

CITIES LEARNING TOGETHER CONFERENCE
Hong Kong, 18-20 November 2013

STRANDS FULL REPORT

REPORT ON THE ECONOMIC STRAND

(Session moderators: Bruce Wilson and Waltraut Ritter)

(Strand reporter: Josef Konvitz)

The Agenda

“Economics' is integral to how business operates, to how community members establish their livelihoods, and to how public authorities generate the resources to improve standards of living, provide infrastructure, key shared services and support for collective activity... So the Economic theme matters for this Conference because of the deep tension between generating employment, public resources (individual and collective wealth), and the limits to growth. How can this be understood and resolved? How does learning assist in resolving this tension?”

The Conceptual Framing

On the Monday afternoon, the Economic group (15-20 people) explored a number of contextual and conceptual issues. These included an overview of the Hong Kong economy led by Waltraut Ritter, and a discussion of the Precedings contributed by Anne Newton and Allie Clemans , Joanne Curry, Roberta Piazza, Josef Konvitz, Nicola Vatthauer, Glen Postle and Lorelle Burton, with comment from Clare Shine (from the Salzburg Global Seminar).

The debate canvassed various issues about the role of the market on the one hand, and public intervention on the other, and how these tensions are expressed in very specific ways related to such diverse issues as skills formation, public transport usage, competitiveness of liveability, university-city engagement, ‘aggressive individualism’ and risk aversion.

These conversations provided a backdrop to the work to be done on the second day with the host organisation, Energising Kowloon East Office (EKEO). This is an authority charged with the oversight of a major development project on the site of the former Kai Tak airport, and an adjacent, old manufacturing area in which 220,000 people are still employed. While it is a former airport site, it is on a significant waterfront site with a deep channel. Already, a new cruise terminal for Hong Kong has been developed, although at this stage, it remains relatively underutilised.

In preparing for the case study, various possible topics for discussion were mentioned:

- Culture and context;
- The involvement of existing organisations, community and social cohesion;
- Various operational matters such as planning powers, financial models, decision-making processes,
- The role of universities
- Intergenerational connections
- Willingness to take risks
- Market competition and segmentation.

EKEO

EKEO is charged with the development of a second CBD for Hong Kong, on the assumption that there is likely to be continuing demand for office space, driven by a continuing growth in foreign

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investment. The area for which EKEO is responsible is massive, three parcels of land totalling close to 550 square kilometres. The strategy is driven by a Conceptual Master Plan, which has been through 4-5 iterations over 15 years, some of which have been contested strongly, and is now subject to ongoing public engagement. There is an explicit focus on place making, while the 'CBD2' acronym is derived from: Connectivity; Brand; Design; and Diversity.

An extensive introduction was provided by Raymond Lee, the EKEO CEO. He left us with two questions on which he would appreciate feedback:

1. How to maintain the economic vibrancy of Kowloon East during the transformation?
2. How to address the needs of SMEs and Arts/Culture/Creative groups?

In response, the Economic strand group spent some time reviewing the information provided, drawing on their experience in other settings, ranging from major port redevelopments, to smaller university-city-community regeneration projects. This was a challenging development site, partly because of the location of the cruise terminal and the distance to other attractive parts of the city, and partly because of the linkages between the waterfront and other parts of the development site.

Our conversation highlighted that this was clearly a place where learning could be, and was, occurring. There was the formal aspect linked particularly with training and universities, employment and design, and the informal, which is important always in large economic districts. It was acknowledged also that there is a much larger list of cities where significant scale redevelopment has occurred than that mentioned by EKEO, many of which were well known by members of the group.

This discussion was summarised by the theme reporter as highlighting the 3 'P's:

- **Process:** the evolution of the Plan. How had the interests of various stakeholders been reconciled? What do people now understand to be intended?
- **Proximity:** part at least of the development is closely interlinked with other communities; what impact will this have on others, and on shifting patterns of activity?
- **Property:** to what extent will this development reflect the peculiar nature of property development in Hong Kong, where all land freehold is government owned.

This prompted two further questions:

- Where is the evidence about what's going on, in other sites as well as here?
- Is there a need to intervene? If needed, what form should the intervention take, and over what timeframe? How to facilitate conversations about whether major projects should go ahead? [this is learning how to bring people together, rather than 'doing' to them]

Responses to Questions

Following some work in small groups, the following (aggregated) responses to the various questions were developed:

Firstly, it was suggested that the following pieces of evidence would be very useful:

- The future shape of the knowledge service economy;
- Experience of cities elsewhere undergoing major redevelopment projects;
- Thorough knowledge of the quality of the built environment and its attention to people-related matters; and
- The implications of migration and resettlement of corporations from other parts of Hong Kong to Kwun Tong.

Secondly, it was suggested that public intervention was warranted:

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- In order to change public perceptions of the area, which would be necessary to develop public space, attract private investment, and ensure mixed use development;
- To promote greater diversity of uses in the development, enhancing skill, health and business outcomes. These uses might include: a business incubator; university spaces, training organisations, education centres; public spaces; local arts/cultural uses, and residential (including the top 6+ floors of business buildings). Including small street-front spaces for hairdressers, food outlets, newsagents would also be valuable. Taken together, these uses would encourage a ‘night’ economy;
- While mixed use might reduce the return from some parcels of land, it could even increase the overall land outcomes because of the demand for space;
- Another option is conducting an architectural design competition, which might generate new thinking about the use of space;
- To establish community and public forums for learning to occur, and to be captured.

In response to Raymond’s two questions, the following observations were offered:

1. Maintaining vibrancy

- It was noted that the community consultation process had already generated some very good suggestions, that should be implemented.
- Local procurement
- A community advisory council that brought different stakeholders together to continue to advance awareness and engagement
- Include schools with community hubs, and other educational sites (universities) in the development
- Encourage stakeholders to recognise that the new infrastructure and more diverse activities would add to the attractiveness of the area, generating new business and employment opportunities
- Encourage learning through places such as libraries (and university community/adult education)
- Include at least one business incubator in the development
- Investigate whether some businesses should be assisted to relocate from the area, into other parts of Hong Kong.

2. Engaging with SMEs and arts/culture groups

- Business incubators
- Diversity of spaces
- Encourage a mixed economy, including a ‘night’ economy.

In response, Raymond clarified three questions for the group:

- Engagement with those affected directly (including artists in low rent accommodation) continues and was crucial to their planning
- Mixed use was a very high priority in the design, and needed to be much more than infrastructure
- No site has been set aside for a university, but all Hong Kong university has an interest in EKEO and is maintaining a dialogue, exploring learning options. There have been several inquiries from overseas and mainland universities, including one specific proposal.

Conclusion

It was noted that Pascal could be a continuing support to EKEO: through access to learning from other places, including those redevelopment sites which were not so well known; and through assisting EKEO to capture its own learning and to share with others.

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With respect to learning from others, some attention to indicators and benchmarking might be possible, together with clarification of short-term and long-term outputs and impact. A range of issues including language and meaning, processes of decision-making and the role of tacit knowledge would warrant continued exploration.

REPORT ON THE GREEN STRAND

(Session Moderators: Eric Tsang and Robbie Guevara)

(Strand Reporters: Sandy Morrison)

Key questions that provided focus for the group and some of the main points raised included:

1. How can cities more effectively develop policies that will enable them be sustainable?
2. What role does learning, including formal and non-formal education, public awareness raising and training, play in contributing to effective sustainability policy and practice in cities? It is already happening, but the challenge is to ensure quality of learning and make more visible. Understanding is needed of (a) learning from nature; (b) use of technology; and (c) greening skills/jobs.
3. What roles do government, civil society and the private sector have in contributing to policy and learning dimensions to achieve the vision of sustainable cities? How can there be better partnerships and convergence of these roles? Key points are:
 - (a) partnerships and acknowledging that there may be issues of power struggle;
 - (b) the need for co-management of resources; and
 - (c) learning organisations and clarity of roles in terms of “what are they good for” rather than “good at”.
4. How do we balance an approach that begins to contribute to achieving the goals of both global and local sustainability agenda? With reference to:
 - (a) localisation of knowledge and validation of that knowledge;
 - (b) continual innovation;
 - (c) past, present and future knowledge and practices are important; and
 - (d) inclusion of social, economic, environmental, political and cultural spheres.
5. Liveability is about the human requirement for social amenity, health and well-being. How can both individual and community well-being be addressed in sustainable cities? What could be a reasonable set of liveability indicators? Actions needed for:
 - (a) creating awareness;
 - (b) changing behaviour;
 - (c) generating green jobs and green skills;
 - (d) co-creation of knowledge;
 - (e) two way learning; and
 - (f) preservation and appreciation of indigenous knowledge and local community knowledge.

The group created a framework articulating their thinking around conceptualising how cities can learn sustainably together in order to transform themselves. Ideas emerging from their discussions included:

- (a) if you want to go fast go alone; if you want to go far- then go together;
- (b) overcoming an obsession with development;
- (c) moving beyond the work context into the life context;
- (d) making a future rather than waiting for a future;
- (e) do we need to wait for a disaster to find the learning moment?;

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- (f) rethinking at a more radical level; and
- (g) working for holistic learning and holistic approaches.

It was agreed in order for global sustainability to occur, local sustainability must already have been achieved in cities. Partnerships, acknowledging diversity, the creation of a comprehensive learning plan and a consideration of the role of leadership with grassroots support were considered to be of importance. It was suggested that issues of power should be acknowledged in terms of partnerships between government, civil society and private sector with resources being co-managed to encourage collaborative working.

On the second day, the group visited the new CBD planned for East Kowloon. It was reported that challenges exist within the development process. Efforts from universities were apparent with regard to people being trained or by capturing their own learning. Two questions arose from the visit: How do we sustain the CBD as it is not a Greenfield site? How to engage with people?

REPORT ON THE HEALTH, WELL BEING & SOCIAL WELFARE STRAND

(Session Moderators: Peter Kearns and Benjamin Chan)

(Strand Reporters: Denise Reghenzani-Kearns & Denis Barrett)

The Agenda & Context

This strand of the Hong Kong Conference took place at a time of growing interest in alternative approaches to provision of public services such as health, and with a growing recognition of the significance of well being as a measure of social progress. Driven by financial pressures on governments and demographic change with ageing populations in many countries, these themes set the agenda for the Health, Well Being and Social Welfare strand.

The search for sustainable health systems for the future was reflected in a report by McKinsey & Co prepared for the 2013 World Economic Forum which was built into the brief for this strand with the following extract from the report setting the scene:

The preferred health system of the future is strikingly different from the national health care systems of today, with empowered patients, more diverse delivery models, new roles and stakeholders, incentives and norms.¹

The themes in McKinsey report were reinforced by a paper prepared for the Conference by Josef Konvitz on *The Coming Revolution of Public Services* which questioned whether the traditional model of centralised, hierarchical, vertically-structured delivery systems would be able to cope with the context confronting national governments and cities.

A further theme that influenced the strand was provided by PASCAL work under the PIE program on EcCoWell, a search for more integrated and holistic approaches to the environment, health, learning, culture and community. As this approach envisaged community learning strategies providing an overarching framework for initiatives such as healthy cities and green cities, the workshop conducted on Healthy Cities for the Future brought these questions into focus in discussion of the features of health systems in the future.

The EcCoWell work of PASCAL has been followed up by the city of Cork which conducted a seminar on EcCoWell in March, followed by an EcCoWell international conference in September. We were fortunate that a member of the Cork EcCoWell planning group, Denis Barrett, participated in this Conference and served as co-reporter for the strand.

The issues noted above were examined in two panel sessions of the conference and a full day workshop held at the Hong Kong Institute of Education with participation by leaders from the Healthy City movement in Hong Kong, so that the Hong Kong experience served as a case study for consideration of ways in which healthy city initiatives might serve as instruments for progress towards sustainable health systems that were responsive to the context noted above.

¹ McKinsey & Company (2013) *Sustainable Health Systems: Visions, Strategies, Critical Uncertainties & Scenarios*. Davos: World Economic Forum

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The Workshop

The workshop held on 19 November addressed the subject *Healthy Cities for the Future: Concepts, Sustainability, Partnership*. The healthy city idea has been actively promoted by the Hong Kong Department of Health so that healthy city initiatives exist in all 18 administrative districts of Hong Kong. On the other hand, there has been no development of the learning city initiative in Hong Kong. Learning city and healthy city aspirations have much in common so that the Hong Kong situation raised the question as to whether the healthy city movement could be a de facto learning city approach, and the further question on whether ways could be found to strengthen learning aspects of these healthy city initiatives in the transition to a sustainable future health system for Hong Kong.

This workshop had the benefit of presentations from a number of leaders in the Hong Kong Healthy City movement. These speakers were:

- Professor SH Lee has been a leader in health development in Hong Kong in various roles including Director of Health and founding Chair of the Department of Family and Community Medicine in the Chinese University of Hong Kong
- Dr MK Tham is a Senior Medical and Health Officer in the Department of Health
- Dr Jeffrey Pong is Chair of the Wanchai Healthy City Committee
- Ms Scarlett Pong is Convenor of the Shantin Healthy City and Chairman of the Organising Committee for the 6th Global Conference of the Alliance for Healthy Cities to be held in Hong Kong in 19-21 November 2014.

This mix of Hong Kong speakers brought varied perspectives of health systems policy and the local Healthy City initiatives in Hong Kong districts into a dialogue.

Professor Lee provided a framework for consideration of healthy city development in Hong Kong through his long involvement in a number of roles. He introduced the concept of ‘settings’ which he defined in the following way:

A setting is the place or social context in which people engage with environmental, organisational, and personal factors which interact to effect health and well being.

This concept has a good deal in common with a broad concept of place-making in a learning city initiative and points to some of the connections between healthy cities and learning cities.

Presentations by the Hong Kong speakers covered a number of areas seen as priorities. These included initiatives in schools and services for seniors in the context of an ageing population. Strengthening learning provision for seniors emerged as one of the areas where learning strategies could be applied to affirm current healthy city initiatives. This might involve closer connections between Elder Academies and Healthy City initiatives.

Presentations and responses by the international participants in the workshop brought a range of diverse perspectives to bear on the Hong Kong experience. There was particular interest in the research reported on a change management study by Finnish participants Dr Ilpo Laitinen and Dr Jari

Stenvall. The conclusions of the workshop in respect of the questions addressed, are summarised below.

1. What will be the main features of Healthy Cities in the future by 2020

There was a general recognition that the current approach to Healthy City development will change over time with a progression from a top-down approach to more grass-roots engagement of local communities. This will provide for stronger and broader partnerships with a convergence between current healthy city and learning city strategies towards an innovative hybrid model. This convergence is likely to appear first in addressing the needs of an ageing population, e.g. with Elder Academies being more closely linked into Healthy Cities strategies.

Aspects of these trends included the points listed below:

- A lifecycle/lifelong learning approach will be widely adopted.
- The local government role in Hong Kong will be strengthened over time to support this development.
- EcCoWell principles will become more general, at times expressed in policies such as “health in all policies”.
- This general movement over time will involve a progression from “closed systems” to “open systems”, described in the group as a progression from first to third generation management.
- Patients/individuals will become “co-producers” in their health maintenance and management.

2. What concepts and partnerships will drive development towards this vision?

The conceptual basis for this vision of the future was seen as involving a mix of concepts at present underpinning healthy and learning city development. The notion of well being, both individual and societal, was seen as central with improved assessment systems to monitor progress. Future Healthy Cities were seen as being “age friendly” with the needs of people in all stages of the lifecycle central. Integration in service delivery will be fundamental with “co-production” of services as in the Finnish work reported, a driving force. These trends will produce cities that are more inclusive and democratic.

Other aspects of these trends included the following

- The local neighbourhood level will become increasingly important in a creative interaction between policy at the city, sub-city (district), and neighbourhood levels.
- Online course for large numbers will become more common.
- Political literacy and citizenship will be enhanced as people contribute to their local community and will have a stronger sense of global citizenship, this will drive social change.

3. What steps should be taken over the next three years?

Opinions varied on the steps that should be taken to drive the desired changes over the next three years. In general, we thought that silo-thinking would be broken down with a broadening of roles so that, for example, teachers would be seen as health workers within schools as learning organisations with the team roles would drive change with schools more connected to communities. This wider

interaction would extend all the way to WHO and UNESCO who would engage in this dialogue in connect learning, health and well being in ways leading to value-added outcomes.

Aspects suggested included the following:

- There will be move away from conventional economic indicators to broader composite indicators that combine economic performance with social progress and well being.
- These measures would extend to local neighbourhood so as to identify disadvantage and monitor progress.
- Day service centres will provide local and primary points of contact for a wide range of health services.

Day 1 Panel Sessions

It was perhaps unfortunate that the Conference Day 1 panel session preceded the Workshop on Day 2 which is recorded above as there are elements of the Workshop outcomes which merited further discussion from a policy perspective. Some aspects will perhaps be taken up in the Glasgow EcCoWell Seminar on 5 December 2013 and the 19-21 November 2014 Global Conference of the Alliance of Healthy Cities.

In general however, there was a broad compatibility between the outcomes of the Day 1 discussions and the Workshop conclusions. These were seen as involving a series involving important shifts over time in the way health services were regarded and provided. These shifts are summarised in relation to the set questions below.

Discussions in the panel sessions were enhanced by several guest speakers from Hong Kong. Both Professor Lee and Dr Dai (Gerontologist and Past President of the Hong Kong Alzheimer's Association) brought distinctive perspectives from experience that added depth to discussions.

1. What are likely to be the key features of Future Sustainable Health Systems in Cities

It was recognised that future sustainable Health systems in cities will require a series of shifts away from the traditional underpinnings of health delivery systems to ways that will be sustainable in the long-term. Much of this will correspond to the McKinsey report scenario of "super-empowered individuals" although it also appeared that these shifts will involve a new social contract in society.

The shifts discussed involved movement from:

- patient to citizen with the citizen as driver;
- diagnoses of ill health to preventative measures;
- Institutional based care to community based care;
- Institutional care to front-line primary care with multi-disciplinary teams;
- compartmentalisation to a "purpose-driven" model.
- Isolated Department of Health responsibility to Whole of Government/Community responsibility aligned with empowerment of the individual.

The emerging sustainable system will feature multi-sectoral, multi-professional, multi-disciplinary teams.

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2. In what ways can the Well Being and Welfare of the populations of cities be enhanced in the framework of future sustainable learning cities?

There were three principal thrusts in the discussion of this question. These involved the PASCAL EcCoWell approach, a focus on people-centred approaches rather than bureaucratic top-down approaches and the interactive notion of “setting” introduced by Professor Lee. The people-centred approach was a theme recurring throughout the panel discussions. Regular assessment of progress was seen as important.

3. What role will policies and strategies for local communities play in enhancing health and quality of life for the populations of cities for the future?

Responses to this question included a number of themes that were subsequently taken up on the following day in the Workshop. These included the idea for age-friendly cities, strategies for engaging and empowering the local community, smart solutions and strengthened assessment of progress in fostering wellbeing for all in cities. This will involve a number of difficult transitions where learning strategies can be applied in supporting the necessary adjustments in communities. A number of these ideas were elaborated in the workshop.

General Comment

The Health, Well Being and Social Welfare strand of the “Cities Learning Together” Conference may be seen as illuminating the EcCoWell principles developed by PASCAL in a context marked by demographic change and growing financial pressures to maintain health services in traditional ways. While there was broad agreement with the conclusion of the McKinsey report that health services in the future will be “strikingly different” and a fair consensus on future sustainable systems, the path towards the desired future requires further discussion and analysis.

The Workshop conducted confirmed that Healthy Cities and Learning Cities have much in common and that individual and community learning strategies can contribute much to health and well being outcomes. The paper prepared by John Field for the Conference demonstrated the small but significant link between learning and health, sociability, wellbeing and empowerment. Conversely, a lack of learning for personal interest led to loneliness and cognitive decline.

Presentations in the Workshop showed that Hong Kong Healthy Cities are soundly based while there is no Learning City development recognised as such. This situation owes much to the leadership of the Department of Health which is now complemented by leadership at the Administrative District level. The absence of a voice to articulate the known benefits of successful learning cities may possibly be a barrier to Hong Kong Healthy Cities developing further in the directions identified in this Conference. However, presentations showed that the Hong Kong Health system has a considerable capacity to adapt to change and emerging issues.

The international participants found much to admire in the presentations on health and Healthy Cities development in Hong Kong with their strengths evident. However, health systems everywhere face the challenges identified in the McKinsey report and a number of similar reports around the world. Supporting Healthy City projects in adapting to these challenges could be facilitated if there was an active process of merging the strengths and features of Healthy Cities and Learning Cities. It may possibly assist Hong Kong Healthy Cities projects making the adjustments discussed in this conference if a pilot Learning City initiative were set up in one of the Administrative Districts to test

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ways in which Learning City objectives and strategies could add value to Hong Kong Healthy Cities in embracing these changes. Such a project might have an initial focus on opportunities for lifelong learning for seniors in local neighbourhoods. Hong Kong has strengths in the Elder Academies, established by the Labour and Welfare Bureau in 2007, which could make a larger contribution to desired health and well being objectives in a coordinated strategic approach.

The health strand of the Conference may be seen as a further step in a process of elaborating PASCAL EcCoWell principles following the Cork International EcCoWell International Conference, and with the Glasgow EcCoWell meeting to follow. The “Cities Learning Together” Conference once again illustrated the value of cities learning together with diversity of experience a catalyst in assessment of individual experience of cities, and in working towards creative, sustainable responses to challenge and change.

REPORT ON THE SOCIAL STRAND

(Session Moderators: Rajesh Tandon and Elizabeth Tang)
(Strand Reporters: Helen Dabu, Howard Nielsen and Martin Henwood)

Notes on the field visit and discussion with migrant workers

This field visit organised by the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic and Adult Education (ASPBAE) in partnership with the Alliance of Progressive Labor- Hong Kong (APL-HK) as the Social Strand of the 11th PASCAL International Observatory Conference highlighted the issues and concerns of migrant workers in Hong Kong and the empowering strategies and learning that they have co-created to assert their rights, seek legal remedies and build movements in Hong Kong to become active agents of change.

The notes below were based on three key activities undertaken within the Social Strand, to wit:

1. Pre-field visit on 17 November to public spaces in Hong Kong where migrant workers converge during their rest day on Sunday
2. Parallel Session on Thematic Strands in the afternoon of Day 1 of the Conference
3. Discussion on 19 November with invited resource speakers from the domestic workers' union in HK and support groups for domestic workers

I. Context

There are about 300,000 domestic workers in Hong Kong, of which, about half are from the Philippines, half from Indonesia and a small number of domestic workers from Sri Lanka, Pakistan and Nepal.

Hong Kong sets a minimum wage for migrant workers which is HK\$3,920 and was recently increased to HK\$ 4,010 as a result of the long struggle of the domestic workers union for wage increase and protection of migrant workers in Hong Kong.

While domestic workers in Hong Kong are guaranteed the right to form unions/associations and publicly assemble or mobilise to express their demands and grievances, they still face significant issues and concerns such as the following:

- a. Rampant contract violations
- b. Maltreatment and abuse
- c. Poor working and living conditions (some sleep in the sofa/living room, on-top of dryers/washing machine, no privacy)
- d. Salary not commensurate to the job they are required to perform
- e. Exorbitant recruitment fees
- f. Employment agencies and loan sharks take advantage of their vulnerable and desperate situation and charge them with high recruitment fees with high interests if

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- they cannot pay these fees; thus, usually, for the first six months of domestic workers in Hong Kong, their salaries go directly to their recruiters and loan sharks
- g. Domestic Workers are prevented to shift to other types of work
 - h. Imposition of a two-week rule by the HK government (domestic workers only have two weeks after expiration or termination of their contract to look for another employer, otherwise, they need to go back to their home countries)
 - i. Health and well-being of migrant workers are compromised due to the conditions of their work and the burden they carry to support their immediate and extended families in their home countries
 - j. Discriminatory and anti-migrant policies

Trends have shown that migrant workers contribute significantly to the economies of labor-sending and labor-receiving countries however this contribution has failed to improve the conditions and treatment of migrant workers. The immigration policies of labor-receiving countries make the foreign domestic workers feel that they are ‘needed but unwanted’, they are the ‘first to be fired, but last to be hired’, and they get blamed by citizens or nationals of their host countries for the rise of unemployment among local workers.

However, as discussed by the migrant workers, the basis for the “hate and the blame” that are directed against them are purely racist and discriminatory since most migrant workers, such as the domestic workers, take on jobs that are considered 3-D jobs (dirty, demeaning and dangerous jobs), jobs which the local workers in the host countries do not want to take.

Migrant workers are confronted by issues and challenges not only in the host countries where they work but also in their home countries as most of these labor-sending countries fail to provide the necessary protection for their migrant workers and do not have concrete reintegration plan for those wanting to go back to their home countries for good. Labor-sending countries have been very aggressive in promoting migration as the key to success for many workers but failing to discuss the social costs of migration.

Remittances sent by migrant workers to their home countries fuel domestic consumerism as in the case of the Philippines where there has been a significant rise in the number of shopping malls in urban areas and increase in the profits of banks and foreign exchange industries. This cycle of consumerism among migrant families results in the failure of the migrant workers to save for their retirement and/or for sudden/urgent financial needs (such as medical emergencies, calamities, etc). Thus, in many cases, after working for 20-30 years and taking care of their employers’ children and household, workers come home without significant savings and forced to send their children to work abroad and provide for the family which continues the cycle of migration.

The plight of migrant workers only highlights the kind of development that is happening in our society at present where profit is valued over human beings. The current capitalist

model of development fails to address chronic marginalization of migrant workers, the elderly, youth, indigenous peoples, stateless persons, and other vulnerable sectors.

The participants of Social Strand shared current interventions and practices in their respective countries that ensure inclusion and empowerment of marginalized sectors, go back to the basics of conscientisation learned from Paulo Freire, assess dominant values that exclude people (individualistic thinking and attitude) and promote more empowering approaches to affirm human dignity.

II. Empowering Strategies: Migrant workers as co-creators of learning and agents of change

With the abovementioned issues and concerns, the domestic workers in Hong Kong demonstrated how they can come together and move to action. Below are their programs and services:

- a. Education – leadership training, gender sensitivity, skills training, migrants rights and legal remedies education, financial literacy

Since the nature of the job of domestic workers (living with their employers, only 5-6 hours of daily rest from Monday to Saturday, only 1 whole day rest day per week) and the Hong Kong government does not provide institutionalized education programs for migrant workers, the workers themselves organize learning opportunities among them.

The skills trainings shared by the Agusan Filipino Migrant Workers Support Group during the pre-field visit tour on Sunday (17 Nov) showed that it can serve as a learning opportunity (providing them livelihood options as part of their reintegration plan) and relaxation activity for migrant workers. An example of this is the bead works that the domestic workers do during their rest day and while chatting with their fellow workers. The trainers are migrant workers themselves thus co-creating learning for their self development. Such learning events are organized in the parks behind a mosque (for Indonesian workers) and on the pedestrian bridges in central area. It shows creative use of spaces and opportunities for supporting learning activities of migrant workers.

- b. Organising & Solidarity

Organising domestic workers is an important educational process, and is fraught with challenges due to the confinement of workers in the employer's home most of the time.

Explaining to domestic workers their rights and the process of seeking legal redress is an important role that members of the domestic workers union play in Hong Kong and is an important component of workers' education and empowerment. The Progressive Labour Union (PLU) is an umbrella union for all domestic workers.

The Union also provides assistance to Migrant workers in distress; the domestic workers union provides counseling, legal and para-legal services (from police reporting to filing of and pursuing legal cases against abusive employers).

Movement building is an important educational process, and domestic women workers learn from each other in this process as well.

c. Savings & Credit

Migrant domestic workers come in to Hong Kong in search of income from which they can send some funds back home, and have a saving. Education of migrant workers on financial literacy and means of savings has been an important learning agenda. The workers themselves have organized a Migrant Workers Credit Union, a sort of cooperative, to channel savings for their own future.

This coop is served by volunteer professionals, some of whom are young boys and girls who were looked after by domestic workers when they were children. The coop also cultivates the habit of regular savings and advice on borrowing and remittances.

d. Support system

Providing strong support system (from the church, faith-based groups, hometown associations, interest-based groups of migrant workers) has been facilitated for migrant workers.

The presentation made by the Filipino Migrant Cancer Support Society (FILCASS) underscored the importance of ensuring the total well-being of domestic workers, especially those in distress. This facility is provided by the Church related service.

The conversations with the Indonesian Migrant Workers during the pre-field visit highlighted the challenges of sustaining their connections with their families in Indonesia beyond remittances.

There is a need to affirm the human worth and dignity of migrant workers beyond the remittances they send back home. Governments must not only measure the impact of migration in terms of economic indicators but to also look at the social costs of migration (human rights abuses against migrant workers, break-up or forced separation of families, children are growing up with one or both parents living abroad, culture of consumerism, brain drain).

e. Partnerships

Several examples of partnerships with universities were also provided. A department of labour studies had conducted a research on labour issues of migrant workers; a legal education department had been providing legal aid clinics to those migrant workers who had come forward to file cases against contract violations or abuses.

However, it was felt that educational institutions can more proactively engage with domestic workers and support improved policies and monitoring of their employment contracts on a regular basis.

III. Further Insights and learnings from the sharing of the domestic workers and their support groups

1. The anchor of development must be human dignity – development must be holistic
2. There is a need to critically look at the issues and concerns of migrant workers in the context of development agenda and strategies both by labor-sending and labor-receiving countries; ensuring that migrant workers are treated as human beings not as commodities.
3. The marginalized sectors such migrant workers, elderly, disadvantaged youth, women, indigenous people, and disabled people are co-creators of learning and agents of change (let's go back to the principles of Freire)
4. Movement building is important in democratizing power (currently dominated by the elite) and ensuring that the marginalized and disadvantaged are included in social and economic development.
5. Pursue pro-migrant bilateral agreements between labor-sending and labor-receiving countries
6. Affirm and ensure enjoyment of hard-fought rights (human rights, education for ALL, Convention on the protection of the rights of all migrant workers and members of their families, Domestic Workers Convention, etc).