



**MASTER OF ARTS IN ASIA PACIFIC POLICY STUDIES**

MAAPPS Policy Brief # 5

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**POLICY BRIEF:  
Tackling Hong Kong's Anti-Mainland  
Chinese Sentiments**

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**Policy Problem:**

Hong Kong locals' increasing anti-Mainlanders sentiment, often expressed through discriminations and demonstrations, is dampening local economy and hurting Hong Kong's world financial hub status. This brief is targeted at mitigating people's anti-Mainlanders sentiment.

**Recommendations:**

**1. Launch courtesy campaigns at Mainland visitors to mold their behaviors and strengthen law enforcement on those who break local laws.**

> Publish brochures that introduce local laws and social norms, list "Dos and Don'ts in Hong Kong" and basic conversational Cantonese/English sentences. Disseminate them as welcome packages at the airport, border control points, and tourist-concentrated spots.

**2. Change the industrial land use near the Hong Kong-Mainland boundary (Lok Ma Chau Control Point in New Territories) to commercial use. Develop projects to encourage building shopping centres in this area to divert visitors from densely populated downtown areas.**

## **Background:**

Our retail sales dropped for six straight months since February amid a slowdown in visitor arrivals from Mainland China. It is estimated that if we lose 20% of Mainland visitors, our GDP would suffer a loss of over 40 billion HKD<sup>1</sup>.

The anti-Mainlanders sentiment is partly due to people's distrust against Mainland China's political system. It also stems from people's unpleasant experience with Mainland visitors who are accused of uncivil behaviors, disrespect for local norms, and of pricing local people out<sup>2</sup>. The first factor exceeds our scope of control; recommendations will therefore be focused on the second cause.

## **Analysis:**

1. A poll released by The Chinese University of Hong Kong in November 2014 suggested that less than 20% of the respondents have positive feelings toward Mainland tourists. Mainland tourists' low awareness of public order and sanitation (e.g. eating on the subway<sup>3</sup> or public urination<sup>4</sup>), disrespect for local culture<sup>5</sup> is an important source for the sentiment.

While previous efforts to change people's perceptions of Mainlanders by broadcasting a documentary that presents Mainlander favorably and emphasizes the importance of tolerating Mainland newcomers have failed and caused backfires, we should direct our target at Mainlanders' behaviors instead. Many of Mainland visitors' misbehaviors are not intentional but because they are not aware of the cultural and law differences in Hong Kong (Chart 1). It is therefore important to raise their awareness of local norms and laws.

The Cleanup Hong Kong campaign since the 1950s provides a perfect precedence of molding uncivil behaviors through intensive media exposure. The well-known "litterbug" image has been proven successful in encouraging public awareness of keeping public space clean and abiding by laws. Meanwhile, since many Mainlanders are only here for short visits, they would not be exposed to our campaigns for too long a time. In this sense, tough law enforcement as what Singapore does to regulate public behaviors is also needed.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.nbd.com.cn/articles/2014-09-12/862790.html>

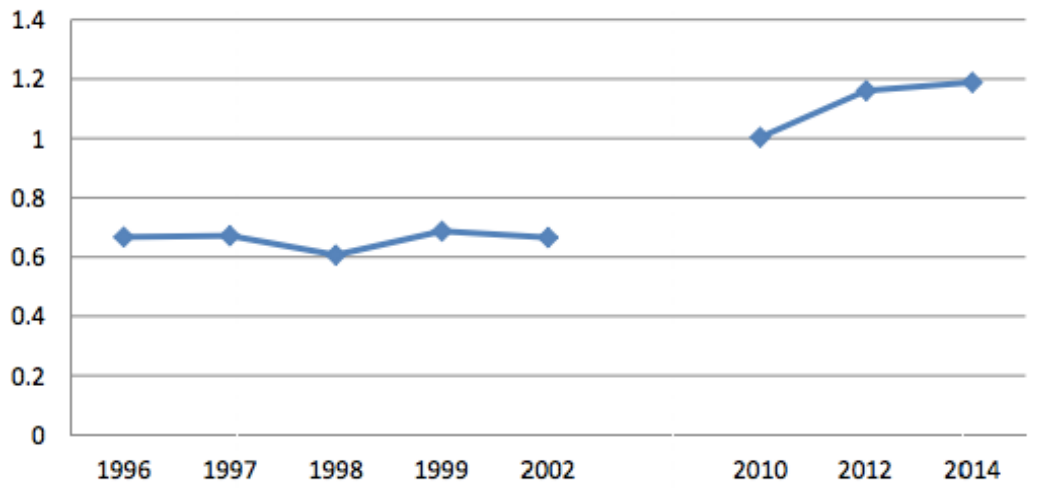
<sup>2</sup> <http://www.cnn.com/2014/03/07/world/asia/hong-kong-china-visitors-controversy/>

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.businessinsider.com/mainland-visitors-eating-on-hong-kong-train-cause-a-huge-fight-2012-1>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/worldviews/wp/2014/04/30/chinese-toddler-pees-in-hong-kong-street-stirs-online-firestorm/>

<sup>5</sup> <http://hk.apple.nextmedia.com/news/art/20130130/18150260>

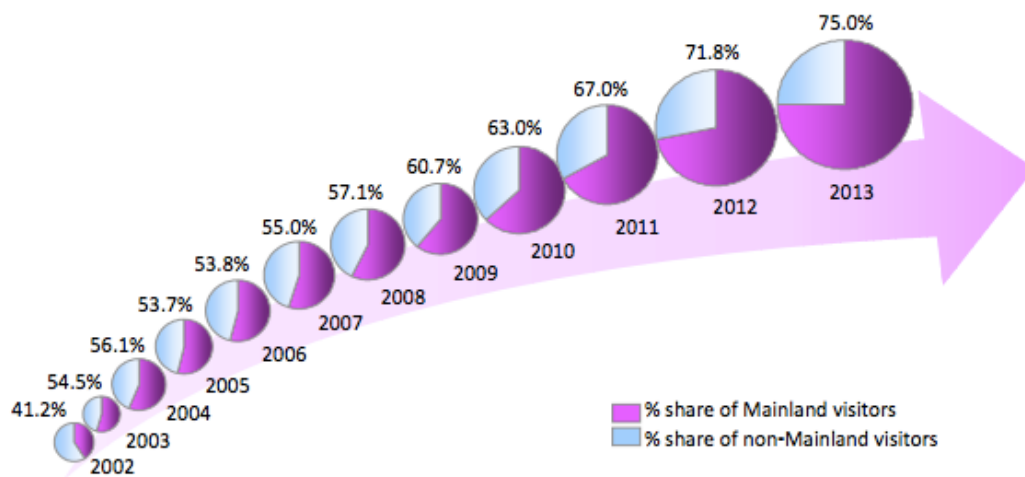
**Chart 1 Index of Cultural Difference between Hong Kong and Mainland China<sup>6</sup>**



Note: Cultural different index (CDI) is adopted by the Chinese University of Hong Kong to quantify and reflect the extent to which Hong Kong people perceive themselves differently from Mainland Chinese. On the scale of one to five, the larger the number is, the bigger the difference is in their perception. In 2014, CDI reached 1.19, which is a record high number.

2. Predictably our visitor arrivals would exceed 70 million in 2017. Physical and social carrying capacities are reaching the limit especially in densely populated areas. The urban area of Hong Kong has the highest population and employment density in the world<sup>7</sup>.

**Chart 2 Share of Mainland visitors in total visitor arrivals (2002-2013)**



Source: Hong Kong Tourism Board.

<sup>6</sup>[http://www.com.cuhk.edu.hk/ccpos/images/news/PressRelease\\_20141110\\_Identity.pdf](http://www.com.cuhk.edu.hk/ccpos/images/news/PressRelease_20141110_Identity.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> <http://lsecities.net/media/objects/articles/high-density-living-in-hong-kong/en-gb/>

While most people work and live in Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula, Mainlanders also go to these places when visit Hong Kong. People complain that Mainlanders have “occupied” their neighborhoods because tourists contribute to the crowdedness in public transportation and drive up retail prices and rentals for retail space in their neighborhoods.

A solution to compromising sentiments against Mainlanders and tourism revenues is to divert Mainland visitors to least-populated areas (Map 1 & 2) Lok Ma Chau in New Territories. The following factors determine its feasibility.

Firstly, the top Mainland province where visitors come from is the neighboring Guangdong (Table 1). They enter Hong Kong mainly via control points near Lok Ma Chau. Most of them are day-trippers and most mainland visitor’s main purpose is shopping<sup>8</sup>. Unlike local people who need to go to Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula where most companies and institutions are located, Mainland visitors’ priority concern is not locations but diversity of shopping choices, comfortability of shopping environments, and availability of transportation and they are willing to shop at the border<sup>9</sup>.

Secondly, Lok Ma Chau has many untapped land. While the Green Belt is reserved for ecological considerations, open space currently used as warehouses can be exploited for our recommendation. Shopping centres at the border can meet the niche of Mainland visitors whereas those in populous residential areas can gradually shift to be local-oriented.

Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Untapped land resources: a flatland of 800-900 hectares 2. Low population density of 3,801/km <sup>2</sup> (Hong Kong’s overall population density is 6,544/km <sup>2</sup> ) e. Close to Hong Kong-Mainland border	1. Few existing hospitality units such as hotels and restaurants 2. Expensive land resumption because 30% of the land are private-owned
1. Ongoing Guangzhou–Shenzhen–Hong Kong Express Rail project 2. Impending completion of the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macau Bridge which will provide convenient cross-border transportation	Potential resistance from non-indigenous inhabitants in New Territories and business owners who benefit from current passenger flow in downtown
Opportunities	Threats

<sup>8</sup> <http://www3.baf.cuhk.edu.hk/htm/news/news.asp?refNo=145>

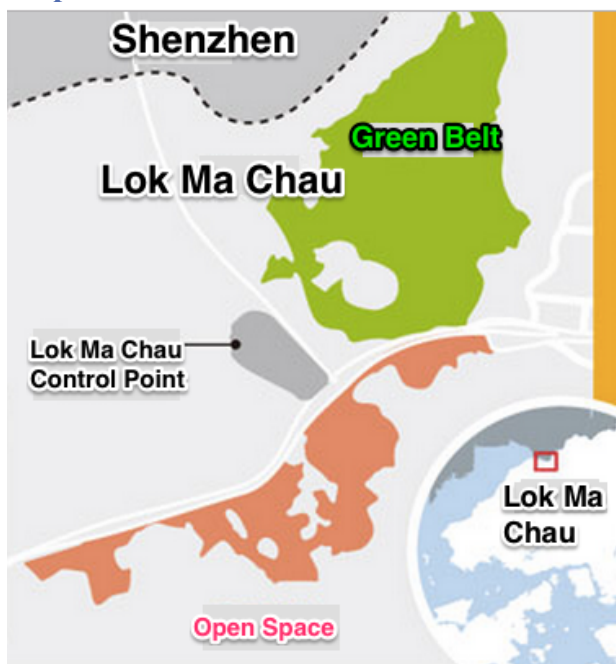
<sup>9</sup> [http://www.mpfinance.com/htm/finance/20140706/news/ec\\_gba1.htm](http://www.mpfinance.com/htm/finance/20140706/news/ec_gba1.htm)

## Costs Implications:

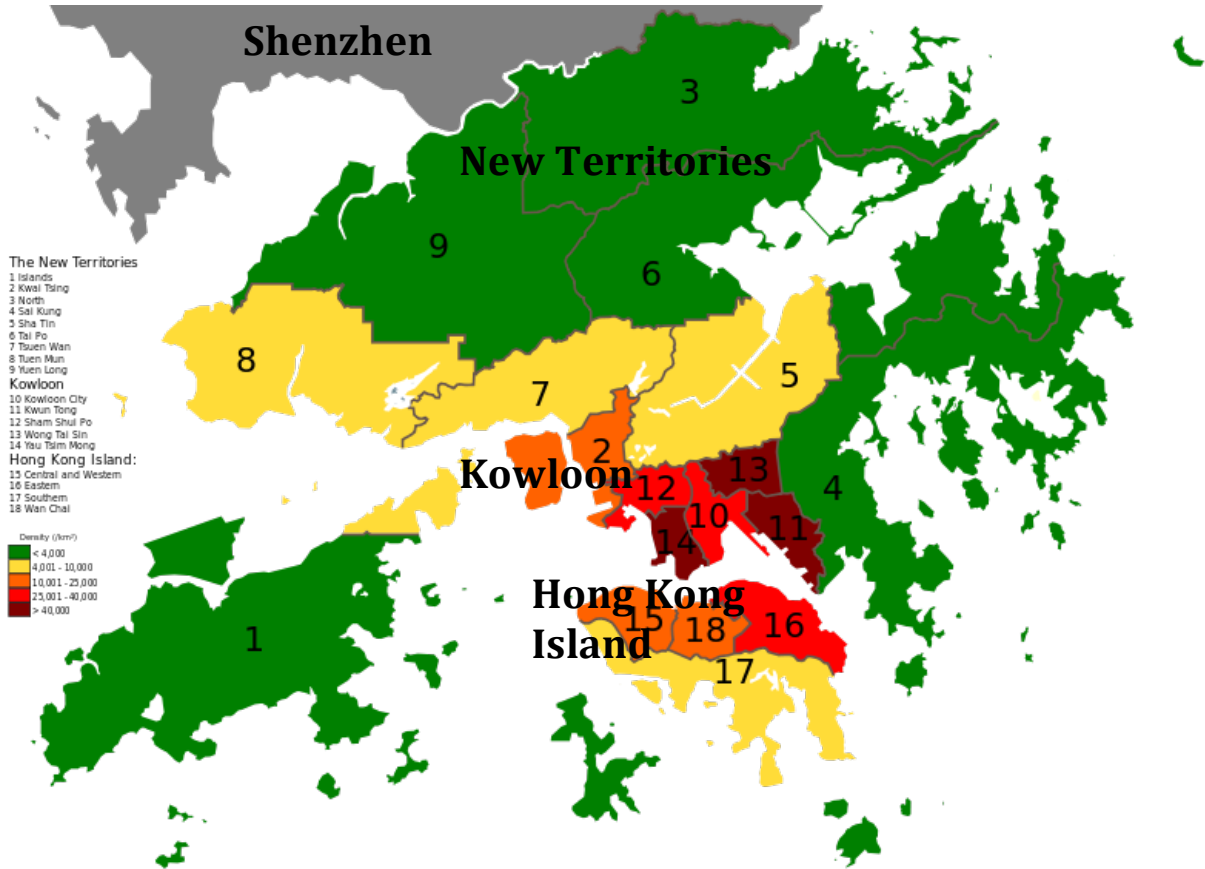
Actions		Expenditure (HKD)
Media campaigns	Brochure design and publications	10,000
Urban development	New Territories development projects (resettlement + construction)	1,000,000,000
Total		100,010,000

## Appendix:

Map 1 Location of Lok Ma Chau



Map 2 Population Density in Hong Kong



Map 3 Cross-boundary Transport



**Table 1 Top 10 cities where Mainland visitors come from**

<b>Rank</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Percentage of IVS visitors</b>	<b>Visitor arrivals* ('000)</b>	<b>In comparison with the corresponding period in 2012</b>
1	Shenzhen	48.8%	6 162	+22.3%
2	Guangzhou	16.3%	2 061	+24.9%
3	Dongguan	4.7%	600	+22.7%
4	Shanghai	4.2%	528	+17.4%
5	Foshan	4.1%	523	+16.0%
6	Beijing	3.0%	377	+5.6%
7	Jiangmen	1.8%	224	+56.6%
8	Zhongshan	1.4%	183	+35.7%
9	Zhuhai	1.3%	164	+66.4%
10	Huizhou	1.2%	148	+26.0%
<b>Total</b>		<b>86.9%</b>	<b>10 968</b>	<b>+22.9%</b>
<b>The total visitor arrivals under the IVS from January to June 2013: 12 625 226</b>				

\* Figures may not add up to total due to rounding.