

# VOICES OF EXPERIENCE: HKU alu

## Leonie Ki

(BA 1970)

Managing Director,

New World China Enterprises Projects Ltd

Leonie Ki is also author of *Going North: the Last Ten Years, 1992 - 2002*, published by *HK Economic Times*.

“Like the average Hong Kong born person, my parents were immigrants from China, and I grew up being very sceptical and fearsome of Communists and the People’s Republic of China.

Unfortunately, in the mid 80’s, when Hong Kong signed the Joint Declaration with China for the return of sovereignty in 1997, there was an anti-spiritual movement in Mainland where advertising was being condemned as a tool of capitalism. Then the June 4 Incident started a brain drain from the territory. I joined the flight and was accepted to move to Canada. I landed for 4 days and decided I didn’t want to become a second-class citizen. I returned to Hong Kong and went straight to China to set up my advertising agency there in 1992. Instead of running away, I wanted to see for myself the real face of China.

The country had then just gone through a metamorphosis from a planned economy to a market economy. Things were looking up, even though people were still very poor and



material goods were meagre and scarce. I felt great empathy for everything I saw, for it was like going back through a time tunnel to the Hong Kong of the 60’s. I also felt it was the land of tomorrow, and that there were a lot of opportunities. For the past twelve years, I witnessed the growth and development of



## Wilfred Wong

(BSocSc 1975)

Vice-Chairman, Shui On Holdings Ltd

“I first started business relations with the mainland in 1992 when I left the Administrative Service of the Hong Kong

Government and joined a transnational real estate development corporation as its Deputy Chief Executive. It was exactly the time Mr Deng Xiaoping made his historic tour to the south – what followed was what keen China watchers would describe as an affirmation of the country’s commitment to developing a market economy. My task was to explore business opportunities in Shanghai, and there I was at the airport, with only a suitcase and bewilderment in hand, feeling more foreign than I would have felt in any given European or North American city.

Numerous business deals and a number of political appointments (including being elected Deputy to the National People’s Congress) have given me opportunities to gain in-depth understanding of the evolving business environment in China. Although I now shuttle between Hong Kong and the mainland, my base remains in Shanghai. I often see international visitors looking amazed amidst the city’s landmarks like the Bund, the Pudong financial district, or the Shanghai Museum, marvelling at the sophistication and the prosperity. Indeed, many cities on the mainland have modernised at what seems like lightning-fast development in areas like telecommunications, transportation and real estate, all closely linked to improving the quality of life. In the meantime, the government has improved its efficiency and transparency, while new laws and regulations conducive to business and economic development have been enacted. Go to any city and you will see a much better educated younger

# Opinion on living and working in China



the country under reform and restructuring, and a decade without strife. Chinese people are born entrepreneurs: give them a chance, and they will become the movers and shakers of the world.

1998 was a watershed year. By the end of it, Hong Kong and Macau had been reunited with China. Then Beijing won right to host the 2008 Olympiad. Shanghai would hold the World Expo in 2010. China attracted the most FDI (foreign direct investment), and quickly built a reputation as the World's factory, producing high- to low-end goods for the international market as well as the emerging local consumer market. The returned students from overseas have also created a new pool of modern executives who brought with them innovative thinking and western business practice expertise to blend with the Chinese culture. China is surging ahead as one of the world's major economies. Now, anybody who has second thoughts about China will have to change their minds or they'll be left out from the largest consumer market of the world.

My piece of advice for anybody planning to live or work in China is: have patience, China cannot change in a day, and we cannot clone or replicate western management without adjusting to the local mentality and mindset.”

generation aspiring to advancement, and ready to reach out to the rest of the world.

Lest this seems like a rosy picture painted by a biased optimist, I suggest you make a visit to the 'New Silk Road' yourself. No matter where one starts on this road, one must be prepared to embrace change, as many more reforms are imminent as China joins the WTO, the middle class emerges, and more of the country is urbanised.”

Mr Wilfred Wong will soon publish a Chinese book (CEPA 先鋒 — 內地營商環境 VS 香港企業攻略) in both the Chinese Mainland and Hong Kong on the implications of the implementation of CEPA (Closer Economic Partnership Arrangement). With a foreword by Mr Cheng Siwei (成思危), Vice-Chairman of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress of the PRC (中華人民共和國全國人民代表大會常務委員會副委員長), the book presents analyses of the latest developments in over 20 business areas on the Mainland, each accompanied with the transcription of radio interviews co-hosted by Mr Ng Ming-lam (吳明林) with many well-known figures such as Mr Vincent Lo (羅康瑞), Ms Leonie Ki (紀文鳳), Ms Cheung Choi-ngor (張賽娥), Mr Anthony Wu (胡定旭), and Mr Ng See-yuen (吳思遠), from 2002-03.



## Falk Kagelmacher

(MArch 1996)

**Falk Kagelmacher is an architect and urban designer living and working in Beijing. He has a Diploma in Engineering Degree in Germany, a Master of Architecture from HKU in 1996, and a Post-Grad in Architecture at the ETH-Zurich, Switzerland. After receiving his Masters' Degree from HKU, he returned to Germany for more professional experience, and after several years of working as an architect, received his registration to the Chamber of Architects.**

### Why did you decide to come to China and when?

After living in HK for some years, I always wanted to return to China, but before doing so, I wanted to get more experience in Germany first. In 2001, I received an offer to work as a project manager here in Beijing, which I accepted and completed after roughly one year. During that time, I organised my First International Architecture Conference in Beijing, bringing in several professionals from China and abroad to give lectures. Through this conference and my assignments I have made a lot of valuable contacts, and through my work with the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (CAUPD), I established my current position as a Foreign Expert.

### What do you do now in China?

As a Foreign Expert I am a consultant to the CAUPD, which is the design institute of the China Ministry of Construction. I am sponsored by a ministry of the German government. My work involves technology-transfer in the building industry in resource efficient technologies and sustainable systems. The area covers urban planning as well as architecture.

### What role do you see HKU playing in the future of your profession in China?

I can see great opportunities for HKU, which has a mixture of Chinese and foreign influences. This mixture will serve it well. China is opening up and developing at tremendous speed, and HKU has a history of combining two worlds. I think of Hong Kong as an international place, and – especially in my area – some big developers have experience from both Hong Kong and other countries. These influences now act as trendsetters in the building industry. These internationally educated and experienced people are shaping the future face of Chinese cities.