

HONG KONG
Culture and Society

The Dynamics of Social Movement IN HONG KONG

Edited by
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香港大學出版社

HONG KONG UNIVERSITY PRESS

Hong Kong University Press

14/F, Hing Wai Centre

7 Tin Wan Praya Road

Aberdeen

Hong Kong

© Hong Kong University Press 2000

ISBN 962 209 497 X

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<http://www.hkupress.org>

Cover photo by Wong Kan Tai

Cover design by Lea & Ink Design

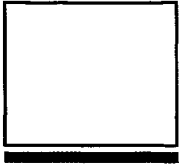
Printed in Hong Kong by Condor Printing Co. Ltd.



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Introduction — Changing Political Opportunities and the Shaping of Collective Action: Social Movements in Hong Kong

Tai Lok Lui and Stephen Wing Kai Chiu

The 1997 question brought Hong Kong under the spotlight of the international news media. The change in sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997 was a world event of the 1990s. Largely due to such media attention, various aspects of Hong Kong politics — from tensions and conflicts in the diplomatic talks between China and Britain to the prospects of capitalist Hong Kong under 'one country, two systems' — have come to constitute topical issues for academic discussion as well as journalistic reporting. However, despite growing interests in Hong Kong politics, more attention has been given to diplomatic conflicts and their consequences (such as confrontations brought about by the political reform proposals put forward by Chris Patten) than the structuring of politics within Hong Kong society. And when the domestic political arena is under scrutiny, the focus is always placed on institutional politics, more precisely activities in the legislature, and not actions and contentions in the broader political context. Few people bother to ask: what is the role of the Hong Kong people in this extended period of transition? Other than talks about the threat to freedom of press (or differently put, the fear of political censorship as well as self-censorship), the future of pro-democracy political groups and post-1997 changes in social and political environment, few attempts have really been made to probe the shaping and reshaping of politics from below before and after 1997.

The chapters in this volume serve the purpose of redressing this imbalance and set out to examine the development of various kinds of social movement in contemporary Hong Kong.

Such a neglect of people's collective action and popular mobilization in the structuring of Hong Kong politics is no accident. Indeed, in the eyes of many observers of Hong Kong politics, the central question of their study has always been the stability of the anachronistic colonial political system. King discusses the problem of political integration in a colonial city under rapid urbanization and suggests that the 'administrative absorption of politics' is 'the way Hong Kong's political system has coped with the problem of stability'.¹ Kuan directly addresses the issue of political stability and notes that '[t]he persistence of the colonial constitutional order has been accompanied by remarkable political stability. Hong Kong has never experienced any large-scale revolt or revolution. On the contrary, it is reputed for its lack of serious disputes'.² Lau describes 'the existence of political stability under highly destabilizing conditions' in Hong Kong as a 'miracle' of the twentieth century.³ In his depiction of Hong Kong politics:

[c]onflicts and violence ... did occur in 1956, 1966 and 1967. Except for the last one, they were primarily social conflicts not directed specifically against the government Moreover, all three instances of conflict were, relatively speaking, small or moderate in scale. And, what is more significant, their political reverberations were minimal [T]he staggering inequality in the distribution of income in Hong Kong would have the potential of generating class conflict and industrial hostilities, which she can ill afford to have. Nevertheless, none of these potential conflicts have materialized.⁴

Leung rounds up this discussion of political stability and remarks that '[a]lthough a rapidly modernizing society under colonial rule, Hong Kong has been exceptional in having been spared the frequent turmoil and instability that have plagued other countries of a similar socio-economic and political status. Since they have not been a particular salient feature of the society, social conflict and social movements have rarely been the subject of inquiry in studies of Hong Kong society'.⁵

Of course, few observers of Hong Kong politics would deny the existence of social conflict and social movements in contemporary Hong Kong. Rather, they argue that 'conflicts will be confined in scale because, under normal conditions, it is extremely difficult to mobilize the Chinese people in Hong Kong to embark upon a sustained, high-cost political movement'.⁶ In this vein, observers of Hong Kong politics downplay the significance of social conflict and social movement in Hong Kong's political life. Given that most local collective actions have not been able to present a forceful challenge to the colonial state and thus do not constitute a serious threat to the stability of the political order, social conflict and social movement are relegated to secondary importance, if not total insignificance, in the analysis of Hong Kong politics.

However, while observers of Hong Kong politics are busy with the construction of explanations of political stability, waves after waves of collective actions — from student activism to urban protests and organized actions of civil service unions — have been witnessed in this so-called politically quiescent society since the 1970s. The emergence of protest action and social movement since the early 1970s indicates a change in the parameters of the political arena under the colonial rule. Whereas it is reasonable to say that these collective actions have not shaken the social basis of political stability in Hong Kong, it is quite another thing to assume (or even to assert) that such popular mobilization is of limited significance to the political life of the colony. As we shall see in subsequent discussion, the impacts of these collective actions are not confined to those issues which originally generated such conflicts.⁷ They have wider repercussions to the constitution of Hong Kong politics.

□ Changing Political Opportunities and Popular Mobilization

In this introduction, which is intended to provide the historical backdrop for the discussion of various kinds of social movement in subsequent chapters, we shall analyse the development of social movements in the context of changing political opportunities. By social movement, we mean 'a collectivity acting with some degree of organization and continuity outside institutional channels for the purpose of promoting or resisting change in the group, society, or world order of which it is a part'.⁸ Our approach to the study of social movements in Hong Kong is informed by the recent 'political process model' in the social movement literature, which emphasizes the importance of broader political institutions in giving rise to a structure of opportunities for the occurrences and patterns of collective action.⁹ Particularly, we emphasize that:

1. social movements are structured by the institutional environment wherein they are embedded;
2. their development is both constrained and enabled by the existing political opportunity structures; and
3. they interact with the broader political environment and, in their turn, are able to impact on the institutional setting and create opportunities for collective action.

In conceptualizing the political context of mobilization, Kriesi et al. point to four components of the political opportunity structure: national cleavage structures, institutional structures, prevailing strategies, and alliance structures.¹⁰ First, very briefly, the cleavage structure refers to the national-specific political cleavages, which are often 'rooted in the social and cultural

cleavages of a given society' which serve as the basis of mobilization. In Hong Kong, for example, the KMT-CCP rivalry was once the dominant political cleavage in much of the post-war years. Since the 1980s, however, the contradictions between the various pro-China organizations and social forces on the one hand, and those who advocated faster democratization and higher autonomy for Hong Kong tend to structure social and political mobilization. Second, the formal institutional structures of the political system, such as laws, electoral rules, party systems and relationship between various branches of the government also shape the course of development of social movements. An issue that preoccupies many researchers on developing countries, for example, is the effect of democratization on social movements. A key question relevant to our discussion here concerns the impacts of the 'opening up' of the political opportunity structure (e.g. election to the legislature) on social movements.¹¹ Third, 'prevailing strategies' mean the more informal strategies followed by authority against social movements or those adopted by social movement organizations. In Hong Kong, as mentioned, the colonial state's strategy of 'administrative absorption' has often been emphasized. Finally, the concept of alliance structure highlights the more interactional aspect of the political process when actors formed alliances among themselves. For example, in the last years of colonial rule, the colonial state often formed temporary and shifting alliance with the pro-China groups or the democrats on different issues. Grass roots organizations also have forged an uneasy alliance with the middle-class democrats.

Our adoption of the political process model is a flexible one, taking it more as a useful set of conceptual tools for our examination of the Hong Kong cases than a theoretical strait-jacket. In the following chapters, authors are given the autonomy to be selective in their focus of the institutional configuration of the concerned social movements. For example, while democratization and changes in the formal political institutions appear to be a common theme in most essays, the shifting alliance structure and its effect on social movements are highlighted in only a few of them (e.g. Ho's treatment of alliances among movement organizations on housing issues in chapter 6). It is also not our intention to argue that the political and institutional structuring of collective action is adequate to answer all the questions related to our understanding of social movements. Indeed, we do not pretend to be exhaustive in our treatment of social movements in Hong Kong. First, the types of social movement covered in this volume are selective; the selection is informed by our judgment of their relevance to social and political changes in contemporary Hong Kong. Second, the emphasis of our discussion is placed primarily on the institutional configuration of the developmental paths of various kinds of social movement. At the expense of leaving out some interesting topics (such as culture and social

movement) in our discussion, we believe that such an emphasis on the institutional structuring of and the course of development of social movement will help illustrate how various social movements are constituted by the changing social and political environment, and how they, in turn, constitute the social and political space for popular mobilization and collective action.

In our review of the development of social movements in contemporary Hong Kong, we suggest that the emergence of collective actions in the 1960s and 1970s was largely an outcome of social and political changes within Hong Kong society. Subsequent development in the 1980s and 1990s, especially changes brought about by the process of decolonization, has significantly politicized popular mobilization and collective actions. However, as we shall point out in this introduction, and equally emphasized by the contributors of this volume, the impacts of politicization vary among different social movements. While some social movements find the new openings in the political structure opportunities for bringing their demands to institutional politics, other encounter competition for resources and leadership of popular mobilization. The effects of politicization are more complex than those of straightforward political empowerment. Organizers and leaders of social movements in Hong Kong find both new opportunities and constraints in the period of transition to 1997.

□ The Rise of Social Movements in a Politically Stable Colony

As we have pointed out in the above section, political stability is widely accepted as the central question for the study of Hong Kong politics. Although many researchers on this topic have made significant contributions to the study of political life in Hong Kong,¹² their focus on political stability has narrowed the scope of political analysis. The major problem of the binary concept of political stability and instability is that it leads researchers to look for political turmoil, disorder and collapse of authority. Any situation of social conflict which is not in a state of revolution, internal war or dramatic change in political control and state power falls out of the scope of their analysis. Social movements, before they have been changed into contentious struggles for political power and becoming capable of challenging the existing political order, are perceived as unimportant or simply irrelevant. The quotations we have cited in the above section should be adequate to illustrate this point. There are two consequences. First, social movements in Hong Kong are under-researched. As Chiu and Hung argue, the early generation of sociologists had a rather high threshold of instability.¹³ Any collective action which fell short of challenging the entire

social and political system would be deemed as insignificant and not worthy of studying. The paradigmatic concern of systemic equilibrium in this sense is self-reinforcing. By pinning their focus on the sources of social and political stability, they invariably overlooked the diverse forms of protests and resistance at the grass roots. Furthermore, when collective actions were included into political analysis, they were often taken as sporadic, unorganized actions expressing hidden angers and discontents but void of political meanings. Such a conception of collective action directed researchers' attention towards the breakdown of the normative and political order and away from the structural cleavages and the processes of mobilization and organization in the making of collective action. So, for example, the 1966 Kowloon riots were conceived as outcomes of communication failures between government and people,¹⁴ problems of political integration¹⁵ and generation gap.¹⁶ Few attempts had been made to look at the riots in the light of social cleavages, people's grievances and popular mobilization. As a result, social movement was largely eclipsed as a research topic of local political analysis in the 1970s.

But there are exceptions. Two major studies of industrial relations in Hong Kong¹⁷ cover the issue of industrial conflict.¹⁸ To be fair to these authors, it should be noted that industrial conflict and strike activity are only parts of their overall analyses of industrial relations in Hong Kong. They did not set out to test any explanation of strike pattern or to explain the rise and fall of industrial action. Their research addresses the broader issue of how various social factors shape management-labour relations in the colony. Although they approach their questions differently, they come to a similar observation that the trade union movement has only a marginal influence at the workplace, industry and societal levels. England and Rear put considerable stress on the nature of worker orientation in combination with the structure and functioning of the labour market as a major determinant of the ineffectiveness of trade unionism.¹⁹ Turner and his colleagues underline the orientation of union organization in their explanation of why local unions remain marginal in capital-labour bargaining at the workplace. While these two major works on industrial relations are relevant to our understanding of the labour movement in Hong Kong, they, by themselves, do not directly analyse industrial conflict and action as a kind of social movement.

But then the emergence of collective actions in the 1970s poses new questions, though very often being ignored, to the observers of Hong Kong politics. The rise of the student movement,²⁰ urban protests²¹ and civil service unionism²² illustrates the restructuring of the political arena after the two riots in 1966 and 1967. This restructuring process worked at two levels. At the level of identity formation and consciousness, the two riots had tremendous impacts on the 'post-war baby-boomers'. The proliferation of literary clubs in the 1960s was part of this 'conscientization' process. It expressed the dissatisfaction of

the colonial social and political order, mainly in the form of a search of the Chinese cultural root among the younger generation. This subsequently developed into two strands of social participation — on the one side, university students actively participated in local social affairs (organizing the university reform campaign, visiting and delivering services to poor households, supporting protest actions, and launching a mass campaign calling for the adoption of Chinese as an official language) and on the other, a search of cultural identity (organizing visits to mainland China and organizing the 'Defend Diaoyutai Movement'). The former brought university students to encounter the restricted space of social and political participation under the colonial administration. The latter was later developed into nationalistic fervour. Under the political parameters of colonial rule, at the early stage of the student movement, the two strands coexisted and together had the chemical effect of boosting student activism. Experience of confronting the colonial government in the process of social participation reinforced the students' critique of colonialism and directed their attention to the look for an alternative. In the context of the early 1970s, this alternative was communist China — representing an alternative to both capitalism and colonialism.²³

At the level of the institutional configuration of political participation, the 1966 and 1967 riots alerted the colonial administration of the potential outburst of popular discontents among the local Chinese. In response, the colonial administration carried out various programmes of reform, including the establishment of the City District Officer (CDO) Scheme, changing labour legislation, and provision of youth services. This, without bringing about major changes in the institutional structure of the existing polity, had provided more room in the public sphere for open discussion and criticism of government policies.²⁴ This new 'political climate' provided room for manoeuvre for advocates and community organizers to initiate organized actions to protest against government policies in the early 1970s. Furthermore, the triumph of the colonial authority over the pro-China groups in 1967 also led to the decline in significance of primary political cleavage in early postwar Hong Kong: the rivalry between the pro-China and pro-Taiwan groups. By attacking the colonial system, and failed, the pro-China groups began a protracted process of organizational and ideological reconstruction. The pro-Taiwan groups, on the other hand, chose to align with the colonial government during the struggles, and they also experienced a gradual decline in the 1970s, perhaps owing to the absence of an active enemy in sight. While much of the collective actions before the 1970s were instigated by the pro-China faction against the pro-Taiwan faction or vice versa (in Lee's description, 'Chinese politics on Hong Kong soil'),²⁵ the decline in the salience of the left-right political cleavage created new space for the more locally oriented social movements.²⁶ Politics in Hong Kong became localized in the 1970s.

□ Challenges to the Colonial Administrative State

The early 1970s witnessed several waves of collective action. While the student movement addressed broader ideological and political issues of that period, urban protests and industrial actions in the public sector were driven by community-based and work-related interests. Here we shall not go into the details of these social movements.²⁷ Rather, we would like to discuss the major characteristics of social movement in this period. First, most of the collective actions of these social movements were expressed in the form of protest actions.²⁸ This partly reflected the limited resources of the movement organizations and participants — the main strategy of their action was to rally support of a third party for the purpose of exerting pressure on the government, showing their relatively weak bargaining position *vis-à-vis* the colonial state and limited resources for mass mobilization. Second, it was an outcome of the institutional configuration of political action under the so-called ‘consultative democracy’ political arrangement. Prior to the reform of local administration (i.e. the establishment of district boards and the related local elections) in the early 1980s, the channels of open political participation were confined to (through election) the Urban Council. More importantly, within this so-called ‘consultative democracy’ framework, the administrative state was politically insulated from society, and depoliticization was the ruling strategy of the colonial government.²⁹ In this context, while the elitist interest groups could access to the government through the appointment to consultative bodies and exerting political influence on the bureaucrats, political demands made by the general public were channelled to the non-institutional arena. Simply put, the design of the colonial state and the political representation system drove political claims and demands to assume the form of protest action.³⁰

By the end of the 1970s, some signs of a ‘social movement industry’ was in formation. The proliferation of different types of collective action had greatly broadened the scope of contentious politics. A variety of interests and latent groups had been mobilized and became recognized political claims and demands. Protest groups and pressure groups were formed to sustain mobilization.³¹ In a way, the early activism of the student movement in mobilizing collective action and its subsequent decline in importance in leading popular mobilization revealed the growth of social movement organizations and the formation of a ‘social movement industry’. The growing importance of pressure groups like the Hong Kong Professional Teachers’ Union and the Society for Community Organization in events like the Golden Jubilee Secondary School Incident (actions triggered by alleged corruption in a secondary school and protests against government intervention in closing that school) and the Yaumatei Boat People Protests (a series of protests demanding resettlement in land temporary accommodation), and the formation of an ad hoc alliance for joint action of

mobilization under the leadership of these pressure groups illustrated a change towards consolidation of social protest through pressure group politics.

Our earlier discussion of the institutional configuration of social protest can also be applied to our understanding of the rise of pressure group politics in the late 1970s and early 1980s. In essence, pressure group politics was more of a continuation than a discontinuity of protest actions found in the early 1970s.³² Despite that some of them were coopted into the colonial administrative system through appointment to advisory committees, most of the pressure groups were active mainly outside formal institutional politics.³³ Indeed, the fact that most pressure groups were 'outsiders' of institutional politics helped create some kind of tacit understanding among pressure groups, social movement organizations, and grass roots protest groups. In the joint actions organized in the late 1970s and early 1980s, pressure groups, social movement organizations, and grass roots protest groups could easily come together and formed an ad hoc organization for a common cause. Though ideological differences among different groups still mattered, on the whole they had little difficulties in making common demands and staging jointly organized protest actions. The affinity among these groups was largely a consequence of the restricted opportunity of political participation in that period. The closed political system created common understanding among the activists — they had the shared experience of being rejected, sometimes repressed, by the Hong Kong government and in the process of staging their protests, confronting a bureaucratic, colonial administrative state. Restricted entry into the formal channels of the polity 'created' an oppositional force being active in the non-institutional political arena.³⁴ Some of these groups (such as university students' organizations) were critical of colonialism and/or capitalism. Others (for example, residents' organizations) did not have elaborated ideological programmes, but were equally critical of the bureaucratic colonial administration which was not responsive to their demands. By the early 1980s and on the eve of the Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong's future, there existed a loosely knitted network of pressure groups, social movement organizations and grass roots protest groups playing the role of an oppositional force to the colonial administration.

Studies of social movements in the late 1970s and early 1980s reflected an academic recognition of the relevance of social movement to the study of Hong Kong politics. Early attempts to analyse the development of social movements in the 1970s were mainly informed by Marxist political economy.³⁵ More systematic studies of social movement came at a later stage; their focus was no longer structural analysis at the level of political economy. Leung's study of the student movement is an application of resource mobilization theory to an understanding of the student activists.³⁶ Lui's analysis of housing protests offers a historical account of the development of housing protests in Hong Kong and how the form of collective action is shaped by the political institutions and

organizational mobilization.³⁷ Chiu also analyses strike activity from a historical perspective and highlights the interactions of economic, institutional and organizational factors in shaping the variation in strike level.³⁸ The commonality of these studies lies in the rejection of a simplistic conception of structure and action and an attempt to probe the institutional configuration of collective action and the process of movement mobilization. More importantly, a common concern of these writers is to debunk the myth of 'stability' espoused in earlier studies. By painstakingly documenting a rich tradition of collective actions among local residents and workers, Lui and Chiu³⁹ provide ample evidences to the empirical inadequacies and historical myopia in the studies like Lau's, King's and Miners'.⁴⁰

□ Social Movements in the Process of Decolonization

The Sino-British negotiations over Hong Kong's future and the subsequent agreement between the two governments on returning the colony to China on 1 July 1997 brought a drastic change in both the political agenda and parameters of Hong Kong. The settlement signalled the beginning of the decolonization process. Whether the initiation of political reforms (from the establishment of district boards to the introduction of popularly elected members to the Legislative Council) was part of the British government's preparation for decolonization or otherwise is beyond the scope of our discussion here. Without going into the background of different phases of political reform carried out in the 1980s, it is safe to say that changes in the political design have restructured the political arena. Though initially pressure groups, social movement organizations and grass roots protest groups had shown signs of reservation about participating in formal institutional politics,⁴¹ they were quickly drawn into electoral politics, first at the levels of election to district boards and Urban and Regional councils and later in direct and indirect elections to the Legislature. The new agenda then was that of politics in the transitional period. At the same time, the academic discussion of Hong Kong politics shifted from the question of political stability to that of opportunities and institutional constraints encountered by local strategic elite in this transitional period.⁴² The new question was: how a new political order is to be made within the parameters of 'decolonization without independence' and the diplomatic politics between Britain and China?⁴³ Again, the question of political development, whether formulated in terms of political participation, democratic transition or political reintegration, attracted most of the attention. The study of popular mobilization and social movement was once again being left out. Meanwhile, in the realm of *realpolitik*, the 1980s was a period of political struggle through electoral politics.

In the studies of social conflicts in 1975–91, it is shown that there has been a drastic increase of conflicts related to political issues (i.e. those concerning constitutional matters and issues about political and civil rights) since 1984.⁴⁴ Before 1984, constitutional matters rarely appeared on the agenda of local social movements. This, of course, was not because of political indifference among the activists. Rather, it was because, prior to the political reforms in the 1980s, the question of democratization was simply seen as remote — an issue unlikely to have any practical meanings in the face of a closed colonial administration. This growing importance of political issues in social conflict reveals the opening of new political opportunities brought about by decolonization and also a shift of attention to political participation in formal institutional politics by pressure groups, social movement organizations, and grass roots protest groups. The struggle for democracy, both for deepening political reform before 1997 and for democratizing the political structure after the handover, became the major concern of the activists in the 1980s and 1990s (for a discussion of the democracy movement, see chapter 2).

The opening of new political opportunities driven by decolonization has a double-edged effect on the development of social movement in Hong Kong. On the one side, there are now new opportunities for political intervention in the sphere of electoral politics and in the process of designing the future political structure of Hong Kong. After a short spell of initial reservation, activists from pressure groups, social movement organizations and grass roots protest groups quickly came to form new political groups for the purposes of preparing for elections at different levels and articulating political programmes for expressing to the Chinese government their opinions on blueprints of transitional arrangements and post-1997 administration.⁴⁵ The proliferation of political groups in the 1980s can be seen as a response to the new political environment triggered by decolonization. Many of them actively participated in the democracy movement for securing the establishment of a more democratic political structure before 1997. Sing's study of the democracy movement in the 1980s (see chapter 2) best illustrates how former pressure groups, social movement organizations and newly formed political groups have come to develop a loosely defined group of democrats on the basis of previous collaborative experience and some tacit understanding of the need of fighting for the democratic cause. The opening of political opportunities has brought about the further politicization of pressure groups and social movement organizations. Political parties were formed for consolidating the existing network of activists and concerned groups.

On the other hand, participation in formal institutional politics had given rise to divisions among the loosely connected active groups in local social movements. The twists and turns during the Sino-British talks about Hong Kong's political reforms and the post-1997 political arrangements and the

emphasis on convergence towards a social and political system which China would find acceptable posed new questions to the political groups and social movement organizations. The choice between pragmatism (accepting the parameters prescribed by China) and continuing to play the role of an oppositional force (especially after the June 4 Incident in 1989) created divisions among these active groups. The loosely formulated consensus found among active groups in the 1970s had lost its relevance, and the solidarity among the so-called democrats was weakened. Previous informal political networking was replaced by formalized party participation and inter-organization linkages.

At the same time, electoral politics and party politics became the focus of contentious politics in the transitional period. Discussions about the decline of grass roots protest groups reflected the gradual separation of grass roots mobilization and community action on the one side, and party politics on the other.⁴⁶ After a short period of active participation in local elections, grass roots protest groups had changed their strategy and assumed a low profile in the 1991 and 1995 elections to the Legislative Council.⁴⁷ This changing relationship between social movement and party politics is an issue worth further investigation. Indeed, the discussion about the incorporation of popular mobilization and protest action into party and electoral politics reflects the peculiarities of social movement and political groups in Hong Kong.⁴⁸ Related to our discussion of the development of social movements, most of the present leaders of the democrats started their political careers in organizing protest actions and social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. Their close connections with social movement organizations created expectations from the grass roots that they would continue to play the role of leading popular mobilization against government policies. Indeed, their experience in organizing social movements and their role as oppositional force led them to assume a double role in Hong Kong politics — they were both the leaders of protest actions and the oppositional politicians in the elected bodies at different levels.

Nevertheless, it was also becoming clear that the politics of grass roots mobilization was different from that of election. The rapid development of electoral politics and the concentration of efforts in parliamentary struggle had led to a 'hollowing out' of political organization at the grass roots level. This was not just an issue for community groups. The same phenomenon of leaving behind workplace-organizing and jumping onto electoral competition was also found among local unions (Chiu and Levin in chapter 4). Lai's study of the protests against hazardous installations on Tsing Yi Island in the 1980s (chapter 9) also illustrates very well how electoral politics shaped community-based social movements. Since the development of local elections in the early 1980s, protests groups in Tsing Yi soon became deeply involved in electoral politics and gradually stayed away from noninstitutional collective actions.

The mass mobilization before and after the June 4 Incident did not really

change the picture portrayed above. While a huge crowd had joined the street rallies and marches protesting against the suppression of the student movement in Beijing, the pro-Chinese democracy movement quickly fell from the peak after the crackdown (Wong in chapter 3). The longer-term impact of the June 4 Incident is found not in sustained mobilization of mass action but in the introduction of a moral dimension (how one positions oneself in the judgement of the crackdown at Tiananmen Square after 1989) into the political discourse — continuation of support of the pro-Chinese democracy movement is often seen as a sign of daring to stand firm against the authoritarian regime of China. In this way, the 'China factor' (in terms of one's political position in the question of Chinese democracy) is brought closer to democratic politics in Hong Kong. Meanwhile, controversies about the political reform programme put forward by Chris Patten also had not triggered another round of pro-democracy popular mobilization. As Hong Kong approached 1997, it became increasingly difficult to mobilize the public and to stage open confrontational action against China.

□ New Social Movements

The 1980s and 1990s also witnessed the emergence of new social movements in Hong Kong. Environmental issues at community level had led to a number of collective actions in the 1980s.⁴⁹ However, unlike the development of green politics in industrialized countries, apart from the anti-Daya Bay Nuclear Plant movement, most of the environmental actions were not articulated to a wider political agenda (Lai in chapter 9). Many of these organized actions were based on the concerns of individual communities and best characterized by the 'not-in-my-backyard' mentality — a mentality which took environmental issues as matters of protecting one's own community from environmental hazards and not universal problems of human development. Also, there were signs of the development of the institutionalization of the environmental movement. With government and corporate supports for environment education, some NGOs concentrated on the promotion of environmental consciousness as a lifestyle, staying aloof from the real political and economic problems which brought about the degradation of our environment (Lai in chapter 9).

We also saw the development of grass roots-oriented women's groups in the 1980s. Lee's study of the women's movement in Hong Kong (chapter 8) argues that since the 1980s, there has been an emergence of feminist politics. In her words, 'the women's movement in Hong Kong over the years created a new collective actor'. Women's struggle now works on this new identity — women's claims are no longer put in a language of familial/maternal welfare but that of their rights, independence and gender equality.

How the women's movement would further make an impact on the political

arena is an issue for future research. While the environmental movement seems to be confined to consciousness-raising and environment education and becomes more dependent of state and corporate supports, the women's movement is expected to put more efforts in changing policies for the promotion of gender equalities. The democratization of the legislature has helped bring gender issues to public debate.

□ Social Movements in the Post-1997 Milieu

As a result of the confrontation between Britain and China precipitated by the proposals for political reform put forward by Chris Patten, the original idea of a 'through-train' arrangement (i.e. continuity in terms of major political institutions) had been revoked. Lu Ping, then director of the State Council's Hong Kong and Macau Affairs Office, expressed the opinion of 'abandoning of the illusion of co-operation from Britain during the transition to Chinese rule'.⁵⁰ China moved on to set up the 'second stove' by forming the Preparatory Committee and set out to put the Provisional Legislative Council in operation before 1 July 1997. Various moves initiated by China to redefine the political parameters after the political transition, with the clear objectives of upsetting the implementation of Patten's political reform and pre-empting pro-democracy groups from gaining a foothold in the future political system, met criticisms and oppositions from different sectors of the local population. Negative public response notwithstanding, China cleared its way of ensuring a convergence of Hong Kong's political structure into an institutional arrangement that it found acceptable.

In a sense, these moves did not mark a departure from China's original vision of 'Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong'. As put by Xu Jia-tun in his personal memoir, 'the essence of the future "Hong Kong people ruling Hong Kong" arrangement is a cross-class united government under the leadership of the bourgeoisie'.⁵¹ As shown in the processes of electing the Chief Executive, the formation of the Provisional Legislative Council, and the adoption of new voting methods for the election of the first SAR legislature in 1998, both pro-China groups and business interests had been well taken care of. Although there is still room (yet significantly circumscribed by changes in the arrangements of the election process) for the democrats to manoeuvre in electoral politics, the SAR government had largely established a governance structure which is executive-led, pro-business, accommodating to China's influence. And the style of governance would be, as repeatedly hinted by Tung Chee-hwa, conservative and paternalistic.

Meanwhile, the tensions between China and Hong Kong, mainly the fear of political intervention, continued to be one of the key concerns of the local

population. In recent years, oppositions to China's policies over Hong Kong, from questions concerning future constitutional arrangements to the increasingly authoritarian posture about social and political control, had become one of the major concerns of local demonstrations and protest actions. From 1993 to 1996, protests outside the Xinhua News Agency increased from 100 to 175. Police records of the number of marches also showed a jump from 285 in 1993 to 405 in 1995.⁵² In fact, people's concerns about the 'China factor' in Hong Kong's social life were not confined to political matters. The public outcry against the open attack on RTHK, the government broadcasting station, made by Mr Xu Ximin, a senior Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference delegate, revealed how nervous Hong Kong people were about a tightening of social and political control through disciplining the mass media. While the fear of China's intervention continues to haunt the public (disputes concerning the ruling of the Court of Final Appeal on Mainland children's right of abode is just another case at stake), with a drastic downturn of confidence in Hong Kong's economy since late 1997, people's attention has shifted to livelihood issues, particularly those of rising unemployment and the effects of the plunge in property prices.

The effects of a restructured economy (particularly pertinent here was the declining manufacturing sector) and vibrant speculations in the stock market and property market emerged in the context of speculators' attack on the Hong Kong currency and the financial chaos in the East and Southeast Asian region. In the first quarter of 1998, for the first time in the past 13 years Hong Kong experienced negative economic growth. Unemployment rate shot up dramatically and continued to rise. The stock market was volatile and property prices once fell some 40% within a year's time.⁵³ Meanwhile, the income gap between the rich and the poor widened. In 1996, the Gini Coefficient was 0.518, a significant jump from the 0.453 in 1986. More people began to feel the heat of a depressing economy; even white-collar employees were also driven out of their previously rather stable jobs. The unemployment problem was no longer an issue confined to those middle-aged former (male and female) manual labourers. The extended period of rapid growth in the postwar decades seemed to have come to a close. There witnessed the rise of protest actions organized by those lower-middle- and middle-class people who were angry with the government's imposition of the new mother-tongue language education programme (thus affecting their children's opportunity of receiving English education), those suffered from the collapse of small stockbrokers' agencies triggered by the drastic downturn in the stock and property markets, or those badly hit by the plunge in property prices and becoming owners of negative assets.

Can the self-acclaimed paternalistic, executive-led, pro-business SAR government be able to handle various demands from local people

in the midst of rapid changes in the economic environment and psychological pessimism worrying about rising economic hardship? Can it turn the clock back (reinstating 'administrative absorption of politics' by strengthening the appointment system and the advisory machinery and playing down the significance of electoral politics) and reconstitute a paternalistic bureaucratic state, after intense politicization in the decolonization process and in the face of emerging conflicts between civil servants and Tung Chee-hwa? Questions concerning the prospect of further democratization, the protection of Hong Kong from Beijing's political intervention and monitoring government's performance remain the overarching concerns.

Tung Chee-hwa was eager to depoliticize what he saw an overpoliticized environment. There would not be major changes in the existing political system before 2007, as stipulated in Annex II of the Basic Law. More than once, Tung had tried to show in public his style of paternalistic and bureaucratic governance. However, after a series of events happened after the handover (from the bird flu to the government's slow reactions to the impacts of the economic turmoil in the region, to Tung's inconsistency in handling the housing issue, to the airport fiasco, just to name a few examples), public confidence in the SAR government dropped to a record low. The government was widely criticized for its incapability in dealing with problems arising from crisis situations. Yet, most of the recent protest actions and popular mobilization were taken over by political parties of different orientations. The need of securing electoral support drove political parties of diverse political persuasions to assume a more active role in interest articulation and popular mobilization. On the one hand, more resources were available to collective action-organizing. On the other hand, popular discontents and demands for policy change were quickly subordinated to the political struggle in institutionalized politics. Differently put, political struggles for further democratization and power-sharing had overshadowed social movements.

□ Contextualizing Hong Kong's Social Movements

The contributors of this volume emphasize that social movements in Hong Kong predated the political transition triggered by the 1997 question. Indeed, one of their central arguments is that a useful handle to start our analysis of social movements in Hong Kong is to look at the effects of the long-term changes of the political opportunity structure on their course of development. In this regard, the contributors have tried to give historical and developmental accounts of social movements in Hong Kong. Decolonization and the resultant politicization of social conflict are no more than parts of the larger, macro-structuring of political opportunity for collective actions. It is interesting to observe that, as shown in the studies of different social movements reported by

our contributors, there is no single, homogeneous '1997 effect' on social movements. China's intervention into Hong Kong's social and public affairs, while no doubt always bring about the politicization of social issues, does not necessarily create more opportunities for social movement organizations. As we shall see in the following chapters, the '1997 effect' varies and the impacts of decolonization and China's intervention have been differently appropriated by different types of social movement.

The other common theme in the following chapters lies in the emphasis that a more adequate understanding of the structuring of social movements requires us to look into social movement organizations and the process of mobilization for collective action. While our contributors examine the macro-structuring of the trajectories of social movements and thus will not be able to probe the issue of organizational development in adequate depth, they have discussed the responses of social movement organizations to the changing political environment.

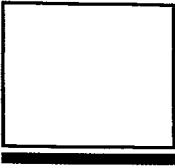
All the chapters in this volume look at longer-term development of social movements in Hong Kong. This, we hope, will help redress the imbalance we find in journalistic accounts of social and political development in many 1997 special issues of newspapers and magazines. Hong Kong society and its politics have much broader relevance than merely another case of political transition. The same is true for our study of social movements in Hong Kong.

Notes

1. King, 'Administrative absorption of politics in Hong Kong', p. 129.
2. Kuan, 'Political stability and change in Hong Kong', p. 146.
3. Lau, *Society and politics in Hong Kong*, p. 1.
4. *Ibid.*, pp. 2, 4.
5. Leung, *Perspectives on Hong Kong society*, p. 159.
6. Lau, *Society and politics in Hong Kong*, p. 20.
7. See also Cheung, 'The rise of the new middle class and its political implications', and Lui, 'The path of development of Hong Kong's popular movements'.
8. McAdam and Snow, 'Social movements: conceptual and theoretical issues', p. xviii.
9. Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution*, McAdam, *Political process and the development of Black insurgency 1930-1970*, and McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, *Comparative perspectives on social movements: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, and cultural framing*.
10. Kriesi et al., *New social movement in Western Europe: a comparative analysis*.
11. See, for example, Canel, 'Democratization and the decline of urban social movements in Uruguay: a political-institutional account'.
12. One example is the proliferation of research on the cultural foundation of the existing political order. See, for instance, Hoadley, 'Hong Kong is the lifeboat: notes on political culture and socialization', King, 'The political culture of Kwun Tong', and Lau and Kuan, *The ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*.

13. Chiu and Hung, 'The colonial state and rural protests in Hong Kong'.
14. Hong Kong government, *Kowloon disturbances 1966: report of Commission of Inquiry*.
15. King, 'Administrative absorption of politics in Hong Kong'.
16. Jarvie, 'A postscript on riots and the future of Hong Kong'.
17. England and Rear, *Chinese labour under British rule and industrial relations and law in Hong Kong*, and Turner et al., *The last colony: but whose?*
18. These two studies of industrial relations were expanded and updated in the 1980s. See England, *Industrial relations and law in Hong Kong*, and Turner, Fosh and Ng, *Between two societies: Hong Kong labour in transition*.
19. It is interesting to note that England also formulates his research question in a format rather similar to the studies of political stability. England, *Industrial relations and law in Hong Kong*, p. 1, writes: '[v]iewed against the potential for conflict which exists in Hong Kong, the miracle of social order should be placed alongside its acknowledged economic miracle. The question arises then as to how the potential power of working-class action in a capitalist society has been diffused. Has it been achieved by the removal of sources of disaffection, by the development of an armoury of repression, or by directing grievances into constitutional or administrative channels?' But given his research interest in management-labour relations, England does not stop at pointing out the existence of industrial peace. He moves on to ask what are the factors that bring about the demobilization of the working class.
20. See The Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Hong Kong's student movement*.
21. Lui, 'Urban protests in Hong Kong', and Lui and Kung, *City unlimited: housing protests and urban politics in Hong Kong*.
22. Ho, 'The government and the clerical workers: a case study of labour-management conflicts in the Hong Kong civil service'.
23. The ideological struggle between the pro-China faction and the social actionist faction within the student movement in the mid-1970s is a topic worth more serious research. The rise and fall of the pro-China faction can be seen as a change in the direction of self-searching among the young people in the 1970s. The formation of a local identity and the gradual articulation of localism make the search of a culturally Chinese identity less appealing and even obsolete among the second or third batch of the baby-boomers.
24. See, for instance, *The Urban Council White Paper 1971*.
25. Lee, 'Hong Kong identity — past and present', p. 158.
26. Lui, 'The path of development of Hong Kong's popular movements'.
27. On the student movement, see The Observers of Far Eastern Affairs, *The student movement*, The Hong Kong Federation of Students, *Hong Kong's student movement*; on urban social movement, see Lui, 'Urban protests in Hong Kong', Lui and Kung, *City unlimited: housing protests and urban politics in Hong Kong*;' on public sector unionism, see Ho, 'The government and the clerical workers: a case study of labour-management conflict in the Hong Kong civil service'.
28. See Lui and Kung, *City unlimited: housing protests and urban politics in Hong Kong* for elaboration; also consult Lipsky, 'Protest as a political resource'.
29. Harris, *Hong Kong: a study in bureaucratic politics*.
30. Lui, 'Urban protests in Hong Kong', Lui and Kung, *City unlimited: housing protests and urban politics in Hong Kong*. Also see Jenkins and Klandermans, *The politics of social protests*.

31. On the formation of protest groups and pressure groups concerning community politics, see The Hong Kong Council of Social Service, *Community development resource book*, various years.
32. Lui, 'Pressure group politics and political participation'.
33. The best example showing the attitude of the colonial administration towards local pressure groups is the comments made in the report of the SCOPG. See Lee, 'Pressure groups and party politics', p. 134.
34. Compare with Tilly, *From mobilization to revolution*, and Gamson, *The strategy of social protest*.
35. Wu, 'The political conjuncture of contemporary Hong Kong and development of popular movements', and Tsang, 'An exploratory analysis of Hong Kong's class structure'.
36. Leung, 'Who protests'.
37. Lui, 'Urban protests in Hong Kong'.
38. Chiu, 'Strikes in Hong Kong'.
39. *Ibid.*, and Lui, 'Urban protests in Hong Kong'.
40. Lau, *Society and politics in Hong Kong*, King, 'Administrative absorption of politics in Hong Kong', and Miners, *The government and politics of Hong Kong*.
41. Lui, 'Pressure group politics and political participation', and 'The path of development of Hong Kong's popular movements', and Lui and Kung, *City unlimited: housing protests and urban politics in Hong Kong*.
42. Lau, 'Political reform and political development in Hong Kong', 'Decolonization without independence', and 'Basic Law and the new political order of Hong Kong'.
43. While Lau, 'Decolonization without independence' and 'Basic Law and the new political order of Hong Kong', directly addresses the issue of the formation of a new political order in the transitional period and looks for a new mode of political integration, Scott, *Political change and the crisis of legitimacy in Hong Kong*, raises the question of legitimation crisis and suggests that this is the fundamental problem of the future SAR government.
44. Cheung and Louie, 'Social conflicts in Hong Kong, 1975-1986', and Chui and Lai, 'Patterns of social conflicts in Hong Kong in the period 1980 to 1991'.
45. Cheng, *Hong Kong: in search of a future*.
46. Leung, 'Community participation: the decline of residents' organizations', Lui, 'Back to basics: rethinking the roles of residents' organizations', and Ho in Chapter 6.
47. Lui, 'Two logics of community politics'.
48. Lui, 'What is to be done?'
49. Chan and Hills, *Limited gains*.
50. Quoted from Sida, *Hong Kong towards 1997*, p. 409.
51. Xu, *The memoirs of Xu Jiatun on Hong Kong*, p. 121.
52. Gilley, 'Jumping the gun', p. 16.
53. Elliott, 'The numbers don't lie'.



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