Social and Cultural Issues in the Pacific Rim: The Case of International Migration and a Look at Multicultural Planning in Greater Vancouver, British Columbia

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Abstract

This paper has focused on a case study of multicultural planning in Richmond, a municipality of Greater Vancouver. It illustrates the challenges experienced by local government in Vancouver in response to high levels of in-migration from the Pacific Rim. This is just one of a number of interesting research projects examining the challenges of immigration settlement in Canada carried out by the RIIM-Metropolis Centre of University of British Columbia. International migration across the Pacific Rim has been in the spotlight recently. In Canada, the Asia-Pacific region is now the primary source region for immigration, contributing over half of all immigrants. Hong Kong has been a significant sending country of migrants to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s. The dramatic change in Richmond’s population composition due to Hong Kong migration can be gleaned by population statistics over the 1980s and 1990s. A major social policy challenge facing Richmond at start of the new millennium was the potential isolation of the Hong Kong community from long-term residents of other cultural backgrounds. Contemporary migration patterns in the Pacific Rim are here to stay and are a key factor in our globalizing world. The role of migrant workers, the impact of refugee moments, the consequences of growing irregular movements and increasing emergence of highly skilled migrants are all very significant. What I find interesting is the likely consequences for countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In countries such as Japan and Korea the existing proportion of foreign residents is very low, smaller than in European countries; while it is larger in Singapore and Malaysia. However, the potential for growth is obvious. The Indian sub-continent provides a vast labour reservoir. Economic and political reform in China could open the door for mass labour migration, while setbacks to reform could lead to refugee movements. Indonesia and the Philippines have considerable population growth, and regard labour export as a vital part of their economic strategies. The fast-growing economies of East and South-east Asia seem certain to pull in large numbers of migrant workers in the future. It is hard to believe that this will not lead to some degree of settlement, with far-reaching social and political consequences.

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I. Introduction

The topic of international migration has drawn increasing attention in recent years in the Asia-Pacific region, partly because of the dramatic growth of in the number of people crossing national boundaries (Castles and Miller, 1998). Interest has also been stimulated by recognition of the diversity among international migrants: These range from long-term immigrants, refugees, temporary workers, tourists, executives of multinational corporations, students, and so on. Each type is important for different reasons and each demands separate consideration with respect to policies of sending and receiving countries. In some countries, public controversy has arisen because of illegal immigration or purposeful overstaying of visitors with tourist visas or temporary work permits, calling further attention to international migration.

International migration across the Pacific Rim has also been in the spotlight recently (see studies by Fawcett and Carino, 1987; Castles and Miller, 1998; Goodman et al., 2003; Iredale et al., 2003). On the one hand, Asian refugees from Afghanistan, Laos, Kampuchea and Vietnam have been identified as groups having severe adaptation problems in countries of first asylum or countries of eventual resettlement. On the other hand, economic migrants from Hong Kong and other Asian sources have been singled out as the most ‘successful’ group among contemporary immigrants to the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. These contrasting pictures reflect the real diversity among Asian international migrants.

It is very interesting that while Asia-Pacific is home to more than half of the world’s people it is also the world’s main source region for international migrants – those leaving home in search of a better life through temporary employment or permanent residence in another country. However, there are today relatively few options for permanent resettlement, with the prospect of eventually attaining the rights of citizenship in a new country. The opportunities that do exist, moreover, are nearly all found in four Pacific Rim nations: Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States. Among these, the United States admits most of the world’s immigrants (Castles and Miller, 1998).

In Canada, my home country, the Asia-Pacific region is now the primary source region for immigration, contributing over half of all immigrants (119,000 people out of a total of 229,100 in 2002). (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002). This predominance of people from Asia is the outcome of a dramatic realignment of Canadian immigration patterns that has taken place in just the past forty years. In 1960, Europe was still the main source of immigrants to Canada as it had been throughout Canadian history. These numerical shifts in immigration to Canada are closely paralleled by recent changes in immigration to the United States, Australia and New Zealand. The growth of Asian immigration to all four countries was made possible by similar policy changes, which eliminated earlier discriminatory provisions. The new policies provide, in effect, equal opportunities for admission regardless of the immigrant’s nationality or ethnicity. It is no surprise that these policy reforms produced significant shifts in immigration patterns, but the predominance of people from Asian countries was not really anticipated.

Most Asian immigrants across the Pacific Rim come from just five countries –
Greater China (including Hong Kong and Taiwan), the Philippines, Vietnam, South Korea and India. Even so, the exact pattern of inward migration for the four Pacific Rim receiving countries is slightly different. Canada’s top-ranked Asian admissions in 2002 were the People’s Republic of China, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, Iran, Republic of Korea, and Sri Lanka. Up to the reunification of Hong Kong with China in 1997, Hong Kong had been the previously most important flow of new migrants from about the mid-1980s (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2002).

To reiterate an earlier point, the changes that are taking place in patterns of Pacific Rim migration flows reflect to some degree a worldwide increase in international population movements, involving not only immigrants and refugees but also contract workers, business people, students, tourists, and illegal or undocumented migrants. A further observation is that although Asian people are the dominant group in permanent immigration streams in the Pacific Rim, the actual numbers involved are not large relative to the size of the populations of Asian sending countries. However, the volume of such movements is sufficient to have impacts on the demographic structure of smaller countries in the region, such as Hong Kong (and especially so in the case of the Pacific Islands). The volume of migration flows are also of sufficient size to affect population growth rates in larger industrialized host countries where birth rates are low, and to have a noticeable influence on various other aspects of sending and receiving societies.

Canada, as a major receiving country, has adopted a ‘multicultural model’ of immigration policy at the government level. This implies that immigrants should be granted equal rights in all spheres of society, without being expected to give up their diversity, although usually with an expectation of conformity to certain key values. On the part of the receiving society, there is also the assumption that multiculturalism implies the willingness of the majority group to accept cultural differences in society, and state action to secure equal rights for minorities (Multiculturalism and Citizenship, Canada, 1991). Naturally enough there have been many challenges to implementing ‘equal rights’ in practice, especially with balancing the demands of newcomers with the values and norms of the mainstream society.

The remainder of this paper considers just one impact of the increasing flows of immigrants to Greater Vancouver (the name normally given to the metropolitan region surrounding the city of Vancouver) in the last 20 years or so. Specifically, it reviews aspects of the large number of Hong Kong Chinese migrants who have settled in the municipality of Richmond (part of Greater Vancouver) and the need to adopt a ‘multicultural planning’ model by the local municipal council and its staff. First, I will discuss some of the geographical patterns that have resulted from Hong Kong migration to Vancouver since the 1980s.

II. Hong Kong Migration to Canada

As mentioned earlier, Hong Kong has been a significant sending country of migrants to Canada in the 1980s and 1990s. While migration from Hong Kong subsided after 1997 (reflecting greater political certainty in that region) in the 20 years from 1975
to 1995 Hong Kong ranked first in source countries sending migrants to Canada. In
Vancouver, the large numbers of Hong Kong migrants led to new patterns of Chinese
residential locations, away from the older downtown core to newer suburban neigh-
bourhoods. This process has been quite recent, as even as late as the early 1960s the
majority of Chinese in Vancouver were living either downtown, either in the city’s
traditional ‘Chinatown’ itself or in the adjacent lower-income residential district of
Strathcona. However, many thousands of Chinese, either new migrants from Hong
Kong or elsewhere, or those born in Canada, had by that time also moved to suburban
residences at much lower levels of relative concentration (Cho and Leigh, 1972). This
has been due largely to the higher incomes of recent Hong Kong migrants, their higher
occupational status and their higher position in society. In particular, the decades of the
1980s and 1990s saw more ethnic Chinese from Hong Kong and elsewhere take up
residence in almost all the inner and middle suburban municipalities in the Greater
Vancouver region. Geographical analysis of population data in these decades indicate
that dual processes are at work – leading to spatial dispersion as well as local suburban
clustering, simultaneously, giving rise to new areas of suburban concentration. Indeed,
the new areas where Hong Kong migrants have located are found mainly in the suburbs
surrounding Vancouver City, from Coquitlam in the northeast to Surrey in the southeast,
and notably Richmond, the municipality lying south of Vancouver and adjacent to
Vancouver International Airport.

Rising demand for houses in the suburbs by Hong Kong migrants has had a
number of consequences, especially from those with high income and/or wealth (i.e.
immigrants with professional occupations, or those whom were entrepreneurs). Thus,
during the period from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s two issues in particular
captivated Vancouverites. One involved the connection between Hong Kong migrants
and so-called ‘monster house’ or ‘mega house’ syndrome (Li, 1994; Ley, 1995; Mitchell,
1995, 1997). Indeed, real estate issues involving Hong Kong migrants became
extremely contentious when members of the local population realized that Chinese
residents had unique housing preferences (Majury, 1994). For instance, after living in
crowded Hong Kong, new migrants often wanted large homes cut off from the crowds
they thought must be outside. Under Chinese feng shui (‘wind and water’) rules of
geometry a sloping ceiling was thought to bring bad luck, so roofs had to be flattened.
Trees near the front door divided the family so these had to be removed (Ley, 1995;
Mitchell, 1997). After buying traditional Canadian west coast style houses, new owners
from Hong Kong often converted them to box-like multi-story dwellings that filled
almost the entire lot compete with multi-car garages. Thick walls and high hedges
marked the borders of what were promptly dubbed ‘monster’ houses due to their
insensitive design and harsh contrast with more long-established Vancouver residences.
Some citizens pressured city councils to legislate against this style of housing, and so
from 1986 to 1992, several local by-laws were passed to regulate house sizes and lot
coverage and to require neighbourhood preservation (Li, 1994).

The second issue of importance to Vancouver residents was the connection
between Hong Kong money and its perceived impact on house prices (Baxter, 1989;
Gutstein, 1990; Ley, 1998). As an example, in the recent boom years of Vancouver’s
real estate markets (from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s) the assessed value of west-
side houses in elite suburbs of the City of Vancouver increased dramatically by as much as 300 per cent. These areas, such as Kerrisdale, Oakridge and Shaughnessy, were all favoured by wealthy Hong Kong migrants, and the degree to which they contributed to this type of inflation in property markets became subject to much debate (Gutstein, 1990). One quantitative analysis conducted by Ley and Tutchner (2001) found a strong statistical association between Vancouver’s housing price inflation and levels of immigration from Hong Kong in the years 1986–1996.

Other polemical issues of the last decade included certain unwelcome traits associated with investment from Hong Kong (and the wider Asia-Pacific region) directed into local housing and condominium apartments. Most notable among these was the fact that certain properties were being sold exclusively to prospective residents in Hong Kong, rather than to residents living in Vancouver, and were connected with the practice of property ‘flipping’ in rising real estate markets (i.e. short-term speculative buying and selling). These were much publicized and accordingly caught the ire of the local population, especially during the early part of the housing boom during 1987–1989. Still, public pressure for corrective policy action abated eventually during the decade of the 1990s as the rate of pace in property developments slowed. In fact, neither provincial nor city governments showed much enthusiasm for controls on real estate that might adversely affect either flows of people or investment to Vancouver, either from Hong Kong or the wider Asia-Pacific region (Ley et al., 1992). Yet another issue for many long-term suburban residents concerned competition with new migrants over resources for their children’s educational programs, especially the availability of spaces at ‘good schools’. Of course this was closely related to the geographical clustering of new Hong Kong migrants at the local level in just a few locations, at the same time that their overall housing preferences spread into the suburbs (Wong and Netting, 1992). Hence, in some of the best Vancouver public schools, ethnic Chinese often made up a majority of students. For the City of Vancouver as a whole over half of all public school students spoke English only as a second language by the end of the 1980s (Bulla, 1989).

This transformation of certain suburbs in metropolitan Vancouver, and the resistance from local residents over certain issues, reflected the experience of other ‘ethnoburbs’ in North America and elsewhere (Li, forthcoming). However, we believe that on balance the overall experience of Hong Kong immigration into Vancouver may be judged as having occurred in a remarkably smooth fashion, despite the many challenges of accommodating recent immigrants into suburban schools and neighbourhoods. In part, we argue this has been due to the increased economic opportunities that many migrants themselves have brought to Vancouver, a subject that the paper deals with in a following section. In part also it has been due to the efforts made by several municipalities and NGOs (non-government organizations) who work within the metropolitan region on behalf of newly arrived migrants, whether from Hong Kong or other parts of Asia-Pacific. While the level of effort has been uneven, over the last twenty years many agencies, including certain local governments, have promoted multiculturalism at the local level, attempted to ward off any nascent symptoms of racism, and provided special services for Hong Kong and other Asian immigrants (Edgington and Hutton, 2002). The paper now turns to the City of Richmond as an illustrative case study of these issues.
III. Multicultural Planning in the City of Richmond

The City of Richmond lies about 12 kms south from the centre of Vancouver and comprises a series of delta islands, including Sea Island on which is located the Vancouver International airport. Its relative proximity to the downtown and cheaper land prices than in the City of Vancouver has made it one of the most rapidly growing municipalities in the Greater Vancouver region. By way of illustration, Richmond’s population growth rate has averaged between two and four per cent per year, and in less than a twenty year period Richmond’s population increased by around 50 per cent from approximately 100,000 in 1981 to 150,000 in 1997 (Domae, 1998). This rate of growth has naturally enough required intense building activity to accommodate the housing and consumer needs of new residents. As will be shown, such a high speed of change has been a major source of anxiety for long-term Euro-Canadian residents, and this together with the influx of Hong Kong-Chinese has also caused concerns about inter-ethnic relations in this largely suburban community.

Until the early 1980s immigrants to Richmond had come largely from Britain, Germany, Holland and the Scandinavian countries. By contrast, the top five source countries of immigrants to Richmond in the first half of the 1990s were Hong Kong, the PRC, Taiwan, the Philippines and India. Immigrants from Hong Kong alone comprised just under half of all immigrants to Richmond in this period (City of Richmond, 1998a).

The dramatic change in Richmond’s population composition due to Hong Kong migration can be gleaned by population statistics over the 1980s and 1990s. Whereas the British/English population comprised 47.6 per cent in 1981, by 1996 this figure had dropped to just 20.6 per cent. Conversely, the Chinese ethnic population (including Hong Kong immigrants, but also those from Taiwan, the PRC and elsewhere) had increased from around 7.0 per cent in 1981 to 33.7 per cent in 1996 (see also City of Richmond, 1998b). These dramatic shifts also changed the nature of inter-ethnic relations in Richmond in the same twenty-year period. Until the mid-1980s the overwhelming absolute size and proportional representation of the dominant British population placed the Hong Kong community on the periphery of inter-ethnic relations, and tangible representations of Chinese ethnic culture, such as temples, retail stores, schools, housing and so on, were few. But after then the ascendency of the Chinese and Hong Kong residential population has had a number of implications for the landscape of Richmond.

First, and perhaps most contentious has been the housing preferences of many of the new immigrants. As noted earlier, this has been manifested in the much-publicized ‘mega-house’ (or ‘monster house’) debate over the large dwellings catering primarily for newly arrived Chinese populations, perceived as grossly out of scale by the local, traditional community (see Ray, Halseth and Johnson, 1997; Domae, 1998). At one level, the ‘monster house’ controversy related to objections of long-standing (and mainly Anglo-background) citizens both to the scale and design features of new homes built for many new immigrant families. Most of the older houses in Richmond’s residential neighbourhoods were indeed of modest dimensions, constructed significantly below the zoned potential of the single-family sites. Many of these were subsequently demolished by recent immigrants, and replaced by houses built out to the maximum
floor space allowable in the local by-laws, both to accommodate the extended families common to new immigrant cohorts, and also to realize the potential value of the (increasingly expensive) residential lots. However, the most pejorative connotation of the ‘monster house’ usage in Richmond related more to what many viewed as outlandishly ostentatious and unsympathetic design values. These included their characteristic pastel exteriors, box-like shape, garishly-tiled flat roofs, pillars framing ‘cathedral-style’ front entrances, and paved front yards, with little or no landscaping (Ray, Halseth and Johnson, 1997).

There were no doubt legitimate objections to these ‘monster houses’, especially on aesthetic grounds, among local Richmond residents who vigorously opposed their proliferation within the municipality. But the debate, which throughout the late 1980s and early 1990s permeated public meetings, letters to the editors of the local press, television coverage and City council sessions, soon assumed a harsher and more hostile tone. The ‘monster houses’ were depicted in the local press as inimical to the traditional scale and design attributes of Richmond’s established residential neighbourhoods. Moreover, their tendency (at least indirectly) to inflate housing prices and residential taxes was seen as presaging a classic invasion and succession process (Domae, 1998). In this way the more affluent new immigrants were perceived as displacing existing households, and thus dramatically reshaping the social morphology of the community. The vehemence of some of these objections invoked a vigorous counter-reaction among new immigrants, including accusations of racism and discrimination (ibid.).

Fortunately, Richmond council and its planning staff recognized the particularly divisive and destructive nature of the ‘monster house’ conflict and took a leadership role in inter-cultural negotiation to reduce this land-use conflict. Between November 1993 and June 1995 they undertook a series of public meetings (including a special community task force) to address the issue, culminating in no fewer than seven residential development by-law amendments implemented. These included provisions relating to (notably) required setbacks, landscaping, and the building ‘envelope’ (interview with Terry Crowe, Manager, Policy Planning Department, City of Richmond, July 2001). The City was therefore instrumental in largely shifting the locus of the debate from a hostile inter-ethnic arena to a more ‘typical’ community planning process. This resulted in a series of compromise by-law amendments which, while not totally satisfying to either side of this contentious issue, comprised a somewhat mutual accommodation of interests. The controversy over ‘monster houses’ in Richmond no doubt left a legacy of bitterness or grievance among some parties. But in the half-decade following the resolution of this debate, local social planners reported that at least an apparent measure of progress in community integration had been achieved (interview with Kari Hulala, City Planning Office, City of Richmond, July 1999). Yet notwithstanding such an outcome, there is still the larger question of how can new landscape and urban design preferences of recent immigrant groups be inserted into mature residential communities. A study by Domae (1998) on Richmond in the 1990s raises this issue by asking how can local governments reconcile conflicts over identity and cultural expression with their more traditional planning processes focused upon land use planning. This case study on differences in housing design preferences illustrates well the complexity of the issues concerned, while at the same time pointing to at least the
willingness of the Richmond planning department to strike a compromise to satisfy the needs of new immigrants as well as established residents.

A second controversy in the last decade comprised the development of a central 11 ha. block for so-called ‘Chinese shopping centres’ located on or close to the corner of Number 3 and Cambie Roads, City of Richmond, in the first half of the 1990s. The development of large-scale specialty Chinese retail centres began in 1990 with the C$200 million Aberdeen Centre, containing predominantly Chinese-owned shops, cinemas, a bowling alley, restaurants, professional and health services and banks oriented to ethnic Chinese customers. At the time this was North America’s largest Asian mall and somewhat of a novelty. However, this project was followed relatively quickly by five other commercial-retail complexes, Parker Place, the Yaohan Centre, President Plaza, Central Square and Continental Square, between 1991 and 1997. Yet another five major centres were built in 1997. Street signs and interior signage in all these developments featured large Chinese characters alongside, often overshadowing smaller English letters. The stores themselves sold products and services that catered to Hong Kong migrants and other Chinese customers exclusively, including Chinese food products, herbal medicines and designer cosmetics. All projects, except the original Aberdeen Centre, contained strata-titled shop and office units sold or leased to new immigrants from Hong Kong as well as established Chinese residents. These were drawn to the Centre either to open a business, and so own the commercial space (instead of leasing the space), or to buy the space as an investment tool (see below).

Soon after these projects began business, long-time residents complained vehemently about the absence of English signs. The city council and local media received numerous letters about this issue during the early 1990s. To address such a polarized conflict, city representatives met with Chinese retailers, administrators of the Chinese malls, the local Chamber of Commerce, and the Chinese Business Association, and remonstrated that the inclusion of English on signage was important for community harmony as well as for business reasons. Consequently, mall administrators eventually requested that merchants display English language signage throughout the store and employ at least one English-speaking sales clerk. Retailers were also encouraged to attend customer seminars sponsored by the malls to learn North American customer service expectations (Domae, 1998). Nonetheless, one study by Nan (1999) noted that there often remained communication problems between the Chinese sales people and English-speaking customers, making Caucasians a distinct minority among their customers. Indeed, there is no doubt that the overall marketing strategy of these new Chinese shopping centres has been targeted at the Chinese-Canadian community by supplying specialty merchandise and services (see also Lai, 2000; 2001). In fact, such a market orientation has been imperative for Chinese shopping centres to emerge and survive in Greater Vancouver’s retail market.

These two inter-ethnic land use planning situations in Richmond speak to the literature on local government and multicultural planning, such as by Ameyaw (2000: 101) who argues for an ‘appreciative planning’ approach to urban planning in a multicultural context. ‘Appreciative planning is a model based upon mutual respect,
trust and care-based action’. In Richmond, the municipal government and their land use planners were willing to work with both new and long-standing citizens, community groups and businesses, and were reasonably successful in diffusing local tensions. Each one of these ‘stakeholder’ groups played a pivotal role in facilitating the process of mutual accommodation, yet the key to managing this process was the consultation and communication between all stakeholders under the guidance of local government. As noted in Domae’s (1998) study, the city’s leadership was essential in understanding where ethnic interests coincided in Richmond, as well as where they collided, and such leadership proved to be crucial to the mutual accommodation process. She concluded that although residual friction existed in some parts of the community, by the end of the 1990s a surprising balance of interests prevailed between traditional Richmond residents and the Hong Kong newcomers (ibid.).

A major social policy challenge facing Richmond at start of the new millennium was the potential isolation of the Hong Kong community from long-term residents of other cultural backgrounds. Some commentators feared that two distinct cultures were emerging. For instance, the same amenities and language facilities that made Richmond so convenient to the Chinese, also functioned as a ‘cultural shield’ between Hong Kong immigrants and the mainstream Canadian society. Armstrong (2001) comments `many school children, normally the fastest group to pick up a new culture, are not doing so because they are dropped into schools and neighbourhoods where most youngsters are now Chinese’. The city of Richmond, which has predominantly English-speaking officials, has attempted over the years to reach out to the local Chinese community and explain council services. Yet while translations are available of certain council publicity sheets and information brochures, this has been sporadic rather than systematic. To compensate, major events are provided by the city in order to break down barriers between the traditionally English-background council and the new Chinese and other non-English speaking communities; council planners will also attend and provide stalls in the ethnic communities’ own ‘cultural fairs’ (interview with T. Crowe, op.cit.).

Mention must also be made of local NGOs and their role in providing settlement services for newly-arrived migrants and assisting their integration into the local community. For example, in response to the growth in Hong Kong immigrants, a non-profit services agency called SUCCESS (United Chinese Community Enrichment Services Society) opened a branch office in Richmond in 1989. Li (1992:129) notes that “within a year of operation, the Richmond office of SUCCESS reported serving over 6,000 individuals through its various programs, and providing direct consultation services to more than 300 clients per month”. SUCCESS is the principal social service agency in Vancouver helping orient and settle new Chinese immigrants and assisting Chinese Canadians to overcome language and cultural barriers. It provides a broad range of services that include family and youth counseling, women’s and senior’s programs, public education, employment services, immigrant classes for new arrivals, and ESL classes. Services are provided in Cantonese, Mandarin and English. The main office is in Vancouver city, with branches in Richmond as well as other municipalities, Burnaby and Coquitlam (interview with Francis Li, Social Worker, SUCCESS, Richmond Office, Richmond, February, 2001).
IV. Conclusion

This paper has focused on a case study of multicultural planning in Richmond, a municipality of Greater Vancouver. It illustrates the challenges experienced by local government in Vancouver in response to high levels of in-migration from the Pacific Rim. This is just one of a number of interesting research projects examining the challenges of immigration settlement in Canada carried out by the RIIM-Metropolis Centre of my University. You can see our many working papers on http://www.riim.metropolis.net/.

Let me finish this essay with some thoughts on the social and cultural issues that need to be addressed by growing levels of international immigration in the Pacific region. The dramatic changes in the Pacific Rim reflect to a degree a worldwide increase in international population movements. This in turn is a major consequence of the ‘North-South gap’. Growing differentials in life expectancy, demography, economic structure, social conditions and political stability between the industrial democracies and most of the rest of the world – looms as a major barrier to the creation of a peaceful and prosperous global society.

Despite the rapid growth, international movements are still quite small in comparison with Asia-Pacific’s vast population, and so it is likely that calls for economic improvement can only lead to further immigration in search for better opportunities overseas. Contemporary migration patterns in the Pacific Rim are here to stay and are a key factor in our globalizing world. The role of migrant workers, the impact of refugee moments, the consequences of growing irregular movements and increasing emergence of highly skilled migrants are all very significant. They are making increasing vital contributions to modern economic, social and cultural development and social and political transformation. It is clear that the four major migration receiving countries – United States, Australia, New Zealand and Canada – will have to meet demands to take many more Asian migrants in future years.

What I find interesting is the likely consequences for countries in the Asia-Pacific region. In countries such as Japan and Korea the existing proportion of foreign residents is very low, smaller than in European countries; while it is larger in Singapore and Malaysia. However, the potential for growth is obvious. The Indian sub-continent provides a vast labour reservoir. Economic and political reform in China could open the door for mass labour migration, while setbacks to reform could lead to refugee movements. Indonesia and the Philippines have considerable population growth, and regard labour export as a vital part of their economic strategies. The fast-growing economies of East and South-east Asia seem certain to pull in large numbers of migrant workers in the future. It is hard to believe that this will not lead to some degree of settlement, with far-reaching social and political consequences.

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