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Social Mobilization amidst Social Political Turbulence

*Pattern of Social Conflict in Hong Kong
in the Period 1980 to 1991*

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Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies

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HK\$30.00

ISBN 962-441-096-8

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Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the Centre of Urban Planning and Environment Management of The University of Hong Kong for funding the present project (Project No: 371-015-6078). We would also like to express our appreciation to our student research assistants, Miss Yvonne Lam Fung-kiu, Miss Judy Yu Chi-kwan, Miss Kitty Chau, Miss Priscilla Soo and Miss Amy Chak. In addition, we would like to express our gratitude to Prof. Louie Kin-sheun and Prof. Anthony Cheung-Bing-leung for giving us their kind consent to have access to the raw data of their previous research archive (1975-1986). On the other hand, we are also indebted to the intellectual stimulation of colleagues in the Department of Sociology, The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Prof. Stephen Chiu Wing-kai and Prof. Lui Tai-lok in particular, as well as Prof. Leung Sai-wing and Mr Chu Wai-chi of the Department of Applied Social Studies in The Hong Kong Polytechnic University.

Opinions expressed in the publications of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies are the authors'. They do not necessarily reflect those of the Institute.

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ISBN 962-441-096-8

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Introduction

The polity of Hong Kong is a configuration of different socio-economic and political (internally driven, yet externally derived) forces, which is difficult to explain by one or a few conceptual constructs. Such constructs might include the "utilitarian familism," insightfully coined by S. K. Lau (1982), the "administrative state," used by Peter Harris (1983; see also Miners, 1986), or the "[colonial] administrative absorption of politics" thesis of Ambrose King (1975). In short, in spite of their relevance in pin-pointing or explaining certain salient features of the interface between the colonial state governance and the functioning of the Chinese community, these conceptual understandings on the specificity of Hong Kong take the socio-political conflict articulations in the public arena (e.g., demonstrations, petitions, strikes, etc.) too lightly, or, methodologically, they follow either functionalist or "administrative science" lines of argumentation.¹

These conceptual accounts are more in doubts when, in the 1980s, the political contours of Hong Kong are shaped by two different, yet interrelated, developments within and beyond its territory. These developments are, namely, the struggle for more civic power in the allocation of urban resources — as a continuation of the 1970s' urban social protests (in a Castellsian sense, Castells, 1983; Lui, 1984; Wong, 1989) on the one hand, and issues and controversies over the future of Hong Kong — ways through which to preserve its uniqueness (Cheng, 1986, 1987; Lai, 1989).

More specifically, the 1980s are characterized by the gradual accumulation of intense antagonism between the two contending regimes — the outgoing British-colonial and the in-coming Chinese states — over the political configuration of Hong Kong in the transition to and beyond 1997. The high tide of such inter-state hostility came in 1992 with the introduction of the controversial “Patten Formula” of constitutional change.

Furthermore, it should be stressed that the above named conceptual accounts of the Hong Kong case are less focused on the actual social conflicts in the public arena. Hence, there is a need for developing a better account of the case of Hong Kong governance and the socio-political articulation in a conflict arena.

The Social Conflict Nexus: Analytical Accounts of Social Protests and Social Movements

Social conflict mostly arises out of changing socio-economic conditions. Interactively, conflict in turn brings about social change and forms one of the major societal forces in making history. This presents a *structuration process* which involves both social agency and a historically given social structure (Giddens, 1984; Wood and Jackson, 1982). Hence, studies of social conflict can directly shed light on the specific changing relationships between social actors and social structure, the governors and the governed, the ideologies and interest articulation of socio-political groups, as well as the change in the cultural arena (Dalton and Kuechler, 1990). This general conceptual concern is to be specified via a contextualization of the social conflicts and events noted in our study.

More specifically, this contextualization exercise is to explore the process of how the nexus of social conflict and (the trajectory of) social change is developed across a specific temporal span. One specific form of the manifestation of such conflict is social protest against (or asking for help from) the ruling body (the government). This can be interpreted as the instrumental force of social change in our society. Accordingly, many scholars note this

particular role of social protests or social movements. They see them as “one of the chief ways through which modern societies are remade” (Blumer, 1951:154); “historical actors” (Touraine, 1977:298); “transforming agents of political life” or “carriers of historical projects” (Eyerman and Jamison, 1991:26). Some authors go so far as to claim that “mass-based movements and the conflict they generate are primary agents of social change” (Adamson and Borgos, 1984:12, cited in Sztompka, 1993:275).

Yet, it should be remembered that social protests and movements are some of the many possible responsive manifestations in the given socio-economic change. Other spontaneous collective responses, ranging from retreat-back-home or antisocial riots on the activity spectrum, are available. Here, both the perceived and existing opportunity structure (Kitschelt, 1986) and the associated pull-and-push forces available will likely shape individuals’ response in a given situation. In conceptual terms, Hirschman (1969) insightfully notes the *Exit, Voice and Loyalty* opportunity structures existing in most socio-economic behavioural encounters. To recapitulate, the requirement for social conflict to be transformed into social protest, or even social movement of a longer temporal span, is contingent upon certain socio-economic set-up.

According to Sztompka (1993:275-76), social movements can be defined as social processes which comprise the following constitutive components, namely (1) a collectivity of people acting together; (2) a shared goal of collective action for some change in their society, defined by participants in a similar way; (3) the collectivity is relatively diffuse with a low level of formal organization; (4) the action has a relatively high degree of spontaneity, taking non-institutionalized, unconventional forms. In addition, one of the valid generalizations about social protest and collective mobilization is that “social movements arise only when aggrieved groups cannot work through established channels to communicate new claims into the political process of authoritative decision making” (Kitschelt, 1993:14). More important is the theoretical-cum-hypothetical distinction (or competition) between two sets of explanation about the relationship between established political

structure and the praxis of social movement, namely, the “cyclical model” *vis-à-vis* the “structural differentiation” model.

The “cyclical model” views social protest as the challenge to representative democracy which is in fact a recurring expression of dissatisfaction with the political structure. Whilst the “structural differentiation” thesis argues that the practice of social movement extends the political horizon and its capacity which, in turn, engenders a pluralization of political decision mode (Kitschelt, 1993). Here, it should be remembered, however, that each of the models has a certain explanatory advantage as regards respective types of social movements. For instance, the cyclic model could provide a longitudinal perspective within a given and stable polity, whilst the structural differentiation thesis highlights the self-transformation of social movements in a changing polity.

The typology of social movements is quite obviously affected by (1) the internal organization (objectives, strategies employed and involved members) of the protests, and (2) the ways the concerned community and political structure accommodate such challenge. In the first arena, the academic focus is more on the process of political mobilization. For instance, McCarthy and Zald (1977) theorized about social protest in terms of the mode of “resource mobilization”; and, in the same vein, Aiken (1969) highlighted the community-based social movement, whereas Nettl (1967) put forward the idea of “interest articulation” to argue for the very basis of social protest. Theses which position social movement in a wider societal context are attempted by Rokkan (1966) in terms of nation and ethnic identity building, Deutsch (1961) and Pye (1966) in terms of the inclusive, if not totally integrative, function of social movement in the formation of society. In short, social movement involves not just opposing actors, issues, selective and counter-movement strategies, it is also embedded in and will develop various dynamics internal and external to the social movement.

Conceptions of social movement, after 30 years of intellectual debates, have been more fruitful than before. Yet, the new orienta-

tion for further research on this theme is more subtle, differentiated and fine-tuned than previously. More importantly, the structural (organizational) bias of the fashionable resources mobilization theory regarding social movement is weighted against the individual, social-psychological dimension. It is also quite clear that a reconciliation process integrating both theses is underway (Sztompka, 1993:ch. 19). Hence, social movements should be studied via the contextualization of the issues, actors and strategies involved. This necessarily requires a dialectic analytical framework to assess the statist mode of governance and the societal responses in social movements.

To recapitulate, the contingency role of a given socio-economic set-up which fosters the formation of social protests/social movements should be stressed here. It is not to deny the different theoretical emphases on the psychological, socio-psychological and socio-structural domains of (New) Social Movements.² In other words, the “grand theories” on social movements developed in the 1970s and early 1980s have difficulties with explaining the complicated protest/movement articulation process in the 1980s and beyond. Particularly, they are inadequate to explain the emergence of a different set of protest appeals and organization strategies.³ Methodologically, what is more relevant to research on social protest/movement is to focus “on the specific issues which are real driving forces underlying individual social movement” (Chui and Chan 1994:3).⁴

The Hong Kong Case Reconsidered: The Context of Neo-colonial Rule in Hong Kong — the 1980s

With reference to the occurrence of social protests in Hong Kong from 1967 to 1986, recent studies (Cheung and Louie, 1990; Chui and Chan, 1994) have indicated an emerging (alternative) explanatory paradigm on the specificity of societal functioning in this Chinese community under British colonial rule. Social movements in Hong Kong are in fact one of the most important dynamics

which confront, if not challenge, the decision-making of the colonial governance, particularly in those arenas where collective consumption, quality of life and civil rights issues emerge as social issues. In other words, those analytical accounts which hold the view that, under British colonial governance, the Chinese community is less politically charged — so as to ensure a stable and static mode of policy process characterized by people's "passive acceptance" — should be questioned.⁵

Yet, this reconsideration of the societal functioning of Hong Kong — as a civil society — should not be characterized as if social protests from 1967 to 1986 had changed significantly the political agenda-setting and the processing of them. In actuality, the social protests of concern are much shaped by the internal dynamics (say, mobilization power of activists *vis-à-vis* colonial state power) and the external control (say, influences derived from the political left and right wings of Chinese politics). For instance, the influence of Chinese party politics (Kuomintang versus Chinese Communist Party) upon social movements in general, and labour movements in particular, has set the limits of the conflict arena where social (de)mobilization takes place. Here, this can be substantiated by a benchmark study of industrial strikes and labour movements occurring from 1946 to 1989 (Leung and Chiu, 1991). The study succinctly highlights the trajectory of development whereby the form of conflict manifestations in the production sector is much constrained by the politically charged unionism, yet this specific configuration of the union movement is apathetic for most Chinese here in Hong Kong. Paradoxically, without much improvement in labour welfare or any increase of collective bargaining power for workers, industrial strikes are far less employed in conflict situations after 1982. In fact, industrial strikes are the least prominent in the period 1946-1989.

A considerable portion of Hong Kong's people in the 1980s would agree that the return of (colonial-capitalist) Hong Kong to the socialist rule of China in 1997 poses more problems for them than the Sino-British Joint Declaration (1984) solves. The historical questions between the British and Chinese governments find their

manifestations in the (non-institutional) democracy movements signified by the mobilization of large number of citizens in a collective way, as well as the (institutional) formulation of the Basic Law by the Drafting Committee (BLDC) and Consultative Committee (BLCC), respectively.

Before 1997, Hong Kong is essentially a British colony, though its colonial status has been subjected to contradictory interpretations by the British and Chinese governments, respectively. To prologize our discussion, some of the studies of local politics and administration are here noted. Harris (1983) and Miners (1986) have highlighted the specific features of the colony, namely, an administrative colonial state with (widening) consultation. While Lau (1982) notes the functional aspects of a "minimally integrated social political system." The "[colonial] administrative absorption of politics" is offered (King, 1975) to explain their interaction. But, these analyses, if not challenged, might be questioned in view of other studies which highlight the fact that social protest movements, since the 1970s, have been flowering (Leung 1986; Hong Kong Federation of Students, 1983; Society for Community Organisation, 1982; Lui, 1984). On the other hand, there has been a top-down approach of the colonial government striving for a "representative government" (Hong Kong Government, 1984a, 1984b). Seemingly, the theoretical unit to be examined, namely, the citizens' protest, is more promising as a perspective on the state-society relationship that, in turn, can analyze the changing polity in the 1980s.⁶

In the analysis of Hong Kong's political arena, a few elucidation should firstly be noted. First, the structural tension between the central (People's Republic of China, PRC) state and the local (Hong Kong: colonial-capitalist) state. This distinction between the central and local state is derived from the concepts developed by Saunders (1985) resembling the dualist distinction in state policy formulation under the capitalist system. It should be acknowledged that the distinction of state(s) and the division of state policy (or intervention arena) are subject to criticism; on this case, see Duncan and Goodwin (1982, 1988) and Harrington (1983). Yet,

such a distinction, which resembles the analytical construct of the Weberian ideal type, has its own conceptual significance.

Secondly, to illustrate the conflicts and to analyze the case of the macro planning and democracy protest, it is necessary to take into account at least two dimensions, namely the spatial-judicial sphere of the central and local state(s): PRC versus Hong Kong, and the binding to the Joint Declaration by the PRC and British governments. More important is the Basic Law, which will govern the relationships between economic growth versus welfare, production versus collective consumption, corporatist versus social interests, respectively. Saunders' analytical framework (Saunders, 1979, 1985, 1986) thus rightly offers us the dichotomized but related dimensions for our analysis. Furthermore, Hong Kong, which apparently was recognized, albeit *de facto* but not *de jure*, by the PRC as a colony, is viewed as a local state under British government (Smart, 1989:185-86).⁷ In other words, the local state of Hong Kong has a colonial nature, but it is constrained by the "Dragon" nearby (apart from the influence of the Foreign Office of the British government). In this instance, we follow the thesis that the (local) state's (Hong Kong) as well as the society's capacity to manoeuvre "lie not only in features of states themselves, [in our case: the colonial-capitalist rule of Britain] but also in the balance of state's resources and situational advantages compared with those of non-state actors" (discussed in Skocpol, 1985:19), [i.e., the PRC as well as the pro-democracy groups].

Thirdly, the Hong Kong state can be conceived as a relatively well developed socio-economic capitalist society, yet with a neo-colonial polity. The differences between Hong Kong and China are obvious and tend to be polarized (Bonavia, 1985; Lo, 1988; Cheng, 1987; Yee and Wong, 1987). In short, as argued by Castells (1983:331-35), the clash of values and social interests is conditioned by history, and the associated dynamics in turn contribute towards the formation of social movements.

The Study: Historical Analysis of Archival Data

Guided by such a conceptual discourse and the contextual appraisal of Hong Kong's polity, this study attempts to provide a descriptive account of the issues that are conflictual. In addition, the study also tries to analyze how these issues become the source of socio-political articulation, in most cases, against the colonial state within a given period. The choice to research this period (1980-1991) is justified on three grounds. First, Lord MacLehose, the former Governor of Hong Kong, apparently knew about the PRC's position on the future of Hong Kong after his visit to China in 1979. More importantly, his administration began to prepare the new administrative structure of the districts in 1980. It is clear that, from the socio-political point of view, the colonial administration has changed its mode of governance since 1980.

Secondly, in relation to the controversies over the future of Hong Kong — issues about 1997 — the period 1980-1991 marks the conjunctural epoch of socio-political articulations in Hong Kong (to a certain extent, beyond this period), for a participatory mode of colonial governance, if not a democracy movement. Such a development is actually being juxtaposed to the various ramifications and restructuring processes of the open door policy (since 1978) of the PRC. Yet, these articulations are more or less "forced" to settle down when the Basic Law is promulgated in April 1990. More critical still, when the then Governor Chris Patten puts forward his constitutional reform package in 1992, there arises an intense antagonism between the British-Hong Kong and Chinese states, which opens up another period of politicization for the Hong Kong society. The present study delimits its scope of investigation to the period before the commencement of such a stage of "competing mobilization" (Chui, 1997). Lastly, this study is in line with two recently completed studies of social conflict in Hong Kong (Cheung and Louie, 1990; Chui and Chan, 1994) which take the time-frame of 1975 to 1986 and 1967 to 1974, respectively, with

the aim to develop more in-depth studies about the colonial governance mode and the pattern of social conflicts in Hong Kong.

The parameter of this study, or the manifested phenomenon to be examined, is borrowed from Castells' formulation (1983) (for critique on it, see Lowe, 1986; McKeown, 1987:ch. 6), and limited to three spheres: (1) collective consumption of public goods, housing in particular; (2) cultural identity as manifested by the (Westernized *vis-à-vis* PRC's) ideological sphere: ideas of and demand for human rights; (3) political mobilization for local autonomy, self-administration and democracy. These three components of the protest movements are examined in the study period, which are developed along two lines: (1) within Hong Kong, the collective consumption issues, the legislature functioning and the debates on the political development of representative government; and (2) between Hong Kong and the PRC, the Basic Law Drafting (under the PRC's direction) versus the mobilization of democratic movements. For the sake of illustration, here Figure 1 provides the typical presentation.

The present study is essentially a historical analysis of past events in a designated period. Thus, the methodology of archival study is employed. Archival studies rely basically upon the retrieval of data from existing records. The content of these records therefore constitutes the raw data for such studies. According to Babbie (1992) and Judd et al. (1991), content analysis and the analysis of existing data are best for historical research. The specific strength of archival studies lies in its large coverage of immense populations or units of analysis. Since the newspaper is having a day-to-day coverage of a wide range of events, it is warranted to use newspaper retrieval as a viable means of archival study. For a more detailed discussion of the merits and limitations of such a research methodology, please refer to the Methodological Note.

As the present research constitutes one of the continuous effort of similar studies on local social conflicts in post-war Hong Kong, it is warranted to adopt similar, if not totally identical, conceptual as well as operational definitions of the domains of the

Figure 1 Social Issues and Protest Movements

| Type | Issues | Target | | |
|--|-------------------------------------|--------|-----|---------|
| | | HK | PRC | Year |
| Collective consumption: | Housing issues | | | 1985-88 |
| 1. Housing policy restructuring | | X | — | 1985-87 |
| 2. Sub-standard housing redevelopment | | X | — | 1985-86 |
| 3. Asbestos problem in housing blocks | | X | — | 1988 |
| Ideology: | Legislation | | | 1985-87 |
| 1. Legislative Council Power and Privileges Bill | | X | X | 1985 |
| 2. Public Order [Amendment] Bill | | X | X | 1987 |
| 3. Film Censorship Bill | | X | X | 1987 |
| 4. Daya Bay issue | | X | X | 1986 |
| Political: | Political development and Basic Law | | | 1984-89 |
| 1. "Convergence" issue | | X | X | 1984-88 |
| 2. 1988 direct election [Green Paper 1987] | | X | X | 1987 |
| 3. Basic Law 1st draft - consultation | | X | | 1988 |
| 4. Proposal on SAR government | | X | | 1988-89 |

study. Specifically, social conflicts are conceived as “incidents reported in the local newspapers involving group(s) of Hong Kong citizens taking overt collective action(s) in the territory against specific government policy(ies) and/or practice(s); or specific private institutions; which involves conflict of interests between the contending parties within the designated period.”

A variety of data is collected for analysis, which include the nature and scope of the issues (or policy domains concerned), the people affected and the participants (the backgrounds and numbers), the organizations involved, the specific strategies employed, the duration of the issues and, finally, the institutional response and outcome elicited from such mobilization.

Findings and Analysis

A total of 1,719 cases have been identified over the span of 12 years in the period under study.⁸ The distribution of cases is shown in Table 1. It is obvious that the number of cases increases substantially in the latter part of the period. This can be attributed to the fact that the Hong Kong society has been subjected to more controversial issues in the society at large. Spectacularly, the year 1986 witnessed a leap from 76 cases in 1985 to 125 cases. Here, it should be highlighted that the Legislative Council had its first batch of indirectly elected councillors in 1985. The local polity has since been subjected to more open debates and controversies within and outside the institution.

The Issues and/or Policy Domains At Stake

The three most frequently occurring issues are labour, politics and housing. In fact, the three types of issues constitute more than half of all the cases. However, transport, education and environmental issues also become significant social issues in the study period, which is similar to the two previous studies conducted by Chui and Chan (1994) and Cheung and Louie (1990) (Table 2).

Table 1 Distribution of Social Conflict Issues over the Years

| Year | Frequency | % |
|-------|-----------|-------|
| 1980 | 64 | 3.7 |
| 1981 | 94 | 5.5 |
| 1982 | 83 | 4.8 |
| 1983 | 64 | 3.7 |
| 1984 | 66 | 3.8 |
| 1985 | 76 | 4.4 |
| 1986 | 125 | 7.3 |
| 1987 | 200 | 11.6 |
| 1988 | 280 | 16.3 |
| 1989 | 168 | 9.8 |
| 1990 | 205 | 11.9 |
| 1991 | 294 | 17.1 |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 |

A closer examination reveals that “constitutional” issues are the most frequent type in the political category. It should be remarked that the Sino-British settlement on the future of Hong Kong, the 1985 Legislative Council reform, the 1988 Direct Election movement and the 1991 Direct Election of the legislature are all significant political events in the period, hence the weight of such cases in the political domain. “Immigration” issues are in fact cases concerned specifically with the Vietnamese “boat people”: their expatriation, their settlement in camps, the sporadic chaos arising in the camps, and the like. The third major group of issues in the political domain concern those pertaining to “Hong Kong-China relations.” These are issues related to the Beijing pro-democracy movement in 1989 and onwards, Chinese intervention in local affairs, viz., the drafting of the Basic Law, and the like. Civic rights and police power issues are also quite prominent in the

Table 2 Distribution of Issues

| Nature | Frequency | % |
|------------------|-----------|-------|
| Labour | 333 | 19.3 |
| Politics | 295 | 17.2 |
| Housing | 282 | 16.4 |
| Transport | 160 | 9.3 |
| Education | 146 | 8.5 |
| Environment | 106 | 6.2 |
| Economy | 99 | 5.8 |
| Welfare | 93 | 5.4 |
| Land development | 71 | 4.1 |
| Medical /Health | 55 | 3.2 |
| Culture | 27 | 1.6 |
| Public utilities | 13 | 0.8 |
| Others | 39 | 2.3 |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 |

period. Such a pattern is to be contrasted to the two similar studies: in Chui and Chan's study of 1967-1974, the three major political issues were not so prominent, while in Cheung and Louie's study of 1975-1986, political and civic rights, constitutional and law-and-order issues were the three most frequent types.

In terms of scope, "sectoral" issues are the most prominent. This is attributable to the predominance of labour issues which concerned specific sectors of the labour force, like the manual workers affected by factory close-down and civil servants in wage disputes. "Local" issues come second in frequency. This is accounted for by the fact that many issues were concerned with, for instance, public housing provision and allocation, private housing management, pollution, education and transport problems in spe-

Table 3 Distribution of Scope of Issues

| Scope | Frequency | % |
|----------------|-----------|-------|
| Local | 544 | 31.6 |
| Sectoral | 878 | 51.1 |
| Territory-wide | 297 | 17.3 |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 |

cific communities. Finally, the "territory-wide" issues are essentially those concerned with political problems (Table 3).

It is obvious from Table 4 that a considerable proportion of the cases is aimed towards obtaining immediate tangible provisions, like the allocation of public housing in squatter clearance issues, the compensation for unpaid wages in labour disputes, and the like. Immediate prevention of particular action, like the suspension of worker dismissal, the withholding of bus fare increase, refraining from building a Vietnamese "boat people" camp, etc., comes second to the most frequent type of demand. The modification of legislation, particularly those on labour ordinances protecting workers' rights and safety, is also frequently sought after.

It is observed that half of the cases involves only one single type of demand, whereas about one-third of the cases seeks two different types of demands. More spectacularly, participants in a number of cases even put forward a wide variety of demands, ranging from five to ten types. For instance, participants in the Anti-Public Housing Rent Increase issue in 1984, the Asbestos and Public Housing issue⁹ in 1988, the June-Fourth Incident in 1989, and the Bank of Credit and Commerce Bankruptcy issue¹⁰ in 1991 demanded various types of remedies.

Table 4 Distribution of Types of Demands

| Demands | Frequency | % |
|---|-----------|------|
| Immediate tangible provision/compensation | 727 | 42.3 |
| Immediate prevention | 425 | 24.7 |
| Modify existing legislation | 245 | 14.3 |
| Disclose information | 185 | 10.8 |
| Consult and/or involve citizens/victims | 143 | 8.3 |
| Modify existing institutional structure | 98 | 5.7 |
| Modify existing practice | 93 | 5.4 |
| Penalize relevant personnel | 55 | 3.2 |
| Others | 116 | 6.7 |

The Profile of the Victims or the "Aggrieved" in Conflict Issues

Residents predominate as the most frequently affected sector in the conflict issues. This can be accounted for by the fact that housing issues rank third in numbers among all the cases. Furthermore, residents are also affected about local issues, like transport provision, pollution and, even, political issues which concern the entire population. Manual workers are the second most frequently affected sector, which is attributed to the prevalence of labour issues and, similarly, political issues which have cross-sector effects. Proprietors, which include hawkers and minibus/taxi drivers (as categorized in the present study), are also frequently affected by transport, municipal and, even, housing issues since some hawkers are affected by public housing redevelopment or rent adjustments (Table 5).

It is also found that the majority of the cases (73.6 per cent) affects merely one single sector. About one-tenth of the cases involves two sectors.¹¹ There are still nearly 30 cases which cut

Table 5 Backgrounds of Victims

| Sectors | Frequency | % of 1,719 cases |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Residents | 740 | 43.0 |
| Manual workers | 562 | 32.7 |
| Proprietors (including hawkers) | 457 | 26.6 |
| Professionals | 430 | 25.0 |
| Students | 404 | 23.5 |
| Civil servants | 352 | 20.5 |
| Businessmen | 316 | 18.4 |
| White-collar workers | 309 | 18.0 |
| Consumers | 290 | 16.9 |
| Others | 451 | 26.2 |

across the interests of more than three sectors. For instance, the Central Provident Fund issue in 1987, the appeal for the increase of income tax allowance in 1988 involved five and six sectors, respectively. There are 262 cases which are "territory-wide" issues and are therefore having as many as ten sectors being involved.

With respect to the number of people being affected, it should be noted that, due to the incomplete reporting of newspapers, there is a substantial number of cases which did not contain such data. Among the 821 known cases, a significant portion (31.9 per cent) affects the interest of the "whole population," which is essentially cases of territory-wide scope. Next comes the group of cases having affected the interests of 51 to 500 people (154 cases, 18.8 per cent) (Table 6). Indeed, those cases affecting 500 people or less are basically local or sectoral issues, like public housing management, squatter clearance, factory close-down, pollution, etc. Statistical analysis reveals that there exists a significant relationship ($p < 0.001$) between the scope of the issues and the number of people affected (chi square = 521.768, $df = 4$, gamma = 0.816, lambda = 0.392).

Table 6 Distribution of Number of People Affected

| Number of people affected | Frequency | % | % of known cases |
|---------------------------|-----------|-------|------------------|
| 10 or less | 57 | 3.3 | 6.9 |
| 11-50 | 65 | 3.8 | 7.9 |
| 51-500 | 154 | 9.0 | 18.8 |
| 501-5000 | 90 | 5.2 | 11.0 |
| 5001-50000 | 49 | 2.9 | 6.0 |
| 50000-250000 | 52 | 3.0 | 6.3 |
| More than 250000 | 92 | 5.4 | 11.2 |
| Whole population | 262 | 15.2 | 31.9 |
| Unknown | 898 | 52.2 | — |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 | 100.0 |

The two most frequent types of action participants are the pressure group leaders and the residents: 28.2 per cent and 25.2 per cent of all the cases. It is obvious that pressure group leaders (including the politicians having membership at the various levels of the representative institutions as categorized in the present study) have been actively involved in staging conflict issues. On the part of the residents, they are mostly involved in community-level housing issues, like public/private housing management, squatter clearance, transport and education provision and, even, environmental pollution. The union leaders and professionals are also active participants given the prevalence of labour issues in both the private and public sectors. In the latter case, doctors, nurses, teachers and social workers are likely candidates to participating in salary structure issues (Table 7).

Half of the cases are having only one single type of participants. Apart from this, about one-third of the cases has two types of participants. Nevertheless, there is still a considerable number

Table 7 Distribution of Types of Participants in Action

| Participant background | Frequency | % of 1,719 cases |
|---------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Pressure group leaders | 484 | 28.2 |
| Residents | 439 | 25.2 |
| Union leaders | 322 | 18.7 |
| Professionals | 312 | 18.2 |
| Manual workers | 293 | 17.0 |
| Resident group leaders | 252 | 14.7 |
| Proprietors (including hawkers) | 198 | 11.5 |
| Students | 168 | 9.8 |
| Civil servants | 112 | 6.5 |
| Religious group leaders | 73 | 4.2 |
| Businessmen | 57 | 3.2 |
| White-collar workers | 27 | 1.6 |
| Others | 227 | 13.2 |

of cases (154, 9.0 per cent) which have three different types of participants. More spectacularly, a few cases have involved nine or more types of participants, which might indicate their significant social impact. For instance, the Anti Bus-Fare Increase issue in 1980, the Basic Law issue in 1984, the Public Order (Amendment) Bill issue¹² and the Further Development of Representative Government in 1987, etc., are such cases.

Unfortunately, one-third of the cases are devoid of data as to the number of participants. Amongst the known cases, a large proportion (44.6 per cent) have ten or fewer participants. This might indicate that most of the cases do not have a mass base of participants. Interestingly, there exists a negative relationship ($\gamma = -0.237$) between the number of people affected and the number of participants. It seems to illustrate that, even if the nature of the case is of wide social concern, there is still only a

limited number of participants in the overt actions related to the cause. It might invite speculations about the capacity of mobilization of action organizers and the reiteration of the apathy of local people towards overt political actions.

Organizational Mobilization in Conflict Issues

As the majority of the cases are local or sectoral in scope and their nature is predominantly labour and housing issues, it is logical to see that community or sectoral groups prevail in more than half of the cases. Indeed in the present study, such sectoral groups include the trade unions, while community groups include the resident organizations or district concern groups. Loose groups of people directly affected by an issue are usually involved in staging direct action against their respective targets. On the other hand, it is to be noted that, with the advance of democratic development in the local polity, the emergence of territory-wide political and/or interest groups makes their presence evident by actively participating in social conflict: 17.7 per cent or 304 cases. However, the strategy of forming confederations of coalitions, in view of enlarging the mass base and escalating the pressure on the target, seems to be relatively scanty utilized: only 8.7 per cent or 150 cases have involved confederations in the actions (Table 8).

Table 8 Types of Organizations Involved in Social Conflict Issues

| Types of groups | Frequency | % of 1,719 cases |
|--|-----------|------------------|
| Community/Sectoral group | 889 | 51.7 |
| Loose group for individual case | 626 | 36.4 |
| Territory-wide political/interest group | 304 | 17.7 |
| Standing specific-issue concern group | 235 | 13.7 |
| Spontaneously formed group for the case | 177 | 10.3 |
| Confederation of groups of various natures | 150 | 8.7 |

The majority of the cases (1,118, 65.0 per cent) has only one group involved in the action. This might indicate the relative simplicity of the issues in terms of scope and people affected. However, there is still a considerable number of cases which involve two to ten groups. Furthermore, there are 25 cases which record a spectacular number of more than 50 groups (Table 9). Upon closer examination, it is found that there exists a significant correlation between the number of groups involved and the scope of issues (chi square = 78.23, df = 4, $p < 0.001$, gamma = 0.309), and the number of people affected (chi square = 89.703, df = 4, $p < 0.001$, gamma = 0.48) and the number of participants (chi square = 26.174, df = 4, $p < 0.001$, gamma = 0.188). That means, the larger the scope, the greater is the number of people affected and participating, the greater is the number of groups involved.

It is obvious that the majority of cases (1,279 cases, 74.4 per cent) involves only one single type of group. Another 17.0 per cent, or 292 cases, involves two different types of groups. The rest of the cases involves groups of three to six different in nature. The six cases which involve all the various types of groups identified in the present study indeed deserve greater examination, namely the Public Housing Subsidy issue in 1984,¹³ the Anti-first Asylum (for Vietnamese) issue in 1989,¹⁴ the June-Fourth Incident in 1989 and its appertaining issue of Appeal for the Release of Pro-democratic Students in China in 1990, and the Anti-Legislative Council Motion of Sharing the Gulf War Expenses in 1991.

Table 9 Number of Groups Involved in Social Conflict Issues

| Number of groups | Frequency | % |
|------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | 1,118 | 65.0 |
| 2 | 184 | 10.7 |
| 3-10 | 236 | 13.7 |
| 11-50 | 156 | 9.1 |
| More than 50 | 25 | 1.5 |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 |

Strategies Employed in the Mobilization Process

The most frequently used tactic of action mode is the press conference: 31.0 per cent, 533 cases, which is followed closely by the action of petition to the Executive and/or Legislative Council or the Office of the Members of the Executive and Legislative Council (OMELCO): 30.3 per cent, 521 cases (Table 10). The popularity of staging press conferences can be seen in light of the relative cost-effectiveness of such a means for publicizing the issue and the demands of the action participants. We can also speculate on the significant role played by the media in propagating social conflict issues. On the other hand, such a non-institutional means of action is coupled with an institutional counterpart, that of petitioning the uppermost echelon of the government machinery, the Executive Council and Legislative Council. Such a pattern is to be conceived in view of the institutional mechanism of the Hong Kong government. The Executive Council is vested with the authority to decide broad social policy orientations, as well as specific orders (like the permission to raise public transport fare). The Legislative Council is essentially the legislature to enact laws, which have direct implications on, say, labour issues demanding legislative modification. The OMELCO (which, after the direct election in the Legislative Council in 1991, was changed into an independent administrative arm of the Legislative Council, breaking away from the Executive Council members) has long been regarded as the viable mechanism for redressing citizens' grievances against the administration.

The third major type of action mode utilized is the issuing of press statements or sending "letters-to-the-editor." Admittedly, this pattern is somewhat determined by the present methodology of data retrieval from newspapers. The expansion of the newspaper column on "letters to the editor," or "social service" as it is sometimes called, helps to escalate the popular utilization of such a means to make oneself heard. It is also found that the administration has gradually been more prone and ready to respond to such letters via the same column, thus making a responsive image

Table 10 Distribution of Types of Action Taken

| Action mode | Frequency | % of 1,719 cases |
|------------------------------------|-----------|------------------|
| Press conference | 533 | 31.0 |
| Petition to ExCo/LegCo/OMELCO | 521 | 30.3 |
| Media advertisement/statement | 451 | 26.3 |
| Petition to government department | 340 | 19.8 |
| Mass protest, demonstration, etc. | 242 | 14.1 |
| Meeting with relevant personnel | 205 | 11.9 |
| Petition to Governor | 179 | 10.4 |
| Signature campaign | 117 | 6.8 |
| Opinion survey | 76 | 4.4 |
| Industrial action | 62 | 3.6 |
| Petition to authority outside HK | 60 | 3.5 |
| Civic disobedience/non-cooperation | 56 | 3.3 |
| Petition to New China News Agency | 56 | 3.3 |
| Violent confrontation | 28 | 1.6 |
| Petition to District Board | 12 | 0.7 |
| Petition to Urban/Regional Council | 10 | 0.6 |
| Others | 90 | 5.2 |

of the concerned departments. The use of other means, such as petitioning the government departments, mass demonstrations, meeting with relevant personnel (government officials and/or management in the private sector) and petitioning the Governor, are also popular tactics used in the study period, all of which have been used in more than 10 per cent of all the cases.

It is seen that the majority of the issues involves merely one single type of action: 61.9 per cent, 1,064 cases. Another 21.4 per cent have two types of action utilized. However, the cases resorting to a wide variety of actions (ranging from seven to ten modes)

deserve greater attention, given their special feature of using multifarious strategies. For instance, the Anti-Bus Fare Increase issue in 1980, the Basic Law issue in 1984, and Rich Tenant issue in 1986, all resorted to ten different types of actions. Roughly 60 per cent of the cases has one single episode of action. Another one-fifth has two action events. There are 134 cases (7.8 per cent) which involve three actions. There is also a substantial portion of the cases (10.5 per cent, 180 cases) which involves a range of four to ten actions. More spectacularly, there are cases which have utilized numerous actions: there are six cases having 30, 33, 45 actions, while one case records 79 actions. These cases deserve investigation in more detail. For instance, such incidents as the Anti-rich Tenant Policy in Public Housing in 1986 (30 actions), the "26-Substandard Public Housing Block" issue in 1985 and Public Order (Amendment) Bill issue in 1987 (both 45 actions),¹⁵ the June-Fourth Incident in 1989 (79 actions) are spectacular in the number of actions staged (Table 11). There exists a significant and modest relationship ($\gamma = 0.544$, $\lambda = 0.130$) between the number of participants and number of actions. This shows that more participants have been involved or accommodated in greater number and wider variety of action modes.

Table 11 Distribution of Number of Actions

| Number of actions | Frequency | % |
|-------------------|-----------|-------|
| 1 | 1,005 | 58.5 |
| 2 | 343 | 20.0 |
| 3 | 134 | 7.8 |
| 4-10 | 180 | 10.5 |
| More than 10 | 57 | 3.2 |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 |

Involvement of Politicians from the Representative Institutions

With reference to the resource mobilization perspective, the utilization of various means or resources is crucial in the configuration of social movements. In the present study, though the conflict issues can yet be regarded as constituting a coherent social movement, the mobilization of the members of the representative institutions (or grossly conceived as "politicians" in the local context) is also of significance, apart from the utilization of various action modes. It is found that these politicians or political élites have seldom participated in the conflict issues. Suffice to say, in the present study, "involvement" of the politicians is conceived as the active participation of these figures in staging the event in support of the cause. Thus, when they act their role as the receiver of complaints in the capacity of duty officers in the OMELCO, they are not regarded as having been involved.

Amongst the four different types of members, the District Board members have been most frequently involved. This can be understood in the context of the predominance of local, community-based issues, like housing, transport, pollution, education provision, and the like. The low incidence of Advisory Board members reflects the fact that these people are essentially appointed by the administration, which therefore accounts for their low profile in mobilizing mass activity in search of a specific social cause. However, the low involvement of Urban and Regional Councillors might perhaps reflect the relative limitation of their mandate in overseeing municipal affairs, which is in contrast to the more proximate figures of the District Board members who can have better access to a smaller constituency and a less restricted scope of concern. Lastly, the involvement of the Legislative Council members is mostly found in those cases of a political nature and of territory-wide scope, such as the drafting of the Basic Law, the future of Hong Kong, constitutional development, the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant issue, and the like. All in all, the participation of these politicians, with the exception of the Advi-

Table 12 Involvement of Members of Representative Institutions

| Member of representative institutions | Frequency | % | % of 1,719 cases |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------|------------------|
| Executive/Legislative Councillor | 60 | 21.6 | 3.5 |
| Advisory committee member | 24 | 8.6 | 1.4 |
| Urban/Regional Councillor | 31 | 11.2 | 1.8 |
| District Board member | 163 | 58.6 | 9.5 |
| Total | 278 | 100.0 | |

sory Board members, can be seen as a move by these political élites to reach out to their constituencies, or “top-down” mobilization, in establishing a viable élite-mass relationship (Table 12).

Duration of the Mobilization Process

A great majority of the cases lasts merely a week or less: 72.9 per cent, 1,253 cases. This might indicate the short span of persistence of the action participants. However, this can also be seen in light of the limited follow-through reporting by local newspapers in tracing the development of the issues. In the present study, if a case is not fully documented about its development and consequences, it is coded in the lowest category which denotes the duration of less than one week, hence giving prominence to short-span issues. Nonetheless, there is still a considerable number of cases which last over a span of one week to a month (8.2 per cent, 141 cases) or even over a longer period of three months (10.5 per cent, 180 cases). Furthermore, there are 58 cases which last for nearly a year, and two cases which persist over a year (Table 13). A note is given here that, as mentioned previously, there are indeed cases which last over several years (as in the cases of the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant issue, the Basic Law Drafting issue, the development of representative government, the future of Hong

Table 13 Distribution of Duration of Actions

| Duration | Frequency | % |
|------------------|-----------|-------|
| Less than 1 week | 1,253 | 72.9 |
| 1 week - 1 month | 141 | 8.2 |
| 1-3 months | 180 | 10.5 |
| 3-6 months | 85 | 4.9 |
| 6-12 months | 58 | 3.4 |
| Over one year | 2 | 0.1 |
| Total | 1,719 | 100.0 |

Kong, etc.). Yet, due to the treatment by the present study of recording such cases in each particular year, the result is for a low incidence of issues extending over a year.

A more prudent examination reveals that the duration of issues has varied strength of association with several aspects, namely the scope of issue (a low gamma of 0.05, $p < 0.05$), the number of people affected (a low gamma of 0.137, $p < 0.005$), the number of participants (a modest gamma of 0.448, $p < 0.001$). Most spectacularly, there exists a strong relationship between the number of actions and duration (a strong gamma of 0.920, $p < 0.001$). This might indicate that the mobilization of a large number of participants can probably sustain a longer duration of contestation against the action target.

Societal Impact of Social Mobilization

The viability of a democratic system is reflected, amongst other manifestations, in the responsiveness of the administration to citizen grievances or challenges. Thus, the present study has hoped to reveal the Hong Kong government's performance in this regard (though the question of whether Hong Kong qualifies to be a democracy still begs for further debate). However, due to limited

reports available in the newspapers, a substantial portion of the cases have missing data in this aspect, rendering analysis difficult.

From amongst the 415 known cases, departmental response or intervention come as the most frequent types of institutional response to conflict issues. Such a response might include, say, the arbitration of the Labour Department in labour disputes, meeting between the Housing Department officials and petitioners, reply from a government department to the letters-to-the-editor column, etc. Of much interest, debates in the territory's uppermost political decision-making body, the Legislative Council, record the second most frequent type of institutional response. This can be comprehended against the background of the introduction of indirectly elected Legislative Councillors from 1985 onwards and eventually directly elected ones in 1991, that provides the arena for a more visible articulation by the citizens' representatives in the government machinery (Table 14).

Table 14 Distribution of Institutional Response to Incidents

| Institutional response | Frequency | % of 1,719 cases | % of known cases |
|---|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Departmental response/intervention | 323 | 18.8 | 77.8 |
| Debate/Discussion in Legislative Council | 68 | 4.0 | 16.4 |
| Response from central administration | 35 | 2.0 | 8.4 |
| Debate/Discussion in advisory committee | 22 | 1.3 | 5.3 |
| Response from authorities outside Hong Kong | 17 | 1.0 | 4.1 |
| Set up special bodies of investigation | 15 | 0.9 | 3.6 |
| Debate/Discussion in Urban/Regional Council | 6 | 0.3 | 1.4 |
| Debate/Discussion in District Board | 4 | 0.2 | 1.0 |
| Others | 10 | 0.6 | 2.4 |

The majority of the cases can merely obtain one single type of response from the target system. Another group of cases (3.5 per cent, 61 cases) succeeds in having two different types of response. Amongst them, the 26-Sub-standard Public Housing issue in 1985, the "Illegal Mothers" issue in 1988,¹⁶ and the Bank of Credit and Commerce issue in 1991, are all successful cases in obtaining four to five types of responses, ranging from special investigation, immediate provision or remedy, departmental and/or central administration response. However, the elicitation of institutional response does not necessarily mean remarkable accomplishments. A total of 96 cases achieves "success" with the respective demands. Nonetheless, the limitation of incomplete information obtained through the newspaper render such a result poor. Notwithstanding this, only a small portion of the cases achieves success with respect to their demand (Table 15). The high ratio of "success" relative to the total number of cases is merely given by the small base number of known cases.

Table 15 Outcomes/Achievements Accomplished with Issues

| | Full success | Partial success | Failed | Total | Ratio* |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|--------------------|--------|-------|--------|
| Obtain immediate provision | 43 | 48 | 46 | 137 | 0.66 |
| Existing practice modified | 39 | 34 | 45 | 118 | 0.62 |
| Obtain immediate prevention | 22 | 22 | 31 | 75 | 0.59 |
| Citizen consulted/involved | 16 | 6 | 11 | 33 | 0.66 |
| Existing legislation modified | 13 | 2 | 8 | 23 | 0.65 |
| Information disclosed | 8 | 3 | 11 | 22 | 0.50 |
| Institutional structure modified | 5 | 1 | 1 | 7 | 0.86 |
| Relevant personnel penalized | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0.66 |
| Others | 3 | 0 | 5 | 8 | 0.38 |
| Total | 150 | 117 | 159 | 426 | |

Note: * Ratio = Full success + partial success / total.

A Brief Summary

The long span of the study period and the more dynamic development of the Hong Kong society in socio-economic and political respects, gradually supported by the expansion of media coverage, all contribute to the proliferation of social conflict issues recorded in the present study. The general profile of the conflict incidents appears to become more varied, more numerous per year, involving larger numbers of participants and organizations, taking multiple action tactics and lasting for longer periods of time. The most prominent domains were labour, politics and housing. This can be interpreted as the manifestation of the primary contradiction between capital and labour on the first hand, and collective consumption conflicts on the other. Furthermore, the ideological conflict between Hong Kong and Communist China, which is crystallized in the development of a more democratic government structure in the transitional period and the laying down of the future Special Administrative Region (SAR) foundation (the Basic Law and future government structure), constitutes the third major arena of conflict. Such a general pattern aptly echoes our Castellsian framework focusing on (1) collective consumption, (2) cultural identity, and (3) political mobilization for local autonomy.

Concluding Remarks

From what we have found in our study about the patterns and modes of social conflicts in Hong Kong in the period 1980-1991, there are several important observations which could serve as an interim conclusion on the problematique — the one embedded in the changing state and society relation that has been subject to the restructuring dynamics of Hong Kong under various socio-economic and political factors. In the section below, we shall highlight some of these observations; necessarily, the concluding

remarks should be tested against the context where some (and why not other) conflicts have arisen.

Social Mobilization Becomes More Visible through the Media

From 1980 to 1991, it is quite obvious that, in spite of the opening up of the governmental channels to cope/deal with the complaints and grievances, more conflictual issues (than in the previous decade, the 1970s) were put in the societal sphere via different modes of social action. These actions were readily channelled to the mass media, which in turn were directed to the society at large. The keywords for this phase of societal development in the conflictual arena are “visible,” “seen,” “communicable” and, hence, “exerting pressure for state intervention,” which are conditional upon (or the requirement for) the “reporting” by the mass media. With reference to Lipsky’s (1968) formulation of the logic of social action, it is imperative for the social activist(s) to stage effective appeal for some “third party” support or sympathy, to confront the target of his/their action. This is particularly prudent when the activists are largely in a relatively disadvantageous power position *vis-à-vis* their target, i.e., the establishment, the authority, etc. In the age of telecommunication, the role of the mass media is obviously critical in aiding and/or frustrating the effective channelling of such pressure from the activists to the target system(s).

The rapid development of the mass media and the internal organization of this development are important domains to be explored. In the local context, the mass media have undergone the stage of consolidation in the study period, after their initial take-off in the previous decade. The total number of newspapers, news magazines, television and radio broadcast channels has all grown substantially. This has resulted in intense inter- and intra-media competition. This has provided the impetus for enlarged coverage of news events and the improved quality of journalism. With specific reference to newspapers, the volume of newspapers and

the length of individual news reports have expanded considerably as compared to those found in the previous study by Chui and Chan (1994). More specifically, more columns have been dedicated to reporting local news and receiving complaints or enquiries from the citizens. The total volume of newspapers, in terms of pages and sheets, has substantially increased over the years. This also accounts for the increase in the number of cases identified in the present study.

Apart from the expansion of newspaper reporting, the role of the news personnel has been equally, if not more, critical in making the social action incidents more visible. The emergence of a new generation of media personnel, the increased professionalization of the news personnel, grounded in better training locally and keener competition from abroad, have resulted in the improved quality of news reporting. More specifically, the personnel's socio-economic background and their views on social issues should be examined. The personnel is more prone to accept the liberal aspirations of, say, free journalism, public scrutiny of public policies and, even, the more progressive orientation of heralding social justice. These generally conceived "middle class" ideological aspirations/orientations have "elective affinity" with the logic of social action, in which social protesters address issues of social injustice, government maladministration and gross human sufferings. Simply put, the journalistic profession has come to its stage of maturity by positioning itself in the society-polity of Hong Kong in the study period, given the intense stimulation derived from the social context, as well as the gradual fruition of the organization of the media personnel in their process of unionization. In fact, the socio-economic background of this media personnel is shared, to a considerable extent, with the activists who are largely adversaries of government policies. As evidenced in this and the previous studies, students, social workers and pressure group leaders have been active participants — main actors or organizers — in social conflict issues.

This development underlies the specification of when and how social conflicts are communicable to the society at large and

the corresponding responses of the involved parties, the governmental responses (in policy terms) in particular.

The State's Policy Process Constitutes the Conflictual Arena

As represented in other studies, it is also found here that the state's policy process has also been the arena where conflict has arisen, namely housing and land development, constitutional and political development, transport and education. In actuality, in most of our surveyed conflictual incidents, those involved social actors have demanded (or at least expected) certain form of state intervention or assistance when the issue was becoming conflictual. In short, state (including both the British colonial and their counterpart, China's) policy process and its configuration, within a relatively closed, élitist and colonial governance structure, are bound to have challenges derived from societal process. Such challenges arise when and if social actors are having grievances which are readily shared by the media personnel, a point exemplified in the previous section.

More importantly, this mode of conflict articulation via social mobilization, in search for conflict resolution, is not just adhered to by the collective consumption arena. Indeed, it is also those issues pertaining to ideological struggle about the distribution and control of power and privileges of political actors (including citizens) in question. Both governments in Hong Kong and Beijing are subjected to this challenge when they need certain notion of legitimacy for ruling.

As far as the state's role is concerned, a detailed excursion into the duality of the British-Hong Kong (city) state and the Chinese Communist state is warranted. Since the early 1980s, when the Sino-British negotiations began to take shape, such a duality has become increasingly apparent in the local political arena, which has stricken a new chord in the state-society interface in Hong Kong's context.

The British-Hong Kong Colonial State

With respect to the British-Hong Kong (colonial) state, this is particularly prudent when we recognize the increasingly active role of the Hong Kong government at social intervention in view of gaining public legitimation on the one hand (to counteract the Chinese government's challenges to its colonial legitimacy) and in response to the escalating social demand kindled by the public, in general, and the social activists, in particular. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the colonial state's ideological appeals, in terms of certain participatory (consultative) mode of administration found in the District Administration Scheme and those democratic (yet never realized) offerings found in the two Green Papers (i.e., *On the Further Development of Representative Government* 1984 and 1987), backfired as regards its claim of administrative excellence. In fact, such appeals induced certain social actors to take more actions challenging, if not going against, the colonial policy formulation processes. The climax of such endeavours for democratic restructuring of the government machinery came with the 1988 campaign for direct election. It symbolized the public's (or part of it) quest for greater participation in policy making. Nonetheless, its eventual failure and the following remedial arrangement of partial direct election in 1991 have only disillusioned local liberal protagonists further in their attempt to foster more open government in the transitional period, if not beyond.

Similar to but more apparent than in the 1970s, the Hong Kong government has been subjected to social protests concerned with the collective consumption domain. Firstly, the assumption of neo-conservative, Thatcherist social policy orientation of grossly conceived "privatization" in the 1980s aroused intense grassroots mobilizations. Social provisions since the 1970s have, so to speak, induced social demand for government provision in housing, education, medical-and-health, and welfare services. The in-(never-)sufficient supply and inefficient management of such social services have laid the foundation for Castellsian secondary conflicts to sprout. The reversion to a more market-oriented

model of provision (which includes cost-covering charges for hospital services, private sector-led provision of housing, etc.) has further fuelled widespread social discontent. The restructuring of the Housing Authority in 1988, which accrues to less direct government subsidy, the "Rich Tenant Policy," the sub-standard housing redevelopment in 1985-1986, etc., are all pertinent examples within this domain.

In other respects, the colonial state's policy on land development has recurrently aroused social discontent of the aggrieved — those evicted by public works projects, affected by private development backed by the government, and the like. The present study has identified numerous cases whereby victims of such urban (re)development projects have gone onto the streets to stage their protests and demand government compensation and/or resettlement. It is especially apparent as Hong Kong has been a fast growing urban society and its housing estate development has constantly fuelled the economy as well as the government's revenue.

The Chinese Communist State

The Chinese government, on the other hand, has also become an increasingly visible political agent in the local polity in the 1980s. The initialization of the Sino-British Agreement on the Future of Hong Kong has aptly signified the ascendancy of the Chinese government in the local political arena. In sequel, Beijing officials as well as their local Hong Kong associates have gradually stepped on the local political stage, gaining public visibility and recognition in preparation for their eventual public acceptance. This has also procured the *de facto*, though not *de jure*, shadow government or the so-called "second power centre" on a par with the British colonial government.

The logic of "back fire," which has aptly characterized the British colonial government's attempt to bring about more democracy in the colony, had also certain validity when the Basic Law was drafted under (a contradictory) notion of "Hong Kong People Ruling Hong Kong." Such a back fire directed towards the Chi-

nese authority has also been observed in the socio-political mobilization for democracy and liberty in the context of the Basic Law drafting and that, to a large extent, in the June-Fourth Incident and its aftermath.

In preparation for the eventual transfer of sovereignty and the laying of the foundation for the future SAR government — both structurally and in terms of personnel — the Chinese regime staged the drafting of the mini-constitution. The very test of the compatibility of a socialist (Communist) with a capitalistic social order was crystallized in the formalistic documentation of the Basic Law which would in turn embody the “One-Country, Two-Systems” pledge. However, the strain of the possible (in)compatibility has charged the local people, in general, and the liberal social activists, in particular, to (over)react to the drafting process in view of forestalling a proper distance away from the Chinese regime. Thus, findings of the present study aptly reflect such a psychological strain, as well as the ideological divide, by presenting numerous social protest activities in relation to the Basic Law drafting process.

Apart from the domain of political concerns about future SAR governance, the local people are also increasingly aware of the safeguarding of their immediate interests *vis-à-vis* the Chinese government. The construction of the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant in the vicinity of the territory has alarmed the local people as regards the possible nuclear hazard. This incident also critically reveals several sensitive issues. In the first instance, the Chinese government has been put to the test on its sincerity to attend to Hong Kong people’s concerns, in their choice of plant site. Secondly, it is also put on trial as to its receptivity to Hong Kong people’s redress of their grievance which amounts to a conflict of national versus local interests. Thirdly, the incident also exposes the ambivalent position of the British colonial government at striking a balance between protecting the local people and maintaining friendly relationships with China. All these direct to the (colonial and Chinese) state-society interface which has become increasingly intensified throughout the 1980s.

The 1989 Beijing Tiananmen Incident has also opened another front for the local people to strive for their relative position in relation to the Beijing government. The mixed messages of (pro)democratic aspirations, coupled with nationalistic concerns about warding off a brutal regime, further fuelled by a psychological threat of eventual transfer of allegiance to the Chinese, have made the 1989 Pro-democratic Movement in Hong Kong a unique historical incident distinct from other similar movements so aroused elsewhere in the world. The aversion to the military crackdown, the outcry over fair trials and the release of pro-democracy students/Beijing citizens, and in corollary, the advocacy of a more open, clean and humanistic government, are all deliberate attempts (though futile) by the local people to strike a more viable relationship with the Chinese government.

However, though the Chinese government has increasingly been subjected to challenge in the local political sphere, its state proper is lying outside Hong Kong. Thus, the local New China News Agency plays the role of a “symbolic state form” and acts as the vanguard to challenge the British-Hong Kong government on policy issues, as well as to be the target of social protests staged by local social activists.

Social Mobilization Gathering Force from the 1970s to the 1990s

The 1980s have a certain specificity in the socio-political history of Hong Kong. This is the period when agenda of social protests (and protesters) and grievances in collective consumption and production sectors, for various socio-political structural change, can be put for discussion on the quasi-political bodies’ (District Boards or Legislative Council) agenda. On the other hand, futuristic issues pertaining to the coming of 1997 and the search for “Hong Kong People Ruling Hong Kong” have also offered ample opportunities for young social activists to move to the (partly) elected bodies with certain “on-going” social protests.

Hence, both involving oneself in and articulating social protests were in fact becoming an important asset for a political career of individuals. They are also important for the collective bodies, say, the political parties, to build up their respective identity and the class, regional and sectoral identity of the (quasi-) political agency. Here, the politicization process has been taking place in a mode which is characterized by an integration of both the elected bodies' acceptance of social protests and the social activists or their political bodies, for their identity and political mobilization, to sustain and support many arenas of social protests. It suffices to add that, the 1980s have given a chance to former (1970s) social activists with a formal platform (i.e., through the election to the District Boards, Urban and Regional Councils and Legislative Council) to amplify their say. The reciprocal relationship between those within and without the establishment, or to quote Chui's (1993) coinage of using "double-barrelled" strategies, have further characterized a unique feature of the conflict issues in the 1980s. This pertains to the ascendancy of a group of movement élites and organizations leading the future direction of social movements in the local context. Nonetheless, their career, individual and collective alike, hinges upon the tolerance of the future SAR regime. Or, to borrow a commonly used Hong Kong catchword, the "mutual understanding and mutual accommodation" between the future ruling and non-ruling élites are pivotal in this respect.

To recapitulate the characteristics of social mobilization taking the form of social protests in the 1980s, two particular points should be made. First, the society and state relations and the very nature of these protests have not been much different from their previous period (i.e., before the 1980s), as presented by a colonial state's governance with no popular mandate in almost all policy areas. The occurrence of social protests has been much contingent upon a set of conditions whereby the state has lessened the control (say, even the mass media and social protest organizers from a new breed of educated deviants). The latter point is particularly prudent when we take full cognizance of the liberalizing effect of the dialectical development between protest and government sur-

veillance measures as well as public acceptance. Each and successive currents of social protest seem to push the government's threshold at tolerating such overt activities still lower. Public reaction to such activities also seems to reflect greater general acceptance of non-conventional modes of redress of grievance. The million mass rally of 1989 June-Fourth Incident has virtually released any remaining reservations against open provocation for specific causes.

The second, and perhaps the most important, aspect of social protests in the 1980s is the uncertainty juxtaposing the 1997 issue and the maturation of social protest logistics and the external support (including the rapid development of the media industry) they can muster. In short, and as represented in our study, the colonial ruling of Hong Kong in the 1980s and the correspondent societal responses are much more conflictual, paradoxical, contradictory and disorganized in terms of the state and society relations. This form of state-society relations is quite different from some scholars' prescription for the functional integration of state and society in Hong Kong.

The impetus given by the 1997 issue pertains to repercussions which can qualify as or be conceived of as "the 1997 syndrome" in the local context. It gives rise and adds fuel to the emergence and increased activity of political groupings and/or parties and their attendant political figures. These figures, suffice to add, are largely social activists nurtured in the 1970s. The critical conjuncture of pressing an outgoing colonial government for swift and timely socio-political structural changes, on the one hand, and forestalling the encroachment of an incoming government, on the other, has engendered the juxtaposition of political protests throughout the 1980s: the political reforms towards representative government, the Daya Bay incident, the Basic Law Drafting issue, the Pro-Democracy Movement, and the like. The protesters, the reporting media personnel, as well as the general public alike, all share the similar fate of living in this "here and now" situation of the transitional period. The "State" — both the colonial and the Chinese — has become increasingly shaken off its base. The out-

going state's legitimacy has been challenged and its civil service morale watered down. The incoming state's credibility as to its being benevolent is also interrogated, given its disreputable track record uncovered in recent years.

Perhaps the most central theme derived from the present study is that of the gathering momentum of social protests in the 1970s, which boils down to the emergence of a civil society in preparation for striving for a more balanced relationship with the state, be it the present, transient colonial state or the future communist/socialist Chinese state. Hong Kong provides a unique case for conceiving the possible nurturance of a civil society in the absence of an independent state, but under the auspice of a (diminishing) colonial and a (encroaching) central regime with the passage of time.

Methodological Note

Although local newspapers can provide data on social events in a society, they have some inherent limitations in terms of both validity and reliability. In terms of the validity of information contained in newspapers, the specific standpoint of the editorial board, the reporters and, even, the main stake-holder of the newspaper company, can possibly interfere with the objectivity of the events reported. Attention is specifically drawn to the fact that in the specific period under study, i.e., the 1980s, there were vigorous political movements and antagonism amongst the various parties which involved the British-Hong Kong government, the Chinese government, the local political groups and their leaders and, not least, the local citizens. The various contending forces put forward multifaceted versions of interpretation of the "social facts" happening in society. Journalists and editors alike were also subjected to such contending and even conflicting "truth claims" in the selection of raw material for their reporting. Furthermore, it should also be noted that local newspapers in Hong Kong are characterized by having affiliation with the traditional leftist or

rightist factions of Chinese politics. There could obviously be conflicting interpretations and documentation on the social events occurring in the period under study. On the other hand, there is a problem of insufficient follow-through of reporting by journalists on individual cases. This has caused a serious problem in the completeness of data available for analysis, especially in the attempt to examine the relationship between the "input" (e.g., number and variety of participants and organizations), the "through-put" (the actions taken and the involvement of political representatives) and the "output" (the actual outcome or achievement obtained).

In another respect, the reliability of data reported by local newspapers can also be doubted; since it is often found that there exist very inconsistent data on, say, the number of casualties in accidents among different newspapers. We had been warned by academics and professionals in journalism that the quality and practice of local reporters could be called into question.¹⁷ Thus, there can be imprecision and accumulated distortion across different newspapers. Notwithstanding this, the "manifest" content (Babbie, 1992) of the newspapers is taken as the raw material for analysis. There is no deliberate effort to trace the possible incidence of "latent" content, if any, of the reports found in the newspapers.

Acknowledging the possible biases or omissions in one single newspaper, the present study merely resorted to one local Chinese newspaper (*Ming Pao Daily News*) due to limited resources available. Thus, in terms of sampling or selection of newspapers, it can be said that out of the entire frame of all local (Chinese and English) newspapers, a "purposive sampling" of one single newspaper was taken. Based upon past experience in using the same methodology (Cheung and Louie, 1990; Chui and Chan, 1994), and having acknowledged the various limitations inherent in newspaper data quality, the researchers have tried to complement this with other sources of data in reporting the incidents of social conflict issues. Thus, such other documents as special issues on major controversies, like the June-Fourth Incident in 1989, the

1991 direct elections at the three levels and other cases, were referred to when appropriate.

In the process of data analysis, the procedure of quantification may invite the criticism of arbitrariness. Quantification may constitute suppression of data into neatly defined categories, which thereby reduce the fine details of the raw data. Furthermore, any single datum of, say, the number of organizations involved in a social conflict, might not necessarily indicate the severity of the issue, if the nature of the groups is not examined simultaneously. Hence, quantitative or statistical analysis based upon such arbitrarily delineated data might result in inappropriate inference.

Notes

1. These conceptions of the society-polity of Hong Kong are less plausible in explaining the social protests in the 1980s, e.g., Daya Bay Nuclear Plant (Yee and Wong, 1987), the over 1-million people mass rally in the June-Fourth Incident. For a critical assessment of these conceptions, see Wong and Lui (1992, 1993).
2. For a brief overview of the characterization of social movements, see Sztompka (1993:ch. 19), and reviews of various theses on New Social Movements, see Dalton and Kuechler (1990), and the International Social Movement Series (Klandermann, 1988-1994).
3. This can be seen in the manifestation of the New Social Movements which have different organizational and ideological strategies from traditional social movements. For a comparison, see Dalton and Kuechler (1990), Eyerman and Jamison (1991), special issue of *Social Research* (52[4]Winter, 1985).
4. This method which emphasizes historical contingency is much in line with recent state theories and social historians' approach to contextualize the social processes (Jessop, 1990:1-11; Skocpol, 1992).
5. For a critical assessment of theses on Hong Kong politics, see Wong and Lui (1992, 1993). According to a territory-wide survey, over 20 per cent of the population has participated in social action in the period 1991-1994 (Lai, 1994).
6. The changes in the transition period (1984 onwards) refer to Cheng (1986). See also Bonavia (1985), Burns (1987), and Yee and Wong (1987). Before 1982, refer to Lau (1982) on polity, Lee and King (1982) on socio-cultural aspects, Youngson (1983) on the economy (with the PRC). Recent work on the middle class and the 1997 issue, refer to Cheung et al. (1988).
7. It should be noted that the "colony" status of Hong Kong is (to its maximum) *de facto* recognized by the PRC government but considered as *de jure* by the British government. About 98 per cent of the Hong Kong population is Chinese but culturally a mix of East and West. Over one-fourth of Hong Kong's population had "voted with their feet" by emigrating legally or illegally from mainland China to Hong Kong in the last few decades.
8. A preliminary note is warranted about the designation of cases in this study. Some cases actually extend over several years, as in the case of the Daya Bay Nuclear Plant issue or the campaign for direct election to the Legislative Council. However, as the present study takes the year as basis of analysis, such cases are treated as separate cases in each year over which they span. This might perhaps invite the criticism of "double-" or even "multiple-counting" of the same cases. However, such a choice is still justified in the attempt to record the actual incidence of such cases in each particular year. Nonetheless, caution is maintained throughout the study in this regard.
9. In 1988, a cancer-causing substance, asbestos, was found to have been used in the construction of public housing estates. This aroused public concern as possibly affecting health. Thus, action was taken to demand the Housing Department

to remove the harmful material and provide rehousing for the affected tenants.

10. The bank ran into bankruptcy and caused serious financial losses to its depositors. Since the government had made some controversial remarks regarding the bank's financial conditions, the public eventually held the government responsible for not being able to safeguard the interest of the victims and, thus, demanded remedies from the bank as well as the government.
11. Throughout the study, a simplified method of computation of aggregate scores has been used to derive a composite variable for analysis. It is acknowledged that such a method has its drawbacks in treating the data as having the same "weight." For instance, the various types of action might have different impact and should therefore be treated differently. Simple aggregation of such data might have suppressed the analytical differences.
12. The government moved the amendment bill to impose more stringent control over the citizens' right to public assembly and rally. This aroused a general outcry, which escalated to condemning the British-Hong Kong government as yielding to the Chinese authority in restricting civic rights even before 1997.
13. The government initiated the controversial policy of "rich tenants" by publishing a consultative document on evaluating the policy of "subsidy" to public housing tenants. In effect, the proposed policy would result in a more stringent investigation of the tenants' assets (which amounted to intruding into personal privacy), tighter control over the allocation of public housing and, even, the possible forced termination of tenancy of sitting tenants. Since nearly half of the population was living in public housing, the proposed policy aroused widespread discontent.
14. Ever since the incoming of Vietnamese "boat people" fleeing from Vietnam in the late 1970s, there have been controversies

over whether Hong Kong should follow the British policy of making Hong Kong the "first asylum" for refugees. Such a humanitarian concern aroused great public discontent since the services provided to these Vietnamese people incurred heavy financial costs for the Hong Kong government. Sustained concern by some pressure/residents groups (especially those in the vicinity of the "boat people camps") has held to abolish such a policy and remove all the Vietnamese people back to their homeland.

15. Upon the disclosure of incidents of structural defects in some public housing estates, it was revealed that there had indeed been corruption amongst government officials and contractors in the process of constructing those estates. The issue arouse a public outcry to penalize the concerned officials and contractors as well as to provide proper rehousing for the victims affected.
16. This is a social problem resulting from the cross-border marriages between local and mainland people. The women who happened to marry local men, gave birth to children who eventually came to Hong Kong for family reunion with the fathers. They were smuggled to Hong Kong to take care of the children. However, upon police arrest they had to be repatriated back to China. The issue aroused the concern of some humanitarian groups which demanded the government to grant discretionary allowance for these "illegal mothers" to stay in Hong Kong.
17. Such critique against local newspaper reports can be seen in local journals, see Cheng.

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**Social Mobilization amidst
Social Political Turbulence
Pattern of Social Conflict in Hong Kong
in the Period 1980 to 1991**

Abstract

Hong Kong underwent unprecedented political turbulence in the period 1980-1991. The period signified intense political mobilization in both the institutional and non-institutional arenas. The development of representative government engendered by the British-colonial state provided institutional channels for a group of ascending political figures and organizations to exert their political efficacy through formal means. On the other hand, the 1997-Future-of Hong Kong issue politicized the society by the intense political interplay between the British-colonial and Chinese states. The Hong Kong citizens were mobilized along collective consumption, ideological as well as political autonomy spheres. The authors of this study attempted to map out the pattern of such socio-political mobilizations in the period and provide the detailed configuration of such movements in terms of the constituent parts (participants and organization), the development (resources and strategies employed) and the socio-political impacts derived (institutional response and results). The authors also attempted, based upon their empirical findings on such mass social mobilizations, to provide an alternative conceptual framework to analyze the Hong Kong polity (as contrasted with other prevalent ones pertaining to social stability and/or political apathy). On the other hand, the authors also attempted to render an alternative methodological endeavour investigating social movements by contextualizing the detail configurations of conflict incidents (as contrasted with macro-level theorizing along structural, socio-psychological lines). Results of the study unfold that social mobilization in Hong Kong which accumulated momentum during the 1970s, progressed during the 1980s and, therefore, laid out the foundation for the nurture of a civil society in the absence of an independent state.

香港社會衝突模式研究

一九八零至一九九一年

徐永德 黎安國

（中文摘要）

香港在一九八零至一九九一年期間經歷了史無前例的政治變化。在這期間內，社會上出現了不少循正規或非正規渠道的政治動員。港英政府推行的代議政制，開放了正規渠道予社會上正在冒升的政治團體與人物進行此類動員。另外，中英有關香港前途安排方面的爭議，亦加深了社會的政治化。香港市民在集體消費、意識形態和政治自主等方面均感受到很大的政治動員。

是項研究的作者透過量化研究，嘗試勾劃出這段時期內發生的社會衝突與動員事件，及其中的特色與模式，例如事件的成因、性質、政策範圍、涉及的人數、背景、組織，以至所運用的動員方法、持續時間和社會效應等。作者嘗試提出另類觀點，以識別過去有關香港人是政治冷感之說。另一方面，作者亦希望提供另類的研究方法，將社會運動研究扎根於具體的時空處境之上，以別於宏觀的結構學說或社會心理學說。研究結果顯示：七十年代的社會運動為八十年代奠下基礎，在香港不能夠成為獨立的政治實體的前提下，孕育出一個正在漸趨活躍的民間社會。