

The Connectivity of Hong Kong – Summary & Suggested Readings

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As a cosmopolitan city situated at the tip of the Pearl River Delta in China's southern maritime edge, Hong Kong definitely plays a unique role as a strategic hub in China's global development. From the transformation of Qing empire to the Republic, and People's Republic of China in first half of the 20th century, to the opening and reforming period in the later half of the 20th century, and most recently the belt and road initiative, we see the shift to a stronger positioning of China's global influences. In fact, Hong Kong has been an international centre for economic-material exchange and socio-cultural-religious fusions between the East and the West since the 1840s when the British settled in this city leased by the Qing Dynasty, to its current status since 1997 as the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. In this lecture, I will discuss Hong Kong from a multitude of perspectives of the historical and contemporary contexts and by taking the political, cultural, and economic pulses of the eastern Asia-Pacific region.

Hong Kong has been connecting South China, if not the entire China, to the world since the 1840s. Benefited from the capital and talent influx from mainland China, which experienced civil war and political unrest until 1970s. Hong Kong became home for many Chinese from all over the country who wanted to escape the hardship created by natural disasters and the political unrest. When the negotiation of the return of HK happened, there was a large outflux of Hong Kong people in the 1980s and 90s. Hundred of thousands chose Canada, creating the people connection between Canada and Hong Kong.

With the networks and communities built by the early Chinese settlers of gold rush miners, railroad workers and other labourers, and the connections forged by the British commonwealth system, Canada has always been a popular destination for Hong Kong students, immigrants and capitals. In recent decades, Chinese Canadian businesses have expanded from small business to manufacturing, professional services, pharmaceutical, infrastructure and information technology.

The China Institute at U of Alberta, in its 2022 report, concludes that "Hong Kong was the second greatest destination for Canadian direct investment after the US in 2020. Canada and Hong Kong's future collaboration may lie increasingly in financial services, transportation, education, food and beverages (F&B), and arts and culture. Furthermore, both Canada and Hong Kong are renowned innovation hubs with mutual interest in and clustering around areas such as biotech, cleantech, AI, fintech, insutech (insurance technology), or edtech (education technology), providing great opportunities for technology and research related cooperation" (p. 23).

In this lecture, I will explore the history, Canadian connections, the political, social, economic and financial developments of Hong Kong in both the colonial and post-handover periods. In particular, I will address the future prospects of Hong Kong. Will the indelible city become an economic city emphasizing prosperity and stability or a political city continuing its quest for democracy and freedom?

Suggested readings

Chan, Ming K. 1994. *Precarious Balance: Hong Kong Between China and Britain 1842-1992*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Chan, Ming K. 2008. *China's Hong Kong Transformed: Retrospect and Prospects beyond the First Decade*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press.

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Lim, Louisa. 2022. *Indelible City: Dispossession and Defiance in Hong Kong*. New York: Riverhead.

Sheridan, Michael. 2021. *The Gate to China: A New History of the People's Republic & Hong Kong*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Resources on Hong Kong studies:

- U of Toronto Libraries <https://guides.library.utoronto.ca/HongKongStudies>
- York University Libraries <https://researchguides.library.yorku.ca/hongkongstudies>