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Transnational Subcontracting of Filial Piety in East Asia? Contradictions of Cross-Borders Home-Helping Regime in Ageing Societies

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Abstract

Foreign home helpers (FHH) for domestic works in middle-class families becomes norm in East Asia: over 285,000 FHH are working in Hong Kong, whilst Taiwan employs around 170,000 FHH to serve the frail aged — more and more families are taking such option (innovation?) to cope with the caring of their aged seniors. Obviously, a new regime of transnational care is establishing as flexible labour regime and income differentials in East Asia enable FHH to take care of the elderly — due to (female) labour shortage and the preferred caring for the elderly at home. This seemingly attractive alternative option is also an extended form of filial piety (FP, respect and taking care of the seniors) sub-contracting that FHH serve for the aged 24-hour as they live-in, paralleling the round-the-clock global production regime. Socio-culturally, the modus operandi of "out-sourcing" and "sub-contracting" of traditional customs, particularly filial piety, confirms the socio-economic changes of family system in 21st Century Asia. FHH are one of the major carriers for the (withering) cultural virtue of FP, yet they bear contradictions in hyper-modernizing Asia as well: migrant workers are at best are nomadic with minimal terms of social inclusion (-as outsider of the society); but FHH are indeed the "insider" of the family as they know the daily tasks of it — and in some instances they enable the socio-cultural norms (filial piety) re-making. For public policy development and social innovation, this paper examines these contradictions and dynamics, in a new flexible labour regime for caring ageing population.

Hyper-Modernizing Economic-Demographic Miracle: Asian Ageing?

Three distinct dynamics are intertwined yet interacting in Asia's newly industrializing economies (NIEs: South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, mainland China). Firstly, the hyper-modernizing demographic transitions towards ageing society; secondly the emerging regime of flexible (cross-border migrant-workers for domestic home helping or caring) labour market with more and more mobility of foreign home-helpers (FHH), and last but not least the (rejuvenation of the) thousand-

year old social norms and virtues for filial piety (FP)—taking care of one's aged parents, in terms of inter-generation reciprocity (Ting 2009a/b). To cope with the ageing challenges, the differential adaption of all three dynamic forces will shape the destiny of social development. Examine the developmental trend and dynamics, this paper addresses to the implications for elderly policy development and social innovation.

Asia's Confucian societies like the Greater China (of Hong Kong, Taiwan and mainland China), South Korea and Japan, have their common social foundation with social virtues of filial piety—intergeneration and reciprocal care for the seniors (Ting 2009b). With no exception, these social values, norms and ethics have been shaping and framing many public policies development, ranging from public housing provision and health services to family-based elderly care.

For the last few decades, the hyper-modernizing economic miracle in the globalization project has been leading its demographic transitions; problematically manifesting as a global challenge due to the ageing momentum which is at its high speed in recent decades (Lai 2007, 2008a/b). To put ageing dynamism in its historical place, the United Nations estimates in 2007 (UNPD 2007) noted that the societal ageing ratio (percentage of those age 65 or above in the total population), in the developing countries, was a low at 6% in 2005, but was forecast to rise to 7.5% in 2020 and 14.6% in 2050.

Hyper-modernization goes along with hyper-urbanization processes, enhancing the individualization of social development. The estimates by the United Nations (2009) confirm such trend too. Hence, their elderly ratio was forecasted to double in around 30 years. According to the estimates, from 2009 to 2050, the number of persons aged 60 or over will grow almost to triple, globally, increasing from 739 million in 2009 to 2 billion by 2050. For the same period, a correspond increase from 65% to 79% of the world older person live in the less developed regions (U.N., 2009, p.x). Here, the demographic challenge is not only for the developed countries with a decline birth rate and prolonged longevity, but also for newly industrializing economies (NIEs) which follow a speedy rate of ageing trend in recent decades, East Asia in particular (Lai 2007, 2008a). China is one of such examples that, due to its one-child policy since 1979, it has over 12% of the population are aged 60 or above in 2009; but will gradually rise to 33% in 2050 (Xinhua News Agency, 4 July 2009).

The global ageing challenge, as stressed by the U.S. Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS 2009), has a strategic significance for human survival if the problem is not probably dealt with. The critical problems for ageing society in developing economies are many, not least are the 'cash'—the financing (in terms of health care and pension system), the labour supply for caring services—the 'care' of the fragile aged (CSIS 2009, Jackson, et.al., 2009; see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Asia in Global Ageing, 2013 (% of Population aged 65 or above)

Japan	23%	Italy	20%	Swiss	16%
Hong Kong	13%	Sweden	19%	U.K.	15%
Taiwan	12%	Germany	18%	Netherlands	14%
South Korea	12%	Norway	17%	USA	13%
China	11%	Spain	17%	Australia	13%
Singapore	9.5%	Austria	16%	Canada	13%
		France	16%		

Source: the author's compilation from various sources from references of this paper

Compared with ageing process in the Western developed economies, demographic transitions began much later in East Asia than in the West (Mason and Kinugasa 2008), but the momentum is more dramatic with a hyper and speedy one (Lai 2008a, Tsuno and Hooma 2009). In less than 30 years, demographic transitions occurred in Japan and all Asia's NIEs: South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore. These countries have been transformed from the high birth and death rate population model to a low birth rate (less than 1.5 in terms of Total Fertility Rate, TFR) and ageing one. Japan had 23% of the total population aged 65 or above, whilst Korea achieved 11% in 2012 (Birdsall, et.al. 2001; Rostow 2000; Lai 2007, 2008a; NIPSSR 2012, 2013).

Historically, Japan led the post World War II rapid economic development in East Asia, from mid-1960s to 1980s, and later followed by South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong and Singapore in the 1980s to 1990s. They are undoubtedly representatives of the phenomenal East Asian Economic Miracle, a term coined by the World Bank (World Bank 1993). Here, the positive role of the baby boomers at the post World War II industrialization is important, supplying sufficient labour force for economic development; but the developmental trend towards ageing is the history, which will be likely repeated in other NIEs.

The demographic transitions in Japan (since 1960s), South Korea and Taiwan (since 1970s) towards ageing society have been very much due to natural growth—all three countries are a "closed" population system with minimal immigration (less than 1.5% of the population); China resembles such a closed system. Whilst the population systems in Hong Kong and Singapore are somewhat relatively "open", with large immigrants throughout the second half of 20th Century. In spite of the differences in the population systems, all economies experience demographic transitions towards ageing, with a decline of fertility and mortality (Mason and Kinugasa 2008).

Global ageing is a challenge for every developed economy. The destiny of any country's economy depends on longevity: the demography driven demands to shape community and service market (Beck 2000; Milanovic 2003). As demographic transitions developed, there is, and will be, shortage of manpower to take care for the

ageing family members; especially to fulfill the virtue of caring the aged in Asian familial-cultural ethos.

The Remaking of Thousand-year Old Filial Piety in 21st Century Asia?

In East Asia, Confucianism defines socio-cultural ideals for China, Korea and Japan in particular. One of the key virtues of Confucianism is filial piety (FP)—taking care of the ageing parents in one's life course. The obvious virtues are shown in the Chinese classics, the *Twenty-Four Paragon of Filial Piety*. Here, social reciprocity and familial loyalty, following Confucian norms, attribute to FP as both virtue and behaviours (Chow 2006, Meyer 2000).

With blood-tie, the sense of belonging and togetherness and the synergy of time, space and the upward oriented inter-generational social reciprocity, define FP. The most obvious, or the extreme manifestation/demonstration of FP, presents in funeral activities—customs, ritual and rule; yet the customization of funeral can easily move into a service industry. More specifically, funeral ceremony marks the end as well as the new beginning of FP (Lee 2003, Suzuki 2000).

Yet, there is a global trend of lowering fertility rate as rapid economic development: all Asian NIEs have been experiencing a significant drop of total fertility rate (TFR) to less than 1.5 per woman (K-S.Chang 2003, M-C.Chang 2004, Eu 2003, Golini 2003, Tu 2003, Yap 2003). Hence, the supply side of FP (sons and daughters) is sharply reduced following the drop of TFR. In this section, socio-economic familial changes will be discussed in relation to the FP practice—caring the elderly.

Work Life Balance vs. Intergenerational Caring: Overloading or Burnt-Out?

Under economic liberalization, particularly for labour mobility in hyper-modernization, traditional role model for caring the aged within the realm of FP has its limits, if not withering away: a nation-wide survey by the Japanese Ministry of Health and Welfare in 1994 found that 60% of the care-givers thought their burden was too much. Furthermore, the ever-increasing demand for paid job performance and the service for family life are making heads of family (women in particular) overloading, if not burnt out; the burnt out tendency will be much increased if the duty of FP is included in the consideration.

This is in strong contrast to the early 1970s that women were willing to scarify for FP; Salaff (1995) has rightly pinpointed, and it has been well researched by feminist literature, that the down-side of FP in Asian societies and family (in the case of Hong Kong) during industrialization era, has been exploiting the women's life chance. To cope with external demands that the family members are differentially, gender-specific, exposed to the burden of responsibility, women (the never-married daughters and/or

daughters-in-law) are mostly positioned to bear the FP responsibility (Sung 2003, Zhan and Montgomery 2003). For Chinese patriarchy culture, which is contradictory in nature, women mostly have to be scarified for familial goals (Meyer 2000).

Under a more flexible, globalizing, production regime, workers have to moving into different localities for job and to engage in a 7-day-and-24-hour (7-24) working cycle—people are more nomadic yet less available for taking care of the ageing parents. More specific, the modern societal and economic demands for family (and its members) are more than ever under the conditions of labour market restructuring and uncertain economic outlooks. Women participation in economy becomes a norm yet this undermines the time-space arrangement for managing work-family life. Except family gifted by economic and cultural assets, most families in present economic conditions (ups and downs of business cycle) are under stress, though most families can still be functional but not healthy.

For younger generations, the modernist ideas of planning and choosing how to live one's life fit into the neo-liberal economics of consumer sovereignty: people have the idea that their own actions determine their own success or failure—definitely this orientation is exactly the spirits (ideology) of Asian Miracle and its instrumentalism for welfare development (Kwon 2005). But the built-in effect of this orientation is the repetitive planning (for better alternative choice) without the moral calling (have to get married and give birth) for actual experiencing the social reality on the one hand, and the procrastination of the social life-task (responsibility) in the name of continuing learning, life-long education—the biographization of life course (Vinken 2004; Mayer 2004). But all these shape the de-standardization of life course, developmental tasks and moral obligations that have not been taking up by younger generation—these are the inertia for those kid-adults to moving on to take up social (citizenship) responsibility, as well as the familial one of FP (Lai and Abe 2005).

More specific, global economic restructuring creates the sense of uncertainty, particularly in labour market: job insecurity and instability for people; particularly for the younger generation. This sense of uncertainty is paradoxically anchored with the ever-increasing calculative, rational planning for possible future work and familial engagements (FP against which job, where to live, with whom for courtship and marriage, etc.). The systematic planning future is not just affecting the younger one, the middle-age workers are called upon for retraining, as well as their continuing education (Beck 2000).

The upwardly mobile, better-off family (in comparison with their previous cohort) dynamics reinforce the delaying and "exit" strategies of the younger generation not to take up socially expected role for adulthood, fatherhood / motherhood... as well as FP. Furthermore, the developmental state's further extension of higher education (postgraduate level), equal opportunities for men and women, and the promotion of

progressive rights for women, also reinforce the personalized, individual choice for alternative life course. In short, the global system-demanded high mobility (working across-borders) and flexibility (working at home and off-hour over time work) of the labour is the embryo for disruptive family life course and cycle: late or never marriage, or no FP duties, reflecting the individualistic lifestyle orientation, as well as the lifestyle options-seeking and experimentation for both sexes; particularly the case for those who want to be 'career' woman than housewife.

Commercialization of Elderly Care: Short-Cut to, or Short-Circuit of, FP?

Thanks to economic liberalization driven labour specialization and mobility, commercialization-cum-professionalization of nursing care for elderly seemingly is a way of FP sub-contracting—the role of carer shift from one's blood-tied family member or relative to the outsider of the family (see Lai 2007, Lan 2002 for discussion on sub-contracting and out-sourcing of elderly care): the state funded welfare agencies sometimes reinforce this trend—perhaps the more extreme form is the so-called 'Social Hospitalization' (Lai 2001, Wu 2004, MHLW 2008).

Adjusting and adaptive to the ever-increasing care-burden (short cut to, and short-circuit) of FP will become a permanent feature of caring the aged, in our hyper-modern life course. In reality, professional care protocols (regulations on family member-visitors) are more often than not, unintentionally limit the extent of FP. Or, in its variations, professionalism legitimizes a regime of FP sub-contracting; for instance, mobile-ambulance (day/time) caring regime in the so-called community caring regime. In short, the state intervention shapes the very different, mostly with unintended consequences, form of caring regime and therefore FP can be negotiable and adaptive, even following the logic of marketization (Lai 2007, Lan 2002). Distancing from their traditional role of familial carer, in a highly competitive society, women have to work and be independent—that is the new form of the (Western state) sponsored feminism. They gain money from paid work, and renegotiate the caring role with the husband or their parents.... Yet, daughters-in-law turn to the employment of waged caregivers not only because of their shortage of time and to lessen the burdens of labour, but also to retrieve some autonomy from the authority of their mothers-in-law (Lan 2002, Kim et al. 1991, Kim and Kim 2003, Liu et al. 2000).

For caring the aging population, in Asian societies excepting Japan, migrating guest/foreign domestic labour is more than obvious. More recently, in Hong Kong, it is not uncommon that in private middle-class nursing home, foreign home helper (FHH), totally over 285,000 in 2010 (see Fig. 2), are also assisting the more formal case, though the children and relatives of the aged do visit them regularly. And the trend for FHH home and elderly care is prevailing and likely to be part of the Hong Kong (middle class) family system; isn't it a new version of caring regime powered by mobile guest workers or out-sourcing and/or sub-contracting of elderly care?

Figure 2: Foreign Domestic Helpers by Origin in Hong Kong, 2011

	Philippines	Indonesia	Thailand	Others	Total
2005	118,030	96,900	4,510	3,760	223,200
2006	120,788	104,129	4,292	3,572	232,781
2007	123,545	114,411	4,072	3,503	245,531
2008	23,943	123,341	3,820	3,493	256,597
2009	129,875	130,448	3,858	3,597	267,778
2010	137,313	140,941	3,695	3,732	285,681

Source: Hong Kong Immigration Department

The caring *modus operandi* of the filial piety out-sourcing and sub-contracting regime is seemingly functional and coupling with the state-advocated familism, which emphasizes on the quality of care and less-resources for better-quality of family life, in open (labour) market where efficiency and timeliness are the key for success. Yet, the adoption of FHH in family and/or community life is becoming a norm in Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan; and for this, Japan is timely considering this option to cope with labour shortage in the long term care for ageing population.

Familial Duties Out-sourcing under Flexible Regional Divisions of Labour

The (ideologically driven) neo-liberal global project, i.e., the creation of global free market and the dominance of Anglo-American capitalism within world's economic regions, has been cemented by networks of transnational corporations. In addition, free market capitalism is reinforced within the frameworks of global economic institutions, like WTO, IMF, World Bank and G7, which enable the further deregulation, privatization, structural adjustment programmes, and limited government. The globalization project is by default a regime of migrating (free flow of) labour supplies. But the globalization processes hence have put state-society at very peculiar position, as both exposed to the challenges of 'external' forces: capitals, goods, labour (and jobs) are more mobile than the previous regime of global order. Here, migrant labours become important for those (dirty) works not readily taken up local people.... This is particularly the case for the long-hour caring work tasks which require specific temporal locality-bound, in-situ (not transferable), *modus operandi* of service delivery: guest home helpers (domestic maids in the olden days)!

Borrowed Time from Guest Work for Filial Piety in the "Care" Market?

To highlight and specify the new *modus operandi* of caring the needy ageing population, we take the case of Taiwan as example in this section.

The 2008 estimate for the aged (65 or above) population in Taiwan were 10% of the total population, with the long term nursing care service need for the ageing population is ca. 396,000 senior adults, and it is projected that in 2028, the aged (65 or

above) population will reach 22.5% of the total population, with the nursing care needs of 811,000 elderly (*United Daily News*, 13 July 2009). The responsibility for caring the frail (396,000) aged persons is unequally divided by three major human labours, of the local (semi-)professional agencies (caring 50,000 elderly), 168,000 FHH-supported home stay and the family members' supported home stay for 180,000 aged persons. (*United Daily News*, 29 May 2009).

Since 1992, with the stringent regime for the certified nursing care needs by the health authority or professionals (very different from Hong Kong's "free-to-hire" model), the importation of guest nursing helper (the FHH equivalent) has been the major source (a form of FP out-sourcing) of human resources taking care of the fragile aged, and in 2008, the total numbers of FHH were 168,000.

But the labour rights of the guest workers are not protected within the labour law in Taiwan—their official social rights are minimally attached to the norms of labour market. This neglect of, or the abuse on, guest workers are among hosting societies in Asia (Law 2002, Lyons 2005). Hence, they are the sub-classes of semi-normal citizenship in their host countries. More critically and in spite of the global recession which has stopped the inflow of guest workers to Taiwan, the demand for guest migrants-embedded nursing care for ageing population has never been matched, and the trend for increasing migrant nursing care worker from overseas is more than prevalent.

Globalization-driven Social Sub-Classes of Nomadic Sub-Citizenship

Welfare rights in the Western (welfare states) have been much theoretically anchored upon T.H.Marshall's concept of social rights—an extended, 20th century capitalist state financed basic welfare provisions, yet integrated part of citizenship rights from civil and political rights won in the 18th and 19th centuries (Holmwood 2000). The fully developed welfare state in the post-war era highlights the state's project for full social protection against developmental risks of human society: constituting nationhood with people solidarity—the very notion of citizenship-cum-social contract, within a closed system of the nation state's population and territorial bound socio-economic development.

On the other hand, the East Asia Miracle demonstrates the alternative to social development that socio-economic progress with people's loyalty and hope for the future—the legitimacy of the governing state, can be derived from the economic contract for "free choice" without a fully developed social (welfare) citizenship regime. Hence welfare citizenship could be decoupled from the labour market social contracting, as long as social contract(s) between the labour (workers) and capital (the firms/government as employer) can work-out economic efficiency in the 'compressed' modernization phase of rapid economic growth (Chiu and So 2005, Pahlke 2003).

Under economic liberalization, the globalization forces reinforce the momentum of labour mobility, the higher rate of globalization links to: the higher rate for both legal and illegal migrants, as well the migrant-workers; and the higher will be the socio-economic disparity and differential in one locality. How to cope with this heterogeneous yet mixed category of the nomads-of-globalization, the newly 'borrowed' sub-citizenship of globalization (minorities? ethnic groups? people-in-transits?), within and beyond the territorial boundary of nation/local state, is a critical social policy challenge (Fix, et.al. 2009; Sainsbury 2012).

Traditional networks and families expose to hyper-modernization demands. Under global labour market restructuring, the unsecured tenure for labour class has exerted tremendous pressure on family system—families under high growth economies have been stretched to their limits for caring those family members with special care, against the context where families are heavily 'taxed' by home mortgage and oligarchic retailing networks.

In reality, lower class and socio-economic deprived migrants are discriminated against not just by their host communities, but also by the systematic neglects (sometime even policy targeting) of the government. In mainland China, over billions of migrant workers lack the parity of living chance, vis-à-vis their counterparts of normal residents with normal household registration in cities; over 285,000 migrant domestic helpers from Southeast Asia working in Hong Kong's families lack adequate social protection, and over 170,000 of migrant domestic nursing-care workers in Taiwan have been problematically surviving.

In East Asia, majority of the female migrant-workers are for domestic work: FHH move from Indonesia, Sri Lanka and the Philippines to the Middle East, Hong Kong and Singapore. Many also come from Myanmar and Cambodia to work in Thailand, but these are largely illegal. Employed in private households 7 day-24 hour (7-24 working mode), these women are lack of normal basic labour rights, deprived of socio-cultural and welfare rights (of social citizenship) and can be very isolated and vulnerable (Stalker 2008; Piper 2008, Ed., 2008). How to integrate these mobile and sub-classes of new comers in the hosting societies needs to be addressed not just in social (security and inclusion) citizenship terms but also in terms of human rights.

Public Policy Innovations in Nomadic Transnational Labour Regime

Our discussion above highlights the contradictions of the hyper-modernizing, rapidly ageing, Asia and the differential caring regime, human resourced by flexible migrant (predominantly female) workers. FHH are enabling some form of the assisted ageing with care—isn't towards a rejuvenated regime of filial piety? But to what extent can the mobile, migrant labour force in shaping global ageing future? A critical ending remark to the key aspects of public policy innovations is provided here.

Socio-culturally, the *modus operandi* of the "out-sourcing" (from the family member to other non-family member) and "sub-contracting" (the FHH employing agencies and family members downward sub-contracting to the individual FHH) of the traditional custom, filial piety (FP, respect and taking care of the seniors), confirms the change of home care regime in 21st Century (see Lan 2002 and Lai 2007 for detail discussion). FHH in actuality are one of the main carriers for the (withering) cultural virtue of FP, but they are paradoxically as outsiders of the host family and at best a nomadic social sub-class or under-class (*vis-à-vis* T.H.Marshall's concept of social citizenship), without welfare rights. But the demand for guest workers' FP-compatible job performance is contradictory to their nomadic social (sub)citizenship status (having minimal social inclusion)—FHH are both outsiders (for the hosting family and country) and insiders (working 7 day-24 hour [7-24] within the host family and performing FP duties as if they were the daughter or daughter-in-law) for the socio-cultural norms making! All these have been reinforcing the contradictions within the East Asian family system based upon FP, and exacerbating the problems of exploitation due to 7-24 caring the aged—but FHH have no compatible or equitable economic, social and cultural (ESC) rights. Hence, human rights at large for migrant-labours in hyper-modernizing Asian societies are not protected (Piper, Ed. 2008).

The Sub-contracting Regime of "Care" by Outsiders-(as Insiders)

The elderly care in Asia's NIEs is a 7-24 caring service industry, mostly staffed by low-paid female workers and/or the FHH. This is within the context of the regional labour migration that the capacity of caring service is substantially upgraded with a new regime of elderly care out-sourcing / sub-contracting and mobile labour force: it seems that nursing home in Hong Kong and Taiwan, if granted more flexibility for guest labour (co-nursing FHH workers), their experimentation will give insights for Japanese and other societies to learn for coping with their ageing population.

The Japan's trade talks with South Korea, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines for Free Trade Agreement (FTA) highlights the trend toward a more mobile labour regime for nursing care workers: a few thousands caring workers are planned for elderly care policy experiment. More specifically, Japan wants the Philippines to give greater investment and services trade opportunities to Japanese businesses in the FTA, while the Philippines wants Japan's job market opened to Filipino nurses and lawyers. For Thailand, to lower tariffs on Japanese auto parts, and Bangkok's insistence that Japan open its markets to Thai rice, chicken and other agricultural products, and to ease its foreign labour rules so Thai physical therapists can work in Japan. In actuality, around a few thousands guest nursing care workers from Indonesia, Thai and the Philippines are now in training in Japan -- the importance of guest professionals, para-professionals and guest home helpers are more than obviously demanded by ageing society. Coping with ageing population in East Asia, the regime of flexible nursing or

home-helping labour migration is establishing; though it cannot solve the fundamental shortage of local nursing worker supplies (say the shortfall is nearly half a million in Japan).

From the supply side of migrant workers, we can also see paralleling trend of the importance of female ones in the overall migrant-workers' mobility (see Fig.3). Recent migration studies also show the feminization of migration in Asia region (Piper 2008, Ed., 2008; Yamanaka and Piper 2006). Hence, the female guest workers tend to assume the socio-cultural role of caring agency not just within the familial boundaries, but also extending to the cross-borders trading and commercialized transaction of filial piety.

Figure 3: Outflow of (Migrant-) Workers and Percentage of Women, 2007

Country	Outgoing Workers (in 000s)	Percentage of Woman (%)
Philippines	1070	59
Indonesia	593	69
Sri Lanka	204	57
Vietnam	79	57

Source: adapted from Stalker 2008, p.9 and p.12

For the flexible, nomadic labour regime in Asia, three obvious issues need to be addressed. Firstly, the pro-family policy re-orientation should not be targeting to the individuals and families by various types of high profile campaign (using mass media and hence wasting people's time and resource to entertain such events), but we should change the policy and business practice that will enable more freedom and time for family members to interacting among themselves: work-life balance in terms of inter-generational care is crucial for socio-familial development.

Secondly, global ageing is a challenge for every developed economy. We have shown that the back-side of active FP might produce the burnt-out of caregivers, which is prompting to elderly abuse (Yan and Tang 2003). With the demographic trends of fewer children and ageing population, coupled with the economic problems in East Asia is experiencing, attitudes toward supporting elderly parents and aged relatives are also changing significantly. It is becoming increasingly difficult to expect that families will provide full support for their elderly, and the problems of illness and long-term care have been identified as the greatest concern of the elderly (Lai 2001, cf. Ornatowski 1996).

Last but not least, it is not just the disparity of life chance between the rural and urban sector, between the rich and the poor; but also the de-humanization of work, the disharmony (if not conflicts) between work-family life. To cope with the overwhelming demands for caring both the young and older generations by the working class, public policy should re-orientate itself towards an intergenerational care friendly one: the

enabling of FP and parental duties, by granting FP leaves at work place; these are some possible initiatives.

As a social virtue, many Asians (even Westerner) support the filial (piety) duty. But in a turbulent reality of flexible production regime, a mixing of work-and-family life, as well as the nomadic life experience for job (insecurity) and survival, the individual's contribution to FP is quite another thing—all these are contextually negotiated in the de-standardized life course. On the other hand, the ageing population (the more educated one, like us) is seemingly, fatalistically yet realistically, accepting the non-FP reciprocity and they (we in future) do not expect nor blame much about non-fulfilment of filial duty (K-S Chang 2003, cf. Hwang 1999, Jang et al. 2000).

To recapitulate, the new regional labour migration regime enables the shifting of FP burden (who and where to take care of the parents, how and how much?) from the blood-tie and familial one to foreign guest workers, FHH. In actuality, the change of labour regime is being championed by regional and international governmental bodies like WTO and IMF, for the globalization project. But the liberalized flexible labour regime has not provided basic human (economic, social and cultural) rights (minimal social rights) for migrant workers at the hosting countries.

Home Care in Asia's Nomadic Labour Regime: Opportunism with Curse?

The ageing rate, historically, for doubling of the elderly ratio (from 7% of the total population age 65 or above) used to occur at a steady pace. In the developed countries, it took 105 years in France, 85 years in Sweden, but in Japan, only 24 years. The Japanese case is in fact the fore-runner for Asian newly industrializing economies, like South Korea (Eu 2003), Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore, as well as the rapidly ageing China (after 2030). In all cases of ageing population, they are structurally linked to the rapid industrialization, urbanization and hyper-modernization, at a time of high and sustained economic development. Still, caring the aged population is a challenge for all.

Comparative studies have shown that the cultural virtues, say, filial piety (FP), might produce the burnt-out of caregivers (Sung 2003), which is prompting to elderly abuse (Yan and Tang 2003; Lai 2007). Distancing from their traditional role of familial carer, in a highly competitive society, women have to work and be independent—that is the new form of the (Western state) sponsored feminism. They gain money from paid work, and renegotiate the caring role with the husband or their parents. Yet, daughters-in-law turn to the employment of waged caregivers not only because of their shortage of time and to lessen the burdens of labour, but also to retrieve some autonomy from the authority of their mothers-in-law (Lan 2002, Kim et al. 1991, Kim and Kim 2003, Liu et al. 2000).

For individuals, the living chance of living in one's own local communities is contingent upon the ups-and-downs of global business cycle, with a flexible regime of labour productivity and mobility... Here, younger people having no choice but are more nomadic and mobile for paid job anywhere and anytime, whilst the aged one is mostly community-bound and locality-fixated. All these are likely shaping social-familial changes, challenging the very basic ideas of good virtue and customs (say, filial piety) of familial and inter-generational reciprocity in one's own home in the same community (Hwang 1999, Meyer 2000).

For caring the aging population, in Asian societies excepting Japan, the use of guest/foreign domestic labour is more than obvious. The caring *modus operandi* for out-sourcing and sub-contracting regime is seemingly functional and coupling with the state-advocated familism, which emphasizes on the quality of care and less-resources for better-quality of family life, in open (labour) market where efficiency and timeliness are the key for success. Yet, the adoption of FHH working 7-24 in family and/or community life is becoming a norm. More recently, in Hong Kong, it is not uncommon that in private middle-class nursing home, FHH are also assisting the established professionals like social workers and nurses, to perform some basic yet important tasks of nursing care. Their caring role is more than materialist or behaviourist per se; emotional supports for the aged ones are not uncommon: isn't it a new version of caring regime powered by FHH for elderly care?

Under economic liberalization regime and high mobility capital, labour and goods, labour force can be mobile, flexible and adaptive not just to the manufacturing of goods, but also helping to caring the aged as a form of service-for-foreign-currencies (an out-sourcing of FP for elderly care). Recently, the remittances from guest workers overseas back home are important for the local development; this is particularly the case for Asian migrant workers' exporting countries, like Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam (Fix, et.al. 2009; Piper 2009).

In spite of the fact that the ideal for filial piety is not practical in a turbulent reality of flexible production regime, against the compressing work-and-family life of the nomadic life experience for (most of us are some form of) migrant workers, various studies on the so-called sojourns' mobile communication, using mobile phone for cross-border yet intra-familial communication, highlight the liberating aspect of the benefits of being in the information age: in what P-C. Lan (2006) describes as the global Cinderella with a mobile phone. The icon of the nomadic Cinderella represents migrant workers' mobile communication with their distant family members in the information age.

Who care for those FHH's aged parents? Through mobile phone, migrant workers can enjoy not just inter-generational communication, but also the encrypted informative instruction texting for managing family wealth; the (instruction and the digital proof for)

remittance of fund back to the home becomes a way of life (Migrant Remittances 2005).

As world remittance market is having exponentially growth with flexible global workforces recently, coupled with the ever-increasing mobile phone user by migrant workers, Vodafone and Citigroup launch a Vodafone-branded mobile-based international money transfer service targeting the global remittance market worldwide. (Citigroup 2007). The new (sojourns-targeted) service provides senders and receivers of money with a simple, easy to use, secure, transparent and convenient method for sending money home with mobile phone or via the internet. Hence this new sojourn experience and mobile communication practice can, and will, enable their elders or parents to be readily ageing-in-place, with both communicative and financial supports from remote distance relatives.

To recapitulate, the contradictions in new transnational labour regime of 7 day-24 hour home caring services provided by outsiders (guest workers)-as-insiders, following new FP practices, is contradictory and problematic: when one society's virtues (say FP) become the transnational curse for guest (outsider-as-insider) workers, are not these social virtues still worth to be pursued? The present welfare sub-classification of, or in some cases discrimination against, guest workers (FHH) is more than obvious; not a fair and just regime for migrant workers' economic, social and cultural rights as globally recognized by international communities, nor in accordance with basic human rights.

Implications for Public Policy Innovation in/beyond Hong Kong

The trilogy of Asia's developmental dynamics—of the hyper-modernization driven demographic lowering fertility and ageing, with a flexible regime of migrant domestic helpers (FHH) and the partially rejuvenated, or the rediscovery, of Confucian filial piety of inter-generational socio-familial reciprocities to caring the seniors and the aged, will likely shape Asian societies' destiny in 21st Century. But before any specific policy initiative to taking on the comparative (dis-)advantages of these developing-trendy offerings, there is an urgent need to recognize, as well as to make sense of, the social reality we are in—all these are relevant for the policy initiatives and social innovations.

Obviously, the most important approach for public policy planning and social innovations in the coming years is to bring back, and to re-examine, the case of FHH and their nomadic labour regime, say the least to recognize their role so far for societal-family development: how they fit into different policy development scenarios to cope with the challenges of rapidly ageing population. Up to now, not many policy studies (on housing, children education, family friendly, health care, welfare and elderly alike) have touched upon the several decades existence of (over 285,000) migrant-workers in Hong Kong: though they are almost everywhere in health care clinics and hospitals, nursing homes and outside the schools...all importantly "accompany" the aged, children

and women, family at large. And more importantly, they provide a supportive role for the so-called gender-equality (for the best possible opportunities and achievement for women) in Hong Kong's socio-economic miracle. This reality-check is indeed just a small step towards the so-called (which might be so popularly over-discussed among policy science professionals and politicians) "evidence-based and informed policy making". In actuality, it is great surprising that we (and you) cannot find any existence, hence any role, of such a large women power residing and working 7-24 in several hundred thousand families, in any (both before and after the 1997) Hong Kong government policy papers, executive orders, directives and guidelines. For this, recent policy research on Filial Piety—commissioned by the Central Policy Unit, Hong Kong SAR Government (Ting 2009a/b) is a welcoming one, to re-addressing the (main supportive) role of FHH in family function in a hyper-modernizing society. Hopefully, this realistic calling contributes to Hong Kong's public policy agenda-setting and evolution, as well as social innovations, for the benefits of ageing population, citizens and residents at large.

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