On the road,
towards feelings of national belonging

A study on Hong Kong university students' cultural identity and their national identification with China

Thuy Ca

June 2012 • T.B.T.Ca@students.uu.nl • Student number 3405761 • Supervised by Yke Eijkemans

旅途中, 如何看家鄉

探究香港大學生之文化認同及對國家歸屬感

Thuy Ca

2012年 6月 • T.B.T.Ca@students.uu.nl • 三四零五七六一 • Yke Eijkemans 監督

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Prologue

I had been looking forward to the first of February for four years: the day that I would leave my all too familiar environment and go to a far-away place to do fieldwork and celebrate my *rite de passage* from being a student of Cultural Anthropology to a 'real' anthropologist. Unlike the most influential forefathers of Anthropology, I wasn't planning on visiting a remote tribe, indigenous people or a small community that differs from the rest of society. No. I decided to go to Hong Kong. A metropolis, a city of millions, a place where most people eat with chopsticks and have black hair and slanted eyes, just like I do. Packed with a handful of little notebooks, small enough to always carry with me to write down jottings, a netbook (that broke down in the first week), some reading material and filled with excitement and curiosity I began my journey.

This bachelor thesis is the tangible result of my unforgettable experience in Hong Kong. Not only did I evolve myself as an anthropologist, I also encountered new sides of myself. Doing research about cultural identity and feelings of national belonging makes you self-conscious of your own identities and feelings of belonging. As a Vietnamese, born in the Netherlands, I always thought I was anything but nationalistic. That I could migrate anytime and be just as happy as I am in the Netherlands. However, my astonishment when the university students in Hong Kong didn't really understand what I meant by 'feelings of belonging', pointed out the nationalist in me. How could they not cheer for the national football team? Or feel a strong connection with their country? Ever since Hong Kong was reunited / returned to China, Hong Kongers are in the process of learning to belong to the Chinese nation. They are on the road, towards feelings of national belonging. The question is whether those feelings are the destination or merely a direction sign…

During the three months I was in Hong Kong, I have experienced the struggles of doing research. At times I felt lonely, missing the social network that I took for granted in the Netherlands, the naturalness of always being surrounded by people I care about, people I feel comfortable with. Moreover I found out that initially I was not so much in search for data, but for acceptance, not only as a researcher but also as a peer or a friend. Luckily I have also experienced the joy of meeting new people, getting to know a new culture and even establishing friendships. It wouldn't have been such an inspiring, rewarding and unforgettable

experience without the help of all the people I have met in Hong Kong and the unconditional support of my parents. Their faith in me and words of wisdom have encouraged, helped and inspired me at plentiful moments. I would like to use this opportunity to thank my informants, for their hospitality and kindness. I would like to thank Dawn, for showing me Hong Kong's (underground) music scene and introducing me to her lovely friends. Thanks a lot Olga, for hanging out with me on Wednesdays and checking the Chinese characters. And a special thanks to Kerri, you made me feel like home from the very beginning. A complete stranger when I arrived in Hong Kong, a very dear friend now that I am back in the Netherlands. Thank you for teaching me useful Cantonese words, not so useful Cantonese words and giving me a sneak peak in the 'real' life of a Hong Konger. Not to mention Kamean, Amy and Chris; I want to thank you guys for being true friends and make me feel like a Hong Konger.

Last but not least I would like to thank professor Matthews and Justin from the Chinese University of Hong Kong for their hospitality and for inspiring me with new insights, and Yke Eijkemans for guiding me during the bachelor project. Her commitment, honesty and academic insight have helped me through the process of doing my first anthropological fieldwork.

Maps of Hong Kong

Figure 1. The People's Republic of China (yellow), with the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region circled and in red.

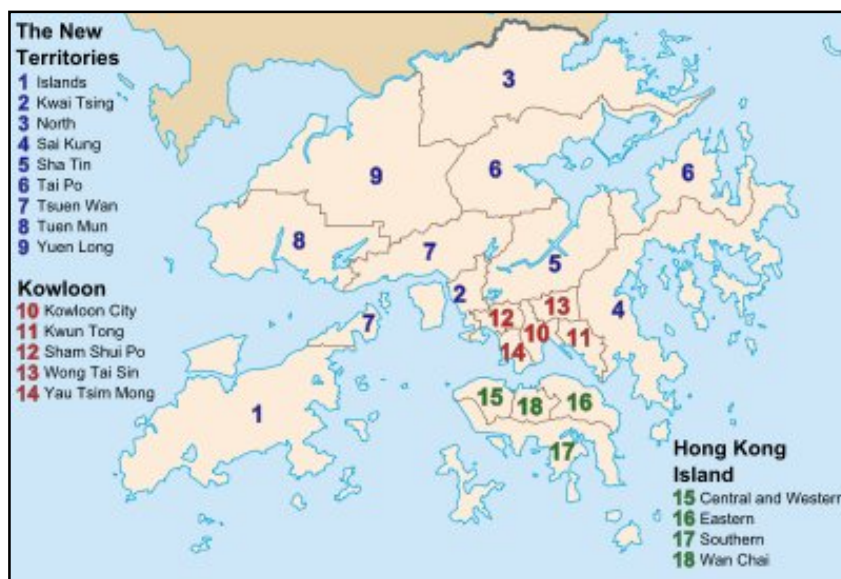*Source : http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/e/e0/China_Hong_Kong.svg*

Figure 2. Hong Kong's administrative districts.

Source: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hong_Kong

Introduction

Towering skyscrapers, flickering lights, a passing tram, lots of red taxis, hordes of people and the smell of food and exhaust gases. With my head in the back of my neck I stare at the skyrocketing buildings, dazzled by just a handful of these new impressions. It is only 8 P.M. but already pitch dark outside, weren't it for the gigantic, brightly illuminated ads. I find myself in what seems like New York City, but I am surrounded by Asian-looking people. Next to a food stand that sells all kinds of ball-shaped sea food on a stick and freshly squeezed bamboo juice, rises Times Square, a massive shopping mall and office tower complex that sells products and brands from all over the world. As I orientate myself I notice the street names and other signage are all written in what must be traditional Chinese characters that I don't understand, and English. In the hustle and bustle I notice that most people, if not all people, have a smart phone or better an iPhone. I am on China's south coast[1], in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China[2], also known as the place where 'east meets west'. More precisely I am in Causeway Bay on Hong Kong Island[3], taking in the city I will live in for the next three months. A variety of people is surrounding me. I see a lot of people with East Asian features: black hair, slanted eyes and quite small in height and physique. I see a lot of people wearing suits, people of Indian and African descent and Caucasians, who are also called *gwai lo* (佬)[4]. I hear conversations in Cockney English, Chinglish[5] (Jing and Zuo 2006: 15) and French. I wonder whether these people live or work here, or maybe both, whether they are Hong Kongers, expats or simply tourists like me. I wonder whether they have immigrated to this place or will leave again and if so, to which country they will go back. In short, I wonder who these people are and where they are from.

Why do we always have to know someone's place of residence or ethnic descent? Maybe because we all live in a country, speak a certain language and belong to a particular nation;

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[1] See Figure 1.

[2] Hereafter referred to as 'Hong Kong'.

[3] See Figure 2.

[4] *Gwai lo* literally means 'ghost man'. It is said to refer to foreigners in general but, as the name suggests, in practice it refers to Caucasians in Hong Kong.

[5] Chinglish refers to the spoken or written English language that is influenced by the Chinese language.

thence we use these factors to construct our identity (Anderson 2006: 2-3). At first glance these three factors are united in the nation-state (Pye in Dittmer and Kim 1993: 7). Therefore belonging to a nation seems a very important "identity marker" (Kiely et al. 2001: 35). 'Where are you from?' is a question you can't avoid as a traveller, migrant or foreigner. But what if you live in a state of which you don't feel you belong to its nation? What if your national identity is not an important identity marker at all? The paradox these days is that political and cultural boundaries often don't coincide anymore as a result of transnational connectedness (Eriksen 2010: 202-204). This makes it very hard to define to what national culture one belongs (Mathews 2000). This is exactly the case for Hong Kongers.

Globalization makes it possible for us to choose all different components from various cultures to construct our own identity (Eriksen 2010: 199-200). We could choose these components from what Mathews calls "the global cultural supermarket" (2000: x). By calling it a supermarket Mathews shows our reality of living in a world of "culture as fashion, in which each of us can pick and choose cultural identities like we pick and choose clothes" (2000: 4). As this global supermarket expands, our diversity of choice is ever growing. We could choose to live in Hong Kong, speak Cantonese with our mainland Chinese parents, be a Christian, eat pizza, play the mandolin, listen to techno music and hang out with our Dutch friends. Globalization thus expands our world by making us aware of difference (cf. global cultural supermarket) but at the same time it makes our world smaller; people and cultures come into contact with each other more rapidly and more easily (Eriksen 2010: 200).

As a result of increasing migration and transnationalism the borders between states become more porous and nations are no longer bound by states (Eriksen 2010: 176). Therefore it gets harder to define yourself along national lines, especially since different people with different cultures come to live with each other within one state. Consequently states do not consist of one homogenous nation anymore. Still the idea of one nation plays a role in the construction of our personal identity, which consists of plural forms of identity (Wodak et al. 2009: 16). These forms are adopted interchangeably as the context and situation in which we are changes (Baumann 1999: 58; Wodak et al. 2009: 16). Identities could simultaneously be self-ascribed and ascribed to us by others, which makes identities in some cases quite ambiguous: they could feel rather ambivalent and could even induce conflict (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20). I therefore believe it might be better for a researcher to focus on processes of identification rather than on separate identities (Wetenschappelijke Raad voor het

Regeringsbeleid (WRR) 2007: 34)[6]. This way the emphasis is placed on individuals and the way they perceive their identity and the extent to which they identify with a particular identity. Especially in the light of the abovementioned shifting overlaps between nations and state-borders, in which state-borders change and don't coincide with a particular nation anymore, it might be more accurate to speak of a person's national identification rather than his or her national identity.

In the case of Hong Kongers I have experienced that things get confusing when it comes to the national identification with their born-again motherland: the People's Republic of China[7]. During British colonial rule Hong Kongers have managed to construct a very own and unique Hong Kong identity, unlike adopting a British identity or holding on to a Chinese identity. After reunification with China in 1997, feelings of national identification are thus rather confusing to most Hong Kongers. Luckily in a place where east meets west, a big global cultural supermarket opened its doors to seven million residents. A supermarket in which culture is presented as the information and identities that are available for us through globalization (Mathews 2000: 4). By using that information and those identities Hong Kongers can shape and maintain their Hong Kong identity, rather than accept a national identity that is imposed on them by the Chinese state. Researching what that particular Hong Kong identity is through the ways in which it is constructed and given meaning to, leads to insights into personal identifications of Hong Kongers with China. Therefore the research question I aim to answer is '*how does the cultural identity of Hong Kong university students influence their national identification with the People's Republic of China?*'

The objective of this research is to understand what the Hong Kong identity is, how it is constructed and given meaning to, and how it influences processes and perceptions of national identification. I am well aware of the limitations of my research. Analysing processes of identification takes time and given the limited amount of time I could spend in the field, I can merely describe a snapshot of on-going processes of identification: snapshots of daily life in which identities and perceptions on mainland Chinese are being expressed. Moreover this has been a small scale research, nevertheless I believe it is one of social and academic relevance. Socially it reflects the thoughts and perceptions of Hong Kong university students, which could contribute to a mutual understanding between them and their mainland Chinese peers.

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[6] Translated from Dutch WRR means Acadamic Counsil for Governmental Policy.

[7] Hereafter referred to as 'China'.

This could eventually help providing for a greater cohesion between ethnically and culturally different students in their contemporary shared state. Academically it contributes to the discussion whether the concept of a nation-state is still applicable to contemporary societies (Eriksen 2010: 202). This corresponds with the views of Hannerz (1992, 1996) and Appadurai (1996: 19), who have suggested that "many contemporary men and women tend to seek their identifications and social alignments along different axes [cf. global cultural supermarket] than was formerly the case [i.e. national axes]". The discussion is also in line with the view of Hobsbawm (1990), who even states that the age of the nation-state as one homogenous nation within one state is nearly over (in Eriksen 2010: 202). Finally this research questions the need for a national identity and its accompanying loyalty to a nation, following researches of Mathews, Ma & Lui (2008: 7,13).

To answer my research question I went to Hong Kong to do anthropological fieldwork research. I stayed there for three months and conducted research for a period of 12 weeks from 6 February 2012 until 26 April 2012. The research took place among Hong Kong university students, mostly studying at the Chinese University of Hong Kong[8] particularly in the field of Social Sciences, with ages ranging from 17 to 25 years. I have used several research methods as mentioned by Hennie Boeije (2010) to obtain my research data, such as conducting qualitative interviews and doing participant observation. The first and foremost research method used were different types of interviews that are mentioned in DeWalt and DeWalt (2002): from casual conversations to informal interviews and unstructured and semi-structured interviews. In these interviews I have tried to discuss the same subjects and topics with all my informants and respondents so that my data were comparable.

Secondly I used participant observation by participating in daily (student) life and special activities in order to fully integrate in and experience the Hong Kong culture. Participant observation enhances the quality of the obtained data (it avoids socially desirable answers) and it enhances the quality of the interpretation of the data, as I was there when the data were obtained and I have come to know the cultural knowledge and opinions of my respondents and informants (DeWalt and DeWalt 2002: 8; Boeije 2010: 60). Even though all students have a good command of English, they speak Cantonese amongst each other which made participant observation quite limited for me at times since I don't speak Cantonese.

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[8] Hereafter referred to as 'CUHK'

Finally, I came up with two sets of respectively fifteen and twenty questions to randomly approach students and ask them for answers. These interactive questionnaires have proven to be an accessible way of approaching informants and have provided me with new insights that I could further explore with the help of interviews.

On the basis of four sub questions I have structured and analyzed the data I have collected during my fieldwork. In the next six chapters I will present my findings and observations, starting with a theoretical framework in chapter one. I will discuss the concepts of identity and identification, followed by discussing the nation and nation-state, cultural identity and alternatives to national identification, such as global citizenship. In chapter two, the context of Hong Kong is presented on the basis of the theoretical framework. The third chapter comprises of a description of the university students in Hong Kong, while chapter four discusses Hong Kong culture. In the fifth chapter I will analyse the difference between Chinese culture, Hong Kong culture and mainland Chinese culture and its implications for imaging mainland Chinese. The final chapter explores feelings of belonging and the consequences of "the paradox of multiculturalism" (Eriksen 2010: 176), followed by the conclusion.

I.   Theoretical framework: identity markers[9] regarding cultural identity and national identification

"A man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears. […] Having a nation is not an inherent attribute of humanity, but it has now come to appear as such." (Gellner 1983: 6)

Nowadays it seems only natural to have a nationality that defines who you are: a Vietnamese, a Japanese, a Korean and so forth. But what does this national identity actually mean in today's world? In this chapter I will discuss the concepts of identity and identification, and their role in constructing feelings of belonging to a nation. Furthermore the concepts of cultural identity and ethnicity are discussed in the light of nation and nation-state, and alternatives to national identification are analyzed.

1.1 Identity

The mass of academic literature one can find on the concept of identity is overwhelming. It is impossible to find the perfect definition of identity as so many theoretical interpretations exist. Below I will discuss interpretations and characteristics of identity that I find are important and useful to research processes of identification.

Individuals are "hybrids of identity", carriers of multiple identities, and therefore a homogenous pure identity is an illusion (Wodak et al. 2009: 16). Through the interaction with other people we move through multiple dimensions of identities: each individual has multiple "I's" (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20): you could for example be someone's daughter, a musician, belong to an ethnic minority or be a nationalist. Within these multiple dimensions of identities Fong and Chuang make a distinction between subjective and objective identity. Both are ascribed forms of identity: respectively self-ascribed and ascribed by others *(ibid).* On the one hand subjective identity – also called 'ego identity' by Goffman (1990: 129 in Wodak et al. 2009) – refers to an individual's own perception of himself and "the internalization of the attitudes and expectations of others" which enables him to direct his

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[9] The term 'identity markers' is based on an article of Kiely, Bechhofer, Stewart and McCrone titled "The Markers and Rules of Scottish National Identity" (2001) The Editorial Board of the Sociological Review. They define identity markers as "any characteristics associated with an individual that they might choose to present to others, in order to support a national identity claim" (2001: 35-36). In the context of my research I interpret identity markers in a slightly broader way, as I believe identity markers can also be ascribed to individuals by others and may support identity claims other than a national identity.

own behaviour (Wodak et al. 2009: 13). A subjective identity is thus shaped and controlled by an individual himself from within. On the other hand objective identity refers to how others perceive and communicate an individual's identity (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20), which takes place between the individual and society, thus from the outside (Wodak et al. 2009: 15).

Within the concept of objective identity, two additional distinctions can be made according to Wodak et al. (2009). First of all, a social identity can be distinguished in which the focus is on the individual to who certain social characteristics are ascribed (age, sex, class, etc.) (Wodak et al. 2009: 16). Second of all, an identity in relation to systems can be distinguished, in which the concept of identity is used for characterization of social systems *(ibid)*. The focus is then on collective identity and thus groups *(ibid)*. Collective identities could be self-ascribed as well, but initially the identity characteristics of collectiveness are defined from the outside and thus ascribed by others*(ibid)*.

It is important to keep in mind that in practice, the distinctions I have raised above are not always clear and consistent, as individuals bear with them the characteristics of collective groups or systems to which they belong (Wodak et al. 2009: 16). Therefore it is important to be aware of both subjective and objective identities, as their interplay provides for their very existence. We need 'the Other' to construct an objective identity in contrast to which a subjective identity can be constructed and vice versa (Eriksen 2010: 37-38). When we interact with 'Others' a "negotiation of identity" (both subjective and objective) takes places which exposes the fluid and relative character of identity (Eriksen 2010: 37-38). Identities are demarcated distinctiveness vis-à-vis the other (Eriksen 2010: 49).
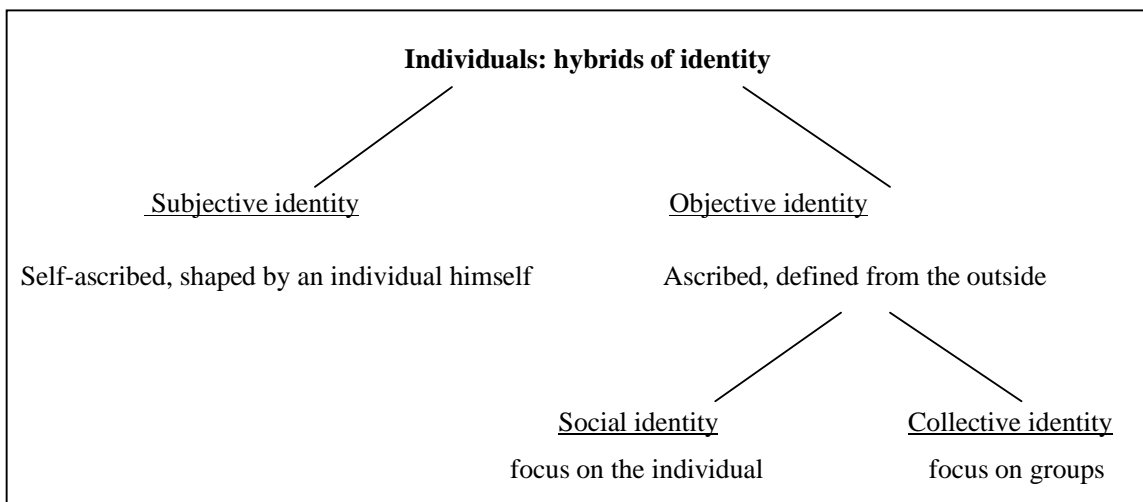

Table 1. Multiple dimensions of identities

Individuals move frequently between the multiple dimensions of identities, since identities "are a matter of situation and context" (Baumann 1999: 58; Wodak et al. 2009: 16), they are "relative and to some extent situational" (Eriksen 2010: 37). Individuals can choose to overcommunicate or undercommunicate one or more identities, depending on the situation they find themselves in (Eriksen 2010: 27, 35-38), which means that some identities are strongly emphasized at one moment, to be played down at another moment. One can choose to overcommunicate an identity to show belonging to or membership of a group, as every identity involves inclusion and exclusion (Wodak et al. 2009).

Mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion make the creation of an Us and Them[10] ('the Other') inevitable (Eriksen 2010: 23). Differences between Us and Them could be emphasized through stereotyping, which according to Eriksen "refers to the creation and consistent application of standardized notions of the cultural distinctiveness of a group" (2010: 23-24). When stereotypes occur it is important to keep in mind that they don't necessarily need to be true and that there may be a discrepancy between attitudes (what people say) and actions (what people do) (Eriksen 2010: 24-25). Stereotypes contribute to defining Us from Them and can justify differences in access to resources (Eriksen 2010: 25). Other symbols of cultural unity can be a shared language, religion, a division of labour which creates interdependence and a notion of shared origins, such as physical appearance (Eriksen 2010: 80).

When two or several groups who consider themselves as being distinctive are in constant interaction with each other, they "tend to become more similar *and* simultaneously increasingly concerned with their distinctiveness" (Eriksen 2010: 23). This points out that interaction with others, while categorizing these others, is of great importance. As discussed above, in relation to others individuals may have many "selves" (Eriksen 2010: 25) that are fluid, relative and situational. They can choose which identity they want to identify with at a particular moment. Therefore identities are concepts that are constructed and reconstructed, concepts that individuals can choose to stress at times, or are given to them by others. Personal identities are therefore by definition plural (Wodak et al. 2009: 16). This plurality means that it is possible to adopt multiple 'selves' and 'I's' when identifying oneself with a specific group (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20). Processes of identification are thus very

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[10] The creation of an Us and Them is also emphasized in Baumann's (1999: 25) essentialist view on culture, which is explained further on in the paragraph 1.3 Cultural identity and ethnicity.

important to emphasize, as they are purely based on the individual and his or her reason to choose a certain identity to belong to a particular group.

1.2 Identification

According to the WRR there are three forms of identification: functional, normative and emotional identification (2007: 34). Functional identification refers to membership that fulfils specific functions in daily life, in which case an individual is a member of a group or community to which the achievement of certain goals is central. An individual could be for example a citizen of a city or a member of a union. Normative identification refers to a frame of reference and norms that individuals use to regulate their social life (like laws and traditions) and that decide whether you belong to a group or not. Finally there is an emotional identification, which refers to the extent to which members feel connected to a group or community emotionally. It refers to feelings of belonging, loyalty and pride; feelings that are present within a nation towards the nation-state. The value of approaching identity by focusing on processes of identification is that you avoid reasoning from fixed results by emphasizing identities as non-given concepts (WRR 2007: 35). When speaking of the Hong Kong identity, I try to reason from Hong Kongers' point of view. In their view there is a distinct Hong Kong identity; a fixed result, reasoned from an essentialist view on culture. Therefore when exploring the Hong Kong identity, I will approach and analyze it as a given concept. But when it comes to a Hong Konger's national identity, I will emphasize processes of identification, reasoned from a constructionist approach. Naturally processes of identification lead to a fixed result as well, but the emphasis is rather placed on the road towards it than on the result itself.

Thus when focusing on processes of identification, we assume that there are multiple identities individuals can identify with in order to construct their personal identity. These identities can exist altogether at once, but depending on the situation they are expressed or not. When speaking of identification the emphasis is placed on how, in what situations and to what extend an individual identifies with a particular identity. These processes of identification take place at a national level as well. Therefore in the next paragraph I will discuss the concept of a nation.

1.3 Nation

Anderson proposes a very clear and manageable definition of a nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (2006: 6). Members of a nation feel loyalty and belonging to an imagined community; imagined and limited, as they will never meet all of their fellow members. But a nation is not simply the biggest form of an objective collective identity, as inclusion is not entirely voluntary (Dittmer and Kim 1993: 5). Therefore it is important to stress that a nation is intertwined with politics, it is a political community. Thus it is not only defined by the group, but more importantly also by the subordination to sovereign authority by that group (Dittmer and Kim 1993: 5-6). Therefore we can't speak of Hong Kong as a nation on its own, but only as a part of the Chinese nation.

Consequently we speak of a nation-state in which a national identity can be constructed. So in finding a definition for national identity, one could either stress the state or the nation, both in interaction with each other. On the one hand, in emphasizing the *state* it is a matter of drawing social and physical boundaries and deciding who's included and who's excluded (Dittmer and Kim 1993: 6). These boundaries can be drawn on the basis of citizenship, as practiced in civic nationalism. Civic nationalism defines the nation as a political entity that is not based on common ethnic ancestry, which makes membership of the nation voluntary (Nash & Scott 2001: 391). People within the civic nation identify with each other in having the same equal political rights and having allegiance to similar political procedures (Nash & Scott 2001: 391). This is in line with a cognitive sense of belonging to a nation (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 4, 153), which attaches no meaning beyond those political procedures. A cognitive sense of belonging can simply refer to the matter of showing your passport at border controls *(ibid).* In addition, according to Pye (in Dittmer and Kim 1993: 7) three typical criteria can be distinguished by which people are included into the nation-state: territory, ethnicity/nationality and historical/cultural exclusiveness.

On the other hand, in emphasizing the *nation*, cultural distinctiveness is implied: both if it is invented and if it is a result of ethnic transformation (Archilés and Martí 2001: 780). Thus a nation can consist of several ethnic groups, whose boundaries have to be overcome as nation-states try to turn their nation into a 'superethnos', one overarching national imagined community that can be labelled as "*the* French, or *the* American people" (Baumann 1999: 30-32). The paradox is that in order to achieve a superethnos, a nation should be both postethnic

and superethnic. Postethnic in denying ancient ethnic distinctions to transcend ethnic boundaries among citizens, and superethnic as a nation defines itself as a somewhat homogenous imagined community that is not bound by ethnicity (without denying ethnic diversity). In practice the ideal superethnos is thus rarely achieved as nation-states include and exclude particular ethnic groups (Baumann 1999: 31). However, the nation is dynamic and as Eriksen mentions ethnicity and social identities are relative, fluid and situational (2010: 37). Members of a nation negotiate their identity and according to the situation an ethnic identity can be activated or deactivated to be included into or excluded from the superethnos (Eriksen 2010: 37). Therefore a nation could consist of one or multiple ethnic groups, but an ethnic group can also transcend a nation. The crucial difference between the two concepts is that a nation demands command over a state, thus only when an ethnic group strives for a sovereign state it can be defined as a nation (Eriksen 2010: 7).

As mentioned above a nation can consist of multiple ethnic groups as long as they are bounded by the culture of the superethnos. In the case of China, Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese both form an ethnic group and should be bounded by a superethnos. *Should be,* and therefore I will focus on processes or identification rather than nationalist sentiments. Nationalists believe that "political boundaries should be coterminous with cultural boundaries" (Gellner 1983: 1; Eriksen 2010: 7) implemented in a sovereign state. So when it comes to identifying ourselves, we can hold on to a national identity and a national culture that comes with it. A great example of this pervasiveness is the public expression of national sentiments during the FIFA World Cup, where we all cheer for that one nation and country that we identify with. Language plays an important role in generating that united imagined community. It creates strong feelings of belonging and in that way excludes others, but language is rather "fundamentally inclusive" (Anderson 2006: 134) than a tool of exclusion: all people are theoretically able to learn any language. Any language can thus invent nationalism when printed, while it has the capacity to bind all members of the nation building particular solidarities *(ibid).* Thus (printed) language plays an important role in shaping a national identity.

The above-mentioned national sentiments don't come naturally but are the most powerful tools to bind a nation with the state. Therefore as opposed to cognitive belonging, an emotional sense of belonging as expressed during the World Cup is what states would like to instil on their nation. But through migration societies become ethnically more heterogeneous, and as national borders, nation-states and national identities are getting blurry by

globalization, the ideology of the nation-state is under pressure. This is called "the paradox of multiculturalism" (Eriksen 2010: 176) in which the nation as a mono-cultural people (cf. Baumann's superethnos) is no longer coterminous with the state as a political-geographical entity. As the national dimension of identification stays pervasive in social life (Thompson 2001), people alternatively resort to a more cultural interpretation of their identity and/or a different perspective on citizenship and nationality. In the next paragraph I will discuss cultural identity in relation to ethnicity.

1.4 Cultural identity and ethnicity

According to Baumann there are two prominent views on culture in the social sciences: the essentialist and the constructionist view (1999: 24). The first one – the essentialist view – is the most widespread and explains culture as a static concept that consists of fixed rules and norms, a concept that is inherited by a group and functions as a mold that shapes both the collective and individual lives and thoughts of all its members (Baumann 1999: 25). The second view on culture is the constructionist view, that explains how culture only exists while being performed, which means culture is very fluid, always moving and can never be repeated without a change of meaning (Baumann 1999: 26). The two theories seem opposites but they rather complement each other. The construction of culture is "a making of culture [constructionist view], yet all making of culture will be portrayed as an act of reconfirming an already existing potential [essentialist view]" (Baumann 1999: 92). It is important to look at culture from both these views, as people use both notions interchangeably to talk about their culture. As with identifying oneself, context plays a great role, as depending on a specific context people want to reify their culture or escape cultural stereotypes (Baumann 1999: 95).

This dynamic stance towards culture is visible in interethnic relationships; when cultural differences are perceived as being important and relationships have an ethnic element (Eriksen 2010: 16). Without ascribing cultural identities to yourself and others, cultural differences are not seen and there's no ethnicity. Only when cultural identities are at play, ethnicity exists. This makes ethnicity an aspect of social relationships rather than a property of a whole group (Eriksen 2010: 16-17). It may seem that "ethnicity is the same as cultural identity" (Baumann 1999: 19) but I don't agree with that. As Eriksen (2010: 16) states it could indeed be the case that two groups seem culturally similar and yet have an interethnic relationship, which would support Baumann's statement. However, I believe it could also be the case that one ethnic group – with "myths of common origin" (Eriksen 2010: 17) –

constitutes two completely different cultural groups: depending on where you choose to let history begin and depending on which myths you want to include. This is exactly the case in Hong Kong. Together with the citizens of mainland China, Hong Kongers belong to the Chinese ethnic group, but culturally they are different from mainland Chinese: their cultural identities thus differ.

Cultural identity

According to Fong and Chuang (2004: 22) cultural identity includes individual, relational and communal forms of identity. First of all they explain individual identity as the individual's interpretation of his or her cultural identity based on own experiences. Secondly, they state that relational identity refers to various relationships in a culture, such as between friends, colleagues or neighbours, in which appropriate behaviour is exposed. Thirdly they distinguish communal identity which refers to the use of communication to create, affirm and negotiate a shared identity. Central to these forms is interaction. The individual constructs his cultural identity in interaction with others. Friedman (1994) has pointed out two broad types of cultural identity in which Fong and Chuang's three forms of cultural identity can be subdivided, which means that within the two types all forms can occur. Friedman's types differ from each other in their ascriptive character. The first type he designates is that of 'lifestyle' which is the least ascriptive and a form of subjective identity. It refers to the practice of a culturally specific scheme that can be freely chosen, comparable to the products in Mathews' (2000) global cultural supermarket mentioned earlier. This type of cultural identity is chosen by individuals that are autonomous over the culture they participate in (Friedman 1994: 35). It coincides with the constructionist view on culture and permits "a broad cultural pluralism within the larger domain of non-cultural citizenship of the nation state" (Friedman 1994: 35). The second type of identity is designated as ethnic. It redefines individuals among culturally identical citizens as a culturally specific group. In Friedman's opinion the ethnic type of cultural identity divides a population in terms of characteristics that are ascribed to the members of the divided groups. He calls it a "substantive identity" (Friedman 1994: 35) that can either indicate a common history or descent. This coincides with one of Hall's (1990: 393)[11] two models to consider cultural identity in which he sees cultural identity as similarity and continuity, maintained through a common history and ancestry and shared cultural practices (i.e. Friedman's ethnic cultural identity). This is in contrast to cultural identity as difference and rupture (Hall 1990: 394). By this he means that cultural

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[11] Hall's distinction coincides with Baumann's essentialist and constructionist views on culture that are discussed earlier.

identity is not a given concept that is fixed in an essentialist past, but undergoes constant transformation, transcending history, time, culture and place. In his view cultural identities are thus labels that we give to different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past.
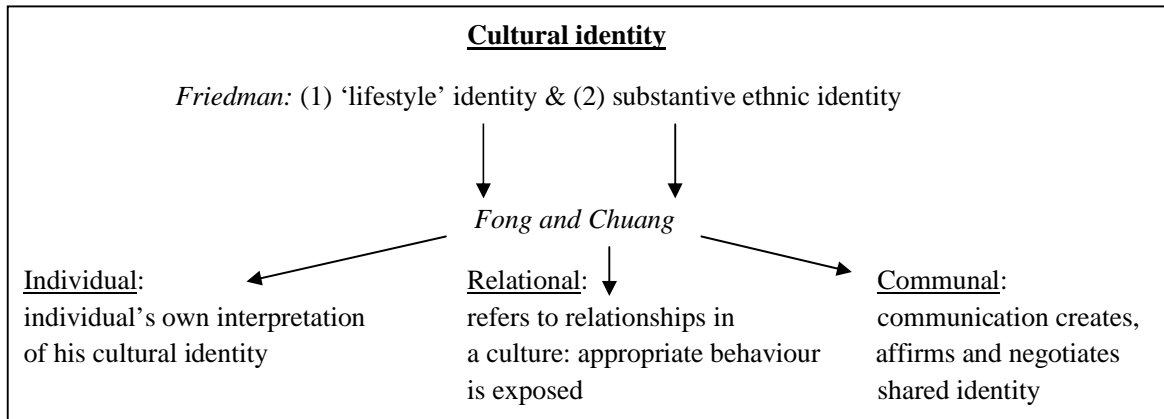
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Cultural identity

Friedman: (1) 'lifestyle' identity & (2) substantive ethnic identity

Fong and Chuang

Individual:
individual's own interpretation
of his cultural identity

Relational:
refers to relationships in
a culture: appropriate behaviour
is exposed

Communal:
communication creates,
affirms and negotiates
shared identity

</div>

Table 2. Friedman's two broad types of cultural identity and Fong and Chuang's forms of cultural identity that they could consist of.

1.5 Global citizenship

Next to a more cultural interpretation of identity, a different perspective on citizenship and nationality could help us cope with a more and more confusing national identity in a globalizing world. An alternative can be found in global citizenship. What draws people to global citizenship is the fact that it evokes far more dynamic forms of belonging and participation than models of national citizenship (Schattle 2008: 3). Nowadays there are many versions of global citizenship because of its ability to "be cultivated through a willingness to modify, enlarge, or at least look more carefully at the community to which [you] belong" (Schattle 2008: 7). I will now shortly discuss the primary concepts of global citizenship: awareness, responsibility and participation, to continue with the secondary concepts of global citizenship, which are more applicable to the situation in Hong Kong.

Global citizenship is hard to imagine without an existing centralized world government or an acknowledged civic identity, but for global citizens awareness is key. Thinking beyond your imagined physical boundaries and being conscious of the fact that we live in a more interdependent and interconnected world, is the beginning of an identification with the world (Schattle 2008: 27, 44). Therefore global citizens are able to look at issues from different perspectives. This awareness extends into questions of national identity: global citizens don't want to restrict their personal identity to any country in particular. Outward awareness

provides for motivation to involvement in society or politics and to take responsibility for a common good (Schattle 2008: 32). Moreover the closely-linked responsibility and participation are primary concepts in which voluntary initiatives, being proactive and having a voice and using it in public policy are key-elements (Schattle 2008: 45).

Secondary concepts of global citizenship include cross-cultural empathy, international mobility and personal achievement. Firstly cross-cultural empathy focuses primarily on human relationships and social interaction, often within local communities (Schattle 2008: 47). It implies the ability to cross intangible borders and reaching out across different cultural groups. Global citizenship implies the willingness to create personal relationships with culturally different people. Secondly international mobility refers to disengagement from civic life within any political community, which means international mobility is closely intertwined with citizenship. Civic detachment – or international mobility independent of citizenship status – refers to the process of adaptation of individuals to their (new) environment, often when working and living abroad. Civic engagement refers to international mobility that has implications for citizenship status that are related to immigration (Schattle 2008: 58). Last but not least the concept of personal achievement was articulated, which focuses on notions of competence and competitiveness in order to be prepared for the global economy (Schattle 2008: 54-55).

The power of capital

In addition to global citizenship, the discourse of the market is proposed as an alternative to not fully belonging to a nation or not fully understanding the sense of belonging to a nation. The discourse of the market is that you can be anything in the world that you want because everything is for sale (cf. Mathews' cultural supermarket). In this view belonging to a state is based on "calculation and self-interest" rather than loyalty and love for one's country (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 165). According to Harvey (1989) and Jameson (1991) the power of capital will erode all boundaries between nation-states (both cited in Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 165); it is free and unbounded by national ideology (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 13). In conclusion Hannerz raises an interesting question: "What can your nation do for you that a good credit card cannot do?" (1996: 88). Do we need a strong identification with a nation or can we just be global consumers? In order to discuss this theoretical framework in the following chapters, I will first raise the previous questions in the particular context of Hong Kong in the next chapter.

II.   Context: identity markers in Hong Kong

In the case of China, if the boundaries of nation and state are shifting, can we speak of Chinese people who have Chinese culture? What is 'Chineseness' then and how can we define the Chinese? Or is there no such thing (anymore)? In this paragraph I will introduce the context of Hong Kong in order to understand the identity markers as discussed in the previous chapter.

Geographically Hong Kong is only slightly smaller than the smallest province of the Netherlands (Utrecht)[12] and with around 7.15 million inhabitants (nearly six times the number of Utrecht province) its population is bigger than Bulgaria's (Central Intelligence Agency 2012)[13]. Hong Kong's history is a relatively recent one. Only fifteen years ago, on the first of July in 1997 Hong Kong was reunited with China, after having been colonized by Great Britain for over a century. Together with Macau it is one of two special administrative regions of China. It is special since it is declared in the Sino-British Joint Declaration of 1984 that "the economic, legal and social system in Hong Kong and its citizens' way of life will remain in force for fifty years after 1997"[14] (Mathews 2000: 128). The fact that Hong Kong did not fully emerge with the Chinese nation-state economically, legally and socially – due to the above-mentioned "one country, two systems" principle – had and still has implications for Hong Kongers' identification with China. This principle and also the emergence of a Hong Kong identity in the 1970s, has contributed to rather ambiguous feelings towards China that are felt nowadays. "China has been their cultural home, but also a dictatorship from which many in Hong Kong once fled" (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: xiii, 2).

During the colonial period Hong Kongers didn't know of what country they should feel allegiance to, neither to Great Britain, where they didn't have the right of abode, nor to China. When the British first colonized Hong Kong in 1841 the territory was only sparsely

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[12] Hong Kong's total geographic area comprises of 1,104 km² (with a land area of 1,054 km²), which is comparable to New York City's total geographic area of 1,214 km² (with a land area of 785,2 km²). As mentioned in the text, Hong Kong is also slightly smaller than the province of Utrecht in the Netherlands, which comprises of 1,449 km². Central Intelligence Agency 2012: https://www.cia.gov/index.html (last visited on 24 June 2012).

[13] Central Intelligence Agency 2012: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/rankorder/2119rank.html (last visited on 24 June 2012).

[14] The Sino-British Joint Declaration can be read on the website of the Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Bureau of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: http://www.cmab.gov.hk/en/issues/jd2.htm (last visited on 4 January 2012).

populated. After World War II however, Hong Kong welcomed hundreds of thousands of immigrants: some of them were returnees and had lived in Hong Kong before they were forced to leave when the Japanese invaded, more came to flee the civil war in China and the political changes that took place in the mainland as China became Communist (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 25). The 1950s were a time of survival, many migrants had to start from scratch and "[f]or an ordinary family, housing and livelihood were daily problems" (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 27). In the 1960s Hong Kong continued to experience waves of immigrants from the mainland and Hong Kong residents still felt a strong identification with these fellow Chinese. It was only around 1966-1967 that a new local generation emerged amongst these immigrants. Post-war baby-boomers were born and raised in Hong Kong, never had experience outside of it and thus felt a strong identification with it (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 32). Mainland Chinese were now regarded as 'the Other': reapers of the benefits of Hong Kong's economic development (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 37).[15]

During the colonial period the British actually encouraged Hong Kongers to develop the Hong Kong identity freely, as long as they wouldn't touch upon the essentials of the colonial state. Through "administrative absorption of politics" (King 1974 in Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 34) Hong Kongers were encouraged by the colonial government to express their political opinions. Even though the government would react to these opinions according to a "constructed social census" and thus remained politically undemocratic, Hong Kongers were included and felt like they had something to say politically (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 34). It is no surprise then, that a clear national identification was hard for Hong Kongers when Hong Kong was returned to China: they had experienced relative political freedom under the colonizer while China still had a communist regime.

From 1 July 1997 onwards, the national identity of Hong Kong citizens could be determined *politically* by their passports[16]: legally they belong to the Chinese state (Mathews 2000: 122). A *cultural* definition, by which I mean emotional feelings of belonging, of their national identity is a whole lot more difficult to determine. Belonging to the Chinese state imposed a new identity that is ambivalent to most people (Mathews 2000: 131). This new

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[15] For a much more detailed and excellent overview on Hong Kong's history in relation to the Hong Kong identity, see *Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation* (2008) by Mathews, Ma & Lui.

[16] They did not have a British National Overseas Passport anymore and became citizens of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China. British Consulate-General Hong Kong: http://ukinhongkong.fco.gov.uk/en/help-for-british-nationals/passports/what-passport/bno-passports/ (last visited on 24 June 2012) and Government Hong Kong: http://www.gov.hk/en/residents/immigration/traveldoc/hksarpassport/index.htm (last visited on 24 June 2012).

identity is namely the Chinese national identity that is imposed on Hong Kongers now that they are part of the Chinese nation.[17] The ambivalence is that most people feel they have a distinct Hong Kong identity that differs from the Chinese identity, even though 95% of the population is ethnic Chinese[18]. Hong Kongers identify with Hong Kong and its citizens as a place, rather than with the whole Chinese nation and state-defined territory. Hong Kong challenges the idea of one nation within a state that can be ethnically diverse but has to be culturally similar (Eriksen 2010: 16).[19] The Chinese nation consists of two culturally diverse groups that are ethnically similar. This cultural diversity manifests itself in the emphasis on a distinct Hong Kong identity.

To understand this identity we have to look at cultural identity. I will show how Hong Kong university students shop in Mathew's (2000) global cultural supermarket to express Fong and Chuang's (2004) different forms of cultural identity to construct their Hong Kong identity. The next chapter will provide a picture of who these Hong Kong university students are.
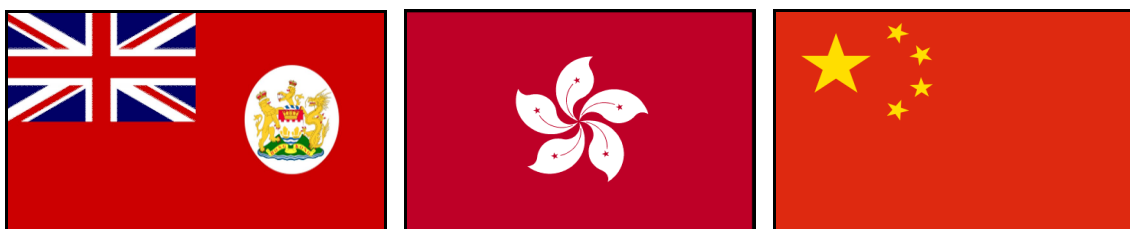

Figure 3. Flags of Hong Kong through the years. The first one was used from 1959 to 1997, when Hong Kong was a British Crown colony.[20] The second one is Hong Kong's current flag. The last one belongs to the People's Republic of China and *could* someday become Hong Kong's flag, when the fifty years of a high degree of autonomy (as stipulated in the Sino-British Joint Declaration) are over in 2047.

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[17] Even though Hong Kongers form an autonomous political community to a high degree (as a result of the 'one country, two systems' principle), China is the sovereign authority to which they have to submit. This means that they are not a nation on their own (Eriksen 2010: 10 & Anderson 2006: 6), as will be further analyzed and explained in the next chapters.

[18] The percentage is based on a 2006 census. Central Intelligence Agency 2012: https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/hk.html (last visited on 10 June 2012).

[19] Hong Kong and China are culturally different. For example the spoken languages: in mainland China people speak Putonghua (Mandarin Chinese) and in Hong Kong people speak Cantonese.

[20] Flagspot, the Hong Kong Colonial Flag: http://flagspot.net/flags/hk-colon.html#hk (last visited on 24 June 2012).

III. Hong Kong university students

As the train slows down, a female voice starts speaking in Cantonese, then proceeds in Mandarin and ends in English: "Next station: University. Doors will open on the left side." This phrase would become well-known to me as it marks the end of an eight-minute journey by train from my apartment to the Chinese University of Hong Kong. As I walk out of the small MTR station, a long queue awaits me. I line up and collectively we wait for a shuttle bus. The weather is hot and humid so I feel relieved when I manage to get a window-seat and the fully loaded non-air-conditioned bus starts to ride. Through the dusty window I take in the surrounding scenery. The hilly roads and numerous trees stand in sharp contrast with the massive skyscrapers, smell of traffic and hustle and bustle of Causeway Bay. Hong Kong Island is where I spent my first days in Hong Kong, now I was living in Tai Po, New Territories[21]. I welcome the cool wind that comes through the half-opened glass window and blends with the sweaty odour that has filled the bus. Fifteen minutes later I alight at New Asia College, ready to meet professor Mathews at the Anthropology department. I didn't know then that he would shake my hand and immediately introduce me to my research population: Hong Kong university students. Not simply university students, but *Chinese* university students with the focus on *local* students. In chapters four and five I will further explore why both 'Chinese' and 'local' are denominations that need clarification in Hong Kong. For now I will focus on the characteristics of my research population.

Regarding the university students 'Chinese' refers to the fact that they are citizens of China – and thus not exclusively citizens of Hong Kong – who are currently studying at one of the eight universities in Hong Kong and are therefore living in Hong Kong. The focus on 'locals' refers to my particular interest in Hong Kong students who weren't necessarily born in Hong Kong but were raised here and thus generally citizens of Hong Kong. Next to these students, I have spoken with many more inspiring people who were not part of my research population but have provided me with a more holistic view on my research: people outside the research group age-range, full-time workers, students who had just graduated, non-Chinese locals, a primary school teacher and university professors.

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[21] See Figure 2.

All students were born between 1995 and 1987 and are thus between 17 and 25 years old at the time of the research. On the basis of two factors they form a rather special group. First of all, they are university students. Their level of education and age make them different from other youngsters and generations, namely the "millennium babies"[22] who were born after 2000 and are now in high school, and the people who were born in the early 1980s who are now full-time working. Second of all, they have experienced the handover in 1997; even though some experienced it more consciously than others. *"All of a sudden I had to sing March of the volunteers[23] instead of God Save the Queen"*, says Simon[24] who was seven at the time of the handover. He continues: *"The people from my generation are pioneers! We needed to be the first."* He and his fellow primary school classmates were the first to experience the consequences of the reunification of Hong Kong with China. Simon was a student at the Queen Elizabeth School and wore a school uniform every day with an emblem that depicted the British crown. After the handover the emblem turned into a leaf: Hong Kong was no longer a British colony and the leaf symbolized the Chinese Education Department. Christy[25], who was ten at the time of the handover, recalls only little of the historical event: *"I was so young. I didn't experience it consciously"*.

These different generations represent different layers of society that experience different identifications with China. On the one hand the millennium babies nowadays learn in high school how to *"be proud of being Chinese"[26]* due to changing school curricula fostering Hong Kong's reunion with China. This way feelings of belonging to the Chinese nation are imposed on young Hong Kong children from the top-down through education, a policy Anderson calls 'official nationalism' following Seton-Watson (2006: 86, 109). On the other hand, the working youngsters in their early thirties today can't escape to do business with mainland Chinese and have to learn Putonghua[27], even though the official languages of Hong Kong are Cantonese (written in traditional Chinese characters) and English. *"Hong Kongers can be their self or they can choose to be their better self. If we want to be our better self, if we want*

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[22] Interview Michael: 2 March 2012.

[23] 'March of the Volunteers' is the national anthem of the People's Republic of China, including Macau and Hong Kong. For more information about the national anthem and its lyrics: http://www.nationalanthems.info/cn.htm (last visited on 24 June 2012).

[24] Interview Simon: 9 March 2012.

[25] Interview Christy: 23 February 2012.

[26] Interview Hazal: 26 March 2012.

[27] Putonghua is better known as Standard Chinese or Mandarin.

to improve ourselves, we have to link ourselves with China", says Carol[28] who has been working in China for the past couple of years. *"It is necessary to learn Putonghua to do business with mainland China, China is our economic market"*, and she is not the only person in her early thirties to state this. Due to China's booming economy, it is a great place to do business. And in order to do business, Putonghua has to be learned as a second or third language. In contrast to the full-time workers, mainly in their thirties, the university students regard the growing interconnectedness with China as a disadvantage; they see it more as a threat to their freedoms and a means by which the central government is trying to control Hong Kong. "I don't want to see a 'harmonious' Hong Kong" says Michael[29], by which he means a Hong Kong that is in harmony with mainland China and thus communist. In fact, most students are quite pessimistic about Hong Kong's future. *"China is slowly taking over Hong Kong. I am afraid for Hong Kong's future"*, says Rose[30] and as I will show later on, she is one among many students who share this view.

Furthermore, within the research population four groups can be distinguished. First there are the local students who are Hong Kongers, meaning they have a Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card and they are ethnically Chinese. This group is very diverse in terms of personal background: there is a great diversity in their place of birth (as is among their parents) and in their socioeconomic status and religious believes. There is a freedom of religion in Hong Kong and nearly half the population practices some form of religion.[31] The most prevalent religions are Buddhism and Taoism, but the students I have spoken with were either atheist or Christian. It occurred to me that religion is limited to their private personal sphere and is only revealed when I ask about it. Religious believes are thus not used by the students at all to categorize their peers and not a differentiator. What the members of the first group have in common is that they are Hong Kong citizens, who have been living in Hong Kong for at least seven consecutive years and thus own a Permanent Identity Card (HKID).

Secondly there are non-Chinese local students. Like the local students they are Hong Kongers, but they are not (fully) ethnic Chinese. They could for example be of mixed origin, Eurasians or have any other ethnicity. Even though they were raised (and in some cases born)

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[28] Interview Carol: 17 March 2012.

[29] Interview Michael: 2 March 2012.

[30] Interview Rose: 15 February 2012.

[31] U.S. Department of State: http://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/irf/2007/90133.htm (last visited on 11 June 2012).

in Hong Kong, and therefore couldn't be any more Hong Konger, they are not perceived of as Hong Kongers by the local students. As I talk to Mei Ling – who is half New Zealander and half Chinese – I notice her 'exclusion' of being perceived of as a Hong Konger by fellow Hong Kongers has two main reasons: she doesn't look Chinese and she speaks only basic Cantonese. As I will show later, she's missing two very important ingredients to be perceived of as a Hong Konger by 'real' Hong Kongers. Interestingly she – a non-Chinese local – is the *only* person I have spoken with whom solely uses her Chinese name.

The third group consists of international students. These are students who don't have the HKID but live in Hong Kong to study full-time at one of the universities. They could have any nationality but for my research I have exclusively focused on students from mainland China, therefore when referring to this third group I strictly refer these students. In a way it is inaccurate to call these students 'international', since they live in the same nation-state and have the same nationality as their Hong Kong peers. But even though they are both citizens of China theoretically, in practice mainland Chinese have to apply for an Exit-entry Permit for traveling to and from Hong Kong.[32] Mainland Chinese can only enter Hong Kong if they have the right documents; there is no free movement between Hong Kong and mainland China. Mainland Chinese have different passports and different legal rights; therefore I call these students 'international'. I have included them into this research because they have provided me with the other side of the story, told from the (mainland) Chinese nation's perspective.

Exchange students make up the last group. They are not part of my research population since they have different nationalities and are only in Hong Kong for a few months at most as a part of their studies elsewhere. As the table below shows the research focuses on groups 1 and 3.

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[32] Immigration Department: http://www.immd.gov.hk/ehtml/hkvisas_9.htm#studying_in_hong_kong (last visited on 24 June 2012).

	Locals: Hong Kongers who have the Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card	Non-locals: Live in Hong Kong for a limited amount of time for a specific purpose
Group 1	***Chinese Hong Kongers***	
Group 2	Non-Chinese Hong Kongers: could have any ethnicity other than Chinese (e.g. Eurasians)	
Group 3		***International students: study full-time in Hong Kong, here: exclusively mainland Chinese students***
Group 4		Exchange students

Table 3. Hong Kong university students.

IV.   Hong Kong culture

The windows are plastered with pieces of A4-paper printed with traditional Chinese characters. Inside a variety of people sit on simple plastic furniture that looks easy to keep clean. The room is the size of a small diner, with around thirty seats. In the middle, high school girls are playing with their smartphones, dressed in their school uniforms. In the right corner, a group of older men are sitting around a table, talking loudly with each other. They have ordered five different dishes with meat, vegetables and fish which they share with each other. In their hands they hold a bowl of rice and two chop sticks. At the entrance stands a small desk with on top of it a cash register that nobody is operating. At the left side of the room is a counter that gives you a glimpse of the kitchen. On the tables stand cups with chopsticks in it, menus and napkin holders. A middle-aged woman comes out of the kitchen with a bowl of macaroni in soup and a plate with small sandwiches with egg and luncheon meat and two little sausages that look like hot dogs. She walks back to the kitchen and returns with two big transparent plastic cups. Judging from the (light) brown colour of the drinks, the ice cubes and the slice of lemon, one is a cold milk tea and the other one is a lemon ice tea. This is a snapshot of an ordinary day in a typical *caa caan teng* (   )[33], which is a Hong Kong restaurant that offers simple, affordable menus and is knowable for its set meals. In my opinion the *ca caan teng* serves as a perfect metaphor for an essentialist view on Hong Kong culture, but in order to understand this metaphor we have to take a closer look at Hong Kong culture.

In this chapter I will discuss how identity markers (Kiely et al. 2001: 35-36) are presented by students in order to construct subjective and objective identities (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20). The identity markers support a cultural identity claim and thereby emphasize a particular Hong Kong culture. Like I have mentioned in chapter one, we move through multiple dimensions of identities of which the boundaries are not clear-cut (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20). Only in interaction with others a "negotiation of identity" (Eriksen 2010: 37-38) takes place in which the dynamic character of identities is exposed. Therefore I will start by discussing a more essentialist view (Baumann 1999: 24) on Hong Kong culture, that corresponds with the construction of objective identities (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20). On the basis of this, I will analyse underlying processes of giving meaning to cultural identity.

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[33] *Caa caan teng* literally means 'tea restaurant'.

When I think back to Hong Kong as a tourist, I immediately picture the famous sceneries of Victoria Harbour, the view from the Peak, the thousands of sky scrapers, the massive shopping malls, beautiful beaches, First Ferry, Lan Kwai Fong and above all I think of Hong Kong food. The importance of food is confirmed by Rose[34] who says: *"Whenever I go abroad, I really miss Hong Kong food! It's such a big part of Hong Kong culture"*. This importance is partly due to skyrocketing housing prices in Hong Kong (and thus very small apartments in which whole families live), whereby social life largely takes place outside the four walls of one's home. At the restaurant or the bar, while enjoying a meal or a drink, is where I learned a lot about Hong Kong culture. *Jam caa* (   )[35] [36] taught me about traditions and cultural practices: the washing of the tableware and chopsticks with hot water or tea before eating, the sharing of *dim sam* (   )[37] and the tapping of a bent index finger to thank the person who is pouring tea in your cup. Moreover buying boxes of *caa siu siu juk faan* (   )[38] [39] brought me closer to the local population[40], and the campus canteen is where I met new people, conducted interviews and learned more about university student life. Talking about food, being interested in food and the curiosity about local dishes brought me to new places and strengthened friendships. When I asked students what they thought was characteristic for their culture, it was no surprise that Hong Kong food was always mentioned.

Next to the delicious food, students mentioned to be proud of the Hong Kong culture that is marked by its cosmopolitanism and international character, both cultural identity markers. Most people speak English and in this place where 'east meets west' you can find a mixture of many cultures as represented, again, through food. Just think of the wide range of dishes you can choose from: Korean barbecue, Sichuan food, dim sum, hot pot, Indian curry, sushi or French fries. Moreover in general students believe Hong Kongers are open-minded people, with a broader view of the world because of their exposure to so many different cultures. *"Hong Kongers are hard working, the food is great and even though Hong Kong is a very small city and is portrayed as a*

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[34] Interview Rose: 23 February 2012.

[35] *Jam caa* literally means 'drink tea'.

[36] See Figure 7.

[37] See Figure 7.

[38] *Caa siu siu juk faan* literally means 'roast pork barbecue pork rice'. It's a box of rice with two kinds of meat and some vegetables.

[39] See Figure 6.

[40] See Appendix III: visual memories.

capitalist society, you can see the diversity of cultures that show a different side of Hong Kong culture", says Caroline[41].

This is why I think the *caa caan teng* is such a great metaphor for Hong Kong culture. Like the Hong Kong cultural identity, in essence the *caa caan teng* is unique, created and developed locally and has Chinese roots. Moreover inspiration for the menu can be found in other cultures, of which bits and pieces are taken and made Hong Kong. It is a place where a variety of people (students, working class) come to eat, but at the same time it keeps out 'outsiders' while it is limited to people who can read traditional Chinese characters.[42] The *caa caan teng* is where 'east meets west', where you can eat macaroni in noodle soup and Hong Kong style French toast. Hong Kong culture as represented by the *caa caan teng* is a little bit of everything, it's a good mix of ancient Chinese traditions and Western influences.

Following this metaphor it appeared to me that students interchangeably presented essentialist and constructionist views on their culture. As we've seen above, on the one hand Hong Kong culture is a mixture of all kinds of worldly cultures which indicates a constructionist character. By incorporating more and more aspects of other cultures, Hong Kong culture is always moving and therefore it changes in meaning by making those aspects their own (Baumann 1996: 26). It also shows how Hong Kongers have cross-cultural empathy, which is a secondary concept of global citizenship[43]. On the other hand, culture is portrayed in an essentialist way since the abovementioned characteristics were the first to be mentioned by students in introducing their culture to me: this is The Hong Kong culture, presented as a static concept (Baumann 1996: 25). This constancy is emphasized while they differentiate themselves from the mainland Chinese, which I will show in the next paragraph.

Othering: creating Us and Them

When it comes to their culture, students also think of their freedom: freedom of speech, relative political freedom and no internet censorship. They are proud of their good educational system and the fact that Hong Kongers are 'civilized'. *"We don't spit on the ground or litter like the mainland Chinese do"* explains Rose[44]. It happened more often that students emphasized a

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[41] Interview Caroline: 28 March 2012.

[42] This aspect of Hong Kong culture will be addressed in chapters five and six.

[43] I will discuss global citizenship in chapter six.

[44] Interview Rose: 15 February 2012.

positive aspect of Hong Kongers in contrast with a negative aspect of mainland Chinese. They spit, we don't. We have access to Facebook, they don't.

It is no surprise that my image of the average mainland Chinese was heavily influenced by Hong Kongers in the first few weeks. A small selection of comments that were mentioned in conversations about mainland Chinese is: mainlanders are uncivilized, they don't know how to line up, they defecate in public, eat on the MTR, talk loudly and spit everywhere. Name a bad habit and it's probably a mainlander's habit: the list goes on and on. By strongly stereotyping mainland Chinese, Hong Kongers depict them as the 'Other' by which cultural differences between Us (Hong Kongers) and Them (the mainland Chinese) can be emphasized (Eriksen 2010: 23). This distinction is made in order to confirm the cultural distinctiveness of Hong Kong culture in contrast with mainland Chinese culture[45]. By stereotyping the mainland Chinese Hong Kongers can favourably compare themselves to them (Eriksen 2010: 25) and reconfirm an "already existing potential" (Baumann 1992: 92): the Hong Kong culture, static and dominant. Through the comparison with mainland Chinese they emphasize the relational aspect of their substantive identity, which refers to various relationships in which appropriate behaviour is exposed (Friedman 1994: 35). *"I used to eat in the MTR sometimes… But now I don't because people will think I'm a mainlander!"*[46] In order to maintain the distinction Hong Kongers have to consciously construct their identity.

At the same time students admit that Hong Kong culture knows its downside, it is also marked by sky-high housing prices, massive consumerism and the fact that most people *"don't really care about politics"* but care about money. *"Hong Kongers are very money-oriented!"* says Caroline[47], who doesn't like this characteristic one bit. *"They always want to make more and more money!"* At the same time they are not particularly politically engaged. As Ingrams explains "The enormous migrant population ha[d] no interest in Hong Kong's ultimate welfare at all. These people come and go as it pays them" (1952: 244-245). At the same time we will see in the next two chapters that they are strongly concerned with political influences. In the next chapter I will take a closer look at the subjective identity of Hong Kong university students and the dynamics between different forms of cultural identity.

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[45] As I will discuss in chapter five, mainland Chinese culture differs from Chinese culture.

[46] Interview Amanda: 11 April 2012.

[47] Interview Caroline: 19 April 2012.

V.   'Chineseness' versus cultural differences

When I first met Chris two years ago during an exchange in Japan, he told me he was from Hong Kong. I figured Hong Kong is a part of China so he must be Chinese. "*Isn't Koron[48] also Chinese?*" I asked him. "*Also?*" he replied with a somewhat startled facial expression. I didn't understand what I had done wrong, until he started explaining to me that even though Hong Kong is a part of China again, he is from Hong Kong and not from China. I had made the apparent mistake of calling him a Chinese. When I got to Hong Kong it appeared to me that more, if not all students share Chris' opinion: they are Hong Kongers who are completely different from mainland Chinese. Even though students wouldn't say they are particularly proud of their Hong Kong identity, I sensed a strong defence of and emphasis on this distinct identity whenever their 'Hongkongness' was in jeopardy or questioned. Furthermore I noticed that students exclusively called themselves Hong Kong people or Hong Konger. When I asked them whether they are Chinese, they would at most say "*I am Hong Kong Chinese.*" They seemed to be reluctant to be identified with being Chinese. "*I definitely want to emphasize that I am from Hong Kong and not from mainland China*" is what I heard more than once. In this chapter I will explore why Hong Kongers would rather not be related to being Chinese and what consequences their views on Chinese culture, mainland Chinese culture and Hong Kong culture have, on their perceptions of mainland Chinese people.

5.1 The paradox of being a Chinese Hong Konger

Initially students thus identify more strongly with their Hong Kong identity and don't identify with or even reject a Chinese identity. But subsequently Elaine[49] says: "*I can't deny I am Chinese now that Hong Kong is part of China*". She experiences this Chinese identity as being ascribed to her from the political domain through civic and official nationalism (Nash & Scott 2001: 391; Anderson 2006: 86, 109). In addition Christy[50] states that she is actually neutral about being Chinese, "*but I defend being a Hong Konger when compared to mainlanders*". It seems that students choose to strongly undercommunicate (Eriksen 2010: 27, 35-38) a Chinese identity when it comes to national identification and the comparison with

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[48] A fellow exchange student from Shanghai, China.

[49] Interview Elaine: 15 March 2012.

[50] Interview Christy: 23 February 2012.

mainland Chinese. On the other hand, when it comes to Hong Kong culture students choose to overcommunicate *(ibid)* their 'Chineseness'. They feel like Hong Kong culture goes way back and includes traditional Chinese culture, family values and is rooted in Confucianism. This is quite a paradox, since they don't want to be identified as being Chinese but at the same time they attribute an important role to Chinese culture within their Hong Kong culture. The paradox can be explained when analysing what exactly is being understood by 'Chineseness'.

Defining 'Chineseness'

Students describe 'Chineseness' as an all-encompassing concept that transcends state lines and includes ethnic Chinese from all over the world. Being Chinese can then provide for a cultural and ethnic home that transcends particular countries (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 2). The Chinese ethnic group is thus perceived of as a worldly imagined community that is interconnected by ethnicity. With no role for politics or the desire for sovereignty, this imagined community is not comparable to Anderson's definition of the nation as an imagined political community (Anderson 2006: 6). However, I believe it still can be seen as an imagined community since it is big enough for face-to-face contact with each and every other Hong Konger to be unlikely *(ibid)*. I will call this overarching Chinese group with its accompanying Chinese culture an ethnic group, even though it is imagined by students as the Chinese 'nation', which is academically incorrect (as I will discuss in chapter six). The reason why I call it an ethnic group is because ethnicity only exists when "cultural differences are perceived as being important, and are made socially relevant" (Eriksen 2010: 12). Chinese consider themselves, and are regarded by others, as being culturally distinctive, and therefore it is accurate to speak of the Chinese as an ethnic group (Eriksen 2010: 4).

When it comes to membership of this group, students indicate that people can be a member if they choose to be. *"If a BBC [British Born Chinese] would perceive himself as part of the Chinese 'nation', he is part of it. If he feels more like a Briton, he is not."*[51] Choosing to be a part of or apart from the Chinese ethnic group, is like choosing a self-ascribed subjective identity (Fong and Chuang 2004: 20), comparable to Friedman's 'lifestyle' identity (1994: 35). In overcommunicating or undercommunicating 'Chineseness', students can respectively transcend political and cultural boundaries or foster cultural pluralism (Eriksen 2010: 202-204; Friedmand 1994: 35). However, this choice is reserved for a selected group of people. *"Chineseness is deeply rooted and has a degree of biological*

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[51] Interview Rose: 28 March 2012.

trace" explains Michael[52]. In his opinion even the Mongolians and Tibetans who live in mainland China are not Chinese. Being Chinese or being perceived of as Chinese can thus be a choice, but at the same time it seems to be intrinsic to a person. Being Chinese is negotiating a substantive (ethnic) cultural identity (Friedman 1994: 35) since it consists of certain characteristics that are ascribed to members of the Chinese ethnic group: as a Chinese you can't deny you're Chinese. Therefore in order to be included into this Chinese ethnic group people are bound by unspoken rules: a Caucasian person will never be part of the Chinese ethnic group due to the apparent lack of shared origins, as reflected in their physical appearance (Eriksen 2010: 80).

The cultural distinction of 'Chineseness' is aimed at Chinese culture versus other cultures: Chinese culture referring to something other than mainland Chinese culture and Hong Kong culture. It means traditional Chinese culture, old traditions, written language and food customs; rooted in ancient history and Confucianism that binds the Chinese ethnic group in students' eyes. However, important is the distinction between Chinese culture, mainland Chinese culture and Hong Kong culture.

'Chineseness' in Hong Kong

Depending on where history begins, Hong Kongers' myths of common origin change together with the ethnic group they belong to. When counting from ancient history, Hong Kongers can be perceived of as ethnically the same as Chinese. In that case they are part of the Chinese ethnic group, together with mainland Chinese. When choosing to let history begin from 1841, when the British Empire colonized Hong Kong, or from 1966, when the Cultural Revolution led by Mao Zedong was launched, Hong Kongers form an ethnic group by themselves, distinctly different from mainland Chinese and Chinese. These two historical events have contributed greatly to the cultural differences between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese. As described in chapter two, Hong Kongers constructed a Hong Kong identity and culture during the colonial period. Moreover as a consequence of being colonized, Hong Kong was exposed to many different cultures (cf. 'east meets west'), mixing traditional Chinese culture with other cultural influences. In addition Michael[53] emphasizes the role of the Cultural Revolution. *"Deep down there is no difference between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese. But when the Cultural Revolution took place, traditional Chinese*

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[52] Interview Michael: 2 March 2012.

[53] Interview Michael: 2 March 2012.

culture was completely destroyed. The uncivilized behaviour of mainland Chinese is only recently induced by the Communist Party of China." Thus it can be said that Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese have the same descent, and that through the course of history they have both altered Chinese culture.

The case of China is a good example of two groups that seem culturally similar (Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese), and yet have a socially highly relevant interethnic relationship between them (Eriksen 2010: 16). This differs from Baumann's (1999) notion of a nation that has to be made out of one 'superethnos', thus one national culture, while accepting ethnic diversity. China shows us that it could also be the case that one ethnic group – with "myths of common origin" (Eriksen 2010: 17, 37) – constitutes two completely different cultural groups. In the next two paragraphs I will focus on these two cultural groups. I will first discuss the Hong Kong identity and later on the imaging of mainland Chinese by Hong Kongers.

5.2 Hong Kong identity: being a true Hong Konger in Hong Kong

Three factors are considered crucial in order to be regarded as a 'real' Hong Konger. Unlike the case of 'Chineseness', myths of common origin are not postulated. (Non-)Chinese people can be(come) Hong Kongers as well, as long as they comply with three factors. First of all they have to have the Hong Kong Permanent Identity Card (HKID), which proves that you're a permanent resident of Hong Kong and enjoy the right of abode.[54] You receive the HKID being born in Hong Kong, being born to a parent who was a permanent resident of Hong Kong at the time of birth, or after taking Hong Kong as your place of permanent residence and having ordinarily resided in Hong Kong for a continuous period of minimally seven years (Government Hong Kong 2010). Living in Hong Kong for a period less than seven years thus not makes you a Hong Konger. Second of all they have to contribute to Hong Kong society by paying taxes or having a job in Hong Kong. And most importantly, they have to speak Cantonese and understand the Hong Kong slang. Rose[55] emphasizes that being fluent in Cantonese is actually not enough, in order to be a true Hong Konger you have to understand the Hong Kong slang, which according to her is a combination of the language used in Hong Kong television dramas and the language used on internet forums. *"Residents of*

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[54] Government Hong Kong: http://www.gov.hk/en/residents/immigration/idcard/roa/eligible/ (last visited on 27 June 2012).

[55] Interview Rose: 17 April 2012.

Guangdong provence [who also speak Cantonese] don't understand this slang and can't use it properly. They don't understand the underlying meaning and feeling of the words." The slang changes regularly which implicitly demands people to live and stay in Hong Kong for a longer period of time, in order to learn the slang and keep up with it. This fits nicely with the other two factors.

All three factors that construct Hong Kongers' collective identity (Wodak et al. 2009: 16) are expressed in the following example. One of the tutors at the anthropology department at CUHK is Justin, a Hong Kong born half Indian half Swiss Hong Konger. When I ask anthropology students if they consider Justin a Hong Konger they answer doubtfully. *"Well.. Does he speak Cantonese?"* He doesn't. And therefore students don't regard him as a true Hong Konger. *"He has to speak Cantonese! If I would have a brother, who is a foreigner but grew up with me... he wouldn't look like a real Hong Konger but I would think he's a real Hong Konger I guess"* says Caroline[56]. When I ask Christy[57] what she thinks if Justin she starts laughing. *"I don't know... I shouldn't be so harsh.* [Thinks for a second] *He could be..."* she says doubtfully. Later she adds: *"Maybe yes, the boundary is blurred since Hong Kong is a migrant society."* But, she too stresses the importance of language: true Hong Kongers should know how to speak Cantonese. She takes Gregory Rivers as an example: a Hong Kong actor of Australian heritage. He speaks fluent Cantonese, uses Chinese characters and has a Chinese wife: Christy considers him a true Hong Konger, even though he doesn't look Chinese. In Anderson's discussion of the nation-state he also emphasizes the importance of language within an imagined political community. Even though, again, Hong Kong is not an imagined *political* community, the function of language is similar: it invents strong feelings of belonging while it binds all members of the imagined community (Anderson 2006: 134). Mastering the Cantonese language is absolutely decisive for being included into the Hong Kong ethnic group. The collective Hong Kong identity is thus ascribed to you by others. You could live in Hong Kong for over seven years or contribute to Hong Kong society, and even feel really Hong Konger (like Justin does); but if you don't speak Cantonese, you're just not perceived of as a Hong Konger. By adopting these crucial factors to include people, Hong Kongers choose to overcommunicate their Hong Kong identity to show belonging to and membership of the Hong Kong ethnic group (Wodak et al. 2009).

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[56] Interview Caroline: 19 April 2012.

[57] Interview Christy: 26 March 2012.

In addition to these factors the majority of Hong Kong students have an English first name. It is a cultural identity marker that indicates a relational 'lifestyle' identity (Fong and Chuang 2004: 22; Friedman 1994: 35). *"It makes things easier. Foreign people can't pronounce my Chinese name"*, says Vivien[58]. It is not really a matter of closeness whether you address a person by his Chinese or English name. Chinese names – as recorded in their birth certificate – are mostly used by family members, Chinese teachers and friends who got to know them by their Chinese name. Some people get their English name quite late, so for example their secondary school friends would call them by their Chinese name, whereas their fellow university students call them by their English name. At first I thought it was quite peculiar. You don't expect an Asian person living in an Asian country to be named Bryan. It makes sense if Bryan would be an American, but Bryan is a Hong Konger. I asked students about their English name and discovered an important factor that makes it peculiar: Hong Kongers choose their own names. In general their English names are not given to them by their parents, are not registered in their birth certificate and are subject to change. *"Last year I changed my name. Before that my name was Kam, but I found out it's actually a guys' name so I changed it to Amanda"*, says Amanda[59] as if it's the most natural thing in the world. Christy's name was chosen by her primary school (class 6) teacher, and so on. And it's not only Hong Kongers who do this. Mainland Chinese give themselves (or receive) English names too, but it's less common than in Hong Kong. Having an English name is not regarded as part of the Hong Kong culture by students; it is more of practical usefulness.

The abovementioned crucial factors that grand membership into the Hong Kong ethnic group, stand in beautiful contrast with the ease with which an English name is chosen. Both coincide with Hall's (1990: 394) model of cultural identity as difference and rupture. During years of colonization they were separated from mainland China, developed their own economy and maintained a different language. Now that they are reunited again they try to cope with those differences by setting up rules. That way Hong Kongers use the Hong Kong identity to position themselves within the narratives of the past *(ibid)*. Now that I have discussed what it takes to be a 'real' Hong Konger, I wonder how they differ from mainland Chinese.

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[58] Interview Vivien: 17 April 2012.

[59] Interview Amanda: 10 April 2012.

5.3 Mainland Chinese culture: from a Hong Kongers' perspective

What surprised me is that students can very easily point out who is or is not from mainland China. Apparently Hong Kongers can be visually distinguished from mainland Chinese by their physical appearance. *"I can't really tell you what it is! It's just a gut feeling... They have different hairstyles, wear different clothes and behave differently. When they start talking, in Cantonese or Mandarin, I just know I was right and it's a mainlander!"*[60] I have tried to develop this skill but only semi-succeeded. One hint I was given is that mainland Chinese people usually carry a lot of bags (with big brand names) or luggage. *"When you see a Chinese person carrying bags of Louis Vuitton, Prada and Chanel, you can be pretty sure he's from the mainland"* says Peter[61]. Gwen[62] adds: *"mainland Chinese are always carrying big suitcases and bulky luggage."* These two stereotypes describe the main types of mainland Chinese that come to Hong Kong: the extremely rich who come to Hong Kong to spend money (since you have to pay almost no tax in Hong Kong), and the poorer Chinese who come to Hong Kong to buy and sell (cheap) goods in big numbers. Following chapter four, I will discuss the (negative) attitude of university students with respect to mainland Chinese and China. I will do this on the basis of recent incidents that happened in Hong Kong between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese, which in my opinion expose underlying frictions between the two parties. Moreover I believe Hong Kongers' perceptions towards the growing number of mainland Chinese in Hong Kong reflect their identification with China.

Mainland Chinese versus Hong Kongers

"Do you know about the pregnant women?" asks Rose[63]. The ignorant look in my eyes must have encouraged Rose to explain the matter. An increasing number of mainland Chinese women want to give birth in Hong Kong, which has put a growing burden on the resources of local hospitals.[64] By giving birth in Hong Kong their children will gain residency rights including rights to health and education. Moreover mainland Chinese women see it a chance

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[60] Interview Kirsten: 21 March 2012.

[61] Interview Peter: 11 April 2012.

[62] Interview Gwen: 18 March 2012.

[63] Interview Rose: 27 March 2012.

[64] According to the Hong Kong Census and Statistics Department, the number of births in Hong Kong by mainland Chinese women went from 26,838 in 2006 to 40,875 in 2010. A 52% increase.

to dodge China's one-child policy and a way to receive better medical care. The problem is however that they are taken the hospital places of the Hong Kong pregnant women.[65] Therefore they are called 'double negative', referring to both the pregnant woman and her mainland Chinese husband. The students I have spoken about this phenomenon reacted somewhat resentful, so I tried to see it from the mainland Chinese's perspective as well. What if the healthcare system in mainland China is really bad? What if the conditions of giving birth in Hong Kong are way better than in China? *"It doesn't matter! They are taking our resources!"*[66] Michael[67] adds that he thinks these pregnant mainland Chinese women are 'ignorant'. *"They think their children's lives will be better in Hong Kong. They want to live the American dream in Hong Kong. It's not realistic."*

Another event that caused problems was the Dolce and Gabbana (D&G) incident. Facts are that a D&G security guard stopped a photographer from taking pictures of the shop-front from the pavement outside. Story goes that it was a Hong Kong photographer and the security guard favoured mainland Chinese costumers and discriminated Hong Kongers. As a result, on 8 January 2012 more than a thousand people protested outside the D&G flagship store in Hong Kong. Hong Kongers felt they were deprived from their right to take photographs in public spaces and moreover felt discriminated.[68]

Figure 4. Protesters outside the D&G store. The headline reads: "Thousands of people challenged Dolce and Gabbana to give an apology".

Source: http://badcanto.wordpress.com/2012/01/09/the-truth-behind-hundreds-protest-at-dg-photo-ban-in-hong-kong/

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[65] http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/6269655.stm (last visited on 8 June 2012).

[66] Interview Rose: 1 March 2012; interview Michael: 28 March 2012.

[67] Interview Michael: 2 March 2012.

[68] For a more detailed description from a Hong Konger's perspective: http://badcanto.wordpress.com/2012/01/09/the-truth-behind-hundreds-protest-at-dg-photo-ban-in-hong-kong/ (last visited on 21 June 2012).

Moreover the Hong Kong government implemented Hong Kong-mainland China driving scheme, allowing drivers registered in China to drive into Hong Kong.[69] The underlying idea is that free traffic will spark Hong Kong's economy. However, Hong Kongers are not happy with this scheme. According to the Oriental TV[70], Hong Kongers argue that the traffic rules are completely different and that it will get even busier on the already congested roads. Moreover it will worsen the air pollution problem and problems with pregnant women. In addition some are seriously worried that it might lead to the adoption of China's system of driving on the right side of the road.

Another very popular event that caused some fuss was the video of mainland Chinese eating on the train. A mainland Chinese mother lets her child eat noodles in the MTR and gets addressed since it's not allowed to eat or drink on the MTR. She refuses to listen and a fight breaks out.[71] Professor Kong Qingdong of Peking University has responded to the video on TV.V1, a mainland Chinese internet TV station.[72] Striking about his interview is that he calls Hong Kongers bastards, thieves and cheaters; who were British running dogs, and now are dogs and not human. Also the importance of language is raised again: the professor thinks Cantonese is merely a dialect and all Chinese citizens should speak Putonghua.[73]

Out of many incidents that are largely summarized on badcanto.wordpress.com[74] I have merely highlighted the five incidents above, since these were the ones that students cited repeatedly to discuss the ongoing problems between them and mainland Chinese. What I would like to stress is that it's nearly impossible for me to portray a neutral and full image of the current situation in Hong Kong. It is hard to retrieve both sides of the story and it's very

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[69] For a more detailed description from a Hong Konger's perspective: http://badcanto.wordpress.com/2012/02/02/hong-kong-netizen-against-mainland-self-driv-tour-to-hong-kong/ (last visited on 21 June 2012).

[70] Part of their broadcast on this topic can be seen on:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T83cdMa6Jpk&feature=player_embedded (last visited on 18 June 2012).

[71] The incident with English subtitles can be seen on: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wEComrx76uY (last visited on 19 June 2012).

[72] The broadcast with English subtitles is quite shocking and can be seen on:
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nUkiaDS3g4 (last visited on 19 June 2012).

[73] The interview with the mainland Chinese professor can be seen on: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_nUkiaDS3g4 (last visited on 1 June 2012).

[74] Badcanto is an online blog by presumably a Hong Kong blogger who claims: "I write this blog because I care about my home" and therefore started documenting incidents that happened between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese from early 2011onwards. It tries to cover most incidents in English rather than traditional or simplified Chinese and is being used as a counterpart of mainland Chinese internet news blogs that portray the situation in Hong Kong from the view of mainland Chinese. Telling the stories from the view of Hong Kongers is a great addition to existing media coverage of some incidents, but on its own it's rather one-sided. Therefore each article should be read critically!

hard to asses whether something's a one-time incident that is magnified or a real ongoing problem. Since I don't understand Chinese I am dependent on English subtitles that are without a doubt biased towards either group. The purpose of these examples is therefore not the objective coverage of recent problems, but the raising of awareness. Fact is that at the time of this research these incidents were experienced as important problems by Hong Kong students, which reflects a particular mindset that influences their feelings towards China.

Complementary to these incidents, students talked about their mainland Chinese peers: the *noi dei saang* (NDS)[75], who merely come to Hong Kong to study (and sometimes stay to find a job). Their stance towards the NDS is rather ambiguous. On the one hand the NDS mostly come from a rich family and are mostly in the top 5% of their class back home and therefore seen as great competition: not only in university, also later on the labour market. On the other hand *"they are willing to adapt to the Hong Kong culture and if they stay here after their studies they will contribute to Hong Kong society"*, says Carol[76]. This is consistent with the previous paragraph: as long as you contribute to Hong Kong society, you are welcome as a permanent resident. The ambiguous and mostly negative stance of Hong Kongers towards mainland Chinese influences their perceptions of the Chinese nation and fuels a reluctance to belong to it, as I will explain in the next chapter.

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[75] Literally translated *noi dei saang* means 'mainland China student'. The name is not regarded as being offensive.

[76] Interview Carol: 2012.

VI.   Feelings of belonging

"Do you feel proud to be a Hong Konger?" I ask Christy.

"Proud? I don't know. Maybe not particularly proud. It's just who you are." She thinks about this for a second and adds "..but I would definitely say I am a Hong Konger when compared to a mainland Chinese. Yes, I am a Hong Konger, not Chinese!" She nods affirmatively and starts laughing.

-Christy[77]

When Christy said this, I wondered what implications the reluctance of being Chinese has on the Chinese nation. Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese both have the Chinese nationality and are *de jure* part of the same Chinese nation. Anthropologically speaking they are thus part of the same "imagined political community" – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (Anderson 2006: 7). With this definition the nation is thus confined along state lines. However, the students I have spoken with don't share this academic definition of a nation. As we have seen in chapter five, in their view the Chinese 'nation' transcends state lines and encompasses ethnic Chinese from all over the world. However as an ethnic group, Chinese don't strive for an all-encompassing Chinese state and moreover – unlike a nation – inclusion into this Chinese ethnic group is entirely voluntary (if you meet certain conditions). This voluntary basis, is not comparable to civic nationalism, in which simply having a certain nationality includes you into a particular nation, regardless of your ethnicity or culture (Nash & Scott 2001: 391).

Ethnic differences can then be transcended as a nation is held together by a supra-ethnicity. It is quite paradoxical that in the case of the Chinese nation, there is a clear supra-ethnicity, namely the Chinese culture. Even so, Hong Kongers don't connect 'Chineseness' with a political-geographical entity: the Chinese state, and they don't feel a connection whatsoever with mainland Chinese.

In the previous chapter I have described recent upheavals that show that mainland Chinese are *not* welcome and have stirred up the fierce debate about relations between Hong Kong and

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[77] Interview Christy: 23 February 2012.

mainland China. Needless to say this is only one side of the coin. In the next paragraph I will discuss how the mainland Chinese government tries to involve Hong Kongers into the nation.

6.1 An ambiguous relationship with mainland Chinese and the 'motherland'

The Chinese government tries her best to include Hong Kongers into the Chinese nation. For example, the Chinese national anthem is played every night before the news on Chinese-language television channels, schools offer education into national identity from kindergarten onwards (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 2), and more and more signs are written in simplified Chinese characters (that are used in mainland China). Even though most students see these developments as a sign that *"China is slowly taking over"*, according to Hazal[78], a primary school teacher, the explanation is clear. *"The university students are a different generation. They haven't experienced the hardships of building Hong Kong. China is growing and doesn't want to pay attention to such a small place like Hong Kong. If we go abroad we see signs for tourists in English. Most tourists in Hong Kong are from mainland China, so why shouldn't we have signs in simplified Chinese? It's a way of serving our tourists. University students just don't see the bigger picture."* Students definitely do not share this opinion. They believe China is practicing official nationalism in order to instil nationalistic feelings upon them (Anderson 2006: 86, 109). From what I have been told by students and read in online reports, there seems to be a fear of Sinicization (Kam-Yee 2009: 1). And that's not all there is to it. Students feel like Hong Kong is getting too crowded as well. *"There are just too many [mainlanders]! The Hong Kong government should control their numbers."*[79] According to the Hong Kong Tourism Board, of the 41.9 million visitors to Hong Kong in 2011, over 28 million or nearly 24% hailed from mainland China.[80] That is a big percentage, but the question remains why mainland Chinese are experienced as a problem rather than being welcomed as fellow members of the nation.

Exclusion as a defence mechanism

Partly due to the described upheavals in chapter five, Hong Kongers feel their culture and privileges are at stake and the mainland Chinese are the intruders, the 'bad guys'. Even

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[78] Interview Hazal: 28 April 2012.

[79] Interview Simone: 15 February 2012.

[80] Cited on http://articles.cnn.com/2012-02-01/asia/world_asia_locust-mainlander-ad_1_mainland-hong-kongers-hong-kong-tourism-board?_s=PM:ASIA (last visited on 8 June 2012).

though Chinese form the majority group within the Chinese nation, Hong Kong students have quite a negative stance towards mainland Chinese,. This is somewhat odd since it is mostly a majority group that feels threatened by minority groups. However in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, mainland Chinese form a minority group and Hong Kongers don't want to be identified with this group at all. Through the use of stereotypes the emphasis is places on 'Othering', which justifies differences in access to resources (Eriksen 2010: 25). By socially excluding mainland Chinese, they safeguard their natural resources (cf. the pregnant women). Instead of enhancing cultural unity, mainland Chinese are experienced as a threat. Reasons can be found in history. Early post-war Hong Kongers had a "refugee mentality" (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 27-28). This mentality planted seeds for today's national identification with China. Compared to the situation in mainland China, the immigrants' lives in Hong Kong were good. Therefore immigrants tried to avoid political tensions and accepted the status quo in Hong Kong, even if this meant they had to put up with hardship. The refugee mentality was a survival instinct and involved a sense of transience and rootlessness (Mathews, Ma & Lui 2008: 28). This rootlessness continues to be felt today. Therefore their cultural differences with mainland Chinese are perceived of as being very important and are nowadays made socially relevant (Eriksen 2010: 12). This feeling of distinctiveness allows them to have *no* feelings of belonging to the Chinese nation and the Chinese state.

State politics

The lack of connection with the Chinese state is exactly the point: it's the republic they have a problem with, they don't agree with the state. In the wake of history, the state is not perceived of as being representative of their culture and value system. Like earlier said, by the late 1960s and 1970s an autonomous Hong Kong cultural identity began to emerge, as a post-war generation reached adulthood that had only known Hong Kong as their home (Mathews 2000: 127). It was only then that a Hong Kong identity became distinct from a Chinese identity. Nowadays the 'one country, two systems' principle offers a way out of national identification; Hong Kongers don't feel the need to support or revolt against the state government because they have their own. Hong Kong has a high degree of autonomy as enshrined in its constitution: the Hong Kong Basic Law. It maintains a capitalist economic system and has a multi-party system, even though only a small Election Committee consisting of 1200 members has the right to vote for the Chief Executive – the head of government. Recently, on 25 March 2012, C.Y. Leung was chosen as the new Chief Executive, causing a lot of controversies as some people say he's been chosen by the Election Committee because

he's a Communist, so that the central government has more power in Hong Kong. Again, the fuss around these elections showed how students were concerned about top-down Sinicization (cf. official nationalism).

6.2 Lack of national identification

Since Hong Kongers have their own government, there is merely a cognitive belonging to China and a lack of national identification with the state. There is however, a degree of emotional belonging to Hong Kong as well. First of all Hong Kong is perceived of as their own territory: they're aware of geographic boundaries that coincide with ethnic boundaries. Recent upheavals indicate that students are very well aware of the geographical boundaries between Hong Kong and mainland China. They see Hong Kong as *their* territory, independent from mainland China and the resources and benefits that the Hong Kong government provides should merely be available for Hong Kong citizens. Second of all they feel bonded to Hong Kong because of friends and family; but not because of strong nationalistic feelings and no feelings of loyalty. Emotionally Hong Kong is *"the place I know best, where I grew up, where my parents live"*[81]. But that's as far as their attachment to Hong Kong goes. *"If I could move somewhere else, I would do it!"* says Peter[82]. And so would Caroline[83]: *"I feel part of Hong Kong because of my friends and family. I don't feel connected to the general public."* They don't cheer for a Hong Kong team but *"for the best team"*. The emotional attachment to Hong Kong does not coincide with a national identification with the Chinese state. I wondered whether the emotional attachment felt towards Hong Kong is strong enough for the Hong Kong ethnic group – the imagined community – to strive for sovereignty and independence from China. The answer is simple: they can't. They don't have their own armed forces or their own natural resources. Hong Kong is depending on China, for example for their water supply but more recently also economically.

Especially in the case of the migrant society of Hong Kong, the nation (as a mono-cultural people) is no longer coterminous with the state (as a political-geographical entity). Therefore Hong Kongers' have a different perspective on citizenship and nationality that could explain their lack of national identification. Hong Kong students feel like they are cosmopolitans, 'citizens of the world'. Through global citizenship different forms of belonging and

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[81] Interview Elaine: 15 April 2012.

[82] Interview Peter: 12 March 2012.

[83] Interview Caroline: 28 March 2012.

participation are offered (Schattle 2008: 3). Even though global citizenship's ideology of awareness, participation and responsibility (Schattle 2008: 7) are not pursued in Hong Kong, there are secondary concepts of global citizenship that are practiced in Hong Kong pragmatically. Hong Kong students are aware that in order for them to succeed in the global economy, they have to focus on notions of competence and competitiveness (Schattle 2008: 54-55). Therefore the NDS are regarded as competitors and students believe they're better off without them. The processes of 'Othering' creating an Us and a Them can be seen as mechanisms to cope with competition (Eriksen 2010; Schattle 2008) that are directed inwards. In this light students emphasize their Hong Kong identity and exclude mainland Chinese.

On the other hand, when essentializing their culture the emphasis is placed on the international and cosmopolitan character of Hong Kong culture. Just as with global citizenship, they value cross-cultural empathy highly (Schattle 2008: 47) which implies the ability to cross intangible borders and reaching out across different cultural groups *(ibid)*, but only when it comes to anyone but their neighbours. Moreover, since they don't feel a national belonging to China, they can disengage from civic life (Schattle 2008: 58). This allows them to be internationally mobile independent of citizenship status which explains Chris' and Caroline's easiness to trade Hong Kong for a different home. Simon[84] even advices to *"migrate if you have money! You should get another national identity as well, double nationalities are accepted in Hong Kong. For example be a Canadian Chinese, so if China takes over Hong Kong you could easily move to somewhere else."* Students mentioned they would easily move to another country if the living conditions are better there. Their sense of belonging does not go beyond the longing for capital. As the world goes from nationalism to globalism, as a result of migration and transnationalism (Eriksen 2010: 176), Hong Kong goes from globalism to nationalism, as desired and instilled by China. The question remains whether there should be strived for the application of the ideology of the nation-state in Hong Kong.

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[84] Interview Simon: 17 April 2012.

Conclusion

In this research I have focused on Hong Kong university students' subjective and objective Hong Kong identity (Fong and Chuang 2004). I have analysed how they shape this Hong Kong identity themselves and how they use this identity to interact with others. Students' particular social identity (particularly their age) influences the way they express and interpret their Hong Kong identity (Wodak et al. 2009). Also their collective identity has two dimensions: on the one hand they feel distinctly Hong Kong, on the other hand they feel Chinese (Fong and Chuang 2004). At the same time the distinction between Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese is made clear. Mainland Chinese are stereotyped in the process of 'Othering' (Eriksen 2010) and perceived of as threatening competitors. Especially now that Hong Kongers and mainland Chinese are more and more in interaction with each other they are increasingly concerned with their distinctiveness, *but* they are also becoming more similar (Eriksen 2010). Theoretically the latter is favourable for inclusion into the nation-state. Based on territory, ethnicity and nationality Hong Kongers are part of the Chinese nation (Pye in Dittmer and Kim). Historically and culturally speaking they are not, depending on where you let history begin. The question in Hong Kong is therefore not whether the Chinese nation-state includes Hong Kongers, but whether Hong Kongers want to be included into the superethnos at all (Baumann 1999).

Through the course of history under colonial rule, a national identity has never been praised to Hong Kongers. Therefore they had the freedom to develop and construct a distinct Hong Kong identity that manages inclusion, exclusion and 'Othering' (Eriksen 2010). With regards to inclusion, Hong Kongers have the ability to transcend tangible borders to accept different cultural groups (cf. 'east meets west'). However, when it comes to exclusion Hong Kongers see mainland Chinese, who live in the same state and belong to the same nation, as the 'Other'. Mainland Chinese are thus stereotyped and are put in a bad light (Baumann 1999; Eriksen 2010). Hong Kongers as a multicultural society is thus only a descriptive term that implies the existence of different ethnic groups in Hong Kong society. In terms of mutual tolerance and recognition, multiculturalism is absent in Hong Kong. What factors create these negative feelings? First of all it's the mass media, emphasizing and magnifying these conflicts. They create an image of the mainlander as being less 'civilized' than Hong Kongers and as threats to their socio-economic life as they know it. Second of all there's a cultural

difference between mainland Chinese and Hong Kongers, rooted in history. Hong Kong was a colony and therefore it's more internationally oriented. It didn't experience the Cultural Revolution, an awful event that nowadays still represents the Chinese state for many Hong Kongers. Therefore Hong Kongers don't perceive China as their motherland or their home since they don't agree with Communism and state policies. The state fails to be a representative for Hong Kongers' culture and value system. Most students even believe the central government is slowly controlling them. This could also be seen as attempts to enhance the integration of Hong Kong with China (from the top-down through official nationalism), but it's not perceived that way. In my opinion it's safe to say that most students experience an anti-national identification or a lack of national identification with China. The paradox here is that Hong Kongers tend to feel identified with the Chinese ethnic group and its corresponding Chinese culture, even though feelings of national identification with China are non-existent among Hong Kongers. The paradox can be explained by the strict distinction between mainland Chinese culture and 'Chineseness' or Chinese culture, of which the binding power lies in its rootedness in ancient Chinese history and Confucianism.

Hong Kongers thus identify with the Hong Kong culture mainly through a normative identification by having certain rules to perceive an individual as a Hong Konger, and an emotional identification that makes them feel connected to Hong Kong emotionally. This emotional identification however has nothing to do with nationalistic feelings for China or feelings of belonging to Hong Kong. Hong Kongers feel they belong to the world and are global citizens. Their different perspective on citizenship and nationality academically contributes to the discussion whether the concept of a nation-state is still applicable to contemporary societies (Eriksen 2010). This corresponds with the views of Hannerz (1992, 1996) and Appadurai (1996) who suggest that identities should be constructed on the basis of the global cultural supermarket (Mathews 2000). The discussion is also in line with the view of Hobsbawm (1990), who even states that the age of the nation-state as one homogenous nation within one state is nearly over (in Eriksen 2010: 202). Finally this research questions the need for a national identity and its accompanying loyalty to a nation, following researches of Mathews, Ma & Lui (2008: 7,13).

I am curious about Hong Kong's future. Time will tell whether a nation-state can exist without holding together a nation with an overarching national culture or whether we linger in an idea of one nation in one state. In that case China will try to impose mainland Chinese culture upon Hong Kongers. If we can let go of this idea and have faith in a truly multicultural

society Hong Kongers could preserve their Hong Kong culture but in a way also experience feelings of belonging to the Chinese nation. The case of Hong Kong shows us how deeply rooted 'belonging to a nation' is in our system. It is very confusing when it is not clear to which nation one belongs, and the question we have to ask ourselves is whether it should be a prerequisite to belong to a nation. Through the analysis of the situation in Hong Kong it is apparent that a national identity is actually no longer necessarily a requisite in our globalized and increasingly interconnected world. Global citizenship and the discourse of the market offer alternatives, by making you a global consumer who can be anything in the world because everything is for sale (cf. Mathews' cultural supermarket). Perhaps the state will someday lose the emotional feelings of belonging of its nation and a civic nationalism will prevail in which anyone is easily included. This doesn't mean that feelings of emotional belonging will no longer exist, on the contrary. Feelings of emotional belonging will always exist as long as there is the Other (Eriksen 2010). We all feel, one way or the other, connected to an imagined community. However, the political aspect of an imagined community could lapse in the future. People will feel connected to others in other ways: through a shared language, musical preferences or lifestyle.

While Gellner spoke about having a nation is like having a nose and two ears, we could better speak of group membership instead of nationality. In an inspiring lecture[85] professor Mathews stated that someday there will be no more ethnicity, as individuals can choose their own cultural identity regardless of their ethnicity.[86] At first I thought this was impossible, but as nation-state boundaries can be transcended, why can't ethnic boundaries be too? I believe human beings are herd animals, that are not led by the nation but by self-chosen personal preferences and self-ascribed identities that we buy in our ever-expanding cultural supermarkets.

German philosopher Hegel once said *"Only when the dusk starts to fall does the owl of Minerva spread its wings and fly."* (1820: 20). With this quote he meant to say, that philosophy always lags behind history and political changes. The same could be valid for feelings of national belonging: maybe times have changed and we should explore alternatives to national belonging rather than linger on the paradox of multiculturalism.

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[85] "Cultural Identity in a Globalizing World", lecture by professor Gordon Mathews, Chinese University of Hong Kong (11 April 2012).

[86] For an illustration of the transcending of ethnicity through culture, see: Burakku, Black culture in Japan.

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Appendix I: summary

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Appendix II: visual fieldwork memories

This photograph was taken on my last day in Hong Kong. I went to this food stand nearly every day to buy a box of rice with barbecue and roasted pork, and nearly every day I was greeted by this man. Even though he didn't speak a word of English and I only knew how to order in Cantonese, we could communicate pretty well!

Figure 5. *Caa siu siu yuk faan*, 30 April 2012.

Figure 6. *Caa siu siu yuk faan*, 7 April 2012.

Figure 7. J*am caa & dim sam*, 11 March 2012.