

# TEACHING IN ASIA:

## Broadening the fieldwork horizon for Geography teachers

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*Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge Site . Source: [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hong\\_Kong-Zhuhai-Macau\\_Bridge\\_Site\\_HK\\_view\\_201506.jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Hong_Kong-Zhuhai-Macau_Bridge_Site_HK_view_201506.jpg)*

In 2010 I embarked on what was to be a two-year period of work in Hong Kong. As a geography teacher the prospect of new and exciting work opportunities helped to ease the uncertainty of such a significant move. Five years on I have gained a deeper understanding of how living abroad can further our understanding of geography. I must declare that 13 years of teaching the same case studies from the recommended text book rendered boredom not just for the students but for the teacher. Since moving to a foreign country I have embraced the varied and contemporary issues and case studies just waiting to be explored on my doorstep.

Living in a dynamic world city (Hong Kong) has exposed me to a range of wonderful teaching opportunities in both the human and physical aspects of our subject. The 2014 civil protests (known locally as the umbrella movement) was a fascinating time to be living in Hong Kong. Aside from my personal interests in the student sit in I was able to use the protest as a case study with my Yr11 Preliminary Geography students studying the political unit. As a class we reviewed the portrayal of the protests in the western media (namely the Australian press) and compared this to the local reports which undergo significant scrutiny and editing.

### **Year 12 HSC large City study**

Within six months of living in Hong Kong it became apparent that the city would be the obvious choice for my Year 12 Large City study. Having toiled with Sydney year in, year out Hong Kong presented a fresh

and interesting change of focus. Given the physical attributes of this city; namely a population of 7.3 million people, an area of 1107km<sup>2</sup> and an average population density of 6600km<sup>2</sup>, the urban dynamics of change are both easy to find and teach. Urban consolidation and urban renewal are well-worn terms on the nightly news and urban villages exist in abundance.

The smallness of the city ensures a single day field trip (within the usual school hours) can cover more than a third of the districts and take students through a myriad of the old and new that defines Hong Kong. Within a short bus ride students are witness to a building housing 6 foot by 4 foot caged dwellings juxtaposed to real estate that boasts the world's most expensive floor space. Further, the city undertakes mandated renewal within 50 years of a buildings operation leaving a litany of examples for study. Kennedy Town, a district located on the western edge of Hong Kong Island is currently undergoing extensive urban renewal. Older industrial buildings have been cleared to make way for high rise apartment dwellings. On the one hand this renewal provides much need housing yet it also gives rise to spatial inequality.

### **Investigating Asia: Beyond the classroom**

As geographers we are constantly drawn to change and the impacts that accompany change. Living within 30 minutes of the Shenzhen China border I have the luxury of travelling into China after work, on weekends or extensively during holiday periods. Fieldwork opportunities include the following:

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1. Reviewing parallel trading that occurs between Hong Kong and China (a popular topic for the Research Action Plan and SGP tasks)
2. Investigating pollution in the Pearl River Delta
3. Visiting ghost towns/cities that have been built yet scantily occupied such as Nansha located in Panyu; a mere one hour ferry ride from Hong Kong.
4. Interviewing Chinese tourists crossing the border as part of the Hong Kong governments' Special Visa Scheme.
5. Students devise surveys which are administered to local residents to better understand the impact of Chinese investors on the Hong Kong housing market.

By drawing upon local examples I am able to supplement the published Australian examples and draw parallels for students whilst providing a context for the environment in which they live. With the New K-10 Geography Syllabus (due for implementation in 2017) including Asia as a Cross Curriculum Priority, it will be incumbent upon teachers to integrate studies from Asia within each stage of our teaching. Topic areas such as Changing Places and Environmental Change and Management would lend themselves to a study of Hong Kong, China and/or Macau.

The application of these examples is not limited to the senior years. Each of these issues could be applied to units covered in Years 7–10. For example, the building of a bridge from Hong Kong to Macau (see images 2 and 3) and neighboring Zhuhai (due for completion in 2017) could be reviewed as part of the unit titled Place and Livability. When considering the factors that influence the decisions people make about where to live and their perceptions of the liveability of places (ACHGK043) together with the influence of accessibility to services and facilities on the liveability of places (ACHGK044). A ferry ride between Hong Kong and Macau (one hour in duration) would provide a firsthand look at the bridges construction. Classroom discussion could be centered on the reasons for the bridges construction and the possible influence this will have on Macanese residents accessing Hong Kong as a place of work. The possibilities are endless.

A second example would be to investigate the students within your school who live in China and commute daily to Hong Kong. Cross border students from China offer a unique insight into their duality. Questions could be posed such as: Do they attend school in Hong Kong for the English medium curriculum? What restrictions, if any, are placed on their schooling? How would school in China differ from schooling in Hong Kong? Cross border education is a growing trend amongst wealthy Chinese families and could easily be contrasted to boarding schools in Australia.

## Taking the plunge

As geographers we are inherently drawn to the field for information and example. We applaud students who step outside of the classroom and seek the real essence of geography. Whilst working overseas is neither practical nor of interest to everyone I would strongly recommend undertaking a posting overseas. With an Asian centric curriculum there is no better time to investigate a move.

### Source 1



Source: [https://www.google.com.hk/search?q=parallel+trading+hong+kong&espv=2&biw=1242&bih=606&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAcQ\\_AUoAmoVChM18JbQkefNyAIVBTCmCh0wTw-w#imgsrc=WT2CPOHit96MPM%3A](https://www.google.com.hk/search?q=parallel+trading+hong+kong&espv=2&biw=1242&bih=606&source=Inms&tbn=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAcQ_AUoAmoVChM18JbQkefNyAIVBTCmCh0wTw-w#imgsrc=WT2CPOHit96MPM%3A)

Source 1 illustrates Parallel Trading...the movement of goods and services across the border between Hong Kong and China. These are goods not readily available in China or are available but are of an inferior quality.

### Source 2



Source: [http://hk-magazine.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/item\\_image/HK-Zhuhai-Macau%20Bridge%202\\_web2.jpg](http://hk-magazine.com/sites/default/files/imagecache/item_image/HK-Zhuhai-Macau%20Bridge%202_web2.jpg)

Source 2 shows an artist's impression of the finished HK-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge that will link Hong Kong with Macau and Zhuhai in China.



Source 3: Map illustrating the proximity of Hong Kong to Macau and mainland China



Source: [https://www.google.com.hk/search?q=hong+kong+macau+bridge+location&espv=2&biw=1242&bih=606&source=inms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAYQ\\_AUoAw0VChMlrOzdm-jNyAIVBi2mCh2KCQU8#imgdii=bmcYT4bBuJJJeM%3A%3BbmcYT4bBuJJJeM%3A%3BeUrselkqdm-7dM%3A&imgcr=bmcYT4bBuJJJeM%3A](https://www.google.com.hk/search?q=hong+kong+macau+bridge+location&espv=2&biw=1242&bih=606&source=inms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=0CAYQ_AUoAw0VChMlrOzdm-jNyAIVBi2mCh2KCQU8#imgdii=bmcYT4bBuJJJeM%3A%3BbmcYT4bBuJJJeM%3A%3BeUrselkqdm-7dM%3A&imgcr=bmcYT4bBuJJJeM%3A)

Source 4: Map illustrating the location of the bridge between Hong Kong, Macau and Zhuhai.



Source: <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/8416141.stm>

## THE 2015 HSC EXAMINATION REVIEW

Afternoon workshops will focus on investigating, reflecting on and preparing for the 2016 HSC Geography examination. Experienced presenters have all marked the 2015 HSC paper and will share their comments about the HSC Geography Examination.

Information regarding dates and event locations will be sent to all schools in early 2016. Further information will be available on the GTA NSW website – [www.gtansw.org.au](http://www.gtansw.org.au)