

# **HONG KONG'S IDENTITY FORMATION IN THE LIGHT OF THE UMBRELLA REVOLUTION**

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## **Abstract**

Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution has suggested that unlike Tibet or Xinjiang, the city could become a pioneer in the fight for autonomy from the People's Republic of China, and could start on the long road towards democracy. Protesters questioning the electoral method of the Chief Executive and the Legislative Council and pushing for universal suffrage gathered on the streets in 2014 September to make their voices heard and advertise a new and different Hong Kong that decides for itself, a strengthening of Hong Kong identity.

The thesis uses social media sources, blogs, forums and articles, and analyses surveys of the Hong Kong University Public Opinion Program to be able to measure whether Hong Kong people had or supported a strong sense of a separate identity that could efficiently help the protesters in creating a united opposition movement against the PRC.

The thesis concludes that the lack of powerful social identity resulted in the weakening of determination of Hong Kong's civil society during the Umbrella Revolution. Society is divided on major questions concerning the future of the city, such as the people's trust in the Central and Hong Kong Government, in the one country-two systems politics, and in their perceptions of their ethnic belonging.

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## Introduction

A strong civil society, if mature enough, has the capability to adjust the power between the state and the society, and to lead communication between the government and the civil population. Civil society is strong when it enjoys high autonomy from the state, when it organizes voluntary actions quite spontaneously but without very long intermittent breaks, and when it possesses relatively strong bargaining power.<sup>1</sup> Civil society does not build into a vertical or horizontal relationship, rather it can serve as a herald, a mouthpiece of different interest groups and it holds the power to interfere from this outside position into politics. Civil movements that act on behalf of the society should be regarded as a form of very powerful opposition force; yet they are often marginalised and fail to reach the planned outcome.

Hong Kong's civil society organizations have not been able to reach their democratic aims for nearly two decades, despite the city's vibrant civil society. The most recent example is Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution which apart from showing significant organizational development in civil society still proved to be inefficient. This shows that even if the civil society managed to raise awareness to certain issues and also managed to mobilize huge amount of people, just the number of people and organizational development didn't prove to be enough to achieve a goal. This raises the question whether the failure of democratisation movements in Hong Kong is not the failure of civil society but implies deeper problems.

Hong Kong is a mixture of bits and pieces from the political arena: it embraces market economy but lies under the rule of an authoritarian system, it combines the classical Chinese culture with modern Western influences, and its people are both Chinese and have a local identity that distinguishes them from the rest of China. As a consequence of the British

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<sup>1</sup> Waisman, Carlos H. "Estudios Interdisciplinarios De América Latina Y El Caribe." Civil Society, State Capacity, and the Conflicting 'Logics' of Economic and Political Change. January 1, 2014. Accessed April 12, 2015. <http://www7.tau.ac.il/ojs/index.php/eial/article/view/962>.

colonial rule and the rather democratic politics, it has the right to organize protests and mobilize the population in the defence of Hong Kong's interests. These features had an influence on Hong Kong's civil society; while it has always wanted to be a melting pot of modern, liberal, 'fashionable' ideas, it could separate neither ideologically nor in identity from the mainland.

However, observers of the Hong Kong – Beijing relationship raised the question whether the one country – two systems politics that formulate the main axis of the relationship of China and Hong Kong will come to an end. Since Hong Kong's reintegration to China in 1997, Hong Kong's nationalism and the citizens' sense of social identity have been undergoing changes. This phenomenon can be seen in the increasingly spectacular opposition movements and protests against the expanding role of the PRC over the city's political life in the last two decades. Since 1997, the young and more patriotic people of the society who nurture a stronger sense of Hong Kong identity than their emigrant elders think that emphasizing the existence of a new Hong Kong identity would have benefits for the city and would create the basis for conscious preparedness and self-defence against the PRC's power display.<sup>2</sup> The PRC's shadow over Hong Kong has strengthened a new wave of nationalist consciousness and also the formulation of harder line willingness to nationalist self-expression. Hong Kong's pro-democratic movements could stimulate familiar voices in mainland China's other regions that fight for autonomy from the mainland as well, and obviously China does not want this to happen. The PRC supposedly could oppose this strong development of the Hong Kong identity and gradually cease its one country- two systems politics.

Hong Kong has managed to achieve a larger degree of organization in the civil society, expression of more precise aims and mobilisation of a more patriotic, nationalist movement,

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<sup>2</sup> "The Coming Storm of Hong Kong Nationalism." *Comparativist*. February 1, 2015. Accessed April 27, 2015. <http://www.comparativist.org/the-coming-storm-of-hong-kong-nationalism/>.

but this was still not enough to push through the goals of the Umbrella Revolution; the biggest democratisation movement that influenced the mainland's politics since the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre. Articles and reports on Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution tend to blame the weakness of civil society for not being able to reach the desired goals. These sources state that Hong Kong's civil society is still embracing weak horizontal linkages, civil society organizations are marginalised, and Hong Kong's society is just welfare oriented and focuses on economic performance. However, Hong Kong's civil society has become more organized by 2014, civil society organizations united their forces for the Umbrella Revolution, and the movement managed to mobilize tens of thousands of people.

By examining the mechanisms of the revolution, we can try to understand why protesters failed to put their will across; that apart from the fact that Hong Kong lies under the rule of an authoritarian system, what caused that the people of Hong Kong couldn't efficiently unite in the defence of nationalist and identity centred politics. The thesis assesses the extent to which Hong Kong's social identity has strengthened and what kind of role it had in the democratisation movement. It sheds light on whether Hong Kong's still formulating identity was strong enough to sustain a powerful democratisation movement, or the failure of the Umbrella Revolution is not related to identity issues.

The thesis is divided into four chapters. The first introduces the methodology. The second describes the concepts of identity and elaborates the status of Hong Kong's identity, the past and present of its formation. The third describes the evolution of Hong Kong's civil society, as a major institutional indicator of identity formation. The fourth analyses the Umbrella Revolution and the most important milestones that lead to the outcome, also in a subsection it raises attention to the fragmentation in Hong Kong's society, while another subsection gathers accurate data on how Hong Kong citizens see themselves and the future of the city.

# 1. Methodology

This thesis uses the tools of qualitative research as the study is mainly based on the analysis of articles published in the social media. These reveal Hong Kong society's perceptions that drive it with reference to its identity formation; therefore qualitative research methods fit the best the aim of the paper. Historical analysis is used to follow the development of identity formation, civil society and civil society organizations through time and to analyse the events influencing social identity. To be able to understand the prevailing patterns of Hong Kong's identity formation and evaluate the society's response to changes, one has to look back at the defining factors emerged over time, therefore this methodological approach is the most beneficial to get the wished answers.

The study focuses on the main historical events and processes, such as different protests, socio-economic changes that reveal the patterns, structure and changes of civil society, also the influences the formation of civil society had on the formation of identity. The different patterns are useful in tracing identity formation of Hong Kong citizens and in assessing what had the biggest influence that is still valid in the present. Regarding the research question the thesis answers, it is necessary to focus on the Umbrella Revolution and its main events by introducing the mechanisms of civil society organizations taking part in the movement and the extent of social mobilization they reached. Data from articles, blogs and forums will provide more informal information on the public opinion of people.

To strengthen the argument with officially accepted data, the thesis uses the statistics and figures of The Hong Kong University's Public Opinion Program to evaluate the changes in Hong Kong society, the perceptions of Hong Kong citizens about themselves and measure their belief in Hong Kong's future. These figures are able to accurately show to what extent

Hong Kong citizens identify themselves as belonging to Hongkonger or Chinese ethnicity, to what extent they accept changes imposed by the PRC on them, and whether they believe that the one country-two systems politics is still viable. When the Umbrella Revolution started, it seemed that more people had a single identity that resulted in the polarization of the society, therefore it is necessary to analyze the data published by the Hong Kong University Public Opinion Program which is available on the internet, to have evidence whether a polarization and strengthening of identity formation has happened. The average sample size for every poll is between 1000 and 1100.

Both first and second-hand accounts are used in this study. For firsthand accounts, the thesis uses the records of correspondents, who have been present at the event, and have transferred first hand experiences by posting and publishing their thoughts. Second-hand accounts mean secondary interpretations of the event, observing the content of social media posts, blogs, reports, and the publications of civil society organizations that explain and give comments on the changes and mechanisms of the Hong Kong identity and Umbrella Revolution.

To be able to assess fully to what extent the Umbrella Revolution was regarded as the mouthpiece of the population's will, and to what extent Hong Kong's identity could act as a binding force of the population, these methods of research effectively enhance the analysis of public opinion.



## **2. Concepts of identity**

The concept of identity is challenging to define in politics because of its psychological connotations and therefore elusive meaning, additionally, the notion of collective identity is very hard to pin down in the field of international relations as there are too many factors that influence people's perception of their identity either on individual, or group and society level. In the case of Hong Kong, which has a relatively young society and is still at the beginning of nationalist, identity-related transitions, defining the identity's current status is essential to be able to understand while civil society movements weren't successful and to observe the city's further possibilities and measure its political leverage. Therefore, this chapter will consider some definitions of identity and explain how these definitions fit the framework of Hong Kong.

### **2.1. Definitions of identity**

When one wants to talk about identity without searching for definition in the literature, the very basic things that can be related to this concept are use of common language, sharing a common territory and sharing the same historical memories that formed the society through time. However, in Hong Kong's case, one has to understand this definition more broadly. Hong Kong citizens do not have a long history of creating common memories, and defining common origin is also problematic, since large portion of the population arrived from the mainland, but from different regions and speaking different dialects. Subsequently, Hong Kong people shouldn't have an identity or shouldn't have a separate identity, but still they do

share some commonalities that create a sense of belonging amongst them that make them feel different from the rest of China.

These commonalities are most likely to be created through ad hoc discursive practices that do not necessarily need a basis of long history. To Hall, identities are points of temporary attachments to the subject positions that discursive practices construct. They can be the results of chaining the subjects into the flow of the discourse<sup>3</sup>, even without a stable basis of common historical memories. Therefore, it could be possible that even if there isn't a common origin of people and a strong root of Hong Kong identity that evolved through hundreds of years and survived many challenges, common movements and experiences that stimulate an echo in society to political changes still can have a unifying effect on the society itself. However the effects of these movements will probably not be as strong as a long history of identity formation, moreover, it is not likely to be a quick process that happens in just weeks or months. In Hong Kong's case, over the last two decades protests against the government's certain provisions and projects - such as the protests against a costly rail line construction that links the mainland to the city, or the annual July 1 protests against the Basic Law's Article 23 - have drawn the society together and raised more awareness to purely Hong Kong issues. These events created a discourse that people could join to and build their identity accordingly. This is a process that can help to overcome the missing of common history and engage people in identity formation.

After concluding that Hong Kong's identity is more discourse related without strong historical roots, it is necessary to know more about the more profound characteristics of it, mainly because the territory's case doesn't follow the basic patterns of identity. Like Hall, Smith notes that national identity stresses the importance of a community of birth and native

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<sup>3</sup> Hall, Stuart. "Cultural Identity and Diaspora." Framework 36 (1989): 223-24. Accessed May 6, 2015. <http://sites.middlebury.edu/nydiasporaworkshop/files/2011/04/D-OA-HallStuart-CulturalIdentityandDiaspora.pdf>.

culture including common languages, customs and traditions. He adds that national identity does have another subcategory or model: civic identity. The civic model of national identity includes a historic territory, a legal political community of equal members, articulated in a set of rights and duties and a common civic culture and ideology.<sup>4</sup> When Western values also become prevailing in the society then they can foster and support the desire to participate and help in the development of a civic identity, which also includes an element of willingness of participation in the political life.<sup>5</sup> Hong Kong society has quite a developed civic culture, Western values did become prevailing in Hong Kong's society and helped in the development of a civic identity, however willingness to participate does not mean that there are no divisions in the civil society and the majority of Hong Kong people just support one alternative. To be able to create a united form of identity, a certain society has to go through a process of identification, through which a society adjusts itself to external influences and becomes able to respond to those influences as a united front.

The process of identification works for the homogenization of a given society. This process integrates all of the parties who share common characteristics and common origin with each other. Hall argues that the process of identification is always an articulation, an over-determination, too much or too little, but never the proper amount. To be successful, it requires the application of "othering", the enhancement of differences and the emphasis of certain boundaries.<sup>6</sup> Identities are formed through differences; by recognizing and appreciating those differences. Identification means a conversation with *us* about *them*, who are speechless and rejected to be heard. As Wilkinson and Kitzinger argue, *they* are oppressed and marginalized by a dominant culture, *their* culture and traditions are represented as inferior

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<sup>4</sup> Smith, Anthony D. *National Identity*. Reno: University of Nevada Press, 1991. 11-12.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Hall, Stuart. "Who Needs Identity?" In *Identity: A Reader*, 16-17. New York: Sage Publications, 2000.

to the prevalent identity.<sup>7</sup> Through this process the new identity becomes a fashion that can pull the different groups of a given society together and build a tie of belonging and dependency amongst them. Under the aggressive promotion of the PRC's politics, the aim of Hong Kong's identity would not just be to counterbalance the Chinese mainland alternative, but also to win against it and express its superiority over it, as the only viable alternative. This identification process in Hong Kong has started and there have been some developments, but given the failure of many civil movements and the Umbrella Revolution, it is not clear that people really managed to identify themselves under the values of a Hong Kong identity. The city's society does not show signs that a strong homogenization of society has happened.

The homogenization of society should go hand in hand with the constitution of social identity, as basically they are consequent processes. When the homogenization of society happens, then the people also establish the boundaries of their own identity. As Laclau elaborates the constitution of social identity is also an act of power. Through the process of building up the social identity a given group expresses an act of social violence; it wishes to repress that counter-identity that threatened it. Identity formation does not form a horizontal line of social mechanisms; it is rather a vertical process, in which the new identity gets to the top of the hierarchy.<sup>8</sup> In this sense one could argue that Hong Kong's identity formation currently is not just an act of self-defence, but is also about creating a more popular and stronger identity that the PRC can 'offer'. However, due to the common features of the two cultures, the close economic ties and dependency on each other, for Hong Kong forming a different and also very attractive type of identity is a very difficult problem. There should be a very strong supporting body that has the influence and also the interest to keep the 'project' alive, and remind people of their mission. Apart from rhetoric, propaganda, the most sensitive but also powerful weapon could be a well-defined identity of a nation or group in fighting for

<sup>7</sup> Wilkinson, Sue, and Kitzinger, Celia. "Representing the Other." In *The Applied Theater Reader*, 88. New York: Routledge, 2009.

<sup>8</sup> Laclau, Ernesto. *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. London: Verso, 1990. 33.

common goals. This well-defined identity is able to draw up the guiding lines and give inner meaning to the actions; serve as an engine in the whole process. Hong Kong's identity did not seem to act efficiently as an engine or motivation for people taking part in the revolution.

As Hong Kong's history and development has always been influenced by the international arena and as the city has always been in contact with other international actors, influences coming from abroad had an impact on its identity formation. In the modern era due to political and bureaucratic changes, globalization and the interconnectedness of the world, people tend to form multiple identities. This multiplicity can support and reinforce social identity and the sense of a common destiny by giving more common points, but it can also crosscut them and drown further ambitions in strengthening that given identity.<sup>9</sup> Hong Kong citizens do have multiple identities, but it is questionable whether this multiplicity strengthens the collective social identity of Hong Kong or not, whether it makes it more viable in the face of current challenges and help it to occupy the top position in the hierarchy.

The thesis will argue that even if Hong Kong's society managed to join the discourse that is a prerequisite for identity formation according to Hall's theory and embraces a quite developed civic culture that is also dominated by Western values as Smith pointed out the relationship, still Hong Kong' identity has not reached the level yet when it acted as a dominator alternative and defined the hierarchy as Hall, Wilkinson and Kitzinger and Laclau states the process should happen. It did not constitute itself yet through an act of power; however, the Umbrella Revolution has shown signs towards this direction. Further chapters will elaborate in details why Hong Kong's identity proved to be little for sustaining ambitious democratic aims and challenging the rule of the PRC.

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<sup>9</sup> Smith, Anthony D. "National Identity and the Idea of European Unity." *International Affairs (Royal Institute of International Affairs 1944-)* 68, no. 1 (1992): 58.

## 2.2. Past and present of Hong Kong's identity

Before the Umbrella Revolution, the level of Hong Kong citizens' consciousness of Hong Kong identity was obscured by different opinions within the society and the approximately 150-year history of colonial memories. At the beginning of Hong Kong's transition into an economic and trade centre, the urge to participate in politically related affairs stood at a low level. The British colonial system didn't foster the blooming of a very self-conscious and ideologically separate form of Hong Kong nationalism, Hong Kong identity formation. The Umbrella Revolution in 2014 has manifested these problems and raised the question whether the territory's relatively young identity was convincing enough to make the whole population willing to fight for the same cause or not. This section will introduce the most important milestones of the city's identity formation and will reflect on the patterns that also define citizens' identity today.

The characteristics and main features of Hong Kong identity are still obscure and the commonalities with the culture of the mainland make it even more problematic. However, for more than 150 years Hong Kong has been a separate political entity, which had huge effects on the creation of roots of a quite open form of identity.<sup>10</sup> During the British colonial times, Hong Kong citizens didn't feel the need to form an aggressive alternative that counterbalanced Western values. The colonial government didn't impose harsh regulations on Hong Kong citizens after 1967, the breakout of labour protest and Leftist riot. Instead, it tried to embrace a more open attitude towards the people who weren't satisfied with being treated as refugees or emigrants. It didn't force the people to assimilate with the British culture, nor did pose religious requirements but mostly focused on economic welfare that placed the society into a relative safe position.

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<sup>10</sup> Lee, Francis, and Joseph Man Chan. "Political Attitudes, Political Participation, and Hong Kong Identities after 1997." *Issues&Studies* 42, no. 2 (2005): 2.

The relevant changes that caused a surge in nationalism and identity formation happened after Hong Kong's reintegration to the mainland, and after economic hardships that rocked the trust in Hong Kong's government and raised fears that the city would not be able to continue its free life under the authoritarian rule of China. The economic problems shook the self-confidence and the feeling of superiority of Hong Kong; it had to understand that things are changing and that it needs to make preparations against the emerging challenges. Hong Kong people started to actively look for traces of belonging after 1997; they wanted to reconstruct their identity for shielding themselves against external influences.<sup>11</sup>

Today Hong Kong's identity that mostly derives its characteristics from the economy focused past enhances affluence, openness to the world, professionalism and pragmatism, decorated with certain elements of a global identity that come from connections and strong relations with Western countries. Subsequently, it also refers to civil liberties, the rule of law, respect for human rights, transparent and accountable government, democratic institutions, political pluralism, free media and free speech.<sup>12</sup> A whole set of Western values. It has remained distinct and opposed to Chinese identity and served as a shield against influences of Chinese bureaucracy and authoritarianism. Kaeding argues that today's Hong Kong identity has to adapt itself to different threats and changes in this new era of the reconstruction of global order, and the most important amongst these changes is the integration with China. Still, the civic part of the Hong Kong identity has become quite resilient by now, despite the absence of full democracy.<sup>13</sup> However, quite resilient does not mean resilient or efficient enough.

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<sup>11</sup> Matthews, Gordon, Eric Kit-wai Ma, and Tai-lok Lui. *Hong Kong, China - Learning to Belong to a Nation*. New York: Routledge, 2008. 40.

<sup>12</sup> Cheung, Anthony. "The Hong Kong System under One Country Being Tested: Article 23, Governance Crisis and the Search for a New Hong Kong Identity." In *The July 1 Protest Rally: Interpreting a Historic Event*, 55. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Kaeding, Malte Philipp. "Identity Formation in Taiwan and Hong Kong – How Much Difference, How Many Similarities?" In *Taiwanese Identity in the 21st Century: Domestic, Regional and Global Perspectives*, 258-259. London: Routledge, 2011.

The Umbrella Revolution in 2014 was the biggest organized democracy movement in the 21st century and after the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre through which Hong Kong tried to adapt itself to the new challenges. Although, news soared that Hong Kong could have become an exception that breaks the authoritarian ruling of mainland China if it reaches its political goal, but finally the event ended up by producing the exactly opposite result. The revolution itself couldn't mobilize society to the extent needed; it proved to be too difficult to unify the people when they are divided on major questions concerning society. The question arises whether the civil society and the lack of a stable Hong Kong identity can still be blamed that the revolution was so easily ended by the PRC and did not challenge seriously the current balance of power.

Hong Kong has not gone through a classical decolonization process that could offer an opportunity to strengthen and define its identity along traumas, or deep historical guidelines, and that could have formed social mechanism towards a more efficient model, since after the end of British rule, China immediately took over the leading role and started to form the region's politics to fit the interests of the mainland. Hong Kong didn't have the time and the chance to carve out full independence to itself.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, many changes that other 'more developed' societies experienced are new to Hong Kong people; there are no institutional or bureaucratic buffer zones that could slow down the impacts of violent political changes. Now, reunification with China very broadly could be understood as a form of colonization again, where the violent bureaucratic and political changes force the population to grow up to the tasks lying in front of it.

In sum, the past and present status of the city's identity shows that Hong Kong's 'act of power' - which could have been a decolonization process - has not happened; therefore in the lack of an enforcing framework Western values couldn't become organic elements of the

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<sup>14</sup> Chan, Ming K. "The Politics of Hong Kong's Imperfect Transition: Dimensions of the China Factor." In *The Challenge of Hong Kong's Reintegration with China*, 15. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, HKU, 1997.



identity either. Economic changes resulted in dependency on the mainland, which also had an influence on further decision making. Multiplicity has been and still is a defining indicator of Hong Kong's identity.

### 3. Evolution of social movements

In the observation of social identity, looking at the development of civil society is essential. The different civil society organizations can give the institutional framework for the civil society to reach common goals and foster a common understanding and common bond amongst citizens. Without civil society the formation of social identity is likely to bump into more obstacles, and is likely to proceed more slowly if we also assume a lack of other forcing and violent external factors. Civil society and civil society organizations have the tools to make this process smoother and act as bricks in the building of social consciousness. The observation of civil society and of the emergence of civil society organizations has to take into consideration the first steps also from before the British colonial era. Therefore, the aim of this chapter is to briefly introduce the evolution of civil society organizations in Hong Kong and show how those changes influenced the citizens' identity through time.

#### 3.1. Social movements in the colonial era

Hong Kong has served in history as a major port for Chinese living in the south of China, who engaged in trading abroad. Due to its interconnectedness with other countries and its vivid economic and cultural life, it soon became a trade and economic centre that based its reputation for centuries.<sup>15</sup> Even before the establishment of the People's Republic of China, many people decided to move to the city from the surrounding territories, to seize better

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<sup>15</sup> Wong, Siu-lun. "Hong Kong, China." Lecture, PECC-ABAC Conference on "Demographic Change and International Labor Mobility in the Asia Pacific Region: Implications for Business and Cooperation", Seoul , March 25, 2008. 2.

opportunities to trading. After the establishment of the PRC in 1949, Hong Kong has often served as a last resort for emigrants, who escaped from the communist grip of mainland China to establish their new life in the city.<sup>16</sup> These people decided to start over their lives, to isolate themselves from the violent and unstable political turmoil series and propaganda campaigns that from time to time pushed them to insecurity, poverty and made them to fight for controversial demagogic aims. They decided to start over in Hong Kong because of its closeness to the mainland, its economic reputation and its British colonial status that the city gained after 1842.

The British colonial system allowed the population to pursue its initially simplistic aims of earning enough money to make ends meet and sending children to schools. The first Chinese settlers who arrived to the city were poor, unskilled people from the working class; they soon were employed by factories. Later, during the propaganda campaigns of mainland China – such as the Cultural Revolution, the Hundred Flowers Campaign - and because of the planned economic requirements expressed in the Great Leap Forward Campaign more and bigger waves of immigrants arrived to the city. This time many of them were middle class workers, teachers, scientists and professionals of a certain field.<sup>17</sup> This led to a very fast restructuring of the society, Hong Kong immigrants have become tied intellectually to Western nations through the British rule, which entailed a significant intellectual development and blooming of opportunities: studying, cooperating with other professionals and earning experience in other Western countries.<sup>18</sup> Through this transition, from a rather passive, storehouse-like role, Hong Kong has evolved into an active economic player that defines the economy of the region and even the continent, and holds great potentials for further

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<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 3.

<sup>17</sup> "APMRN - Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific - Hong Kong." APMRN - Migration Issues in the Asia Pacific - Hong Kong. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://www.unesco.org/most/apmrnwp7.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

development. Hong Kong's international profile has always been determined by its economic performance, and this has characterized the population's political participation.

The formation of civil society goes hand in hand with market economy in most of the cases. Market economy is a facilitator of a more open and more vivid social life that entails a more expressed wish of the population to become the part of the organism of a given society.<sup>19</sup> It is a sociological counterpart of the market and the development of democracy therefore composes a pillar of the economic, political and sociological "trio".<sup>20</sup> However, in Hong Kong this process has happened in contrast with the general order; market economy forewent the emergence of enhanced political participation and strong awareness of political shifts. The road of civil society formation has been quite jolting in the last fifty years,<sup>21</sup> and Hong Kong's civil society now seems to move towards a more conscious and politically aware stance.<sup>22</sup> Changes in the civil society's structure, the work of NGOs, the increase in the number of protests and the increase of more politically sensitive social movements have changed Hong Kong citizens' perceptions of themselves and the process of their identity formation.

Although Hong Kong has hosted several protests, the role of civil society stayed debated and questionable. One could say that these are the consequences of a badly organized, fragmented civil society, but in this case one has to ask whether civil society's fragmentation reflected upon the fragmentation of the society itself. Civil society organizations can't reach united goals until the society itself does stand under the flag of the same united goals.

One could consider the question that what could entail this situation in a city embracing market economy and Western values. Scholars explain this by the underdeveloped

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<sup>19</sup> Gordon White, "Civil society, democratization and development (I): Clearing the analytical ground," in *Civil Society in Democratization*, ed. Peter Burnell and Peter Calvert (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 6.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Harrison, Godfrey, and Lydia K.H. So. "The Background to Language Change in Hong Kong." In *One Country, Two Systems, Three Languages*. Exeter: Short Run Press, 1997. 9.

<sup>22</sup> Ma, Ngok. "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong Paradox and Duality." *The Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 2 (2008): 158. Accessed April 26, 2015.

political culture and the weak organizational capacity of the civil society in Hong Kong.<sup>23</sup> As the city has always offered home for the Chinese emigrants who arrived more in the pursuit of material stability than in search for ideological freedom, people who experienced severe hardships mostly concentrated on the well-being of their families. Until the government could fulfil their expectations and could offer a more or less stable socio-economic perspective, citizens didn't engage in creating an active and powerful civil society. Citizens concentrated more on maintaining their family values and nurturing their kinship relations in case of emerging problems than considering political participation as a solution.

It could be argued that stressing the importance of the family is an outcome of the Confucianist traditions that China emigrants continued to practice even after leaving the mainland, but on the other hand it is also because of their troubled pasts and negative historical memories. In times of traumas and crises, family ties are the most important, and when arriving to a new place into a new society, relatives tend to think that they can only trust their own family members. The process of blending into a bigger group can take quite a long time, also depending on the size and structure of a given family.

Even if very relevant shifts in civil society didn't challenge the colonial government that does not mean that grassroots organizations or grassroots actions didn't take place at all. Resistance movements and campaigns emerged and amplified the voices of those who were not one hundred percent satisfied with the prevalent socio-economic situation.<sup>24</sup> These movements may not be significant when considering their leverage on changing the regime at the time; however they are important in observing the development of Hong Kong's civil society. Before 1970 the active and efficient political participation of civil society movements

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<sup>23</sup> Ma, Ngok. "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong Paradox and Duality." *The Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 2 (2008): 158. Accessed April 26, 2015.

<http://www.tfd.org.tw/export/sites/tfd/files/publication/journal/dj0402/155-176.pdf>.

<sup>24</sup> Chiu, Stephen, and Tai Lok Lui. "Changing Political Opportunities and the Shaping of Collective Action: Social Movements in Hong Kong." In *The Dynamics of Social Movements in Hong Kong*. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, HKU, 2000. 2.

remained at an elementary level in terms of efficiency. The level of institutionalization of the civil society organizations wasn't carefully and meticulously formulated yet.<sup>25</sup>

However, Hong Kong citizens have always felt a need to create channels of communication between each other who had the same problems or embraced the same goals, and the higher bureaucracy. Since the city was ceded to Great-Britain, its civil society organization chain vitalized, welfare organizations and guilds were created. Local 'problem-solving' groups, religious organizations, welfare providers were operating in the city from 1842. Guilds of various trades were set up, some of them established proper business regulations, while others tried to fight for the society's rights and amplify the voices of the victims of illegal, irregular actions. Sometimes these organizations even managed to stage strikes in the pursuit of their clients' goal.<sup>26</sup>

Until the 1950s the main activities of civil society organizations were characterized by welfare provision. Later, after the establishment of the PRC, the large number of refugees arriving to the city triggered a change and raised the need for the reorganization of the civil society. The then existing institutions were not enough to be able to fulfil the requirements and remedy the problems of refugees, they needed help from other actors, human rights organizations, humanitarian aid agencies mainly seating abroad. Mutual experience sharing and pooling of capabilities resulted in more conscious route of development in the future. However, in this period the "refugee mentality" of the local population remained the most defining binding force and this posed obstacles in front of political mobilization.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Lam, Wai. *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong: The Paradox of Activism and Depoliticization*. Armonk, N. Y.: M.E. Sharpe, 2004. pp. 221.

<sup>26</sup> Lee, Jik-Joen. "The Colonial Government of Hong Kong's Development of Social Welfare: From Economic and Social Service Perspectives - Working Paper." *Social Welfare Practice and Research Centre - The Chinese University of Hong Kong*, March 1, 2009.

<sup>27</sup> "World History Connected | Vol. 10 No. 1 | Catherine S. Chan: Narrating the Hong Kong Story: Deciphering Identity through Icons, Images and Trends." January 1, 2013. Accessed May 3, 2015. <http://worldhistoryconnected.press.illinois.edu/10.1/chan.html>.

Urbanization and industrialization in the 1970s brought about an expansion in the social welfare provision.<sup>28</sup> The government took up a central role and it provided opportunity for the civil society organizations to work together with governmental institutions. The two parties divided the work between themselves, the government provided the funds and the civil society organizations offered the services.<sup>29</sup> This interconnectedness and dependency prevented the civil society organizations from expanding in number, but it helped them to regard the state as a beneficial actor that offers quite broad margin for self-realizing activities.

There was no need to form stronger ties horizontally. Due to the outstanding economic performance of the city and the benevolent relationship between the state and the civil sector there was no relevant pressure that urged categorical changes. As above stated, this does not mean that grassroots organizations, or social activism was totally non-existent. The growing wealth, socio-economic development and stability replaced the refugee mentality, citizens started to think about Hong Kong as their homeland that they have to preserve in its unique status.<sup>30</sup>

During the 1980s, Hong Kong citizens had quite adequate level of political knowledge, yet they didn't consider political participation as much a right as developed Western democracies at the same time.<sup>31</sup> They had to follow political shifts out of economic considerations, but took a rather passive role when it came to them mobilizing under the flag of a certain goal. This kind of conscious, politically oriented mobilization remained quite unfamiliar to them through a long time.<sup>32</sup> Hong Kong civil society organizations showed poor horizontal linkages with other civil society organizations during the colonial era, so the civil

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Fong, Brian C..H. "State-Society Conflicts under Hong Kong's Hybrid Regime Governing Coalition Building and Civil Society Challenges." *Asian Survey* 53, no. 5 (2013): 860-61. Accessed April 25, 2015. [https://www.ied.edu.hk/flass/fas\\_upload/userfiles/pdf/State-Society Conflicts under Hong Kongs Hybrid Regime Governing Coalition Building and Civil Society Challenges.pdf](https://www.ied.edu.hk/flass/fas_upload/userfiles/pdf/State-Society Conflicts under Hong Kongs Hybrid Regime Governing Coalition Building and Civil Society Challenges.pdf).

<sup>31</sup> Turner, Matthew. "60s/90s Dissolving the People." In *Narrating Hong Kong Culture and Identity*, 36. Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 1995.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

society missed one of the main factors according to Kamrava and O'mora which is important to be able to reach long-term achievements.<sup>33</sup>

### 3.2. Social movements after reintegration to China

Hong Kong became a very prosperous city in the 1980s. What brought about a very relevant change was the Joint Declaration between the PRC and Great-Britain in 1984, which officially declared Hong Kong's reintegration to the mainland. The declaration was enacted from July 1, 1997 officially. It was obvious that reunification with the PRC would definitely change the region's political landscape; the absence of preparation, concrete and internationally recognized plans about the future would not be able to provide Hong Kong full autonomy.

New organizations were formed for the defence of Hong Kong's democratic image, such as the Meeting Point or the Hong Kong Affairs Society.<sup>34</sup> New social and political movements brought the liberal CSOs together, resulting in the formation of the Joint Committee for the Promotion of Democratic Government in 1986. The JCPDG became a collective organization for ninety-five groups which came from different sectors and embraced different aims. It was a platform for bigger cooperation and had the role to coordinate the democracy movements from 1986 to 1990.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Kamrava, Mehran, and Frank O'mora. "Civil Society and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Latin America and the Middle East." *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 5 (1998): 896. Accessed April 12, 2015. [file:///C:/Documents and Settings/HJeni/Dokumentumok/Downloads/comp pol\\_latin america.pdf](file:///C:/Documents%20and%20Settings/HJeni/Dokumentumok/Downloads/comp%20pol_latina%20america.pdf).

<sup>34</sup> Ma, Ngok. "Civil Society and Democratization in Hong Kong Paradox and Duality." *The Journal of Democracy* 4, no. 2 (2008): 161. Accessed April 26, 2015.

<http://www.tfd.org.tw/export/sites/tfd/files/publication/journal/dj0402/155-176.pdf>.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.



The first direct elections in the Legislative Council in 1991 prompted the establishment of democratic political parties; Hong Kong also supported the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests. The repression of the protest by mainland China entailed a decrease of interference into the mainland's politics, but also strengthened the need to protect basic rights and the rule of law in Hong Kong through the establishment of two institutions: the Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor and the Hong Kong Human Rights Commission.<sup>36</sup>

1997, the year of Hong Kong's reintegration to the PRC was accompanied by another very important event that influenced the region's political changes: the Asian crisis. The HKSAR government was forced to reduce funding for various services, and the government's crisis solving steps didn't prove to be the most calculated and pragmatic. The over exaggerated opening of economy and laissez-faire reforms of the market launched competition between profit-making companies and non-profit organizations in bidding for provision of public services.<sup>37</sup> The society posed increasing challenges to the government, questioned its capabilities and capacities and finally judged it as ineffective and weak in fighting for the interests of the population. Many CSOs asked for universal suffrage and political accountability, for fear that politicians are pressured by the mainland.<sup>38</sup>

From the 1990s, due to the rather polarizing political changes, Hong Kong citizens have become increasingly sensitive about their identity; they tried to other themselves from mainland China mostly by emphasizing the different trajectory of political development and the memories of colonial development. Hong Kong citizens had the chance to be both Chinese and Hongkongers, and because of the city's international economic role they also embraced a very international form of identity. The city's openness and interconnectedness with the world

<sup>36</sup> "Rule of Law Protector Should Not Be Left Unprotected." Hong Kong Human Rights Monitor. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://www.hkhrm.org.hk/english/reports/press/pr200999.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Civicus Civil Society Index Report for The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. *The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region: A Vibrant but Loosely Organized Civil Society*. 2006. pp. 17-19. Accessed April 25, 2015. [http://www.civicus.org/new/media/CSI\\_HongKong\\_Country\\_Report.pdf](http://www.civicus.org/new/media/CSI_HongKong_Country_Report.pdf).

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

created networks with other countries, Hong Kong's Chinese but Western colourfulness attracted thousands of tourists and businessmen. This made Hong Kong citizens to be proud of their city, their way of life, and also to be protective of what they achieved. One of the most important milestones in the development of the civil society is the July 1, 2003 protest. By introducing the national security bill which was formulated in accordance with Article 23 of the Basic Law and was meant to restrict civil liberties, the Tung administration's actions stimulated public anger amongst people. More than half a million marched on the streets protesting against the administration.<sup>39</sup>

According to Fong, the rise of civil society activism in Hong Kong can be seen from four indicators. First, expansion of the number of civil society groups and protests, the channels of citizen action have expanded to new platforms, such as think-tanks, internet mobilization and the involvement of religious groups. The extent of citizens' participation has also grown bigger. The civil society's political agenda has changed, apart from traditional activities now they also interfere into environmental protection, culture, heritage protection and even more ambitious political activities.<sup>40</sup> This development can be proved by the response of the society to the outbreak of severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) in 2003 that managed to stir up emotions and lead the society towards an increased feeling of belonging.<sup>41</sup> From March 11 up to 6 June, a total 1750 cases have been identified.<sup>42</sup> First Hong Kong had to experience the repercussions of an economic crisis and then the helplessness against the epidemic. This situation was unexpected to a city that served as an economic fortress in the past, and its people believed that by working hard they can avoid

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<sup>39</sup> Zheng, Yushuo. "Introduction: The Causes and Implications of the July 1 Rally in Hong Kong." In *The July 1 Protest Rally: Interpreting a Historic Event*. Hong Kong: City University of Hong Kong Press, 2005. pp. 1-2.

<sup>40</sup> Fong, Brian C.H. "State-Society Conflicts under Hong Kong's Hybrid Regime Governing Coalition Building and Civil Society Challenges." *Asian Survey* 53, no. 5 (2013): 860-61. Accessed April 25, 2015. [https://www.ied.edu.hk/flass/fas\\_upload/userfiles/pdf/State-Society Conflicts under Hong Kongs Hybrid Regime Governing Coalition Building and Civil Society Challenges.pdf](https://www.ied.edu.hk/flass/fas_upload/userfiles/pdf/State-Society Conflicts under Hong Kongs Hybrid Regime Governing Coalition Building and Civil Society Challenges.pdf). pp. 862.

<sup>41</sup> "A Major Outbreak of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome in Hong Kong — NEJM." *New England Journal of Medicine*. May 15, 2003. Accessed April 29, 2015. <http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMoa030685#t=article>.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

long-lasting problems or a feeling of instability. Civil society found basis for improvement and took actions, which entailed the need for more organized, pre-event and professional planning. It simultaneously tried to influence public policies, decisions about the methods of selecting the chief executive. As the consequence of the SARS epidemic, more organizations started to campaign for collective environmental protection.<sup>43</sup> They criticised the government, people started to question whether the politicians they chose for protecting their rights have the leverage to do so. Civil society organizations became more ambitious. The government encouraged business elites to cooperate with NGOs.

In sum, Hong Kong's civil society has become pluralistic.<sup>44</sup> This means that participants come from very different walks of life; a bigger but more scattered network has come to existence. According to a survey published in 2003, there were 16,662 civil society organizations in 14 fields, their total annual expenditure constituted about 1.8% of Hong Kong's GDP in 2002 and their full-time employees made up about 7.9% of the total workforce. The amount of service they offered was substantial: 83% of primary schools, 68% of secondary schools and most of the special schools were operated by civil society organizations at that time.<sup>45</sup> However, the main weaknesses of civil society - funding, leadership and management skills; transparency and accountability, and relation with the government – showed that it didn't become an independent political actor. Civil society organizations now are quite marginalized by the PRC Central Government; they suffer from internal division and little turf battles that scatter their resources. Organizations are highly dependent on government funding.

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<sup>43</sup> Tracy, Megan. "Food, Environment and Health Post-SARS: Corporate Expectations and Participation." CHINA ENVIRONMENT SERIES, no. 7 (2005): 61. Accessed May 26, 2015.

[http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CES 7 Commentaries, pp. 61-71.pdf.](http://www.wilsoncenter.org/sites/default/files/CES%207%20Commentaries.pdf)

<sup>44</sup> Wai-man, Lam, Percy Luen-tim, and Wilson Wong. "Civil Society." In *Contemporary Hong Kong Government and Politics: Expanded Second Edition*, 181-184. Vol. 2. Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012.

<sup>45</sup> Liu, Eva. "Survey." In *Study on Third-Sector Landscape in Hong Kong*, 448-450. Central Policy Unit, 2004.

One can see through the development of Hong Kong's civil society that civil society organizations have served as both direct and indirect supporters of identity formation through time. They collected and fulfilled the requirements of the people and gave margin for the formation of common interests and common goals. Civil society tried to be as normative and preemptive in working for the common interests of the society as possible; therefore it could serve as a perfect basis for nurturing a community sense, a common identity. However, even if Hong Kong's civil society has become quite active by now, it still does not have enough leverage to push through its goals about the democratization of the city. It does not enjoy the support of influential, powerful political actors. Reuschemeyer and Huber argued that if there is no significant division in the elite class of the society that would also result in the division of interests, then it is too difficult for the civil society to reach any serious or enduring changes.<sup>46</sup>

Civil society organizations in order to be effective have to create a horizontal organizational chain of interconnectedness with other civil society organizations and actors that are democratically governed. They also have to fulfil relevant political agendas to put pressure on the state, to gain bigger leverage in negotiations and force it to open up. Civil society has to work its way through and has to cooperate with political society, to polarize actions and transfer these actions to a higher level.<sup>47</sup> These conditions would result in a united front of social opinions and civil interests that could respond to political changes with calculation and would help in drawing up alternatives.

What one can see through the timeline of the evolution of Hong Kong's civil society, is that the civil society of the colonial era was characterized by a refugee mentality that disappeared by the time the territory became economically influential. People started to think

<sup>46</sup> Rueschemeyer, Dietrich, and Evelyn Huber. *Capitalist Development and Democracy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992. 216.

<sup>47</sup> Kamrava, Mehran, and Frank O'mora. "Civil Society and Democratization in Comparative Perspective: Latin America and the Middle East." *Third World Quarterly* 19, no. 5 (1998): 895. Accessed April 12, 2015. file:///C:/Documents and Settings/HJeni/Dokumentumok/Downloads/comp pol\_latin america.pdf.

about Hong Kong as their home, they started to have emotional ties to it. After the city was reintegrated to China, Hong Kong citizens felt important to improve cooperation for the defence against the PRC, they started to question the government and the extent of civil society activism has increased. This proves that even if significant organizational development has happened, there are other obstacles that prevent pro-democracy advocates to reach their goal.

## 4. Analysis of the Umbrella Revolution

The Umbrella Revolution or Umbrella protest, one of the most relevant events in the city's identity formation process, started on September 26, 2014 when hundreds of students gathered in a courtyard in Hong Kong, demanding for an end of Chinese control over Hong Kong politics. The one country-two systems politics allowed Hong Kong to maintain some sort of independence that mainland people do not have and are not likely to have in the near future, such as the freedom of press or the right to assemble.<sup>48</sup>

The Umbrella Revolution has turned the city's financial district into a conflict zone. Tens of thousands of Hong Kong residents have occupied major points overall the city, stopping business and halting traffic. The major triggering cause of the protests was that Beijing has rejected the previous agreement to grant Hong Kong open elections of the chief executive by 2017 and the Legislative Council by 2020 agreed in the Basic Law in 1984. People gathered to the streets to demand universal suffrage. Their final goal was to end protests only if Beijing changes its electoral guidelines and Leung Chun-Ying, the pro-Beijing chief executive, steps down.<sup>49</sup> The next subsections introduce the most important features of the revolution, the fragmentation in society supported by data from The Hong Kong University's Public Opinion Program.

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<sup>48</sup> Brinn, Katie. "Hong Kong's 'umbrella Revolution' Explained." Yahoo! News. January 1, 2014. Accessed May 2, 2015. <http://news.yahoo.com/katie-couric-now-i-get-it-umbrella-revolution-175949877.html>.

<sup>49</sup> Kaiman, Jonathan. "Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution - the Guardian Briefing." The Guardian. September 30, 2014. Accessed May 2, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/30/-sp-hong-kong-umbrella-revolution-pro-democracy-protests>.

#### 4.1. Basic features of the revolution

Basically, Hong-Kong's top political post, the chief-executive is elected by a nominating committee, from which most of the members are pro-Beijing elites driven by personal interests and are living under significant extent of interconnectedness with the mainland. When Hong Kong was reunited with the mainland again, Beijing promised to respect the agreed terms and provide universal suffrage in the election of the chief executive and the Legislative Council. Unfortunately, as the mainland's influence grew bigger in the region and it did not have to rely on the city to sustain its economic stability and economic attractiveness, Beijing felt that it could break its promise. In August 2014, it decided to change the terms of the agreement and turned it to its own benefit. According to these changes only some previously agreed and committee elected candidates could run for the post, and obviously these candidates would be politicians who support the mainland's efforts and plans, and work for the benefit of the PRC in the city.

The protesters moved to the streets under the organization and mobilization of Occupy Central Love and Peace, which mostly recruited supporters amongst students. This campaign was assessed in the international media as something more than just a protest for open elections. According to correspondents, the event is a milestone in the future formation of relationship between the city and Beijing. Over the past years Beijing's influence on Hong Kong's life has been increasing, citizens think that they will become politically marginalised and that the city is already used for its economic role it has in the region. Displeasure over current state of affairs and the strengthening ties with the mainland had a huge impact on Hong Kong's wish to other itself from China.

Hong Kong is a famous touristic place that attracts thousands of visitors from abroad and from the mainland as well. This causes an overburdening of Hong Kong's resources and as the SARS epidemic also raised serious questions about environment-protection, today this issue of overburdening has become a topic of self-expression of Hong Kong people. Many mainland citizens want to move to the city in the hope of finding better living conditions, better work and higher salary. Since the city has been suffering from the economic consequences of two big-scale economic crises as well, its citizens do not welcome more workforce and fiercer competition. The average level of the standard of living has been decreasing in the last ten years, the dependency on Chinese trade agreements and cooperation threatens Hong Kong's economic leading role. This instability could facilitate the mainland's ambition to assimilate Hong Kong into the common Chinese identity and to end the one-country two-system politics. Hong Kong has become overpopulated, it is struggling to get back its previous economic leverage which could entitle it to stand alone and isolated, and work for its own benefits while enjoying some privileges.

The Occupy Central movement was initiated by Benny Tai Yiu-ting, who works as an associate professor of law at the Hong Kong University, and the first steps for establishing the movement can be traced back to 2013. On 16 January the same year, Benny Tai published an article in the Hong Kong Economic Journal in which he proposed plans for an act of civil disobedience with the aim of pressuring the government if changes are not implemented in the field of universal suffrage proposals.<sup>50</sup> The blockade plan got the support of the Democratic Party; it declared officially that this goal is worth supporting. Benny Tai, the Democratic Party and also some lawmakers who supported the idea agreed that civil disobedience is a necessary step in order to have enough leverage to push through demands against the government. According to the original plan, the movement wished to organize a non-violent

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<sup>50</sup> Griffiths, James. "TIMELINE: How Occupy Central's Democracy Push Turned into an Umbrella Revolution." South China Morning Post. October 4, 2014. Accessed May 4, 2015. <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1612900/timeline-how-occupy-centrals-democracy-push-turned-umbrella>.



protest of approximately 10, 000 people who would take an oath that the event wouldn't turn into violence and that they would surrender to the police. The plan was a little obscure and it didn't offer a clear-cut solution or bottom line to how to force the government to table a universal suffrage proposal.<sup>51</sup>

Even if the protest didn't have a singular leader, since the movement managed to mobilize a significant portion of the Hong Kong society, yet it had some leading figures and sought the support of some organizations to keep the revolutionary spirit up. Benny Tai, Chan Kin-Man and Chu Yiu-Ming were leaders of the Occupy Central Love and Peace movement; they were all important because of their political experience and self-restrained, realistic manner. The most influential student leaders of the movement, Joshua Wong and Alex Chao, embraced a more idealistic and radical style, they are politically inexperienced and tend to pursue less practical strategies.

Joshua Wong is the leader of Scholarism, he has been a very active pro-democracy activist. In 2011, for the creation of a movement, he mobilized 120, 000 people to demonstrate against the PRC's patriotic education proposal. He is a young, ambitious person, who believes that every 'battle' has to be considered as the final one to have the needed determination to fight for certain aims.<sup>52</sup> Scholarism is one of the most important student organizations that have taken part in the protests. The personality of Joshua Wong, his public statements and interviews, the campaigns he led display significant consciousness of social identity. Alex Chow is the leader of Scholarism's closest ally, the Hong Kong Federation of Students, who thinks along more radical lines as well. He believes that the annual protests of

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<sup>51</sup> But, Joshua, and Colleen Lee. "'Occupy Central' Blockade Plan Gets Democratic Party's Support." South China Morning Post. February 19, 2013. Accessed May 4, 2015. <http://www.scmp.com/news/hong-kong/article/1153519/occupy-central-blockade-plan-gets-democratic-partys-support>.

<sup>52</sup> Kaiman, Jonathan. "Who Guides Hong Kong's 'Umbrella Revolution' Pro-democracy Movement?" The Guardian. September 30, 2014. Accessed May 4, 2015. <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/sep/30/hong-kong-pro-democracy-protest-leaders-occupy>.

the city need to be upgraded and developed into a more extreme form of opposition to be able to stimulate reactions and gain support.<sup>53</sup>

These people, the leaders of the movement, who expressed quite harsh opinions against the PRC's politics and managed to work in cooperation were supposed to be willing to go to jail for defending their beliefs. However, this has not been the case when it came to the decision to continue or to stop the movement. Even if the leaders of Occupy Central still have memories about the 1989 Tiananmen Square Massacre, therefore taking part in a democratisation movement has a special meaning to them, and brings a common sense of mission, the Umbrella Revolution didn't reach the same level of effort as the Tiananmen incident. It is unclear to what extent leaders of the Umbrella Revolution were able to transmit the deep and thorough heritage of the Tiananmen incident in fighting for aims and to what extent could the Umbrella Revolution become a part of formulation of a common identity.

The protests took for almost three months, at the beginning of the revolution the reactions of the police force triggered responses from the society, support for the movement escalated quickly, since the actions of the police kept it alive. The protesters had to protect themselves from the pepper spray and tear gas attacks of the police officials, and they used nylon shields or umbrellas to do so. This very simple and everyday used object of an average Asian person has become the symbol of the revolution and patriotism. It has also become a sign of preparedness that protesters are ready to face the obstacles the official forces might pose to them. The protesters and the civil society organizations taking part in the protests also wanted to emphasize the inequality of forces: umbrellas and raised hands against pepper sprays and tear gas.<sup>54</sup> This could also be regarded as a metaphor to the relationship between the PRC and Hong Kong in the first phase of the protests; while mainland Hong Kong pushes

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Wener-Fligner, Zach. "What Is the Meaning of the Umbrellas in Hong Kong's "Umbrella Revolution"?" Quartz. September 29, 2014. Accessed May 4, 2015. <http://qz.com/272854/what-is-the-meaning-of-the-umbrellas-in-hong-kongs-umbrella-revolution/>.

for changes and Beijing quite aggressively rejects the changes required by the protesters, Hong Kong keeps on demonstrating peacefully and abides by the law.

When the protests began, the international media saw a united and determined community with an absolute majority who wanted to fight for the same cause. However, this image is not exactly what perfectly describes the situation. In October, violence broke out in several places over the city, when groups of anti-Occupy Central activists assaulted the protesters and destroyed tents and barricades. These groups consisted of pro-Beijing citizens, a number of alleged triad members who allegedly get involved to fulfil the Central Government's 'order', local business people and local elites who felt frustrated that their day-to-day activities and work were affected by the student movements.<sup>55</sup> Tensions escalated to an even bigger extent when anti-Occupy protesters were allegedly released shortly after arrest.

As the society of Hong Kong were quite polarized and out of fear of the mainland's military interference, university professors and politicians urged the protesters to leave the streets for their own safety. Later, the government cancelled first round of talks with the student leaders, the talks were hold just nearly half a month later, and soon the movement started to fall apart piece by piece as it got exhausted in waiting and the level of outside support didn't increase relevantly over time.<sup>56</sup>

It was not the student leaders or the civil society organizations who were one step ahead the government, but the other way around. The revolution was not planned for such a long time, the tools to how to reach the final goal were obscure and the government gave no sign of concessions. Beijing waited. In November, as a sign of helplessness, protesters had clashes again with the police forces; Beijing refused again to hold talks with pro-democracy activists. Later in December, Occupy Central leaders turned themselves in to the police. This

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<sup>55</sup> Tiezzi, Shannon. "Hong Kong Police: Triads Infiltrated Occupy Movement." *The Diplomat*. October 14, 2014. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://thediplomat.com/2014/10/hong-kong-police-triads-infiltrated-occupy-movement/>.

<sup>56</sup> "Umbrella Revolution." *Radio Free Asia*. Accessed May 4, 2015. <http://www.rfa.org/english/news/special/UmbrellaRevolution/Home.html>.

act symbolically ended the protest.<sup>57</sup> This caused a huge disruption in the identity of the movement, and even if by that time it was by and large clear that the protesters couldn't win, the leave of the three most important personages cut the enthusiasm. Even if protesters rallied to the streets in 2015 February, that didn't give much of a change to the final outcome. The revolution faded and left Hong Kong in the same instable situation as before.

## 4.2. Fragmentation in society

To be able to find the answer to what extent was the society's social identity strong, whether people saw themselves united and fighting for the same cause or it was just a weak and fable form of self-expression, it is helpful to examine blogs, forums, videos or debates that were published at the time of the event. After the initial excitement over the protests, by October many correspondents, opinion polls and surveys also showed that the situation is quite controversial. Articles questioned whether the protests had any sense at all. According to the Washington Post's article that time written by Eric Li, "the movement is part of a global trend you might call "maidancracy". In the article maidancracy is described as a common post Cold War phenomenon, and even if such kind of movement succeeds, which obviously have more idealistic goals than realistic, that would entail long-term socio-economic problems and hardship for the region.<sup>58</sup> While the article compares Hong Kong's case to Ukraine, one

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

<sup>58</sup> X. Li, Eric. "The Umbrella Revolution Won't Give Hong Kong Democracy. Protesters Should Stop Calling for It." Washington Post. October 6, 2014. Accessed May 4, 2015.  
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/posteverything/wp/2014/10/06/the-umbrella-revolution-wont-give-hong-kong-democracy-protesters-should-stop-calling-for-it/>.

should emphasize that there are quite relevant differences in the two region's level of social identity formation.

As the China Daily reported, in 2014 November nearly 83% of respondents told the Hong Kong University's Public Opinion Program that they want protesters to end the movement. By the end of the protests, Hong Kong citizens have understood that high level of autonomy does not mean full autonomy and that in contrast to the famous slogan that "Hong Kong people govern Hong Kong", this is not exactly the case.<sup>59</sup> But can it be so if the consciousness of social identity is at a very developed level and if there were no significant violent repressions that could cut the ambitions totally? Huge portion of the society couldn't identify themselves with the aims of the demonstrators, they complained about inconveniences the protests caused, that they couldn't go to work or couldn't take their children to schools. The elites of the society felt little urge to support the movement, which apart from the number of people was quite naïve and underdeveloped in its aims.

To Hong Kong's conservative and pragmatic part of the society the movement was a lump on the back, lead by unskilled young schoolboys who know nothing about politics, and does not want to understand the penetrating role of economic and financial interests.<sup>60</sup> Hong Kong's trade with China is currently very important for the city to climb out of economic instability and hardship. For the time being, observers fear that Hong Kong has lost its economic importance to the mainland, since China managed to have a capital surplus and it does not need to look for foreign capital. In 1997, Hong Kong's economy was 18 percent the size of the mainland, now this number has decreased down to 3 percent.<sup>61</sup> However, the mainland and Hong Kong signed the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) in

<sup>59</sup> "'Umbrella Revolution' Defeated." - Opinion. December 12, 2014. Accessed May 4, 2015.

[http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2014-12/12/content\\_19070164.htm](http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2014-12/12/content_19070164.htm).

<sup>60</sup> "Hong Kong Residents Clash with Occupy Central Protesters | Al Jazeera America." October 13, 2014. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/10/13/hong-kong-clashes.html>.

<sup>61</sup> Shaffer, Leslie. "Who Needs Who the Most: Hong Kong or China?" CNBC. September 30, 2014. Accessed May 18, 2015. <http://www.cnbc.com/id/102043499>.

2003, and added further liberalization measures during the following years. Basically, all Hong Kong products can be imported to China tariff free under the conditions of the agreement. In 2014, 60% of Hong Kong's re-exports were of China origin and 54% were destined to the Chinese mainland. By December 2014, 876 mainland companies could be listed in Hong Kong with \$1.9 trillion of total market capitalization, or accounted 60.1% of the market total. In 2014, after the US, Hong Kong was the mainland's second largest trading partner, bilateral trade was estimated around \$376 billion and Hong Kong was the second largest export market to the Chinese mainland.<sup>62</sup> These figures do not imply that Hong Kong could be a negligible factor in the economic relations of the mainland, since it absorbs the business ambitions of a quickly developing and achievement-oriented society, it magnifies the mainland's interests and importance on the international level and it is still able to play a linking role in the relationship between China and other countries.

It is beneficial for Hong Kong to be friends with China, and obviously the main mechanisms in society are greatly influenced by welfare. Hong Kong is struggling, more than it had to before, when it enjoyed a very special role in the hierarchy of economies. Now, it has to deal with more problems, but these problems are still not aching and still haven't sent the majority of the population into desperate poverty and unsolvable socio-economic problems. Hong Kong feels that it has to prepare for everything, but it is still not in a situation, when much radicalized actions against the mainland and also against the government would seem rational to implement. Hong Kong citizens right now are more willing to find solutions for their problems by keeping a good relationship with the mainland and making sure that the economy is not hampered by 'irrational' aims. This view can be proved by the above mentioned 83%, when residents voted for the cease of the protests.

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<sup>62</sup> "Economic and Trade Information on China | HKTDC." Economic and Trade Information on China | HKTDC. May 14, 2015. Accessed May 19, 2015. <http://china-trade-research.hktdc.com/business-news/article/Fast-Facts/Economic-and-Trade-Information-on-China/ff/en/1/1X000000/1X09PHBA.htm>.

Many online reports, forums that commented the event noted that protesters had grown tired and also dispirited. The major lever of the protests was public support which obviously kept the movement weak. Therefore, the Central Government's tactic to wait was productive in a sense, since it managed to exhaust the people on the streets and managed to take the leverage away from their fight.<sup>63</sup> After the three main leaders turned themselves in to the police to send message to the protesters to retreat, Alex Chow didn't unite with Joshua Wong under the idea of a hunger strike and he acknowledged that it is only a matter of time before student leaders would have to give up too, as students have underestimated the strength of the government's political power.<sup>64</sup>

### 4.3. What people think

The Public Opinion Programme of the Hong Kong University was established in June 1991 and it offers information and data for the use of academics, journalists, policy makers and the general public. It observes the changes in civil society, in the political area and amongst the general population.<sup>65</sup> Since it is one of the most reliable and currently openly available databases that can give an account on the public opinion before the Umbrella Revolution, during the protests and also after the cease of the movement, it provides very

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<sup>63</sup> "Here's Why The 'Umbrella Revolution' Isn't Going Anywhere." Business Insider. October 11, 2014. Accessed May 20, 2015. <http://www.businessinsider.com/officials-hope-to-wear-down-protestors-in-hong-kong--heres-why-that-wont-work-2014-10>.

<sup>64</sup> Chandler, Clay. "As Hong Kong's Umbrella Revolution Folds, What's next for Asia's World City?" Fortune As Hong Kongs Umbrella Revolution Folds Whats next for Asias WorldCity Comments. December 3, 2014. Accessed May 20, 2015. <http://fortune.com/2014/12/03/as-hong-kongs-umbrella-revolution-folds-whats-next-for-asias-world-city/>.

<sup>65</sup> "About POPBack." Hong Kong University. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/aboutpop/index.html>.

good basis for measuring the potential factors in identity formation during the period under study.

According to Hong Kong POP poll carried out on the people's level of concern about political, economic and livelihood problems, in 2014 December, 20.9% of respondents acknowledged that they are mostly concerned with political problems, 22.5% was worried about economic problems, and a high proportion: 55, 1% was concerned with livelihood problems. The same year in June, the figures by and large showed the same results, while in 2011 the figures indicated very different phenomena in the society. In December 2011, the least concerning problems for respondents were political problems, with an amount of 3.9% voting for that problem. The number of those who worried about economic problems amounted to 30.2%, while the number of respondents concerned with livelihood problems represented a much higher amount: 70.4%.<sup>66</sup>

This could mean that regarding the opinion of the people the economic situation probably became more stable by 2014, than it was in 2011. In 2011, the re-emergence of European debt crisis influenced the region's economic development; the external environment in advanced economics really couldn't help Hong Kong, and the rate of expansion of its economy decreased by 2%. Even if some sectors could sustain a 'status quo' or could reach certain amount of growth - like tourism - the overall situation was characterised by moderation. Inflation went up during the year and the total exports of goods decreased to a modest 3.6%, from 17.3% in 2010.<sup>67</sup> Hong Kong citizens' salary only rose very slowly compared to the soaring property prices.

These economic changes could explain the huge proportion of people worrying about livelihood problems, and even a close to 10% growth in the number of those who worry about

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<sup>66</sup> "數表 TableBack." 數表 Table. December 30, 2014. Accessed May 20, 2015.  
<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/mostcon/mconq88/poll/datatables.html>.

<sup>67</sup> "2011 Economic Background and 2012 Prospects." February 1, 2012. Accessed May 20, 2015.  
[http://www.hkeconomy.gov.hk/en/pdf/er\\_11q4.pdf](http://www.hkeconomy.gov.hk/en/pdf/er_11q4.pdf).



economic problems could explain the sensitivity of society on economic changes. The decrease in the number of those who worry about economic problems and livelihood problems by 2014 could sign the economically stabilizing role of the mainland economy, as the mainland managed to sustain a stable performance, while Hong Kong's economic performance is a lot more volatile.<sup>68</sup>

This stabilizing role is more like a change of roles, China holds the cards now and Hong Kong searches for the opportunity to play along the rules in the hope of gaining benefits. The interdependence between Hong Kong and China has reached a level, when China does not have to send troops to Hong Kong to suppress the protests by the use of military force, but with other economy related steps it can force the city to reconsider its ambitions for democracy. Obviously, this does not mean that China can do whatever it wants without consideration, as we all know that the mainland's economic situation is far more difficult than that, but currently China is the bigger fish in the sea.

Hong Kong's 2014 age structure data reveals that the population's 46.9 % in 2014 was consisted of people between 25 and 54 years, which basically mean the core, the workforce of the population.<sup>69</sup> This group gives the majority, who are the mostly influenced by economic shifts and the most sensitive to changes. This can be a huge weapon in the hands of the mainland when thinking about how to deal with the Umbrella Revolution. Hong Kong society is going towards becoming a rapidly aging population which gives huge pressure to young people who are still in education or just started to work and face the problems of financing their families lives', as in China many Chinese do. Those who can are in favour of emigration and searching opportunities elsewhere, just as their relatives did many years ago when they left the mainland. This is not really a very nationalistic, patriotic attitude.

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<sup>68</sup> "GDP Growth (annual %)." The World Bank. Accessed May 21, 2015.  
<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG>.

<sup>69</sup> "The World Factbook." Central Intelligence Agency. Accessed May 21, 2015.  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2010.html>.

As Reuschemeyer and Huber argue, much change can't happen right now until the elites of the society are not willing to take actions and invest in the process of transition. Even if the balance of power is very much already decided and it is quite questionable under what circumstances could Hong Kong reach its democratic aims, it seems that the most influential people of the population didn't even try to break the current rule of China over the city. One can't know whether it is a result of meticulous pre-calculation during which it became obvious for the elites that it would be a suicide to go against China, or whether it is just the outcome of personal interests. What can be derived from it is that nationalist, patriotic sentiments supporting a different Hong Kong identity were stifled quite easily. The government didn't even try to find a bridge between the mainland and the protesters, some of the government members allegedly even went for vacation in the midst of the protest.<sup>70</sup> Protesters, the young and vibrant elements of society were neglected and spectacularly left out of decision.

According to the results of a different poll conducted by the Hong Kong University, people's dissatisfaction with current political, economic and livelihood conditions has been growing since 2008. There was a relevant decrease at the end of 2011 and a significant increase in the first half of 2014.<sup>71</sup> However by December 2014, the figures started to decrease again, showing that more people accepted the prevalent political, economic and social/livelihood conditions. In exact numbers it means that in 2014 December, 62.6 % of respondents were dissatisfied with political conditions, 32.4 % with economic conditions and 47.3 % with livelihood conditions. A year ago figures showed higher amounts with 68.6 %

<sup>70</sup> Press, Associated. "Hong Kong Students, Officials Talk but Don't Agree." Mail Online. October 21, 2014. Accessed May 26, 2015. <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/ap/article-2801144/Few-hopes-success-Hong-Kong-talks.html>.

<sup>71</sup> "市民對政治、經濟及民生現狀的不滿程度 - 綜合圖表 (按次計算) People's Dissatisfaction with Current Political, Economic and Livelihood Conditions - Combined Charts (per Poll)." 市民對政治 The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015. [http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/mostcon/dissat/poll/dissat\\_poll\\_chart.html](http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/mostcon/dissat/poll/dissat_poll_chart.html).

voting for political conditions, 39.0 % for economic conditions and 55.8 % voting for livelihood conditions.<sup>72</sup>

People's confidence in Hong Kong's future has been decreasing since 2008.<sup>73</sup> It means that in February 2008, 83.3 % of respondents were positive about the territory's future, while March 2015 this only amounts to 44.8 % and 48.1 %.<sup>74</sup> The number of those who are confident about China's future has been slowly decreasing since 2008, however this trend changed in December 2014 when 64.9 % said they were confident about China's future, 28.7 % was not confident. In 2015 March, these numbers experienced a little decrease, currently 60.9 % of respondents say they are confident and 31.2 % that they are not confident.<sup>75</sup>

To be able to understand the silent fading of the protests, the figures about people's confidence in one country - two systems politics is also important to observe. The chart reveals that the people's confidence has been slowly decreasing since 2010 and by 2015 March only 42.9 % of respondents felt confident about the relationship with China, while 51.5 % of the respondents remained quite unsure about the future. In September 2014, all together 37.6 % of respondents felt confident about the one country-two systems politics. This lower percentage must have been influenced by the mainland's decision of ruling out open elections. However, according to the figures released in December the same year, the difference between those who are confident and not confident was relatively little; 45.6%

<sup>72</sup> "數表 TableBack." The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015.

<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/mostcon/dissat/poll/datatables.html>.

<sup>73</sup> "市民對中國前途的信心(按次計算) People's Confidence in China's Future (per Poll)". The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015.

[http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/conchifuture/poll/chi\\_poll\\_chart.html](http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/conchifuture/poll/chi_poll_chart.html).

<sup>74</sup> "市民對香港前途信心(按次計算) People's Confidence in HK's Future (per Poll)." The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015. [http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/conchkfuture/poll/hk\\_poll\\_chart.html](http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/conchkfuture/poll/hk_poll_chart.html).

<sup>75</sup> "數表 TableBack." The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015.

<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/conchifuture/poll/datatables.html>.

voted for confidence in the current political system and 47.4% of respondent felt quite negative about it.<sup>76</sup>

These numbers show that the population was basically separated into two groups during the time of the revolution. The number of all of those who feel unconfident about the mainland's relationship with Hong Kong in the future still amounts probably just the half of the population. Another half of it opposes these negative feelings, who in times of protests or political turmoil would counterbalance the more radical and idealistic views of pro-democratic elements in the society, since confidence in the one country-two systems politics presupposes a tolerance and patience for China's decisions. However, from these numbers one will not be able to measure whether there is relevant difference in the level of nationalism within the two groups, since one country-two systems politics already mean a wish of differentiation from the mainland and one can't know that those who are not confident would feel confident about either a just Chinese or just Hong Kong alternative.

For the question whether respondents trust the Beijing Central Government 9.2 % answered very trust, 23.7 % quite trust, 21.4 % half-half, 16.7 % quite distrust, 24.4 % very distrust in 2014 December. While by 2015 March 12.4 % responded that they trust the Central Government very much, 20.8 % quite trust, 21.4 % half-half, 16.5 % quite distrust, 25.7 % very distrust. Much restructuring has not happened; the numbers very much show the same proportions.<sup>77</sup> It seems that the 3 % growth in the number of those who very much trust the Central Government comes from those who otherwise already quite trusted it, therefore it more or less can be considered as if they were just ensured about the political and economic power of Beijing. Still, if we add up the figures, then by 2015 33.2 % of respondents have trusted the Central Government and 42.3 % had quite negative opinions about it, with a

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<sup>76</sup> "數表 TableBack." The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015.  
<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/conocts/poll/datatables.html>.

<sup>77</sup> "數表 TablesBack." The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015.  
<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/trust/trustchigov/poll/datatables.html>.

constant 21.4 % half-half during the same period. The most united and consistent group over the issue is the half-half group, which also serves as the weakest part of the population, since these respondents are not likely to take sides in times of protests or revolutions and subsequently they do not contribute to the human basis of the formation of a stable Hong Kong identity.

How Hong Kong citizens see themselves? How do they categorize themselves, as Chinese or as Hong Kong citizens? Do they share the mainland's view of Hong Kong belonging to the mainland Chinese culture and therefore it is essential to link it back to the mainland? The polls show that 42.3 % of respondents thought of themselves as Hongkongers in December 2014. This means an approximately 2 % growth since June 2014 and an approximately 6 % growth since December, 2013. However, in 2014 December, 24.3 % of respondents declared themselves Hongkongers in China, 15.0 % believed that they are Chinese in Hong Kong and 17.8 % thought that they are simply Chinese. A slow decline has been present in the number of those who think that they are Chinese since the 2008 June poll was published when 38.6 % of respondents identified themselves as Chinese.<sup>78</sup> Now, 39.3 % of respondents embrace mixed identity; they are either Chinese in Hong Kong or Hongkonger in China. Overall, those who are likely to accept the mainland's regulations as they feel connected to China to a certain extent are in majority. This fragmentation of society over the question of identity also reveals uncertainty about the people's perceptions of themselves. Hong Kong citizens don't see the situation black and white, they embrace a mixed identity which is very much dominated by mixed factors, such as Chinese roots but the approval of Western values. This fragmentation is not likely to be able to sustain a strong social movement or to be able to cooperate with civil society organizations in the fight for more ideological aims.

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<sup>78</sup> "數表 Table Back." The Hong Kong University. Accessed May 21, 2015.  
<http://hkupop.hku.hk/english/popexpress/ethnic/eidentity/poll/datatables.html>.

Hong Kong's civil society has gone through relatively big changes since the end of 1970s and is now a very influential part of the average life of Hong Kong citizens, also a very defining factor of the currently already existing identity, because of the vivid network of civil society organizations that can advertise that pragmatism and democracy that many Hong Kong citizens identify as their trade-mark.

Civil society gives the 'institutional' framework for reaching democratic aims, but it is not enough to provide the ideological basis as well. Hong Kong people, a bunch of emigrants didn't have the chance to become one and united in political aims, first because of the quick transition from the British colonial governance to the Chinese one country-two systems politics and also because of the material-oriented society who didn't feel the need to overthrow the current system until they had everything and working hard was more than enough to make ends meet. Later when economic problems emerged and influenced the region's economic development, people felt the urge to give voice to their dissatisfaction and demand that things have to stay in the same flow as they were before. They were afraid to lose their privileges and speciality under the rule of the mainland. Even though, things became more difficult when after the 1997 Asian crisis Hong Kong's leadership tried to climb out of the problems by casting loose a laissez-faire attitude and carrying out liberalization reforms. Things got out of control and the mainland's company has proved to be more useful then ever.

Raising international attention for the cause of the protesters of the Umbrella Revolution was quite easy, the international media was more than happy to report and question a story that obviously stinks from the international debate over the viability of democracies and also puts into question the mainland's allegedly harmonious politics. Criticisms soared in forums and blogs that China suppresses an innocent student movement, for the sake of sustaining its legitimacy and preventing its population to get engaged in the

situation and draw a line between the case of Hong Kong and the upsurges in Xinjiang of Tibet.

Hong Kong's society definitely has been experiencing the process of becoming one entity since the last two decades, mainly since it realized that reintegration to China may deprive it from many of the privileges it has regarded natural so far. Still, the Umbrella protests relied on students mainly, and the lower levels of the population who are influenced by those socio-economic changes that have been influencing the region since 1997. Elites, government personnel or politicians ally with the mainland, since this is a more moderate approach to solve the current issue and does not risk surprising shifts or volatile external interventions.

## Conclusion

The Umbrella Revolution was the biggest-scale democratisation movement since the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre that sought to challenge mainland China's decisions over the city's political life. First, without reflecting on the success of the movement in reaching its goals, one could say that the Umbrella Revolution definitely was successful in raising awareness of the society's problems and mobilize huge portion of the population. This action went hand in hand with an increase in the number of those who define themselves as just Hongkongers and decrease in the number of those who identify themselves as Chinese.

However, these changes are not dominant enough to be able to form a majority and express a united will that represents the majority of the people. In contrast with the initial reports, the analysis has shown that Hong Kong citizens couldn't unite under the banner of an overwhelming nationalist, identity-centred sentiment. Hong Kong's identity seemed to play lesser role during the protests than the economic considerations of the elite and influential part of the society. This also means, that apart from the fact that Hong Kong is currently under the rule of an authoritarian system and it does not have the external support and the domestic political leverage to reach its aims, the study revealed that the majority of the elites in the society didn't support the movement and Hong Kong government cooperated to a great extent with the mainland on the issue.

The government didn't even pretend to take the protesters' political aims seriously; they postponed talks with the students and waited until the movement started to disperse itself. Finally, the majority of protesters and also some of the key leaders evaluated the situation as not worth continuing, the movement had to realize that it has to face China alone, and it can't draw support from the broader international arena. Currently, Chinese economic and political



influence in the world politics defends China from the harsh international criticism from the part of other governments, even if international media treated the case quite sensitively and provocatively.

The media also expressed a controversy in the public opinion after the first waves of the protests, and it also reported about the clashes between Occupy and anti-Occupy protesters. Despite the cooperation of more civil society organizations, the protests weren't planned to survive such a long period of time, there wasn't a strategic plan how to gain public support from time to time and how to recruit more and more members to take part actively in the movement. Protesters and residents both got tired and wearied; the idea that Hong Kong could lose its reputation that could entail economic fallbacks threatened the population. The analysis on the data of the Hong Kong University conducted Public Opinion Program has also proved that in many questions the society can't agree as one, it is separated into two or more groups and regarding the question of ethnicity some of the groups show mixed characteristics. The majority of the population can't clearly decide they are either Hongkongers or Chinese, but believe that they are either Hongkongers in China or Chinese in Hong Kong. This already puts an obstacle before the conscious formulation of a strong sense of Hong Kong identity that could be able to provide the ideological motivation for a stronger and more strategic civil society movement.

Relating to Laclau's theory, that establishing the identity of a certain group is always an act of power when the new alternative identity overcomes the prevalent identity that threatens its existence and changes the positions in the hierarchy, one assumes that very strong and united actions could shake the currently prevailing hierarchy. However, as we could follow it through the slow dispersion of the movement and the lack of support from the absolute majority of the society, this act of power didn't happen yet in Hong Kong's society.

The Umbrella Revolution couldn't create a very strong sense of belonging among people, but it is not surprising, if we consider that many Hong Kong citizens embrace multiply identities.

As Smith points out, multiplicity in identity can support and reinforce social identity, but also can crosscut them. Multiplicity in Hong Kong citizens' identity seems to crosscut social identity ambitions for now. This can be the legacy of the emigrant culture, Hong Kong citizens' economy related considerations. The city has been an economic and trade hub, which serves as a trademark and offers employment for the majority of the population. Therefore economic considerations obviously influence the society.

Hong Kong citizens still have a long way to go to form a strong and special identity. They still have to experience common events that train their own sense of belonging together and help them decide whether they would like to accept the PRC's decisions or would like to challenge them and demand broader democracy. The Umbrella Revolution is important in this process, since it raised not just socio-economic questions, but also politically polarized the community to an extent that hasn't happened since 1989. However, the mainland's influence over the city could break this process into pieces, and could halt this process of self-realization. Whether Hong Kong will be able to reach its aims and alienate its identity from the mainland is still the question of future studies.

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