were promoted (for example, “Hong Kong is our Home”); and civic campaigns such as “Keep Hong Kong Clean” and “Fight Violent Crime” were launched (Turner 1996). However, as argued by Ho, such initiatives were aimed at resolving the legitimacy problem as well as enhancing local belonging, rather than empowering social citizenship. Thus, even today, the social service sector continues to operate with the principles of charity and benevolence as supplementary to the individualistic and family values advocated by the state. Citing Jones (1990) and McLaughlin (1993), Ho’s chapter reveals that the “Chinese family” is not an essentialistic category, but becomes part and parcel of the strategy of political governance that could in effect undermine the development of social citizenship and the community.

If the 1960s and the 1970s saw the government nurturing a civic sense of Hong Kong identity, while continuing to delimit political development, by stressing law and order, local belonging, economic rationality, governing effectiveness and material welfare, the 1980s brought significant changes in citizenship development in several areas. First, nominally, a localized sense of residence rights and belonging was further inscribed in law, though such development had been underway long before this. After the Second World War, with the independence of most of its colonies, the British Empire was itself undergoing a process of citizenship restructuring. Then, with the massive influx of Commonwealth citizens into Britain, a series of immigration and nationality Acts were introduced to restrict entry and reduce access to citizenship status (Turner, Foreword). As a corollary, externally, the Hong Kong people were among those who were gradually excluded from British citizenship. Locally, following the newly coined idea of UK belonging in Britain, the official notion of a Hong Kong beloner was introduced, which distinguished between local resident and immigrant Chinese (Ku, forthcoming). Then, in 1987, the category of Hong Kong beloner was replaced by “Hong Kong permanent resident,” which de-differentiated between the local-born and the immigrant Chinese in view of the political handover in 1997. After 1997, the Basic Law continued to adopt this as the legal category of political membership in Hong Kong, but issues and disputes over right of abode and citizenship claims have arisen regarding the Mainland-born Chinese, an issue that we will return to later.

Second, politically, there have emerged intense conflicts and competing discourses over democratic reform, civic liberties, and political identity in the context of the handover issue (Lo 2001). After rounds of diplomatic negotiation between the two sovereign powers, the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 finally laid down a framework of “one country, two systems” to accommodate the uneasy tension between Chinese sovereignty and local autonomy. Belatedly the colonial government began to introduce political reform, partly in preparation for a more honorable “exit” for itself and partly as a buffer against the authoritarian or centralist system under the future sovereign. However, this resulted in increasing opposition from China and the conservative forces.
During the political transition, there developed a tug-of-war between the pro-rights camp that advocated democracy and autonomy, and the pro-China camp that stressed order, control, and patriotism. This has continued until today, with Hong Kong’s political liberties remaining vulnerable under the sovereign’s authoritarian toleration (Baehr 2001). Denny Ho and Agnes Ku’s chapters will take up this issue in different ways.

Apart from issues concerning political reform and the rule of law, civic education has also become a battleground. In the entire period of colonial rule, the publication of the *Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools* in 1985 and in 1996 were the first attempts by the government to launch civic education among the younger generation. The projects nonetheless were fraught with conflicts and tensions. As Thomas Tse shows (Chapter 3), first, there arose fierce disputes over the relative emphasis on patriotism and the values of human rights and democracy during the political transition. Then, after the handover, the discourse of the global city, as a new basis for collective identification in the new era of globalization, was uneasily coupled with an emphasis on patriotic education stressing traditional Chinese values.

Hong Kong has indeed been caught in the midst of changing identities. On the one hand, the nationalistic project creates fissures and contradictions in the new hegemonic formation, between the patriotic subject and the idea of civil and political citizenship, and between the former and a new ethic of self called forth to meet the challenge of globalization. On the other hand, as we shall see below, the neo-liberal ideology that underscores the statist project of the global city is deepening old inequalities and producing new ones, which have far-reaching implications for citizenship rights and social participation.

Towards neo-liberal governance: continuity and change

The late 1980s saw the launching of administrative reforms, social policies and social programs consonant with neo-liberal concepts. Globally, the late 1970s witnessed a world-wide economic recession as a result of the OPEC oil crisis, stagflation, rising prices, declining profitability, and so on. The adverse effects of economic globalization, under the persuasion of the New Right, have since then given rise to the so-called neoliberal revolution, which emerged as an attack on the welfare state in advanced capitalist countries and later equally in socialist and former socialist countries (especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in the late 1980s). Neo-liberal mode of governance rests on three foundational principles, namely, decentralization, privatization, and individualization. Accompanying these processes is the new language of consumer rights being appropriated from the market. This nonetheless signifies only a shift in the form and focus of governance but not a diminished will to govern: neo-liberal rule now takes the form of a new alliance between the state, social institutions, professional agents, and individuals in the production of *the enterprising individual* as the new citizen subject (Dean 1999; Rose 2000).

Unlike some of its Western counterparts, Hong Kong was not a welfare state. Nevertheless, the colonial government was quick to pick up the neoliberal language to launch new social policies, as following the global trend in general, and as aggravated by
the opening up of the Chinese economy in the late 1970s in particular. This was reflected in the increasing concern about the competitiveness of the city in the global restructuring economy. Then the Asian financial crisis of 1997 further intensified the neo-liberal development in the post-handover period. Po-keung Hui’s chapter provides a detailed deconstruction of the narrowly economistic and individualistic assumptions in the ideal citizen subject as embodied in the image of the enterprising individual or what he calls the “economic man”: an industrious worker and a smart consumer (see Chapter 11). For one thing, the enterprising individual is in fact not an entirely new ethic of citizenship in Hong Kong. If European societies have experienced a shift from the welfare state to neoliberalism,4 the development in Hong Kong has shown a great deal of continuity between the civic, urban, economic, and self-reliant subject under colonial citizenship and the enterprising individual under the recent ideology of neoliberalism. The latter, nonetheless, is now taking specific shape through specific discourses (see also the next section on globalization) and is creating and deepening social divisions in new ways.

For example, in the domain of education, a series of reform initiatives have been introduced under the ideologies of market efficiency and new managerialism since the late 1980s. Today the SAR government’s appeals to life-long learning, all-round education, and the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) must also be understood against this historical back-ground. The idea of DSS, for instance, was proposed by the Education Department in the early 1990s, and it has recently been re-tabled and implemented with a slightly more generous offer. As an alternative to the traditional system of government control, the Scheme seeks to give greater administrative freedom to the subsidized school while also giving it the major financial responsibility. This reflects a process of quasi-privatization of education that works more favorably for the elite schools and the wealthier class.

Anita Chan in Chapter 4 examines the hidden impacts of the education reform initiatives on the formation of a stratified and gendered citizenry. She highlights how the education reforms in the 1980s and the 1990s were aimed at producing an “ideal learner-citizen,” especially in the elite schools. This nurtures an ideology of competitive individualism and a belief in the open society. The schooling process, however, simultaneously reproduces cultural distinction, to secure existing class relations as well as a patriarchal society at large by crafting gendered subjects in the class-room. Classroom practices, the hidden curriculum as well as the formal curriculum, make gendered subjects, by which female students in the elite schools struggle to position themselves within a discourse of success, while female students in the neighborhood schools are shaped to be second-class citizens of the future. The making of the ideal citizen in the site of school, in short, is always a class and gendered project.

Moreover, in a city where social and political citizenships have remained relatively under-developed, neoliberalism could further reduce the public and their rights for social participation (Ho 2000). Indeed, a variant of the idea of self-enterprise has provided a guiding motto in the domain of social welfare: self-reliance. All along, recipients of Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) have been constituted as welfare recipients rather than bearers of rights. Social citizenship is reduced to the provision of a basic safety net for the needy or those “economically inactive” due to unemployment, disability, old age, and so on. In 1998 the Social Welfare Department proposed a
“Support for Self-Reliance” scheme to help the able-bodied unemployed CSSA recipients and to discourage benefit claimants from depending on CSSA. As pointed out by Lai-ching Leung (Chapter 9), the reform of the social security system is actually another step towards depriving the citizenship rights of such people as single parents, women, the underclass, new migrants, and ethnic minority groups, by emphasizing the obligations and individual responsibilities of benefit claimants. Moreover, instead of enhancing the autonomy and social participation of the people who are on welfare, the system is leaving them stranded in the “trap” of welfare dependency or having them fall prey to administrative or professional surveillance. The latter seeks either to turn recalcitrant subjects into normal citizens, or to exclude those who cannot meet the criteria of the normal citizen. The sense of social exclusion is ironically created by these administrative measures aiming at inclusionary effects (Ngai Pun and Ka-ming Wu, Chapter 7).

Globalization, migration, belonging and exclusion

Globalization has been conducive to increasing transnational migration which somewhat loosens the conventional links among citizenship, residence, and belonging in many countries (Castles and Davidson 2000). In Hong Kong, continual cross-border migration from the Mainland further complicates the issue. As pointed out earlier, local residents are entitled to a distinctive set of nominal and legal rights which is tantamount to a form of local or quasi-city state citizenship. According to Ghai (2001), today a local status of permanent residence is “both more inclusive and more exclusive than citizenship, as it allows the accommodation of non-nationals at the same time as it excludes categories of nationals” (p. 144). Such legal status acknowledges the cosmopolitan nature of the society while, ironically, marking Hong Kong from the Mainland, on the one hand, and creating hierarchies among the residents, on the other. Beneath the veil of formal legal status, moreover, the processes of identity formation and exclusion are simultaneously at work in everyday life.

Hong Kong society had an immigrant origin, with the bulk of its early population coming from the mainland. For a long time, the Chinese were ruled as colonial subjects under a culture of white supremacy and a system of state-business domination. From the late 1960s to the 1970s, the ideas of community, citizenship, and local society alongside immigration control, welfare, and other reforms began to nurture the growth of a Hong Kong identity. The flip side of this, however, is a simultaneous process of “othering”: exclusion is experienced by the abode-seekers from the mainland and those newly arrived migrants who also hope to make Hong Kong their home.

After the handover, the disputes about the issue of right of abode were most emblematic of the mutual definition and exclusionary character of legal status and cultural identity. The Basic Law guarantees such a right to all persons, among others, of Chinese nationality born to Hong Kong residents, regardless of their place of birth. The Constitution came into effect in July 1997, and a heated controversy was raised when, immediately after the handover, hundreds of mainland-born children of Hong Kong residents who had either overstayed, upon expiry of their temporary permits or entered the territory illegally, made a public claim to their right of abode. The government...
nonetheless re-defined and curtailed the rights of these people through legal amendment and through constitutional interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress. In the struggle, the government’s argument turned on the prevailing sense of Hong Kong identity and presented a negative stereotype of the mainland-born Chinese. The rationalization of the discriminatory and exclusionary practices, which reflected and reinforced a culture of narrow localism, effectively undermined the basic citizenship right of a section of this group of people (Ku 2001).

Today the SAR government is seeking to transform Hong Kong into a global city, based on an informational economy and a knowledge-based society. Accordingly, the new ideal citizen-subject is projected through a set of discourses and programs to enhance the “population quality”—in terms of talented subjects and value-added human resources—to meet the challenge of global competition. Social divisions in terms of class, ethnicity, and gender have increased, and the migrant population is among the worst affected. The Chinese people from the mainland have come and are still coming to Hong Kong on a daily basis under the quota system, while international migrants ranging from corporate managers to domestic workers are having an increasingly marked presence. With continual cross-border and international migration, Hong Kong has gradually developed into a semi-ethnocracy, as Barry Sautman’s chapter poignantly argues, in which a hierarchy of citizens is created—citizens of the ethnic Chinese elites, denizens of the new mainland migrants, as well as the European, American, and East Asian expatriates, and marginals of South Asians such as Filipino, Thai, Indonesian, and Nepalese workers. Sautman’s comparative political economy analysis shows how the social structure and changes further segregate the poor, the marginal, and the minority from full participation in this semi-ethnocratic milieu, as in other regions such as Israel and South-East Asian societies (Chapter 6).

Then among the Chinese migrants, a nominal concept of citizenship, as de jure rights granted from above, is, however, far from the de facto social and political participation. Hon-chu Leung in Chapter 5 focuses on the incorporation of mainland migrants into society in relation to the changing practices of citizenship, as legal rights and as social participation, in the city. He argues that the idea of home-making provides a basis not only for rights claims but also for social advancement. However, eligibility for public housing is offered primarily to “normal” working-class families, and families split by immigration restrictions and the newly arrived from the mainland are effectively barred from social citizenship and upward mobility. Ngai Pun and Ka-ming Wu’s Chapter 7 adds that the global project in an informational economy will create a “structural schizophrenia” by which lower-class Chinese migrant women are further excluded, especially in the areas of employment, welfare, housing, and child-care services. The global imagination, a statist project, is thriving at the expense of the poor and the new migrant women who are often perceived as “redundant citizens” and as welfare burdens, because of their low work skills and poor educational background.

**Struggles, identities and practices in civil society**

Conventional theories tend to conceive citizenship as a category of formal status attached
to the state. Recently, this statist conception of citizenship has been challenged by scholars who seek to bring back civil society and citizenship practice (Somers 1993; Chandhoke 1995; Ku 2002b). The civil society of Hong Kong was often said to be “weak,” and hence a neglected realm, because of a population which was generally politically apathetic (Lau 1982). British colonial authorities did not encourage political and social participation by the Hong Kong people. Nevertheless, the fact remains that civic associations in the form of voluntary charity groups, trade associations, religious organizations, and neighborhood groups (kaifongs) have steadily increased since the nineteenth century. Protests, social movements, and other forms of resistance about labor, housing, political, nationalistic, gender, and other issues are not infrequent and their impact has not been insignificant, especially since the 1960s (Chiu and Lui 2000). The late 1960s and the 1970s, in particular, were a period of burgeoning student activism and growing urban collective action. Political consciousness rose when the handover issue dominated city life in the 1980s. This was also a time which saw the bursting growth of political, advocacy, and community concern groups with some clear political and other agendas. In 1989, society experienced an unprecedented fervor of civic participation in the June-Fourth Movement when millions of Hong Kong people poured onto the streets to support the student and workers’ protests in Beijing and other cities. The ideas of rights, democracy, and participation began to surge, sustained not only by the protests but also through new official discourses as laid down in the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 and in the Bill of Rights of 1991. Different forms of resistance gathered momentum in society in the 1990s.

Today the diverse demands from an increasingly heterogeneous civil society further call into question the state’s capacity to govern the citizenry within the old institutional and hegemonic frameworks. Institutionally the limited democratic reform has hampered the development of effective links between party politics and civil society (Lui and Chui 1999). Ideologically the “global city” and the re-nationalizing projects by the state, while deepening political and social fissures in society, fail to adequately answer the claims, the needs and the concerns of the people. Civil society continues to play a strategic role in contesting citizenship rights and hegemonic values, and in opening up news terrains for participation.

In Part III on “Civil society, resistance and participation,” the chapters by Agnes Ku, Lai-ching Leung, Day Wong, and Po-keung Hui bring to light various kinds of politics from below. Ku in Chapter 8 focuses on civil conflicts between the state and civil society, and between the nation and the local. She presents a historical sketch of the formation of two competing discourses since colonial times, namely “law and order” and “civil society,” and analyzes how the boundary of civil autonomy is being defined and contested in the post-colonial regime. As shown in the recent disputes over the right of abode ruling, the Public Order Ordinance, and Article 23 of the Basic Law on national security, there has been a tendency by the SAR government to exert authoritarian regulation over civil society in the name of legality, order, and patriotism and through various legislative, administrative, political, and public relations initiatives. Yet, the space of civil citizenship remains fluid and contested under the auspices of competing discourses of rights, liberty, rule of law, and civil society in the public sphere, both locally and internationally.
Over the years, the issues of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, community, and ecology have gained increasing prominence, which brings our attention to the questions of universalism and difference (Young 1990) and cultural citizenship (Stevenson 1997) in the context of the proliferation of identities. Lai-ching Leung in Chapter 9 provides a feminist interpretation of citizenship development in Hong Kong. She analyzes how the ideology of minimal social intervention and the gender-neutral assumption in social welfare policy interact to exclude women from full social and political participation. The women’s movement hence plays a significant role in politicizing gender issues in the areas of welfare, law, politics, pornography, sexual violence, and media culture. The movement has come a long way from an emphasis on sameness and equality in the earlier decades to a dual stress on equality and difference in the 1990s. In a male-dominated political system where women’s voices remain relatively weak, the strategies of informal politics and public engagement by the women have contributed to a more pluralist framework of citizenship.

Day Wong in Chapter 10 further explores the issue of equality/difference through an engagement with Western theoretical debates and local history. In Hong Kong, sexual politics did not come onto the scene until the 1980s. A comparison with Western experience reveals how a Chinese- or Hong Kong-specific discourse of sexuality and citizenship has shaped the specific forms of sexual politics in the city. More specifically, appealing to a local norm of universalism, local gay and lesbian groups construct their identities as law-abiding, contributing, and producing members of the Hong Kong society, which helps secure public recognition and citizenship rights while tending to play down differences. This is nonetheless counter-balanced by a newly emerged politics of transgression that stresses sexual differences and distinctions.

Po-keung Hui in Chapter 11 examines the neo-liberal and global forces that have shaped the economic restructuring in Hong Kong since the 1990s. An ambitious project, Hui attempts to articulate an alternative “community economic subject,” a new subject-making project aimed to counter state hegemony and market power, and rooted deeply in daily community life. He studies an experimental community currency project in a local district and assesses its potentials and limitations in bringing the market, currency, the community, and the living space back under the control of the people. This community project was launched as an empowerment practice to open up a new front of resistance politics in Hong Kong. Its implications for an alternative conception of citizenship with a participatory vision to create political, economic, and social rights are illuminating.

Last but not least, Alvin So in Chapter 12 puts Hong Kong in a comparative light with respect to Greater China. He discusses how state forms, in their interaction with society, nation, and the market, have produced different configurations of citizenship in different periods in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China. For example, since the 1990s, in contradistinction to the earlier decades, Mainland China has witnessed a retreat of the socialist state in social citizenship whereas Taiwan has moved swiftly towards democratization and Taiwanese nationalization. He argues that in the three locations, the mode of citizenship is related to a particular kind of “grand project” initiated by the state whereas civil society, more so in Hong Kong and Taiwan than in the Mainland, can be seen as a configuration of social forces making citizenship from below.
Conclusion

This volume attempts to rethink the citizenship project in Hong Kong in the face of rapid changes, locally, nationally, and globally. The notions of participation, rights, membership, belonging, and difference are no longer abstract formal concepts but sites of intense contestation. Our modest project, squarely located amidst such struggles, is to unravel the manifold tensions and struggles between state and society in changing times. Apart from the hegemonic project by the state and other institutions in the production of the citizen-subject, citizenship, in this volume, is understood also as a lived practice by which agency, subjectivity, and embodied struggles from below expand the space of participation and resistance. By engaging with concrete and everyday experiences, we highlight the notion of a lived citizenship that unfolds the subjective experiences of social exclusions along the lines of class, gender, race, and ethnicity, and that contests and negotiates the meaning of state power, rights, law, and social participation. Together, the contributors reveal the complexity of the processes of citizenship formation in Hong Kong, as they are shaped by global and national forces, and as they are mediated, manifested, contested, and negotiated in diverse local settings. This volume will contribute not only to enriching our understanding of Hong Kong in its various aspects of citizenship formation but also to the literature on citizenship by highlighting the city as the lived embodiment of a specific temporality and spatiality which refract the effects of global and national forces through particular historical trajectories, regulatory practices, social conditionings, and forms of resistance. It is with this understanding that we hope also to explore the possible political, cultural, and social bases and struggles for invigorating citizenship through concrete processes and practices in the face of new challenges.

Notes

1 So and Chan (2002) describe the SAR government as one of soft authoritarianism.
4 Powell (2002) cautions against over-stating the shift.
5 The Immigration (Amendment) (No. 5) requires that mainland-born persons claiming such right of abode in Hong Kong must prove their status by a certificate of entitlement affixed to a one-way permit that is exclusively available through the exit-entry administration on the mainland. The Bill was swiftly passed by three readings within one day by a provisional legislature which did not have a constitutional status.
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Part I
State, institutions and ideologies
1
Citizenship as a form of governance

A historical overview

Denny Kwok-Leung Ho

Introduction

Citizenship can be regarded as a means of political rhetoric that helps in the search for a better social life for members of society within a given territory. At the time Marshall (1950) suggested a framework for the advocacy of this notion, the British style of Keynes-Beveridge welfare state was established and deemed to be a system having the potential to ensure each member a minimum level of well-being through the provision of social rights. While Marshall treated the notion as an analytical concept for the study of British social policy, the three components of the concept of citizenship, as suggested by Marshall—namely civil rights, political rights and social rights—had been employed by British politicians as the political yardstick by which the British government was appraised. While Hong Kong had been a Crown colony of Britain and citizenship as a kind of political rhetoric had seldom been put forward as the governing principle of the colonial government, in the 1990s scholars began to throw light on the degree of freedom Hong Kong people could enjoy after the city reverted to Chinese sovereignty. Basically, like the students of citizenship inspired by Marshall, scholars have employed citizenship as a yardstick to measure the extent to which citizenship has been realized (Baehr 2001; Leung 2001; Degolyer 2001; Scott 2001; Lo 2001). This chapter, however, focuses more on citizenship as a form of governance, showing the particular nature of the state-society relationship in Hong Kong.

The study of citizenship is in fact an analysis of political power. For this purpose, we draw on a discussion of the concept of governance in order to see the way in which citizenship is both the means for and the effect of governance carried out by the Hong Kong Government. To offer a general understanding of governance we can state that “[g] overnance is an analytical concept, giving rise to questions about what forms of power and authority, patterns of relationship and rights and obligations might typify a particular approach to governing” (Newman 2002). We follow Jessop (1999) and go further to refer to “governance” as “any form of coordination of interdependent social relations—ranging from simple dyadic interactions to complex social divisions of labour,” and we take a territory-wide level of analysis of coordination. We distinguish three forms of governance that constitute the institutional arrangements of Hong Kong. These three forms are, namely: (1) the anarchy of exchange (market forces); (2) the hierarchy of command (imperative coordination by the state); and (3) the heterarchy of self-organization (networks). These three forms of governance correspond to three domains—the anarchy of
exchange is employed to sustain the economic system, the hierarchy of command to the political system and the heterarchy of self-organization to the social (or civic) system.

In our view, since the colonial government took a strong stand on economic development as the most important “political” task to accomplish, civic rights had long been enshrined as basic rights for Hong Kong people. By contrast, in order to protect its colonial rule, the colonial government did not promote or grant full political rights to the Hong Kong people. Regarding social rights, since the colonial government understood that social and welfare services could pacify social conflicts arising from the unequal distribution of resources and wealth—the unavoidable result of the capitalist mode of production—issues of social rights had to be tackled. However, rather than the advocacy of social rights, one of the strategies employed was the identification of social services and welfare as the residual means to assist people. On the other hand, the colonial government put emphasis on family support as a form of self-organization. One of the results was the relegation of “community” to a secondary position. This form of governance was maintained by the colonial government until the issue of the transfer of sovereignty emerged in the 1980s so that more political rights were granted. In the 1990s, the Hong Kong Special Administration Region (SAR) government encountered economic downturn and then community as a form of self-organization was advocated. These changes in the form of governance impact on the extent, contents, and depth of citizenship (Faulks 2000).

In this chapter, we examine how these three dimensions of citizenship have changed. Through a brief depiction of the trajectory of the development of the idea and practice of citizenship in Hong Kong since the 1950s, we attempt to unravel the factors for the under-development of the idea and practice of citizenship in Hong Kong in the pre-1980s and examine the difficulties in the realization of citizenship in the era after the retrocession of Hong Kong to Chinese sovereignty.

The political system and the hierarchy of control

Governance is certainly related to the need for the creation and maintenance of social order. For the colonial Hong Kong government, the tasks of state-making and legitimacy-creation were necessary and the establishment of the political system was the institutional means for these ends. Any political act presupposes the existence of a “legitimate” political structure where political commands and principles of governance are established. The political structure is then constituted in the form of a hierarchy of control.

In modern societies, the state should define a boundary and claim that it has the right to rule those people within this delimited area. This is the first area of control pertaining to the extent of citizenship. As the colonial government found it impossible to grant citizenship in terms of nationality and ethnicity, residency became the main defining component of the legal status of Hongkongers. As a matter of fact, granting residence rather than citizenship to people was a strategic means for the colonial government to circumvent the issue of nationality, and moreover, it was strategically feasible to integrate people continuously coming from Mainland China.
In 1949, the government began to introduce immigration controls on the Chinese from the Mainland. The control measures had remained generally lenient until 1974 when the government introduced a “touchbase” policy. Full immigration control, alongside a daily quota system, was implemented when the policy was called off in 1980 (Leung, Chapter 5 in this volume). After 1997, the SAR government, in the name of stable governance, was likewise committed to a policy of (partial) exclusion vis-à-vis the Mainland-born children of Hong Kong residents (Ku 2001). From 1950 to the turn of the century, the issue of the right of abode was pertinent only to the right to stay in Hong Kong. There were few disputes about the implications of granting this right. Contrary to the understanding of citizenship in European countries where citizenship entails civil, political, and social rights, people who were granted the right of abode did not automatically obtain these kinds of rights. The colonial government had in fact exercised a different set of political means to restrict the contents of citizenship, particularly those related to the political rights.

Taking political stability as its primary concern, the colonial government restricted political rights so as to render itself autonomous in the face of a large Chinese population in Hong Kong. Between 1950 and 1980, political power remained concentrated in the hands of the official bureaucrats and there was no direct election for the Legislative and Executive Councils. The only relatively “democratic” institution that appeared in the post-war history of Hong Kong was the Urban Council, which contained elected members. However, its scope of authority was limited to issues arising from public health, recreation and amenities, management of public services and other miscellaneous matters. Political rights were undeveloped in this period.

In order to gain legitimacy, the advocacy of economic liberty then became a strong ideological pillar to strengthen the capitalist economy. In the early post-war era, although the significance of Hong Kong’s role as the link between Britain and China had declined, the British government had no intention of giving up Hong Kong, as Miners argued, although this was not due to any military strategic consideration as previously, nor to any moral obligation, but because “the very favourable balance on invisible trade, outweigh the only cost incurred by the British taxpayer, the colony’s defence bill” (1984:14). Therefore, Britain retained in this period its authority to rule Hong Kong mainly for the pursuit of commercial benefits. We could argue that it was the intention of the colonial government to construct its own image as an “a-political” ruler in the sense that the government itself was wary of political issues and matters. The Governor of Hong Kong in the period from 1947 to 1952, Sir Alexander Grantham, clearly revealed this tactic in his speech to the Legislative Council in 1950 saying that:

we cannot permit Hong Kong to be the battleground for contending political parties or ideologies. We are just simple traders who want to get on with our daily round and common task. This may not be very noble, but at any rate it does not disturb others.

(Lau 1982:36)

In order to protect the rule of the colonial government, officials suggested a very peculiar interpretation of the concept of democracy. The Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs said
at a teach-in organized by a university student organization in 1969 that democracy was defined as “the measure of the effectiveness of channels open to the general body of members to show their approval or consent or disapproval or to influence decisions of the governing body.”

Nevertheless, whereas the public were only allowed to express their political concerns outside the formal political institutions, there was a state-business alliance and, as Chiu argues, “the broad confluence of interests between the state elites and the bourgeoisie contributed to an overall policy of supporting private entrepreneurship” (1994:63). Given that the colonial government relied on the support of businessmen to ensure economic development and in turn maintain social order, opening up the political situation through granting more political rights to Hongkongers would entail the reduction of the political power of the state-business alliance. The colonial government attempted to avoid this as it would have jeopardized colonial rule.

Nonetheless, in the 1980s, unlike the situation in the 1970s, the polity was opened up, allowing more channels for representatives of different interest groups to influence the decision-making process. The District Boards scheme was established in 1982 which took the unprecedented step of electing a number of its board members on the basis of universal adult franchise. However, the monolithic and authoritarian political structure of Hong Kong had not been totally replaced by a pluralist one in which different interests were potentially represented. The core of the political structure, which comprises the Legislative Council and the Executive Council, was still dominated by conservative groups (Scott 1989).

The “pragmatic” ruling strategy of the colonial government was reflected in the introduction of the functional constituency into the political system. Davies (1989) argues that the middle class occupied critical positions in various sectors and were developing into an important social and economic force, and thus it would not have been advisable to exclude them from the political arena. Hence, this can be understood as the government’s strategy to make itself accountable while at the same time keeping political power safe from any threatening social forces.

The Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong’s future after 1997 triggered off a series of campaigns demanding the introduction of direct elections to the Legislative Council (LegCo). In view of the PRC’s opposition to any drastic electoral reform, the British colonial government, against the majority’s expectations which were shown through public opinion polls and surveys, yielded to the PRC’s pressure and abandoned the introduction of direct election to LegCo in 1988 (Lo 2001:132). The Tiananmen Square crackdown in 1989 marked a turning point in that the colonial government, amidst the fears and demands of the people, set off a new phase of reform that resulted in more civic and political rights. In 1990, a Bill of Rights was enacted. In 1996, the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC) was set up with the aim of eliminating discrimination because of sex, marital status, pregnancy, disability and family status. Moreover, upon Governor Patten’s arrival, the franchise arrangements governing LegCo’s functional constituencies were broadened; the voting age of the Hongkongers was reduced from 21 to 18 and pledges to monitor the performance of government departments were issued. While Hongkongers were empowered and allowed to enjoy more political as well as civil rights in the period between 1980 and 1997, these changes also reflected the British
colonial government’s aim of an honorable “exit” by 1997.

Nonetheless, political rights remained confined to a small number of Hong Kong people as the PRC government did not expect any drastic change in the political domain. The hierarchy of control left by the colonial government was largely retained by the SAR government. This can be shown in the definition of right of abode that reveals the strategic move of the SAR government to ensure the integration and participation of those who “deserved” it. The move comes from the political calculation that pertains to the specific colonial nature of Hong Kong. Before 1997, the colonial government had created a cosmopolitan character for Hong Kong by allowing non-Chinese-nationals to be involved in running the territory. Expatriates occupied many key positions, both in the government and the economy. In order to keep the expatriates in Hong Kong, it was necessary for the SAR government to adopt a more “inclusionary” citizenship. However, from the political point of view, allowing too many non-Chinese nationals to occupy key social and political positions might be politically unwise. This became a dilemma that the SAR government had to resolve.

In order to understand the strategic aspect of citizenship, Ghai (2001) has pointed out that it is necessary to analyze the use of the status of “residents” rather than “citizens” under the jurisdiction of the Basic Law. The notion of “citizens” does not exist in the Basic Law. It is the residents, either permanent or non-permanent, who are guaranteed equality before the law, rights to vote and to be elected. The central concept used in the Basic Law to refer to community membership is “the right of abode.” There are three categories of person who are granted the right of abode in Hong Kong, namely permanent residents, non-permanent residents and other persons in Hong Kong, but only the permanent residents, whether or not a Chinese national, enjoy all the rights and obligations stipulated in the Basic Law, including the right to vote, the right to stand for election and eligibility for public services—the rights from which non-permanent residents are excluded.

However, regarding the category of permanent residents, Ghai argues that the distinction within this category revealed “the Basic Law goes further than any scheme in providing for a local identity, which not only separates regional residents from other nationals, but also facilitates the participation and integration of non-nationals” (2001:150). This argument is based on an analysis of the distinctions within the category of permanent residents. There are three sub-categories of permanent residents, namely, (a) a general category of permanent resident, whether Chinese nationals or not; (b) permanent residents who are Chinese nationals without the right of abode in a foreign country; and (c) permanent residents who are Chinese nationals without the right of abode in a foreign country and who have ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for a specified period. Apparently, those who are permanent residents in general, i.e. type (a), are allowed to stay and to maintain the cosmopolitan character of Hong Kong. However, politically, only permanent residents who are Chinese nationals without the right of abode in a foreign country are entitled to be appointed as Chief Executive, a principal official, a member of the Executive Council, Chief Justice, Chief Judge of the High Court, President of the Legislative Council, a member of LegCo from all but a small number of constituencies (20 percent), and a member of the Committee for the Basic Law. (For some of these positions, there are certain residence requirements.) This
strategy ensures that those who can be trusted by the leaders of the Chinese nationals are
allowed to play a critical role in the leadership of the Hong Kong Special Administrative
Region (HKSAR).

In 2003, the SAR government still has no plans to allow direct election for the Chief
Secretary, and the Executive Council is still composed of appointed members. In the
Legislative Council we find 30 of the 60 seats occupied by representatives returned from
functional constituencies. Political rights, though granted more to Hongkongers since the
1980s, remain the target and Hongkongers keep striving for their full realization.
However, there is a question as to the measures employed by both the colonial
government and the SAR government to secure their legitimacy. Moreover, as rights
implies responsibilities, how could these two governments mobilize Hongkongers to
maintain the community as a whole? The answer to these questions can be found in the
discussion of the advocacy of civic rights in Hong Kong.

Civic rights or market rights?
The fact that Hong Kong was ruled by the British government inevitably generated the
question of legitimacy of rule. Throughout the entire colonial period, the government had
employed two means to avoid any legitimation crisis. First, it refrained from interfering
in the Chinese society so as not to provoke and politicize the Chinese people in society.
Second, it adopted and advocated the principle of laissez-faire to justify its ruling. Free
trade, free labor and the free market were adopted as the “legitimate” principles for the
distribution of wealth, appropriation of products and property rights. As Lau (1983)
argued:

For a government that is colonial in constitution and can command only limited
moral authority and political trust, it is advantageous to appeal to political
market criteria to justify many of its actions and, deliberately or inadvertently,
to endow them with moral authority.

By stressing the sanctity of market principles, the colonial government allowed the
anarchy of exchange to operate in the economic domain. However, this led to a partial
realization of civic rights, in the light of Marshall’s definition of civic rights as those
freeing the individual and the private realm from interference by the public realm. Faulks
argues that:

the kinds of rights asserted by neo-liberals are best termed market rights…[that
refer to] those rights necessary to the maintenance of a capitalist economy. The
primary market right is therefore that of property. Market rights also include the
right to accumulate and spend wealth as one sees fit, to assert self-interest in the
market place, and to choose between a wide range of service providers.

(2000:64–65)

Applying this distinction between market rights and civic rights, we notice the partial
realization of civic rights by the colonial government. Three areas in particular merit our
attention.

First, concerning the contents of civic rights, only those rights related to market rights were endorsed while those pertaining to freedom were ignored by the colonial government. This situation has not changed much even in the period after the transfer of sovereignty in 1997.

The opportunities for free expression created for Hong Kong people seemed to be merely an ideological foundation for the colonial government. The imbalance of power and influence between the colonial government and the Hong Kong people was justified in terms of the government’s efficiency and acceptance (Rear 1971). Hong Kong people were depicted as “economic animals” focused on the pursuit of economic benefits, and were said to enjoy fully-fledged civic rights. Nonetheless, although the colonial government was successful in creating the impression that Hong Kong people were merely interested in issues happening within the economic domain, it was not the case that civil rights were granted to Hong Kong people and protected. As Rear pointed out:

one result of the 1967 disturbances has been to make it very difficult to make statements about the people enjoying freedom of speech and association. There is in law a very large measure of freedom of speech, subject to the usual safeguards. But there is a ready tendency on the part of the bureaucracy and those in positions of influence to write off any modest expression of radical opinion as either “Red,” “leftist” or “uninformed” without any attempt being made to meet the arguments presented. It has already been pointed out that the unwillingness of Government officers to face arguments is partly responsible for some criticism being uninformed. It has already been pointed out that the free expression of views on Government-controlled news media is also not fully accepted in practice.

(ibid.: 106)

Regarding the freedom of association, the police, who were granted extensive powers of arrest and search, had the power to intervene in the private lives of the people. According to the Public Order Ordinance, people were required to apply for licenses to organize public gatherings or assemblies of persons on seven days’ notice. Those who attended such gatherings without such a license were liable on conviction to imprisonment for five years or to a fine of HK$5,000 and three years’ imprisonment. Rear commented that “such freedom of association as exists is largely an unlawful freedom, and there is evidence that any form of organized public demonstration of a political nature will incur rapid punitive action” (ibid.: 107). In practice, the colonial government was oversensitive to politics. In 1978, the Director of Home Affairs refused the amalgamation of Mutual Aid Committees (MACs) in high-rise residential buildings. The reason given by the government was that the government did not “encourage MACs to group together because by so doing they might be involved in the game of politics and tend to be diverted from the original objective and instead try to gain political power and prestige” (Lau 1982:37).

However, with the advent of economic prosperity and mounting aspirations for more freedom, an increase of social protests was witnessed. Hong Kong people were
increasingly inclined to resort to collective action to press for their demands. In face of the rising trend of mass action, the colonial government employed a more responsive and lenient tactic in order to pacify the discontented masses. This reinforced the public’s view that Hongkongers were entitled to freedom of association and public demonstration. Even though the colonial legal system retained repressive rules that restrained the scope of civil rights, in practice the colonial government in the 1970s allowed Hongkongers to enjoy a higher degree of autonomy. In the 1980s, the Joint Declaration, with the endorsement of the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the Basic Law, in its Chapter III where the provisions for the fundamental rights and obligations of residence of Hong Kong were listed, clearly prescribed a wider scope of autonomy for Hongkongers. However, we did not witness any drastic enhancement of civic rights in the following period.

Since the government of the People’s Republic of China is not a signatory to the two international covenants, it is doubtful if the two covenants could be the ground for ensuring the protection of civil rights of Hong Kong people. In addition, while in 1992 the colonial government passed the Bill of Rights, the Standing Committee of China’s National People’s Congress scrapped this bill, and went further to pass an amendment to the Public Order Ordinance that resulted in restricting the civil liberties of Hongkongers. In 2002, the SAR government attempted to pass the National Security (Legislative Provisions) Bill that was deemed necessary by the government to complete the Article 23 legislation of the Basic Law. Although the SAR government issued a number of amendments, Article 23 was regarded as a tool for the government to restrict Hongkongers’ scope of autonomy. There remained a number of serious problems, such as “the offence of sedition will continue to be an offence designed to incriminate speech; proscription of local organizations will continue to incriminate mere association and additional search powers for the police will continue to be a concern for possible abuse.” This aroused public concern and resulted in half a million people taking the issue onto the streets. In September 2003, the SAR government postponed the legislation in response to the political demands of the people. At the time of writing, there is no clear sign of intention by the SAR government with respect to this political issue. Nevertheless, this issue reveals that Hongkongers are more conscious of their role in protecting their basic civic rights whereas the SAR government is inclined to restrict the civil liberties of the people.

Second, with regard to the extent of civic right in the market, the colonial government never allowed Hong Kong people to enjoy total freedom to enter the economy. While market rights granted to citizenship refer to the right to labor and investment, this did not mean that all people were allowed to invest and accumulate capital. The control over street hawkers reveals that the anarchy of exchange was only permitted within a designated range. The government prevented people from street hawking by defining hawkers as “illegal,” and by claiming it was illegal use of public space for economic activities, no matter whether the hawkers were licensed or not. The control of hawkers, in fact, reveals that the government played a critical role in defining the extent of market rights. More-over, if one looks at the underlying rationale for this measure, we can tease out a moral discourse that was, at the same time, governing the operation of the economic domain. Smart has pointed out that, in the 1950s, the control of hawkers was officially
justified by the reason of protecting the public from the many hawking-related obstruction and sanitary problems. But in a 1968 Hawker Report by the Urban Council there was a new line of argument that “the unrestricted issue of hawker licences is not in the best interests of the public; able-bodied persons ought not to be encouraged to hawk when they might be better employed in industry for the economic benefit of the community (HKRS 438, DS 1/8)” (Smart 1989). This shows that the government attempted to prescribe a moral yardstick for the correct way of life for Hong Kong citizens, that is, an able-bodied person was expected to be working for industrialists and for the benefit of the Hong Kong economy.

At this point, we should highlight the significance of the idea of the “depth” or “thickness” of citizenship as suggested by Faulks. By this, Faulks means to those issues concerning

how demanding or extensive should our identity as citizens be and to what extent should it take precedence over other sources of social identity and competing claims we have upon our time, such as family commitments or making a living?

(2000:7)

White and Hunt suggest a similar line of thought, that is to break with the state-centered conception of citizenship and treat citizenship as “a way of governing aggregates that draws subjects into participation in their mutual governance and thus involves relations with others and hence links to freedom” (2000:96). Most importantly, they point out that governing is not only about a relation of externality, of governing others, but also embraces the governing of the self. In the practice of citizenship, the care of the self is the main theme, through which an ethical way is constituted to require both self-mastery and attention to relations with others. Individuals are produced as the “subjects” who “are prepared to take responsibility for their own actions in their relations with others” (ibid.: 111). In light of this idea, we discover that while Hong Kong people were granted civil rights, they were produced as a particular kind of people. This can be shown by the fact that, in the 1960s, Hong Kong people began to learn how to live as modern economic actors.

Finally, Hong Kong people were said to be free for the pursuit of economic interests. In schooling and everyday socialization, they were appraised as having such good qualities as industriousness that contribute to the economic success of the society. More importantly, workers were expected to be “modern” in the sense that they ought to learn how to act according to an economic rationale. Owen (1970) pointed out that traditional modes of economic behavior were challenged and became gradually “modernized” in the 1960s through the import of and competition with Western methods.

In his analysis of the process of formation of Hong Kong identity, Turner also found that the colonial government promoted a new perception of identity for the indigenous Hong Kong people. As he argued, “separation from China demanded new self-images of the Hong Kong body, moulded by Western ideas of time, health and efficiency, and western ideals of posture, fashion and physique” (1996:38). The colonial authority, on the one hand, stressed the freedom Hong Kong people could enjoy, and, on the other,
promoted an image of “citizens” which was basically Western and modern. In the 1960s, as Turner maintains, the colonial government to some extent actively promoted new perceptions of identity, such as Cantonese-medium broadcasting and primary school education, the District Offices, or the precursors of the “Keep Hong Kong Clean” campaign. Hong Kong citizens were then said to be obliged to learn how to act as modern Hongkongers. The economy was portrayed as a place where Hong Kong people could enjoy freedom and also a place where they could enjoy personal transformation. In the Osaka Expo 70, the Hong Kong Pavilion featured images of a young woman who had been transformed by Western culture, training and fashion. The young woman was a fictional figure symbolizing personal development from a traditional girl (first seen posing picturesquely with a Tanka hat) into a westernized lady. The audience of the pavilion was told that “this ex-fisher-girl was rapidly trained to work in an advanced electronics factory. Her story demonstrates the adaptability of labor in Hong Kong” (Turner 1996:44). In another instance, for the promotion of the products of the first design students of the government’s Technical College, the image of two girls attracted public attention as the girls personified the Hong Kong ideology of modern design. The girls were “pictured in striking white mini-dresses alongside a range of shapely white glass fibre chairs” (ibid.:44). In this era, the government, in association with other institutions, such as mass media and education, promoted a new image of “citizens” who were not only skillful and diligent workers but also modern. The miniskirt, once seen as a symbol of the erotic and dangerous, was adopted as the outfit suitable for selling Hong Kong overseas or locally because it was said to represent boldness and Western assertiveness.

Turner also noted that in economic domain, Hong Kong women were taught to serve by promoting the ethos of “pleasing the client.” As the motto of the Federation of Hong Kong industries advocated, “it should always be remembered that Hong Kong manufactures to meet buyers’ requirements. The buyer says what he wants and what price he is prepared to pay—and gets the good to meet these.” Notice that the pronoun “he” is employed to refer to the buyers, and the idea of paternalism is naturally accepted as the appropriate moral principle between clients and service providers. However, the colonial government was happy with the products of this economic ideology. At least, it turned out to be a particular identity for Hongkongers who had few connections with Mainland China and the Communist Chinese government. As Turner points out:

in this hybrid between overdetermined, paternalistic rhetoric and the indeterminacy of popular experience, the population of Hong Kong came to identify themselves as “Heung Gong Yuen”, an ambiguous construction that was more than a “resident”, less than a “people”. Colonial authority supported this sort of esprit de corps, but until the social reforms of the MacLehose era, offered little more than bread and circuses. Even after the riots of 1967, the most elevated vision of society was that offered by the Federation of Hong Kong Industries, the soulless “Hong Kong Inc.,” in which society was pictured as a company run by managers, a business in which all would benefit from cooperation and efficiency.

(ibid.: 22)
The 1980s and the 1990s were a period of economic development in the same spirit, and today the SAR government remains committed to the view that Hong Kong people are modern and cosmopolitan, and can live up to the international standard of a continuously prosperous economy. The Chief Executive wrote in the 2000 Annual Report of Hong Kong that perceptions of Hong Kong internationally are keeping pace with our economic development. Recent research carried out as part of our review on international perceptions of Hong Kong establishes that the HKSAR is considered to be innovative, up-to-date, dynamic, intelligent, energetic, prestigious and distinctive.3

In order to render Hongkongers more competitive, the SAR government offers a series of courses for further education. What it has advocated falls in line with its commitment to life-long learning and continuous education. The SAR government continues the line of thought of the colonial government that self-reliance and being able to survive in the free economy are the expression of civic virtues. As has been argued, civic rights are equivalent to market rights, an axiom that has not changed even after the transfer of sovereignty.

Social rights as a form of self-organization

Marshall argued that with private property rights and profit-seeking as its essential features, a market economy was inevitably associated with unequal distribution of resources and opportunities. As a result, social conflicts emerged and the extension of social rights was the means to pacify discontent and restore social order.

Before the two riots broke out in 1966 and 1967, the colonial government appeared to be confident of its ability to rule and thus seldom employed social services to deal with political discontents. Citizenship-as-legal-status was undeveloped and Hong Kong people did not enjoy unconditional entitlement to social welfare. The colonial government in the post-war period was reluctant to offer direct social services. Neither housing provision nor social security was taken up by the colonial government, and education was mainly for those who could afford high school fees (see Chan 1996). The 1960s witnessed an expansion of the public housing sector. But this was only one of the strategies of the colonial government to create more land for industrialists. In the era of economic growth, the government cleared the land occupied by squatters in order to create more usable space for industrialists. The provision of resettlement in the form of public housing was certainly a tactic to avoid provoking massive protests and opposition (Ho 1989).

In fact, the expansion of the public sector and social services was a massive change by the government to tackle the political conditions that contained potential dangers and discontent clearly revealed through the two riots in 1966 and 1967. The formulation of new ruling strategies, however, was not pertinent to any measures expressing a new form of citizenship.

A planned provision of social welfare, a form of objectification of social rights, began in 1968. As Jones (1990) pointed out, it was only after the 1967 riot that the idea of
positively marketing social services was chosen as an aid to community development and took off under the leadership of Governor Sir Murray MacLehose. However, the provision of welfare had nothing to do with the concept of social rights designated as a way to achieve justice and equality. Jones was critical of the provision of social services at that time:

It is scarcely a welfare society in the making. For all the formal emphasis on integrating the likes of the disabled and elderly into the community, services pointed in this direction carry nothing like the cachet (let alone priority rating) of those not labeled as being exclusively (or even primarily) for the disadvantaged. Taxation is still looked on as the equivalent of theft; income redistribution is emphatically no business of Government; even pooling risks to the extent of setting up a Provident Fund continues (apparently) to be out of the question.

(1990:284–285)

We argue that the government was reluctantly drawn into delivering a range of services rather than being guided by any maxims related to the expression of social rights. This characteristic of social welfare in Hong Kong in this period is concomitant with the government’s crisis management. This is also the reason why there was no formal recognition of social welfare as an indisputable right. The social service sector continued to operate with an underlying principle in terms of charity and benevolence while the colonial government constantly reiterated that people should look to the family, voluntary agencies and the market for their welfare needs (McLaughlin 1993). Guided by this view, the colonial government reiterated that Hong Kong people remained responsible for their own livelihood, or individuals’ responsibilities could only be borne with the support of family and family members. This is the reason why, along with the expansion of social service, family service was also expanded.

In the 1970s, the colonial government launched a series of campaigns in which community-building and family-building were the core. This measure was subsumed under the banner of Family Life Education (FLE). Given that citizenship is related to loyalty, Hongkongers are obliged to be loyal to their families. This idea was promoted and reinforced through a series of annual consciousness-raising campaigns conducted by social welfare agencies in tandem with the Social Welfare Department. The salience of families was revealed by slogans such as “Building a Happy Family,” “Honour Your Parents,” “Love and Care Help Build up a Happy Family” and “Responsible Parenthood.” Through these campaigns, young couples were educated to understand the meaning of love and the enhancement of love in marriage, and the elderly were instructed to adapt to the younger generation. With the dominance of this ideological strategy of emphasizing the role of family, social rights were discussed only rarely in the Legislative Council.

We should also note that the promotion of care is not bound to one’s family members but also one’s neighbors and neighborhood. In order to develop a sense of loyalty to the Colony, Hong Kong people were instructed to “have a care for and take a pride in its neighbours and neighbourhood; to see its well-being and future as ultimately bound up
with the well-being and future of the Colony itself” (Jones 1990:222). The colonial authority, in fostering a sense of care among Hong Kong people, attempted to persuade the ordinary people of Hong Kong to become charity-conscious. The establishment of the Community Chest can be seen as the means to achieve this end. One of the citizens’ virtues then is learning to be the Hong Kong contributor-in-the-street. This reveals how the colonial government advocated families as the morally right form of self-organization (Ho 2000).

One of the consequences of the advocacy of family as the form of self-organization to support one’s livelihood was the poor development of community-building. Although there had been a decade of protest movements and community activism in the 1970s, grassroots organizations were often transient. This could be attributed to the situation that much of the official effort was invested in deprived areas which were characterized by the temporary nature of residence and lack of organizational resources. But decreasing involvement and investment by the colonial government in building residents’ organization and community networks were crucial factors. In view of the little organizational support for social rights, in the 1990s, the colonial government succeeded in marketizing public housing through the promotion of home ownership. Moreover, the government met little objection from the public regarding the reduction of the subsidy to the “well-off” public housing tenants. In other words, public housing provision appeared to be a means of catering for those who were unable to take care of themselves, but had nothing to do with social rights.

The lack of community-building effort resulted in poor communal networks and weak community-based organizational structures. From the administrative point of view, this was an effective way to ensure political stability since housing movement activists had no strong political power to challenge the government. However, the SAR government finally was faced with the negative impacts of this corollary of weak communal networks. After four years of economic downturn, the SAR government expected to motivate people to command community resources to tackle issues arising from unemployment and poverty. In 2001, the Community Investment and Inclusion Fund was established with the aim of using community resources to solve social problems. As the Chairperson of this fund admitted, “Hong Kong is at the crossroads—it is time for us to build up the social capital of Hong Kong. This will enable us to move forward during this difficult time and work towards building a strong, caring and harmonious community.”

Anyway, this new move indicates a change in the form of governance in the social domain. Citizenship is no longer understood as a right-based conception but as a desirable activity. The purpose of this move is politically-oriented. Community-building is not regarded as a collective form for the realization of social rights but as a form of self-organization. It is not a form of making claims to rights on the government but a form of self-reliance. Thus, the SAR government disbanded fifty-four government-sponsored Neighbourhood Level Community Development Projects but invested HK$0.3 billion in community-building, because the former, as indicated by the history of community movements, would bring forth political and welfare demands.

The SAR government gave up investing in this form of grassroots mobilization whereas it supported a new form of self-organization that was more likely to encourage self-help and self-reliance. The effects of this new move have not yet surfaced but this
merits more attention to see the extent to which the advocacy of self-organization will bring about a new conception of social rights in the future.

**Conclusion**

Hong Kong remains a place where market rights are predominant, and citizenship is just a premature notion as a guiding principle for Hongkongers. The main function of citizenship in a society is to govern society according to the principles of respect for others’ rights and an obligation to be involved in the task of maintaining common institutions that sustain these rights. People are expected to maintain the market and the logic of the anarchy of exchange, while political institutions are still in the hands of the elites and the civil servants in the higher echelons. We anticipate that Hongkongers, who now find themselves in an adverse economic situation and therefore hope to alter the economy, will feel a sense of political powerlessness. Social welfare seems to be guaranteed in the social domain. However, in face of the shortage of public funding, the SAR government has begun to advocate self-help and communal support, rather than provide more social services to enhance people’s ability to survive. Whereas the colonial government expanded the social service sector to deal with market failure and indirectly strengthened Hong-kongers’ awareness of their social rights, the SAR government relies more on non-state mechanisms to compensate for market failures and in the delivery of economic and social policies. Although there is no clear indication that the mode of self-organization will turn out to be the dominant form of governance, we surmise that Hongkongers will find it difficult to enjoy more social rights to state-supported welfare and state-sponsored social services in the future.

**Notes**

1 This is a quotation cited in Rear (1971:56). The quotation is from a speech by the Deputy Secretary for Home Affairs who said that his speech represented both his personal views and those of the Hong Kong Government.

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Welfare good or colonial citizenship?

A case study of early resettlement housing

Iam-Chong Ip

Introduction

Hong Kong’s early public housing project is an example of colonial modernity rather than a textbook case of the expansion of citizenship in the conventional evolutionary or Marshallian scheme (Marshall 1950). As compared with other Third World cities, this project, started in the early 1950s, appeared as a “premature” achievement of socioeconomic citizenship, while, in contrast, civil rights and political rights in the city were under-developed. This phenomenon illustrates the specific and conflictual process of transplantation of Western political ideas and institutions to the colonial context. That is, while the colonial state in Hong Kong shared with Third World cities the similar experience of over-urbanization and the rise of an informal housing sector, its responses to the housing crisis were mediated through the institutional and imagined relations between the state and the living environment, housing and the people, which when summarized can be considered as a “sanitary syndrome,” and were shaped by Hong Kong’s colonial experience since the beginning of British colonial rule.

Manuel Castells (1986), writing on the massive public housing projects of Hong Kong during the 1950s, was curious about the political will of the state. This chapter argues that the basis for this political will lies in the colonial state’s perception of “public health” and its relations to anxiety over “public order.” Yet, ironically it does not mean that the colonial government had devised an effective means to solve hygiene problems. Instead, the “sanitary syndrome” underlaid colonial policies and institutions to such an overwhelming extent that it displaced other concerns such as welfare until at least the 1960s. In this light, the historical formation of colonial discourses about “public health” and “public order” is crucial to our understanding of the development of social citizenship in post-war Hong Kong. In this chapter, we will explore the early colonial origins of the “sanitary syndrome,” and re-evaluate the resettlement housing project in the 1950s as a “semi-sanitary operation.” We will then conclude by discussing some of the implications for the development of social citizenship.

Colonial origins of the sanitary syndrome

In the mid-nineteenth century, when British colonialists ruled Hong Kong, what worried them most were health problems: sanitary conditions, epidemics, climate and illness
The colonial institutions, organized along the axes of sanitation, health and order, were critical to the urban development of Hong Kong, particularly in respect to housing. As in other colonies, this “sanitary syndrome” began with the bodies of the colonizers themselves and those of their soldiers, rather than with the “general public” (Arnold 1988; Ramasubban 1988). The colonizers felt that their bodies and those of their soldiers, the “pillars” of colonial rule, were seriously threatened. Governor Davis argued that “[t]he best answer to the whole is the remarkable immunity from disease which followed immediately upon the completion of fitting dwellings, efficient drainage, and other improvements” (11 April 1846, Blue Book; Jarman 1996:74).

“Fitting dwellings” and “efficient drainage” seemed to be the most crucial projects for early colonialism in Hong Kong, at least from the viewpoint of Davis. In 1856, the first housing ordinance, The Building and Nuisances Ordinances, related to “building” and “sanitation” was enacted. The sanitary concern of the early colonizers is illustrated in the close relationship between the issues of “building” and “nuisances.” Building became a discursive and institutional domain for colonial administration, construction and favorable living environment, which acted in metonymic terms for social and political stability, i.e. order.

Yet, even then, Hong Kong and its colonizers were by no means immune from disease and death, especially after they had greater contact with the Chinese. Their fear and anxiety over disease and death, their military power and their ruling authority soared. In 1881, the Colonial Office employed Osbert Chadwick to conduct an investigation into Hong Kong’s sanitary problem. The reason for this investigation, according to a letter by Sir J. Pope Hennessy, Governor, was that a military official complained that Hong Kong’s “sanitary state” was threatening his soldiers’ health. His complaint led the Colonial Office to send Chadwick to Hong Kong (1882; Jarman 1996:649–650). Chadwick’s survey was the first detailed examination of Chinese housing and his research field was the Taiping Shan area, a Chinese community. The plans in his report not only showed the internal structure of the Chinese tenement house but also drew the colonial gaze to the Chinese-built environment and led the colonial administration to look at the everyday life of the Chinese.

Osbert Chadwick proposed constructing an underground drainage system in Hong Kong and regulating Chinese buildings according to British standards. Governor Hennessy shared similar worries but arrived at a different solution. He argued that the “bucket system” for carrying sewage and refuse out of the town for agricultural purposes was much more feasible and favorable to the government and the Chinese people (1882; Jarman 1996:649–650). According to Hennessy, he was not alone among Europeans in preferring the local sanitary system to a western one and he cited the comments of Dr Dudgeon, a European medical doctor who argued that the Chinese did not suffer from their own “bad smells” (quoted in Hennessy’s letter to the Colonial Office, 29 April 1881; Jarman 1996:632).

But Chadwick insisted on his “law of health” as the universal one and the only way to reduce disease epidemics (Chadwick 1882:21). His major suggestions included technical solutions implementing western drainage and ventilation systems, and the establishment of the Sanitary Board to improve Hong Kong’s sanitary conditions. Under pressure from
the Colonial Office, the board was set up in 1883 and subsequently drafted the Public Health Ordinance for regulating sanitary conditions of streets and buildings. For example, all buildings were required to install ventilation systems because, according to Chadwick’s theories, crowded and enclosed spaces were the hotbed of disease (Chadwick 1882:27–28; Urban Council 1983:3; Endacott 1958:183).

However, these policies initiated discontent among the Chinese, especially flat owners and landlords because the Public Health Ordinance forced them to reduce their rental area and disturbed their everyday life (Endacott 1964:150–151). Ho Kai, a medical doctor, and other elite members collected 47,000 signatures opposing the Public Health Ordinance. The colonial government also suggested that four elected members be recruited onto the Sanitary Board. In 1888, Ho Kai, nominated as a member of the Sanitary Board, criticized the regulations pertaining to Chinese buildings as unreasonable. Quite correctly, he pointed out that all these regulations originated in the context of the British city. Indeed, Chadwick, in his report, had quoted The Metropolitan Buildings Act issued by the Local Government Board in Britain to argue that Hong Kong’s houses were sub-standard (Endacott 1964:150–151).

The concept of public health was borrowed by the British colonizers from the Public Health Movement in England in the late eighteenth century and the early nineteenth century. This movement reached its peak in the 1840s when Edwin Chadwick, Osbert Chadwick’s father, published his Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Population of Great Britain, 1842. According to Lupton and Pickstone, the Public Health Movement initiated by Chadwick in Britain was not a consequence of the natural development of scientific knowledge. Rather, it emerged from the specific politico-economic context in which capitalism and its form of labor control were established. This might be the reason why Chadwick could only influence London and a handful of industrial cities, as well as leading to legislation for the Public Health Department and public health, while his proposals failed to be implemented in many local governments (Lupton 1995:29; Pickstone 1992).

Although Chadwick’s proposal only found partial support in his own country, the colonial regime was able to bring his idea to full implementation, making Hong Kong a testing ground for the Public Health Movement. However, the original idea of this movement was changed and adapted to the priorities and needs of maintaining a colony. Chadwick’s original policy was to alleviate the miseries of the working class by expanding state intervention into the personal domain of health (Chadwick 1842:4). But this focus gradually shifted as his ideas were implemented in the colony, from reforming the laboring class’s health to the maintenance of colonial order with the well-being (including health) of the colonizers and the army as its center.

The idea of “public health” and the outbreak of epidemics was the basis allowing the colonial authority to investigate the Chinese community and its organizations. For example, in 1894, a serious plague occurred in Hong Kong and the government sent soldiers to examine each Chinese apartment, arrested all patients and placed them in isolation on a ship. All of them were subject to western medical care. This not only violated the Chinese community’s freedom but also their custom that patients were taken care of at home rather than treated in hospital or in an isolation cell. The health crisis gave the colonial authority an opportunity to cooperate with western medical science and
thereby intervene in the Chinese dwellings and Chinese customs. In 1896, for sanitary reasons, the Taipingshan area, a crowded Chinese settlement, was demolished by the government.

In *The Birth of the Clinic*, Foucault (1973) points out that all diseases have their domains of genesis, occurrence, development and treatment. Modern medical science not only envisioned a space of configuration for disease but also marked out the space of localization of disease itself. In other words, all pathological elements have a certain form, contour and configuration under the gaze of medical doctors. In the case of Hong Kong, the implication of colonial sanitary control was that disease was no longer an independent entity but was tied to the colonizers’ perception of the source of health and disease associated with themselves and those associated with the colonized. The Public Health Movement *located* diseases in Chinese dwellings or in their *habitation*. Their families were seen as the core of habitation, and therefore the family was no longer a suitable place for treatment. Consequently, patients should be removed from the family, the breeding ground of diseases, to another enclosed and isolated space for treatment, such as a hospital (or an isolation ship as was the case in 1894). Thus, colonial institutions transformed Chinese dwelling places and local medical institutions from shelters for sick people into breeding grounds for the spread of diseases and therefore made them subject to restructuring and even demolition in the improvement of public health.

At the turn of the century, the colonial government drafted and passed a series of ordinances for regulating local buildings: Public Health Ordinances (1887), Veranda Ordinance (1888), Building Ordinances (1889), the Closed House and Insanitary Dwellings Ordinances (1897), Buildings (Amendment) Ordinance (1898), Insanitary Properties Ordinance (1899), Public Health Ordinance (1901), Public Health Amendment Ordinance (1901) and the Public Health and Building Ordinance (1903). The latter was a milestone in the establishment of the development control institutions constraining Hong Kong’s urban development (Bristow 1984:52). In the eyes of the colonial authority, it would appear that the general public of the Chinese community was not a “civil” society. They were people who remained to be incorporated into a well-organized order. The colonizers found the Chinese way of life alien, repellent and harmful to both European and Chinese people. These colonial perceptions were consolidated in a wide range of sanitary regulations and institutions. The subsequent discussions and projects on housing, urban environment, and even welfare, continued to be dominated by these institutions and the colonizers’ perceptions.

**The failure of welfare policy**

The sanitary concern, as a colonial syndrome, continued to dominate the institutional changes in the early twentieth century and this colonial ideology greatly shaped and hindered the development of nascent welfare ideas and policies. The colonial concern with sanitation, cleanliness and order seems quite anachronistic when we take into consideration the social and political situation of China in the first few decades of the twentieth century. At that time, Hong Kong shared the political unrest of Mainland
China, and was plunged into severe social and political conflict which threatened to undermine colonial rule. The National Revolution (1911) and the May-Fourth Movement (1919), both driven by nationalism, challenged colonialism in Hong Kong. These nationalist movements derived their support from the grassroots of society because the world-wide economic recession after the First World War seriously affected the livelihoods of working people. Social and political grievances led to a series of mass strikes and boycott movements in the 1920s. In 1925 and 1926 Communist Party-led mass strikes, which were triggered off by an incident in which workers and students were attacked by Japanese and British occupying forces in Shanghai, left Hong Kong in ruins. Faced with these challenges, the colonial government continued to maintain its alliance with local elites rather than attempting to devise measures to appease the masses. As Tsai correctly observes, in the 1920s the colonial government failed to address the division of society into two conflicting camps, the lower class and the ruling alliance of the local elites and the colonizers (Tsai 1993).

Touched by social grievances and wary of explicit conflicts that might threaten colonial rule, a group of colonial elites within the colonial government began to think about social policy and ways to alleviate hardship. In 1935, a commission was set up to investigate the housing difficulties of Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. The report, completed in 1938, proposed public housing schemes and town planning, although it was still very much concerned with sanitation, development control of buildings, and slum clearance. However, it was made clear in the report that it was impossible to rely on private developers to provide housing for the lower classes (Housing Commission 1938:5).

This was the first time in the history of Hong Kong that the idea of public housing had been introduced by the colonial government, thereby treating housing as a form of social welfare and not as a form of sanitary control or merely as property. However, this new idea did not lead to any new institutional arrangements; instead, the colonial government intended to implement these new ideas within existing institutions. Consistent with past colonial traditions of associating sanitation and building, the Urban Council and the Public Works Department (responsible for construction) were called upon by the Governor to take up key roles on the Town Planning Board and in the planning of public housing.1

Shortly before the Japanese Occupation in 1940, H.W.Owen, Secretary of the Housing Commission, suggested that a Trust should be set up to handle town planning and housing (Owen 1940:43). The suggestion was based on a Singaporean model but the colonial government in Hong Kong refused to adopt it. However, the situation changed after the Occupation. Although the Urban Council was still under the control of the colonial administration, Dr Hon J.P.Fehily, Chairman of the Urban Council, was ambitious enough to propose new policies to deal with housing problems that had become especially acute after the devastation of war. In 1949, the Urban Council proposed to build bungalows and tenement houses for the lower classes and the Chief Architect drew up a few plans. However, the proposal did not receive support from the officials of the Public Works Department who saw technical problems associated with the building site and the water supply. Furthermore, the Financial Secretary refused to provide any public funding for the scheme except for the supply of cheaper urban land.2
There was also opposition from the private sector. Lo Man-Kam, a non-official Legislative Council member, opposed the plan for financial reasons and instead urged the government to solve the housing problem by simplifying the procedures of land lease renewal and land sales in order to encourage private developers to build more apartments.3

In 1951, with a grant from the Colonial Development and Welfare Fund, the Model Housing Society and the Hong Kong Housing Society started two pilot schemes of public housing at North Point and Sheung Li Uk. These two projects were completed in 1952 (Hong Kong Government 1953:18). The projects were intended to provide three-storey tenement buildings with independent flats for the middle-lower class. Different from later resettlement housing design, each flat had its own kitchen and toilet.4 However, these pilot projects did not gain support from government officials such as the Financial Secretary and the Chief Building Surveyor, who opted for designs that could tolerate higher resident densities and lower building costs, and who were willing to sacrifice accommodation quality for lower costs.5 There were no further large-scale projects after the completion of these two pilot schemes. It appeared that regarding the building of public housing, economic considerations still super-seded welfare concerns. In other words, there was no consensus about housing as welfare among colonial officials at that time. There would be no institutional support unless the objectives of the new scheme of public housing were perceived in a different way—one compatible with colonial concerns with public order and sanitation.

While the living environment remained the object of colonial rule and an important source of the government’s revenues (see the discussion in the next section), it was difficult to form a consensus on social welfare among officials. Welfare ideas and other related political considerations (such as alleviating class inequality and poverty) were marginalized on the official agenda. The new social and political situation did not radically transform the colonial perception and fantasy of a sanitized urban order. Therefore, the expansion of social citizenship by no means followed the Marshallian model of welfare state and advanced capitalism.

The rise of the “semi-sanitary” operation

The failure of welfare policies before the Second World War offers an intriguing contrast with the birth of the Resettlement Block, as a semi-sanitary operation, concerned with public health and public order. After the Sino-Japanese war, the civil war began in Mainland China and resulted in a great influx of refugees to Hong Kong. There was widespread squatting and the number of squatters rocketed from about 30,000 in 1947 to about 300,000 in 1949 (The Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55:2). While housing policy remained to be debated within the colonial government, its most direct response was regulation and control. In September 1948, the Governor, together with the Executive Council, drafted the new Public Health Ordinance, which conferred more power to the police, public work- and health-related departments to take action to clear and manage the squatter housing.

The impression has been that the state did not intervene in the squatter areas until the
Shek Kip Mei fire in which more than 50,000 people were made homeless (Castells 1986; Li and Yu 1987:50; Liang 1999). It seems that the drastic increase in fire victims compelled the government to introduce resettlement policies and to redraft existing housing policies. Yet there is evidence to suggest the contrary, and that the existence of squatter areas as a problem threatening urban order and sanitary conditions had received attention from the colonial government before the occurrence of the Shek Kip Mei fire. In 1951, the Urban Council and the Sanitary Department were made responsible for the administrative work of the resettlement areas (Chairman of Urban Council and Director of Urban Services 1948–49, 1949–50). Residents affected by the government’s clearance action were resettled to officially designated areas and they built their squatter houses in these permitted areas with little or no support from the government. Squatter houses built within these areas were required to meet the size and standard imposed by the government. In some cases, a government-sponsored company called Hong Kong Settlers’ Housing Corporation might be commissioned to build squatter huts which would in turn be leased to residents in need. The rent was about HK$35 per month. However, this policy failed to meet the housing needs of most people because poverty-stricken residents could not afford this amount (Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55:4) or the designated areas were too far away from the residents’ workplaces. Besides these permitted areas under strict control, the government designated some tolerated areas in which squatting was less strictly regulated (ibid.: 2).

Despite government efforts to resettle refugees, the number of squatters continued to grow outside both permitted and tolerated areas. For example, the Shek Kip Mei squatter area was neither permitted nor tolerated by the government. The number of victims in this fire was as high as 50,000, exceeding the total number of people living in the permitted and tolerated areas. Thus the fire did not mark the beginning of government management of squatter areas, but was merely an incident exposing the failure of official policies.

At that time, the government did not have any public housing policy but rather an urban sanitary operation because it did not conceive of the problem of squatter areas as a “housing problem” at all. In that year’s Urban Council Chairman’s report, it is stated that more than 0.35 million people lived in unsafe and unsanitary squatter houses (1950–51:9). It proposed an increase of the permitted area in order to bring the unsanitary environment under control. Indeed, both the permitted areas and tolerated areas were means of social and sanitary control (Chairman of Urban Council and Director of Urban Services 1950–51:4). In other words, in line with the framework of their predecessors who dealt with the tenement houses in the early colonial period, the officials perceived the squatter problem as a sanitary or public order problem.

After the Shek Kip Mei fire in 1953, resettlement housing emerged. It was the beginning of public housing construction by the government. But why did the government initiate this project of resettlement housing? This remains a controversial issue. According to the official history of the Housing Authority, there are two reasons: the first being that the number of victims was so great that financial or material aid would cost more than actually building the houses, and the other being that clearance and resettlement created more land for real-estate development (Hong Kong Housing Authority 1978; Liang 1999).
Although the first explanation seems reasonable, it fails to explain why this became a relatively long-term policy rather than merely an *ad hoc* measure. The number of victims in this fire set a record but before it there had been many other fires in squatter areas involving between 10,000 and 20,000 victims. For instance, in January 1950, 20,000 people lost their homes in the Kowloon City squatter area alone. In November 1951, 15,000 people were made homeless in another fire (Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55, 3). Although these were disasters of a scale comparable to the Shek Kip Mei fire, the government did not provide resettlement for the fire victims. Furthermore, the cost-effective considerations cannot fully explain why the government also resettled residents affected by government clearances.

The second explanation is supported by some scholars (Hopkins 1971; Mitchell 1972; Pryor 1973; Drakakis-Smith 1979), but is criticized by Alan Smart. He may be the first to notice the importance of the Hong Kong government’s colonial character in understanding post-war Hong Kong housing development. Smart has pointed out that after the Japanese left, the colonial state was not interested in providing a great amount of land for development despite pressing demands for land on the part of real-estate developers and the genuine housing needs of the people. During this period, real-estate development was not the government’s major concern.

The Hong Kong government was not simply a capitalist instrument facilitating the operations of various markets, such as the property market. This instrumental perspective fails to explain why the government built the multi-storey towers for resettlement rather than merely clearing them out of the urban center (Smart 1992:31). Smart’s explanation with regard to resettlement policies emphasizes the economic and political balance of the colonial state. In Hong Kong, the colonial state categorized all land as *Crown land* under its control and the land revenue had remained a key revenue source for the government from the beginning of colonial rule. In order to realize and maximize the monopoly rent of the Crown land and to boost the land price to maintain the stability of government revenue, it had to control land supply to ensure that there was no oversupply of land, rather than increase land supply by clearance. However, this high land-price policy placed a great burden on the working class and then affected the cost of industrial production. Hence, building public housing was the most effective way to control wage demand and land development (ibid.: 39). Smart adds that housing clearance often created politicized or quasi-political resistance. The resettlement policy was deployed to placate the grievances of the lower class and to mitigate social antagonism (ibid.: 42).

Smart’s analysis convincingly shows the politico-economic structural constraints implicated in the policy consideration and puts the colonial state and its policy back in the colonial context. However, he confines the colonial context to the interests of the colonial state, rather than interpreting how the colonial authority understood and interpreted its interests. Interests are intelligible only within ideological vocabularies and a comprehensive understanding demands a close reading of the discourses of the official documents and the relations between *interest* and *ideology*.

The responses of the Urban Council and other institutions to the fire were new interpretations of the sanitary concern and sociopolitical interests. When the government intended to set up a working task group to study the resettlement problem of the victims in the Shek Kip Mei fire, it recruited the chairman of the Urban Council as a group
member. In 1954, the Housing Authority was also under the supervision of the Council. The importance of sanitary institutions was the consequence of the failure of consensus on welfare. And the officials stated clearly that resettlement housing was not a “welfare operation”:

A good deal of thought was given to the squatter’s own position and his relationship to the clearance organization. On the one hand he was breaking the law and there was certainly no reason why he should be offered privileges or favours denied to the rest of the community. In other words *squatter clearance and resettlement was not a welfare operation in any sense*. What was required was not primarily to improve the living conditions of that section of the community which happened to be breaking the law relating to the occupation of Crown land: the task was to devise a *rapid and practical method*, at a cost at least less than prohibitive, of removing, *in the interests of the whole community*, *the fire risk and the threat to public health and public order* presented by the worst squatter areas.

(Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55:30, my emphasis)

In fact, the working group perceived and conceived the resettlement problem as a sanitary measure targeted at public health:

Squatters are not resettled simply because they need, or necessarily because they deserve, hygienic and fireproof homes; they are resettled because the community can no longer afford to carry the fire risk, health risk and threat to *public order* and *public prestige* which the squatter areas represent, and because the community needs the land of which they are in illegal occupation. And the land is needed quickly.

(ibid.: 46, my emphasis)

Likewise, the Director of Medical and Health Services stated clearly that the squatter fire was a “very serious public health problem” (The Director of Medical and Health Services 1953–54:14). In the report written by the Urban Council, the chairman mentioned the policy consideration and repeated a similar concern about public health and order:

[The Urban Council sub-committee] said that the routine of huge fires each year was quite unacceptable, that considerations of *health and public order* demanded rapid and effective action, that it was ridiculous for the economic and social progress of the Colony to be strangled through a land shortage which could be to a great extent relieved if illegal structures could only be removed from large tracts of valuable land, that *the squatter areas were a very serious blot on the Colony’s prestige*, and that the problem should now be faced and dealt with even if it meant very heavy capital expenditure.

(Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55:7, my emphasis)

The Shek Kip Mei fire symbolized the breakdown of the old sanitary institution and order while Resettlement Housing offered a means to rescue the sanitary fantasy. Hence, the
“Public Health/Sanitary Syndrome” as a colonial heritage, in Anthony King’s words (1990), needs to be understood in a new context. The sanitary concern was related to the reputation of the colonial authority, the government’s budget, and commercial interests. That is why the Urban Council, which was a machine regulating urban order and sanitation, was highly involved in what was ostensibly a housing issue. And the Commissioner for Resettlement stated repeatedly that the sanitary order concern overrode other concerns, such as social welfare (Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55:30). He also added that this was not a legal issue because they were forced to build their squatter homes and the number of squatters was so large that it almost made up a tenth of the whole population and legal prosecution was therefore useless. The resettlement policy was not intended to provide any privilege for a certain group of people; instead, the government was concerned with the best interests of the community and a practical solution to the problem of “public health.”

There was a big difference between the early idea of a welfare housing project, raised by Owen and the Urban Council in the years 1949–51, and the idea of resettlement housing. While the idea of welfare housing failed to overcome the sanitary fantasy and related institutional barriers, the large-scale public housing project seems to be impossible without the justification of improving public order and hygiene. Indeed, the government was very worried that the new subsidized housing would kill private housing; the sanitary concern seemed to be able to reduce its worry. The colonial bureaucrats did not view resettlement housing as a response to the soaring housing demand caused by the great influx of refugees; instead, the crisis provided an opportunity to articulate the colonial concern with public housing, and its implications for public health and order. This articulation also shaped the specificities of the resettlement housing.

**New community, new citizen**

As soon as the resettlement blocks became operative, stricter regulations were imposed on the squatter areas. In 1954, the Resettlement Department, under the supervision of the Urban Council, was established with the duties of patrolling the squatter areas and prohibiting any new built structure; registering all temporary structures; clearance and resettlement; and the management of the resettlement areas. The last of these listed duties was intended to create civil order within the resettlement areas. The Urban Council viewed the management of resettlement areas as a form of social engineering for the new citizen:

> These are the persons who, if the resettlement estates are to be successful, have to be assisted to build up *orderly communities*; they have to learn self-respect and respect for the rights of their neighbours; they have to be taught to make the best of the simple accommodation provided, to forget the defeatist attitude towards dirt and disease which pervades the squatter areas, to take advantage of such social services as the Colony is able to offer to her people. They are the *new citizens*. A random group of ten persons in a Kowloon street probably
contains at least one of them.

(Commissioner for Resettlement 1954–55, 40, my emphasis)

The project of the resettlement block brought about a special kind of citizenship expansion as well as a form of cultural cultivation or enlightenment. In a report by the Commissioner for Resettlement, some examples were provided to illustrate the educational function of their housing management. In one of his examples, the staff of the Resettlement Department taught residents to buy proper rubbish bins. They also advised the people how to choose materials for partitioning for the sake of health and convenience. According to the same rules, no commercial or family industrial work would be allowed in order to maintain harmonious relations with neighbors (ibid.: 41).⁷

These concerns with public health, community, social order and civic virtue were the principles of resettlement management, which, for the colonial state, was the first experiment in regulating the masses directly. The entire resettlement project could be seen as a laboratory experiment for running a miniature of a sanitary city. And the “citizens” were imagined as people following sanitary rules and living under the colonial enlightenment project.

Examining the design of the first resettlement housing blocks furthers our understanding of the colonizers’ sanitary concern in these projects. Officials admitted that the resettlement housing was “substandard.” Each block was a multi-storey tower in an “H shape” where each arm had two lanes of back-to-back units. Each unit, with the area of 120 square feet, accommodated five adults. All units were surrounded by a common passage or terrace, with staircases at the four corners. There was no toilet in the units. Instead, a public toilet and laundry room were installed in the middle of each arm.

Some features of the design are noteworthy. Each unit had one side facing the terrace for light and air. The back-to-back design helped to maximize the number of units in limited space. In order to let air pass through two back-to-back units, there were some womb-like holes on the separating wall. To make provision for nuclear families, two back-to-back units would be merged into a single bigger unit to increase the living area. A kitchen and toilet could be installed in this bigger unit and the public terrace could be changed into a private one. But this was not actualized until the 1970s. This design envisioned an imagined community with an ideal “nuclear family” as its foundation. The plan to expand the unit into an independent apartment was a promise and the aim of this official movement: a civic culture with the nuclear family as its center. Each resettlement area was a quasi-imagined space for the quasi-new citizen, living in a civilized way and enjoying their nuclear family life. In reality, it might only be an imagined space and a microcosm for the colonizers to resolve their sanitary order anxiety.

The institutional system regulating tolerated and permitted or licensed areas was parallel to that which regulated the resettlement estate and public housing which began in 1955 but which was implemented at a very slow rate. In 1955, the Resettlement Division within the Urban Council was developed into an independent department called the Resettlement Department, and made responsible for the management of squatter areas and resettlement estates. The government’s housing policy continued its strong regulatory function at least until the 1960s. The commission established in 1964 proposed to demolish all temporary structures in tolerated areas and moved all squatters to licensed
areas. The squatters in the licensed areas remained there until the government decided to develop that area. The Commissioner’s Report regarding resettlement policy repeatedly stated that the policy of resettlement estates was intended to resettle only those residents who were temporarily occupying Crown land required for development. Other residents, such as those living in the illegal roof-top squatter houses and the structurally dangerous tenements, were not taken into consideration at all (Working Party on Government Policies and Practices with Regard to Squatters, Resettlement, and Government Low Cost Housing 1963:5). Even the survey of housing conditions in Hong Kong was beyond the scope of this policy commission (ibid.: 21).

Despite the colonial rhetoric of sanitation, there is a large gap between the reality and the government’s imagination and even the officials recognized it. In 1899, P.Ayres said that sanitary conditions had not improved despite the enactment of many regulations and ordinances. This might have pushed the colonial authority to further indulge in sanitary operations. According to a survey in 1958, more than 7,000 residents still lived in tenant houses with back-to-back designs built before 1903 (Maunder and Szczepanik 1958). And as mentioned above, the resettlement housing designs including the “semi-back-to-back” partition still remained sub-standard according to the colonial government’s principles.

**Conclusion: the politics of social citizenship**

To conclude, in the case of housing, the development of citizenship in Hong Kong did not follow the evolutionary process of a “schematic” capitalist or modern society. The social citizenship represented by the grand project of resettlement housing in the 1950s was initiated and maintained by the restructuring of the colonial state in the post-war context. Behind the concept of “citizens” lay the control of the population and a civilizing project. The idea of citizenship was a dominant idea imposed on the people and was a historic-ideological formation foregrounding the changing colonial society and imagination. In order to understand the formation of institutional or sociological subjectivity, one needs to examine continuously changing discursive formations rather than structurally fixed positions (Hall 1992:277). In particular, the colonial sanitary syndrome has various implications for people’s subjectivity and citizenship.

The widespread sanitary institutions and measures regulating people’s bodies and living environments were both a modern and a colonial phenomenon. The Chinese in Hong Kong first of all came to be defined by the official institution not as “citizens” but as subjects under the governance of sanitary power, and this institutional subject formation paralleled the process of the making of the colonial state. The changing sanitary institutions and discourses emerged from the colonial transplantation of a power/knowledge system from western countries, particularly the Public Health Movement in England, to Hong Kong. It is by no means a coincidence that Hong Kong’s sanitary system was initiated by Osbert Chadwick, son of the pioneer of this movement, Edwin Chadwick. In other words, Hong Kong experienced its modernity through the birth of biopolitics collaborating with the consolidation of the colonial power (Arnold 1988; Foucault 1997). The ideological and institutional association of sanitary concern
with the housing problem was built up in the colonial encounter and provided a set of vocabularies and perceptions for the colonial officials to develop the resettlement policies and system. If we have to understand the supply of public housing by the government as some sort of “citizenship,” particularly in the first two decades after the Second World War, we must understand the colonial context behind this notion of “citizenship.”

This discussion of the colonial experience has further prompted us to reconsider the nature of housing as social space. While state-sponsored housing is not a simple welfare good, we can further reveal the sociohistorical relations implicated in the living space. Housing is not only a physical unit or an object, but a terrain subject to political power, state ideology, and dominant fantasies. The various themes, including interpretations of the building style, reading the ideologies behind the details of design, the changes of functional components of the buildings, and subjectivity deserve further exploration.

Notes

1 Speech by the Governor, Sir Geoffrey Northcote, Hong Kong Hansard (South China Morning Post), 13 October 1938, p. 121; Despatch 140 of 28 February 1939 (CO 129/581/13, Public Record Office, Hong Kong).
2 Cheap Housing Schemes, 1949, HKRS 156/1/1899 (BL 21/736/49), Public Record Office, Hong Kong.
5 Memorandum of March 1953 from the Financial Secretary, at 49 in BL 18/736/50II, Public Records Office, Hong Kong; Paragraph 16 of a memorandum from the Chief Building Surveyor to the Director
7 According to an information leaflet delivered to the residents, settlers are encouraged to operate small shops or workshops in their rooms according to certain rules, such as holding a trade license, applying for permission from the Urban Services Department, etc. (J.M.Rowlands, Chief Resettlement Officer. 1954. Information leaflet for persons being resettled in Multi-Storey Resettlement Estates. 20 April 1956. HKRS 163–1–1742, Public Record Office, Hong Kong).

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The expansion of nation-states in the past couple of centuries has led to an emphasis on public education and citizenship education world-wide (Wong 1991; Meyer et al. 1992). With the establishment of modern school systems world-wide, every nation-state or government has sought to convey its ideal of citizenship and nationhood through its school curricula. Citizenship is increasingly expected to be taught in formal lessons and has become an increasingly significant part of the school curriculum. States around the world have focused attention on using the school curriculum as a medium for transmitting political culture to the younger generation, with social subjects officially designed to acquaint students with nationalistic values and particular political ideologies.

The appearance of citizenship education in the Asia-Pacific region is a very recent phenomenon, mainly the outcome of colonialism which brought the Western education system as well as nationalism to the region (Tse 2003). For many places in the region in the post-war era, new civic education was triggered by decolonization and national independence. With the retreat of colonialism, many former colonies inherited a modernized polity as well as a plural society which was ethnically divided in terms of religion, languages, political loyalty and ideological orientations. These circumstances prompted the need to establish a national education system and the adoption and development of nationalistic education—a concern common to many new nation-states. Citizenship education thus became the social cement of national identity in order to foster unity and commonalities among a population undermined by economic, ethnic and political cleavages.

One salient trend observed in the development of citizenship education is that it often follows larger societal changes. And one of the most eye-catching cases is the post-colonial transition and change of sovereignty exemplified by Hong Kong in the late 1990s. Hong Kong, formerly a British colony and now a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China, is as an anomalous and interesting case when examining the development of citizenship education over the years. To a certain extent, Hong Kong’s belated decolonization and hence democratization, its special international position, together with the transfer of sovereignty from the British government to the Chinese government in 1997, have resulted in a peculiar path of citizenship education in Hong
Kong when compared with many other states in the region—most notably the marginalization of civic education in the colonial period and the advent of nationalistic education in the post-colonial era.

As a colony or an SAR, Hong Kong has never been a nation-state or a democratic polity. Civic education in this quasi city-state thus displays certain features that distinguish it from a conventional unitary model of national citizenship. It was alien, conformist and depoliticized in nature, alienating students from their indigenous nationality and local politics and fostering students as “residents” or “subjects” in a colonial state rather than “citizens” in a nation-state. Since the 1980s, the progress of decolonization and national reintegration has triggered new changes for school civic education in Hong Kong, which resulted in the active involvement of the government in promoting civic education, most notably the publication of two sets of official guidelines on civic education in schools in 1985 and 1996. Following the resumption of Chinese sovereignty, civic education in Hong Kong mainly aimed at building nationalism and patriotism, and at strengthening the teaching of the Basic Law and the concept of “one country, two systems.” Furthermore, with the accelerated pace of globalization in recent years, there is an immanent tension between “localism,” “nationalism,” and “globalism.” Increasing global interdependence and international exchange require school education to foster the essential abilities and skills necessary for living in a global village. When facing globalization and international competition, balancing national and international identities, while at the same time reconciling identity and differences, remains a problem not yet fully solved.

This chapter begins with a brief discussion of the development of citizenship education in modern times in Asia. Then it gives an account of the continuity and change of civic education in the colonial era up to the present period. After highlighting the distinctive features of civic education in the colonial and SAR periods, we then examine the official hegemony project and its inherent tensions. Finally, the chapter ends with a brief review of the practices of civic education in schools and discusses their implications for the making of adolescent citizenry and the citizenship movement. As will be shown in the following sections, in the course of the development of civic education, there have been fierce disputes and contests concerning the meanings of citizenship—particularly the contention between nationalistic education and civic education. However, with the assertion and reinforcement of ethno-cultural nationalism in the official civic education discourse, the alternative discourse of civic or multicultural nationalism has been marginalized or excluded (Brown 2000). A paradoxical result is that the state project of civic education is running counter to the making of an empowered citizenry.

Civic education in the colonial era

Critics of colonial education usually accuse the school of being an apparatus of colonialism and imperialism which consolidates the legitimacy and authority of the colonial rulers over indigenous people (Carnoy 1974; Altbach and Kelly 1991). Unlike the cases of mainland China and Taiwan from the 1950s to the mid-1980s in which citizenship education was highly politicized, civic education in Hong Kong in the same
period was in a state of poverty (Tse, K.C. 1997a; Tse, K.L. 1998). During this period, Hong Kong as a British colony followed an a-political educational system in which civic education was marginalized (Wong 1981; Tsang 1984, 1994, 1998; Morris and Sweeting 1992; Tse, K.L. 1998). The colonial government tightly controlled the educational system through the prohibition of political activities in schools, the provision of official curricula and model syllabuses, as well as official approval and exhortation of textbooks (Morris 1992a). To counter-balance the political influence from mainland China and Taiwan, the government was particularly sensitive and suspicious towards political issues in education and avoided political education as an explicit educational objective. In addition, legal constraints on political activities made nationalistic education taboo in most schools. Consequently, civic education in this period was “a-nationalistic” and “a-political” in nature, detaching the students from their indigenous nationality and local politics and molding them into residents or subjects rather than citizens (Morris 1992b; Tsang 1994, 1998). As such, civic education in this period served to contain the challenges of nationalism and, in turn, to consolidate colonialism.

Civic education and its politics in the transitional period

The introduction of political reforms geared towards a representative democracy system and the stipulation of China’s policy of “One country, two systems” gave an impetus to civic education in Hong Kong during the transitional period from 1984 to 1997 (Bray and Lee 1993). Accompanying the process of decolonization was partial democratization from the early 1980s. With the introduction of representative government in 1982 and the political reform package brought in by the last Governor, Chris Patten, in 1993, the scope of democratization was extended. Civic education was thus responsible for enabling Hong Kong’s future citizens to exercise their rights of voting. However, the pace of democratization progressed slowly and tortuously. Party politics has had an extremely short history in Hong Kong as direct elections were not introduced to the Legislative Council until 1991.

More importantly, unlike many former British colonies heading towards independence and nation-building, the experience of Hong Kong is unique in its reintegration into an existing socialist state, China, and, at the same time, maintaining a high degree of autonomy and a capitalist way of life. With the designated return of Hong Kong to China in 1997, the question of national identity or a change in political membership became a pressing issue for the future local SAR and national governments as the change of sovereignty meant that Hong Kong people acquired a new identity as citizens of the PRC. Years of separation between Hong Kong and mainland China and the different ways of governance had led to Hong Kong’s distinctive socioeconomic development and the emergence of an indigenous culture, and in turn, a sense of Hong Kong-centeredness and “Hongkongese” identity (Lau and Kuan 1988; Choi 1990, 1995a). These circumstances prompted the need for reform of the colonial education system and the adoption and development of nationalistic education. Civic education thus becomes the social cement of national identity to foster unity and commonalities among a population alienated from its homeland for years.
In fact, civic education in Hong Kong is like its embedded social milieu in miniature. Viewed in a conflict perspective, the citizenship movement in Hong Kong over the years could be interpreted as a series of political empowerment struggles on the part of Hong Kong citizens against political containment by the governing authorities, either the Hong Kong (British) or Chinese governments (Tsang 1998). Full of struggles and conflict, the citizenship movement has thus simultaneously been a complicated interplay of patronage by the colonial government, domestication by the Chinese government and the quest for empowerment by the local civil society. And the disputes concerning civic education during the transitional period aptly illustrated this scene. Tsang (1998) argues that the citizenship movement and hence its related civic education in Hong Kong have been trapped in a triangle of tensions between the colonial British-Hong Kong government, the Chinese government and the Hong Kong citizens. And the conflict over citizenship concentrated distinctly on the issue of democracy—the essence of political citizenship.

This situation of citizenship development in Hong Kong has also repeated itself in the realm of civic education. The colonial government has tried to maintain the status quo and the subject political culture and has been half-hearted in initiating civic education and unenthusiastic about a participatory civic education program. Meanwhile, in congruence with the domesticating stance taken by the Chinese government, its supporters have emphasized nationalism and patriotism in civic education, with the intention of diluting anti-communist sentiments and taming the defiance of the PRC government, on the one hand, as well as controlling the quest for growing democratization or potential separatism in Hong Kong, on the other. At the same time, some individuals and groups, small in number, weak in strength and fragmented in organization, have been persistent proponents of civic education for democracy, human rights, rule of law, and global citizenship, but they are marginalized in the dominant civic education discourse and practice.¹

In response to the changing local socio-political milieu and public concern over civic education in the early 1980s, the Hong Kong government finally adjusted its stance of depoliticization and played a more active role in promoting civic education, as evident in the publication of the Guidelines on Civic Education in Schools (henceforth Guidelines) in 1985 which initiated the most explicit civic education movement ever in Hong Kong’s history (CDC 1985:26–41). In hindsight, the 1985 Guidelines were a half-hearted preparation for the future Chinese citizenry by the colonial government. The government showed a lukewarm and reactive attitude towards promoting civic education (Lee, S.M. 1987). Albeit within these limitations, the Guidelines and government stance did give the green light for school civic education after years of political taboo. It also opened debates and controversies regarding the proper objectives, nature, content, and ways of implementation with regard to civic education (HKPRI 1998a, 1998b; Lee, W.O. 1999; Lee and Sweeting 2001). But the major disputes lay in the priorities and desirability of nationalistic education.

The conflict over civic education started when there were suggestions to increase the identification of Hong Kong students with the Chinese nation-state. The Chinese government and its supporters stated that there was an acute “identity problem or crisis” of the Hong Kong Chinese which lay in the reintegration of capitalist Hong Kong with socialist China. The rise of a strong local identity, together with the distrust of China,
resulted in an assertion of Hong Kong identity against a Chinese identity. Political reintegration of Hong Kong with China would then require reintegration at both cultural and social levels. Requests for more nationalistic education were thus made by the Hong Kong Federation of Education Workers (a “pro-China” teachers’ union), Education Convergence (an education concern group), officials from the New China News Agency (Hong Kong Branch) and the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, members of the Cultural Group of the Preliminary Working Committee (PWC) for the establishment of the first Special Administrative Region of Hong Kong, and the future Chief Executive, Tung Chee-hwa. Advocacy for nationalistic or patriotic education was in many cases mixed with anti-colonial sentiments. And their views also triggered counter-arguments from many others (Choi 1995b, 1996; Man 1995, 1996; Amnesty International Hong Kong 1996; Lee, N.K. 1997; Leung, Y.W. 1998; Leung and Cheng 1998) who disapproved of the over-emphasis on nationalistic education and patriotism at the expense of rationality, personhood, democracy and human rights. All denounced colonial education and exhibited anti-colonialism but diverged in their precise positions. While the nationalist camp embraced reunification with the homeland and called for nationalistic education, their critics showed reservations about the desirability of nationalism and instead highlighted the values of human rights and democracy, as well as a distinct local identity on the part of Hong Kong. They were also worried about “recolonization” or “internal colonialism” in the form of suppression of local identity and the jeopardization of individual freedom and rights after the handover.

To a certain extent, the disputes over civic education exhibited the inherent tension of “two systems”—“One country vs. SAR” or “Socialist China vs. Capitalist Hong Kong.” While some were concerned about how to make Hong Kong a part of China (emphasis on the one country in the “one country, two systems” policy), many people were also worried about the logistic of having “two systems” operating within “one country.”

Closely related to these controversies, the political content and recommendations made in Chinese history and history subjects and textbooks, the introduction of local history in the curriculum and the teaching of history after 1997 became the foci of public attention and disputes, given that these issues were directly or indirectly linked with civic education. These issues also triggered worries of increasing central intervention or bureaucratic control regarding local curricula.

Under the pressure of the PWC’s Cultural Group, the colonial government finally set up an ad hoc group in 1995 to draft new guidelines. These various interpretations of civic education were also reflected in the new guidelines, which were in turn a product of political compromise. To win wide recognition and acceptance from all groups in the community, the Ad Hoc Working Group of the new guidelines deliberately accommodated different interpretations of civic education and bypassed the debates and disputes about the orientations and the struggle for priorities of civic education. Divergent conceptions of citizenship proposed by different parties have pushed toward a more diffused, increasingly pluralistic, complex and multi-dimensional and ever-expanding scope of citizenship education, thus making the almost “hotchpotch” civics curriculum. With its eclectic treatment of the aims and components of civic education, the new guidelines’ orientation was a mixture of individual change, mild social change and pro-autonomy values (Leung et al. 2000). For example, the major aims of the
Guidelines 1996 are as follows:

1 To enable students to understand how the individual, as a citizen, relates to the family, the neighbouring community, the regional community, the national community and the world; and to develop in them positive attitudes and values conducive to the development of a sense of belonging to Hong Kong and China, so that they are ready to contribute to the betterment of society, the state and the world.

2 To help students understand the characteristics of Hong Kong society, and the importance of democracy, liberty, equality, human rights and rule of law.

3 To develop in students critical thinking dispositions, and problem-solving skills that would allow them to analyze social and political issues objectively and to arrive at a rational appraisal of these issues.

With the publication of the 1996 guidelines and the handover of sovereignty, the controversy over civic education and opportunities for confrontation were sidestepped. With official endorsement and support from the new government, the nationalistic education discourse has successfully submerged and displaced other competing civic education discourses. Meanwhile, the general public and youth have become less resistant to civic education and Hong Kong’s integration with China as time went by.

**Civic education in the SAR era: the official nationalistic education project and its inherent tensions**

Hong Kong’s real transition is not merely about sovereignty, but also about identity. It is ironic that Hong Kong’s decolonization was leading to “nationalization” without full democratization. As the process of decolonization moved on, democratization was forced to retreat and some human rights gained in the later years of colonial rule were taken away, subordinated to the imperatives of national sovereignty and nationalism. In addition, civil citizenship and social citizenship are under threat after the handover, as evidenced in several instances such as the forming of the Provisional Legislative Council; the re-amendment of the Public Order and Societies Ordinances in 1997 by the Provisional Legislative Council; the abolition of two municipal councils in 1999; and the drafting of Article 23 of the Basic Law regarding national security. Even judicial independence, in the past repeatedly emphasized by the British colonial government and repeatedly guaranteed by the Beijing government, had to follow the decision of the National People’s Congress concerning the case of right of abode in 1999. All these speak of the democratic regression and deterioration of the rule of law and human rights, and a curtailment of citizenship of the Hong Kong people, and raise doubts about the level of autonomy that the SAR will have in practice and the viability of “two systems” in “one country.”

Since its early days, the first SAR government has been troubled by the problem of a legitimacy deficit and the first Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa was eager to demonstrate his capability and build up his reputation. To engineer a new state project, Tung has highlighted education as one of the three top priorities of his new administration. In his
inaugural address he pledged to draw up a comprehensive plan to improve the quality of education in the new era with extraordinary emphasis on civic education and patriotism. In addition, and placed above all other concerns, he called for the creation of a society proud of its national identity and cultural heritage. Tung’s public speeches (Tung 1997a, 1997b, 1997c, 1997d, 1998a, 1998b, 2000a, 2000b) have stressed again and again the role of education in developing national identity and citizenship. Hong Kong was said to have a colonial history which resulted in a poor understanding of Chinese civilization and history; and education should help boost people’s understanding of Chinese history and culture, and allow them to recognize their Chinese identity. He reaffirmed fine traditional Chinese values and emphasized individuals’ fulfillment of obligations and acceptance of responsibilities rather than pursuit of their rights. Civic education was said to give young people a deeper knowledge of China, Chinese culture and history, the “one country, two systems” concept, and the Basic Law. Civic education served to foster in youth a sense of attachment and solicitude for the nation, so that they would have national pride as Chinese and be willing at all times to contribute towards the well-being of not just Hong Kong but also the entire Chinese nation. Tung has also called on the community and organizations to work together to develop young people into confident and responsible individuals. These goals have been reiterated by all senior officials responsible for education and have become a cultural hegemonic state project in tandem with national reunification and nation-building.

Upon critical analysis, the recurring themes of the official discourse are the promotion of traditional Confucian values and virtues, a focus on the obligations and responsibilities of individuals towards the community and country, a stress on societal values and the avoidance of confrontation (Morris and Morris 2000a, 2000b; Morris et al. 2000). However, the “Chinese culture” or “Chinese” is treated simply as an abstract, coherent and positive package, instead of a “common project” shared and constructed by its members in a community based on equal and democratic participation. Put this way, the moral foundation of national identity is never fully deliberated and examined. The grand narrative of “Chinese identity” also hides its internal heterogeneity and overrides the diversity and complexity of regional and ethnic variations. Implicit within a Han—or mainland-centered ideology, the overarching Chinese identity is dominant whereas inadequate attention is paid to racial diversity and equality in Hong Kong. More worrying is that Chinese identity is too easily reduced to identification with the political regime in mainland China.

Obviously the major purpose of the state project is to create unquestioning political commitment and strengthen social order through the promotion of a unifying Chinese identity and values to the exclusion of a distinctive Hong Kong cultural identity and individual rights. An emphasis on harmony and hierarchy in Confucian ethics is quite different from the ethos of individualism and equality in Hong Kong. The relations—and obligations-centered Confucian ethics is also at odds with the individual rights-based notion of citizenship. Even when human rights were mentioned in the official discourse, it was asserted that they were well respected and would be safeguarded by the government and are entrenched in the Basic Law, with its legitimacy and authority taken for granted. Still further, democracy was accorded a low priority. Even when democratization was discussed, it was within a cautious, gradual approach where young
people were to be turned into an educated electorate who would exercise their democratic rights properly. Students should appreciate the importance of elections and voting, and know the composition and functions of the legislature. However, the idea of democracy falls short of discussion and deliberation.

The themes stressed above by Tung have been most obviously incorporated in the school education system through a number of measures. In the past six years, we have witnessed the reintroduction of independent civics as a school subject, revisions of school syllabuses, the strengthening of Chinese history as a school subject, textbooks changed to reflect the new political reality, wider use of Putonghua as the medium of instruction, more and more schools displaying the national flag and singing the national anthem, and more and more programs for participation in community services and exchange activities with the mainland to boost nationalism and sense of social responsibility. Also, new aims of education incorporating nationalism were promulgated, financial incentives were provided to schools and NGOs offering civic education programs or activities. Outside schools, a series of civic education programs was launched and a range of promotional activities and publicity materials were organized by the Committee on the Promotion of Civic Education (CPCE) and the Home Affairs Bureau to boost nationalism among Hong Kong’s teenagers.

As such, we can see that the emphasis was placed on promoting students’ understanding of the Basic Law, the “one country, two systems” principle, and knowledge of China and Chinese culture. Official civic education explicitly aims at enhancing students’ sense of belonging to the HKSAR, identifying with their home country or motherland and making contributions to the global community. Civic education is to help local children and teenagers become “good citizens,” establishing their positive values and attitudes such as responsibility, commitment, perseverance, respect for others, and national identity (CDC 2001, 2002). Today, Hong Kong society is in turmoil. Economically, it is caught in a painful process of re-structuring. Socially, ideological differences and income disparities have created rifts among the people. Against this background, building an adaptive and harmonious community has become a pressing issue on the official agenda. From the official perspective, to save a society from further division and disintegration, we need to foster a spirit of solidarity (citizenship) that can facilitate isolated individuals to coalesce into a community, and encourage each individual to think from self to society to service. It is also salient that nationalistic education and education on the Basic Law have been given higher priority than educational concerns for democracy, human rights, rule of law, global education and critical thinking. For example, the introduction of independent civics and the changes to the Chinese history curriculum involve strengthening a sense of belonging to Chinese culture and values, while citizenship as a form of “competence” continues to be neglected. Hong Kong history has been reinterpreted as “local history” in relation to the greater and more inclusive “national history” of China, with an emphasis on its close relations with mainland China for thousands of years. In addition, “real politics” is kept out of discussions.

Eager to remind Hong Kong people of their cultural roots and to promote their national consciousness, the SAR government has sponsored various civic education programs and cultural events over the years. These have caused much discomfort, if not discontent,
among many local people who wondered whether Hong Kong was to be “mainlandized” (Hong Kong iMail, 5 April 2001). With the tendency to override localism in favor of the promotion of nationalistic education and national identity (Siu 1996; Kan and Vickers 2002:82–84; Vickers 2002; Vickers et al. 2003), the cultural, historical and ethnic commonalities of Chineseness are often achieved at the expense of the subordination of minorities and ethnic groups, and silence of dissenting voices. For instance, new immigrants, ethnic minorities and migrant workers in Hong Kong are systematically discriminated against in different areas such as accommodation, employment, education, social welfare, and so on (Home Affairs Branch Hong Kong 1997; Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor 2000). However, these situations have until recently received only scant attention from the government and the public, let alone educational concerns.

Paradoxically the nationalization of civic education is accompanied by a process of “apoliticization.” While Hong Kong is no longer a colonial state, outside the academic domain, the discourse of post-colonialism has had little impact on the discussion of Hong Kong’s situation among the general public. It is also ironic that the official efforts to strengthen patriotic education and the national consciousness of the younger generation by adding nationalism to education have run exactly counter to what the current education and curriculum reforms are intended to achieve—catering to the needs of individual students for an all-round and unique development, and nurturing students’ critical thinking and analysis skills (CDC 2001). Taking the history curriculum as an example, the objectives of the latest attempt by CDC to reform the school curriculum are to adopt a learner-focused approach that suits the needs of different students and to develop their ability to learn by shifting the teaching method from memorization to a more pro-active one. However, a question left unanswered is how we can reconcile the incompatible aims of building up identity and patriotism and critical thinking. If the new approach is meant to help students better comprehend what happened in China, it should not preclude the study of history from non-Chinese perspectives and critical ways. The worst that could happen to the curriculum is to replace one brand of ethnocentric bias with another and fall into the trap of conflating history education with nationalistic propaganda (SCMP editorial, 14 July 2001). In a similar fashion, when compulsory Chinese language and civic education become routines of school life after reunification, at stake is whether post-1997 school education will tolerate a critical and contested conception of national citizenship or become merely another means of the political indoctrination of parochial ethno-cultural nationalism.

In view of the downturn of the Hong Kong economy in the aftermath of 1997, local senior officials kept on crying over the crisis of Hong Kong and highlighted the importance of maintaining Hong Kong as an international financial center and Hong Kong’s long-term competitive advantage in a difficult period of economic restructuring, triggered by the Asian financial crisis, and made necessary by the emergence of a knowledge-based economy and China’s accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001. It is common wisdom that Hong Kong’s fate is tied inextricably with that of the mainland, in particular the Pearl River Delta region. It is said that economic integration will evolve more rapidly with China’s entry into the WTO, as well as the signing of CEPA (Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement) between
the SAR government and the central government in 2003. With fears that Hong Kong will be left behind in global competition, Hong Kong must find its niche in the globalized economy and reposition itself as an international city of China that requires an adjustment in the mind-set and beliefs of the Hong Kong people. To fulfill their obligations as Chinese nationals following Hong Kong’s reversion to the sovereign state, and to capitalize on the vast opportunities on the mainland, young people in Hong Kong are expected to possess the knowledge, skills and attitude for interacting with their fellow Chinese on the mainland. Young people are told that they have to find their roots, take pride in their Chinese heritage, and identify themselves with the interests of China, their “motherland.”

However, with the accelerated pace of globalization and international competition in recent years, the relations between “localism,” “nationalism” and “globalism” have become more complicated, thus making a reconciliation of national and international identities a difficult and problematic task. The contestation between “China’s SAR” and “Asian world city” also mirrors the tension between nationalized and global citizenship. Symbols of Hong Kong are tailor-made for different audiences based on very different political and economic considerations. On the one hand, under the framework of “one country, two systems,” Hong Kong is presented to China as an alienable part of China. On the other hand, in the post-colonial era, Hong Kong’s image or identity, cast in a business-like manner, is also strategically presented to the world outside as an “East meets West city,” an Asian world city, or a gateway to mainland China, serving the purposes of boosting business and tourism. This poorly defined identity is thus ambiguous, hybrid, incoherent and sometimes contradictory. With the glorification of its modernized, capitalistic, cosmopolitan character and the celebration of the recovery of Chinese identity, the shallowness of both national and international flavor as well as of Hong Kong’s apolitical identity remains unchallenged.

The continuity of def ormed citizenry and the unfinished struggles for empowerment

With the changes in the socio-political milieu since the mid-1980s and the change in government policy towards civic education, the recent state of civic education in Hong Kong schools has shown both subtle changes and continuity. The salient change is that with the transfer of sovereignty and the active promotion by the SAR government, nationalistic education has established itself as a patriotic hegemonic state project, although whether it will take effect is still unknown. On the other hand, a striking continuity with the past is that what is transmitted to the students is still conformist in nature, detaching students from both “macro-politics” in the society at large and “micro-politics” in the school. In most schools, democratic education is basically absent. Instead, the dominant orientation of official civic education programmes is still in the mode of “citizenship transmission” and mainly concerned with developing the nationalistic moral virtues of a good resident and promoting good and co-operative relationships with the government, rather than a more reflective and critical approach to political literacy. And even more discouragingly, many studies have called the actual practices of civic
education in schools into question (Leung, S.W. 1997; Tse 1997b; Lee and Leung 1999; Chung 2000; Morris and Morris 2001). At most there was only a modest success in transmitting knowledge, and the effects on attitudes and values were even more problematic. Because of shortcomings in school teaching, students were generally poor in cognitive and analytical abilities, and in communication and participation skills. So it is not surprising that Hong Kong students have great civic knowledge but show little inclination for confrontational behavior at school or in politics, as the latest report of the largest study on local citizenship education conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA) in 1999 has revealed (Torney-Purta et al. 2001; Steiner-Khamsi et al. 2002). Although Hong Kong students were found to be among the top five of the participating countries in their knowledge of citizenship, democracy and the responsibilities of government, students preferred social to politics-related activities and expressed reluctance to take part in confrontational or violent political acts. Not surprisingly, there was a lack of an open classroom climate. Student unions’ participation in school affairs was usually limited to organizing activities, and provocative discussions on politics were discouraged (SCMP, 25 May 2002).

In view of the fact that the civics courses in many schools are taught primarily in a rote learning style, much in contrast to the stated purpose of civic education, there has been a promotion of student-centered and individualist pedagogies over the years. Curriculum designers are trying to bridge the gap between knowledge and action, which is to encourage students to think in a reflective and critical way, as well as to encourage participation in public life. Accordingly, reforms in curriculum, pedagogy and assessment have been endeavoring to improve a currently ill-informed citizenry. However, whether these measures can produce any substantial effect remains questionable. A common observation is that classroom teaching has changed little despite advocacy for years, that is, there appears to be a large discrepancy between the intended curriculum and the actual one implemented in classrooms.

While there are some government schools in Hong Kong, most are non-profit and/or religious schools which receive public funds under a code of aid which stipulates the quality of education and inspection in broad terms. Correspondingly the Hong Kong government gave the schools a free hand but did not make civic education a compulsory subject. In reality, the issue of the official guidelines did not bring radical, fundamental and swift changes in the implementation of civic education at the school level since their implementation lay in the hands of individual sponsoring bodies and heads of individual schools. Accordingly, the concrete policies, organization and measures of implementation among different schools were diversified (HKPRI 1998a, 1998b). As such, this decentralized school system, together with multiple voluntary associations in a relatively vibrant civil society, allows much room for struggles from below and a myriad of citizenship practices which could contribute to alternative and contested notions of citizenship.

Even more important, a truly “democratic citizenship education” is not possible without a corresponding change in the social milieu. In fact, given the prevalence of non-democratic politics in Hong Kong, the political realities dictate that most civic education is oriented towards a “patriotic and compliant subject and enterprising individual,” instead of education for genuine democracy and social transformation. Further-more,
carried with very utilitarian and instrumental considerations such as disseminating national propaganda and developing human resources in a global competitive world, the official civic education program also runs the risk of fulfilling the political and economic imperatives instead of humanistic and democratic concerns. As such, the civic education program in the post-colonial educational system could better serve to prepare Hong Kong’s younger generation for national integration and global competition, instead of the further development of self-governance in Hong Kong on the part of the common people. The official civic education program serves more to breed students as patriotic subjects/nationals and competitive global people rather than competent citizenry. There have been ample occasions for the government to remind people that “one country” comes before the “two systems” in relations with the mainland. However, there have been doubts about the precedence of “one country” over the “two systems,” and there has even been talk of Hong Kong reverting quickly to “one country, one system” (Standard editorial, 29 June 1999). Given that Hong Kong is on the verge of “recolonization” (Chow 1992; Scott 1995), the fate of civic education will become a barometer of the status of citizenship in the days to come. After all, civic education itself is a part of the ongoing struggles of citizenship empowerment vis-à-vis state paternalism and tyrannical capitalism. And the anti-Article 23 campaign which resulted in the mass rally on the 1 July 2003 did become a catalyst for a new wave of citizenship movement and open the possibility of re-shaping the course of citizenship education in Hong Kong.

Acknowledgments

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Notes

1 Most remarkable are the Tiananmen Square Democratic University, the Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union (HKPTU), the Hong Kong Christian Institute, Amnesty International Hong Kong (AIHK), the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor, the Hong Kong Human Rights Commission, the Justice and Peace Commission of the Hong Kong Catholic Diocese, Oxfam Hong Kong, and Greenpeace Hong Kong.

2 The first controversy emerged in early 1994 when the Preliminary Working Committee’s Cultural Group began to discuss the revision of the curriculum and textbooks after 1997: the textbooks should not be contradictory to the Basic Law, and the colonial favor should be eliminated. The fear of central control or censorship on curriculum and textbooks arose again in June 1994 when the then Director of Education, Mr Dominic S.W.Wong ordered a publisher to delete an account of the Tiananmen massacre from a new Form Three Chinese history textbook. Another issue touching upon the question of bureaucratic influence over the Hong Kong curriculum arose in September 1995 when the PWC’s Cultural Group made
recommendation to make Chinese History a compulsory subject and the inclusion of Hong Kong history in the subject Chinese History instead of World History.

3 See particularly *Hong Kong Human Rights Situations after the Change of Sovereignty (May 1998)*—*A briefing Paper Summarizing What’s Going on with the Human Rights Aspect in Hong Kong* by the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor and *Human Rights Watch Reports on Hong Kong* in recent years.

4 According to Mr Tung, one of his major policy planks is to raise the quality of education, starting from basic education so as to build Hong Kong into a world-class cultural, education and scientific research center. See *Chief Executive’s Policy Agenda* (http://www.info.gov.hk/ceagen.htm) and Speech by the Chief Executive of HKSAR on 4 July 1997 (http://www.info.gov.hk/hk1997/handover/tung704.htm).

5 Based on the principles in the 1996 Guidelines, the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) produced a syllabus for the new subject “civic education” at junior secondary levels and introduced to schools from the 1998–99 school year onwards.

6 The revisions of the primary General Studies, junior secondary Social Studies and Chinese History curriculums have been completed. A salient trend of the impact of 1997 handover on the secondary school curriculum was an increase in the topics allocated to the study of China, the relationship between Hong Kong and China, Hong Kong’s political transition, and a specific reference made to the Basic Law. For details, see Hughes and Stone (1999).

7 To strengthen national identity among students, all junior secondary school students will have to study Chinese history and culture under comprehensive curriculum reforms. Under the plan to be introduced within the next five years, secondary schools will either teach Chinese history as an independent subject or as the key ingredient of history lessons (*SCMP*, 14 July 2001).

8 Putonghua, the national language, was included in the school curriculum starting from Primary 1, Secondary 1 and Secondary 4 in the 1998–99 school year. A new curriculum for Primary 1 to Secondary 5 was developed with specific teaching points on Chinese culture. In the long term it was planned that Chinese medium schools would use Putonghua as the medium of instruction.

9 From 1998 onwards the Director of Education encouraged schools to fly or display the national flag, especially on important occasions. Schools are also encouraged to play the national anthem where appropriate. The Education Department also produced a special educational television program entitled *Under Our National Flag* and broadcast on TV channels.

10 In the past few years, the Education Department and schools have organized various student exchange activities in mainland China, such as visits to Beijing for Community Youth Club members, inter-school sports competitions and nation-wide computer software competitions for young people. Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have regularly organized youth exchange activities between HKSAR and the mainland. Through the CPCE, the Commission on Youth, the Chinese History and Culture Educational Foundation for Youth, and Quality Education Fund, the government has also been sponsoring a number of NGOs to organize more cultural exchanges, trips and study tours for young people to visit the mainland. In addition, students from Primary 4 to Secondary 7 were recruited to join
Community Youth Club (CYC) through their respective schools in 2002. A conservative youth organization was founded in 1978 with the motto of “Learn, Be Concerned and Serve,” the Club takes the form of school clubs engaging in a wide range of extra-curricular activities under various themes such as conservation, consumer education, anti-narcotics, anti-crime, respect for the elderly, positive attitude towards life as well as community services in Hong Kong.

11 The Education Commission took Hong Kong’s return to China into consideration when reviewing the education system and formulating the new aims of education for HKSAR. Patriotism as emphasized by Tung was formally placed on the education reform agenda. In tandem with the Education Commission’s efforts, a holistic review of the curriculum across all levels of schooling was conducted between 1999 and 2001. Moral and civic education as well as community service are treated as among the five essential learning experiences for whole-person development, with the aims of developing students’ personal character and interpersonal skills, and establishing their values and attitudes such as responsibility, commitment, perseverance, respect for others, and national identity as a priority for personal development and improving society. A promotion of moral and civic education is highlighted as one of the Four Key Tasks for the next five years.

12 With the setting up of the Quality Education Fund in 1999, schools will have more opportunities to organize activities to stimulate students’ civic and national awareness. Also, to strengthen civic education in schools, financial incentives were provided to secondary schools offering civic education as a separate or integrated subject from the 1996–97 school year onwards. Meanwhile, a HK$2.3 million “Chinese Cultural Projects Incentive Award Scheme” was established in 1998 by the Education Department to promote understanding of their country among students and to inculcate in them a Chinese identity.

13 For instance, to mark the 50th anniversary of the founding of the People’s Republic of China in 1999, the government spent HK$4 million on cultural and educational activities during National Day Celebration Week with the theme of “Heart and Hopes for our Motherland and Hong Kong.”

14 The majority of places in Hong Kong from primary school upwards were provided either free of charge or at highly subsidized rates. In the 1999–2000 school year, 1,199 aided schools were in the care of 504 sponsoring bodies.

15 A recent attempt is the “Civic Education for Civil Society Project” held by the Hong Kong Christian Institute in 2002, for example. Regarding the global citizen, an active NGO in this area is Oxfam Hong Kong, a member of Oxfam International and an independent development and relief agency based in Hong Kong (http://www.oxfam.org.hk/).

16 Of course, there are other contradictory concerns and counteracting processes with regard to patriotism, which are beyond the scope of this chapter. For instance, a notable paradox in the official discourse is a collective-oriented national subject juxtaposed with an individual economic man. Perhaps it is exactly the formation of this specific economic and political animal in the market place and public domain which is endorsed and celebrated by the SAR government, which also reflects a strange blend of economic neo-liberalism with political paternalism in the official
mind-set. For a discussion of the enterprising individual, see the introductory chapter.

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The making of the “ideal citizen” in schooling processes

Gender, differences and inequalities

Anita Kit-wa Chan

Unfortunately, at some time during the 1980s, the pendulum had swung from old-style elitism to the other, egalitarian extreme, and nowhere has that been more evident than in, again, education... As a result, standards deteriorated, and we were asked to believe that mediocrity ought to be acceptable so long as it was equally shared... What I am rooting for is the new kind of elitism—open, meritocratic and strongly altruistic in outlook ... I am sure this New Elitism is also the kind that most of our citizens would espouse. It is in essence the spirit of Hong Kong!

(Tung Chee-hwa 2001)  

Since the 1980s, in response to the rising panic about the deteriorating standard and declining competitiveness, various initiatives have been proposed to reform the educational system in Hong Kong. The restructuring aims not only to improve the quality of education, but, as the speech of the Chief Executive cited above implies, it signals the coming of a new social order and a new citizenry. Some studies have already expressed concern about the changes on exacerbating social inequalities, especially the different access to good quality education by students of different classes. However, thus far, few have examined the effects of these changes on citizenship and on gender relations and identities, or have questioned the desirability and accessibility of the ideal citizenry constructed in schools. Drawing on insights from critical and feminist studies, this chapter attempts to fill these gaps and expand the educational critiques by problematizing the actual making of (gendered) citizens in schools through the lived experiences and subjectivities of young schoolgirls.

In the following, I shall first discuss the theoretical discussions on educational restructuring, citizenship and gender before outlining the recent changes that have occurred in Hong Kong. Then the chapter will show the specific making of ideal citizens in Hong Kong schooling processes by first examining closely the experiences of young girls studying in elite mission schools, then comparing those with girls studying in band 4 and 5 neighborhood schools, i.e. non-elite settings. It is hoped that by showing the processes and practices in schools in differentiating and normalizing social and gender
differences and in constructing unequal citizens, this chapter can help challenge the claim of our educational system as a fair meritocracy, the neutrality of schooling processes and the desirability of “competitive individual” as a new citizenry.

**Educational restructuring, citizenship and gender**

In the past two decades many developed countries, in response to an uncertain global restructuring economy, have brought in market principles and ideas of new managerialism to improve the economic returns, efficiency, standard and accountability of their educational systems. Critical studies have argued that the educational restructuring is attributable to the ascendency of neo-liberalism. The marketized reforms proposed are intended to redefine education more as an economic activity than a social, political or moral activity, so that economic rationalism rather than egalitarianism becomes the dominant guiding ethic (Whitty 1998; Ball 1999).

These reform initiatives have two profound impacts on the understanding of citizenship. First, they constitute a new citizen-subject, i.e. an “enterprising individual,” for students. On the one hand, students as citizens-to-be are regarded as human capital; they have to develop necessary skills and dispositions to help their country to compete efficiently and effectively in an increasingly competitive world economy. On the other hand, they are also hailed as rational autonomous individuals/consumers who should be instrumental and entrepreneurial in orientation, self-actualizing, and always maximize their own benefits (Apple 1998). Second, the reforms entail a reconstruction of the meanings of democracy and equality. As the market is believed to distribute resources more efficiently and fairly according to individual effort, the customer’s rights rather than the citizen’s rights are to be protected and privileged. Educational concerns have been increasingly shifted from about justice and equality to concerns about competition and efficiency. Gordon and her colleagues have succinctly summarized the impacts of these educational changes on citizenship:

> Marketization in both rhetoric and organizations has led to the marginalization of equal opportunities considerations, and the competitive “consumption” of education; entrepreneurship has become requisite for the “citizen-to-be”, the requirements of national identity and nationhood are laced through the curriculum.

(2000:51)

If critical studies have highlighted the possible changes on citizenship and equality, feminist studies have further deepened the discussions by problematizing the very notions of citizens and their constructions in schools. Feminists argue that men and women have unequal access to the notion of “abstract individual” and “enterprise individual,” before and after the educational restructuring, because both are masculine, if not male, dominated. For instance, the notion of citizen in liberal democracy assumes the existence of an “abstract individual,” who has to transcend one’s social differences in order to become a citizen (Pateman 1988). Citizenship thus defined is premised upon a series of dichotomies, i.e. a split between the spheres of culture and nature, public and
private, rationality and emotionality, mind and body, and a celebration of the domination of the first pair over the latter. Moreover, while men were assumed to be “naturally” rational, women were symbolically associated with emotionality and the sphere of nature, and thus were excluded from the public sphere and denied citizenship rights.

Such a male and masculine-dominated notion of citizen has shaped the education systems in Western liberal countries. Historically, girls’ access to education in these countries came much later than boys and one reason for the extension was to prepare women as moral cultivators of future (male) citizens (Yuval-Davis 1997). Even when equal opportunities to education are achieved, boys and girls are not treated as equal citizens. Studies show that gender is a pervasive organizing principle in school lives and is embedded in the formal and hidden curriculum, in the unofficial and physical school, which regulate and naturalize gender differences, divisions, and inequalities (McDonald 1980; Riddel 1992; Gordon 1996). Through differentiation and segregation practices, extra-curricular activities, disciplinary control, authority structure, the use of space, social interactions, girls and boys are steered to different gendered routes to citizenship.

Differentiation aside, schools have also normalized masculine citizens as the ideal by marginalizing and devaluing women, femininity, and the private sphere as “the other.” For example, Victoria Foster (1997, 2000) shows that schools valorize and privilege male-dominated subjects and skills, such as science and technical subjects, as the only valid knowledge but belittle and devalue female-dominated subjects and values, such as the curriculum of care, humanities, and ethics. Furthermore, girls are positioned within the “deficit framework,” and are expected to emulate the masculine qualities, namely, those ideal qualities of the “abstract individual,” in order to succeed. Such a normalization process implies that women have to overcome the qualities of “the other” and can be at best “second-class citizens.” Indeed, when girls do make inroads into traditional male spheres in schooling and even outperform boys, their success is not celebrated but causes great alarm. The recent moral panic about boys’ under-achievement actually reveals an implicit fear against “space invaders,” namely, girls, who are seen to have illegitimately encroached on a system that has been designed to create “male learner-citizens” (Kenway 1996; Foster 2000).

The new ideal citizen—subject—the enterprising individual—as espoused by neo-liberalism in recent educational restructuring is no easier for girls to become. Not only is it still built on the notion of an abstract, rational, independent (male) individual, it also calls for the cultivation of new qualities, such as instrumentality, entrepreneurship, hyper-autonomy (i.e. one is the maker of his/her own life) and the ability to hide one’s feelings and fears in an aggressive marketplace. In particular, it privileges competitive individualism over collectivity, collegiality and co-operation (Kenway and Epstein 1996). Lurking behind these new qualities is an image of a white middle-class male with “entrepreneurial masculinity” (Kerfoot and Knights 1993; Collinson and Hearn 1994). In fact the qualities embedded and emphasized in the new citizenry and the recent educational restructuring have been found to exclude and marginalize women and femininity (Leonard 1998; Whitehead 1998).

These do not imply that all girls are losers in the schooling processes. Blackmore (1998), for instance, has remarked that the girls of the middle classes are likely to have more choices in a devolved, marketized education system as their parents can afford fee-
paying schools. Other studies have also shown the differential educational achievement and experiences among girls, which are related to the ways that gender intersects with class, ethnicity, and sexual orientations (Kessler et al. 1985; Grant 1992; Epstein and Johnson 1998).

Furthermore, girls are not passively indoctrinated; they actively appropriate, negotiate and contest the meanings provided by schools. While the notions of citizen may be imbued with masculinity, which regulate their understanding of democracy and (in) equality, girls do attempt to position themselves within the masculine discourse and experience their identities with pain and pleasures, fears and desires (Walkerdine 1989; Walkerdine and Lucey 1989). In other words, it is possible that girls can become ideal (masculine) citizens, but their subjectivities are bound to be fraught with contradictions.

In short, these critical and feminist insights have raised important issues to be considered in relation to our educational reforms and, more basically, the schooling processes and their construction of citizens. They alert us to the changing meanings and identities of citizenship and equality as introduced by marketized reforms. They urge a closer examination of the very meanings and qualities of the “ideal citizen” produced in schooling processes, and the unequal access and difficult appropriation for students. It is with these insights that I am going to examine the recent educational changes in Hong Kong and the unequal citizens that different schools produce.

The “quality turn” in Hong Kong’s educational system

Compulsory free primary education was introduced in Hong Kong in 1971, which was later extended to junior secondary schooling in 1978, allowing all eligible children to receive nine years of free education. The latter change was accompanied by the abolition of a highly selective examination, i.e. the Secondary School Entrance Examination. The introduction of mass education was primarily to do with the legitimation crisis of the colonial government and pressures from the international community (Cheng 1987; Scott 1989). The universal provision did help establish the social citizenship of Hong Kong’s residents, i.e. an entitlement to schooling. The granting of (formal) equal opportunities to schooling also established a social and moral order, as the majority of people largely accepted the educational system as open, fair, and an important ticket for social mobility (Choi 1993; Wong and Ng 1997).

Furthermore, despite the absence of any anti-sexist curriculum, the compulsory and free education has greatly improved the chances of “dutiful daughters” to receive schooling, who used to sacrifice their schooling for their family economy (Salaff 1981). For example, since the introduction of free education, the percentage of school entrance of boys of the age group 12 to 16 has increased from 80.0 percent in 1971 to 91.8 percent in 1991 whereas girls have improved from 69.2 percent to 95.6 percent respectively. The improvement is even more remarkable in university attendance. While girls made up about one-third of the student population in the two universities in 1971, they slightly outnumbered boys in 1999.4

However, since the introduction of the mass education system, there has been a constant worry over the declining standard and language competence of students and the
problems of disciplinary control in schools and of juvenile delinquency in society. Such anxiety was further aggravated by a concern about the competitiveness of Hong Kong in a global restructuring economy in the mid-1980s. Because of the gradual relocation of manufacturing bases to the mainland and the increasing competition from both neighboring Asian countries and other Chinese cities, Hong Kong not only has to restructure its economy but also has to improve its competitiveness. Concerns about reforming the educational system so that it could better serve the changing economy and equip its members to compete effectively in the international and regional markets became pressing.

From the mid-1980s onwards, a series of reform initiatives, informed by a market ideology and the new managerialism, have been introduced to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the system. For example, the government provides great incentives to encourage schools to join the Direct Subsidy Scheme (DSS) so that a strong private sector could be established to increase diversity and choices. To enhance their flexibility in financing and management, schools were given a “block grant” and a model of modern management to follow. As far as curriculum and teaching are concerned, the Target-Oriented Curriculum (TOC), which places emphasis on learning outcomes, target setting, portfolio keeping and assessment, was proposed. Not least, a comprehensive scheme of “quality indicators” was developed to measure the performance of schools, to enhance their accountability, and to assure services provided are “value for money” (Education Department 1998).

A closer examination of these extensive changes suggests that the improvement of the “quality” of education has been narrowly conceived. Quality becomes no more than raising standard and educational outcomes by means of privatization, marketization, competition, devolution and accountability. These, as some local studies have rightly identified, could incur heavy human costs when educational practices were too preoccupied with managerial- and market-oriented values and initiatives (Tsang 1997; Tse 2002). Some also point out the potential effects of these changes on widening inequalities between established and less-established schools and on exacerbating the unequal access among parents and students of different classes to good quality education (Tsang 2002). Some also question the “newness” of the notion of “competitive individual,” as competition for good students and good schools has always been intense in Hong Kong (Morris 1997).

Nevertheless, the nature of these reforms and their effects are probably much deeper and more complex. As vividly suggested by the Chief Executive in his recent speech, the reform initiatives appear to be attempts to reassert the role of education in serving the economy, and are intended to re-establish a new social order (i.e. new elitism) and a new citizenry (i.e. competitive or enterprise individuals). If old elitism, which was characterized by a closed system and selection, was the mainstay before 1971, then new elitism, based on meritocracy, open competition and wide choices will be installed as a new academic and social order. Yet interestingly, the importance of this new order is not so much to replace the old elitism but, as the speech suggested, is to counter the damages done since the egalitarian extremes emerged since the 1970s. Egalitarianism, which is criticized as neglecting the ability differentials of individuals, has been promoting mediocrity and thus spoiled the standard and competitiveness of Hong Kong. In other
words, Hong Kong is similar to other developed countries in which educational reforms aim at attacking egalitarianism. The reforms have actually reinstated the inevitability and legitimacy of inequalities. They are seen as justifiable if they are produced by open and fair competition and mechanisms, and reward individuals according to their ability, effort and merit. However, do schools in Hong Kong simply differentiate students on the basis of ability differentials or will other social differences matter too? How are elites actually produced in schools?

Furthermore, it is suggested that the reformed educational system is going to produce competitive and autonomous individuals, i.e. new elites/citizens, who will display a strong will to compete and succeed, and help revitalize an ailing economy. However, how desirable is “competitive individual” as a citizenry? What qualities does s/he have to aspire to? Can every student have equal and easy access to it? Will girls be able to benefit from the educational changes and aspire to be full and ideal citizens? Do they have to bear any particular costs? Or are they destined to be “second-class citizens” as some feminists claim? These questions cannot be answered fully if the actual making of citizens-to-be in the Hong Kong schooling processes is not revealed. In the following, I attempt to address these issues by focusing in particular on the experiences of two groups of girls: those studied in elite schools and those in band 4 and 5 neighborhood schools.

The making of the “ideal learner-citizen” in elite schools

Five girls in my study were students at elite mission girls’ schools, who all had high aspirations and self-confidence. They envisioned having a career in business or professional fields, such as being a scientist, pharmacist, an architect, an audiologist or an accountant. These girls experienced the educational restructuring as an expansion of opportunities, but they also regarded the declining standard as pressure for them to study harder and perform better.

Segregated schooling may appear to be one obvious reason for explaining their strong self-confidence, as girls in single-sex schools may experience the environment as harassment-free and can develop a more positive identity. Nevertheless, it is even more likely that their educational aspiration is to do with the middle-class tradition of these schools, which is famous for training women members of the elite.

The five schools that these girls attended are regarded as well-established “name schools” in the local context, which are situated in good and expensive residential areas, such as Mid-level, Tsim Sha Tsui and Kowloon Tong. They were founded by missionary groups that aimed to provide a separate but a good education for girls of the affluent families, equipping them with skills and knowledge for their future roles, i.e. as women elite members themselves, or as wives of the elite, or as socialites in an upper-class social circle (Chan 2003). These schools are now subsidized by the government, but because of the feeder and nominated system, middle-class parents such as professional and business people are still their main clientele. Over the years, these schools have successfully established a name for training academic woman elite members and produced enviable educational performance in public examinations.

According to the girls, they were constantly pressurized to compete and succeed. Right
from the start, ability tracking was at work; examination followed by elimination was used to foster the spirit of excellence and competitiveness among the girls. In their first form, students were tested and sorted into elite or supplementary classes by an entrance examination. Then each year those elite students had to keep their places by constant good performance or else they would be downgraded to “poorer” classes. The pressure and competition escalated when girls had to decide their subject streams in Form 3, as their schools required them to compete fiercely among other girls to get into the most prestigious stream, science. Their successful entry was regarded as a mark of one’s accomplishment and a testimony of one’s competitiveness, as Teresa suggests:

Although I like literature and have little interest in science subjects, I will opt for the science stream… It is not easy to get into the science classes, but I want to give it a try. I want to know how good I am and whether I can really get what I want.

*Cultural (and middle-class) accomplishments*

Yet academic excellence alone is not enough to become a woman elite member in these schools, accomplishment in extra-curricular, social and cultural activities is equally essential. While an all-round education is only emphasized in the recent *Educational Commission Report No. 7,* it has been an integral part in the “name schools.” As these girls stated, every student in their respective schools was required to learn or to play a musical instrument. Although there were numerous examinations and tests, students were obliged to take part in various clubs and social activities, ranging from academic-oriented clubs, interest groups, athletic teams, debating teams, choirs, orchestras, concerts, dramas, bazaars, to interschool competitions.

Girls had different opinions with regard to such good grooming and the ideal of a “competent all-rounder.” Sharon, a daughter of two managers, for instance, had a very high opinion of her school training. She enjoyed her school life very much, including its environment, educational goals and activities. As fully backed up by her mum, an old girl, she was an active member at school and was heavily involved in the sports association, the student council, basketball and drama teams. She clearly viewed the opportunities and training provided by her school as important to developing her leadership skills, which had nothing to do with social differences but individual determination and autonomy to choose:

I think if you are willing to be more active, to take initiative to become a leader, your chances will be the same in whatever kinds of schools. I think people will only judge your ability and suitability for leadership … Men and women are in fact very equal in Hong Kong in terms of chances.

In comparison, Mandy was less happy with an “all-round education.” Although she regarded her school as providing a good learning environment, she was not happy with its heavy emphases on extra-curricular activities. Furthermore, she somehow felt that the school had showed biases to her sister and students of her background:
The principal always asks us to donate money to the school for various constructions, and this year it was the swimming pool. She also forces us to join activities or concerts that we don’t really enjoy… You know some tickets are really expensive. Some of my classmates may find the price acceptable, but not my friends and me. We definitely will not buy the tickets if we are not forced to.

Some teachers are rather biased. My sister was a student here before, and she felt it too… Although she got nine distinctions in the public examination (i.e. HKCEE) she was not elected as the head girl. The teachers told her that she was too inactive in school activities and would not be a good leader.

The different opinions of the girls reveal an important dimension of an “all-round education” in these elite girls’ schools. The ability to enjoy an all-round education and be culturally competent is not unrelated to a student’s family and class background. Financial resources and a cultural grooming at home, i.e. both material and cultural capital, still do matter. As the daughter of a factory worker and a full-time mum, living in a public housing estate, Mandy probably had not got the resources or developed the right disposition and therefore found the various extra-curricular activities in school too expensive and too much.

Moreover, when such middle-class values, life-style and upbringings are implicitly privileged and normalized in the very notion of “ideal student” or “student elite,” those who do not possess the proper cultural capital are not simply regarded as different but can be excluded from positions of leadership or considered inferior. Therefore, even though someone like Mandy’s sister had excelled in academic excellence and proved her merit and ability in a competitive examination, she was still regarded as lacking and could not be an ideal model for others to emulate. Meritocracy and competition are surely not the only determinants in defining elite members.

**Masculine and competitive ethos**

Unlike the other five who studied in single-sex elite schools, Rebecca was the only female high-flyer in my study, who studied at an elite mixed school. Her schooling experience and subjectivity help illustrate the exclusion and discrimination implicated in the notion of “ideal learner-citizen” in a middle-class and coeducational elite setting.

Rebecca’s school was a renowned middle-class co-educational institution famous in producing elite members in the local context. According to Rebecca, at least two-thirds of the parents of her classmates were senior civil servants, professionals and business people. As compared with those elite girls’ schools mentioned, her school placed the strongest emphasis on examinations, competition and stratification. Every element in the school, including knowledge, classes and the worth of students, was clearly ranked and carried different utilitarian values. For instance, in its constructed academic order, the science stream was privileged as the best and most worthwhile knowledge. Yet science classes were further differentiated. In order to have one’s success guaranteed in the public examination, students were encouraged to instrumentally pursue the best formula, i.e. the science stream plus A-math plus geography:

We all feel that we’ll have a better and brighter future if we study science. Only
those students with poor grades will choose arts. In F.3, the competition was the keenest and the atmosphere was very tense. Since only two classes in F.4 offered additional mathematics (A-math) and many students wanted to take the subject, one should be at least among the first 80 students in order to get in…

Most students also wanted to study geography, because in the past, those who got 10 distinctions in the HKCEE were all from the geography class.

Applying the academic order was designed in this way to cultivate the qualities of competitiveness, competence and the will to succeed. It is clear that its students had to strive hard and compete fiercely with one another in order to qualify as a minority of competent and competitive students, who were likely to be the future elites in society. However, the nature of the hierarchical academic order is masculine-dominated. For instance, when the science stream was privileged as a better and more useful and valid knowledge than arts, it not only devalued a subject which is traditionally associated with femininity, it rendered those students who chose it as “weaker and poorer.” Moreover, the desirable attributes that one needed to develop in order to succeed in this science- oriented and examination-dominated regime are individuality, self-reliance, aggression, competitiveness, instrumentality, entrepreneurial orientation, rationality, and the ability to live with pressures. These emphasized qualities, namely, the valued attributes of the new citizenry in Hong Kong, closely resembling the constituents of white middle-class masculinity, are used to define success in a competitive capitalist society (Connell 1993; Mac an Ghaill 1994).

Clearly there are costs implicated in being a competitive individual. In such a highly competitive and instrumental environment, students seemed to live in an atmosphere of constant fear, insecurity and suspicion. They also had to hide their academic and emotional weaknesses from their “competitors” and “assessors.” Furthermore, as ethics of caring, mutual help and cooperation were hard to develop, finding one’s own remedies, i.e. private tuition, was the only viable solution:

As the competition is so intense, it affects our relationship with one another. Some of my classmates may appear friendly but all they want to know is your grades. They only find those less competent students not threatening… I never ask my classmates or teachers for help. I don’t want to be seen as the stupidest… Most students have private tutors, some attend the tuition schools, and some even have both. You feel very insecure if you don’t have this extra help.

It is questionable whether such academic order is desirable, i.e. the competitive and individualistic ethos and its notion of “excellent student,” but it seemed to have obscured the class differences and gender inequalities in school. As mentioned earlier, the school was a very middle-class elite school. According to Rebecca, the school was also very sexist which not only practiced rigid gender segregation but had been particularly restrictive of girls’ activities:

Our principal will not let Girl Guides “sell flags” [i.e. a kind of charity activity] or go camping because these activities are too dangerous for girls. Boy scouts are allowed to take part in those activities. I always wonder whether there is
favoritism to boys in our school… We are not allowed to take part in any ball games. The principal said that it was too dangerous for girls to wear shorts in public.

Whether in school or in public arenas, girls were forbidden to move, explore and exercise as freely as boys. “Protection from danger” was used as a justification, but the confinement and restriction were targeted particularly at women’s bodies. The school might regard women as a weaker sex who require its greater protection, yet it was equally concerned about the danger that women’s bodies, i.e. wearing shorts in public, might pose to others, who therefore have to be kept away. Such a restriction clearly curtailed the agency of girls and inhibited them from acquiring important qualities that the school prized, i.e. being creative, adventurous, active and competitive. However, although Rebecca and her female class-mates were unhappy with the discriminatory practice imposed on them, they did not challenge the unfairness because “we are too busy with our studies and don’t really have much time left for those activities.”

Rebecca might appear to acquiesce with a discriminatory order, but in reality she did not. Her faith actually lay in the competitive and individualistic ethos of the school and its ability to rescue her from her humble origins. Several times in the interview she mentioned her desire to improve the livelihood of her parents via her educational qualification. This probably explains why she was willing to submit herself to the ethos of an elite school and be changed by it. In fact having been in this masculine-dominated regime for about a year, she told me that she felt completely transformed by its competitive, elitist, academic culture and believed that its ideal of “excellent student,” albeit difficult, was a desirable goal:

Although my former school gave me happier memories, this school offered a better learning environment… In my former school, I enjoyed the relationship with my classmates. We were very friendly with each other, and we shared everything. I felt at home there. But when I came here, I began to realize what a real school was, and I had to obey rules and regulations. I think I have become more mature and can look at things from a more long-term perspective… I now go to school because I want to absorb knowledge and I have to be very serious about my study.

Rebecca seemed to gain functional and cultural literacy and a new sense of agency and control in her life in her new school. However, the transformative power of education and her empowerment were only partial when her “loss” was considered. As her narratives illustrates, what she acquired in the new learning environment was also a displacement of the private (and femininity). Intimacy, sharing, pleasure, and mutual help, though enjoyable, could only belong to “home,” i.e. the former school. Yet to become a mature student, useful adult and future leader, she had to give up these and move on to a different sphere, i.e. a “real school,” which was characterized by scientific knowledge, instrumental learning attitudes and rigid rules and regulations. In other words, Rebecca’s transformation in a competitive, examination-oriented regime entailed a new masculine subjectivity, which required her to accept the inevitable split between the public and private spheres and the subordination of the latter to the former.
Nevertheless, an embodied female being was unlikely to live comfortably with a masculine subjectivity in a male-dominated elite school. Even though Rebecca eloquently described her new learning experience and her newly found identity, she still felt inadequate as a real achiever. At the time of the interview she was in the elite class (the best among all science classes) and had come fifth in the whole form. This achievement was impressive but Rebecca attributed her success to her “conscientiousness” and explained why she could make herself the equal of the “intelligent” boys:

I think boys are really brighter but girls are more hard working. Some boys are really very clever. However, there are some subjects, such as Chinese language, that you have to study very hard and memorize many facts in order to make good grades. You cannot rely solely on your cleverness.

Walkerdine (1989) warns that teachers and parents may dismiss excellence in girls and attribute their academic success to conscientiousness when boys’ performance is implicitly used as the measurement. What we witness here is the way Rebecca counted herself out even though she had an excellent performance. She might have her aspirations raised by the masculine academic order, but her vision of herself and her ideas of gender differences had changed very little. When describing herself as hard working but not as clever as boys, Rebecca continued to see herself as “the Other” of the “Ideal” and as inferior to boys.

The making of gendered citizens-to-be in neighborhood schools

Scaling down the banding hierarchy, the experiences of those from coeducational band 4 and 5 neighborhood schools provide a stark contrast to what we have seen so far. The four girls that I interviewed were oblivious to the educational system and reforms or the opportunities available. Higher education appeared to be something too distant for them to grasp. Their academic concern was much closer and more immediate, i.e. passing the HKCEE or getting promoted in the coming year, and no one seemed to aspire to be the “competitive individual” that the reform initiatives envisaged.

The schools that these girls attended were regarded as “neighborhood schools,” as they were situated fairly close to public housing estates in Kwun Tong, Kwai Chung, and Kwai Fong and were attended mainly by students who lived nearby. Furthermore, as band 4 and 5 schools, these schools had to admit students whose abilities were at the bottom 30 percent. In fact, the girls told me that each year 20 percent or less of the students in their respective schools would pass the HKCEE and get through to the A-level for matriculation. More than half of them would leave school at F. 3 to find a job, after struggling through the minimum number of years available. Poor academic performance aside, these neighborhood schools also had behavioral problems to deal with. According to the girls, smoking, stealing and foul language were common in their schools, and the relationships between students and teachers could sometimes be tense and antagonistic.

The academic and disciplinary problems suffered by lower band schools are comparatively more often discussed in local educational studies, but what is less
examined is the embeddedness of gender in these issues. As I am going to reveal, because of these specific circumstances that the schools faced, girls in these schools were treated as second-class citizens and were asked to be silent, controlled and obedient.

* A secondary sex in the academic order

We have seen how the girls in the elite schools regarded the science stream as a superior, if masculine, knowledge and were eager to compete to gain access to this. By comparison, the subject choice of the girls in the band 4 and 5 schools followed a much more traditional pattern: science subjects were for boys whereas the arts stream was for girls. If the persistence reflects their obstinate gender stereotypes, it also reveals the unequal values and expectations attached and constructed by schools to science and arts, masculinity and femininity, and boys and girls:

Boys are better at science because their brains are more open and flexible. Moreover, I don’t think boys have the patience to sit still and recite. It’s only possible for girls to do so.

(Ching Yin)

At that time I didn’t know which stream to choose. We were given some guidelines: “Arts stream is for hard-working students; science students have flexible minds; the commerce class is for job preparation.” At that time I was struggling hard between arts and commerce, as I don’t have a flexible mind… Girls are usually better at arts, as we are better at memorizing facts.

(Yuen Lai)

These girls obviously displayed some traditional conceptions of gender differences. When they associated boys with science and girls with arts and compared the differences in terms of “flexibility vs. patience,” “using their brain” vs. “sitting still,” “ability” vs. “memory,” they invoked some common dichotomies between masculinity vs. femininity, such as active vs. passive, and mind vs. body. Nevertheless, these differences were not understood as complementary but as opposing, exclusive and hierarchical, because the first pairs, representing masculinity, were considered better and more valuable than the second pairs, which symbolize femininity. In other words, girls did not regard themselves as different and equal to boys, but as inferior to the latter. While we may expect schools and teachers to challenge the unequal values attaching to masculinity and femininity, they actually reinforced these discursive differences when providing guidelines.

Moreover, some girls experienced a lower expectation from their teachers in their school processes. For instance, Mei Ling studied in a band 4 co-educational school in Kwai Fong. Upon the advice of her teachers and family, she chose arts-commercial class to specialize in F. 4. She soon realized that it was a bad choice because most of her teachers showed low expectation or motivation to teach this class, which was girls-dominated, thinking that most of the students would soon marry or quit school forever. When she insisted on studying biology, her favorite science subject, she encountered not encouragement but hostility:
My biology teacher doesn’t like girls either. It is unusual for girls in the commercial class to choose biology and the five of us have to attend lessons with students of the science class. But the boys in that class don’t like us; they find us stupid and slow. We tried to sit in the front row to avoid any contact with them. The teacher, however, doesn’t pay any attention to the front row. He always ignores us. He only talks to the boys in the back rows.

(Mei Ling)

One cannot help but wonder why these girls were treated as “space invaders.” Was it simply due to the gender bias of individual teachers? Was it because the science subject was designated mainly for male learners and girls should not enter the privileged preserve of “real citizens”? Was it possible for girls to be encouraged in such an environment to be full citizens, if not ideal citizens, who could at least enjoy the right to study what they wanted? We probably need more research to verify whether the lower band coeducational schools in Hong Kong are male-centered, yet it is clear that the bias and hostility of male teachers and students had already stifled the aspirations and performance of Mei Ling. Although she had been a model student in her previous school years, at the time of the interview she was very unhappy with the declining results and had almost given up hope in her study.

Disciplining and silencing girls

Not only were the four girls subordinated in the academic order, their agency was more heavily circumscribed as compared to boys in the same schools or the girls in the elite schools. Girls reported that teachers usually spoke in a loud voice, gave strict orders and sometimes even used physical force to discipline boisterous boys, but they themselves were subject to a different control strategy:

I was rather disobedient in F.I but teachers never gave me a second chance once their biases are formed… Even though I raised my hand to ask them sincere questions, they still ignored me. I have tried and tried and decided to give up. I now prefer to take a nap in the class, so that time can pass more easily. I sometimes daydream as well.

(Shuk Han)

I used to sing or speak loudly in the class, but now I feel tired and do not want to shout or sing any more… I don’t think teachers like me because I don’t speak in a soft voice as most girls do. Last time my Chinese teacher asked me a question and I replied in a loud voice. He said I was rude and asked me to apologize.

(Yuen Lai)

McRobbie (1978) suggests that girls’ disciplinary problems are usually verbal in nature, which probably explains why teachers are usually very concerned about the noise produced by girls and will use various strategies to discipline them. However, in doing so, it seems that their voices can also be silenced, softened and suppressed. As the above instances indicate, “noisy girl” would be simply ignored or was expected to soften her
voice. Lying behind the disciplinary strategy was also the grooming of a particular femininity—obedience, politeness, silence and passivity, probably qualities that these kinds of school regimes most desired. Therefore when Yuen Lai sang, shouted, and spoke loudly in the class, thereby failing to conform to this feminine ideal, she was reprimanded.

Furthermore, sometimes girls were forced to keep silent in order to moderate the boisterous and difficult boys. Such practice, however, could be at the expense of girls’ agency:

This term I am actually surrounded, because my teacher wants me to pacify those noisy boys… I always keep my lips closed, and pretend not to hear or not to be interested. I guess this is the best way to deal with those foul-mouthed boys. They will only be too happy to find me upset… I sometimes also find it difficult to remain silent all the time, especially in those boring lessons, but I won’t chat. I know this will get me into greater trouble. I prefer to daydream.  

(Ching Yim)

When Ching Ym was used to restore peace and order, what she could actually do was to resort to the only viable survival strategy in her circumstances, i.e. pursing her lips to avoid greater trouble. Nonetheless, girls were not entirely passive. When the voices of both Shuk Han and Ching Yin were not allowed to be expressed freely, they turned to a private mental space—daydreaming—a space that they probably could be them-selves. Yet in doing so, not only was their study affected, they also confirmed and conformed to the traditional femininity that their schools desired for them, i.e. passive, controlled and obedient girl.

Voice apart, girls’ sexuality and their autonomous expressions, another important dimension of agency, were also regulated and suppressed. In the schools of these girls, there again were various segregation practices which were probably attempts to minimize the contact of the two sexes, and prevent any “immature” heterosexual intimacy from occurring. For example, girls and boys had to line up and sit separately in classroom and public areas and were assigned different activities in PE classes. However, as far as sexuality was concerned, female students appeared to be the specific targets:

Our teachers always discourage us from playing with boys. We are not even allowed to talk to them. They keep a close eye on us all the time. My form teacher always ridicules Kit Ming [her close friend] and me as lacking in modesty and propriety. She thinks girls should not initiate any talk with boys… Some teachers and students even bad-mouth you if you get too close with the opposite sex. They call you a “flirt” or “slut” and isolate you.  

(Shuk Han)

Apparently, girls’ sexuality was under closer surveillance and an acceptable form of behavior was expected. Girls were required to regulate the sexual behavior of both themselves and of the boys. Therefore, taking the initiative with the opposite sex, which implied active female sexuality, was serious misconduct and was ridiculed. However, if girls failed to exercise self-restraint, isolation and negative labels—a powerful tactic (Lee
would be imposed on “deviant” girls to bring them to conform to a pure, controlled and passive feminine sexuality. Without doubt, this particular femininity, together with the various controls on their agency, are unlikely to develop girls as active and full citizens.

Conclusion

By improving “quality,” increasing choices and fostering fairer competitions, recent educational restructuring claims to produce a new citizenry and new elitism that most people will espouse. However, the discussions of this chapter, focusing on the lived experiences of schoolgirls, have questioned the desirability of the notion of ideal citizen/student and its unequal accessibility by students who are bearers of social differences and studied in different bands of schools. While “competitive individual” appeared to be the ideal for every student to aspire to in the elite mission schools, the actual school practices had also privileged the tastes and values of middle-class and masculine qualities. These posed difficulties for working-class girls, albeit with academic excellence, to position themselves as elite. Meanwhile, the ideal citizenry was an alien goal to girls who studied in schools that were at the bottom of the banding system, who were found to be more likely than girls in the elite schools to be groomed as passive, second-class citizens.

In short, the new citizenry as encouraged by the recent educational restructuring is far from empowering and inclusive, as it tends to obscure and reinforce social and gender differences and inequalities and fails to challenge the differentiation and normalization processes in schools.

Notes

1 The speech was delivered at the grand dinner celebrating the Ninetieth Anniversary of the University of Hong Kong, see <http://www.info.gov.hk/ce/speech/cesp.htm> (18 December 2001).
2 The research for this chapter was based on an in-depth study conducted in 1993 and 1994, which explored the schooling experiences, aspirations and identities of twelve young girls. In this chapter, because of space limitations, the discussion only focuses on ten girls for closer examination, i.e. six who studied in elite mission schools and four who studied in band 4 and 5 neighborhood schools. It is hoped that by comparing and contrasting the experiences of these two “extreme” groups, i.e. those at the top and the bottom of the banding hierarchy, we may gain a better understanding of the differences and similarities among these girls in relation to their schooling experiences and their access to citizenship. As an exploratory case study method, this study does not aim to provide an exhaustive and generalizing analysis but to identify important theoretical issues for closer examination. It certainly encourages more ethnographic studies to help verify and broaden the observations found in this chapter, and to explore the possible differences within
schools and arising from other types of schools.

3 In this chapter, the term “masculine-dominated” refers to the cultural domination of the masculine qualities and values while “male-dominated” refers to the numerical domination of the male sex. Although the two are usually closely linked, I intend to separate the two for analytical purposes and avoid the problem of essentialism. In the third section, I am going to illustrate how female students can position themselves within the masculine discourses.

4 For a more critical discussion of the changes to girls’ educational achievement in Hong Kong, see Choi (2003).

5 DSS was similar to the “opting out” in Britain or the “charter school plan” in America. Introduced in 1988, it aimed to encourage schools to go private while enjoying government subsidy (Education Commission 1988). The scheme has undergone many modifications, and for a more detailed historical account of DSS and its educational implications, see Tsang (2002).

6 Schools were encouraged to reform and modernize their management structure on the basis of suggestions outlined in the School Management Initiative (Education and Manpower Branch 1991). For detailed discussions, see the chapters in Mok and Chan (2002).

7 The idea of TOC is similar to the National Curriculum and national assessment in the UK. For a more detailed discussion of TOC, its history and problems, see Cheng (1995).


9 It should be pointed out that gender making also exists in girls’ schools in Hong Kong. However, due to space limitations, interested readers are referred to Chan (1996).

10 The discursive constructions of science and arts as masculine and feminine will be taken up again in the next section.

11 Rebecca’s school was male-dominated as it had a very unbalanced sex ratio, i.e. 3:7 between girls and boys. Probably because of this, most of the leadership positions were also occupied by boys.

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Part II
Migration, belonging and exclusion
Politics of incorporation and exclusion

Immigration and citizenship issues
Hon-Chu Leung

Introduction

With a population consisting largely of immigrants and their children, Hong Kong is often referred to as “a society of immigrants,” as if the term can define its essence. On the other hand, if official restrictions on immigration and popular prejudices against “new immigrants” are any guide, Hong Kong is not very welcoming to its immigrants, even when, or especially when, they came from Mainland China, where the bulk of its population originated. The apparent paradox, this chapter argues, could be explained by a review of immigration history and immigrant policies in relation to the changing meaning of residence in Hong Kong. Through a dialog with the literature on citizenship and a historical examination of official strategies of immigrant incorporation, it discusses how the particular form of citizenship practiced in Hong Kong has led to the creation of the “new immigrants” as an excluded group. Reviewing the controversy over the right of abode in Hong Kong after the end of the colonial era, it discusses also how an escalation of anti-immigrant discourses on the notion of “population quality” to justify discriminatory immigration rules has led to the tying of social rights to economic contributions, in other words, a marketization of citizenship. This subordination of social values to economic concerns, this chapter argues, excludes not just families split by immigration restrictions, but also the poor, the lowly educated, and the inappropriately skilled—people unfit for the post-colonial official vision of Hong Kong as a “national world city.” Conditions for these socially exclusionary discourses and policies in the practice of citizenship in Hong Kong will be proposed in the conclusion.

Citizenship and immigration: politics of social membership

Citizenship marks full membership in a community and is a key reference point in recent studies on the incorporation of immigrants into their host societies (Brubaker 1989; Castles and Davidson 2000). The concept of citizenship, however, is fraught with ambiguities and tensions, as it refers to both a legal status and participation in a community. As a legal status, citizenship pertains to the rights conferred on and obligations demanded from the people under a state’s jurisdiction. The citizen in question can be a privatized adherent to laws made by an elite. As participation, on the other hand, citizenship is a desirable activity and it presupposes the active involvement of citizens in
the affairs of the community.

In both of its meanings, citizenship implies inclusion as well as exclusion. As a legal status, the citizenship of certain types of person entails the non-citizenship of others, people who cannot meet the formal criteria to become citizens. In ancient city-states and colonial societies, the non-citizens can be the majority of the population. In modern nation-states, formal exclusion applies mainly to the immigrants. Depending on rules of admission, immigrants and their descendants can be barred from the status of full citizens regardless of their length of residence in a country (Casdes and Davidson 2000:84–102). As participation in the community, on the other hand, citizenship requires social competences rooted in an equality of conditions (Turner 1986). Therefore, besides formal inclusion through the legal status of citizen, citizenship is also predicated upon substantive social and cultural conditions.

This concern for the substantive conditions for citizenship is reflected in T.H.Marshall’s classic formulation of modern citizenship as consisting of three interdependent components of civil, political and social rights. The civil element refers to rights necessary for individual freedom—personal liberties, the right to property, and the right to due process of law, etc. The political element refers to the right to participate in the exercise of political power. The social element, in Marshall’s own words, stands for “the whole range from the right to a modicum of economic welfare to the right to share to the full in the social heritage and to live the life of a civilized being according to the standards prevailing in the society” (Marshall 1994). To Marshall, the emergence of social rights completes the evolution of citizenship as it provides the condition for the incorporation of the working class (i.e. the economically disadvantaged) into the political community.

Marshall’s account of citizenship as evolution towards a liberal welfare state is based exclusively on the experiences of Britain. Not enough attention is therefore paid to the variable political circumstances in which the different types of rights historically emerged in different countries. Nor is there enough recognition of the tensions between the different sets of rights as components of citizenship. Authoritarian states bent on limiting popular participation, for example, would concede civil and social citizenship to its subjects, while holding back political citizenship as far as they can (Turner 1993). The entrenchment of civil citizenship, on the other hand, could diminish the legitimacy of social citizenship by enshrining free exchanges between individuals as a paramount value (Fraser and Gordon 1998). Therefore, the three aspects of citizenship can emerge in different order and different combinations. There is no obvious reason why the three types of rights should eventually be equally available in any particular society (Shafir 1998:15–16). Moreover, as the recent rolling back of social rights in Western welfare states has powerfully demonstrated, even rights that were once considered necessary components of citizenship can be withdrawn as political-ideological conditions shift (Katz 2001:345).

Economic security through social rights, moreover, is only one condition for citizenship as participation. Another area ignored in Marshall’s approach is the cultural conditions for citizenship. Effective participation presupposes the intelligibility of the institutions of the community and a sense of belonging to that community. Citizenship, therefore, requires access to common cultural resources and shared identification with
symbols of unity. In other words, citizenship is also an identity that presupposes a willingness to put aside differences and a minimum degree of cultural unification (Kymlicka and Norman 1994). Critical to practices of citizenship is thus a cultural industry that creates the requisite degree of cultural unity among those who are and who aspire to be citizens in a community (Leca 1992). The unifying cultural symbols that define paths of inclusion to a community, however, also serve as barriers that exclude disadvantaged groups. The other side of the definition of the United States as an individualistic land of opportunities, for instance, is a charity-dependent “underclass” that has failed in pursuing the cultural ideal of achievement (Roche 1992:55–68; Fraser and Gordon 1998). And as the example of “underclass” suggests, the culturally and the economically excluded can be closely related. To the extent they are barred from equal participation into the community, regardless of their legal status, they are effectively non-citizens (Castles 2000).

For students of immigration, a focus on citizenship highlights the formal requirements as well as substantive conditions for immigrant incorporation, and allows a conception of the inclusion and exclusion of immigrants as dynamic, multi-faceted, processes. From a state-centered perspective, we can examine how the contents of citizenship change as states adopt different systems of control over immigration and permit immigrants different sets of rights (Feldblum 2000). From a bottom-up perspective, we can study how immigrants try to secure inclusion into their host communities through private as well as collective efforts, adding in the process new meanings to citizenship as actual activities (Friedmann 2002:67–86). From either angle, an examination of citizenship brings into attention the contests over social and political rights, and construction of cultural bonds and boundaries, as immigrants are incorporated into or excluded from particular communities.

To the extent that citizenship is associated with democratic participation in a nation-state, however, the concept could be of limited relevance to Hong Kong, which was a British colony until 1997 when it turned into a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. Even today, with an electoral system designed to favor the business elite and minimize popular participation, the great majority of the Hong Kong population have been effectively denied a say in public policy-making. It seems only fitting of their disenfranchised status that people in Hong Kong rarely speak of themselves as “gongmin” (citizen), literally public people, the commonly used Chinese translation of the term citizen that connotes membership in a state. Nonetheless, as a legal status, an officially recognized resident of Hong Kong does enjoy certain rights that are otherwise unavailable, most notably to stay, work and receive social benefits in Hong Kong. And reflecting a sense of civic identity, it is common for residents in Hong Kong to refer to their public status as “shimin” (city people), literally people of the city and another possible translation of the term citizen (Chow 2000:121). In other words, despite the dependent political status of the territory and restrictions in its democratic processes, some aspects of citizenship appear to be operative in Hong Kong for at least some of its immigrant population.

The awkward positions of residents in Hong Kong in relation to citizenship reflect the “anomalous” nature of Hong Kong as a “non-national society.” But it also reflects the limits to national conceptions of citizenship in a world characterized by shifting political
boundaries and over-lapping social memberships, as testified by the emergence of schemes of partial citizenship for non-national residents in many countries (Hammer 1990). Therefore, working through the tensions created by Hong Kong’s ambivalent relationships to citizenship could be productive in helping us understand the contested nature of citizenship and the politics of immigrant incorporation as a struggle over social membership.

In the following sections, through a historical overview of official policies on Mainland immigration and immigrants, I will offer an account of the incorporation of Mainland immigrants into Hong Kong in relation to the changing practices of citizenship, as legal rights and as social participation, in the territory. The first section covers the period from the return of British rule in 1945 to the outbreak of riots in 1966 and 1967, a period in which Mainland Chinese immigrants, irrespective of their numerical and functional weight in the population, were officially outsiders seeking sanctuary in a “foreign” territory. The second section examines the period extending from the late 1960s to 1997, in which partial citizenship was extended to the majority of residents in Hong Kong and “new immigrants” from the Mainland emerged as the excluded others of those who identify with Hong Kong as “home.” The third section discusses developments from 1997 till now. It is a period in which Hong Kong has ceased to be a British colony and becomes a SAR of the People’s Republic of China. It is also a period in which “population quality,” in addition to numerical control over immigration, has become a policy objective. Implications of the changes over the three periods will be examined in the concluding section.

“A problem of people”: colonial accommodations to refugees

When the British retook Hong Kong in 1945 at the end of the Japanese Occupation, the population of the colony had been depleted to around 600,000. It was increased more than fourfold to over 2.5 million in 1956. Part of the increase was due to the return of pre-war residents, but there were also about one million new arrivals from Mainland China, of which 700,000 were identified as refugees. The massive influx prompted the Hong Kong government to impose border control and restrict entry from the Mainland in 1950. Except for seven months in 1956, a quota system for immigration from the Mainland into Hong Kong has since been in force (HKIS 1960).

The rapid increase in population put heavy pressure on the provision of housing and public facilities in Hong Kong. Reflecting the government’s sense of urgency, the title of the first chapter of the official Hong Kong Annual Report for 1956 was “A Problem of People.” In the chapter, the Hong Kong government identified the problem of a vast immigrant population as a paramount challenge that had an influence on all areas of public policies. The problem was immense, the government further explained, because of scarcity of land in Hong Kong, and it estimated the normal capacity of Hong Kong to be about 1.2 million people, less than half of the actual population in 1956 (HKIS 1960:2–3). The chapter was subsequently reprinted several times as a pamphlet with the same title. The thesis that Hong Kong, with a shortage of land, was threatened by immigration from Mainland China thus became one of the most prominent features of public
discourses in Hong Kong.

As two-way migration between Hong Kong and Mainland China was still common in the 1950s, the Hong Kong government proclaimed the hope in the early years of the influx that when conditions in the Mainland stabilized, many of the immigrants would choose to return to their homeland. The anticipated return, however, did not materialize. As its hope for the return of the immigrants to the Mainland dimmed, in the mid-1950s the colonial government started to introduce programs that would facilitate the incorporation of the immigrants into the social system of Hong Kong (HKIS 1960).

The most important of these programs was the unprecedented project of resettling squatters, mostly immigrants, in government-built apartment blocks. The trigger for the resettlement program was a fire in 1953 that left thousands homeless, but the underlying condition was the spread of squatter settlements in the city as a result of the large influx of immigrants. A resettlement program was expedient, the official in charge candidly admitted, because the squatter settlements posed serious threats to public security and prestige, and because they occupied land needed for urban development (Commissioner for Resettlement 1955, quoted in Catherine Jones 1990:184). While expediencies forced upon it the role of the biggest housing developer in Hong Kong, the Hong Kong government was wary of the long-term commitments a resettlement program would entail in, for example, education and health care, as the immigrants became part of the permanent population in Hong Kong. As far as possible, the colonial government tried to limit the commitment of government resources and involve voluntary agencies as well as international aid in the provision of public services (HKIS 1960; Catherine Jones 1990:161–208). The restraints were justified, the government repeatedly stressed, because there were other needy people in Hong Kong who required help from the government, and as older residents, their needs should take priority over those of the new immigrants (HKIS 1960).

The resettlement program represented a major step undertaken by the Hong Kong government to cope with changes brought by the post-war influx of Mainland immigrants. Other than that, colonial institutions inherited from the pre-war era, when Hong Kong was largely a temporary stopping place for transient businessmen and workers, remained intact. Constitutionally, the Hong Kong government was accountable only to the British Crown. While there were consultative mechanisms for a selected elite and charities for people in need, the disenfranchised majority of residents in Hong Kong were little more than colonial subjects allowed the “privilege” of living in a “foreign” territory. This political set-up, however, was increasingly untenable as the immigrants settled down and a new generation of young people grew up in Hong Kong. And the need for change was amply clear when street riots shook the government from its complacency in 1966 and 1967. Summarizing the lesson as “people will not care for a society that does not care for them,” the Hong Kong government introduced extensive public reforms in the following decades to avoid the danger posed by widespread political alienation (Scott 1989:39–126).
“From shelter to home”: community-building, immigration control and social exclusion

*From Shelter to Home* (M. Leung 1999) is the title of the official history of public housing in Hong Kong published by the Hong Kong Housing Authority. It aptly summarized the strategy pursued by the colonial government from the late 1960s through the 1990s to widen its social basis by building a “community” that could be taken as co-extensive with the Hong Kong population (Turner 1996). After the riots in the mid-1960s, the Hong Kong government concluded that Hong Kong could not be governed with the majority of its population remaining “outsiders,” as subjects without any claims to the place. The coming of age of the younger generation born in Hong Kong, most of them children of the Mainland immigrants, in particular, rendered obsolete colonial institutions premised upon sojourner communities with key life interests lying outside Hong Kong. Proposals for reforms that would enlarge democratic participation, however, were eventually shelved in favor of a more conservative approach centered on enhancing the profile of the government as the guardian of public interest in Hong Kong. One prong of the strategy rested on enhancing the legitimacy of laws as impartial protection for the common people; the other focused on enlarging the role of the government as a provider of public services (Catherine Jones 1990; Carol Jones 1999).

A key area in which the government enlarged its role was the public housing program, which was extended to accommodate about half of the population. The new housing units, moreover, unlike the resettlement flats previously built, were self-contained apartments equipped with basic cooking and cleaning facilities. Families living in public housing were thus provided with a measure of privacy, at a very modest but progressively improving standard. Public health service was also expanded and affordable medical care became available to all willing to wait in a queue. First, primary education was made free so that all families could afford to send their children to school. Free education for nine years was later made mandatory in 1978. To further highlight the protective functions of laws, labor legislation was introduced to give workers rights against the worst excesses in industrial relations. As a safety net of last resort, a public assistance program was started in 1971 to keep the really destitute from starvation (Scott 1989; Catherine Jones 1990).

The result of the reforms was a degree of security in life not known before to the majority of residents in Hong Kong. The increased security, in confluence with the employment opportunities created by the manufacturing boom and an improving dependency ratio in most families as the post-war baby-boom cohort entered working age, made possible widely experienced improvement in living standards in the 1970s and 1980s (Ng 1994). Having literally built a lot of homes and safeguarded their functioning with public services, the colonial government could thus cultivate, as its basis of legitimacy, a depoliticized identification with Hong Kong as a “home” (Lui 1997). That Hong Kong is a “home” is summarized by catch phrases like “My home is in Hong Kong” or “Hong Kong is my home.” The choice of the word “home” represents a very strategic use of language, as it avoids the thorny issues of the colonial status of Hong Kong and the exclusion of the majority from channels of political participation, while promoting a sense of belonging to the territory. A depoliticized and private form of
citizenship based on rights derived from residence in Hong Kong thus arrived.

The “home” in question, it is important to note, is not just a place to live but also a base for social advancement. With the opportunities it opens up, making a home in a public housing estate is but a first step on the ladders of social mobility in Hong Kong (Lui 1997). The Hong Kong that is “home,” in other words, is also a land of opportunities, and to call Hong Kong “home” implies aspirations for, if not participation in, upward mobility (Wong and Lui 1994). Not everyone, however, is entitled to live in a home built by the Hong Kong government, and not everyone can comfortably call Hong Kong “home,” not even among those who have actually lived in Hong Kong for many years. These excluded people include immigrants or would-be immigrants who could not legally stay in Hong Kong. They also include people whose families cannot be united with them in Hong Kong. The two groups are closely related, in class and in kinship terms.

As the Hong Kong government enhanced its role as a service provider, it also became increasingly restrictive on immigration. Although border control was started in 1950, the Mainland immigrants who successfully crossed the border to Hong Kong were normally allowed to stay in the 1950s and 1960s. In the early 1970s, the government restricted the right to stay in Hong Kong to those illegal immigrants who had reached the urban area under a so-called “touch-base” policy. A big jump in illegal immigration in the late 1970s prompted the government to abandon even the “touch-base” policy. Since 1980, all illegal Chinese immigrants, once they are found, will be repatriated to the Mainland. Legal immigration from the Mainland to Hong Kong, on the other hand, remains limited to the small number allowed by the quota system (Siu 1996).

Most of the illegal Mainland immigrants who managed to enter Hong Kong in the 1960s and 1970s were men. Some were married before they came to Hong Kong. Many more would return to the Mainland to get married, as even without the surplus of men created by immigration, it would be difficult for a low-income immigrant to find a local bride in Hong Kong (Siu 1996). Because of the quota system, however, their wives and children have to apply individually and wait in long queues before they can stay in Hong Kong legally. As a result, the “single” man who was married in the Mainland is not eligible for public housing in Hong Kong, which is built primarily for “normal” nuclear families. His Mainland wife, on the other hand, unlike the wives in “normal” working-class families, cannot work in Hong Kong to augment take-home pay and insure the household against the fluctuations of her husband’s income from, typically, casual work. Their children, in the meantime, have to spend at least part of their school age in the Mainland and lose their chances for “orderly” progress through the education system in Hong Kong. If eventually, one by one, all members of the family clear their individual applications to be reunited in Hong Kong, they still have to wait in line for public housing. Until the partial relaxation of restrictions in 2000, they could not be assigned a public housing apartment unless more than half of their family members had already lived in Hong Kong for over seven years.

Ineligibility for public housing means that the “singles,” the split families, and the newly reunited families have to set aside a much larger pro-portion of their income for rent. It also means they have to worry about rental increase every time the lease is to be renewed. The large discrepancy between public and private rent has strengthened
“normal” families living in public housing in Hong Kong by discouraging unmarried adult children from leaving home (Smart 1992). Restrictions on access to public housing and the associated disruption of family timetables by immigration controls, on the contrary, severely limit the options of split families as self-help units. I have discussed in the previous paragraph how wives and children of these families are barred from the opportunities available in Hong Kong and therefore from taking part in family mobility strategies premised upon two incomes and putting children through school. Adding to their plight is the problem that members of the split families, as individual applications, cannot co-ordinate the time of their immigration. If the mother is cleared to go to Hong Kong before one or all of the children are, she may have to move back and forth across the border frequently to take care of a family split by immigration restrictions. If the children are to arrive before the mother, on the other hand, either the mother has to stay illegally in Hong Kong, or the father gives up work to look after the children. In all these scenarios, the capabilities of the family-household as a resource-pooling unit are severely hampered (H. Leung and Wong 2001).

Manuel Castells (1990) has argued that workers and small entrepreneurs in Hong Kong could afford to take risks in search of economic gains only because of the security provided by public housing. Following the same reasoning, we can argue that restrictions on family reunion and public housing assignment are key explanations for the exclusion of the “singles” and the split families from the “normal” paths of upward mobility in Hong Kong. It is no accident that “singles” and families with newly arrived members have been over-represented among the poor over the past few decades in the territory (Faure 1997:359–362; H. Leung and Wong 2001). And as the poor, they became “outsiders” to an increasingly affluent Hong Kong in the 1980s and 1990s.

The split families are “outsiders” in Hong Kong not just in the sense that they are barred from attaining a common standard of living. As they are identified as “Mainlanders” or “new immigrants,” their plight has not received much sympathy from the more established residents in Hong Kong. This lack of sympathy towards more recent immigrants could be partly explained by official discourses that identified immigration as a “problem” for Hong Kong. By stepping forward as a gatekeeper for immigration from the Mainland, the government laid claims to the role of the guardian of the interests of the colony. And to justify the severe restrictions, it portrayed potential immigrants from China as competitors for public resources and a threat to “the quality of life” of those already residing in Hong Kong (HKG 1980).

Anti-immigrant discourses did not find much resistance among the public because they fitted the negative stereotypes of Mainland immigrants that have become prevalent in Hong Kong since the late 1970s. As their lives became more comfortable, residents in Hong Kong congratulated themselves in their imagination as sophisticated, modern “urbanites.” Conversely, they distanced themselves from their Mainland “cousins” by identifying the Mainlanders as backward and unruly (Ma 1996; Ku 2002). Negative stereotyping of Mainlanders was further reinforced by the competition for jobs as a new wave of immigrants entered the labor market in the 1980s. Therefore, on top of being lazy and spoiled, the new arrivals, quite contradictorily, were also accused of snatching jobs as overly eager workers (Wu 1998). The older residents of Hong Kong are thus predisposed by their prejudices to support restrictions on immigration from the Mainland,
and ignore the pains such restrictions inflict in splitting up families.

The prejudice against Mainland immigrants is, moreover, just part of a general lack of sympathy towards the poor which, as Ah Oi (1999) perceptively observes, is rooted in the common life experiences of many residents in Hong Kong, many of whom once were immigrants themselves. The reasoning is rather straightforward. If the widespread improvement of living standards has confirmed that Hong Kong is a land of opportunities, and the improvement can be gained by an average family through sustained hard work, the misery of those who are poor in Hong Kong has to be their own fault. If the more recently arrived immigrants from the Mainland tend to have difficulties attaining the common standard of life in Hong Kong, the “new immigrants” as a group are suspicious. Reflecting the common association of the poor with the newly arrived, the widely used colloquial term “xin yimin” (“new immigrant”) does not refer technically to anyone who has arrived recently, but only to those from the Mainland who cannot provide for themselves as “normal” Hong Kong families do. And people who cannot afford the consumerist “Hong Kong way of life” can be perceived as “xin yimin” regardless of their length of residence in Hong Kong. Who is a “new immigrant” in Hong Kong, in other words, is defined not by the date of their arrival, but by their failure to participate in a cultural lifestyle. With such a definition, poverty becomes confused in Hong Kong with the social and personal characteristics of the newly arrived.

From quality of life to population quality: new lines of exclusion in a “national world city”

New hopes were on the horizon for families split by the immigration quota system with the approach of 1 July 1997, the date Hong Kong became a SAR of China. They were hopeful because it is written in the Basic Law, mini-constitution of the SAR, that children of Hong Kong residents born outside Hong Kong have the right of abode in Hong Kong. Eager to claim that right, hundreds of “undocumented children” showed up in the office of the Immigration Department the first working day of the Hong Kong SAR to seek confirmation of their status as legal residents. However, the new SAR government proved to be no more willing to accept Mainland-born children of Hong Kong parents than its colonial predecessor. In three days, and with retrospective effect, the SAR government legislated to tie the right to stay in Hong Kong with the issue of a certificate that maintains in effect the quota system. The constitutionality of the legislation was subsequently challenged in court and the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong eventually ruled in favor of the right of abode claimants that rights stipulated in the Basic Law should not be unreasonably hampered by administrative measures (Chan et al. 2001).

Instead of conceding defeat in the legal battle, however, the SAR government requested the National People’s Congress to provide an interpretation of the Basic Law to override the rulings of the court, despite criticisms that such a step would undermine both judiciary independence and the autonomy of the SAR. To mobilize public support, the SAR government released a set of statistics to show how admitting Mainland-born children of Hong Kong parents could lead to a huge influx of population from the Mainland and a tremendous burden on public resources. The statistics released stirred a
great controversy for their affront to common sense, but this is not the first time a Hong Kong government has attempted to persuade the public of the need for tight control over immigration from the Mainland. Except for the figures, arguments put forward by the SAR government in 1999 were actually almost identical to those put forward by the Hong Kong government in 1980 when it argued for the need to end the “touch-base policy” (HKGS 1980; Chan et al. 2001:265–287). And both statements reiterated themes put forward by the colonial government in its “classic” 1956 statement that the paramount problem of Hong Kong is “a problem of people,” i.e. its population, and the government should as a priority protect the interests of the current residents (HKIS 1960).

Nonetheless, there is a new twist in this old story that Hong Kong is being threatened by a huge exodus of people from the Mainland. In his opening speech before the debate over the issue of right of abode in the Legislative Council, Tung Chee-hwa, the Chief Executive of the SAR, not only repeated the familiar theme that Mainland immigrants posed grave threats to the quality of life in Hong Kong. He also suggested that there was a need to pay attention to the “composition of society.” Hong Kong is to become a knowledge-based society, he elaborated, and it needs to import elite talents to further development in that direction. The economy of Hong Kong has restructured to become service- and technology-oriented, he added in his answer to the questions of a legislator, and could no longer absorb cheap labor from the Mainland as it did before (Wen Hui Po, 7 May 1999). In other words, in an economically restructuring Hong Kong, the problem with the would-be immigrants is not just that there are too many of them. They are also the wrong kind of people that Hong Kong should admit, if it is to fulfill the aspirations for new heights in economic development. The concern, a commentator suggests (Yau, 7 May 1999), is no longer simply over the quantity but also the quality of the immigrants, i.e. whether the immigrants are adequately educated and skilled enough to contribute to economic development.

The position of the SAR government was challenged by a vocal campaign organized by the right of abode claimants and their relatives, with support from religious groups and human right activists. Most of the residents in Hong Kong, however, were apparently quite willing to accept arguments put forward by the government. According to opinion polls, the public of Hong Kong was overwhelmingly in support of the government in its resolute stance in limiting immigration from the Mainland. Debates hovered around the legality of the procedures followed by the government, but it was a very small minority that disputed the official vision of Hong Kong as an “economy” (as opposed to society or community) that prioritizes development over other social values, most notably family reunion (Ku 2001).

As a confirmation of its interest in selecting the right kind of immigrants, shortly after it maneuvered to keep the restrictions on immigration for family reunion, the SAR government introduced a scheme for the importation of “outstanding talents” from the Mainland in December 1999. It also started a review of immigration policies on professionals that led eventually to the Admission of Mainland Professionals Scheme in 2001 (ISD 2000:418–419, 20 November 2002). Following the publication of a report on population policy that highlights the need to upgrade the “quality of population” in Hong Kong in March 2003 (TFOPP 2003:viii), the government announced that the two schemes will be combined to admit applicants with good educational backgrounds and
confirmed employment. Their spouses and dependent children will also be entitled to residence in Hong Kong\textsuperscript{10} (SCMP, 12 March 2003a). The same report also recommends the admission of investors outside Mainland China willing to put HK$6.5 million into assets in Hong Kong (SCMP, 12 March 2003b).

Having supported the SAR government in its determination to keep out the lowly educated right of abode claimants, regardless of their ties to the place, residents of Hong Kong are on weak grounds to reject the import of “talents,” “professionals,” even “investors” to boost the development of a “knowledge-based economy.” Having agreed that the inadequately qualified children of Hong Kong residents would be a burden for Hong Kong, they can also offer little resistance to arguments that Hong Kong is suffering from a “human resource mismatch” that hinders it from turning around its economy after the financial crisis in 1997. Targeting and upgrading the “quality” of the population (as human resources) thus become justifiable, even urgent, policy objectives of the SAR government. Importation of “talents” and “professionals” is the first step in that direction. A “reasonable” next step is a review of the current quota system so that the entry of “unqualified personnel” (i.e. “low-quality population”) through family reunion can be further restricted.\textsuperscript{12} Short of this, residence requirements for social benefits should be made more stringent so that the “unqualified” will be deterred from living in Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{13} In short, in supporting the official position that prioritizes economic development over social values, public opinion in Hong Kong has made it politically possible to tie immigrants’ right to live in Hong Kong with their potential for economic contribution.

It is not just the would-be immigrants and the split families that are feeling the pressure of this attention to “population quality” in Hong Kong. If inadequately skilled people are not welcome in Hong Kong, even when they have direct family ties to current residents, it is only a small step to conclude that the lowly skilled residents in Hong Kong are also a burden to Hong Kong. With a build-up of bias against “low-quality population,” it is not surprising that in the new SAR era, the working people in Hong Kong are constantly urged to transform themselves into something more useful. Thinly disguised as “life-long education,” constant retraining is put forward as a must for workers to maintain their employability, and “add to the value of self” becomes the only legitimate means for those who have to work for a living to secure a claim to livelihood. Those who fail to attract employers in Hong Kong, on the other hand, are encouraged to look for openings elsewhere, and proposals are publicly made that the poor and the unemployed should leave Hong Kong to seek opportunities in the Mainland.\textsuperscript{14}

In other words, as economic development is put forward as the paramount goal of the government and a “high-quality population” is a necessary ingredient for success, it is not just the right to be reunited with Mainland families in Hong Kong that is being called into question. Threatened also is the right of the lowly educated, the inappropriately skilled, and the economically unsuccessful, to receive support, if not live, in Hong Kong. In embracing too eagerly the government’s claim to be the defender of their interests in this “land of opportunities,” Hong Kong residents who have supported the restriction of family reunion on economic grounds have inadvertently undermined also the legitimacy of their own claims to the only place they can call “home.”
Conclusion

A common problem facing the governments of the world on the issue of immigration, an authority on comparative studies of immigration (Hollifield 2000:148–151) observes, is: “We asked for workers but human beings came” (Max Frisch, quoted in Hollifield 2000:149). The immigrants who entered Hong Kong from Mainland China in the post-war period have proved to be very good workers by fueling an economic boom in Hong Kong for over four decades. That they were also human beings liable to display their discontents on the streets prompted the colonial government in Hong Kong to concede partial citizenship to the “normal families” among them in the form of civil and social rights, not unlike what governments elsewhere have done to their immigrant residents. The SAR government, on the other hand, by tying residency rights to economic value, and restricting social citizenship, has apparently had some preliminary success in turning the human beings living or seeking to live in Hong Kong back into workers.

The SAR government’s insistence on the priority of economic development can be attributed to an unrepresentative elite’s quest for legitimacy without political citizenship. Similar attempts to restrict citizenship rights by invoking the prerogative of development can also be found among other post-colonial states (Chatterjee 1993:202–205). And that economic growth is the best palliative to all ills is among the most widely shared political convictions in the contemporary world (Collins 2000). Fixing on the economy as the top priority, however, may be particularly appealing to those who have seen their lives improved through the more prosperous years of Hong Kong, insofar as they continue to identify with Hong Kong as a “land of opportunities” and tie their self-esteem to economic success. To the extent that an economic-centric identity remains pervasive, groups campaigning for a more socially minded conception of citizenship will find the very basic task of reasserting that people living or aspiring to live in Hong Kong are human beings who have a value beyond their value in markets to be very difficult.

Notes

1 For a survey report on discrimination faced by new arrivals in Hong Kong, see Hong Kong Psychology Association (1997). For a recent press account, see Sing Pao (21 March 2003).
2 In response to demands for inclusion, schemes of partial citizenship have emerged in many countries to allow immigrants some but not all of the rights of citizens (Hammer 1990).
3 Following Leca (1992:31), cultural industry refers here to the production of education and information services on a large scale by specialized organizations e.g. mass media and schools.
4 Address by Sir Murray MacLehose, Governor of Hong Kong from 1971 to 1982, to the opening session of the Legislative Council, 6 October 1976, quoted in Catherine Jones (1990:210).
5 Since then, households can be assigned a public housing unit if just half of their adult
members (i.e. 18 years or older) has lived in Hong Kong for over seven years. The change means that a family comprising of a couple and young children can be entitled to a public housing unit even if only one of the parents is a permanent Hong Kong resident.

6 Of the two families with newly arrived members visited by Ah Oi (1999), only the one living on public assistance is perceived by their neighbors as “new immigrants.”

7 “Asia’s World City” is the title of the introductory chapter by the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong SAR in *Hong Kong 2000*, the official annual report on Hong Kong (Tung 2000). It is also the slogan of the brand program launched in 2001. Visually, however, Hong Kong is represented in the new brand by a dragon, an icon that highlights the Chineseness of the SAR (ISD July 2001). Therefore, the official vision of Hong Kong is a “national world city.”

8 The government claimed that relaxation of restrictions as ruled by the court would lead to the influx of 1.67 million Mainlanders into Hong Kong, a city of about 6.5 million residents, consisting of two generations of offspring of current residents. Some 75 percent of the first and 65 percent of the second generation originated out of wedlock. See reports on Apple Daily, 29 April 1999 (in Chinese).

9 For a campaign document and a profile of the right of abode claimants, see Hong Kong Catholic Committee for Justice and Peace *et al.* (2002).

10 This is treating Mainland professionals in the same way as professionals from overseas. For non-professionals, unequal treatment remains as the restriction on family reunion by the quota system applies only to Mainland Chinese.

11 Investors from the Mainland are excluded because of concern over exchange control in China.

12 Among others, a social administration professor is a leading advocate of a reduction of the quota of 150 per day set since 1995 (*Hong Kong Economic Daily*, 29 July 2002).

13 The report on population policy recommends that a seven-year residence restriction be applied to applications for public assistance. The availability of subsidized public health service to residents of less than seven years is also to be reviewed (TFOPP 2003:66–67). More general restrictions of social rights can be found in lowering the level of public assistance, increasing fees for public health care, and tightening income requirements for public housing eligibility.

14 A member of the Executive Council, the top advisory body to the Chief Executive, for example, advocates that the poor should move to the Mainland (*Ming Pao*, 23 August 2002). A research report on unemployed school-leavers also recommends a search in the Mainland for jobs (*Hong Kong Economic Daily*, 16 December 2002).

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Hong Kong as a semi-ethnocracy

“Race,” migration and citizenship in a globalized region

Barry Sautman

The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as one of your citizens; you shall love him as yourself, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

(Leviticus 19:34)

Introduction

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, pointing to regular (if limited) elections, an independent judiciary, vibrant mass media, and a Basic Law that provides civil rights, represents its political system as liberal democratic (Xinhua, 25 February 1999, 6 November 1999). Some observers concur (Allan 1998; Yeung 2001), but critics view governance in the SAR as illiberal or undemocratic (Thomas 1999; Lau 2000) or semi-democratic and semi-liberal (So 1999; Overholt 2001). Hong Kong elites also conceive of the SAR as cosmopolitan, proclaiming it “Asia’s World City” (SCMP, 20 August 2002). In contrast to dissent from the view of a liberal democratic Hong Kong, however, few question the representation that as the globalized city par excellence, Hong Kong is an internationalized “unique blend of East and West” (PTN 1998).

Hong Kong’s population has long had a modicum of ethnic diversity (Lethbridge 1978) and its heterogeneity has expanded since the early 1980s. Official incidents of Chinese-Western biculturalism do exist, such as Chinese-English bilingualism (BL 1990: Art. 9), Chinese and Western holidays (AP 1999), a scattering of Western civil servants (SCMP, 26 August 2001), and the intermingling of Chinese and Western elites at public functions. Post-colonial Hong Kong identity is, however, only superficially constructed on a supposed Chinese-Western cultural hybridity. From its inception, colonial Hong Kong was saturated with white supremacy (Klein 1995), while in the late-colonial to post-colonial periods, cultural racist world-views on both sides have ensured that the “unique blend” has involved at least as much acrimony as amity within the “East-West” (read: Chinese and White) confluence (Bond 1987). Hong Kong identity is moreover largely dismissive of multiculturalist equal valorizations of the world’s peoples.

Neither East Asian nor Euro-American cultures play scarcely a role in Hong Kong people’s “new identity…with almost sub-national connotations alongside Chinese nationality” (Cheung 2002), despite the SAR’s populations of South Asian and Southeast
Asian provenance. Hong Kong society instead features a system of racial inferiorization that extends beyond the colonial-era European-Chinese binary. It will be shown that an ethnic hierarchy exists in terms of access to substantive citizenship rights and social status. Hong Kong Chinese are at its apex, although that population can be disaggregated by sub-ethnicity. The SAR population is now overwhelmingly comprised of Cantonese speakers (88 percent in 1996), yet a “Cantonese chauvinism” continues to exist among those of Guangdong descent. Shanghainese speakers make up a vast disproportion of Hong Kong business and political elites, while the Hakka sub-ethnic group remains a generally low-income population. Other groups, such as Chaozhou people and Minnanese, are in intermediate positions among Hong Kong Chinese (Wong 1988; Guldin 1997; Lin 2002).

Recent Mainland Migrants, other East Asians and Westerners are at the next level of the overall Hong Kong ethnic hierarchy. South Asians are a lower stratum and Southeast Asian women domestic workers, whose migration accounts for most of the SAR’s newfound ethnic heterogeneity, are its base. Just as Hong Kong is arguably a semi-liberal, semi-democracy, it is also a semi-ethnocracy in which one ethnic group rules at the expense of others (Yiftachel 1999). Racial inferiorization in Hong Kong is not merely varying degrees of disdain for Others. It is the product of a system of differential exclusion of resident peoples from political power. Particularly at the base of the ethnic hierarchy—the space in which migrant SE Asian women labor—this system imposes legal liabilities and welfare deficiencies at odds with democratic notions of citizenship.

This chapter will relate the concept of semi-ethnocracy to Hong Kong’s system of racial inferiorization and detail how the SAR’s “government by businessmen” (Bowring 2002a) both countenances and promotes ethnic stratification linked to concomitant class and gender oppressions. It will argue that semi-ethnocracy arises from the interrelated hegemony of Hong Kong tycoon elites who abhor democracy and the exercise of civil liberties, the fusion of their world-view with that of the PRC rulers, and Hong Kong’s imbrication in a globalization that generates growing gaps in the political power and living conditions of nations, ethnic groups, classes, and genders. As will be shown, semi-ethnocracy in Hong Kong is part of a “global apartheid” that results from the intersection of migration, racism, and the world system (Richmond 1994) and assigns places in an ethnic order based on categories of citizenship, semi-citizenship, and alienage. Globalization has fostered migration to Hong Kong of developing world peoples whose special oppression creates resistance among the migrants and a thin layer of their local allies. Hong Kong’s semi-ethnocracy cannot be overcome, however, without a challenge to the SAR’s anti-democratic features and to globalization’s expansion of inequalities.

**Ethnocracy**

The Enlightenment *philosophe* Baron d’Halbach (1776) imagined an “ethnocratie” as a regime that promotes a moral and harmonious society by protecting freedom and property. Two centuries later, Gotz Aly (1999) called Nazi desk-murderers “ethnocrats.” Between these labels for a utopia and a dystopia, ethnocracy emerged as a descriptor for a regime that expresses the identity and aspirations of one ethnic group in an ethnically
divided society, based on rule over other ethnic groups who are accorded only qualified rights to citizenship. Ethnocracy’s raison d’être is to secure the key instruments of state power for the dominant ethnic collectivity; it allows only those facets of democracy consistent with the demos being identical with that group and not the collective population. Where the hegemonic ethnic group is a large majority of the population, as in Israel, a high level of repression is not consistently needed to maintain domination and ethnocracy represents itself as liberal democracy (Butenschon 1993).

“Ethnocracy” has also been applied metaphorically to one liberal democracy long-dominated by an ethnic group that has not fully incorporated other groups in a common conception of national identity (Kreutz 2000). Discussions of ethnocracy in the UK employ the term to describe some white Britons’ refusal to imagine a British identity for non-white minorities and often focus on mixed-parented people (Younge 1997; Ramesh 1998). That mixed parentage is increasing indicates that many Britons do at least accept that such hybridity is compatible with Britishness. A metaphor of ethnocracy is thus deployed to underscore that British elites are overwhelmingly white, without implying that that ethnic hierarchy is legally mandated, as it typically is in an ethnocracy tout court.

Semi-ethnocracy

Peter Wallenstein (1998) has theorized a “partial ethnocracy” that combines ethnic dominance and societal (e.g. class) stratification. A full ethnocracy has close cooperation among the elites of groups that emphasize ethnic identity and exclude others. A more common ethnocracy is partial: some “non-ethnic groups,” i.e. fragments of the dominant group or of other ethnic groups who do not so closely identify with ethnic interests, are also part of the system. Extrapolating from Wallenstein’s idea, a concept of semi-ethnocracy can be envisaged in which the regime features the dominance of an ethnic group, but without totalizing it. Non-dominant group elite individuals may occupy scattered positions of influence, while the bulk of the dominant ethnic group is decidedly non-elite and derives only those privileges that flow from the structure of exclusionary laws and norms that in varying degrees disable other ethnic groups.

Semi-ethnocracy features an ethnic hierarchy that may be based on an encompassing set of discriminatory laws. It is in any case grounded in the privileging of a particular ethnic culture and the acceptance by significant segments of the dominant ethnic group that non-dominant ethnies each have a subordinate place in the societal structure. These places typically attach through the differential operation of citizenship laws, a partial or full ethnic division of labor, and ethnic stereotyping. The latter may be partially negative and partially positive (even to the point of providing access to special state resources or affirmative action) or it may be wholly invidious, depending on the group’s putative rung in the ethnic hierarchy. Stereotyping nevertheless often exposes non-dominant ethnic group members, including their elites, to discrimination in employment, education, housing, and access to services. The ethnic hierarchy and its derivation from the existing form of governmentality will either be naturalized, i.e. deemed a function of subaltern peoples’ “lower” cultural capital, or dominant elites will argue that it cannot exist given
the “democratic” governance claimed to inhere in the constitutional order as a whole.

In a semi-ethnocracy, ethnic hierarchy is not rigid, but is omnipresent. Dominant ethnic group elites expect subaltern groups to know their place, accepting, for example, that the top layers of government, the economy, and cultural institutions are reserved for dominant ethnic group members. If subaltern groups do not accept their status, dominant elites institutionalize their hegemony through constitutional measures and social patterns and practices that tie mobility to ethnically exclusive kinship, place of origin, political, business, and other networks. The governing elite will resist any attempt by subaltern groups to encroach on the rewards of ethnic privileging through efforts to broaden democracy, particularly if these are based on invocations of human rights and the creation of civil disobedient social movements. Through a discourse of natural inequality or allusions to the “realities” of domestic and international economic competition and the traditionally exclusionary worldview of the majority ethnies, dominant ethnic elites seek to stave off the realization of the very democratic ideals that they claim to honor.

*Semi-ethnocracy, migration and gender*

One structural base of ethnocracy is found in “rules, policies, and institutions affecting immigration” (Yiftachel 2000:734). Immigrants in ethnocracies try to attach themselves to the dominant ethnopolitical group if they can and to distance themselves from minorities who cannot. The core group uses a discourse of inclusion to mask its economic and cultural marginalization of those immigrants whom it does incorporate into the dominant ethnies, but it is also overtly exclusionary of other migrants in all realms of politics and society.

Israel provides an example in its several hundred thousand non-Jewish migrant workers. Most are undocumented and all are denied any possibility of citizenship. Faced with ethnic antagonism, a community of undocumented Black African migrants have formed an African Workers Union and held protests in which a discourse of human suffering, international rights, and Israel’s relations with African states is advanced, winning sympathy from part of the middle class and protective contacts with social activists and members of parliament (Kemp and Raijman 2000). In achieving a degree of collective empowerment, the African migrant workers have shown that even in a full ethnocracy, dominant ethnic groups may at times back away from certain harsh features of a control regime over those they might otherwise completely exclude, even while imposing extreme measures to control and isolate other ethnic groups deemed a fundamental threat to the dominant group, for example, the occupied Palestinians.

In full ethnocracies, migrants are often the most marginalized section of society, with the degree of exclusion linked to their ethnicity and the demand for their skills. In Israel, many Filipina migrants are only slightly above Black Africans in the ethnic hierarchy. They are provided documents, but only because they are perceived as a non-threatening group and because many do skilled work, such as nursing. In a semi-ethnocracy, many migrant workers who are unskilled and at the base of the ethnic hierarchy have documented status, while remaining ineligible for permanent residence, let alone citizenship. A semi-ethnocratic regime may be more attuned to humanistic appearances and may also be slightly more generous about providing documented status because the dominant ethnic group has a demographic preponderance that is assuring to its core.
Ethnocracy is typically grounded in a patriarchal nationalism antithetical to gender equality. Julie Mostov (1999) notes that ethnocrats include international rights standards in constitutions, but construct national identity in ways that limit citizenship for women by undermining their access to social and political resources and by compelling women to be disproportionately represented among the poor and as targets of ethnonational politics. In a semi-ethnocracy, women may have a role in elite politics, but those with power may be complicit in the subordination of non-dominant ethnic group women through citizenship laws, restrictions on the permanency and mobility of migrant women, and everyday ethnic and class-laden practices that adversely impact ethnically subaltern women. Socially conscious professionals may not closely identify with ethnic interests, however, and may recognize that gender discrimination at the base of society can permeate upwards, leading some dominant group women to oppose ethnicized policies.

**Semi-ethnocracy, citizenship and globalization**

State-centered analysis of citizenship and migration has elaborated a tripartite structure reflecting of the rights of citizens, denizens, and aliens (Hammar 1990; Cinar 1994) or citizens, denizens and margizens (Martinello 1994, 2002). *Citizens* have plenary rights, but even these may be contingent. In the European Union, for example, only nationals in their state of residence have full rights and many are excluded from the redistribution of political and socio-economic resources by unemployment, poverty, and racial discrimination. *Denizens* are foreigners accorded permanent residence, with an entitlement to family reunification, social welfare, and civil rights, but not political rights. *Margizens* are typically contract workers or undocumented workers who are excluded from the local political-cultural status (e.g. “Europeaneity,” Japaneseness) and have very limited rights.

Marked divisions exist between citizens, denizens and aliens in states where nationality is based on *jus sanguinis* (acquisition from a parent). Many ethnocracies use this rule to block migrants from passing from margizen to denizen to citizen. Semi-ethnocracies may be more cognizant of labor requirements and standards of propriety, but a state’s conception of who should be its members depends on conceptions of how the polity should be maintained. Semi-ethnocracies thus also operationalize elite ethnonationalism by excluding migrants at the lower levels of the ethnic hierarchy from permanent residence and restricting opportunities for denizens to attain full citizenship. For example, until recently most non-ethnic Germans could not become German citizens. Naturalized non-ethnic Belgians cannot join the army or hold certain state offices (Parekh 1994).

Globalization is consequent for citizenship and thus for the construction of ethnocracy and semi-ethnocracy. Stephen Castles (1998) finds three ways that globalization affects citizenship. First, states cannot control border-transcending economic activity, as power has passed to corporations and markets, but can still exercise power over forces more amenable to control, through greater restrictions on potential new ethnic minorities and a sharper differentiation of groups within their territory. Second, the idea of autonomous national cultures is challenged by diffusions of consumerism, individualism, and US lifestyles, leading to a re-ethnicization of nation cultures. Third, increasing mobility across borders forms new, often disadvantaged and isolated ethnic minorities among
migrants from areas increasingly culturally distant from their host states, with many long-
term foreign residents unable to become citizens. In contradiction to liberal theory, rights 
are linked to ethnic, class, and regional-origin status. In the Asia-Pacific region, there is 
also an increasing feminization of migration, as migrants concentrate in jobs regarded as 
“typically female,” such as domestic work, entertainment, and restaurants. These low-
paid, poor-conditioned jobs are associated with patriarchal stereotypes that link gender as 
well to the separation of residence and rights (Lim and Oishi 1996; Castles 2000).

Ethnocracies are not necessarily the most globalized states and many in Africa and 
Asia emerged before the deepening of globalization in the 1980s, while those in post-
communist Europe and Central Asia owe their origins to a “nation-building” at odds with 
the depreciation of the nation-state assumed in globalization theory. Globalization, 
however, has had a particularly significant effect on weak states, disadvantaging them 
further in the new dispensation of international political economy and augmenting state 
tendencies to shore up dominant ethnic group advantages. Stronger states are also 
experiencing increasing pressures of competition and challenges from the migration that 
globalization has unleashed. Elites in these states feel compelled to bolster their 
legitimacy among the ostensibly privileged segments of ethnic hierarchies and construct 
semi-ethnocratic fortresses, based on dominant ethnic group cultural hegemony and 
differentiated rights within ethnic hierarchies (Hagendoorn and Hraba 1989). Singapore 
provides an example in the link between the elite discourse of “Asian (read: Chinese) 
values” and the city-state’s stringent restrictions on migrant worker rights (Wong 1996; 
Chua 1997; Clammer 1998). Domestic workers there are not guaranteed a minimum 
wage, can be required to work all their waking hours, are not entitled to even a day off a 
week, can be dismissed without notice or right of appeal, and can be sent home on an 
employer’s whim or if a regular medical examination reveals pregnancy. As Vivien Wee 
has remarked, “These people are not second-class citizens, because they are not even 
citizens. Because they are not citizens they are denied proper rights and protections. 
Equity is only for those who belong” (Age 2002). The regime in Hong Kong has taken a 
not dissimilar path and it is to that case of semi-ethnocracy that we now turn.

The Hong Kong semi-ethnocracy

Hong Kong’s margizens

Until recently, Hong Kong was said to be “98 percent Chinese,” the estimate given at the 
times of both the 1981 and 1991 censuses (Wood 1982; APWI 2002). By the 2001 
census, however, the non-Chinese population officially stood at 5.1 percent of the total 
(see Table 7.1).

The 2001 figures reflect only those ethnic minority people reached by the census. 
Greater numbers of non-Chinese live in Hong Kong, especially among the SAR’s one 
million non-permanent residents (SCMP, 31 July 2002). Most are likely found at the 
bottom of Hong Kong’s ethnic hierarchy, among groups that effectively make up the 
SAR’s margizens.

Nepalese, for example, became a new minority in the 1990s as
globalization further impoverished Nepal (UNDP 2002) and it became known that under a law in force until 1983, children of Ghurka soldiers stationed with UK forces in Hong Kong were eligible to take up residence. The 2001 census recorded 12,564 Nepalese, but the government had stated in 1999 that the number had already reached 17,700 (HKSA 2000: para. 35). Nepalese community leaders assert that their co-nationals exceed 50,000 (SCMP, 16 June 2000). Almost half of Nepalese men make less than HK$ 10,000 per month and the average wage of Nepalese women is substantially lower. Half of Nepalese men work in low-paid construction jobs and unemployment among Nepalese is said to top 20 percent, compared to 7 percent among the general population (SCMP, 26 February 2001; 2 May 2002; 18 December 2002). Nepalese and Pakistani children have been denied places in Hong Kong schools due to fears that their admission will lower a school’s standing. Nepalese are singled out for airport body searches and Nepalese, Pakistanis, and Filipinos are kept out of nightclubs by entrance fees that are in the main inversely pegged to a group’s rung on the SAR ethnic hierarchy (HKS, 5 April 1999; DPA, 1 September 2002, 30 August 2001, 21 March 1999, 31 October 2001).

Filipinos and Indonesians constitute other fast-growing ethnic minority communities. The vast majority are female domestic workers. Of 239,850 domestic workers in the SAR in late 2002, about 63 percent were Filipinas and some 33 percent were Indonesians, with 2.8 percent Thais and the rest mainly Indian or Nepalese (SCMP, 4 April 2002, 21 December 2002b). The Filipina domestic worker cohort grew rapidly from the early 1980s, peaking in 2002 (Sautman and Kneehans 2002:29). Despite their employment as unskilled labor, many Filipina domestic workers are better educated than their employers, with 80 percent having graduated from secondary school and 15 percent finishing college

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>% of population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>6,364,439</td>
<td>94.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>142,556</td>
<td>2.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indonesian</td>
<td>50,494</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British</td>
<td>18,909</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>18,543</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Thai</td>
<td>14,342</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>14,180</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nepalese</td>
<td>12,564</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani</td>
<td>11,017</td>
<td>0.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>61,345</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>6,708,389</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hong Kong Chinese employers, however, do not value education or intelligence among domestic workers and many see these attributes as antithetical to a desired docility (Constable 1997; Lowe 1997). In a survey of domestic worker employers, moreover, nearly half expressed a willingness to physically punish domestic workers who do not perform to their satisfaction (CB 2001). The number of Indonesian domestic workers grew steadily from 1994, but has greatly increased since the Asian financial crisis of 1997 (Sautman and Kneehans 2002:31), as part of the Hong Kong middle class seeks very low-paid domestics, while globalization reduces job prospects at home for rural Indonesians (NYT 2001). Indonesian maids often work for half the legal minimum wage of HK$3,670 (HkiM, 13 August 2002).

Foreign domestic workers (FDWs) face persistent societal discrimination. They have been banned from many lifts, swimming pools, beaches, office building toilets and clubs to which their employers belong. Even non-FDW SE Asians often find it hard to rent a flat and Filipina FDWs perceive bias against them as related not only to their occupation, but also to their ethnicity. Some Hong Kong Chinese have complained in the media about the presence of FDWs in parks and other public spaces. The leading landlord in the Central district proposed in 1993 that Chater Road be cleared of Filipino maids to make way for “quality family traffic” (Sautman and Kneehans 2002:38; L.Law 2002a).

In contrast to other foreigners on employment visas, FDWs are allowed into Hong Kong only on two-year contracts and cannot bring in family members (HKHRM 1996). They are prohibited from changing to other types of employment and can be prosecuted for non-domestic work demanded by their employer. If her contract is prematurely terminated, an FDW is required to leave Hong Kong within two weeks, unless she can prove that she was not responsible for the contract termination and finds another employer. This two-week rule replaced a six-month rule in place before 1987 (GB 1995; Ozeki 1997). If the FDW disputes the termination, she is deemed a visitor ineligible for employment, even though dispute resolution takes months and requires the FDW’s presence, thus forcing her to do illegal part-time work. FDWs’ identity cards are marked with a “W” prefix to distinguish them from the general population. Although entitled to one day off per week and to statutory holidays, FDWs may be made to work an unlimited number of hours and may be fired even in the absence of evidence of a contract violation. Many FDWs face discrimination in dealings with police, labor and immigration officials, as well as the public (Cheng 1996:147; HKHRC 1997). At the time of the 1995 Legislative Council elections all adults ordinarily resident in Hong Kong for seven years could vote, but since 1997 the franchise has been denied to FDWs who attain this length of residence (SCMP, 20 April 1995; HKHRM 2001). A person cannot now be treated as ordinarily resident in Hong Kong during the time that she is employed as an FDW and is thus ineligible to obtain the right to vote and not to be deported (SCMP, 1 June 1998, 6 July 2001). The position of FDW thus reflects in part a dynamic summarized by Cheng Shu-ju (1996:143): “Their inferior status is in fact shaped by the established racial hierarchy of the society in the labor-receiving countries and materialized within the family constructed upon this social hierarchy.” The state’s selective deprivations of the rights accorded to foreigners, however, signals to society that the racial inferiorization of much of the ethnic minority population comports with government policy. The ethnic
groups mainly composed of FDWs are thus kept in a permanent margizen status.

**Hong Kong’s “expat” denizens**

Hong Kong’s post-colonial globalization has also seen significant changes in denizen ethnic minorities, locally labeled as “expatriates.” While from 1991 to 2001 margizen Filipinos and Indonesians respectively increased from 1.2 percent to 2.1 percent and 0.1 percent to 0.8 percent of the SAR population, the British dropped from 1.2 percent to 0.3 percent (HKCC 2001). One other denizen group dropped in numbers. In 1998 Hong Kong had 50,000 Japanese (SCMP, 24 May 1998). By 2001, the Asian financial crisis and a stagnant home economy may have shrunk the Japanese presence by three-quarters. Other denizen groups have expanded, with non-British whites now 0.4 percent or some 27,000 residents (HKCSD 2002). Denizens are on a very different rung of the ethnic hierarchy than margizens. Most minorities are women aged 27–38, working as domestics, with a median income of HK$3,800 a month. In contrast, 60 percent of ethnic Indians and most Westerners are administrators, professionals or managers, with a median monthly income of HK$13,000 for Indians, HK$36,000 for Westerners, and HK$10,000 for the general population. A much higher percentage of denizen minorities are male (Nielsen 2001; SCMP, 3 January 2001, 30 April 2002).

Hong Kong Indians are a highly variegated group. Many of those born in the territory have high-status jobs and Indian-descended merchants account for 10 percent of Hong Kong’s import-export trade (SCMP, 26 February 2002). Prosperity, however, by no means shelters them from employment, housing and travel-related discrimination (SCMP, 6 May 2002, 24 June 2002, 15 July 2002, 17 July 2002). The government is aware of discrimination against Indians and other minorities, but has thus far refused to provide a means of redress through an anti-race discrimination law. Many recent migrants from the sub-continent work in low-paid jobs, such as security guards, that reflect the historical position that most people from the region had under the colonial administration (Law, S.Y. 1999). Indian domestic workers, who are generally employed by ethnic Indians, are among Hong Kong’s lowest-paid workers, with some earning only HK$1,000 per month (IPS 1999).

Hong Kong’s white population exemplifies a well-off minority that nonetheless consists of denizens because it has the socioeconomic rights that are part of the tripartite schema proposed by Marshall (1950), but is disallowed many political rights enjoyed by the dominant ethnic group. The Basic Law bars non-PRC citizens from holding the top twenty-three offices in Hong Kong, while PRC law allows non-Chinese to naturalize only if they are near relatives of Chinese, are settled in China, and renounce their citizenship in other states (SCMP, 5 November 2001). Hong Kong Chinese who were conferred PRC citizenship in 1997 are entitled to retain citizenship in other states. Non-ethnic Chinese permanent residents, even if born in Hong Kong, are ineligible for SAR passports because they are not PRC citizens, while Hong Kong Chinese, regardless of whether they already have citizenship in another country, are entitled to SAR passports and “home return permits” (hui xiang zheng) that allow visa-free entry to the Mainland. A 15-year-old girl of Pakistani descent and without Chinese relatives did receive PRC citizenship and an SAR passport in 2002, but she held no other passport (SCMP, 2 December 2002).
Permanent residents who are not Chinese citizens cannot elect SAR deputies to the PRC National People’s Congress. Children of permanent residents who are Chinese citizens enjoy the right of abode in Hong Kong even if they are born elsewhere, while children of non-Chinese permanent residents do not have that entitlement (Tsang 2001). A PRC citizen permanent resident never loses the right of abode in Hong Kong merely by living abroad; a non-Chinese permanent resident loses the right by living abroad for more than three years (SCMP, 20 May 1998, 26 May 1998, 28 October 1998). A non-Chinese must be settled and continuously reside in the SAR for seven years to receive permanent residence; a Chinese citizen need not make a showing of settlement or continuity (HKHRM 2001). A non-Chinese, in contrast to a Chinese, must make Hong Kong alone his place of permanent residence.

These citizenship and residence disabilities, together with dominant ethnic groups’ disdain for the cultures of other peoples, affect all who secure permanent residence in the SAR, making them permanent denizens irrespective of whether they acculturate. The one exception to this permanency involves New Mainland Migrants (NMMs) to Hong Kong.

**The new Mainland migrant hybrid**

Although not an official minority or “racially” distinct from most Hong Kong people, many of the latter regard new Mainland migrants (334,000 people or 5 percent of the population in 2002) as a notch lower on the SAR ethnic hierarchy. Most are family members of Hong Kong people who come as part of a 150-a-day quota of Mainlanders issued one-way permits. Some 70 percent of Mainlanders who have lived in Hong Kong for less than seven years have not been educated beyond junior middle school. Their median monthly personal and household incomes are HK$6,000 and HK$12,000, the latter being 64 percent of the overall population’s median household income. Most NMMs work in low-skilled jobs in the catering, hotel, retail/wholesale or import/export sectors. While only 6 percent of the Hong Kong population receives welfare payments, 18 percent of new Mainland migrants do. Formerly they could apply for welfare during their first year in the SAR and received payments of about HK$10,000 a month for a family of four or 55 percent of Hong Kong median household income, placing welfare recipients in the income bracket of the lowest-paid 10 percent of earners. More than 35 percent of surveyed long-time Hong Kong residents nevertheless favored giving new migrants even less and a scheme was mooted to pay Mainlanders eligible for one-way permits a small fraction of the welfare payments they might otherwise seek, in exchange for their not migrating to the SAR (SCMP, 29 April 2002a, 2002b, 30 April 2002, 21 December 2002a; Bowring 2002b). Instead, the government announced in 2003 that adult new Mainland migrants would not be eligible for welfare payments or reduced benefits until they had lived in Hong Kong for seven years (Yau 2003).

Surveys of long-term Hong Kong residents and new Mainland migrants have shown that the former are strongly biased against the latter, although not to the same extent as they are disparaging of South Asians and SE Asians. New Mainland migrants experience discrimination in many aspects of their lives (Kneehans and Sautman, 2001; Sautman and Kneehans 2002). Indeed, the Hong Kong government acknowledges that discrimination against Mainland migrants is analogous to race discrimination (MP 1997). A survey of
100 Mainland migrant households found that 82 percent of respondents believed that they face “racial discrimination” in Hong Kong, with almost all convinced that it is average to very serious. Some 40 percent reported being paid less than Hong Kong people for the same work and 30 percent stated that employers had rejected them because of their migrant status (Loper 2001). The position of new Mainland migrant women is especially difficult. A survey has shown that 70 percent of new Mainland migrant women are unemployed and of those who had work, 75 percent said they labored for 63 hours a week or more and 80 percent earned HK$6,000 a month or less (HKS, 9 March 1998, 23 July 1998).

New Mainland migrants are disenfranchised, but do expect permanent residence after seven years and that their children will acculturate and become full-fledged Hong Kong Chinese. They are subjected to employment and other forms of discrimination, as well as pervasive bias. As a group that temporarily lacks full political citizenship is generally disadvantaged in terms of socioeconomic rights, and whose numbers are constantly replenished, but that consists of individuals who can anticipate inclusion in the dominant ethnic group, new Mainland migrants represent a denizen/margizen hybrid.

Structural and ideological bases of the Hong Kong semi-ethnocracy

Taken together, new Mainland migrants and ethnic minorities are more than a tenth and perhaps as much as an eighth of the SAR population, with the proportion expected to rise as more middle-class families who need two incomes hire FDWs, who come much cheaper than local domestic workers, can be worked for unlimited hours, and may have English or business skills that the employer families can utilize. Talent import schemes may augment the number of new Mainland migrants and “expats” continue to flock to Hong Kong as a locus for the “China trade.” Because the proportion of non-dominant ethnies remains within the zone of comfort of local elites, however, Hong Kong is unlikely to become a full-blown ethnocracy. Some scholars and public figures are convinced that democracy is receding (Crampton 2002; NDI 2002), but near-term Hong Kong will likely remain semi-liberal, semi-democratic, and semi-ethnocratic. Dominant ethnic group elites will be vigilant in preserving their monopoly of power against fissiparous trends induced by the fear of downward mobility in economically troubled times and by an increasing rights consciousness. Their stance is fostered as much by elite interaction with the Mainland as by considerations of local interests. PRC leaders and the tycoon core of Hong Kong Chinese business elites both seek to maintain their desired forms of social cohesion and regime legitimacy and share a powerful strain of authoritarianism that they seek to bring to bear against social fractiousness. The SAR tycoons’ need to protect their hegemony in the face of popular reaction to the disequalizing effects of globalization, and their authoritarian world-view, are the structural and ideological bases for semi-ethnocracy.

That Hong Kong is a plutocracy—a government by or in the interests of the rich—is a “widely held sentiment” in the SAR (Phillips 2001; BW 2002). Its regime is beholden to a small group of influential people who dominate the economy. Links between political leaders and leading families are stronger since 1997 (Bowring 2002c, 2002d) and the political system has been “rigged to ensure that in plutocratic Hong Kong, all men were
created equal, but businessmen were infinitely more equal than others” (Jacob 2000a).

Hong Kong is also a very unequal society. The top 20 percent of Hong Kong people hold about 50 percent of all wealth, while the bottom 20 percent have about 6 percent. The top 10 percent take about 44 percent of SAR income, while the bottom 10 percent have 1.8 percent (LegCo 1999; HKiM, 27 November 2000; SCMP, 29 August 2001; Lee 2002). The SAR’s Gini Coefficient—a measure of income inequality in which 0 is perfect equality and 1 is perfect inequality—is the highest in the developed world and surpasses that of many developing states (see Table 7.2). Growing inequality is in large measure due to shifts in population shares through increases in the proportion of foreign workers, whose

<table>
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<td>The world</td>
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<td>0.400</td>
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<td>mid-1990s</td>
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<td>Latin American countries</td>
<td>mid-1990s</td>
<td>0.490</td>
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<tr>
<td>South Korea</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.378</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japan</td>
<td>1997</td>
<td>0.400</td>
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<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>2002</td>
<td>0.450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>1999</td>
<td>0.460</td>
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<tr>
<td>Singapore</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>0.481</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>2001</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>0.593</td>
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earnings most sharply vary from the rest of the population (Lam and Lin 1998). Increased
inequality reinforces Hong Kong’s “ethnoclass” structure as the gap between dominant ethnic group core incomes and those of the largest ethnic minorities widens.

The tycoons are the core of Hong Kong’s elite: “men who built their empires wielding absolute power over their companies and employees, and are unaccustomed to being questioned or facing public scrutiny” (Gargan 1997). Almost all are ethnic Chinese with close government ties. Hutchinson Whampoa and Cheung Kong Properties head Li Ka-shing has the greatest influence. Some regard him as more powerful than Chief Executive Tung Chee-hwa (Asia-week, 15 January 1999; Lau 2001b) and others speak of “Li’s unquestioned writ” in a political system that favors the rich (FEER 2001). Those with ties to Li voted for Tung in the small circle election (400 business people and professionals) that awarded him power in 1996 (IPS 1996). Tung himself was a shipping magnate without political experience when given the nod by Beijing. His Financial Secretary until 2003, Anthony Leung Kam-chung, headed Chase Manhattan Asia-Pacific before his appointment and has stated that “For people to serve the public, I think these people should be the elite of society” (Gargan 1997). Leung’s successor as Financial Secretary, Henry Tang is, like Tung, a wealthy businessman and son of an ex-Shanghai industrialist. Secretary for Financial Services and the Treasury, Ma Si-hung was Chief Financial Officer of Pacific Century Cyberworks, headed by Li Ka-shing’s son Li Tzar-kai. Tung, a close friend of the Li family with former business ties to it, conferred with Li Tzar-kai about Ma’s appointment (SCMP, 25 June 2002, 1 July 2002).

Most prominent tycoons strongly oppose expanding democracy. They criticized the enlarged franchise of late colonial rule (FEER 1996), applauded the return to business-centered “small circle elections” for LegCo functional constituencies, seek to perpetuate the system in the face of calls for its abolition after 2008 (Yeung 2000), and object to criticisms of the regime by demonstrators, LegCo members and journalists. As General Chamber of Commerce head, Eden Woon, has put it, “The more bickering there is, the more [business] people shake their heads” (Asia-week 2000). Li Ka-shing and tycoons such as Lam Kinming of the Lai Sun property group have condemned challenges to Hong Kong’s system of power (SCMP, 6 January 1999; FT 1999; Asia-week 2000). Wharf Holdings chair, Peter Woo, has called upon the regime to “ensure the tax-exempt majority does not swamp the taxed minority” (Woo 2000). Gordon Wu Ying-sheung of Hopewell Holdings has stated that if a “one man, one vote” electoral system were implemented, Hong Kong might suffer for ten years and equates the concept with French Revolution guillotines and Cultural Revolution Red Guards. Chesson International Holdings chair, Kai Yiuming, has stated that the government’s opponents want to destabilize Hong Kong (HKiM, 9 November 2000; FEER 2000). Hang Lung property baron, Ronnie Chan Chi-chung, favors an executive-dominated government and has stated that democracy is undermining the SAR’s business environment (SCMP, 19 August 2001).

The tycoons, it has been argued, “abhor democracy chiefly because it would put an end to a system that blesses cozy business arrangements” (The Economist, 22 April 2000). While this may be so, the tycoons also oppose democracy because they abhor challenges to the SAR’s political and social configurations. Gordon Wu, for example, has lamented that in post-handover Hong Kong “Workers confront their employers, students accuse their school heads and members of the public oppose the government,” while
demonstrations occur daily (HKiM, 9 November 2000; SCMP, 6 October 2001).

The tycoons have not been openly and directly involved in matters affecting “ethnic relations.” They are, however, leading lights in local business organizations—the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce (HKGCC), the Chinese General Chamber of Commerce, the Chinese Manufacturers Association, Hong Kong Federation of Industries (HKFI), the Employers Association of Hong Kong and the Hong Kong Management Association—that have had long histories of opposition to anti-race discrimination legislation (SCMP, 4 May 1995, 4 September 2001, 9 August 2002). Their most oft-heard voice on the issue has been that of Liberal Party head, James Tien Pei-chun, who has represented the HKGCC and HKFI in LegCo and has been a member of Tung Chee-hwa’s Executive Council. Tien has opposed anti-discrimination bills since the mid-1990s and has argued that Hong Kong has been spared race discrimination because it is 98 percent Chinese (Tien 1994; UPI 1996). He has favored laws to allow employers to dismiss pregnant FDWs and to exclude them from the SAR’s mandatory pension scheme (SCMP, 28 July 1995, 22 December 1999). Tien’s opposition to anti-race discrimination legislation is likely to be more ideological than “practical,” however, as the HKGCC’s own chief economist has stated that the cost of anti-discrimination laws is “quite marginal” (SCMP, 29 July 1998).

The government itself has always highlighted the objections to anti-race discrimination legislation of the “local” business organizations that Tien has represented. The Home Affairs Bureau noted in a “consultation paper” that sixteen of twenty-five business groups consulted favor legislation, with six opposed. It dwelt, however, upon the “local” business groups’ objections and stated that “it may be significant that the majority of those in favor of legislation were foreign chambers, whereas most of those opposed were the major local chambers” (HAB 2002). The government evidently has considered that the views of these tycoon-influenced business organizations trump the need to uphold Hong Kong’s international image by meeting the criticisms of UN organs over the failure to ameliorate racial discrimination (SCMP, 2 October 2002). A likely reason for this stance is that top officials share the tycoons’ view that there are already too many challenges to the existing order, which would be upset further by any enlargement of the rights of the SAR’s denizens and margizens. The tycoons are highly class conscious, overwhelmingly male, and “patriotic,” while “low-status” migrant workers, unlike many other members of Hong Kong society, are discriminated [against] by virtue of their combined and intersecting social identities of national origin, race, gender and class” (AMWC 2001).

Because of the growing disparities of wealth and power in Hong Kong society, there is a risk to the tycoon regime in empowering, however slightly, any subaltern group. To do so would contravene the Chief Executive’s view that a regime of deference to authority comports with “Chineseness,” “Chinese values,” and the “Chinese way of doing things” (Mirsky 1998; Vines 1998; SCMP, 25 March 1998; Asiaweek, 22 October 1999). He thus sees Hong Kong as a Chinese region and not merely a region of China. LegCo legal profession representative Margaret Ng (2001) has observed that in recent years “As rich ethnic Chinese float to the top, the non-Chinese non-rich are submerged,” a phenomenon that she links to denunciations of human rights as Western and counterposed to Chinese harmony and cooperation. Hers is an apt description of a
functioning semi-ethnocracy.

The effort to promote dominant ethnic group solidarity has met with some success, particularly in sharpening the differentiation of Hong Kong Chinese from margizens. Some 13 percent of Hong families with children under 13 years of age employ an FDW and

Intrinsic to the employment of Filipino domestic servants...is their place as status-markers for their middle class and elite employers. Having Filipinos and other foreigners do work that is seen as servile and demeaning not only enhances the social standing of the middle class, but also the national identity of the broader populace.

(Pinches 2001:192)

Beyond minimal interactions, Hong Kong Chinese seldom try to develop personal relationships with Filipinas, who have no local acquaintances apart from people in the work domain (Ozeki 1997), in contrast to Filipina FDWs in some other countries (Parenras 2001). An arm’s-length relationship is in keeping with the imbalance of rights among ethnoclasses in the SAR. It applies equally to other margizens and, with the occasional exception of the best-off ethnic Indians and whites, to denizens as well. A desired deepening of racial inferiorization in a time of economic difficulties extends well beyond the growing sections of the middle class who interact with the most subordinated ethnic minorities. A survey in 2002 found that seven out of ten Hong Kong people want to cap the number of FDWs allowed into the SAR and 60 percent favor taxing the low salaries of FDW, although no one proposes a similar tax on low-paid Hong Kong Chinese (DPA, 30 August 2002). There have also been proposals to sharply cut the wages of FDWs (MN 1999). Regardless of whether such proposals are realized, a strengthening of semi-ethnocracy presents one way for the tycoon regime to maintain a semblance of legitimacy in a time of continued crisis for the bulk of the Hong Kong population.

Conclusion

Myron Weiner (1987:35) has noted that among “ethnic hegemonic states” in Asia, Africa, and the Middle East where single ethnic groups have taken control of the state and used its power to control others, the Gulf States stand out because of sharp restrictions on the rights of migrant workers designed to prevent them from having a permanent presence. The Hong Kong tycoon regime, like the family autocracies of the Gulf States, “seek[s] to elevate the political and cultural integrity of their dominions by counter-posing them to the ‘secondary’ serving societies made up of ethnically degraded foreign workers” (Pinches 2001:192). Most Gulf States have a large proportion of foreign workers in their midst, which is one reason for their authoritarianism and full-blown ethnocracy. Abundant oil resources and the strategic role of these states in US military designs for the Middle East guarantee that their overseas patrons ignore the Gulf States’ anti-democratic and ethnocratic practices. The Hong Kong regime can still rely on an overwhelming demographic preponderance of the dominant ethnic group and it is monitored internally and externally by human rights organizations that know that Hong
Kong values its good name as “Asia’s World City,” making a complete ethnocracy counter-productive. With all that, the tycoon regime remains adamant that its own form of an “ethnic hegemonic state,” with an enduring division between citizens, denizens, and margizens, is one source of stability and legitimacy in a strikingly unequal society.

Hong Kong has both struggling ethnic minority and anti-racist organizations (L. Law 2002a; Sim 2002) and an abundance of “democrats,” but the two forces are not fully conjoined. The Citizens Party and Frontier are vigorous in protesting against race discrimination. The largest force in the democracy camp, the Democratic Party, supports an anti-race discrimination law, but is otherwise largely silent on denials of migrant rights. The ex-leftists of the largest political party, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment of Hong Kong, support the government and the only violation of minority rights that they have protested are those of the ethnic Chinese in Indonesia (CND 1998). Meanwhile, the living conditions of most Hong Kong Chinese continue to decline, as globalized competition pushes even those with full formal citizenship toward a place of their own at the margins. The main organized forces among the non-elite majority, i.e. labor unions, remain weak by international standards (Chiu and Levin 1999; Chiu 2002). It is an open question whether they recognize subordinated ethnic minorities and new Mainland migrants as potential allies, rather than competitors, but the Hong Kong Confederation of Trade Unions did support FDW protests against a wage cut in 1999 (Law 2002a: 216).

Can globalized Hong Kong be imagined as a place without semi-ethnocracy and, if so, what would be the conditions for such a polity? A Hong Kong with a tycoon regime cannot even be democratic in the sense of allowing, as some states do, more or less ethnically-equal opportunities for residents to pass from margizen to denizen to citizen. Still less can the SAR be democratic in the sense of a polity that accords the whole demos the minimal socio-economic rights proclaimed by international human rights instruments. The growing inequality in Hong Kong society may be part of an international trend under conditions of globalization. The profundity of inequality, however, is a creature of a continuous colonial and post-colonial domination of Hong Kong by large corporations whose profits are inherently bound up with their hegemony in a system of social relations based on sharp ethnic, class, and gender inequalities. To replace semi-ethnocracy therefore requires the abolition not merely of tycoon hegemony, but corporate elite dominance generally. Whether or not globalization as a whole is irreversible and must remain the sine qua non of the political economy of the SAR, its residents now can begin to imagine a Hong Kong in which they can live in substantial equality, with equal access to the full spectrum of political rights and the attainment of those other rights that pre-condition a voice in the ordering of a democracy that permeates everyday life.

Ethnic equality then, is not merely a matter of excising invidious laws and providing a remedy to those who encounter discrimination. It is linked with the contest, at times muffled and at times history-making, between those who overlay wealth with power and those who are denied both. Those who equate the unrestricted play of “market forces” with freedom view Hong Kong as the freest society in the world (O’Donnell 2000). For the majority of SAR residents and particularly for the bulk of ethnic minority people and new Mainland migrants, it is a freedom that will be unrealized until political forces come to the fore who are unwilling to serve two masters—the hegemony of the corporate state.
on the one hand, and an increasingly marginalized majority, on the other—and instead consciously seek a governance that is pervasively democratic and multi-ethnic.

Abbreviations and sources

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Source Description</th>
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<td>AP</td>
<td>Associated Press (1999)</td>
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<tr>
<td>AP</td>
<td>Asia Pulse (2002)</td>
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<td>APWI</td>
<td>Asia and Pacific World of Information</td>
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<td>BDU</td>
<td>Business Daily Update</td>
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<td>BL</td>
<td>BusinessLine</td>
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<td>BW</td>
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<td>CB</td>
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<td>CND</td>
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<td>DPA</td>
<td>Deutsche Presse Agentur The Economist</td>
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Note

1 A full list of newspaper and journal articles cited can be requested from the author at sobarrys@ust.hk.

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Introduction

Post-handover Hong Kong was rocked by a series of citizenship battles, especially in terms of struggles for the right of abode. The right of abode movement was central to the social life of Hong Kong in the post-1997 period, proliferating and configuring new cultural and political terrains for contesting meanings of citizenship and identity in Hong Kong (Ku 2001). Notions of community, belonging and culture are no longer abstract concepts; they have become sites of intensive contestation. The movement, which lasted for four years, had faded into silence by 2002 when the Hong Kong police finally arrested and repatriated overdue residents who were Mainland children born to Hong Kong citizens. Whether the battle was a failure is a theme extending far beyond what this chapter can handle. However, the struggle provides an important foundation on which the politics of identity and questions of citizenship in Hong Kong can be further discussed. The struggle has ultimately revealed the constitutive process of defining who is and who is not the Hong Kong citizen-subject proper in the era of globalization. Writing at a time when these Mainland children are being denied right of abode in Hong Kong, this chapter would like to look at the lower-class women whose lived experiences and subjectivities, though often hidden behind the scene of the battle for formal or legal citizenship, are always reconfigured and shaped by the discourses of the battle embedded in the larger discourse of Hong Kong developing into a global city. With insights from, but in contrast to cultural and transnational citizenship studies, we will contribute to the debates by putting forward a notion of “lived citizenship.”

This notion of citizenship, albeit twisted, sometimes deformed, and always fragmentary and actively negotiated, is an embodiment of everyday practices and lived experiences of many lower-class people. Lived citizenship contests the myth of globalization that increasing cross-border population mobility would open up spaces for
constructing a multiple or flexible citizenship (Ong 1999). In contrast to this optimistic cultural logic of transnationality, current debates on cultural citizenship alert us to the fact that struggles for legal rights in terms of membership of the nation-state, that is, *de jure* citizenship, are not equivalent to the struggles for social, political and cultural rights of the members and hence access to active and full participation in the society, that is, *de facto* citizenship (Holston 1999; Isin and Wood 1999). The right to legal citizenship does not necessarily lead to the granting of rights of social participation and cultural recognition of minorities or marginal groups (Young 1990). The gap between normative and substantive citizenship can be further enlarged when trans-border and transnational migration dislocate people in different places, who may or may not be members of the society in which they reside. The politics of belonging and its relationship to citizenship, often a tense and paradoxical one, is highlighted and has become an increasingly important component of the cultural politics of many global cities. Now while globalization is conducive to thousands of transnational immigrants who may be granted permanent residence in many Western or Asian countries, they are often denied some of the rights vital to citizenship, and thus the sense of belonging to the communities in which they reside (Castles and Davidson 2000).

We further argue that both the ideology and process of globalization are highly political and proceed at the expense of the social. The deconstruction of the social, as we put it, will be the whim, if not the win of globalization. In brief, the cultural logic of globalization and trans-nationality not only disrupt the conventional platform for the social formation and praxis of citizenship rights, but pose challenges to a modernist discourse of humanity and human needs. For example, in the eyes of the Hong Kong government, family reunion between the Mainland children and their Hong Kong parents who are mainly lower class pales in importance next to maintaining Hong Kong’s competitiveness as a global city. “Human,” in the global informational age, can only be made sense of when it is transformed into “human resource” or “human talent,” if not a “cyborg” servicing the high-tech economy. The quirk of globalization thus lies not in destroying humanity and rights of citizenship, but by making the latter more difficult to talk about and to justify. In the context of Hong Kong, we can see how the state-led imaginary of building a global city leads to a process of constructing an “enterprising individual” and the “hollowing out” of the social. The new governance after 1997 makes the articulation of full participation in social, economic and political rights for its citizens more difficult.

**Global colonialism in Hong Kong**

Post-handover Hong Kong is rapidly undergoing transformation into a post-industrial city and enters the “global condition” at a pace greater than its citizens could have imagined in previous years. The nature of the post-handover city regime, we argue, is paradoxically conservative, if not authoritarian. Accompanied by a deep sense of political frustration and the serious challenge of economic downturn, we witness a rupture in Hong Kong’s urban imagineering at the turn of the millennium (Pun and Lee 2002). In 2000, Hong Kong simultaneously announced a number of ambitious “global” projects including
Cyberport, Herbalport and Disneyland, to speed up the restructuring of the Hong Kong economy. Many of these eye-catching global terms, like Cyberport, Silicon Harbor, Herbalport, Science Park, Disneyland, and so on, float ghostlike in and out its citizens’ minds, spiraling through the electronic mass media, and involve a process of simulacra-making and remaking hyper-realities into the space of Hong Kong. This new grand urban imagineering advocated by the first Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) government demonstrates the strengthening of the role of state in regulating the city. As statist projects, these “new” moves of the Tung administration are to consolidate existing, though fragmented, measures into a coherent policy framework that appeals to the imagination and aspiration of global middle-class citizens. These grand projects all aim to convey a futuristic promise of professional and high-salary employment, upward mobility and the raising of Hong Kong’s status to an advanced site of production in the world economy. This framework is subsumed under a globalization discourse striving to maintain Hong Kong’s competitiveness and dominance as Asia’s World City in the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, this involves a new governmentality of its citizen-subject and it marginalizes those who do not fit in this new urban imagineering.

We hold that the nature of the Hong Kong hegemony evolving at the moment is a kind of global colonialism. The radical urban imagineering sets itself at war with its own society, further opening its economy to global capital and elites, and yet rendering closed the right of abode to its own citizens’ next generations. The best example is the legalization of administrative measures to exclude citizenship rights for children born to Hong Kong people in Mainland China, while at the same time, the SAR government openly welcomes the migration of high-tech talent and professionals from Mainland China and overseas to Hong Kong. The former are increasingly considered undesirable citizens under the new urban imagineering. By highly prioritizing high-tech talents from Mainland and abroad, encouraging them to move to Hong Kong, and granting them rights of residence and citizenship, these measures can only result in the polarization of Hong Kong society and the reduction of its own people to the status of second-class citizens (Sassen 1998). In the name of stabilizing Hong Kong society, the government has commodified citizenship and turned it increasingly into an instrument that is designed for the flexible accumulation of the city in order for it to remain competitive in the global economy. The route to self-colonization is zigzagged—first imagining itself becoming Asia’s world city, thus engaging in narcissism and then realizing its impotence in important areas such as a deficit of information technology skills and qualified labor, and thus going through self-depreciation and exclusion. As Foucault’s concept of heterotopia highlights, the imaginary of “becoming” mirrors the imaginary of “lack” (Soja 1996). The becoming of Hong Kong as a high-tech metropolis, a global city, mirrors the process of excluding its own society, a global city without its people.

By the time of handover in 1997, Hong Kong society was already deeply divided along line of class, gender and ethnicity, despite the fact that those social divisions were temporarily overshadowed by the economic boom of the 1980s and 1990s. But strife was sparked off once the Asian financial crisis hit the territory and turned the economic boom into a bubble. Today class politics is conspicuous. For example, we see how middle-class people—most of them local-born adults—immediately come to identify themselves as a different kind of Hong Konger from the lower working class who, often, are new
immigrants or arrivals from Mainland China and South Asia. Social differentiation and exclusion are mainly expressed in two aspects: first, by criticizing the lower working class who live on the Comprehensive Social Securities Assistance Scheme (CSSA); and second, by discriminating against or expelling their children who were born in China, and thus preventing them from staying in the territory. In advocating its urban imagineering of Hong Kong towards a twenty-first century global city, which simultaneously implicates a demand for the culturally and financially “superior” citizens, the SAR government has paradoxically accelerated existing social exclusion created out of class difference and the constructed distinction between “new” and “old” Hong Kongers. Disputes over the “right of abode,” embedded in this larger discourse of Hong Kong as a global city, thus put the questions poignantly and critically: Whose city it is? (Sassen 1998); Who has the right to stay in Hong Kong? And for whom does the city develop?

Hence, the “right of abode” is not purely an issue of “constitutional crisis”; more seriously, it is a social crisis that is going to constitute and reconstitute Hong Kong society. The process of global colonization, by which we mean the bringing in of global capital and talents while at the same time barring the entry of Mainland children born to Hong Kong people, will continue to sharpen existing social conflicts and reconfigure post-handover politics. Through the “right of abode” disputes, a hard-handed immigration policy was imposed irrespective of concern for the rule of law and human rights issues. At the same time, public opinions are shaped to consent to this inhumane governance that openly discards the rule of law which, unfortunately, is implicated and complicit in the larger statist project of urban imagineering. In many ways, this grand project of the global city justifies an authoritarian mode of political regulation which inevitably will deform basic claims for citizenship rights.

The rift between the two blocs—one from the global side including entrepreneurs, managers and professionals, and the other from the local side, consisting of the working class and the new arrivals—is destined to widen. This rift will be further complicated by aggravated internal conflicts between the middle class and working class, working class and lower working class, lower working class and underclass at a time marked by a severe unemployment problem and other economic difficulties in Hong Kong. In the following sections, we tell stories of new immigrant women who are wives to Hong Kong working-class men. They are part of the tide of new arrivals in the 1990s, the latest generation of immigrants who continue to constitute Hong Kong as a migrant society. We will focus on their work experiences at the conjuncture when Hong Kong is rapidly experiencing economic restructuring and economic downturn after the Asian financial crisis, and see how they are “disconnected” as Hong Kong strives to be a global city. For those having to live on welfare, we look at the ways they confront social and economic constraints and the alienation of being rejected from application, and having to live without decent housing and childcare provision. It is an attempt to understand the personal struggles and triumphs of these people in order to approach the way citizenship becomes the site of struggle, a lived embodiment and praxis largely subsumed in the discourse and practices of globalization in Hong Kong.
Dislocated citizens in the Information Age

What’s good about Hong Kong? Why should I be here? If not for my husband and my son, I wouldn’t think of coming to Hong Kong.

(Mrs Wong, a new immigrant arrived Hong Kong in 1997)

In the second part of this chapter, we will let speak the subjective experiences of mainly lower-class women whose stories highlight the deformation of citizenship in Hong Kong. The ethnographic studies were conducted in Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan, the two working-class communities where most of the Mainland migrant women resided, and from among them, ten women provided their full life-stories. Embedded in daily struggles to integrate into Hong Kong society, these women’s experiences contest the normative notion of citizenship which is more than an abstract legal term, but a lived concept. Through telling the stories of their experiences, we contest the grand narrative of the global city in which the notion of citizen rights is increasingly tailored for the middle class. For these lower-class women, citizenship becomes a site of struggle where written legal texts, forces of discrimination and exclusion in everyday lives, the grand narrative of globalization and Hong Kong development collide. This kind of deformed citizenship, as will be illustrated, is therefore a battlefield which constitutes these people’s lived process and their subjectivities.

We asked our informants what they thought about the present government plan of promoting Hong Kong further into a world-class city, e.g. by building a Disneyland to boost tourism and a Cyberport for developing information technology, Mei Fong responded bitterly:

We women are “sinking.” No one will employ us. All this development would not benefit us at all. Disneyland will not even employ me to sweep the floor or to clean the toilets because they need someone who speaks English. The signs everywhere, even those in the bathroom, would be in English. They [the employers] fear that the tourists might ask you for directions. Nowadays, people aged 30 to 40 are also looking for jobs sweeping floors. How can I possibly get the job?

Mei Fong’s story soberly demonstrates that workers of low educational levels will hardly benefit from the new trend of global development since they would not be considered qualified even for very low-tier positions. The type of economy implicated in the urban imagineering is highly exclusionary and is designed only to engage with some segments of the population.

Another local-born manufacturing worker, Sau Hong, was also forced to “disconnect” from a valuable employment in this new era of development. Like many of the working daughters who made up the industrial success of Hong Kong in the 1980s, Sau Hong, now in her early forties, had only finished primary school and spent her lifetime working in the electronics industry (Salaff 1981). However, when the manufacturing industry
finished restructuring around 1995, she and all other co-workers were dismissed. She moved to many types of work but failed to stay in a long-term job. Several months before the interview, she thought that the year 2000 would be a fortunate one for her when the Information Technology Department employed her as a messenger:

I was so excited. It was a two-year contract! I immediately left a previous short-term job in the Election Affairs Department. The position simply required me to make copies of documents and do some manual work. But when I took up the job, they [the office] merged the works of office assistant and the messenger together. They wanted me to read the faxes, letters and to distribute them to different staff members in the office. And all of these documents were in English. I couldn’t read them! If they knew that the job nature requires English proficiency, why did they employ me? The job made me feel so stress-ful and embarrassed. The colleagues had bad attitudes and I just could not bear the pressure anymore. I kept on forcing myself to hang on but eventually I gave up.

Sau Hong’s experience once again confirms that it is difficult for displaced women workers to re-integrate into an economy and job market that increasingly discards manual labor and emphasizes knowledge and information. The larger discourse of Hong Kong striving to restructure and to transform itself into a world city, hence only makes these unemployed workers increasingly distanced from the social imaginary the former has claimed to bring about. The social alienation of the lower class is intense when we look at the experiences of new immigrant women. Mui Li, a Fukien woman, moved to Hong Kong with her two children in 1998 when her husband was seriously ill. In her late forties, Mui Li was ready to take up the economic burden of the family and not willing to live on welfare. She said:

I don’t want people to say I am being lazy and depend on government money. We, new immigrants, are equal beings, having hands and feet. I want to find a full-time job to support my family. At the beginning, I could find work everywhere: in factories, in restaurants, or in chain stores. But now I could hardly find any and all I can find is a part-time cleaning job! My boss told me even a university graduate can’t find a job now, what else can I expect?

For each day of work, Mui Li could get paid HK$100. She was not provided with a work contract, and thus received no paid holidays and other benefits stipulated by the labor regulations. On average earning HK$3,000 each month, Mui Li saw no hope of improving her living conditions in the coming years:

Before I came to Hong Kong, I often heard that Hong Kong is a very advanced city and people could have a good living with high standard. But now, I understand that only a small number of people can have that wealth. For us, the poor, no matter how hard we work, it is not going to improve our lives.

Finding a job might be hard. But it is even harder for new immigrants to take daily criticism from Hong Kong locals for further squeezing the local job market. “Taking
away the rice-bowls of Hong Kong people” is a daily complaint to them and the label has spread out quickly through the mass media and into the community. The local-born working class is suffering a high unemployment rate close to 8 percent in 2002, the first time in the history of Hong Kong since its economic take-off in the 1960s, and nurtures an exclusionary attitude towards the new immigrants. New arrivals from Mainland China are considered as competitors in the job market and used as scapegoats for pushing down labor prices when incomes have decreased in recent years. Discrimination against them is mounting, as evidence from welfare discourses and policies, labor market and employment practices, and community life at large show. For our interviewees, the Hong Kong dream is ironically detached from its reality when the possibility of finding a job and a sense of belonging is doomed. Under the larger practices and discourse of Hong Kong taking off to a new developmental stage, the lower class and new immigrants have to struggle harder to combat waves of social exclusion and negotiate new ways of finding a place in the global city.

Welfare system without citizenship rights

I really don’t want to get CSSA. I feel I am losing face when people say we are new immigrants, and we come over to Hong Kong for CSSA. But what can I do? My kids are still too young. Who can take care of them?

(Po Lan, a new immigrant mother of two kids)

The hegemonic narrative of the global city in relation to the welfare system is, unfortunately, about reducing its role through emphasizing its loopholes and accusing the lower class of abusing it. For instance, recent discourses about cutting governmental expenditure on medical services and the CSSA are also part of the larger narrative of building Hong Kong as a global city which further appeals to business and global capitalist interests. Two of our women informants fell into the net of CSSA due to extreme economic hardship. As we will demonstrate in the following, the welfare system is part of the social processes that further alienate the lower class from sharing in a fuller sense of citizenship. Indeed, the welfare system’s design reproduces gender inequality and, in different ways, sustains the impoverishment of the lower class. These are problems that the narrative of a global Hong Kong city never attempts to address and to resolve. In telling their difficulties in applying for welfare assistance which involves much insult and discrimination, we want to look at these women as actors and investigate the various networks they have used to find appropriate housing, to seek out information from social workers and to get childcare services. Our interviews point to the fact that people tried hard to find different resources to provide themselves with the potential for economic and cultural integration. In the end, their tales of economic agility and cultural dexterity teach us a great deal about the complex textures of citizen life in a global city like Hong Kong.

Ting Ting, a new immigrant from Mainland China, is in her early thirties. She has
come to Hong Kong to be reunited with her husband and their daughter. She does not speak Cantonese well and is not working. After a while, her husband left her and her daughter at home without any food or money. She wants to work but her daughter is too small to be left alone:

I asked my husband to look after our girl when he came back from work. I got a job in the restaurant at night. However, my husband did not come back home after work! I was really sad but I could not give up the job. So, I chained my small daughter at home and opened the door with the gate closed. I then asked the old woman next door to keep an eye on my daughter or call the police if she cried. I had to go to work otherwise we had no food to eat. Later my neighbor told me that I would be accused of child abuse if I continue doing that. I had to quit the job.

Facing an irresponsible husband, Ting Ting sought help from the Social Welfare Department with an urgent need to apply for CSSA and public housing. After an appointment in the family service, she was declined welfare status for two reasons. First, she had not divorced her husband. She was required to present the divorce document in order to be eligible. Second, she did not have any apparent wounds on her body which could serve as evidence of being battered or abused. She cried:

What do they want to see? Do they want to see blood all over my body or do I have to have cancer in order to apply for CSSA? My daughter was hungry and I had no documents proving abuse by my husband.

Ting Ting was stunned after the encounter with the Social Welfare Department. Disappointed and unable to fight back, she borrowed some money from her cousin and managed to settle with her daughter in a small room in Tuen Mun. Although they lived inadequately and were in debt for several months, she said:

I didn’t want to apply for CSSA. I have hands and feet. I had a cleaning job in the vegetables market which pays HK$5,800 monthly. I tried to get a “si nai” [middle-aged housewife] to take my daughter to and from school and I could pay her HK$500 a month. But no one was willing to do that and I just need to do it myself.

As opposed to the mainstream image of new immigrants coming to Hong Kong in order to abuse welfare rights, Ting Ting’s experience tells us that new immigrants often lack the persistence and adequate language to articulate their rights and needs. Faced with complicated bureaucratic procedures and tough attitudes from government agents, they are easily intimidated and become less confident in their appeals. Without further instructions from social workers, many of them withdraw from pursuing their applications and simply strive to live on without any government assistance.

This kind of problem is not faced only by new immigrants. The local lower class, as illustrated by the story of Po Ling, shares similar experience. Now in her mid-forties, Po Ling arrived in Hong Kong some ten years ago. Her husband deserted the family and
stopped supporting their two children. Po Ling could not work because her son was sick and financial problems started to arise. Caught in a dilemma of either leaving her son at home when she went out to work or having no income to make ends met, she eventually sought help from the Social Welfare Department. Po Ling was, however, “fiercely scolded by the officials,” who thought that she should settle her “internal family problems.” She was frightened and discouraged from visiting the welfare department again. Po Ling recalled,

I didn’t know what to do. Fortunately, my mother and sisters in Shenzhen were willing to help me. They brought me food, clothes, money …all that I needed. I also kept borrowing money from my ex-co-workers to support the children’s schooling and living expenses. Yet the debt accumulated too much and I was living under great pressure.

Po Ling later took a re-training course in a workers’ union. A union organizer took her to the Social Welfare Department again and finally convinced the social workers to grant her assistance. She also found a job through the union.

The central problem with welfare policy in Hong Kong, in our opinion, is that it was not developed out of ideas of civil and social rights nor as an attempt to eradicate social inequality through redistribution. There is an absence of a notion of citizenship for full actualization of the political, economic and social rights of the people. As the discourse of globalization has become prevalent, and income polarization between the poor and the rich has sharpened in recent years, the SAR government has even criticized welfare development as slashing Hong Kong’s competitiveness in the global economy. Hence welfare policy orientation is further inclined towards notions of “self-reliance,” or “payment by users,” which ironically echoes the behavior ethic of enterprising individuals who do not need social assistance. It also results in the further construction of welfare recipients as greedy and abject subjects in society and makes the lives of those on welfare even more bitter.

The problem of housing right and childcare provision

The question of housing has been a site of intensive contestation and struggle in Hong Kong’s citizenship rights. Debates over who should be eligible for public housing, how to prevent free riders, how much housing under Home Ownership Scheme should be built and whether public housing poses threats to the housing market have become part of daily conversation in the city. However, the banality of these debates serves to construct and reinforce housing as a category of commodity and continues to obscure its relevance to citizens’ rights and one’s full integration to the society. The narrative of Hong Kong as global city further sharpens the differential conceptions of housing as commodity for the big real-estate corporations or as part of the basic rights for many of the working class and the socially marginalized. For our informants, a housing unit is not just about the right to accommodation, but also the right not to be abused and discriminated against. Yet finding a place to stay in Hong Kong is a big headache for some lower-class women who are newly divorced. In order to get divorce documents and apply for CSSA, they must
present residential evidence different from their husbands’ ones as a proof of their determinancy to break up with their husbands. Yet the high expense of moving to a new place often keeps them in their original home no matter how much they want to run away from domestic violence. Even for those who are lucky to be granted CSSA and housing subsidy to live in a private unit, these women often find it is not the most desirable option. Ting Ting, the above informant, found a place in Tsuen Wan and she described it:

The place was about 70 square feet and it was furnished. It was three thousand dollars a month (highest housing subsidy a single mother can get). We lived with the landlord’s family of five. And altogether seven of us lived in that flat. The three kids of the landlord always harassed my little daughter (3-year-old) in playful ways. Later, their family always embarrassed her by saying that she has no father. I was really sad but I dared not say anything.

Ting Ting later ran into the Kwan Fook Women’s Rights Association (KFWRA), a non-governmental organization for battered women’s rights. And from the organization, she found out that there was a government program—“conditional offer of tenancy” for single parents with children who are going through the legal procedures for divorce. It offers single parents who are having difficulty finding private housing a chance to apply for public housing. Ting Ting immediately inquired about it in the Social Welfare Department. However, she was insulted by officers and rejected as ineligible because she didn’t “have three or four family members and she was not seriously sick.” She did not give up but continued to participate in the activities of the KFWRA. With the Association’s organization, Ting Ting and a number of other single mothers who experienced similar discrimination in private housing staged a protest against the Social Welfare Department. With collective effort, they successfully gained eligibility in applying for conditional offer of tenancy.

Apart from housing problems, the issue of childcare remains an unknown category within citizens’ right and is even harder to articulate due to the gender assumptions associated with the notion of childcare. Most of the lower-class women we met want to work, but the problem of childcare prevents them from doing so. Impoverished single mothers can hardly take up jobs because the income derived would not be enough to put their children in day care centers. Siu Lan was a new immigrant single mother of two children. Due to great pressure in meeting household needs and intense grievance against her husband’s betrayal, she suffered from various mental and physical problems that required hospitalization. During the period we went to interview her, Siu Lan attended the hospital for regular check-ups and small operations. Asked why she did not stay at the hospital but commuted every day, she sighed:

Who takes care of my children? During the few weeks when I went through a big operation, my children did their homework inside the hospital! And since they were too small to enter the patient room, they did it on a bench outside of the room. When the hospital closed at night, they went home. It was lucky that the nurses understood our situation. Now the doctor strongly advises me to stay in the hospital but I must apply for “voluntary home leave” because no one takes care of my children.
Siu Lan had attempted to make use of the government childcare service and consulted the manager of the welfare department. The welfare manager gave her another HK$900 on top of her monthly welfare money. She cries:

But I don’t need money! What I need is childcare service. The social worker was sympathetic to me but the superior blocked my application. The superior said that my case was not serious enough because I didn’t have cancer or kidney problems.

Siu Lan, like many mothers, expressed their eagerness to participate in paid work instead of staying at home. They talked about the fear of gradually becoming “useless” in society. They expressed anxieties about finding a job a few years later when rapid changes are going on in the economy. The inadequate provision of childcare services keeps them in the domestic sphere to take care of their children and simultaneously lowers their competitiveness and confidence. Their sense of belonging to and integration into the society becomes challenged yet further.

We see from their experiences the institutional problems in welfare design and the immense urgency of articulating citizen’s rights within the discourse of Hong Kong becoming a global city. While the discourse of globalization glorifies ideas of freedom, movement, unlimited flows of information and the possibility of liberation, traditional assumptions of gender remain largely rooted and unchallenged in the bureaucratic processes in which lower-class women strive to gain more autonomy. Men as breadwinners and women as child-carers implied in the process of granting welfare have resulted in making the lives of many divorced women harder. In traditional perceptions, a married woman is supposed to be supported by her husband, unless demonstrated by official documents or conspicuous evidence of abuse. Otherwise, their problems are just “internal family problems.” In terms of childcare provision, welfare policy conforms to mainstream social norms that it is fine for women to stay at home and take care of the kids. Although no data has been released from the Social Welfare Department, different sources suggest that men are usually more likely to get childcare services.

There is still a long road to travel in the struggle for the inclusion of housing and childcare as part of Hong Kong citizens’ rights. Yet Ting Ting, like many lower-class and new immigrant women, has struggled to fight for housing rights in Hong Kong. Despite the many obstacles she has encountered, her participation in the movement and her persistence have enabled her to negotiate a housing option. There are of course many more, like Siu Lan, who have struggled hard and remain destitute. Yet contrary to the assumptions that these women are helpless victims, many of them indeed actively negotiate the meanings of rights and entitlements, along with the policy-makers, professionals, and the local and global discourse on Hong Kong’s development and welfare in a changing political economy that no longer caters for their needs. These women do not usually have their rights realized as written legal texts claim or as some others who enjoy rights by birth or through better class positions. But they augment their economic and social capital, and through informal and non-institutional networks, integrate themselves into Hong Kong society through everyday life practices in this ongoing citizenship battle.
Conclusion

Lived citizenship is not simply an abstract concept, nor only related to the notion of public sphere. We have tried to situate it within the recent political and social context of Hong Kong and see the ways meanings of citizen rights—the rights to work, welfare, housing and childcare—are constantly re-worked in the midst of economic restructuring and with the ascent of neo-liberal discourses of privatization and the urban imagineering of Hong Kong as a global city. Through articulating the experiences of some lower-class and new immigrant women, we showed how the notion of citizenship is increasingly deformed within the larger discourse of globalization. Manuel Castells once described the Information Age as a “condition of structural schizophrenia,” wherein dramatic technological and economic transformations have shaken many traditional institutions such as the family and nation-state, and selectively switch on and off individuals, groups, regions and even countries according to their relevance in fulfilling goals in the new kind of society, while individuals, particularly displaced ones, are increasingly alienated from and threatened by these development processes (1996:2–3). In different ways, our informants are often situated in this condition of schizophrenia when their everyday lived experiences no longer match what the larger discourse of global economic transformation claims to bring about. When lower-class people are further excluded from the labor market, and when there is a lack of citizen rights in the design of the welfare system and when welfare is not an entitlement to all citizens but a charity given to the needy, impoverished people find it increasingly difficult to speak of their rights.

The above analysis also shows that a welfare recipient in Hong Kong, ironically, has to share resonances with an “enterprising individual” notion because, in order to be eligible for welfare, one has to be assertive, to look out for resources, and to be articulate enough to present difficulties and strong enough to bear insulting remarks from the government bureaucracy. However, the people who have enterprising qualities are more educated and know well the local rules of game. Contrary to popular belief that Hong Kong welfare money is channeled into the pockets of many new immigrants, our research shows that often, new immigrants and lower-class women lack the “enterprising” cultural qualities to fight for what they are legally entitled to. Though discouraged and sometimes devastated due to lack of support, they are still dignified individuals who stand on their own through self-help, family networks and even through community organizations. Sometimes they do win the battle in getting back their welfare or housing entitlements, and hence a reconstruction of their sense of belonging through self-empowerment or community organization.

Global discourses of the new economy, trans-border activities, together with local practices of welfare reduction and hostility to welfare recipients have played a major role in defining who are the good and who are the bad citizen-subjects in Hong Kong. However, these discourses and practices may also open up some multiple subject positions and different subjectivities through which people actively engage and relate themselves to changing socio-economic conditions. For instance, many mainlanders became vocal activists in the right of abode movement and keep expressing oppositional views against the government decision after the final repatriation. The new urban
imagineering has projected a new future, particularly for the middle class. Yet it has also created its abject other—the new immigrants and the lower class—who have found their reality completely distanced from the ideals of the articulated within the narratives of globalization. Women welfare recipients are seen as opposed to both notions of the “global citizen” and the “productive worker” when losing competitiveness in the job market. How can the lower class benefit from Hong Kong’s development into a global city? If they are going to be further marginalized in the post-handover SAR urban imagineering, can the increasingly contested terrain of citizens’ rights open up space for lived struggles and women’s empowerment? These questions remain to be seriously considered, and more importantly, answered.

**Notes**

1 The struggle over roof-top housing in 1996 was a good example of this conflict. The government decided to demolish all roof-top houses since, as government officials claimed, they “adversely affect the international image of Hong Kong.” The decision led to fierce grass-roots opposition as housing was at the heart of their livelihoods.

2 This program, especially designed to meet the housing needs of single mothers, was a product of lobbying by the women’s groups in Hong Kong who strongly criticized the government for ignoring the needs of single mothers. It was known that criteria for compassionate housing are very strict and there are always many kinds of people in need who are competing for compassionate housing.

3 Interview with Ting Ting (1999) in Kwan Fook Women’s Center.

4 Daycare centers are very expensive in Hong Kong. Depending on locations, it usually costs HK$ 1,000–2,000 monthly to take care of children and supervise their homework for 4–5 hours after school. If a single mother has two children, and if she does not depend on CSSA and finds a job which pays HK$6,000 monthly, she still would not be able to support such expenses. Since typical rent payment runs from HK$3,000 to HK$4,000 and the day care center fees of HK$2,000 for two kids, rent and childcare payments alone would exhaust her salary without much left for food and transportation.

5 In Leung’s study, about 74 percent of single mothers took care of children all on their own. Meanwhile, five out of nine of the single fathers had help from some other relatives (mostly their mothers). These men also employed domestic helpers, or they had access to childcare service in the Social Welfare Department (Leung 1998:80). In an interview with a feminist social worker with the KFWRA, she told us that she knew cases of single fathers granted childcare services and who were even referred to the Labor Department to find work through social workers. She said it is unacceptable for social workers to see a productive man stay at home on CSSA and take care of his children while it is fine for women. Interview with Ms Chong of KFWRA, 2000.
References


Part III
Civil society, resistance and participation
Negotiating law, rights, and civil autonomy

From the colonial to the post-colonial regimes

Agnes S.Ku

Introduction

In the West, liberalism has it that the market as well as the rule of law serves as the precondition and safeguard for civil citizenship. Evidence nonetheless shows that a market economy does not necessarily generate a liberal regime or the rule of law in some countries (Kamarul and Tomasic 1999; Jayasuriya 1999), and political and legal discourses are often multiple and contested in a society (Hall et al. 1978; Hunt 1993; Lazarus-Black and Hirsch 1994; Leonard 1995). In capitalist Hong Kong, the idea of the “rule of law” has long been incorporated into the hegemonic narrative of economic success. It serves well as far as rhetorical purposes are concerned, especially for a city that prides itself on market efficiency, liberty, and political stability. In reality, however, the idea of law has been subject to conflicting interpretations under the impact of historical legacies, local politics, national influences, and international relations. In particular, two competing discourses have been at work, namely a discourse of “civil society” emphasizing the ideas of rights and the rule of law, and a more authoritarian discourse of “law and order,” which give rise to much contestation over citizenship, rights, and legitimacy in local politics.

Citizenship is a category of status about rights as much as one of action on rights (Somers 1993; Mische 1996; Isin and Wood 1999; Ku 2002). In post-handover Hong Kong, given the two competing discourses, the space of civil autonomy has been subject to much negotiation and contestation through state practices and civil struggles. For instance, on the side of the SAR government, a number of legislative and political moves relating to right of abode, the Public Order Ordinance, anti-terrorism, and the antisubversion law have revealed a deepening trend of authoritarian development. Within civil society, citizens organize resistance movements to protest against the state in the name of rule of law, human rights and citizenship. A major aim of this chapter is to analyze how the two different discourses of state-civil society relations lay out the discursive field of struggle that shapes the possibilities and limitations for civil citizenship today.

For one thing, political critics tend to see the major legal tension as primarily one of ideological schism between liberal Hong Kong and post-communist China within the “one country, two systems” framework. While such a view explains much of the tension in society, it nonetheless over-looks how, for example, the ideas of “rule of law” and “law and order” are both products of the British colonial legacy that continues to inform
civil conflicts today. As a caveat, the two terms do not, however, form a simple dichotomy but have been (de-)articulated with the notion of rights in different ways at different times. In this regard, this chapter will decipher the contested meanings of law, rights, and citizenship as they were historically formed and as they unfold in present conflicts. More specifically, as the struggle over the Public Order Ordinance has had a relatively long history from colonial to present times, the analysis will take it as a prime, but not exclusive, focal point to chart the changing and conflicting discourses of civil citizenship at different historical junctures.

The chapter is divided into three sections. The first section discusses the development of the ideas of law and rights between the 1960s and the 1990s as part and parcel of the colonial legacy. It starts by looking into the formation of the law and order discourse as a governing ideology of British colonial rule, as well as the conflicts generated through an emergent idea of rights in civil society. It then explores how law, citizen resistance, international norms, the China factor, and changing British policies interacted in bringing about an alternative discourse of civil society combining the ideas of rights and the rule of law in the transitional period. This is followed by a brief second section which pays attention to the ways the discourse of “law and order” has been reproduced, reinforced, and contested through the “one country, two systems” imagery in the early post-handover years. The third section seeks to illuminate the specificity of the two competing discourses, the dynamics of state-civil society interplay, as well as the outcome of struggle through a discussion of the conflicts over the Public Order Ordinance in 2000 as well as the controversy over Article 23 of the Basic Law in 2002 and 2003. The chapter then concludes by reflecting on the increasingly delicate condition of civil citizenship today.

**Colonial legacies: political contexts and discourses on law and rights**

The discourses of “civil society” and “law and order” are products of the British colonial legacy. The former places a high value on rights and the rule of law whereas the latter puts a heavier emphasis on control and order. On the analytic plane, the notions of the rule of law (as a legal principle instituted to prevent abuse of power) and civil rights are distinct concepts, and their connection remains historically contingent. Under British colonial rule, on the one hand, the rule of law was transplanted locally to the extent that a relatively independent judiciary as well as a principle of procedural justice were in operation, and yet it remained partial and deformed in the absence of a democratic legislature. On the other hand, human rights protection had been weak in legal terms in Hong Kong (Wesley-Smith 1992; Klein 1997). This remained the case at least until the transitional period in the 1980s. Thus despite the (partial) rule of law, “law and order” reigned as the governing ideology in the heyday of colonial rule. During the 1980s and the 1990s, in the context of the “1997” issue, the mixed colonial legacies as well as the rising international norm of human rights became conducive to the development of two conflicting discourses of state-civil society relations—a more rights-based discourse stressing democracy, rights and the rule of law, and an authoritarian discourse stressing stability, control, or law and order. The following gives a historical account of the twists
and turns in the formation of the two competing discourses during the colonial era.

“Law and order” as the ideology of colonial governance

Since the inception of colonial rule, law had become an apparatus of domination by the government. A conscious articulation of law as part of the governing ideology was, however, a more recent development after the mass riots in the mid-1960s. Between the late 1960s and the early 1980s, in the aftermath of the mass riots, the colonial government employed rational legal domination as part of a wider program of hegemonic restructuring (Jones 1999). Laws were created and amended to enhance the legitimacy of the government in the absence of democratic reform while subjecting citizens to greater political control. One of the constituent elements in the ideology espoused by the government was “law and order.” The chaos and violence associated with the mass riots provided the basis for a strong link between law and stability in both functional and discursive terms. They also helped establish the legitimacy of the police who were seen as performing the role of guardians of social order (Gaylord and Traver 1995:30). In principle, the government proclaimed the even-handedness of law. In effect, however, the government introduced tough ordinances and minute procedures to regulate civil action. For instance, the Public Order Bill 1967 underlined the need to prevent and control disorder without making any reference to the right of citizens to dissent by means of peaceful assembly. To this end, the legislators conferred wide powers on the Governor and the police. On the operational level, control was exercised through methods such as licensing, notification, dispersal powers, banning orders, and punitive measures. These were further buttressed by other statutes proscribing public nuisances, obstruction of public places, incitement to disaffection, obstruction of police officers in the execution of their duty, and so on (Mushkat 1992). Elastic standards and the lack of definition of terms such as “breach of the peace” left the government, especially the police, with excessive discretionary powers. On the whole, law was used as an instrument of rule and legitimacy for a strong executive government in the postriots context.

In the subsequent years, conflicts and tensions over police power nonetheless mounted and finally turned the law into an object of struggle. People were convicted of illegal assembly in a number of cases, the most notable of which was the Yaumati boat people incident in 1979. These conflicts dramatized the deep tension between legal authoritarianism under the law, and the emergent idea of citizen rights within civil society. Anti-colonialism aside, one of the sources for the latter lay in the international norm of human rights. Organized resistance against the (amended) Public Order Ordinance first emerged in the late 1970s. In 1980 some fifteen local pressure groups presented the first systematic non-official report on the Ordinance to the United Nations for international attention. This started an alternative tradition of using the international covenants on rights as the standard by which to assess local conditions.

In brief, during the 1970s, the governing ideology of law and order continued to reign, on the one hand, while, on the other, it came under fierce criticism. Drawing on the idea of rights, local activists looked upon the Public Order Ordinance as an embodiment of colonial authoritarianism and injustice. Through their resistance, internally, a loose alliance among the pro-rights groups was in the making; externally, an international
profile was being nurtured. In such a context, on balance, while strong criticisms and resistance helped lead to a somewhat liberalized amendment in the Ordinance in 1980, no full legal recognition was yet accorded to the right to demonstrate as an integral part of the freedom of expression. In part, this reflected the British Common Law tradition that entrenched the idea of civil liberties and yet denied a positive legal principle supporting such rights (Mushkat 1992:415). In part, pertinent to the specific context of Hong Kong, it showed the government’s lingering fear about the danger of political instability in the shadow of the mass riots. There was, however, more to this. For decades after the Second World War, while the other British colonies were beginning to incorporate a rights agenda into their political and legal development, Hong Kong had remained the human rights exception within the British Commonwealth. For instance, although two UN human rights Covenants were extended to Hong Kong in 1976, this was only the automatic consequence of ratification by Britain. Unlike what happened in other dependent territories, the British government did not incorporate the provisions in the domestic law of Hong Kong through a Bill of Rights. In this light, I hazard to say that notwithstanding the Rule of Law, civil citizenship had remained largely under-developed within the “law and order” framework under colonial authoritarianism.

If the 1970s saw the idea of citizenship rights germinating in society, a more elaborate discourse of rights as well as a conscious articulation of the “rule of law” as the basis for rights protection can perhaps be dated to the 1980s and 1990s in the context of the “1997” issue. This was brought about through the crystallization of ideological differences between two opposing camps, which were further precipitated into a crisis by a most unusual event in 1989. The transitional period marked a shift in the target of civil struggle from the colonial government to the future sovereign power of the Chinese government.

“In 1997,” the rights agenda, and opposing discourses

In the early 1980s, the emergence of the “1997” issue ushered in a period of political uncertainty and ideological conflict which saw the development of two competing discourses on state-society relations and citizenship. The Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 enshrined the “one country, two systems” formulation, laying down the principle of a high degree of political and legal autonomy under Chinese sovereignty. The international covenants on rights were formally ratified in the agreement, providing a legitimate basis for the elaboration of a new discourse of citizenship. Thus, on the one hand, a pro-democracy movement was formed among old and new rights concern groups, and advocated the ideas of equality, citizenship rights, participation, and local autonomy primarily as a buffer against Chinese communism. On the other, the new discourse of democracy and rights had been strongly opposed by the Chinese government as well as the conservative alliance of business elite and pro-Beijing groups via the old hegemonic values, as well as an added concern with the principle of Chinese sovereignty, which in effect justified an authoritarian political order (Ku 2001a). The drafting of the Basic Law for post-1997 Hong Kong then became one of the major battlegrounds between the two camps. It was in this context of escalating tensions that another controversy was roused over the Public Order Ordinance. The episode showed an authoritarian trend through the
operation of law and order within the government, which resulted in more organized resistance in civil society.\textsuperscript{9}

In a most dramatic and unexpected way, the Tiananmen Square event in 1989 served as a catalyst for new developments. In its aftermath, tensions escalated, new practices of resistance were established, local and international concern increased, and new issues arose in the legal domain. On the one hand, demonstrations over the cause of Chinese democracy or against the Chinese government arose in greater numbers. On the other, the government tightened up political control \textit{vis-à-vis} such activities. Civil conflicts erupted, which led to more adamant resistance. For example, in December 1989, a group of student protesters were prohibited from marching by the police on the grounds that they had not applied for a license. It was after this event that the Hong Kong Federation of Students (HKFS) began the practice of civil disobedience that has continued until today—the practice of only informing the police prior to demonstrating but without applying for permission. Conflicts between the police and the student protesters were intensified, finally leading to the conviction of four leaders of HKFS for “breach of the peace” under the Public Order Ordinance. The conflicts served only to consolidate the resistance movement. In the process of struggle, some groups formed an alliance to call for legal change while strengthening international links as a possible counterweight to pressure from an increasingly distrusted Chinese government.

During the 1990s, the 1989 event in Beijing produced contradictory and significant effects in yet another way. Internationally, it aroused an increase in concern for the human rights issue in China, and it brought about a turning point in Britain’s appeasement policy \textit{vis-à-vis} Beijing regarding political and legal reform in Hong Kong in particular. Locally, there had developed a keen awareness of the need for rights protection in society. It was amidst such a changing climate that the ideas of rights and the rule of law, also as a result of hard struggle by the people, began to be placed at the center of political discourse. The rule of law was equated with the British Common Law tradition and came to crystallize what was just and good about the local community as opposed to what was bad about the exercise of arbitrary power in China. In a context where the pace of democratic reform was circumscribed in the Basic Law, the new rule of law discourse might serve to conjecture the possibility of rights under political authoritarianism. The impact was most distinctly shown in the enactment of the Bill of Rights in 1991, which was also incorporated in the Basic Law for post-handover Hong Kong, as well as the subsequent liberalization of law such as the Public Order Ordinance and the Societies Ordinance under the governorship of Chris Patten (1992–97).

In sum, the discourses of “law and order” and “civil society” were both products of British colonialism. The transitional period in the 1980s and the 1990s marked a shift from a more authoritarian framework of law and order to a rule of law discourse that incorporated a rights-based conception of citizenship in its content. The shift was not caused by economic changes but was facilitated and precipitated through local struggle and international pressure in the transitional period. As a result, the space of civil autonomy was expanded, if only for a very brief interlude, under Governor Patten. It was, however, all too brief, not only because it was cut short under the SAR government in 1997, but also because it had come too late in the long history of colonial rule. The colonial legacies had indeed bred contradictions. While the British had established the
rule of law under the Common Law tradition, and were finally, after much delay, able to incorporate the human rights principles into it, they also left behind them a tradition of “law and order.” Thus, despite the formal incorporation of the idea of rights, the conservative elites and the pro-Beijing groups were able to converge in their common adherence to a more authoritarian conception of governance by drawing on the old framework of stability, control, law and order while stressing a new principle of Chinese sovereignty in the Basic Law. As we shall see, this was conducive to intense political conflicts and a reverse development in citizenship after 1997.

The politics of law after 1997

After the handover, the SAR government has been selectively inclined to the discourse of law and order within the “one country, two systems” formulation. On the one hand, it has kept much of the control system in its colonial form, especially with regard to police power. On the other hand, it shows signs of reversal over the development of civil citizenship. It itself consists of a largely authoritarian structure that is in favor of business interests and skewed toward a conservative stance. It was preceded by a Beijing-appointed provisional legislature in the early months after the handover, which amended the ordinances on civil liberties in terms that were, albeit less tough than the pre-1990 legislation, stricter than those relaxed during the final years of British rule. For example, before 1995 the Public Order Ordinance required organizers to get a license for public assembly. In 1995, as part of the liberalization of law under the effect of the Bill of Rights, the law was relaxed to remove the requirement for a license. Then in 1997, the provisional legislature amended the law to include a requirement for a notice of no-objection from the police.

Indeed, after the handover, the “law and order” discourse has resurfaced as a powerful ideology through a number of events relating to the Basic Law and the Public Order Ordinance. It appears in the rhetorical guises of “rule of law” and “rule according to law,” which exist alongside with the “rule of law” discourse. The meaning of “law” remains ambiguous in public discourse. For in Chinese, the notion of fazhi can mean “rule of law” within the common law tradition, which is more commonly understood among the legal profession and the pro-rights groups. It can also mean “law and order” in a general sense, a conception which is held by the conservative groups and the lay people to stress “rule according to the law” or law-abiding behavior. This is further complicated by the reality of “one country, two systems.” Different interpretations of “rule of law” thus enter the field of struggle. If I may digress from my focus on the Public Order Ordinance for a moment only to return to it with a better informed case study, the right of abode saga can be very revealing about changing state-civil society relationships in general, and about the role of law in particular.

In 1999, in the right of abode conflict, there emerged two opposing legal discourses (Ku 2001b). On one level, this revealed a fundamental difference or tension between the Common Law tradition in Hong Kong and the Chinese law system on the Mainland. Yet on another level, it showed how the conservative forces in Hong Kong appropriated the difference to achieve the effect of “law and order” in an instrumental and pragmatic way.
For example, the government first created a sense of population crisis and then called for a quick and drastic resolution. Within the broad framework of rule of law, the government’s strategy of resolution was first of all to reduce the whole problem to a matter of legal means and speed—constitutional amendment through the local legislature (slow) versus re-interpretation by the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (quick). The former conformed to the rule of law tradition whereas the latter was based on the legal tradition in China. Finally, by means of the latter, the government succeeded in overturning part of the ruling of the Court of Final Appeal in Hong Kong. It justified the move on the grounds of legality, speed, and effective population control.\textsuperscript{12} Apparently, the government’s turn to national law was overlaid with a concern about “law and order” that privileged political and administrative expediency. Within civil society, the government’s action was fiercely challenged as signifying a breach of the rule of law.

As we have seen, the “law and order” ideology has its most enthusiastic support in the government, the conservative elites, and the pro-Beijing groups. Yet to a certain extent, it is also counter-balanced by the more rights-based “rule of law” discourse, as it is enshrined as abstract principles in the Basic Law, as it remains an institutionalized norm in the judiciary and in the legal profession within the Common Law tradition, and as it is advocated by the pro-rights groups in civil society. The two discourses, each as a set of ideological and symbolic codes, lay out the general possibilities and limitations for civil citizenship, while they are themselves being specified and re-specified in concrete events. In this light, given the two competing discourses, we may cautiously assume that the space of civil autonomy remains relatively fluid in Hong Kong, and is subject to negotiation and contestation through citizenship practices and state actions in times of civil conflicts. Such an assumption cannot lend itself to any foregone conclusion about the specific contours of civil citizenship but would allow us to look into the dynamics of negotiation through particular cases. The next section will analyze the discursive, dramaturgical, and political dynamics unfolded in the Public Order Ordinance disputes in 2000 and extend the discussion briefly to reflect on the more recent in 2003.

**Recent civil conflicts: from the Public Order Ordinance dispute to the Article 23 controversy**

In July 1997, the provisional legislature amended the Public Order Ordinance in such a way that subjected citizens to detailed restrictions and surveillance through a number of legislative tactics. Such tactics included, first, specific legal requirements such as official registration of the organizing associations, and seven-day advance notification to, as well as obtain-ment of a notice of no objection from, the police for marches of more than thirty people or sit-ins of more than fifty people.\textsuperscript{13} Second, a heavy criminal penalty was imposed in the case of non-conformance to the legal requirements. For example, any assembly, whether peaceful or not, can be criminalized simply on the grounds of failure to give enough notice, subject to the maximum penalty of five-year imprisonment.\textsuperscript{14} Third, the police were empowered to regulate demonstrations and consider banning them on the grounds of “national security” and “rights and freedom of other people,” on top of
“public safety” and “public order.”

Given the terms of the Ordinance, much tension and negotiation have been underway over the boundaries of legality, illegality, and legitimacy. In the first three years after the handover, there were more than six thousand protests and demonstrations, of which around four hundred were held without seeking the advance permission required under the Ordinance. In spite of illegality, the police did not take action against these demonstrations on such grounds (except for a few arrests on the grounds of public safety and order). Deep conflicts were nonetheless sparked off during June and December 2000 when the police used unusual force during a June demonstration and later arrested a total of sixteen people (including seven university students) first over the June demonstration and then over an earlier demonstration in April.\(^{15}\) The struggle against the Public Order Ordinance was not planned beforehand but the arrests turned on the heat and quickly developed into intense civil conflicts over the power of the police and the legitimacy of the Ordinance. In the process, the two opposing sides not only resorted to different political resources and strategies. They also drew on different discourses to compete for public credibility while co-staging a drama with different actors playing different and changing roles with changing scripts.

“Civil society” versus “law and order”

In the first stage of the conflicts, although the government defined the protesters as non-law-abiding citizens within the law and order framework, the opposition discourse of civil rights and rule of law managed to gain sway. On the one hand, illegality was legitimately reconciled with the idea of civil rights. The basis for the opposition discourse was grounded at the outset through a more or less consensual construction of the June event: the police using excessive force against peaceful demonstrations.\(^{16}\) The flip side of it was the orderly, non-violent, and non-provocative manner in which the rallies were held. Thus, despite some negative criticisms, the self-restrained performance of the protesters generally created resonance in the public sphere, as shown in newspaper editorials, commentaries, public opinion surveys, and open support from university professors, exstudent movement leaders, the legal profession, pro-democracy legislators, and other civic groups in society.

The danger of the Ordinance as well as the representation of the protesters (especially students) as victims of police power were given an added meaning through the rule of law discourse. On the part of the government, the Secretary for Security had justified the arrests by stressing compliance with law and equality before the law. On this count, however, the legal profession presented an alternative, more authoritative legal interpretation of the event. Drawing on the discourse of rule of law, lawyers and legal academics argued that the arrests of selected protesters on selected occasions after a long lapse of time demonstrated arbitrariness and inconsistency on the part of the police. What was particularly worrying was that political considerations might be involved in targeting the students as a pre-emptive measure of threat against unwelcome protests on National Day, 1 October. On 9 October, the Bar Association expressed in an open statement its serious concern about the rule of law principle being undermined and called for a review of the Ordinance.
In brief, the cultural resources for resistance had come more generally from the rule of law discourse, and specifically from the Basic Law as well as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that was incorporated in it. The principal ideas were civil rights, constitutionality, the international norm of human rights, and the rule of law spirit. The discursive and dramaturgical effects not only added up to undermine the presumed link between law and legitimacy with regard to the Ordinance as well as the scope of police power allowed under it. They also effectively expanded the space of civil autonomy beyond legal confines and further justified the campaign of civil disobedience.

Civil disobedience was first conducted by the student activists, and soon picked up a dramatic force through the participation of other people, which presented a strong and direct challenge against both the enforceability and the legitimacy of the Ordinance. On 2 October, HKFS mobilized more than three hundred people for a march, including pro-democracy legislators, the Professional Teachers’ Union, religious groups, women’s groups, and other advocacy groups. An opinion poll also showed that public support was on the side of the pro-rights alliance. On 8 October, more than one thousand people joined in an illegal protest organized by some ex-student movement leaders. A few prominent ex-student movement leaders spoke about their acts of civil disobedience against colonial repression twenty years before that had led to the amendment of the Public Order Ordinance in 1980. The long tradition of student activism against social injustice and political repression was enlivened and reincarnated through the mobilization. In the public sphere, the power of the performance registered a remarkable effect that pointed to an urgent need to review or amend the Ordinance.

However, in the heat of the drama, the government made two strategic moves that effectively reduced the public appeals of the pro-rights groups. On the one hand, the Department of Justice finally decided not to prosecute the sixteen protesters. Although the government had scrambled to maintain an image of a strong government rather than one of yielding too readily to public pressure, the decision did work in effect to release much of the dramatic tension and reduce the immediate “evilness” of the Ordinance. In this way, it served to weaken the forcefulness of the claim of the protesters in their anti-Ordinance campaign. At the same time, a process of meaning reconstruction was underway in the public sphere that began to denigrate or sideline street activism and mediated a transition to institutional politics (Ku, forthcoming).

On the other hand, the police and the administrative arm of the government maintained a high profile of non-concession and authority. Immediately after the decision of non-prosecution, the police issued a letter of warning to the arrested people affirming the criminal nature of the demonstration and warning them of future prosecution in case of similar undertakings. In discursive terms, the government legitimated itself with general reference to the rhetoric of “rule of law.” However, what lay behind it was a more authoritarian “law and order” framework or discourse. The discourse recognized the principle of rights but put relatively greater emphasis on legality, control, and order. As espoused by the Secretary for Security, it stressed the need for public control, maintained the harshness of law in principle, allowed much discretionary power by the police in practice, and conceived the activists as unruly troublemakers rather than citizens with legitimate rights. It enabled the government to defend the Ordinance, which also had the open backing of Beijing, while justifying its selective enforcement. The language of the
discourse carried a mixed sense of control and discretion, which were actually two sides of the same coin. The stern delivery of the discourse, together with the words of warnings, added up to present a portrait of a government intent on the maintenance of law and order under the existing Ordinance.

While petitions for legal amendment went on, the drama took a further twist when the government engineered a shift from the street theater to that of “reasoned debate” leading finally to “legislative resolution.” (Ku, forthcoming). In December, preceded by a series of public relations exercises, the Secretary for Security made the unusual move of tabling a government motion in the Legislative Council on the retention of the Ordinance in its present form. With the skewed structure of the legislature, it turned out that the majority of the members voted in support of it.

Outcome of the struggle and further conflicts

In the process of the struggle, the pro-rights alliance and the government had drawn on competing discourses of law, rights, and order to legitimate their claims and actions. On one level, citizenship practices had expanded the scope of civil autonomy beyond the confines of the Ordinance through a successful campaign of civil disobedience. However, on another level, the social drama as it developed had also limited the development of the civil struggle in two important ways. First, with the foregrounding of the role of students as the basis for moral appeal against prosecution, what could have been a general battle about civil autonomy in society became a matter of moral sympathy for a particular status group.

Second, the civil struggle could not propel itself toward an amendment of the Ordinance in line with the rule of law discourse. In one sense, the legislative outcome in defense of the existing Ordinance would only reflect the dominant power of an authoritarian, executive-led state with a structurally skewed legislature. Yet in another sense, it depended also on the ironic success of the political, discursive, and dramaturgical strategies of the government, as well as the diminishing discursive and dramaturgical appeal of the pro-rights movement in the later stages of the event.

Still, the outcome of the event may be examined from yet another angle. Despite the non-amendment of the Ordinance, a new kind of delicacy about the state-civil society relationship has been developed through the event. The government emerges supporting the maintenance of law and order under the existing law, and the contenders have experienced both the power of civil disobedience and frustrations with the government. As the state-civil society relationship becomes more delicate, it could easily erupt into more instances of civil conflicts. This has indeed been the case in the two years up until the present. On the one hand, civil resistance continues to test and contest the boundary with old and new tactics. On the other, the HKSAR government has appeared to be more authoritarian and high-handed than ever.

Earlier on, the government relied on some “soft” tactics such as putting on Beethoven’s Fifth Symphony to drown the chanting by the demonstrators, partitioning the demonstrators into small groups, and zoning them into areas far from the targeted site.19 More recently in 2002, it has turned to some tough measures, which include the massive operation of dispersal of the right of abode protesters at Chater Garden in April,
the handcuffing and arrest of two journalists who refused to remain restricted to a designated area on the same occasion, the high profile arrests as well as prosecution in May of three people who were involved in unauthorized demonstrations some three months before in February, and the conviction of sixteen Falun Gong followers of public obstruction or assault of the police over a protest outside the Beijing Liaison Office. On one level, these might show where the government’s baseline was: control was enhanced in special circumstances regarding specific politically sensitive issues such as Falun Gong, events that involved either the Chinese and Hong Kong national leaders or political and business elites world-wide, anniversary celebrations over the handover or the national day, and other exceptional situations. However, on another level, the more allowance is made for special and exceptional situations without any strong justifications, the fewer institutional safeguards there will be for civil citizenship, and the more fear and worry will arise among the people.

Most recently, the controversy over Article 23 of the Basic Law has sparked off another wave of tensions and conflicts over the issue of civil rights in a much more intense way and on a much wider scope, both locally and internationally. Article 23 states that the SAR shall enact its own laws to prohibit acts of treason, secession, sedition, and subversion against the national state, or theft of state secrets, and it also restricts links between local and foreign political organizations. On 24 September 2002, five years after the handover, the SAR government released a consultation document on the Article. The Chief Executive, while acknowledging the importance of human rights and civil liberties, stressed: “It is our duty to proceed with the enactment of the legislation. In fact, it is the community’s collective duty to protect national security.” The Secretary for Security added, “Every nation has laws to protect such fundamental interests of the country.” In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhang Qiyu said the legislation was necessary and would be conducive to the maintenance of social order. Discursively, the ideas of constitutional duty, national security, and international legal standard were brought forth to delimit the scope of civic liberties under the framework of law and order. During the three-month consultation period, the government launched a series of intensive public relations initiatives through pamphlets, the news media, legislative council hearings, and numerous open forums, persuading the public of the need for such legislation.

However, from the point of view of the pro-rights groups, the government’s lack of commitment to a genuine public consultation on the details of the proposed law would indicate a likely tendency of bypassing civil society and further undermining civil rights. To them, the consultation was just a fake performance by the government. On the discursive level, the Bar Association stressed the rule of law and evoked the Johannesburg Principles as the international standards to be incorporated into the legislation for rights protection. Within local civil society, journalists, religious organizations, artists, academics, lawyers, human rights concern groups, and other associations raised concerns about rights issues and called for more detailed public consultation. Internationally, business communities (banks and chambers of commerce), civic associations (journalists’ alliance, teachers’ union, and advocacy groups), legal experts, and state institutions (the consulates from Britain, Australia and Canada, the European Parliament, the European Union, the US State Department) joined the chorus of the pro-rights groups. Tensions were escalating finally leading to tens of thousands of
citizens marching in opposition to the proposed law in December, which was followed by another public rally by the pro-government (or Pro-Beijing) alliance.

Yet, the intriguing issue is, just as civil society could demonstrate an unusual capacity for organizing mass resistance, as well as fostering an informal local-international alliance, the government could well count on mobilization from within the network of pro-Beijing trade unions and other conservative groups for a ritualistic demonstration of support to counteract opposition. The latter could take place both within and outside the establishment—from the street to the legislature. This was the case in the Public Order Ordinance dispute, and the pattern was repeating itself in the Article 23 controversy on a wider scale. There then developed a vicious cycle of state authoritarianism provoking more fierce resistance from civil society and further reinforcing itself through the legal and political apparatus under the “law and order” ideology, until finally when, on 1 July 2003, more than 500,000 people joined in another historic march as a demonstration of civil power against the state.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, this chapter has attempted to analyze the historical formation of the two competing discourses of “civil society” and “law and order,” and also the way they shape the possibilities and limitations for civil citizenship in post-handover Hong Kong. As we have seen, both discourses are the products of the legacy of British colonial rule, the tensions between which are being exacerbated through the interplay among local, national, and international politics since the transitional period. On the one hand, for the large part, colonial rule had resorted to legal authoritarianism or the law and order framework under the rule of law. In such a context, colonial rule had unwittingly planted the seed of resistance against itself. The 1970s already saw the growth of civil struggle around the idea of rights. On the other hand, to a certain extent, the British Common Law tradition had also entrenched the idea of civil liberties in the local legal culture. It was with the emergence of the China factor in the 1980s, especially after 1989, that a rights-based discourse of the rule of law began to gain a foothold in local politics. More specifically, the international covenants on rights were first brought to the awareness of the Hong Kong people in the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984. It waited until 1991 for the Bill of Rights to be introduced to implement such basic rights, which is now incorporated in the Basic Law. This was followed by a brief period of legal liberalization under Governor Patten. In MacNeil’s words, the development of rights is a pattern not of successive progression, but of “deferral and discontinuity” (1992:93).

In retrospect, despite the long operation of the rule of law, the rights-based discourse of law has had only a brief history in Hong Kong. In the early 1990s, it served to conjecture the possibility of rights under political authoritarianism in the context of the “1997” issue. The discourse not only gathered strength fast in civil society but has gained a constitutional status. As Chan (2002) points out, the power of constitutional review of legislation for its conformity with the human rights provisions in the Basic Law is an important guarantee of rights protection. Unfortunately, with its short history of development, the cultural and institutional bases for the discourse are now coming under
great challenge under the SAR government: although the local judiciary remains more or less independent, with Hong Kong’s autonomy remaining contingent upon the sovereign’s authoritarian toleration (Baehr 2001), with the dominance of a group of conservative and pro-Beijing elite within the government, and with neither the institution of a democratic legislature nor a strong cultural tradition of rights discourse in society, the rule of law appears to be built on a volatile base.

What, then, remains for civil citizenship? A pessimistic reading of institutional politics may only allow for a negative answer that leaves us with few hopes. Alternatively, an approach that focuses on not only the state but also civil society, with attention to their discursive resources and dramaturgical practices, may perhaps open up some space for other possibilities. Rights are not simply legally prescribed, but are often discursively contested and dramaturgically enacted. Given the present institutional and cultural constraints, the public sphere (Habermas 1989; Fraser 1992; Ku 2000) remains an important site for political struggle, citizenship practice, and public education. More specifically, a pertinent question would concern how far the contesting ideas of rights and rule of law can serve as a counter-force in the public sphere. Indeed, notwithstanding a strong legacy of “law and order” today, what marks a major difference from the colonial times is the existence of a strong counter-discourse of rule of law and rights within civil society. In conjunction with this, international attention to human rights development in China has also helped to keep alive the Hong Kong agenda beyond local confines (Hook and Neves 2002). However, the international arena has remained, at best, a public sphere of moral sanction, persuasion and dramaturgy whose impact and influence have been subject to a multitude of ideological, economic, national, and diplomatic interests (Baker 2002).

Under the auspices of competing discourses, and situated at the interstices of local, national and international forces, the space of civil citizenship in Hong Kong has remained fluid and unstable. Given such a negotiated space, it is perhaps worth further studying how, in the different instances of civil conflicts, the government, citizens, and the media script the public drama and perform their roles under the contested discourses that lead to particular outcomes. Such construction and performance of public meanings both reflect and define cultural possibilities and limitations in the ever-changing matrix of civil relations on the local, national and international levels.

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Notes

1 Chan (2002) distinguishes between fundamentalist and pragmatic conceptions of the rule of law in Hong Kong.
2 In principle, the rule of law as a legal principle is concerned less about the content of
law than the way it operates, in terms of the ideas of neutrality, rationality, formality, impartiality, and impersonality (Wesley-Smith 1992). Thus, the rule of law did not by itself guarantee civil liberties.

3 For more details, see Mushkat (1992).

4 Such statutes include the Summary Offences Ordinance, the Crimes Ordinance and Offences Against the Person Ordinance.

5 See Twenty Years of Resistance by HKFS (1994).

6 Ibid.

7 Other examples included Britain’s excluding Hong Kong from the application of the European Convention on Human Rights, refraining from applying to Hong Kong certain rights-related international conventions, and denying its residents the right of access to the European Court of Human Rights. The reasons behind all these remain obscure, but there is suspicion of a possible China factor involved. For a detailed historical account, see Jayawickrama (1992).

8 The “1997” issue refers to the question of Hong Kong being returned to China in 1997.

9 In 1986 the government introduced an amendment to guard against the release of false news. In reaction, some seventy-three associations formed into an alliance in support of press freedom, followed by the formation of the Hong Kong Human Rights Commission in 1988. On the international front, since 1988, in addition to the previous organizations, the Bar Association, the Journalists’ Association, the Human Rights Commission and some individuals have started to send their own non-official reports to the United Nations.

10 In colonial Hong Kong, there was neither a watch committee nor a police authority to oversee the Commissioner of Police. It is instead specified in the Police Force Ordinance that the commissioner is subject to the orders and directions of the head of government. This is contrasted to Britain where most police duties and powers are derived from the law (see Gaylord and Traver 1995). In June 1997, the government tabled an Independent Police Complaints Council Bill that intended to give a police watchdog statutory powers. However, it suddenly withdrew the bill before its third and final reading, and this has left the police with minimally monitored power until today.

11 For example, the Chief Executive is elected by a small group of conservative elite; within the legislature, councilors returned through democratic elections constitute only one-third of the entire membership.

12 This is quoted from an official paper released on 18 May 1999.

13 This is compared to Britain where there is a notification requirement, but the police must have the permission from an elected body if they want to object, or to Germany where the police have to go to court to obtain permission to object. These are safeguards against possible abuse of power by the police.

14 This compares, for example, to a three-year jail term for a “rioter” and two-years’ imprisonment for “a person who enters any premises in a violent manner.”

15 Early at dawn on 26 June, a group of protesters including dozens of university students, abode-seekers and others stayed on outside Central Government Offices after an overnight demonstration to mark the first anniversary of Beijing’s
constitutional interpretation over the right of abode. Scuffles took place between the protesters and the police. The incident was followed first by arrests of five university students, eight right of abode seekers, and one citizen in August. It was followed later in September by arrests of five students, three of whom were already arrested over the June episode, relating to an earlier demonstration over university tuition fees five months before in April. If the “26 June” scuffles happened by accident, the arrests would seem to be motivated: the first arrest in August took place just about two weeks after the arson attack at the Immigration Tower by a few abode-seekers.


17 See Apple Daily (6 October 2000).

18 Beijing’s position was expressed by a Vice-Director of the Legal Affairs Commission of the National People’s Congress Standing Committee in early December (South China Morning Post, 7 December 2000).

19 So and Chan (2002) introduce the notion of “soft authoritarianism” to describe the performance of the SAR government in its first three to four years.

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9
Engendering citizenship
Lai-Ching Leung

Introduction
Citizenship is a deeply gendered concept. Most citizenship theories have excluded women from the full status of citizenship by narrowly limiting the concept to the public sphere, to political participation, to economic independence and to the notion of breadwinners. In the 1950s, T.H. Marshall extended the notion of citizenship from civil and political rights to social rights. A theory of “social citizenship” developed by Marshall was an important way of counterbalancing the possible harmful effects of capitalism, to reduce general risks and to enrich the concrete substance of civilized life. However, he did not pay any attention to gender (Bussemaker and Voet 1998).

Feminist theories refute the false universalism of male citizenship claims (Pedersen 1993; Lister 1993; Walby 1997). Marshall described civil citizenship as being related to individual freedom that included the liberty of an individual, freedom of speech, the right to own property and the right to justice. Yet these are the rights which most women did not enjoy until political citizenship had been secured. However, there remain some social rights, such as the right to justice from male violence, which are still not fully realized (Walby 1997). Social citizenship is dependent on the right of a worker with full access to such rights as income maintenance payments, pensions and related welfare provisions provided as a result of waged employment. As Lister (1990) argues, women disappear from the welfare state as they are defined as dependent members in the family. Their rights to welfare are not via employment, but are based on their dependent relation to their husbands, which may result in only a very meager level of support. Women’s taking unpaid work in the family not only curtails their access to the political rights of citizenship, but also impinges upon their social rights.

Most feminists argue that it is not enough to simply append to women the official status of citizenship. Rather, it is necessary that the basic theoretical frameworks need to be changed. As the concept of citizenship is exclusively linked to specific masculine virtues, women have no other choice than to obtain that status by a strategy of “sameness.” This strategy, however, neglects gender differences and the suppression of particularity and difference cannot be the basis for a female emancipatory politics (Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999). The women’s movement has played a key role in articulating another vision of citizenship that combines both equality and difference and is based on more inclusive forms of dialog. The recognition of pluralism and the division between public and private is the starting-point for this analysis of women’s citizenship (Bussemaker and Voet 1998:283).

This chapter attempts, first, to highlight the debates on the concept of citizenship from
a feminist perspective. The notion of citizenship is not a fixed but a contested concept that has called for feminist criticism over the years. Second, it reviews the claims on women’s citizenship in the context of Hong Kong and discusses how far the local women’s movement has helped to reshape politics and the discourse of rights and entitlement. The third part of this paper explores the strategies, including welfare and politics, that enable women as an agency to struggle for their full citizenship rights.

**Feminist perspectives on citizenship**

The women’s movement has played a key role in citizenship struggles by challenging the confined roles of women in the family and society, by which women are excluded from the public sphere. The gender-neutral concept of citizenship has called for a feminist critique over the years and is now evolving in the re-conceptualization of the term. As Bussemaker and Voet suggested (1998), citizenship is also a “contextualized” concept, that is, it depends upon social and political context, as well as the historical legacies within which they have been developed.

**Public-private divide**

Starting from the First Wave of the women’s movement in Western countries, feminists, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, in her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, were the first to make claims for women’s citizenship. She challenged the civic-republican discourse of citizenship that treated woman as simply a mother in the family, but without citizenship. There was no room for the position that women should enjoy citizenship duties and activities, as well as rights in politics, and that they should be equal to men, but with rights to be independent from men (Bussemaker and Voet 1998:285). In the nineteenth century, the major focus of the women’s movement was the struggle for universal suffrage and women’s exclusion from politics. Most feminists believed that the political rights women gained were important for them to move forward in making demands for more civil and social rights. These rights included legal protection from domestic violence, equal pay for equal work, education opportunities and welfare rights.

The success of women obtaining their political right to vote in the nineteenth century, however, did not indicate that they were full members of society. Entering into the Second Wave of the women’s movement, as Carole Pateman (1988) points out, women were still confined to a second-class citizenship position. She claimed that the universal understanding of citizenship rested on the male norm and on women’s exclusion from public politics and their inclusion as mothers. The position of women as “second-class” citizens has thus always been connected with the gendered division between the “private” and “public” sphere. The assumption was that women, therefore, must become “like men” and give up their experiences, needs and interests “as women” in order to achieve full citizenship (Siim 1999:109).

Feminists such as Ruth Lister (1990), Gillian Pascall (1993) and Sylvia Walby (1994), have put more emphasis on the social citizenship rights of women. They argued that women’s ability to act as citizens in the public sphere continues to be constrained by their
responsibilities in the private, with implications on the rights that they can enjoy. Participation in the formal labor market and politics are severely constrained by the responsibilities of caring for children and the elderly. Without mainstream paid employment, women’s access to social security rights as autonomous individuals is limited. The result is very often economic dependency, which means that a woman’s relationship to social citizenship rights is mediated through her male partner who enters the public sphere in her name.

In response to the public and private divide, some feminists have therefore suggested that politics should transform citizenship in a way that uncouples the division between the public-private sphere from the division between men and women. However, other feminist scholars, for example, Sara Ruddick and Jean Bethke Elshtain, focus on the positive implications of the public and private divide for women’s politics. They question public values which are mainly founded on male standards, whereby women’s experiences and interests are predominately determined by their duties and roles as mothers. The “sexual difference” between men and women should be emphasized in a way that the “maternal values” from the family should be recognized, they argue. The “mother-child relationship” in the family should be as equally important as political participation in the public domain (Phillips 1991).

Mary Dietz (1985), an American feminist, questions this maternal value in women’s politics. She emphasizes the specifically political nature of citizenship, but not the notion that citizens should pursue general concerns. Dietz criticizes maternal thinking as a paradigm for citizenship, and that citizenship means leaving the “private” world of family or neighbors or work, and becoming involved in more general concerns. As she states, “To be a good mother is not in itself to have the requisite capacity for citizenship. (Good) mothers may also be (good) citizens, but their being (good) mothers do not make them (good) citizens” (Dietz 1985:31). She sees citizenship as an explicitly political activity.

Iris Young shares Dietz’s emphasis on women’s political citizenship, but argues that this means organizing politically around one’s group identity as a necessary and legitimate part of citizenship. She argues:

> In a society where some groups are privileged while others are oppressed, insisting that as citizens persons should have behind their particular affiliations and experiences to adopt a general point of view serves only to reinforce that privilege; for the perspectives and interests of the privileged will tend to dominate this unified public, marginalizing or silencing those of other groups.

(Young 1989:250)

Young challenges the idea of equal treatment and argues for particular interests for oppressed groups as society is socially differentiated. Both Dietz and Young agree that citizenship should take place in a public arena, although they have different emphases. To re-politicize issues and to question the clear distinction between the public and private, as Anne Phillips (1991) suggests, the feminist slogan “The personal is political,” goes some way in reshaping politics and the discourse of rights and entitlements. Entering the 1990s, a new form of equality that transcends the “equality vs. difference” debate and recognizes
the diversity of social groups has become the major concern in the project of engendering citizenship.

**A differentiated universalism**

To reject the “false universalism” of traditional citizenship theory, some feminist theorists call for a new discourse of citizenship whereby the citizen is an abstract subject with equal access to rights, including the right to politics and welfare. However, the specific location of people in society which mediates the construction of their citizenship as “different” or “others,” and thus determines their entitlements would still have to be addressed (Lister 1997; Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999).

Ruth Lister (1997) suggests a multi-layered notion of citizenship is key to the understanding of women’s citizenship. It should involve a number of elements central to a feminist political economy, in particular an international approach and the interrogation of the binaries inscribed within the public-private divide and the opposition of structure and agency. As much of the literature on citizenship has traditionally focused on its inclusionary face, more radical contemporary writings tend to portray citizenship as a force for exclusion. However, inclusion and exclusion represent the two sides of citizenship’s coin; they represent a continuum, rather than an absolute dichotomy (Lister 2000). In her recent work, Lister explains:

Members of a society enjoy different degrees of substantive citizenship according to their positioning on a number of dimensions including class, gender, sexuality and “race.” Likewise, nation-state “outsiders” stand in a hierarchy, from those admitted to full legal citizenship, through those with legal resident status, down to asylum-seekers and then “irregular” immigrants. However, for those physically prevented from entering a territory, exclusion does operate as an absolute. (2000:98)

Women are too often excluded both as insiders and outsiders. As insiders, the exclusion of women is associated with, and confined to, the private sphere, where they are deemed unfit for the responsibilities of active political citizenship. The form of locating women in the sphere of domestic life and care is defined in exclusive contrast to the political and public sphere. Moreover, women’s exclusion from citizenship is mediated by other social divisions such as class, race, disability, sexuality and age.

As outsiders, a significant proportion of migrants and asylum-seekers are women, although it is only recently that this has begun to be acknowledged. Some feminist analyses of citizenship argue that the differential positioning of diverse groups of immigrant and non-immigrant women within particular nation-states means that “they face different opportunities as well as structural constraints in performing their agency.” Multicultural explanations can be used to disguise the failure to address the economic and social predicaments that immigrants and refugees encounter (Yuval-Davis and Werbner 1999). International human rights law, enforced by more effective institutions of global governance, could subject nation-states’ exclusionary powers to an internationally agreed set of principles including that of non-discrimination. This would furnish “outsiders” with

Post-structuralism advances one’s understanding of the multiple and fluid identities of individuals in the citizenship discourse. The deconstruction of the unitary categories of women reveals their non-existence therein. Thompson and Hoggett argue from a social policy perspective that “any justifiable universalism or egalitarianism must take particularity and difference into account; and any legitimate particularism or politics of difference must employ some universal or egalitarian standard” (1996:23). In line with this argument, Lister (1997) suggests a differentiated universalism to the incorporation of diversity and difference into the conceptualization of citizenship rights. This concept is linked to practice through, first, the commitment to a politics of solidarity in difference, that is, a politics that requires both an “inclusive politics of voice and representation.” Second, there is a need to negotiate a pluralist politics of community. The recognition of the citizenship and agency of marginalized groups is a politics of emphasizing the agency, rather than victimhood, of oppressed and marginalized groups (Yeatman 1993).

Engendering citizenship and the women’s movement in Hong Kong

In Hong Kong, the claim for women’s citizenship has not clearly informed public discourse in the past. However, the local women’s movement has definitely played a significant role in re-shaping the concept of women’s citizenship in the last decade. The early stage of the local women’s movement has been in some ways similar to that of the Western countries in that it has been focused on civil and social rights of women. For example, the campaigns for equal pay for equal work (in the 1960s), the abolition of concubinage (in 1970), maternity leave benefits (from 1979 to 1980s), separate taxation (from 1981 to 1990), childcare service provision (starting from the late 1980s to the present) and legal protection from domestic violence (starting from the late 1980s to the present). These activities have not only recognized the gendered division of labour that constrained women’s participation in the public sphere, but also placed the analysis of women’s citizenship well within the social and political context of Hong Kong. It has been forcefully pointed out by one feminist group that the interplay of the minimal intervention policy and the gender-neutral assumption of social welfare policies contributes to confining women’s roles in the family, and reinforces their position as partial citizens as well (AAF 1990). Childcare, community care and social security policies are typical examples. The collective actions at that time have no doubt helped to re-define the identity and position of women in society, although they were mainly based on male standards.

Entering the 1990s, debates on the politics of difference have not only reshaped the debate on women’s citizenship in the West, but also shed some light on the women’s movement in Hong Kong. Women’s groups started to recognize that struggle for women’s full citizenship should not only be connected to gendered division between the “private” and “public” sphere, but also needed to take the particularity and difference of social groups into account. Women in Hong Kong are not homogeneous, but have different experiences of ethnicity, sexuality, age and class. Issues such as the marginalization of new arrival women and discrimination against homosexual women
have become one of the major concerns in social movements as well as in the women’s movement of Hong Kong. As Lister (1999) suggests, women are being excluded both as insiders and outsiders by their positioning on different social dimensions. New arrival women of Hong Kong may have multi-layered identities—as new immigrants, lone mothers and benefits claimants—with more constraints in performing their agency than the local married women after their marriage breakdown. The campaign on entitlement to social security benefits and the access to compassionate re-housing for lone mothers in the 1990s have become some of the major concerns in the engendering citizenship project.

At the same time, women’s groups have shifted their demands on the rights of full-time housewives. The women’s movement in the 1980s focused more on the emancipation of women from oppression in the family where women are deprived of participation in employment and politics, and lack individual rights to access social security benefits. In the 1990s, this claim was still valid. However, women’s groups tended to adopt an “equality and difference” strategy to promote women’s citizenship by demanding the recognition of the contribution of homemakers or carers as their domestic labor should be regarded as “work.” The campaigns for voting rights of full-time housewives in Functional Constituency Elections and the provision of a Mandatory Provident Fund for homemakers started then (AAF 1998).

After the long campaign for the establishment of the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Women’s Commission by women’s groups in Hong Kong, these two organizations were finally set up in 1996 and 2000 respectively. Women are now under the protection of the Sexual Discrimination Ordinance (1995), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) (1996) and the Family Status Discrimination Ordinance (1997). These developments, especially the extension of the international law CEDAW to Hong Kong, seem to have been a step forward for the claim of equal citizenship rights of women.

In retrospect, the women’s movement has made some contribution to the discourse of rights and entitlement of women in Hong Kong. The following discussion will highlight some of the important issues that relate to women’s social and political claims. In so doing, how women are portrayed as dependent and second-class citizens and how far women’s citizenship has been re-shaped in Hong Kong will be critically reviewed. The issues of discrimination against sexual orientation and marginalization of new arrival women will not be touched upon, as Pun Ngai and Wu Ka Ming’s contribution on new arrival women, and Wong Kit Mui’s work on the gay movement will provide in-depth analyses and discussions.

**Equal pay for equal work**

The idea of a citizen has been traditionally connected to an individual’s performance in the public sphere, having male virtues and being economically independent. The concept of a gendered division of labor has assumed that women’s primary role is in the family and they are economically dependent on men, with married women becoming the “property” of their husbands. The result can be economic dependency, which means that women lose the autonomy to control their own incomes and their individual rights to
access social welfare continue to be constrained.

In Hong Kong, women do not enjoy the same treatment as their male counterparts when competing in the job market. This is an obvious violation of the basic principle of equality. The campaign for equal pay for equal work began in the 1960s to change this sexist, but established, practice within the ranks of the government. The campaign was first started by high-ranking female civil servants who worked for the colonial government. This campaign gained support from different sectors in the community, including women’s group and professional associations, as well as from nurses and teachers. In the ensuing debate, the government defended itself by arguing that differential pay was based on the women’s access to their husbands’ financial resources and their prioritization of family over career. The following is the statement on the 1962 Report on Women’s Salary Scales in the Public Service as quoted in Lee (2000:235), “The distinction between married and unmarried women is, however, considered clear-cut since a married woman has a legal claim on her husband to be maintained, whereas an unmarried woman has to maintain herself.”

The blatantly sexist statement of the colonial government undermined the individual rights of women, in particular those who were married, to their own benefits. Women were portrayed as mothers or wives, with family as their first priority even if they had their own job. The success of the campaign in 1971 of “equal pay for equal work” was an important move in challenging women’s duality in public and private spheres as embedded in Hong Kong society. However, this campaign was only a partial success as the “equal pay for equal work” policy was only applied to the public sector but not to the private sector. Most working women still suffer from job segregation in society, getting paid less and occupying a lower position in employment, compared to their male counterparts. More recently, the Sex Discrimination Ordinance has given further protection for women in employment; however, in fact, the unchanged familial roles of women compounded with the loopholes in the Ordinance present considerable barriers to the battle for equal pay for working women.

Campaign for separate taxation

The campaign to tax married women separately was another part of the debate over women’s full citizenship rights in Hong Kong. The campaign began in the early 1980s and lasted for more than ten years. According to the Inland Revenue Ordinance of Hong Kong, “The income of a wife, not being a wife living apart from her husband, shall be deemed to be the income of the husband and shall be chargeable accordingly in his name.” Under this Ordinance, married women were not allowed to pay taxes individually on their own incomes, but had to be assessed under the name of their husbands. The Financial Secretary of the time declared that a separate taxation system for husbands and wives would be a radical departure from the Chinese concept of family which would challenge the traditional values of filial piety and family unity. This unfair and discriminatory taxation policy was strongly objected to by women’s groups in Hong Kong, who demanded an end to the presumed role of a married woman as being economically dependent on her husband. In 1983, the government altered the taxation law to allow married women to fill out separate tax returns. However, married couples
still had to be jointly assessed (Lee 2000:244). This was seen as only a minor change to the taxation law which did not satisfy the public, and the debate continued until 1988.

The campaign on separate taxation was not only the concern of women’s groups, but also of labor unions in Hong Kong; however, they put a different emphasis on the issue. Labor unions focused on the monetary benefits to the taxpayers, because the middle class would benefit more from the changes. Conversely, women’s groups regarded this campaign as not being only about economics, but more importantly, the struggle for women’s economic rights and legal status as individuals, based on the principle of gender equality (Leung 1988). The assertion of equal economic status between men and women was one of the important battles to gain women’s civil rights in society.

**Social security and poverty**

Social security is a gender-blind system. It has created a poverty trap for women, in particular, married women and lone mothers, and has also structured women’s identities as dependent citizens. Under the current rules of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) benefits, couples are treated as a single unit rather than as individuals with a partner. The ideology of the “family as a unit” is the policy assumption of the social security system which has the same policy assumption as the taxation system of Hong Kong. Under the “family wage model” in social policy, it means that men are the breadwinners, while women are the dependants in the family. Married women thus face at least three problems in accessing social security benefits. First, married women are not entitled to claim benefits as individuals, even though they may not actually be financially supported by their husbands. This is so if their husbands are found to have employment above the subsistence level. Second, for women married to unemployed men, the structure of benefits is likely to produce a work disincentive to women. If either of them have earnings, this will affect their entitlement to benefits. Third, the unemployment status of married women is less likely to be shown in official statistics, because they are regarded as full-time housewives once they return to their families from the labor market (Chan et al. 1999).

Starting in 1997, women’s groups launched an anti-poverty campaign and first introduced a feminist perspective into the analysis of poverty issues on International Women’s Day. They argued that the concept of a gender division of labor, together with the notion of the “family wage,” only make it more difficult for women to have an adequate income of their own and force them to be dependent on men. Married women’s poverty is therefore more invisible than that of other groups of women such as the elderly and single mothers (AAF 1998). Similar concerns have been raised in different events in later years such as in the Anti-Poverty Summit organized by the Hong Kong Council of Social Services in 1998 and the Hong Kong Perspectives on Beijing +5 Conference organized by the Equal Opportunities Commission in 2000 (Leung 2000; Wu 2000).

In 1998, the Social Welfare Department published a review report on social security benefits entitled *Report on Review of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) Scheme*. The Report stated that the rapid increase in the CSSA caseload and its expenditure, from 88,600 cases in September 1993 to 218,400 in September 1998, is one of the great public concerns (Social Welfare Department 1998:1). In light of this, the
Social Welfare Department proposed a “Support for Self-reliance” Scheme to help able-bodied unemployed CSSA recipients. This was “to ensure that our social security system should act as a springboard to the future, which gives its recipients the opportunities to become self-reliant” (ibid.: 3).

The reform of the social security system is actually another step towards depriving women of citizenship rights by emphasizing the obligations and individual responsibilities of benefit claimants, without taking into account their social citizenship rights. The reform has attracted strong criticism from women’s groups, lone parents’ groups and social service agencies. It has been argued that the social security system in Hong Kong has assumed women’s domestic role in the family, not only for married women, but also for lone mothers. For some single mothers, reliance on benefits is not the preferred option, but they may be hindered by other factors in accessing an adequate income. Evidence shows that single mothers on benefits have low educational levels and young children. Single mothers remain on social security benefits for a long time, not because of any dependency culture, but because there is little support for childcare. Equally debilitating is the fact that the benefit structure and low pay also discourage benefit claimants from returning to work (Leung 1998). The gender division concept regards single mothers also as the natural carers in the family, even if they are separated from their husbands. Single mothers are supposed to take up childcare duties at home, resulting in their not being provided with childcare expenses, even though they may take up paid work outside the family. The new measures not only further reinforce the economic dependency of women on men and on the state, but also stigmatize service recipients, which will create more social conflicts as a consequence (AAF 2000). Since 2000 the social security system has adopted the welfare-to-work policy orientation and has been cut further. It runs the risk that CSSA recipients will be further marginalized and excluded from society once they are defined as being “dependent” or “unmotivated” recipients.

The interplay of the minimal intervention policy and the gendered assumption of the social security system in Hong Kong has an impact on the shape of women’s poverty that curtails women’s social citizenship. The cost of partial citizenship is to be excluded from full participation in the community as other members in society (Lister 1990).

Mandatory Provident Fund

Women are not only treated as dependent citizens, but also as “second class citizens entitled to third class benefits” (Lister 1990). The unpaid work by married women affects their citizenship rights in at least three ways: first, married women are unlikely to be entitled to contributory benefits that depend on previous employment status. Second, women’s participation in community affairs is hampered by the lack of social service support. Third, full-time housewives do not enjoy the same political rights as their male counterparts under the existing Functional Constituency Elections of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) Government.

Women, in particular those who are married, are less likely to be entitled to retirement benefits due to their employment records. In 2000, the SAR Government implemented the Mandatory Provident Fund (MPF) scheme. This scheme is aimed at providing
retirement protection for the working population of Hong Kong given the proportion of the aged population is expected to increase to 14 percent by 2016, and to 24 percent by 2031. The MPF is an employment-based retirement protection scheme, for employees and self-employed people with earnings over HK$4,000 a month. Those who earn below this level of income do not need to make any contributions, but their employers have to contribute 5 percent of the employee’s income (www.mpfahk.org/2002).

The MPF scheme has been strongly criticized by the public, including local women’s groups, on the grounds that it is a discriminatory policy since it neglects the welfare of women, including those employed in the labor market and those who have taken up unpaid work in the family. For those who are employed in the labor market, the scheme offers them insufficient retirement protection. Evidence from local research studies shows that female workers are in a more disadvantaged position in the labor market compared to their male counterparts. This is because: (1) women get less pay and are in lower positions than men; (2) married women usually have a broken employment history between the ages of 25 and 40 due to having babies and providing childcare; and (3) women workers are more likely to take up low-paid jobs and casual work in the labor market, and they are more at risk of losing their jobs in times of economic transformation and under globalization processes (AAF 1993; Chan and Ng 1994; Chan et al. 1999). However, the MPF will not provide any protection for a worker who is in an unstable and low-paid job, and with women being the majority in these positions, they are also the majority excluded from this retirement protection scheme.

Women who are able to join the MPF scheme find that they face additional dilemmas. Contributions to the scheme are only covered by employers and employees, the government only intervenes by monitoring the Fund. According to Census Data, the median monthly income of a female worker in Hong Kong was HK$8,500 in 2001 (Census and Statistics Department 2002). For a female worker with a median level of income, if she made a continuous contribution to the scheme for 25 years, it is estimated that she would get about HK$1,700 a month after retirement. This pension is lower than what she might be able to get from social security benefits.

The Mandatory Provident Fund is actually a work-related welfare scheme, directly related to work history, income and position in the labor market. This scheme obviously overlooks the retirement protection of people who are not currently engaged in the labor market, for example, full-time housewives and disabled people. Full-time housewives are not covered by the scheme, not because they do not work but because they are not paid for their work at home. The scheme is, therefore, a system which has a blind spot in locating the different needs of different women who have divergent work patterns and individual needs different from those of men, primarily due to unequal caring responsibilities within the family. Without the entitlement of the Mandatory Provident Fund, full-time housewives are denied access to the full status of citizens. As Ignatief argues, “the basis of citizenship of entitlement was the insurance principle and universality of benefit: everyone contributed and everyone benefited” (as quoted in Lister 1990:57).
Social support for women’s community participation

Women are under-represented at the different levels of public and political affairs. In 2000, four out of the thirteen members of the Executive Council were women. In the 1998 Legislative Council election, 25 of the 166 candidates were women, ten of whom were elected. In the 1999 District Council election, 129 out of the 798 candidates were women, 57 of whom were elected, making the gender gap in the District Council even wider (Census and Statistics Department 2002:82).

Women are not active participants in community and political affairs because society has not positively supported their participation. A research study by the Association for the Advancement of Feminism of Hong Kong pointed out that the participation of women in public and political affairs is commonly affected by their educational level, economic power, and their role in the family (AAF 1985). At first sight, women, particularly fulltime housewives, are active in local community affairs because they spend most of their time in the community. However, women’s community participation does not imply that they play an influential role within the community. Moreover, women’s participation in public affairs is limited to the local community level, but their concern and involvement in political issues are comparatively low. Evidence shows that women still face difficulties participating in public affairs as a result of their primary roles as carers in the family. The idea of the “family first” is still a common way to resolve this dilemma. The commonly held assumption is that full-time housewives have flexible time. This is not so, as illustrated in the study where a significant number of respondents claimed that they “do not have time” or have “too many household duties” to effectively participate in the public domain. As Lister (1990) suggests, the excessive calls on women’s time for unpaid work limits their participation in the political rights of citizenship.

The research by the Association for the Advancement of Feminism (1985) not only uncovers the low participation rate of women in political affairs, but also focuses attention on social welfare provisions for women. The low participation of women in political and community affairs is closely linked to the inadequate social support they receive from society. The slogan “the personal is political” was adopted by feminists in struggling for the welfare rights of grassroots women in the 1980s. Feminist groups believe that welfare rights campaigns helped to shift social boundaries from the private to public spheres.

Since then, issues concerning the improvement of childcare provisions, the establishment of women’s centers and the introduction of carers’ allowances, have formed the major part of the struggles of the women’s movement in Hong Kong. Unfortunately, there has not been much improvement in childcare provision in, for example, providing for a variety of forms of childcare services such as temporary care services and child minder services, allowing for flexible opening hours of day-care centers and providing financial support for low-income families. At the same time, services provided by women’s centers are still not on the subvention list of the Social Welfare Department. The government refuses to acknowledge the need to provide a carer’s allowance based on the assumption that women are the natural carers of the family.
**Voting rights of full-time housewives**

It is claimed that Hong Kong is a democratic society and that citizens have the right to vote, but unfortunately, full-time housewives in Hong Kong enjoy only what might be called “second-class” political rights. Full-time housewives do not have the same political rights as other members of society, due to their identity and status within the family and the fact that they are not classified as one of the so-called functional groups in Functional Constituency Elections. In Hong Kong, there are two levels of elections to the Legislative Council: one based on Geographical Constituencies, and the other for Functional Constituencies. In Geographical Constituency Elections, citizens with right of abode are presumed to have a vote. However, the Functional Constituency Elections are specifically designed to give businesses and professionals a greater voice as they are seen as having a “function”—that is employment—in society. In this regard, people who can vote in Geographical Constituency Elections are also eligible for an additional vote in Functional Constituency Elections, if they belong to one of the defined functional groups.

Housework is work but is unpaid and is not considered to warrant a special category as one of the functional groups in Functional Constituency Elections. According to the data of Hong Kong, there were about 750,000 economically inactive homemakers in 2001 (Census and Statistics Department 2002). That means that a substantial proportion of women have been deprived of their political rights under the Functional Constituency Elections, further eroding their ability to make political decisions in relation to community affairs. As pointed out by Lister, “the distinction between the right and the ability to participate in political power as an expression of the citizen’s socio-economic position has long been understood” (1990:41).

In response to this discriminatory political system, women’s groups in Hong Kong have urged the government to abolish the voting system with regard to Functional Constituency Elections. This political practice is nothing less than a system which denies political citizenship to those members of the community with less wealth or a lower social status. At the same time, the voting system also breaches many Articles of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, including discrimination against women from participating in public life (AAF 2000). Advocating the implementation of the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) is one way to abolish the current discriminatory political system so as to achieve equal suffrage for men and women.

In 1996, the CEDAW was introduced to Hong Kong under the aegis of the Home Affairs Bureau. The extension of CEDAW was originally seen as a successful move in advancing women’s rights in Hong Kong. But Hong Kong being a signatory to the Convention is now seen as nothing more than “politically correct” window dressing by women’s groups in Hong Kong (AAF 2000). For example, the government holds several exemptions to the articles in CEDAW. One exemption relates to the Small House Policy which gives only men from the New Territories the right to own land. This exemption reflects the inadequate protection of women from unfair treatment and confirms their lower standing in the ownership of property. Since the application of the CEDAW to Hong Kong, the Home Affairs Bureau has done little to promote the Conventions or worked in co-ordination with the Equal Opportunities and Women’s Commission. To
further protect the citizenship rights of women in Hong Kong, there needs to be far more commitment on the part of the SAR government towards mainstreaming gender equality in all government policies.

**The feminist approach to citizenship**

What has been done in the past has advanced women’s rights in some ways but in only a very limited respect. So what strategies should be adopted to secure women’s access to their social and political citizenship rights? This has been a fundamental question for feminists over the years in both Western countries and in Hong Kong. That social and political citizenship are interconnected is not in dispute. What is needed is a balance of power between men and women, both in private and in public life. In other words, the barrier to women’s citizenship rights is the women’s role as carers, resulting from the traditional sexual division of labor in society. In this light, welfare provision is still at the frontier of struggles for women’s full citizenship.

**Welfare and citizenship**

Feminists agree that welfare provisions can best promote women’s citizenship in the public sphere. However, some are torn by the dilemma that arises from the equality versus difference dichotomy: does the route to women’s social citizenship rights lie through recognition of the care work still undertaken largely by women or through equality in the labor market? Treating equality as synonymous with sameness suppresses the differences that exist between different categories of women and men.

To avoid becoming stuck in the equality versus difference debate, Lister suggests that the starting point should be shifting the privileges men enjoy through the sexual division of labor and which will require changes in both private behavior and public policy. However, she is under no illusion that public policy is a more effective way of changing men’s behavior and their relationship to private and public spheres. For example, Scandinavian governments use three main interlinked strategies: (1) parental leave; (2) working time; and (3) public education programs. This state support helps to create new gendered expectations and new roles for men in respect of domestic responsibilities. At the same time, the parental support policy also challenges the traditional “male breadwinner model” that has an important effect on other policy areas such as social security (Lister 1999).

In line with Ruth Lister, Bubeck (1999) further suggests that “care” should be included in the conceptualization of citizenship as a general citizen’s obligation. In so doing, the values of care would be changed from private to public. It means that the performance of care becomes a public issue, instead of a private problem, and becomes the responsibility of all citizens, instead of a burden for women.

The involvement of men in caring work, enabling women to gain access to paid work and state-funded provisions could be aimed at enabling parents and other carers to combine their caring responsibilities with paid work. However, there is need to support those who provide care themselves at home. How due recognition is given to the
importance of care and the provision of carers with economic security have become major concerns for feminists. Some feminists suggest that the provision of non-contributory citizenship pensions would ensure that all women get a pension in their own right, regardless of their employment record (Sainsbury 1997; Lister 1999). For those who do take up the duty as carers in the family, the provision of an Invalid Care Allowance, which is non-contributory and non-means-tested, could be said to be a citizenship approach to support caring labor.

The best strategy to promote women’s citizenship in the social sphere, as Lister suggests, is

[to] not allow ourselves to be pushed into policies which reflect the philosophies of either equality or difference. Instead, we need to argue for both and, through a range of policies, which, on the one hand, give greater value to care work and, on the other, promote women’s position in the labour market.

(Lister 1999:29, emphasis in original)

**Political citizenship**

To change the political agenda and the discourses of politics, feminists suggest two approaches, a “politics of presence” and a “politics of difference,” to change women’s political roles from objects of politics to political agents. “The politics of presence” is an argument for developing solidarity between oppressed groups to challenge the political exclusion of marginalized groups in public life (Phillips 1993:161). “The politics of difference” is an argument for making sense of women’s equality through their representation in formal political systems, as well as their differences and participation in informal politics (Lister 1997).

The invisibility of women in the political arena reflects at least the narrowly defined and male-oriented politics in the public sphere. In fact, informal politics such as the process of negotiation with welfare institutions and bargaining with housing officials are frequently conducted by women, which is in contrast to their under-presentation in the formal political system. That women actively participate in local community actions is well documented in many community studies (AAF 1985; Leung 1985). In highly urbanized Hong Kong, housing is one of the major problems in the community. In the past decade, facing poor living conditions in old housing estates (poor hygiene and facilities) and in new towns (poor transportation and social service provision), it is women who have had to deal with the Housing Authority and other government departments. Their participation in informal politics is often motivated by personal and domestic concerns. Also, the community actions in the past are very male-oriented and the prevalent sex-role concept is not only adopted by the government but the community workers themselves. However, the concerns of women in community affairs propel them to move into the public sphere to work with others. As suggested by Dietz, who claims that one risks essentializing women’s different experiences in politics as something natural or downgrading their activism as “women’s issues,” to make private concerns public, is a move to deconstruct the private-public divide. Through the recognition of women’s participation in local political activities, new role models for active political
citizenship will be provided, further contributing to a more pluralist framework of citizenship (Lister 1997).

Another strategy to enhance women’s political rights, as Lister suggests, is the enforcement of international human rights laws. For example, in the social context of Hong Kong, local women’s groups formed a strong alliance in fighting for the extension of the CEDAW to Hong Kong and the signing of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action that were adopted at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995. Under these internationally agreed sets of principles, the government has to ensure that they are implemented through various policies and measures. Various countries, which adopted some elements of the Beijing Platform for Action, focused on the idea of mainstreaming. Two years ago, the Women’s Commission of Hong Kong set up a working group to initiate gender mainstreaming as a policy-making framework within government departments.

The concept of gender mainstreaming has its potential advantages, “rather than being an ‘add-on’ policy, it affords the opportunity to rethink sets of assumptions. These include how public policy is formulated and delivered generally, and ways of organizing work and service delivery more specifically” (Rees 1999:166). Gender mainstreaming is in fact an approach that needs a strong political commitment by the government to equal opportunities that goes beyond piecemeal positive action measures. It has a long-term gender impact on policy-making processes which seek to correct the disadvantages experienced by women as citizens, and to ensure that women and men have equitable access to, and benefit from, society’s resources and opportunities, with the aim of achieving gender equality. The gender mainstreaming approach has become one of the major strategies of local women’s groups to change women’s political representation in Hong Kong.

Conclusion

Citizenship is a dynamic identity. Feminists refute the claimed universality of citizenship discourse as being gender-neutral, but see it in fact as a male-oriented conception. Women’s citizenship is hindered by their caring work and their exclusion from the public sphere, as being dependent and second-class citizens. In the understanding of women’s citizenship, consideration should be paid to women’s experiences in their access to welfare benefits, employment opportunities and political participation, which differ from those of men. The feminist reinterpretation of citizenship must integrate a gender analysis into a broader understanding of differences, such as class, ethnicity, disability and sexuality, and its impact thereon. The notion of a “differentiated universalism” is the means of capturing the tension between equality and difference in the citizenship debates.

The development of women’s citizenship is constituted at least by changing gender relations, which should involve a range of policies, including support to those providing care for adults and children, placing greater value on care work, promoting women’s position in the labor market, increasing the representation of women in the formal political system, as well as embracing a pluralist form of political participation. The sexual division of labor has a profound implication for women’s capacity to participate as
active citizens in the public sphere, and therefore the destabilizing of private and public
divide is an attempt to accommodate the diversity of women’s concern in citizenship
debates and to transform the male model of citizenship.

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Introduction

In its liberal form, citizenship claims to embody the ideal of universalism. All individuals who can legitimately claim to be citizens are supposed to share equally the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. Nevertheless, the emphasis on a general will that transcends particular differences of individuals presupposes and enforces a homogeneity of citizens. In demanding that individuals suppress their own needs, interests and perceptions they derive from their particular experiences, the universalistic notion of citizenship asserted by liberals has led to the denial of difference and oppression of minorities. Recent works on citizenship and civil society suggest that a democratic polity that genuinely protects the equal rights of all its citizens to pursue their particular ways of life must give voice to the disadvantaged groups. The recognition and expression of difference are increasingly seen as important for redressing injustice and realizing democracy.

In demanding those very rights that are supposed to have been granted to all citizens of a society, disadvantaged groups often face a “dilemma of difference.” On the one hand, these groups must continue to deny any essential differences between them and the non-marginalized. For instance, inherent differences between men and women, whites and blacks, heterosexuals and homosexuals, able-bodied and disabled people may be denied in order to claim equal rights and treatment. On the other hand, they often find it necessary to affirm that there are differences between men and women, whites and blacks, heterosexuals and homosexuals, able-bodied and disabled people that demand differentiated rather than identical treatment to redress those particular disadvantages originating in diverse historical circumstances. In acknowledging group difference in capacities, cognitive styles, needs, culture and/or lifestyles, there is a danger that the difference is understood as deviance and deficiency. How these disadvantaged groups articulate their demands of equal rights while preserving their own distinctiveness and without having to submit themselves to the hegemonic norms that reflect the experience of the socially privileged is a question that remains to be answered.

What complicates the issue is the suggestion by postmodern theorists that difference is to be located in a space within identity rather than simply between identities. While social movements seem strong when they pivot around a unitary (racial, gender, or sexual) identity, this heightened solidarity is often purchased at the cost of increased internal repression. Foucault (1982) calls for struggles “against that which ties the individual to
himself, struggles against forms of subjectivity and submission.” Some writers and activists turn to the notion of queer to develop an anti-normalization, post-identity politics. Others, particularly the rights advocates, insist that “identity” provides a working theoretical base without which right claims cannot be advanced and the construction of cohesive and visible political communities will not be possible. One specific example illustrating these theoretical debates over citizenship, identity and difference is the lesbian and gay movement in Hong Kong.

This chapter reviews and analyzes the historical development of this movement, and it will argue that in making claims for equal rights and anti-discrimination legislation, Hong Kong activists have appealed to essentialist notions of homosexual identity. The emphasis on innate difference bears the risk of being pathologized, just as homosexuality was long posited as a mental illness that is not amenable to change in psychiatric discourse. How to resist the force of pathologization and stigmatization is a question pertinent to the lesbian and gay movement. In the United States the movements of the ethnic minorities have served as the dominant model for social marginalized groups that are also mobilizing for political recognition (Seidman 1993). An ethnic model relies on the notions of authentic, alternative culture and ways of life. In Hong Kong an affirmative elaboration of autonomous lesbian and gay culture that stresses its difference from the mainstream heterosexual culture has not appeared. Instead, driven by the ideal of universal citizenship, local groups seek to assert the equal moral worth of both homosexuals and heterosexuals in their fight for equal rights. By constructing their identities as law-abiding, contributing and productive members of Hong Kong society, homosexuals present themselves as respectable citizens who deserve to receive the same treatment as heterosexuals. In what follows, I will argue that this strategy not only plays down the difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals, but also involves repressing the differences within the lesbian and gay community. To convince others of their normality, they have repudiated the “Other.” Those who fall below the standard are excluded, marginalized or condemned.

The first section critically reviews the debates associated with the concepts of difference and citizenship. To take the notion of difference seriously, it argues that in addition to the development of a differentiated concept of citizenship, we need to learn from the postmodern theorists’ idea of anti-normalization politics. In what follows I shall analyze the lesbian and gay movement in Hong Kong to see what it tells us about the politics of difference. This chapter claims that the (homo)sexual politics in Hong Kong actually consists of two elements: a moment of citizenship and a moment of transgression. The moment of citizenship refers to the struggles for equal protection of the law, equal rights in employment, parenting, access to welfare provision, and partnership rights, and so on. As I have mentioned earlier, the struggle for equal rights entails an identity politics which produces normalizing effects. However, it must not be over-looked that contained within the movement are acts of cultural contestation which destabilize the existing symbolic order upon which normalizing power operates. This is the moment of transgression, which can be witnessed in some protests and actions in recent years. While the moment of citizenship tends to suppress difference, the moment of transgression brings difference back to the stage. Instead of asserting the effectiveness, legitimacy or superiority of one moment over the other, I argue, we need their co-
Existence to be reminded of the limitation of each of these strategies.

**Difference and citizenship**

Feminists have long been arguing that access to citizenship is a highly gendered process (Young 1989, 1990; Fraser 1992; Pateman 1992). The public sphere, in contrast to Habermas’s idealized reconstruction (Habermas 1989a, 1989b, 1991; Cohen and Arato 1992), is hardly a domain free from power relationships. Rather, it is a domain often dominated by men, for its requirements of independence and abilities of abstract argumentation, coupled with families’ all-absorbing household duties and child-rearing activities, discourage women’s participation. As citizenship has been constructed in a male image, women are treated as second-class citizens. Richardson (2000) further points out that lesbians and gays can be regarded as partial citizens as the image of the citizen is constructed not merely as male but also as heterosexual. For example, in Britain, as in many parts of the world, lesbians and gay men are excluded from certain civil and social rights, such as the right to legal protection from discrimination or harassment on the ground of sexual orientation, or to health or welfare benefits as same-sex relationships are not often officially recognized. Since the state withholds various rights including the rights to marriage, childbearing, and child-rearing, Richardson states, lesbians and gays are banished from the public to the private realm, and yet simultaneously excluded from the private realm where this is associated with the family (2000:78). In this sense, the formation of both the public and the private spheres in relation to civil society is a highly sexualized process.

To the extent that some groups are excluded from participation in democratic governance, it becomes clear that the notion of a universalized citizenship is problematic. Some theorists advocate a concept of differentiated citizenship in order to solve the problem. Young (1989, 1990) emphasizes that if citizenship is to be truly inclusive, we must take group rights and group identities seriously. A society’s policies must be committed to the promotion of different groups’ participation in decisionmaking. There must be mechanisms in the political system that ensure the specific representation of oppressed groups so as to allow for the articulation of special rights that attend to their group differences. Inspired by the notion of differentiated citizenship, Richardson (2000) notes that in theorizing sexual citizenship, one does not need to choose between a universalistic notion of “the sexual citizen,” and a sexually differentiated model which would allow for a specific notion of, say, lesbian citizenship, gay citizenship, bisexual citizenship, transgender citizenship, sado-masochist citizenship, and so on. Rather, one could seek to transcend the either/or positions by opting for an integrated approach of a differentiated universalism. Richardson argues that Weeks’ construction of sexual citizenship points toward a differentiated universalism when he talks of the importance of “balancing the claims of different communities with pursuing new common purposes,” and “learning to live with diversity at the same time as building our common humanity” (Weeks 1998:49; cited by Richardson 2000:94).

The development of a differentiated concept of citizenship is one way of appropriating the notion of difference. It points toward a politics of difference which relies on group
identity to provide for legal protection and equal rights. This way of dealing with difference is, however, criticized by postmodern thinkers and queer theorists as reducing difference to identity. The radicalism of the poststructuralist perspective, Fuss states, lies in its critique of identity: “To the extent that identity always contains the specter of non-identity within it, the subject is always divided and identity is always purchased at the price of exclusion of the Other, the repression or repudiation of non-identity” (1989:103). While the concept of a differentiated citizenship, and its associated politics of difference, aims to redress structural injustice between men and women, and heterosexuals and homosexuals, the difference is primarily located between identities. It is not so much a difference that troubles identity from within.

Foucault (1979a, 1979b) has provided a radical account of how modern forms of normalizing power operate through the constitution of identity-bearing subjects. Normalization, Foucault notes, is not exactly a force of repression or expiation, but rather a power of individualization. It brings five quite distinct operations into play: homogenization, comparison, differentiation, hierarchization and exclusion (1979a:182–183). We may say that while the heterosexual couple is seen as the norm or the legitimate couple and those who fail to conform are seen as abnormal or perverts, the procedure through which power operates is more than a simple division and rejection. Individuals are compared, differentiated, and hierarchized according to their differing nature and qualities. Some kinds of sexuality are seen as more acceptable than others; some kinds of pursued pleasure are seen as more normal and acceptable than others. Individuals come to identify themselves as a subject with a specific nature and quality. While they experience individuality, identity and subjectivity, they can be at the same time subject to the power of normalization. In light of Foucault’s work, resistance does not lie in consolidation of existing identities, but rather in the constant questioning of the limits of these identities and experimenting with the possibility of transgressing these limits.

Halperin (1995), in outlining the queer politics of Foucault, defines queer as “whatever is at odds with the normal, the legitimate, the dominant” (1995:61). In queer politics the intervention aims not so much at the inclusion and protection promised by citizenship as at the constant destabilization of identities and resistance to normalization forces. Judith Butler, influenced in part by Foucault, seeks to attack and destabilize gender identity. She says, “Identity categories tend to be instruments of regulatory regimes, whether as normalizing categories of oppressive structure or as rally points for a liberatory contestation of that very oppression” (1993:307–308). Butler calls for subversive action in the present: gender trouble, i.e. the mobilization, subversive confusion, and proliferation of genders. Drag, for instance, can be seen as a kind of subversive bodily act and as an example of cultural contestation (1990:137). Queer legal theorist Bower (1997) echoes Butler in calling for the abandonment of the state as the site of privileged political action and suggests a turn to cultural contestations as the locus of effective political intervention.

Many questions have been raised with regard to queer theory and politics. In response to Butler, Kirsch asks, “If we don’t take identity categories as rally points, from where do we fight prejudice and exploitation?” (2000:8). Phelan (1994) doubts if it is wise to deconstruct and destabilize an already marginalized identity. She believes that the direction for marginalized groups should be developing a strong sense of identity through
building their own culture and community. Weeks (1998) holds that a strategic use of identity is necessary in struggles, and suggests understanding identity as fiction. Critics of postmodern theories question how the tension between protective justice and sexual plasticity can be reconciled. Seeking civil law protection for marginalized groups requires specification of the protected categories in a way that enables people to identify themselves under these categories. This would then risk the kind of rigidity and fixity that anti-normalization politics wishes to avoid. Should we dismiss universality and identity politics in favor of a politics of anti-normalization? Or is a post-identity politics a myth and the usefulness of “queer” doubtful? In the following analysis of the lesbian and gay movement in Hong Kong, I shall argue that we should break free from the either/or approach and that both a post-identity politics of anti-normalization and an identity politics of sexual rights are necessary to each other.

The rise of (homo)sexual rights movement in Hong Kong

Homosexuality was not a major social issue to the people of Hong Kong before the 1980s. Very few reports had been made on this subject, with the occasional exception of media coverage of the issues as overseas news. In Britain the Sexual Offences Act in 1967 decriminalized homosexual acts between men over the age of 21 in private. In 1968, influenced by British enactment of decriminalization law, the colonial government consulted with the local lawyers’ associations about any possibility of bringing the law in Hong Kong into line with that of Britain. Indigenous lawyers raised objections to the proposal, arguing that homosexuality was a foreign idea and homosexual acts were un-Chinese (Zhou and Zhao 1995). The issue of decriminalization was subject to more intense debates in the colony only after the occurrence of the case of Inspector MacLennan, who was found dead when under investigation for the practice of homosexual acts in 1980. The community began to look into the prevalence of homosexuality and the appropriateness of pre-existing laws governing homosexual conduct, and this resulted in the Hong Kong government considering decriminalization of homosexual conduct justified, with the claim that homosexuals were liable to blackmail. In 1983 the Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong stated in its report that it is not the function of the criminal law to intervene in the private lives of citizens, or to enforce moral judgments in areas where there is no need to protect others. In 1988 the government published a consultation paper to seek public opinion on whether criminal penalties for homosexual acts in private between consenting adults should be removed. This generated heated debates within Hong Kong; legislators, academics, social pressure groups and churches, for example, were divided on this issue for a decade.

The establishment of the Hong Kong Ten Percent Club in the late 1980s marked the rise of a more organized and visible lesbian and gay movement in the territory. The group engaged in political lobbying, called for press conferences, and submitted their position papers to the Office of the Executive and Legislative Councils to urge liberalization of laws. Human rights groups in Hong Kong backed homosexuals in the battle. The Hong Kong Human Rights Commission, which represented a coalition of forty-one local organizations including religious bodies, pressure groups, women groups, social worker
associations and officers of district board members, made a joint declaration supporting
decriminalization.

Many Hong Kong people still viewed homosexual conduct as “sick,” “sinful,”
“morally wrong,” or objectionable for reasons of conscience, or religious or cultural
tradition. They worried that a change of laws would mislead youngsters into thinking that
homosexuality was legitimate and they would engage in homosexual practice as if it were
a fashionable trend. The suppression of the student movement in Beijing in 1989 gave
impetus to a significant shift in people’s attitude. The protection of human rights then
became a general concern. People came to realize that what gave them protection was the
enactment of the Bill of Rights Ordinance. The Bill requires that any restriction of
fundamental rights must not only be prescribed by law, but must also stand the test of
necessity. Opponents to decriminalization were soon aware that any pre-existing
legislation that did not admit of consistency with the Bill would be repealed. Finally,
some opponents in the Legislative Council changed their position, and, with the majority
support of legislators, the law enacting decriminalization was passed in 1990, one year
before the Hong Kong Bill of Rights Ordinance passed into law.

Following the removal of criminal penalties for homosexual conduct in private came a
flourishing of lesbian and gay organizations in the 1990s. The Hong Kong Ten Percent
Club, which had already been active in the late 1980s, was formally registered in 1992.
Two other organizations offering support and counseling to lesbians and gay men came
into existence in 1992 and 1993. Seeing that the above organizations were mainly
dominated by males, female organizations were formed in subsequent years with the
goals to make their presence felt and to serve the needs of lesbian and bisexual women.
In 1994 an independent legislator, Anna Wu, tabled a Private Member’s Bill in the
Legislative Council to urge the government to enact equal opportunities ordinances to
prohibit discrimination on the grounds of gender, disability, marital status, age, religion,
race, nationality, and sexual orientation. The government considered the scope too wide
and decided to enact only legislation against discrimination on the grounds of gender and
disability. Pressed by the activist groups to strengthen the anti-discrimination legislation
by covering the ground of sexual discrimination, the government launched a consultation
in 1996. To the disappointment of these groups, the government concluded that public
education was more effective than legislation in ending discrimination. The fight to
extend the existing anti-discrimination legislation to cover sexual orientation became a
major goal of local lesbian and gay groups in the post-1997 era.

Drawing on Richardson’s (2000) analytic schema for the classification of sexual rights,
we can say that a shift in emphasis has occurred in local discourses of sexual rights: there
is a partial move away from conduct-based claims to both relationship-based claims and
identity-based claims. In the 1980s, when struggles targeted decriminalization of sexual
acts between consenting adults, the right claims were conduct-based, with their focus
primarily on the argument that privacy should be respected. From the 1990s onwards,
some groups began to demand the right to same-sex marriages or domestic partnerships,
and access to social and legal benefits accruing from that right. The claims are concerned
with the right to public recognition and validation of their relationships. In responding to
the government’s consultation in 1996, local groups urged the enactment of laws that
would ban discrimination on the basis of a lesbian or gay “identity.” They began to fight
for the right to disclose sexual identity without being penalized, the right not to have to hide their sexual identity. The identity-based rights claims are not so much about the right to privacy as the right not to have to be private.

While the rights claims of local groups are identity-based, a closer look at the sexual politics in Hong Kong will lead us to see that, unlike their Western counterparts who cultivate a sense of pride towards their own group identity, local groups mainly appeal to a universalistic notion of citizenship in claiming equal rights. They express a sense of pride toward their identity as Hong Kong citizens rather than toward their own sexual identity. In what follows, I shall examine how the identity politics of equal sexual rights gives rise to a politics of respectable citizens which consists of normalization effects.

**Identity politics and normalization**

In the 1980s the colonial government favored decriminalization of sexual acts between consenting adults in private due to the fear that the illegal environment might be a fertile breeding ground for blackmail. In the consultation paper, homosexuality was presented as a fixed and innate character of a minority of people:

> The evidence…has convinced us that there is in all sectors of our Hong Kong community…a significant large minority whose predisposition from birth is exclusively homosexual; and we have learned that there is nothing that can be done to change that innate character.
>
> (The Law Reform Commission of Hong Kong 1983:121)

This understanding of homosexuality has been criticized by postmodern thinkers and queer theorists. They attack an essentialist conception of identity and emphasize that gender and sexuality are socially constructed. The constructionist perspective is challenging and subverts the uncritical acceptance of the privileged and naturalized order of heterosexuality. Ironically, opponents of homosexual rights often adopt a non-essentialist or constructionist perspective (cf. Evans 1998:127). “Homosexuality is a selected way of living. Why should we set up a law to protect a lifestyle?” (*Hong Kong iMail*, 21 August 2001). This argument has been used against the demand for anti-discrimination legislation on the grounds of sexual orientation. Opponents question whether homosexuality can really be proved to be inborn. They hold that homosexuals should be willing to bear the consequences of their own choice or decision with respect to their sexual preference and that legislation outlawing discrimination is either unjustified or unnecessary. They further argue that the wider acceptance of homosexuality would inevitably result in a seduction of youngsters to this “pathological” way of life.

In response to these attacks, local groups have adopted different strategies to advance the rights of homosexuals. One strategy is to follow the position in the consultation paper, that is, to assert the innate and fixed nature of homosexuality. The insistence that homosexuality is inborn further forms a key element in their defense against charges of contamination of the normal population. Some activists emphasize that people do not choose to be gay, nor can youngsters be influenced to become gay. Sexual orientation is portrayed as something fixed and long existing inside oneself:
Using the phrase sexual preference indicates that the writer of the document has very little experience with sexual orientation. If someone can “prefer” an orientation, then someone can choose it as well. This is a naïve misunderstanding of sexual orientation, and furthers the misconception that gay men and lesbians can avoid the problems associated with being discriminated against by simply changing their “preference” or unchoosing to be gay.

(Hong Kong Gay Coalition 1996:C60)

Many opposing voices do not accept non-heterosexual orientations based on the belief that “one can choose to be gay” or “choose not to be gay”, but how many people, heterosexual, or not, remember when they “chose” their current sexual orientations? Many researchers have also shown generic elements in one’s sexuality and that it’s not by choice.

(Horizons 2000:3)

Lesbian and gay teachers are hardly more likely to produce lesbian and gay students than heterosexual teachers are to produce only heterosexual students… sexual orientation cannot be affected no matter how serious an attempt is made.

(Hong Kong Gay Coalition 1996:C73–74)

The liberal ideology of citizenship could be receptive to certain lesbian and gay rights claims. This has been primarily through the construction of lesbians and gay men as individuals who cannot help being that way, and therefore should not be discriminated against on that basis. Under the influence of liberal ideology, it is possible for people to compare lesbians and gay men to the people with disabilities who cannot help being disabled. In submitting their positions to the government during the 1996 consultation, local groups presented a series of psychological and inter-personal problems experienced by lesbians and gay men. For instance, it was stated that more than 50 percent of gay men and lesbians had at one point in their lives considered suicide and roughly one-third of teen suicides were committed by lesbian and gay kids who thought they had no choice but to end their lives (Hong Kong Gay Coalition 1996:C74). While this claim was intended to alert people to the harmful effects of prejudice, it at the same time perpetuated the stereotyped image that homosexuals were sick people who desperately need help and sympathy.

We may say that the strategy adopted by local activists is what Foucault calls “reverse discourse.” Foucault’s politics of discourse suggests that a certain discourse is not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it; it can be an instrument of power, but also a stumbling-block and a point of resistance (1979b:101). In this example, the psychiatric discourse that portrays homosexuals as inborn and sick has been re-appropriated to form an opposing strategy that demands legal protection of homosexuals. “Homosexuality began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or naturality be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories with which it was medically disqualified” (ibid.: 101). However, while it is possible for those who are discriminated against to turn discourse around to their advantage, the strategy of reverse discourse often leaves the labels and overall framework for thinking about
homosexuality intact. To assert the innate difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals and to present the suffering faced by homosexuals do not pose any fundamental challenge to the stigmatization and deep-rooted prejudice associated with homosexuality.

This is not to suggest that local groups are unaware of the force of pathologization of homosexual identity. In the conferences of Chinese Tongzhi (which literally means “comrades” and includes lesbians, bisexual, gays and transgendered people), the cultivation of a positive sense of their own sexual identity has been one of the concerns of organizers. In the 1998 conference, the slogan was “Let every one be a healthy person under the sun.” This seemed to imply that “homosexual people are now living an unhealthy life.” In the 2001 Chinese Tongzhi Conference, “happiness, pride, true love, power” became the keywords. This time the vision goes beyond living a healthy life, but embodies itself in pride and happiness. In other words, lesbian and gay men do not only struggle painfully to survive in the midst of fear and prejudice, but also can stand up and feel proud of themselves. As stated in the Manifesto of the Conference, “We are a group of Chinese tongzhi unashamed and proud of who we are.”

Resisting pathologization of gay identity is a question pertinent to the struggles for equal rights. In the sexual rights movement of Western societies, the use of the term “gay,” which itself means lively and spirited, suggests a new defiance of moral norms and a new sense of pride in self (cf. Weeks 1985, 1989). The axioms of “gay pride,” “coming out” and “coming together” reinforced each other as necessary components of a new identity in the 1970s. Perhaps for the first time in history, a homosexual identity became one that could be declared openly as a personal affirmation, and lived as a complete life career. The new consciousness emerged side by side with a vast increase in organization, including telephone helplines, community services, professional and trade union groups, gay theater groups, gay cinema, gay newspapers and magazines. The movement also set in motion a reversal of the tendency for sexual minorities to define themselves against a single, universalistic standard of sexual morality. The lifestyles that were labeled and rejected as “promiscuous” had been reversed by activists into a celebration of sexual pleasure.

In Hong Kong, many local activists treat coming out, parades and mass protests as confrontational politics that should better be avoided. They tend to hold the view that social harmony and family relations are of common concern to people in Chinese communities. Chinese tongzhi do not like to engage in any acts that might jeopardize their family and communal relations (Zhou 2000). In the Manifesto of the Chinese Tongzhi Conference, it was emphasized that “Confrontational politics in the West should not be imposed upon Chinese societies.” On what basis do local groups assert their sense of pride, then? I would like to point out that sexual politics in Hong Kong does not resemble the experience of Western societies in constructing a group identity similar to the ethnic model. Rather, it is a desexualized politics of respectable citizens, in which the homosexual identity is often bracketed.

As many Hong Kong people still believe that homosexuality is symptomatic of a psychic abnormality, pro-gay organizations and local activists do not highlight the difference between heterosexuals and homosexuals. They appeal to the underlying shared humanity of heterosexuals and homosexuals to warrant the elimination of discrimination.
The Hong Kong Council of Social Service (1996:C121) and the Hong Kong Social Workers Association (1996:C117) supported enactment of anti-discrimination legislation on the ground that “all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights.” They believe that every person is entitled to every basic human right and should enjoy equal opportunities irrespective of his/her race, sex or sexual orientation. In the 1996 Chinese Tongzhi Conference, participants declared that they would like to be respected simply as individuals, like any other individuals. They refused to define their lifestyles according to the norms proposed by sexual liberationists. They did not even want to highlight the sexual aspect of their life. Although homosexuals were seen as a minority, difference was to be transcended rather than celebrated. Many local groups did not seek to affirm homosexuality as a distinct social identity. Nor did they try to promote the building of an autonomous homosexual culture:

We are a group of Chinese tongzhi unashamed and proud of who we are. While we do not deny our sexual orientation, we do not advertise the sexual aspect of our life. If the society can deal with this issue without prejudice, everyone, tongzhi or otherwise, need not highlight her or his sexuality. People should respect each other as individuals regardless of sexual orientation and other social differences.

(Chinese Tongzhi Conference, 1996)

The adoption of a strategy of desexualization can be traced back to as early as the 1980s when lesbian and gay communities discussed how homosexuality should be translated in Chinese. In order to correct the misconception that lesbian and gay men are sex-crazed maniacs, some members proposed that the translation should seek to play down the erotic aspects of their relationships. They proposed to translate “homosexuals” as “tong xing ai zhe,” which lays emphasis on, and romanticizes too, the love and affection between same-sex partners. The strategy of desexualization contrasts sharply with the approach of many gay activists in the West who claim a right for their own lifestyles, sexual practices and norms. In recent years when local activists have claimed a right to public recognition and validation of their relationships, they take pains to avoid confrontational politics that lead to the perception that the granting of rights would threaten the existing institutions of family and marriage. They begin to advocate the right to domestic partnership that recognizes the relationship between same-sex partners and gives them access to the rights and responsibilities related to debts, property, taxation, and so on. The notion of domestic partnership can potentially entail another challenge to the existing monogamous institution through the possibility of relaxing the number of persons involved in the partnership. Local activists consciously avoid mentioning this so as to prevent the accusation that their way of life would corrupt youngsters and public morality (in Zhong da xue sheng 2001:54).

If these local activists have not turned to confrontational politics or sexual liberationists’ ideology in their fight for equal rights, what conceptual or discursive tools do they rely upon in developing their sense of pride? Besides appealing to the notion of common humanity, these local activists develop pride through identification with the general public in Hong Kong. Instead of emphasizing difference, they lean toward the
notion of sameness. They declare that they are entitled to the same respect, for they have the same inclination to show affection for each other, in private and public, as the other 90 percent of Hong Kong people do (South China Morning Post, 13 July 1995). While activists in the United States were keen to assert the unique lifestyles, values and beliefs of homosexual minorities, local activists stress that they are just like the majority who have affection for their lover and family, and commitment to their work. To repudiate the accusation from religious groups that homosexuality is immoral, they highlight the fact that gay people are as law-abiding as anyone else, as moral as any other section of society, no more but certainly no less (Hong Kong Gay Coalition 1996:C71).

those who identify as gay or lesbian in our community in Hong Kong are not pathological people, but productive and contributing members of society.  
(Hong Kong Gay Coalition 1996:C59)

Gay men and lesbians do not differ at all from heterosexuals in their value systems. We all value loving families, long-term partners, the success of the Hong Kong economy, the work ethic, and good dim sum. Attempts to conceptualize gay men and lesbians as morally deficient, evil, or as destructive to the family are all biased.

(Hong Kong Gay Coalition 1996:C74)

In emphasizing that homosexuals are productive and contributing members of society, upholding familial and monogamous values and sharing with the majority the same ways of life, local groups are engaged in a politics of respectability that aims toward social assimilation. By projecting a respectable image, the lesbian and gay community repudiate the idea of homosexuality as symptomatic of psychic, social or moral inferiority. Yet, the politics of respectability gives rise to the force of normalization that silences non-conventional ethics and lifestyles. Those who do not commit to monogamous values, or do not contribute to the success of Hong Kong’s economy are judged as inferior and deviant. The appeal to a common humanity does not challenge the social and moral boundaries between the respectable and the deviant. Rather, it puts the power of normalization to work, making its hold on individuals more and more inescapable.

The politics of respectable citizens has aroused discontent among some members of the lesbian and gay community. They criticize mainstream organizations for projecting an image of homosexuals as middle-class, professional, good-looking, and upholding conventional morality. This has excluded and silenced the voices of those who are lower class, or who are non-conformists in their rejection of conventional practices and values. Rainbow of Hong Kong was a group founded in 1998, with subsidiary groups such as Rainbow Action, Rainbow Cell Group and a sister group formed in subsequent years. It seeks to serve excluded and disadvantaged groups within the lesbian and gay community. It has become the largest gay and lesbian organization in Hong Kong, with more than 600 registered members. Among them, a committee member states, there could be up to one hundred who are unemployed, elderly, retired, social security recipients, and people with disabilities. Their members’ educational back-ground varies from primary to postgraduate level. Founders believe that one should not overlook the differences
between members of the lesbian and gay community. A founder openly claims that he works as a part-time sex worker. This marks the determination of Rainbow of Hong Kong to represent the interests and voices of marginalized groups. A member refuses to use the label of tongzhi to identify herself, for the reason that ‘tong’ presupposes sameness and commonality. “Rainbow,” she contends, correctly signifies the diversity and difference within the lesbian and gay community (in Zhong da xue sheng 2001:50).

**Anti-normalization politics and transgression**

Just as the heterosexual self-understanding as normal and natural came about through a reference to its deviant opposite of homosexuality, homosexuals have come to understand themselves as having a unified and normal sexual identity through stigmatizing others as deviant. Within the lesbian and gay community, members who practice sado-masochism, casual sex, and open relationships are likely to be condemned and stigmatized. In the struggle for legislation against discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, lesbian and gay groups have aligned with the government position to include only homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality as legitimate forms of sexual orientation. Other sexual minorities including sado-masochists and transgendered people are excluded from being considered for legal rights. Excluded individuals can, of course, appeal for inclusion but this has to be based on the moral codes of civil discourse operating in society. For instance, sado-masochists may attempt to seek legal protection by claiming that their practice improves the sexual life between intimate partners, and that they deserve respect for they also contribute to the success of Hong Kong’s economy. Nevertheless, this would immediately construct those who fail to conform to the image of normal and respectable sado-masochists as deviants. They include those sado-masochists who do not have a job, and those who prefer casual sex to relationships of exclusive and long-term commitment. Claims for citizenship often provide the grounds for normalizing power to take control over individuals. To fight against normalization, one should constantly reflect upon the limits that are imposed on us while experimenting with the possibility of transgressing those limits. Acts of transgression are as necessary and important as acts of struggles for citizenship.

In calling for enactment of anti-discrimination legislation, Rainbow Action engaged in the politics of respectability. In a public hearing of the Legislative Council, a spokesperson claimed, “We are also taxpayers but why do we enjoy fewer rights?” (South China Morning Post, 21 August 2001). Yet, at the same time their members’ acts of transgression destabilize and trouble the mainstream homosexual identity of respectability that is necessary for the claims about equal citizenship. In 2001 they staged the first sado-masochism protest in Hong Kong in order to voice an outcry about a police raid on a sex shop during a party for sado-masochists (Hong Kong iMail, 20 August 2001). Members of Rainbow Action had no connection with the sex shop, but they wanted to protest against the power of the police and the public’s prejudice against sado-masochism. The protestors, wearing leather, studded belts, hoods and chains, performed mock whippings en route to the Central Police Station. On the way they shouted, “Police should not intervene in our party. We want sexual pleasure.” When they arrived at the
destination, they tied one of the members to the gate of the police station. Before they were able to proclaim their statement, the police arrested the protestors, and later prosecuted them on the ground of obstructing police from their work. During the trial, Rainbow of Hong Kong obtained support mainly from students’ organizations and human rights groups, not from the lesbian and gay community. Some local groups felt that Rainbow’s deviant acts rendered their attempt at building a respectable image for homosexuals futile. While sharing the concern of these local groups, however, I would like to argue that the demonstration represents anti-normalization politics that opens up space for a proliferation of difference without at the same time reducing difference to identity.

Anti-normalization politics does not entail an identity politics that fights for inclusion within the traditional citizenship status (cf. Meeks 2001). In the demonstration, protestors did not demand equal rights for sado-masochists. Nor did they seek to extend the anti-discrimination law to cover protection of sado-masochists. The protest was not so much centered on an identity. Nevertheless, the demonstration asserted a form of sexual practice, a way to pleasure, which is different from the sexual practices recognized by the mainstream community. The protestors made use of the opportunity to explain to the public that sado-masochism is often practiced with the mutual consent of participants and with the consideration of safety (cf. *The Sun*, 27 August 2001). In the protest, members of Rainbow Action cast doubt on the standard of obscenity, which, as they pointed out, is arbitrary and ambivalent. They criticized society’s double standards when a government-financed show which included striptease and nude scenes was allowed to open at the Cultural Centre to anyone over the age of six. The protest challenged the division between art and indecent materials, between the respectable and the despised. Anti-normalization politics not only displaces identity, but also challenges the very grounds upon which negotiations of inclusion are made.

Anti-normalization politics involves acts that transgress limits and boundaries; it signifies a moment of transgression. The struggle for equal rights and inclusion in citizenship involves an identity politics that tends to suppress difference; it is a moment of citizenship. These are two different moments in the lesbian and gay movement in Hong Kong. The moment of citizenship has been dominant since the 1990s, but in recent years the moment of transgression is becoming increasingly significant in some protests and political actions. Interestingly, as the following example shows, a single political action may consist of both a moment of transgression and a moment of citizenship.

In 2002 Rainbow Action carried out a sham marriage in order to demand the same social rights that are available only to heterosexual couples (*South China Morning Post*, 26 March 2002). A gay member married a lesbian member in order to use the marriage certificate to apply for subsidized rental housing. After registering as marital partners, they had a ceremony outside the registry office with their same-sex partners. They kissed and exchanged rings with their respective same-sex lovers who had been witnesses to the wedding. The newly-weds went to apply for public housing after the ceremony and declared that they could then live with their same-sex partners in a subsidized apartment. Rainbow Action stated that they would start to provide matching services for gays and lesbians to help them obtain social benefits. The organization received hate mail over the sham marriage (*South China Morning Post*, 1 April 2002). Other lesbian and gay groups,
as well as pro-gay legislators, criticized Rainbow Action’s use of legal loopholes to fight for social benefits. They held that a same-sex couple living in a subsidized apartment would violate the public housing rental agreement which requires the marital partners to be the residents. Other activists argued that the attack should be targeted at the lack of formal recognition of the relationships of same-sex partners, not the public rental housing agreement.

The sham marriage caused outrage and controversy. It was intended to challenge the status quo and existing forms of social exclusion. Should it be regarded as an act of transgression? It must be emphasized that anti-normalization politics defines transgression in terms of its effect of destabilizing and displacing identity. A post-identity politics of anti-normalization should be distinguished from Weeks’ integrated approach which leans towards a differentiated universalism of citizenship. In Weeks’ view, the lesbian and gay movement in the West has two complementary elements: a moment of transgression and a moment of citizenship. The moment of transgression, for Weeks, is characterized by the constant invention and reinvention of new senses of the self and new challenges to the existing institutions and traditions that have excluded these new subjects. It includes the moment when the non-heterosexual comes out as lesbian or gay, when the housewife joins a consciousness-raising group and redefines herself as a feminist, when the cross-dresser proclaims him/herself as transgendered (1998:36). Weeks’ definition of transgressive moments tends to reduce difference into identity. When he notes that the two moments are necessary to each other, he is referring to their complementary character. That is, the moment of transgression exposes the inadequacies of the status quo, “but without the claim to full citizenship, difference can never find a proper home” (ibid.: 37). Weeks’ understanding of transgression, I argue, fails to capture the radical potential of transgression in terms of its challenge posed to identity politics.

If difference and transgression were, as Weeks suggests, to find their home in citizenship, identity politics would often be privileged and main-stream values would often be relied upon to justify the right to inclusion. In the case of the sham marriage, the members came out and identified themselves as lesbian and gay. In order to demand equal rights, they appealed to mainstream values about monogamy and intimacy when saying, “We are two pairs of same-sex couples in love, willing to share the burden and difficulties together with our lovers” (South China Morning Post, 26 March 2002). They also presented themselves as respectable citizens who pay taxes. As ordinary tax-payers, they argued, they should be entitled to the social and economic benefits including public housing and tax allowances for spouses. Yet, since claims for citizenship status are based on a politics of respectability, it is not surprising that the use of legal loopholes has met with disapproval and condemnation. To seek inclusion, members of Rainbow Action have to hide the fact that they embrace open relationships rather than monogamy. They also have to conceal from the public the fact that they belong to the low-income group who may even have been exempted from tax payment. Differences within the identity of homosexuals are to be suppressed. If difference and transgression were only to find a proper home in citizenship, I contend, they would have to be predetermined, judged, and absorbed by the moment of citizenship.

From the perspective of anti-normalization politics, the transgressive moment in the sham marriage, I argue, is contained in the act of cross-dressing. The gay member who
was supposed to play the role of the groom wore a white wedding dress and veil, whereas the lesbian member who was supposed to play the role of the bride wore a black tuxedo and sported a fake moustache. When the newly-weds came out of the registry office to have a real wedding with their same-sex partners, it did not take long for an observer to discover that their respective partners were dressed in the same way as they were. On the scene, there were two couples: the gay couple being dressed as two brides and the lesbian couple being dressed as two grooms. Their innovative act of cross-dressing worked against the stereotyped assumptions that one of the partners of the gay couple must be feminine and play the female role in their relationship, and that one of the partners of the lesbian couple must be masculine and play the male role in their relationship. It calls into question the use of a heterosexual frame in the understanding of homosexuality and subverts the binary masculine/feminine opposition which is believed to necessitate and ground heterosexual desire.

The transgressive act of cross-dressing troubles the dominant conception of the gender identities of a couple. Yet, instead of simply demonstrating that both partners of a gay couple can be feminine or both partners of a lesbian couple can be masculine, the act of cross-dressing actually mocks the notion of a true and original gender identity. Activists dressed up and acted out to expose the constructedness or artificiality of what in other settings passes as natural male or female. As Butler’s discussion of drag informs us, “In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender—as well as its contingency” (1990:137). The notion of an original gender identity is parodied within the practice of cross-dressing. If the notion of originality of one’s gender is questioned, sexuality can no longer find its ground in a fixed and natural order of gender. Contesting the naturalization of gender has an immediate effect of uprooting the naturalization of sexuality. The domains of gender and sexuality can no longer be seen in terms of originality. What they manifest instead is endless possibilities of performativity.

In sum, we have seen that in the local lesbian and gay movement, the concepts of differentiated citizenship and group rights are still underdeveloped. Activist groups mainly appeal to the liberal ideal of universal citizenship in seeking for inclusion. In order to prove that all persons, heterosexuals or otherwise, are of equal moral worth, they identify themselves as respectable, normal citizens. While a politics of respectability transcends rather than affirms difference, it is shown that there is an emergence of a post-identity politics of anti-normalization which brings difference to the fore. A juxtaposition of these two distinctive strategies shows the importance of fighting for recognition while at the same time refusing to succumb to the forces of normalization. It also points to the limits of the rights discourse that is dominant in civil society and to new ways of thinking about difference beyond identity.

The significance of the transgressive act of cross-dressing does not lie in its giving birth to a new form of subjectivity—the transvestite. Nor should it be regarded as an act of coming out which paves the way for rights claims of transvestites. The act of cross-dressing allows us to catch a glimpse of cultural contestation for deconstructing privileged genders and sexualities. It reminds us that an identity politics of equal rights movement does not encapsulate the entirety of sexual politics. It is true that identity categories provide the rallying points from which we can fight prejudice and injustice. Yet, as seen in the (homo)sexual rights movement in Hong Kong, identity politics tends
to affirm not only the insignificance of difference between homosexuals and heterosexuals but also the homogeneity of homosexuals. The differences among lesbians and gay men are often repressed and ignored. People who fall below the standard of a respectable homosexual citizen are rejected and marginalized. In order to recognize differences as irreducible, an anti-normalization politics is deemed necessary. What is most important about anti-normalization politics is that it marks a space of difference for which no identity and no standard of normality exist. It performs its function through troubling identities, destabilizing boundaries, and deconstructing oppositions. It points in the direction of the future, a future that must always remain open to new social relations and forms of sexual expressions. But to stipulate what forms of difference is espoused would be, as Meeks (2001) notes, to do certain violence. If a post-identity politics of anti-normalization is not so useful in the struggle for equal rights, its co-existence with an identity politics that seeks inclusion in citizenship at least reminds us of the limits of the latter.

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In search of a communal economic subject

Reflections on a local community currency project

Po-Keung Hui

Introduction

In the midst of the current economic recession, the Hong Kong government, accompanied by the mass media, is attempting to interpellate a cosmopolitan citizen-subject modeled on a notion of the “economic man.” By treating human beings as “human resources” whose (market) value augments through formal educational training in general, and information technology (IT) training in particular, it is believed that this economically qualified citizen-subject will be capable of resolving the unemployment problem and rescuing the Hong Kong economy. Almost all important social policies—the reduction of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA), the creation of a “positive social welfare system” in which “social welfare” is regarded as “social investment,” the setting up of numerous re-training programs for the unemployed, the reform of the formal education system, and the introduction of various technology funds and the Community Inclusion Investment Fund—are devoted to producing this economically qualified citizen-subject. As such, the exclusionary emphasis on the economic citizen-subject has reinforced the hegemonic project of constructing a cosmopolitan citizenry since the late 1990s.

Different aspects of the making of such a cosmopolitan citizen-subject are discussed in other chapters of this collection. This chapter instead focuses on the discussion of the potentials and limitations of community projects that attempt to cultivate an alternative economic citizenship. In response to the thinning of the meaning of the economic citizen-subject, there have been a number of community economic projects that have endeavored to cultivate an alternative economic citizenry/subjectivity in Hong Kong in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The full potential of these projects is yet to be seen but the efforts of countering the hegemonic process of cosmopolitan subject formation deserve a close examination.

The making of an economically qualified citizen

The general belief that associates “successful” (measured in economic terms) persons (usually men) with the virtues of being independent, autonomous, rational, hard-working and self-interested is well and alive in Hong Kong despite recent social and cultural studies that have shown that these “successful figures,” best represented by the CEOs and
senior managers of large corporations, are at most reasonable persons who are far from “rational” and “independent” in a narrow economic sense (Carrier and Miller 1998; Thrift 1997, 1998). James Carrier and his colleagues describe the process of misrecognizing the capitalist reality with abstract economic concepts as “virtualism”—“the attempt to make the world conform to an abstract model.”¹ The “virtualism” of “economic man” does not come from nature, nor is it a mere reflection of the “reality.” The making of “economic man” in Hong Kong is in fact a complex—albeit incomplete—process, in which different agents and institutions play different roles.

To a significant extent, this process has been initiated from the top—the government and corporations—as a cultural-political project that is based on an articulation of existing and new language, drawing mainly from the realm of the economy in general, and work and consumption in particular. Through the portrayal of images and counter-images of successful (business)men in TV, movies, popular business books, magazines, newspapers and other mass media, the image of a qualified economic citizen—a smart consumer and a hard-working and productive producer—was created.

For instance, after making a radical cut of the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance (CSSA) in 1999, the Hong Kong government, together with the mass media, has utilized a strategy of “blaming the victim,” as condensed in the slogan: “CSSA feeds lazy bones.” This slogan has effectively mobilized not only populist hatred to attack recipients of CSSA, but has also reinforced the ideology of “no such thing as a free lunch” and an individualistic world-view—that success or failure is solely the result of individual ability and effort, two backbones of the ideology of the “economic man.” Similarly, the recent (non)-debate on the shuang shi qing nian (status zero youth)² has also effectively reinforced two myths: that the young people are failures and that they are responsible for their own “failures.” These articulations are not merely rhetorical devices or tricks. Their success is a result of their ability to create new ways of connecting the liberal language of the “economic man” with the conservative themes of work ethics and individualistic consumerism, as well as addressing the “real problem, real and lived experiences, real contradiction” of ordinary people (cf. Hall 1988:56)

The real problems and lived contradictions experienced by most ordinary people in Hong Kong have always evolved around the aspiration for a better material life, which in turn translates into a direct consequence of “good” work ethics and “smart” consumption patterns that become the major components of the “economic man.” Yet the processes of work and consumption do not strictly follow an economic logic. More often than not, desire, passion and anxiety contribute significantly to the dynamics of work and consumption, and subsequently the construction of “economic man,” and business practices and economic behavior can largely be seen as cultural and performative activities.

If “economic man” is based on virtualism, a result of the fact that the experiences that are most familiar to us are easily unfelt and unarticulated whereas something else is (mis-) recognized as the “true” representation of the “reality,” then intellectual-political projects of constructing an alternative economic subject/citizen have to utilize a new language to uncover the experiences of the ordinary people who are unable to recognize themselves within mainstream economic discourses.
Gibson-Graham and colleagues have engaged in such a project by bringing in the experience of ordinary people in order to gain “a new positioning in the grammar of economy.” They have worked as a group since 1997 consisting of “members who hoped to become desiring economic subjects of a ‘socialist’ sort” (CEC 2001:94). They do not see the economy and capitalism as a monotonous entity; for them to call the economy capitalist is to engage in “categorical violence.” As a result, it is desirable to develop new languages “to represent noncapitalist forms of economy (including ones we might value and desire) as existing and emerging, and as possible to create” (ibid.: 95). Their cultivation of alternative economic subjectivities is realized essentially through creating a new economic language and by rearticulating it with existing economic processes. For them, many of the diverse everyday activities of ordinary people, such as community and ecological services, household management, voluntary and religious works, can be seen as diverse “economic practices” but they are disqualified as “non-economic” by mainstream economic language and are thus marginalized as secondary or insignificant. In order to reclaim their centrality in the economy, Gibson-Graham develops a typology that regards these practices as economic (but not capitalist) activities. In other words, what Gibson-Graham advocates is to broaden and to open up the meaning of the economy, instead of reducing everything into a narrowly defined economistic domain.

To cultivate a “desiring economic subject” of a “socialist sort” requires integrating two apparently contradictory ethical principles. The first is conventionally associated with the economic domain: being an autonomous self that is independent, free and assertive. The second is considered to fall into the communal domain: being a communal subject who is caring, willing to share and is concerned with collective welfare. To reconcile these seemingly contradictory principles, the meanings of “economic” and “community” have to be reconsidered. On the one hand, the homogenizing and exclusive tendencies that limit or even suppress community members’ freedom and autonomy have to be avoided, and the meaning of “community” could just as well be understood in terms of difference. On the other hand, to balance the selfish, indifferent, and atomizing tendencies of individualism, the economic subject can be reconceptualized as mutually respecting and supportive subjects who are able to maintain feelings of common interest and sympathy but at the same time to keep a critical distance from communal cohesion and domination.

In Hong Kong, as elsewhere, unlike other keywords with contested meanings (perhaps the most notable one is “globalization”), the term “community” is rarely used unfavorably. Rebuilding community is an acceptable political agenda for almost all social forces differentially located along political spectrums, from conservatives to liberals to the radicals. This is particularly true in this current recession period in which the community is increasingly accepted as an alternative to the malfunctioning market economy and the retreating state. Yet in light of the not-always-positive experiences of various kinds of community projects in the past, it is still worthwhile to swim against the current in order to rethink the meaning of community before endorsing its liberation potential.

What is a “community”? The New Shorter Oxford English Dictionary defines a
I. A body of individuals: 1. The commons as opposed to peers etc.; the common people. 2. An organized political, municipal, or social body; a body of people living in the same locality; a body of people having religion, profession, etc., in common; a body of nations unified by common interests. 3. A monastic, socialistic, etc. body of people living together and holding goods in common. II. A quality or state: 4. The state of being shared or held in common; joint ownership or liability. 5. A common character, an agreement, an identity. 6. Social inter-course; communion; fellowship, sense of common identity. 7. Commonness, ordinary occurrence. 8. Life in association with others; society; the social state.

In other words, in addition to its connotation of its detachment from the state and its difference from “peers” or those of rank, “community” often connotes “commonness,” “sameness” or even “oneness.” From the nineteenth century onwards, “community” has become a term that implies “experiments in an alternative kind of group-living,” whose constituency is always disadvantaged populations. The term has increasingly detached from national politics and official social welfare provision, and come closer to denote “working directly with people” (Williams 1976:75–76). To many social activists, the ideal “communal subject” is one who actively shapes his/her own future by engaging in various communal relationships, promoting shared interests and constructing common identities.

Yet in light of past negative experiences of various kinds of community projects, such as the exclusive tendencies of the community and its restriction of individual autonomy and freedom, the term “community” has increasingly been rethought in recent sociocultural studies. When community is understood as a geographically bounded locality with the following characteristics: intimacy, immediacy, reciprocity, transparency, assimilation, shared interests, shared identities and local autonomy, it is often used as a (utopian) political model that could serve as an alternative to both the atomizing individualism and a panoptical surveillant state. Yet in a cosmopolitan setting such as contemporary Hong Kong, communities are inevitably border-crossing. Shared or common interests with a particular group/community are always partial. Even in a given geographical locality, it is not easy to put different groups of persons together by assigning them a common identity, as the interests of different ethnic, gender, income and age-groups are very diverse. Elaborating Iris Young’s critical notion of community, Jeannie Martin (Martin and O’Loughlin 2002) nicely argues that the model of a small neighborhood that celebrates face-to-face relations is inadequate to mediate among strangers and their unassimilated differences. Moreover, this model of community that privileges commonness and sameness is blind to adverse political consequences such as exclusiveness and intolerance of difference. Hence, as Martin argues, broader networks such as administrative, political, economic, cultural ones are crucial to communal projects in complex societies, for without these networks the democratic and inclusive encountering of strangers will be impossible. That is why Martin believes that community development should be understood largely as cultural work or cultural
mediation that aims at constructively handling “constellations of meanings, practices, identifications.”

What Young and Martin proposed could be framed as the “community of difference.” As Cameron and Gibson (2001:17) suggest, “communities of difference” are nothing but “fluid process[es] of moving between moments of sameness and difference, between being fixed and ‘in place’ and becoming something new and ‘out of place.’” This opens up a possibility, though not easy to realize, of reconciling the apparent contradiction between communal relationships and independence/freedom of the individual.

For the community of difference to be sustained, it needs to be supplemented by an autonomous self. The cultivation of an ideal of autonomous self, or “detachment” as framed by Anderson (2001), has a long history in the West (and in the East too; see Wang Hui 2000, for the case of China). For Anderson, “detachment” or the “power of distance” is a set of practices of the self that is not confined by instrumental reason or institutional surveillance. It also reveals the considerable accomplishment through “the denaturalizing attitude toward norms and convention.” Detachment can take many forms, encompassing “not only science, critical reason, disinterestedness, and realism, but also a set of practices of the self, ranging from stoicism to cosmopolitanism to dandyism.” Anderson discovers that during the Victorian period, many aesthetic and intellectual projects, as embodied in the writings of John Stuart Mill, George Eliot and Matthew Arnold, attempted to cultivate a critical sense of detachment. Similar aesthetic and intellectual projects have continued into the contemporary period, and the new cosmopolitanism and the “valorized form of ironic detachment in queer and postmodern theory” are the latest exemplars. The cultivation of cosmopolitan detachment (or a critical distance) in a complex society aims at constructing relationships on a voluntary basis and encourages reciprocal and transformative interaction between strangers. It is a yearning for autonomy and freedom, as well as for equality and difference (Anderson 2001:6–7).

Yet when elements of individual detachment were translated into economic principles in the nineteenth century, their radical potentials were diluted. For instance, freedom and equality were rendered as free competition, and autonomous and different personalities turned into the basis of the economic division of labor (Simmel 1971:225). In order to rescue individual detachment from its extremely narrow economistic sense, one could retranslate the meaning of individual detachment by articulating it with the notion of community. Simmel’s Philosophy of Money (1990) presents us with a clue of how such option is theoretically possible.

According to Simmel (1971:217), the formation of individuality during the European Renaissance signified an “inner and external liberation of the individual from the communal forms of the Middle Ages.” Freedom is defined as a change of obligations, and paying the obligations by money is most harmonious with personal freedom. The introduction of money into human interactions has largely increased people’s freedom because money payment is always less restrictive to the individual than paying the obligation directly to a specific person in kind or in labor. The transition from slavery to monetary exchanges is therefore an improvement in the degree of freedom that people enjoy. Today it is not uncommon that people may prefer a clearly specified work contract to working for an individual employer, as exemplified in the case of South-east Asian domestic helpers in Hong Kong. Through monetary exchanges, one can buy him/herself
out of a particular personal obligation (Simmel 1990:283–286, 296–299).

Money allows individuals to become members of a community without having to surrender personal autonomy and freedom, and allows smaller groups to join a larger community for a greater degree of mutual differentiation without sacrificing their independence. According to Simmel (1990:344–347), the enlargement of communities could facilitate the fuller development of individuality because when the number of persons related to one another increase, their medium of exchange tends to be more abstract and generally acceptable which in turn permits deals over far-flung distances and connects the most diverse persons.

Yet money plays a dual role. In particular historical contexts, money simultaneously brings to bear both a unifying and a disintegrating effect. While facilitating the interaction of people with diverse interests and identities, money at the same time “destroys many other kinds of relationships between people” (ibid.: 346). Simmel (1990:376) further argues that money is not a satisfactory mediator of intimate and long-lasting personal relationships—such as the genuine love relationship. Money provides people with instantaneously purchasable satisfaction as it is completely detached from durable personal relationships and bears no further consequences. Money brings freedom, but also new sets of regulations, particularly bureaucratic and quantitative regulations.

For Simmel, as for Marx, the bureaucratization and rationalization tendencies brought by money have introduced reification, alienation and objectification into all kinds of social relations. As Turner (1986:100) highlights, “[m]oney ceases to be a means and is transferred into an end itself.” Money completely dissolves durable relationships and substance into pure instrumental function and pure form.

Formal money also embodies the tendency of concentration and exclusion. In the course of history, “specific-money” has given way to “all-purpose money,” as Karl Polanyi (1968) notes. As a result, the function of money is no longer confined to a single role—either as the means of payment, or as means of accounting, or as means of exchange, or as storage of value—but encompasses all these functions simultaneously. This allows money to be endlessly accumulated, giving rise to financial concentration and financial exclusion. When money is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the very rich, the majority of the population is excluded from access to financial services and financial resources. In a complex society like Hong Kong, lacking access to finance can be regarded as losing a basic right—the “financial citizenship right” (cf. Thrift and Leyshon 1999).

The concentration of money and financial exclusion induce many problems. Formal (national and international) money is a tool for the rich to extract financial resources from the local community, and unemployment/under-employment immediately follows. Financial concentration and exclusion also reduce the controllability of the ways of life of local people, and limit the range of choices open to community members. As the direction of development and the mode of production/consumption are exclusively determined by national or international monies, local environmentally friendly practices are increasingly marginalized.

For both neoliberals and Marxists, the origins of modern capitalism lie in money and trade. They believe that money and the market lead inevitably to the development of capitalism, for better or worse. As a result, to many social activists and critical
intellectuals, money and trade are at best a necessary evil. However, history is not governed by predestined logic. Money did play and still plays a dual role, and specific money was and is still a real alternative to all-purpose money. The development of capitalism in which money has increasingly concentrated in the hands of the very rich is only a product of continuous struggles among different social forces situated in concrete historical contexts, and hence is reversible. If capitalism is understood as an open system (cf. Gibson-Graham 1996) that is not confined to a single logic as orthodox Marxism suggested, then it is possible to reconstruct a new mode of market exchange by utilizing community money as the means of exchange. As Polanyi (1944) argues, the economy is embedded in society and money is embedded in its socio-cultural contexts. Changing the cultural and political contexts of money (say, from national to communal settings) thus could create new conditions in which community money does not necessarily repeat the historical course of national money that leads to financial concentration/exclusion and alienation/reification.

Likewise, as discussed above, there are also pros and cons of reciprocity/community. The ethical dimensions of communal/reciprocal relationships—generosity, altruism, mutual support, and so forth—create a friendly environment and generate long-term personal connections that are extremely important in facilitating certain market exchanges (Plattner 1998). However, communal/reciprocal relationships also embody deficiencies—generating debts and obligations, and sometimes even oppression. In fact, too much intimacy can be nerve-racking. Yet similar to the case of formal money, the negative consequences of communal relationships are not necessarily bound to happen. In contrast, if communal relations are supplemented by the anonymity of market exchange in a constructive way, things could work out very differently.

Both the alienating and exclusive tendencies of formal money and the oppressive and inward-looking nature of the community need to be balanced in order to engender personal freedom and to facilitate reciprocal relationships. As Simmel argues, human relationships in general consist of both closeness and distance, and individual freedom and autonomy can therefore be understood as a situation in which distance and connected-ness have both reached their optimal level without negatively affecting each other. The community currency projects that flourished in several countries in the 1980s and 1990s could be viewed as attempts that aim at translating Simmel’s philosophical language into concrete practices, and to search for this optimal level of integration. To prevent the accumulation of money that causes financial concentration and financial exclusion, community currency projects try to eliminate money’s “storage of value” function, and to limit the function of money to the means of exchange.

To dilute the alienation and reification effects of money, community currency projects attempt to bring back mutual concerns and long-lasting relationships into market exchanges. To balance the inward-looking and obligatory nature of community, community currency projects endeavor to create a critical distance among participants and hence provide them with an autonomous space. These attempts, wittingly or unwittingly, I would argue, could be understood as efforts to cultivate a “communal economic subject,” by which I mean a dynamic process that aims at reconciling the two aforementioned and apparently contradictory ethical principles—communitarian values and individualist ethics. The remainder of this chapter maps out the radical potential and
limitations of community currency projects in the context of contemporary Hong Kong.

**Community economic projects in contemporary Hong Kong**

Since the late 1990s, a number of community economic projects have flourished in Hong Kong. Many of these projects are very small in scale, most having less than fifteen active participants. The flourishing of these community economic projects is situated in a particular historical conjuncture—a period of economic recession with high unemployment rates. From the early 1980s to the late 1990s, the financial and real-estate speculative boom that had driven land prices to an unaffordable high level destroyed many domestic industries. When the late 1990s’ economic recession arrived, severe problems of unemployment surfaced. The recession also cooled the speculative boom and subsequently land prices, hence significantly reducing revenues to the government that previously relied heavily on the sale of land. Partly due to the government deficit and partly influenced by the strong neo-liberal ideology that has prevailed in Hong Kong for decades, the 1990s witnessed a further retreat of the state in the social welfare sector. The combination of forces of high unemployment rates and the reduction of social welfare forced workers to accept appalling working conditions and unacceptably low wages. Those who are not “lucky enough” to be employed (or, shall we say, exploited?) by the capitalists in such a devastating period, have had to rely on the Comprehensive Social Security Assistance Scheme (CSSA) for survival and consequently bear the insult of “lazy-bones.” In response to this demoralizing context, trade unionists and local NGOs organizers are increasingly interested in experimenting with different sorts of community economic projects. These projects are viewed not merely as a means to provide necessary material resources for workers and the unemployed, but also as a means of generating alternative experiences of a non-capitalist kind.

There is another reason why these community economic projects have emerged since the late 1990s. Many active organizers of these projects are critical of the existing capitalist world order that is blamed as inducing atomization and alienation, but at the same time they are also skeptical of the traditional trade unionism. This is an understandable reaction to the social movements in the 1970s and 1980s that were almost exclusively dependent on rigid organization and collective mobilization, usually carrying an authoritarian tone. In other words, the creation of these community economic projects is regarded by many social activists as a means of overcoming the defects of both neoliberal individualism and orthodox Marxist-Leninist collectivism, in the contemporary context in which state welfare is retreating.

The immediate reasons for organizing these projects are manifold, and among the most important ones is the desire to ease the unemployment problems. These projects are also important to NGO organizers, as their financial support from the government has also been drastically cut, and therefore they need to secure new financial resources to continue their services and their own survival. Aside from these immediate and practical reasons, many of these projects also, wittingly or unwittingly, aim at cultivating a new citizenship. This can be seen from the languages that these projects have adopted to describe their goals: to encourage mutual respect, reciprocity and sharing, to empower participants
through democratic participation and egalitarian interactions, to enhance participants’ self-reliance and self-confidence. To look at the potentials and limitations of the cultivation of a new communal economic subject in Hong Kong, in the following I will draw on one case, the community currency project in Wan Chai, for detailed discussion.

The COME project

The Community Oriented Mutual Economy project (COME), based in St. James’ Settlement in Wan Chai, was officially launched in December 2001 after several months’ preparation. It was modeled on the Ithaca HOURS system in New York and the TLALOC system of Mexico, with some modifications. By March 2003 there were 473 members. Although the project is located in St. James Settlement in Wan Chai, the meaning of “community” is not confined to this geographical location. In March 2003, 72 members were interviewed and some 26 percent of the members were Wan Chai residents, whereas around 74 percent were from other areas. Over 60 percent of the participants were members of St. James’ Settlement. Women had a higher percentage of participation, accounting for 75 percent of the total memberships. Almost half of the members were 26–45 years old (47.2 percent) and around 40 percent were over 46. In terms of employment status, 8.7 percent were full-time workers, 34.8 percent were part-time workers, 11.5 percent were unemployed or underemployed, 30 percent were full-time housewives, and 14.5 percent were the retired or students. In terms of education level, around 45 percent of the participants had received less than nine years’ formal education, and 28 percent had senior high school standard and another 26.7 percent had tertiary education. In terms of income level, 37.5 percent earned less than HK$3,000 per month and more than three-quarters of the members received less than HK$15,000 per month. More than one-fifth of the members received CSSA.

The COME project issues a note called shifenquan (hour-minute coupon or the time coupon). The face values of the four different kinds of shifenquan are equivalent to 1 hour (60 minutes), half an hour (30 minutes), one-sixth of an hour (10 minutes) and one-twelfth of an hour (5 minutes). Using these coupons as the means of transaction, the project aims at facilitating mutual exchanges on an egalitarian basis among participants. The idea is that one hour/minute of work should be equal to one hour/minute of work, regardless of the nature of the jobs. By February 2003, there were altogether 176,500 “minutes” issued, or 373 “minutes” (around 6 “hours”) per member.

The operation of the project is managed and overseen by a management board with twelve members appointed by the St. James’ Settlement in the first year in 2001. A new management board consisting of twenty members was elected by the members and appointed by the St. James’ Settlement in December 2002. The members of the management board are social workers, housewives, single mothers, full-time or retired workers from the remodeling, nursing, accounting, and education sectors. Under the management board, there are several working groups that deal with the planning and implementation of different parts of the daily operations of the system. There is an advertising and promotion working group that is responsible for the publication of a monthly newspaper in which a directory of offers and demands are listed; a sandwich
group that delivers donated sandwiches and bread to members of the COME project; a COME fair working group which is in charge of the organization of the monthly market; a collective purchase working group that integrates the ideas of collective purchase into the project; a hotline group which aims to bridge the needs and offers between members; and finally an evaluation working group that monitors the progress of the project. According to the aforementioned March 2003 survey and another survey carried out in April 2002, core members who help organize activities and participate actively in mutual exchanges account for about 15 percent of the total memberships. Active members who participate in COME activities regularly account for another 37 percent. The rest, about half of the members, are regarded as inactive or very inactive.

The April 2002 survey also reveals that the reasons for participation are rather diverse. They range from searching for equal, fair and communal relations, ecological harmony and self-empowerment (16 percent) to the desire to help people (15.4 percent), as well as from making friends (14.6 percent) to improving one’s material life (13.2 percent). According to the March 2003 survey, 36 percent of the members do trade with other members outside the monthly market, and food, toys and various services (such as hair-cutting and logistics support in various COME activities) are the most frequently exchanged objects and services. Some 46 percent have made four or more new friends after participating in the project. There are on average around 100 advertisements of offers and demands listed on the monthly newspaper. Services and goods that are listed include household maintenance, medical care, computer maintenance and training, tutoring, hair-cutting, and typing, among others.

Obviously, different members may have different reasons for joining the project. Yet it is still possible to identify several common intentions:

1 The promotion of employment of local human and physical resources as a response to increasing unemployment and under-employment of community resources. The introduction of community currencies may help local people out of the predicament of a shortage of productive investments, which is a consequence of financial expansion and financial exclusion. The creation of community money facilitates the circulation, production and consumption of goods and services, as well as reintroducing a social life to unemployed groups who are largely excluded in a capitalist society.

2 The creation of alternative ways of life different from consumerism and developmentalism. This is made possible through encouraging second-hand exchanges and recycling, thus reducing the consumption of newly produced products that require long-distance transportation and significant energy consumption. It also provides participants with a chance to re-evaluate the values (“prices”) of different types of labor.

3 The empowerment of the participants of the project through democratic management and participatory decision-making.

4 Seeking to improve their material life.

5 To help the community.

To achieve these goals, the COME project has designed different mechanisms. In order to encourage exchanges, the system imposes no transaction tax or fee. Zero interest rate is set to discourage capital accumulation and to speed up the circulation of money, and
subsequently, goods and services. Open and transparent information management (such as announcing the time and place of the management board and working group meetings to all members and welcoming their participation) provides participants with the necessary knowledge to protect themselves from deceitful trading as well as to encourage active and democratic participation. To minimize inequality, and to re-evaluate the value of different jobs, guidelines are established to direct the price ratios between different kinds of labor to an acceptable range (the maximum exchange ratio is now set at 1 to 4 in this project). Furthermore, it is connected with large NGOs in Hong Kong (such as Oxfam Hong Kong) for financial support, and with mainstream businesses, albeit small and medium in size (by May 2003, there were six small businesses participating in the project), to encourage the supplies of goods and services. To reinforce the educational aspects of these projects, cultural activities—such as fairs and picnics—aiming at the promotion of mutual trust and friendship, are regularly organized. Last, but not least, to protect the credibility of the system and the welfare of the members, regulations intended to prevent the abuse of the system are in place (for example, pure monetary transactions in Hong Kong dollars are not allowed).

As one of the earliest experiments with community money in Hong Kong that started in 2001, it may be too early to give a definitive assessment of this project. Yet preliminary evaluations are still possible. To begin with, there are undeniable limitations for this community project. For instance, most active participants in this system are members of the St. James’ Settlement, many of the active members come from a similar background—low income, retired workers, housewives, recipients of CSSA and other government subsidies, as well as the very young and the middle-aged. Those with a higher income and better education, professionals and college students account for only a minor proportion of the active membership. If translated into formal monetary units (Hong Kong dollars), the total transactions within the system are insignificant. There are also cases where the pricing policies of this community currency system are not very different from those in the formal economy, thus defeating the egalitarian principle. Some members who put their names and contact numbers on the advertisement listings in the COME newspaper have no time to serve other members due to their formal employment obligations, thus undermining the credibility of the exchange system as people seeking their offers are declined. As the circulation of the time coupon is still largely initiated and controlled by the management board through payment to (voluntary) workers of the routine activities such as the monthly market and the newspaper (which have taken up a large share of the resources and energy available in the system), the COME project resembles the features of conventional social services (or a planned economy). Finally, the limited range of goods and services provided in this system is also disturbing.

Despite all these limitations, I would argue, this community project does achieve its originally set objectives to a certain extent. The most notable achievement is the retaining of the self-confidence of the active participants, and the improvement of their material life. According to two focus group discussions conducted by the Evaluation Working Group of the project on 28 September 2002 (with five female members) and 12 October 2002 (with another six female members), many participants, mostly new immigrants from mainland China, are satisfied with the expansion of their social networks after engaging in this community exchange project. They feel that they are respected and
trusted when they trade in the COME system. They also reveal that they become more self-confident, partly because their non-marketable skills such as cooking, sewing, hair-cutting and speaking Mandarin are recognized and valued by others, and partly because their relations with their family members have significantly improved as the whole family can regularly take part in public (exchange) activities together. Some of the low-income participants are also able to buy toys for their kids that they could not afford to purchase in the formal market. The expansion of their social networks through the COME activities also increases their chances of finding jobs in the formal market, and in fact some of them did receive job offers. Some of them also feel empowered and self-actualized as they can perform the role of “bosses” through setting up their own booths to sell things at the monthly market fairs. Some expressed that after participating in this project, they were more willing to interact with strangers than before. Through collective purchase and the sandwich group, some members indicated that the project really did help reduce their daily expenses by providing low-priced rice, sandwiches and second-hand electrical appliances and furniture. Therefore, although the exchanges in term of shifenquan account for only an insignificant portion of their daily expenses, the living standard and quality of life did improve considerably for these active members. Perhaps most important of all, their pleasurable experiences have shown the feasibility of the cultivation of communal economic subjects, for the process of cultivation “can’t be just be work—it has to be pleasure too” (CEC 2001:129).

The cultivation of a communal economic subject has to work on both the communal and the economic fronts. The project is different from voluntary work in the ways that, with the assistance of the time coupon, people’s standing and value are recognized, not only to those who help, but also those who receive assistance. When asked whether they prefer the original social provisions provided by St.James’s Settlement or the COME exchange services, core members of the COME management board who actively participate in community exchanges have unanimously said that they prefer acquiring services and goods from the COME system, as they feel more comfortable and empowered in this system than being a passive receiver of conventional welfare provisions. On the other hand, when asked whether they prefer to use Hong Kong dollars or the time coupon, despite agreeing that formal money is in many ways more valuable than the time coupon, they still insist that the COME exchange system has to use the shifenquan as the main means of transaction because it embodies alternative values (such as equality) that are the last things they want to give up.

**Towards a new cultural mediation**

Despite the positive responses as in the above focus group discussions, the cultivation of new communal economic subjects in the COME project is still far from complete. Apart from its short existence so that it is not capable of showing the full potential of such a cultural project, there is one crucial constraint to be overcome before substantial accomplishments are achieved.

Although it is not difficult to observe that pursuing material interests is clearly one of the most obvious impulses that permeate every activity of the project, the major obstacle
of the project ironically lies in the under-cultivation of individual detachment that is usually associated with selfishness and is often put against community goals. This obstacle seems to arise from the fact that the core organizers and active participants (the *de facto* cultural mediators) of the COME project have tended to dichotomize the “communal” aspects and the “economic” functions of the project, and are passionate about the former while being repulsed by the latter. In the Hong Kong context in which the business mentality prevails and the government has actively subsumed all socio-cultural meanings into business fads, it is not unreasonable for critical social organizers and active community participants to take such a pro-community and anti-economic position.

The institutional basis of the COME project, the Community Development Team of the St. James’ Settlement, is situated in the field of critical social work that strongly advocates community building and self-empowerment. Within this critical social work framework, caring, sharing, mutual assistance, participation, and democracy are “goods” to be promoted whereas bureaucracy, elitism and business mentality are “evils” to be avoided. As the COME project is fundamentally a project that creates and utilizes the instruments of community money and market, two areas that are alienated (if not oppositional) to the fields of critical social work and community activism, ethical reservations about money and trade are often heard even among the most active participants of the project. As a result, certain ethical values are kept out of the COME system, especially those concerned more with the cultivation of individual detachment.

A common anxiety is: why turn all mutual and voluntary support into calculable monetary relations? The distaste for “capitalist practices” and the desire for “communal ethics” are so strong that the passions of many of the active participants of the COME project have been heavily invested in the latter. In such an institutional context (and remember it is situated in the wider Hong Kong context in which economistic values predominate), the cultivation of “critical detachment” is often misrecognized as advancing “selfishness” in a negative sense. A direct consequence of the lopsided emphasis on the communal values is that the lion’s share of the resources of the project has been allocated to the organization of social activities that primarily aim at building up self-confidence, mutual assistance, friendships and trust among participants. In contrast, the “economic” aspects of the project, i.e. the setting up of a sustainable system that is able to facilitate frequent, high-quality and efficient exchanges among members, are in effect being relatively neglected. In other words, the process (participation) is separated from the outcomes of the process (developing a sustainable community exchange system) and emphasis and resources have been largely put on the former. Consequently, communal sentiments permeate most social activities provided by the organizers and the effectiveness of these activities is often measured by the frequency and intensity of participation, regardless of the contribution of these activities to the construction of an efficient and sustainable community exchange system. Consequently, the viability of the community money project is in question.

The predicament of the system is shown in the inability to mediate unassimilated differences and strangers, that limits the scale and scope of the project. The result, ironically, is the exclusion, wittingly or unwittingly, of non-members or less active participants. Too focused on promoting intimate communal relationships, as well as
lacking an appropriate institutional setting to mediate diverse interests within the system, the COME project may have induced an inward-looking tendency—members of the community project tend to work and play with those they are familiar with, and are reluctant to trade with “strangers” or “unfamiliar faces.” The consequence could be the insulation of its members from the wider social context in which the project is situated. The exclusive nature of a closed community may also be a problem if the outcome is a collective organizational framework by which system resources cannot be channeled into facilitating outsiders and the less active members’ participation. Moreover, the strong desire for “active participation” and “intimate relations” could induce unnecessary pressure on less active members and leaves no space for different levels of commitment to the project which is crucial for members to maintain a critical distance from the community, and subsequently to acquire individual autonomy and freedom.

To reconcile the oppositional tendency of the moralistic concerns and the economic aims requires new cultural mediations, in which a new language and institutional mediating frameworks that are able to articulate the concrete practices with alternative visions have to be created. Some of the ethical problems could be resolved if participants are able to utilize new language (including using old language in new contexts) and visions to bring together economic/individualistic values and communal goals (such as translating and transforming “selfishness” into critical individual detachment and community of difference). The institutional constraints—manifested as the insignificant provisions of goods and services, as well as the inability to mediate exchanges among “strangers”—could also be relaxed if the scale of the COME project is enlarged. For that to happen, formal administrative and organizational frameworks have to be in place. Without such organizational structures and formal procedures, it will be difficult to maintain regular and frequent exchanges even for the active members, not to mention the “strangers.”

**Conclusion**

The above tensions between direct participation and professionalism, between moralistic concerns and efficiency, between communal ethics and economic values, are very often understood as oppositional and irreconcilable contradictions. This understanding has to be changed before a genuine communal economic subject can effectively be cultivated.

The basic function of money is to facilitate market exchanges, but market exchange is not merely an economic activity. It is a process that expands personal interactions such as acknowledgment, attention, acceptance, respect and friendship. Disengaging from market exchanges could mean indifference to, and rejection of, other community members. Moreover, the market also provides a distance and space for members to connect with others within a community, and this space and this distance are important for the cultivation of the autonomous self and individual freedom. Integrating these liberating potentials with communal values that advocate intimacy, immediacy, reciprocity, transparency, shared interests, shared identities and local autonomy, the possible defects of money and exchange (atomization and alienation) will probably be diluted, and a new communal economic subject is in the making. Community money, if properly
implemented, is the antidote to “purely egoism or altruism.”

Through the lens of the experiences of the community currency project, we gain a new language to facilitate the cultivation of the communal economic subject, which is a continuous process, representing “an inspiration more than a certainty” (Anderson 2001:32). It involves a politics of becoming, aiming at the cultivation of durable capabilities and institutions, both imaginative and practical, of an emerging communal economic citizenship. To counter the thinning of the meaning of citizenship in the post-1997 Hong Kong context, in which a “citizen” is increasingly defined as the “economic man,” recapturing the meaning of the “economic” is of crucial importance. Yet it is one thing to criticize the hegemonic project of cosmopolitan subject formation, but quite another thing to totally dismiss mainstream (economic) practices.

In order to effectively cultivate a new communal economic subject/citizen, one has to take both terms—“community” and “economy/money”—seriously. Taking an “either/or” position certainly obscures the emancipatory potential of the community money project, and, worse still, leads to unnecessary divisions among those who share progressive goals. This chapter suggests that the de facto cultural mediators of the community economic projects have to integrate individualistic values into their critical social work framework. In this regard, Anderson’s “critical detachment,” Cameron and Gibson’s “community of difference,” and Simmel’s “dual roles of money” are useful concepts to help us reconcile the false dichotomy: that money/market is associated solely with selfish profiteering and community/reciprocity is exclusively associated with disinterest and common goals.

Notes

1 According to Carrier (1998:2), “virtualism” emerges from “the growing abstraction of economy in the West.”

Abstraction at this formal, conceptual level leads at least some people to adopt an abstract-economic world-view. Here, the world is seen in terms of the concepts and models of economic abstraction, which are taken to be the fundamental reality that underlies and shape the world. Those who adopt this view of the world can be said to perceive a virtual reality, seemingly real but dependent upon the conceptual apparatus and outlook that generate it. Perceiving a virtual reality becomes virtualism when people take this virtual reality to be not just a parsimonious description of what is really happening, but prescriptive of what the world ought to be; when, that is, they seek to make the world conform to their virtual vision. Virtualism, thus, operates at both the conceptual and practical levels, for it is a practical effort to make the world conform to the structures of the conceptual.

(ibid.: 2)

2 The term shuang shi qing nian first appeared in a survey report in early 2001 by a local educational organization, and was subsequently picked up by the government and the media as a keyword to describe and construct a vulnerable image of youth.

3 See Gibson-Graham (2002:23). Gibson-Graham also tries to facilitate the
development of various kinds of alternative economic practices, some of which have already existed in the sea of capitalism in various forms. In their own words, their project is “cultivating new ways of being, that created new languages, discourses and representations, that built organizations” (ibid.: 34). However, their “language of economic difference was drawn from Marx’s capital,” and therefore their “non-capitalist” practices are by and large defined in a classical Marxian sense—i.e. non-wage-labor commodification (CEC 2001:119). Despite its powerful articulations, heavily drawing on Marxist concepts and languages may create unnecessary barriers for the cultivation of new language, particularly in the case of Hong Kong, and for good historical reasons. Due to the Cold War legacy, as well as the well-perceived “poor performance” of “communism” in mainland China in the last few decades, the soil for the growing of Marxist language is extremely poor in Hong Kong. More fundamentally, one can argue further that whether wage-labor relations can be regarded as capitalistic in nature, as employment contracts, at least in China, have long preceded European capitalism(s). If the project of cultivating a communal economic subject is to take root in the popular, not merely among an extreme small circle of social activists, the new language to be developed may have to be compatible with mainstream economic language.

4 For some Filipina domestic helpers in Hong Kong, working for a factory could be a dream of freedom. See Manipon (2001).

5 This study is based on my participant observation from July 2001 to June 2003, in the capacity of one of the members of the Management Board of the project. In addition to attending almost all management board meetings and several monthly markets, I have also utilized relevant documents such as the COME newspaper, promotional materials, minutes of the meetings, surveys and group interviews conducted by the evaluation working group of the project. My intention in participating was in line with the strategies as advocated by Cameron and Gibson (2001:12), i.e. to foster alternative economic development, which include:

1. supporting community-based and voluntary projects that have the potential to develop into more formal economic practices and activities; 2. supporting communities to take on economic activities that were once provided by formal businesses or the state; 3. resourcing households to alter their production and consumption activities.

I see this chapter as a personal reflection on the potentials and limitations of the project, as well as a constructive dialog with my colleagues in the COME project and a wider community that are interested in the search for alternative economic subjectivities.

6 According to the March 2003 survey, over 97 percent of the members have attended the COME Market Fair. From January 2002 to May 2002, 963 members attended the COME Market Fair that is held once every month and the total transactions accounted for 22,000 “minutes.”

7 Interestingly enough, according to the April 2001 survey, housewives, new immigrant, low-income, low-education groups and CSSA recipients are more active
than their counterparts in terms of exchanges of goods and services, as well as in terms of their participation in various social activities. They also reveal higher trust levels than other groups of participants. It is also easier for them to make new friends than full-time workers and male members.

8 The need for a more formal and effective administrative and organizational framework is also evidenced in the feedback from some of the members of the management board or work groups. On the one hand, on various occasions, they have openly expressed their worries about the demands on time and intensity of work as members of these committees, and implicitly suggest that their obligations may need to be spelt out more precisely. On the other hand, also due to the lack of clearly spelt out obligations and commitments for members of various working committees, very often the work may fall on one or two person’s shoulders. This raises the question of whether reducing formal (or often read as bureaucratic) organizational frameworks, as well as adopting completely transparent and open procedures of handling strategic planning and daily operations of the project, always produces positive outcomes.

References


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When we talk about citizens, we talk about Chinese citizens, American citizens, Canadian citizens, British citizens, and so forth. We tend to perceive that citizens are a product of the state because it is the state that defines the rights and obligations of citizenship in a sovereign territory. Drawing upon the Western experience of citizenship, T.H. Marshall (1950) spells out that the modern state has granted the following rights to its citizens:

- **Civil rights**: rights necessary for individual freedom, including personal liberties, property rights, and the right to due process of law, etc.
- **Political rights**: the right to participate in the exercise of political power, such as the rights to vote and be elected in public office.
- **Social rights**: a whole range of rights from economic welfare to employment, housing, pension, social security, etc.

Despite the crucial importance of rights in the determination of the nature of citizenship, Hon-Chu Leung (Chapter 6 in this volume) points out that Marshall’s rights formulation has the following shortcomings. First, although Marshall portrays civil, political, and social citizenship as steps in an evolution towards the Western welfare state, he fails to anticipate that these citizenship rights could be incompatible with one another in another context. For example, the Chinese socialist state during the 1950s was very generous in promoting social rights but it could be quite restrictive in granting civic and political rights.

Second, it must be stressed that rights are not simply favors granted by the state, but are products of protracted citizenship struggles waged by the civil society against the state. For example, it was the long history of labor and democratic movements in Western Europe in the nineteenth century that finally led to the granting of civil, political, and social rights to workers in the twentieth century. But if the state can be propelled to grant citizen rights by social forces, the state can also take the rights away when it wins the battle against civil society, such as the present disfranchisement of immigrants and the eroding of social rights under globalization and neo-liberalism. Therefore, researchers need to study the interaction between the state and civil society through a fairly long historical span before gaining an understanding of the genesis, formation, and
transformation of citizenship rights.

Third, it is also necessary to bring in the role of the nation in citizenship study. This is because citizenship is not merely a product of the state, but also a product of community and nation-building. Granting citizenship to a group of people is not only a means to grant them rights and duties, but is also a means to give them an identity and collectivity as well as encouraging them to develop some kind of political participation in an “imagined community” (Fogel and Zarrow 1997). In this respect, since the Chinese triangle of Mainland-Taiwan-Hong Kong was divided into the socialist, authoritarian, and colonial states during the Cold War, it is interesting to study how these three states activate different “nationalizing” or “de-nationalizing” projects to define the nature of their citizenships.

Finally, the growing volume of people crossing national boundaries in this era of globalization has further complicated our analysis of citizenship. How do trans-border migrants fit into the citizenship category of the host states? Are trans-border migrants treated more nicely (or poorly) than local citizens? In our study of the Chinese triangle, it will be interesting to examine how the Chinese in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and Mainland China are treated by other Chinese when they move across borders.

In sum, the above queries show that citizenship is a very complicated set of dynamic relationships. This chapter will examine the making of citizenship in the Chinese triangle of Mainland-Taiwan-Hong Kong. It will argue that the states in this Chinese triangle have produced many different configurations of civic, political, and social rights from the 1950s to the 1990s. It will be further shown that interactions among the state, nation, and civil society have played important roles in the shaping of their divergent patterns of citizenship. In particular, it argues that Hong Kong has transformed its “colonial citizenship” (Ip, Chapter 2) from the pre-1997 days to “enterprising citizenship” in the post-1997 era (Ku and Pun, Introduction); that Taiwan has gone through a phase of “Chinese citizenship” during the 1950s and 1960s to a phase of “Taiwanese citizenship” since the late 1990s; and that Mainland China’s “socialist citizenship” in the Maoist era has been replaced by “market citizenship” in the post-1978 reform period.

Hong Kong: from colonial citizenship to enterprising citizenship

Colonial citizenship

From 1842 to 1997, Hong Kong was a Crown colony of Great Britain. Like other British colonies, the colonial state of Hong Kong granted little rights to the Chinese residents in the territory. The British Parliament directly appointed the Governor of Hong Kong, and British expatriates ran the colonial state. The Hong Kong Chinese had no voting rights and no power to select their own governor. Although the colonial state is often labeled a liberal state, it had many repressive laws to restrict the civil rights of the Hong Kong Chinese, such as a Society Ordinance to control the kind of organization allowed to operate in the colony and it banned publications that criticized the colonial state. Only when the Hong Kong Chinese were apolitical were they left alone by the colonial state (Tsai 1993).
Believing in *laissez-faire* economics, the colonial state had a hands-off policy and granted no social rights, i.e., it did not see as its task to provide full employment, health care, housing, pension, and welfare for the Hong Kong residents. Two main concerns of the colonial state were “law and order” (Ku, Chapter 8) and sanitary control over sickness-prone Chinese bodies which were believed to be a threat to the health of the British colonists (Ip, Chapter 2).

Aside from the lack of political rights, civil rights, and social rights in colonial Hong Kong, there was also a lack of “nationhood” among the Hong Kong Chinese up to the first half of the twentieth century. Colonial Hong Kong at that time was an entrepot. Most of its Chinese population was a transient population. Chinese in the Pearl River Delta came to Hong Kong for work, and they returned to China to retire or during political unrest (as in World War II). Thus, most Hong Kong Chinese saw themselves as sojourners. Hong Kong was not their home. Their commitment, loyalty, and identity were toward China rather than to Hong Kong (Faure 1997).

In short, Hong Kong up to the first half of the twentieth century had a kind of what can be labeled as “colonial citizenship,” with minimal civil, political, and social rights granted to Hong Kong residents. In return, Hong Kong residents also showed little loyalty to or identity with the British colony.

However, after the Chinese Communist Revolution in 1949, the nature of colonial citizenship in Hong Kong changed. On the one hand, over a million Chinese entered Hong Kong after the Revolution, and these “refugees” could not go back to China. To stop these refugees coming, the colonial state quickly erected fences along the Hong Kong border. No Mainland Chinese were allowed to enter Hong Kong except those possessing a valid entry visa. On the other hand, fearing capitalist infiltration, the Chinese Communist state also closed itself off from Hong Kong, making it difficult for Hong Kong Chinese to return to their native villages through vigorous border controls and interrogations (Chan 1995).

Aside from creating a border to separate Hong Kong from the Mainland, the colonial state also carried out “de-nationalization” policies in order to consolidate its control over Hong Kong. First, there was a de-linking from the Chinese economy. There was a shift in Hong Kong’s economic orientation from a China-based entrepot economy to a global-based export-industrialization. Second, despite having a liberal label, the colonial state was quite active in suppressing communist infiltration in Hong Kong. It banned the operation of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) in Hong Kong. Third, on the education front, English was maintained as the prestigious language of instruction, while Chinese was downgraded. The colonial University of Hong Kong was the only one that was seen as legitimate, while various other universities set up by Mainland refugee or missionary professors were seen as illegitimate and they received neither funding nor recognition from the colonial state.

In this respect, “colonial citizenship” was further consolidated in Hong Kong in the 1950s through these de-nationalization measures. Not only did the lack of civil, political, and social rights continue, but also the colonial state wanted to suppress the residents’ national identity and loyalty to China. While these de-nationalization policies generally worked, they were not unchallenged. During the 1960s and the 1970s, the colonial state was challenged by various social movements in the civil society, leading finally to a new
mode of what can be called “semi-colonial citizenship.”

Semi-colonial citizenship

The most serious challenge to the colonial state was during 1966–67. When the wind of the Cultural Revolution reached Hong Kong, leftist unions, students, newspapers, and business organizations went on strike, organized street protests, public demonstrations, and even bomb threats to condemn British imperialism and to call for the downfall of the colonial state. Although the 1966–67 riots gradually subsided after the heat of the Cultural Revolution died down in the late 1960s, this had created a legitimacy crisis for the colonial state (Scott 1989).

In the early 1970s, a new generation of Hong Kong-born university students came of age. They were impressed by the “China heat” when the CCP welcomed them to visit their motherland. Afterwards, these students started a nationalist movement in Hong Kong, organizing patriotic tours and China exhibits, calling for Chinese to be the official language of Hong Kong, and encouraging their fellow students to pay more attention to Chinese affairs on the Mainland (So and Kwitko 1992).

In the late 1970s, these radical students graduated and became middle-class professionals such as social workers, journalists, lawyers, and environmentalists. They formed concerned citizenship groups, pressure groups, and started an urban movement in Hong Kong. They condemned the rampant corruption in the Hong Kong government, the arrogance of expatriate British officials, the dislocation of grassroots population as a result of squatter removals, the sub-standard living conditions of public housing, and the persistence of poverty in affluent Hong Kong.

Owing to the 1966–67 riots and the above social movements, the colonial state modified its citizenship policies from the 1970s to the 1990s. However, because of its colonial roots, the Hong Kong government was only half-hearted in pushing for citizenship rights. First, to gain more support from civil society, the MacLehose era in the 1970s initiated a series of public policies to grant more social rights to the Hong Kong residents: setting up a massive public housing program to house over half of the Hong Kong residents; setting up labor laws to make sweat shop production more humane and more consistent with international labor conventions; increasing welfare expenditure to help the poor, the widowed, and the elderly; instituting nine years of free education and expanding the number of places in higher education.

The colonial state also ran a modest campaign to increase the sense of belonging of Hong Kong Chinese towards Hong Kong. To withstand the assault of the nationalist movement in the early 1970s, the colonial state instigated the “I Love Hong Kong” campaign, the “Clean Hong Kong” campaign, and the annual Hong Kong Expo.

Despite the above state efforts to cultivate a sense of community and belonging among the Hong Kong people, and despite the granting of social rights, the colonial state’s efforts were still half-hearted in the sense that it avoided touching the sensitive issue of granting political rights to its residents. In the 1970s, the topics of electional and constitutional changes were never put on the agenda by the colonial state.

Therefore, Hong Kongers had to wait until the mid-1980s before the colonial state initiated any policy oriented toward democratization. In 1984, the British government and
the Chinese government concluded a Joint Declaration, which would turn Hong Kong into a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China in 1997. In order to sell the Joint Declaration to both Hong Kong society and the British Parliament, the British negotiating team negotiated a last-minute settlement from its Chinese counterpart to include a clause in the Joint Declaration that “the Chief Executive and the Legislature in the SAR should be elected.” However, the Chinese Mainland, Great Britain, and the colonial state played around the word “election” in limiting the granting of political rights to the Hong Kong Chinese. So (1999) shows that despite the active mobilization of democratic forces in civil society, they succeeded only in instituting a semidemocratic government in the SAR era. It was only a semi-democracy because the Hong Kong people had no right to directly elect their Chief Executive and all the Legislature seats.

Identity, community, and nationhood were also key issues during the period of de-colonization. Afraid of the uncertain future of the colony after 1997, the new HongKonger identity politics quickly emerged to defend the interests and lifestyles of the Hong Kong people. However, this HongKonger identity was constructed on the bases of negative experiences, discrimination, and the politics of exclusion rather than on the positive traits of Hong Kong people. First, afraid of the influx of over three million Hong Kong “refugees” after 1997, the British government quickly passed a law to disqualify HongKongers from becoming its citizens. This law turned HongKongers into “semi-colonial” citizens because, although they could travel to Britain using the BNO (British National Overseas) passport, they had no rights to become full citizens in Britain.

What is more, Britain was not alone in not welcoming HongKongers. Canada and Australia also set up discriminatory measures and stereotypes against Hong Kong immigrants to their territories. HongKongers were portrayed as disloyal citizens only interested in getting social rights and showing no commitment to these countries. It was portrayed that as soon as HongKongers got citizenship, they would immediately return to Hong Kong to work, leaving their children and old parents behind to enjoy free social rights in that country. HongKongers were accused of putting up “monster homes” to destroy the cultural landscape of urban neighborhoods as well as creating a real-estate bubble economy and problems for the urban economy (Smart and Smart 1996).

The shared experience of discriminatory practices in other countries triggered a sense of “we” feeling and community spirit among HongKongers. On the other hand, it was also the discriminatory measures that the HongKongers themselves practiced on other immigrants in Hong Kong that further consolidated their identity and sense of community belonging. HongKongers followed various stereotypes against working-class and peasant immigrants from Mainland China, labeling them lazy and of low culture, and accusing them of burdening the Hong Kong welfare system. Mainland migrants were said to be likely to commit crimes and their children would be dropouts in schools. Thus, HongKongers wanted to stop the immigration of Mainland immigrants to the territory.

In short, this section has argued that a pattern of semi-colonial citizenship emerged during the period 1970s-1997 in the following two ways. First, in response to the challenge from civil society, the colonial state granted more social rights; and it made a modest attempt at democratization during the period of de-colonization. But these attempts were only half-hearted, and the colonial state never aimed at transforming HongKongers into full citizens. In the 1970s, social rights were granted without political
In the 1980s, the colonial state at best created a semi-democracy which avoided the direct election of top officials. Second, it is semi-colonial in the sense that although HongKongers experienced discrimination in Britain, Canada, and Australia, they themselves also carried out these discriminatory practices toward Mainlanders in Hong Kong. In this sense, it shows that HongKongers still have not been liberated completely from the colonial mentality to feel positive citizenship rights.

Enterprising citizenship

Since 1997 Hong Kong has entered a new era. It has become a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of China. The British are largely out of the picture and colonialism is no longer a key factor in shaping Hong Kong politics. In this new era, the SAR state wants to promote a new mode of citizenship different from that promoted by the colonial state.

But the SAR state faces a citizenship dilemma. On the one hand, although the SAR state has initiated a modest push toward “re-nationalizing” Hong Kong, such as establishing 1 October as a National Holiday, replacing British flags with Chinese flags, etc., the SAR state did not want to push this nationalizing effort too far. Otherwise, Hong Kong would become just another Chinese city like Guangzhou and Xiamen, and Hong Kong would lose its global city status. To a certain extent, Hong Kong’s global city status relies upon the maintenance of “one country, two systems” and it has to keep a certain distance from Mainland China. On the other hand, the SAR state cannot instill a strong sense of identity and community spirit among Hong Kong residents, for this “localization” policy could be interpreted by the CCP as a strategy to promote separatism or independence. Thus, the SAR state has its hands tied in using nationhood or local community building in defining the citizenship of Hong Kong. It cannot use either a nationalizing or a localizing strategy.

This may explain why the SAR state has used a “global” vision to side-step the nationhood or community dimension in formulating Hong Kong’s citizenship policies. The goal is to transform Hong Kong into a high-tech, informational global city. Following Jessop (2002), this SAR’s new policy could be called “enterprising citizenship.” The “grand project” of the SAR state is to solve the developmental crisis of Hong Kong after 1997, so its citizenship policy is defined in relationship to this number one task.

To start with, the colonial state, being a lame-duck state, had not formulated any long-term developmental policy for Hong Kong since 1984. As a result, Hong Kong gradually lost its competitive market position in the world economy. Hong Kong has experienced de-industrialization as most of its manufacturing industries have moved across the border. But Hong Kong’s production costs kept on rising because the colonial state in its remaining days increased land prices and handed out salary rises to civil servants. Moreover, Hong Kong’s technological edge has fallen behind those of Singapore and Taiwan because the colonial state had no high-tech development policies.

The above developmental problems were hidden before 1997, as Hong Kong was riding on the high tide of the opening of Mainland China for trade and investment. But these problems quickly came to the forefront and turned into a developmental crisis soon after the Asian financial crisis hit the territory in late 1997. Suddenly, Hong Kong’s stock
market and real market lost half of its value. The unemployment rate was at its record of 7.8 percent and Hong Kong’s government faced an unprecedented budget deficit. Hong Kong could not find a way out of these economic problems (So and Chan 2002).

By the 2000s, the number one concern of the SAR state was how Hong Kong could regain its global city status through being more competitive and enterprising in the world economy. To accomplish this project, the SAR requires not just change in the economy, but also a restructuring of the entire Hong Kong society and culture. Thus, civil servants need to be more enterprising in providing better services and lower costs to the Hong Kong society; universities have to be more competitive in producing enterprising students to serve the market; and Hong Kongers are urged to be more enterprising in upgrading their skills and credentials through “life-long” education. Even the unemployed are told to be more enterprising in finding a job for themselves through participating in “native” economies such as selling crafts in festivals, and they should not rely too much upon the state for welfare and social security. The main thrust is how to make citizens more enterprising and Hong Kong’s economy more competitive.

Under such a hegemonic discourse of enterprising citizenship and competitive economy, other issues such as civil rights, political rights, and social rights could be sidestepped. Not only was the SAR state ready to cut social welfare, civil sector jobs, and salaries, it also prepared to cut back civil rights by carrying out the Public Order Ordinance and pushing through the controversial Article 23 that aims to curb any protests or organized movement that are labeled as illegal in Mainland China and could lead to subversion and treason (So 2002; SCMP).

In addition, a good citizen is now seen as one who can add more value to the Hong Kong economy, irrespective of ethnicity. To make Hong Kong competitive again, the SAR state wants to recruit more high-valued migrants but wants to limit the entry of low value-added migrants. On the one hand, the SAR state welcomes middle-class professionals from the Mainland. There is no quota to limit their entry, and they can bring their families to Hong Kong and become citizens after seven years. On the other hand, despite the Basic Law (the mini-constitution) of Hong Kong granting citizenship to Mainland Chinese for family reunion, the SAR state appealed to the National People’s Congress to repeal such a clause, leading to a protracted battle with the pro-right of abode activists for several years (Leung, Chapter 6). The SAR state expressed the threat that an influx of 1.6 million Mainland peasants and workers to Hong Kong for family reunion would ruin Hong Kong’s economy. The SAR state even took the drastic measures of arresting and sending over-stayers back to the Mainland in 2002. In 2003, the SAR state further proposed that Mainland immigrants need to stay in Hong Kong for at least three years before they are eligible to apply for welfare, housing, and medical benefits.

To sum up, focusing on citizen rights and nationhood, the previous discussion has shown that Hong Kong’s citizenship has been drastically transformed in the second half of the twentieth century. From “colonial citizenship” before the 1950s, social movements and protests against the colonial state led to the development of a “semi-colonial” citizenship in 1970s–97. After 1997, a legitimacy crisis further propelled the SAR state to adopt a policy of “enterprising citizenship” to solve the developmental problems of Hong Kong. If Hong Kong’s colonial and nationalizing experiences have had an impact on its changing pattern of citizenship, we can detect this impact even more clearly in Taiwan,
which went through a transformation from “Chinese citizenship” to “civil-society citizenship,” and then to “Taiwanese citizenship” in the second half of the twentieth century.

**Taiwan: from Chinese citizenship to Taiwanese citizenship**

*Chinese citizenship*

Like Hong Kong, Taiwan was a colony for over half a century. It was only in 1945 that China resumed sovereignty of Taiwan from Japan. In 1949, after the Guomindang (GMD) was defeated on the Mainland, it brought over one million government officials and soldiers to Taiwan and became its ruling government. The urgent task of the GMD state at that time was how to defeat the communists and regain control over Mainland China. To accomplish this task, the GMD initiated a grand project of nationalizing Taiwan, i.e., to turn Taiwan into an imagined nation of China (Chun 1994).

This nationalizing project carried out the following two major policies. First, on the cultural front, since the GMD criticized the communists on the Mainland for destroying the thousand years old Chinese civilization, the GMD state imagined that Chinese civilization had moved from the Mainland to Taiwan, and claimed Taiwan was now at the center of Chinese civilization. This claim was based on the fact that Taiwan had the best museum of China, and it was only in Taiwan that Chinese culture (such as Confucianism, Chinese festivals, local folklore, and ethnic traits) had flourished. Another means of nationalizing was to turn Mandarin into the official language of Taiwan. In schools, students were taught only in Mandarin (called guoyu: the “national language”), while students were prohibited from speaking local Taiwanese dialects. Also, students were taught the history of China, not the local history of Taiwan. These language and history policies were aimed at socializing Taiwan residents as Chinese citizens at the expense of local identity and community. All Taiwanese were also required to receive two-year military training for the preparation of the project to “liberate” the Mainland from communist control. Also, National Day parade was an extravaganza of anti-communism and military display (Rigger 2002).

Second, on the political front, Taiwan represented the Chinese nation and the GMD state became the Chinese state in the international system. For instance, the GMD state occupied a seat that was reserved for China in the Security Council of the United Nation. In the Cold War mass media, the GMD state was the “Free China,” while “Communist China” was denied existence in US-led world affairs. Subsequently, Taiwanese citizens were accepted as Chinese citizens by other states.

Despite the claim to be a “Free China,” the GMD state had not granted many citizenship rights to the Taiwan people. Facing the imminent threat of communist invasion from the Mainland during the Cold War era, the GMD would not tolerate any challenge from the local Taiwanese society. Thus, the GMD state declared Taiwan to be under martial law and suspended all civil and political rights. Newspapers and television were heavily censored, no non-GMD-sponsored political organizations was allowed to form, top government officials were not directly elected by Taiwanese citizens, and
dissidents could be labeled as communists and tried under martial law. For example, the GMD sentenced a GMD intellectual named Lei Chen to ten years in prison for trying to make common cause with Taiwanese politicians who hoped to form an opposition party and contest local elections (Rigger 2002). The GMD distrusted the local Taiwanese because they had waged an uprising against GMD corruption on 28 February 1947. The GMD worried that the local Taiwanese would wage another uprising and the latter still remembered the bloody suppression of the GMD, killing an estimated 10,000–20,000 of the local population (Gold 1986).

Aside from the lack of civil and political rights, there was also an absence of social rights. The legitimacy basis of the GMD regime had two props: Chinese nationalizing and developmentalism. In order to push for rapid export-led industrialization, the GMD put tight controls on labor and unions. Wages had to be kept low and workers’ benefits kept to a minimum in order for Taiwanese products to remain competitive in the world market. However, by the 1970s, social forces in civil society began to challenge the absence of civil, political, and social rights in Taiwan.

**Civil-society citizenship**

As in Hong Kong, the Taiwan-born generation began to become politically active in the 1970s, challenging the discriminatory policies of the GMD against the local residents. Being locally born, the so-called “Taiwanese” were more interested in Taiwanese society than in Mainland affairs. Against the nationalizing policies on the cultural front, the local Taiwanese wanted to reclaim their local culture, local history, and local languages (Gold 1992). To protest against the dominance of Mainlanders in Taiwanese politics, the Taiwanese formed a loose collection called “Tang-wai” (outside the Party) to challenge GMD rule. This political contestation was generally interpreted as one between “local Taiwanese” versus “the Mainlanders.” Furthermore, as Taiwan was pushed out of the United Nations, its seat was taken over by the People’s Republic of China (PRC). After the normalization of US-China relations in 1978, the US recognized the communist state on the Mainland as the sole legitimate government of China. This loss of US support in the international system dealt a fatal blow to the GMD’s nationalizing policy. As one state after another followed the US’s lead in breaking off diplomatic relations with Taiwan, the GMD state fell into diplomatic disarray, forcing it to face the political reality that Taiwan was just Taiwan, it was not China and should not imagine itself as the Chinese nation.

The GMD first responded to these internal and diplomatic challenges with political repression. Dissidents were arrested and imprisoned; newspapers and magazines were censored; and anti-GMD organizations were banned. But as the diplomatic crisis deepened, as more and more states condemned the authoritarian practices of the GMD, and as the aging GMD leaders one by one passed away, the GMD finally was forced to adopt a democratic reform from above, allowing multi-party electoral politics to take place.

Once the democratic lid was opened, it could not be closed. Suddenly, there was an explosion of social movements in civil society in the late 1980s. All sorts of movements, including democratic movements, environmentalist movements, feminist movements,
home shelter movements, labor movements, aboriginal movements, and consumer movements came to life from the end of the 1980s. These social movements asked for all sorts of civil, political, and social rights (Hsiao 1992). As a result, by the 1990s, movement activists finally won the battle to elect the Taiwanese President directly. Taiwanese civil society was very active, with political mobilization and civil protests taking place frequently. As the Taiwanese people were highly conscious of their citizenship rights, they would not hesitate to challenge the GMD on any violations. A milestone case in judicial human rights came in the Taiwanese High Court’s decision to overturn the murder convictions of the Hsichih Trio more than a decade after the murder was committed. The Legislative Yuan has also added an amendment to incorporate the principle of “innocent until proven guilty” into Taiwanese law. Henceforth, all defendants will be presumed innocent until a guilty verdict is entered.3

Taiwanese citizenship

The development of a robust civil society was finally carried to its logical conclusion to promote a new mode of citizenship in Taiwan in the late 1990s. If the civil society is a Taiwanese civil society, its concerns should then be mostly related to Taiwan (not Mainland China), and its citizenship should be defined in terms of Taiwanese identity and community rather than Chinese identity and community.

Therefore, when the DPP (Democratic Progressive Party) won the election in 2000, not only was the dominant GMD forced to step down, but also the Chinese nationalizing policy had to be reconfigured. Since the late 1990s, with growing tensions in the Taiwan Strait, with increasing threats from the Mainland over the use of force in national reunification, with tactical support from the USA to support Taiwan autonomy, Taiwanese civil society has both covertly and overtly pushed for something that can be called “Taiwanese citizenship.”

The DPP now says that Taiwan is different from Mainland China. The Republic of China (ROC) is a sovereign state. There are separate states on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait; and the future of Taiwan should be decided by the votes of the Taiwanese people. The DPP calls on Beijing to face the reality of Taiwan-China relations and to respect the true sentiments of Taiwan’s 23 million people (Chen 2003).

On the cultural front, although the DPP did not go as far as to push for Taiwanese independence explicitly, it did actively promote the usage of local Taiwanese dialects, the rewriting of Taiwanese history to stress its historical separateness from Mainland China, and the setting up of a Taiwanese museum to glorify the contributions of local culture and lifestyle. In other words, the DPP tried to follow the GMD’s path of nationalizing in imagining that Taiwan has a nationhood of its own.

At the international level, the DPP successfully won the battle to lobby the Bush government to sell arms to Taiwan. The DPP also tried hard to re-establish links with other states in the international arena. The claim is that since Taiwan’s citizenship is built on democracy and human rights, this excellent achievement should qualify Taiwan to be accepted as a member nation of the modern international system.

On the inter-Strait relationship, the DPP tried to defer any links that could speed national reunification. Despite the support of Taiwanese businesspeople, the DPP was
reluctant to install the three direct links. At the most, the DPP state was only willing to install the so-called “little three links,” i.e., direct flights between the Mainland and the outer islands of Taiwan, or to allow a charter flight to pick up Taiwanese businessmen directly from the Mainland back to Taiwan during the Chinese New Year in 2003.

However, Rigger (2002) points out that DPP’s Taiwanese citizenship does not appeal to mainstream voters in Taiwan, both because they are afraid of the consequences if Taiwan were to declare independence, and because many Taiwanese still cherish an ethnic and cultural identity that is Chinese. Thus, the overwhelming preference of the Taiwanese population is neither for national unification (Chinese nationalizing) nor for independence (Taiwanese nationalizing), but for the existing status quo.

More economic integration with Mainland China may not help in promoting national reunification because Taiwanese who have traveled to Mainland China often find their sense of “Chineseness” diminished. The way of life they encounter on the Mainland barely resembles life in Taiwan, and many Mainland Chinese treat “Taiwanese compatriots” as foreigners (Rigger 2002). As time goes by, Taiwanese citizenship seems to be increasingly defined by Taiwan’s shared citizenship experience of democracy and civil movements rather than by its Chinese race, blood ties, and culture.

Like that in Hong Kong, the mode of citizenship in Taiwan has under-gone profound changes in the second half of the twentieth century. From an imagined “Chinese citizenship” in the 1950s, there has been a 180-degree turn in the formation of a “civil-society citizenship” through granting civil, political, and social rights to the civil society in the late 1980s, and then to a “Taiwanese citizenship” since the late 1990s. The following section will show that Mainland China also has redefined its mode of citizenship over the past four decades.

**Mainland China: from socialist citizenship to market citizenship**

**Socialist citizenship**

Most of the literature on citizenship is drawn from the experience of Western democratic countries and stresses the importance of *individual* civil, political, and social rights. In Maoist China during the 1950s and the 1960s, however, this emphasis on individual rights was taken as a bourgeois device to mystify class inequalities, domination, and exploitation in capitalist society. Subsequently, the Chinese state seldom used the term “citizens” during the Maoist era. The discourse of citizenship gave way to a discourse of class, and an individualistic perspective on citizenship was replaced by a state-centric view of citizenship (Harris 2002; Goldman and Perry 2002).

Instead of individual rights, the Chinese state emphasized the people, the masses, the collective, mass mobilization, and altruism. The focus was on how individuals should get rid of their selfishness in order to serve the collective. As a good socialist citizen one would devote oneself to serving the Party.

Although emphasizing the collective, the Chinese state nevertheless has extended massive social rights to its urban citizens. In the cities, urbanites gained all sorts of social rights that far exceeded those in Western welfare states. For instance, Chinese urbanites
were entitled to have employment rights. They were also entitled to receive housing, health care, childcare, pensions, and other benefits as a work package from their work units. However, as citizenship is a category of both inclusion and exclusion, it must be pointed out these social rights were granted to urban citizens only. Rural citizens had none of these rights (Li 2003), and neither did “class enemies” or “bad elements” such as landlords, compradors, GMD officials, etc.

Similarly, although Western literature has emphasized the lack of political rights under communist rule, the Maoists did not believe in this kind of formal democracy because they questioned how much power an individual could have in casting a vote every 4–6 years in an election. Instead, the Chinese government instituted what could be called “mass democracy.” During political campaigns, Chinese masses were mobilized to exert power over their leaders. Government officials (cadres) had to give “self-criticism” in public, and the masses could voice their own criticisms to challenge the leaders if they were not satisfied with the leaders’ self-criticisms. During the Cultural Revolution, many Party leaders were indeed humiliated and downgraded, and were sent to the countryside to perform labor and learn from workers and peasants.

However, by the mid-1970s, revolutionary fervor had subsided. Instead of class struggle and mobilization politics in the Maoist era, the reform era emphasized economic development, Four Modernizations, and marketization. Subsequently, the mode of citizenship has changed from “socialist citizenship” to “market citizenship.”

**Market citizenship**

The main concern in the post-Mao era was to promote economic development and to catch up with the West as fast as possible. To do so, the socialist mode of governance had to be discarded, the selflessness ethic needed to be dropped, and mass mobilization campaigns had to be discontinued. Subsequently, a whole new set of economic discourses has found its way into popular culture: such as “smashing the iron rice bowl,” the law of value, supply-demand economics, material incentives, efficiency, productivity, maximization of profit, etc.

Keane (2001:8) points to the installation of consumer rights as a template for economic and cultural citizenship, as well as ethical refashioning. The consumers had to be protected from exploitation by black-market profiteers and misleading advertising claims. Numerous consumer groups arose to help consumers defend their legal rights and interests, and to assist victims to seek compensation according to the law. Keane further argues:

the citizen concept has allowed a reformulation of the collective sense of “the people” into the individualized sense of the law-abiding, rights possessing, rational, consuming individual… Just as “the people” were used as a symbolic template upon which to inscribe concepts of collectivism and altruism, the citizen, in the era of economic development, is the blueprint for a Chinese subject formulation that binds the anarchy of the market by prescribing appropriate codes of legal and moral conduct. Citizenship is thus primarily conceived in economic and ethical terms.
After replacing “socialist citizenship” with “market citizenship,” the Chinese state began to take back the social rights that it had previously granted to the urbanites in the Maoist era. State enterprises were condemned as highly inefficient, losing money, and corrupt. Social welfare rights were condemned as making workers lazy and making the state enterprises lose money. Thus, workers would face layoffs and market discipline if their state enterprises went bankrupt. Workers were told that they should no longer depend on the state for jobs, welfare, and other benefits.

Interviews with redundant workers reveal a strong sense of resentment against the economic reforms. Many workers felt betrayed by the Chinese state that took away their iron bowls and put them in limbo with little recourse. According to Lee’s (2000) study, between 3,000 and 4,000 worker strikes and protests took place annually through the second half of the 1990s in China’s interior and north-eastern provinces, areas that were hit hardest by unemployment. Lee calls this new wave of labor activism “post-socialist labor insurgency,” under which workers frequently invoke the notion of citizenship rights and the socialist state’s responsibility for workers. However, given the tight political controls, massive unemployment did not develop into well-organized labor movements or large-scale social unrest (Li 2003). To a certain extent, “market citizenship” on the Mainland is quite similar to “enterprising citizenship” in Hong Kong. Both not only cut back social rights in order to induce their citizens to be more enterprising and to compete in the market, but they also scaled down civil and political rights under the discourse of law and order.

If the Chinese state could impose such policies to cut back the urbanites’ entitlements, it naturally wanted to deny such rights to the rural immigrants. Although there had been a massive inflow of rural populations into the cities since the 1980s, this “floating population,” estimated to number over 100 million people, were denied almost all the social rights of the urbanites. Thus, their stay in the city was illegal because they had a rural household registration, and they were not entitled to receive housing benefits, health care, a pension for themselves and education benefits for their children. On this topic, Solinger (1999) points to the making of a second-class citizenship for these rural migrants. Li (2002) further laments that rural migrants frequently encounter prejudice and unequal treatment in everyday life. They are largely criminalized and demoralized simply because they are members of the floating population. Their children are denied the opportunity of basic education and they have no rights to urban space and urban housing. For example, no sooner had the migrants built their own housing apartments in Zhejiangcun near Beijing than their homes were torn down by local state authorities.

Although rural immigrants were denied full citizenship status in the cities, Hong Kong and Taiwanese investors received VIP treatment in Mainland China. They were labeled as entrepreneurs and seen as modernizers who would bring prosperity and economic development to China. They were given the same citizenship rights as Mainland Chinese. In Beijing, for example, they could send their children to local public schools without paying extra fees; they could own both public housing units or apartments in the private sector; and they could own a private car and get an official driving license. They were granted all these citizenship rights because the Chinese local state wanted them to invest...
in their territories rather than investing in other cities.

In sum, there was a shift from “socialist citizenship” to “market citizenship” in China during the second half of the twentieth century. The selfless and altruistic people in the Maoist era have been replaced by an individualized economic actor and a shrewd consumer who knows how to protect his or her rights. Following this market logic, the Chinese state is taking away social rights from urban citizens, while denying such rights to rural immigrants.

**Conclusion**

This chapter traces the transformation of citizenship in the Chinese triangle of Mainland-Taiwan-Hong Kong in the second half of the twentieth century. Based upon the above discussion, this concluding section will make the following remarks on what citizenship is, why certain forms emerge, and how it changes.

First, what is citizenship? Our discussion shows citizenship is a very complicated relationship and can take different forms. In the West, citizenship means acquiring a set of civil, political, and social rights. In our three Chinese cases, however, citizen rights could vary from one extreme of having very limited rights (as in colonial Hong Kong) to having one right but not the other right (as in Maoist China) to the other extreme of having most of the rights (as in contemporary Taiwan).

Second, what can explain the different forms of citizenship in the Chinese triangle? This chapter shows that the mode of citizenship is related to a particular kind of “grand project” initiated by the state during that period. For example, since the SAR state has put the revival of Hong Kong’s economy as its top priority, it pursues a mode that can be labeled “enterprising citizenship” because the Hong Kong people are now asked to increase their value-addedness, to be competitive, and to play a role to make Hong Kong’s economy more enterprising. Since the GMD state put “liberating” China as its top priority, its citizenship policy could be labeled “Chinese nationalizing,” as Taiwan residents were asked to imagine that Taiwan was the Chinese nation both on the cultural front and in the international system.

Third, how does citizenship change? As a dynamic process, citizenship rights gained in one period can be lost in another. Assuming that the state is a covariance of citizenship, this chapter has pointed to the following four crucial factors in the making of citizenship: the civil society, nationhood, the market, and social class:

1. If state policies can be seen as making citizenship from above, then civil society can be seen as a configuration of social forces making citizenship from below. In Hong Kong, it was the 1966–67 riots, the nationalist movement, and the urban movements that pushed the colonial state into granting more social rights to the grassroots population. In Taiwan, it was the protracted struggles between the civil society and the authoritarian GMD for over two decades that finally led to the explosion of social movements and the “civil-society citizenship.”

2. Nationhood has played a crucial role in determining the mode of citizenship in the Chinese triangle. In Taiwan, nationalization has always been the defining characteristic of citizenship, both in the earlier phase of “Chinese nationalizing” mode
in the 1950s and in the present “Taiwanese nationalizing” mode in the 2000s. Comparatively speaking, nationhood has played a relatively minor role in defining Hong Kong’s citizenship. The colonial state’s “de-nationalization” policy in the 1950s was not that successful, while the SAR state’s “renationalizing” policies after 1997 are constrained by Hong Kong’s striving to become a global city.

Researchers should not overlook the role of the market in the making of citizenship. In Mainland China, “socialist citizenship” aimed to create a new kind of “socialist person” who would be selfless and devoted to the collective. After this socialist project failed, the Chinese state quickly embraced “market citizenship,” highlighting the fusion of consumerism and citizenship, taking away social rights from urbanites, and denying rural migrants their citizenship rights.

It is worth reiterating that citizenship is strongly embedded in the existing class structure. The salience of the effect of class can be seen in our study of cross-border relationships. Although Mainland peasant migrants are discriminated against by the politics of exclusion in Hong Kong, Mainland professional migrants face no such hardship. Instead, they are quite well treated by the SAR state. Similarly, businessmen from Hong Kong and Taiwan receive VIP treatments on the Mainland on the grounds that they will bring prosperity to the Chinese cities.

In sum, researchers need to bring factors of the state, civil society, nation, the market, and social class back in so as to provide a better understanding of the genesis and transformation of citizenship in the Chinese triangle of Mainland-Taiwan-Hong Kong.

Notes

1 South China Morning Post, 23 February 2003.
3 Taipei Times, 24 February 2003.

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