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**PART I**

PARTICIPATION AND POLICY-MAKING



# 1

## New Trends of Political Participation in Hong Kong

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### 1. Introduction—Emergence of New Issues

The political system of Hong Kong is defined by the Basic Law. It promises the special administrative region “a high degree of autonomy.” (article 2) But the people of Hong Kong have often been reminded by Chinese officials that they have to think more of “one country” than “two systems.” In other words, limitations are put on “a high degree of autonomy.”<sup>1</sup> As the central authorities have become increasingly dissatisfied with the situation in the territory, their intervention has become more frequent and obvious. In late 2013, the officials of Central Liaison Office and pro-Beijing media defended the former’s lobbying of legislators as a routine which had to be accepted by the community.

Hong Kong’s political system has often been described as “executive-led” because the Chief Executive enjoys strong presidential powers while the legislature’s role is relatively limited. For example, it has no role in government personnel matters; it cannot seek to increase government

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1 Joseph Y.S. Cheng, “The Basic Law: Messages for Hong Kong People,” in Richard Y.C. Wong and Joseph Y.S. Cheng (eds.), *The Other Hong Kong Report 1990*, Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1990, pp.34–44.

revenues and expenditure and cannot initiate public policy proposals without the approval of the Chief Executive. And the latter can refuse to allow government officials to testify before the Legislative Council because of security and public interest considerations.<sup>2</sup>

The Chief Executive is elected by an Election Committee dominated by the pro-establishment camp with business and professional elites, while 30 seats in the 70-seat legislature are returned by functional constituencies again dominated by the establishment. The pro-democracy movement has been campaigning for the democratization of the electoral systems since the latter half of the 1980s. And in 2010, the National People's Congress Standing Committee in Beijing has agreed that election of the Chief Executive by universal suffrage in 2017 and that of all seats in the legislature by the same method in 2020 may be implemented. Hence political reform has emerged as a significant political issue since early 2013.

Democratization has hardly made any progress in Hong Kong, yet there are many new trends and phenomena relating to political participation in recent years that deserve attention. After all, Hong Kong is still a vibrant city. This chapter attempts to study the basic factors affecting political participation in Hong Kong since its return to the Motherland and its new trends of political participation in this period. These factors include constitutional evolution and the political structure, changes in the social structure and economic development. While offering observations of concrete phenomena, this chapter will also consider the relevant theoretical issues so as to provide a better understanding of Hong Kong's political development.

In terms of constitutional evolution and the political structure, differences within Hong Kong's pro-democracy movement have been fully exposed by the refusal of the central government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) to provide a clear roadmap for the elections of

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2 *Ibid.*, pp.44–52.

the Chief Executive and the entire legislature by universal suffrage, and the acceptance of the PRC government's slightly revised political reform package by the Democratic Party (DP) in 2010. There are elements in the pro-democracy movement who believe in a dialogue with both the central government and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) government. The Civic Party (CP) and the Labour Party (LP) will probably continue to stand firm on the political reform issue, and maintain their moderate style. The original League of Social Democrats (LSD) keeps on splitting. Thus there will be three rather distinct orientations. The establishment of the CP in 2006 and later the LP and the LSD, as well as the split of the Liberal Party soon after the Legislative Council elections in 2008, were significant developments in the pattern of political parties. Government lobbying of the legislators has become more complicated too.

More significant are the intermediate and long-term changes in the social structure. In the past, 60–70% of the people of Hong Kong considered that they belonged to the middle socio-economic strata, they shared strong middle-class values.<sup>3</sup> In the last two decades, however, Hong Kong increasingly has developed into an “M-shaped” society, where many educated young people have doubts whether or not they belong to the middle-class.<sup>4</sup> As the gap between the rich and poor widens, and opportunities for upward social mobility are reduced and dissatisfaction in society accumulates. These trends naturally affect the inducements and patterns of political participation.

There is a common concern among the people of Hong Kong: will political participation continue to radicalize? Will the minority, especially the young people, adopts more radical political actions in the context of rising political apathy among the majority? Naturally what is considered

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3 See, for example, Lau Siu-kai, *Society and Politics in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1982; and Lau Siu-kai and Kuan Hsin-chi, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1988.

4 Omae Kenichi, Mxing Shehui: *Zhongchan Jieji Xiaoshi de Weiwei yu Shangji (M-shaped Society: The Crisis and Business Opportunities of the Vanishing of the Middle-Class)*, translated from Japanese by Liu Jinxiu and Jiang Yuzhen. Taipei: Shangzhou Chuban, 2006.

radical in Hong Kong is still rather moderate when compared with European countries. Nevertheless there is some media discussion on the “post-80s generation,” and the Donald Tsang administration also felt the need to study the phenomenon.<sup>5</sup>

The performance of the HKSAR government obviously has an important impact on the mode of political participation in Hong Kong. Although there have not been any large-scale mass demonstrations after those in 2003–04, public opinion surveys reveal that there has been substantial dissatisfaction with the performance of the C.H.Tung and Donald Tsang administrations. Regarding the confrontational political reform issue, the people of Hong Kong realize that the Chinese leadership still has a big influence on the process and decision. As perceived by the DP chairman, Albert Ho, the Chief Executive’s role was “a bit dysfunctional.”<sup>6</sup> The C.Y. Leung administration only gets worse, as it has been plagued by scandals right from the beginning.

After the massive protest rally on July 1, 2003, the Chinese leadership was worried about Hong Kong’s situation, and its intervention in Hong Kong politics has since been much strengthened. The pro-Beijing united front therefore has more resources to mobilize the people of Hong Kong and influence their political attitudes. The electoral machinery of the pro-Beijing political parties has become increasingly effective and sophisticated.<sup>7</sup> However, in the direct elections to the Legislative Council in 2008, the pro-democracy camp still secured almost 60% of the votes, demonstrating that the people of Hong Kong valued effective checks and

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5 See Michael E. DeGolyer, *Protest and Post-80s Youth, A Special Report on the Post-1980s Generation in Hong Kong, Hong Kong Transition Project*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong Baptist University, 2010. On December 17, 2010, the Central Policy Unit of the HKSAR government and the Applied Social and Economic Research Centre, Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, held a seminar entitled “Youth and Social Change” to discuss the issues of the territory’s post-1980s generation.

6 *Apple Daily*, July 10, 2010.

7 See Joseph Y.S. Cheng, “Introduction: Causes and Implications of the July 1 Protest Rally in Hong Kong,” in his edited book, *The July 1 Protest Rally: Interpreting a Historic Event*, 13–24. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2005.

balances against the HKSAR government. In the following Legislative Council elections in 2012, its share of the votes fell to about 55%, reflecting the growing unpopularity of the HKSAR government.

Hong Kong's economic development and its prospects influence the community's demands. If the economy continues to grow, the people of Hong Kong may want stability and hope to solve their problems by their own efforts.<sup>8</sup> When the economy stagnates, the demand for income redistribution will be strengthened. For example, in recent years before the release of the government budget, political parties make demands for various sweeteners for the community, like one extra monthly payment of social security allowance and old-age pensions, waiver of one or two months of public-housing rents, transport subsidies for low-income earners etc. In the long term, the HKSAR government must comprehensively consider its commitments regarding all types of social services.

## **2. Changes in the Structure of Hong Kong's Social Stratification and Their Impact**

In 2012, Hong Kong's per capita GDP reached US\$37,352 per annum. It is a developed economy, however, according to a report of the United Nations Development Programme, Hong Kong's income gap was the largest among all Asian cities in 2008 and 2009.<sup>9</sup> The statistics from the Census and Statistics Department of the Hong Kong SAR government show that the Gini coefficient stood at around 0.43 in the 1970s. It rose sharply from 0.453 in 1986 to 0.518 in 1996 and continued to climb to 0.537 in 2011.<sup>10</sup>

In September 2010, Oxfam Hong Kong published its report on poverty in the territory which showed that the number of working-poor families

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8 Lau and Kuan, *The Ethos of the Hong Kong Chinese*.

9 United Nations Development Programme, Development Report 2009; M Economy and Inequality, 2009: <http://hdrstats.undp.org/en/indicators/161.htm>.

10 Hong Kong, Census and Statistics Department, Half-Yearly Economic Report 2012: [www.tradingeconomics.com/hong-kong/gdp-per-capita](http://www.tradingeconomics.com/hong-kong/gdp-per-capita).

had been increasing, from around 172,600 at the beginning of 2005 to about 192,500, a rise of 12% in five and a half years. The report also indicated that the incomes of the poorest one-fifth of the families had shown no improvement; and the median monthly incomes of the poorest one-tenth and one-fifth of families were HK\$3,000 and HK\$6,000 respectively. In comparison, the median monthly income of the richest one-tenth of families had increased by 16% to HK\$80,900, about 27 times that of the poorest one-tenth of families, reflecting that the gap between the rich and poor had widened in the past five years.<sup>11</sup>

In October 2010, the Hong Kong Council of Social Service released a research report, indicating that in the first half of the year, the population of “poor families” in Hong Kong reached 1.26 million, amounting to 18.1% of the population. The report also revealed that the median monthly income of the high-income household group had risen from HK\$31,000 in 2009 to HK\$32,950; while that of the low-income household group had basically remained unchanged at HK\$9,000. The income gap between the two groups had been maintained at the ratio of 3.4:1 in the past four years; but in the first half of 2010, it rose to 3.7:1. Apparently, the income gap worsened in the economic recovery after the recent global financial tsunami.<sup>12</sup>

According to the Census and Statistics Department of the HKSAR government, in the quarter September–November 2009, the number of households with a monthly income of HK\$25,000 and above had dropped from that in the corresponding period of the previous year; while the number of households in various groups with a monthly income of below

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11 *Ming Pao* (Hong Kong daily newspaper), September 20, 2010. A “working-poor family” refers to a household with at least one member employed, and its monthly income is below one half of the median monthly income of local households with the same number of family members.

12 *Ming Pao*, October 4, 2010. A “poor family” is one whose income is less than or equal to one half of the median income of local families with the same number of members; at that time, the median monthly income of a one-member family was HK\$33,275, two-member families HK\$7,100, three-member families HK\$10,000, and four-member families HK\$12,000.

HK\$10,000 had risen, with growth rates ranging from 2.4% to 9.7%.<sup>13</sup>

Under such circumstances, grievances among the lower socio-economic strata easily accumulate. The gap between the rich and poor in Hong Kong was serious in the past. But it was like China today: the people of Hong Kong felt that their living standards had been improving, and would continue to improve. In other words, Hong Kong was a place full of opportunities; as long as one worked hard, one's efforts would be rewarded. Even those who had little education with very limited upward social mobility prospects could still pin their hopes on their younger generation. In recent years, however, "inter-generational poverty" has emerged as a social issue, reflecting that many people in the territory no longer consider that Hong Kong is a place full of opportunities. They grumble that there has been no real improvement in their living standards since Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, and they are not optimistic about its economic future. Meanwhile, they feel that work pressure and the pressure of making ends meet have been increasing. The rise in discontent naturally means an erosion of their identification with the territory's political and economic systems.

The HKSAR government understands that grievances in the community have been gathered and that its popularity is low; it therefore hesitates to introduce policies which will add to the people's burdens, instead it often offers them sweeteners. Regarding the burdens, the Donald Tsang administration abandoned its plan of broadening the tax base and introducing a consumption tax. On the long-term financing of medical care, it also avoided any proposals demanding contributions from the people but simply chose to encourage individuals to join private-sector insurance schemes. The C.Y. Leung administration would like to make an important contribution in the housing area; but other than that, it is in a difficult position to deliver as it has been much handicapped by disunity within the establishment and its own scandals.

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13 *Ming Pao*, January 20, 2010.

The various subsidies and waivers provided by the annual budgets in recent years show that the Donald Tsang administration was eager to please all socio-economic strata. At the grassroots level, the demand for more income re-distribution through the government has been strengthening. When the economy is in good shape and the government enjoys a budget surplus, people ask for a reduction of their tax burden or more subsidies. When the economy deteriorates, people at the grassroots level demand assistance. When can the HKSAR government refuse these ad hoc subsidies and waivers? It is obvious that these budgetary measures will only have a very limited impact.

A more serious problem is the gradual loss of the HKSAR government's potential to increase taxation to improve social services and the community's quality of life. The people of Hong Kong realize that the ageing population implies an increase in expenditure on medical care and other social services; environmental protection through energy conservation and pollution reduction demands efforts from both individuals and the government; and an enhancement of the territory's long-term international competitiveness requires more investment in infrastructure and education. They are reluctant, however, to accept an increase in their tax burden, and those at the grassroots level demand further income re-distribution by the government. Meanwhile, the government avoids increasing the people's tax burden, and has been forced to reduce its commitments in various social services. The government's capability to re-distribute income in fact has been weakened, and those at the grassroots level receive less help. For example, the direct subsidy schools scheme, the introduction of sub-degree programs and the encouragement of private universities all reflect the HKSAR government's attempts to reduce its commitment in the education sector; but they indirectly have a negative impact on the upward social mobility of the children of poor families and exacerbate the gap between the rich and poor.<sup>14</sup>

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14 Joseph Y.S. Cheng, "The Deep Structural Problems of Direct Subsidy Schools" (in Chinese), *Sing Tao Daily*, December 16, 2010.

Poverty adversely affects political participation.<sup>15</sup> Before 1997, the people of Hong Kong were not very enthusiastic about political participation, but they basically accepted and supported the existing political and economic systems, indicated a relatively high level of satisfaction with the government's performance, and articulated few demands on the government. At present, Hong Kong people's political participation is still not very enthusiastic; but their identification with the existing political and economic institutions has been in decline. They have a lower level of satisfaction concerning the government's performance, stronger grievances with various phenomena of social injustice, and more demands and protests *vis-à-vis* the government. The latter tends to react rather passively to these demands and protests; it tries to reduce the people's dissatisfaction and psychological expectations, but normally it cannot tackle the roots of the problems.

The final years of the Tsang administration and the first year of the C.Y. Leung administration witnessed many more protest activities. Very often the radical young protesters were ready to confront the police, leading to arrests. Worse still, an increasing number of protesters now carry the old colonial flags in protest rallies to indicate their preference of the colonial administration over the HKSAR government, a phenomenon which has caused considerable anger in Beijing and within the pro-Beijing united front.

### **3. Meaningful Political Participation and Rational Deliberations**

In the 1990s, theories on deliberative democracy were developed in Western political science, as a response to the perception and analysis

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15 Amartya Sen, "Foreword," in *From Poverty to Power*, ed. Duncan Green. Oxford: Oxfam International, 2008, xiii–xvi.

of democracy as the articulation and aggregation of interests.<sup>16</sup> The latter theories were basically theories of rational choice, based on the premise that an individual citizen or voter would rationally consider the opportunities and restrictions of each option in making his or her decision. Democratic institutions therefore allow voters to pursue their interests freely and equally.

Deliberative democracy imposes a higher demand on citizens. Its theories are influenced by John Rawls' concept of political justice and the emphasis of John Stuart Mill on open debate in the 19th century. Deliberative democracy theories hold that citizens have the fundamental cognitive capabilities to engage in rational debate; they would consider not only their individual needs, but also the public interest. The latter implies that individuals have ethical considerations; and they will re-order their priorities in the course of the debate. This kind of political participation brings its own satisfaction, and is in accord with the belief that the full development of the individual can only be secured through meaningful political participation.

The people of Hong Kong have a fine tradition of reason and moderation. Although a fully democratic political system has yet to be established, people enjoy freedom of speech and the media offer platforms for free discussions. Self-censorship has certainly become more serious in the past two decades, but critics will not find it impossible to articulate their views.<sup>17</sup> In recent years, Internet media have been offering convenient and interactive discussion platforms for various small groups.

According to a survey conducted in the U.S. in February–March 2003, about two-thirds of respondents indicated that they had participated in some kind of regular political discussions in the past year, and a quarter of

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16 Shawn W. Rosenberg, "Introduction: Theoretical Perspectives and Empirical Research on Deliberative Democracy," in *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy*, ed. Shawn W. Rosenberg. Basingstoke, Hampshire and New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007: 1–22.

17 Joseph M. Chan and Francis L.F. Lee (eds), *Media and Politics in Post-Handover Hong Kong*. London: Routledge, 2008.

them had taken part in at least one organized forum.<sup>18</sup> It is likely that the participation rates of Hong Kong people would be substantially lower. On the other hand, there are factors of political culture: People of Hong Kong often avoid political discussions in social gatherings.

In qualitative terms, however, people of Hong Kong should not do too badly. Local newspapers usually offer considerable space for commentaries and political columns; and their quality is respectable. The problem is that serious readers are few, and the discussions often only involve opinion leaders. In the past decade and more, high quality in-depth investigative reports in newspapers and the electronic media have become rare; budgetary considerations seem to be the principal factor. Various types of civic groups organize many open forums and seminars; the quantity is impressive, and the quality is acceptable. Again, participants are few; and their major purpose seems to be to attract media attention rather than to offer platforms for the public to articulate its views.

An encouraging development has been the emergence of a number of private think-tanks in the past 20 years. Their scale and resources obviously cannot compare with those in the Western advanced countries—there is even a considerable gap between them and those in Taiwan—but at least this is a healthy beginning. Given the financial resources of the local major business groups, they really should do more to build a better research foundation for policy discussions.

At this stage, the more prestigious, pro-establishment local think-tanks include the Business and Professionals Federation of Hong Kong, the Better Hong Kong Foundation and the Bauhinia Foundation; the latter was generally perceived to be in active support of the previous Chief Executive, Donald Tsang. The incumbent Chief Executive, C.Y. Leung, had very close ties with the One Country, Two Systems Research Institute. Two key members of his team, Cheung Chi-kong and Shiu Sin-por, were formerly

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18 Fay Lomax Cook, Michael X. Delli Carpini, and Lawrence R. Jacobs, “Who Deliberates? Discursive Participation in America,” in *Deliberation, Participation and Democracy*, ed. Rosenberg, 25–44.

key leaders of the institute. The Hong Kong Policy Research Institute is no longer very active, though it attracted a lot of attention in the early years of the C.H.Tung administration; and the Social and Economic Policy Institute has ceased operation. Maintaining a think-tank of considerable scale on a long-term basis is certainly very challenging.

The Lion Rock Institute and Synergy Net are politically neutral; while the political stand of the Hong Kong Democratic Foundation and the Civic Exchange is close to the pro-democracy camp.<sup>19</sup>

As political parties in Hong Kong have limited resources for policy research, think-tanks' research outputs offer serious policy options different from those of the government. They serve to promote meaningful policy discussions which are an important channel of political participation. There is still ample room for further development of think-tanks in the territory. In the controversy on the construction of high-speed railways, the work of proposing an alternative option challenging the government plan mainly fell upon two or three professionals; and it demonstrated the lack of policy research resources outside the government.

A serious handicap in promoting rational deliberations in political participation in Hong Kong is the deep ideological schisms within the political elites. The chances of accepting the other side's views are low, and the discussions center on the publicity effects generated. Policy debates in the Legislative Council and its hearings seldom attract the community's attention. Legislators emphasize securing sound bites in the media; and policy research is obviously not their priority. The vast majority of legislators depend on their respective small staff teams with limited policy research capabilities and resources. Top government officials tend to be cautious, and they want to make sure that they make no mistakes in public. Their strategy is to lobby for the support of the pro-establishment legislators; and the most effective way is to make concessions to satisfy

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19 See Tony Latter, *Hands on or Hands off? The Nature and Process of Economic Policy in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2007: 125–28.

their respective constituencies' demands. This pattern of parliamentary politics does not contribute much to meaningful political participation.

Theories on deliberative democracy stress adjusting the priorities of one's own interests in debates as well as balancing one's own interests with those of the public. But the existing political cleavages have been exacerbated because, given the "executive-led" system of government, the HKSAR government is well protected by the electoral system as stipulated by the Basic Law, and there is no genuine political competition. The Chief Executive is picked by the Chinese leadership; and on important policy issues, the pro-establishment legislators will support the HKSAR government once Beijing has taken a stand. They will challenge the HKSAR government on minor policy issues like landfill, though, so as to demonstrate that they are also ready to fight for the people's interests.

Political reforms are certainly one of the most significant concerns of the Hong Kong community. But in the recent decade and more, there has been only political mobilization, and almost no rational debates. Members of the pro-democracy movement understand that the Chinese leadership has no intention of allowing genuine democracy in the territory, hence their arguments are aimed at mobilizing people to support the democratic cause in elections and protest activities. At the same time, the defense put forward by politicians of the pro-Beijing united front is far from convincing; nobody realistically believes that the conditions in Hong Kong are not yet ripe for democracy. But the united front has substantial mobilizing power; it has captured the government and a majority in the legislature and the District Councils.

Apparently there is no broadly-based political participation concerning important livelihood issues on which there are no well-defined political cleavages. The Donald Tsang administration raised the important question of broadening the territory's tax base. This was related to the level of the government's revenues, and the future financial resources in support of various types of social services. Hence, this was an issue with a significant impact on the future welfare of the people of Hong Kong. Yet there were not much serious discussions on the issue; the general response was that

people were reluctant to accept an increase in tax burden, and the Donald Tsang administration abandoned the idea.

Long-term financing of medical care is a severe challenge for an ageing population. In the U.S. during the Clinton and Obama administrations, reform of the medical insurance system was hotly debated among all stakeholders, i.e., the entire population. But in Hong Kong, most people are reluctant to contribute; they believe that the government has respectable fiscal reserves and therefore it should assume the responsibility for health care. The Tsang administration finally opted to encourage people to acquire their medical insurance policies from the private sector with financial incentives provided by the government.

In the final years of the British administration, especially during the administration of Governor Chris Patten, it tried hard to establish mutual trust with all political parties. On financial and economic policies, the British administration attempted to secure the votes of the pro-establishment legislators; on political reforms and human rights issues, it turned to the pro-democracy legislators for support.<sup>20</sup> This required superb political skills; but all political parties felt that they had a constructive role to play in the government's policy-making process.

During the HKSAR government era, as Donald Tsang himself declared, there would be "differential treatment" depending on one's degree of support for the government. Political cleavages deepen in the absence of political competition, i.e., the opportunity for the government to be replaced by the opposition. As the pro-democracy groups have been pushed outside of the political establishment, they feel they have no chance to influence government policies and therefore have little incentive to engage in a meaningful dialogue with top government officials. This "differential treatment" phenomenon has gradually spread to the government's advisory committee system.

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20 Joseph Y.S. Cheng, "Sino-British Negotiations and the Challenges of the British Administration in the Final Transition Years," (in Chinese) in *Transition in 1997: Hong Kong's Challenges*, ed. Joseph Y.S. Cheng and Sonny S.H. Lo. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1997, 23–24.

The government advisory committee system has been an important channel for formal political participation. The traditional British model was to involve representatives from all representative, concerned groups in the relevant advisory committee in the policy sector. The British colonial administration was under no pressure to be accountable, and the appointees were appointed on an individual basis. The pressure on the British administration was quite limited, although in the 1970s and 1980s, it began to actively involve some critics of the government.<sup>21</sup>

The HKSAR government made no attempt to improve the system further, instead there has been some serious backsliding. The first issue is the membership, which tends to be the same group of four or five hundred people. They are mainly the senior executives of the major corporations and the top professionals with strong business ties with them. As more and more young family members of local tycoons receive appointments, the suspicion of top government officials trying to curry favor with the tycoons has been strengthening.

Senior government officials already spend considerable time on handling the media and the legislators, few of them are still willing to make good use of advisory committees to engage in serious consultation. As a result, most advisory committee members feel neglected. Those who are ready to offer critical views consider themselves cold-shouldered by government officials, who only welcome those members who are ready to defend government policies in public and who would not make their jobs more complicated.

#### **4. Civil Society and Social Movements**

Political participation offers opportunities for citizens to develop their full potential, and makes them realize that they can make an impact on the government; in the words of Premier Wen Jiabao, “to let people live

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21 Joseph Y.S. Cheng, “Political Modernisation in Hong Kong,” *The Journal of Commonwealth & Comparative Politics* 27(3) (1989): 306.

happily with dignity.”<sup>22</sup> From the government’s point of view, low-level political participation will not exert pressure on the government, but it will not give the government a high level of legitimacy either. A politically apathetic population gives the government no trouble, but the latter cannot achieve much either; this was the kind of situation Donald Tsang faced in his initial years. But as his popularity declined, he gradually lacked the support and the political will to engage in serious policy reforms or even tackle controversial policy issues.<sup>23</sup> Due to the split of the establishment in the dirty electoral campaign fought between Henry Tang and C.Y. Leung, whose administration was subsequently tarnished by his own scandals and those of his team members, Leung’s plight was even worse than that of Donald Tsang in his final years; even though Leung had intended to push for reforms.

In a modern society, work pressure is high and life is busy, people’s enthusiasm for political participation easily falls. Even in European countries with a long tradition of democracy, declining enthusiasm for political participation is still a challenge. Hence the concept of “participatory engineering” has emerged in the academic literature.<sup>24</sup> The concept largely refers to the efforts of political elites to promote political participation through reforms of democratic institutions. In 2002, the ruling coalition of the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party in Germany proposed an amendment of the national constitution in parliament to introduce direct democracy measures at the federal level. Its purpose was to revive the nation’s declining interest in political participation.

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22 Jing Dongyu, “Wen Jiabao retires in a hidden way, the Development and Reform Commission finds it hard to suppress inflation” (in Chinese), *Cheng Ming Monthly*, No. 398, December 2010, 18.

23 See, for example, Joseph Y. S. Cheng (ed.), *Evaluating the Tsang Years 2005–2012*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2013.

24 Thomas Zittel, “Participatory Democracy and Political Participation,” in *Participatory Democracy and Political Participation*, ed. Thomas Zittel and Dieter Fuchs, 9–28. London and New York: Routledge, 2007.

Hong Kong has yet to establish a democratic political system, and “participatory engineering” is beyond the community’s horizon. The pro-establishment political parties normally believe that low voter turnout rates are in their favor; and the government naturally hopes that few people would take part in protest activities. On the other hand, pro-democracy political parties and a vast majority of NGOs are concerned with the development of civil society and the promotion of political participation among the people. But they have limited resources, and tend to concentrate on issues which can attract people’s attention.

Some Western political scientists hold different views. Their research reveals that people who have higher educational qualifications and incomes are more interested in politics and can better cope with the modern world’s complicated political life. They therefore consider that economic development will have a greater positive impact on political participation than political institutions.<sup>25</sup> There has been no specific study on Hong Kong in this area, hence only some superficial observations can be offered at this stage.

In the District Boards (later District Councils) elections in the 1980s and 1990s, voter turnout rates in the New Territories were higher than those in the urban areas, with the highest rates in districts where there were high concentrations of indigenous villagers. In the urban districts, there were usually higher voter turnout rates in areas of high concentrations of public housing estates; voter turnout rates were lowest in upper-middle-class residential districts like Tsim Sha Tsui, Yaumatei, Happy Valley and Mid-levels.<sup>26</sup> This pattern has not changed much in recent years. Naturally, voter turnout rates are just one indicator of political participation, and the above pattern mainly reflected network mobilization power. But voting in elections is considered the most important act of political participation;

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25 *Ibid.*, 10.

26 Joseph Y. S. Cheng, “The 1988 District Board Elections — A Study of Political Participation in the Transitional Period,” in *Hong Kong: The Challenge of Transformation*, ed. Kathleen Cheek-Milby and Miron Mushkat, 116–149. Hong Kong: Centre of Asian Studies, The University of Hong Kong, 1989.

and the general explanation for the low voter turnout rates among the upper-middle socio-economic strata in Hong Kong is that they have nothing to ask for in terms of social services provided by the government. Hence they have low motivation to vote. On the other hand, leaders and members of the most influential business and professional groups in Hong Kong are all well educated with high incomes. They play important roles in the government's policy-making process, and often participate in the government's advisory committees. They are the political elite in Hong Kong.

In the early 1980s, when Beijing and London began to prepare and mobilize for the negotiations on Hong Kong's future, the pro-Beijing united front also actively approached community leaders in all socio-economic strata and sectors. There was a major setback during the Tiananmen Incident and its aftermath, but united front work soon recovered. After the establishment of the HKSAR government, its development has become even more prominent. Joining these united front organizations is now perceived as a channel to become a member of the establishment; activists in these organizations have a good platform to stand for District Council elections, and have a chance to be appointed to the government's advisory committees. Those who are interested in pursuing a political career, especially those who do not come from rich families, are strongly tempted to consider these organizations. Appointments as political assistants and deputy heads of policy bureaus are apparently very attractive.

For many small businessmen and professionals who are not interested in politics, united front organizations are valuable for establishing useful economic contacts. In view of the rapid economic integration between Hong Kong and the Mainland, many owners of small and medium-sized enterprises and professionals believe that membership of the united front organizations will bring them convenience and opportunities in developing their businesses in the Mainland, and the latter is increasingly important to them.

In the past two decades or so, civic groups outside the establishment have also been enjoying healthy development, in line with political

theories on the relationship between economic development and political participation. People of Hong Kong enjoying respectable living standards seek satisfaction in life through social and political participation. In the same period, social and political participation in Taiwan have shown remarkable progress. At the end of the Chiang Ching-kuo regime in the late 1980s, political liberalization—symbolized by the termination of the ban on political parties and newspapers—led to an outburst of enthusiasm for political participation that had been suppressed during the previous decades of authoritarian rule. This enthusiasm probably reached a peak in the presidential election in 2000. After that, corruption and the emotional, non-rational elements in the elections led to a return of political apathy among a segment of the electorate.

The development of civil society has maintained its momentum nevertheless. Various religious groups, philanthropic bodies, environmental NGOs, etc. have all demonstrated substantial resources and mobilization power. A considerable proportion of the people feel that their participation in the civil society has brought them satisfaction.

The overthrow of Presidents Ferdinand Marcos and Joseph Estrada by “people power revolutions” in the Philippines was indeed impressive. Although corruption in politics continues to be a serious problem, and political and economic power has been captured by a small number of families, the development of civil society has been healthy, and the Filipinos are enthusiastic in social and political participation. In Indonesia, since the downfall of President Suharto in the wake of the Asia-Pacific financial crisis in 1998, political democratization and the development of civil society have been remarkable so that commentators consider Indonesia is the most democratic country in Southeast Asia. The performance of the student movement and the women’s rights campaign is especially outstanding; within a short period of time, its media, in both qualitative and quantitative terms, have made significant improvements.

Hong Kong’s traditional political culture neglects participation and emphasizes tackling one’s problems through one’s own efforts. In the past decade, various types of civic groups have emerged, attracting many young

participants and grassroots activists. These groups are usually small in size with very limited resources, but they have often articulated issues not taken up by the major political parties.

The campaigns to preserve the Queen's Pier, Lee Tung Street (Wedding Cards Street) and Choi Yuen Village; the protest against the government's high-speed railway plan, and so on, to a considerable extent caught the government and the major political parties by surprise. The participants were social activists of the "post-80s" generation. These social movements or campaigns demonstrate that the younger generation feels the existing political parties do not represent them; and some of the young activists may not be keenly interested in the struggle for democracy. They want to choose their own issues, and campaign in their own style; to them, participation probably more significant than achieving the objectives of their campaigns.<sup>27</sup>

These activists of the "post-80s" generation have their own networks and modes of mobilization. They are not much motivated to get themselves organized, apparently they do not seem to be active in establishing their own organizations; and they want to maintain a distance from the pro-democracy political parties. Their activities attract a lot of media attention, and they are very active in the new Internet media, thus they have a considerable influence on the younger generation. A new star among these activists is the Scholarism group which successfully blocked the introduction of "Moral and National Education" as a subject in the school curriculum in the autumn of 2012. This group of senior high school students and young university students soon won the admiration of the community. In the July 1 protest rally in 2013, they raised more money than any other pro-democracy group or political party.

From an academic point of view, this type of political participation does not focus on the establishment of constitutional, democratic institutions, but much more on mobilization and participation, thus securing agenda-setting

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27 See note 3, above.

power through the articulation of issues at the community level. This type of participation concentrates on the community; participation itself brings satisfaction, and participation itself is the meaning and objective. In the long-term, this type of participation may serve to promote more inclusive and accountable political institutions, develop a participatory political culture, and cultivate political talents outside the establishment. The social movements concerned are careful to avoid capture by political parties or political elites, so as eventually go against their original purposes.<sup>28</sup> This reflects the weaknesses of existing political parties and political elites, and highlights the danger of political fragmentation.

## 5. Differences within the Pro-Democracy Movement

Even in democratic countries, coalitions of opposition parties or opposition parties not in alliance or coalitions find it difficult to maintain co-operation on a long-term basis if there is no chance for them to capture government together. There is a natural tendency to co-operate with the governing party, especially when it suffers from a setback in a general election and no longer controls an absolute majority in the legislature. The New Komeito in Japan is a good example. Another tendency is to become radicalized, and downgrade the importance of parliamentary politics, as is often the case with small communist parties in European countries.

Since Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, the pro-democracy parties have been in decline; further, they have been kept outside the political establishment by the HKSAR government. Both of these tendencies have been strengthening at the same time. In the first place, arguments on the party line first emerged in the DP, whose appeal was in decline due to other factors as well. Under such circumstances, the CP was established in early 2006, followed by the League of Social Democrats.

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28 John Gaventa, "Foreword," in *Mobilizing for Democracy: Citizen Action and the Politics of Public Participation*, ed. Vera Schattam, P. Coelho and Bettina von Lieres. London and New York: Zed Books, 2010, xiii and xiv.

Intense competition among the pro-democracy political parties in Legislative Council elections has become the norm; and this is largely related to the electoral system. In the direct elections to the geographical constituencies in the Legislative Council elections, voters have one vote each in the five multi-member constituencies. There are no incentives for the pro-democracy parties to co-operate; in fact, pro-democracy candidates within the same constituency are in competition for the same pool of voters who are in support of the democracy cause.

In contrast, in District Council elections, which adopt the “single-member constituency, simple-majority” system, pro-democracy parties understand that it is a case of political suicide if two or more of their candidates compete in the same constituency. In fact, they will be severely criticized by the voters in support of the pro-democracy movement for their disunity. In the District Council elections in 2003, the pro-democracy parties initiated a formal co-ordination mechanism and secured a major victory, though the pro-establishment parties’ support for “the Article 23 legislation” was the principal cause of their considerable fall in support. In the District Council elections in 2007, the co-ordination mechanism was basically maintained. Although the League of Social Democrats withdrew from the mechanism in the District Council elections in 2011, the other pro-democracy political parties still worked hard to uphold the co-ordination mechanism. To ensure that only one pro-democracy candidate competes in each District Council constituency is an arrangement of mutual benefit. That is why the co-ordination mechanism largely works despite the differences among the pro-democracy parties.

As they are in perpetual opposition without effective participation in the government’s policy-making processes, the pro-democracy parties have limited appeal to various types of interest groups. The business and professional groups are important enough to have frequent direct contacts with the government to influence its policies, and they do not maintain a dialogue with the pro-democracy parties. The limited contacts between the two sides are mainly for public relations purpose; in fact, within the “executive-led” system of government, the business and professional

groups do not feel much need to have a meaningful dialogue with the pro-establishment political parties either.

The civic groups outside the political establishment are usually very cautious in their co-operation with the pro-democracy political parties. One reason is the traditional political culture; the groups concerned do not want to involve political parties in their negotiations with the government. There were unhappy experiences in co-operation in the 1980s and 1990s between the pro-democracy political parties and some grassroots pressure groups; the latter felt that they had been exploited by the former for publicity. Basically civic groups outside the political establishment jealously guard their independence and purity, they want to fight for their own unique missions and avoid being involved in the political interests and considerations of political parties.

Civic groups which value an effective dialogue with the government naturally desire good relations with it; and anti-establishment pressure groups want to grasp the initiative of their political struggles in their own hands and refuse to allow the initiative to pass to the pro-democracy political parties.<sup>29</sup> This alienation and mutual distrust between the latter and the anti-establishment pressure groups have perhaps been exacerbated in recent years. As dissatisfaction with the HKSAR government grows, some radical groups perceive all political parties as part of the political establishment and refuse formal co-operation even with the pro-democracy political parties. In contrast to the European countries, there are very few issues and movements in Hong Kong that generate close co-operation between the anti-establishment political parties and civic groups.

To some extent, as the cause of fighting for democracy has been dominated by the pro-democracy parties, most civic groups of young people tend to find issues of their own interest. They are therefore not too

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29 Francis L.F. Lee and Joseph M. Chan, "Making Sense of Participation: The Political Culture of the Pro-Democracy Demonstrations in Hong Kong," *China Quarterly*, No. 193 March (2008): 84–101.

keen concerning the struggle for democracy. In 2007, the protest movement to preserve the Queen's Pier seemed to have surprised the government and all major political parties. Apparently the pro-democracy movement has not been able to satisfy the younger generation's social demands. Admittedly, the pro-democracy movement has failed to win the trust and wholehearted support of the people regarding the most significant livelihood issues ranging from housing, education, medical care to minority rights, environmental protection and animal rights. As the community realizes that the Chinese leadership opposes genuine democracy for the territory and significant breakthroughs cannot be achieved in the foreseeable future. It is difficult to maintain a high level of enthusiasm for fighting for democracy among a majority of people of Hong Kong.

Despite all these serious obstacles, the pro-democracy parties still secure about 55–60% of the votes in the direct elections to the Legislative Council. The community counts on them to provide effective checks and balances *vis-a-vis* the HKSAR government. It appreciates the significance of checks and balances, and it understands that the corruption of power. Political wisdom of people of Hong Kong balances the increasing political mobilization capability of the pro-Beijing united front. The latter offers important services at the grassroots level through its political groups and grassroots organizations. Their distribution of rice, edible oil, moon-cakes etc., organization of snake-soup banquets and holiday trips, and assistance in handling applications to various government departments, are valuable to families with low incomes and limited education. These services help the united front to build effective networks; and the networks in turn become important mobilization instruments in elections and political campaigns.

At the same time, the HKSAR government places a lot of emphasis on propaganda and image-building in recent years, as reflected by the significant increase in resources spent in these fields. Senior civil servants often complain that their superiors pay too much attention to the criticisms of the media. Certainly the HKSAR government's propaganda is one type of political mobilization, it is not very effective at this stage, but it is difficult to assess its impact on the community's political participation in the long term.

## 6. General Observations

In the past, the colonial administration successfully secured the support from the people of Hong Kong and its legitimacy through its performance in economic development and social stability. Since the territory's return to the Motherland, most people have not perceived any obvious sustainable improvement in living standards on their part, instead they consider that the gap between the rich and poor has been widening, upward social mobility opportunities have been in decline, and the government has been favoring major business groups in various ways. As reflected by the published opinion surveys, the community's evaluation of and support for the HKSAR government have been deteriorating, and there is a crisis of "legitimacy deficit" on its part (see Tables 1.1 and 1.2). Lack of progress in democratization has certainly disappointed the supporters of the pro-democracy movement.

Apparently the Donald Tsang administration was aware of its "legitimacy deficit," hence it avoided controversial policy issues like consumption tax, and mandatory contributions to a medical insurance fund. In first year of the C.Y. Leung administration, there was already speculation that he might soon have to step down. While serious controversies and setbacks have been avoided, people of Hong Kong realize that they cannot expect major policy reforms from the government. The latter gradually has lost the appeal to persuade the community to take some "bitter pills," instead it becomes accustomed to distribute "candies" to please the public.

Within the framework of an "executive-led" system of government, the role of political parties is relatively limited. The difficulties and inadequacies of the pro-democracy movement have been considered above, the effectiveness of the government's advisory committee system has also been in decline; under such circumstances, the room for normal expansion of meaningful political participation for people of Hong Kong is not obvious.

While there has been considerable accumulation of grievances in the community, so far the general response from people of Hong Kong has

**Table 1.1**  
**Satisfaction with the policy direction of the Donald Tsang Administration**  
**and the C. Y. Leung Administration, August 2005–September 2011**

Responses to the question: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with Donald Tsang Yam-kuen/C.Y. Leung's policy direction?" (per poll)

Date of survey	Successful cases	Very satisfied	Quite satisfied	Half-half	Quite dissatisfied	Very dissatisfied	Don't know/ Hard to say	Total	Mean value*
17–20/10/2011	518	4.2%	25.1%	25.8%	26.9%	14.5%	3.4%	100.0%	2.8
13–14/10/2011	520	3.5%	29.3%	26.1%	24.3%	11.8%	4.9%	100.0%	2.9
26–27/10/2010	523	2.8%	31.1%	28.2%	24.8%	10.7%	2.4%	100.0%	2.9
14–16/10/2010	507	3.8%	28.4%	34.2%	19.8%	8.2%	5.7%	100.0%	3.0
20–26/10/2009	513	2.5%	22.9%	28.8%	23.8%	17.2%	4.9%	100.0%	2.7
15–17/10/2009	508	2.1%	23.1%	38.5%	24.9%	8.9%	2.6%	100.0%	2.8
18–24/8/2009	1,020	2.9%	26.7%	44.8%	17.5%	7.0%	1.1%	100.0%	3.0
16–18/2/2009	1,001	2.8%	25.4%	35.5%	21.7%	10.0%	4.7%	100.0%	2.9
27–29/10/2008	1,015	2.8%	22.1%	35.6%	24.0%	11.3%	4.2%	100.0%	2.8
17–19/10/2008	505	2.4%	20.0%	38.3%	21.8%	10.2%	7.4%	100.0%	2.8
18–20/8/2008	1,000	3.7%	25.3%	35.3%	24.1%	9.7%	1.9%	100.0%	2.9
18–20/2/2008	1,037	5.8%	41.1%	36.2%	10.7%	1.8%	4.4%	100.0%	3.4
10/10/2007	1,023	5.6%	45.4%	30.1%	7.1%	2.4%	9.4%	100.0%	3.5
20–24/8/2007	1,010	5.3%	47.2%	33.6%	6.4%	2.3%	5.2%	100.0%	3.5
22–26/2/2007	1,014	7.0%	38.6%	39.2%	8.6%	2.5%	4.1%	100.0%	3.4
10/11/2006	1,027	1.8%	34.6%	36.7%	9.9%	3.9%	13.1%	100.0%	3.2
21–23/8/2006	1,019	6.8%	46.5%	35.3%	6.0%	2.1%	3.3%	100.0%	3.5
17–21/2/2006	1,017	6.9%	44.3%	33.6%	5.8%	1.8%	7.7%	100.0%	3.5
12/10/2005	914	6.8%	45.1%	23.3%	3.6%	0.3%	20.9%	100.0%	3.7
22–25/8/2005	1,004	5.5%	42.2%	29.6%	4.4%	1.9%	16.4%	100.0%	3.5

\* The mean value is calculated by quantifying all individual responses into a score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 marks according to their degree of positive level, where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest, and then calculating the mean of these scores.

Source: Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with Donald Tsang Yam-kuen's policy direction? (per poll)" <[http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ce2005/sat\\_policy/poll/datatables.html](http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ce2005/sat_policy/poll/datatables.html)>; Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with Leung Chun-ying's policy direction?" <[http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/features/policy\\_address/2013/datatables\\_f.html](http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/features/policy_address/2013/datatables_f.html)>.

**Table 1.2**  
**Satisfaction with the overall performance of the Donald Tsang Administration**  
**and the C. Y. Leung Administration, August 2005–June 2013**

Responses to the question: "Are you satisfied with the overall performance of the HKSAR government?" (per poll)

Date of survey	Total sample	Sub-sample	Very positive	Quite positive	Half-half	Quite negative	Very negative	Don't know/ Hard to say	Total	Mean value*	Base
13–19/6/2013	1,040	652	1.8%	18.1%	27.7%	29.3%	21.9%	1.3%	100.0%	2.5	644
20–23/5/2013	1,023	553	2.7%	23.2%	29.1%	24.9%	18.8%	1.2%	100.0%	2.7	547
17–25/4/2013	1,023	599	2.8%	25.8%	34.9%	20.4%	15.5%	0.7%	100.0%	2.8	595
21–27/3/2013	1,003	666	3.0%	25.0%	36.4%	22.7%	11.3%	1.5%	100.0%	2.9	655
18–21/2/2013	1,027	546	3.8%	24.5%	30.7%	24.0%	14.3%	2.8%	100.0%	2.8	531
18–24/1/2013	1,024	635	2.7%	23.2%	26.1%	26.1%	19.3%	2.5%	100.0%	2.6	618
18–28/12/2012	1,013	661	3.7%	25.3%	31.4%	21.2%	16.6%	1.9%	100.0%	2.8	649
14–22/11/2012	1,020	608	3.4%	21.9%	32.7%	28.7%	12.2%	1.1%	100.0%	2.8	599
17–23/10/2012	1,021	612	3.3%	21.4%	27.6%	23.7%	21.9%	2.2%	100.0%	2.6	599
18–27/9/2012	1,037	640	3.4%	22.9%	22.7%	28.2%	20.5%	2.3%	100.0%	2.6	625
14–18/8/2012	1,019	568	3.6%	18.6%	25.9%	24.9%	21.5%	5.4%	100.0%	2.6	537
17–20/7/2012	1,018	661	1.7%	23.8%	24.7%	21.3%	20.4%	8.0%	100.0%	2.6	608
19–25/6/2012	1,048	667	1.2%	18.7%	26.2%	30.6%	21.8%	1.5%	100.0%	2.5	656
18–24/5/2012	1,001	539	3.3%	16.5%	30.6%	29.5%	17.5%	2.6%	100.0%	2.6	525
17–23/4/2012	1,034	538	1.1%	21.3%	28.4%	31.6%	16.4%	1.2%	100.0%	2.6	532
16–21/3/2012	1,020	582	2.9%	23.8%	28.1%	25.6%	17.8%	1.8%	100.0%	2.7	572
20–22/2/2012	1,012	583	2.2%	17.8%	25.7%	35.4%	17.3%	1.6%	100.0%	2.5	573
12–17/1/2012	1,020	558	1.7%	24.1%	28.2%	30.9%	13.8%	1.2%	100.0%	2.7	552
14–28/12/2011	1,035	508	2.1%	19.6%	30.2%	30.8%	16.2%	1.1%	100.0%	2.6	502
15–21/11/2011	1,023	521	2.5%	21.9%	29.2%	30.6%	14.0%	1.7%	100.0%	2.7	506
13–20/10/2011	1,013	639	2.5%	21.4%	26.8%	32.4%	15.9%	1.0%	100.0%	2.6	632
13–20/9/2011	1,001	613	1.9%	20.3%	30.5%	24.9%	20.6%	1.6%	100.0%	2.6	603
16–23/8/2011	1,009	507	2.6%	19.4%	29.0%	25.8%	21.7%	1.5%	100.0%	2.5	499
21–25/7/2011	1,004	502	2.2%	14.4%	30.0%	31.5%	21.2%	0.7%	100.0%	2.4	499
23–29/6/2011	1,036	606	2.6%	17.6%	28.2%	27.1%	23.3%	1.2%	100.0%	2.5	598
16–18/5/2011	1,007	623	2.5%	18.5%	34.2%	26.2%	17.2%	1.4%	100.0%	2.6	614
22/4–2/5/2011	1,072	768	3.3%	19.1%	32.4%	27.5%	17.5%	0.2%	100.0%	2.6	766
14–23/3/2011	1,006	601	3.1%	22.0%	35.1%	25.5%	14.3%	0.0%	100.0%	2.7	584
21–25/2/2011	1,020	1,020	2.0%	23.9%	33.3%	24.3%	15.7%	0.8%	100.0%	2.7	1,012

18-26/1/2011	1,018	1,018	2.7%	27.2%	37.2%	21.1%	10.5%	1.3%	100.0%	2.9	1,004
17-22/12/2010	1,017	1,017	2.1%	26.8%	35.8%	22.6%	12.1%	0.6%	100.0%	2.8	1,010
17-27/11/2010	1,001	1,001	3.3%	27.7%	38.2%	20.9%	8.8%	1.1%	100.0%	3.0	989
26-30/10/2010	1,009	1,009	2.6%	27.4%	35.4%	24.2%	9.8%	0.6%	100.0%	2.9	1,003
18-24/9/2010	1,010	1,010	4.4%	32.2%	37.3%	17.5%	8.3%	0.3%	100.0%	3.1	1,006
17-20/8/2010	1,006	1,006	3.4%	23.6%	32.9%	24.2%	14.8%	1.2%	100.0%	2.8	994
19-21/7/2010	1,007	1,007	3.2%	26.4%	28.8%	25.4%	15.6%	0.6%	100.0%	2.8	1,000
18-22/6/2010	1,009	1,009	3.6%	27.1%	24.2%	26.8%	17.0%	1.3%	100.0%	2.7	996
18-20/5/2010	1,015	1,015	1.5%	23.6%	31.6%	26.8%	15.8%	0.7%	100.0%	2.7	1,008
26-29/4/2010	1,010	1,010	3.2%	24.7%	33.9%	26.5%	11.1%	0.6%	100.0%	2.8	1,001
23-25/3/2010	1,012	1,012	3.9%	26.5%	33.7%	23.4%	12.0%	0.5%	100.0%	2.9	1,007
22-27/2/2010	1,021	1,021	3.8%	26.3%	34.6%	24.4%	10.1%	0.9%	100.0%	2.9	1,011
18-21/1/2010	1,013	1,013	3.0%	26.5%	30.7%	24.6%	13.7%	1.4%	100.0%	2.8	998
14-17/12/2009	1,000	1,000	4.0%	28.3%	34.9%	21.5%	11.1%	0.2%	100.0%	2.9	998
19-23/11/2009	1,001	1,001	2.9%	27.9%	30.2%	25.6%	12.7%	0.8%	100.0%	2.8	993
20-30/10/2009	1,005	1,005	3.1%	24.3%	32.3%	23.2%	16.0%	1.1%	100.0%	2.8	994
14-17/9/2009	1,004	1,004	3.3%	28.1%	38.8%	20.2%	9.2%	0.4%	100.0%	3.0	1,000
18-24/8/2009	1,020	1,020	2.6%	29.2%	39.9%	20.4%	7.4%	0.4%	100.0%	3.0	1,015
20-23/7/2009	1,003	1,003	4.5%	31.8%	38.7%	15.4%	9.0%	0.5%	100.0%	3.1	997
16-21/6/2009	1,012	1,012	4.1%	26.8%	42.5%	17.8%	8.6%	0.3%	100.0%	3.0	1,009
19-22/5/2009	1,011	1,011	3.2%	30.6%	40.9%	16.0%	9.0%	0.2%	100.0%	3.0	1,009
21-23/4/2009	1,014	1,014	1.8%	22.7%	41.8%	21.4%	12.2%	0.0%	100.0%	2.8	1,014
9-11/3/2009	1,019	1,019	3.0%	21.2%	39.1%	23.6%	12.5%	0.6%	100.0%	2.8	1,013
16-18/2/2009	1,001	1,001	2.7%	24.6%	41.2%	21.7%	8.7%	1.1%	100.0%	2.9	988
19-21/1/2009	1,011	1,011	3.6%	23.5%	36.9%	22.6%	12.9%	0.4%	100.0%	2.8	1,005
16-18/12/2008	1,005	1,005	2.8%	19.8%	38.8%	25.3%	12.6%	0.8%	100.0%	2.7	995
18-24/11/2008	1,006	1,006	3.5%	27.6%	38.7%	19.2%	10.0%	1.0%	100.0%	3.0	995
22-24/10/2008	1,018	1,018	1.8%	20.7%	49.0%	17.7%	10.1%	0.6%	100.0%	2.9	1,010
17-19/9/2008	1,003	1,003	2.3%	22.7%	43.7%	21.6%	8.6%	1.2%	100.0%	2.9	991
18-20/8/2008	1,000	1,000	2.6%	27.6%	39.1%	21.4%	8.2%	1.1%	100.0%	2.9	987
14-16/7/2008	1,181	1,181	3.2%	27.2%	42.3%	17.3%	8.1%	2.0%	100.0%	3.0	1,157
18-20/6/2008	1,003	1,003	3.6%	32.8%	40.5%	15.2%	7.3%	0.7%	100.0%	3.1	996
20-22/5/2008	1,023	1,023	7.5%	42.6%	38.7%	8.2%	2.5%	0.5%	100.0%	3.4	1,018
16-18/4/2008	1,009	1,009	4.4%	44.7%	37.6%	9.0%	3.5%	0.8%	100.0%	3.4	1,001
18-20/3/2008	1,026	1,026	5.9%	46.7%	36.3%	6.9%	3.2%	1.0%	100.0%	3.5	1,015

18-20/2/2008	1,037	1,037	5.1%	44.2%	35.2%	10.4%	3.4%	1.6%	100.0%	3.4	1,021
16-18/1/2008	1,022	1,022	5.9%	42.1%	35.4%	11.7%	3.7%	1.3%	100.0%	3.4	1,007
19-24/12/2007	1,019	1,019	5.6%	39.4%	37.1%	11.8%	4.9%	1.3%	100.0%	3.3	1,006
21-26/11/2007	1,012	1,012	5.1%	46.8%	34.4%	10.1%	3.0%	0.6%	100.0%	3.4	1,002
22-25/10/2007	1,016	1,016	5.1%	51.1%	32.0%	8.4%	2.8%	0.6%	100.0%	3.5	1,007
17-21/9/2007	1,008	1,008	4.9%	48.0%	35.3%	7.5%	3.3%	1.1%	100.0%	3.4	997
20-24/8/2007	1,010	1,010	5.2%	48.0%	34.0%	8.9%	2.5%	1.5%	100.0%	3.5	994
23-26/7/2007	1,007	1,007	5.5%	45.1%	37.9%	7.3%	2.6%	1.7%	100.0%	3.4	990
15-21/6/2007	1,006	1,006	7.1%	44.2%	36.1%	8.2%	3.0%	1.4%	100.0%	3.4	991
16-25/5/2007	1,008	1,008	6.5%	43.8%	38.2%	8.0%	2.8%	0.5%	100.0%	3.4	1,001
17-20/4/2007	1,011	1,011	5.1%	45.0%	37.5%	8.8%	2.0%	1.5%	100.0%	3.4	994
19-21/3/2007	1,007	1,007	5.3%	44.6%	39.8%	7.4%	2.0%	0.8%	100.0%	3.4	998
28/2/2007	1,018	597	5.5%	45.1%	35.6%	9.6%	2.7%	1.6%	100.0%	3.4	586
22-26/2/2007	1,014	1,014	5.2%	37.0%	42.1%	11.1%	3.1%	1.6%	100.0%	3.3	995
22-26/1/2007	1,020	1,020	3.3%	34.5%	44.4%	12.3%	4.6%	0.9%	100.0%	3.2	1,010
18-20/12/2006	1,016	1,016	2.9%	31.4%	45.4%	14.7%	4.2%	1.4%	100.0%	3.1	1,002
20-24/11/2006	1,012	1,012	5.3%	34.3%	41.6%	14.9%	3.4%	0.6%	100.0%	3.2	1,006
23-27/10/2006	1,010	1,010	3.6%	37.5%	40.5%	11.0%	6.0%	1.5%	100.0%	3.2	994
14-20/9/2006	1,013	1,013	3.4%	38.8%	45.9%	7.8%	3.2%	0.9%	100.0%	3.3	1,004
21-23/8/2006	1,019	1,019	4.4%	43.7%	37.6%	11.0%	2.1%	1.3%	100.0%	3.4	1,005
14-21/7/2006	1,006	1,006	5.7%	41.3%	39.5%	8.7%	3.6%	1.2%	100.0%	3.4	994
19-21/6/2006	1,012	1,012	5.9%	46.8%	37.4%	6.8%	2.6%	0.5%	100.0%	3.5	1,007
18-25/5/2006	1,022	1,022	5.2%	43.2%	40.0%	8.1%	2.5%	1.0%	100.0%	3.4	1,011
18-21/4/2006	1,015	1,015	5.5%	49.2%	34.7%	7.3%	2.0%	1.3%	100.0%	3.5	1,001
13-17/3/2006	1,010	1,010	6.0%	44.3%	37.5%	8.0%	2.7%	1.6%	100.0%	3.4	993
22/2/2006	1,026	670	5.9%	48.9%	34.8%	8.1%	1.8%	0.6%	100.0%	3.5	666
17-21/2/2006	1,017	602	5.7%	44.5%	33.6%	12.6%	2.7%	0.9%	100.0%	3.4	597
16-20/1/2006	1,011	1,011	6.7%	42.9%	37.8%	8.2%	2.4%	1.9%	100.0%	3.4	991
15-19/12/2005	1,016	1,016	6.8%	42.0%	37.4%	8.1%	4.0%	1.7%	100.0%	3.4	999
18-23/11/2005	1,019	1,019	4.3%	46.5%	37.7%	7.3%	2.5%	1.8%	100.0%	3.4	999
25-29/10/2005	1,017	1,017	6.2%	50.3%	33.2%	6.5%	2.0%	1.8%	100.0%	3.5	998
26-29/9/2005	1,027	1,027	4.6%	47.2%	36.0%	7.6%	2.6%	2.0%	100.0%	3.4	1,005
22-25/8/2005	1,004	1,004	4.2%	39.1%	33.2%	15.6%	4.7%	3.1%	100.0%	3.2	971

\* The mean value is calculated by quantifying all individual responses into a score of 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 marks according to their degree of positive level, where 1 is the lowest and 5 the highest, and then calculating the sample mean.

Source: Public Opinion Programme, The University of Hong Kong: "Are you satisfied with the overall performance of the HKSAR government? (per poll)" <<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/sargperf/sarg/poll/datatables.html>>.

been a sense of resignation, disappointment and helplessness, not anger. The economy of Hong Kong is a mature one, its middle class probably enjoys one of the highest living standards in Asia, and families at the grassroots level benefit from a fairly generous social security net. Since the negotiations on the territory's future in the early 1980s, people of Hong Kong have well understood that they need to maintain an attractive investment environment, and social stability is essential to such an environment.

On the other hand, in view of the Chinese leadership's rejection of genuine democratization, the community's sense of political impotence in the colonial era continues, and may perhaps have been exacerbated. The vast majority of people of Hong Kong have no intention of confronting the Chinese authorities, and they are proud of China's rising international status; further, they are grateful for Beijing's support of the territory's economy in terms of policy concessions. In contrast to the years before 1997, trust for the central government from people of Hong Kong was sometimes even higher than their evaluation of the HKSAR government's performance. The trend, however, has been reversed since 2008, the Chinese leadership's interferences in Hong Kong and the deteriorating human rights conditions in China have resulted in a decline of this trust, and the fall was more significant in 2012 and 2013.

Radical political participation in general has a limited market in Hong Kong. There is considerable worry and resentment in the community against the mode of political articulation and expression on the part of the League of Social Democrats, People Power, and some young radical activists of the "post-80s" generation. At this stage, the territory's moderate political culture is still an effective deterrence against radical political action, but there is a worry that as young people become more frustrated with their career prospects, the number of young radical activists will grow rapidly.

In the existing electoral system, the target of the radical political parties is one seat in each of the five geographical constituencies based on the support of 10% of the electorate. This is quite an achievable target, as was

demonstrated in the 2012 Legislative Council elections, but the ceiling may soon be reached. Radical young activists usually do not amount to more than a few thousand; moreover, they are not interested in getting organized. Obviously their radical political actions are moderate by European standards.

In the past one or two years, the local media have observed “a resentment against the rich,” which may have an impact on political participation in the territory. There is widespread expression of envy of the rich; newspapers and magazines are full of reports of the lifestyles of the rich. This “resentment against the rich” probably reflects dissatisfaction with the widening gap between rich and poor and the government’s policies favoring the major business groups and real estate tycoons. The latter and the government feel the pressure, hence the gesture of the establishment of a Community Care Fund.<sup>30</sup>

The challenge is not so much the resentment, but the perception of lack of fair competition. The early promulgation of a fair competition law would contribute to a reduction of the resentment. A more significant issue is the government’s commitment in social services which represents income re-distribution. This is probably the most important political question in all politically stable countries. Medical insurance is probably the domestic policy issue that has attracted the most attention in the U.S. in recent years, while in the wake of the global financial tsunami the impact of budget cuts on social security is at the top of the policy agenda in most European countries.

The situation in Hong Kong is rather unusual because the government enjoys frequent budget surpluses and substantial fiscal reserves. The community is therefore reluctant to absorb extra taxation burden, and only asks the government to assume the financial responsibility for

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30 See the comments made by the local tycoons about the resentment against the rich at <http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/02/28/hongkong-li-idUKL3N0LX2GO20140228> and [www.chinadailyasia.com/opinion/2013-11/06/content\\_15096734.html](http://www.chinadailyasia.com/opinion/2013-11/06/content_15096734.html) accessed on April 2, 2014

improvements in social security. To avoid controversies, the Donald Tsang administration dodged the issue of expanding the tax base through the introduction of a consumption tax, and refused to propose a mandatory contributory medical insurance scheme. The C.Y.Leung administration does not have the political support to engage in such testing policy reforms. The political reform issue will keep its hands full. People of Hong Kong therefore do not feel that there are many serious policy issues to engage in community-wide deliberations, and this has a negative impact on political participation.

The political reform issue in 2013 and 2014 will be a severe test; if the Chinese leadership fails to satisfy demands for democratization of people of Hong Kong, the HKSAR government will suffer a severe “legitimacy deficit” in future, and it will not have the necessary political support to promote the reforms the territory needs. All parties will suffer from the policy paralysis and political polarization.

Under these circumstances, people of Hong Kong focus on their works and families. Work pressure is usually high, and leisure time is limited. Therefore, theoretically, there is ample scope for religious activities, neighborhood social interactions, voluntary service etc., to develop, as in the case of Taiwan. After all, human beings are social animals, and political and social participation brings satisfaction in life.