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There are many ways for colonialism to persist in the postcolonial: for many African and South American countries, the colonial power transforms its political control into economic privileges, and in Hong Kong it is often understood that the colonial power has simply changed identity. Before 1997, it was generally believed that Hong Kong, after the end of British colonial rule of a hundred years, would enter a neo-colonial period under the authoritarian, if not totalitarian, regime of Communist China. Some western journalists had forecast that the city would cease to be a vibrant metropolis when China resumed sovereignty over Hong Kong, assuming that political freedoms would be stripped away and the western-based legal and administrative machinery dismantled. On the contrary, China turned out to be not exactly as vicious a colonizer as the stereotypes set in the western media had made it out to be.

Over the last ten years, China has been able gradually to transform its negative international image of 'China threat' to become a benevolent global power in the eyes of many Asian, African, Arab and Latin American nations, by emphasizing its peaceful development, and by wooing other countries with its soft power, economic incentive and diplomacy. On the other hand, the British colonial governance structure—relying on not only the elitist rule of administrative officers but also the intimate collaboration of the polity and business sectors as well as the absence of universal suffrage—is still very much in place in post-1997 Hong Kong and is even reinforced by the re-appointed Chief Executive Donald Tsang Yam-Kuen, who himself was an administrative officer working for the ex-colonial government for more than thirty years. Beijing, though always acting in the name of the nationalist cause, obviously has no intention to eradicate such a 'good', 'stable' and 'effective' governance system as that created by the western colonizers. China does not want Hong Kong to change politically, so that the rising power can buy time to allow the mainland economy to grow continuously.

The difficulty in establishing the notion of the postcolonial for Hong Kong is also demonstrated in the corresponding difficulty in identifying the moment of Hong Kong's decolonization, while the only readily available master trope for figuring the change of colonial status is the nationalistic discourse of 'return' (huigui) to the grand narrative of Chinese history (which differs greatly from the term 'handover' used by the colonial discourse before 1997). If postcolonial Hong Kong designates any proliferation of histories and temporalities, such proliferation is a limited one, and it makes sense only in its relation to China's nationalist discourse and within the global framework of capitalist modernity. Although not yet fully integrated within

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its returned sovereign power under the policy of 'one country, two systems', and in spite of the promise that Hong Kong will not change for fifty years after reunification, Hong Kong's last decade has been more closely tied to China's development than expected. The new hegemony of neo-liberal capitalist economies—in the city that extends market rationality to every sphere of life, intensifies pauperization, and depoliticizes administrative and social powers—is actually triggered off and mediated by China's economic miracle. As Chinese leaders increasingly believe and embrace the capitalist market, and as China's economy becomes more open to the outside world, Hong Kong's unique strategic-economic role (as a vital conduit to the world when China was contained by the US-led powers) is crumbling. Other Chinese cities have risen up to compete with Hong Kong for international capital and by taking away jobs. To benefit from the China boom, the ex-colony dreams of converting itself into a world financial centre by establishing itself as the hub for mainland Chinese firms to raise money, and by facilitating the transnational circulation of finance capital. The implication of this new function to be performed by postcolonial Hong Kong is that, being a part of China under its national sovereignty as well as a global space serving the interests of multinational corporations, the city would not participate in the so-called 'Beijing Consensus' or the Chinese model of coordinated development.

Seemingly, Hong Kong is excluded from China's macro-economic control and has maintained its exceptional status. But being an exception does not necessarily mean that it is not a member included in the whole. The distinction between exception and rule or between what is outside and what is inside is always blurred in postcolonial Hong Kong. The Mainland and Hong Kong Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement (CEPA, a free-trade agreement giving Hong Kong companies preferential access to the mainland market) and other economic privileges such as the exclusive mandates for offshore yuan banking and other mainland-related financial business are the special advantages bestowed by Beijing upon Hong Kong, although the value of some of these economic privileges is more hype than real substance. These privileged deals, however, could not be considered as pure gifts handed out by the Chinese government only for Hong Kong's benefit. The mainland can also gain from these special economic arrangements with the postcolonial city, in terms of the inward transfer of capital, expertise and experience. When China opened its economy in the late 1970s, the People's Republic already realized that it could draw upon Hong Kong and other reaches of the Chinese diaspora for capital and related knowledge by legally giving Hong Kong businessmen preferential treatment over other foreign investors. Colonial Hong Kong was once the example China followed to grope its way to capitalism, and postcolonial Hong Kong, though increasingly dependent upon China for its economic boost, continues to assert itself as occupying a positive exemplary role for China's capitalist development, because of the city's strong foundation of the rule of law, effective monetary policy, respect for intellectual property rights, and professionalism in many fields.

The economic goodies offered by Beijing are also a means to curb any public expressions of discontent in the more politically conscious Hong Kong. The pragmatic thinking of Chinese leaders is essentially to buy people off by moving the economy ahead and satisfying them materially, in the hope that people would not be easily aroused into mass activism on controversial issues. There is a series of collective experiences shared among the Hong Kong people over the last decade: going through the damaging financial crisis; scary infectious diseases, including bird flu and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS); administrative crises such as an incompetent Chief Executive in Tung Chee Hwa, who was forced to leave office; the resignation of his top officials over various scandals; and the half-a-million-people march spurred by the fear of a new security bill called Article 23 which would place additional restrictions on individual freedoms and freedom of speech. These together have fomented a growing civil movement which manifests concern over almost everything, from protecting the harbour from further reclamation to air pollution to preserving old architectural structures to addressing unequal income distribution and the Gini Coefficient index in Hong Kong, which has yet to be decolonized. These, however, are not signs of any kind of progressive politics, let alone a breakthrough in the given, existing order, as they are only responses to specific isolated social problems. What many Hong Kong people ask for, and this is something that might challenge the political structure, is a definite timetable for direct elections of the legislators and their Chief Executive, as promised in a clear statement in the Basic Law, the constitution for postcolonial Hong Kong.

Actions taking place within the pre-established framework can, however, create unimaginable impacts. When the leading member of the pro-democracy Civic Party, Alan Leong Kah-Kit, managed to obtain enough support for a nomination by the Election Committee and ran against Tsang, it noticeably alarmed and disturbed Beijing. A number of mainland officials loudly voiced their worries about whether Hong Kong was still adhering to the Basic Law and whether the procedure for moving toward democracy was operating in an 'orderly' way. One mainland official has even bluntly said that the city would risk being marginalized if it wasted too much time in messing with politics. Later, Wu Bangguo, the chairman of the National People's Congress, when commenting on the implementation of the Basic Law, warned even more straightforwardly that there is a limit to Hong Kong's high degree of autonomy and that the city has only as much power as given by the central government. The message simply means Hong Kong's political reform is entirely in the hands of Beijing.

The return of Hong Kong to China has brought the two parties closer together than ever (that said, many mainland Chinese actually still know very little about Hong Kong because of very selective media coverage in China, while Hong Kongers still need to catch up with the political culture, social reality and geographical diversity of the mainland), but it has also brought forth and exacerbated Hong Kong people's conflicting emotions of love for and fear of the Chinese state. Hong Kong apparently embraces neo-liberal economies as the proper form of global capitalism, towards which China is

gearing itself. The combination of neo-liberalism with authoritarian centralized control has already been well established in East and Southeast Asian countries. In a way, it is the thriving capitalist enclave of Hong Kong which somewhat (re)defines the national whole, although China's path to building a capitalist social order is still slow and frequently marked by crises and tensions. The thought of being a specific singularity, changing and shaping the concrete content of the universal, becomes an illicit fantasy of Hong Kong in positing itself against China. Such a phantasm, though submerged most of the time, might pop up at some critical moments.

Hong Kong people believe they played a role in the student movement in Tiananmen Square in 1989. It was the huge amount of money and camping equipment donated by them that made the Chinese students decide not to retreat from the Square, thus ultimately leading to the government's brutal suppression. The spectacular crackdown on the demonstrators, using tanks and automatic weapons, galvanized a million Hong Kongers to go to the streets in protest marches, while other Hong Kong people helped some demonstrators hide and then escape abroad. Subsequently, Beijing no longer saw Hong Kong just as an innocent goose laying golden eggs but also as a potential base of political subversion. The Hong Kong government's failed attempt in 2003 to push for the enactment of a national security legislation provided for by Article 23 of the Basic Law—legislation to prohibit treason, secession, sedition, and subversion against the Chinese regime—clearly indicates Beijing's anxiety and its eagerness to interfere in Hong Kong's domestic politics and to control the city's process of decolonization.

Being uncertain of what agency entails, and usually failing to make any universal claims, Hong Kongers, however, generally have a common understanding that the democratization of their city may mean something to China as a whole. That 'something', marked by certain contingencies, could become a possible rupture that changes the hegemonic coordinates and creates a space for something new, especially when China so far refuses to accept Hong Kong's development into a full democracy as a political laboratory for the mainland, although its economic model has already been well imitated. By no means is Hong Kong's cry for universal suffrage meant to be a 'revolution' (i.e. the change of the existing coordinates) for the self-interest driven Hong Kong majority, though the world governed by globalized capitalist economy is more than ever open to the indeterminacy of any revolutionary moment. Decolonization or democratization is by definition a foreign body to Hong Kongers, who find it simultaneously attractive and repelling. They would never claim it to be their own. Probably because of such an unintended position, it could become a spontaneous revolt characterized by contradictions within the capitalist mode of living.

In this special issue we would like to chart the postcolonial conditions of Hong Kong in the first decade after its return to China (1997 to 2007) primarily in relation to its socio-political and cultural aspects. We want to analyse how we could understand Hong Kong as a new or alternative postcolonial example, and how its identity has emerged out of its confrontation with internal and external alterities framed within larger discourses of

nationalism, globalization, and late-capitalism. While our focus is primarily on the local, we are interested not only in exploring what China means for Hong Kong, but also in how the postcolonial city has introduced new horizons and experiences to the mainland, culturally, socio-politically, and intellectually. So we are specifically interested in border crossing and fluid boundaries, not only as an abstract theme, but as the actual flows of labour, capital and ideas, which make Hong Kong never just another Chinese or global city. However, the growing marginalization of Hong Kong after its return to Chinese sovereignty has somewhat turned the city into the absent other for the essential China–'the West' binary—Hong Kong can no longer function as the other to the West in the conventional East–West binarism. The process of very limited (if not entirely absent) decolonization does not lead to a more liberated and self-determining socio-political structure, and the failure to build a radically altered postcolonial order by the first Chief Executive Tung Chee Hwa's Special Administrative Region (SAR) government only further reveals the antagonistic relations between the power and the oppressed inherited through the colonial legacy.

In what ways postcolonial Hong Kong can redefine the slippery term 'postcolonialism' through its particular position in China's grand project of modernity and the operation of global capitalization is one of our major concerns. In the wake of, as well as in the shadow of, colonialism, we examine whether the postcolonial city can introduce a difference or something new with respect to the past. Perhaps the majority of Hong Kongers are still the hybrid, diasporic subject who stands ambivalently against nationalism as univocal discourse, while remaining as the mark of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the nation-state, mainly because the historical memory of colonial experiences is still materially constitutive of Hong Kong's postcolonial consciousness and sociability. In the confusing situation of today's world, we look forward to finding some possibilities of creating a new space for people to participate in the process of emancipation by rethinking the postcolonial conditions of Hong Kong.

Our special issue begins with a photo essay by David Clarke, entitled 'Contested sites: Hong Kong's built environment in the postcolonial era'. Clarke provides a photo tour, with elaborate written captions, for readers to understand the spatial changes of Hong Kong in the last two decades. Clarke demonstrates how Hong Kong's postcolonial experiences are carved enduringly into the city space, on the one hand, and captured fleetingly in visual representations, on the other. With the dynamics between history and space, permanence and transience, Clarke's essay shows how the local Hong Kong people are painstakingly constructing their postcolonial identity with Hong Kong as the subject. This photo essay embodies a humble and simple hope of the collective of this special issue's contributors, despite and along with their careful resistance to cultural essentialism, in envisaging a more habitable dwelling for the dwellers.

The following two essays provide a general background to situate the complexity of addressing a postcolonial Hong Kong identity. In his essay, 'Hong Kong viscera', Koon-Chung Chan, probably the most prolific and

well-respected local cultural critic now living in Beijing, provides an insightful historical account of the development of Hong Kong's cultural identity since the 1950s. He unfastens the entangled historical threads to explain why most Hong Kong people today still regard coloniality dearly, and why it is so difficult for Hong Kong to articulate a postcolonial self. Hong Kong, as Chan argues, has not gone through a decolonization process, a process which entails a transformation so radical that the Hong Kong people are not yet audacious enough to embrace it.

While Chan's essay tries to explain the current predicaments by tracing their historical roots, Wai Kit Choi's essay, '(Post)coloniality as a Chinese state of exception', which provides a socio-political analysis of contemporary Hong Kong, also argues that a continuation of the colonial structure is embedded in the city. He demonstrates a kind of hypercoloniality of Hong Kong, in which both the colonial and the postcolonial structures work in parallel. Critically adopting Giorgio Agamben's and Aihwa Ong's ideas, Choi argues that Hong Kong can be an 'exception' to China's nation-building project not because of the city's neo-liberalism, which China is also actively pursuing, but because Hong Kong is a 'postcolonial' exception, and this status of exception allows Hong Kong to be both inside and outside China, also allowing China to pursue its own capitalism. However, Hong Kong is also suffering from this global/national facilitator role, as shown in its increasingly severe class segregation and the city's frantic mode of competition against adjacent regions for the command of global capitalism.

Following Chan's and Choi's general account of the colonial-postcolonial entanglement, the subsequent essays provide different perspectives from which to examine the specific tensions between China and Hong Kong, as well as those between the national and the global in this postcolonial city. They combine to show a spectrum of possibilities in the understanding of the local. Laikwan Pang gives a detailed account of the recent development of the Hong Kong film industry, and she argues that the earlier postcolonial model, which has been liberally used to study recent Hong Kong films, can no longer explain the current situation, which is characterized by the industry's fervent attempt to embrace the mainland market on the one hand, and its active participation in conjuring up a transnational Asian cinema globally on the other. At the same time, Pang argues that a smaller, culturally essentialist local cinema has also coagulated to maintain a loosening local identity, so we are observing the simultaneous emergence of not one, but a few, very different Hong Kong cinemas.

If Pang juxtaposes different 'locals', Kwai-Cheung Lo discusses the local within local Hong Kong: the city's internal otherness. In his essay 'A borderline case: ethnic politics and gangster films in post-1997 Hong Kong', Lo argues that the ethnic always serves as an internal other of a community. Although Hong Kong has been seen as a racially harmonious and ethnically homogeneous society, a strong tension exists between the so-called native Hong Kong people and recent mainland immigrants, who can be seen as Hong Kong's own ethnic minority. Lo argues that such marginalization is actually essential for Hong Kong to conjure up a fictive

postcolonial identity. He further connects the notion of the ethnic to the general understanding of the outlaw, and Lo argues that Hong Kong's gangster movies, probably the most important genre in this important cinema, demonstrate precisely the boundary demarcation between the majority and a minority in the same way as 'ethnic' works.

If there is a local inside local, there could also be another local outside local Hong Kong, and to Hong Kong's evangelical Christian discourse the 'native' people are probably less those from Hong Kong than the vast number of mainland Chinese. In his essay 'Christian social discourse in postcolonial Hong Kong', Shun-Hing Chan analyses the development of the Christian social discourse in Hong Kong after 1997, which provides us with a unique perspective in understanding a possible antagonistic relationship between China and Hong Kong. Chan demonstrates a dichotomy between the evangelical and the mainline churches in post-1997 Hong Kong: the mainline churches have been outspoken on socio-political matters in Hong Kong and critical of the city's lack of democracy, while the evangelical churches have concentrated mostly on moral issues. Chan argues that the evangelical church leaders have displayed an openly pro-government attitude because they want to build good relations with the state in order to facilitate their evangelical activities in the mainland. Similar to the cases of many global forces which see Hong Kong as a means to China, Chan's specific object of analysis reminds us that the (inter-)national positioning of Hong Kong is not only a product of the current phase of global capitalism but is something far more essential.

From Christian institutions, Helen Grace introduces us to Hong Kong's emerging civil communities. In her essay 'Monuments and the face of time: distortions of scale and asynchrony in postcolonial Hong Kong', Grace finds a new form and practice of memory in the recent civil actions against the demolitions of the Star Ferry and Queen's Pier. As shown in these recent events, there is an interesting pair-up between Hong Kong's postcolonial memory of the colonial and the over-production of images, and in this juxtaposition Grace discovers a subtle correlation between two senses of memory: the monumental-memorial (the architecture) and the performative-participatory (the massive images produced around the architecture on YouTube). Because these recent civil actions subsist on the intimate relation of the two, she explains that monumentality can be established in a fleeting and amateur sleight of hand, and that the seemingly permanent collective identity produced in this movement is actually built upon the most transient acts of ubiquitous image-making.

The penultimate contribution to our special issue is Yeung Yang's photo/text diary documenting the development of the Star Ferry event with which Grace's essay is also concerned. A major icon of Hong Kong through the tourists' gaze, Star Ferry is a passenger ferry line carrying people across Victoria Harbour between Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. The ferry was first exposed to global audiences in the Hollywood film *The World of Suzie Wong* (dir. Richard Quine, 1960). In 1966, the increase of the ferry's fare was one of the immediate causes of the 1967 leftist riot in Hong Kong against British colonial rule. The Star Ferry pier in Central, along with its clock

tower, was demolished for the sake of the new reclamation plan at the end of 2006. The relocation of the historical ferry pier and the destruction of its clock tower triggered many Hong Kong people's memories of the colonial past, and people from all walks of life gathered around the ferry's clock tower right before its demolition, hoping to save the structure, a gathering that ended up in a violent (in a Hong Kong sense) police–civilian confrontation. It also led to the subsequent movement to save the nearby Queen's Pier, which would also have to make way for the reclamation plan.

The 'save-the-Star-Ferry' event has a special meaning for Hong Kong's development of civil society, as the movement materializes the notion of the 'public', both in the sense of space and in the sense of identity. It also demonstrates the complexity of colonial sensations in the current postcolonial Hong Kong, where public sensibility does not necessarily emerge as a sheer nostalgia for the colonial days but may take shape as a positive forward-looking assertion of one's unique history and identity.

Most of these articles were written in the year 2007, and they give an up-to-date depiction and analysis of present-day Hong Kong situations. The timely publication of this special issue would not have been possible without the understanding and the facilitation of the *Postcolonial Studies* editorial collective, and the punctual submission and revision of the essays by the contributors. We are particularly grateful to Leo Ou-fan Lee's contribution of the Postscript, which critically reminds us of the danger of holding on to the Hong Kong local, and effectively bids us hark back to a kind of dialectic thinking in any theorization of cultural identity. Lee's Postscript opens up instead of closes down the continual reading and writing of Hong Kong.

Kwai-Cheung Lo and Laikwan Pang