

# 2014 Hong Kong Protests

香港抗議

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The obedience  
of disobedience

抗命之不可抗



**2014  
Hong Kong  
Protests**

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# “Protest is not our culture”

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A guide towards  
an understanding  
of the civil unrest  
in Hong Kong

## Introduction

In the fall of 2014 Hong Kong was the site of large scale civil disobedience and revolt. A process that is ongoing at the moment of researching this ‘guide towards an understanding of the civil unrest in Hong Kong’.

On September 22 Hong Kong students started protesting against decisions made earlier by China’s Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress (NPCSC). See page 21

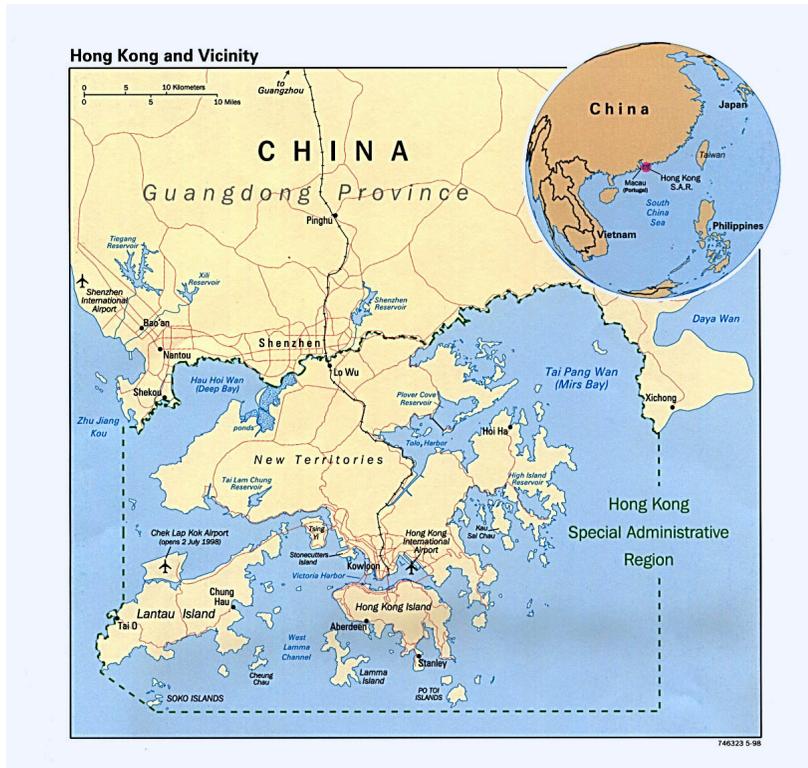
A few days later, September 26, a large group of demonstrators led by Joshua Wong occupied the square in front of the Central Government Complex – popularly called ‘Civic Square’. Since this once open area was barred from public access earlier that year, the protesters had to breach security barriers to reclaim the site. The police mobilised on Civic Square, surrounded protesters at the centre and prepared to physically remove the protesters overnight.

Continuing on September 28 the Occupy Central with Love and Peace started their campaign by blocking high-traffic routes near Admiralty. The amount of protesters took flight, peaking at more than 100,000 participants, reacting on the events when police forces used aggressive tactics and tear gas to disperse the gatherings. From this point on, not only Admiralty, but also Mong Kok and Causeway Bay were areas subject to occupation.

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## Facts & figures



Map of Hong Kong

Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region in China. The area consists of 236 islands of which most are uninhabited. The amount of land is comparable with the size of In total, the city of Hong Kong is inhabited by 7.182.000 million inhabitants. Parts of the city are extremely dense, in Kowloon for example 44.000 dwellings per square kilometer is no exception. Amsterdam has a density of 'only' 6000 dwellings per square meter.

Official languages	English, Chinese, Cantonese
Capital	Victoria / Central
Government	Special Administrative Region China
Population	7,234,800 persons
Area	1,104 km <sup>2</sup>
Average density	6,544 persons / km <sup>2</sup>
GDP total	\$ 400.607 billion <sup>(44th)</sup>
GDP per capita	\$ 55,167 <sup>(9th)</sup>

# Chapter 1

## A very short history

### A very short history

Hong Kong has been part of China only since 1997, after Britain gave it up as a colony. The handover took place at midnight of 30 June 1997, the 156-year-old British crown colony, was returned to the People's Republic of China. Although the reunification of these two parts of China was completed overnight, their differences are far from disappearing due to the long-time separation which lies behind them. This historic event 'symbolized a host of imagined fundamental clashes such as colonialism vs. nationalism, capitalism vs. communism and east vs. west' (Chan & Cheng, 2002). Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong had an emotional moment. <sup>Source 1</sup>

Sources can be found in the grey sections after each chapter, they offer a more in-depth look on the subject.

With the handover to China the British enforced a 50 year long lasting agreement that the city should have a large degree of autonomy and that it should have a political system different from the rest of the People's Republic of China. This agreement is known as the 'Joint Declaration'.

This was extremely important for the British because Hong Kong was (and is) of such economic importance, that they didn't want it to be led by communist mainland China. When Hong Kong was reunited with China, the Chinese authorities promised that there would be one country, two systems principle: the mainland under communist and authoritarian rule, and Hong Kong under private capitalist and more liberal rule. →

Also, the Joint Declaration implied that eventually, universal suffrage was to be introduced so that the people of Hong Kong could choose the 'Chief Executive', the head and representative of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and head of the government of Hong Kong (one could say it is the mayor of the city). <sup>Source 2</sup>



Hong Kong

Source 1

## Hong Kong handover: Patten wipes a tear as Last Post sounds

The Independent  
July 1, 1997

Hong Kong handover:  
Patten wipes a tear as Last Post sounds

Chris Patten, the 28th and last governor of Hong Kong was swallowing hard as he emerged from Government House for the last time yesterday afternoon. He might just have got through the modest ceremony marking his departure without shedding a tear had it not been for the lowering of the flag and the mournful sounds of “The Last Post”.

It was a wrenching day for the Governor, crowned not by his final departure on HMY Britannia but at a farewell parade in pouring rain which turned into a torrent the moment the band struck up “God Save the Queen”.

Leaving is something the Brits do terribly well, so well that they have even trained their colonial subjects to produce a perfect replica of a British ceremonial occasion. Britain supplied both most of the hardware, and the music; but Hong Kong supplied the rain, which fell in torrents throughout.

And Hong Kong also supplied what it supplies best – people. “They were only ordinary”, said Mr Patten in his farewell address, “in the sense that most of them came here with nothing. They are extraordinary in what they have achieved against the odds”. Some 10,000 people turned out for the ceremony, the Chinese just about outnumbering the British residents. Most of them were dressed in their Sunday best to pay their respects to the departing power.

The baggage of history was left discreetly out of sight, for the most part, though Mr Patten referred obliquely to the opium wars which gave birth to the colony. “This chapter began with events that, from today’s vantage point, at the end of the following century, none of us here would wish or seek to condone,’ he said. Rather less obliquely he reminded his audience that most of Hong Kong’s people came to live under the British flag as refugees from Communism, or as he put it “because of events in our own century which would today have few defenders”.

Mr Patten had promised that Britain would be withdrawing without self-congratulation but with dignity and solemnity. Yet he could not resist raising at least two cheers for British colonialism. He said Britain had provided “the scaffolding” – the rule of law, clean government, the values of a free society and “the beginnings of representative government and democratic accountability”.

[...]

Source 2

## **Basic law: Article 45**

The government of Hong  
Kong Special Administrative  
Region

**The Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region shall be selected by election or through consultations held locally and be appointed by the Central People's Government.**

**The method for selecting the Chief Executive shall be specified in the light of the actual situation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and in accordance with the principle of gradual and orderly progress. The ultimate aim is the selection of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage upon nomination by a broadly representative nominating committee in accordance with democratic procedures.**

**The specific method for selecting the Chief Executive is prescribed in Annex I: "Method for the Selection of the Chief Executive of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region".**



Chief Executive Donald Tsang signs instruments of consent

## Chapter 2

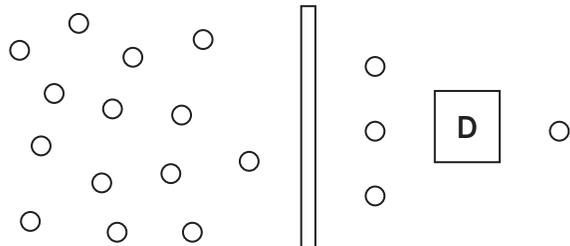
# **An initial view on protests**

So what are the protests about?

The universal suffrage has not been introduced yet. Instead, a 1200-member Election Committee, controlled by mainland China, chooses the Chief Executive. In the beginning of 2014, the current Chief Executive, CY Leung, requested the China's Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPCSC) to investigate the method of universal suffrage elections for the elections of 2017.

The 2014 Hong Kong protests, also known as 'the Umbrella Revolution' began in September after the decision of the NPCSC to disallow universal suffrage. Instead, the NPCSC advised to stick with the system of the 1200-member Election Committee, now no longer responsible for directly choosing the Chief Executive, but for approving three candidates that may run for the Chief Executive elections.

As a result, outraged students formulated a set of demands as a reaction to the NPCSC's decision. <sup>Source 3</sup>



Advice of NPCSC

What is actually happening?

The following timeline provides an overview of the events that have taken place so far during the protests. An eyewitness report of the protests at Admiralty in the early hours of December 1 by Gordon Mathews, anthropology professor at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, describes the nature of police actions. <sup>Source 4</sup>

August 31	September 22	September 26
China insists on its right to vet candidates for Hong Kong's next leadership election in 2017. In response, Occupy Central and other groups vow to embark on an "era of civil disobedience" including mass sit-ins.	University students begin a week-long boycott of classes.	Around 150 student protesters storm government headquarters and occupy a courtyard in the complex. Police use pepper spray to repel them. The protesters defend themselves with their now emblematic umbrellas.

September 28

With parts of the government complex besieged, Occupy Central joins the students, announcing that it has begun its civil disobedience campaign. A major street opposite government headquarters is taken over by protesters.

October 3

Student leaders agree to Mr Leung's offer of talks. But chaos later erupts in Mong Kok, a busy working-class shopping district taken over by protesters, when government loyalist thugs attack demonstrators.

October 4

Student leaders call off talks, accusing police of failing to act over violent attacks against them. Tens of thousands gather for a mass peace rally in central Hong Kong in response to the assaults.

October 10

Some 100,000 gather at Harcourt Road in Admiralty.

October 13

The police remove some protest barricades at the Admiralty site and Mong Kok. The protesters in turn build bamboo scaffolding as reinforcement.

October 14

More clashes in Admiralty at night, with the police using pepper spray and batons on protesters.

October 17

The police clear Mong Kok protest in the morning, but protesters return shortly, numbering 9,000 by nightfall. More clashes erupt.

October 24

Men wearing face masks storm protest site on Nathan Road, dismantling barricades and attacking people.

October 28

Hongkongers mark one month of the protests with 87 seconds of silence, to represent the 87 tear gas canisters fired on protesters by the police.

November 5

More clashes in Mong Kok. Activists hold a protest march calling for Beijing to release the nearly 100 mainland Chinese who have been detained over the past month for supporting protests.

November 6

HKFS abandons plans to visit Beijing during Apec Summit.

November 13

Members of HKFS, including secretary-general Alex Chow, plan to go to Beijing on Nov 15 to request meeting with central government leaders.

November 15

HKFS representatives Alex Chow, Eason Chung, and Nathan Law are not allowed to board the plane to Beijing and are told that their "Home Return Permits" have been revoked.

November 17

The police are ready to support bailiffs in enforcing a court injunction that orders people to stop blocking access to the Citic Tower in Admiralty, says a government statement.

November 18

Bailiffs and the police peacefully clear a protest area in Admiralty.

November 19

Protesters clash with the police outside Legislative Council building. a small group tries to break into the building. Windows are smashed.

November 25

Scuffles break out between the police as an operation to clear protest site in Mong Kok turns chaotic in the afternoon, after proceeding relatively peacefully in the morning. Thousands gather by nightfall, and in the escalating tensions, 80 are arrested.

November 26

A swift police operation clears a section of Nathan Road. Student leaders Joshua Wong and Lester Shum are arrested. The road is opened to traffic by the early afternoon.

November 27

Wong is released on bail, but banned from a large area of Mong Kok as a condition. He accuses the police of using violence on him.

November 29

Thousands of pro-democracy activists clash with the police in the early hours of the morning as they attempt to reclaim part of the protest site in Mong Kok.

December 1

A second day of chaos on the streets, as thousands of protesters force the temporary closure of the government headquarters, defying orders to retreat. Chief Executive Leung says police have been very tolerant but would now take "resolute action", suggesting that patience may have finally run dry.

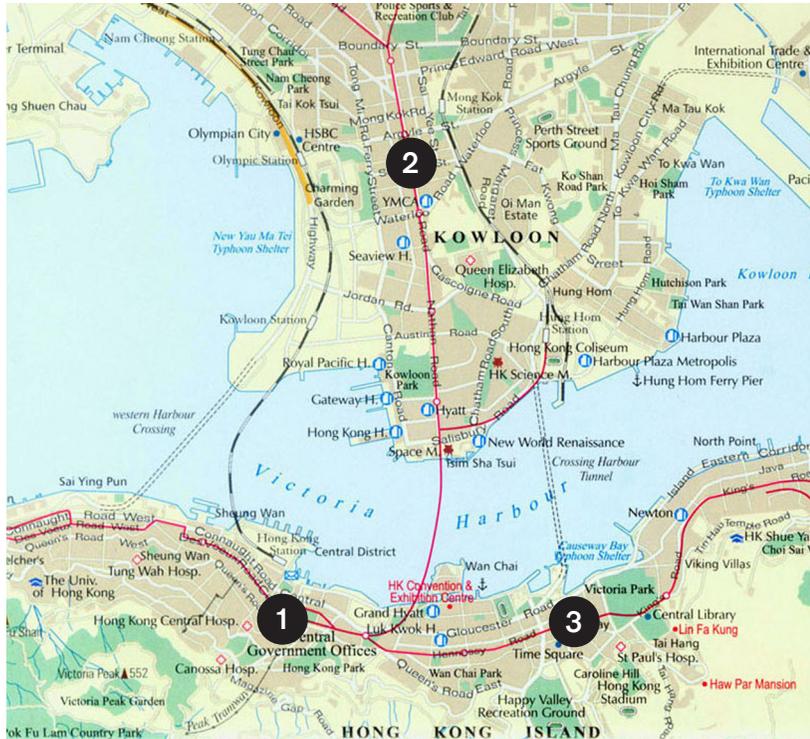
December 2

Founder of Hong Kong student activist group Scholarism Joshua Wong started his hunger strike.

December 3

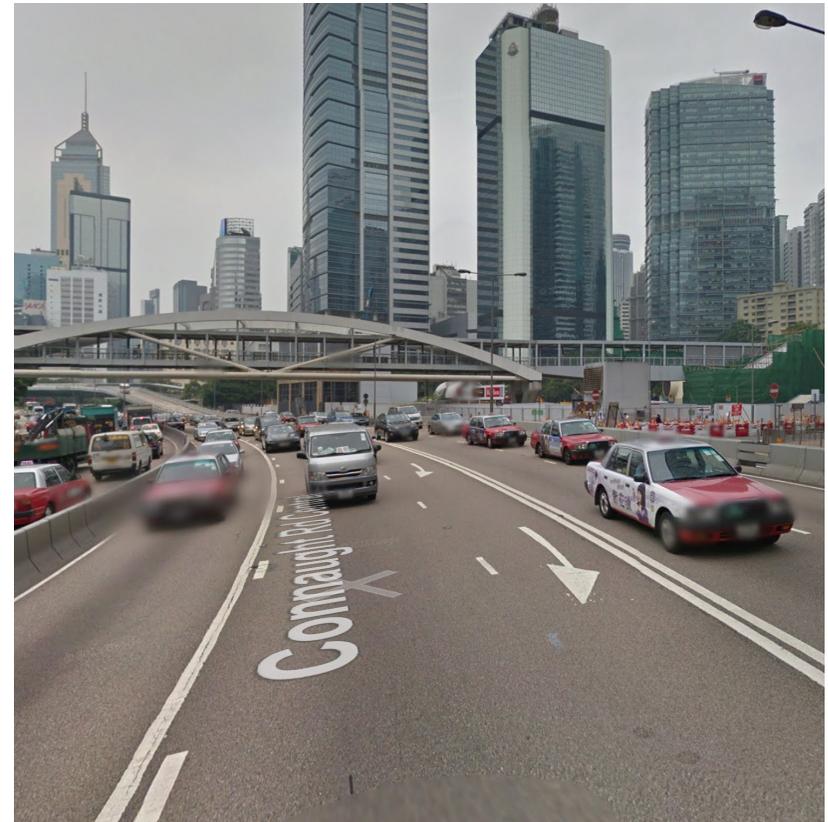
Occupy leader Benny Tai turned himself in at the local police station, but was sent home without being charged.

What does it take place?



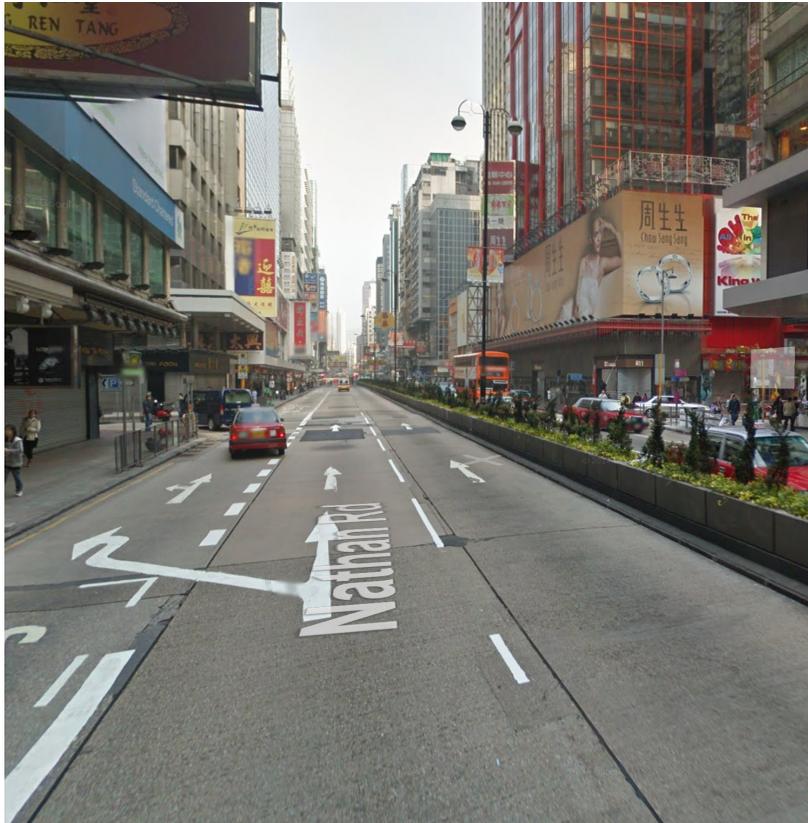
The main protest sites are Admiralty (1), Mong Kok (2), and Causeway Bay (3). Admiralty is the place where the Occupy Central movement started. It's in the middle of the central business district and close to most government offices. Mong Kok is more residential and a working-class shopping area. Causeway Bay is a highly popular middle/upper-class shopping centre.

Site 1: Admiralty



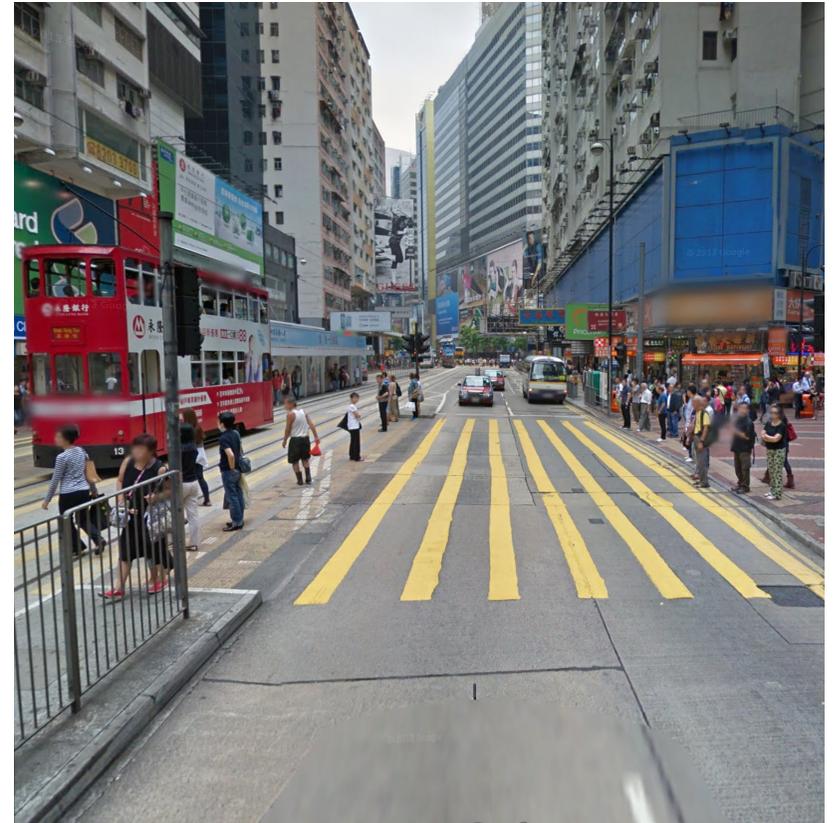
Streetlevel view of Admiralty area during an average day (source: Google)

Site 2: Mong Kok



Streetlevel view of Mong Kok area during an average day  
(source: Google)

Site 3: Causeway Bay



Streetlevel view of Causeway Bay area during an average day  
(source: Google)

Who are in charge?

In the media two names pop up regularly when it comes to looking for 'the leaders' of the protest: Benny Tai and Joshua Wong. Benny Tai is perceived as one of the most eminent initiators of 'Occupy Central'. Joshua Wong is one of the student leaders and is the founder of the Hong Kong student activist group Scholarism. <sup>Source 5</sup>



17 year-old Joshua Wong

Source 3

## HKFS Declaration For Students' Strike Hong Kong Federation of Students September 22

**“Seize our Future! In Solidarity We Strike to Open New Possibilities”**

**We call for a strong stance of students and the community against ridicule. We call for your action to guard our city. We demand the Beijing and HKSAR government,**

- 1) To confirm Civil Nomination as one of the Nominating methods of the Chief Executive Election in 2017**
- 2) To reform the Legislative Council and abolish all Functional Constituencies seats**
- 3) To apologize to the Hong Kong people and withdraw the Decision on Issues Relating to the Selection of the Chief Executive of the HKSAR by Universal Suffrage and on the Method for Forming the Legislative Council of the HKSAR in the Year 2016**

**4) The related officials, namely Chief Executive Leung Chun-ying, Chief Secretary for Administration Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor, Secretary for Justice Rimsky Yuen and Secretary for Constitutional and Mainland Affairs Raymond Tam Chi-yuen shall resign.**

**Hope rests with the people; change starts with struggle! We, the people, have a dream, a dream of dignity and for a better future, a future which honors the efforts of our past generations, a future give to our present generation and to leave for our future generations. Resist and fight, for it is our future that we are holding on to!**

**The Hong Kong Federation of Students  
10 September 2014**

Source 4

**Eyewitness account  
by Gordon Mathews**  
Facebook  
December 1

Eyewitness account by Gordon Mathews

I went to Admiralty last night, to be with my students, after the Hong Kong Federation of Students called for an escalation of protests. I went because the police have on occasion been behaving like barbarians, and I wanted to witness what would happen. Unwittingly, I also wound up protecting my students, only because when I was there, they felt a need to protect me rather than to charge to the front lines confronting the police.



Gordon Mathews (Source: Facebook)

The news tonight is full of claims by police and Hong Kong government figures that protestors had become violent. Perhaps a few somewhere were—but overwhelmingly the violence was committed by police beating students with their batons with great force. Now, the protestors were indeed engaged in illegal behavior—they were occupying roads around the Central Government Complex, in an expansion of their earlier protest zones. Some force was probably needed to clear the roads.

But many police were behaving in an out-of-control way, as dozens of videos on TV and YouTube attest. This does not compare to police brutality in the United States: we have had no shootings, and, I pray, this will continue. Hong Kong is still more civil in its behavior than almost anywhere else in the world. But the police have become politicized, largely because of Hong's political leaders hiding from sight, and a generation of Hong Kong youth has emerged that see the police as their enemy.

Source: <https://www.facebook.com/umbrellamovementhk/posts/537250249743574>

Source 5

**Protest leaders’  
short biographies**  
Voice of America News

Benny Tai Yiu-Ting

Co-founder of Occupy Central with Peace and Love. Born in 1965, the Hong Kong University law professor is renowned as a concerned teacher and a passionate democrat.

Founder of the Occupy Central civil disobedience movement Benny Tai cries during a rally outside government headquarters after protesters were threatened by residents and pro-Beijing supporters in Kowloon's crowded Mong Kok district.

Guided by his Occupy co-leaders, Chan Kin-man and veteran activist Chu Yiu-ming, Tai helped draft a first proposal for universal suffrage in 2004, prior to elections in 2007 and 2008. The recipient of death threats for his beliefs and despised by Beijing, Tai has kept a relatively low profile since Hong Kong's students seized the initiative and took over the streets. Tai now appears to be concentrating on shoring up support for the students among older professionals in the city.



Joshua Wong Chi-fung

Co-founder of Scholarism. The face of 17-year-old Wong adorns the cover of the latest international edition of Time magazine, and indeed the clean-cut high school student embodies the idealism and virtues for which Hong Kong's young democracy protesters have become internationally renowned.

Joshua Wong, 17-year old student leader, stands on the stage during a rally in the occupied areas at Central district in Hong Kong, October 9, 2014.

While his school grades are said to have faltered, how many teens can lay claim to challenging the full might of the Chinese government before completing the first year of a university course? Wong cut his teeth in political activism aged 13 by challenging the city's proposed high-speed rail link. He then mobilized over 100,000 students to face down government plans for a communist Chinese education and patriotism program before taking a lead on the democracy reform issue. China accuses him of being a U.S. spy. Anyone who listens to Wong speak though can hear the conviction of his belief: that the people should be allowed to choose the candidates who wish to stand as the next leader of this southern Chinese city.

Source: <http://www.voanews.com/content/whos-who-in-hong-kong-protests/2479068.html>

# Chapter 3

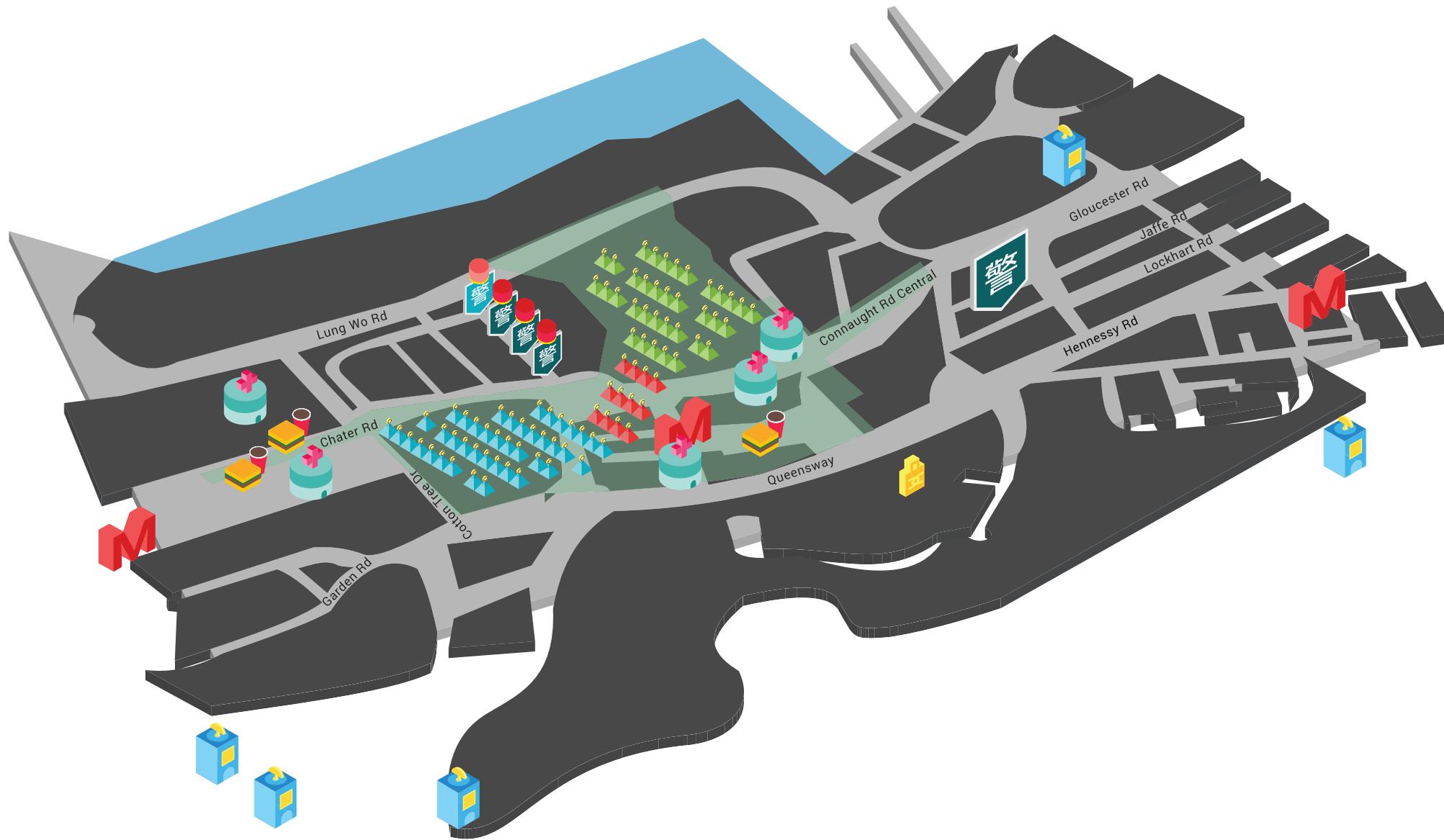
## Hong Kong protests' architecture mapped

Admiralty

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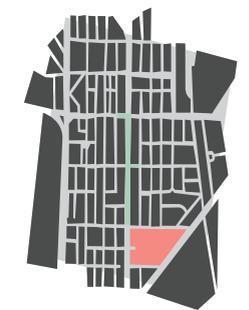
Admiralty



Mong Kok

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-  Support station
-  First-aid station
-  Food & supply station
-  Tent camp
-  High police concentration
-  Low police concentration
-  Metro station
-  Shopping area
-  Guan Yu temple
-  Entertainment area
-  Study area



Mong Kok



Support station



First-aid station



Food & supply station



Tent camp



High police concentration



Low police concentration



Metro station



Shopping area



Guan Yu temple



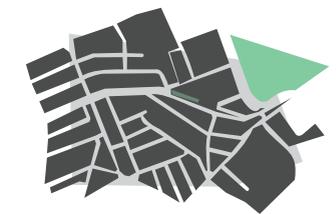
Entertainment area



Study area

Causeway Bay

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# Chapter 4

## Observations on Hong Kong protests in image

Observations on Hong Kong protests in image

In search of background information and in depth insights on the events that have taken place during the protests so far it became clear that the nature of these protests are quite particular. Exploring the use of social media for example showed how banal and random most protest-related conversations are. Also, images of the events show a seemingly ordinary and orderly continuation of daily life within the protests.

Other revealing discoveries were that not only the protesters built a temporary temple, but also built dedicated websites for the provision of practical protest information. All in all, these findings led to general observation that the 2014 Hong Kong protests are highly characterized by their peaceful, organized and ordinary nature.

Looking closer at the (temporary) temple, housing “a small statue of the red-faced, bearded deity Guan Yu”, not only shows the protesters attempts to design and build their own ‘space’, it also affects the way wherein the police and triads act within the proximity of this shrine. “The god, also known as Emperor or Lord Guan, represents brotherhood, righteousness, and victory in war. His presence in Mong Kok is meant as a strategic deterrent. Protesters believe neither police nor the mob, said to be prevalent in the neighborhood, would dare to move him.” Source 6 →



Up until this point, there have been no kills reported during the Hong Kong protests.



The temporary temple for Guan Yu, an important figure for the protesters, police and triads. The latter two parties are afraid to move the shrine.

## Anarchy versus democracy



"Sorry I don't know who did this, but we are not anarchists. We want democracy."  
(Photo: James Legge)

## Grids



Tents are put up in grids, and rented to protesters in order to give them the opportunity to occupy the sites for longer periods.

I do



Several photos of weddings or newly-weds at the protest-sites appear on the internet, showing that ordinary life intertwines with protest life. Photos of birthday party's show the same pattern.

Building infrastructures



Carpenters work together on building desks for students at the protest-sites.



"Stop lessons, but don't stop learning." Studying is an important visual theme within imagery of the Hong Kong protests, showing not only the high rate of student participation, but also a cultural take on protesting in itself.



Like Hong Kong, the camp is intensely urban, but some protesters have tried to add a touch of green on Harcourt Road.

## Ping Pong



At a certain point even Ping Pong and Mahjong tables were seen at the protest-sites, something that was eagerly used by pro-Beijing media to condemn the protesters. "Illegal occupiers are occupying the roads as their living space and playground," said Kong Man-keung, a police spokesman. "These acts are seriously damaging interests of the residents nearby, and are absolutely unacceptable to the general public." (Source: AP news)

## Happy birthday



"Faced with angry residents and local shopkeepers who stop by every once in a while to hurl insults at the camp, the students sometimes break into song to drown out their opponents. Their song of choice: a ridiculously cheerful rendering of 'Happy Birthday,' which works remarkably well at turning away troublemakers.

The story goes that when a protester inadvertently played the tune on his phone during one vicious shouting match, the crowd spontaneously decided to sing along. That was enough to leave those who had started the ruckus speechless." (Source: AP news)



"Office workers walk through streets closed by protesters in the business district of Central in Hong Kong, China, on Monday, Sept. 29, 2014." (Source: Time Magazine)  
While these workers don't seem to participate, a lot do, using social media or other methods of communication to meet up at protest-sites after office hours.

## Cleaning teams



At both the Admiralty and Mong Kok protest-sites banana peels are fermented to make into cleaning vinegar, protesters are working in teams to clean the streets, pick up and sort out garbage — showing both their polite attitude, as well as their tactics and organisational skills. (Source: Slate, The World's Politest Protesters)

## Crowd control



Several entrances are built at the Admiralty site to control protesters going in and out, preventing accidents and chaos from happening.



Protesters built a library in the parking lot of the Hong Kong legislative council building. Volumes include *Pride & Prejudice* and *The Economics of John Maynard Keynes*.



All in all these images show a peaceful, organized and ordinary atmosphere. Of course there have been (and there will be more) violent events, but the fact is that so far, there have been no killings, or outings of extreme incidents of violence.

For a large amount of protesters, there seems to be a thin or practically no layer between the life of protesting and daily life. The intertwinement of participating in civil disobedience on the one hand and continuing with daily concerns on the other hand is apparent and unruffled.



Admiralty area

## The use of digital platforms

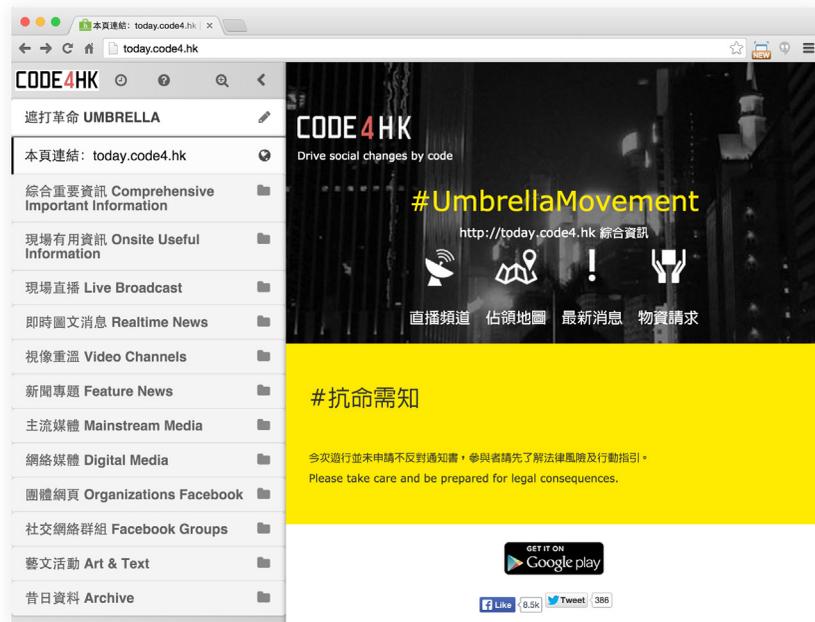
Besides presenting the observation of the peaceful, organisational and ordinary nature of the protests it's worth emphasizing the role of the virtual organisation and it's interaction with the physical conditions of the protest sites. <sup>Source 7 & 8</sup>

It is clear that the digital platforms supporting the Hong Kong protests are of great importance. Not only are they heavily used by protesters to organise themselves, but also these platforms are elaborately taken care off in terms of visual identity. Many examples of websites are rather well designed and could be compared with commercial, corporatist websites.

For example Firechat is used to bypass regular cellular and wireless networks by utilising an alternative Bluetooth network. In this application, and other social media, protesters discuss about relevant subjects as where to go, and when. But also as a channel to converse about more banal subjects as where to buy new jeans near the occupied area's. Google forms are used to gather news, which then is checked by a voluntary group of journalists, so the spread of falsified information (by pro-Beijing groups or the government) is contained or even stopped.

Two other examples of the protesters' virtual organisation are Code4HK and the Manual of Disobedience, both available in both English and Chinese. Code4HK is a website Inspired by Code →

for America that promotes social changes by using code, and even in the early stages of the Hong Kong protests already had an extensive information-base of the events happening on and around the occupied area's. Clearly showing the protest-movements consist of people tied closely to groups of skilled 'hackers' and the creative class. The page today.code4.hk keeps protesters in sync of the latest news, local rest stops, supply centers and distribution. In a blog post from December 2013, Vincent Lau wrote described the organisation's mission as follows. →



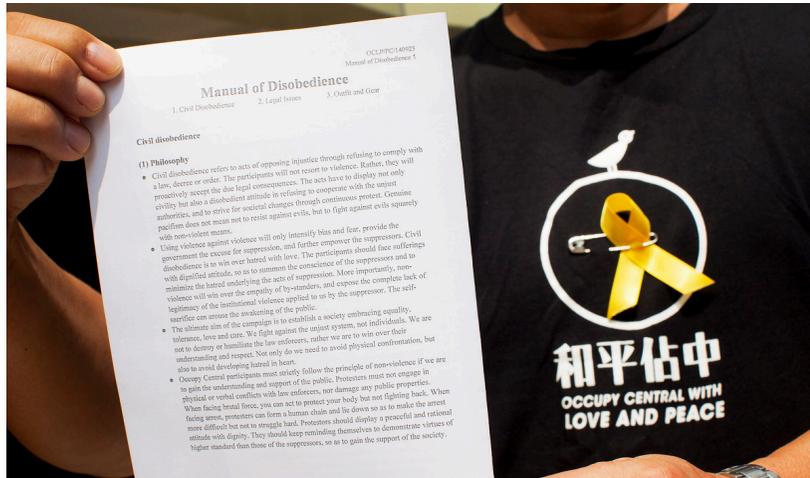
Today.code4.hk, a comprehensive overview of available information, news, video's, external sources and much more.

“Technology is one of the few things that stands a chance to fight against monopoly and bureaucracy. Egypt succeed in evolution with the help of social media technology. Startups grow rapidly in Chile or Vietnam changing the landscape. After empty words of ‘Cyberport’ and the dot.com bubble years ago, we need to ask why we didn’t have [a technology revolt in] our lovely Hong Kong. We need to show the possibilities. We need to engage [developers] and every citizen to participate in saving our city. More importantly we need to try.”

Source: Technasia, A visual guide to Hong Kong's online hub for the Umbrella Revolution

Slate has written the following on the Manual of Disobedience: “Published online several days before the Occupy Central campaign was set to begin, the document is part how-to guide and part philosophical mission statement. It details the movement’s tactics, the rules for nonviolent protest, the legal codes that may be violated, and the exact procedure to follow should someone be arrested. It also implores protesters to ‘avoid physical confrontation, but also to avoid developing hatred in [their] heart,’ and explains that the protests must be a model of the values that they are striving to see in their society, namely ‘equality, tolerance, love, and care.’ The protesters understand that these values will not only help win over sympathizers, but lay bare the illegitimacy of the regime if it moves against them with excessive force. These aren’t youthful idealists; these are savvy political operators who understand the secrets of successful nonviolent resistance.” →

Source: Slate, The World's Politest Protesters



The Manual of Disobedience as presented by Occupy Central with Love and Peace, available in both English and Chinese. Also pictured is the logo used by the organisation in various manifestations of their visual identity.

**Not only do you see widespread use of formalized or you could even say commercial phenomena as logo's (i.e. visual identities), printed banners, websites, manuals, signing, branded clothing et cetera. There is also a growing variety of 'Occupy' related artwork popping up both at the protesting area's and online. A lot of them incorporating the umbrella as an iconic concept. Again showing close ties to people within what you might call the creative class. This has strong relations to what we have seen during Occupy movements in other western oriented societies, also looking at the form or framework of protest that is used. But besides these seemingly parallel characteristics, you can also notice some rather large differences between the former and the latter. See page 98**

Source 6

## Guan Yu is the People's Deity Wall Street Journal October 30

## Guan Yu is the People's Deity

### “Protesters, Police and Triads Show Reverence for Chinese Deified General”

From a throne of wooden pallets, a small statue of the red-faced, bearded deity Guan Yu presides over Mong Kok, the most tense of Hong Kong's pro-democracy protest sites. Guan Yu has the distinction of being worshiped by the protesters who occupy a major intersection in the heart of one of the city's densest neighborhoods, the police who have both protected and battled protesters, and the triads, the organized crime groups that populate the area and are alleged to have fought protesters over the past four weeks.

The god, also known as Emperor or Lord Guan, represents brotherhood, righteousness, and victory in war. His presence in Mong Kok is meant as a strategic deterrent. Protesters believe neither police nor the mob, said to be prevalent in the neighborhood, would dare to move him. No one did on Thursday, another quiet day in the nearly five-week standoff.

“Everyone can claim him: police, triads and protesters,” said David Palmer, chair of the Department of Sociology at the University of Hong Kong. “He incarnates the values of courage, bravery and loyalty.”

To protesters, the god's work is apparent in the missteps made by Hong Kong police in trying to control the protests. Every time the authorities make moves on Guan Yu, something bad happens to them the next day, according to

Boby Yeung, a 35-year-old construction worker who is one of the god's self-appointed attendants.

“Every time they're disrespectful here something strange will happen.”

Two weeks ago, when police moved to clear the Mong Kok site, they destroyed Guan Yu's old shrine, knocking the statue to the ground and breaking off its hand.

“They made a big mistake,” said Mr. Yeung. After the raid, a police spokeswoman mistakenly wore a hat bearing the old seal of Hong Kong's colonial police, complete with British crown, to a news conference. “This was the punishment of the god,” Mr. Yeung said.

Later, police accused protesters at the shrine of illegal assembly and of being triads. The next day, Mr. Yeung notes, seven police were caught on camera beating a protester. A spokesman for the Hong Kong Police Force declined to comment on Guan Yu. Police said they tried to clear the Mong Kok site because of rising violence. “Confrontations of various scales and criminal offenses are taking place in the occupied area in Mong Kok almost every day,” police spokesman Hui Chun-tak said.

The protest as a whole is entering its second month, with no further talks scheduled between organizers and the government.

[...] →

Guan Yu is deeply ingrained in Hong Kong's police department. A detective installed the first shrine to Guan Yu in a police station in 1931 "to demonstrate his own dedication to, and courage in carrying out duties," the website of the Hong Kong police says. "He also prayed for divine intervention in the solving of his crime cases."

"In almost every police station, there is a designated corner—chosen after consulting a Feng Shui master—for the statue of Guan Yu," said Tommy Tang, a retired chief inspector who started worshipping the deity after he joined the force in 1977.

Officers also hold special ceremonies to thank Guan Yu after breaking big cases. "We would set a minor shrine in the office or the staff canteen to worship [Guan Yu] with some food such as three chickens and three roasted geese," said Mr. Tang. Depending on turnout, police would prepare roasted pig if needed, he added.

[...]

Source 7

## New trends of Political Participation in Hong Kong City University of Hong Kong Press 2014

## New trends of Political Participation in Hong Kong

Digital media and online platforms have become key features of the contemporary political discourse deployed by Hong Kong's subaltern counter publics to make visible their protest tactics of irreverent bodily and visual dissent.

Today, many protest participants enjoy inexpensive and ready access to Internet-enabled high quality image capture and dissemination devices which can be shared through new media and social networks such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and local blogs and Internet sites. Citizen journalist-produced visuals and Internet-based radio and video-streaming services substantively widen the opportunities to participate in political events such as meetings, processions, or rallies, and in various forms of digital activism.

On the visualizing of street protests via digital platforms, Doerr et al. (2013, xi) write, "(e)ncounters with social movements have always been intrinsically tied to the visual sense. Activists articulate visual messages, their activities are represented in photos and video messages, and they are ultimately rendered visible, or invisible, in the public sphere." Thus, by taking to the physical or virtual "street" protesters and social movements can become "visible, to each other" thereby aiding them in overcoming and rejecting a sense of "powerlessness" (Sassen, 2011).



Joseph Yu-shek Cheng

Source 8

**Online counter-  
hegemonic resistance  
in China's Hong Kong**  
Daniel Garrett  
2013

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) is well known as a “City of Protests” but fewer are aware that Hongkongers’ vivacious dissent against hegemonic rule and social injustice also extends into virtual Chinese and HK Internet spaces as much as its physical streets and public spaces. As postmodernist movements and new social movement actors have taken root in HK (Chan K.-m., Cheung A.B.L., Choy, So) the importance of information communication technologies, especially new and social media platforms, have increased sharply in the last few years. This has been all the more the case as the city’s subalterns have become more assertive and transgressive in confronting hegemonic efforts to create and (re)present images and visualities of the territory as an economic entity well-adjusted to, and accepting of, Chinese sovereignty under the “One Country, Two Systems” (OCTS) ideology. Typical of postmodern social movements and actors, subaltern Hongkongers’ contemporary dissent is frequently expressed visually in both its street-level and online protest repertoires (Garrett and Ho 2014, forthcoming) which work together in a continuum to present a countervisuality (Mirzoeff) disputing hegemonic claims of a harmonious HK and HKSAR-China relationship.

As the political situation in HK rapidly deteriorated since 2010, the SAR government and Chinese officials have been increasingly pressured by these new modes of digital and visual insurgency. Indeed, a HKSAR Executive Council member advising the Region’s chief executive warned in 2012 – a year many pro-regime observers identify as a point where HK took a virulent anticommunist turn (Chan T., Chan T., Yang) and identity politics reared its ugly head (Garrett) – online activism, as “a parallel universe where ideas, consensus and influence come out of online chat rooms, Facebook and internet radio” (Chan B.), could no longer be ignored.

Another China Daily writer argued in August 2013 that given the larger number of Facebook users in HK than those that voted in the last legislative elections, HK’s online communities were more representative than electoral rituals. (Lam J.) Garrett and Ho (Forthcoming 2014) also observe that Hongkongers’ online activism (aka ‘digital democracy’) has been insufficiently considered in assessing the political and social situation and in conceptualizing Hongkongers’ political participation. Not entirely oblivious, various recent SAR government actions and measures – such as efforts to proscribe online parodies over putative copyright violations (Nip and Wong), making a record number of arrests and prosecutions of demonstrators (Cheung S.), circumscribing →

online political campaigning, and apprehending a dissident for simply uploading an image of a defaced national flag onto social media (Lam O.) – are contemporary indicators of steady ‘mainlandization’ of the security and judicial sectors of the “HK system” (Lo S., Lo T.W., Lo and Kwok) and shrinking physical and online spaces for dissent in HK’s public spheres.

Source: <http://blogs.nottingham.ac.uk/chinapolicyinstitute/2013/11/25/online-counter-hegemonic-resistance-in-chinas-hong-kong-a-very-quick-glance/>

## Chapter 5

# The bigger picture

A comparison of the Hong Kong protests with the Occupy movements throughout the world uncovers striking contradictions between the two. Not only do they differ expressively in image and appearance (Occupy has a more alternative/anarchic and 'messy' reputation, whereas the Hong Kong protesters, as showed previously in this book, have a less radical appearance, as their protest activities fluidly intertwine with their daily lifes), and in their goal setting (Occupy is aiming to address social inequality and 'criminal corporatism', whereas the Hong Kong protests have a more tangible purpose: universal suffrage), but also, and moreover, they are fundamentally different in attitude. The occupy movement is clearly rejecting the matter of how large corporations and the global financial system control the world in a way that disproportionately benefits a minority. It is essentially condemning the corporatist culture of capitalism. Whereas the Hong Kong protesters, as described in chapter 4, are seemingly obedient in their disobedience in a context of highly corporatist and capitalist structures. Hong Kong protesters are campaigning for democratic reforms, they don't argue for an anti-corporatist agenda. They don't seem to denounce their city's free market and commercialist orientation.

Focussing on this specific aspect, Hong Kong protesters and their way of acting might be more related to other revolts against communist regimes throughout history. Looking closer at the Velvet Revolution, and specifically to the political concept Parallel Polis (Vaclav Benda, 1978), there even seem to be, albeit accidental, philosophical connections between these events in history.

By creating structures and infrastructures that mimic those that exist in society, the Hong Kong protesters have essentially created an alternative society next to it. This reveals a long-term strategy, they are here to stay. The movement has all the means to turn this into a successful endeavour, access to material, skills, virtual tools and most of all 'heart'. The fear of mainland China getting a tighter grip on their freedom seems to enforce the backing of the movements. Just like capitalism the societal status quo of the Hong Kong people seems to be a status forward. Taking away the promise of this move forward, moving into standstill, actually seems like a step backward. A step backward to what we (and they) might consider a totalitarian state.

In times of the totalitarian communist regime of Czechoslovakia, Vaclav Benda, a political thinker and dissident, created a political-social concept called Parallel Polis. It is this concept that is unwillingly reflected in today's events in the Hong Kong protests. In addition to other philosophers, Benda sought a theoretical grasp of the social events in the circles of dissents. The so-called alternative culture or underground was described in the text Parallel Polis in 1978 for the first time. As a political scientist, Benda noticed the emergence of a new social structure which was born in artistic and intellectual circles as a tool to escape the totalitarian communist regime. →

Benda described his concept based on seven 'pillars' like but not limited to the existence of constant monitoring and verification of civic rights and freedoms, a parallel economy and a parallel informational system. The three pillars mentioned all are visible in the occupied areas of Hong Kong today, the protesters have built their own distribution, communication, information and political networks. In *New Media & Society* Lagos, Coopman, Tomhave also seek for connections between the Parallel Polis concept and recent events of civic unrest and self-organisation. Stating that today's digital tools enables people to organise themselves, where this used to be impossible. French philosopher Jacques Rancière wrote about a similar concept in his book *The Politics of Literature*, wherein he states that literature could be the democratising layer that lessens hierarchy. In this light literature and self-organisation using today's digital tools could have a similar effect on the democratisation of the people and levelling of hierarchies. Source 9 & source 10

Altogether there are some striking parallels as well as contradictions noticeable in what is happening in Hong Kong at the moment, and what has been happening throughout the world recently, and historically. It is hard to predict what the results will be of the endeavours of the Hong Kong protesters, as it always hard or even impossible to predict these things. Leaving at least one question unanswered at the moment, namely: "If you can design the way you're treated, can you also design the outcome of a protest?"

Source 9

## **New Media & Society**

Taso G Lagos, Ted M  
Coopman and Jonathan  
Tomhave  
2013

**“Parallel poleis”:** Towards a theoretical framework of the modern public sphere, civic engagement and the structural advantages of the internet to foster and maintain parallel socio-political institutions.

The role of the internet in large-scale demonstrations, as witnessed in the Arab Spring, has been debated and reflects continued interest in the intermingling of social movements and digital technology. Yet behind these large photogenic events stand other less obvious social activities that may be equally profound, particularly in the form of alternative institutional frameworks that better meet the social needs of individuals than current models. We categorize these “dissident” frameworks as “parallel poleis” as developed by Czech philosopher and activist Vaclav Benda and offer two case studies to support this contention. At the heart of parallel poleis lies the notion that digital technologies are uniquely positioned to reflect and facilitate the political expressions of individuals due to low-cost transactions, ease of use and large social network reach possibilities. The sociopolitical ramifications of a parallel polis as conceptualizing the social-technical interaction warrants further discussion.

From a structure and organizational perspective, if not a theoretical one, there is a need to better explicate the relationship between online activity and offline political or civic engagement. By “political or civic engagement” we mean the abilities and means by which human beings

express and participate in social institutions that reflect their on-going yearnings for awareness, intentionality, free will, and identity. These yearnings find increasing dissemination in the various digital tools and technologies that now define our lives. Western media, over the course of the Arab Spring in 2011, made consistent and persistent mention of the role of Facebook and Twitter in the vast demonstrations that altered the political landscape in the Arab world. Like the Occupy Wall Street and the Indignado movements in Southern Europe collectively dubbed “Facebook revolutions” (Bennhold, 2012), these extraordinary mass gatherings demonstrate the blending of digital technology and civic participation best captured perhaps by Pickard’s “praxis-based democratic theory of technology” (2008: 629).

Our goal is not to prove or disprove the connection between technology and these large-scale mass upheavals. Rather, we explore the link between digital technology and political expression insofar as it relates to institutional innovation in the form of a “parallel polis” (Benda, 1978/1991); initially in the discussion of large social demonstrations and then to the more stable alternative digital institutions that our case studies offer. Whatever utilitarian possibilities a parallel polis offers, this is not a discussion on social emancipation, escape or the benefits of being “cured of civilization” (Barzun, 2000: 10).

From the standpoint of computer mediated communication (CMC), Dourish (2006: 6) sees the meeting point between technology and civic expression, or what he calls “space” and “place,” as the emergence of “new cultural →

practices” that “open up new forms of practice within the everyday world, reflecting and conditioning the emergence of new forms of environmental knowing.” Dourish establishes a mechanism for how human beings utilize technology for their own specific social ends. Staying within the same realm of CMC and computer–human interaction, there is in “distributed cognition” the same will towards further (re)defining this intersectional space. In the work of Hollan et al. (2000), as well as Clark (1997) and Hutchins (1995), distributed cognition (or in the case of Clark, “embodied cognition”) comes to mean not just thinking in our brains but also in the interaction with the (in this case, digital) tools that make up our daily environment. Bardone’s (2011) *Chance Seekers* takes the same cognitive approach in which human beings, interacting with their environment, improve their chance of social advancement through the “affordances” this interaction provides (Gibson, 1979, cited in Bardone, 2011: 63). Parallel poleis may in fact be another manifestation of chance-seeking behavior.

[...]

Source & further reading: [nms.sagepub.com](https://nms.sagepub.com)

Source 10

## The Politics of Literature Jacques Rancière

[...]

In a sense, all political activity is a conflict aimed at deciding what is speech or mere growl; in other words, aimed at retracing the perceptible boundaries by means of which political capacity is demonstrated. Plato's Republic shows at the outset that artisans don't have the time to do anything other than their work: their occupation, their timetable and the capabilities that adapt them to it prohibit them from acceding to this supplement that political activity constitutes. Now, politics begins precisely when this impossibility is challenged, when those men and women who don't have the time to do anything other than their work take the time they don't have to prove that they are indeed speaking beings, participating in a shared world and not furious or suffering animals. This distribution and this redistribution of space and time, place and identity, speech and noise, the visible and the invisible, form what I call the distribution of the perceptible. Political activity reconfigures the distribution of the perceptible. It introduces new objects and subjects onto the common stage. It makes visible what was invisible, it makes audible as speaking beings those who were previously heard only as noisy animals.

The expression 'politics of literature' thereby implies that literature intervenes as literature in this carving up of space and time, the visible and the invisible, speech and noise. It intervenes in the relationship between practices and forms of visibility and modes of saying that carves up one or more common worlds.

[...]

Literature, in short, is a new system of identification of the art of writing. A system of identification of an art is a system of relationships between practices, the forms of visibility of such practices, and modes of intelligibility. So it is a certain way of intervening in the sharing of the perceptible that defines the world we live in: the way in which the world is visible for us, and in which what is visible can be put into words, and the capacities and incapacities that reveal themselves accordingly. It is on this basis that it is possible to theorize about the politics of literature 'as such', its mode of intervention in the carving up of objects that form a common world, the subjects that people that world and the powers they have to see it, name it and act upon it.

[...]

What's next?

**Will the so-called  
Umbrella Revolution  
succeed in its mission  
to achieve universal  
suffrage?**

**Will the peaceful,  
organized and ordinary  
character of the protests  
be maintained?**

**Will Hong Kongers  
remain obedient in their  
disobedience?**

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Designing Democracy  
In a time in which confidence in democracy is under increasing pressure, the Sandberg Designing Democracy program thinks the question of the future of democracy through design. The program aims to apply design and art as a specific method of critical thinking to reshape democratic politics.

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