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**'It's not what it was': British Migrants in Postcolonial Hong Kong**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores the colonial in postcolonial migration tracing its surfaces in the bodies, travel and settlement practices of British expatriates in Hong Kong and in the architecture and social arrangements of their everyday lives. It argues that empire still matters and makes matter; that it has tangible surfaces in lives and buildings, in scenes of routine operation. Its focus is a fragment of the Hong Kong post/colonial-landscape-in-transition. It is grounded in the operation of two social clubs, a microcosm of broader social changes, as Hong Kong establishes its new relationship with China; and as new intersections between migrant and Chinese bodies forming the post-colony forge emerging social morphologies. It argues that new instantiations of old, colonial, surfaces inflect the production of postcolonial (white) Britishness-in-migration; and shape migrants' engagement with landscapes of new settlement and (ethnicised and racialised) difference.

**Key words:** British migrants, Hong Kong (post)coloniality, ethnicity

## **Migration Research, Race, Ethnicity and Postcoloniality: Framing Considerations**

In *Brits Abroad* the Institute for Public Policy Research (Sriskandarajah & Drew 2006) suggest that six million British citizens – one tenth of our population – now live overseas. While they are highly concentrated in Australia, Spain, the US and Canada 1; there are British migrants living in every country in the world, propelled by various motivations, including a trickle of return migration among British citizens with migrant origins. Despite its scale, British emigration has attracted little attention; until recently. Contemporary migration research is now generating a small but vibrant new literature on British expatriates. Walsh's (2006) research in Dubai, O'Reilly's (2000) research in Spain, Yeoh and Willis' (2005) research in China, Fechter's (2007) research on mobile professionals in Jakarta, Amit's (2007) research on Canadian-based consultants and my own research in Hong Kong (Knowles 2005, Knowles and Harper 2008) explores social and cultural settlement practices and migrants' engagement with landscapes of new settlement. Expatriate lives, from a range of Western countries, also feature in the literature on elite transnationals (Castells 2000, Sassen 2002, Hannerz 1996); in literature on 'skilled' and 'transient' migrants (Findlay 1995, Beaverstock 2005); and in a burgeoning literature recognising that a range of ordinary people – students, pensioners, second home owners – in fact cast their lives in global terms (Scott 2006, Conradson and Latham 2005, Clarke 2005, Smith 2005, Amit 2007, King 2002).

Expatriate is a widely contested term but is used in this collection to draw attention to the experiences of citizens of 'Western' nation states who are involved in temporary migration to destinations inside and outside of the

West. Temporariness involves a wide range of temporalities from a year, to what eventually accumulates to a lifetime of deferred decisions to move-on in the unfolding of individual biographies. Expatriate or 'expat' also captures the way these migrants refer to themselves; the ways in which they establish inclusions and exclusions around migrant origins to differentiate 'types' of migrant and to differentiate migrants from locals. In our research in Hong Kong, for example, expatriates migrating from the Indian subcontinent are not referred to, nor do they refer to themselves, as expats, but Australians and Americans and, sometimes, British citizens of Indian descent are referred to and refer to themselves in this way. The contours of inclusion and exclusion drawn around expat status have something to do with race and ethnicity; but *what* is not immediately obvious.

This observation opens onto a bigger and more fraught issue in migration research: a reluctance to include analysis of race and ethnicity and, relatedly, hesitance in using postcolonial frameworks to contextualise migration. Before moving on I will say something about how the concepts race, ethnicity and postcolonial are being used in this paper.

As a sub-field of Sociology, *Race and Ethnicity* engages with racism, the production of difference, identities, social inequalities and so on, but has had little to say about migration or the migrant origins of those whose circumstances are defined by these concerns. On a separate, parallel, track in *Migration Studies*, migration is rarely (explicitly) framed using the concepts of race and ethnicity. While race and ethnicity are often implied or assumed, they are rarely directly included as key terms of analysis. Race and ethnicity are rarely used in UK migration debates discussing migrants' from developing to Western countries, for example. The various terms used to refer to these

migrants - 'economic migrants', (equally unwanted but more deserving) 'asylum seekers', 'illegal immigrants', 'students', 'overstayers' and so on – invoke implied racial and ethnic categories in popular understanding which are rarely made explicit . Admittedly these migrants are not raced and ethnicised in any straightforward way. They include (white) citizens of Eastern European and Balkan countries, (black) Africans and those whose racial designations blur its starker boundaries like Turkish Kurds, Iraqis and so on. The ways in which these migrations are constructed as *problematic* - in popular debate, government policy and sympathetically-oriented research - is implicitly raced and ethnicised, in combination with other factors, such as the economic, social and political circumstances of sending countries and the (lack of) opportunities they afford their potentially mobile populations.

While the working presumption in public policy and debate is that migration *into* Western countries is problematic for a range of reasons; the opposite holds for expatriate migrants departing Western countries. Expat skills contribute to receiving countries, they place no burden on sender or host countries and they are 'invisible in terms of ethnicity' (Findlay 1995:515): an open admission that ethnicity features in the calculation of problematic migrating populations. Invisibility is a key claim of whiteness, as the voluminous literature on this subject suggests (Dyer 1997); and expatriates, skilled migrants and elite transnationals, at least those without migrant genealogies extending to non-Western countries, are predominantly white. Because there is no straightforward mapping of race and ethnicity onto migration does not mean we should ignore their entanglement. Proportions of white and non-white expats are not the central issue: the intersections and entanglements between whiteness and expatriatesness is, on the other hand, a

key issue deserving closer attention than it has so far received. First, some further framing illuminating white racialness and ethnicity.

Race and ethnicity are fluid categories with powerful histories, generated in relationship with places, with other people, with activities and objects of material culture. Drawing on Winant (1994a:37) who argues that race is 'engraved on our beings' as well as the broader social landscape of the racial order <sup>2</sup>; it is useful to conceptualise race and ethnicity as social and political distinctions made and sustained through human agency (Knowles 2003:28): simultaneously personal and structural, part of who we are, how we operate in the world, and the way the social world is organised. Although race and ethnicity are not the same, ethnicity invoking cultural performances, language and more besides, they often operate in tandem, as fluid, indefinite but powerful resources in societies where they carry structural as well as personal resonance (Knowles 2003:41), and are constituted in the production of human subjectivity and space.

Like other social forms designated by the term race, white raciality too is shifting and dynamic (Gallagher 2004); uncertain and unstable (Bonnet 1998, 2000); produced through social and political claims (Braman 1999:1402-3), cultural performance (Schueller 1999); and is emphatically asserted in colonial contexts where racialized categories are breached by the messiness of social practices (Stoler 2002:153). I will return to this connection between whiteness and empire later in a brief discussion of postcolonial framing. Versions of whiteness are as differentiated as the subjectivities, spaces and social contexts through which they are produced. From the vantage-point of California and women's lives Frankenberg (1993) details the everyday operation of white racialness in desire, experience and reflexivity;

mapping lives onto broader racial landscapes. Her point is that gender, time and place matter. Consequently, in this paper, whiteness is not conceptualized as un-fractured, or as only fractured by citizenship and long-claimed belonging as in the idea of *white Britishness* suggests, but by more specific circumstances too: by styles of migration, by place and by biography. In this paper I am concerned white Britishness produced in the lives of migrants living in Hong Kong: other lives and other locations produce other versions. Additionally, there is wide variation within locations around biographical circumstances, forms of local connection and competence in engaging with (cultural, ethnic and other forms of) difference. The British migrants I interviewed in Hong Kong displayed variation in these capacities; but those who feature in this paper are by no means voicing unique or exceptional views.

Whiteness is neither intrinsic nor an aesthetic property of flesh-tone. It is produced in combination with claimed national origins, access to social goods (including mobility), location of everyday operation and available forms of social advantage and disadvantage. This formulation of whiteness includes Lipsitz's (1998:vii-viii) point that whiteness is about the accumulation and transmission of advantage inter-generationally, built on the spoils of multiple exclusions and discrimination, mobilized in the organization of racialized societies. While this suggests a more monolithic version of whiteness than I am comfortable with, it makes a useful point about transmission and accumulation; issues that have a bearing on the past, in the context of this paper, a past marked by empire and the postcolonial landscapes onto which empires opened. The fact that transmission and accumulation are uneven

processes that are unevenly racialized does not discount it from our analytical attentions.

Contemporary migration is rarely conceived through frameworks that acknowledge the routes etched by empire and the postcolonial landscapes to which they gave way. This raises two questions. What might this involve? And, secondly, which postcolonial frameworks, given the diversity and contested nature of the 'postcolonial' in postcolonial scholarship? A useful entry point into this literature is its connection with race. Dyer (1997) suggests that the effectiveness of whiteness lies in its occupying a central but undeclared and unmarked position from which the world is known and judged; a thesis that corresponds with the seminal works of postcolonial theory in Said's (2003) classic *Orientalism* criticising the occidental production of knowledge about the orient. In the gap opened by Said the most useable postcolonial scholarship attends to the specifics of imperial governance and its postcolonial legacies in particular places (Abbas 1998, Wu 1999, Flowerdew 1998, Skeldon 1997, Holland 2000 for example deal with Hong Kong); to the operation of colonial power and anti-colonial struggle (Scott 1999:12); and to quotidian details of colonial life (Stoler 2002). Postcolonial frameworks grounded in the materialities of people, places and objects, and which trace the past in the operation of the present, provide the kind of postcolonial framework in which we might usefully review the production of white Britishness in scenes of contemporary migration. Postcolonial theory is often vague on the relationship between past and present, taking a speculative rather than material stance, giving the impression that the past *hangs around*, only to surface in people's attitudes of arrogance and assumed superiority over others. Although postcolonial whiteness is widely suspected as a medium for



the articulation of colonial pasts; the mechanisms by which this operates are rarely concretely specified. In this paper empire is conceptualised as a framework for understanding, evaluating and operating in the world, transacted through the arrangement, deployment and decoration of space, grounded in 'the club'; and through its instantiation in the bodies and practices of postcolonial subjects.

### **Hong Kong and Its British Migrants**

The colonial in the postcolonial is particularly visible in Hong Kong. Reverting to China in 1997 Hong Kong is a capsule of the postcolonial world where the colonial still lies close to the surface; written on the streets and buildings with their fading crests, and inscribed, in multiple and subtle ways, in the lives of those who live there. Our research in Hong Kong (1998-2003) <sup>3</sup> coincided with a particular moment in the production of contemporary Hong Kong as it became a Special Administrative Region (SAR) of Mainland China. Only slowly did the social and political changes accompanying this reverberate through the lives of Hong Kong's residents, and these processes coincided with our (sporadic and drawn-out) fieldwork activities. A significant world migration magnet drawing people across the border from China, Europe, SE Asia and other Western countries; Hong Kong has accumulated a stratified migrant labour force – Indian, European, Philippine, American – similar to other SE Asian and Middle Eastern migrant destinations like Dubai and Singapore. Despite its fluctuating economic fortunes, it attracts leading global corporations whose elegant glass and concrete towers form the core of a thoroughly modern and vibrant city. Its future is closely interwoven with China, a major force among global economies, and this gives added impetus to

Hong Kong as a migrant destination, despite a growing onward movement to Beijing and Shanghai as epicentres of current and spectacular economic growth.

Numerically British migrants in Hong Kong are insignificant. The 2001 Hong Kong census reported less than 19, 000 of them, or point three per cent of the Hong Kong population which is 95 per cent Chinese, and includes many Mainland migrants, who still arrive at the permitted rate of 150 a day. Migrants in a city composed through (Chinese) migration, the British are outnumbered by 142, 556 Filipinos (two point one per cent) over 42,000 migrants from the Indian sub Continent (point seven percent) and 50, 000 Americans. The British migrants in our study have varied social circumstances, migrant histories and migrant-genealogies. Some are recycled colonial functionaries who arrived in the seventies to work the apparatus of empire and its attendant enterprises as police officers, civil engineers or teachers. Others arrived when the future of Hong Kong was settled in the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) and still others arrived in the service of multi-national corporations and as teachers in the years after 1997. The migrants we accessed have lived in Hong Kong from three to thirty years; a mix of long-term belongers and temporary contract workers. Some plan to stay and some to move on, they have vague and sometimes more definite plans for future posts or retirement. A mix of men and women, they fall between the ages of 17 and 85. They are teachers, classroom assistants, self employed in a range of not particularly well-paid jobs, corporate lawyers, surveyors, urban planners, office administrators, ladies who lunch, clergy, high ranking police officers, and successful entrepreneurs working the financial system.

Our selections were about wanting to capture a diversity of voices, and not overlook those in ordinary rather than elite global positions. Hong Kong is a place of opportunity (and high rewards), but those outside of the corporate matrix operate in a small niche, closing with the Chinesisation of business and public services, around a demand for English language training and translation and temporary skill shortages. Some of the people we interviewed were not especially privileged and some had difficulty in maintaining themselves in employment. Aside from work, leisure, travel opportunities and general 'lifestyle', augmented by low rates of income tax (15 per cent), are key motivators among British migrants. In the taxonomies of migration they operate at the intersections of 'economic' and 'lifestyle' migration, categories that need to be understood as capturing a loose collage of individually negotiated motivations.

Transience and transition lie at the centre of migrant lives and landscapes. Transience captures the substance of the lives of British migrants who live permanently temporary lives in Hong Kong as our research there showed. Temporariness surfaces in mundane decisions about storing furniture in the UK and in deferring decisions to buy curtains and sofas sometimes for up to twenty years. Temporariness also avoids confronting conflicting futures within families and between couples who may disagree on its geographical location. Temporariness and its subverted conflicts thus structure the configuration of intimacy in migrant families. Transition captures the shifting global and local social and political landscape on which they operate. All social landscapes are in transition in the sense that they are always in process, always being made, but transition in Hong Kong has additional and particular elements of transition set out above.

## **Clubs as a Microcosm of Hong Kong**

Clubs provide a neat capsule of the transition and transience in Hong Kong society and in migrants' lives. They were part of the fabric of colonial life from Melbourne to Mombassa where they provided civility and separation based on gentlemen's clubs in London<sup>4</sup>. In rapid transition from being places of European, and, particularly British, privilege, and Chinese exclusion, clubs, like the rest of postcolonial Hong have new members, new purposes and new activities. Clubs are capsules of multi-cultural proximity between the ethnically and racially marked bodies in postcolonial transition. No longer places of colonial separation, difference and proximity is negotiated in the disposition of space for club activities, rules of conduct and codes of etiquette. Interstitial spaces in the social fabric, clubs are spaces of interaction that are neither entirely public nor private. Clubs produce and refract the social differentiations and stratifications of the people and places they compose, but on a micro-scale. The club is (post)colonial Hong Kong writ small: it displays all of the attendant (racialized, ethnicised and classed) difficulties presented by proximities of difference, by sharing space across divergent conceptions of leisure, and by a relationship to the past marked by (colonial) violence and conflict.

There are approximately 42 private social clubs in Hong Kong providing leisure, special interest and dining facilities for their (now overwhelmingly Chinese) members. Significant in an urban environment of high population densities, limited space and high land values, the variance between them in accessibility and membership fees, makes them a social sorting device in the stratification of Hong Kong society. At the top end the (Royal) Hong Kong Jockey Club has only 200 voting members, two of whom

must support with personal recommendation any new application for membership. This filters and facilitates social connections at the highest level in Hong Kong society and is firmly in elite Chinese hands. Similarly, the luxurious Hong Kong golf club has high fees and a thirty-year waiting list, so that only the well connected and wealthy with a decent handicap succeed in joining. Moving down the social scale media types join the Foreign Correspondence Club; women of intellectual orientation join Helena May, set up to aid the journeys of suitable European migrant women to the colony in the Nineteenth Century.

The two clubs I want to focus on operate at the lower end of the social hierarchy: the Kowloon Cricket Club (referred to as KCC) and the United Services Recreation Club (USRC). These two clubs provide a framework in the social lives of a slice of ordinary local Chinese people and expat migrants. They reveal conflicts over the meaning and purpose of a club through disputes over aesthetics and the deployment of scarce space in different kinds of activities. KCC and USRC show some of the tension points in postcolonial Hong Kong; they are places where the postcolonial veneer can be scratched to reveal the colonial in the postcolonial, embedded in the fabric of ordinary lives and activities. These specifics raise bigger questions about the ways in which the past shapes the present.

### **Postcolonialism's Surfaces**

The United Services recreation Club occupies a tranquil green space in the tangle of major roads and flyovers composing Kowloon and a relentless roar of traffic. A low white building in grounds tangled with tropical plants, it has a lawn-bowling green in the front which is favoured by Chinese members. On

the ground floor and past the reception is a restaurant set out with tables for four to accommodate expat dining and large round tables that suit the bigger Chinese extended family groups. Popular British, Indian and Chinese dishes dominate the menu. Next to the restaurant is a café area with wicker furniture and tables, magazines and scruffy arm chairs. Next to the restaurant is the 'Gunners Bar', its regimental plaques revealing its military past and the flat screened television capturing football and rugby matches from around the world. Rarely used by Chinese members 'The Gunners' is male and expat dominated. Upstairs is a smarter restaurant and bar overlooking the pool. At the side are the tennis courts, popular with all members and flood-lit well into the night. The club is clearly a work in progress; it stands astride different styles of interior decor and furnishing and divergent use by its membership. Like the rest of Hong Kong it is in transition, in a state of becoming.

The United Services Recreation Club is having a refit and opinion is divided on the issue of club aesthetics: marble or wicker? Chinese members, now over seventy per cent of the club membership but not well represented on the committee that makes key decisions, favour marble. Marble is the surface of the new era of (postcolonial) modernity; British expats favour the wicker tables and chairs of colonial shabby-chic and a lick of paint around the regimental plaques on the wall in 'The Gunners'. The club has a crumbling abandoned shabbiness it needs to address if it is to survive and compete with other clubs for members. While the central parts of the city gleam with newness in glass, steel and concrete, the club crumbles around its colonial kitsch, around an out-migration of British expatriates, and a need to attract new, Chinese members to secure its future.

The USRC was built in the thirties to serve the social needs of a middling layer of government colonial functionaries, primarily military, police, civil servants and government workers and more recently civil engineers and surveyors. Applicants were once assessed for 'suitability' by army officers who assessed their capacity to 'fit in'. Chinese were excluded still in the fifties and sixties and were later, in the eighties understandably reluctant to join. Decolonisation devastated the club as 350 members, the remaining repressive apparatus of empire, abruptly decamped in 1997. In 2002 a further 60 members who lost their jobs in the economic down-turn also moved on. Pierre, the club's French manager, forged in another version of European empire in what was once Indo-China, is pessimistic about the future of the club and Hong Kong: *'Its time to pack up and go home'*, which means, it transpires, that he is trying to get a job in Singapore.

'Ok it's shabby' concedes Pierre, reporting that two more clubs have just closed. But it's 'a club not a hotel'. It is there for its members to get together, do things together. He contrasts what the club could and should be, and perhaps once was, with the pressure towards it becoming more of a 'business' in 'marble and gold and have a nice day'. Marble and gold are not just the surfaces of the new postcolonial order, they are the demands brought by a new, Chinese membership. So these surfaces are also a way of speaking indirectly about ethnicity, about the social relationships of empire, inevitable social change, the way things were and the new, more difficult proximities with Chineseness with which some club members, and it seems, Pierre himself, struggle. He stops circling and goes for it: 'they have let too many local people in' and they have a 'different mentality' a mentality of self and immediate gratification. Gold and marble are the decorative materialisation

of the 'wrong mentality' which manifests itself in club activities and comportment. New members lack the 'spirit' of 'clubability'. Pierre has tried endless combinations of 'activities' – BBQs, cravat knotting, flower arranging – to create the right level and type of sociality among members. Nothing works; people use the club for a family dinner, a game of squash or tennis, lawn bowling, a session in the gym, a swim or a pilates class. The very meaning of a club is called into question by these new uses and new, Chinese, members.

### **Club Space, Activities and Members**

Around the corner, at the Kowloon Cricket Club (KCC), a similar transition is in process and it centres on the disposition of space for competing club activities. The problem with the Cricket Club is Cricket. Most members played cricket, or watched it, and no –one minded that the manicured cricket pitch occupied ninety percent of the precious land area of the club: until recently. Only three to five percent of the members actually play cricket. Many more play hockey and tennis and these activities are seriously short of space, and space has become a hot issue at the club. The membership is seventy per cent Chinese, fifteen percent British and Australian combined and fifteen per cent Indian sub continent: the cricketing nations are seriously outnumbered and on the defensive.

Sitting on balcony in the sun overlooking the cricket green and slowly working through her lunch is Alice. Alice, her husband and two children have lived in Hong Kong since the eighties, living through the handover and gradual changes that slowly transformed their life in Hong Kong. Alice, her parents and grandparents, have all spent their lives in colonial contexts and



the club is part of the furniture of their lives. Alice grew up in Nigeria where her father, an engineer, had worked on the construction of the Jos to Maiduguri railway. Her childhood memories are about the prefabricated houses they lived in, enamel bowls, smells and sounds, the houseboys, the crafts: ordinary things composing the fabric of a life. Her father was born in India in the late 1920s and lived there all his life, in Calcutta and Darjeeling, first as a musician in the army and then, later as a coal merchant when the British army left in 1947. Both of her grandparents 'stayed on' in India and eventually died there. She warms to the theme of staying on because of its resonance in her life too:

...they [her grandparents] stayed until they died. They never came back. They'd been such a long time they just wouldn't have fitted in [in England]. There are people here actually.....a lot of people aren't retired because they couldn't afford it and worry about the medical and so on and think they just don't want to be anywhere else and you can actually afford to live here quite cheaply. If you know where to go and live up in the New Territories, if you are prepared to convert an old pigsty or something and there are people who do that: real hangers on, real stayers on.

Empire isn't in the genes but in the social practices embedded in the verities and genealogies of family life. There are obvious similarities between colonial and expatriate life at the level of job opportunities and in lifestyle, especially in the availability of domestic service and recreation opportunities, particularly for women. Alice is 'hanging on' to a part time maid and a part time job. Her family began their lives as migrants in Hong Kong within the context of its late colonial administration; and then it continued, but not quite on the same terms.

She recalls the day things changed for ever in the pageant that marked the end of the British Empire:

...it just poured and everybody got soaked, and there was Chris Patten and he was crying and his daughters were crying and Prince Charles

was there....and everybody had big parties and you went and watched it on the TV and it was all very emotional.....everybody had their flags and....you thought well lets all pretend we are British overseas colonials....when you thought about it though it was sad in a way....and you thought, well, what is going to happen in the future....But things haven't changed dramatically, but then things are gradually changing.

Regime changes bring personal changes in individual lives. Life in Hong Kong slowly changed for Alice and her family.

When we came here [in the eighties] everything was provided, a house, a car, the schooling, the airfares, ....sort of expat life and we joined the club. Now you look around and it's actually very Chinese now. Which isn't a problem but it's not what it was. Whether that's a good thing or not, I don't know. Now my husband works for a Chinese company, we don't get housing, ....medical, anything like that. So you sort of think, is it really worth being here? Except I love it and I don't want to go. I love the weather, the social life, my job, I love everything about it.

### **Staying on, Making New Lives**

Staying on has resonance in Alice's parents' and grandparents' decisions about migration and the shifting political landscapes of postcolonialism. Her grandparents 'stayed on' in India and her parents did the same in Africa twenty years later. Now Alice is pushing to 'stay on' in Hong Kong. As in other families we investigated in the course of our research there is disagreement about whether to go or to stay. Alice's husband wants to go; she wants to stay; their two girls grow into their own life trajectories. Alice lives a different life than her husband as well as having a different kind of family genealogy. Work occupies a central part in his life, he works full time and provides the family wage on which their lifestyle is premised. She works part time for extras that embellish their lifestyle and redistributes domestic labour to a maid. The family struggle when Alice's husband loses his job and then finds another on a lower wage. Each domestic purchase takes on heightened significance, grounding their future intentions about whether to stay or to go. The new

curtains clinch it - a materialisation of investment and intention - they will stay. Apparently insignificant household objects have significance well beyond their function: they condense long-running family struggles over place and anchor, at least temporarily, the permanently temporary nature of these migrants' lives.

Its worth staying on, even though colonial privileges no longer exist and expat life carries new uncertainties and difficulties. But there are foundation scandals: some of the high rises do not have deep enough foundations; corners were cut on the subcontracted work. The Chinese firm that Alice's husband works for are implicated. They can no longer secure work and employees are laid off. Alice's husband has to find new work; work for which he is over qualified, in worse conditions than he is used to; so staying on becomes demeaning rather than the exercise of privilege. The erosion of entitlement is a difficult burden to bear, bemoaned and traded against the advantages of staying; issues on which families sometimes disagree.

## **Conclusions**

The club so well expresses this erosion of privilege: the transformation of the built and human fabric of empire into the new uncertainties of the postcolonial world in which expat lives are reconfigured. Hong Kong has changed and so has the club. No longer an oasis of European civility Alice shares it, she says, with people who spit in the pool and stand on the toilet seat, who bring their servants to the club with them and use their mobile phones, which, she says is supposed to be against the rules. It's the minutiae of daily life that grates, small changes log bigger ones, and although she doesn't 'mean to be racist' and knows we are in 'someone else's country' we

see in these unguarded moments some of the little places where race and empire matter, and which inflect the ways in which expats live as migrants on landscapes of new belonging with racialized and ethnicised difference.

The cartographies and materialities of empire still reverberate through the migrations composing the postcolonial world. Empire matters and makes matter, in places and in people's routine lives. Empire has tangible surfaces, in buildings, along streets and in scenes of everyday migrant life. It is inflected in people's daily practices, in their frameworks and ways of seeing and interpreting the world. It subtly shapes migrants' subjectivities, their ways of being-in-the-world, a world that has changed, where old uncertainties are replaced by new ones. The colonial world is only slowly being transformed in a postcolonial world; and the lives of migrants composed in ex-colonial spaces are one of the vectors grounding the past-in-the-present. Colonial surfaces in British expat life may be more tangible in Hong Kong, in the last major bit of the empire to be handed over, but we should also to be alert to their persistence in other locations too. Contemporary, postcolonial, migration may be less *postcolonial* than it seems, at least in some places, with some groups of migrants. This underpins the configuration of new settlement in migrant lives, their relationship to place, to social connections with other people and with racialized and ethnicised difference. This underpinning seriously restricts British migrants' participation in host societies and places limits on their living a more cosmopolitan life.

## **Endnotes**

1. *Brits Abroad* is an ambitious if methodologically limited survey which points to the need for detailed and systematic research on British emigrants. It shows that British emigrants are unevenly distributed with large concentrations in Australia, Spain, the US and Canada but with some emigrants in 190 countries. It points out that we know little about who these emigrants are, why they have migrate and how they live as migrants. This last point is especially important.
2. Racial order is a term used by Winant (1994a and 1994b) to refer to the ways in which societies are structured or organised by ideas and practices premised on race as a salient cluster of social distinctions.
3. The research project—Landscapes of Belonging- on which this chapter is based was supported by funding from the British Academy. This, and extra funding from Southampton University, allowed 6 fieldtrips to Hong Kong between 1998 and 2003 during which we interviewed 63 migrants between one and six times each, the majority British. Informants were recruited through snowballing but from 3 distinctively different social locations; the aim was to capture a diversity of lives through close qualitative engagement. The methods included biographical interviews, mapping personal trajectories and photography to capture migrants' relationship with Hong Kong and the people with whom they interacted.
4. Mrinalini Sinha (2001) provides an excellent discussion of clubs and Britishness in Colonial India.

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