

BLCC

Magazine



The Digital Magazine of the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong



**Getting to know our members:
Julie Pourtois & Hans Loontjens
Hong Kong for the Summer
Business Opportunities after COVID-19
Accidental Entrepreneurship
A Trip Down Memory Lane**



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Foreword

Dear friends of the BLCC,

As many of you may have already heard, I will relocate to Singapore by the end of June.

Consequently I will resign from the ExCo of the BLCC. This is an ideal moment to share some reflections: about my personal experience, about the BLCC & about Hong Kong

For almost 16 years, Hong Kong is 'home' for me. I did not regret a single minute to relocate from Belgium to this city!

We take it for granted, but we do not always realize how fortunate we are to live & work in this part of the world and Hong Kong more in particular.

You know that my professional activities are in the world of Consumer Durables (yes ... Tumi, Samsonite, Gregory, American Tourister, ...). As a brand, you cannot be a world leader if you are not a leader in Asia. Not only that, the center of gravity for consumer spending has moved quickly to Asia. And it will continue to do so!

Being part of that momentum gives an enormous amount of satisfaction.

Besides the professional achievements, there is also this amazing (Belgian) community in Hong Kong. All of you must have experienced how welcoming this community is. It is easy to get introduced and to become part of that group. To make it even easier, we can switch very quickly from "work" to the "social life": i.e. a good Belgian beer, a hike, catching up with friends. All of that in a very informal way, so typical for our Belgian community.

The role of the BLCC cannot be underestimated. I am very happy with the turnaround of the BLCC over the last couple of years. Many among us have contributed to this, but I certainly want to give credit to Piet Cremers, as the chairman who was instrumental in the re-launch of the BLCC, and Robin as the person who puts all his energy in running the Chamber.

You also should know that I feel strongly about the importance of the Young Professionals in the BLCC. I encourage each of the Young Professionals to engage more in this group, use this network of the BLCC to get to know more people, build your own network. It is so easy here in Hong Kong to get access to those that are already higher in the organizations. Believe me, each of them is ready for a chat, advise and help YP's!

A word of appreciation to Peter and the Consulate! A tremendous help for the business community through the official and personal contacts with the political leaders, business leaders and the 'who is who' in Hong Kong. These insights that you share help us to understand more what is going on behind the scenes.

And while we still experience the (travel) restrictions because of COVID -19 I look forward to international borders re-opening (please Hong Kong: get vaccinated!!!!) and to travel resuming. A last piece of advice: buy a new piece of luggage to make your travel worry-free 😊

With you I am looking forward to this edition of our magazine, specifically the interview with our BLCC members Hans Loontjens and Julie Pourtois.

Our member Rizal Wijono writes about Hong Kong and the BLCC in the mid 90's in 'A Trip Down Memory Lane', very interesting! BLCC Trainees Baukje & Andrea share their best tips for the Hong Kong Summer and so much more.

Happy reading!



Paul Melkebeke

A trip down memory lane

As I stepped off the boat onto the pier of the Hong Kong China Terminal in Tsim Sha Tsui, little did I know that I was going to call “Fragrant Harbour”, the literal translation of Hong Kong, my home for the next 25 years. When I set foot in Hong Kong I arrived from Xiamen, China where I’d completed an 8-month study of Putonghua following a T.E.W. Bachelor’s degree from UFSIA (or Universiteit Antwerpen as it is now called). As the boat prepared to dock, all I can remember was the sight of a neon-lit grand skyline, the buzz of junk ships and the “smell” of modernization that went along with a very fast paced people that seemed to be running more than walking. I set foot on the docks of TST with my backpack in which I had almost all my belongings, all of a sudden feeling very small and so very far away from Stabroek where I spent most of life. It was 2 June 1994.

Fate brought me to Hong Kong or at least, that’s how I like to think of it. It helped of course that my Chinese girlfriend whom I met in Xiamen and who got selected by Arthur Andersen, was to be based in Shenzhen, just across the border of Hong Kong. My father always taught me: “out of sight, out of mind” so the choice between Hong Kong and a cushy job in safe Antwerp was quickly made, despite (or perhaps thanks to) the mysteriousness and adventure that veiled Hong Kong.

I discovered Hong Kong the hard way. Without a job, the prospect of renting a shared room on my life’s savings (which was very little) didn’t leave much room for error. I did not have a sugar daddy fronting my thrills; and my pride, or should I say love, prevented me from going back to Belgium. But soon reality sank in. My shared room (without air-conditioning) in a desolated 40-year-old building in Sai Wan Ho was as cheap as it got at HK\$ 7,500 per month. That was the equivalent of approximately 35,000 Belgian Franks, which in 1994 would have been enough to rent you a villa in Brasschaat.

Networking, networking and networking! I wasn’t so naïve to think that my young demeanour and TEW degree would land me a job soon, hence prior to departing to Hong Kong, I wrote a letter to the Belgian Consulate. A young Joanna Wong (who still works there by the way) was a trainee at that time. She wrote me back and advised me to



Rizal Wijono

connect with the Belgian Club. I remember my first visit to the Belgian Club. In 1994, the Belgian Consulate owned 22 Barker Road at the Peak which was a 900-square-meter luxury house nestled on a 3,500-square-meter garden, large enough to fit a few tennis courts; but the jaw dropping feature of the compound was without doubt its view at sunset, overlooking glittering Hong Kong island, Kowloon and in the far distance the New Territories. Interesting anecdote, not many people know that the Belgian compound was sold in 2000 for HK\$ 136 million and sold again recently to Jack Ma for HK\$ 1.5 billion. In other words, the Chairman of Alibaba now lives with his family in the same quarters where so many a Belgian spent quality time with their families or brewed their China entry strategy.

So it is in this same house where I had my first contact with the Belgian Club in Hong Kong. I was greeted by a young and newly arrived Johan (& Kathleen, his wife) Verkammen, Consul. Johan introduced all newcomers to Piet Steel, the Consul General at the time. It didn’t take me long to blend in, especially with the young professionals. Rene (and Liliane)

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***Fate brought me to
Hong Kong or at least, that’s
how I like to think of it***”

Vermeir (Eternit) introduced me to Guy Follebouckt, whom I found out later, headed the international division of Belgian Bank. Belgian Bank is a fully owned subsidiary of the Generale Bank and was at the time the dominant Belgian Bank in Hong Kong, having over 23 local branches in HK with rep offices in Beijing and Guangzhou offering retail, commercial and corporate banking services. When Guy offered me a management trainee program at the Belgian Bank to be assigned to Bernadette Tan at the Eurodesk helping Belgian Expats, I was heavenly grateful. But not in particular of the career opportunity, all I could think of at the time was that I could afford myself to stay in Hong Kong and visit my girlfriend in Shenzhen during the weekend, whom I eventually married in 1995 and have 2 lovely children with.

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***I've been lucky to
 experience the rise of Hong
 Kong***”

From 1994-1996 I helped look after the banking needs of most Belgian expats and their families in Hong Kong. The expats from Interbrew, Alcatel Bell, Janssen Pharmaceutica, Eternit, Barco and Tractebel were my major accounts. Georges Legros who chaired Belgian Bank also chaired the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce. As its secretary, Bernadette Tan and I hosted quite a few gatherings together with my Belgian Bank

colleagues Dirk Bruynooghe, Guy Follebouckt and Hans De Backer. The BLCC at that time was a small but cosy boys' club (not a very correct statement, I realize) with a young Piet Cremers (Anglo Eastern) and Jean Paul Cuvelier as core local Belgians. Frederic Verhaeghe (Barco), Patrick Wallaert and Rene Vermeir (Eternit) were also “part of the furniture”.

Fast forward 25 years to present day and I'm happy to say that the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce is as strong as ever and evolved handsomely into an inclusive & professional organization serving our diverse business communities. I've been lucky to experience the rise of

Hong Kong, initially through Belgian Bank, later by helping ING Investment Management (ING acquired BBL) build its businesses in 10 countries across Asia. In the last 15 years or so, I've switched gears and was at the helm of some of the leading Chinese conglomerates in M&A and Asset Management. Who would have known that this boy who started out “in't Antwaarps” in Stabroek would blossom in his “back-to-the-roots” calling and would be able to ride the wave that they call “China”.



Business opportunities after COVID-19

The global crisis brought on by the pandemic will have an enormous impact on the economy and society of the future. The radical interruption of “business as usual” has resulted in huge challenges, but every crisis is also the origin of new opportunities.

Text: Lena Mårtensson, Luxinnovation

Photo: Laurent Antonelli, Blitz Agency

It can safely be said that the coronavirus pandemic has changed the world. Many businesses are today fighting for survival, and their traditional markets might never again become what they once were. However, this does not necessarily mean only bad news. Crises also bring new opportunities and spur innovation, and companies that are open to change and learn from the past turbulent months could emerge stronger, more competitive and more resilient.

“Rather than seeing the crisis only as a threat, we are seizing the digital transformation that the crisis induced to further adopt digitalisation in the context of resilient production capacities and value chains, in strategic economic sectors,” said Luxembourg Minister of the Economy Franz Fayot at the virtual round table “Luxembourg & ASEAN: Partners in a digital, changing world”. This event was organised by the collective of Belgium-Luxembourg Chambers of Commerce in Asia, with the support of the Luxembourg Embassy in Bangkok, on 7 May 2021. “In Luxembourg, we are deeply and intensively engaged in a transition towards more resilience and more sustainability. We want to rebuild ‘better and greener’.”

Uncovering main market trends

The key to success is to spot and seize new opportunities. “We are convinced that many of the changes are here to stay, and that the most successful companies will be those that are able to adapt their business models to take changes into account,” comments Sara Bouchon, Head of Market Intelligence at Luxinnovation, Luxembourg’s national innovation agency.

Her team has released an in-depth study entitled “Post COVID-19 Market Trends”. It is part of a national effort, initiated by the Luxembourg government, to help companies come out of the crisis stronger and more competitive than before.

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This development made us take a big step forward towards the data economy

The study provides a unique overview of the innovation, technologies and trends that will shape the economic reality in the months and years to come. Four major market trends are identified: digitalisation, sustainability, resilience and new business strategies.



The digital leap forward

Defining digitalisation as a megatrend does not sound very original, but the rapid adoption of digital technologies to manage business as well as basic aspects of everyday life during the pandemic moved us forward 3-4 years virtually overnight, according to some experts.

“This development made us take a big step forward towards the data economy,” Dr Bouchon points out. “The use of digital technologies gives companies new opportunities to collect data on client behaviour, for example,

or on what is going on in their supply chain. Smart companies will use this data to improve their offering and to take strategic decisions based on facts, not feelings. The data itself is also a precious asset that could be bought and sold.”

Resilient supply chains

The health crisis has also highlighted the urgent need to design smarter, stronger and more diverse supply chains that are resilient and can withstand crises. “We expect global companies to diversify their supply chains much more in the future and rely less on single-sourcing models driven exclusively by cost control,” comments Dr Bouchon. “More firms will also decentralise their manufacturing capacity and look to bring parts of their production closer to home.”

Digital technologies are essential. “With technologies such as artificial intelligence and the internet of things, companies can obtain a real-time view of all suppliers and their stocks. When regular suppliers face disruption, they can react by quickly switching to alternative providers.”

Towards a new, sustainable paradigm

The virus has been a radical eye opener when it comes to sustainable business and societal practices. “The lockdown gave us a simulation of how to drastically reduce our negative environmental footprint,” says Dr Bouchon. “If we want the economic recovery post COVID to last over time, we need to ‘build back better’ as the OECD says”.

Romain Poulles, who chairs Luxembourg’s Higher Council for Sustainable Development, goes a step further. “We need a complete paradigm shift towards an economic model based on well-being, social equality, reduced environmental risks and much less pressure on finite resources,” he claims. “This would probably result in the biggest business opportunities of the last 200 years.”

Key sustainability trends identified in the Luxinnovation report include the transition towards clean, renewable energy sources, reusable medical equipment, healthy and locally produced foodstuffs, and the construction of sustainable and resilient public infrastructure. Circular business models, such as product-as-a-service and the sharing economy, are also emerging.

Business strategies: a shift of focus

One thing is clear: the pandemic will leave its mark on the strategies of numerous companies. Luxinnovation predicts that changes in consumption patterns, the emergence of new forms of entertainment and tourism, the

increased importance of remote working and other factors will lead to new business models. Numerous companies are now analysing their offering to see whether it still corresponds to what clients want and whether they are focusing on the most relevant target groups.

“This crisis has forever transformed the way we work together,” comments Thierry Ravasio, Head of Corporate and Public Sector at KPMG Luxembourg. “We have seen a shift of focus on what really matters: customers, employees and citizens. A motivated workforce, resilient and agile operations and outstanding customer experience are also hot topics that will continue to shape the business strategies of the future.”

Luxinnovation points out innovation as one of the most important factors for being able to adapt to the “new normal” and benefit from these new opportunities. “Before the pandemic, we spoke about innovation as a way of improving products and services. Now, we focus more on innovative business models, innovative ecosystems and innovation in policy and decision making,” says Dr Bouchon. “Innovation and cooperation are effective means for becoming more resilient to challenges in the future.”

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This crisis has forever transformed the way we work together

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If we want the economic recovery post COVID to last over time, we need to ‘build back better’

Getting to know our members: Julie Pourtois

For this edition of the Digital Magazine we interviewed our BLCC Board Director Julie Pourtois!

Could you please give us a short introduction about yourself & what brought you to Hong Kong?

Sure! I'm Julie from Belgium. I've been in Hong Kong for 12 years. And I'm the Director for Business Development at Zühlke, a Swiss engineering company.

I started my career back in Belgium as a journalist. I was working at a public radio station. After 6 years, I wanted to do something a bit different. That's when I decided to enroll in a Chinese studies programme in London. I studied Mandarin and International Relations at SOAS, the School of Oriental & African Studies. After my study, a move closer to China seemed the next logical step even though I had never been to China before, or Asia for that matter. I was fascinated about going to Asia, so I decided to go to Hong Kong. Thankfully, I found a job relatively quickly related to publications: I joined the French Chamber of Commerce. I started working there as a Publication Manager in charge of the Chamber magazine, amongst others. After two, three years, I took over the role of Deputy Director.

You worked in journalism & business development. How would you describe your career path?

I would describe it as going with the flow. When I was at university, I studied journalism, because I wanted to report on all kinds of matters. I think my fascination with radio shows started when I was a kid, I would listen to the radio all day. I really enjoyed my time as a radio journalist, but after a while, I felt disconnected. I think it's because we're reporting on people's lives, or events, instead of living them myself. At some point, I wanted to experience the real world. With the world constantly changing, I got the chance to do something different, which has been amazing. 30 years ago, you would do one job and stay at the same company for your whole career. But luckily that is not the case anymore. I'm grateful for being in Hong Kong, because this is a place where you are not put into a box somehow. You have opportunities to change careers: it's less traditional or conservative in the sense that if you



don't have the right diplomas, you still can go into other ventures than just the one you studied for. If you're willing to start from scratch again, learn on the job or learn a bit more beforehand, I think it's feasible.

How did you get into the technology industry?

I actually got in touch with technology through the French Chamber. At that time, we started a program called Wise City. We worked together with around 13 Hong Kong government departments. We advised them on how to build a smart city, to improve the quality of life for citizens by using smart technologies. My job was to get in touch with a lot of companies and several levels of government. Through these connections, I came in contact with technology. I thought this is fascinating when you see how it actually impacts people's livelihoods, not only on the cell phone but on everything: waste, water and electricity management, or how to interact with the city in a more friendly manner. This interesting project inspired me, and it had been a great six years at the Chamber: it was time for a change and I wanted to join a technology company. So I joined a French company called Palo IT in 2019, doing software development, creating new

products for consulting and new digital products for clients. It was a great change, and I learned a lot about technology because it was new to me. After two years, I became the Managing Director with a small team. Afterwards, I got the opportunity to join Zühlke, where I am today.

Could you tell us about what Zühlke does? And as Director Business Development, what are your responsibilities?

Zühlke is a software engineering company & a consulting firm. We support our clients' digitalization efforts and help create new business models for them by developing services & products based on new technologies. What's very interesting to me is that we are positively impacting a lot of organisations. We are growing really fast, but the challenge is finding enough software engineers to keep up; the demand is high everywhere after all. I'm in charge of helping Zühlke to develop new markets and increase the portfolio of clients. I'm always trying to find new partners and constantly think about potential markets where we can do business. For a company that has more than 50 years of history, Zühlke believes in the importance of staying resilient, flexible, and relevant in this ever-changing world. As a matter of fact, Zühlke arrived in Asia only three years ago, but we are growing thanks to our clients and because of our excellent engineering. We also have an office in Singapore and just opened one in Vietnam, which is exciting.

We're really fortunate as a company, because people realised, during the pandemic, that they need better tools & platforms to operate. I see the trends accelerating. So we are at the heart of what companies are being challenged with today.

What is one exciting project that you're working on currently?

One exciting project we did in Hong Kong was to work for one of the leading virtual banks. We helped them develop and launch their product from scratch and see it grow. It was very exciting. Another very fascinating project we worked on was the NHS COVID tracing app available in England & Wales. We had teams from Asia & Europe working 24 hours to pull the app out of the ground in less than three months. I can proudly say that today, we have close to 40 million users. Of course, we are constantly adding new features, the latest is making the app more friendly for people with a disability.

What would you say is the most exciting about technology?

It's everywhere. It is a force of change for good in the sense that technology is an enabler for us. We can tackle important issues with technology. Here at Zühlke we work a lot on home and medical technical innovations. For example, we design new insulin pumps. If something goes bad with a diabetic, the healthcare system is immediately informed. This is

where technology will help us with more predictive medicines, taking good care of ourselves. Also, there is a lot to be done in the sustainability area as well, we are certainly trying to develop more sustainable products. With everything stored on the cloud an example would be a green cloud. There

are so many ways that technology can help us. The challenge is making sure technology is serving humans and not the other way around. Honestly, it's fascinating. Technology is always changing & evolving. You know you have a good job, when you learn something new every day.

Would you say that your job is more people focused or technology focused?

It's a bit of a mix of both, I would say. Of course, my work is technology oriented. With technology changing fast, we are always on the lookout to find new ones and then think about how we can learn from it. But I think my work is more focused on people. What we try to do at Zühlke is solve the issues that people are facing. The most important step to solve the issue, is understanding the problem presented to us. At the end of the day, coming to an understanding can only be achieved through human interaction. Only after we talk about the problems and understand them, can we come up with a solution and start developing our systems from scratch.

What has been the biggest challenge in your career so far?

To be honest, I haven't come across many challenges. But what I do think is important as a young professional is to be committed at the start of the career. Whatever you decide to do, do it with passion, and then always look for the next opportunity. I was interested in meeting people and doing interviews. So I did that. And then, afterwards, Asia was booming, and I got fascinated with that part of the world. I started studying Chinese and went to Hong Kong and the same happened with

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You know you have a good job, when you learn something new every day

my interest in technology. Another opportunity to learn about technology, other than reading books, is to actually work in technology companies and learn from the ground up. The point I want to make is if you are interested in something, be committed. Follow your passion and work hard. At some point, Hong Kong will offer you opportunities. It is the kind of a city where people are rewarded for their efforts.

Would you view smart technology as favorable or rather menacing?

I see technology as something that helps us advance in life. The pandemic is an excellent example. We've never been able to develop a vaccine that fast, let alone so many vaccines. At Zühlke, we did a project where we help doctors to diagnose better through AI. It increased the diagnostic success rate from 70% to 98%. I think this part of technology is fantastic and will help us progress. However, we are in the beginning phase of learning how to best use technology. Of course, there are some dark sides to technology, especially with the use of social media. We need some rules and guidelines to make sure that we are properly

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Whenever I come back to Hong Kong Airport and smell this place, I feel at home

using technology. But I believe technology itself is an enabler. So I'm not concerned about the rise up of technology.

Having been in HK for 12 years, what do you like most about being here?

That's a tricky question as there are a lot of amazing things in Hong Kong. One thing that comes to my mind: Hong Kong is very energizing. It's a city that you can rediscover every day. Every day when I go to my office, the view is different, and it amazes me every time. Then, of course, the beautiful nature we have right outside our doors. From the beautiful parks to the relaxing beaches and the incredible hikes, all very easy to reach thanks to the excellent public transport here. And who doesn't like the food & the loud but friendly people; all these things are reasons why I love Hong Kong. Although it can be tiring sometimes when it's polluted or super-hot, but still. I love to go to Belgium to recharge and see my friends and family; but whenever I come back to Hong Kong Airport and smell this place, I feel at home.



Back to the Basics Series: The realities of doing business in China – Copyrights and Trade Marks

Thanks to our relation with the European Commission back in Belgium, we can publish another striking article from their China IPR Helpdesk. Here is one about Copyrights and Trade Marks, we hope this is of relevance to you.

China's intellectual property rights (IPR) system has come a long way in the past 30 years, and development continues – a revision of the trade mark law came into force in May, paving the way for more thorough protection for rights holders. Although China is now coming into line with international IPR standards, there are still many ways in which the system differs from the European one. Below, the China IPR SME Helpdesk takes a look at two major types of intellectual property rights, trade marks and copyright, and considers how these differ from European standards.

Copyrights

The Chinese system for copyrights is very similar to that used in Europe. Copyrights last for 50 years from the date of creation, or the lifetime of the author plus 50 years, and it protects a range of creations, such as artistic works, books, websites, or computer software. As in Ireland, copyrights are automatically protected as long as the creator can be clearly identified; however, unlike most countries in Europe, China also offers copyright registration for owners, a process handled through the Copyright Protection Centre of China (CPCC).

Registration is not necessary to enforce copyrights, but it can help greatly where ownership needs to be proven. As a general rule, Chinese courts and administrative agencies prefer as much paperwork as possible relating to the rights in question in an enforcement case and a Copyright Registration Certificate will prove ownership in the absence of any conflicting evidence. Copyright can also be a good back-up to other types of IPR in enforcement cases; for instance, the visual design of trade mark can be protected under copyright. It is also advisable because registration

is granted relatively quickly (around 30 days) and inexpensively.

Trade marks

Issues relating to trade marks are by far the most common type of IP problems that businesses bring to the Helpdesk. Copying a company's trade mark means stealing and harming its reputation, and this is vital to the competitiveness of most businesses. Therefore it cannot be understated how beneficial it is to register a trade mark as early as possible.

As in Europe, trade marks can be registered through the 'national' or 'international' system. Foreign applicants without residency or place of business in China must submit trade mark applications through a local Chinese trade mark agent who will deal directly with the Chinese Trade Mark office (CTMO). As in Europe, the type of goods or services that need protection should be stated in applications by choosing the appropriate 'classes'. However, a separate application must be made for each class of the same trade mark.

As the registration of a trade mark in a western alphabet does not automatically protect the trade mark against the use or registration of the same or similar trade mark written in Chinese, it is also highly advisable to register a Chinese version of a foreign trade mark. If there is no existing Chinese Character name for a foreign brand, it is very likely that one will be adopted by local customers – probably a phrase that sounds similar, but may not convey the image the company wants.

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It cannot be understated how beneficial it is to register a trade mark as early as possible

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Copyright can also be a good back-up to other types of IPR in enforcement cases



Although trade marks that are normally registered at the intellectual property offices in European countries are not protected in China, the international system is available under the Madrid protocol through the World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO). A business can file an application with the national trade mark office stating which countries it wishes to have protection in, which then passes the application to WIPO. The WIPO will conduct a formality examination and will notify all Madrid Protocol members that the applicant stated. Although this route is in theory as effective as the national route, it is advisable to undertake the registration in China if possible as local agents may be able to give better advice on the details of what to register, in light of possible conflicts.

Think ahead

The changes to the Chinese system that continue to take place are bringing it closer to European standards and a thus a safer place to do business. However, the real business environment remains quite different, with much greater potential for intellectual property theft than in Europe. This is not to say that China is a market to be avoided for European SMEs, only that companies must be more careful: identifying and assessing the value of all of their IP, having a clear strategy, and registering their rights much earlier.

CHINA IPR SME HELPDESK



The **China IPR SME Helpdesk** supports small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) from European Union (EU) member states to protect and enforce their Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in or relating to China, Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, through the provision of **free information and services**. The Helpdesk provides jargon-free, first-line, confidential advice on intellectual property and related issues, along with training events, materials and online resources. Individual SMEs and SME intermediaries can submit their IPR queries via email (question@china-iprhelpdesk.eu) and gain access to a panel of experts, in order to receive **free and confidential first-line advice** within **3 working days**.

The China IPR SME Helpdesk is an initiative by the European Union

To learn more about the China IPR SME Helpdesk and any aspect of intellectual property rights in China, please visit our online portal at <http://www.ipr-hub.eu/>.

Hong Kong for the Summer

With the Summer approaching, we (BLCC Trainees Andrea Zhou & Baukje Huisman) have some tips on activities that we have done or would like to do ourselves. We hope you enjoy this piece!



Wong Tai Sin Temple: 2 Chuk Yuen Road, Wong Tai Sin District

Amid the urban jungle, Wong Tai Sin Temple stands out as one of Hong Kong locals' most beloved places of worship. As the interior of the temple unfolds upon entry, the intense smell of the burning incense creates an illusory sensation as if one steps into an ancient dynasty. But the hallucination only lasts for a fleeting moment - it is then engulfed by the whispers of the religious, the shouting of the children, and the moving and squeezing flock of worshippers. Don't be startled; take three or five pieces of incense along, light them up before paying them as homage to the Buddhist sculptures.

There's a Chinese saying phrased “心誠則靈”: genuine faith materializes reality. The experience of the temple's highlight entails some degree of conviction of this aphorism. At the heart of the temple, visitors collect a bucket of sticks and then shake it while repeating several lines of sutra to themselves; as one stick slowly climbs out and drops out of the bucket from the shaking, it will be a guidance or indication of your fate, including the fortune of career, physical health, love and emotional well-being. You may enquire with the professional fortune tellers about your stick right outside the

hallway. If you shake out sticks with good omens, congratulations; whereas if not, you may pray to the deities with an earnest heart so that an ominous fate will not befall you.

Museums

Years after I reside here, Hong Kong still amazes me as a city with such a vibrant art scene, and the wonder remains. In particular, the district stretching from Central all the way to Sheung Wan is a cradle for antiques, contemporary art and independent artist collections.

Transliterated from colloquial Cantonese “大館” (big station), Tai Kwun is the former Central Police Station of Hong Kong. You may register for an immersive tour that allows you to experience the authentic living condition of the prisoners in the Victorian era, which introduces details as microscopic as the cell size, prisoners' daily routine and the nutritional composition of the meals. Tai Kwun is also an ideal site for contemporary art exhibitions and performing arts. The most memorable one for me personally is *A Hollow in a World Too Full* by Cao Fei, in which a contemporary prison architect meets an imaginary prisoner of Tai Kwun within the colonial context. Their dialogue transcended time and the universe

in reference to Tai Kwun's identity, from a juridical and penal institution to a cultural, public, inspiring space. With the slightly moldy scent and the intense sharp lighting unique to Tai Kwun, your visit will definitely be noteworthy.

There is more to discover in the neighborhood. Located next to the escalator to mid-levels, H Queen's is a pillar of contemporary art in Hong Kong, hosting 10+ galleries. As the exhibitions rotate on a monthly basis, a visit every month would always offer wonderful surprises. Further away from Central, the walk along the Hollywood Road is a treat for art lovers. There, you may discover independent artist galleries, cozy bistros, antique collections and even graffiti.

Food and dishes

Speaking of local delicacy, dim sums are beyond doubt the finest representation of the Hong Kong taste. Hot steams, crowd noises intertwined with hints of fresh dough, the combination of the five senses enhances the dim sum experience tenfold. What type of dim sum restaurant do you usually pick? If "local" is what you are looking for, I have one suggestion: regardless of the location, simply check the demographics of the diners. Especially during rush hours, places packed with families, round tables and elderly citizens never disappoint. And trying something new every time often pays off: steamed tripe or chicken feet, you may find them more delicious than you imagined.

What was the last time that you had laksa, pho and chili curry? Given Hong Kong's proximity to Southeast Asia, the Southeast Asian food here is also a special treat. From my experience, some of

the best Southeast Asian restaurants are nestled in mega buildings, adding a layer of heat and rich flavor onto the recipe. Next time when the humid Hong Kong weather is bordering on irritating, pick a Southeast Asian restaurant and soak in the colorful ingredients and spices.

Hiking, trails and outdoors

If you want to get away from all the hustle and bustle in the city, go and explore the surroundings of Hong Kong. Nestled in dense vegetation, Hong Kong has 75% of its territory covered in green spaces. On the long hot Summer weekends, meet up with friends and explore the unique chance to enjoy the incredible nature, views and beaches Hong Kong has to offer. A great way to explore is to go on a hike, which has been well integrated into Hong Kong's leisure culture. With 400 miles of hiking trails, hiking has become a signature Hongkonger activity. However, be aware that hikes differ in difficulty, so before deciding to go for a hike please check your trail route, the weather forecast for rain or high temperature, bring enough water and take necessary precautions before and during your hike. You may check the information from the Hong Kong tourism board. I speak out of experience that this is extremely important.

Hong Kong has a total of 263 outlying islands, many of which you can visit. Go to the Central Ferry piers or Sai Kung and hop on one of the boats. As you explore the islands, bring your swimwear and enjoy a diversity of watersport opportunities, from snorkeling to surfing to kayaking. Or bring your hiking shoes to go for a hike or wander along the coastline. Don't forget to visit the small fishing villages and enjoy some delicious food.



Accidental Entrepreneurship: 4 Ways To Harness The Power Of Hong Kong

When we first met BLCC member Michiel Den Haerynck it was clear to us that we wanted to share his energy with our readers. Below is what we hope to be the first of many articles of Michiel's insights into life & business in Hong Kong.

By Michiel Den Haerynck

When I talk to serial entrepreneurs or first-time business owners, it turns out that many of them always knew they were destined to become one. They want to build their own business and claim their space in their ecosystem.

I guess that makes me more of an accidental entrepreneur?

Hong Kong became the catalyst in my life that helped me grow, overcome, and thrive. In retrospect, I contribute most of its impact to these 4 areas:

1. Hong Kong never sleeps.



Hong Kong is a city that favors hard work. Compared to Belgium, it made it affordable to start a limited company and open a bank account (although this process has gotten more complicated). It offers low taxes and incentives to create your own business. It is a climate that mitigates the entrepreneurial risks and lowers the threshold to pursue any bold ideas you might have.

Once you find your ecosystem, you keep meeting the same people who share the same interests and are open to learn, collaborate, and grow.

When I first arrived in Hong Kong in 2013, I pivoted my career and started to work as a junior executive for a financial services company in the Chai Wan area. I built my first actual website ever and discovered my love for consistent branding and email marketing.

However, with a background in law and airport station management, it is safe to say that I had no clue about marketing strategies.

Thus, I started my own digital marketing agency, Club Soda. For the next 3 years, I said “yes” to every

Thus, I started my own digital marketing agency, Club Soda. For the next 3 years, I said “yes” to every opportunity. I learned about time management, client management, HR, and various marketing strategies by making mistakes and quickly rebounding from them.

Saying “yes” helped me stretch my capabilities and interests. It helped me understand what I enjoy and dislike about the different marketing facets and which elements I needed to outsource. Saying “yes” was my way of understanding my values, belief system, and drive.

Hong Kong is a city that never sleeps, and I didn't either.

2. Network mode



Hong Kong seemingly has an endless stream of events on any conceivable topic lined up every day of the week. You can subscribe to professional organizations' newsletters, keep an eye on Eventbrite, Facebook, or other event apps, or follow organizations like Garage Society or The Hive. This will provide you with plenty of professional networking inspiration.

Expatriate organizations are also organizing more social networking opportunities to help you extend the group of people you know.

The past year and a half have been more challenging, but small-scale events with enthusiastic people will return, and I expect an even more intense willingness to connect with others.

Over the years, I have met hundreds of people at such events, most I never heard of again; some turned into clients and a few into close friends. Yet, every interaction helped me practice my networking skills, improve the clarity of my communication, and apply empathy.

Hong Kong is a small town. You are probably already 2 or 3 connections removed from that person you would like to talk to.

3. Understand your personal brand



Personal branding has been a buzzword for a couple of years already. Like all buzzwords, its spirit has been translated into the execution of different kinds of checklists. This became synonymous with having a personal brand.

However, the intention of having a personal brand is more than a checklist; it's a mindset and an exercise in self-awareness.

Your personal brand is the way you are perceived by others. The way others perceive you will impact the opportunities that are presented to you.

Because of the opportunity to immerse yourself in social and networking settings, you have a chance to quickly adjust and improve this perception.

The fastest way to improve your brand is by receiving honest, brutal feedback - which will put your ego on the line again. This feedback will allow you to pursue the perception you like and correct your behaviors that damage your personal brand.

Another way to improve your brand is by adding value without expecting anything in return.

Personal branding doesn't necessarily have to be static. It is something that evolves over time as you grow. Personally, I saw the most significant shift in who I wanted to become when my kids were born. It impacted how I defined "success" and reshuffled my priorities to get there.

4. Overcome challenges

The success of any journey depends on how quickly you can identify and overcome personal challenges. We all have blockers, blind spots that leave us feeling stuck (especially if you say "yes" to unknown opportunities).



I overcame my fear of public speaking by speaking at events. I simply emailed the event organizers and hustled my way in. This definitely backfired a couple of times.

I vividly remember I was invited as a panelist to talk about AI. Only problem: I knew nothing about AI, and as I was listening to the other panelists, I realized the need to scrutinize my event selection process.

When you sound like a rambling idiot, you're out of your depth, and your brain simply wants you to hide under a rock; you have two options: a) give up or b) smile, eat humble pie, and pick up the pieces and do better.

In the end, I always ask myself, "knowing what I know now, what will I do better next time?"

The power of Hong Kong

You probably heard this Richard Branson quote before: *"If somebody offers you an amazing opportunity, but you are not sure you can do it, say yes – then learn how to do it later!"*

For me this applies more than anything to Hong Kong, with 4 aspects that really allow you to harness its power:

1. Be willing to work hard, stretching your capabilities and build your experience in a short amount of time;
2. Meet as many people as possible with the desire to understand them and their perspectives. Understanding the people you meet will help to clarify your value proposition;
3. Understand and improve your personal brand by being open to honest feedback and adding value;
4. Overcome challenges quickly by tapping into a support network that allows you to practice or learn from others.



Michiel is a digital jack of all trades. Since 2013, he worked with and for SMEs, focusing on UI/UX optimization, brand strategy, clear communication, and creating digital processes and systems to improve customer experiences and increase internal efficiency.

In 2019, he realized he had always been on a path to become a "creative project manager," combining an outsider perspective with an internal responsibility to deliver results.

He regularly talks about branding, social media, and digital marketing strategies.

Three Game-changing Energy Technologies by 2040 and Beyond

Green innovation is on course to change the way we power our world and innovative low-carbon energy technologies are being adopted globally to support decarbonisation efforts. In an article published in the previous edition of the BLC Digital Magazine, CLP Innofinity examined three of the six game-changing technologies with the potential to revolutionise the way we live. This second part of the series will discuss the remaining three technologies.

1. Green hydrogen

The industrial sector has largely failed to decarbonise over the past decade and is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels for both energy and feedstock. Hydrogen, an element used in a variety of industries, was historically not a low-carbon contributor. Natural gas has been a primary source of hydrogen production, which also involves processes that produce carbon dioxide (CO₂) such as steam reforming.

Now, however, there is a way to produce “green hydrogen” by using renewable energy to electrolyse water (H₂O), separating the hydrogen (H₂) atom within it from its molecular twin, oxygen (O₂). As the cost of producing renewable energy goes down and the demand for hydrogen goes up, there is great hope that green hydrogen will become an important contributor to emissions reduction.

Moreover, hydrogen offers benefits both as a direct fuel and as an energy carrier for long-term storage. The low to zero-emission hydrogen fuel can be used in fuel cell vehicles, while hydrogen is also a good option for storing renewable energy, giving it more potential in the energy transition.

Development of green hydrogen has been gaining momentum in Australia, where a US\$300 million green hydrogen project was set up in 2019. By 2022, the project is expected to produce 25 tonnes of green hydrogen a day, powered entirely by renewable energy supplied from about 85MW of solar power and 75MW of wind generation capacity.

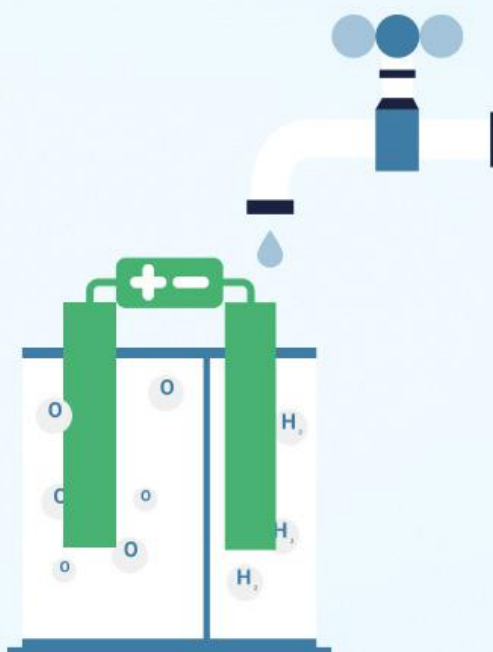
One downside of producing hydrogen through water electrolysis is the enormous quantities of purified water required, which may exacerbate the water scarcity problem. This limitation may be solved in the near future following the news that Stanford researchers have found a way to create hydrogen fuel from seawater.

2. Carbon capture utilisation and storage

Carbon capture utilisation and storage (CCUS) is the process of capturing carbon dioxide (CO₂) to be recycled for further usage in delivering a “net-zero” energy system. CCUS involves a range of technologies to keep CO₂ produced by main factories and power plants from reaching the atmosphere and contributing to global warming.

How is green hydrogen produced?

Green hydrogen is produced by electrolysis, a process where electric current splits water into hydrogen and oxygen, with the use of renewable energy.



CCUS can be retrofitted to existing power and industrial plants that could otherwise emit 600 billion tonnes of CO₂ over the next five decades, equivalent to almost 17 years' worth of current annual emissions, according to the International Energy Agency.

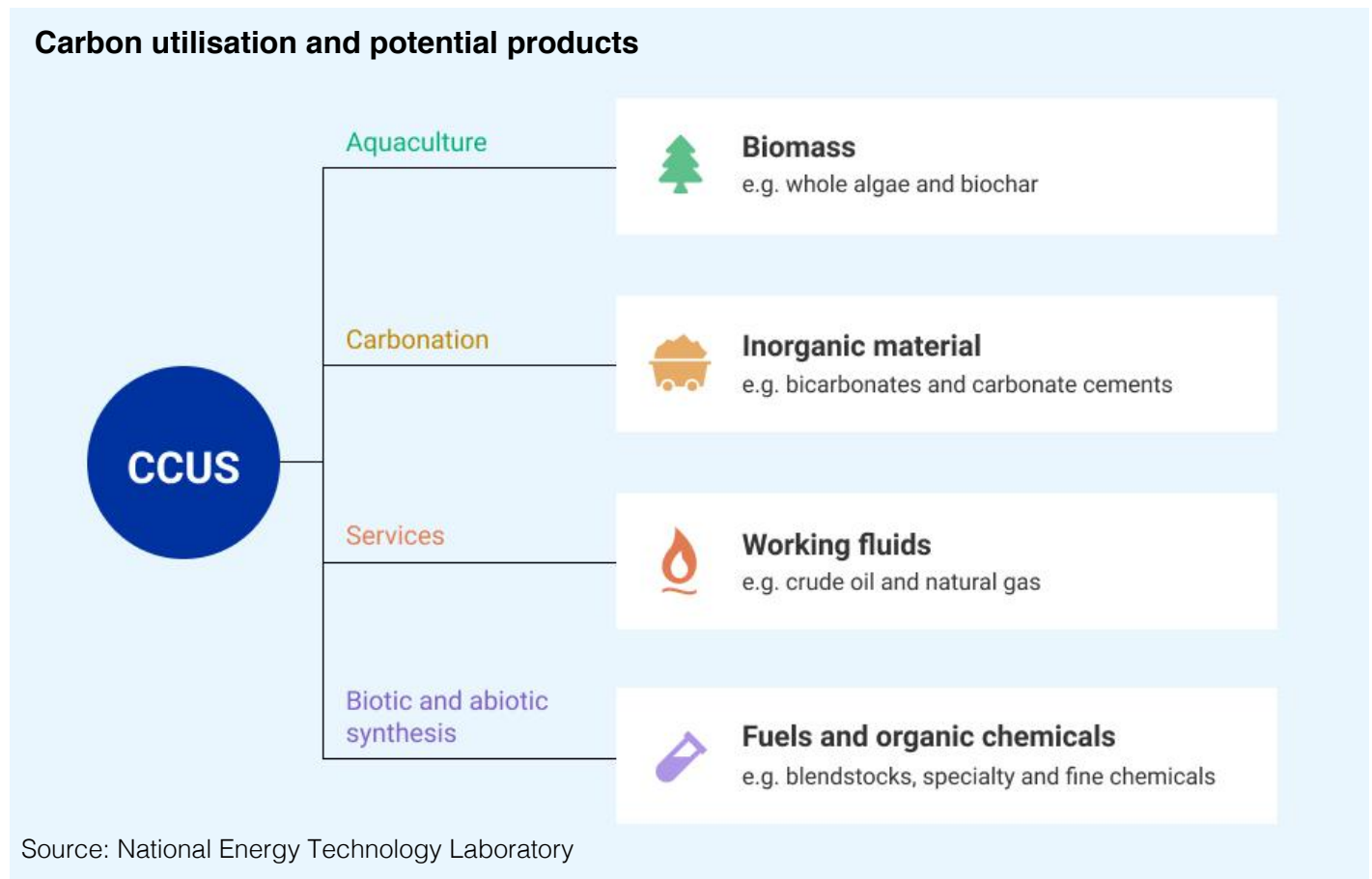
The two main categories of CCUS technologies that still require a lot more development are carbon capture technologies and carbon utilisation technologies.

Carbon capture technologies, including the use of monoethanolamine (MEA) and novel capture mediums, adopt a conventional adsorption-desorption cycle to capture CO₂. Compared to MEA, novel capture mediums use solvents that have a lower thermal requirement, claiming a higher capture efficiency, while not requiring constant maintenance.

In June 2020, international think tank Global CCS Institute identified 59 CCUS facilities in various stages of development with a capture capacity of more than 127 million tonnes per annum. There are now 21 facilities in operation, with early forerunners in the United States, Canada, Norway, and China.

3. Nuclear fusion

Whenever the subject of nuclear energy arises, most people will think about nuclear fission, where heavy radioactive atoms like uranium are broken apart in a process that releases a lot of energy. This is the process that has powered nuclear reactors since the 1950s, since when the industry has been tarnished by rare but cataclysmic meltdowns at Chernobyl and Fukushima.



Carbon utilisation technologies include processes like carbonation, catalytic conversion, electrochemical reduction, photocatalytic conversion, and microbial conversion. Depending on the processes, captured CO₂ is transformed into valuable products and applications, such as fuels, chemicals, construction materials and others. Captured CO₂ injected into depleting oil reservoirs can increase recovery, through a process known as enhanced oil recovery, opening up the opportunity for the oil industry to participate in emissions reduction.

There is actually another nuclear energy process, called nuclear fusion. Fusion is the process that powers our sun, and nuclear fusion is an attempt to recreate this process to produce energy. In contrast with nuclear fission, small atoms like hydrogen and helium are fused together in nuclear fusion to release energy.

Potentially, it can generate power that is low-carbon but without the by-product of nuclear fission such as high-level waste and risk of meltdown. It is the most energy-dense form of power and has the potential to

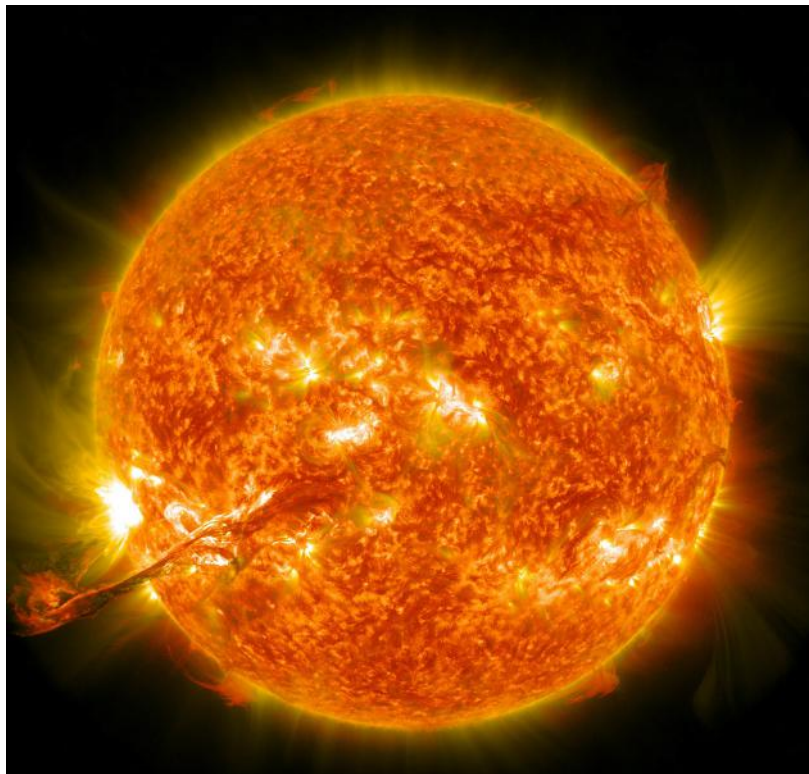
transform the way the world is powered. Two cubic kilometres of seawater could, in theory, provide energy equivalent to all the oil reserves on Earth.

While the promise of unlimited risk-free, zero-waste nuclear fusion has always remained the same, it remains technically extremely challenging to produce a controlled reaction. It is often said that nuclear fusion is just 20 years away, and always will be. Advances in technology are showing some exciting progress that may begin to bring that “20 years away” within reach.

Researchers at Oxford-based First Light Fusion have published results demonstrating their cost-

effective solution for clean baseload power. The company’s inertial confinement fusion process in initiating nuclear fusion reactions by heating and compressing a fuel target, could deliver a levelised cost of energy as low as US\$25/MWh when the technology has matured, compared with approximately US\$100/MWh for nuclear energy and up to US\$50/MWh for onshore wind.

The inertial confinement fusion process can bring down the costs because it overcomes three potential hurdles of other fusion technologies which all add massive costs: managing the intense heat flux, preventing neutron damage to structural materials, and generating the required tritium fuel.



About CLP Innofinity

CLP Innofinity is a content hub where readers can find a carefully curated collection of inspiring articles and opinion pieces discussing breakthroughs in innovation and sustainability. The platform is brought to you by the CLP Group, one of the largest investor-owned power businesses in the Asia-Pacific region and a Corporate Member of the BLCC. Please visit www.clpinnofinity.com or scan the QR code to find out more.



#SeafarersAreKeyWorkers responsible for transporting more than 80% of global trade by volume, including the bulk of all raw materials, fuels, foods and manufactured goods, as well as life-saving pharmaceuticals, medical equipment and supplies. Thank you! **#SupportCrewChanges**



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key workers**

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Getting to know our members: Hans Loontiens

Let's enjoy a condensed piece about the interesting journey of Mr. Hans Loontiens, a hotel industry professional whose fascinating experience traverses cities, cultures and continents. Read along to see how Hans' stories unfold.

Could you please give us a short introduction of yourself & your career so far?

I'm Hans Loontiens from Belgium but have been in Hong Kong for over eight years. For about two years now, I've been the Area Vice President for Marriott looking after Hong Kong, Macau, Taiwan and Hainan. My career path has many unexpected episodes. In my youth, my father was the GM at Shanghai Bell, a JV of a Chinese enterprise and Bell Telephone, a Belgian company; fresh out of High School, he recommended me to go with him and study Chinese. I went to China for the first time in 1984, which was quite early, China just started opening up. We used to get our pink ID card from the Embassy in Beijing. My first ID card is number 007. That shows that there were not many of us.

After three years, my father left, but I enjoyed living in China too much to leave and decided to stay longer. So, I joined the Belgian Consulate as Trade Commissioner, and met my wife not too long afterwards. As the Consulate was right next to the Hilton Hotel, I enjoyed going there quite often, with businessmen. At some point I knew the management pretty well and they said to me, "why don't you join the hotel business? Without hesitation I accepted the job as Sales Manager and I enjoyed it immediately. After 4 years, I took a detour. I went to the US and worked at a business my in-laws started there. However, my time in the hotel business really changed me; I quite enjoyed that industry. So after two years, I told my wife that I wanted to return to it; fortunately I had her support. We liked to travel around; and since then, thanks to my position in the hotel industry, our shared passion has been fulfilled. I have been stationed at Wuxi, Tianjin, Abu Dhabi, Shanghai, Taipei, Egypt, Beijing and eventually Hong Kong.

Could you please tell us a little bit more about your responsibilities specifically as the Area Director?

Of course: right now I'm in charge of over 50 hotels: 10 of which in Hong Kong, 20 in Hainan, 2 in Macau and 19 in Taiwan. Of course we have a



few more in the pipeline. To put it shortly: all the General Managers of those hotels report to me & my amazing team; together we keep the overview of the hotels' performance, we make sure they all follow our brand's standards & policies and of course help them achieve the goals that are set. Usually overseeing this many hotels involved a lot of travelling: I would be away for three weeks per month. But sadly, that all stopped in February 2020. Although, luckily I did manage to visit China this February, I did a nine-week trip, which entailed five-weeks of quarantine. I guess that's the new travel experience. But hopefully now that I'm vaccinated, I can go again in June.

You talked a bit about your career path from Shanghai to the US to Taipei, what eventually brought you to Hong Kong?

Well when I moved to Shanghai in 1984, China was still regarded as a place of hardship. My father's company allowed us to come to Hong Kong every four months, for the so-called R&R, which was very popular at that time. We could go shopping, sightseeing and just relax. Through these trips I

became fascinated with Hong Kong. Since then, I have always said, my dream is to work in Hong Kong. I told this story to the senior management at Marriott when I was in Beijing. When they told me about an opportunity to work at the Renaissance Hong Kong Harbour View Hotel, I transferred to Hong Kong in 2012. It was a dream come true.

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I have always said, my dream is to work in Hong Kong.

What truly excites you about the hotel industry?

You know before I go to work, I always make a plan and think about what my day would look like; and I can guarantee you every single day, something will happen that changes the plan. This is what keeps me interested in this job. Besides, I have a passion for business and I love meeting new people. In the hotel industry, we have so many different guests, and they all have different needs and different things happen to them. In the old days, people just needed a room when they were travelling. But there is so much more to it now. When you look at staycations they're not staying with us because they need the room. They're choosing our hotel to have a good time. It's very exciting that they trust us with that. I think I've never had a day in the morning when I wake up and don't want to go back to work. If that happens to me, I will have to move on because I can't do that.

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We have a loyal base of frequent customers who continue to support us, for which we are genuinely grateful

Would there be any stories when for example, something really challenging came up and you had to deal with it?

Back when I was still at the Renaissance Harbour View, a new MTR station and the bypass were being built in front of the hotel. I remember it being a Saturday morning and I was in the hotel. Around 10am I got a phone call from the duty manager and he said, "Mr. Loontiens, could you come down? The police are here and they found a bomb in front of the hotel". I learned that the whole area was reclaimed land and during World War II, apparently Japanese ships stationed here when it was still a harbour were heavily bombed by American airplanes at very low heights. If a bomb falls flat on the water from a low height, there's a good chance that it doesn't go off. After the war, everyone forgot about that and started reclaiming right over them. When they started digging to build the MTR station, they found such

a bomb. On that day, 97% of all the rooms facing the harbour had to be evacuated. Which was a big challenge as I needed to find nearly 400 rooms in other Hong Kong hotels; in the end we found only 60. All the other people had to sit in meeting rooms or in a coffee shop. It's a very slow process to detonate the bomb. It took 36 hours and then two days later they found the second one and a third one in May. Of

course, during the whole process, our team didn't sleep. For me this was a moment when I realised if something goes wrong it is my responsibility. So it was very stressful, but it was amazing to see that everybody involved was really committed. We do a lot of training on what to do in an emergency. Thanks to this we knew exactly what to do. That's an experience I will never forget.

With the ongoing pandemic, how is the Marriott Group coping under the consequences?

Honestly, it has been fairly challenging. Of course, being in the hotel industry, our company has been impacted tremendously. Last year, the results were not great. But the good thing is that, at least in China, we see recoveries. During the May Holiday, our hotels outperformed the 2019 results by far. With the borders closed for 1.3 billion people, they start to travel within the country. So obviously, that helps. Also, for the Marriott Group, we have a loyal base of frequent customers who continue to support us, for which we are genuinely grateful. More specific to Hong Kong, everyone is fighting for the same business, which is mostly the staycations. On weekends, you see an uptick in occupancy. It's very price sensitive, and hotels are offering attractive packages. The restrictions in place make it a bit burdening to us; it would mean a lot to our industry when this pandemic is controlled.

Do you see any new or exciting trends happening in the hotel industry that you would like to share with our readers?

Currently sustainability is high on our priority list. We are implementing many sustainability initiatives. I think last year we all focused on keeping everyone safe, but now we can take off again. We are in the progress of replacing the little bottles in the

bathrooms with family size ones hooked up to the wall. And we're looking for more ways to reduce plastic everywhere.

What's more, nowadays when we negotiate contracts with companies, sustainability is a part of their evaluation. If you are not up to par with sustainability, they just won't sign the contract with you. I think it puts us all on our toes and makes sure that we do the right thing. My children also remind me everyday to pass on our planet in a decent state to them.

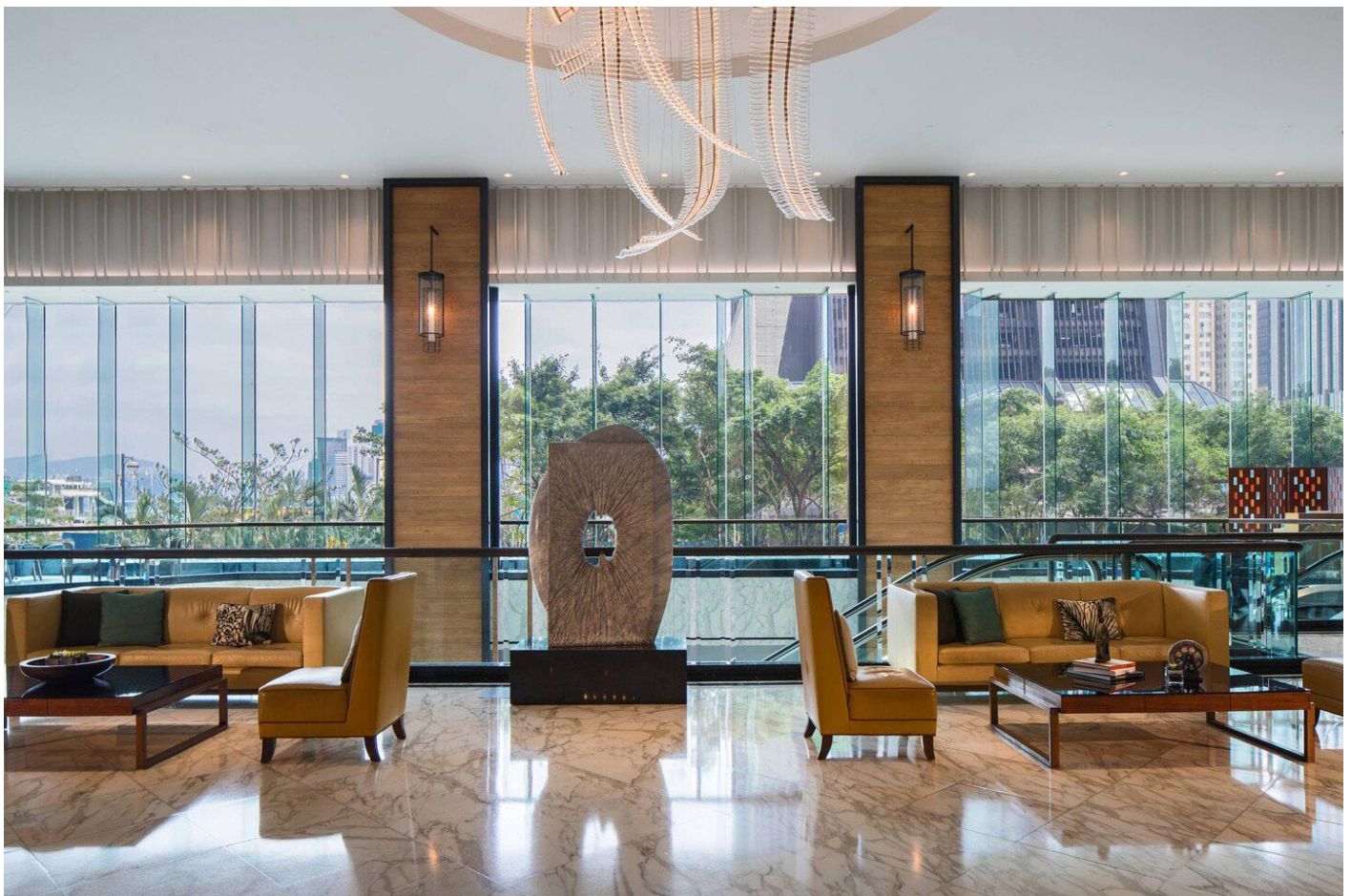
What is one thing you like the most about Hong Kong, compared to Belgium?

The first thing that comes to my mind is the way of living. The first time my wife went to Belgium, we went for a walk at night, around eight o'clock. She was quite surprised to see nobody on the street. In Europe, on the weekends, shops are closed. This is completely the opposite in Hong Kong. You can always find people on the street and if you need to buy something at night in Hong Kong there is always a store open. It's so vibrant. And that is one of the reasons that I love Hong Kong. Something else that

amazes me, in my business, is there are so many new restaurant concepts in Hong Kong. It's an amazing place for people longing for different and new ideas. I cannot say anything else about Hong Kong except it's a very exciting city to live in.

Do you have some hidden gems in Hong Kong to share?

Of course, come to stay with the Marriott! Apart from that, I do have a tip for our readers. If you go to a hotel, even if you live in Hong Kong, go talk to the concierge because they have a lot of knowledge. They do a lot more than picking up your luggage and taking it to your room; they are truly knowledgeable people on the local attractions and events in the city. In the old days, we trained them to tell you to go to all the tourist destinations within the city. A new trend for which we have trained our concierge is suggesting places or activities of the local community rather than what you read in the guidebook. It's very intriguing and we have different programs available. So when you do your staycation, you can explore the city as a local, rather than just sit in your room or in the pool.



BLCC Collective in Asia

As the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong we are a standalone organisation in Hong Kong, however we have loads of sister BLCC's all over the world. During the pandemic, we have expanded our network and intensified our working relationship with our fellow BLCC's in Asia.

And since then, the collective of Asian BLCC's is going strong and growing ever since. We are working closely together with 12 other BeLux Chambers in Asia from Japan to the Philippines to India. During this time, we have had some amazing collaborations. We have taken initiatives together to organise insightful cross-Asia events, which would have been exceedingly challenging for one individual Chamber to organize. Starting with informative webinars, to gatherings with high-profile speakers from different countries.

Together we have introduced high-level speakers to our community such as Cabinet Ministers from Belgium & Luxembourg as well as captains of industry from Google, Samsonite and UPS. And our lineup of high caliber speakers continues, with very soon a web talks by Belgian Ministers Vincent Van Peteghem and Sophie Wilmès and Solvay CEO Dr Ilham Kadr.

Besides doing events, we have signed two memorandums of understanding (MoU) with both Singapore and Malaysia to enable the Chambers' members to attend each other's events at membership rates. This means that once we can travel again, our members will be enthusiastically received and can participate in events organized by BeLuxCham Malaysia and BLCC Singapore on the same terms as you would enjoy in Hong Kong. We will continue the Asian BLCC inter-chamber webinars and support each other's activities as much as possible for the benefit of our members. We hope that this collaboration will be the start of many fruitful cross-regional initiatives to come and to offer you MoU agreements all across Asia!

Check out our website to find our fellow BLCC's in Asia.



When did Hong Kong feel like home?

By Janet Field

Despite living in Hong Kong for many years, I was recently asked: “At what point did Hong Kong feel like home?” It’s an interesting question, and not easy to answer. I think, in part, it depends on your reasons for moving there in the first place.

For me, although I had lived overseas before, moving to Hong Kong came at the wrong time. I had recently started a new job, had a great social life and was generally content. So, I didn’t feel any burning need for change.

For my husband, on the other hand, our relocation was driven by his job so for him it meant a promotion and a new adventure, and he couldn’t wait to move. In the run up to our move, he was flown to Hong Kong on a reconnaissance trip where he was introduced to his new colleagues and clients, wined and dined and shown around.

As the trailing spouse, I was left to try and find a new job in Hong Kong and had no real sense of what we were letting ourselves in for.

Not surprisingly, my husband took to Hong Kong like a duck to water. From the moment we arrived, he found himself, courtesy of his job, on a social whirl that put everything we’d previously known in the shade. Shortly after our arrival, he attended an all-male Burns Night celebration and got home around 6.00am. His inner teen was reborn.

As for me, I had no friends at that point and spent the evening watching back-to-back episodes of long forgotten TV series from bygone eras, which was the only English language TV viewing available at the time.

I think it’s fair to say there was a period of transition for one of us.

Thankfully, about a month before our move, my company was able to offer me a new position in Hong Kong, which helped smooth the transition considerably. As the only native English speaker in the office, I at first felt awkward in a sea of rapid Cantonese speaking colleagues, and did my best to fit in.



I watched one morning as a whole roast suckling pig was wheeled into the centre of the office. Nobody explained its presence, so I pretended not to notice and hoped its purpose would become apparent. I didn’t have to wait long. Everyone was invited to gather round for the Cutting Ceremony to celebrate the move to a new office, something I wasn’t even aware of.

I decided that the key to belonging was to learn Cantonese. So, we embarked on lessons with misplaced optimism that we’d soon be conversant. The lessons were surprisingly enjoyable, and we made several new friends. But we were caught out by how difficult it was and eventually, once we’d mastered enough to get by, we decided to call it a day. The intense pace of Hong Kong life just didn’t tally with the time required to become really competent.

“

I watched one morning as a whole roast suckling pig was wheeled into the centre of the office

But even our basic language skills opened new doors. We discovered there was more to Chinese food than egg foo yung and chicken chow mein and the day we ordered dim sum in Cantonese for the first time felt like another milestone. The waiters didn't understand our pronunciation and laughed at our efforts. But we stuck to our guns and tortured them with our butchered Cantonese.

For the first six months I loved Hong Kong and hated it in equal measure, being initially gripped by homesickness, and feeling the pull of the family and friends we'd left behind.

A key turning point was moving out of our tiny, serviced apartment, where we struggled not to kick the TV every time we crossed our legs, and into a more permanent home. After weeks of viewing dozens of dingy apartments, this was no mean

achievement. After that, everything else started to slot into place.

As we began to make new friends, our social life picked up too, though it took time to find other working women with similar interests. Initially, most women I met didn't work, which was a big change from back home. So, finding likeminded friends was pivotal, as they became like family.

In essence, settling in involved many ups and downs, saying yes to every invitation, and being open to new experiences.

In the end, every time we returned to Hong Kong after visiting the UK, we looked forward to landing in the sunshine and walking into our apartment with its views of the sea. When you get that feeling, you know you are home.

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***For the first six months
I loved Hong Kong and hated
it in equal measure***



Events 2021

With 2021 almost halfway, we can proudly talk about some of the fantastic events we organised this year so far.

Vaccine Drive in HK: what, which, why, where, who...and should I?

In February, Hong Kong rolled out its vaccine programme. With various vaccines being approved and introduced around the globe, and hope that the pandemic finally started to fade came. Our community wanted to know more. Together with DutchCham, we invited Professor Seto, Specialist in Clinical Microbiology & Infection at Gleneagles Hospital and Ms. Yvonne Ho, from IATA to answer the most asked questions. In a very energetic way, we were brought up-to-date on the latest developments of the virus situation, learned about the misunderstanding and misconception of the vaccines and talked about the impact of vaccines on travelling.

COVID Impacts on Tax Declarations 2020 with Fidiam

We were delighted to team up with our corporate member Fidiam for a tax declaration webinar. The pandemic has impacted people's lives one way or another; some corporations are reeling, while others thrive under the 'new normal'. All of these developments can work their way into your corporate or personal situation - so the question begged: how to declare your 2020 income and profits? Luckily we had two tax experts Ms. Yan Hong and Ms. Anne de Roulhac from Fidiam, who were kind enough to talk us through these topics.

1. Profits Tax Return 2020 - Calendar for filing & payment

Seeking Deferrals &/or Instalments		
Conditions	Documents Required	Tax Reliefs
Companies having financial difficulties settling their tax bills on time.	Instalment <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Payment Proposal - Last 3 months income & expenditures - Last 3 months bank statements - Last 3 months management accounts - Debt repayment details - Cash flow position and forecasts 	Waiver of surcharges for late payment of taxes (5% to 10%)
	Deferral <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Last 8 months management accounts - Project of Profits Tax Computation 	Holdover of provisional tax or payment of tax by instalments

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Warzone90: A 90-minute Simulation War Zone

We were finally able to organize our first in-person event in collaboration with the Red Cross Hong Kong and SwissCham. Have you ever wondered how you would behave and react when you're in a war zone as a civilian? If so, this would have been the perfect event for you. We offered our business communities a one-of-a-kind opportunity to simulate the intense sensation in a war zone. Built predominantly upon the actual experience of the Red Cross operatives, the simulation provided us with an insight of our response to real-world conflicts. We had the precious chance to reflect on how to align our priorities with humanitarian missions, how to conduct ourselves in tension & distress, and understand better the fundamental values & missions of the Red Cross. The simulation was both educational & inspirational.



Photo Exhibition & Happy Hour with SCC

Together with the Singapore Chamber of Commerce, we enjoyed a fascinating presentation delivered by photography historian Mr. Edward Stokes about the urban landscape of Singapore & Hong Kong. The exhibition focused on the photographic techniques of Marjorie Doggett & Lee Fook Chee and the moving stories behind the scenes, which add a personal touch to the dialogue between the two cities and the two photographers. The Happy Hour afterwards was not as busy as expected but our members still enjoyed this 2nd in-person gathering of the year.



LUXEMBOURG & ASEAN: Partners in a Digital, Changing World - Web Talk with Minister Mr. Franz Fayot

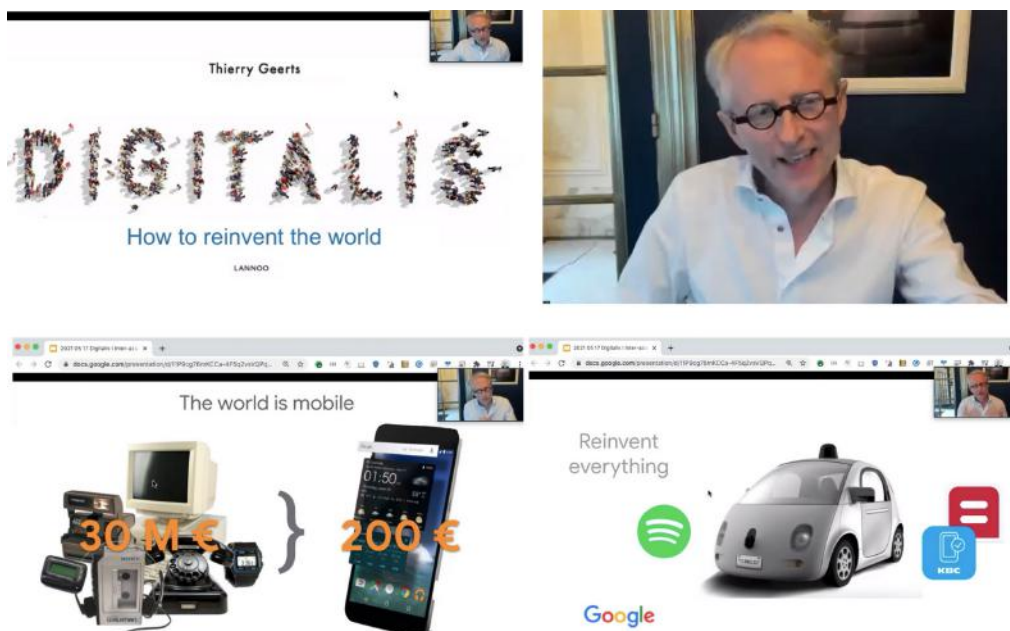
The BLCC, together with 11 other BeLux Chambers of Commerce in Asia, initiated several web talks with high-profile speakers. We had the pleasure to welcome Luxembourg's Minister of the Economy, Mr. Franz Fayot, to be our first keynote speaker.

This in-depth discussion on the future of Lux-Asia relations was certainly insightful. Mr. Fayot discussed business opportunities between Luxembourg and ASEAN countries, digital transformation and sustainable business models while highlighting Luxembourg's innovation and data-driven landscape. He also acknowledged the many Luxembourg companies present in the ASEAN region and promised to visit when he gets the opportunity.



DIGITALIS - How To Reinvent the World with Google BeLux CEO Thierry Geerts

The world is going through a lightning-fast digitization process, and people are concerned about its impact on healthcare, climate change or emerging populism. On the other hand, technological innovations can provide solutions for the challenges we face. Luckily we had our second high-profile speaker, Mr. Thierry Geerts - CEO Google BeLux, take us through the world of Digitalis. Developing creativity, working together and solving complex problems by embracing digitalization is the way forward. We have learned that digitalization entails the task of reinventing everything; not an easy task!



Upcoming events

We already have some exciting events coming up!
You will find all of our events over here:



Belgium Looking ahead: Recovery, Finance & Asia with Minister Vincent Van Peteghem

On 8 June from 6pm – 7:15pm, we invited Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Vincent van Peteghem to speak to our BLCC community. This is our third high-caliber speaker event organized together with our Asian BLCC Collective. During this talk, Mr. Van Peteghem will discuss various topics, including Belgium’s pandemic approach, the vaccination program & the recovery plan. You can also expect news fresh from the wire about the EU Green Pass, new financial instruments implemented by the EU and Belgium’s views on the increase of protectionism. We look forward to seeing you there!

What can Belgium & Asia do for each other? With Minister Sophie Wilmès

Together with our colleagues in the Asian BLCC Collective we are happy to present you with our fourth high-caliber speaker: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sophie Wilmès. In her web talk entitled “What can Belgium & Asia do for each other”, she will give the latest update on the importance of Asia for Belgium, traveling (as before the pandemic), and the role of the Foreign Affairs Ministry in facilitating the relationship in our region with Belgium.

Luxembourg National Day

This year the Luxembourg National Day on 23 June falls on a Wednesday. Your BLCC is looking to organize a delicious lunch or dinner for our members & friends in the Luxembourg business community. More details to be announced soon.

Belgium National Day Dinner together with the Belgian Club

It’s the season of National Days! After the Luxembourg one, it’s time for Belgium to celebrate. Join us on Wednesday 21 July for a delicious dinner organized together with the Belgian Club. More details will be announced soon.

Web talk with Mrs. Ilham Kadri

Also save the date for 9 September from 3 to 4 pm HKT for a web talk with Mrs. Ilham Kadri, CEO of Solvay. Solvay is a science company and a global leader in Materials, Chemicals and Solutions. More details on Mrs. Kadri’s talk are expected soon, keep an eye on our channels.

Membership with the BLCC comes with several benefits, but did you know that our members also have access to the events & services of EuroCham; the European Chamber of Commerce? You can even actively participate in EuroCham! How? Read all about it in the following article.

The European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong aims to create business opportunities via its network of Chambers, business associations and government agencies. As a “Chamber of Chambers” the membership of EuroCham is comprised of 14 European National Chambers, the BLCC being one of them.

Just like the BLCC, the European Chamber is governed by a Board of Directors; each EuroCham Director is a delegate from the individual Boards of the 14 European National Chambers. We have delegated Mr. Pierre-Yves Bastjaens to represent the BLCC’s interests in EuroCham.

The EuroCham Board is currently chaired by the Delegate from the German Chamber of Commerce; this position as well as the position of Treasurer is assigned on a rotating schedule; one day the BLCC Delegate will take up each of these positions.

EuroCham’s main mission? To represent the common interests of European businesses. To represent these interests, the Board of EuroCham can use its weight to influence certain topics of concern to the business community. Through Mr. Bastjaens & the General Manager of the BLCC, our members can always bring topics to the attention of EuroCham.

However, there is more that our members can do with Eurocham: the business councils.

Currently EuroCham runs six different business councils; these are industry specific sectorial councils, made up of members from any of the 14 EuroCham member Chambers. Our BLCC members are at any time invited to take up a position within any of these Councils.

The objectives of these councils are quite to the point: gather a group of industry specialists and have them discuss topical issues for that industry. Outcomes include forming smaller working groups for research, writing & publishing position papers, formulation of European/EU bilateral policies and regulatory dialogue with the governments of Hong Kong & Macau.

Find an overview of the councils below:

Sustainable Development (ECSD)

The (ECSD) represents European businesses with a strong and unified voice on matters of Sustainable Development towards relevant stakeholders in Hong Kong. The Council aims to ensure that Sustainable Development will be a key driver of competitive advantage for European businesses in Hong Kong. The Scope of Work of ECDS focuses on: Climate Mitigation, Green Recovery, Circular Economy, Sustainable Energy, Green Finance and Sustainable Mobility.

Intellectual Property Rights Business Council (IPRBC)

The IPRBC seeks the broadest possible representation of European businesses in Hong Kong & Macau within its contributors. The Council aims to bring together experts on a regular basis, to brainstorm on policy, regulatory, and market access issues in the field of IPR and wider trade-related matters.

Sourcing & Trading Business Council (ESTBC)

The European Sourcing & Trading Business Council aims to bring together companies in the sourcing/trading industry that see an immediate need for more conducive and targeted policies. The Council believes that Trade is an important pillar of the Hong Kong economy and has been so over the last four decades, during which Hong Kong has played a big role in also developing the knowledge base in South China aligned to the Central Government vision.

Wine & Spirits Business Council (WSBC)

The WSBC represents European Wine & Spirits companies in Hong Kong. The aim is to engage with the government stakeholders on imported wine & spirits issues including tax, regulations, IPRs and responsible consumption. It brings forward proposals, publishes position papers and develops constructive dialogue to facilitate market access that benefits both the trade and the development of Hong Kong.

European Automotive Council (EAC)

The EAC represents the European passenger car and commercial vehicle manufacturers in Hong Kong. Their aim is to bring forward proposals and be a partner to the government of Hong Kong, working together towards a safer, greener, more efficient and more competitive automotive sector. Contributors of this Council are European vehicle manufacturers, their subsidiaries and/or representative offices. The council comprises four priority areas: the Environmentally Friendly Vehicle (EFV) Scheme, vehicle emission, introduction of the latest driver assistance & safety systems and new energy vehicles & smart mobility.

Travel & Tourism Council (ETTC)

The ETTC is EuroCham's newest initiative, and currently being developed.

Several of our BLCC members already take part in these Business Councils offered by EuroCham. If this article has triggered your interest as well, don't hesitate to contact us & we'll happily introduce you to your favorite Business Council!

Welcome to new BLCC members in 2021

Corporate:

Goodmark Asia Ltd



Individual:

- Justin Campbell
- Tristan Demaeseneer
- Paulina Chu

Young Professional:

- Matthew Chan

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If you enjoyed reading this digital magazine, sign up for our newsletter now. Receive information about developments in Belgium, Luxembourg & Hong Kong. Learn about our latest activities, news from our members & other chambers and updates on the BLCC.

Don't hesitate, subscribe today through your Glue Up account or click [here](#).



Advertising in the BLCC Digital Magazine

In February 2020, the BLCC launched its Digital Magazine. Due to its online character, the magazine is widely shared in our business communities and beyond. The magazine contains informative stories on Hong Kong, interviews with company leaders & entrepreneurs, stories on exchanges between Belgium/Luxembourg and Hong Kong, events etc. The magazine covers a wide range of topics aiming to be a valuable source of information for the readers.

This magazine is a perfect opportunity to reach out to the wider public. View previous editions [here](#).

Magazine Advertising fees

Prices are in HKD and per issue.

	1 edition	2 editions	3 editions	4 editions
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Sponsored Article	750			

Would you like to see your business in our magazine? **Contact us** for more information.

Join the BLCC membership

Interested in becoming a member of our Chamber? Click [here](#) for more information on our different membership types and benefits. Interested to join for the rest of 2021 sign up today for a 50% discount.

- **Corporate Member** HK\$ 10000
- **Individual Member** HK\$ 2000
- **Young Professional** HK\$ 500

As an independent & member-driven association, the Belgium-Luxembourg Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong provides a platform for individuals & companies to connect, grow their business and succeed in achieving their professional goals. We aim to accomplish this by organizing events, promoting products, services and new business ideas and keeping the members abreast of updates from within the community. The BLCC follows its three core values: collaboration, ethics and independence. We operate on a proactive approach and cooperate side by side our members and other Chambers, through which we provide added value. In all of our actions, we are guided by the wishes of our members, the environment and sustainability.