“From the Battle for Democracy to the Battle for Hong Kong”: John Tsang and the Rise of Localism

by

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Introduction

On March 24, 2017—two days ahead of Hong Kong's sixth leadership contest known as the Chief Executive election, tens of thousands of people swarmed into Edinburgh Square in Central and the adjacent multi-stories parking lot—all in the hopes of catching a glimpse of John Tsang, a candidate in the race. At around 6:30 in the evening, Tsang arrived at the Square on an open top double-decker to cheers and much jubilation and delivered an emotional speech that called for "giving a new meaning" to Lung Wo Road and Connaught Road (next to him), where protesters staged an occupation of the streets in 2014 during the city’s largest democratic protest—known as the Umbrella Movement—for the universal suffrage of the Chief Executive.\(^1\) In attempting to redefine a space that had hitherto borne democratic meaning, Tsang implied that the city's democratic agenda should be set aside. The crowd appeared to be receptive to his message as they chanted on for his victory.

Such a scene was nothing short of the peculiar. In the first place, Hong Kong had never seen a Chief Executive candidate stage a campaign rally; what is more, the number of people in attendance was staggering considering that very few of them had the right to vote in the closed election. Since Hong Kong's return to China in 1997 from British colonial rule under "One Country, Two Systems"—a constitutional arrangement that ensured Hong Kong's separate executive, legislative, legal and economic systems from China—the city's leader had been selected every five years

by an election committee that comprises of 1200 people (800 before 2012), a majority of whom were Beijing loyalists who voted according to the Chinese Central Government's preferences. In effect, the election became a rubberstamp process that formalized Beijing's pick, which accounted for the public's previous lack of interest in the Chief Executive election as it wielded little influence in the result of the race.

But Tsang's popularity was also peculiar in another way—many of Tsang's supporters were democrats even though Tsang espoused opposing conservative beliefs. Since the handover, democrats of the city have sought to expand the government’s representation to fulfill the Basic Law’s (a constitutional document drafted in accordance to “One Country, Two Systems”) promise for people to enjoy the rights to elect their Chief Executive and the legislature. Their efforts culminated in the Umbrella Movement in 2014, a democratic movement that demanded “genuine universal suffrage” for the Chief Executive. On several occasions, however, Tsang expressed his support for a directive issued by the Chinese Central Government’s Standing Committee of the National People's Congress on August 31, 2014—the very mandate that restricted the representation of future Chief Executive elections and drove many people to participate in the Umbrella Movement the same year—and then opposed the democratic movement as it unfolded. In spite of that, Tsang's popularity remained unscathed. In January 2017 when he announced his candidacy, he was already the most popular candidate among democrats with 59.6% saying that they

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supported him; this figure rose to 72.9% days before the election in March. In response to public opinion, the three hundred pan-democratic members of the election committee even decided to vote for Tsang as a bloc a few days ahead of the election. In light of this, my thesis attempts to understand why John Tsang was such a successful candidate among democrats despite his conservative views.

The existing literature has different explanations for John Tsang's rise. One group of scholars and critics compared Tsang to Carrie Lam, another pro-establishment candidate in the race, and believed that the former was more adept at connecting with the public through his campaign. Hui and Jiu, for instance, argue that Tsang was better at portraying himself as the people's person through his Facebook posts, while Lam gave off an impression of aloofness, best exemplified by her refusal to set up a Facebook page to engage with younger people. Ma corroborates this view by arguing that Lam did not need to mobilize public support because there were signs that she was Beijing's favorite early on in the race. In contrast, Tsang must acquire public support to have a chance on influencing Beijing's decision, thereby accounting for a campaign that emphasized the people's participation. While these articles explain Lam's relative unpopularity, they only suggest that Tsang was what some

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6 Ma, Ngok, “兩種不同的威權想像 [Two ways of Imagining Authority]” Pentoy (2017), https://www.pentoy.hk/%E5%85%A9%E7%A8%AE%E4%B8%8D%E5%90%8C%E7%9A%84%E5%A8%81%E6%AC%8A%E6%83%B3%E5%83%8F/.
democrats consider as "the lesser of two evils". Such an argument, however, completely ignores Woo Kwok-Hing, the third candidate in the race, who received little support (only 13.8% of democrats said they supported him in March\(^8\)) even though his political beliefs were most in line with the pro-democratic camp—presumably the least of all evils.

A different group of writers point to Tsang's intention to mend social divides and his invocation of the idea of "recuperation" under a political climate of weariness as the sources of his popularity. As both Chan and Choi note, the Umbrella Movement's failure to achieve electoral reforms for the Chief Executive election meant that the entire democratic movement suffered from a period of low morale and even stagnation, as reflected by the lack of participation in democratic demonstrations after 2014. Against this mood of political fatigue, Tsang's invocation of society's need to "recuperate" was appealing to democrats, who preferred a less contentious political atmosphere.\(^9\) The article "Looking back at the 'John Tsang Phenomenon' at the End of the Race: Interviewing Fans of John Tsang" supports Chan and Choi's conclusion, as several of the interviewed supporters expressed that they were growing increasingly tired of the deep divisions in society and desired a break from politics; some even agreed with Tsang's intention to set aside the democratic agenda in exchange for more

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social harmony. Although these articles correctly point to political weariness as a widely felt emotion in the wake of the Umbrella Movement, they fail to explicate a clear link between the political mood of weariness and democrats' willingness to abandon their long-held democratic principles. More than that, Tsang was not alone in identifying political fatigue as the prevailing political climate—both Lam and Woo also noticed the fragmented political landscape and ran on a platform to mend social polarization. In view of that, these articles were unable to explain how Tsang's invocation of recuperation was more persuasive than his opponents'.

A third and final group of scholars argue that Tsang received the most support from democrats because he portrayed himself to be on the side of Hong Kong, as opposed to Beijing. Both Yip and Ng et al., for instance, mention examples of Tsang supporting the Hong Kong team during a football match against China when he was still the Financial Secretary or when he praised localism (later defined) in Hong Kong as a potential force of good as evidence of his pro-Hong Kong stance. Yip further comments that Tsang's willingness to sometimes veer away from Beijing's line (especially his conciliatory approach to young locals) made him a proper

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10 “退潮之際，回望曾俊華現象 — 訪「薯仔」與「薯粉」[Reviewing the “John Tsang Phenomena” at the End of the Race: Interviewing Fans of John Tsang].” Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E9%80%80%E6%BD%AE%E4%B9%8B%E9%9A%9B-%E5%9B%9E%E6%9C%BB%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1-%E8%A8%AA-%E8%96%AF%E4%BB%94-%E8%88%87-%E8%96%AF%E7%B2%89/.

11 Yip, Kin-Man, “曾俊華現象：溫和政治的完美示範 [The John Tsang Phenomenon: The Perfect Example of Moderate Politics]” Pentoy (2017), https://www.pentoy.hk/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1%E F%BC%9A%E6%BA%AB%E5%92%8C%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E7%9A%84%E5%AE%8C %E7%BE%8E%E7%8A%A8%E7%AF%84/ and Kang-Chung Ng, Emily Tsang, Gary Cheung, "The Remaking of Financial Chief John Tsang into 'Local Hong Kong Boy'” South China Morning Post (2016), http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/politics/article/2054000/remaking-financial-chief-john-tsang-local-hong-kong-boy.
"messenger of Hong Kong". The article "Why John Tsang did it but not Path of Democracy", which featured an interview with Yuen Lei-Cheung, a member of Tsang's campaign team, confirmed Yip and Ng et al.'s views. As Yuen explained in the interview, Tsang intentionally mobilized cultural symbols of Hong Kong during his campaign to gain the trust of the people—something he coined as "decent populism" that enabled Tsang to reach across partisan lines for support. Like authors of the last group, however, these scholars also fail to clearly explain the connection between Tsang's mobilization of Hong Kong's cultural identity and democrats’ willingness to abandon their democratic claims.

In sum, the three groups of articles were insufficient to understand the "John Tsang Phenomenon" because they only attempt to explain Tsang's popularity in terms of his campaign activities without investigating the wider context that made democrats willing to desert their democratic agenda in support of a conservative candidate. My thesis fills this research gap and contextualizes John Tsang's success. I argue that John Tsang’s rise was emblematic of the wider shift in Hong Kong’s political landscape from democrats’ traditional fight for democracy to their new struggle to protect Hong Kong’s local identity. Since the city’s handover to China from British rule in 1997 to 2014, the democratic movement had been detached from

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12 Yip, Kin-Man, “曾任港現象：溫和政治的完美示範 [The John Tsang Phenomenon: The Perfect Example of Moderate Politics]” Pentoy (2017), [https://www.pentoy.hk/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1%E F%BC%9A%E6%BA%AB%E5%91%92%8C%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E7%9A%84%E5%AE%8C %E7%BE%8E%E7%A4%BA%E7%AF%84/](https://www.pentoy.hk/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1%E F%BC%9A%E6%BA%AB%E5%91%92%8C%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E7%9A%84%E5%AE%8C %E7%BE%8E%E7%A4%BA%E7%AF%84/).

13 "為何曾俊華做到 民主思路做不到 [Why John Tsang did it but not Path of Democracy]” Standnews (2017), [https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E4%B8%AD%E9%96%93%E9%81%93- %E7%82%BA%E4%BD%95%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E5%81%9A%E5%88%B 0-%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E6%80%9D%E8%B7%AF%E5%81%9A%E4%B8%8D%E5%88%B0/](https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E4%B8%AD%E9%96%93%E9%81%93-%E7%82%BA%E4%BD%95%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E5%81%9A%E5%88%B0-%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E6%80%9D%E8%B7%AF%E5%81%9A%E4%B8%8D%E5%88%B0/).
the development of the local identity because democrats did not have a narrative of a distinct Hong Kong self. In 2014, the Umbrella Movement became as much a localist project concerned with identity creation as it was a democratic movement, as it created for Hong Kong a new civic identity alongside demands for the universal suffrage of the city’s leader. In the wake of the movement, democrats adopted a localist outlook and became more concerned with protecting Hong Kong’s identity, thereby marking a shift from “the battle for democracy to a battle for Hong Kong”14. At this time, new narratives of the Hong Kong identity pervaded society and even competed with the dominance of the Umbrella Movement’s civic identity. This created the space for John Tsang to produce a compelling representation of Hong Kong that successfully appealed to democrats without necessarily invoking their democratic claims. This thesis, therefore, attempts to understand Tsang’s rise by charting the development of localism since its beginnings in 2006 to 2017, when the Chief Executive election transpired.

My understanding of localism draws on Benedict Anderson and Stuart Hall's insights on nationalism and national identity. Anderson argues that the nation is an "imagined political community—and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign."15 The imaginary aspect of the nation suggests that it is a shared idea among its people and is "constructed and conveyed in discourse, predominantly in narratives of national culture."16 For this reason, Hall describes the nation as a

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14 Ibid.
"system of cultural representations,"\textsuperscript{17} whereby "representation" is the product of the "continuous play of history, culture and power."\textsuperscript{18} Identities are consequently formed when people participate in the representations of the nation.\textsuperscript{19} This reveals three important features of identity: in the first place, because representations are continuously produced and reproduced, national identities are also fluid processes—rather than essentialized entities—that transform according to the changes of the nation’s representations. Identity is, then, "a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past."\textsuperscript{20} In addition to that, the ongoing nature of identity suggests that it is also decentralized, as different representations of the nation can exist at the same time to compete with or influence one another. This follows that identities are inherently political because "an exercise of power is always present in representations,"\textsuperscript{21} whereby political actors can create different narrative contents and adopt strategies to promote their own portrayal of the nation.\textsuperscript{22} Finally, because representations are an exercise of power against another, there is always a politics of "marking of difference and exclusion."\textsuperscript{23} Identities are thus always defined negatively against the Other to create "positive" meaning for themselves.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{17} Quote from Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{18} Hall, Stuart, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in 書寫我城: 香港的身份與文化 [Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity], ed. Pun Ngai 潘毅,余麗文 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2003), 10.
\textsuperscript{20} Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, 10.
\textsuperscript{22} Woodak et al., The Discursive Construction of National Identity, 30.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 4-5.
On the basis of Anderson and Hall's contributions to the literature of nationalism and national identity, I arrive at the conclusion that localism is conceptually similar to nationalism. Localism is nationalism minus the claim to nationhood and takes a locality as the unit of its imagination. While nationalism is the project to imagine the nation and produces national identities, localism imagines the locality and produces local identities. This definition of localism is different from the Hong Kong media's usage of the term, which suggests localism to be the xenophobic movements against Mainland Chinese. While such a movement is indeed a localist movement, it is only one branch of localism that produces one of many representations of what the Hong Kong identity entails. My definition is also different from some scholars' application of the term, which considers localism to be a result of globalization and the international economic order taking localities and regions, rather than nations, as the units of economic production, thereby producing "new dynamics of re-localization". 

As Robins argues, "globalization is like putting together a jigsaw puzzle: it is a matter of inserting a multiplicity of localities into the overall picture of a new global system." Although globalization—a process that is especially apparent in the increasing economic integration between Hong Kong and China—does contribute to the rise of localism in Hong Kong, I treat it only as part of the reason for the emergence of some localist narratives. For instance, I mention in chapter one that increasing economic integration with China has heightened awareness and recognition of Hong Kong's hitherto "unnoticed" culture; and in

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26 Ibid., 34.
chapter three, I point to Hong Kong's socio-economic assimilation with China as a reason for some localists to mobilize xenophobic movements against Mainland Chinese people.

As localism denotes a process of identity creation, the following four chapters chronologically describe the creation of different representations of Hong Kong. Chapter One traces the beginnings of localism from 2006. It argues that localism began out of an urge to reinvent the Hong Kong identity because previous economic and political representations of the city were no longer persuasive with the changes of socio-political circumstances. Localism took on political potentials and evolved into three major processes: it interrogated the city's colonial past, the entrenched capitalist system and Chinese nationalism. At this stage, Hong Kong’s localist movement remained marginal and separate from the city’s struggles for democracy. This changed during the Umbrella Movement as I discuss in Chapter Two. I argue that the Umbrella Movement became as much a localist project as it was a democratic event because it merged the process of identity creation with the city’s democratic claims.

During the movement, demands for the universal suffrage of the Chief Executive were coupled with claims for self-determination, a call that presupposed the creation of the Hong Kong social self. The protesters' ability to organize themselves and practice their desired form of participatory democracy during the 79 days of occupation demonstrated that Hong Kong's identity emerged out of people's continuous participation in the civic process. In short, the Umbrella Movement was a process of civic localism. I argue in Chapter Three that Hong Kong's civic identity was contested in the wake of the Umbrella Movement. The Umbrella Movement's
failure to achieve its democratic goals or its calls for self-determination created uncertain prospects for Hong Kong's identity. To protect the claims for self-determination, some localists looked for a more definite identity and created new narratives of Hong Kong as an ethnicity—a kind of ethnic localism—that effectively played down the civic elements of the city's identity. This reflected the transformation of Hong Kong’s fight for democracy into a wider struggle to protect its identity, thereby creating the context for John Tsang’s rise in Chapter Four. Tsang became popular among democrats (who were now also localists after the Umbrella Movement) at a time when the city's civic identity lost its dominance due to its competition with other narratives. This created the possibilities for Tsang to mobilize an apolitical and depoliticized Hong Kong identity that did not need to draw from the civic elements of the city's identity, but could at the same time mobilize support from the pan-democratic camp—a process I coin as “conservative localism”. Tsang’s conservative localism was proof that the shift from the “battle for democracy to the battle for Hong Kong” had taken place.

A word on my methodology. I share Ma's skepticism on some scholars' empirical research on localism.27 Many of these researchers conduct surveys that ask individuals to categorize themselves either as Hong Kong people, Chinese, or in between, and conclude that a rising number of self-identifying Hong Kong people denotes a rise of the local identity.28 As Ma points out, these surveys assume that the

Hong Kong and Chinese identities are fixed entities when they are, in fact, ongoing processes, and fail to reveal which representations of China or Hong Kong individuals are identifying with. Rather than approaching the subject of localism through empirical research, I evaluate narratives of the Hong Kong identity by considering their contents and ways they are mobilized. As my primary sources, I draw on a wide selection of articles, books, documentaries, interviews, televised debates, opinion pieces, Facebook posts, campaign advertisements and discourse during social movements to inform myself of the contents and evolution of different narratives. My secondary sources include social theories and political analyses to help me better understand the strategies as to how political actors shape their narratives and mobilize popular support for their representations of Hong Kong. Ultimately, this thesis attempts to survey different narratives through various sources to substantiate my central claim that Hong Kong has shifted away from its battle for democracy to a new battle for the city’s local identity.

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29 Ma, “Grassroots Nationalism”, 150.
Chapter One

The Beginnings of Localism

I. Introduction

In 2006, the Hong Kong public observed in intrigue as a group of people occupied the Star Ferry Pier, a historical landmark in the heart of town, to resist the government’s decision to demolish it. The preservation movement was an anomaly in Hong Kong’s history of activism—it was one of the first notable activist campaigns after Hong Kong’s handover to China in 1997 that did not arise from political issues surrounding democratization or universal suffrage, but instead emerged from the cultural sphere. Scholars and social commentators have since dubbed the 2006 movement as the beginning of localism in Hong Kong.¹

The emergence of localism in 2006 denoted the urge to reinvent representations of the Hong Kong identity, which underwent waves of changes in the past. In the 1970’s, the first wave, people began to strongly identify with the city's economic success and perceived themselves as "economic animals" who only possessed a materialistic outlook in life and showed disinterest in politics. In the 1980's, the second wave, the economic narrative became less persuasive when people were increasingly concerned with the political arrangements of Hong Kong's return to China in 1997. Around this time, Hong Kong was said to embody certain "core values", including such components as democracy, freedom and the rule of law. The

two identities, as this chapter argues, were constructs of the colonial government that favored its rule in Hong Kong: the "economic animal" identity, to begin with, promoted a vision of society that was depoliticized, which minimized political challenges to the colonial administration; and the "core values" narrative was heavily invoked by the colonial government to mask the lack thereof for most of the city's history. As constructs from the top, these identities often carried their own agendas at the expense of ignoring social realities and representing Hong Kong inaccurately. While accuracy is not the concern here\(^2\), these depictions of the people became less persuasive over time with the changes in socio-political circumstances. In 2003, for instance, a major protest exposed how Hong Kong's economic and political identities became unpersuasive in describing who Hong Kong people were: the apolitical economic animal failed to account for the huge turnout in the demonstration, and the core values were limited because they only represented a fraction of what people believed in. In short, old identities lost their certainty and stability.

As the previous top-down identities failed to create persuasive representations of Hong Kong, there was an increasing urge from some people to create new narratives of the city. The context of the first localist movement in 2006 thus emerged. Localists turned to Hong Kong’s culture, a sphere largely ignored for most of the city's history, for ingredients to reinvent new identities for the people. From 2006 to 2014 (when the Umbrella Movement occurred), localism evolved into three

\(^2\) As Anderson argued, “Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.” (Quote from Hall, Stuart, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in [Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity], ed. Pun Ngai 潘毅,余麗文 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2003), 22).
main processes: it interrogated the city’s colonial history, its entrenched capitalist way of development, and an older generation’s attachment to Chinese nationalism.

This chapter is divided into four parts: the first and second part respectively introduces Hong Kong’s economic and political identities and the reasons for their creation and perpetuation; the third part explains how the two identities became unpersuasive in the aftermath of a major protest in 2003; and the fourth part traces the rise of localism since 2006 and details the three said interrogative processes.

II. Hong Kong's Economic Identity

A number of scholars believe that refugees and immigrants who fled to Hong Kong from the Mainland developed their consciousness as “Hong Kong people” at the turn of the 1960’s. For the most part, this was a result of the city’s economic transformation from an industrial economy to a financial center in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s, which saw people enjoy a period of increased upward mobility and rising living conditions. Between 1971 and 1981, Hong Kong’s GDP per capita grew by five times when it was only 2.8 times the previous decade. The people’s freedom and ability to consume also became a common experience for many in the city; for this reason, Turner remarks that the Hong Kong identity of this period was an identity of lifestyle and "a shared recognition of similar self-images." By the 1990s, for instance, the “1992 Middle Class Study” found that most respondents, regardless of their class positions, believed in “personal efforts to achieve success and accepted the

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3 See Lui, Tai-Lok, “Check please!”: A Sociologist’s Notes on Hong Kong (Hong Kong: Xian Ren Hang Publisher, 1997); and Ng, Chun-hung, “In Search of the Local Consciousness” in Studies on Hong Kong’s Popular Culture Vol.II, ed. Ng Chun Hung and Sze Man-Hung (Hong Kong Humanities Press, 1997).


5 Turner, Matthew, “60s/90s: Dissolving the People” in 畫寫我城: 香港的身份與文化 [Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity], ed. Pun Ngai 潘毅.余麗文 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2003), 35.
rules of fierce races for a higher status based upon competition”—a reflection that Hong Kong people approved of the city’s economic system.

The general public’s acceptance of Hong Kong’s economic framework, at the same time, led to many people’s self-perception as economic animals who were only concerned with their economic livelihood and were uninterested in political affairs—a characteristic that was said to have allowed for years of social stability upon which the economy thrived. Several scholars since the 1970’s have made such an argument. Hoadley (1970), for instance, attributes Hong Kong's stability to the “refugee mentality”—the idea that people preferred to stay out of politics because they had just fled war-torn China as refugees and tended to associate politics with conflicts and trouble. Similarly, Lau (1978) argues that Hong Kong society was “inward-looking, self-contained and atomistic…with apolitical orientations and low potentials for political mobilization.” Lau attributes this view of society to “utilitarian familism”, the idea that people were materialistic and economically driven but were, at the same time, attached to family, rather than individualistic, values. The parochial nature of individuals resulted in a “minimally-integrated socio-political system”, whereby society and politics were separated from one another. Together, therefore, Hoadley and Lau participated in the representation of the people as inherently materialistic and depoliticized.

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6 Lui, Tai-Lok, "Rearguard politics: Hong Kong's middle class." The developing economies 41, no. 2 (2003), 172.
7 Hoadley, Stephen J., "'Hong Kong Is the Lifeboat': Notes on Political Culture and Socialization" Journals of Oriental Studies 8 (1970), 211.
9 Ibid., 99.
In so characterizing Hong Kong people, however, these scholars fail to take into account the government’s role in perpetuating Hong Kong's economic identity. After World War II, the colonial government had an interest in cultivating a depoliticized society to keep Chinese nationalists in check at a time when waves of decolonization movements were unfolding elsewhere in the world, and more so to prevent Hong Kong from descending into a battleground between the Chinese Communist Party and the nationalist Kuomintang, which threatened to destabilize the city. The government, for example, designed an education system that was stripped of political contents, whereby schools and textbooks were forbidden from discussing political issues. On top of that, the history syllabus only informed students of the city's social and economic development and omitted its political history; the Chinese history subject altogether avoided political topics on modern China and instead encouraged students to identify with traditional Chinese culture and Confucian values. Aside from education, opportunities for political participation remained limited. Until 1984 when the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed, the entire legislature consisted only of governor-appointed members. Without broad representation, the government adopted a consultative mode of governance in the 1970's to achieve "consensus government", which efficiently dealt with social (instead of political)

grievances at the local level with such institutions as the City District Offices. Consequently, the government was able to appease political demands by efficiently and effectively addressing social ones.

Besides fostering a depoliticized atmosphere, the government also actively took part in the discourse against political activism. Contrary to Hoadley and Lau's observations, activism was a common occurrence in the post-World War II era—these included communist influenced movements (the 1967 riots), pro-Republic of China protests (the 1956 riots), nationalist movements (Defend the Diaoyu Island protests in 1970), and activism against government policies (the campaign against telephone rates increase in 1964 and the 1966 riots against the rise in the ticket price of the Star Ferry). During most of these movements, the government and its supporting institutions (like pro-government newspapers) often invoked the narrative of depoliticization to discursively confront activism and deter political participation. The narrative, for instance, stigmatized protesters as "troublemakers" who deviated from the norm of the apolitical Hong Kong person, denounced radicalism as unfit for social stability and emphasized the importance of observing the law even when conducting protests. In all these instances, the narrative invoked activism's threat to stability (hence prosperity) as an argument to silence activists and resonate with a public that valued economic progress highly. For this reason, Lam believes that the government’s acts to depoliticize "became acts to participate politically and discursively."16

14 Lam, Wai-man, Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization (London and New York: Routledge, 2015), 2.
15 Ibid., 139 & 184.
16 Ibid., 225.
The government's narrative of depoliticization not only led many into perceiving themselves as economic animals, but also cultivated the idea that political development could not coexist with social stability and economic prosperity. The narrative’s enduring presence in contemporary Hong Kong was reflected in a survey conducted in 2001, in which less than one-fifth of the respondents thought democracy was more important than economic development. In the same survey, less than 2% of respondents felt that they were able to understand and participate in politics—a reflection that most people had internalized the narrative of depoliticization and saw a high mental entry barrier to political participation, as it involved deviating from the norm of the economic animal.

III. Hong Kong's Political Identity

At the onset of the 1980's, the portrayal of Hong Kong people as apolitical and economically driven became less persuasive, especially after the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984—an agreement between Britain and China that decided on the arrangements of Hong Kong's handover to China in 1997. Discussions on Hong Kong's future constitutional and political arrangements pervaded society because, for the first time in the city's history, the people were promised the right to elect their own Chief Executive and legislature. The previously politically evasive colonial government introduced indirect elections to the Legislative Council for the first time in 1985 to prepare Hong Kong for democracy, whereby half the seats were

18 Ibid., 14.
Functional Constituencies—representatives elected by their own industries and professional interest groups—and the other half consisted of directly elected members from the District Boards and Municipal Council (the city’s version of local government). Political groups subsequently mushroomed in numbers and demands for government to further expand representation in the legislature became increasingly boisterous. At this stage, democracy was woven into Hong Kong people's political vocabulary.

It was not until 1992 when Christopher Patten became Hong Kong's last governor that the city's core values took its rudimentary form. Patten was especially concerned with democratization in Hong Kong, believing that it was his duty to honor the Joint Declaration by ensuring genuine democratic progress in the city. As he writes in his memoir, he was “not prepared to do China’s dirty work by curtailing Hong Kong’s freedom and democratic development” but instead intended to “stick firmly to the Joint Declaration.” In his first policy address in 1992, for instance, Patten articulated the four cornerstones of Hong Kong: the market economy, the freedom of the individual, the rule of law and democratic representation—ideas that he would constantly invoke during his five years as governor. Later in 1994, he expanded the legislature’s representativeness by redefining the Functional Constituencies, which he thought unfairly favored business interests, as the voter base of some FC seats was confined to only a few corporate bodies. Patten consequently added nine new

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functional constituencies in the election of 1995 and expanded the political franchise from a few thousand companies to 2.7 million people. Ultimately, Patten's electoral reforms provided the people with the experience of a freer and fairer election and the opportunity to enjoy their civil liberties as promised by the Joint Declaration. This consolidated people’s identification with the core values, but at the same time enraged China. Director Lu Ping of the Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, for instance, expressed his disapproval of Patten’s reforms and even labeled him “a person that will be condemned by history” in a press conference.

In spite of China’s objections, Hong Kong people readily accepted Patten’s “core values”, as it provided the language to protect Hong Kong from China's impending and likely assimilation. The threat of assimilation grew especially strong in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989, which saw Chinese troops suppressing democratic demonstrations and killing protesters in Beijing and other cities. To many who witnessed scenes of the incident on television, the Chinese government’s brutality epitomized the differences between Hong Kong and China’s political cultures—on the one hand, Hong Kong embodied capitalism, democracy, human rights, and freedom; and on the other hand, China stood for socialism, democratic backwardness, and the lack of human rights and freedom. These perceived differences undermined Hong Kong people's trust towards the Chinese government and propelled widespread fear that Beijing would backtrack on the promises it made in the Sino-British Joint Declaration to preserve

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25 Patten, East and West, 69.
the city’s freedom and push for continued democratic progress. When a million Hong Kong people subsequently marched on the streets as the student protests in Beijing unfolded, it was as much a demonstration to support student protesters in Beijing, as it was an expression of the people's unease for their political future. Seen in this light, Patten's clear articulation of the core values, introduced a few years later, were timely in setting the inviolable benchmarks for Hong Kong's political culture—the people were only too happy to accept them as their political identity.

As a colonial construct, however, the core values came with their limitations. In representing Hong Kong's identity as a limited set of values, Patten either unintentionally ignored or deliberately concealed the historical realities of Hong Kong. In the first place, the core values—the market economy, democracy, freedom and the rule of law—masked the lack thereof for most of Hong Kong's history. Patten often referred to the core values as “bedrock principles” and “self-evident and universal truths”, which gave the impression that they were society’s deeply entrenched values and had existed since time immemorial.27 Hong Kong's history says otherwise: democratic progress only began with the first legislative election in 1985 and sped up with Patten's electoral reforms in 1995; society was not entirely free as such institutions as schools and the press were barred from discussing politically sensitive issues; and widespread corruption before the 1970's reflected the weakness of the rule of law. In adopting the core values as an identity, therefore, most tended to forget that these values, especially democracy, were of a recent—or as Flowerdew argues, a “mythic”—creation.28 More than that, the core values were a

28 Ibid., 461.
foreign import precisely because Hong Kong people were never given the right to determine themselves and their own values—even the negotiations preceding the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 that discussed Hong Kong's future ironically excluded representatives from Hong Kong. For this reason, Tambling comments that "Hong Kong has been given an identity with which to identify itself." Or rather, Hong Kong has been provided with an identity because it was never given the rights to determine its own. Seen in this light, the core values masked the people’s lack of right to self-determination.

IV. The July 1st Protest in 2003

On July 1 2003, the six year anniversary of Hong Kong’s handover to China, the Civil Human Rights Front organized a half a million people-strong protest against the government's proposed legislation of the National Security Bill, which prohibited acts of "treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government." Many believed that the bill was an intrusion of their personal liberties and human rights, as it enabled the administration to arbitrarily suppress activism and criticisms against the Chinese government. More than that, the bill was perceived to reflect China’s desire to assimilate Hong Kong by curtailing the latter’s political autonomy and eliminating the city’s separate political identity. At the same time, however, the protest led to the gradual discovery that Hong Kong's previous economic and political identities were no longer persuasive and sufficient.

29 Wong, Thomas W.P., “Colonial Governance and the Hong Kong Story” in 傳寫我城: 香港的身份與文化 [Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity], ed. Pun Ngai 潘毅,余麗文 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2003), 228.
representations of the people. For one, the representation of Hong Kong people as apolitical and economically driven became less persuasive when half a million people turned up onto the streets—an unexpected turnout. Even though some participants continued to maintain a distance from politics in interviews conducted after the protest and described themselves as apolitical—evidence that the culture of depoliticization endured—their mere willingness to participate in the protest reflected the economic identity's weakening power to persuade people to view all activism as inherently bad and perceive themselves as apolitical economic animals.

For another, the core values became increasingly insufficient in representing Hong Kong's identity. In the aftermath of the 2003 protest, a group of 300 professionals published a declaration titled "Standing Firm on Hong Kong's Core Values", which reiterated values including freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law. Such a declaration transformed the 2003 protest from a mere resistance against the National Security Bill to a greater defense of the city’s core values—a goal that would define the subsequent annual July 1 protests after 2003. In framing the protests as such, however, people continued to feel little sense of empowerment—interviews showed that some participants in the 2003, 2004 and 2005 July 1 protests displayed a declining sense of political efficacy, and surveys conducted between 2003 and 2004 recorded a high sense of political inefficacy in the general public, especially

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33 “維護香港核心價值宣言 [The Declaration to Protect Hong Kong’s Core Values]” Hong Kong Great Speeches (2004), https://hkspeech.wordpress.com/2004/06/07/%E7%B6%AD%E8%AD%B7%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%E6%A0%B8%E5%BF%83%E5%83%B9%E5%80%BC%E5%AE%A3%E8%A8%80/)
among young people.\textsuperscript{34} As one protester claimed in an interview, “Very frankly, I don’t think the postponement of Article 23 [the National Security Bill] is because of the July 1 demonstration…Whether Article 23 could have been passed, if you want to give credit, give it to James Tien\textsuperscript{35}. It’s game over if he didn’t stand up.”\textsuperscript{36} This sense of disempowerment stemmed fundamentally from the people’s perceived lack of power to determine their own political fate—something that they felt was beyond their own control and rested in the hands of some Beijing loyalists and the Central Government. As a political identity with colonial origins, therefore, the core values were only a limited set of political values that did not supply the vocabularies to demand for the right to self-determination. For this reason, Law believes that the July 1 protests embodied what he coins "virtual liberalism"—the idea that the protests were mere tokens of democratic resistance and failed to challenge the fundamental shortcomings of the regime (i.e. the restricted rights to self-determination).\textsuperscript{37}

V. Hong Kong's Cultural Identity

As Hong Kong’s economic and political identities lost their dominance in the wake of the 2003 protest, no existing identities fully and persuasively portrayed Hong Kong any longer. According to Laclau (in the words of Hall), such a dislocation "unhinges the stable identities of the past, [and] it also opens up the possibility of new

\textsuperscript{34} Lee and Chan, “Making Sense of Participation”, 100 & “對政府管治缺信心，政治無力感強:研究顯示本地青年社會政治參與偏低 [Teenagers have lack of trust for government and strong sense of political inefficacy; Study shows local teenagers have low level of political participation]” Breakthrough (2004), \url{https://www.breakthrough.org.hk/ir/Research/27_Soc_pol/soc_pol.htm}
\textsuperscript{35} The government did not withdraw attempts to legislate the National Security Bill immediately after the July 1 protest, but after James Tien, the leader of the pro-government Liberal Party, decided that the Liberal Party would vote against it.
\textsuperscript{36} Lee and Chan, “Making Sense of Participation”, 94.
\textsuperscript{37} Law, “告別七月嘉年華 [Farewell to the July 1 Carnival]”, 9.
articulations—the forging of new identities, the production of new subjects...”. Hong Kong people had the opportunity to represent themselves in new ways.

Turning away from the economic and political spheres, localists in the post-2003 world employed culture as an ingredient to create new articulations of the people—a sphere largely unexplored because the colonial and Chinese governments had avoided nurturing a distinct cultural identity in Hong Kong. The Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984, for example, was suspiciously quiet about the city's culture. The document only went so far as to preserve Hong Kong's social and economic system in stating that "the current social and economic systems in Hong Kong will remain unchanged, and so will the lifestyle”;

local culture, as Turner observes, "is rendered merely as a 'lifestyle'". More than that, Hong Kong people were only referred to as “inhabitants” of Hong Kong in the document, thereby denied of a distinct cultural existence. On one side, China did not wish to foster a distinct Hong Kong cultural identity, as it interpreted distinctiveness to be analogous to "splittism", which could further fuel secessionist ambitions in other such Chinese territories as Tibet and Xinjiang. On the other side, the British government had little interest in enraging China through its promotion of a distinct Hong Kong identity. More than that, Hong Kong’s acceptance of the Chinese identity favored Britain as it justified the British government's decision in 1981 to dispose of 3.25 million British passport holders and avoided an influx of Hong Kong migrants into the colonial metropolis.

38 Hall, “The Question of Cultural Identity”, 600.
40 Turner, “60/90”, 39.
41 Ibid., 39.
42 Ibid., 48 & 47.
43 Ibid., 48.
Without a centralized and dominant representation of Hong Kong culture, a plurality of narratives have emerged throughout history (including "east meets west", "modernity cum tradition" or "the world's emporium") but never succeeded in stabilizing Hong Kong's cultural identity. This led to Wong’s suggestion that Hong Kong's culture is "less a pattern or entity... it is more a practice, a stand, a form, that one finds (or better, self-invent) in urban experiences...". Rather than being a constructed entity, therefore, the cultural identity has been constantly reproduced through the lived experiences, habits and social interactions of the Hong Kong people—a process Billig coins "banal nationalism" (in this case, banal localism).

Beginning from the 1970's, for instance, television shows based on contemporary social issues, Cantonese pop music, and the adoption of traditional Chinese characters as the form of writing (as opposed to simplified Chinese in the mainland) produced a shared sense of place and culture. Such a banal cultural identity was further reinforced as Hong Kong people differentiated themselves from Mainland Chinese. On the one hand, Hong Kong people perceived themselves as "modern and cosmopolitan" and "civilized", on the other hand, the Chinese were described as "backwards" and "uncultured"—representations that were perpetuated in such famous television shows as "The good, the Bad and the Ugly" that included a character from mainland China who was portrayed to be rural and out of place in Hong Kong’s cosmopolitan setting. As Billig remarks, such a process of differentiation

44 Wong, “Colonial Governance and the Hong Kong Story”, 221.
necessarily led to stereotyping to "[distinguish] between 'them' from 'us', thereby contributing to our claims of a unique identity."\textsuperscript{46}

The decentralized nature of Hong Kong’s culture meant that localists found plenty of room to create new articulations of Hong Kong people beginning from 2006. In so doing, their purpose was not to prescribe a stabilized cultural identity to the city; rather, they attached new functions to culture that helped Hong Kong better understand itself, or in Abbas’s words, "interrogate[d] the very nature of Hong Kong and explores the possibility of its redefinition."\textsuperscript{47} The use of culture to interrogate denotes the constant development of new, and sometimes conflicting, views and representations of who Hong Kong people are and should be. This reveals two important aspects of localism in Hong Kong: for one, it is a fluid process that challenges fixed identities of the past to reinvent new ones (which are equally prone to challenges). For another, contending views and representations of Hong Kong can arise from different groups and people; in other words, localism is decentralized. From 2006 to 2014, three major interrogative processes emerged: the interrogation of colonialism, capitalism and development, and Chinese nationalism.

i. The Interrogation of Hong Kong's Colonial History

Localism's interrogation of colonialism challenged the existing narrative of Hong Kong’s history that looked uncritically and favorably at the colonial government’s legacy. Up until its last moments in the city, the colonial government promoted a narrative of history that magnified its own achievements and overlooked the individual efforts and experiences that shaped modern Hong Kong. As Chris

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 81.
\textsuperscript{47} Abbas, Ackbar. "Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics." Public culture 9, no. 3 (1997), 304.
Patten said in his final speech as governor the night before handover, "our own nation's contribution here was to provide these scaffolding that enabled the people of Hong Kong to ascend: the rule of law, clean and light-handed government, the values of a free society, the beginnings of representative government and democratic accountability. This is a Chinese city—a very Chinese city—with British characteristics. No dependent territories have been left more prosperous, none with such a rich texture of civil society..." To localists, the dominance of such a narrative fostered an uncritical nostalgia towards the city's colonial history, which emerged from people's inability to identify or break with the past: on the one hand, people could not fully identify with the city's history because they could not find their place in it. As Abbas remarks, "the history of Hong Kong...has effectively been a history of colonialism," rather than that of the Hong Kong people. But on the other hand, people found it difficult to break with the city's past because it was the only one they had. Their unwillingness to break with it implied, to some degree, attributing most of the city's successes to the colonial government’s achievements and recognizing that colonialism was not necessarily exploitative. Colonial nostalgia stemmed from this acceptance of the colonial historical narrative.

In 2006, localists used two pieces of colonial architecture, the Star Ferry Pier and the Queen's pier, that were facing impending demolition as cultural resources to challenge the colonial historical narrative. Already in 1999, the government had

49 Abbas, “Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics”, 300.
50 Abbas, Ackbar, Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1997), 2.
decided to demolish both piers (first the Star Ferry Pier before the Queen's Pier) to make room for new motorways and a waterfront promenade.\textsuperscript{51} When the government finally decided to push through its plans in November 2006, a group of protesters quickly occupied the Star Ferry Pier to resist its demolition. To these protesters, the Star Ferry Pier was "where the Hong Kong people have accumulated life experiences through bits and pieces"; in other words, it was the embodiment of Hong Kong's collective memories.\textsuperscript{52} More than that, protesters stressed that the pier must be preserved as a "living history", as it witnessed Hong Kong people's historical existence and continued to serve as a spatial anchor for people of contemporary times.\textsuperscript{53} By December, the government remained reluctant to make concessions to activists and began sending bulldozers into the site. As a response, the protesters staged a hunger strike that drew inspiration from a past moment in history when So Sau-Chung went on a hunger strike at the same spot in 1966 to protest the rise in the Star Ferry’s ticket price. In so doing, protesters commemorated the Star Ferry pier for its additional political meaning as a site where local activism originated.\textsuperscript{54} In spite of public opposition, the government went through with its plans to demolish the Star Ferry Pier. This led protesters to move their operation to the nearby Queens Pier that awaited a similar fate. Here, they staged an event where people of diverse backgrounds, including new immigrants, migrant workers, and grassroot groups, disembarked from a boat called "The Local"—a ceremony that was reminiscent of the


\textsuperscript{52} Ku, Agnes Shuk-mei. "Remaking places and fashioning an opposition discourse: struggle over the Star Ferry pier and the Queen's pier in Hong Kong." Environment and Planning: Society and Space 30, no. 1 (2012), 11.

\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 11.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 15.
Queen's landing when she visited Hong Kong in 1975.\textsuperscript{55} In organizing such a ceremony, activists freed up the pier from its original colonial purposes and proclaimed that Hong Kong people of all backgrounds had an equal claim to the space. Despite their later occupation movement and a second hunger strike in July 2007, the activists were unsuccessful in preserving the Queen's Pier at its original site.

In the two movements, therefore, localists focused on the architecture’s "local and everyday relationship with the city and its people" rather than their colonial character.\textsuperscript{56} This freed up Hong Kong's history from the dominance of the colonial narrative and produced a competing one where the people became the subject. As Hall argues, the politics of identity was a also politics of position\textsuperscript{57}; rewriting Hong Kong's story, then, meant narrating its history from the position of the people—a process that necessarily came with selectively de-emphasizing the colonial narrative that has for long functioned to inflate government's achievements at the expense of playing down the historical role of the people. This process of positioning and selection, as localists saw it, represented Hong Kong's stride towards an age of “post-colonialism”\textsuperscript{58}—not in its disavowal or erasure of colonial history, but in finding the people’s place within an overbearing colonial historical narrative. As banners that

\textsuperscript{56} Ku, “Remaking Places”, 11.
\textsuperscript{57} Hall, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora”, 11.
\textsuperscript{58} Poon, Kwokling, "『本土』的十年變化 [Changes of Localism in Ten Years]” in 香港研究作為方法 [Hong Kong Studies as a Method], ed. Jyu Yiuwai 朱耀偉 (Hong Kong: 中華書局; 2016), 258.
adorned the Queen's Pier during the movement clamored: "Learn to rewrite our history" and "Farewell to colonial mindset, reclaim our own city".  

ii. The Interrogation of Capitalism and Development

Localism's interrogation of capitalism challenged the prevalence of the so-called "Central District Values", which promoted growth, efficiency and prosperity, often at the cost of Hong Kong’s culture. To some scholars, the government's inflexible logic of development is embedded within Hong Kong's Basic Law (the city’s mini-constitution). As Article 5 of the Basic Law stipulates, “The socialist system and policies shall not be practiced in the HKSAR, and the previous capitalist system and way of life shall remain unchanged for 50 years.” In only seeking to prolong the capitalist way of life, the drafters of the Basic Law simply summed up Hong Kong's success as its capitalist system in the 1980’s and sought to perpetuate it for at least another 50 years. Hong Kong's constitution thus encourages an unfettered capitalist impulse for economic growth, but at the same time limits the government and society from looking beyond the economic sphere. As Lui puts it, the Basic Law practically “froze” Hong Kong's economic arrangement and shackled the city’s development to

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59 Chen and Szeto, “The Forgotten Road of Progressive Localism”, 438.
60 Chu, Yiu-Wai, Lost in transition: Hong Kong culture in the age of China (New York: SUNY Press), 45.
an economic-first model.\textsuperscript{62} Or as Ghai points out, Hong Kong is ironically not free to choose for itself a free economy.\textsuperscript{63}

In the eyes of some localists, the government's inflexible drive for development has stifled the growth of organic culture. According to scholars like Abbas, the city's one-dimensional economic development "has made it difficult to recognize the existence of a Hong Kong culture"—an example of what he calls "reverse hallucination" (not seeing what is there).\textsuperscript{64} Owing to this pervasive reverse hallucination, Hong Kong was constantly misrepresented as a "cultural desert" or a "generic city" bereft of cultural attributes. Without a culture to identify with (or so people perceived), many retained a weak link to the local identity and considered it as something similar to a consumer’s choice. This was especially evident in the early 1990's, when around one percent of the population opted to immigrate each year owing to uncertainties about the city’s political and economic future—identity became a mere matter of preferences that people could adopt or abandon according to their interests.\textsuperscript{65} For many of these people, therefore, Hong Kong’s identity was little distinct (or, at least not enough for them to stay), save for a prosperous economy that was replicable elsewhere. This was reverse hallucination at its best.

In 2009, localists used the Tsoi Yuen village as a cultural resource to challenge both the government's impulse to develop at all cost and society's misrepresentation

\textsuperscript{62} Lui, Tailok, “終於需要面對未來:香港回歸及其設計上的錯誤 [Finally Confronting the Future: Hong Kong’s Handover to China and Its Design Flaws]” in 香港研究作為方法 [Hong Kong Studies as a Method], ed. Jyu Yiuwai 朱耀偉 (Hong Kong: 中華書局, 2016), 89. (84-97)


\textsuperscript{64} Abbas, “Culture and Politics of Disappearance”, 5 & 7.

\textsuperscript{65} Mathews, Gordon, Eric Ma, and Tai-lok Lui, Hong Kong, China: Learning to Belong to a Nation Vol. 10, (New York: Routledge, 2007), 44.
of Hong Kong as a culturally barren city. In 2008, government proposed to construct an express rail network between Hong Kong and Guangdong as part of the greater project to integrate Hong Kong with the Pearl River Delta Region. There were two particular concerns with the rail network: for one, reports suggested that the original HK $30 Billion price tag could double due to inflation; for another, the railway would cut through rural areas of Yuen Long, including Tsoi Yuen Village and dislocate its 150 households. In September 2009, as funding for the railway was set for approval, activists organized tours to the Tsoi Yuen Village to introduce the remaining vestiges of Hong Kong's agricultural life and culture to an urban audience. On December 16, two days before the funding for the railway would be approved, activists staged a prostrating walk around the Legislative Council, where they circled the building and kneeled every 26 steps to symbolize the proposed 26 kilometers of railway tracks to be laid in Hong Kong. Such a procession was a symbolic reconstruction of the people's relationship with land—an something that farmers of the Tsoi Yuen Village managed to salvage in spite of the city's fast-paced development, and something that the government threatened to destroy by viewing land only as a means of economic development. Later on January 9, 2010, a day after pan-democratic members of the committee filibustered the bill, villagers and protesters organized a "Fun and Greenery Cultural Festival" outside the legislature, where they served food made from crops of Tsoi Yuen Village accompanied by music and rallying speeches—the village came to the city. On January 16, as the Finance Committee met again to

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approve funding for the rail, activists held a last straw hunger strike for 120 hours. As their hunger strike declaration claimed, “Is the government not always promoting sustainable development? The preservation of Tsoi Yuen Village is the best way to achieve this vision. A lot of Hong Kong’s communities have already been demolished, and we cannot allow the same absurdity to happen in Tsoi Yuen Village… If we use the six billion dollars funding for the railway on something else, including primary school education and expanding spots in universities, Hong Kong will become a better place [my translations].”

In sum, activists of the movement challenged the government's one-sided economic development that showed little regard to people's lives and way of living. More than that, by raising awareness of Tsoi Yuen Village through guided tours, the prostrating walk and the festival, activists challenged the representation of Hong Kong as a cultural desert and highlighted aspects of the city's diverse and organic culture that people might have overlooked in the past; in short, they attempted to reverse the trend of “reverse hallucination”. The anti-development ethos and the call to preserve Tsoi Tuen Village, however, should not be interpreted as anti-globalization or in opposition to economic integration with China. As one leader pointed out, the activists goal was simply to "democratize the policy planning processes... [and] the use of public spaces." This implied greater transparency and flexibility to government's lop-sided economic development.

iii. The Interrogation of Chinese Nationalism

67 “八十後反高鐵青年斷食宣言[Post-80’s anti XRL Hunger Strike Declaration]” HKpost80’s (2010), https://ragingiron.files.wordpress.com/2010/01/declaration.jpg
Localism's interrogation of Chinese nationalism challenged how nationalism had been historically represented in Hong Kong. As Matthews describes, Hong Kong's relationship with China has been nothing short of contradictions, as it wanted both to be apart from and a part of China. Apart—because Hong Kong people perceived themselves to be the embodiment of freedom, openness and cosmopolitanism, and imagined China as "a space of oppression and confined vision". A part—because Hong Kong people revered Chinese culture, which included thousands of years of Chinese civilization, customs and practices, and yearned for a return to their ethnic motherland (for this reason, the rhetoric "Blood is thicker than water" has constantly been invoked as a reminder of Hong Kong’s ethnic bonds with China). Hong Kong's befuddling relationship with China resulted in a form of nationalism known as "liberal patriotism", which suggested that Hong Kong people bore the mission to modernize and liberalize China. In the wake of Reform and Opening Up in China in 1978, for instance, a number of businesspeople began flocking into China to set up new factories alongside community leaders who introduced several Non-Governmental Organizations to tackle widespread poverty in rural China—acts that they believed contributed to the country’s modernization. In terms of liberalization, too, such organizations as the "Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China" (the "Alliance"), which was established during the

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70 Wong, Yuk-Lin Renita, "Going 'Back' and Staying 'Out': Articulating the postcolonial Hong Kong subjects in the development of China." Journal of Contemporary China 11, no. 30 (2002), 147 & 150.
72 Wong, “Going 'Back' and Staying 'Out'”, 152.
73 Ibid., 155.
student protests in Beijing in 1989, called for "End[ing] one-party dictatorship in China" and "Build[ing] a democratic China" as part of their operational goals. In years subsequent to 1989 (until today), the Alliance has held annual candlelight vigils to commemorate the deaths of protesters during the government suppression and to continue the struggle for democracy in the Mainland—an event that still draws hundreds of thousands of participants each year. In the above examples, localism and nationalism coexisted because liberal patriotism meant extending the perceived merits of the local identity—economic openness and political liberalism—into the mainland. In characterizing themselves as modernizers and liberalizers of China, however, Hong Kong people took up an attitude that was analogous to that of the colonizer towards the colonized. For this reason, Law describes Hong Kong’s version of nationalism as an example of the city’s "northbound colonialism".

Localists adopted two strategies to interrogate how nationalism has been historically represented in Hong Kong. The first strategy took roots in a book published in 2011 by Chan Wan titled "On the Hong Kong City-State", which caused a rupture in the political scene. In his book, Chan lambasts traditional democrats for holding on to an obsolete and unfeasible nationalistic impulse to democratize China, all the while ignoring Hong Kong's disappearing distinctiveness as a result of China's increasingly aggressive project of assimilation since 2003. In the wake of the 2003 protest, China promoted greater economic integration with Hong Kong, which saw an influx of Mainland Chinese, including tourists and new immigrants, into the city—

74 “About Hong Kong Alliance” Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, https://hka8964.wordpress.com/hkaeng/#eng_who
75 Law Wing-Sang, Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 177.
76 Chan Wan 陳雲, “香港城邦論 [On Hong Kong as a City-State]” (Hong Kong: 天窗, 2011), 39-41.
just in 2012 alone, for instance, 35 million Chinese visitors travelled to Hong Kong, far exceeding Hong Kong's population of 7 million.\textsuperscript{77} In light of this, Chan deems the influx of mainland Chinese as a threat to the city's socio-economic order: on the one hand, tourists drove general prices up, created shortages of such goods as milk formula and displayed "uncivilized" behaviors including spitting and defecating in public; on the other hand, new immigrants depleted Hong Kong's scarce resources including hospital services. Chan, therefore, sees an urgent need to defend Hong Kong's interest and protect its culture from Chinese assimilation—in short, the idea of “Hong Kong First”\textsuperscript{78}. In a later article, Chan encourages Hong Kong people to develop an "ethnic consciousness" and believes that Hong Kong people must act to protect their "Huaxia" traditions (Chinese traditional culture) from further communist intrusion.\textsuperscript{79} Chan’s ethnocultural Hong Kong identity was a clear break from the pan-Chinese liberal patriotism of the past—it abandoned the urge to reconcile Hong Kong and China’s identity and raised the possibilities of having multiple Chinese-ness-es.

Chan’s ideas received widespread support on the Internet and even managed to mobilize a number of movements that have since been characterized as "right-wing localism". In January 2012, for instance, the luxury good brand Dolce & Gabbana released a policy that banned locals from taking pictures of its store while allowing mainland tourists to do so. After news of this broke out, tens of thousands of protesters congregated outside the store and demanded an apology from D&G,
believing that it sacrificed Hong Kong people’s interest to Mainland Chinese ones. Later in February 2012, a group of netizens crowd funded to publish an advertisement, which depicted a locust sitting on the Lion Rock Hill, subtitled: “Would you like to see Hong Kong spend HK$1000000 every 18 minutes on the children of non-Hong Kongers?” Here, the image of the locust drew from historically racist representations of Chinese immigrants, most notably a cartoon by George F. Keller that depicted swarms of “Chinese locusts” invading “Uncle Sam’s Farm” during the Chinese Exclusion Act in the United States in the late nineteenth century. Many right-wing localists’ perception of Mainland Chinese as locusts was founded on their belief that Chinese immigrants were taking advantage of the city’s scarce resources. Lui, for instance, notes that the number of babies born by Mainland women increased from 17.6% in 2002 to 46.1% in 2012, which he believes would heighten demands for and place more strain on health services, housing and education in the future. Then in 2013, Chan held an event on June Fourth that competed with the main candle light vigil organized by the "Alliance" to commemorate the deaths of the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989. During the event, he criticized the Alliance's goal of democratizing China and called for prioritizing the pursuit of

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81 Lion rock, a mountain in Hong Kong, became a symbol of the city’s cooperative spirit after Roman Tam released his song "Under the Lion Rock" in 1970.
82 Garrett, Daniel and Wing-Chung Ho, “Hong Kong at the Brink—Emerging Forms of Political Participation in the New Social Movement” in New Trends of Political Participation in Hong Kong, ed. Joseph Y.S. Cheung (Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2014), 352.
democracy in Hong Kong. In defending and prioritizing Hong Kong's interest, these movements represented Hong Kong's identity as an exclusive construct founded on the Hong Kong/China binary—Hong Kong is what China is not.

In the summer of 2012, an alternative strategy to interrogate nationalism emerged with the campaign against the government's proposed implementation of the Moral and National Education (MNE) in schools. Already in 2008, the government proposed the implementation of the MNE and suggested that the curriculum should highlight "(1) racial ties, noting that we are all connected by blood as Chinese...(2) culture and heritage, which refers to our sharing a wealth of long-established, profound cultural legacy of China, and (3) our country itself." Chinese nationalism was here represented as the ties between ethnicity, culture and the state. Much later in April 2012, when the government decided to push through its plans to implement the subject in the coming school year, a pro-Beijing group published a controversial curriculum guide, which portrayed the Communist government as a progressive and selfless regime and instructed teachers to develop students' "passion" and "affection" towards their country's history, culture and race. In response, activist groups like Scholarism (a student-led organization led by Joshua Wong) criticized the curriculum for its pro-Beijing orientations and its cultivation of an uncritical cultural and ethnic loyalty towards the nation—to them, the MNE was an attempt to “brainwash” schoolchildren. Subsequently in July, Scholarism organized an anti-MNE march to

86 Ibid., 336.
87 Ibid., 337
88 Scholarism, “立場聲明：撤回國民教育科 只可推展國情教育 不要官方定義國民教育 [Declaration of Stance: Withdraw the National and Moral Education; Only implement education on Mainland affairs; Rejecting the Official definitions of National and Moral Education]” Facebook Post,
the government headquarter that successfully mobilized 90,000 people. After the
government insisted on pushing through with the program, the organization occupied
a public square outside of the government headquarter in September that drew over
120,000 people at its height. Eight days after the occupation, the Chief Executive
C.Y. Leung finally conceded and gave up plans to make MNE a mandatory school
subject in the upcoming school year.

In sum, the anti-MNE campaign challenged the government’s version of
nationalism that “promoted ethnic identification based on affect”.89 To activists, this
was an attempt to “brainwash” schoolchildren as it failed to foster students’ critical
understanding of the nation. In questioning the MNE’s ethnocultural definitions of the
Chinese identity, localists also interrogated liberal patriotism for its attachment to
ethnic and cultural China. They found it impossible for liberal patriotism to call into
question the undemocratic nature of the Chinese state without at the same time calling
into question the state’s cultural and ethnic narratives, which are employed in China’s
state formation. As Chow argued many years before this movement, “communism,
nationalism and the state centralization of culture through the dissemination of
standardized histories have reinforced one another in a unique way…; the
disenchantment with one of these categories must involve a disenchantment with and

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89 Veg, "The Rise of “Localism”", 337.
criticism of the others as well. The Chinese national identity was thus not a la carte—challenging the Chinese polity and the state’s cultural and ethnic narrative are two parts of the same process, not two separate and unrelated processes as liberal patriotism liked to think. Rather than defining identity in fixed primordial and ethnocultural terms, some suggested during the campaign that identity should be based on a set of universally-accepted civic values. National education should, therefore, be replaced by civic education, in which students learn to be a part of their polity through critical understanding of their roles and responsibilities as citizens rather than through affect and emotions. Ultimately, this civic Hong Kong identity was an implicit rejection of the ethnocultural Hong Kong identity that right-wing localists promoted.

VI. Conclusion

As it became clear in the aftermath of the 2003 protest that Hong Kong’s economic and political identities were no longer sufficient and persuasive representations of Hong Kong people, localists turned to the cultural sphere and used culture as an ingredient to reinvent the Hong Kong identity. In the preservation movement of the Star Ferry Pier and the Queen’s Pier, the two colonial architecture became instrumental in re-narrating a people-centered version of Hong Kong’s history; in the movement mobilized against the express rail link, Tsoi Yuen Village was a resource to demonstrate that Hong Kong was not only an economic entity but a

92 Gwok-Kui Wong, “國民教育，錯在「國民」 [The mistake of the National and Moral Education is the “national” Inmedia (2012), http://www.inmediahk.net/%E5%9C%8B%E6%B0%91%E6%95%99%E8%82%B2%EF%BC%8C%E9%8C%AF%E5%9C%A8%E3%80%8C%E5%9C%8B%E6%B0%91%E3%80%8D.
city with a vibrant cultural scene and diverse ways of life; in the right-wing localist movements, Hong Kong’s culture was no longer a means to reinvent Hong Kong’s identity, but became itself a building block of an exclusive construct—localists stressed the need to protect Hong Kong’s culture and interest from Chinese assimilation and intrusion; finally, in the anti-MNE campaign, localists denounced the use of ethnicity and culture as the building block of any identities and called instead for representing Hong Kong’s identity in civic terms.

As Chu Hoi-Dik, a prominent activist leader who participated in the preservation movement in 2006 and the anti-rail movement in 2009, suggests, a common theme of the localist movements between 2006 and 2014 was their emphasis on self-determination, which he explains as the possibilities to rely on the people, rather than on government or political parties, to realize their own autonomy.93 Pursuing this logic, identity-creation after 2006 became an expression of people’s self-determination, as it freed Hong Kong from the dominance of past representations and gave people the room and autonomy to reinterpret and reinvent who they are and should be. While this self-determination movement remained for the most part in the cultural and social spheres between 2006 and 2014, it moved into the political sphere and interrogated Hong Kong’s democratic development during the Umbrella Movement in 2014, as the next chapter shall discuss.

Chapter Two
Creating the “Self” in “Self-Determination”:
The Umbrella Movement as a Localist Movement

I. Introduction

In September 2014, Hong Kong witnessed the Umbrella Movement (named so because protestors used umbrellas to protect themselves against tear gas fired by the riot police) that called for "genuine" universal suffrage for the Chief Executive, the city's leader, in the upcoming election in 2017. The movement was a direct response to a decision of the NPCSC (Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, China's de facto legislative body that wields the highest authority to interpret Hong Kong's law) published on August 31, which ruled that future candidates of Hong Kong's Chief Executive must be proposed by a Nomination Committee composed of 1200 members—a majority of whom are pro-Beijing—and that no more than three candidates can qualify for candidacy. The decision's stringent nomination round contradicted with the expectations of Hong Kong's democrats, who understood "genuine" universal suffrage to include a more broadly representative nomination committee free from Beijing's control, or involve no nomination committees at all.

For democrats, the NPCSC decision came with two realizations. In the first place, the decision revealed that Beijing, not the people, held the ultimate right to determine Hong Kong's affairs. Beijing’s right to author Hong Kong's political future meant that it could decide on the contents of the city's political system as well as its
democracy. Beijing, as this chapter argues, is invested in restricting the extent of democracy, as the latter is fundamentally incompatible with the existing colonial governing logic that is characterized by the collusion between the local government and business elites. Such an arrangement has, on one side, enabled the city's historically corporate-guided economic development, but, on the other side, limited democratic representation in order to protect the privileged position of business people in government. China admired and attempted to preserve such a colonial ruling infrastructure because it enabled the city’s economic stability and prevented democratic demands from growing out of hand. As a result, democracy continued to have little room for development after the handover in 1997, as evidenced by Beijing's persistent efforts to defer decisions on widening democratic representation in Hong Kong. In delivering the decision on August 31, Beijing ultimately shut down future possibilities for a broadly representative government and sent out the message that the undemocratic governing coalition during colonial times was here to stay—democracy was at a dead end.

Despite the NPCSC August 31 decision, the traditional democratic movement from 1984 (the year the Sino-British Joint Declaration was signed) to 2014 (the Umbrella Movement) was ineffective in wrestling China over the right to determine Hong Kong's political future. Traditional democratic movements were uninterested in the struggle for Hong Kong people's right to self-determination because the idea of a distinct Hong Kong self had not been realized until the series of localist events that transpired since 2006, as the previous chapter discussed. As a result, the development of democracy had been divorced from the development of
Hong Kong's identity. Even the core values—popularly understood as democracy, freedom and the rule of law—which Hong Kong's last governor engineered and which became prevalent after the 2003 July 1 rally, conveyed only a set of universal political values without furnishing Hong Kong people with the vocabulary to struggle for self-determination. Seen in this light, China's demonstration of its authority over Hong Kong in the August 31 decision exposed the inadequacies of Hong Kong's traditional democratic movements. In addition to that, a younger generation of democrats felt discontented by the forms of traditional democratic movements that were rigidly attached to the principles of "peaceful, rational, non-violent, non-profanity" (和理非非). To them, these principles continued to portray Hong Kong people as docile economic animals who were unwilling to take on political risks and rendered democratic movements ineffective in pressuring Beijing to compromise, as the NPCSC's unyielding decision demonstrated. Traditional democratic movements, like Hong Kong’s democracy, also came to a dead end.

In light of China's assertion of its authority over Hong Kong and the traditional democratic movement’s failure to wrestle for this authority, the Umbrella Movement reframed Hong Kong's fight for democracy into a broader struggle for the right to self-determination—a claim that presupposed the creation of a Hong Kong social self. During the movement, protesters took Hong Kong as the unit of the imagined political community; they represented the city as a civic community distinct from China and its people as citizens, rather than docile subjects of Chinese rule. On top of that, the Umbrella Movement was a prolonged occupation of the streets—an act of civil disobedience—that challenged traditionally "peaceful" ways of protest.
Protesters used the occupation as a public performance to demonstrate their capacity for self-organization and to practice their desired form of participatory democracy. In creating new representations of the Hong Kong people through the protester's new claims and forms of protest, therefore, the Umbrella Movement merged the struggle for democracy with the process of Hong Kong's identity creation—the Umbrella Movement was as much a localist event as it was a democratic movement.

This chapter is divided into three parts: the first part argues that the source of Hong Kong’s restricted democratic system lies in the absence of people’s right to self-determination; the second part discusses traditional democratic movements’ failure in wrestling Beijing for Hong Kong people’s right to determine the city’s political future; and the third part contends that the Umbrella Movement was as much about Hong Kong’s identity as it was about democracy.

II. China’s Authority over Hong Kong

The NPCSC's August 31 decision was essentially a declaration of China's right to determine Hong Kong's political affairs—a right that gave China the power to preside over the contents of Hong Kong's democracy. In China's narrative, the resumption of Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong was what enabled democratic development in the city—democratic demands only became possible after the Sino-British Joint Declaration promised Hong Kong people the right to elect their legislature and Chief Executive in 1984. For this reason, Deng Xiaoping, the former Chinese leader, told Hong Kong legislators before the signing of the declaration that Hong Kong people's consent over the matters of their political future was not necessary because they

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1 Chan, Kam-Fai, “命運加冕的暴力，是法律的起源: 訪談馬國明 [Violence Crowned by Destiny Is the Beginning of Law; an interview with Ma Kwok-Ming]” in 界限 [Limit], ed. Chan Kam-Fai (Hong Kong: Liber Research Community, 2017), 71.
should have confidence in the Chinese government to deliver a desirable political blueprint for the city.² Deng subsequently rejected the so-called "three-legged stool"—the idea that ruling Hong Kong was based on the "consent of Hong Kong people, consent of China and consent of Britain"—and argued that there was "no three legs, only two legs", thereby stripping Hong Kong people of their right to self-determination.³

China has had an interest in restricting democratic development in Hong Kong because democracy fundamentally threatened the collusion between the government and businesses—a ruling infrastructure that the Chinese government wanted to preserve. Already since the late 19th century, the colonial government had incorporated business representatives and Chinese elites of high economic standing into the government structure. The Legislative Council's unofficial members (as opposed to official members who were government officials), for instance, were dominated by such business organizations as the Hong Kong General Chamber of Commerce and the Hong Kong Federation of Industries⁴; the Executive Council—the equivalence of a government cabinet—often included representatives from British trading companies like Jardines and Swire and such Chinese magnates as Shouson Chow⁵; and advisory committees were often created to integrate elites from the

³ Ibid., 89.
⁵ Ma, Ngok. "The making of a corporatist state in Hong Kong: The road to sectoral intervention." Journal of Contemporary Asia 46, no. 2 (2016), 250; and Loh, Christine, and Civic Exchange, Functional Constituencies: A Unique Feature of the Hong Kong Legislative Council (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2006) 27.
finance, manufacturing and real estate industries to serve as unofficial advisors. The colonial government's cooptation of economic elites was mutually beneficially to both parties: on the one hand, business interests were well represented, as representatives enjoyed close access to the governor and promoted a business-friendly environment through limiting government spending and resisting tax increases. On the other hand, the government's appointment of elites became, as Loh argues, "an effective method to buy off potential adversaries and...a strategic device to create a semblance of democracy." In so doing, therefore, the colonial government protected its legitimacy of rule by reducing political turmoil, which amounted to what King famously coins as the "administrative absorption of politics".

China admired Britain's ruling infrastructure in Hong Kong and was keen to protect the privileged position of local business elites to ensure Hong Kong's economic stability during the city's transition to Chinese rule. More than that, China saw in business elites a reliable partner to keep the city's democratic aspirations in check—businesses feared that too much democracy would threaten their interests in government, while Beijing was concerned that too much democracy would inspire democratic ambitions elsewhere in China and destabilize the authoritarian regime. As a result, China continued to adopt the colonial government's strategy of cooptation to win the political loyalty of businesses. Several of Hong Kong's most notable capitalists like Li Kashing or Henry Fok became absorbed into such bodies as the

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6 Cheung and Wong “Who advised the Hong Kong government?”, 878.
9 Ma, “The Making of a Corporatist State in Hong Kong”, 249.
10 Fong, “The Partnership between the Chinese Government and Hong Kong's Capitalist Class”, 197.
11 Ibid., 197-198.
Basic Law Drafting Committee, the Basic Law Consultative Committee and the Hong Kong Affairs Advisers.\textsuperscript{12} Beijing even went so far as to incorporate tycoons into ruling bodies at the national level, including the National People's Congress and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.\textsuperscript{13} Of all the appointments made between the 1980's and 1997, 62% represented business interests and only 11% were representative of other sectors of society.\textsuperscript{14} Most notably, only one of the twenty-three members of the Basic Law Drafting Committee claimed to represent working-class interest.\textsuperscript{15} China's preservation of Hong Kong's crony capitalism meant that the handover was, in Chun's words, a political "fiction" because it marked no significant changes to the city.\textsuperscript{16} This has further led to Law's realization that "colonial power is always local, discernable in every locality, but never localized in a certain colonizer."\textsuperscript{17} Seen in this light, China's take over of Hong Kong was, in essence, a project of re-colonization.

So long as China retained the right to determine Hong Kong’s political future, therefore, it would impose on Hong Kong a restricted form of democracy to preserve the ruling coalition between the local government and business elites. In spite of its aversion to democracy, however, China promised Hong Kong people the right to elect their Chief Executive and legislature in the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984 in an effort to pacify fears of Hong Kong's return to an authoritarian country, and also to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 199.
  \item \textsuperscript{13} Ibid., 199.
  \item \textsuperscript{14} Cheung and Wong “Who advised the Hong Kong government?”, 875.
  \item \textsuperscript{15} Wong, Wai-kwok. "Can Co-optation Win Over the Hong Kong People? China's United." Issues & Studies 33, no.5 (1997), 110.
  \item \textsuperscript{17} Law, Wingsang, Collaborative Colonial Power: The Making of the Hong Kong Chinese (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 207.
\end{itemize}
provide a political blueprint for Taiwan’s return to China. This resulted in articles 45 and 68 of the Basic Law, which respectively allowed for the Chief Executive to be selected "by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nomination committee" and the "election of all members of the Legislative Council by universal suffrage". As scholars like Kwan points out, China's promise of universal suffrage made for an "inherently unstable regime, because it will be taken to task to deliver" in spite of the incompatibility of democracy and the city’s pro-business ruling infrastructure. In the 1980's, however, Beijing believed that it could control the pace of Hong Kong's democratic development with the support of a ruling business community that was equally resistant to wider political representation. For a time before the handover, too, the British government willingly cooperated with Beijing's desire not to democratize Hong Kong, as the former was uninterested in interfering with Hong Kong's political future beyond 1997 at the risk of angering China. In 1984, for instance, the colonial government issued a Green Paper that created the Functional Constituencies in the Legislative Council (as chapter one discussed), whereby members of different industries and professional interest groups could elect their representatives into half the legislature (the other half of the seats were elected by the electoral college, which was composed of directly elected members from the District Boards and the Municipal Councils). This ensured that business people were well represented and their opinions well protected as the

18 Sing, Ming. “Mobilization for Political Change—The Pro-Democracy Movement in Hong Kong [1980s-1994]” In The Dynamics of Social Movement in Hong Kong, ed. Stephan Wing Kai Chiu and Tai-lok Lui (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2000), 23.
legislature became open for indirect elections for the first time in 1985.\textsuperscript{21} In addition to that, the colonial government produced a report in 1987 that suggested Hong Kong people were not ready for direct elections in spite of opinion polls and signature petitions that suggested otherwise—a move that impeded Hong Kong's pace of democratic development.\textsuperscript{22}

However, in the wake of the one million people-strong demonstration in support of protestors in Beijing in 1989 and the Tiananmen Square Massacre that soon followed, Britain departed from its previous policy of restricting Hong Kong's democratic progress.\textsuperscript{23} As the previous chapter explained, Patten's appointment as Hong Kong's last governor in 1992 expedited electoral reforms in the legislature. During his term, Patten most notably broadened the voter base of the Functional Constituencies from a few thousand corporations to 2.7 million voters, thereby rendering the entire concept of the Functional Constituency meaningless and eroding the privileged position of business elites in the legislature.\textsuperscript{24} To China's dismay, Patten's reforms excited greater aspirations for democracy, as the experience of an almost fully direct election created expectations for China to deliver its promises on universal suffrage. China's disbandment of the 1995 Legislative Council after the handover, for instance, led to an angry public that believed China's actions were unjust violations of the popular will and marked the deterioration of Hong Kong's democratic standards.\textsuperscript{25} After the July 1 protest against the National Security Bill in 2003, the demands for full and direct universal suffrage became even stronger and

\textsuperscript{21} Ma, "The Making of a Corporatist State in Hong Kong", 251.
\textsuperscript{22} So, "Hong Kong's problematic democratic transition, 370.
\textsuperscript{23} Ibid., 372.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 373.
\textsuperscript{25} Ma, Ngok, "The Decline of the Democratic Party in Hong Kong" Asian Survey 41, no.4 (2001), 569.
more explicit—the fight for "Double Universal Suffrage in 2007 and 2008" (Chief Executive and the Legislature) became the collective goal that united democrats in Hong Kong.

Patten's electoral reforms and the growing demands for universal suffrage undermined China's control over the pace of democratization in Hong Kong. Beijing instead resorted to a delaying tactic that time and again postponed decisions on universal suffrage. In 2004, for example, Beijing ruled out universal suffrage of the Chief Executive in 2007 and the legislature in 2008, and required that any future electoral reforms must first seek the approval of the NPCSC.\(^{26}\) Again in 2007, the NPCSC postponed the 2012 universal suffrage of the Chief Executive to 2017 and the legislature to 2020. Furthermore, it ruled that the nomination committee for Chief Executive candidates (as required by the Basic Law) would be based on the current election committee—a group of 1200 people (as of 2017) that elects the city's leader and is composed of a majority of pro-Beijing members.\(^{27}\) This paved way for a Beijing-controlled nomination round in the event that universal suffrage for the Chief Executive became a reality in 2017.

After almost 20 years of democratic stagnation in 2014, Beijing was finally compelled by its earlier 2007 decision to make arrangements for the universal suffrage of the Chief Executive in 2017. In June 2014, China issued a White Paper, the state's highest level of document, titled "The Practice of the 'One Country, Two Systems' Policy in Hong Kong Special Administrative Region", which argued that

\(^{26}\) Sing, Ming, and Yuen-sum Tang. "Mobilization and Conflicts over Hong Kong’s Democratic Reform" in Contemporary Hong Kong government and politics, ed. Lam Wai-Man, Percy Luen-Tim Lam, Wilson Wong (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 140.

Hong Kong's "high degree of autonomy...is not an inherent power, but one that comes solely from the authorization of the central leadership."²⁸ According to Ortmann, this narrative misleadingly pointed to China as the sole source of Hong Kong's autonomy, when the latter is actually the product of the Sino-British Joint Declaration in 1984.²⁹ In Beijing's point of view, the Chinese government wielded the absolute right to determine Hong Kong's affairs because it alone provided the source of Hong Kong's autonomy; this followed that Beijing could decide on the contents of Hong Kong’s democracy. To further consolidate Beijing’s ultimate authorship over the city, the White Paper required that "the Hong Kong people who govern Hong Kong should above all be patriotic"³⁰, whereby patriotism implied the acceptance of the Chinese government's inviolable right to determine Hong Kong affairs. In light of this, the NPCSC's August 31 decision to restrict the city’s democratic representation was a demonstration of China's right to determine Hong Kong's political future. In short, the decision ruled that candidates of the Chief Executive must receive support from half the pro-Beijing nomination committee and that no more than three candidates can qualify for candidacy.³¹ These requirements made it virtually impossible for democrats to succeed in the nomination round to become candidates. The NPCSC decision, therefore, revealed that Beijing would continue to restrict democracy in an effort to preserve the ruling government-business alliance. Democracy reached a

²⁹ Ortmann, Stephan, "The lack of sovereignty, the Umbrella Movement, and Democratisation in Hong Kong." Asia Pacific Law Review 24, no. 2 (2016). 118.
dead-end so long as China continued to wield absolute power in determining Hong Kong's political future.

III. The Failure of Traditional Democratic Movements

At the same time as the NPCSC August 31 decision reflected China's self-proclaimed right to decide on Hong Kong's affairs, the decision revealed the ineffectiveness of traditional democratic movements (from 1984 to 2014) in wrestling China over Hong Kong people's right to self-determination. Democracy in Hong Kong had often only been portrayed as a political or legal issue detached from the struggle for self-determination, because the idea of a Hong Kong social self—a distinct entity separate from the Chinese identity—had been non-existent before the first localist event in 2006; without a social self, there can be no self-determination to speak of. Instead, traditional democrats were attached to the ideas of "democratic repatriation" and "liberal patriotism", which held that Hong Kong would return to China as a democratic entity and was tasked with liberalizing China to create a new democratic Chinese identity.32 Traditional democratic movements in Hong Kong were thus nationalist in character—democracy in Hong Kong was only significant because it formed a part of the larger struggle for democracy in China. This was especially evident in the annual June Fourth commemoration for the Tiananmen Square Massacre in 1989 (as the last chapter discussed) organized by the "Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China", which still cites

"building a democratic China" as one of its five operational goals.\textsuperscript{33} In light of this, Hong Kong’s struggle for democracy was divorced from the development of Hong Kong people’s identity, because traditional democratic movements failed to secure the boundaries of Hong Kong’s polity. The idea of a Hong Kong political self separate from that of China remained a marginal view that only very few scholars proposed before the handover (such as Chan Koonjung, editor of the City Magazine, who wrote about Hong Kong people’s right to self-determination in 1980).\textsuperscript{34} For this reason, the process of Hong Kong’s identity creation during the series of localist events between 2006 and 2014 remained largely a cultural—rather than a political—project.

Without recognizing the Hong Kong social self, traditional democratic movements failed to furnish Hong Kong people with the vocabularies to struggle for self-determination. The core values—commonly understood as democracy, freedom and the rule of law—that came into broad circulation after the July 1 rally in 2003, for instance, only provided Hong Kong with a set of universal political values that became no more than empty signifiers easily appropriated by pro-Beijing officials. As an example, both pro-Beijing candidates of the Chief Executive in 2012, C.Y. Leung and Henry Tang, called for protecting Hong Kong’s core values in their manifestoes, even though their definition of the core values were closer to those of Beijing than to

\textsuperscript{33} “About Hong Kong Alliance” Hong Kong Alliance in Support of Patriotic Democratic Movements of China, \url{https://hka8964.wordpress.com/hkaeng/#eng_who}

democrats.\(^{35}\) Absent the right to self-determination, therefore, Hong Kong people also enjoyed no power to institute their definitions of the core values and decide on the contents of their desired form of democracy.

On top of the traditional democratic movements' failure to address Hong Kong people's right to self-determination, a younger generation of democrats grew disillusioned by traditional forms of democratic protests that held fast to the principle of "peaceful, rational, non-violent, non-profanity"—a phrase Emily Lau, the former vice chairperson of the Democratic Party, employed in 2011 to describe her beliefs in an effort to distance herself from "radical" democratic members of the Legislative Council who favored more confrontational tactics against the government, including swearing or throwing objects in the legislative chamber.\(^{36}\) To some democrats, especially younger people who participated in such political organizations as People Power or League of Social Democrats that adopted more disruptive forms of democratic resistance, the concept of "peaceful, rational, non-violent, non-profanity" was self-limiting because it restricted the courses of actions that protestors could employ and rendered protests predictable and non-threatening to the government. To them, as Law suggests, such demonstrations as the annual July 1 marches after 2003

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have become merely "tokenistic and ritualistic forms of resistance" that posed little threat to Beijing because of their unchanging forms.\(^{37}\)

More than that, these principles continued to portray Hong Kong people as economic animals who were unwilling to take on too much political risk. The Democratic Party—Hong Kong’s first and largest pan-democratic party—for instance, held fast to the idea of promoting the city’s stability and prosperity, a colonial narrative that has for long sought to deter political participation as the previous chapter suggested. To members of the Democratic Party, democratic movements must progress along the lines of “harmonious politics”, whereby protests and demonstrations were only a routinized process to increase the leverage of pan-democrats during negotiations with China, rather than a disruptive act to threaten the government for concessions.\(^{38}\) This consequently conveyed to Beijing the idea that traditional democrats had a low threshold for risks and could easily be co-opted. In 2010, for example, Beijing held closed-door negotiations with members of the Democratic Party and won their support for an unambitious electoral reform that would enlarge the election committee for the Chief Executive from 800 to 1200 people in 2012. Many democrats, especially members of People Power and the League of Social Democrats, saw this as a betrayal of the democratic movement because the secret negotiations, made possible by the "peaceful, rational, non-violent,


non-profanity" principle, weakened democrats’ uncompromising demands on universal suffrage.\(^{39}\) As Chan Wan, a right-wing localist discussed in the previous chapter, wrote in 2011 in the wake of the secret negotiations, democrats must abandon this principle and adopt the idea of "bravery in combat" (allegedly more rational and strategic than pure violence) to "disrupt society's order, teach those in power a lesson, and awaken the masses [my translation]."\(^{40}\) In light of this, the NPCSC's uncompromising decision to restrict representation of the nomination committee was a sign that traditional democratic movements had failed to pressure Beijing into softening its stance—some form of escalation, like those Chan Wan suggested, was warranted.

IV. The Umbrella Movement

i. The Occupy Central with Love and Peace Movement

On 23 September 2014, less than a month after the NPCSC decision had been released, Scholarism—a student organization that organized the anti-Moral and National Education campaign discussed in the last chapter—held a gathering at the government headquarters in protest of the August 31 verdict. This would eventually evolve into the Umbrella Movement on September 28—three days ahead of the much talked about Occupy Central with Love and Peace (OCLP), a civil disobedience campaign for universal suffrage that was set to happen on October 1. Already in January 2013, Benny Tai, a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, proposed the OCLP to paralyze the city's central business district and force Beijing to change


its stance on restricting elections for the Chief Executive.\textsuperscript{41} Together with Reverend Chu Yiu Ming and Professor Chan Kin Man—collectively known as the OCLP trio—Tai carried out the OCLP in three stages: in the first stage, the trio organized three "Deliberation Days" (inspired by Bruce Ackerman and James S. Fishkins' book that goes by the same name), which were public assemblies to discuss the desired electoral reforms for Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{42} The D-Days intended to build consensus amongst democrats of varying opinions through rational debates before pursuing negotiations with Beijing—an approach that avoided the secret dealings like those between the Democratic Party and the Chinese government in 2010.\textsuperscript{43} In the second stage, the trio held an unofficial referendum to allow the general public to choose from three of the most popular electoral reform proposals from the D-Days. 800,000 Hong Kong people—more than ten percent of Hong Kong's population—voted, and legitimated the elected proposal that called for broadening the nomination rounds to the public and political parties.\textsuperscript{44} In the third stage, the trio envisioned that they would stage an occupation movement in the Central district on October 1, China's national day, to force China to acknowledge the results of the referendum before participants opt for voluntary arrest. In Tai's view, the illegal occupation of the streets was an act of civil disobedience—breaking the law was necessary if the law fails to deliver justice, including civil and social justice, to the people of Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{45}

\textsuperscript{42} Chan, "Occupying Hong Kong", http://sur.conectas.org/en/occupying-hong-kong/
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{45} Yuen, Samson, "Hong Kong after the umbrella movement: An uncertain future for Hong Kong" China Perspectives 1 (2015), 51.
To a younger generation of democrats, the OCLP was too passive because the movement continued to operate within the confines of traditional democratic movements. For one, the OCLP was absorbed by the technical constitutional issues regarding the Chief Executive electoral reforms and was uninterested in the struggle for self-determination. While Tai once called the OCLP a localist democratic movement, his intention was not to merge Hong Kong’s democratic progress with the development of Hong Kong’s identity; rather, he only meant that the movement was initiated by local Hong Kong people without the support or influence of any foreign powers—a claim to dispel the Chinese government’s fears that the OCLP was a foreign-influenced “colour revolution”. For this reason, Joshua Wong, the leader of Scholarism, thought the OCLP was neither "meaningful nor adequate"; the movement only aimed to "send a message to the government" without wrestling China for the right to determine Hong Kong’s affairs.

For another, the OCLP continued to abide by the principle of "peaceful, rational, non-violent, non-profanity" despite talks of civil disobedience and violating the law. The trio, along with an older generation of democrats, stressed the loving and peaceful nature of the OCLP, because they were afraid that the adoption of more confrontational tactics would provoke a response from the Chinese government comparable to the violent suppression of protesters during the June Fourth Massacre.

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in 1989.\textsuperscript{48} As a result, they issued the Manual of Disobedience, which instructed participants to remain non-violent and respect the decisions of the OCLP leadership.\textsuperscript{49} To many student protesters, however, the emphasis on peace was self-limiting because it restricted the strategies of the protest movement and portrayed participants as weak and unwilling to take on higher political risks. They consequently favored a more active and confrontational approach to the occupy movement.\textsuperscript{50} On September 23, for example, the Federation of Student Unions, which comprised of the student unions of Hong Kong’s eight universities, called for a Hong Kong-wide class boycott and occupied the spaces outside of the government headquarters.

ii. Student Mobilization

On 26 September 2014, after three days of the student protest demanding that the NPCSC withdraw its decision on August 31, the police closed off Civic Square (the central meeting point of the congregation) outside of the government headquarters to make way for a counter rally. As a response, around 100 student protesters decided to "reclaim Civic Square" by scaling the gates and occupying the square despite strong police presence—a move that resembled the student occupation of the Taiwan Legislative Yuan during the Sunflower Movement earlier that year in March and April.\textsuperscript{51} The police attempted to remove the occupiers and arrested 13 people, including Joshua Wong, which led to more participants joining the movement.

\textsuperscript{48} Lee, Francis LF, Joseph Man Chan, and Dennis KK Leung, "When a historical analogy fails: Current political events and collective memory contestation in the news." Memory Studies 38, No. 7 (2017), 10.
\textsuperscript{50} Chan, "Occupying Hong Kong", http://sur.conectas.org/en/occupying-hong-kong/
\textsuperscript{51} Chan, Che-Po, "Post-Umbrella Movement: Localism and Radicalness of the Hong Kong Student Movement." Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations 2, No. 2 (2016), 896.
in support of the student protestors. On September 28, Benny Tai announced that the OCLP, now Occupy Admiralty (where the government headquarters is situated) rather than Central, would begin ahead of its scheduled date on October 1. This led to an outcry among many students who thought Tai "hijacked" the movement; the trio eventually agreed to recede to a more advisory role to the two major student organizations—Scholarism and the Hong Kong Federation of Student Unions. Later that day, as more participants joined the occupation movement, the police fired 87 canisters of tear gas against the occupiers, who used umbrellas as their shields (hence the name "Umbrella Movement"). Undeterred, protesters returned to the streets and began also to occupy other areas in town, including Causeway Bay and Mong Kok—the 79 days of occupation officially commenced.

For the first time in Hong Kong's history of democratic movement since the handover, the claims for democracy developed in tandem with the struggle for self-determination during the Umbrella Movement. The phrase "Masters of our own destiny" (命運自主), for instance, formed the backdrop to the main stage near the government headquarters, and the slogan "Determine our own destiny, flowers blooming everywhere" (命運自主，花開遍地) was prevalent in the occupation sites alongside banners that called for "I want genuine universal suffrage". Such claims for self-determination presupposed the creation of a new Hong Kong social self—an

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endeavor that had hitherto been a cultural project, and now a political one during the movement. This desire to create for Hong Kong a new political identity rendered the Umbrella Movement a localist event in two ways. In the first place, the calls for a new political self took Hong Kong, rather than China, as the unit of the imagined community. Whereas the traditional democratic movement's attachment to liberal patriotism integrated Hong Kong's democratic development into that of China, the Umbrella Movement assumed Hong Kong to be its own entity with its separate democratic struggles. As an editor of Undergrad, a publication of the University of Hong Kong, remarked then, the movement did not fight for "democracy in China. Or democracy in Hong Kong to promote democracy in China. Martin Lee [the founder of Hong Kong's first democratic party] did not understand this when he said the Umbrella Movement was part of the democracy movement."

Secondly, the Umbrella Movement interrogated old representations of Hong Kong's political identity and created new ones. As the previous chapter discussed, the colonial government had actively portrayed Hong Kong people as economic animals who were unconcerned with politics and only cared for self-preservation—a representation that kept people away from political participation and allowed the colonial (and Chinese) governments to enjoy full reign over the city's political affairs, including Hong Kong’s political arrangements after the handover. In restricting democratic representation after 1997, China continued to treat Hong Kong people as docile subjects of rule whose political future must be decided for. During the Umbrella Movement, therefore, protestors' claim for self-determination wrestled Britain and China for the right to author both Hong Kong's past and future. In so

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56 Ibid., 341.
doing, they represented Hong Kong as a civic community inhabited by citizens, rather than colonial subjects, who enjoyed full political agency. As the Hong Kong Federation of Student Unions stated in a declaration that launched the city-wide class boycott, “our objective is to create Hong Kong’s subjectivity as citizens through acts of civil disobedience, attempt to challenge the narratives of ‘depoliticization’ and ‘the economic city’, change the structural imbalances of the government-business collusion, in order to change and create a new local narrative. This will be a process to recreate our identities, which will be foundational to the recreation of a new political community [my translation].” 57 This statement was echoed by such popular slogans as "Our Hong Kong, let's save it ourselves" (自己香港自己救) or "Hong Kong history, written by Hong Kongers" (香港歷史由香港人編寫), which became assertions of Hong Kong people's agency. 58 In sum, the claim for self-determination was incorporated into the fight for universal suffrage during the Umbrella Movement because self-determination was a necessary precondition for Hong Kong people to instate their own definitions of "genuine" democracy, which was more broadly representative than China's version in its mandate published on August 31.

Hong Kong as a civic community was, however, not only a representation that existed in the abstract, but one that was realized during the Umbrella Movement. In occupying three major areas across town (Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok) for an extended period of time, protesters appropriated several public spaces to

57 Hong Kong Federation of Students. "抗殖反篩選 自主港人路——學聯罷課起動宣言 [Anti-Colonialism and Anti-Screening Process, Self-Determine Hong Kong People’s Path: Hong Kong Federation of Students’ Declaration for Class Boycott]." Inmedia (2014), http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1026386.
demonstrate that they were citizens capable of the right to determine their own affairs. Such a public demonstration of the Hong Kong citizenry transformed the Umbrella Movement into a "performance", which Johnston defines as "actions that are symbolic because they are interpreted by those also present at the action, the audience." According to him, "performances are locations where culture is accomplished," because they challenge normalized narratives of the dominant culture and in their place create "alternative symbols, values, languages and frames"—a process that reshapes culture.

Seen in this light, the Umbrella Movement was a performance in that protesters were engaged in actions that competed with historical narratives of Hong Kong people as docile subjects of rule by representing themselves as political agents. In the first place, protesters performed a way of living that was motivated by voluntarism and that required little coordination by any leadership. Within days of the occupation, protesters set up recharging stations for electronic devices, built tables for students to study and tents for sleeping, and volunteered to clean up the streets, station at medical stops or join the night watch patrol team (which monitored police activities on the ground). The Umbrella Movement, therefore, followed a "horizontally-networked" model of participation, whereby protesters organized

60 Ibid., 7.
63 Lim, “The Aesthetics of Hong Kong’s ‘Umbrella Revolution’”, 93.
themselves without a central leadership. As Alan Leong, a former pan-democratic legislator, noted then, "what we have seen is spontaneous—without leadership, without prior organization, of its own volition...a people's movement." Many protesters, in fact, grew averse to the dominance of the two major student organizations—Hong Kong Federation of Student Unions and Scholarism. During a televised debate between student representatives and the government on October 20, for example, many protesters, especially those in the Mong Kok occupation site, clamored "You do not represent me" for the full duration of the meeting. In performing a spontaneous movement that was at times resistant to leadership, participants of the Umbrella Movement demonstrated that the people were independently capable of organizing themselves without the interference of any outside or higher authorities.

On top of that, protesters "prefigured" (in the words of Lin) their envisioned political future by acting out a mode of participatory democracy that was characterized by deliberation. The occupation sites created spaces and an atmosphere that encouraged political discourse and self-expression—acts that challenged representations of Hong Kong people as apolitical subjects. In Admiralty, for instance, the main stage outside of the government headquarters invited people of different political views to deliver speeches; in Causeway Bay, professors and

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69 There was an episode where a student was denied to speak because of his support for violent resistance, but student leaders later claimed they welcomed transparent dialogue.
lecturers gave spontaneous talks and engaged in dialogue with protesters\textsuperscript{70}; and in Mong Kok, protesters carved out "Bullshit areas" in the occupation site where strangers were encouraged to communicate with one another about their political views.\textsuperscript{71} Aside from these spaces for verbal discourse, protest art also became "a tool for protesters to communicate ideas to the outside...[and] reflected the desire of the occupiers to speak to other fellow participants of the movement."\textsuperscript{72} This most notably included the "Lenon Wall", an imitation of a piece of protest art in the prelude to the Prague anti-communist demonstrations in 1989, where thousands of post-it notes scribbled with encouraging messages were stuck to a wall outside of the government headquarters.\textsuperscript{73} These performances of political interactions, no matter verbal or through artistic mediums, created a civic community that stressed citizenry participation and deliberation. Such a model of democracy, as Habermas remarks, "no longer hinges on the assumption of macro-subjects like the 'people' of 'the' community but on anonymously interlinked discourses or flows of communication."\textsuperscript{74}

The Umbrella Movement, therefore, portrayed the Hong Kong social self not as a normative and stabilized set of definitions, but as the very process of deliberation and participation that constantly reshapes the city's political culture; to borrow Hall's words, the Hong Kong people became not a question of "being" but of "becoming".\textsuperscript{75} For this reason, Clemens argues in relation to movement identities that "the answer to

\textsuperscript{71} Lee, "Space of disobedience", 374.
\textsuperscript{72} Quote from Veg, “Creating a Textual Public Space”, 691.
\textsuperscript{73} Matthews, Daniel, "Narrative, Space and Atmosphere: A Nomospheric Inquiry into Hong Kong’s Pro-democracy ‘Umbrella Movement’." Social & Legal Studies 26, no.1 (2017), 38.
\textsuperscript{75} Hall, Stuart, “Cultural Identity and Diaspora” in 書寫我城: 香港的身份與文化 [Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity], ed. Pun Ngai 潘毅,余麗文 (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2003), 11.
'who are we?' need not be a quality or noun; 'we are the people who do these sorts of things in this particular way' can be equally compelling.  

In sum, protesters of the movement acted out their desired form of democracy through the processes of discourse and deliberation—democracy and self-determination became, then, not only political demands, but also a way of living.

V. Conclusion

The Umbrella Movement ended in December 2014 after the High Court granted injunctions to several transportation companies to clear the occupied sites in Admiralty, Causeway Bay and Mong Kok. On December 1, the OCLP trio urged occupiers to retreat and subsequently turned themselves in to the police on December 3 as part of their original plan to take responsibility for breaking the law and to display to the public that they acted illegally for justice rather than personal gains.

The Hong Kong Federation of Student Unions, on the other hand, failed to reach a consensus on retreating, and remained in the occupied sites along with other protesters until the final police clearances in mid-December. By then, the occupation had lasted for 79 days, and both Beijing and the Hong Kong government remained reluctant to concede to the protesters’ demands and withdraw the NPCSC decision.

Provided the above analysis, the Umbrella Movement was as much a democratic movement as it was a localist event. In addition to claims for “genuine universal suffrage”, the movement assumed Hong Kong, not China, as the unit of political imagination and created new representations of Hong Kong’s identity as a


civic community, and its people as citizens with full political agency. This merged Hong Kong’s democratic progress with the development of the city’s political identity, making claims for self-determination possible. Hong Kong people’s realization of their right to self-determination marked the end of what Law coins as the “indefinite deferral of decolonization”, a process that was possible because both Britain and China never acknowledged “the right of those who live on this land to participate in the decision-making process of their own fates.”\footnote{Law, Wingsang, “Decolonization Deferred: Hong Kong Identity in Historical Perspective” in Citizenship, Identity and Social Movements in the New Hong Kong, ed. Lam Wai Man and Luke Cooper (London: Routledge, 2017), 13.} The Umbrella Movement, therefore, recreated the “Hong Kong cultural and political subjectivity that had long been repressed.”\footnote{Ibid., 13.} Or as Hui and Lau even assert, the movement was a “genuine decolonization movement, albeit not measured in nationalistic terms.”\footnote{Quote from Chan, Stephen Ching-kiu, "Delay no more: struggles to re-imagine Hong Kong (for the next 30 years)." Inter-Asia cultural studies 16, no. 3 (2015), 329.} 

In the views of these scholars, therefore, the Umbrella Movement’s struggle for self-determination created new possibilities for Hong Kong’s democratic movement. Like the fight for democracy, however, the fight for self-determination is an unfinished project, because the creation of the social self denotes a process that is ever in flux. As Calhoun argues, “there is no single, definite and fixed “peoplehood”… we lack a theory of the constitution of social selves which will give descriptive foundation to the prescriptive notion of self-determination.”\footnote{Calhoun, Craig, "Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity and Self-Determination." International Sociology 8, no. 4 (1993): 393.} In light of this, the Umbrella Movement’s representation of Hong Kong people as citizens of a civic community is prone to challenges, because the movement has no monopoly on
the process of defining the Hong Kong social self. After the Umbrella Movement, contending views and representations of the Hong Kong people as an ethnic community emerged, as the next chapter shall discuss.
Chapter Three
Uncertainties of the Post-Umbrella Age

I. Introduction

The Umbrella Movement's new claims for self-determination forever changed Hong Kong's democratic movement—for the first time in the city's history, the project of self-creation (a process that presupposes claims for self-determination) developed in tandem with demands for democracy. During the movement, Hong Kong people perceived their city as a separate political entity from China and "performed" a new civic identity characterized by their capacity for rational discourse and deliberation and ability to organize themselves without any higher leadership. Seen in this light, the end of the Umbrella Movement set off a new process of identity creation for the city. Localists of the post-Umbrella age grappled with two central questions: in the first place, what is the Hong Kong identity?—a debate that the Umbrella Movement addressed but by no means settled because identity is an ongoing process rather than a fixed entity, as my introduction suggested. This leads to the second question: how to protect Hong Kong's identity, or in other words, how to sustain localists' nascent claims for self-determination into the future?

Localists found answers to neither question in “One Country, Two Systems”—the guiding principle under which the city returned to China in 1997 as a Special Administrative Region with its own executive, legislative, legal and economic systems. “One Country, Two Systems”, as this chapter argues, does not satisfy Hong Kong people's claims for self- determination because it never acknowledged a
separate Hong Kong social self to begin with. Instead, architects of the principle only recognized Hong Kong's unique capitalist identity, a difference that China believed it would soon overcome as it gradually becomes integrated into the global market. “One Country, Two Systems” was, therefore, designed to protect Hong Kong's economic status until China caught up in economics terms—the assimilation between Hong Kong and China was embedded within the logic of the constitutional arrangement. As a result, the continued existence of Hong Kong's separate identity became a factor of uncertainty under this ruling framework, especially in the wake of the Umbrella Movement, as localists perceived Beijing's unyielding stance on restricting the city’s democracy as a naked demonstration of its iron will to assimilate the city. Without protecting Hong Kong's unique identity, “One Country, Two Systems” also fails to realize localists' goals for self- determination.

In the face of the uncertain prospects of Hong Kong's identity under “One Country, Two Systems”, localists of the post-Umbrella age took it upon themselves to secure more definite boundaries for Hong Kong people. Some localists became discontented with the so-called “Leftist Pricks” (左膠)\(^1\) — a derogatory term used to describe activists who are nationalist in their outlook, dedicated to create an inclusive civic community, or inflexibly attached to the traditional “peaceful, rational, non-violent, non-profanity” model of protest—who they believed failed to create stable boundaries for the Hong Kong identity to defend the city against Chinese assimilation. Consequently, these localists contested the dominance of the “Leftist

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\(^1\) “Leftist Pricks” are not leftists in the sense that they adopt a socialist political orientation (many “leftist pricks” can in fact support capitalism), but in the sense that they demonstrate an excessive degree of acceptance and tolerance (at least in the perspectives of some localists) that is connected to a Rousseauian or Marxist understanding of the altruistic character of human nature.
Pricks” and adopted a number of strategies to construct a more definite Hong Kong identity, including their rejection of the annual commemoration for victims of the June Fourth Massacre—an event that they believed embodied older activists’ nationalist impulse; the creation of new narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity to supplement the city’s civic identity, and the demonstration of violence in the “Fishball Revolution” (named so because localists protested against a government crackdown on street hawkers who sold fishballs, a famous local street food item), a rare case civil unrest that broke the mold of traditional peaceful protests.

Aside from looking for definitive answers to what it means to be Hong Kong people, localists were also interested in finding suitable vehicles to sustain their new claims for self-determination into the future—a discussion that emerged during the 2016 elections for the Hong Kong Legislative Council. During the campaign period, different localist political organizations agreed that the existing “One Country, Two Systems” framework was ill-equipped to preserve Hong Kong people's right to self-determination, but offered different solutions to improve on the existing arrangement, ranging from calls for independence and the creation of the Hong Kong nation, to the extension of “One Country, Two Systems” beyond 2047 (the year when the constitutional setup is supposed to expire) and the staging of referenda for Hong Kong people to decide on their own political future. Whatever their claims, these localist organizations were essentially rejecting China’s assimilation and demanding Beijing to provide room for the development of Hong Kong’s identity—this shifted the discourse from the previous claims for a democratic China to new calls for a decentralized China that would better respect Hong Kong’s uniqueness. More than
that, it marked the shift from Hong Kong’s previous struggle for democracy into a wider fight to preserve the city’s identity.

In sum, localists of the post-Umbrella age realized that the continued existence of Hong Kong's unique identity and their claims for self-determination faced uncertain prospects under “One Country, Two Systems”. In light of this, the creation of new narratives of the Hong Kong identity and the emergence of different alternatives to “One Country, Two Systems” reflected the ways localists negotiated with an uncertain political landscape in search of a more definite identity and a blueprint for the city’s political future.

The following chapter is divided into three parts: the first part argues that “One Country, Two Systems” was drafted with the intention of assimilating Hong Kong with China rather than to protect the people's right to self-determination; the second part explores the new narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity; and the final part discusses different proposals for vehicles that would best protect Hong Kong's right to self-determination.

II. “One Country, Two Systems” as a Project of Assimilation

In the wake of the Umbrella Movement, localists realized that "One Country, Two Systems" was a blueprint for the assimilation between Hong Kong and China, rather than an acknowledgement of Hong Kong's unique identity. "One Country, Two Systems” was a principle Deng Xiaoping proposed in 1984 with the signing of the Sino-British Joint Declaration for Hong Kong's retrocession to China. Under the constitutional arrangement, Hong Kong would return to China in 1997 as a Special Administrative Region with its own executive, legislative, legal and economic
systems. As a number of scholars note, this peculiar setup was a reflection of the Chinese government's own paradox. On the issue of Hong Kong's handover, China's nationalist logic required the rejection of British colonialism in its entirety, as it represented 150 years of national humiliation—all remnants of colonialism must be eradicated in order for Hong Kong to rejoin its motherland. On the other side, China's capitalist logic, which it embraced since Deng's Reform and Opening Up in 1978, called for maintaining Hong Kong's place as an international financial center to facilitate trade and investments in the mainland and support China's economic modernization. This meant preserving the colonial infrastructure that is characterized by the strong business presence in government (as discussed in chapter two) to sustain Hong Kong's mode of economic development. In light of this, "One Country, Two Systems" reconciled Beijing's conflicting nationalist and capitalist logic—"One Country" sufficed China's nationalist impulse to resume its sovereignty over Hong Kong's territory, while "Two Systems" enabled the continuation of the city's economic, hence ruling, infrastructure. "One Country, Two Systems" can consequently be understood as one country, two economic systems; such other systems as the executive, the judiciary or the legislative branches were allowed to diverge from those of China insofar as they supported Hong Kong's capitalist growth. Right from the beginning, therefore, the principle had been designed out of economic considerations to preserve Hong Kong's economy as well as the infrastructure that

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protected it; or as Law comments, it was an attempt to "disavow and affirm Hong Kong, as well as its colonialism."  

In the same vein, the other promises attached to "One Country, Two Systems" contained Beijing's economic logic. The idea of "Hong Kong People Ruling Hong Kong"—a phrase popularized by Deng Xiaoping—for instance, essentially implied business elites ruling Hong Kong, rather than a recognition of Hong Kong people's right to self-determination—something that threatened China's sovereignty over the city. As Director Xu Jiatun of Xinhua Hong Kong, a mouthpiece of the Chinese government, stated in 1993, "to implement the principle of 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong,' the future HKSAR government shall be mainly made up of the local capitalist class with the participation of the working class. It shall be a cross-class alliance, but the capitalist class should form the core of the whole alliance. [My emphasis]." As the previous chapter discussed in greater length, Beijing was keen on protecting the privileged position of local business elites to ensure Hong Kong's economic stability during the city's transition to Chinese rule. Consequently, local business elites assumed a majority of the key leadership roles, including membership in the Basic Law Drafting Committee, or even Hong Kong's first Chief Executive (who was a shipping magnate).

The principle of "High degree of Autonomy"—another phrase popularized by Deng—was driven by the same logic of protecting Hong Kong's economic status. As Ghai observes, the Basic Law, Hong Kong's mini-constitution that was drafted based

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3 Law, Collaborative Colonial Power, 174.
5 Ibid., 197.
on "One Country, Two Systems", was primarily concerned with providing autonomy for Hong Kong to practice its capitalist system free from the influences of China's command economy.\(^6\) In comparison, the political autonomy that Hong Kong enjoyed was ambiguously described; the final draft of the basic law, for instance, omitted a list of the city's executive powers and deliberately left the nature of future Chief Executive and Legislative Council elections vague.\(^7\) For the most part, the city’s extent of political autonomy depended on China's self-restraint rather than on certain constitutional protections—for this reason, Ghai comments that Hong Kong's autonomy is “built on sand”.\(^8\) More than that, the city's cultural autonomy was completely overlooked. The Basic Law never explicitly mentioned Hong Kong people's cultural rights except for a clause that promised to preserve the city's "capitalist system and way of life"—a way of life that is more economic than cultural. In fact, the existence of a distinct Hong Kong cultural identity was foreign to China for two reasons: for one, Hong Kong was portrayed as the embodiment of authentic Chineseness in several narratives. A number of mainland scholars, for instance, believe that Hong Kong culture inherited authentic Chinese culture of the past, such as in terms of food or even the boisterous mannerisms in which people converse—something China had lost during the political turmoil under communist


\(^7\) Ibid., 336 & 325.

\(^8\) Quoted from Cheung, Chor-yung. ““One Country, Two Systems” After the Umbrella Movement: Problems and Prospects” Asian Education and Development Studies 6, no. 4 (2017), 394.

rule. For this reason, Hong Kong was sometimes described as "more Chinese than China". For another, Hong Kong people's local consciousness paled in comparison to the strong sense of Chinese nationalism that emerged before the handover in 1997. This was especially evident when a million people marched in support of democratic protests in Beijing in 1989, which awakened in Hong Kong people a sense of mission to modernize and liberalize China, as chapter one discussed in greater length. The people’s own emphasis on their Chinese ethnic identity created the impression at the time that a separate Hong Kong self did not exist. In light of this, “One Country, Two Systems” was silent on Hong Kong’s cultural autonomy because there was a weak sense of local consciousness in both China and Hong Kong’s narratives. Instead, the drafters—most of whom are Hong Kong capitalists—only saw the differences in capitalism and socialism as the most significant rift between Hong Kong and China. Political and cultural distinctions between the two places, so it was believed, would vanish once their economic differences become resolved.

Beijing's solution to close the economic gap between Hong Kong and China was embedded in the "no change for 50 years" clause attached to the Basic Law. The 50-year limit to "One Country, Two Systems" reveals that the constitutional setup was primarily designed to preserve Hong Kong's economic autonomy—the arrangement would otherwise be a timeless fixture if it ever intended to protect Hong Kong's cultural or political rights in the first place. In Beijing's vision, Hong Kong

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11 Law, Wing-Sang, "香港本土意識的前世今生 [The Development of Hong Kong Local Consciousness from Past to Present]." Inmedia (2015), http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1032059
would remain as an entrepôt to support China’s integration into the global market\textsuperscript{13}—
but only for 50 years. "One Country, Two Systems", then, describes a transient
difference between the economic states of Hong Kong and China, which will be no
more when China eventually catches up with Hong Kong's economic development.
For this reason, Abbas reformulates "One Country, Two Systems" into "One Country,
One System at different stages of development—a difference in times and speed.\textsuperscript{14}
The planned obsolescence of "One Country, Two Systems" was thus encoded in the
50-years clause of the Basic Law—China regards "Two Systems" to be a part of a 50
years transition to "One Country\textsuperscript{15} once it becomes assimilated into Hong Kong's
capitalist state and hence integrated into the world market. The assimilation between
Hong Kong and China is embedded within the logic of the arrangement.

China's economic takeoff, however, did not naturally lead to the expected
assimilation between Hong Kong and China. Instead, the city's political and cultural
distinctions became increasingly apparent even as China grew more like Hong Kong
in economic terms. In the wake of the half a million people-strong protest against the
National Security Bill in 2003, Beijing witnessed the city's entrenched political
culture and realized that its project of national assimilation must be broadened to the
political and cultural fronts.\textsuperscript{16} This change of attitude was well within the
assimilationist logic of "One Country, Two Systems", except that the direction of
assimilation had been shifted—while China had sought to assimilate into Hong

\textsuperscript{13} Lui, "A missing page in the grand plan", 401
\textsuperscript{14} Abbas, Ackbar, Hong Kong: Culture and the Politics of Disappearance (Minneapolis: University of
\textsuperscript{15} Wu, Rwei-Ren, “The Lilliputian dreams: Preliminary Observations of Nationalism in Okinawa,
Taiwan and Hong Kong” Nations and Nationalism 22, No. 3 (2016), 690.
\textsuperscript{16} Fong, Brian CH, “One Country, Two Nationalisms: Center-Periphery Relations between Mainland
China and Hong Kong, 1997–2016” Modern China 43, no. 5 (2017), 528.
Kong's economic state since Reform and Opening Up, it now actively demanded Hong Kong's political and cultural assimilation into its motherland. This new project of assimilation took the form of Beijing's "New Hong Kong Policy" in 2003, which developed measures to curtail the city's autonomy.\textsuperscript{17} Politically, the Liaison Office of the Central People's Government (CGLO) became a de facto "second governing team" and actively interfered in Hong Kong's politics, including its coordination of pro-Beijing organizations in Hong Kong and, most notably, its speculated meddling in the Chief Executive election in 2012 by actively supporting C.Y. Leung, who eventually became the city's leader.\textsuperscript{18} In June 2014, the Central Government even issued a White Paper, the highest level of state document, declaring that "the Central People's Government exercises overall jurisdiction over Hong Kong"\textsuperscript{19}, thereby explicitly restricting the extent of political autonomy Hong Kong people enjoyed. Even in terms of economic autonomy, a sphere that the city's Basic Law places most stress on, China's economic integration increasingly eroded Hong Kong's control over its economy. In 2006, for instance, Beijing incorporated Hong Kong into the Eleventh Five-Year Plan for the first time in history\textsuperscript{20}; later in 2008, the State Council included Hong Kong into the "Plan for the Reform and Development of the Pearl River Delta (2008-2020)"\textsuperscript{21}, which merged the city’s economy with that of Guangdong Province. Together, the plans at the state level to incorporate Hong Kong into its surrounding region not only undermined Hong Kong's economic autonomy but also, as Chin

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 528.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 530-531.
\textsuperscript{19} Quote from ibid., 529.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 529.
\textsuperscript{21} Chin, Angelina Y, “Diasporic Memories and Conceptual Geography in Post-colonial Hong Kong” Modern Asian Studies 48, no. 6 (2014), 1582.
suggests, diluted "the local identities of Hong Kongers by turning them into megalopolitanites of China instead."\(^\text{22}\) Culturally, Hong Kong's government played an active part in promoting the Chinese identity with such acts as introducing the Moral and National Education as a school subject in 2012 to nurture students' sense of national identity (as chapter one discussed), or preferentially providing more subsidies to schools that adopt Mandarin, as opposed to Cantonese—Hong Kong's most spoken language—as the medium of instruction.\(^\text{23}\)

In China's perspective, therefore, the assimilation of Hong Kong into China is evidence that "One Country, Two Systems" has been functioning as it should be—the protection of Hong Kong people's identity and autonomy was never the intention of the constitutional arrangement, as some democrats interpreted it. As assimilation between the two places proceeds, the use-value of "One Country, Two Systems" is at the same time in decline, as it is soon to fulfill its historical mission of merging Hong Kong with China. For this reason, a number of pro-Beijing officials have begun proposing the end to "One Country, Two Systems". Wang Zhenming, an official of the Liaison Office, for instance, suggested in 2017 that "One Country, Two Systems" could be scrapped before 2047, when the principle was supposed to expire.\(^\text{24}\) In the same year, Jasper Tsang, the former President of the Legislative Council, questioned whether China would give up "One Country, Two Systems" now that Hong Kong and China's economic states were on par and that Hong Kong's role of facilitating China's

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\(^\text{22}\) Ibid., 1587.


economic growth had become obsolete with such cities as Shanghai taking Hong Kong’s place as the country’s international financial center. These messages evoke a sense of grave uncertainty to localists of the post-Umbrella age, as the end of "One Country, Two Systems" signaled the total assimilation between Hong Kong and China, and ultimately, the death of the Hong Kong identity.

III. New Narratives of the Hong Kong People

To Hong Kong people, China’s refusal to withdraw or amend the August 31 decision despite strong opposition during the Umbrella Movement demonstrated its resolve to assimilate the city by restricting its political uniqueness. In a survey conducted in 2015, 60.7% of the respondents believed that "the high degree of autonomy in Hong Kong is now under threat", of whom 61.8% considered the Central People's Government to be the primary source of this threat. Under "One Country, Two Systems", therefore, most Hong Kong people felt that their identity faced uncertain prospects owing to Beijing's assimilation. One localist even visualized a doomsday scenario for Hong Kong, commenting that "China is quickly expanding its control over Hong Kong: 150 one-way permits per day", adding to the increasingly pro-government media and a large amount of Chinese capital that is invading Hong Kong. Based on current trends, pessimistically speaking, China will have full

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25 "曾鈺成：香港對中國經濟貢獻大不如前 中央仍願堅持一國兩制？ [Jasper Tsang: Hong Kong’s Contribution to China’s Economy Is Waning, Will the Chinese Government Continue One Country, Two Systems?]" Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics%E6%9B%BE%E9%88%BA%E6%88%90-%E9%A6%99%E6%B8%AF%E5%B0%8D%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B%E7%B6%93%E6%BF%9F%E8%B2%A2%E7%8D%BB%E5%A4%A7%E4%B8%8D%E5%A6%82%E5%89%8D-%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E4%BB%8D%E9%A1%98%E5%A0%85%E6%8C%81%E4%B8%80%E5%9C%8B%E5%85%A9%E5%88%B6/.


27 The one-way permit is an immigration policy in Hong Kong that allows 150 mainland Chinese to settle in Hong Kong every day.
ideological control over Hong Kong before 2047, and its power will become unchallenged—Hong Kong will become another Macau [my translations].”

Fears of a complete Chinese takeover prompted some localists to accuse the organizers of the Umbrella Movement (mainly the Hong Kong Federation of Students Union, Scholarism, and the OCLP Trio) as "Leftist Pricks", a widespread umbrella term that collapses people who remained attached to Chinese nationalism, emphasized such "universal values" as tolerance or equality and denounced exclusionary practices, and held fast to the "peaceful, rational, non-violence, non-profanity" model of demonstration under the same category. According to these localists, the dominance of "Leftist Pricks" was the source of the ill-defined and amorphous nature of the Hong Kong identity, which rendered the city vulnerable to the Chinese threat. In the wake of the Umbrella Movement, therefore, various localist groups adopted different strategies to contest the dominance of the "Leftist Pricks" by rejecting older activists' attachment to Chinese nationalism, contesting the city’s civic identity with narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity, and continuing to challenge the non-violent model of resistance that defined traditional protests. These strategies were ultimately localists’ attempts to negotiate with the uncertainty of the post-Umbrella age and to construct a more definite Hong Kong identity against China's looming threat of assimilation.

i. The Rejection of Chinese Nationalism


As the last chapter discussed, localists became especially discontented with the older activists' reluctance to abandon their nationalist impulse to democratize China during the Umbrella Movement, which they thought weakened the imaginations of Hong Kong as a bounded political community. But these criticisms were not limited to an older generation of democrats. Many localists also began to accuse the Federation of Student Unions (HKFSU) and Scholarism, the two leading student organizations during the movement, for getting too close to traditional democrats in terms of their ideology. For example, in an open letter to President Xi Jinping at the height of the movement in October 2014, the leaders of HKFSU highlighted, "we believe democracy is not only Hong Kong's aspiration, it is also the aspiration of today's China."\(^{30}\) Representatives of HKFSU and Scholarism then attempted to visit Beijing to convey their demands to the Chinese government before they were refused boarding on the plane.\(^{31}\) These actions did not bode well with some localists, who believed that the two organizations were ideologically ambiguous on whether Hong Kong's democratic movement was a part of or apart from that of China and appeared too conciliatory to the Chinese government. As a result, many of the protesters became suspicious of the student leaders' intentions and argued that the HKFSU did not represent them, a charge that eventually amounted to the withdrawal of four of the city's eight universities from the HKFSU after the Umbrella Movement in 2015.\(^{32}\) In sum, localists of the post-Umbrella age sought to reduce the influences of older democrats, whose attempts to annex Hong Kong's

\(^{30}\) Ibid., 341.
\(^{31}\) Ibid., 341.
\(^{32}\) Wong, Benson Wai Kwok, and Sanho Chung, "Scholarism and Hong Kong Federation of Students: Comparative Analysis of Their Developments after the Umbrella Movement" Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations 2, no. 2 (2016), 892.
democratic movement with that of China were perceived to produce unstable boundaries for the Hong Kong identity.

Some localists also contested traditional narratives through their rejection of the annual candlelight vigils to commemorate the victims of the June Fourth Massacre in 1989, an event that they believed embodied the nationalist sentiments of an older generation of democrats. Already since 2013, such localists as Chan Win have criticized the Alliance in support of Patriotic Democratic Movements in China (the Alliance) for citing "Building a democratic China" as one of its operational goals, which linked up Hong Kong's democratic resistance to that of China.\(^{33}\) In response to the rise of localism during the Umbrella Movement, the Alliance revised some of its more controversial programs for the candlelight vigil in 2015, such as removing the song "Chinese Dream", which expresses the people's longing for China’s modernization, from the event to downplay demands for a democratic China.\(^{34}\) These amendments were, nonetheless, futile in preventing competing commemorations from emerging at other locations. The HKFSU, for instance, refused to send representatives to the event and officially withdrew from the Alliance in 2016.\(^{35}\) Instead, the student organization held its own discussion panel with the theme of "reconsidering the meaning of June Fourth and Hong Kong's future", which rejected the Alliance's "ossifying" candlelight vigils and its continued attachment to

\(^{34}\) “支聯會・學界・本土派 五年來對六四晚會態度的變與不變 [the Alliance, the Students, and the Localists: The Changes and Anscence of Change in Attitude Towards the June Fourth Commemoration in Five Years Time]” Standnews (2016), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%94%AF%E8%81%AF%E6%9C%83-%E5%AD%B8%E7%95%8C-%E6%9C%AC%E5%9C%9F%E6%B4%BE-%E4%BA%94%E5%B9%BA%E4%BE%86%E5%B0%8D%E5%85%AD%E5%9B%9B%E6%99%9A%E6%9C%83%E6%85%8B%E5%BA%A6%E7%9A%84%E8%AE%8A%E8%88%87%E4%B8%8D%E8%AE%8A/.
\(^{35}\) Ibid.
the Chinese identity. The panel declared that Hong Kong's only epiphany from June Fourth was the unfeasibility of a democratic China and the untrustworthiness of the Chinese government.\textsuperscript{36} Since 2015, too, the University of Hong Kong has staged its own event that called for an end to the Alliance's nationalistic commemorations. The organizers criticized the Alliance's goal of "rehabilitating June Fourth" as a negotiation that sought concessions from China, essentially an acceptance of the Communist Party's legitimacy—Hong Kong should instead focus on its own future than to make demands on behalf of the Chinese people.\textsuperscript{37} Similarly, Civic Passion-Proletariat Political Institute-Hong Kong Resurgence Order's event was stripped of commemorative elements, and focused mainly on Hong Kong's political issues. In 2015, for instance, the organizers encouraged participants to throw eggs at cutouts of government officials and called for redrafting Hong Kong's constitution as one of their main themes in 2016.\textsuperscript{38} Together, these competing events challenged older activists' nationalist impulse to democratize China, which was founded on calls for a pan-Chinese nation associated with blood kinship.\textsuperscript{39} Localists believed, on the contrary, that older activists’ attachment to such a narrative was misguided, because the Chinese nation does not need to be a unified and homogenous entity\textsuperscript{40}; their calls for a refocus on Hong Kong's own issues and future essentially promoted


\textsuperscript{37} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{38} “支聯會、學界、本土派 五年來對六四晚會態度的變與不變 [the Alliance, the Students, and the Localists: The Changes and Absence of Change in Attitude Towards the June Fourth Commemoration in Five Years Time]" Standnews (2016).


\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., 195.
multivocality within the Chinese nation—in other words, the possibility of Chineseness-es, as I mentioned in Chapter one. If Hobsbawm argues that traditions are invented to "inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past," then Hong Kong localists' rejection of the commemorative tradition on June Fourth signaled a break from the past, both in terms of values and norms of behavior.

ii. The Hong Kong Ethnicity

Narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity emerged as a response to the city's civic identity, which has been realized through people's sustained participation in the civic process during and after the Umbrella Movement. Such a representation of the Hong Kong identity lacked stable definitions of the "people" but instead emerged out of such practices as public deliberation—processes that are necessarily inclusive because membership to the civic community is earned rather than ascribed. For this reason, localists who embrace this civic vision often denounce exclusionary practices against new immigrants in Hong Kong, especially from Mainland China, and advocate for their inclusion in social movements. To some localists, however, this amorphous civic identity is problematic because it failed to clearly define Hong Kong people against Mainland Chinese, rendering the defense of the city against Chinese assimilation difficult. As one such localist wrote, "Leftist Pricks' calls for Mainlanders' inclusion in Hong Kong's civic community, but fail to defend the civic

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community; they support diversity and tolerance, but do not acknowledge that Hong Kong's vulnerable traditional culture is under threat [due to Chinese assimilation]; [my translations]"43 In light of this, the perceived failure of the civic identity to establish clear boundaries for Hong Kong people led to the construction of new narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity that attempted to stabilize the city's identity at a time when its continued existence became an uncertainty.

According to Barth, ethnicity is produced and maintained through the continuous interaction between a group and its Other. Barth rejects the notion that ethnicities are based on an objective list of "cultural stuff", including a common language, history or place of origin, because it erroneously assumes that ethnic groups develop in isolation from one another.44 Instead, ethnicities arise from the construction and maintenance of boundaries—the continuous dichotomization of significant cultural characteristics between a group and its Other.45 As Barth suggests, "some cultural features are used by the actors as signals and emblems of differences, others are ignored, and in some relationships, radical differences are played down and denied."46 In view of that, ethnicities lack a stable definition because members of a group can adopt different "cultural differentiae"47—cultural markers that a group finds significant in differentiating themselves from others—to construct new boundaries or remove old ones. Such changes can happen for two reasons: for one, "political innovators" can amplify some differentiae or play down others through "the

46 Ibid., 14.
47 Ibid., 38.
codification of idioms".\textsuperscript{48} For another, changes in socio-economic or socio-political conditions can render existing cultural boundaries irrelevant or create new ones.\textsuperscript{49} In light of Barth’s definition of ethnicity, some localists’ attempts to create narratives on the Hong Kong ethnicity were essentially boundary-making practices to define Hong Kong people against Chinese people by selecting and emphasizing certain cultural markers they deemed important.

The narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity came into broad circulation in the wake of the Umbrella Movement in 2014. Already in 2011, Chan Win's book "Hong Kong as a City-State" (discussed in chapter one) began the discourse of Hong Kong as an ethnicity without, however, directly calling it as such. In his book, Chan argues that Hong Kong is the legitimate inheritor of traditional Chinese culture (Huaxia), something China had lost due to the contamination of communism.\textsuperscript{50} In so representing Hong Kong, Chan constructs a new cultural differentia that distinguishes Hong Kong's authentic Chineseness against China's tainted version—a binary that made his later claims for the defense of Hong Kong's city-state against Chinese infiltration possible. Later in 2015, Tsui Sing-Yan gave one of the first direct mentions of Hong Kong as an ethnicity through his unique historical account of the Hong Kong people. Tsui's book, \textit{A National History of Hong Kong}, argues that the city had never been heavily influenced by Han culture owing to its marginal geopolitical position in China and its history of colonialism.\textsuperscript{51} Unlike Chan's book,

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 35.
\textsuperscript{50} Wu, “The Lilliputian Dreams”, 698.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 700.
Tsui’s narrative dismisses the notion that Hong Kong embodied any Chineseness at all, but instead magnified the city's unique non-Han history to create greater differences between Hong Kong and China's past. The construction of this new boundary not only made China's assimilation of Hong Kong appear coerced—as Hong Kong was never Chinese to begin with—but also naturalized the existence of a separate Hong Kong ethnic nation. Undergrad, a publication of the Hong Kong University, produced one of the most notable examples of the Hong Kong ethnic narrative, after C.Y. Leung, the city's former Chief Executive, uncharacteristically denounced the magazine's publishers for promoting Hong Kong independence in an earlier 2014 publication during his annual policy address in 2015. In one of Undergrad's articles, for instance, Leung Kai-Ping, the magazine's former editor-in-chief, argues for the creation of the Hong Kong ethnicity to supplement the Umbrella Movement's claims for democracy. Leung rejects the adoption of certain ascribed qualities like race and blood relations as the building blocks of Hong Kong's identity, which he believes would lead to the exclusion of the 8% of non-Han Chinese population in Hong Kong. Instead, the Hong Kong ethnicity should be, as Leung quotes Brubaker, "a category of practice" realized through the "affirmation of Hong Kong values, support of the 'Hong Kong First' policy, and the defense of Hong Kong [my translations]." Unlike Chan and Tsui who emphasize Hong Kong's essential qualities, therefore, Leung integrates the Hong Kong ethnic narrative with civic

52 Ibid., 700.
53 Chan, Che-po, "Post-Umbrella Movement: Localism and Radicalness of the Hong Kong Student Movement" Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations 2, no. 2 (2016), 898.
55 Ibid., 31.
elements and acknowledges that Hong Kong's ethnicity is a construct. In so doing, Leung dichotomizes Hong Kong's identity, which is founded upon civic processes, against China's essentialist identity that is made up of ascribed traits of the Han people. In sum, the three authors selected and magnified different cultural characteristics to mark Hong Kong off against China in an effort to draw clear boundaries for the city’s identity.

The process of boundary making, however, not only existed in narratives but also in practice. In the immediate aftermath of the Umbrella Movement, some protesters organized "Gau Wu" tours—the transliteration of 'shopping' in Mandarin that literally means 'the cooing of the dicks' in Cantonese— in response to a speech made by C.Y. Leung, the city's former leader, encouraging tourists to shop and revitalize businesses in Mong Kong (a major occupation site during the movement). Instead of shopping, participants of these "tours" blended in with normal shoppers and sauntered the streets in an attempt to re-occupy the area before the police took action to remove them. "Gau Wu" soon became an almost weekly occurrence, after such political organizations as Civic Passion and Hong Kong Indigenous (further discussed in a later part of this chapter) mobilized protesters to "shop" in locations near Hong Kong's border with China, including Tuen Mun, Shatin, and Yuen Long. Strong anti-Mainland sentiments pervaded these "shopping tours": protesters often targeted parallel traders from the Mainland, who bought tax-free goods in Hong Kong and resold them in China at a profit, and accused them of pushing up retail prices or...
creating shortages of such essential goods as milk formula. Participants consequently carried xenophobic signs that read "Kick out the locusts!" or "Go back to China!" in an effort to take control of the city's population flow into their own hands. In more confrontational moments, some participants even surrounded and scoffed at people whom they assumed to be mainland parallel traders and kicked their luggage. As Ip points out, these movements were not simply vents for protesters to unleash their anger at Mainland parallel traders—after all, Mainland parallel traders’ effects on the city’s economy were arguably minimal (government statistics, for instance, showed that half of the known parallel traders were Hong Kong people rather than Mainland Chinese). The truth is, however, immaterial in the creation of narratives; as Anderson argues, “communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/ genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined.” In view of that, participants of “Gau Wu” used Mainland parallel traders’ perceived threat to the city’s economy as a narrative to create and enforce new boundaries of the Hong Kong people. In recent decades, China's growing economic strength meant that the previous dichotomy between Hong Kong's "economic modernism" and China's "primitive" economic state was no longer applicable. In light of the diminishing socio-economic differences between the two places, "Gau Wu" protesters shifted the

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portrayal of Mainland Chinese from "poor" cousins from the north to "flawed consumers", whose "consumption craze allegedly results in excessive number, movements, manners and desire, which are deemed to be out of control." As a result, "Gau Wu" became boundary-making events that constructed and dramatized the differences between Hong Kong's sensible consumers and China's flawed ones who threatened the city's civilized economic order. Such a narrative fundamentally competed with Hong Kong’s civic identity as it defined Hong Kong people not as a civic entity but an entity that was defined against Mainland Chinese people’s behaviors.

iii. Challenging Traditional Forms of Protest

Some localists continued to demonstrate their loss of faith in the “peaceful, rational, non-violent, non-profanity” model of protest in the wake of the Umbrella Movement. On Chinese New Year in 2016, for instance, Hong Kong Indigenous, a localist party founded the year before, organized a movement later known as the “Fishball Revolution” to protect unlicensed food hawkers (many of whom sold fishballs, a local delicacy) from a rumored crackdown by officials, which eventually escalated into a violent confrontation; protesters threw bricks and glass bottles at the police and set fire to trash cans, while police officers fired warning shots and used pepper spray against protesters. The radicalization of the form of resistance reflected some localists' growing sense of impatience towards older activists' insistence on peaceful ways of protests, which was in part based on the latter’s fear of

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64 Ibid., 416.
65 Chan, “Post-Umbrella Movement”, 892.
a military suppression equivalent to that during the June Fourth Massacre in 1989.\textsuperscript{66} Such a sentiment was especially prevalent during the Umbrella Movement, when older activists believed that a government suppression was imminent and consequently resisted the adoption of confrontational tactics to avoid provoking Beijing or asked protesters to withdraw at critical moments, such as when the police fired 87 canisters of tear gas on September 28.\textsuperscript{67} Some localists viewed these unwelcomed opinions with contempt, seeing them as attempts to hijack the student movement and stifle its momentum before any goals had been achieved. A number of people went further to denounce the Federation of Student Union and Scholarism as the inheritors of the older democratic movement owing to their continued promotion of civility during protests and their rejection of violence.\textsuperscript{68} In particular, the two student organizations were accused of fostering a carnival-like atmosphere in the Admiralty occupation site (the base of most student and political leaders) where constant singing—which some localists derided as "democratic karaoke"—and the display of films and protest art became part of the protest landscape.\textsuperscript{69} These forms of activities were thought to contribute little to the democratic goals of the movement, as they were mere theatrics that only raised public awareness without taking the resistance seriously.

To these localists, the Umbrella Movement's ultimate failure to force concessions from Beijing at the same time reflected the obsolescence of the traditional forms of

\textsuperscript{66} Lee, Francis LF, Joseph Man Chan, and Dennis KK Leung, "When a historical analogy fails: Current political events and collective memory contestation in the news” Memory Studies (2017), 8.
\textsuperscript{68} Wong and Chung, "Scholarism and Hong Kong Federation of Students”, 880.
\textsuperscript{69} Cheung, "「和理非非」V.S.「勇武派」—由雨傘革命看香港民主社運路線的分裂與衝突 ["Peaceful, Rational, Non-Violent, Non-Profanity” Vs “Bravery in Combat”"]
resistance. As Cooper argues, "the dissonance between the longed-for collective subjectivity of a self-governing Hong Kong polity and the geopolitical denial of this aspiration creates a desire for actions that are perceived as meaningful in a context where the overall goal is seen as virtually impossible."\(^70\) Seen in this light, the Fishball Revolution's violence was perceived as one such "meaningful" action in the post-Umbrella age where the demands for democracy became untenable through traditional means. In escalating the forms of resistance, participants of the civil unrest also differentiated themselves from older activists and localists who favored a milder path towards democratization. Leung Tin-Kay, one of the leaders of the civil unrest, for instance, said in an interview after the incident that he saw no limits to the forms of resistance and that his only principle was to match the government's violence (暴力, a Chinese term denoting the “mindless and excessive use of force”) with the equivalent level of force (武力, the authoritative and justified use of force)\(^71\). In framing the government as the enactors of violence, Leung not only justified his organization’s mobilization of force but also broke away from many older activists' understanding of the government as a potential partner of cooperation (for instance, Yeung Sum, one of the founding members of the Democratic Party, believed that the potential collaboration between the government and political parties was the most

\(^{70}\) Cooper, “You Have to Fight On Your Own”, 104.
\(^{71}\) “本土民主前線 從「左諷」演變至「以武制暴」 [Hong Kong Indigenous: The Evolution from “Leftist Pricks” to “Using Force against Violence”).” HK01 (2016), https://www.hk01.com/%E6%B8%AF%E8%81%9E/10707/%E6%9C%AC%E5%9C%9F%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E5%89%8D%E7%B7%9A-%E5%BE%9E-%E5%B7%A6%E8%86%A0-%E6%BC%94%E8%AE%8A%E8%87%B3-%E4%BB%A5%E6%AD%A6%E5%88%B6%E6%9A%B4- and Lam-Knott, Sonia, "Understanding Protest “Violence” in Hong Kong From the Youth Perspective" Asian Anthropology 16, no. 4 (2017), 281.
effective way of reforming society 72). Such a shift from harmonious to confrontational politics widened the rift between the two generations of democrats and produced a new generation of localists who were willing to take on higher political risks through violent means.

IV. In Search of Vehicles for Self-Determination

While localists of the post-Umbrella age produced more secure boundaries as a response to the uncertainty under China's increasingly intense campaign of assimilation, they also directly targeted “One Country, Two Systems” as the source of their uncertainty. Many localists believed that the constitutional arrangement was ill-designed to protect the Hong Kong self and looked for suitable vehicles that best preserved Hong Kong people's claims for self-determination. In the Legislative Council election in 2016—the first since the Umbrella Movement—many new localist political groups emerged and offered different alternatives to “One Country, Two Systems”. These new organizations can generally be categorized into the nationalist camp and the civic camp. (The Hong Kong media generally refers to the two as the "localist" and "self-determination" branches respectively under the assumption that localism is associated with Hong Kong nationalism and self-determination with groups that do not have nationalist claims but aim to achieve democracy through the process of self-determination. 73 These terms are rephrased here because they assume that localism and self-determination are different processes; according to the definitions I set out in my introduction, localism is the process that

72 Sze Chi Chan and King Fai Chan, "The Unfinished Experimentation of Political Parties in Hong Kong: Reflections From Theoretical and Experiential Perspectives” Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations 2, no. 2 (2016), 849.

creates the Hong Kong self, subsequently enabling claims for self-determination—the right for an entity to decide on its own affairs.) Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the political standing of different parties discussed in the following section.

![Figure 1: Types of Narrative and Identity Affiliation of Different Political Groups](image)

The Hong Kong nationalist camp includes groups that imagined Hong Kong as a separate nation from China, which they thought best protected the claims for self-determination. As Fong suggests, this formed a part of the reactive process of “peripheral nationalism” that resisted Hong Kong’s incorporation into a centralizing

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At one extreme, Hong Kong National Party (established in 2016) advocated for the abolition of the Basic Law, hence "One Country, Two Systems", as it had never been officially promulgated by the people of Hong Kong. Instead, HKNP believed in the establishment of Hong Kong as a self-reliant nation-state to "evict the Chinese colonizers, [and] protect the existence of the Hong Kong nation"—Hong Kong's independence was considered to be part of a decolonization movement to overthrow China’s rule before it can realize its right to self-determination. Similarly, Hong Kong Indigenous—the leader of the “Gau Wu” tours and the Fishball Revolution—made claims for the creation of the Hong Kong nation without, however, clearly expressing desires for the city's independence. Leung Tin-Kay, the founder of the party, took part in an earlier by-election in 2015 for the Legislative Council and won the third most votes in the district—a surprising result that reflected the rise in the popularity of localist parties. HKI argued that "'One Country, Two Systems' is a scam under the Communist Party rule" and must be scrapped to prevent the erosion of Hong Kong's unique identity, values and interests owing to China's assimilation. As Leung stated in an interview, Hong Kong must reject the Chinese identity that is based on such essentialist qualities as race and culture, and realize a Hong Kong nation founded upon civic value. Such a narrative, however, contradicted with the organization’s leadership and participation in the series of

75 Fong, Brian 方志恆, "方志恆：《香港革新論 ii》導論：從世界思考香港前途 [Brian Fong: “Reforming Hong Kong” Introduction: Reflecting on Hong Kong’s Future from the World’s Perspective]." Inmedia (2017), http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1051492.
76 Ibid.
77 Ibid.
78 Ho, Ming-Sau 何明修, "第三勢力與傘兵: 比較台港佔領運動後的選舉參與." 中國大陸研究 60, no. 1 (2017), 69.
79 Kwan, Justin P., "The Rise of Civic Nationalism: Shifting Identities in Hong Kong and Taiwan" Contemporary Chinese Political Economy and Strategic Relations 2, no. 2 (2016), 950.
80 Cooper. “You Have to Fight On Your Own”, 100.
"shopping tours" discussed above, which rejected mainland Chinese membership in Hong Kong's exclusive community due to their places of origin and "uncivilized" consumerist craze. The discrepancy between Leung's narrative in abstract and in reality was unsurprising considering how the media discovered that Leung was born in China and, therefore, would have avoided defining the Hong Kong ethnicity in terms of common origin—this goes to prove Barth's conclusion that the "cultural stuff" of ethnicity is a matter of selection rather than a fixed list of criteria. Civic Passion-Proletariat Political Institute-Hong Kong Resurgence Order (CP-PPI-HKRO), an alliance formed from three localist parties, was an outlier in the nationalist camp, as it produced arguments that were similar to calls for Hong Kong as a nation without directly referencing to it as such. CP-PPI-HKRO's platform was largely based on Chan Win's (also a candidate in the election) "Hong Kong as a City-State", which conceptualized Hong Kong as a city-state, rather than a nation, with a unique culture and its own civic values. As Wu argues, however, the city-state discourse was essentially "nationalism in disguise" because it imagined Hong Kong as a bounded political community built upon certain civic values and a common cultural past; the group's refusal to adopt the term of "nation" was simply a strategy to avoid direct confrontations with the Chinese government. In view of that, CP-PPI-HKRO's demand during the election shied away from demanding independence but instead asked for the extension of "One Country, Two Systems" beyond 2047 (when the arrangement is supposed to expire) to protect Hong Kong's autonomy from

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81 Kwan, Justin P., “From Local to National: The Creation of a New Hong Kong Identity” Master’s Dissertation, University of British Columbia (2016), 60.
82 Wu, “The Lilliputian Dreams”, 698.
China's assimilation. In advocating for the removal of the 50-year limit to the Basic Law, the alliance at the same time altered the nature of "One Country, Two Systems" by rejecting its original intentions to assimilate Hong Kong and China's economies within half a century and envisioning it as a principle to protect the city's cultural and political autonomy for perpetuity.

On the other hand, localists groups in the civic branch were not so much interested in constructing Hong Kong as a nation as they were focused on the continuation of the civic process. (This does not, however, imply that groups in the nationalist camp did not believe in the civic process, only that they place their emphasis on imagining Hong Kong as a separate nation rather than a civic entity.) Youngspiration (established in 2015) was an anomaly in the civic branch because its ideology was divided between the civic and nationalist camps. Several members of the organization participated in the 2015 District Council election—Hong Kong's version of local elections—with their focus on constructing a bottom-up democracy through the democratization of the community-planning process.\(^{84}\) During the 2016 election for the legislature, however, the group supplemented its civic claims with ethnic elements when it proposed both a referendum in 2021 to grant Hong Kong people the right to decide on their own political future, and the construction of a Hong Kong nation to protect the city from China's "unscrupulous invasion into Hong Kong in terms of population, the economy and culture etc."\(^{85}\) The evolution of Youngspiration's ideology from its emphasis on community building to its claims for

\(^{83}\) Ma, “本土力量初考騐[A Preliminary Test of Localists]”, 2.


civic nationalism is evidence that localism is an unstable and developing process. Unlike Youngspiration, Demosistō (established in 2016), an organization comprising of former members of Scholarism and Hong Kong Federation of Student Unions, rejected the Hong Kong nation as an exclusionary construct and an "emotionally-appealing trap of populism that divides among "us" and "them" based on nationality."\(^{86}\) Instead, the group believed that self-determination could only be realized and sustained through the continuation of the civic process in the form of multiple referenda, whose results are collected to create consensus for Hong Kong's future beyond 2047.\(^{87}\) Eddie Chu, an independent candidate and an activist who took part in the preservation movement in 2006 and the anti-Express rail movement in 2009, echoed Demosistō's belief that self-determination is best preserved through continuous citizenry participation—not only in referenda but also in daily community planning and resistance—rather than the establishment of an exclusionary Hong Kong nation.\(^{88}\) Chu came to fame during his campaign for uncovering a scandal that involved the government's preferential treatment to rural leaders by exempting their land as sites for public housing.\(^{89}\) In so doing, Chu essentially framed the election as a process that empowered people to reject the collusion between government and rural leaders and participate in the planning of the city's development. The early Youngspiration, Demosistō, and Eddie Chu’s emphases in the civic process, therefore epitomized what Habermas would coin as a “postmetaphysical” Hong Kong identity, which is stripped of any substantial and essentialist qualities of Hong Kong people.

\(^{86}\) Quote from Lam, “Hong Kong’s Fragmented Soul”, 72.
\(^{87}\) Ibid., 83-84.
\(^{88}\) Chen and Szeto, “The Forgotten Road of Progressive Localism”, 450.
\(^{89}\) Ma, “本土力量初考驗[A Preliminary Test of Localists]”, 3.
and refers simply to “the procedure of opinion and will-formation that secures equal liberties via general rights of communication and participation.”

The 2016 elections concluded with localist political parties winning a fifth of the popular votes and obtaining six of the forty directly elected seats in the Legislative Council. The success of localists and their narratives reflected a shift in the city’s political debate from traditional claims for a democratic China to what Fong coins as a "decentralized China". Together, the demands for Hong Kong independence, the creation of a Hong Kong nation, the extension of "One Country, Two Systems", or the desire for people's participation in deciding the city's political future were, to different degrees, challenging China's centralizing impulse embedded within "One Country, Two Systems", and calls for a multivocal and diverse Chinese nation through the protection of Hong Kong's unique identity, no matter in civic or ethnic terms. Chan Win's "Hong Kong as a city-state" even goes so far as to theorize a China where Hong Kong, Taiwan, Macau and the Mainland become united in diversity under a federalist framework. This marked a shift from Hong Kong’s previous debates on democracy to the new struggle to preserve the local identity.

To China, however, the demands for a decentralized China implicit in the localist proposals for Hong Kong's future amounted to separatism because they rejected the logic of assimilation embedded within "One Country, Two Systems", hence a

91 The localist members in the Legislature comprised of Sixtus Leung and Wai-Ching Yau (Youngspiration), Chung-Tai Cheung (Civic Passion- Proletariat Political Institute- Hong Kong Resurgence Order), Nathan Law (Demosistō), Eddie Chu and Lau Siu-lai (independent).
92 Fong, "方志恒：《香港革新論 ii》導論：從世界思考香港前途 [Brian Fong: “Reforming Hong Kong”]
93 Lui, "回顧雨傘革命：香港和台灣的「左」與「獨」其實差很多 [Looking Back at The Umbrella Revolution.”
violation of China's sovereignty over Hong Kong. Li Fei, the chairperson of the Hong Kong Basic Law Committee, for instance, believed that the nature of self-determination and independence were the same, as they were both violations of the Basic Law. To Beijing, therefore, all localist proposals—whether they were demands for the city's independence or mere calls for public referenda to decide on Hong Kong's future—were equally threatening to China's territorial integrity. For this reason, the Chinese government was widely believed to have played a major role in the Electoral Affairs Commission's requirement that all candidates must acknowledge Hong Kong as an inalienable part of China in writing before they could qualify for candidacy, and its barring of six localist candidates, including Chan Ho-Tin (the leader of Hong Kong National Party) and Edward Leung (the leader of Hong Kong Indigenous), from running in the election owing to their pro-independence stance.

After the election, Beijing's crackdown on localism extended to elected members of the Legislative Council. C.Y. Leung, the city's former leader, for instance, took Sixtus Leung and Wai-ching Yau—both Youngspiration members—to court after they displayed a banner that read "Hong Kong is not China" and pronounced the "People's Republic of China" in a way deemed insulting during their oath taking session. During the hearing, the NPCSC interpreted the relevant laws of oath taking and declared that any oath takers who "intentionally reads out words which do not accord with the wording of the oath prescribed by law, or takes the oath in a manner which is not sincere or not solemn" should be disqualified—a move that critics believed

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95 Kaeding, "The Rise of “Localism” in Hong Kong", 165-166.
96 Cheung, "“One country, two systems” after the Umbrella Movement", 396.
undermined Hong Kong's judiciary independence.\textsuperscript{97} The High Court subsequently decided to disqualify the two Youngspiration members (without, however, citing the NPCSC’s interpretation as a justification), and later disqualified another four members from the democratic camp, including Nathan Law from Demosistō, after C.Y. Leung launched another judicial review on their oath-taking ceremonies.\textsuperscript{98} Beijing's crackdown on the localist members of the Legislative Council, therefore, essentially rejected all alternatives to “One Country, Two Systems” and insisted on its logic to assimilate Hong Kong, which further eroded the people’s right to self-determination.

V. Conclusion

The Umbrella Movement’s failure to secure its democratic demands, adding to “One Country, Two Systems”’ inability to offer protection to the Hong Kong identity due to its assimilationist agenda, gave rise to a deep sense of insecurity amongst localists in the post-Umbrella age. Some localists coped with the uncertain political landscape by contesting the nationalist sentiment of a past generation embodied in the annual June Fourth commemoration, creating new narratives of the Hong Kong ethnicity and adopting violence and other radical means to reject traditionally peaceful forms of protest—all in an effort to secure clear boundaries for Hong Kong people. Different groups of localists also proposed alternatives to “One Country, Two Systems”, including independence or the creation of the Hong Kong nation, which shifted the discourse from calls for a democratic to a decentralized China to better protect Hong Kong people’s right to self-determination from the erosion of Chinese

\textsuperscript{97} Ibid., 396.
\textsuperscript{98} Ibid., 396.
assimilation. The shift from previous democratic claims to new demands of protecting Hong Kong’s identity resulted in a seemingly unbridgeable gap between Hong Kong and China’s understanding of the future: while Hong Kong people desired to remain a separate entity to different degrees ranging from autonomy to independence, China was keen on curtailing Hong Kong’s autonomy through assimilation. In this political deadlock, however, a new force soon emerged in the pro-Beijing camp that attempted to seek common grounds between the positions of localists and Beijing—as the next chapter shall discuss.
Chapter Four
John Tsang: An Unlikely Spokesperson for Hong Kong

I. Introduction

On March 26, 2017, the former Financial Secretary John Tsang lost the sixth Chief Executive Election, the city's leadership contest, to the former Chief Secretary for Administration Carrie Lam. The result of the 1200-people wide election did not reflect the prevailing views in society. Since Tsang announced his candidacy in January 2017, he consistently led the polls—three days before the election, he even gained a 30% lead over Lam and 47% over Woo Kwok-Hing, a retired judge.\(^1\) Another poll published on the same day revealed that Tsang was the most popular candidate among groups of all ages, educational backgrounds and income levels as well as among self-proclaimed democrats (81.3%).\(^2\) The democratic support for Tsang was an anomaly considering how he was a firm pro-establishment figure who espoused opposing political views, including his belief that the Umbrella Movement...

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\(^1\) Lam, Bingsun 林炳坤 (2017). "【特首選舉】曾俊華民調支持度拋離林鄭一倍差距擴大至 30 百分點 [Chief Executive Election: John Tsang’s Support Exceeds Two Times That of Lam; Difference Expands to 30%]." HK01 (2017), https://www.hk01.com/%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%892017/79740/%E7%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%89-%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E6%B0%91%E8%AA%BF%E6%94%AF%E6%8C%81%E5%BA%A6%E6%8B%8B%E9%9B%A2%E6%9E%97%E9%84%AD%E4%B8%80%E5%80%8D-%E5%B7%AE%E8%8B%9D%E6%93%B4%E5%A4%A7%E8%87%B330%E7%99%BE%E5%88%86%E9%BB%9E.

was harmful to Hong Kong's rule of law and economic development\(^3\), and his support for the NPCSC's August 31 decision—the very mandate that drove many Hong Kong people to participate in the occupy movement in the first place.\(^4\)

Tsang's popularity was even more staggering considering the deep political polarization in society. In the wake of the Umbrella Movement, the divide between the pan-democratic and pro-establishment camps deepened: on the one hand, traditionally moderate parties like the Democratic Party adopted a more localist outlook and called for better protections for Hong Kong’s autonomy and local identity alongside new localist parties that made it into the Legislative Council in 2016. In effect, the pan-democratic camp became synonymous with the localist camp (pan-democrats and localists will be used interchangeably in this chapter). On the other hand, Beijing loyalists believed that Hong Kong’s assimilation into China was inevitable and became more eager to promote the Chinese identity in the city. Although a few moderate figures like Ronny Tong from the democratic camp and Michael Tien from the pro-Beijing camp have emerged in an age of deep divide to create grounds for communication, their attempts were futile because they were either mistrusted for their intentions or had little influence in convincing their colleagues. Without moderation, the rift between both sides became seemingly unbridgeable.

The polarization of Hong Kong’s political landscape further exacerbated because previous Chief Executives have historically tended to side with Beijing rather


than represent the interest of Hong Kong people. As this chapter argues, the Chief Executive’s main concern has been to cater to Beijing’s desire for political stability because they are de facto appointed by, and hence answerable to, the Central Government—something that often comes at the expense of restraining the city’s autonomy and curtailing the people’s civil liberties. This favoritism became especially apparent under the former Chief Executive C.Y. Leung’s rule, whereby democrats, and even some pro-establishment figures, perceived noticeable erosions in Hong Kong's freedom and rule of law, prompting calls for a new Chief Executive who could better represent Hong Kong’s interest by standing up to Beijing.

John Tsang successfully portrayed himself as the representative of Hong Kong—a difficult position that required him to win the trust of Beijing without antagonizing the people. Despite his conservative agenda, Tsang was able to persuade democrats that he best represented Hong Kong and its interest by participating in the localist discourse on what it means to be Hong Kong people. Tsang was, however, constrained by his pro-establishment background—his representation of the Hong Kong people must be compatible with the Chinese identity and satisfy Beijing's need for stability. Consequently, Tsang created a conservative branch of localism that essentially propagated the old narrative of Hong Kong as a depoliticized entity, as Chapter One discussed in greater depth. His localism was conservative in two respects: for one, Tsang stressed his heavy sense of place through his vocal appreciation of Hong Kong culture. In so doing, he represented Hong Kong's identity as something banal—experienced through daily life and popular culture—and dismissed some localists' urgency to make Hong Kong a definite
political entity defined against China. For another, Tsang suggested that Hong Kong needed to "recuperate" (休養生息) owing to the deep political contention in society and presented a nostalgic image of the past when Hong Kong people were more harmonious and cohesive. Such a notion of "recuperation" was essentially an attempt to re-propagate a past narrative of Hong Kong as a depoliticized society where political differences were muted or intentionally overlooked. Tsang's invocation of old narratives became appealing to some democrats, who perceived the political climate to be overbearing and desired a break from politics—to them, recuperation was preferred to contention. They were willing to accept Tsang’s downplaying of the democratic agenda at a time when the civic identity lost its dominance in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement.

This chapter is divided into three parts: the first part discusses the polarization in society and the difficulties for the emergence of a moderate figure; the second part argues that Chief Executives of the past have historically tended to worsen, rather than heal, divisions in society; and the third part explains John Tsang's appeal to democrats as the best representative of Hong Kong during the Chief Executive election campaign.

II. Entrenched Political Polarization in Hong Kong

The rise of localism in Hong Kong, and especially localist parties' entry into the Legislative Council, has altered the nature of the divide between the pan-democratic camp and the pro-establishment faction. While the previous boundary between both sides had been premised on the pace and institutions of democracy—with the democrats favoring faster democratization with broader representation in the
nomination committee, and Beijing loyalists desiring otherwise—the new divide was
based on the extent of Chinese assimilation: the pan-democratic camp believed in the
preservation of the city’s autonomy and local identity through the rejection of
Chinese assimilation to different degrees, while the pro-government group embraced
Hong Kong's inevitable integration with China.

In response to the rise of localism, traditional democratic parties in the Legislative
Council took measures to adapt to the changing political landscape. Already in 2012
when right-wing localists began their regular street campaigns against the influx of
Mainland visitors, the Civic Party—one of the largest democratic parties in Hong
Kong—appealed to the rising anti-Mainland sentiment by adopting the theme
"Oppose the Reddening/ Mainlandization of Hong Kong" for its election campaign,
while the Neo- Democrats advocated for the policy of "Hong Kong First" alongside
plans to resist the influx of Mainland visitors to the city and the use of simplified
Chinese.5 In the 2016 election campaign, the Civic Party went further to eliminate the
goal of building a democratic China from its manifesto and recognized the "growing
tendency and sentiment among the Hong Kong people to defend their local cultures
and institutions."6 Candidates of the Democratic Party—the city's oldest and largest
democratic party—also became more receptive to localism and insisted that Hong
Kong people should enjoy the room and freedom to discuss the city's independence.7

After the election, the Democratic Party even published an article that articulated its

5 Ma, Ngok, "The Rise of "Anti-China" Sentiments in Hong Kong and the 2012 Legislative Council
6 Kwan, Justin P., "From Local to National: The Creation of a New Hong Kong Identity” Master’s
Dissertation, University of British Columbia (2016), 57.
7 Ma, Ngok 馬嶽, "本土力量初考驗-香港 2016 立法會選舉 [a Preliminary Test of Localists: Hong
support for localism and called for "achieving the maximal level of self-determination under the current constitutional framework [my translations]"—a possible response to its dwindling vote share from 13.7% in 2012 to 9.2% in 2016.8

At the same time, pro-establishment organizations and parties adopted a more nationalist outlook. As Cheng notices, pro-regime organizations have become more active in organizing demonstrations, petitions and parades since 2012—the number of pro-establishment demonstrations, for instance, increased from 5 in 2012 to 25 in 2014.9 While many of these organizations began as counter-mobilizations against democratic movements, they have gradually evolved into nationalist groups. Most notably, the Silent Majority for Hong Kong (幫港出聲) and the Alliance for Peace and Democracy (保普選保和平大聯盟)—initially mobilized to oppose the Umbrella Movement in 2014—became more involved in the promotion of nationalism through such rallies as "Proud to be Chinese" in 2016.10 At the same time, pro-establishment political parties also stepped up their nationalist rhetoric, especially in denouncing Hong Kong independence. In 2016, the Democratic Alliance for the Betterment and Progress of Hong Kong and Hong Kong Federation of Trade Union (two of the city’s largest pro-Beijing parties) organized a rally to oppose the "humiliation of Chinese sentiments and Hong Kong independence" after Sixtus Leung and Yau Wai-Ching—

8 Quote from "民主黨本土自決綱領左右逢源注定敗北 [the Democratic Party’s Localist Agenda Is Meant to Fail]." HK01 (2017), https://www.hk01.com/%E7%A4%BE%E6%9C%83%E6%96%B0%E8%81%9E/98804/%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E9%BB%A8%E6%9C%AC%E5%9C%9F%E8%87%AA%E6%B1%BA%E7%B6%B1%E9%A0%98-%E5%B7%A6%E5%8F%B3%E9%80%A2%E6%BA%90%E6%B3%A8%E5%AE%9A%E5%A4%B1%E6%95%97.


the elected Youngspiration members in the Legislative Council swore their oath in a way deemed insulting. The elected Youngspiration members in the Legislative Council swore their oath in a way deemed insulting. Yau, for instance, swore allegiance to the Hong Kong nation and pronounced the People's Republic of China as the People's Re-fucking of Chee-na; with Chee-na or Shina (支那) as a derogatory term the Japanese used to refer to China before World War II ended. The subsequent rally successfully drew 30,000 people, which became one of the largest pro-government marches since the handover.

Moderation became an untenable position under the new localist-nationalist (Chinese) divide. In the past when the partisan line was premised on different views on the pace of democracy, moderation had been possible because both pan-democrats and Beijing loyalists recognized democracy's suitability for Hong Kong. As Beatty notes, "the debate is over the when [Hong Kong should have democracy], not the why, and the debate is also over what kind of institutional arrangements rather than if democratic institutions should be set up at all." Based on this consensus, then, both

11 "Yau Wai-Ching Refers to "People's Re-Fu*King of Chee-Na" at Hong Kong Legco Oath Taking." Youtube video, Posted by Hong Kong Free Press, October 11, 2016 and "本地議員言出「支那」玩火太不智 是無知還是挑釁？[Localist Legco Member’s Use of “Shina” Is Unwise: Ignorance or a Challenge?]." HK01 (2017), https://www.hk01.com/%E4%B8%AD%E5%9C%8B/48098/01%E8%A7%80%E9%BB%9E-%E6%9C%AC%E5%9C%9F%E8%AD%B0%E5%93%A1%E8%A8%80%E5%87%BA-%E6%94%AF%E9%82%A3-%E7%8E%A9%E7%81%AB%E5%A4%AA%E4%B8%8D%E6%99%BA-%E6%98%AF%E7%84%A1%E7%9F%A5%E9%82%84%E6%98%AF%E6%8C%91%E9%87%81. 12 Beatty, Bob. Democracy, Asian Values, and Hong Kong: Evaluating Political Elite Beliefs (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 107.
sides could tolerate piecemeal reforms. In 2010, for example, the Democratic Party gave up its demand for genuine universal suffrage for the Chief Executive in 2017 as a precondition to negotiate with Beijing for an electoral reform, which expanded the Election Committee—a group that picked Hong Kong's Chief Executive—from 800 to 1200 people and widened the representation of Functional Constituency members (who are elected by people from selected industries and interest groups) in the Legislative Council.\(^\text{14}\) There was, however, little common ground between localism and nationalism as both sides perceived China's campaign of assimilation and the preservation of the local identity to be mutually exclusive processes.

This did not prevent moderate figures from emerging—and subsequently failing—in both camps. In 2015, the legislator Ronny Tong left the pan-democratic Civic Party and created the think tank Path of Democracy, which sought a "third road" on political reforms and to improve relationships with the Mainland.\(^\text{15}\) Tong became highly critical of the pan-democratic camp for growing too confrontational with Beijing—he was the only pan-democrat in the Legislative Council to openly oppose the Umbrella Movement for shutting down channels of communication between Hong Kong democrats and the Central Government and to visit the China Liaison Office in Hong Kong for direct dialogue.\(^\text{16}\) Many democrats, however,


\(^\text{16}\) Jong, Gungnam 莊敏南, "【傘運三周年·專訪】湯家驊：佔中是分水嶺 泛民從此只能跟車 [“Three Year Anniversary of the Umbrella Movement Interview” Ronny Tong: Occupy Central Is the
considered Tong to have become "too pro-establishment" and charged him as a "sellout to communism"; he was even evicted from a meeting among pan-democratic members of the Legislative Council after he left the Civic Party. In the 2016 election, Tong's Path of Democracy was defeated with only 1.5% of the vote share. As the former member of Path of Democracy Chan Jo-Wai pointed out, Tong's third way was unsuccessful because he failed to build trust among pan-democrats as a messenger and grew too pro-government in his political stance.

Similarly, centrists in the pro-establishment camp have historically found it difficult...
to chart a political third-road, because Beijing considers divergences from its political stance as signs of disloyalty that must be met with punishment. In 2003, for instance, the then leader of the Liberal Party James Tien withdrew his support from the National Security Bill after half a million people protested against it, which led to the bill's eventual failure to become law. In the next election cycle in 2008, the Liberal Party lost all its directly elected seats in the Legislative Council, which was widely attributed to Beijing channeling the support of pro-China grassroots machines away from the party as an act of retaliation.21 Later during the Umbrella Movement when Tien openly called for the then-Chief Executive C.Y. Leung to step down, the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference acted quickly to remove his membership.22 Tien's example reflected that Beijing's urge to enforce discipline within the pro-establishment faction—especially with regards to contentious political issues—restricted the room for political moderation, as moderation sometimes required the divergence from Beijing's official stance. As Michael Tien (James Tien’s brother), who withdrew from the New Party in 2017 because he believed that it has become too firmly pro-Beijing, expressed, the "middle path" position is a precarious one—speaking out against Beijing required him to adopt "the correct way of expression and wording" in order not to offend the Central Government.23 The failure of political moderates in both camps, therefore, entrenched political polarization in Hong Kong.

21 Cheng, "Street Politics in a Hybrid Regime", 399-400.
22 Ibid., 399-400.
23 "中間道・4”以中間之名 進擊的建制派 [“The Middle Path 4” in the Name of Centrism; the Pro-Establishment Camp on Attack].” Standnews (2017), http://www.thestand.news/politics/%E4%B8%AD%E9%96%93%E9%81%93-%E4%BB%A5%E4%B8%AD%E9%96%93%E4%B9%8B%E5%90%8D-%E9%80%B2%E6%92%83%E7%9A%84%E5%BB%BA%E5%88%B6/.
III. The Chief Executive’s Difficulties

Previous Chief Executives have historically failed to mend political division in society because the electoral system makes it structurally difficult for the city’s leader to assume a mediating role. While the Chief Executive is selected by an election committee comprising of 1200 people (as of 2012), a majority of the members are Beijing loyalists who vote according to the wishes of the Central Government.\(^{24}\) For this reason, the Chief Executive is answerable to Beijing rather than to the Hong Kong people as the election is a de facto appointment by the Chinese government.\(^{25}\) In addition to that, Yep argues that the Chief Executive's exclusion from the Chinese leadership hierarchy—a design intended to protect Hong Kong's autonomy—ironically meant that the city's leader is "deprived of access to key avenues for making decisions that may have immediate implications for its [Hong Kong’s] interests."\(^{26}\) The Chief Executive thus enjoys little channel to develop an understanding with and express concerns to Chinese officials; this led Jasper Tsang (the former president of the Legislative Council and also a co-founder of Hong Kong’s largest pro-Beijing party) to comment that the city's leader is more an administrator of Beijing's decisions than a "political leader" who could negotiate with and mobilize support against Beijing.\(^{27}\)


\(^{26}\) Holliday, Ma, Yep, “After 1997”, 257.

\(^{27}\) "曾鈺成引述學者：北京不願見香港有政治領袖 免成心腹之患 [Jasper Tsang Cites Scholar: Beijing Does Not Want to See a Political Leader in Hong Kong to Prevent Causing Trouble]." Stanevnews (2016), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%9B%BE%E9%88%BA%E6%88%90%E5%BC%95%E8%BF%B0%E5%AD%B8%E8%80%85-
Since the Handover, therefore, Chief Executives have tended to cater to Beijing's concerns about the city's stability, which often came at the expense of Hong Kong's autonomy. The city's first Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa, for instance, often insisted that "if it is good for China, it must be good for Hong Kong, and vice versa"—a line that revealed his priorities of protecting Chinese interest over Hong Kong’s.\textsuperscript{28} As Li argues, Tung's later desire to legislate the National Security Bill in 2003, which outlawed acts of "treason, secession, sedition, subversion against the Central People's Government", was an attempt to win Beijing's trust by pacifying its fear that controversial political activities such as Hong Kong's democratic movement or the exiled religious group Falun Gong's anti-communist campaign would go out of hand.\textsuperscript{29} Many democrats, however, perceived the National Security Bill as an intrusion on Hong Kong people's civil liberties as the bill's standards of treasonous acts were arbitrarily defined. The resulting demonstration against the National Security Bill called for Tung's resignation, as many people saw him as a mouthpiece of the Chinese government who failed to protect Hong Kong's interest and autonomy—Tung's initial desire to check on political activism backfired.\textsuperscript{30}

The Chief Executive's image as Beijing's puppet was further exacerbated under C.Y. Leung's tenure from 2012 to 2017. As one scholar observes, Leung tended
to accede more to Beijing's demands because, unlike his predecessors, he was unpopular among businesses and traditional pro-Beijing leftist organizations (a majority of whom supported Henry Tang, an industrialist and the former Chief Secretary for Administration, before he fell out of Beijing's favor owing to scandals surrounding his extra-marital relationships and illegal structure built in his house) and depended on the Central Government Liaison Office to whip votes for him during the election—he became the city's leader with a mere 689 votes out of 1200. To demonstrate his loyalty to Beijing, Leung became the first leader to deliver his inaugural speech in Mandarin as opposed to Cantonese—Hong Kong's most spoken language. A day after the election, he visited the Liaison Office as a gesture of gratitude for its support during his campaign. Owing to Leung's enhanced pro-Beijing orientation, many people felt that their interests were not well represented. In 2012, for instance, Leung was adamant to push through the controversial Moral and National Education Scheme until he was forced to back down at the last minute after 120,000 students occupied the streets. Similarly, in the aftermath of the Umbrella Movement in 2015, Leung submitted a report to the Chinese government that concluded without substantiation the NPCSC's August 31 decision—the very mandate that drove people to participate in the Umbrella Movement—was the "common aspiration" of the people of Hong Kong. And in 2016, Leung took six pan-democratic Legislative Council members to court after they improperly swore the

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In light of this, the amplified calls for Hong Kong's independence and Beijing's subsequent threats to replace "One Country, Two Systems" with direct rule (as the previous chapter discussed) during Leung's tenure were reflections of his failure to convince both sides to practice moderation—Hong Kong's relationship with China became zero-sum.

C.Y. Leung's divisive rule led to calls for a stronger Chief Executive who could stand up to Beijing and better represent the interests of Hong Kong people—what the ex-governor Chris Patten coined as a "Hong Kong spokesperson in Beijing, rather than a Beijing spokesperson in Hong Kong."³⁴ Ahead of the 2017 Chief Executive election, the calls for ABC (the abbreviation of Anyone But C.Y.) emerged from within the pan-democratic camp.³⁵ These sentiments were echoed among some of the more neutral members of the pro-establishment camp. As Jasper Tsang stated in an interview, "How do you look at this divided society, polarized society—and how are you going to change that? If it is [just] the current Chief Executive [C.Y. Leung] running for a second term, we can hardly expect a comprehensive, in-depth debate."³⁶ Similarly, James Tien expressed his belief that "the next chief executive needs to convince Beijing not to take a hardline approach to Hong Kong."³⁷ But Hong Kong's lack of a widely representative Chief Executive election—something it was denied in 2014—meant that there was little room for such a moderate figure to rise, as the future Chief Executive would continue to be answerable to Beijing. Candidates of

³⁷ Ibid.
the next chief executive, then, must persuade Hong Kong people that they are the best representatives of the city’s interest despite their lack of a popular mandate—a difficult feat that John Tsang managed to accomplish in the 2017 Chief Executive election race.

IV. The Rise of John Tsang

i. John Tsang’s Popularity

The Chief Executive election involves two rounds: the nomination period whereby individuals must gather 12.5% of the Election Committee’s open nomination to qualify for candidacy and the election day when members of the committee pick a candidate by secret ballot.38 In the pre-nomination round, all potential candidates ran on a platform to mend society’s polarization. As early as October 2016—four months ahead of the nomination round, Woo Kwok-Hing, a retired judge argued that “Hong Kong as a community has become too polarized and fragmented” and vowed to “reunite the fragmented community now prevalent” during his campaign announcement.39 Woo’s participation in the race was followed by Regina Ip in December, the Chairperson of the New People’s Party (pro-government) and former Secretary for Security, who invoked the need to “win back Hong Kong” at a time of “unprecedented polarization in society, confrontation between the legislature and the executive branch, and disharmony of Hong Kong and China’s relationship [my

Similarly, John Tsang urged Hong Kong to rebuild “Trust, Unity and Hope”—his campaign slogan—during his announcement in January 2017, without which “we will not see a better Hong Kong.” Shortly after, Carrie Lam unveiled her campaign slogan “We Connect” and pledged that a shared love for the city would bring hope to Hong Kong at a time when society’s situation was “worrying and disheartening.”

Despite their similar message of repairing social division, Tsang was already the most popular potential candidate in the pre-nomination stage. According to one poll conducted after all four potential candidates announced their bids, Tsang took the lead with 31.3% of support, followed by Lam’s 22%. Another poll also showed that Tsang was the most popular among moderates and democrats, receiving 37.6% and 59.6% of their support respectively (while only 34.6% moderates and 12.4% democrats supported Lam). In light of Tsang’s popularity among democrats, some
members of the democratic voting bloc in the election committee (known as Democrats 300+ because of their 300 members) toyed with the idea of nominating Tsang. This drew criticisms from other pan-democrats, most notably Leung Kwok-Hung, a disqualified Legislative Council member in the 2016 oath-swinging controversy, who opposed nominating Tsang because of his support for the NPCSC’s August 31 decision and the legislation of the National Security Bill—two policies that mobilized large-scale democratic protests in 2014 and 2003 respectively.

Leung subsequently announced that he would run for the Chief Executive if he successfully amasses 38,000 votes—1% of Hong Kong’s registered voter population—in the nomination round of the Chief Executive Civil Referendum, an unofficial election that Benny Tai (one of the Occupy Trio during the Umbrella Movement) organized to increase citizenry participation in the otherwise closed Chief Executive election.

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See “明報引民主派選委：一定湊夠提名票給曾俊華 戴耀廷「民投」計劃或成下台階” Mingpao cites democratic Election Committee member: we will definitely find enough votes for Tsang; Benny Tai’s Civic Referendum can serve as a justification to vote for Tsang)” [Standnews (2017),](https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%98%8E%E5%A0%B1%E5%BC%95%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E6%B4%BE%E9%81%B8%E5%A7%94%E4%B8%BB%E6%8F%90%E5%90%8D%E7%A5%A8%E7%B5%A6%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF-%E6%88%B4%E8%80%8E%E5%BB%B7-%E6%B0%91%E6%8A%95-%E8%A8%88%E5%8A%83%E6%88%96%E6%88%90%E4%B8%8B%E5%8F%80%E9%9A%8E/]

and “郭榮鏗：民主派選委提名曾俊華，胡國興機會較大” [Kwok Wing-Hang: ‘The pan-democrats’ chances of voting John Tsang and Woo Kwok-Hing are high!]” [Standnews (2017),](https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E9%83%AD%E6%A6%AE%E9%8F%97-%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E6%8F%90%E5%90%8D%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF-%E8%83%A1%E5%8C%BB%E8%88%88%E6%A9%9F%E6%8C%83%E8%BC%83%E5%A4%A7/]

Leung’s participation, however, drew widespread criticism from many democrats, some of whom believed that he was stealing nomination votes away from Tsang and indirectly helping Lam to secure her victory. By the end of the nomination period, Leung only received 14,000 public nominations, partially owing to the lack of participation in the civic referendum; in March, only 65,106 people participated in the unofficial election (far short of Tai’s goal of one million), of whom 91.8% supported John Tsang to be the next Chief Executive. As a result of Leung’s failure to draw support away from Tsang, the Democrats 300+ split their nominations between Tsang and Woo to increase competitiveness in the Chief Executive race. At the end of the nomination round, Tsang secured 160 nominations (80% were from the Democrats 300+) and became the only candidate to receive...


48 “Long-Hair: There Is No Need to Attack Me; “Focus on Campaigning for John Tsang”.” Inmedia (2017), http://www.inmediahk.net/node/1047 and Ng, Ji-sum 吳志森. “長毛幫林鄭？[Long Hair Is Helping Lam?]” Pentoy (2017), https://www.pentoy.hk/%E9%95%B7%E6%AF%9B%E5%B9%AB%E6%9E%97%E9%84%AD%EF%BC%9F/

49 “長毛入圍已無望 提前停收公民提名畫句號 [Long-hair has no chance of entering the nomination round; Stops receiving public nomination earlier than planned]” HK01 (2017), https://www.hk01.com/%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%892017/74194%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%892017/74194%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%89- %E6%9C%80%E6%88%B0%E5%A0%B1-%E9%95%B7%E6%AF%9B%E5%85%A5%E9%96%98%E5%B7%B2%E7%84%A1%E6%9C%9B-%E6%8F%90%E5%89%8D%E5%81%9C%E6%94%B6%E5%85%AC%E6%B0%91%E6%8F%90%E5%90%8D%E7%95%AB%E5%FE%A5%E8%99%9F

50 “倡 100 萬人搞特首民間投票 戴耀廷：唔係要夾啲選委 [Calls for a Civil Referendum with a participation of one million; Benny Tai: I am not pressuring Election Committee members]” HK01 (2017), https://www.hk01.com/%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%892017/65894%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%892017/65894%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E9%81%B8%E8%88%89-%E5%80%A1100%E8%90%AC%E4%BA%BA%E6%90%9E%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E6%B0%91%E9%96%93%E6%8A%95%E7%A5%A8-%E6%88%84%E8%80%80%E5%BB%B7-%E5%94%94%E4%BF%82%E8%A6%81%E5%A4%BE%E5%95%82%E9%81%B8%E5%A7%94

nominations from both the democratic and pro-government camps, Woo received 180
democratic nominations, and Lam received 579, all of which were from the pro-
establishment faction; Ip, on the other hand, failed to secure enough nominations to
qualify for candidacy.\textsuperscript{52} Even at the nomination stage, the candidates’ number of
nomination did not reflect their extent of popularity in society.

Tsang became more popular than his main opponent Lam for two reasons: for
one, he was more adept at engaging with the public because his campaign placed
great emphasis on creating channels for public participation. In his campaign
announcement speech, for instance, Tsang stressed that "Hong Kong belongs neither
to the industrial and business sector nor the labor sector; neither to those born in the
50's nor those in the 80's; Hong Kong belongs to every true Hong Konger." and sent
out "an invitation to the seven million people of Hong Kong to make Hong Kong a
better place [my translations]."\textsuperscript{53} Tsang subsequently launched a Facebook page
where he hosted several question and answer sessions and updated his daily campaign
activities around the community, began a crowd funding campaign that raised three
million dollars from more than 13,000 people in a day\textsuperscript{54}, and even staged a rally two
days before the election that drew more than ten thousand people—something

\begin{footnotes}
\item[52] Lo, Sonny. "Factionalism and Chinese-Style Democracy: The 2017 Hong Kong Chief Executive
Election." \textit{Asia Pacific Journal of Public Administration} 39, no. 2 (2017), 106-7
\item[53] “曾俊華參選特首宣言 [John Tsang Chief Executive Campaign Announcement Speech]”
Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E5%85%A8%E6%96%87-
%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E5%8F%83%E9%81%B8%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96
%E5%AE%A3%E8%A8%80/.
\item[54] “曾俊華眾籌破三百萬 田北俊參與：盡在不言中 [John Tsang’s Crowdfunding Reaches Three
Million; James Tien: It Is Self- Explanatory].” Standnews (2017),
https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%9C%BE-
E7%B1%C7%A0%B4%E4%B8%89%E7%99%BE%E8%90%AC-
%E7%94%B0%E5%8C%97%E4%BF%8A%E5%8F%83%E8%88%87-
%E7%9B%A1%E5%9C%A8%E4%B8%8D%E8%A8%80%E4%B8%AD/.  
\end{footnotes}
unprecedented in Chief Executive election campaigns of the past.\textsuperscript{55} As a number of scholars point out, these interactive campaign activities created the illusion that the people's participation could actually effect changes in the result of a closed election—a myth that Law coins as "virtual liberalism."\textsuperscript{56} As Tsang himself even admitted in relations to his crowd funding campaign, "We don't have universal suffrage yet, and I think people want to feel that they have more ownership in this exercise [the Chief Executive election]. So I thought maybe this is one way [the crowd funding campaign] for them to feel that they are part of my campaign."\textsuperscript{57}

In fact, Tsang needed to mobilize public support because there were clear indications that Lam was Beijing’s pick for the next Chief Executive. Aside from Lam’s strong pro-establishment support during the nomination round, the Chinese Government approved of Tsang and Lam's resignation (respectively as Financial Secretary and Chief Secretary) to run their campaigns on the same day in January 2017; this came 35 days after Tsang resigned but only 4 days after Lam did—a move that commentators believed revealed Beijing’s preferences.\textsuperscript{58} Following Lam's announcement of her candidacy, such pro-Beijing newspapers as China Daily and

\textsuperscript{55} “曾俊華中環造勢集會 萬計「薯粉」響應 高喊「當選！」「一號！」 [John Tsang stages rally in Central; tens of thousands of John Tsang’s fans present calling for “Get elected!” , “Number One!”]” Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E4%B8%8D%E6%96%B7%E6%9B%B4%E6%96%B0-%E6%9B%8E%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E9%80%A0%E5%8B%A2%E5%A4%A7%E6%9C%83/

\textsuperscript{56} Law, Wing-Sang, "虛擬自由主義的凄美句號 [Virtual Liberalism’s Perfect End]" The Initium (2017), https://theinitium.com/article/20170331-opinion-andersen-ce/.

\textsuperscript{57} “The Pulse：Interview with John Tsang & public nomination for CE “ Youtube Video, Posted by “RTHK 香港電台”, February 10 2017, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bps_o1kXYx0

\textsuperscript{58} “曾俊華辭職 35 天，林鄭請辭 4 天後 中央宣佈兩人免職 [Beijing Approves Resignation after John Tsang Retired for 35 Days, and Lam 4 Days]” Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E8%BE%AD%E5%B7%93%E5%A4%A9-%E6%9E%97%E9%84%AD%E8%AB%8B%E8%BE%AD%E5%9B%BE%E5%A4%95%E5%BE%8C-%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E5%AE%A3%E4%BD%88%E5%85%A9%E4%BA%BA%E5%85%8D%E8%81%B7/.
Wen Wei Po began praising her experience and ability and launched an aggressive campaign against Tsang and Woo to portray them as unsuitable for the top job because of their close relationship with the pro-democratic camp. Later, the former Chief Executive Tung Chee-Hwa, now the vice-chairperson of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, even reportedly claimed that the Chinese government would not appoint Tsang should he become elected. In light of his disadvantages, Tsang recognized that public support was the only way he could change Beijing’s attitude—after all, Beijing switched its preference from Henry Tang to C.Y. Leung in the 2012 Chief Executive race due to the former’s scandals and subsequent unpopularity. As John Tsang even argued in an interview, "public support is important... I have always thought that public support is like a currency; if you have more of it, you can initiate more changes [my translations]"—a message to Beijing that popularity and effective governance were inherently tied.

In contrast to Tsang’s successful campaign tactics, Lam gave the impression that she was unwilling to engage with the public. She refused to set up a Facebook page until later during her campaign, and when she did, she accused negative comments

60 "中央拒任命曾俊華？董建華：特首獲中央信任可促進溝通 [Beijing Refuses to Appoint John Tsang? Tung Chee-Hwa: The Chief Executive Can Improve Communications If Trusted by Beijing].” Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E6%8B%92%E4%BB%BB%E5%91%BD%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF-%E8%91%A3%E5%BB%BA%E8%8F%AF-%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E7%8D%B2%E4%B8%AD%E5%A4%AE%E4%BF%8A%E4%BB%BB%E5%8F%AF%E4%BF%83%E9%80%B2%E6%BA%9D%E9%80%9A/.
62 "話唔開又有咩法?「Facebook」專頁公開開嘗 [“She Said She Won’t Set up One but Did” Lam Learns to Use Facebook Page].” Apple Daily (2017), https://hk.lifestyle.appledaily.com/nextplus/magazine/article/20170206/2_476179_0/-%E8%A9%B1%E5%94%94%E9%96%8B%E5%8F%88%E9%96%8B-
against her as a kind of "white terror". Even in the physical world, Lam demonstrated her aloofness with the experiences of the common people—in one instance she was filmed struggling to go through a turnstile at the subway station, and in another, she admitted to returning to her previous official residence late at night to fetch toilet paper rolls, not knowing that they were available at many of the city's convenience stores.

Another reason for Lam's unpopularity was her perceived closeness with Beijing's position, which made her a weak spokesperson for Hong Kong. During the Umbrella Movement, for instance, Lam represented the government in a televised negotiation with student leaders, where she repeatedly ruled out the possibility of reversing the NPCSC's August 31 decision without making any concessions to the protesters. Before she resigned as Chief Secretary, too, she secretly made plans with the Chinese government to build the Palace Museum that would exhibit borrowed artifacts from the Forbidden City in Beijing, and explained that public consultation would be "embarrassing"—presumably for Beijing—if the public opposed it. Lam's perceived loyalty to Beijing and her insistence on the continuation of the previous government's governing philosophy during her campaign announcement speech earned her the nickname "C.Y. 2.0"—a suggestion that she was a clone of C.Y.

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64 Ibid., 67-8.
Leung.67 Claudia Mo, a pan-democratic member of the legislative council, even claimed that Lam was worse than Leung: "C.Y. Leung is crude and transparent—you can see through him. But Carrie Lam is, to borrow a Chinese phrase, a 'smiling tiger.' She'll eat you up with a smiling face."68 This placed Lam in a defensive position, where she later had to repeatedly distance herself from Leung's governing style and deny that she was Beijing's puppet.69 At a televised debate even, Lam confronted Tsang's remark that she was not only "C.Y. 2.0" but would produce "social division 2.0".70

This was in sharp contrast to Tsang, who distanced himself from C.Y. Leung on several occasions as a top government official. When he was still the Financial Secretary, for instance, Tsang openly supported the Hong Kong team in a football match against China in 2015, while C.Y. Leung refused to take a side.71 In one of his blog posts as Financial Secretary, too, Tsang wrote that localism could become a "strong and constructive force" that binds society.72 This came after Leung uncharacteristically denounced Undergrad, a publication of the University of Hong Kong.67

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Kong, for promoting self-determination and independence during his annual policy address.\textsuperscript{73} Before Tsang resigned as the Financial Secretary, he joined Leung in a press conference to respond to a government scandal whereby Leung rejected plans to build public housing on rural leaders’ land in Wang Chau, and instead chose an alternative site that displaced three villages.\textsuperscript{74} When asked whether he agreed with Leung’s decision, Tsang told the reporter in a sarcastic tone that “you always agree with your boss, no questions about that”—a rather odd answer for a government that wanted to demonstrate its unity behind Leung’s decision.\textsuperscript{75} Tsang’s refusal to side with C.Y. Leung accounted for his initial support among democrats when he first entered the race; as one compared Tsang to Leung, "Tsang’s popularity stems from his different approach than C.Y. Leung. Tsang’s response to when he was egged [to which Tsang joked about after], his emphasis on local consciousness and [his support for the Hong Kong team during the] Hong Kong- Chinese football match attest to the differences in the two's approach [my translations]."\textsuperscript{76}

That Tsang became more popular than Lam was understandable. But Woo’s lack of popularity among democrats was an anomaly considering that Tsang espoused conservative views similar to those of Lam. Both ex-government officials, for
example, opposed the Umbrella Movement\textsuperscript{77}, insisted that the NPCSC's August 31 decision—the directive that caused the Umbrella Movement—cannot be reversed\textsuperscript{78}, and dismissed Hong Kong independence as a violation of China's sovereignty over Hong Kong.\textsuperscript{79} Woo’s stance, in contrast, was more pro-democratic than both Tsang and Lam. In his campaign announcement speech, for instance, Woo portrayed himself as the best representative of Hong Kong’s interest because he belonged to no political camp and assured people that he would not favor Beijing’s interest over that of Hong Kong. As he said, "I believe my experience as a barrister and judge in the past 46 years has imparted in me a deep understanding of multiple aspects of Hong Kong's society and culture. My integrity and neutrality have never been doubted. My ability to uphold fairness—honored over the past decades—is an asset I can make use of at this juncture for the promotion of harmony and stability."\textsuperscript{80} Politically, Woo believed that electoral reforms must be the priority of the next government because the city’s failure to achieve reforms in 2014 was the source of its political stalemate—he argued that the 8.31 directive should not be a part of the Basic Law, and subsequently


\textsuperscript{80} "[16 年 10 月 27 日] 胡國興宣佈參選行政長官記者會 (足本) [October 17 2016: Press Conference of Woo’s Campaign Announcement (Full Version)]" Youtube Video.
proposed to widen the electoral franchise of the Election Committee from 250,000 in 2017, to 1 million in 2022, and 3 million in 15 years.\footnote{Lo, “Factionalism and Chinese-style Democracy”, 105.} In terms of the National Security Bill (the attempted legislation of which caused a half a million people-strong protest in 2003), Woo refused its legislation before refining article 22 of the Basic Law to better clarify the boundaries between Hong Kong and mainland organizations and to prevent the interference of the Chinese government into Hong Kong’s affairs.\footnote{Ibid., 111.} This removed fears that the Chinese government would arbitrarily use the national security law against political dissidents in the city. In spite of Woo's pro-democratic stance, a poll showed that his support among pan-democrats began at a low 18.7% in January before dropping to 13.8% in March, days before the election.\footnote{For poll in January, see: “《明報》2017 年行政長官選舉民意調查 (第四輪) [Mingpao Hong Kong Chief Executive Election Poll (The Fourth Round)]” Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (2017), \url{https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/report/CEE2017_MP_fourth/content/resources/analysis.pdf} ; for the March poll see: “《明報》2017 年行政長官選舉民意調查 (第六輪) [Mingpao Hong Kong Chief Executive Election Poll (The Sixth Round)]” Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (2017), \url{https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/report/CEE2017_MP_sixth/content/resources/analysis.pdf} } In contrast, the same poll showed that Tsang enjoyed 72.9% of support from democrats in March.\footnote{See: “《明報》2017 年行政長官選舉民意調查 (第六輪) [Mingpao Hong Kong Chief Executive Election Poll (The Sixth Round)]” Hong Kong University Public Opinion Programme (2017), \url{https://www.hkupop.hku.hk/chinese/report/CEE2017_MP_sixth/content/resources/analysis.pdf} } Woo’s failure to capture democratic support implied that Tsang's appeal to democrats rested not so much on the latter’s democratic beliefs (as Tsang was by no means a pan-democrat), but on his participation in the localist discourse on Hong Kong’s identity.

ii. John Tsang’s Conservative Localism

John Tsang’s popularity among democrats was possible because they were drawn to his narrative of Hong Kong. As a pro-establishment figure, Tsang must represent
Hong Kong without antagonizing Beijing—a difficult position because the city's polarization meant that claims for the preservation of the local identity and the promotion of the Chinese identity were mutually exclusive. Rather than siding with either position, Tsang propagated a narrative that reconciled the Hong Kong and Chinese identities by stripping away the political contents of the former. His campaign became, therefore, a demonstration that the Chinese identity would not threaten that of Hong Kong—or the other way round—so long as Hong Kong's identity remained apolitical.

In his campaign announcement speech, for instance, Tsang actively discussed his attachment to the Chinese identity, unlike Lam and Woo who avoided the topic throughout their campaigns.\(^85\) He claimed that his experience as an immigrant (Tsang moved to the United States when he was 14 and returned to Hong Kong at 31\(^86\)) made him value his Chinese identity more—at one point, he recounted his participation in the nationalist Protect the Diaoyu Island Movement (a movement to protect China's territorial rights over the Diaoyu Islands—in Japanese, the Senkaku islands—against Japanese claims) and an anecdote of a fight that he picked up in the States with

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\(^85\) Their announcement speeches, for instance, was bereft of any contents on the Chinese identity. For Lam’s announcement speech, see: “【全文】林鄭月娥參選特首宣[Full Version: Lam Campaign Announcement Speech]” Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E5%85%A8%E6%96%87-%E6%9E%97%E9%84%AD%E6%9C%88%E5%A5%E5%8F%83%E9%81%B8%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E5%AE%A3%E8%A8%80/; for Woo’s announcement, see: “[16 年 10 月 27 日] 胡國興宣佈參選行政長官記者會 (足本) [October 17 2016: Press Conference of Woo’s Campaign Announcement (Full Version)]” Youtube Video, Posted by “dhkchannel”, October 27 2016, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rzyxqMHgUD8&t=184s.

\(^86\) “曾俊華平生大事 [John Tsang’s Life],” Hong Kong Economic Journal (2016), http://www1.hkej.com/dailynews/headline/article/1453321/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%A F%E5%B9%B3%E7%94%9F%E5%A4%A7%E4%BA%8B.
someone who insulted Chinese people.\textsuperscript{87} To him, Hong Kong people have always demonstrated their patriotism by donating money to assist humanitarian relief in China (here, Tsang failed to mention the oft-considered patriotic demonstration that drew a million Hong Kong people in 1989 in support of democratic protests in Beijing) and must continue to embrace their motherland; as he argued, "behind every great city is a great country... Hong Kong can be better because we are backed by a country that is experiencing a renaissance [my translations]."	extsuperscript{88}

Tsang's attachment to the Chinese identity, however, did not preclude him from demonstrating a strong sense of place in Hong Kong. At the beginning of his announcement speech, he recounted his decision to return to Hong Kong from the United States in 1982 at a time when most people were emigrating out of the city owing to the uncertainties of the handover—this exemplified his "belief in Hong Kong", something that he hoped the city shared as more people were again considering emigration due to doubts about Hong Kong’s political situation\textsuperscript{89}. This was in line with a survey conducted in 2016, which revealed nearly 60% of those under the age of 30 wanted to emigrate.\textsuperscript{90} During his campaign, too, Tsang constantly expressed his appreciation for the city's popular culture, especially its film and music. In an interview, he spoke of growing up watching films of Chow Yun Fat, a famous Hong Kong actor, and pointed to Weeds on Fire and Kill Zone—two recent Hong

\textsuperscript{87} "曾俊華參選特首宣言 [John Tsang Chief Executive Campaign Announcement Speech]" Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E5%85%A8%E6%96%87-%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E5%8F%83%E9%81%8B%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E5%AE%A3%E8%A8%80/.

\textsuperscript{88} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{89} Ibid.

Kong films—as some of his favorite movies. Johnnie To, a local director, also made an endorsement video for Tsang's Facebook page, in which he lauded Tsang for considering film not only as a source of entertainment but as part of the city’s culture that must be valued. In one of his final campaign videos before the election, Tsang collaborated with To in a short cooking segment where they ended up singing "The Wanderer's Voice" 輝仔心聲) by Sam Hui, one of the first Cantonese lyricists to base his songs on Hong Kong people's common experiences. Even in his concession speech, Tsang referenced one of the most famous lines in director Wong Kar Wai's Grandmaster when he said, "with a breath, light a lamp; if one focuses on an idea persistently, there will definitely be resonance.' With these lights, I am sure we will light up Hong Kong's future." Aside from film and music, Tsang also invoked some common spatial anchors of Hong Kong. For instance, he posted on Facebook a picture of himself on board the cross-harbor ferry (the only form of transport across the harbor before the first undersea tunnel opened in 1972), with a caption that recounted the times when he rode the ferry as a child. This embedded his past experiences in the collective memory of the people, which highlighted his part within Hong Kong's community.

In emphasizing Hong Kong’s culture and collective memory, Tsang dismissed the need to construct Hong Kong’s identity from certain civic or ethnic elements. As Tsang wrote earlier in his blog as Financial Secretary, the debate to define Hong Kong people is meaningless because Hong Kong began as a hybrid city of immigrants from different places of China—the attempts to set fixed definitions for Hong Kong people would only "incite endless conflicts and arguments". In light of this, Tsang believed that the Hong Kong identity emerged out of what Billig coins the "banal". As Fox and Miller-Idriss argue, "The nation [in this case, the locality] and its derivatives are not simply discrete objects traded in elite discourse or constructed by the state; they are also everyday processes." These processes include daily and mundane activities that reinforce the notion of "we-ness"; in Tsang's case, the Hong Kong identity arose out of consumption of the city’s film and music and the common experiences of the people (such as riding the ferry)—all of which were activities that "define, demonstrate and affirm" one's local affinities. To him, therefore, the Hong Kong identity was more of an "endemic condition" experienced in daily life than a political construct. For this reason, Tsang believed that the promotion of an apolitical local identity would not only prevent antagonizing Beijing but also convince Hong Kong people that he was from the same cultural background and could thus best understand and represent their perspectives. As Yip suggests, Tsang successfully portrayed himself as being “on the side of Hong Kong” because his campaign proved

99 Ibid., 551.
that he “shared the same feelings of the people, and understood their language and way of perceiving things [my translations].”¹⁰¹

In addition to shaping an apolitical cultural identity, Tsang promoted the depoliticization of Hong Kong through the idea of "recuperation" (休養生息). As Tsang explained in an interview, "what I mean by recuperation is very simple—less conflict in society so that everybody can take a rest. I believe people have grown tired of seeing problems every day that are contentious, separating friends from enemies and black-and-white [my translations]."¹⁰² While recuperation formed the basis of the creation of "Trust, Unity and Hope" in society (Tsang's campaign slogan), it also revived a past narrative of Hong Kong as a harmonious society and urged for a return to Hong Kong as it once was. As one of his campaign advertisement proposed, "It's time to return to being constructive rather than destructive, to work on a consensus and rebuild a system of discipline, to be delighted [as opposed angered] while reading the news, to rebuild a society where friendships are not lost due to opposing views, and to be the Hong Kong that we used to be. [My emphases and translations]"¹⁰³ In his campaign announcement speech, too, Tsang invoked a harmonious image of Hong Kong from the 1950's to the 1980's: "Hong Kong began to receive so many Chinese

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¹⁰¹ Yip, Kin-Man, “曾俊華現象：溫和政治的完美示範 [The John Tsang Phenomenon: The Perfect Example of Moderate Politics]” Pentoy (2017), https://www.pentoy.hk/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1%E F%BC%9A%E6%BA%AB%E5%92%8C%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E7%9A%84%E5%AE%8C %E7%BE%8E%E7%A4%BA%E7%AF%84/.

¹⁰² "「休養生息」被誤解 曾俊華：唔係係故意定真係唔知道 [Recuperation Is Misunderstood; John Tsang: I Am Not Sure Whether It Is on Purpose or Not]." Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E4%BC%91%E9%A4%8A%E7%9A%84%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF-%E8%A2%AB%E8%AA%A4%E8%A7%A3-%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF-%E5%94%94%E7%9F%A5%E4%BF%82%E6%95%85%E6%84%8F%E5%AE%9A%E7%9C%9F %E4%BF%82%E5%94%94%E7%9F%A5%E9%81%93/.

immigrants since the 1950's that our population grew by a million every decade before the 1980's... Hong Kong's acceptance of these immigrants within such a short period of time meant that conflicts were natural. But we were tolerant enough that everyone cooperated and fought for their dreams under the lion rock [my translations]."^104 (Lion rock, a mountain in Hong Kong, became a symbol of the people's cooperative spirit in times of adversity after Roman Tam released his song "Under the Lion Rock" in 1970.) As chapter one pointed out, however, the narrative of Hong Kong as a stable and cohesive society was merely a construct that the colonial government mobilized to depoliticize the populace and suppress political dissidents—in fact, political differences and activism were prevalent throughout the 1950's to the 1980's, including but not limited to riots in 1956 and 1967, or nationalist movements like the Protect the Diaoyu Island Movements in 1970.^105 In recovering a previous narrative, therefore, Tsang was essentially mobilizing the representation of Hong Kong as a harmonious and depoliticized city that conceals political differences under the veil of stability, or in this case, recuperation. As Chan argues, Tsang did not provide a solution to Hong Kong's political polarization but instead turned the city's democratic stagnation into a political asset by using it as a justification for recuperation.^106 This accounted for his promise not to initiate the process of electoral reforms until "the right conditions appear", or to legislate the National Security Bill

^104 “曾俊華參選特首宣言 [John Tsang Chief Executive Campaign Announcement Speech]” Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E5%85%A8%E6%96%87-%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E5%8F%83%E9%81%B8%E7%89%B9%E9%A6%96%E5%AE%A3%E8%A8%80/.

^105 See chapter one for a more comprehensive list of activism in the 50's to 80's.

that instigated a half a million people-strong protest in 2003 during his first term as Chief Executive—both of which were attempts to defer contentious political processes.\(^{107}\)

Tsang's narrative was persuasive because he was able to tap into people's political weariness in an age of deep divide. As one supporter commented, "Some people are still taking their yellow umbrellas out [a symbol of the Umbrella Movement] every day, organizing shopping tours [the anti-Mainlander movements discussed in chapter 3]—I respect this persistence. But we have tried everything in the past two years except for self-immolating and staging a revolution and it has not worked. Honestly speaking, from the Hong Kong Federation of Student Unions to Leung Tin-Kay [the leader of Hong Kong Indigenous] to John Tsang, we only want a sense of hope."\(^{108}\) Another said, "If we do not talk about electoral reforms and put it aside for 5 or 10 years in exchange for trust, it is not a bad thing [my translations]."\(^{109}\) Democrats’ willingness to set aside their democratic agenda in support of John Tsang suggested that the city’s civic claim was losing its dominance as the primary building block of the local identity—a process that had already begun since the end of the Umbrella Movement owing to the competition of different narratives as detailed in chapter three. This created the space for Tsang to selectively play down democratic claims in

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\(^{108}\) Anonymous, "薯粉你問我答 [Question and Answer Session for a John Tsang Fan]." Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E8%96%AF%E7%B2%89%E4%BD%A0%E5%95%8F%E6%88%91%E7%AD%94/.

\(^{109}\) "退潮之際，回望曾俊華現象 — 訪「薯仔」與「薯粉」[Reviewing the “John Tsang Phenomena” at the End of the Race: Interviewing Fans of John Tsang]." Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E9%80%80%E6%BD%AE%E4%B9%8B%E9%9A%9B-%E5%9B%9E%E6%9C%9B%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1-%E8%A8%AA-%E8%96%AF%E4%BB%94-%E8%88%87-%E8%96%AF%E7%B2%89/.
his narrative by invoking society’s need for recuperation as his main justification. As one member of John Tsang’s campaign team Yuen Lei-Cheung writes after the election, the “John Tsang Phenomenon” was a reflection that the “battle of democracy has transformed into the battle for Hong Kong.”—the new partisan line was no longer premised on the differences in the views of democracy between democrats and Beijing loyalists, but on the differences in how to define Hong Kong in relations to China; in other words, the debate over democracy have paled into relative insignificance compared to the debate over identity.

In successfully using the city’s political weariness to mute civic claims, Tsang’s representation of Hong Kong as a depoliticized entity became a deeply political process that contested other narratives of Hong Kong as a civic construct. This accounted for the lack of popularity of Woo and other localist leaders who opposed Tsang. On the one hand, Woo’s constant invocation of his pro-democratic stance, including his desire to re-initiate electoral reforms as a priority, became detached from the general mood of political fatigue, and hence, unpersuasive to some democrats. Many of Tsang’s supporters believed that the continued fight for democracy in an age of political polarization would only lead to society becoming embroiled in another round of deep confrontation. Similarly, many democrats also became critical of other localist leaders who opposed Tsang on the grounds that Hong Kong’s identity must continue to be a civic process rather than as something that

110 “為何曾俊華做到 民主思路做不到 [Why John Tsang did it but not Path of Democracy]”
Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E4%B8%AD%E9%96%93%E9%81%93-3-%E7%82%BA%E4%BD%95%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E5%81%9A%E5%88%B0-%E6%B0%91%E4%B8%BB%E6%80%9D%E8%B7%AF%E5%81%9A%E4%B8%8D%E5%88%B0/.
emerged out of the banal and remained depoliticized. As the student leader Joshua Wong wrote, "Although a lot of people feel discouraged, we must understand that resistance is the only way forward. Some people want to recuperate, thinking that they do not need to be too involved in the democratic movement...this I understand—but I also hope they acknowledge that there is a price to pay in democratic movements [my translations]." Similarly, the disqualified Demosistō member of the Legislative Council Nathan Law argued, "ideals and principles are the reasons why we push forward despite adversity. Without them, we are doomed [my translations]." These comments only drew criticisms from Tsang’s supporters, who accused the localist leaders of being “disconnected from reality” (離地) and “mistrusting public opinion”; some even went so far as to comment that the localist legislative council members were deserving of their disqualification owing to their insistence on Hong Kong’s civic claims. During the election, therefore, Woo and several localist leaders’ representation of Hong Kong as a civic entity became less persuasive with the rise of Tsang’s narrative of a depoliticized Hong Kong, because

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111 “黃之鋒：我接受『票債票償』但我接受唔到『Dq 扒死』[Joshua Wong: I Can Accept That You Don’t Vote for Me the Next Election Cycle; but I Cannot Accept Those Who Believe the Disqualification Is Deserving]." Standnews (2017), https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E9%BB%83%E4%B9%8B%E9%8B%92-%E6%88%91%E6%8E%A5%E5%8F%97-%E7%A5%A8%E5%82%B5%E7%A5%84%E4%9F-%E4%BD%86%E6%88%91%E6%8E%A5%E5%8F%97%E5%94%94%E5%88%B0-dq-%E6%8A%B5%E6%AD%BB/.

112 “從「我要真普選」到「我要曾俊華」『薯粉』詭離乜？[From “I Want Universal Suffrage” to “I Want John Tsang”: What Are Fans of John Tsang Thinking?]." Standnews (2017), https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E5%BE%9E-%E6%88%91%E8%A6%81%E7%9C%9F%E6%99%AE%E9%81%B8-%E5%88%B0-%E6%88%91%E8%A6%81%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF-%E8%96%AF%E7%B2%89-%E8%AB%97%E7%B7%8A%E4%B9%9C/.

113 Wong, Yeung-Ling. “曾俊華無法當選，其實不用再指責對方「港豬」、「離地」[Even though John Tsang failed to become elected, there is no need to accuse each other of “Hong Kong swine” or “disconnected”]." The News Lens (2017), https://hk.thenewslens.com/article/64580.
the political mood has shifted to favor less confrontation—something that many democrats perceived Tsang could achieve.

V. Conclusion

Tsang’s popularity persisted until the end of his campaign. Two days before the election, one poll showed that Tsang’s support stood at 56% while Lam, at second place, received 26% of support and Woo only 9%.114 Owing to Tsang’s popularity, the Democrats 300+ urged its members to vote as a bloc for Tsang ahead of Election Day.115 But the 2017 election came with no surprises: Beijing did not switch its pick over the course of the campaign period like in 2012, which led to Lam’s eventual victory with 777 votes (Tsang still amassed 365 votes and Woo 21). While there were many speculations as to why Beijing would trust Lam over Tsang116, Alvin Yeung, the chairperson of the Civic Party, summed it up best when he said that nobody could begin to understand what the Central Government's standards for trusting a candidate were.117 The 2017 election only revealed that a candidate's popularity played little significance in Beijing's final choice.

John Tsang's defeat, however, did not equate to the defeat of his movement (as Tsang himself even acknowledged in a campaign advertisement, "I am John Tsang, but it does not matter who I am—what really matters is to trust every one of us

instead of any single person\textsuperscript{118}). His conservative localism, which created new narratives of an apolitical Hong Kong identity, effectively played down the city's democratic aspirations and dissociated its cultural identity from claims of self-determination—something that competed with the narratives of other localist leaders. This produced a space that conservatives of the city can explore further. While this does not mean conservatives can couple Hong Kong's cultural identity with the downright suppression of democracy and civil liberties—as both of these are well-recognized values even among conservative elites\textsuperscript{119}—it does imply that conservatives need not resort to Beijing's narrative on the oneness of the Hong Kong and Chinese identities, and can promote a Hong Kong identity stripped of political claims that can threaten China's sovereignty over the city. Seen in this light, Tsang opened up new possibilities for the pro-establishment camp to appeal to localists of the city.

\textsuperscript{118}”請支持行政長官候選人曾俊華[Please Support Chief Executive Candidate John Tsang]” John Tsang Facebook Post (2017), https://www.facebook.com/johntsangpage/videos/1860971687508808/

\textsuperscript{119} Beatty, “Democracy, Asian Values and Hong Kong”, 97 & 107.
Conclusion

This thesis has effectively charted the development of localism since its beginnings in 2006 and described the transformation of Hong Kong’s previous fight for democracy into its struggle to protect the city’s local identity. In Chapter One, I argued that localism began at a time when the previous representations of Hong Kong people as "economic animals" no longer seemed persuasive and the "core values" narrative—bereft of claims for self-determination—became inadequate to fully capture Hong Kong people's identity. Between 2006 and 2014, localism took on what Abbas calls a "quasi-political import" and evolved into three processes that interrogated the city's colonial past, its entrenched capitalistic development and an older generation of Hong Kong people's uncritical attachment to the Chinese identity. At this stage, the localist movement remained a marginal project detached from the city’s democratic struggles.

In Chapter Two, localism became a full-fledged political movement during the Umbrella Movement in 2014. The NPCSC's directive issued on August 31, which restricted the representativeness of the Nomination Committee for future Chief Executive elections, exposed Hong Kong people's lack of power to decide on their own future, as this authority rested in the hands of Beijing. This also came with the realization that traditional democrats had failed to make claims to struggle for Hong Kong people's right to self-determination, because the idea of a distinct Hong Kong self had not existed. The Umbrella Movement, then, became a self-creation

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Abbas, Ackbar. "Hong Kong: Other Histories, Other Politics." Public culture 9, no. 3 (1997), 304.
movement along with the demands for the universal suffrage of the Chief Executive. Protesters used the 79-days occupation as a "theater" to "perform" their ability to organize themselves without leadership and practiced their desired form of participatory democracy. These performances shaped Hong Kong's civic self, which made claims for *self*-determination possible.

In Chapter Three, I discussed the uncertainties of the post-Umbrella age. Beijing's unwillingness to make concessions to protesters of the Umbrella Movement demonstrated its iron will to assimilate Hong Kong—a logic that is, in fact, encoded into "One Country, Two Systems" when it was drafted. As "One country, Two Systems" fail to protect the Hong Kong self, hence the claims for self-determination, some localists attempted to create for Hong Kong a more definite identity by rejecting traditionally peaceful ways of protest and producing new narratives of Hong Kong as an ethnicity. This effectively challenged the dominance of the Umbrella Movement's civic identity. The Legislative Council Election in 2016, then, became a struggle between the civic and ethnic branches of Hong Kong's localism, with each side proposing different alternatives to "One Country, Two Systems" ranging from proposals to stage referenda for people to decide on Hong Kong's future, to perpetual autonomy for Hong Kong and even independence. Here, the previous struggles for Hong Kong’s democracy transformed into a wider fight to preserve Hong Kong’s identity.

Chapter Four argued that John Tsang's rise was possible among democrats (who adopted a localist outlook after the Umbrella Movement) despite his conservative agenda at a time when the city's civic identity lost its dominance. John
Tsang's invocation of an apolitical cultural identity and his idea of "recuperation" that mobilized a past narrative of Hong Kong as a depoliticized and harmonious city—evidence of his conservative localism—became appealing to some democrats who grew weary of the contentious political polarization of the post-Umbrella age. They were willing to accept Tsang's narrative even though it failed to invoke the city's democratic aspirations as part of the local identity. Tsang’s rise was, therefore, emblematic of democrats’ wider shift from their emphasis on democratic claims to their new focus on the local identity, which they believed Tsang’s representation of Hong Kong successfully preserved.

I. In the Wake of John Tsang

i. Entrenched Political Polarization

The Central Government's refusal to appoint John Tsang as the next Chief Executive despite his popularity not only shattered all wishful illusions that Beijing would adopt a conciliatory attitude to democrats of the city, but also once again manifested that the Hong Kong people had no rights to determine their own affairs. As the public had feared, the elected Chief Executive Carrie Lam inherited her predecessor's pro-Beijing orientations at the perceived expense of Hong Kong people's interest, which ushered in a new age of political polarization. On several occasions, Lam argued that any discourse on Hong Kong independence should be prohibited from university campuses\(^2\) and even openly criticized Benny Tai, one of

\(^2\) “批大學港獨標語違基本法 必須停止 林鄭：拆港獨單張是大學校長應有之責 [Lam criticizes Hong Kong Independence banners in Universities as violations of the Basic Law and urges it to stop; Lam: University chancellors are responsible of removing pro- independence material]” Standews (2017). https://thestandnews.com/politics%E6%89%B9%E5%A4%A7%E5%AD%B8%E6%B8%AF%E7%8D%A8%E6%99%E8%AA%9E%E9%81%95%E5%9F%BA%E6%9C%AC%E6%83%95-
the initial organizers of the Umbrella Movement and a law professor at the University of Hong Kong, for advocating for the city's independence—moves that critics considered as violations of the city's academic freedom and freedom of speech. On top of that, Lam also continued the previous government's approach in disqualifying localist candidates from standing in a by-election in 2018 to fill the seats of the disqualified Legislative Council members in 2016. Lam, for instance, supported the government’s decision to disqualify Agnes Chow, a member of Demosistō, who she thought violated Chinese sovereignty over Hong Kong and "One Country, Two Systems” owing to Chow’s calls for self-determination. Lam’s readiness to accommodate Beijing’s interest, therefore, led to the perception that she failed to represent the interest of Hong Kong.

ii. Localism in Disarray

On the other hand, the localist faction came into disarray after the Chief Executive election race. The widespread support for Tsang’s conservative localism—an import from outside the pan-democratic camp—was proof that the camp was lacking a dominant narrative or figure that could unite the whole democratic faction. The

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3 “戴耀廷：林鄭若未能完成北京硬任務 或淪階下囚 景況可能比他更凶險 [Benny Tai: if Lam does not complete her mission assigned by Beijing, she might end up in a situation worse than herself]” Standnews (2018). https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%88%B4%E8%80%80%E5%BB%B7-%E6%9E%97%E9%84%AD-%E6%88%88%E6%8B%A5%E6%9C%AA%E8%83%BD%E5%AE%8C%E6%89%90%E5%8C%97%E4%BA%AC%E7%A1%AC%E4%BB%BB%E5%8B%99-%E6%88%96%E6%B7%AA%E9%9A%8E%E4%B8%8B%E5%9B%9A-%E6%99%AF%E6%B3%81%E5%8F%AF%E8%83%BD%E6%AF%94%E4%BB%96%E6%9B%B4%E5%87%B6%E9%9A%AA/.

decentralized nature of the pan-democratic camp was further exemplified by the Legislative Council by-election in 2018 for four of the six disqualified seats in 2016. Already during the campaign period, a number of individuals expressed their disinclination to vote or opted to cast a blank ballot because they did not believe the pan-democratic candidates represented them; as Chan Win, a right wing localist, wrote in the prelude of the election, "this is the end of an era, the Chinese Communist Party is moving towards absolutism. The previous ways of political resistance, including voting for democrats, will no longer be effective, and will even cause Hong Kong to die a more unsightly death [my translations]." Another self-declared democrat argued, "after the disqualification of Legislative Council Members, a lot of people have become disillusioned by politics and do not think the pan-democratic camp can effectively make substantial changes." The democratic camp's inability to mobilize public support resulted in a low voters turnout of 43%—a decline from 58% in the 2016 election. At the end, the democrats were only able to retake two seats (when all four vacated seats originally belonged to the pan-democratic camp), and effectively lost the veto power over legislative amendments.

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5 “本土派 KOL 狙擊泛民 籬寧「射落海」 投建制 特別針對范國威 [Localist Key Opinion Leaders targets pan-democrats; they would rather “dump their votes into the sea, or vote for the pro-establishment camp; specifically targets Gary Fan]” Standnews (2018). https://thestandnews.com/politics/%E8%A3%9C%E9%81%B8%E7%84%A6%E5%9C%9F%E6%B4%B0%E6%9C%AC%E5%9C%9F%E6%B4%BE%E6%9C%AC%E5%9C%9F%E6%B4%BEko%E7%8B%99%E6%B3%9B%E6%80%91-%E7%B1%B2%E5%AF%A7-%E5%B0%84%E8%90%BD%E6%B5%B7-%E6%8A%A9%E5%BB%BA%E5%88%B0%E7%89%B9%E5%88%A5%E9%87%9D%E5%B0%8D%E8%8C%83%E5%9C%8B%E5%A8%81/6 “香港立法會補選：「抗衡建制」與「終結吵聞」 [Hong Kong Legislative Council by-election: “countering the pro-establishment camp” vs “ending polarization” BBC Chinese (2018). http://www.bbc.com/zhongwen/trad/chinese-news-43361818. 7 Barron, Laignee. “Hong Kong's Democracy Movement Suffers a Blow as Pro-Beijing Rivals Gain Ground in Election.” Time (2018). http://time.com/5195151/hong-kong-2018-by-election/.
In light of this, the results of the election revealed that the lack of a dominant localist narrative could be politically self-limiting. But the decentralized nature of localism could at the same time be an opportunity, as the lack of a stable narrative creates the space for localists of different political views to participate in and contribute to the representation of their city. For the time being, therefore, Hong Kong awaits a persuasive narrative or figure—what Yip calls a “suitable messenger”⁸—that could dominate the political scene and mobilize localists of different factions. The story of the “Battle for Hong Kong” remains unfinished.

⁸ Yip, Kin-Man, “普俊華現象：溫和政治的完美示範 [The John Tsang Phenomenon: The Perfect Example of Moderate Politics]” Pentoy (2017). https://www.pentoy.hk/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8F%AF%E7%8F%BE%E8%B1%A1%E F%BC%9A%E6%BA%AB%E5%92%8C%E6%94%BF%E6%B2%BB%E7%9A%84%E5%AE%8C %E7%BE%8E%E7%A4%BA%E7%AF%84/.
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"曾俊華辭職 35 天、林鄭請辭 4 天後 中央宣佈兩人免職 [Beijing Approves Resignation after John Tsang Retired for 35 Days, and Lam 4 Days]” Standnews (2017). Published electronically January 16, https://www.thestandnews.com/politics/%E6%9B%BE%E4%BF%8A%E8%8
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