

Twenty Years After: **Hong Kong's Changes and Future under China's Rule**

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Abstracts of Papers (in authors' alphabetical order)

Open Society and Its Enemies: The Crisis of “One Country, Two Systems” and the Future of the Democracy Movement

Kenneth Chan, GIS, Hong Kong Baptist University

Is Hong Kong's democratic transition doomed to failure? This paper examines the challenges that Hong Kong has to face in its fight for democracy under Chinese sovereignty and critically evaluates the state of the democracy movement since the 2014 Umbrella Movement. As Beijing tightens its grip over Hong Kong, there are pervasive feelings that the “One Country, Two Systems” policy, which has propelled democratic changes since the 1990s, has turned out to be a straightjacket. In response to growing fears about the “mainlandization” of Hong Kong, the rise of “identity politics” and the concurrent proliferation of various strands of “localism” have posed fundamental questions about the relations between China and Hong Kong. With the democracy movement increasingly fragmented, it has become more difficult to sustain citizens' participation in collective action. During the 2017 Chief Executive election, the democrats tried to revitalize the movement, but it revealed that “benevolent autocracy” was quite acceptable to some democrats and their supporters. With reference to the dissident movements of the former Communist regimes, namely Charter 77 and the Solidarity movement, the predicaments of Hong Kong's democratization will be analyzed from a comparative perspective in order to explore options along both ideational and organizational dimensions. To re-think the overall strategy and actions, the author submits that it is perhaps more important now than ever to sponsor acts of resistance in defense of an open society from its enemies. The new democracy movement is arguably less interested in exploiting the inherent contradictions of the hybrid regime for electoral purposes, but more interested in promoting higher standards of governance which keeps Hong Kong distinct from the rest of China. In doing so, Hong Kong people need not succumb to learned helplessness or seemingly destructive “self-fulfilling prophecies” which are unable to envisage the rejuvenation of the civil society.

Hong Kong Soft Power and Internationalization

Winnie Chan, GIS, Hong Kong Baptist University

The paper aims at exploring the level of internationalization and its soft power development in Hong Kong under China's rule in the past 20 years. Particularly, the paper submits that HKSAR leaderships have evidently shifted Hong Kong's strategic position in the global system to a sub-sovereign region mainly serving the host country Mainland China by analyzing the 2007-2017 Hong Kong Policy Address. Through examining the relationship between the degree of internationalization and the capacity of soft power after the handover, this is suggested that the strength and the diffusion of soft power of Hong Kong have been declining along with decreased integration with the international community. The above analysis probes into pragmatic approaches for future development which Hong Kong should maintain a balanced progress with considering both internationality and national development, hence, to accumulate the resources and power for soft advancement to tackle potential international challenges.

Beijing's Resilient Ruling Strategy in Hong Kong and its Discontents

Edmund Cheng, GIS, Hong Kong Baptist University

This chapter examines the imperatives and impacts of the Central People's Government's ruling strategy in the Hong Kong Special Administration Region between 1997 and 2017. Based on elite interviews, content analysis and process tracing, it reveals the consistency and contradictions in Beijing's ruling program and policy. To reintegrate the former British colony into the Chinese nation and to limit the opposition's political opportunities structure, Beijing has strengthened its co-optation of the local elite through united front work and government-business alliance. While this consistent program effectively controlled the mass media, advanced the regime's social penetration and reduced the pan-democrats' electoral gains, they have also unavoidably generated threats towards Hong Kong liberties and lifestyle and provoked waves of protests. To mediate the bottom-up resistance, Beijing periodically removed unpopular administrations, leveraged legal tools, and mobilized counter-movements. While these resilient policies revealed the hybrid regime's learning curve to absorb, erode or suppress defiance, they have also illustrated its soft spot in accommodating the rising pro-democracy claims and post-industrial values in the civil society. Contradictions in the post-handover period have thus evolved from merely state-versus-society to become contention between people. Discontents are dispersed and deepened despite Beijing's self-perceived toleration, which contributed to a vicious cycle of contention.

Receding China Factor? Cultural Imagination of Mainland Chinese in Post-handover Hong Kong

Anthony Fung Ying Him, the Chinese University of Hong Kong and Chan Chi Kit, Hang Seng Management College

Cultural Imagination of Mainland Chinese has been poised as a significant factor in scholarly dialogue of Hong Kong identity. Rising China-Hong Kong conflicts over democratization and social interaction have been prominently regarded in literature of China studies and social movement recent years. This article, however, presents a dataset

which shows a paradoxical retreat of “China factor” to the sense of belonging of Hong Kong people to this city. Longitudinal surveys from 2010 to 2016 demonstrate that: 1) cultural imagination of Mainland Chinese accounts for a less and less stake in Hong Kong people youth’s love of the hometown since 2012, and 2) among various indicators illustrating local youth’s imagination of Mainland Chinese, those of civil liberties and human rights related the least with Hong Kong identity. On the contrary, the track surveys exhibit a stable and strong stake of cultural imagination of Mainland Chinese in Hong Kong’s people love of China. Contrasting stake of “China factor” to local youth’s love of the hometown and love of China suggests an emergent divergence between local Hong Kong identity and national allegiance to China. The findings echo to the rise of Hong Kong localism and its ramification to the formation of cultural identities of youth in post-handover Hong Kong.

Keywords: China factor, post-handover Hong Kong, Hong Kong identity, Hong Kong localism.

Identity Politicised: A Re-examination of Hong Kong Localism

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Over the past five years the emergence and mainstreaming of ‘Hong Kong localism’ has dominated the Hong Kong’s public debate. The idea of Hong Kong independence surges to the political agenda and has gained significant support among the youth. This chapter aims to provide an overview of Hong Kong localism. It first contextualises the emergence of localism within Beijing’s (failed) policies towards the political development in the Special Administrative Region over the past two decades. The second part delineates localists views on Hong Kong identity and the relationship between Hong Kong and the central government. Based on unique access to the entire spectrum of localist groups and in-depth interviews with activists, legislators and key opinion leaders, I provide a categorisation of localist ideology and demonstrate the dynamics of localism. The analysis sheds light on the question of why the taboo of a national Hong Kong identity was broken and how various forms of Hong Kong nationalisms are imagined.

No More Paradox? Revisiting the Political Economy of the Hong Kong Media

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Press freedom in Hong Kong has been declining continually in the past 15 years. In the global press freedom ranking by Reporters without Borders, Hong Kong ranked as high as 18th in the world in 2002, but its ranking reached the new low of 73rd in 2017. The root of the problem resides in the political economy of the media system. According to conventional understanding, the Chinese government exerted indirect influence over the Hong Kong media through coopting media owners in Hong Kong, most of whom were entrepreneurs with ample business interests in the mainland. At the same time, there were internal tensions within the political economic system. The latter opened up a space of resistance for media practitioners and thus helped the media system as a whole to maintain a degree of relative autonomy from the power center. However, into the 2010s, the political economy of the Hong Kong media have witnessed a number of significant changes, including the changing cost-benefit calculations of the Hong Kong media

owners, the direct intrusion by Chinese capital into the media market, rising power of Chinese enterprises as advertisers, and the collapse of existing media business models. These changes set up a new playing field in which the space of resistance has further shrunk. The growth of social media and alternative media on the Internet became the major counter-acting force protecting freedom of information and expression in Hong Kong. Yet even the digital media arena is facing the challenge of the intrusion by the state.

Public Policies towards Hawkers since 1997

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由殖民時期開始，香港小販政策已有百多年的發展歷史。1997年回歸以來，特區政府的小販政策經歷了全面取締、維持現狀及重新發展三個階段。本文提出關鍵的主因，是一種在2008年漸次形成的後殖民時期的本土想像及文化身份。2015年發生了「魚蛋革命」可能言過其實；但未來的小販政策的確將取決於政府官僚、壟斷市場及民間持份組織的相互角力，及未來港人對於其「全球城市」的願境與想像。研究探索主要應用論述分析的方法，而資料則取材自政府及立法會文件，個人參與經驗及外地案例。

Developed from the colonial period, the hawker policy in Hong Kong has got hundred years of history. After the 1997 turnover, the HKSAR's hawker policy has experienced the three stages of abolition, stagnation and reorientation. This article posits that the major reason is related to an imagination of localism and a formation of cultural identity which has evolved gradually from 2008 onwards. The outbreak of 'Fishball Revolution' in 2016 may be over-stated but the future hawker policy would be determined by the mutual interplay between the government bureaucracy, monopolized market and different stakeholders of the civil society as well as the unique mission and vision of Hong Kong people regarding their 'global city'. This study has utilized mainly textual analysis methods while the source of information comes from government and Legislative Council documents, personal participation experiences and references from foreign cases.

Hong Kong's External Relations and International Status

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This paper suggests that Beijing has shaped and modified the role of Hong Kong in international relations after the handover. Before the handover, Hong Kong helped China in breaking international isolation, while the West regarded Hong Kong as a strategic enclave in promoting market economy and democracy. But in recent years, apart from tightening political control over Hong Kong for resisting foreign interference, Beijing has also made use of Hong Kong to conduct China's public diplomacy. First, a former Chief Executive of Hong Kong, Tung Chee Hwa has engaged with international mass media in explaining the rise of China. Second, the China-United States Exchange Foundation, a think tank in Hong Kong plans and offers

various levels of exchanges between Beijing and Washington. Third, Hong Kong has been assigned a messenger role by China in dealing with track II diplomacy. For examples, the Hong Kong government's diverging attitudes towards Taiwan's Kuomintang and Democratic Progressive Party send a warning to the pro-independence forces there. Besides, the meeting of Fidel Ramos, a former President of the Philippines and Fu Ying, the Chairman of Foreign Affairs Committee of National People's Congress in Hong Kong show that Hong Kong could be an ideal place for negotiation when both got stuck in the disputes of South China Sea. In addition, the seizure of Singapore's armoured vehicles by Hong Kong Customs suggests that Beijing was provoked by the Lion City's assertive statements in criticizing Chinese reclamation in South China Sea. This paper concludes that Hong Kong's international status has been changed after the handover as Beijing becomes more suspicious to foreign influences in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, the Chinese leaders could utilize Hong Kong to enhance its discursive power and image in international community, and more importantly to deliver track II diplomacy without threatening the formal relationship between China and other countries if the political gesture or negotiation cannot work out properly.

Asylum Seekers in Hong Kong Since the Handover

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South Asian and African asylum seekers began coming to Hong Kong in the wake of 9/11 and the tightening of visa restrictions in other developed countries; Hong Kong has become a significant initial destination for asylum seekers from Asian and African countries (but not China). Over these years, only a very tiny percentage of asylum seekers have been granted refugee status either through the UNHCR or through the Hong Kong government itself, enabling them to eventually be resettled in the United States or Canada. Some asylum seekers whose claims are rejected are deported back to their home countries, but most appeal their cases, and wait in limbo in Hong Kong, often for many years. Asylum seekers are granted a small stipend from the Hong Kong government in rent subsidy and food rations, but are prohibited from working. However, because this stipend is not enough to live on, most asylum seekers work illegally at jobs that pay little. Hong Kong treats its asylum seekers somewhat better than most East Asian societies, but its asylum seeker policy seems perversely designed to encourage a long-term illegal labor pool in Hong Kong. In this paper, based on my interactions with asylum seekers over the past twelve years in classes I have been teaching in Hong Kong's Chungking Mansions, and in my extended interviews with twenty-two long-term asylum seekers in Hong Kong, I will trace out the history of asylum seeking in Hong Kong. I will show how the 10,000 or so asylum seekers in Hong Kong, waiting in the city indefinitely, have paradoxically become a symbol of Hong Kong's internationalization—its non-Chineseness.

Cultural Activism in Hong Kong

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When looking at the political evolution of Hong Kong since the handover, the anti-article 23 protests in 2003 are often highlighted as a watershed for the growth of civil society. However, in a less immediately political area, the years after 2003 also saw the inception of what came to be known as the Heritage protection movement (保育運動). The milestones of the movement include campaigns to resist the redevelopment of Lee Tung

Street (Wedding card Street, Wanchai in 2004-2007), of Star Ferry and Queen's Pier (2007), of Shek Kip Mei public housing estate, of the Blue House in Wanchai, of Ngau Tau Kok Estate, and of Choi Yuen Tsuen village (2010), making place for the high speed rail line. A loose group called Local Action (本土行動) was set up in 2006, and other groups followed.

This paper proposes to look at the impact of cultural activism on Hong Kong politics and Hong Kong identity. In particular, it will be highlighted that the post-handover heritage protests illustrated a new understanding of the Hong Kong community, defined not only by a protest against productivism and technocratic urban planning, but also by an alternative historical narrative (Halbwachs's "collective memory") of Hong Kong. In this sense, the heritage protection movement may retrospectively be seen as a defining moment in shaping the values of a new generation of activists.

Why Do Low-Income Citizens Support the HKSAR Government?

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Conventional wisdom suggests that the coalition of support for the HKSAR government consists primarily of a coterie of the real estate elite, who has stood in the way of the city's struggle for democratization. In this article, I argue that the HKSAR government has derived its political support not only from the real estate elite, but also from many low-income citizens. Using two distinct public opinion surveys, I show that low-income citizens are more satisfied with the economic status quo, more proud of the political institutions, more in favor of the Chinese identity, and less likely to vote for the pro-democracy opposition. The results may seem puzzling because the HKSAR government has been (in)famous for its hostility toward welfare. I provide a political-economy explanation for this puzzle.

Imposing to be a New Hong Konger: Discursive Construction of Chinese Hong Kong in the Re-colonial Hong Kong

Wai-Kwok Benson Wong, GIS, Hong Kong Baptist University

The term "new Hong Kongers" comes from a commentary published in *People's Daily* in October 2013, highlighting that new immigrants from mainland China, carrying 40% of the Hong Kong's population, have become pillars in the major occupations and professions in Hong Kong, and implying that they are getting influential on local society with the passage of time. Based on the official discourse, they have contributed to society, but they are discriminated by the local people. In this paper, how and why new Hong Kongers come into being, the discursive formation of new Hong Kongers with reference to publications of the printed media, and premises, languages and implications behind will be examined. As a political project of meaning construction, "new Hong Kongers" can also be contextualized and connected with how "new" can actually be regarded as the process of political and cultural sinicization, aiming to marginalize and even eliminate the indigenous culture and practices, then undergoing recolonization in the long term.

Social Stratification and Social Mobility in Hong Kong since the 1997 Handover: Changing Opportunities? More Equality?

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It is believed that the system of social stratification in Hong Kong and its patterns of social mobility have changed since the handover two decades ago in 1997. The aim of this paper is twofold. First, by referring to a 2007 mobility dataset, together with a number of relevant statistics on income, occupation, and education, this paper seeks to offer an overview of changes in social stratification – thus opportunities for social mobility – in the first twenty years of the post-handover era of Hong Kong. Second, this paper attempts to discuss the equality of the distribution of opportunities for social mobility during the same period.

Since the 1997 handover, the Gini coefficient of Hong Kong has been on the rise and what has just been released (for 2016) is a new high 0.539. This trend does not merely mean that the wealth distribution in Hong Kong has become increasingly unequal skewed to the rich, but also suggests that it become more and more difficult for the younger generations to get ahead in Hong Kong. Their difficulties should be made sense of against a changing system of social stratification (by occupation as well as by income) whereby the younger generations seem to be facing a more limited set of occupational choices with such harsher conditions as a lower level of wages. In particular, whereas some new skilled or professional jobs emerge in the so-called digital era for a more educated generation, a great number of semi- or un-skilled manual jobs have gone with a shrinking, if not disappearing, manufacturing sector. Opportunities for work are essentially confined to few industries; and, temporary/contractual/part-time jobs rather than permanent/tenured/full-time jobs have become more common. Although the blockage of getting ahead through a salaried occupation could be compensated by the option of becoming one's own boss, the existing policies on hawkers and minimum wages alongside with soaring rents damage the desirability and feasibility of such an occupational option.

An analysis of the 2007 mobility dataset by cohort shows that there are structural opportunities for the younger generations to get ahead; but, whether such structural opportunities could be taken advantage of depends very much on one's class background: the more advantaged one's class background is the more likely one takes advantage of such opportunity. Put simply, opportunities for social mobility are unequally distributed within a class differentiated system of social stratification. And, the pathway of getting ahead seems restricted essentially to obtaining a gainfully paid professional/managerial/administrative occupation, rather than running one's own business. Given that a gainfully paid professional/managerial/administrative occupation usually requires a relatively high formal qualification, this paper speculates that qualification and thus formal education will become crucial to grasping structural opportunities for getting ahead. Available data and the prevailing educational policy of the Direct Subsidy Scheme seem to suggest that mobility through education is working to the favour of students of the advantaged class; this surely confirms further that opportunities for social mobility are unequally distributed, and also suggests that social mobility become more institutionalized.

Why Identity, not inequality? Political Activism of Precarious Youth in Hong Kong

Wai-Hei Samson Yuen, Department of Political Science, Lingnan University

Post-handover Hong Kong has witnessed intense cycles of popular protests in which the local youth has played an important, if not indispensable, role. From the heritage preservation movements of 2005-2007 to the Fishball Revolution of 2016, young people had stood at the forefront of political activism in the semi-autonomous city, fighting for new rights, defending against unpopular government policies and questioning the democratic deficit of the hybrid political system. But while economic precarity exerts a growing impact on the life course of the local youth, it is important to observe that these youth-led contention have been framed increasingly as struggles for political identity, but less so as class-based protests against inequality and precarity. Why, and how, does this phenomenon occur? By revisiting survey data and drawing on interviews, this article aims to provide explanations as to why class issues never became salient in recent episodes of contention. Although such explanations may not be definitive and conclusive, they might offer some clues to account for the rise of identity-based and nationalist contention on the global level.