“Gender“ was first addressed in Hong Kong in 1985 when Fanny M. Cheung, professor of psychology at Hong Kong’s Chinese University, founded its Gender Research Centre. Several years later came the school's gender studies program, still the only one in Hong Kong. Although Hong Kong gender studies are still centered at the Chinese University, the gender expertise network has widened, and articles in the book come from academics from the University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong Baptist University, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, and Hong Kong Polytech.

Fanny Cheung became the first director of the government’s Equal Opportunities Commission in 1995. When she had gathered a handful of gender experts, she edited 'Engendering Hong Kong Society: A Gender Perspective of Women's Status' in 1997 (Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press). The 2009 volume wants to be seen as a continuation of the earlier work. Its title also refers to a certain development: from the initial adoption of gender, ‘engendering’, to its general availability through ‘gender mainstreaming.’

While the Fourth United Nations Women’s World Conference in Beijing 1995 initiated the first book, Fanny Cheung’s introduction to the 2009 volume refers to the implementation of its outcomes, namely the Platform of Action. That after a dozen years Cheung is still active in the women’s studies and in the gender field must be appreciated, for it is unusual and rarely seen as a mainstream career perspective. Worth emphasizing as well is the participation of some of the 1997 authors in the new volume, among them Grace C. L. Mak (specialist on education and gender), and Hon Ming Yip, also widely published in the gender-in-Hong Kong field.

Beginning with ten major articles in 1997, the 2009 volume includes 17 pieces in all. A new section, one of four, has been added, as agreed upon in the Beijing Platform of Action. Called “Institutional Mechanisms,” it describes the institutional and legal integration of gender mainstreaming in Hong Kong: After Fanny Cheung and Priscilla Ching Chung’s introduction to Hong Kong’s gender institutions, Carole J. Petersen presents the legal framework, and Siumi Maria Tam and Hon Ming Yip an overview of women’s and gender studies in Hong Kong.

The other sections provide, firstly, a gender analysis of women’s status (similar to the 1997 volume), secondly, a gender perspective on policies, and thirdly, a ‘deconstruction of gender equity issues’. This third section includes the most radically feminist topics, among them: gender-based violence (Catherine So-kum Tang); female sexuality (Angela Wai-ching Wong); media ideologies (Micky Lee, Anthony Fung); a re-appraisal of class (Anne Marie Francesco, Margaret A. Shaffer);
and the description of male gender roles in Hong Kong’s patriarchal society (Siumi Maria Tam, Anthony Fung et al).

As the individual articles cannot be appreciated separately here, this review examines three aspects, also raised in Fanny Cheung’s introduction:

First, gender mainstreaming as the inclusion of men: The book’s contributors are as a group also gendered to some extent, with ten of 33 (nearly a third) being men. Male authors also skillfully apply the gender perspective; with no observable differences between men and women in the choice of topics.

Second, global and intra-Asian comparison: The book refers to the gender mainstreaming method, developed at the United Nations, (Cheung gives a short overview in her introduction) and to the gender concept in general, and each article begins with an international review. However a reference or comparison to Hong Kong is sometimes lacking, and the reason for the detailed account of foreign experiences is not clear. Much more important is the lack of intra-Asian comparisons, especially with Taiwan. Where this comparison is provided (e.g. Angela Wai-ching Wong), its benefit is obvious; other authors have long established its usefulness. References to United Nations women’s documents, specifically the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) underline the need for comparison. Hong Kong may have influenced Taiwan in adopting the convention (Hong Kong: 1996), and in submitting progress reports on its implementation (Hong Kong: 1999 and 2004; Taiwan: adoption and initial report 2009). This potential transnational influence of gender policies would benefit from comparison, as Lee Yuan-chen has shown for Hong Kong and Taiwanese women’s movement strategies.

Third, recent figures: Gender mainstreaming relies heavily on statistical evidence. If developments since 1997 are to be traced, then data before 2001 (e.g. Lee; Li and Zhang: Gender income differentials) is no longer representative. The editing of the book obviously took several years, because the most recent figures are from 2007. The authors do not appreciate the importance of this gap. The volume is proof that a focus on gender mainstreaming does not make much sense where up-to-date statistics are not available unless the focus is exclusively historical (Grace C.L. Mak; also: Wong Pik-wan and Eliza W.Y. Lee on ‘Colonial legacies and post-colonial developments’).

“Mainstreaming Gender“ provides a wealth of information on an admirable and astonishing range of gender-related topics. However, it lacks a general overview of the status of gender in Hong Kong based on the single-issue presentations. The volume should have included a comparison to the PRC, where gender mainstreaming is less important and less known than 'women's work'. And to

2 Ibid., p.108.
Taiwan, which is about to implement its own government-wide gender mainstreaming structures. Unlike both parts of ‘transnational China’ (Mayfair Mei-hui Yang), Hong Kong can present its recent gender mainstreaming activities in English, making them internationally accessible. A unique advantage.

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