

[Clouds over Hong Kong](#) [1]

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Hong Kong gets hazier every time I visit. There has long been bad air pollution here, but it accelerated after relations opened up with China. Hong Kong was better at innovation, design, logistics, finance, marketing, while China was cheaper for manufacturing. So factories sprung up just over the China side of the border, supplying the Hong Kong entrepreneurial machine. And with that came a big rise in air pollution. Curiously, the world's economic problems have seen those Chinese factories close by the thousand, but somehow the air pollution still hangs around.

The place also gets less British every time I visit; there are fewer Western faces, and the Cantonese signs get bigger while the English ones get smaller. This is actually more concerning than the air quality. Hong Kong was, and is, a territory with nothing in the way of natural resources. It made its fortune ? and it is one of the richest places on the planet ? through international trade. Recently, though, the focus has switched to China. There are the historical, family and linguistic ties, of course. And China has been a huge and growing market. And Hong Kong wants to keep its mainland big brother sweet. So Hong Kong entrepreneurs have switched their attention more and more to serving the China market.

I get the feeling here that I get in Scotland when I pick up the Scotsman or the Herald. These papers are obsessed by events in Holyrood; it is as if the rest of the UK are foreign countries. Devolution has produced a sad introspection in Scotland, which used to be one of the most outward-looking parts of the UK, its inventors, academics and professionals spreading and known all over the world. It would be a pity if Hong Kong, once so much an entrepot for world trade, became equally introspective.

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