

The magazine for members of the Dutch Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong



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Diversity & Inclusion

Interview with a Chief

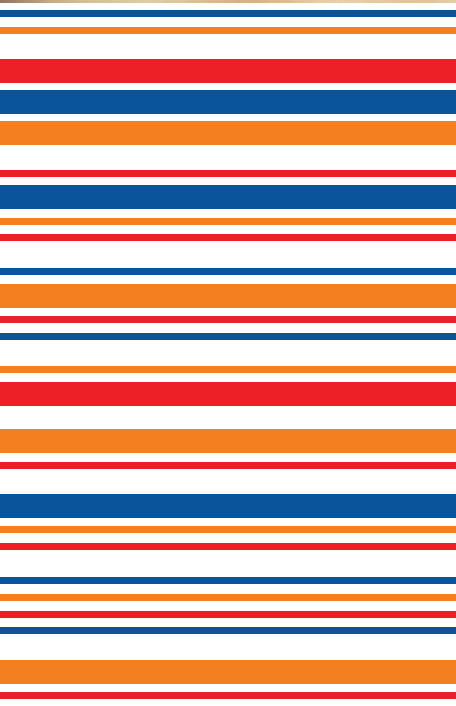
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GUIDE TO SETTING-UP A BUSINESS IN HONG KONG

2021

DUTCH CHAMBER OF COMMERCE IN HONG KONG

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Diversity & Inclusion



Once COVID is under control, I would not be surprised if ESG takes over as the most frequently uttered abbreviation in the board room. We are entering a new era of corporate social responsibility and a company's sustainability and impact on society are catching up quickly with its profitability as a key driver for investment.

The three letters cover a wide range of topics from climate change, water use, and waste management ("E" for environmental), animal welfare and human rights ("S" for social) to corporate management structures, employees' codetermination rights and executive compensation ("G" for governance), to name just a few. All big and juicy topics worthy of their own edition of DutchCham Magazine but this time we will focus on the very important and interesting "S" topic of Diversity & Inclusion.

Empowering people by respecting and appreciating what makes them different, in terms of age, gender, ethnicity, religion, disability, sexual orientation, education and national origin etc. which, very interesting from a business perspective, will not only make your organisation a more pleasant place to work and be in, it will make your company perform better. We have made a lot of progress in this area in the last decades but there is still a lot to be done.

I hope you enjoy our Interview with a Chief with co-founder and COO of Acclime, Debby Davidson. Our lead story features personal stories about encounters with discrimination, diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, we have contributions from our Consul General, PwC, Randstad, Intertrust, the Gay Games in Hong Kong, and more.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to say goodbye and thank you to Muriel (see her interview on page 8). Muriel has been a pivotal part of the Chamber in the past four and a half years and we are going to miss her dearly. We wish you and your family all the best in the Netherlands!

Jan Willem Möller

Leading a diverse and inclusive firm

As a regional corporate and professional services firm, Acclime helps its clients navigate the complexities of establishing and operating their business in Asia. **Debby Davidson, co-founder and COO of Acclime**, tells about her journey leading to setting up her own business, combatting bias and becoming an employer of choice.

■ By Zuba Adham-Bos

Please tell us a bit about yourself

I'm Debby, co-founder and COO of Acclime. I am a lawyer, an entrepreneur, a mother of two and a wannabe gardener. I am extremely proud to be leading Acclime, alongside my co-founder, Martin Crawford. Like many women, my career path hasn't been linear. I was trained as a corporate lawyer and worked in the legal industry for over a decade, with stints in both Hong Kong and London. After the birth of my first-born son, I forayed into business over twelve years ago and discovered that I am much happier building and developing businesses.

What does Acclime do?

We are a regional corporate and professional services firm, providing an extensive range of services. We help our clients navigate the complexities of establishing and operating their businesses in Asia. We provide market-entry services, incorporation of companies, accounting and bookkeeping services, tax advisory and tax compliance, payroll services and human resource outsourcing. By taking care of the 'corporate governance' of our clients' businesses, we enable our clients to focus on what they do best: which is to grow their business and drive top-line growth.



Besides Hong Kong, Acclime operates in nine other markets: Australia, Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam. Our experience has been that clients appreciate our on-the-ground guidance and assistance, especially in emerging markets.

How has the concept of diversity and inclusion changed during your career?

The landscape has changed drastically from when I left university.

When I had my firstborn, I was working in an international law firm. I remember feeling very guilty when I returned from maternity leave as if I was letting the team down by being a young mom. I was perpetually guilty, whether to my



Launching Acclime Vietnam

work colleagues or my family. It was hard to operate in an environment where you're expected to drop everything for your clients at a moment's notice.

In terms of diversity and inclusion, I think there is a lot more acceptance and understanding in the workplace with regards to childcare, especially now that work from home became the norm during the pandemic.

What does Diversity & Inclusion mean to you?

We are at an exciting time in history where the world now expects diversity and inclusion and notices the absence of such qualities. The senior management team of Acclime strives constantly to build a company with an inclusive mindset, and one which celebrates our colleagues as people.

I remember feeling very guilty when I returned from maternity leave as if I was letting the team down by being a young mom. I was perpetually guilty, whether to my work colleagues or my family.

To me, diversity means that you don't have to adhere to a single image of success. In old days, there were certain views about how a highflier professional should look, act or sound. Diversity means that there is no stereotype and that we at Acclime are proud of our workplace culture that fosters inclusion – whether it is relating to LGBT+ or gender or cultures.



Acclime Thailand team

At Acclime, we want to be an employer of choice. I believe that we have had considerable success in this regard.

To me, diversity means that you don't have to adhere to a single image of success. In old days, there were certain views about how a highflier professional should look, act or sound.

Any experiences with bias during your career?

Sure. As an Asian female, I did encounter bias, particularly in the earlier stages of my career. I think people form a certain impression from your appearance and they tend to then build their own preconceived stereotypes. However, I find that once I form a personal connection with others, whether such connection is through a face-to-face meeting, a Zoom chat or a Whatsapp exchange, one tends to move past stereotypes into a real working relationship. The key is to build partnerships.

What would you like to see differently in your industry regarding Diversity & Inclusion? Or perhaps any tips on this?

At Acclime, we work hard to establish a sense of belonging for all of our employees. We believe in teamwork, collaboration and being One Acclime. We practice empathetic leadership and encourage our team leaders to be the mentor they wish they'd had when they were more junior.

Which trends do you expect to see in your industry in the next five years?

2020 has seen exponential growth in technological innovation, digitalisation and e-commerce. Throughout the COVID period, our team has embraced remote working practices. We have now proven that we can onboard new clients virtually and we can effectively advise and represent our clients without travel. Acclime has continued to grow our business, our team and expand into new markets and new services during 2020.

Now that we have learnt that we can work remotely and digitally, we have embraced a technology-enabled Acclime. I believe that this trend will continue in the next five years, and our employees will continue to work digitally and remotely. This is not simply for our employees' convenience but ensures that our clients will increasingly benefit from greater levels of service and more efficient communication.

Leaving a strong Chamber behind

After four and a half years of hard work and dedication to the Dutch Chamber in Hong Kong, our **General Manager Muriel Moorrees** is relocating to the Netherlands and will unfortunately leave the Chamber. She is leaving a very strong Chamber behind and played a crucial role in achieving that. We sat down and talked about her time at the Chamber.

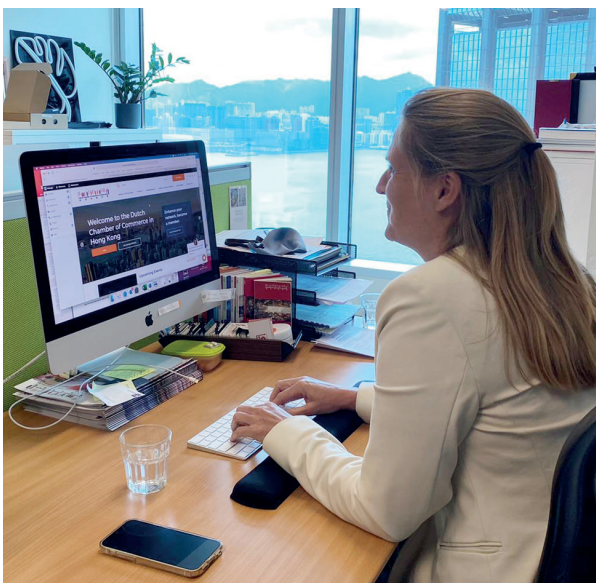
■ By Zuba Adham-Bos

What are your most memorable moments as GM of the Dutch Chamber?

Not too long after I joined the idea to start a mentorship programme was brought up by the Young Professionals Committee, led by Judith Huismans (Marketing and Communication Manager at the time). I thought it was a great idea, so we set it up right away. It's been successful ever since – we're organising the fifth edition this year, in September. Another great moment was organising the Business Awards Gala in 2019 together with the team and the Gala committee. The theme of the night was 'Game Changers', focusing on sustainability. Not only was it a beautiful gala and awards night with 160 guests, but the whole production was a grand experience that took four busy months.

What kind of changes have you seen in the Dutch-Hong Kong business scene?

One of the changes that had already started and has continued further is that Dutch multinational companies employ fewer Dutch people overseas. We've seen this trend in Hong Kong as well. About eight years ago, there were around 6,000 Dutch people in HK, now it's estimated at 3,000 only.



Few people, especially families, are coming in on an expat contract and they are leaving the city as well – partly also because of the protests and the pandemic. However, on the other side, more Young Professionals are entering Hong Kong. This group either has their own start-up or SME or come to work in Hong Kong on a local contract. In the Dutch Chamber's membership base, we have seen a clear increase in start-ups and SMEs.

What were some of your main goals and projects within the Chamber?

One of the main goals was to professionalise the operational side of the Chamber, for example our CRM system, the website and other systems. We implemented those rapidly in the first year.

A few years ago, there was a decreasing trend in memberships, mainly because of fewer Dutch people living in Hong Kong and Dutch multinationals reducing their footprint in Hong Kong. I set two goals for myself. One was to reverse the decrease in members and to grow our membership base,



Event during the 'ban single-use plastic' campaign

which is, of course, a continuous goal. A way to do this is to make sure to be involved with our members and know what they desire, so we can provide good added value. The second goal was to make the Chamber more visible, partly with the new website as well as our social media channels and digital marketing. We can still grow in that but we are definitely on the right track.

It was important to me to set specific annual goals as well. During one of the years, we held a campaign to ban single-use plastic, which is a challenge, but I hope we have raised awareness among our members and the employees of our member companies.

For the past two years, I have been working extensively with the Board of Directors to set strategic goals to further prepare and strengthen the Dutch Chamber for a challenging future. Originally, the function of the Chamber was to be a source of information for companies but that is now to a large degree readily available on the internet. So we need to re-invent ourselves. An example of our recent initiatives is to provide a soft landing toolkit for companies that want to set up a business in Hong Kong and we have further made the first steps towards our Academy. Through our Academy we currently offer Cantonese and Mandarin language courses for our members. The Academy has a lot of potential to offer many different types of professional development courses for which we look to cooperate with our partners.

Furthermore, we are looking for more cooperation within the Greater Bay Area (GBA) and with the Netherlands to increase our visibility and encourage companies to come to Hong Kong. The latter has been challenging but the Chamber plays

an important role in the re-launch of Hong Kong's image and emphasising the positive points of doing business in Hong Kong.

In the Netherlands, we are cooperating with NLinBusiness and sector associations, not only for promotional activities but it also provides an added value to our members as well to expand their network and business opportunities. Similarly for the GBA where we cooperate with the Benelux Chamber (BenCham) and the Dutch Consulates in Hong Kong and in Guangzhou. Together we organised a first webinar series about doing business in the GBA last year.

What will you miss about Hong Kong? And what are you looking forward to in the Netherlands?

I will miss the international community and lifestyle, which was one of the main reasons to move abroad in the first place. In Hong Kong, the people and the city have great energy. It is a small place, but we have got everything: the beaches, water sports, mountains for hiking, the 24/7 city life, islands and it's all so close by! We live near the beach now; every weekend feels like a mini holiday.

The Netherlands have great nature as well, even though I will miss the mountains. I'm looking forward to living close to our family and friends in the Netherlands, especially our parents. Overall, it will be a big and exciting step to move back to the Netherlands after living in Asia for fifteen years – I'm not really looking forward to the winters and rain though!



With team members Emily Tunderman and Michelle Chan

Making a difference one loan at a time

Emeila, a hardworking entrepreneur with 10 children, earns a living by fattening pigs in the Philippines. She dreams of being able to build and expand her business. Recently, she received a US\$400 loan from crowd-funding platform Kiva, to help purchase feed and vitamins for her pigs. Intertrust Group joined forces with others to help make this happen.

Emeila's loan is just one of the 400+ micro-loans Intertrust Group has recently made through Kiva, to help improve the lives of individuals in underserved communities around the world. The three-year partnership is a direct result of feedback from the company's employee engagement survey, which showed that it's no longer enough for companies to offer rewarding jobs with exciting development opportunities. Today's workforce wants to be part of an organisation that is making a visible effort to positively impact society and the environment.

Sarah Chao, Managing Director of Intertrust Group in Hong Kong, is proud to have recently joined this diverse and inclusive company, where nearly half of the population is female and her 4,000+ colleagues represent an impressive 97 nationalities.

About KIVA

Founded in 2005

Active in 77 countries

1.9 million lenders

US\$1.5 billion of loans

3.8 million borrowers

81% women

"We were already pretty active in our local communities, through a combination of our own non-profit, Intertrust Foundation and the diverse corporate social responsibility activities that our employees carry out. But the employee engagement survey feedback triggered us to align with a cause that would support our companywide ESG priorities and match our global footprint. With non-profit Kiva, I know we've found a perfect match. And I can say this because I've been lucky enough to be involved with them before."



For anyone unfamiliar with Kiva, the organisation is all about removing the underlying barriers to financial access around the world. Its unique micro-lending platform leverages the power of technology to connect people who can give a little, to people who stand to gain a lot. It's a wonderful way to make a meaningful impact and help others less fortunate than ourselves to unleash their potential.

Through Kiva, women can start businesses, farmers can invest in equipment and families can earn a livelihood that gives their children a brighter future. What's special about the programme is that it keeps on giving. When loans are repaid – and 97% of them are – the money is returned to be lent again.

"Like the United Nations Global Compact which Intertrust Group signed up to last year, our partnership with Kiva works on the premise that by joining forces with others, we will make more of an impact than embarking on a journey of our own.

Making incremental changes to ultimately drive transformational change is what Kiva is all about and we're proud to be a part of it," concludes James.



■ James Donnan
Regional Managing Director
of APAC, Intertrust Group

Sarah Chao ■
Managing Director HK



www.intertrustgroup.com

D&I: empowering people

Are there still employers out there that do not think diversity and inclusion (D&I) are core business? The Netherlands government – a large and by its nature a very diverse employer – strives to fully embrace diversity and inclusion. So too does the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, including its missions abroad.

You would think that being global automatically makes for diversity and inclusion, but – alas – the reality is often different. If you tweak the statistics you would be amazed at how many nationalities and cultural backgrounds are represented in the Ministry, but this would gloss over the real issues at play. They hinge more on inclusion than on diversity, but the two are closely linked. Moving quickly from the also difficult sub-topic of achieving full gender equality, the real challenge is to allow people from different backgrounds with different outlooks to feel safe to do their part in promoting the core mission of the Ministry.



What do we really mean when we encourage people to think “out-of-the-box”? Are we truly empowering people to put forward different ways of moving issues forward, or are we trying to make the box a little bigger so that we can control what happens inside? And how do you “control” your narrative if your business is truly global and the perspective changes depending on where you are? What does it mean to be representing the Netherlands abroad? How connected can the locally employed colleagues be to Dutch norms and values, if “being Dutch” and doing things “the Dutch way” are part of your branding? But also, how successful can we be in promoting Dutch interests if we are not well-tuned into local ways of doing things?

Obviously, everybody must constantly adapt to changing circumstances to allow for the right mix of diversity and inclusion to arrive at the desired results. And so, diversity and inclusion must be constant topics for open discussion in all teams, wherever they are.

Are we truly empowering people to put forward different ways of moving issues forward, or are we trying to make the box a little bigger so that we can control what happens inside?

The consulate-general in Hong Kong is a small outfit: three men, seven women; one gay, the others straight; seven speak Dutch, but we also count Cantonese, Nepalese and Tagalog among our native languages; two are expats, eight are locally employed. The core tasks of the consulate general evolve around consular services, trade and politics. This reads as a pretty diverse team, but that doesn’t mean our job is done when it comes to D&I. We should constantly strive to empower everyone to be themselves, tap into their potential and feel safe to share and challenge ideas. And to make everyone feel included.

I feel privileged to have a competent team of hard workers that want to make the Netherlands look good to anyone watching. They empower me to see how we can make an even bigger and better impact in the promotion of Dutch interests. Because, like the Ministry in general, I truly believe that people are unique and that therein lies the potential for great things, and that given the right environment this potential can be unleashed and brought to bear positively on them as individuals, as team members and promoters of the Netherlands in Hong Kong. I consider it a privilege to help shape that environment; there is nothing better than working with unique people to bring about positive change, for us personally, the team, and for Dutch interests.



■ By Arjen van den Berg
Consul General

Gender equality in the workplace

Gender inequality comes at a cost. Boosting women's participation in the workforce would lead to a greater diversity of views enabling companies to make more informed business decisions, take lower risks and enhance shareholder value. That just makes for good business sense.

What are some best practices for organisations to promote gender equality?

I believe the best practices are made up of four pillars.

1) Enable middle management: Organisational leadership needs to set the tone from the top. But ultimately the goal is to foster a culture of diversity and inclusion throughout the organisation. For this, we need to engage and enable middle management. In a PwC study, we found that organisations that empowered their teams and business units to set and drive their own D&I agenda were able to achieve better buy-in and accountability.

In creating an environment of inclusion, how do we not inadvertently create one of exclusion?

2) Involve male allies: The latest The Women's Foundation (TWF) survey found that 38% of men believe "gender equality is a women's issue and men need to stay out of the way". In creating an environment of inclusion, how do we not inadvertently create one of exclusion? Men must be part of the conversation to avoid alienating them. Organisations need to recognise this and create a more inclusive environment for everyone. For example, Male Allies programmes can extend the conversation to their wider workforce.

3) Question the issues: Preconceptions can drive ill-informed policy decisions. For instance, an organisation with a declining pipeline of female leaders may choose to focus on retention initiatives when in fact, upon analysis, they are losing male and female workers at a similar rate. Instead, the cause of their trailing pipeline may stem from a failure to hire enough women proportionally when filling senior positions. A gender balanced recruitment policy could therefore be more effective here than only focusing on retention programmes.

4) Think bigger: Out-of-the-box thinking can ultimately enable organisations to do more to promote gender equality and create best practices beyond their workforce. Organi-



sations should coordinate action between other business leaders, influence behaviours in their customer base and advocate with policymakers.

Why are there fewer women in senior management and higher?

We undertook a study with the Women Chief Executives Hong Kong with the support of TWF to challenge some of the preconceptions driving this very question: why are there fewer women in senior roles? What I took away from that research was how much we presume we already know, and how important it is to be able to challenge those presumptions.

From our data, we could see that formal policies are not enough; they need to be translated into positive action. Positive actions should also then be monitored for effectiveness. For example, many of the organisations I interviewed were running formal inhouse mentoring programmes. However, with the focus on mentoring, active sponsorship relationships were potentially being underutilised. Sponsors need to help advocate for their candidates and open doors in a way beyond the role of a mentor. It is important that women are encouraged to leverage those relationships in order to reach those higher positions.



■ By Ali Tse
Partner at PwC Hong Kong
www.pwchk.com

Kindness Matters - A new kind of beer

"It blew us away". Webbe International wanted to do a CSR activity before their team Christmas dinner. They discovered the Kindness Walk at Impact HK which was an experience they will never forget.

Founder Jeff Rotmeyer took them round the back streets of Kowloon to meet, greet and distribute food to the homeless. The Webbe team was touched by the work done by Jeff and his team and wondered how they could help Impact HK. "We're a small NGO with limited resources. Anything you can do yourselves is great", Jeff replied.

The Webbe team brainstormed ideas over dinner and pints together and came up with a stroke of genius: they could make a beer and sell it! All of them enjoy beer. In fact, Managing Director Scott Taylor was President of the Lamma Island Homebrewing Club. They could call it "Kindness Matters"... "I'll have a pint of Kindness, please" had a nice ring to it.

Scott pitched the idea to his friends at local craft brewery Yardley Brothers and they were excited to come on board to make the beer. Yardley opted for a crisp pale ale beer which would be approachable for a wide range of people.



"I'll have a pint of Kindness, please"

Next, they ran a local design competition to find the design for the beer label. Four designers submitted a total of six incredible designs, which were displayed at the Beer Shack, Lamma Island's favourite craft beer taproom. Clientele and residents voted on the best design and the winner was Dutch designer Annemarijn de Boer with a colourful cityscape: "The idea was to show all homes that homeless people in Hong Kong need. I illustrated the high-rise buildings in Kowloon with ProCreate on the iPad and tried to design it colourful and outstanding."



"The beer really helps to raise awareness about homelessness"

The team at Impact HK have been following their beer's progress all the way. Jeff Rotmeyer: "The beer really helps to raise awareness about homelessness. When people are drinking together it is the time when they talk about these kinds of matters and that's why we would love to share more of these."



The beers are being sold privately, to maintain maximum profits for Impact HK. You can still buy a 24-bottle case of Kindness Matters beer for HKD800 by contacting staylor@webbe.com.hk.



■ By Scott Taylor
Managing Director at Webbe International
www.webbe.com.hk
www.impacthk.org

Making SMEs inclusive and diverse

We asked members to tell us how they currently make or wish to make their company inclusive to all the people within it – and tell us about diversity in their company.

■ Selected by Nerice Gietel

Oscar Venhuis
CEO and co-founder of EQ Lab
www.eqlab.co



EQ Lab is a Hong Kong start-up with a global reach in over 43 countries including Singapore, Australia, Europe, Africa, Middle East, America and Canada. Our supporting team consists of leading entrepreneurs, neuroscientists, psychologists, complexity scientists, industry practitioners and enthusiasts from all walks of life. We help individuals and organisations thrive in uncertainty and change thinking at scale and at speed.

Our collaborative network of extended intelligence (EQ) develops deep-learning frameworks and puts in practice new virtual learning methods to overcome confirmation bias through diversity and inclusion. The Dialogic Innovation & Learning System (DILS) by EQ Lab is a unique system to facilitate collaborative networks between individuals and across large organisations. DILS is grounded in neuroscientific evidence and rigorous experimentation. Applying DILS builds multidisciplinary capacities that enable and develop the complexity of thinking, human interaction and cognitive plasticity. These are critical human capacities that need to be nurtured and enriched overtime to thrive in a future world that is VUCA (volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous).

Neuro- or cognitive plasticity is the ability that goes beyond learning new knowledge. It is the capacity to develop new methods of learning knowledge and understanding. Accelerating the development of cognitive frameworks can be achieved through constant exposure to diversity and the inclusion of contrarian beliefs. Fostering and stimulating diversity of thinking leads to a broader, deeper and a more nuanced understanding of what is wrong with your own individual dogmas and viewpoints.

While inclusion and diversity helps dispel negative stereotypes and personal biases about different individuals and groups, it also accelerates the emergence of new solutions and fresh ideas that are now more than ever needed to reduce drag in large organisations and tackle complex global issues.

Rinske Kuiper
General Manager of SofaSale
www.sofasale.com.hk



SofaSale is Hong Kong's largest online furniture retailer. We are proud to be Hong Kong's number one when it comes to providing an extensive range of high quality, stylish and affordable home, office & outdoor furniture. The objective of our business model is to make design and quality furniture accessible to a large group of consumers.

During the hiring process, I notice myself looking for people that are good at their jobs, not necessarily considering diversity first and skills second. I wonder if I am lucky enough to go about it this way because the team is already diverse, or that diversity is so important to me that it occurs naturally.

Balance is key for a well-functioning team and we are doing great. Our employees are aged from 24 to 62. We've got individuals that are single, married and in same-sex relationships. Our people are from different countries, different backgrounds and are following various religions. We are all one team that gets along incredibly well.

I feel proud to have been able to list SofaSale as an inclusive and female-run business on Google and to surprise customer's preconceived notions of what a female boss does. I remember seeing eyebrows being raised all the way to hairlines the first time I started sawing off the legs of a cabinet. But what I love even more is that now the team always asks me if I can fix something before they even consider calling a technician. It seems minor perhaps, but since I've demonstrated adaptability in the work I do, I have noticed an uptick and a drive in the women of my team to start doing what would normally be pigeonholed into a 'manly' job and the men to also be offering and happy to do the more stereotypically 'female' jobs. I feel confident that if employers keep encouraging diversity, and continue to challenge stereotypes, these labels will slowly disappear.

E-commerce with and to the European Union

The rise of the digital economy has forced policymakers all over the world to deal with some of the fundamental issues of taxation. There has been an avalanche of tax proposals to further facilitate cross border trade but also to ensure that companies, both digital and traditional, are paying their fair share.

A few of the recent proposals of the European Commission will have a severe impact on digital shops, platforms and marketplaces that sell, facilitate sales in or to the European Union.

Effective July 1, 2021, the European Union is making important changes to its value-added tax (VAT) rules. This will impact APAC businesses that sell to consumers into and within the EU as follows:

- VAT on cross-border sales to consumers within the EU can be reported through a single reporting scheme (called the One-Stop-Shop, or "OSS");
- All goods imported into the EU shall be subjected to EU VAT;
- A single reporting scheme covering sales of non-EU goods to EU consumers up to a value of EUR 150 and for which a VAT exemption upon import will apply if the trader declares and pays the VAT at the time of the sale using this declarative system (called the Import One-Stop-Shop, or "IOSS");
- Postal operators or courier firms may be liable to collect import VAT on behalf of EU consumers and will be eligible for simplified VAT filing in respect of consignments with a value not exceeding EUR 150;
- Marketplaces may be liable for the EU VAT when they facilitate the delivery of goods to EU consumers, even if they are not part of the supply chain.

In addition, Directive 2011/16/EU (DAC7) was approved. Under DAC7 the EU extends tax transparency rules to digital platforms and introduces an obligation for platform operators to provide information on income derived by sellers through platforms, from 2023 onwards. The information collected will be shared with the tax authorities of the concerned Member States to address the lack of tax compliance and the under-declaration of income earned from commercial activities carried out with the intermediation of such digital platforms.

APAC-based digital platform operators may be impacted having a reporting obligation if they facilitate reportable commercial activities of EU sellers or the rental of immovable property located in the EU regardless of the place of residence of the sellers.



Action needed for webshops, digital platforms and marketplaces:

Before 1 of July 2021

- Possible appointment of an intermediary who will report the sales on behalf of the seller and account for the VAT;
- Suppliers/sellers systems must recognise the VAT status of their clients, the countries of import/dispatch/arrival of the goods and capture the VAT rates applicable;
- Contracts should be reviewed to ensure that VAT accounting responsibilities are clearly defined in the light of the new rules;
- The low consignment relief (consignment with a value not exceeding EUR 23) will be abolished, so VAT will be due on those sales at the rate applicable in all EU countries of sale. This will also impact the price and margin of the products.

Although 2023 may sound far-off, platforms should start thinking about the possible DAC7 implications such as:

- Reviewing the contractual relationships with the sellers;
- Evaluating any data protection implications;
- Complying with data retention rules; and
- Determining the place of registration for DAC7 purposes where this decision becomes



■ By Barbara Voskamp
Partner ASEAN and Co-Head of APAC Region
Team at Loyens & Loeff Singapore LLP
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An honest talk about gender equality

As “Asia’s World City”, Hong Kong SAR prides itself on being a diverse society and has made considerable strides toward gender parity. Despite being one of the most progressive cities in the world, women in Hong Kong are still undervalued by their peers and often face unfair workplace discrimination.

The gender wage gap in Hong Kong stands at 22 per cent, significantly wider than Singapore’s which is at six per cent. Fewer than half of companies in Hong Kong would hire working mothers even if they are as skilled and experienced as other applicants. A Financial Times article revealed that women make up less than 15 per cent of board positions among the 50 Hang Seng index constituent companies.

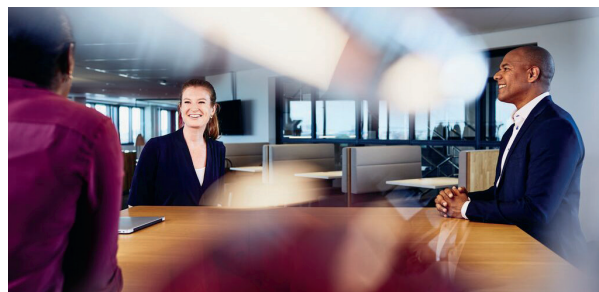
As a female leader, it is only fair for me to be transparent. It does take more for a woman to prove herself capable of taking on such high profile leadership roles. When I took on the managing director position in Randstad Hong Kong five years ago, I am not only proud to be the voice of other women who aspire the same, but also more prepared than my peers to take on new and unexpected challenges. The benefits of gender diversity for firms - widened talent pool, better financial outcomes and prevention of groupthink - are beyond debate.

Female leadership styles and traits, such as empathy and self-awareness, are especially needed now more than ever to help organisations emerge stronger from crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. Everyone has a part to play to drive gender diversity and ensure greater inclusion in the workplace, specifically the HR industry. As gatekeepers and agents of change, HR professionals are best placed to challenge unfair practices and drive lasting change in the world of work. Here are three ways in which the HR community can promote gender equality and diversity across all industries.

1. Toughen anti-discriminatory policies and practices

Companies and recruiters must look beyond characteristics such as gender, sexuality and marital status. HR professionals must practise more self-awareness and avoid using gender-coded language and asking inappropriate interview questions.

At the same time, firms should consider the pitfalls of diversity hire policies. Employers that intentionally hire minorities to fill diversity quotas run the risk of a decaying culture and performance. Combining all the factors, companies could essentially widen the spectrum and unintentionally create a toxic culture shrouded by distrust, falsehood and favouritism.



2. Use technological solutions wisely to eliminate gender biases

Emerging technologies have created new solutions to reduce discrimination and gender bias in hiring and organisational processes. For instance, HR technology can help to provide a fairer screening process by blinding names and gender in resumes. AI-powered language detectors can be trained to detect and filter out gender-biased terminologies in job descriptions. However, while technology enhances human intelligence, it lacks a critical element - the human instinct.

3. Champion gender equality and diversity in the workplace

As thought leaders, the HR community should take the lead in advocating for gender diverse teams and a culture of mutual respect in the workplace. This would include creating and driving activism campaigns to raise awareness on the benefits of an inclusive workplace and drive forward the adoption of anti-discrimination and equal-pay policies.

Striving for a safe work environment and equal opportunities for all will always be a work in progress. Thankfully, the HR industry has an unprecedented opportunity to move the needle by pushing for mindset shifts, gender diversity and inclusive workplaces. According to the World Economic Forum, none of us will ever see gender parity in our lifetimes. With our consistent efforts, hopefully the daughters and sons of tomorrow will.



■ By Natellie Sun, Managing Director
Search & Selection at Randstad Greater China
www.randstad.com.hk

Changes to anti-discrimination law in Hong Kong

A number of amendments to the existing Anti-Discrimination Ordinances in Hong Kong took effect on 19 June 2020. We summarise the key points for employers below.

Protection for breastfeeding employee

In the context of employment, one of the most notable amendments to the Sex Discrimination Ordinance ("SDO") is that it is unlawful to discriminate against a female employee on the grounds that she is breastfeeding. These changes will come into force on 19 June 2021. At the same time, the changes made to the SDO by the Sex Discrimination (Amendment) Bill 2020 which render harassment of a breastfeeding employee unlawful will also take effect.

Discrimination based on the race of an 'associate'

The amendments have made it unlawful to discriminate based on the race of an 'associate' (formerly 'near relative') of an employee in the Race Discrimination Ordinance (the "RDO"). The term 'associate' is defined as:

- a spouse of the person;
- another person who is living with the person on a genuine domestic basis;
- a relative of the person;
- a carer of the person;
- another person who is in a business, sporting or recreational relationship with the person.

In short, the amendment makes the coverage of race discrimination protection available to a wider category of persons, as compared to the former position in the RDO where it was mostly limited to another person or a direct family member of that person.

Discrimination based on 'imputed' race

The amendments have also made it unlawful to discriminate against an employee on the ground of his or her 'imputed' race. This further strengthens the coverage of protection against race discrimination as it is no longer restricted to discrimination on the grounds of the actual or particular race of a person.

This is similar to an existing concept in the Disability Discrimination Ordinance (the "DDO") where it is unlawful for a person to discriminate against another person on the assumption that he or she suffers from a certain disability irrespective of whether that person actually suffers from the 'imputed' disability or any other disability.

Harassment in the workplace

Additionally, the amendments make sexual, racial and disability harassment between two 'workplace participants' unlawful under SDO, RDO and DDO. The term 'workplace participant' is defined widely to include not only employers and employees but also categories of persons outside the traditional employment relationship such as interns and volunteers. Corresponding to these changes, vicarious liability can also be imposed on persons who engage the 'workplace participants' for the unlawful harassment acts carried out by them unless it can be shown that reasonably practicable steps were taken to prevent such acts.

These changes enhance the scope of protection against harassment by covering a wider variety of relationships in the workplace.

What should employers do in light of these changes?

Employers in Hong Kong should familiarise themselves with the above changes and consider the impact on their operations. We also recommend that they:

1. update any existing equality policies or measures to ensure that they accurately reflect the latest legal position;
2. review and amend any policies or measures relating to staff remuneration or benefits to reduce the risk of discrimination claims or complaints;
3. educate the staff about the latest changes to the anti-discrimination law in Hong Kong by conducting training or circulating the updated policies;
4. formulate specific measures or policies to provide accommodations to breastfeeding employee where possible;
5. seek legal advice if there are doubts as to the correct legal position under the anti-discrimination law.



■ By Mark Chiu, Solicitor, Employment
Russell Bennett, Partner, Employment ■
www.tannerdewitt.com



Putting yourself in someone else's shoes

Learning about other perspectives makes us more well-rounded people. Diversity & Inclusion is an interesting topic gaining more and more attention. In this Lead Story we give the floor to a number of people with different backgrounds to speak about their personal experience regarding this topic.



Nerice van Gietel
Career Coach
The Career Lounge

I first studied diversity and inclusion as a student of social sciences in The Netherlands. Living in Hong Kong has completely changed the way I made sense of these things back then. Influenced by a dominant narrative related to the integration of minorities, I bought into the idea that learning Dutch and adapting to local customs 'integrated you'; and that was as good as it got.

After moving to London for work, I saw people from different racial and ethnic backgrounds represented in all kinds of professions. I realized that I took it for granted that most professional jobs in The Netherlands were occupied by native Dutch. Seeing people with whom I racially identified led me to explore professions I never considered before. Similar to The Netherlands, however, a prerequisite for professional career success was speaking the 'majority' language. I concluded that ethnic minorities can get included in positions and get opportunities as long as they adapt themselves to the majority group.

Being an expat in Hong Kong brings a different perspective altogether. Different from England and The Netherlands, speaking the language spoken by the majority does not seem to be a prerequisite for professional success for all. In my home island of Curaçao and Hong Kong, speaking the language spoken by the majority alone, Papiamentu and Cantonese respectively limits your career opportunities. In Hong Kong being a fluent Cantonese and English speaking migrant from a Nepalese or Pakistani background does not necessarily mean you will integrate or access the full range of the labor market. A highly educated white Westerner, meanwhile, may not need to speak a word of Cantonese, nor have to adapt to any local customs, in order to occupy the highest positions in some corporations and institutions.

Moving to Hong Kong, then, brought my experiences with diversity and inclusion to a full circle. Contrary to what I believed when I lived in Europe, diversity and inclusion is not just about the relative size of different groups in a population. It has to do with the power differences between different groups. My different experiences have taught me that we cannot universally apply one lens to topics of diversity and inclusion. Historical, colonial, social-economic, class structures, political context, and various other aspects all play a role in how issues related to inclusion play out and affect different groups in society.



Andres Rubiano
Senior Product Developer
LIDL Asia

Being born in a country like Colombia does carry a certain stigma. Our passports are not known for being among the most "welcomed" around the world. There were (and still are) moments of waiting for a long time at customs when arriving in a country, having to go through a long visa process just to go for a holiday or, being interrogated for a long time to prove you can visit a certain place in the world; but that just comes with Colombia's history and tells you how a few bad apples can spoil the experience for the majority of honest and hard-working people.



Even though, in a certain way (as much as we don't like it), it tends to become "part of the process" for us. During those moments many people are just curious about our culture and sometimes they will even speak a few words in our language, which will always bring a smile when you are so far away from home, making us feel more comfortable.

In Asia specifically, people are very welcoming, respectful and truly interested in your background, which makes it easy to adapt to a new place and express yourself freely, as you would in your own country. This, in hand, helps to create a more inclusive environment to develop your work/activity in the best possible way.

Avoiding cultural stereotypes based on popular references or even wrong perceptions created by international media is probably a very important point to take into consideration when meeting someone, no matter where they are from. In my opinion, this takes down that invisible wall of "precaution" sometimes we may have and opens a more effective and rewarding communication channel between different cultures.

After almost ten years away from my country, I can confidently say that a diverse and inclusive group will always promote creativity (which leads to higher productivity), a variety of meaningful opinions, better performance and a higher brand and company value.

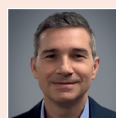


Zuba Adham-Bos
Editor DutchCham Magazine
Dutch Chamber HK

I am Kurdish and Dutch. I was born in Kirkuk, Iraq but grew up in the Netherlands from age 4. Whenever people in Hong Kong ask me where I'm from, I usually answer "from the Netherlands". I have noticed that local people are fine with that answer and assume I'm just Dutch and ask me questions about the Netherlands. But Western people often want to know a little more about where I'm "actually" from. They follow up with sometimes subtle questions such as "Is that a Dutch name?" or more bluntly "You don't look Dutch?".

Even though I might look Dutch to the locals and am so according to my passport, I was definitely not when I was trying to get a visa on arrival in Shenzhen a few years ago. My husband and I were helped at the same time but at different counters. While he did get in with his Dutch passport, I was told to "get a visa at the Chinese Embassy" and was rejected for the visa on arrival. They didn't give me any reason. However, the only difference between my and my husband's passport is the birthplace. It's also the reason why I sometimes get extra checks at airport securities around the world.

While my roots is sometimes an "extra" – extra questions, extra time spent but also extra language and cultural experience – I recently experienced that it was left out. I was going through an electronic application for a job at HSBC where one of the pages was dedicated to "Diversity and Inclusion" with questions about gender and race. To be honest, this was a bit weird to me but that's another story. I looked for my racial background – but it was not listed. The geographically closest choices were "Arabic", "Hebrew" (or Jewish/Israeli) or "Southeast Asian". I was really baffled because not only could I, as a Kurd, not identify with any of these but neither would for example Turkish, Armenian or Persian people. It was a 'Diversity and Inclusion' page, but whole groups of the Middle East were not included.



Case Everaert
Partner
Black Isle Global

My name is Case Everaert and I'm a Partner at Black Isle Global (www.blackisleglobal.com) where we focus on people development, organisational wellbeing, and leadership communication. Our motto is Better People, Better Business, Better World.

Last year, I refused to moderate a DutchCham event when I found out that there were six men on the panel and no women. Black Isle Global is a member of The Women's Foundation popular Male Allies program (www.maleallieshk.org) and personally I'm a founding member of the Male Ally Leadership Council which kicked off the program in 2018. As such, I have signed a Panel Pledge: I will no longer participate in events that feature male-only speakers.



Without the opportunity for women to be recognized as thought leaders, women miss out on profile building opportunities – an important contributor to both experience and recognition of their expertise. Many professional communities miss out on the perspectives drawn from the insights and experiences of women.

A lack or absence of women on panels or as speakers is a consequence of an entrenched system of inequality. At Black Isle Global we focus on giving people a leadership voice and becoming champions of diversity and inclusion. Although we have been coaching women in leadership successfully for years, we noticed we needed to do more. Hence our participation in Male Allies and the development of a robust diversity and inclusion training program for our clients. By addressing unconscious bias, allyship, covering, inclusive communication, growth mindset, psychological safety, and intersectionality we not only help women find their voice, but now we're also changing the system.

The Panel Pledge is just one example of how men can help to improve gender equality and be a Male Ally. Male Allies strive to engage other men, so they feel comfortable having a better conversation around gender. The goal is to form a society where men are fluent in the language of gender equality, able to continuously learn and talk about gender issues, and create real change in their spheres of influence: at home and with friends, in their teams and organizations, and ultimately in the broader community. Please reach out if you want to know more about Black Isle Global diversity & inclusion training programs and about our involvement in the Male Ally program.

Old boys' clubs

"Iedereen zijn plaats weten en verder je smoel houden" – Erik Hazelhoff Roelfsema, Soldaat van Oranje

At the time of writing, the city of Leiden is celebrating "Bevrijdingsweek" ("Liberation week"), with its principal theme the role of Leiden University students in the Dutch resistance movement against Nazi Germany. Leiden is perhaps better known for holding out against, and eventually being liberated from, the Spaniards. The city's reward was its university founded in 1575, and some 350 years later its students were immortalised in the book, movie and major theatre production "Soldier of Orange".



Soldier of Orange the musical - source NRC

The Soldier of Orange quote above – loosely translated to "Everyone, know your place and keep your mouth shut" – provides a characterisation of the prevailing views of the 1930s Leidsch Studenten Corps or LSC: Moreover, they were utterly convinced that, if not in the eyes of God, then at least of every rational European and Dutchman, all people were created unequal."

Now the LSC and the modern-day "corpora" are often typecast as snooty, cosy old boys' clubs reserved for offspring of the elites, whose primary purpose is to keep out the rabble. The above quote provides a bit of a different perspective: inequality is diversity and inclusion personified.

Today with more female than male members, an LGBTH association and no racial requirements for membership, LSC's successor LSV Minerva is arguably a bastion of diversity and inclusion. Language may form a barrier for non-native Dutch speakers, but race surely is not. Compare that to a Dutch expat starting a business in China or Hong Kong and applying for a local passport...

Point of the key quote is emphatically not to exclude, but rather to avoid debate involving claims of superiority. The unwritten rule is: all are welcome who do not assume airs above their station.

In early 1985, as a first-year Minerva student, I had a pleasant conversation with an LSC alumnus who introduced himself with words that in English sound like "Dough-niece". Only weeks later, seeing his picture in Soldier of Orange as a young "Englandvaarder" (=escapee to England to join the resistance there), did I realise he was the Baron d'Aulnis de Bourrouil, one of the "Soldiers". Yet at Minerva, introducing oneself by multiple family names is just not done, even for a war hero.

Nor did LSVM grant our current King much by way of privilege as a new arrival in 1987 Leiden. Bodyguards kept their distance while our then Crown Prince mingled with other novices and members until an injury forced a rethink. He took turns doing groceries for his student house and I personally witnessed him carrying home that most essential of groceries, a case of beer.

The Leiden students' resistance movement grew not out of a sense of superiority or elitism but, to the contrary, out of contempt for the exclusionary and racist demagoguery of Nazi Germany. The calls for a pure Germanic race were meant to pander to the tastes of the scions of Dutch nobility and ruling classes. Instead, the exclusion of Jewish professors and the Germans shutting down Leiden University following the Cleveringa lecture was what prompted the exact opposite reaction.

Many looking in from the outside are tempted to dismiss our "corpora" as homogenous, exclusive clubs for students from privileged backgrounds. "Soldier of Orange" may serve as an eye-opener, with those same students as early day proponents of diversity and inclusion. As the saying goes: never judge a book by its cover...



■ By Ralph Ybema
Managing Director at China Law & Tax
www.chinaltd.nl

Hong Kong tax implications of same-sex marriage

Under the Hong Kong Inland Revenue Ordinance (“IRO”), married persons are entitled to elect for joint assessment and personal assessment jointly with their spouse; and claim or nominate their spouse to claim certain allowances and deductions. How about same-sex marriages?

In section 2(1) of the IRO, “marriage” is defined to mean:

- a) any marriage recognised by the law of Hong Kong; or
- b) any marriage, whether or not so recognised, entered into outside Hong Kong according to the law of the place where it was entered into and between persons having the capacity to do so.

In the same section of the IRO, “spouse” means a husband or wife whereas “husband” and “wife” refer to a married man and married woman respectively. In other words, a same-sex marriage was not recognised previously for the purposes of the IRO.

Judgement of Court of Final Appeal (“CFA”)

In *Leung Chun Kwong v Secretary for the Civil Service* (2019) 22 HKCRAF 127 (“the Leung Case”), the Appellant had entered into a same-sex marriage outside of Hong Kong in 2014. After the Appellant and his spouse moved to Hong Kong, he started to work for the Hong Kong Civil Service Department. During the course of the Appellant’s employment, his spouse was denied access to the spousal medical and dental benefits under the Civil Service Regulations and neither was the Appellant able to elect for joint assessment of salaries tax under the IRO. Consequently, the Appellant applied for a judicial review claiming that he had been unlawfully discriminated against based on his sexual orientation. The CFA allowed the Appellant’s appeal in its ruling on 6 June 2019 and recognised that the protection of the institution of marriage in Hong Kong, being heterosexual and monogamous, was a legitimate aim.

Consequently, the Appellant applied for a judicial review claiming that he had been unlawfully discriminated against based on his sexual orientation.

Implications for taxpayers

The CFA considered that the differential treatment under the IRO between a person in a heterosexual marriage and a person in

a same-sex marriage entered into outside Hong Kong was not rationally connected to the legitimate aim and was not justified and thus a remedial interpretation of the IRO was appropriate. The CFA ordered the following declaration:

- (i) The existing limb (b) of the term “marriage” in section 2 of the Ordinance shall be read as “any marriage, whether or not so recognised, entered into outside Hong Kong according to the law of the place where it was entered into and between persons having the capacity to do so, provided where the persons are of the same sex and such a marriage between them would have been a marriage under this Ordinance but for the fact only that they are persons of the same sex, they shall be deemed for the purposes of such a marriage to have the capacity to do so”; and
- (ii) for the purposes of the Ordinance, references to:
 - “husband and wife” shall be read as “a married person and his or her spouse”;
 - “not being a wife living apart from her husband” shall be read as “not being a spouse living apart from the married person”; and
 - “either the husband or wife” shall be read as “either the married person or his or her spouse”.

Accordingly, a same-sex marriage has now been recognised for the purposes of the IRO. A married person, whether in a heterosexual marriage or same-sex marriage, is entitled to elect for joint assessment or personal assessment jointly with the person’s spouse; and is entitled to claim allowances or deductions under the IRO in respect of the person’s spouse. The Hong Kong Inland Revenue Department also updated its practice notes in February 2020 to reflect the remedial interpretation of a marriage as delivered in the Leung Case.



■ By Willem Jan Hoogland

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Samuel Fung ■

Waste collection is valuable – and the people who do it too

Before we dive into the column, let's try to understand what the words Diversity & Inclusion could mean.

Diversity is the range of human differences, including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, social class, physical ability or attributes, religious or ethical values system, national origin, and political beliefs."

"Inclusion is involvement and empowerment, where the inherent worth and dignity of all people are recognized. An inclusive society promotes and sustains a sense of belonging; it values and practices respect for the talents, beliefs, backgrounds and ways of living of its members."

In the Green World, a lot of work has been done and more is underway. As we all know, waste management is a complex set of various disciplines, like technology, finance, economics, psychology, sociology, law and enforcement etc. To describe all the progress made in various situations in this short column, would deprive many of what they have achieved.



Source: Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

To realise the awareness, it starts with the top management, to understand their responsibilities, to turn this into an organisation's principle and policy and execute accordingly. In this column, I'd like to focus on the people who collect the waste we generate, formal and informal collectors. Without them, we would end up in a mess.

In many countries, these collectors are the first step to a circular economy. If we don't succeed to bring valuable resources into a circular economy loop, we are in trouble for sure. Each year we consume more than the earth can produce. And each year we use it in fewer days than the year before. Our economies need resources to produce, to provide us with jobs, money and so on.

So, the collection of resources (our waste) is extremely valuable - and the people who do this too. Let's look at what happens if collectors wouldn't be there. Remember the waste crisis in New York? For a brief moment in early March 2020, New York City seemed poised to tackle one of its biggest quality-of-life issues — the mounds of black trash bags that line the sidewalks every day, broiling in the summer sun and luring rats in broad daylight. See the picture below.



Another example was Lebanon, not long ago, where government and private organisations could not agree on terms of how to handle the waste, resulting in strikes and as a result, waste piled up in the streets. Spring was coming, temperatures were rising and on top of that, the snow melted on Mount Lebanon, literally flooding the waste through the streets.

These are just a few examples. The importance of collectors is clear. Men, women, black, white or other; they are the starting point. Informal collectors as we know them from the streets in Hong Kong, late at night trying to collect valuable streams to provide them an income, they deserve our respect and appreciation, each and every one of them.



■ By Bernard Scheffens
CEO at WSS Asia Ltd
www.wss-asia.com

Passing the Pen

Name: Quinten Kah

Organisation: Intertrust Group

Email: Quinten.Kah@intertrustgroup.com



Who am I?

My name is Quinten, born and bred in the Netherlands and I have been living in Hong Kong for more than 10 years. I love the lifestyle here: beautiful country parks for hiking, delicious food, nice beaches, an open mindset for meeting people, efficient and affordable public transportation. In short, I think Hong Kong is an amazing city with its dynamic and diverse development opportunities, both on a career level and a personal level.

My professional background is:

Since I started my career in Hong Kong, I have always worked for consultancy or corporate service firms, supporting international clients – initially from Benelux – to expand their businesses into Hong Kong and China. From entrepreneurs, family businesses and SMEs, to PE firms and MNCs; each type of client has its own set of pain points, which we help them to overcome. My current role is to build and strengthen relationships with clients and business partners and support them in setting up corporate structures for business operations and cross-border investments in Greater China, Singapore and various other jurisdictions.

I moved to Hong Kong because:

During university, there was an opportunity to study abroad via an exchange programme at a university in Hong Kong – and I did not hesitate to sign up! Hong Kong was always a place that I wanted to visit. I remember my parents had friends from Hong Kong who used to visit us in the Netherlands and they always came with these amazing tech gadgets (remember the Tamagotchi?) as presents – often months before they were available at our local toy stores. As a kid in the '90s, who wouldn't love these gadgets and game consoles?

The Cantonese music and Hong Kong movie industry – from Stephen Chow movies to many other famous actors and actresses I used to watch on video compact discs – had a major contribution as well. I already felt as if I'd visited the city many times before – or at least, I felt I should visit at least once in my lifetime. I'd initially planned to work in Hong Kong for a couple of years' work experience – I'd never have believed that I'd be here for more than a decade.

I work for:

Intertrust Group, publicly listed on Euronext and headquartered in Amsterdam with 4,000 employees who are dedicated to providing world-leading, specialised corporate management and outsourcing services in over 30 jurisdictions. Intertrust Group focuses on bespoke corporate, fund admin, capital market and private wealth services, enabling our clients to invest, grow and thrive anywhere in the world. Based in the Hong Kong office, I am also part of the Asia-Pacific Commercial community, working closely with our regional and global teams to provide business solutions to help clients grow internationally and realise their business aspirations.

I find most of my business contacts through:

Attending events or seminars – before the pandemic, of course, but hopefully these will be up and running again soon! LinkedIn is also useful, as are introductions through my existing network. After a break from face-to-face events for 15 months, I do look forward to meeting more people in person in 2021!

One day I will be:

Travelling around the world to explore and learn more about different cultures.



An author in Wan Chai

Richard Mason (1919-1997) was born during the First World War in a middle-class English family living near Manchester. He was fortunate enough to go to a private boarding school where the famous poet W.H. Auden (1947 Pulitzer Prize, "The Age of Anxiety") was his English teacher. Auden clearly inspired the young Richard who attempted to write his first novel at 14, although it was trashed by Auden ("no bloody good"). Richard nevertheless continued to write and ended up writing articles for a local newspaper and a film magazine – before moving on to greater writing successes.

During the Second World War, Mason was conscripted in the Royal Air Force but was soon transferred to an Army Intelligence unit due to his language skills. He was put in an intensive three-month crash course in Japanese, to be able to interrogate Japanese Prisoners of War in both Burma and India where he was subsequently sent. The evenings in India provided him time to write his first serious novel, "The Wind Cannot Read", which won a literary prize and was later made into a film. This success meant that Richard was financially able to devote all his time and effort to writing.

In 1956, two books and another screenplay later, Richard decided he needed to search for new inspiration elsewhere. In an interview, he later explained "I had felt I needed background for a book, and something in me said that Hong Kong was a place where I would immediately find material, so I simply bought a ticket!".

As Mason stepped off the ocean liner in Tsim Sha Tsui with one suitcase and his portable typewriter, he made his way to the Star Ferry to Wan Chai where a friend had recommended an inexpensive hotel. This hotel on Gloucester Road was called Luk Kwok Hotel with (then) great views of Victoria Harbour. Mason booked a room for a month and only realised

something during his first evening: "I went down the first night to have my chow fan and see all these women at the bar, and I realised it was virtually a brothel. I was absolutely thrilled. From that moment I knew I had my book!". Mason spent four months writing his novel and living at the hotel. He befriended many of the prostitutes for whom he became a confidant, an "elder brother".

The novel, "The World of Suzie Wong" was a great success. And rightly so! It is a most enjoyable and highly recommended read: the detailed, colourful and vivid descriptions of colonial Hong Kong in the 1950s are not only a pleasure to read but also at times incredibly familiar. Clearly, some things never change. The dialogues are brilliant, capturing not only the rhythm of Hong Kong English but also the local views on



Richard Mason

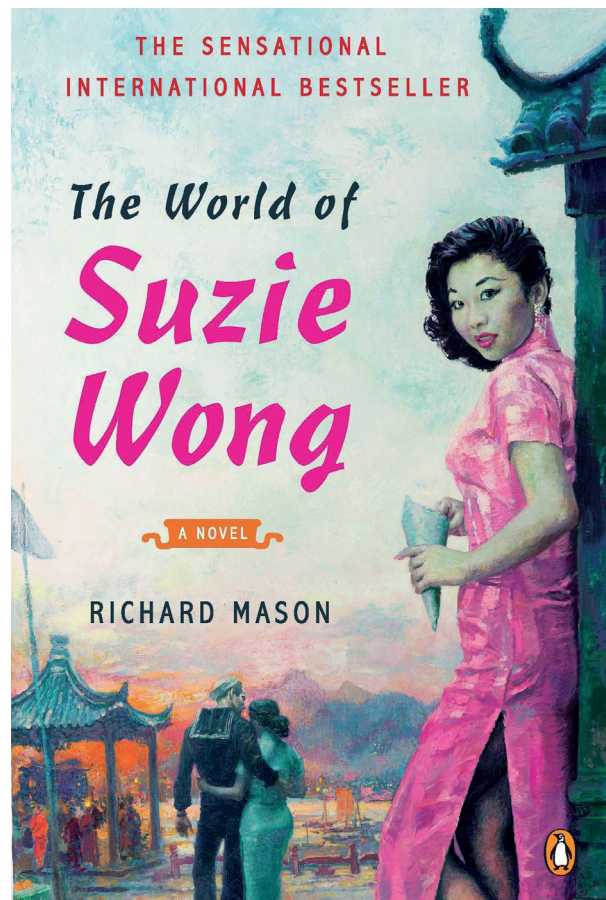


The World of Suzie Wong

"I went down the first night to have my chow fan and see all these women at the bar, and I realised it was virtually a brothel. I was absolutely thrilled. From that moment I knew I had my book!"

gweilos and the British view of Hong Kong life. The book is sometimes very funny, sometimes poignant and always a sharp observation of 1950s Hong Kong. It is an improbable, but nevertheless believable love story between an English artist and a Shanghai-born prostitute. It clearly captured the world's imagination as the book became a bestseller, was then made into a play, and thereafter a film starring William Holden.

The novel has been slightly cheapened or tainted by the many sleazy "Suzie Wong" bars and nightclubs scattered throughout Asia. The term "Suzie Wong" became slang (most notably during the Vietnam War) to mean a prostitute. The novel has also inspired debate in some circles about the portrayal of Asian women as objects of desire. This seems to forget the reality that the novel is based on the real events Richard Mason observed during his four months at the Luk Kwok Hotel.



The World of Suzie Wong: A Novel

Richard Mason must have been astounded at all of the fuss surrounding his novel.

At any rate, the financial success enabled Richard to buy a vast rooftop apartment in Rome in 1959, where he lived comfortably with his third wife and their two children. He remained in Rome for the rest of his life and never returned to Hong Kong. He also never wrote another novel, as he never found inspiration again. In an almost fitting way, the greatest chronicler of colonial life in Hong Kong passed away in 1997, the Year of the Handover of Hong Kong.



■ By Daniël de Blocq van Scheltinga
Managing Director at Polarwide Ltd
www.polarwide.com

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Don van de Pol – Associate Membership

Conrad Hong Kong – Corporate Membership

General Manager, Jan Jansen

Meat the Sea – SME Membership

Founder, Patrick Verhoeven



Gay Games 11 Hong Kong 2022 (GGHK): creating unity in diversity

Management team members Dennis Philipse and Willem Anne Hoekstra tell us more about GGHK's unique combination of sport, arts, culture, fun and community bringing together diverse groups of people to experience moments of joy.

GGHK will take place on 11-19 November 2022, for the first time in Asia. We are expecting 12,000 participants, 75,000 spectators and 3,000 volunteers from 100 countries. There will be an Opening Ceremony in HK Stadium, a Festival Village, multiple Arts & Culture events and 36 sports including typical local events such as Dragon Boat Racing, eSports, and Trail Running. Everyone is welcome to participate regardless of ethnicity, religion, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, ability, or background. It will create unity and positive attitudes that will last a lifetime in Hong Kong, Asia and beyond, under our tagline "Unity in Diversity".

This colourful event is organised and funded by the community, participants, commercial partners and sponsors. Supporting organisations include the Equal Opportunities Commission, BrandHK, InvestHK and the Hong Kong Tourism Board and of course the Dutch Chamber of Commerce. Building on the success of four decades of Gay Games, GGHK will have an estimated economic impact of HKD 1 billion (USD 128 million), comprising 300,000 hotel room bookings and associated consumption revenue, and millions of pictures on social media. We're excited to have Marriott BonVoy and YouTube as Platinum Partners.

The energetic leader of GGHK is Dennis Philipse. In his hometown Amsterdam, LGBTQ+ sports organisations are common. After he moved to Hong Kong in 2010, he searched to join an LGBTQ+ sports group, only to find out they didn't exist. He decided to take the initiative, and within months "OUT in HK" had grown to an LGBTQ+ sports community, joining hundreds of sporters in hiking, trail running, tennis and other sports. Philipse remembered the Gay Games in Amsterdam from 1998, which was a truly diverse experience, and he thought it was a great idea to bring this event to Hong Kong. After an elaborate bidding process, Hong Kong proudly won the license from the global Federation of Gay Games in 2017.

Willem Hoekstra is the Chief Operating Officer of GGHK, he moved to Hong Kong in 2009 and enjoys calling the city his home. He says it is brilliant that Hong Kong is bringing the quadrennial event to Asia. "It will be Hong Kong's biggest sports event ever held, both in terms of the number of events and number of participants. And

it will send out a positive note about Hong Kong to the rest of the world." As head of operations, Hoekstra leads the teams for technology, programme management, finance and accounting, procurement, security and contingency – all as an unpaid volunteer.



Philipse took a break from his professional career in the tech industry and is now a full-time volunteer as co-chair, dedicated to leading the team. "Over the past three years, the team has not only expanded in number, with at present 145 team members but also in quality. The roles are now occupied by committed professional volunteers, all well-seasoned in their field."

Being involved with GGHK is a first for Hoekstra personally. He has never been involved in organizing a sporting and cultural event before, let alone one of this size, complexity and visibility. Hoekstra has worked in Crisis Management and Business Continuity in the banking sector for the past 15 years, and the skills and experiences he gained in that time are proving invaluable in this role: "What I find really interesting is how I can use the professional skills that I have developed in banking and how they are transferable to a completely different environment of managing a massive sports event. The world is bigger than investment banking!"

Philipse says he feels humbled by the enthusiasm of the team, but also by the support they meet daily, from all sectors in society, and all levels of seniority. Learn more about GGHK and how you or your organisation can be involved as a supporter, volunteer or participant.



■ By Dennis Philipse

Willem Anne Hoekstra ■

www.gghk2022.com



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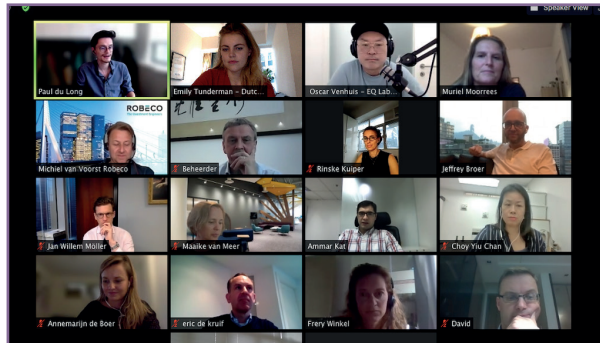
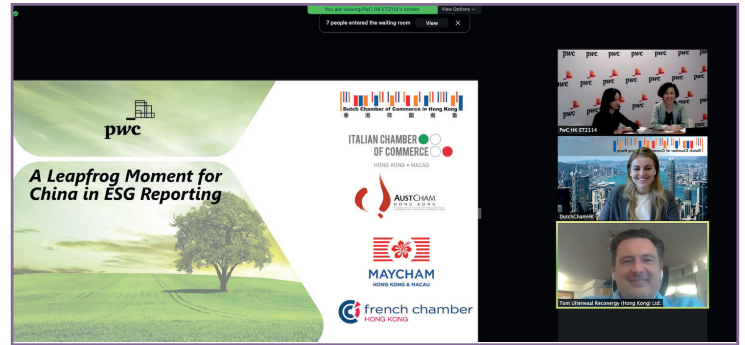


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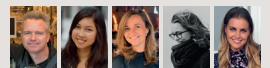
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